

Editor's Introduction and Apology

Any editor who decides to tamper with a late author's published work, had better have a *very* good excuse, and state his case convincingly. I will try to do just that below.

My main reason for producing a new, enlarged edition of *The Bible in Spain*, is simply that it was long overdue. More than a hundred years have gone by since the appearance of the last annotated version of George Borrow's great book: the so-called 'Definitive Edition' prepared by Ulick Ralph Burke and published by John Murray in 1886. Since then, four generations of scholars have dug up background information, gathered oral testimony and documentary evidence, and combed through archives for clues concerning the genesis of the text and the true course of the events which the narrative describes. All this knowledge has been published in magazines and books of usually very small print runs and obscure provenance, difficult to trace and hard to come by nowadays. It is therefore high time to gather the harvest of all this splendid labour in one single location.

Meanwhile, with the passage of time, *The Bible in Spain* has become an ever more difficult book to fathom and digest. Nearly 200 years after its first appearance in December 1842, readers lack the ready historical knowledge to grasp many of its more subtle statements and descriptions. To give but a single example: while, in 1886, the average reader might still remember the Carlist Civil Wars in Spain, and have some faint idea of Baldomero Espartero's role in that struggle, today nobody but the historian can be expected to be familiar with these facts. Yet such background information is crucial to fully appreciate George Borrow's book.

Both of these reasons - increased scholarly lore and readers' diminished ready knowledge of the time period - justify a new, annotated edition of a rich and fascinating work like *The Bible in Spain*. The question then arises what form this should take.

Nature of this edition

The shape of this *Gabicote* edition of *The Bible in Spain* has been decided by the aims of the project and the imperfections of Borrow's established text.

It is important to point out, right from the start, that this is not, in any way, a *philological* edition of the book of the kind that Ms Leslie Howsam envisioned 25 years ago, and for which Simon Hopkins pleaded recently.¹ Neither by education nor by temperament am I philologically inclined; and I dare say that most readers who take the book in hand aren't either. Perhaps it is highly significant that Borrow uses a different word or spelling in a later edition, or changes a sub-clause for better effect, but my own passion is rarely awakened by minor textual variations; and while a small handful of experts may indeed be interested in such subtleties, the labour involved in comparing the texts of a dozen or more editions would simply be prohibitive.

The present edition is therefore a purely *historical* one. That is to say that it aims to make Borrow's text more accessible to the average modern reader by explaining obscure and unknown words from different languages, by filling in gaps in the narrative, and by adding historical context to the events which Borrow describes.

About the footnotes

The main instrument towards those ends is the corpus of footnotes added to Borrow's basic text. As the reader will recognise at a glance, these contain the accumulated scholarship and wisdom of some 150 years of investigative labour by such thoroughly conscientious experts as William Ireland Knapp (Borrow's first biographer), Edward Thomas, Clement Shorter, Thomas Wise, Herbert Jenkins, and – more recently – Angus Fraser, Michael Collie, Ann Ridler, Antonio Giménez and Ian Robertson, to name only the ones most often quoted in the notes.

¹ See, respectively, *Proceedings of the 1987 George Borrow Conference*, p. 43f, and the *George Borrow Bulletin*, 2nd series, n° 6, p. 120, note 74.

In this context, special mention must be made of Ulick Ralph Burke, the brilliant linguist and historian who in 1896 produced the last annotated edition of *The Bible in Spain*. Burke's main contribution is the patient tracing and explanation of many words from obscure languages with which *The Bible in Spain* is sprinkled. The *Glossary* which he added to his edition runs into some 35 pages of tiny, close-set print, and is invaluable to any student of 19th century linguistics, particularly when it comes to Romany-Caló, the language of the Spanish gypsies which Borrow first pioneered.

Given this abundance, the reader will understand that it was impossible to include each of Burke's elucidations in the present edition. I have therefore chosen only to reproduce those of his *Glossary* items which are absolutely indispensable for a proper understanding of Borrow's text (particularly in the case of the difficult 'Gypsy' chapters – 9 and 10 – set in Badajoz and Merida, the 'Jewish' ones – 5, 51 and 52 - in Lisbon and Gibraltar, and the 'Arabic' ones – 53 to 57 - in Tangier); leaving untranslated many foreign words whose meaning becomes sufficiently clear from the author's own context. Readers with a particular interest in these subjects should simply turn to Burke's own edition, which is digitally available on the Gutenberg site; or – in case of Caló - consult Borrow's own vocabulary at the back of his earlier book *The Zincali*.²

Some footnotes to the body text – fewer than 25 in reality – are Borrow's own. These are marked as [Author's note], and where necessary a comment is added after [Editor's addition].

