Spain the Bypassed

[In the English-speaking world, and especially in the United States, the rich archaeological, historical, and cultural treasures of Spain have been relatively neglected, especially when compared to those of other European countries like France or Italy. In pondering why this is so, I came up with the following.]

David Wilkie, *Washington Irving in the Archives of Seville*, 1829. Oil on canvas, 122.6 x 122.6 cm. Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

At the beginning of his *Tales of the Alhambra*, published in 1829, Washington Irving describes traveling to Spain:

> . . . . . And here, before setting forth, let me indulge in a few previous remarks on Spanish scenery and Spanish traveling. Many are apt to picture Spain to their imaginations as a soft southern region, decked out with the

> luxurious charms of voluptuous Italy. On the contrary, though there are exceptions in some of the maritime provinces, yet, for the greater part, it is a stern, melancholy country, with rugged mountains, and long sweeping plains, destitute of trees, and indescribably silent and lonesome, partaking of the savage and solitary character of Africa. . . . .

Washington Irving was not the first American to visit Spain and write about it.

In 1779, John Adams, then a Minister Plenipotentiary of the Continental Congress, was sent to Paris to urge the French to continue its support of the American rebellion against the British crown and to plan for the end of the war. So, in November of that year John Adams, together with his two sons, Quincy and Charles, boarded a French frigate to make a winter crossing of the Atlantic. On the way, however, they encountered rough seas and their boat began to take on water. With all hands manning the pumps, the frigate managed to limp into the Spanish port of La Coruña before it sank. Adams spent several days in La Coruña, meeting with Spanish officials, before he decided that it would take too long to wait for the frigate to be repaired and that he would travel overland to France. Advised that the overland coastal route he thought he would take was too rough for travel, Adams ended up doing the Camino de Santiago in reverse, i.e. traveling south from La Coruña to Santiago de Compostela and thence to Leon and Burgos before turning northward to Bilbao.

John Adams was decidedly unimpressed with Spain. As he later recalled in an unpublished autobiography[1]:

> We had now been about sixteen days in Spain at Ferrol and Corunna and had received Every Politeness We could desire from all the Officers civil and military both of the Army and Navy, and from the French Officers as well as the Spanish; the Climate was warm and salubrious, and the Provisions were plentifull, wholesome and agreable. But the Circumstance which destroyed all my Comfort and materially injured my health was the Want of rest. For the first Eight nights I know not that I slept at all and for the other eight very little. The Universal Sloth and Lazyness of the Inhabitants suffered not only all their Beds but all their Appartments to be infested with innumerable Swarms of Ennemies of all repose. And this torment did not cease at Corunna but

[1] Adams' autobiography is preserved on several sheets of paper housed in the Massachusetts Historical Society, now available online.

> persecuted me through the whole Kingdom of Spain to such a degree that I sometimes apprehended I should never live to see France.
>
> (John Adams autobiography, part 3, "Peace," 1779-1780 sheets 9 and 10 of 18, 24 December 1779.)

And on his journey through northern Spain, Adams' initial impression of the country did not improve:

> The House where We lodge is of Stone … No floor but the ground, and no Carpet but Straw, trodden into mire, by Men, Hogs, Horses, Mules, &c …. On the same floor with the Kitchen was the Stable … There was no Chimney. The Smoke ascended and found no other Passage … The Smoke filled every Part of the Kitchen, Stable, and other [Parts] of the House, as thick as possible so that it was very difficult to see or breath … The Mules, Hogs, fowls, and human Inhabitants live however all together … The floor had never been washed nor swept for an hundred Years – Smoak, soot, Dirt, every where.
>
> (*ibidem*, December 27, 1779)

And:

> I see nothing but Signs of Poverty and Misery, among the People. A fertile Country, not half cultivated, People ragged and dirty, and the Houses universally nothing but Mire, Smoke, Fleas and Lice. Nothing appears rich but the Churches, nobody fat, but the Clergy.
>
> (*ibidem*, December 30, 1779)

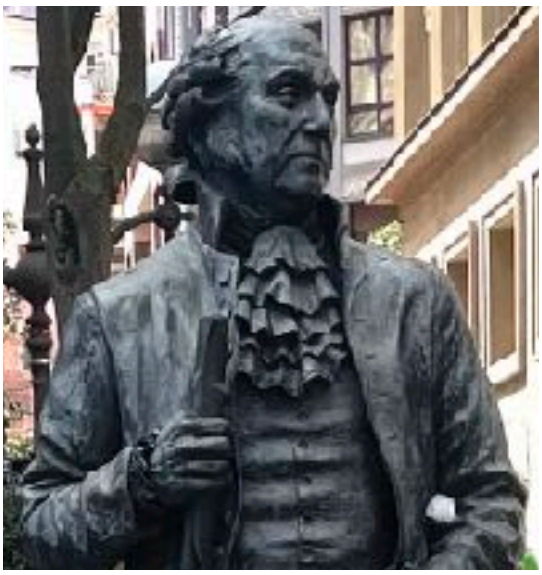
And:

> The Houses are uniformly the same through the whole Country hitherto – common habitations for Men and Beasts – the same smoaky, filthy holes.
>
> (*ibidem*, January 1, 1780)

But when John Adams arrived in Bilbao, his attitude shifted. In his *A Defence of the Constitutions of the Government of the United States of America*, written in London between 1787 and 1788 when he was severing as the American Ambassador to Britain, Adams notes that he had been greatly impressed by the Basque people and by their form of government, which he said influenced his own contributions to the Constitution of the United States. In "Letter IV, Biscay," of *A Defence of the Constitutions of the Government of the United States of America*, Adams states:

In a research like this, after those people in Europe who have had the skill, courage, and fortune to preserve a voice in the government, Biscay, in Spain, ought by no means to be omitted. While their neighbors have long since resigned all their pretensions into the hands of kings and priests, this extraordinary people have preserved their ancient language, genius, laws, government, and manners, without innovation, longer than any other nation of Europe.

. . . . . Active, vigilant, generous, brave, hardy, inclined to war and navigation, they have enjoyed, for two thousand years, the reputation of being the best soldiers and sailors in Spain, and even the best courtiers, many of them having, by their wit and manners, raised themselves into offices of consequence under the court of Madrid. . . . . .



Lurdes Umerez, *Escultura de John Adams*, Bilbao, 2011.

Adams' journey through Spain in 1779–1780—accidental though it may have been—came as the tradition known as the Grand Tour was about to end. The Grand Tour was the trip through Europe that wealthy young aristocrats—primarily British—would take when coming of age as a rite of passage and as a culmination of their education. In the 17th and 18th centuries, upon reaching his twenty-first birthday a wealthy young British man, accompanied by a tutor and servants, would travel to Paris to take lessons in French, dancing, fencing, and riding, and to immerse himself in the courtly behavior and fashions of French high society. From there, the Grand Tour tourist would continue his "gap-year"

by traveling to the Alps and thence southward to Italy, with mandatory stops at Venice and Rome, where he would marvel at the monuments he had read about in his Classical education.

But Spain was not on this Grand Tour itinerary.

It was bad enough for a north-European Protestant to make a pilgrimage to Catholic Italy, but the Grand Tour tourist could at least reassure himself of his moral superiority by his abhorrence of the promiscuous customs of Venice or by sneering at the quaint backwardness of the Eternal City, Rome. But for a Grand Tour tourist to step foot in Spain was a bridge too far.

