

WOMEN WRITERS IN THE ROMANTIC AGE



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Cover image: the Brontë sisters (Anne, Emily and Charlotte) by Patrick Branwell Brontë, oil on canvas, ca. 1834. ©National Portrait Gallery, London

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9. Writers from Spain and Portugal

The Spanish and Portuguese regimes—in Iberia, if not overseas—were fairly calm in the period before Napoleon’s invasion in 1808, but the following years of French occupation and guerilla war left their trace on the peninsula. Spain broadly chose repression, rather as Austria did, after the return of their Bourbon dynasty in 1814; Restoration Portugal witnessed a struggle between conservatives and liberals that played out over a decade or more and from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, capital after 1822 of the new Empire of Brazil. My English-language research has found five Portuguese women writers in this period, with eleven in Spain.

Portugal (5 writers)

Maria da Felicidade do Couto Browne, known as **Maria Browne** (10 January 1797–8 or 9 November 1861), born in Porto, married Manuel Clamouse Browne, a port wine merchant. Browne published pseudonymously as ‘Sóror Dolores’ and ‘A Coruja Trovador’ [The Troubadour Owl], which were also the titles of her first two known books, in 1849–1854. In that year, she also published *Virações da Madrugada* [Dawn Turns] and *Sonetos e Poesias Líricas*. Her writings met with some success. Browne also hosted a literary salon and wrote for the periodicals *O Nacional*, *Miscelânea Política* and *Almanaque de Lembranças Luso-Brasileiro*.¹

Margarida Teresa da Silva e Orta (1711–24 October 1793), born in São Paulo, Brazil, moved with her parents to Lisbon at the age of six

1 Anne Commire and Deborah Klezmer, eds. *Dictionary of Women Worldwide: 25,000 Women Through the Ages*, 3 vols (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2007).

and remained there. Convent-educated and destined for a religious order, da Silva e Orta instead married Pedro Jansen Moller van Praet; they had twelve children. After her husband's death, the Marquis of Pombal imprisoned her for seven years in the Monastery of Ferreira de Aves; she was released in 1777. Da Silva e Orta published under a perfect anagrammatic pseudonym, 'Dorotéia Engrassia Tavadeda Dalmira,' leaving works misattributed: for instance, *Maximas de Virtude e Formosura*, 1752, reissued in 1777 as *Aventuras de Diófanes*. In Ferreira de Aves, she also wrote unpublished texts: an 'epic-tragic poem,' the *Novena of the Patriarch São Bento*, and the *Petition that the Prey Makes to Queen N. Senhora*. Da Silva e Orta was fluent in Portuguese, French, and Italian.²

Catarina Micaela de Sousa César e Lencastre, known as **Catarina de Lencastre** (29 September 1749–4 January 1824), born in Guimarães, was married by proxy in 1767 to Luís Pinto de Sousa Coutinho, Viscount of Balsemão and Governor of Mato Grosso in Brazil. In 1774, he was named envoy to Great Britain and Lencastre accompanied him to London, where she opened a salon. Returning to Portugal, she became famous as the 'Portuguese Sappho' because of her love poetry. Lencastre also wrote for the theater, though most of her work remains unpublished.³

Leonor de Almeida Portugal, 4th Marquise of Alorna, 8th Countess of Assumar [or **Alcipe**] (31 October 1750–11 October 1839), born in Lisbon, spent nineteen years in a convent from age eight because of the Távora affair, resulting in executions and prison for her family. Here, she wrote poetry, discovered by the writer Francisco Manuel do Nascimento: her *Poemas de Chelas* appeared in 1772. Released in 1777, she married Carlos Pedro Maria José Augusto, Count of Oyenhausen-Grevenburg, in 1779, following him to Vienna in 1780, where he became minister plenipotentiary. She continued to write poetry and to paint, meeting kings, popes, and emperors. They returned home in 1785, and she opened a salon. Carlos died in 1793. Portugal stayed in England from 1801 to 1813, translating Chateaubriand's brochure *De Buonaparte ...* in 1814 and returning to live in retirement until 1826. Her *Obras poeticas* appeared in 1844.⁴

2 C.R. Boxer, *Women in Iberian Expansion Overseas: Some Facts, Fancies and Personalities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

3 João Esteves Pereira, *Portugal - Dicionário Histórico, Corográfico, Heráldico, Biográfico, Bibliográfico, Numismático e Artístico*, 7 vols (Lisbon: João Romano Torres, 1904).