The genesis of *The Bible in Spain*

Far more controversial than the inclusion of elaborate footnotes, is the decision to insert into this edition of *The Bible in Spain* fragments alien to the original body text. This audacious line of action on my part demands a thorough and convincing explanation.

² For the internet addresses of Burke's edition of *The Bible in Spain* see the Bibliography to this edition. *The Zincali* is also available in the Gutenberg Project, but unfortunately does not include Borrow's vocabulary, so that a hard print copy must be secured. Some years ago, Father Alberto González, a learned capuchin friar and university professor from the Sanlúcar convent, edited a new edition of Borrow's Caló translation of Gospel of Luke, to which he added an extensive, up-to-date Caló vocabulary loosely based on Borrow's own. The full title of this new revision is: González Caballero, Alberto, ed., *El Evangelio de San Lucas en Caló*, Córdoba: Ediciones El Almendro, 1998, ISBN 84-8005-037-3.

The Bible in Spain is a brilliant and entertaining book, which suffers, however, from a number of structural flaws. Mainly autobiographical, it tells the story of the 4 years and 5 months that George Borrow spent in Portugal and Spain, selling Scripture in vernacular translation for the British and Foreign Bible Society. Unfortunately, the way the book was conceived and composed resulted in a thoroughly ramshackle structure. Borrow did not write it from beginning to end with a well-prepared plan in mind; he pieced it together from the corpus of letters which he had sent to his employers during his Spanish years, and which he retrieved from the Bible Society archive shortly after the publication of his first book in the spring of 1841.³

This was not, in itself, an unpromising approach. Borrow's letters were far more than dry reports talking missionary shop. They were long florid discourses on the land, its people, their customs, beliefs and superstitions, the political and martial trouble of the decade, and the many adventures of the travelling Bible salesman. The letters were, as a matter of fact, so complete, so well-written, and so exciting, that in most cases all the author needed to do to produce a chapter of his travelogue, was to cut out the address and the signature. The first draft of the book was in effect produced this way, more by scissors than by pen, a serial compilation of the greater part of his correspondence. But when, late in 1841, he handed in this early version, his publisher, the great John Murray, found the book a little short (Oh Happy Days!) and lacking in consistency. He consulted Borrow's friend and fellow author Richard Ford, who suggested that more flesh be put onto the skeleton of the correspondence by adding some 'racy, real genuine scenes', 'wild adventure, journals, sorcery, Jews, Gentiles, rambles and the interior of Spanish prisons.' Borrow cheerfully obliged. In the course of the first two months of 1842, he thoroughly rewrote the first draft, enlarging it with no fewer than 389 new pages (on a total of 1159⁴), adding excerpts from his travel notebooks, from letters to other friends and family, and from memory.⁵

³ The full text of the letters, as edited by T. H. Darlow in 1911, may be consulted in the Gutenberg Project (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/603/603-h/603-h.htm>), unfortunately without the linking comments.

⁴ These numbers come from Knapp, I : 385, and seem to refer to the *printed* pages of the first edition. In his letter to John Murray of 22 January 1842, Borrow speaks of 900 pages of manuscript in total [Knapp, I : 308; Collie & Fraser, 38].

⁵ For the full story of the composition and time-line of *The Bible in Spain*, see Knapp, I : 381-402; Collie & Fraser, 38-39; and Collie, *George Borrow: Eccentric*, 171-176.

About the added texts

But material was not only added to the texts of the correspondence; it was also removed, for a variety of reasons. Of these, the most far-reaching excisions concerned the Gypsy material. Throughout his Spanish years, Borrow maintained close contact with the various Gypsy communities he encountered in such places as Badajoz, Córdoba, Granada and Madrid. As he spoke Romany-Caló, and therefore received a warm welcome in their midst, he was particularly well-placed to study their customs, their way of life, and their oral traditions. Borrow rose to the occasion, collecting all the information he could lay his hands on, both from spokesmen and from archives, and with the help of his Gypsy friends even translated the Gospel of Luke into Caló. In Seville, during the last months of his Spanish stay, he turned this unique material into his first book: *The Zincali, or An Account of the Gypsies of Spain*, which appeared in London in April 1841.

The publication of *The Zincali* was a modest success, and had the advantage of bringing Borrow into contact with London's literary world. Yet it had also some troublesome consequences. When Borrow set out to write *The Bible in Spain* half a year later, just about every paragraph, anecdote, and adventure dealing with the Spanish Gypsies had already been used for *The Zincali*, and could not of course be repeated. As a result, these essential parts of the narrative had to be left out of his travelogue, which in hindsight was a pity, since the story was now left incomplete.

