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Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, baronne d'Aulnoy, *Travels into Spain.* Edited and translated by Gabrielle M. Verdier. New York and Toronto: Iter Press, 2022. ix + 303 pp. Notes, references, and index. $54.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9781649590572; $54.95 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9781649590589.

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Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville (1652-1705) was a celebrated French aristocrat who devoted much of her life to writing and collecting fairy tales, court memoirs, and accounts of her travels in England and Spain. Marie-Catherine married François de la Motte, Baron d'Aulnoy, in 1666. Henceforth, she became Baroness d'Aulnoy, and was therefore known as Madame d'Aulnoy. In *Travels into Spain,* Professor Gabrielle M. Verdier presents us with an English translation and a critical study of the *Relation du voyage d'Espagne*, a text originally written in French by Madame d'Aulnoy and published in Paris in April 1691 by Claude Barbin.

Structurally, Verdier's book is divided into two parts, following the traditional scheme of translations that other researchers, such as Raymond Foulché-Delbos and María Susana Seguín, used to previously edit the works of Madame d'Aulnoy. In the first part, Verdier provides an introduction to the controversial work and life of this famous seventeenth-century French writer. In the second part, the reader will find the translation of the fifteen letters that d'Aulnoy wrote from Spain to a cousin in France, all of which were written between 1679 and 1680. These letters are contemporaneous with the marriage between the Spanish King Carlos II and Princess Marie-Louise d'Orléans, the daughter of Philippe d'Orléans and niece of the French King Louis XIV.

Madame d'Aulnoy is a well-known character to specialists in the history and literature of the seventeenth century. In Spain, historians have been quite skeptical when it comes to addressing this character because there is no documentary evidence that allows us to affirm that she was in these lands. Her name does not appear in the archives and, although she claimed to have known several illustrious courtiers, no one mentions Madame d'Aulnoy in the accounts of events, in the chronicles, or in letters. The renowned French Hispanist Raymond Foulché-Delbos claims that her trip to Spain was false and invented. Alfred Morel-Fatio maintains that the baroness had copied and amplified a memoir of the Spanish court written by the French ambassador, Pierre de Villars.[1] Other scholars argued that the baroness traveled to Spain, but that the reading of her texts had to be done with caution. Both the Duke of Maura and Agustín González de Amezúa explain that, in the Baroness's pen, there is realism, but one tinged with invention, exaggeration, and reworking.[2] Despite these criticisms, scholars recognize that the work offers an

entertaining and detailed vision of certain aspects of seventeenth-century Spanish society, as long as it is read with caution and a critical sense. Verdier's introduction covers all these debates, highlighting how the discussions around her work have been shaped by the moral judgments to which this writer (who was described for centuries as "adventuresse") was historically subjected (p. 3). The life and work of this important Baroque writer are now being revisited in the twenty-first century and Verdier adds to these reinterpretations by analyzing d'Aulnoy's literary production as a whole. She focuses not only on the *Relation du voyage d'Espagne*, but also on Madame d'Aulnoy's other texts, including her short stories, court memoirs, historical novels, and two religious pieces.

Despite the controversies surrounding the baroness's travels, Verdier points out that her texts were an important source of information for understanding the Spain of Carlos II, and they inspired several intellectuals and artists in the following centuries, including Victor Hugo. In fact, the first English translation of *Travels into Spain* was in 1691, the same year it was first published in French. The following year, in 1692, Samuel Crouch printed a second translation in London, reflecting the high demand for this book. The stories of this woman and her vision of the Spanish reality found an immense reception among the French and English public. Her success was because d'Aulnoy recognized that the French and English reading public saw Spain as an exotic Other and her writing successfully played to that expectation.

The mentions of the Inquisition and the 1680 *auto de fe*, found in letter thirteen, perfectly reflect the French imaginary about intransigence and religious fanaticism in Habsburg Spain. Did d'Aulnoy contribute to feeding the Black Legend about Spain and the Spaniards? Verdier argues the opposite; that in order to understand this writer, it is necessary to recognize that d'Aulnoy is not writing for either veracity or to convey a true picture of Spanish reality, but in order to sell books. Thus, "D'Aulnoy was not responsible for the Black-Legend (*sic*), centuries old, but the success of *Travels* did spread information on Spain, mostly negative in the twilight of Habsburg rule. Although culture and class certainly influenced the gaze of this French aristocrat, her own unsettled life prepared her to appreciate (and imagine) otherness. She praises many aspects of Spain: extraordinary landscapes and architecture; excellent fruit, fish, and chocolate; women more naturally beautiful than the French but sallow and emaciated, very witty but uneducated; such heroic men but suicidal in their disdain of economic survival" (p. 26).