4 Maria João Lopo de Carvalho, *Marquesa de Alorna: do Cativo de Chelas à Corte de Viena* (Lisbon: Oficina do Livro, 2011).

Antónia Gertrudes Pusich (1 October 1805–6 October 1883), born on São Nicolau in Portuguese Cape Verde to the island's Ragusa-born governor, married João Cardoso de Almeida Amado Viana Coelho in 1820. She later married Francisco Teixeira Henriques, and in 1836, José Roberto de Melo Fernandes e Almeida, having eleven children in all. Pusich published extensively under her own name: poems, elegies, novels, theater, biography. She wrote for several periodicals including *Paquete do Tejo*, *Revista universal lisbonense: jornal dos interesses physicos, moraes e litterarios por uma sociedade estudiosa*, and *Almanach*, and directed the periodicals *A assemblea literaria*, *A Beneficiência* and *A Cruzada*. Pusich also composed and played the piano. She died in Lisbon.⁵

Spain (11 writers)

Fernán Caballero

La Gaviota (1849)

Capítulo I

En noviembre del año de 1836, el paquebote de vapor *Royal Sovereign* se alejaba de las costas nebulosas de Falmouth, azotando las olas con sus brazos, y desplegando sus velas pardas y húmedas en la neblina, aún más parda y más húmeda que ellas.

El interior del buque presentaba el triste espectáculo del principio de un viaje marítimo. Los pasajeros apiñados en él luchaban con las fatigas del mareo. Veíanse mujeres desmayadas, desordenados los caballeros, ajados los camisolines, chafados los sombreros. Los hombres, pálidos y de mal humor; los niños, abandonados y llorosos; los criados, atravesando con angulosos pasos la cámara, para llevar a los pacientes té, café y otros remedios imaginarios, mientras que el buque, rey y señor de las aguas, sin cuidarse de los males que ocasionaba, luchaba a brazo partido con las olas, dominándolas cuando le ponían resistencia, y persiguiéndolas de cerca cuando cedían.

Paseábanse sobre cubierta los hombres que se habían preservado del azote común, por una complexión especial, o por la costumbre de viajar. Entre ellos se hallaba el gobernador de una colonia inglesa, de noble

5 *Portuguese Women Writers (16th-19th centuries)* (http://www.womenwriters.nl/index.php/Portuguese_Women_Writers); Silvia Bermúdez and Roberta Johnson. *A New History of Iberian Feminisms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018).

rostro y de alta estatura, acompañado de dos ayudantes. Algunos otros estaban envueltos en sus *mackintosh*, metidas las manos en los bolsillos, los rostros encendidos, azulados o muy pálidos, y generalmente desconcertados. En fin, aquel hermoso bajel parecía haberse convertido en el alcázar de la displidencia y del malestar.⁶

La Gaviota

Chapter 1

In November, in the year 1836, the steamer "Royal Sovereign" took her departure from the foggy coast of Falmouth, lashing the waves with her paddle-wheels, and spreading her sails, gray and wet, in the mist still grayer and more wet than they.

The interior of the hull presented the uncheerful spectacle of the commencement of a sea voyage. The passengers, crowded together, were struggling with the fatigue of sea-sickness. Women were seen in extraordinary attitudes, with hair disordered, crinolines disarranged, hats crushed; the men pale, and in bad-humor; the children neglected and crying; the servants traversing the cabin with unsteady steps, carrying to their patients tea, coffee, and other imaginary remedies; while the ship, queen and mistress of the waters, without heeding the ills she occasioned, wrestled powerfully with the waves, triumphing over resistance, and pursuing the retreating billows.