Next to these Gypsy episodes lost to *The Bible in Spain*, Borrow also excised certain fragments from his letters for reasons of redundancy or delicacy. In some cases these were merely descriptions of scenery or cities which he no longer cared about; but there were also episodes which he himself or his publisher considered too gruesome, or too indecent, to include in a book aimed at an audience of decent churchgoing Victorians, such as the horrid murder of a snake-catcher near Orense, or certain descriptions of syphilis and other contagious diseases with which parts of Spain abounded.

Finally, Borrow was not above some creative historiography when it served his purposes. One thing of which he made sure, for instance, was that no remark critical of the Bible Society or of any influential public figure would find its way into *The Bible in Spain*. Whether this was simple civility or blatant self-interest is often hard to say. What is certain, however, is that he pined, for the remainder of his days, for some government position or a missionary appointment to a distant land, and that he did what he could to keep on good terms with people of influence.

In short: due to its genesis and Borrow's sharp eye for public relations and self-promotion, the contents of *The Bible in Spain* are far from complete; and since this is an historical edition, which aims at a full reconstruction of Borrow's Spanish biography, I have taken the liberty of supplementing the original narrative with such textual fragments which I deem valuable for the historical record.

Consequently, the more important parts of the texts removed for use in *The Zincoli* have been put back in their rightful place in the narrative. Useful excerpts from his letters to Andrew Brandram, Joseph Jowett, and other officers of the British and Foreign Bible Society, to his Danish friend John Hasfeld, his mother Ann Borrow, and his future wife Mary Clark, have been added in suitable spots. And certain parts of Borrow's lengthy official reports on his Spanish activities which he himself left out, have likewise been restored to the pertinent passages.⁶ In most cases this alien material is simply wedged into the body text, in a different type and with the necessary reference; only where the quote was very short I preferred to relegate it to a footnote. Admittedly this is a somewhat arbitrary criterion, but I trust the reader will appreciate the resultant neater lay-out of the various pages.

Added texts of a special nature

Three extraordinary portions of text need special explanation. The first of these concerns the Moroccan Jews whom Borrow met in Lisbon in late 1835. In the first few editions of *The Bible in Spain*, Borrow described this group at the end of the fifth chapter in terms of which Dr. Goebbels might not have disapproved. There may have been some protests over that, or perhaps Borrow himself recognised (a little late) that he had overdone things; in any case, the text was replaced with a somewhat milder version as of the fifth edition of September 1843. So as to be complete, I have decided to tack the earlier pages onto the end of chapter 5.

⁶ To my embarrassment I must admit that Borrow himself would probably have objected strongly to these restitutions and intrusions. Henry Milton, Murray's professional reader who first evaluated the manuscript, suggested in his report that certain episodes from the letters – such as the story of the snake-catcher's murder – be included in the book. Borrow pledged to do so; and then changed as little as he could. Milton likewise insisted that the book be given a better ending than it had. As will be seen below, nothing came of that either.

Yet another effect of Borrow's erratic methods of composition is the complete lack of a proper beginning and end to his travelogue. In the case of the beginning, this may perhaps be overlooked, since abrupt openings are not unusual in any kind of story telling. The end of *The Bible in Spain*, is, however, another affair altogether. After 54 lengthy chapters dealing with his Spanish adventures, Borrow dedicates three chapters more to the doings of a single day in Tangier, where he went in August 1839... and then stops his narrative in some poor and undetermined spot. As this tends to leave many readers unsatisfied and disenchanted, I have added two appendices at the end of the book: a first one which tells the story of his remaining months in Spain, mainly through quotes from Borrow's own correspondence; a second one which reproduces an episode in Lisbon harbour which Borrow himself wrote some years later in a review of Richard Ford's *Hand-Book for Travellers in Spain*, and which has often been qualified as a 'supplementary chapter to *The Bible in Spain*'.

Lastly, I have added to the end of chapter 48 one lengthy piece of text which was not written by Borrow himself, but by Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Elders Napier, a British soldier and traveller who met Borrow in Seville in May 1839. Although this is an audacious editorial deed, I feel justified in including it, as it is an exceptional text with an obvious bearing on Borrow's Spanish years. All the written portrayals we possess of George Borrow were produced by friends and acquaintances at the time when his fame had become widespread, and consequently each suffers from a certain measure of idolisation or, alternatively, spite. Napier, however, met Borrow when the future bestselling author was still completely unknown (in fact he never even learned his name) and published his account before Borrow began to enjoy the limelight. As such, he paints a fresh and pure portrait of the missionary author 'in his natural habitat'.

The Carlist Civil War

[Forthcoming]

Borrow's Imprisonment of 1838.

[Forthcoming]