

ENGLISH WOMEN AND WRITTEN CULTURE AT THE FIRST THIRD OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: “DIARY OF A TOUR IN SWEDEN, NORWAY AND RUSSIA IN 1827” BY LADY E. MARY GROSVENOR.

BY ALICIA MARCHANT RIVERA, UNIVERSITY OF MÁLAGA (SPAIN). VISITING FELLOW AT CHAWTON IN AUGUST 2014.

Lady Elizabeth Leveson-Gower was born in 1797. She was the younger daughter of George Leveson-Gower, the first Duke of Sutherland, and Elizabeth Sutherland Leveson-Gower, Duchess of Sutherland, also 19th Countess of Sutherland. Richard Grosvenor, second Marquess of Westminster, married her in 1819. They had thirteen children, ten of whom survived into adulthood and three of whom lived into their nineties¹.

My first interest in Lady E. Mary Grosvenor, Marchioness of Westminster, was related to her work titled *Narrative of a yacht voyage in the Mediterranean during the years 1840-1841*; there she dedicates some words to the English cemetery at Málaga helping us -Foundation of the English Cemetery at Málaga- to build the historiography about this beautiful place, among the texts by other women writers from the epoch like Olive Patch, Margaret Thomas or Valérie di Gasparin:

“The protestant cemetery is about a quarter of an hour’s walk from the mole, near the sea; it is small but prettily laid out with plants and flowers. It was a matter of great difficulty to get even this small piece of ground conceded by the Spanish government, and it was at last granted at the intercession of the English consul, Mr. Mark. This burial place was much to be desired, for before it was obtained the bodies were buried anywhere upon the sea-shore. It is neatly walled in and the first body was interred there in 1831”².



- 1) Place of burial of Annie Plews, one of the most famous iconography in our cemetery.
- 2) Funeral monument to William Mark, founder of the British Cemetery at Málaga and British Consul in 1830.

¹ Newton, Diana; Lumby, Jonathan (2002), *The Grosvenors of Eaton*, Eccleston, Cheshire: Jennet Publications, pp. 25–26.

Huxley, Gervas, *Lady Elizabeth and the Grosvenors: Life in a Whig Family, 1822-1839*, Oxford University Press, 1965.

² Grosvenor, Lady E. Mary, *Narrative of a yacht voyage in the Mediterranean during the years 1840-1841*, London: John Murray, 1842, p. 143.

My interest now is, as we can find more information about Lady Elizabeth's mother, father and husband than about her -printed and on line documentary sources-, we can establish that she is, in many aspects, an unknown woman yet (her books have not been translated into Spanish, for example). The first aim will be to create and complete a bibliography about Lady Elizabeth Mary Grosvenor, using different historical sources as her own voyage books or publications like *The Spectator* and other similar ones (Gervas Huxley uses, above all, the information included in her personal letters and diaries, but we can also compile more information from other contemporary sources). Above all, I am interested in what other people -public and private- thought about her.

The Spectator (07/02/1880)³ provides us announcements about Lady Elizabeth's voyage books, like this one belonging to *Diary of a tour in Sweden, Norway and Russia in 1827*:

HURST & BLACKETT'S
NEW WORKS.

Conversations with Distinguished Persons during the SECOND EMPIRE, from 1860 to 1863. By the late NASSAU W. SENIOR. Edited by his Daughter, M. C. M. SIMPSON. 2 vols. 8vo, 30s.

Royal Windsor. By W. HEPPORTH DIXON. Vols. III. and IV., completing the Work, 8vo, 30s. [Next week.]

The Marchioness of Westminster's DIARY of a TOUR in SWEDEN, NORWAY, and RUSSIA in 1827. 8vo, 15s.

Lodge's Peerage and Baronetage, for 1880. Under the especial Patronage of Her Majesty. Corrected by the Nobility. 49th Edition, 1 vol., with the Arms beautifully engraved, 31s 6d, bound.

Other information from *The Spectator* is related to her friendship and relationship with the Queen Victoria (April, 8, 1854):

Post-office negligence seems to be no respecter of persons. Last Wednesday, the Queen wrote a letter of condolence to the Marchioness of Westminster, on the death of the young midshipman, Lord Gilbert Grosvenor. The letter did not reach its destination, Eaton Hall, near Chester, until Saturday. It had been missent, from the General Post-office, to Flint!