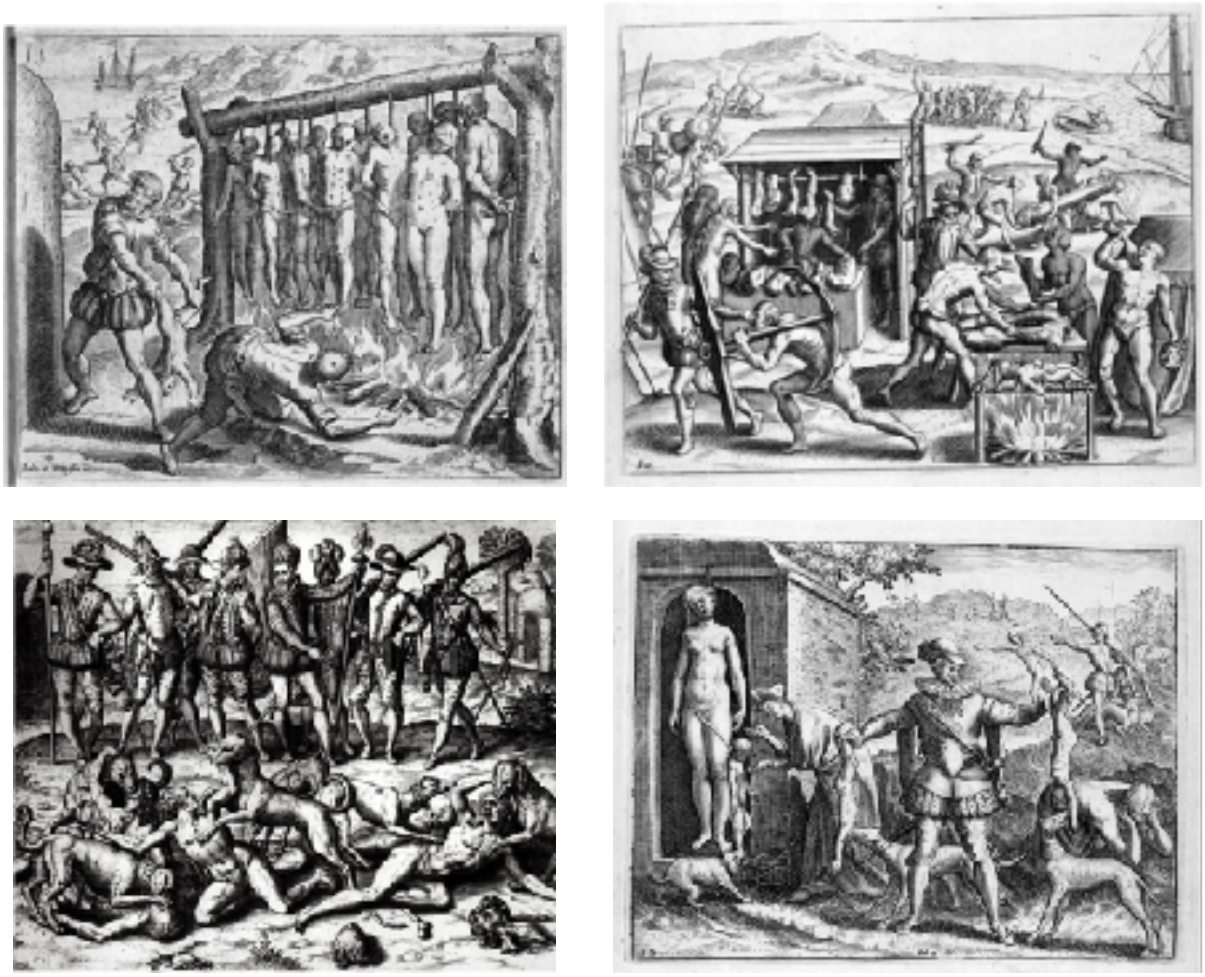
Since the 16th century, Spain had been demonized by the Black Legend (*Leyenda negra*)—a series of myths and calumnious fabrications about the supposed excesses of the Spanish Inquisition and the supposed barbarism in Spain's treatment of the indigenous people in its colonies. Used as propaganda against the Spanish Empire by its Protestant adversaries in England, the Netherlands, and Germany, the Black Legend portrayed Spain as a brutal, backwards, nation.[2] Martin Luther is reputed to have said in the 16th century:

> The Spanish eat white bread with pleasure and kiss white women with pleasure, but they are as dirt-brown and tar-black as King Balthasar and his monkeys.

and

> Thus, it is prophesied that the Spaniards want to subjugate Germany, by itself or through others, such as the Turks. And so Germany will be humiliated and stripped of its men and property, will be submitted to the kingdom of Spain. Satan tries this because he tries to prevent a free Germany.

[2]There is a debate among scholars whether the Black Legend is a genuine factor in modern, contemporary discourse about Spain, with some holding that it survives only in how Spaniards perceive how the rest of the world views them, or in the negative traits that the Spanish people see in themselves.



Illustrations of supposed Spanish barbarism against indigenous people, by the Dutch engraver Theodor de Bry, *Narratio Regionum indicarum per Hispanos Quosdam devastatarum verissima*, 1598.

In the years after John Adams traveled to Paris, the outbreak of the French Revolution (1789) and then the ascension to power of Napoleon (1800) brought an end to the tradition of the Grand Tour.

[A personal anecdote: in the summer of 1964, when I was twelve years old, my bourgeois parents packed up me, my two older brothers, and my younger brother, to take us on an educational Grand Tour. We flew from the US to London and thence to Paris where we rented a car and drove down to Italy, stopping at Florence, Rome, and Naples. We *did*, however go into northern Spain on the way, spending some days in Barcelona, where my father's cousin was the captain of a 6th-Fleet warship at dock there.]

When Washington Irving first traveled to Spain in 1826 at the behest of the US Ambassador to Spain, he was already a successful published author, well known as one of the first American authors to write in a style and to address themes distinctly different from British writers, with works like his 1809 *A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty, by Diedrich Knickerbocker* and his short stories "Rip Van Winkle" (1818) and "A Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820).

And in his *Tales of the Alhambra*, Irving did not paint Spain with the Black Legend tar brush, seeing its Moorish past as a picturesque set of stories that he could use to embellish his account of the time he lived in the Alhambra.

In 1829, the same year that Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* was published, the American painter Thomas Cole undertook his European Grand Tour. Cole is known as the father of the "Hudson River School", a loosely organized group of American landscape painters who celebrated the wild Sublimity of the American wilderness and painted landscapes distinctly different from those of their European counterparts. Cole himself painted several scenes taken from the "Leatherstocking" novels of James Fenimore Cooper, a writer, like Irving, accredited for helping to establish a distinctly American form of literature.

Thomas Cole's Grand Tour, undertaken after calm had been restored in Europe following the Napoleonic era, was in some ways quite traditional. He traveled to London, where he studied the landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain, J. M. W. Turner, and John Constable at the National Gallery, founded just five years previously. From London, Cole traveled to "voluptuous Italy" where he studied the great masters Raphael, Domenichino, and Caravaggio at the Vatican and sketched the ruins of Rome.

Thomas Cole did not travel to Spain.

As Thomas Cole was about to start off on his "Grand Tour", the American poet William Cullen Bryant, wrote "To an American Painter Departing for Europe," (1829):

Thine eyes shall see the light of distant skies:
Yet, Cole, thy heart shall bear to Europe's stand
A living image of thy native land,

Such as on thy own glorious canvas lies.
Lone lakes—savannahs where the bison roves—
Rocks rich with summer garlands—solemn streams—
Skies, where the desert eagles wheels and screams—
Spring blooms and autumn blaze of boundless groves.
Fair scenes shall greet thee where thous goest—fair,
But different—everywhere where trace of men,
Paths, homes, graves, ruins, from the lowest glen
To where life shrinks from the fierce Alpine air.
Gaze on them, til the tears shall dim thy sight,
But keep that earlier, wilder image bright.

In the paintings he made after he returned to the U.S. in 1832 Cole did continue to portray his "earlier, wilder image" of America, although he also painted traditional European historical paintings, such as his rather dramatic series of *A Course of an Empire* canvases.

If Washington Irving was the first to make a chink in the closed door that Spain was to English-speaking visitors, by the middle of the 19th century that door was fully opened, and Spain began to see the first of what would eventually become the hoards of British and American tourists who visit the country every year in the present century..