The men who had escaped the common scourge were enabled to walk the deck, either by being so constituted as to withstand the ship's motion, or by being accustomed to travel.

Among them was the governor of an English colony, a tall, fine-looking fellow, accompanied by two of his staff officers. There were several who wore their mackintoshes, thrusting their hands into their pockets; some had flushed countenances, others blue, or very pale, and, generally, all were discontented. In fine, that beautiful vessel seemed to be converted into a palace of discontent.⁷

The Seagull opens with two epigraphs, from G. de Molene—perhaps G. Tirso de Molina—and from Alexandre Dumas, who writes: "It is undeniable that simple things are those which most move deep hearts and large understandings." And we open with a relatively simple thing, a description of a steamship off the coast of England. After a brief mention of the waves, the paddles, and the damp sails in the damp brown mist, we move inside the ship for a vignette: men, women, children in all attitudes as they confront seasickness. Nightgowns are torn, hats are

6 Fernán Caballero, *La Gaviota* [The Seagull], ed. Juan Alcina Franch (Barcelona: Bosch, 1974), pp. 57–60.

7 Fernán Caballero, tr. J. Leander Starr, *La Gaviota: A Spanish Novel* (New York: John Bradburn, 1864), pp. 9–10.

flattened, servants are serving tea and coffee, hoping to help. The ship sails on apace. And now we pan in on one face among the sturdier men on deck—the tall governor of an English colony, with his two assistants. Others in their mackintoshes are flushed, bluish, or pale.

This is a masterful description. Caballero—a pseudonym, meaning *gentleman*—moves like a film director from a view of the ship amid the waves, inside to the huddled crowd, back to the waves and the men on deck, and in close-up to her protagonist, before pulling finally back to his neighbors' flushed or bluish faces. The governor's mastery of the weather associates him to the ship and parts him dramatically from the mass of travelers around and behind him. Caballero does not tell us about this distinction; she shows it to us. One thinks of the rather similar opening to Gustave Flaubert's 1869 *L'Éducation sentimentale*, another journey by water.

Once again, one may ask whether this scene is inherently Romantic. We have argued above, more than once, as to how description is a characteristically Romantic novelistic activity. It also bears saying that Northern nations, and England in particular, played an outsize part in Romantic narrative, as we saw in the opening to Avellaneda's *Sab*; ever since Ossian emerged in the 1760s as a Northern counterweight to Homer, European culture had found in the British Isles a model of various things, starting with constitutional government, continuing with melancholy and introspection, and concluding perhaps with an art—in Ossian, in Shakespeare—to oppose to neoclassical hegemony. We set sail here from Falmouth for good reason. England is also the home of both the Industrial Revolution and the steam engine, and in that sense, the steamship is as English as the governor aboard it. This is, in short, a topical novel extract, as its opening date—November 1836—might suggest.

Concepción Arenal Ponte (31 January 1820–4 February 1893), born in Ferrol, lost her father aged eight, a political prisoner. The family then moved to Madrid. A year after her mother's death, in 1842, Arenal dressed as a man to enroll in Law at Madrid's University of Alcalá. In 1847, she married the writer Fernando García Carrasco; the two collaborated at *La Iberia*. In 1848, Arenal published the libretto of *Los hijos de Pelayo*; her first novel was *Historia de un corazón* in 1850. Widowed in 1857, Arenal retired to Santander, then to Galicia. In 1862, she wrote her *Prisoner Visitor's*

Manual, translated into many languages. She worked visiting prisons and for women's education, founding the periodical *La Voz de la Caridad* in 1870, writing tirelessly on just war theory, prison reform, education, and state intervention.⁸