We can also find some interesting news about Lady Elizabeth's tendency to help in maternal health and cultural matters:

"The New Hospital for Women has received £ 100 under the will of Mr. Daniel Box, of Streatham, and £50 from "S. O. S." The Marchioness of Westminster has given £30, additional, to the Royal Hospital for Women and Children"⁴.

³ *Periodicals Archive Online*, <http://search.proquest.com/pao>

⁴ *The British Medical Journal*, 9 September 1882.

Other newspapers, like *The Nation* (May, 20, 1916), also provide us some notices about Lady Elizabeth Mary Grosvenor's mother, the Duchess of Sutherland, and her taste for writing, inherited by her daughter and shared by other women at that time, like the own Queen Victoria:

The French Revolution found English society first incredulous and then indignant. In 1790 Lady Stafford says:—

“These Times are big with Events. The Information from all the Southern Provinces in France is dreadful, and the Confusion in the National Assembly goes on prosperously.”

And in November of that year:—

“We had some People last Night who are just come from Paris, and the acct. they give of the Poverty there, their want of Money and Business, is really humiliating; and yet so are that People made that they are *not* humbled, and still look upon themselves as superior to every other nation—and with all this there is such a want of Morality that their Conversation and Principles are Shocking. . . . They have not an idea of Religion; of that they make a jest.”

Lady Sutherland, from across the Channel, expresses the same view in more full-blooded terms:—

“I don't believe there will be any further riot, unless some of the Common People who are near the scene of action get an accidental knock on the Head; and there are so many of them to spare that it would not signify much if they were to be treated as Sparrows, and killed in dozens at a time.”

The second aim would be to find evidences in *Diary of a tour in Sweden, Norway and Russia in 1827* related to Lady Elizabeth Mary's thought about writing and written culture in her social context. In the prologue of the work, she establishes the difference between diary and letters:

“The following short diary consists of literal extracts from one kept by me at the time of our Tour, and of letters of the same period addressed to relations at home. I have thought it better to give both, though necessarily involving some repetition, as the letters are often more ample than the Journal, while the latter preserves the sequence of events”⁵.

We can observe by reading her book that she is interested in History and tries to build little biographies by means of the footnotes in the *Diary*:

“Wednesday morning, 18th.-I have got up early, being awakened by a fly who comes regularly to torment me (...) It was all very pleasant, and we were charmed with the King himself*, who has better manners than anybody I ever saw(...)* This King was Charles XIV, the ablest of Napoleon's marshals. He was elected Crown Prince in 1810”⁶.

We also reach to know throughout her diary when and how she writes, what kind of books she reads:

“We came home exhausted and hungry at a little before seven, dined at half past seven, passed the evening in paying our bills, writing this journal etc...”⁷.

⁵ Preface of *Diary of a tour in Sweden, Norway and Russia in 1827*, London: Hurst and Blackett, 1879.

⁶ *Diary of Tour in Sweden...*, p. 120.

⁷ *Diary of a Tour in Sweden...*, p. 21.

“Monday October 22nd- The Hereditary Grand Duchess having very kindly arranged that we should pay Göthe a visit, the poet wrote that he would receive us at eleven...”⁸

Finally, as a part of a searching project carried out by DUODA in Spain -Professor María Milagros Rivera Garretas-, we will try to project on Lady Elizabeth Mary's work the theory related to the “Living History” -sustained by Marirí Martinengo, Luisa Muraro,...-, who continue those former studies about women produced by Jane Austen:

“The true history is one that expresses love, not just the data sources traditionally considered historic, and that love is expressed by narrating history which results from the implacable dialogue between the female historian and the relation (with a person, with an issue, with a question, with a desire) which are at the origin of her vocation as a historian”⁹.

⁸*Diary of a Tour...*, p. 284.

⁹ Fiona Geuß, “Alex Martinis Roe, A story from *Circolo della rosa*”.
<http://www.fionageuss.net/2014/09/alex-martinis-roe-a-story-from-circolo-della-rosa/>