In 1845, the publisher John Murray issued the first edition of Richard Ford's *A Handbook for Travelers to Spain,* the 1855 third edition of which included Ford's essay *Andalucia, Ronda, and Granada, Murcia, Valencia, and Catalonia; the Portions Best Suited for the Invalid—A Winter Tour*. In the Preface to that third edition Ford wrote:

> Of the many misrepresentations regarding the Peninsula, few had been previously more systematically circulated, than the dangers and difficulties. It was our office to show, that this, the most romantic and Peculiar country in Europe, might in reality be visited throughout its length and breadth, with ease and safety, — that travelling there was no worse than it was in most parts of the continent in 1814, before English example forced improvements. The greatest desideratum was a practical Handbook, since the national *Guias* are scanty and unsatisfactory, as few Spaniards travel in their own country, and fewer travel out of it; thus, with limited means of comparison, they cannot appreciate differences, or know what are the wants and wishes of a foreigner. Accordingly, in their Guides, usages, ceremonies, &c. which are familiar to themselves from childhood, are often passed over without notice, although, from their novelty to the stranger, they are exactly what he most desires to have pointed out and explained. Nay, the natives frequently despise, or feel ashamed, from a sensitiveness of being thought "picturesque barbarians," of those very things which the most interest and charm the foreigner, for whose

> observation they select the new rather than the old, and point out their poor pale copies of Europe, in preference to their own rich and racy originals. Again, the oral information to be obtained on the spot is generally meagre; as these incurious semiorientals look with jealousy on the foreigner who observes or questions, they either fence with him in their answers, raise difficulties, or, being creatures of self-esteem and imagination, magnify or diminish everything as best suits their own objects and suspicions. The national expressions "*Quien sabe*? *no se sabe*," — " who knows ? I do not know," will often be the prelude to "*No se puede*" — " it can't be done."

In 1847, two years after Ford's *A Handbook for Travelers to Spain* first appeared, Dora Wordsworth, the daughter of the poet William Wordsworth, published her J*ournal Of A Few Months' Residence In Portugal, And Glimpses Of The South Of Spain*. Wordsworth begins her travelogue:

> If I had set out from home with the project of writing a book, I might as well perhaps have gone to Portugal as to any remoter quarter; for there is no assessable portion of the globe that has not been visited and described; and after all the fightings and writings in and on Portugal, there is, I believe, no country in Europe that is less thoroughly familiar to us, none indeed which has been more imperfectly explored by tourists. It is in fact a labyrinth to strangers, just as Spain was one immense maze of labyrinths, till the other day when Mr. Ford supplied the clue by the production of his methodical, comprehensive, and most intelligent Handbook . . . (p. vii)

The "glimpses" of the south of Spain that Wordsworth provides in her *Journal* begin when she takes a boat from Portugal to Cadiz:

> . . . . . and Cadiz looked under the bright blue sky a marble city just evoked from the sea by some enchanter, to glitter for a while in the sunshine. As we approached, the town lost nothing of its eastern-story-book character; the walls are so very white, and the bay beautiful, and the curve which the buildings make with the line of water most graceful! (p. 82)

> . . . . . this conducts you into the large square and thence diverge the different streets: even here the fairy character of the place does not leave you—you find the houses as fair and white as they appeared, the streets very narrow and admirably clean, no dirt or rubbish to be seen, save a few fresh orange rinds dropped here and there. To our inquiry of how they came to be so clean, our guide replied "It seldom rains at Cadiz, and the streets are carefully swept three times a day, in the early morning, at noon, and at nightfall." (pp. 84-85)

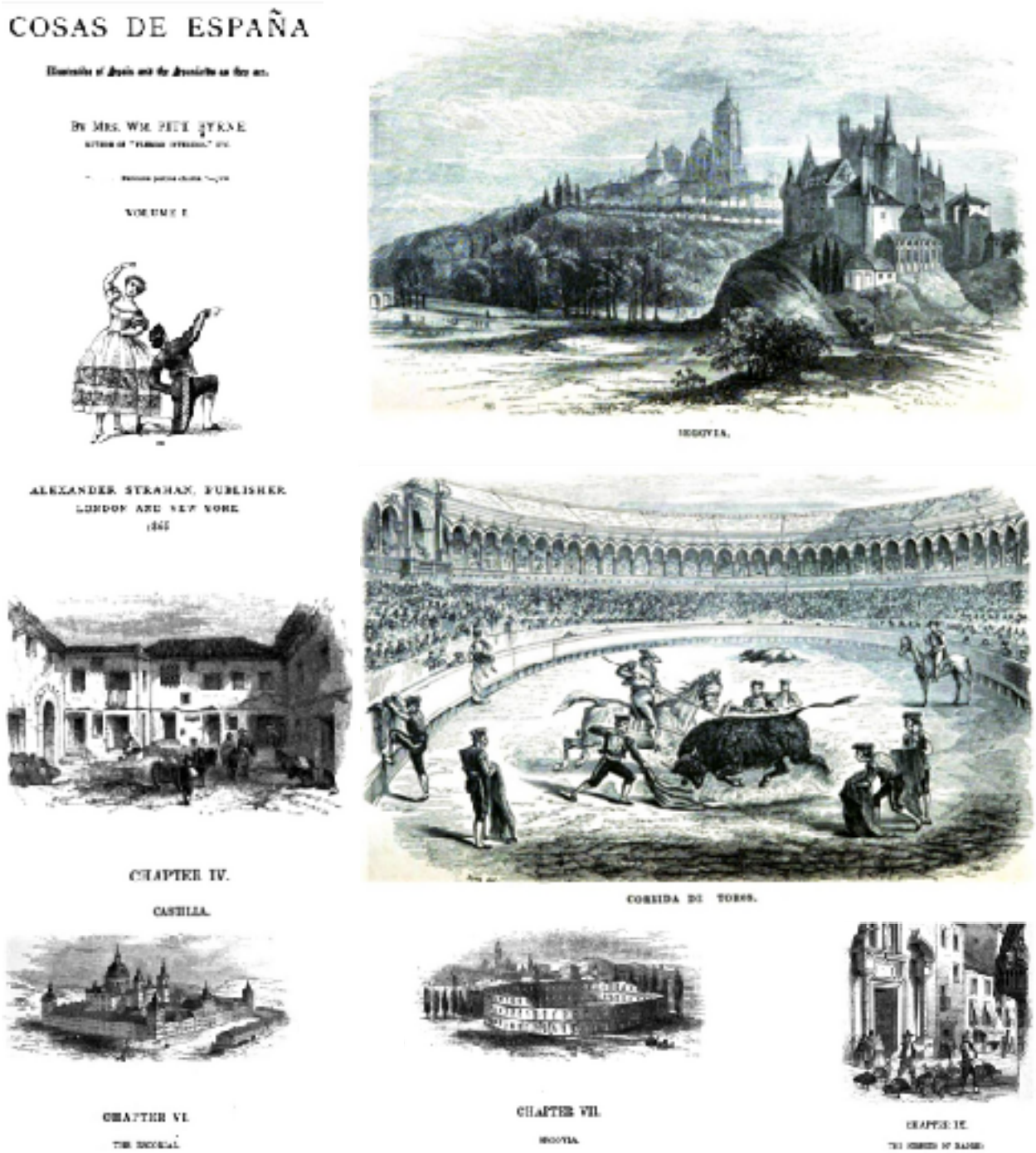
Dora Wordsworth's infatuation with the oriental charms of Andalusia continued as she traveled up to Seville:

> . . . . . and yet more when I looked down from one of the balconied windows upon the garden, I literally trembled in a sort of transport of delighted surprise, and for an instant thought that Aladdin must be our guide, for here was one of those fair gardens that I imagined could only be heard of in the "Arabian Nights" (*vide* Ford again). But what pen could describe the witchery of that glorious sun and deep blue sky, and of those orange groves and cypress trees, and rich flowers and flowering shrubs, and marble fountains throwing around them so bountifully their cool waters; and the marble baths and grottos, and cloister walks all of fine marble; and the historical interest attached to all this, with the thought that you are treading the marble floors that the Moor and the Christian trod so many centuries ago, and for the possession of which they fought so bravely. (pp. 99-100)

Wordsworth, however, was not entirely taken by everything she saw in Andalusia. She was thoroughly "disgusted and horrified" by the gruesome slaughter she witnessed at a bull fight she briefly attended at Seville. And when she traveled up to Granada to marvel at the Alhambra like Washington Irving had done twenty years previously:

> Nothing can be a stronger proof of the wondrous effect of the particular beauty of the Alhambra than the utter disgust with which, upon emerging from this enchanted palace, you involuntarily turn your eyes from that huge, pompous pile of unfinished building which Charles V. intended for a palace that should eclipse it. A large portion of the Alhambra was destroyed to make way for this coarse Brobdignog monster, which has far less claim to affinity with its Moorish neighbour than a Flanders cart-horse with an Arab barb. (p. 174)

In the decades following Dora Wordsworth's publication of her experiences in Portugal and Andalusia, a whole train of other English-language travelogues followed, many of them also written by intrepid female travelers; and, unlike the works of Ford and Wordsworth, these books were accompanied by illustrations of picturesque Spain.