There are, however, several gaps in our understanding of the baroness and her texts. Among the most important, I believe that we still have to get to know the baroness in her role as a courtesan and understand how she was integrated into the networks of power in Louis XIV's France. Most of d'Aulnoy's books were dedicated to members of the French royal family: the *Memoire de la Cour d'Espagne* was dedicated to Marie-Thérèse de Bourbon, Princess of Conti; the *Relation du voyage d'Espagne* was dedicated to Philippe II, duc de Chartres; and the *Memoirs of the Court of England* was dedicated to Louis Auguste de Bourbon, duc de Maine. It would be naïve to think that d'Aulnoy was oblivious to the politics of her time or that she did not know how to take advantage of the patronage practices by which royals favored writers, musicians, and artists in general.

These dedications tell us about the search for protectors at court and the position of the baroness in the different court factions. The relationship between Madame d'Aulnoy and the duc de

Chartres was mainly courtly and literary, based on the dedication of her work to the son of the duc d'Orléans, which gave it visibility and legitimacy within aristocratic circles. Although it was not a close personal relationship, the implicit patronage of the duc de Chartres helped Madame d'Aulnoy strengthen her position in the literary and courtly world. This type of patronage was common at the time, as women writers needed the endorsement of influential figures to advance their careers and gain recognition. About this more political dimension of the baroness, or her relationship with the nobility and patrons, we still know very little. Nonetheless, Verdier shows that there are many other aspects about this writer that have come to light in recent years. The literary portrait of Madame d'Aulnoy that Verdier paints is that of an exceptional woman and a pioneer among her contemporaries. She traveled alone, with her daughter, unsupervised by her husband, accompanied by some maids and a valet, and with her French cook. She negotiated with her crooked Spanish banker, customs officials, and innkeepers. Her audacity led her to decide to publish her trip. In Verdier's words, "D'Aulnoy was the first to publish a woman's perspective on standard subjects: Holy Week, bullfights, and so on" (p. 23).

Since the late Middle Ages, it was common for people to recount their travels through letters. D'Aulnoy's originality, according to Verdier, derives from merging travel letters with family letters, an aspect that makes her a pioneer in the seventeenth century. It is a woman writing to another woman (her cousin) which makes the baroness's story very different from any male story. "She provided a window into a world from which men (and certainly foreigners) were excluded. She could meet ladies in underwear in their bedrooms, titillating for readers because women were reputed to be so secluded in Spain that men were lucky to catch a glimpse of a face under the mantilla or a foot under petticoats" (p. 22). As a writer in a space dominated by male voices, Madame d'Aulnoy inserts herself in the tradition of the *femmes de lettres* who found, in the epistolary and memorialist genres, legitimate forms of expression and intellectual authority. Through satirical descriptions, cultural judgments, and personal anecdotes, the baroness offers not only entertainment and exoticism, but also a platform for reflection on gender codes, courtly morality, and the forms of symbolic power that structured both Spanish and French society. Thus, *Travels* can be read not only as a travel story, but as a subtle intervention in the discourse of knowledge from a female voice that challenges, observes, and translates the world from her own perspective.

D'Aulnoy's letters are published respecting the logical and historical sequence. Letters one to seven (February 20-March 15, 1679) recount the three-week trip from Bayonne to Madrid. In these first letters, the reader will find detailed descriptions of the customs, clothing, foods, religious rituals, and behaviors of the Spaniards. Letters eight to fourteen (March 28-September 30, 1679) describe events happening at court, while preparing for the entrance of Queen Marie-Louise d'Orléans. These letters focused on court life: dances, intrigues, relations between nobles, and problems of etiquette. All of them allow us to form a humorous, ironic, and critical image of the Spanish court. The last letter (number fifteen) is dated September 28, 1680, and it summarizes how the queen's public entrance was. The ceremonial, the itinerary, the ephemeral architecture, the festivals, the bullfights, and the comedies are described. Verdier is wrong when she translates the date of the queen's public entry, which was actually January 13, 1680, and not January 30, something that is easily corroborated by consulting the previous editions. Note three, far from clarifying this matter, delves into the error, since the editor confuses the arrival of the queen in Madrid with the public ceremony of entry into the court, two different events.

Consulting the publications of María Teresa Zapata, Elisabetta Lurgo, Miguel Benito Lázaro and my own would have made it possible to clarify the details and itinerary of the queen from the time she left her uncle's court until she arrived in Madrid and, subsequently, publicly entered the court after confinement in the Buen Retiro.