Cecilia Francisca Josefa Böhl de Faber y Ruiz de Larrea [or **Fernán Caballero**] (24 December 1796–7 April 1877), born at Morges in Switzerland, was educated in Hamburg, her father's hometown, visiting Spain in 1815. In 1816, she married Captain Antonio Planells y Bardaxi. He was killed in action in 1817, and in 1822 she married Francisco Ruiz del Arco, Marqués de Arco Hermoso. When Arco Hermoso died in 1835, Caballero married Antonio Arrom de Ayala, who committed suicide in 1859. Caballero anonymously published the novel *Sole* in German in 1840, then *La Gaviota* in 1849, serialized in *El Heraldo* and translated into several languages. Other novels and short stories preceded her posthumous *Obras completas*.⁹

Dolores Cabrera y Heredia (15 September 1828–1 December 1899), born in Tamarite de Litera, followed her family to Pamplona, Madrid, and Jaca. She published her first poem in 1847, contributing verse from then on to *La Velada*, *La Reforma*, *El Correo de la Moda*, and other journals. For the latter, she also wrote historical articles, biographies of women, and her novel *Una perla y una lágrima* in 1853. Cabrera also published the novel *Quien bien ama nunca olvida* and a poetry collection, *Las violetas*, in 1850, as well as occasional pieces for the royal family. In 1856, she married army officer Joaquín María Miranda, moving with him to Valencia, Granada, and Saragossa. Cabrera was a member of the Hermandad lirica and earned various honors from 1860 onward. She went blind in later life.¹⁰

María Rosa de Gálvez (14 August 1768–2 October 1806), born in Malaga to unknown parents, was adopted by a colonel and married a distant cousin, Captain José Cabrera Ramirez, settling with him in Madrid. There, she became close to Manuel José Quintana, for whose *Variedades de Ciencias, Literatura y Artes* she wrote in 1803–1805, and to the minister Manuel Godoy, who helped her publish. Gálvez wrote

8 Anna Caballé, *Concepción Arenal. La caminante y su sombra* (Barcelona: Taurus, 2018).

9 Milagros Fernández Poza, *Cecilia Böhl de Faber: Fernán Caballero (1796–1877)* (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto, 2003).

10 Maria Soledad Catalán Marín, "Dolores Cabrera y Heredia, una poetisa literana," in Centro de Estudios Literanos, *Revista Littera* (2009), 1: 87–106.

seventeen tragedies and comedies, a *zarzuela* or musical play, and various lyric poems—heroic and Anacreontic odes, descriptive and philosophical pieces. To neoclassical form, Gálvez married Romantic content: liberty of peoples, denunciation of slavery and oppression, rights of women. Her *Obras poéticas* appeared in 1804.¹¹

María Gertrudis Hore (5 December 1742–9 August 1801), born to Irish immigrant parents in Spain, married in 1762 and became a nun sixteen years later. In the convent, she wrote poetry, with friendship among women as a theme. Her work is occasionally erotic.¹²

Inés Joyes y Blake (27 December 1731–1808), born in Madrid to a French mother and an Irish father, spoke English, French, and Spanish, and married Agustín Blake in 1752. The couple settled in Málaga, having nine children. In 1798, Joyes translated Samuel Johnson's short philosophical novel *A History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, including in it the *Apología de las mujeres* [Apology of Women], dedicated to her daughters, which is both among Spain's first feminist essays and Joyes's only surviving work. The text focuses on inequality and on the education of women. However, it was not reissued until 2009, and subsequent Spanish translators of *Rasselas*, in 1813, 1831, and 1860, did not mention it.¹³

Enriqueta Lozano y Velázquez de Vilchez (18 August 1829/1830–5 May 1895), born in Granada, entered the beguinage of Santo Domingo from the age of seven to thirteen. In 1846, she published her first poem; her first play, *Una actriz por amor*, followed in 1847, starring her. Lozano wrote more than 200 works, all Catholic and moral, including novels, legends, poetry, dramas, comedies, lives of women and saints, devotional books, essays, epistles, and opera and zarzuela librettos. She published in various journals, local and national. In 1859, she married Antonio Vilchez; the couple had twelve children. Her plays include *Dios es el rey de reyes*, 1852, and *Don Juan de Austria*, 1854; her poetry includes *Poesías de la señorita doña Enriqueta Lozano*, 1848, and *La lira cristiana*, 1857; and her novels include *Juan, hermano de los pobres*, 1848, *El secreto de*

11 Françoise Etienvre, *Regards sur les Espagnoles créatrices (XVIIIe-XXe siècle)* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2006).