Title page and illustrations from *Cosas de España*, 1866.

In 1866, for instance, there appeared *Cosas de España. Illustrative of Spain and the Spaniards as they are* by "Mrs. Wm. Pitt Bryne" (Julia Clara Pitt Byrne, who often used her married name for her publications). Mrs. Pitt Bryne begins her work:

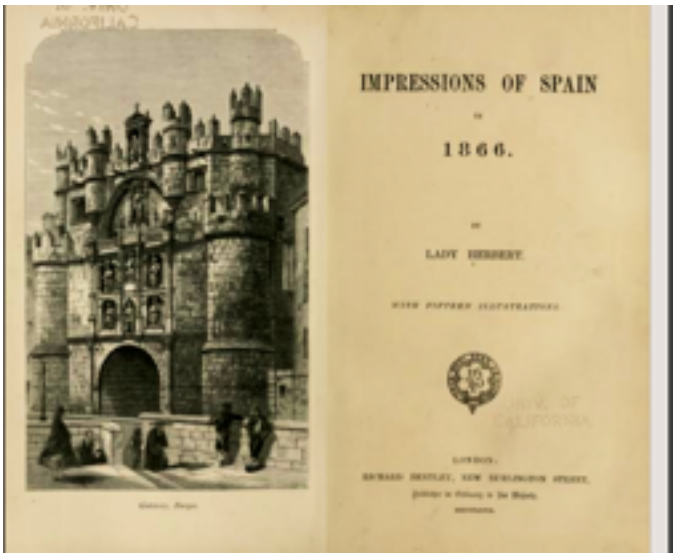
> Preface. Introduction of Railways into Spain. The introduction of railways into that country, by common consent styled "*The* Peninsula" (as if to imply that it is almost disconnected from the civilized world) is an auspicious and suggestive era in her annals. It ought, nevertheless, *ceteris paribus*, to have contributed to raise her to the level of other nations; and if at first sight we are startled at the tardiness of the result, it is because we do not duly appreciate the characteristics, as well as of the country as of her essentially idiosyncratic people. The deliberate movement of the tortoise bears a striking analogy to their tendencies, for deliberate and measured as are all their movements, we may reckon that, for one year's progress among ourselves, we must allow *them* at least a decade: Spaniards, however, like tortoises, are not without their compensatory qualities, and who knows but that, one day, they may get the advantage of their more agile competitors in the race of advancement?
>
> Under existing circumstances, we confess we do not look for any perceptible improvement for some time to come; and those who are acquainted with the Spanish mind will consider that not a mere step, but a gigantic stride has been gained, if only in disturbing the deeply rooted prejudices of this "*genus indocile*," and in obtaining a tacit and even partial admission that their condition is *capable* of improvement. (pp. xi-xii)

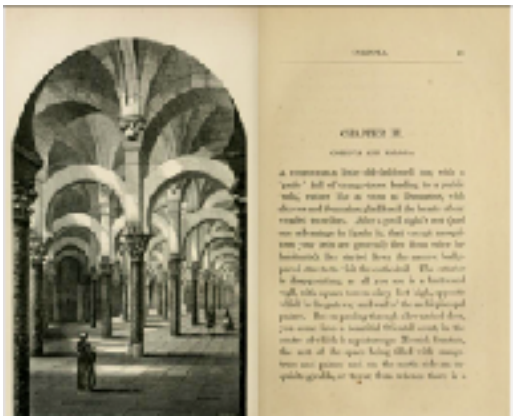
Mrs. Pitt Bryne also shared John Adam's high opinion of the Basque people:

> It is not only in outward aspect that the Basques differ from the Spaniards and the French; their national characteristics are peculiarly their own, and they may be said to gain by comparison with either of their neighbours. Physically considered, they are a well-grown race, and there is a manliness in their bearing which bespeaks a noble self-consciousness with a practical recollection of their traditional independence. (p. 40)

And, like Washington Irving, Mrs. Pitt Bryne is highly attuned to the Moorish heritage of Spain:

> Wherever he has passed, the nomadic Arab has left vestiges, of his presence and sway; we do not allude simply to his architectural constructions, which are immediately recognizable, first by their outline, and further by their wonderful combination of solidity with the most delicate beauty of execution, inspiring us with respect for his good sense as well as admiration for his genius and his taste—the moral, social, and aesthetical influence he has bequeathed to after ages is yet more remarkable.
>
> This influence, strange to say, is still paramount in Spain; we trace it in the customs, the prejudices, the bearing and the dealings of his Spanish successors at the present day . . . . . (p. 84)





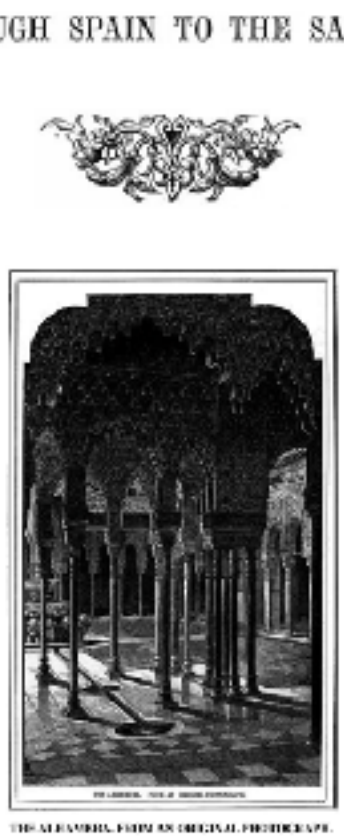
Title page and illustrations from *Impressions of Spain*, *1866*.

The following year, in 1867, Lady Mary Elizabeth Herbert published *Impressions of Spain in 1866*. Lady Herbert begins the account of her travels in Spain:

> What is it that we seek for, we Englishmen and Englishwomen, who, year by year, about the month of November, are seen crowding the Folkestone and Dover steam-boats, with that unmistakable ' going abroad ' look of travelling — bags, and wideawakes, and bundles of wraps, and alpaca gowns ? I think it may be comprised in one word : — sunshine. This dear old land of ours, with all its luxuries, and all its comforts, and all its associations of home and people, still lacks one thing — and that is climate. For climate means health to one half of us ; and health means power of enjoyment ; for, without it, the most perfect of homes (and nowhere is that word understood so well as in England) is spoiled and saddened. (p. B)

In her description of her visit to the Alhambra in Granada, Lady Herbert agrees with the assessment of Dora Wordsworth:

. . . . . Descending the tower, and standing again in the ' plaza ' below, you see opposite to you a large ruined Doric palace, a monument of the bad taste of Charles V., who pulled down a large portion of the Moorish building to erect this hideous edifice, which, like most other things in Spain, remains unfinished. Passing through a low door to the right, our travellers were perfectly dazzled at the beauty which suddenly burst upon them. It is impossible to conceive anything more exquisite than the Alhambra, of which no drawings, no Crystal Palace models, not even Washington Irving's poetical descriptions, give one the faintest idea. (p. 59)



Title page to *Through Spain to the Sahara*, 1868.