In the different letters, the sender combines different narrative forms: the travel story, the social chronicle, the courtly commentary and literary fiction. As for the edition made by Verdier, I am interested in noting that the introduction of subtitles, the division of extremely long paragraphs, and the simplification of sentences with multiple coordinate clauses and semicolons greatly facilitate the reading of the letters. The initial work carried out by R. Foulchè-Delbosc was perfected with the edition of the *Travels* by Marie Seguí in 2005. This work that we review incorporates these previous advances and presents additional novel explanations, presenting a modernized text that constitutes an important source of information for researchers.

Among the shortcomings of this book, it is extremely surprising that the author has provided images of Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Carlos II, and Mariana of Austria, but none of Madame d'Aulnoy herself. Both the National Library of Spain and the National Library of France have two engravings of the baroness, possibly made in the first half of the eighteenth century. Both libraries also preserve old editions of d'Aulnoy's fairy tales, *Memoirs of the Court of Spain* and the *Relation of the Journey to Spain*.[3] The lack of an image impoverishes the reading experience and represents a methodological limitation for the reader who is not familiar with the history and literature of the time. When dealing with distant temporalities and realities, images can generate an emotional impact and knowing the Baroness's face would have allowed a greater humanization of the character by fostering an empathic connection between narrator and reader.

In short, *Travels into Spain* is a book written with a clear and coherent structure, which guides the reader in a fluid way through the proposed historical and literary analysis. Gabrielle Verdier stands out for her ability to explain the main debates on the subject, adopting a well-founded critical stance enriched by a careful reading of the specialized literature. One of the greatest successes of the volume is the inclusion of the fifteen letters written by the baroness, which are offered in a careful, elegant translation faithful to the original style, allowing their literary dimension to be fully appreciated. Although the theoretical and methodological approach is fundamentally focused on French, North American, and English historical-literary perspectives, it would be further enriched if future works also integrated the contributions of Spanish historiography which, in recent decades, has provided valuable insights into the court of Carlos II of Habsburg, abandoning old historiographical themes such as the court's apparent "decadence." I am referring, without wishing to be exhaustive, to the works of Luis Ribot, Carmen Sanz Ayán, Juan Antonio Sánchez Belén, Antonio Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño, Silvia Z. Mitchell, María Teresa Zapata, among others.[4] In conclusion, *Travels into Spain* is an excellent resource both for researchers who wish to delve deeper into the figure of Madame d'Aulnoy and for any reader interested in discovering the great women writers of the seventeenth century, their context, and their contributions to the cultural and literary history of early modern Europe.

NOTES

[1] See Raymond Foulché-Delbos, "Madame D'Alnoy et l'Espagne," *Revue hispanique* 67 (1926): 1-152 and Alfred Morel-Fatio, "Introduction," in Pierre de Villars, *Mémoires de la cour d'Espagne de 1679 à 1681* (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1893).

[2] Gabriel de Maura y Agustín González de Amezúa, *Fantasías y realidades del viaje a Madrid de la Condesa D'Aulnoy* (Madrid: Saturnino Calleja, 1944).

[3] Madame d'Aulnoy wrote a large number of fairy tales, as well as *Mémoires de la cour d'Espagne*, 2 vol. (Paris: Barbin, 1690), dont Sainte-Beuve notera l'intérêt, and *Relation du voyage d'Espagne*, 3 vol. (Paris: Barbin, 1691). Thus, there were a number of images available.

[4] See: Luis Ribot, *Carlos II: el rey y su entorno cortesano* (Madrid: CEEH, 2009); Carmen Sanz Ayán, *Los banqueros de Carlos II* (Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1989); Juan Antonio Sánchez Belén, *La política fiscal en Castilla en tiempos de Carlos II* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1996); Antonio Álvarez Ossorio Alvariño, "La sacralización de la dinastía en el púlpito de la Capilla Real en tiempos de Carlos II", *Criticón*, 84-85 (2002): 313-332; Antonio Álvarez Ossorio Alvariño, "La Corte: un espacio abierto para la historia social", in Santiago Castillo, ed., *La Historia Social en España: actualidad y perspectivas* (Madrid: Siglo XII, 1991), pp. 247-260; Silvia Z. Mitchell, *Queen, Mother, and Stateswoman. Mariana of Austria and the Government of Spain* (Pennsylvania State College: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019); María Teresa Zapata, *La entrada en la Corte de María Luisa de Orleans: arte y fiesta en el Madrid de Carlos II* (Madrid: Actas, 2000). An excellent summary of the state of the art on the historiography of the reign of Charles II is available in Silvia Z. Mitchell, "Introduction: The Spanish Habsburg Court during the Reign of Carlos II (1665-1700)," *The Court Historian* 23/2 (2018): 107-112.

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