12 Ulrich L. Lehner, *Women, Enlightenment and Catholicism. A Transnational Biographical History* (London: Routledge, 2018).

13 Rosa Capel, ed. *Mujeres para la Historia. Figuras destacadas del primer feminismo* (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2004).

una muerta, *Consuelo*, and *Juicio de Dios*, 1860.¹⁴

Maria Josepa Massanés i Dalmau [or **Josepa Massanés** or **Josefa Massanés**] (19 March 1811–1 July 1887) moved to Barcelona at two months old. Her mother died when she was five, leaving her in her grandparents' care. She learned embroidery, French, Latin, and Italian. In 1830, Massanés helped her father flee to French exile, from which he returned in 1833. Her first three poems appeared in the press in 1834 above the initials 'D.B.C.A.:' her own initials followed in 1835 under her "Himno Guerrero," then her full name in 1836. From 1837–1840, more poems appeared in other newspapers; in 1843, she married Captain Fernando González de Ortega, moving to Madrid in 1843–1844, writing and becoming known at court. Massanés's *Poesías* appeared in 1841, *Flores marchitas* in 1850, then a religious drama in 1862, and a *Garlanda poética* in 1881. Massanés also published in Catalan from 1858–1881.¹⁵

Victòria Peña i Nicolau [or **Victoria Peña de Amer**] (28 March 1827–1898) was born in Palma, Mallorca. At about twenty, Amer published her first poems in the Palma press, followed by a collection of religious poems in 1855. Amer then began work with the group that published *El Plantel*, where she met Miquel Amer, marrying him in 1859 and settling in Barcelona. His role in the Barcelona Floral Games helped Amer to take part in poetic contests, winning several awards. Much of her poetry, largely written in Catalan, was collected posthumously in 1909.¹⁶

Mariana de Silva-Bazán y Sarmiento [or **Mariana de Silva-Meneses** or **Sarmiento de Sotomayor**] (14 October 1739–17 January 1784), born in Madrid, married Francisco de Paula de Silva y Álvarez de Toledo, 10th Duke of Huescar, in 1757. They had one child before the duke's death in 1770. In 1775, Mariana married Joaquin Atanasio Pignatelli de Aragón y Moncayo, XVI Count of Fuentes and so forth. He died in 1776. In 1778, she married Antonio Ponce de León, 11th Duke of Arcos and so forth. She was widowed again in 1780. Mariana wrote lyric verse and translated some French tragedies, also painting with merit, it is claimed, though neither texts nor paintings have survived. She was a member of the Madrid royal

14 Juan Rodríguez Titos, *Enriqueta Lozano* (Granada: DMC, 2010).

15 Angela Esterhammer, ed. *Romantic Poetry* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2002).

16 Simón Palmer, María Carmendel (1991). *Escritoras españolas del siglo XIX: manual bio-bibliográfico* (Buenos Aires: Clásico Castalia, 1991).

academy of arts and the Saint Petersburg imperial academy of arts.¹⁷

Xosefa de Xovellanos y Xove Ramírez (4 June 1745–2 June 1807), born in Gijón, became a nun against the strong wishes of her brother. Her poetry, or some of it, is preserved in an 1839 anthology, *Colección de poesías en dialecto asturiano*, compiled by Xosé Caveda y Nava.¹⁸

17 Vicent Ibiza i Osca, *Les dones al món de l'art. Pintores i escultores valencianes (1500–1950)* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim, Centre Valencià d'Estudis i d'Investigació, 2017).

18 *Actos de la XIX Selmana de les Lletres Asturianes dedicada a Xosefa Xovellanos, 1745–1807* (Uviéu: Serviciu de Publicaciones del Principáu d'Asturies, 1998).