And in the following year, the British novelist and poet Matilda Betham-Edwards published *Through Spain to the Sahara*, an account of her journey through Spain at a time of the political unrest that led to the deposition of Queen Isabella II in 1868. Betham-Edwards describes her feelings as her party was boarding a train to enter Spain:

> There was a pleasant excitement about such a journey just then, for every one prophesied a revolution in Madrid; it might come to-morrow, it must come soon, people said; and we were thought very venturesome to venture beyond the Pyrenees at all. Not that the sense of danger attracted us. We had come to Spain with very definite objects, and though we could not help

> feeling that the sooner a revolution came for the Spaniards the better, we hoped that it might not come till we were safely at Gibraltar, at least. The pictures of Velasquez, and the Moorish relics of Cordova, Seville, and Granada, were the loadstones that drew us to Spain; at the same time we could not but be alive to the great political and social questions agitating a country once so glorious, and still so capable of glorious things. (p. 24)

Spain was now opening up to visitors coming to marvel at its Moorish and Gothic architecture and to admire the paintings of the Spanish Renaissance and Baroque masters. And if Dora Wordsworth had wondered "But what pen could describe the witchery of that glorious sun and deep blue sky," in the later 19th and early 20th centuries a host of French, British, and American artists came to Spain to study (and copy) the paintings of El Greco, Murillo, Goya, and above all Velasquez,[3] and to try to describe that "witchery" with their own paint brushes.[4]

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[3] A good source of information on the foreign painters who traveled to Spain is the archives of la Oficina de Copias del Museo del Prado, which contains the records of everyone who applied for permission to make copies of paintings in the museum. When the Prado was founded in 1819, it was only opened to the public on Wednesdays and closed for one day for cleaning, with the remaining five days open for students of the academy and artists to study the history of the paintings and to make reproductions behind closed doors. In 1860, the first regulations on how to obtain permission to make copies of paintings in the Prado required applicants to pay one peseta and to provide a letter of recommendation from someone known to the Royal court.

[4] Several museum exhibitions on American painters in Spain have been mounted recently. In 1999, the New Britain Museum of American Art put on an exhibition, ''Espana: American Artists and the Spanish Experience'', noting in the catalogue: " 'The American artists who traveled beyond the Pyrenees before the introduction of the railroad in 1855 numbered fewer than 10; between 1860 and 1900 their number increased to well over 100.'' The exhibition "Americans in Spain: Painting and Travel, 1820–1920" was shown at the Milwaukee Art Museum and the Chrysler Museum of Art in 2021; in 2022, the Hispanic Society in New York City put on an exhibition, "American Travelers: A Watercolor Journey Through Spain, Portugal, and Mexico." For more on these, cf. William Zimmer, "In Spain, Americans on the Trail of the Exotic, the Dynamic," T*he New York Times*, March 21, 1999; Natasha Gural, "Recently Rediscovered Mary Cassatt Painting Highlights Spain's Erudite Influence On American Art In Groundbreaking Exhibition," *Forbes*, Nov 24, 2020; James Balestrieri. "Americans In Spain: Painting And Travel, 1820-1920," *Antiques and the Arts Weekly*, February 23, 2021; Ed Voves, "Art Eyewitness Review: Americans in Spain, Painting and Travel, 1820-1920," *Art Eyewitness*, April 30, 2021; Rebecca M. Bender, PhD, "Americans in Spain (1820-1920): Traveling Women Artists and their Subjects," August 11, 2021; Ed Heinzelman, "Americans In Spain: Painting and Travel, 1820–1920 at the Milwaukee Art Museum," *An Intuitive Perspective*, September 19, 2021; "In Pictures: How American Artists Captured the Exotic Allures of Spain and Portugal in Woozily Romantic Watercolors a Century Ago," *Art News*, August 8, 2022.

One of the first foreign painters to go to Spain was the Parisian Alfred Dehodencq, who, after having been wounded in his right arm during the French Revolution of 1848, went to Spain to convalesce, learning to paint with his left hand. Dehodencq ended up spending five years in Spain. Like Dora Wordsworth, who was in Spain at the same time, Dehodencq was taken in by the Spanish bullfight, and like the other travel writers of the time, Dehodencq was also enamored of the picturesqueness of Spain, such as the Easter processions of the religious confraternities.

Alfred Dehodencq, *Bullfight in Spain*, 1850. Oil on canvas, 149 x 206 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Pau.

Alfred Dehodencq, *A Confraternity in Procession along Calle Génova*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 111.5 x 161.5 cm. Museo Carmen Thyssen, Malaga.[5]

Following the 1853 marriage of the Spanish noblewoman Eugenia de Montijo to the Emperor Napoleon III, all things Spanish became *tout la vogue* in France, *vide* Édouard Manet's *Le guitarrero* painted in a Parisian studio in 1860 (with the model holding the guitar upside down!), his 1862 *Mademoiselle V. in the Costume of an Espada*, with his favorite model, Victorine Meurent, dressed as a Spanish bullfighter, and his 1863 *Young Man in the Costume of a Majo*, with his younger brother Gustave donning the same trousers and bolero jacket that Victorine Meurent had worn the year before.

[5] Americans often confuse the *capirotes*—the conical pointed hats and face-covering masks worn by the Spanish religious brotherhoods during processions—with the hoods worn by the Ku Klux Klan. The *capirote* has its origin in the Spanish Inquisition as a sign of penitence, while the KKK seems to have adopted it from the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*.

Left: Édouard Manet, *Le guitarrero* (*The Spanish Singer*), 1860. Oil on canvas, 147.3 x 114.3 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art; Right: Édouard Manet, *Mademoiselle V. in the Costume of an Espada*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 165.1 × 127.6 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Édouard Manet, *Young Man in the Costume of a Majo*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 188 x 124.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In 1865, Manet took a ten-day trip to Spain where he wrote a letter to Baudelaire, saying:

> One of the most beautiful, most curious and most terrible spectacles one can see is a bull hunt. On my return, I hope to put on canvas the brilliant, flickering and at the same time dramatic appearance of the corrida I attended.

Before he took his trip to Spain, Manet had started a large composition he entitled E*pisode from a Bullfight*, which, upon his return to Paris, he cut into two separate canvases, *The Dead Toreador* (*Toter Torero*) and *La Corrida*.

Édouard Manet, *The Dead Toreador* (*Toter Torero*), 1864–1865. Oil on canvas, 75.9 x 153.3cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Édouard Manet, *La Corrida*, 1864–1865. Oil on canvas, 48 x 1o8cm. The Frick Collection, New York

Back in Paris, Manet continued to paint bullfighting scenes in his proto-Impressionist style, including a L*e Matador saluant*, using his brother Eugène as the model.

Left: Édouard Manet, *The Bullfight*, 1865. Oil on canvas, 48 x 60.4 cm. Art Institute of Chicago; Right: Édouard Manet, *The Bullfight*, 1865–1866. Oil on canvas, 89 × 109.2 cm. Musée d'Orsay.

Édouard Manet, *Le Matador saluant* , 1866 or 1867. Oil on canvas, 171 cm × 113 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

One of the first American painters to travel to Spain was Thomas Eakins, who went where his fellow countryman Thomas Cole hadn't dared to set foot, spending six months in the country in 1869. Eakins also studied the paintings of Velásquez in Madrid before traveling down to Seville, where he painted Carmelita, the seven-year-old daughter of street performers, as well as a scene of the streets of Seville.

Left: Thomas Eakins, *Carmelita Requena*, 1869. Oil on canvas, 53.3 x 43.2 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Right: Thomas Eakins, *A Street Scene in Seville*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 159.4 × 106.7 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Two years after Thomas Eakins had gone to Spain, Mary Cassatt also ventured there. After moving to Paris in 1871, Cassatt traveled to Madrid and Seville, where she set up a studio and painted several scenes of Spanish life.

Left: Mary Cassatt, *Spanish Girl Leaning on a a Window Sill*, *ca.* 1872. Oil on canvas, 61.9 × 48.3 cm. Milwaukee Art Museum. Right: Mary Cassatt, *Spanish Dancer Wearing Lace Mantilla*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 65.2 x 50.1 cm. Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Left: Mary Cassatt, *After the Bullfight*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 82.5 × 64 cm. Art Institute Chicago. Right: Mary Cassatt, *Offering the Panal to the Bullfighter*, 1873. Oil on canvas, 100.6 x 85.1 cm. Clark Art Institute.

Another foreign painter who was active in Spain at this time was the Italian Pio Joris, who had befriended the Spanish Romantic painter Marià Fortuny in Rome.

Pio Joris, *Spanish Dancers*, 1873. Pen and brown ink with brown wash and white heightening over graphite, 33.6 x 41 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

[We might just note that the wild abandonment one sees in Joris' 1873 drawing prefigures Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*, which premiered at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in 1875.]

A slew of American painters followed in the footsteps of Thomas Eakins and Mary Cassatt to paint picturesque Spain..

John Singer Sargent, who grew up in Italy, France, Switzerland, and Germany, traveled to Spain seven times between 1879 and 1912. In addition to making copies of the paintings of Velasquez and Goya at the Prado, Sargent also painted many Spanish scenes, being particularly taken by the picturesque Roma (gypsies).

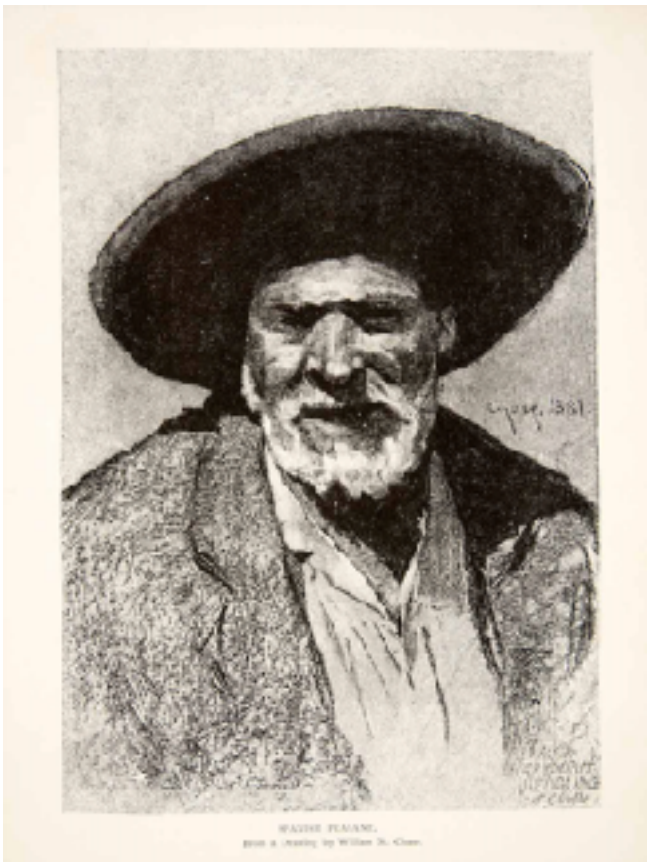


Left: John Singer Sargent, *A Spanish Woman* ca. 1879–1880. Oil on canvas, 56 x 45.7 cm. Private Collection; Middle: John Singer Sargent, *Spanish Roma Woman*, 1879 (?). Oil on canvas, 73.7 x 60 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art; Right: John Singer Sargent, *Spanish Roma Dancer*, ca. 1879–1880. Oil on canvas, 45.72 x 25.4 cm. Private Collection.

John Singer Sargent, *El Jaleo*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 232 x 348 cm. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

John Singer Sargent, *Gypsy Encampment*, ca. 1913. Oil on canvas, 71.4 x 91.8 cm. Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover Massachusetts.

William Merritt Chase first traveled to Spain in 1881, after having met Édouard Manet, Mary Cassatt, and John Singer Sargent in Europe And like those painters, Merritt Chase also studied Valázquez at the Prado, as well as being enamored of the picturesque quaintness of Spain, which he continued to document in subsequent trips to the country.



Left: William Merritt Chase, *Spanish Peasant*, 1881. Etching, dry point, and aquatint, 12.3 x 6.0 cm. Cincinnati Art Museum, Ohio. Right, Frederick Juengling, *Engraving of Drawing by William Merritt Chase, Spanish Peasant, 1881*, 1883

William Merritt Chase, *Spanish Girl*. ca. 1885. Oil on panel, 25.4 x 19.7 cm. Private Collection.

William Merritt Chase, *Spanish Village*. 1882. Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 101.6 cm. Private Collection.

But one didn't always have to travel to Spain to come face to face with that Iberian quaintness. In 1889, the dancer Carmencita, known as the "Pearl of Seville," made her debut as a dancer in New York City, and John Singer Sargent arranged for her to perform in his friend William Merritt Chase's studio in 1890, where they both painted her portrait.


Left: William Chase Merritt, *La Carmencita*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 177.5 x 103.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Right: John Singer Sargent, *La Carmencita*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 229.0 x. 140.0cm. Musée d'Orsay.

Other 19th-century American painters who depicted their trips to Spain include: Harry Humphrey Moore, who married a Spanish woman in 1872 and lived in Segovia and Granada; Edwin Lord Weeks, who traveled to Cordoba after studying in Paris; the intrepid American woman painter Elizabeth Boot, who lived in Florence and who toured Valencia, Seville, and Granada to see the paintings of Goya, Murillo, Ribera, Ribalta, and Zurbarán; and Walter Gay, who was based in Paris and traveled to Spain.

Harry Humphrey Moore, *Spanish Guitarist*, 1890. Oil on panel, 27.9 x 16.5 cm.

Edwin Lord Weeks, *Interior of a Mosque at Cordova*, ca. 1880. Oil on canvas, 142.56 × 184.47 cm. Walters Art Museum.

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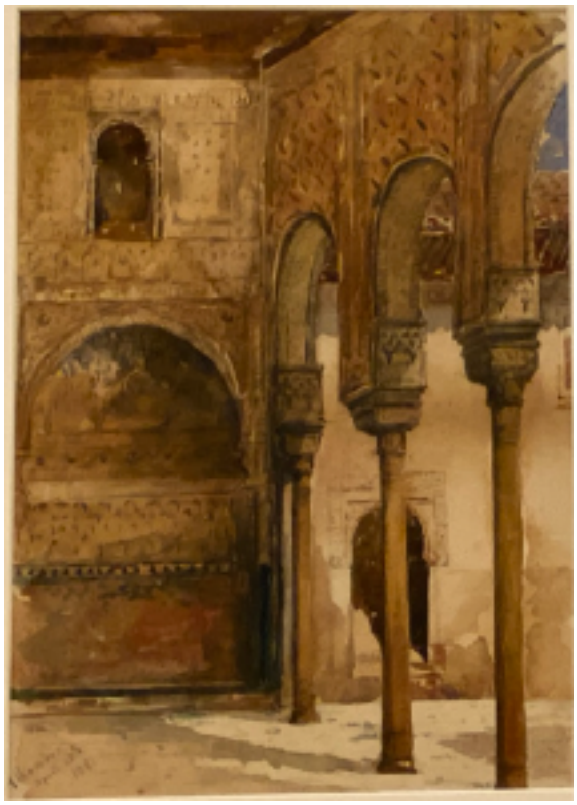

Elizabeth Boott, *Alhambra*, 1881. Watercolor on paper. Private Collection.

Walter Gay, *Las Cigarreras de Sevilla* (*Cigar Makers at Seville*), 1895. Milwaukee Museum of Art.

To summarize so far:

The 19th-century travelogues cited above continue Luther's racist attack on the "dirt-brown and tar-black as King Balthasar and his monkeys" Spaniards:

> partaking of the savage and solitary character of Africa (Irving)
>
> The Universal Sloth and Lazyness of the Inhabitants (Adams)
>
> these incurious semiorientals; the most romantic and Peculiar country in Europe (Ford)
>
> Spaniards, however, like tortoises, (Pitt Byrne)

Dora Wordsworth, however, uses her flowery language to describe the oriental charm she found Spain:

> the fairy character; a marble city just evoked from the sea by some enchanter, to glitter for a while in the sunshine; and for an instant thought that Aladdin must be our guide, for here was one of those fair gardens that I imagined could only be heard of in the "Arabian Nights" (Wordsworth)

Still, the negative view of dirty Spain continued into the 20th century, such as in a 1913 travelogue to Greece that began:

> . . . how is it you are so fond of going to Greece? There are even people who imagine a trip to America far more interesting, and who at all events look upon a trip to Spain as the same kind of thing—southern climate, bad food, dirty inns, and general discomfort, odious to bear, though pleasant to describe afterwards in a comfortable English home.
> J.P. Mahaffy, *Rambles and Studies in Greece,* 1913.

And, for those of us of a certain age, the Monty Python Spanish Inquisition skit, first broadcast in 1970, also reinforced the Black Legend, albeit in a buffoonish way.

And, as we have seen, the paintings of Alfred Dehodenc, Édouard Manet, Thomas Eakins, Mary Cassatt, John Singer Sargent, William Merritt Chase, and others, have visually reinforced the notion that Spain is a land of light and exotic eroticism, of gypsy dancers, matadors, and guitars.

The Black Legend raised its racist head once again in 1898 during the brief Spanish American War when, from April to December of that year, the United States supported rebellions against Spain in Cuba and the Philippines and ended up taking those colonies from Spain as the US emerged as a global imperial power. In the yellow journalism that whipped up US support for the war following the sinking of the USS Maine in Cuba, Spain is shown as a Neanderthal brute.

Grant Hamilton, *The Spanish Brute* - picture printed on front page of the US magazine *Judge*, September 7, 1898.

The brief *Guerra Hispanoamericana* did not put a pause into artists flocking to Spain. And it is natural that the Impressionists continued to paint Spanish scenes.

Auguste Renoir came to Spain in 1881, with the obligatory study of Velasquez in Madrid. Much later in his life, in 1898 during the Spanish American War, Renoir produced his soft *Young Spanish Woman with a Guitar.*

Auguste Renoir, *Young Spanish Woman with a Guitar*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 55.6 x 65.2 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

In 1883, the American impressionist Childe Hassam took a two-month trip studying the Old Masters in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland, and Spain; in his Spanish paintings, Hassam tried to capture the shimmering light of the country.

Childe Hassam, *Church Procession, Spanish Steps*, 1883. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Left: Childe Hassam, *Outer Gate (Puerta del Sol),* Toledo. 1910. Hispanic Society Museum & Library; Right: Childe Hassam, *Plaza de la Merced, Ronda*, 1910. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

The Hispanic Museum and Library notes that

> . . . Hassam (1859–1935), visited the exhibition of paintings by Joaquín Sorolla in 1909 and was inspired to go to Spain. His paintings from Spain in 1910 were exhibited in New York in spring 1911, where Sorolla saw them and brought Archer Milton Huntington to the exhibition.

Other American impressionist painters followed Childe Hassam: the Bostonians Mary Bradish Titcomb and, later, Florence Robinson; the Ashcan artist Robert Henri; the Alabaman Carrie Hill, who first traveled to Spain in 1922; the Canadian-American Ernest Lawson who also studied at the Académie Julian in Paris; Ernest Peixotto, another student of the Académie Julian who wrote an artistic travelogue, *Though Spain and Portugal*, in 1922; and the American impressionist George Wharton Edwards, who was educated in Antwerp and Paris.

Mary Bradish Titcomb, *The Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain*, 1906. Oil on canvas, 55.9 x 45.7 cm. Chrysler Museum of Art.

Left: Robert Henri, *Ramón Escudero y Lozano*, 1906. Oil on canvas, 198.1 × 95.9 cm. Chrysler Museum of Art; Middle: Robert Henri, *Spanish Girl of Segovia*, 1912. Oil on canvas, 104 x 84.14 cm. New Britain Museum of American Art; Right: Robert Henri, *El Matador*, 1906. Oil on canvas, 198.1 × 96.5 cm. Milwaukee Art Museum.

Left: Robert Henri, *Blind Spanish Singer*, 1912, Oil on canvas, 104.0 x 84.0 cm. Smithsonian American Art Museum. Right: Robert Henri, *Spanish Roma Woman (The Spanish Gypsy)*, 1912, Oil on cardboard, 103.5 x 83.8 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Left: Robert Henri, *Spanish Girl*, 1912; Right: *Spanish Gypsy*, 1912.

Carrie Hill, *In the Foothills of the Pyrenees*, 1922. Oil on canvas, 97.5 × 97.5 cm. Birmingham Museum of Art.

Carrie Hill, *View of Segovia*, ca. 1925.

Ernest Lawson, *Segovia*, ca. 1916. Oil on canvas. Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Ernest Lawson, *A Bright Day, Spain (Segovia)*, 1916. Oil on canvas, 45.7 x 54.6 cm. Private Collection.

Ernest C. Peixotto, *Ávila*,1915. Lead pencil and aquatint. Printed in *Through Spain and Portugal*, 1922,

> In his 1922 *Through Spain and Portugal*, Peixotto opines:
>
> How comparatively little we know, in America, of the charm of the Spanish garden! Yet the exuberant *quintas* of Valencia, the gay tiled courts and fountains of Seville, the hanging gardens of the Alhambra, the romantic and melancholy groves of Aranjuez, and the majestic vistas of La Granja might well serve as models for the settings of our country homes in Florida or in California or in the growing Southwest, so Hispanic both in color and in character.

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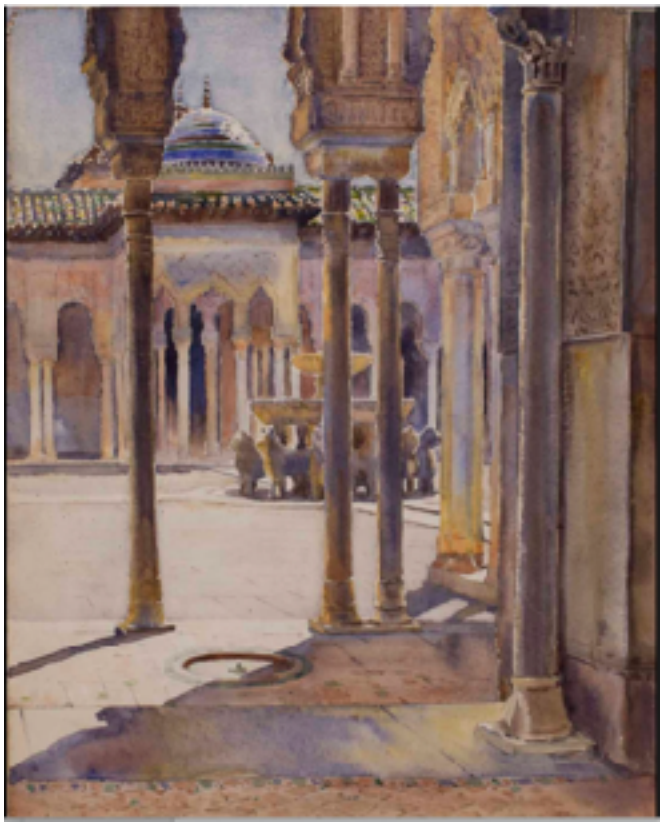

Florence Robinson, *Alhambra, Granada*. Watercolor on paper. Before 1922. The Hispanic Society Museum & Library.

Florence Robinson, *Generalife Garden, Alhambra*, ca. 1920–22 .

George Wharton Edwards, *Fountain and Patio of the Lions, Alhambra, Granada*, ca. 1924.

By the beginning of the 20th century, then, the image of Spain as a sunny "soft southern region" filled with exotic characters and a *no se puede* attitude had been well established in the English-speaking world.[6]

And then came the Spanish Civil War and the rise of Franco, whose 35+-year dictatorship that ended in 1975 still casts a shadow over how we perceive Spain.[7]

Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on canvas, 349 cm × 776 cm. Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.

For the English-speaking world, the 1936–1937 Spanish Civil War was a prelude to WWII, with Franco's rise to power being aided by Hitler and Mussolini. Our view of the horror of the war in Spain was formed by Pablo Picasso's monumental painting *Guernica*, which he painted for the 1937 Paris International Exposition after Hitler's Luftwaffe bombed the Basque city. (*Guernica* ended up being hung in the Museum of Modern Art in

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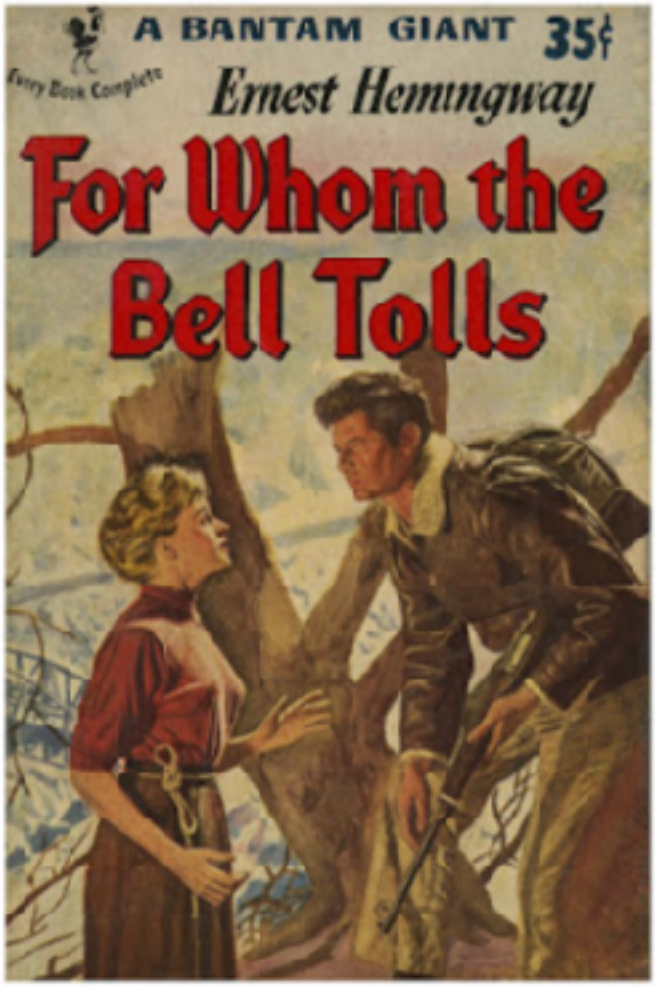
[6] The exoticism of Spain continued to be featured in the later work of Sir V.S. Pritchett (*The Spanish Temper*, 1954) and Giles Tremlett (*Ghosts of Spain*, 2006).

[7] While Spain has not undergone a national reconciliation of its Francoist past the way that Germany has for its Nazi history or South Africa for its apartheid, the country is making progress in this regard. Upon the restoration of democracy following the death of Franco, the government tried to move on from the dictatorship by passing a Pact of Forgetting, granting general amnesty for human rights violations committed under Franco. Then, in 2007, Spain passed a Historical Memory Law, revamped in 2020 as the Democratic Memory Law, which called for the removal of Francoist monuments, the exhumation of mass graves, and the teaching about the dictatorship in secondary schools.

New York City until it was returned to Spain in 1981, after the death of both Picasso and Franco.)

And for many of us, our view of the Spanish Civil War was also colored by reading Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the story of an American volunteer who fought with a Republican guerrilla unit and who valiantly gave up his life to save his love, the gorilla fighter María.



Title page of the paperback edition of Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, (1940), 1956.

After WWII, during which Spain was officially "neutral" (although Franco did send Spanish volunteer troops to aid Germany's invasion of the USSR), the newly formed United Nations did not allow Spain to join that international organization. As an attempt to end

this isolationism, in the 1950s Franco allowed the US to establish a naval military base at Rota and an air-force base at Morón.

John Francis Knott, "Franco's Closet", *Dallas Morning News*, August 5, 1945.

Perhaps the greatest gift that Franco gave to Spain was opening up the country to a booming tourist industry, which now accounts for 12% of Spain's GDP, with more than 85 million tourists visiting the country in 2023, making Spain the second most visited country in the world. Still, many of the tourist resorts thrown up haphazardly under Franco all along the Mediterranean coast have become wastelands of mostly English-speaking tourists.

Sunbathers in Valencia, 2023.

[Another personal anecdote: Seven years ago, my wife and I fled the US and moved to Asturias, on the northern Bay of Biscay. Our son told us that when he proudly announced to his friends that his parents had moved to the north of Spain, some of his friends said "I didn't know Spain had a north!"]

In 1868, the author Matilda Betham-Edwards said: "The pictures of Velasquez, and the Moorish relics of Cordova, Seville, and Granada, were the loadstones that drew us to Spain." Now, however, most of the millions of tourists who visit Spain each year only come for the sun, sand, and sangria, blithely unaware, not only of its Velasquezes and its Moorish relics, but also of its rich archaeological and historical heritage.

When I was a graduate student in Classical Archaeology at the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1970s, the topic of Spain rarely came up in our classes. Yes, in our seminar on Greek colonization there was one report on Empúries, the colony north of Barcelona founded in 575 BC by Greeks from Phocaea. [I begged to give that report!] But in our courses on the Late Bronze Age, although we closely studied every object among the

15 kilos of gold artifacts found in Grave Circle A at Mycenae in Greece, no mention was ever made of the 15 kilos of gold found in the contemporary deposit at As Silgadas in Galicia.

Treasure of Caldas de Reis, ca. 2250–1500 BCE. Gold. Found in 1940, As Silgadas (Caldas de Reis, Pontevedra), Museo de Pontevedra.

And in our classes on the archaeology of the Roman Empire, we did learn that the Roman Emperors Trajan and Hadrian had been born in Italica, near Seville, and we were aware of some Roman monuments in Spain, such as the aqueduct at Segovia or the theater at Merida. But we were not taught that, as Pliny tells us, some 6,500 kilos of gold were extracted every year from the Roman mines at Las Médulas, near Ponferrada, producing more than a thousand tons of gold over the century and a half Las Médulas was in operation. Spain, not Italy, or France, or even Egypt, was the economic backbone of the Roman Empire. Who knew?

Part of the explanation for this relative neglect of Spain's rich archaeological heritage among American academics lies in the country's insularity. French and German archaeologists have long been active in Spain, from the time of Henri Breuil's work at Altamira in 1902, Adolf Schulten's excavations at Numantia in 1905–1912, Hugo Obermaier's study of the El Castillo cave in 1910–1914, and Hans Zeiss' excavation of

Visigothic graves in 1929. And while a number of British archaeologists have undertaken projects in Spain, such as the University of Cambridge's Expedition to Minorca in the early 1930s (led by Margaret Murray from the University of London) or the French-born British historian George Edward Bonsor Saint Martin's excavations along the Guadalquivir, published (in English) in 1931, there has never been a major American archaeological project in Spain, my minor excavations on behalf of Boston University at the Rota Naval Base in 1999–2000 notwithstanding. And, since 1954, the Deutsche Archäologisches Institut Madrid has been actively engaged in archaeological research in the country; there are no equivalent British or American archaeological institutes in Spain. And, further, whereas there are excellent archaeological programs at many of Spain's universities, Spanish archaeologists have been relatively underrepresented outside of the country. There is the La Escuela Española de Historia y Arqueología en Roma, founded in 1910, but until now there has been no equivalent Spanish archaeological institute in Athens; but this next year an Escuela Española de Arqueología, planned since 1992, will finally open in Athens, joining the archaeological schools of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These foreign archaeological institutes are not only responsible for overseeing the archaeological research carried out by archaeologists from their countries, but they also provide opportunities for archaeological students from their countries to interact with budding archaeologists from other countries.

And then there is the question of language.

As Spanish is one of the world's major languages, Spanish archaeologists rarely publish their work in any other language. And while most British or American archaeologists are capable of reading archaeological articles written in Spanish, many do not have access to the often obscure journals in which Spanish archaeologists publish their research.[8]

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[8] A number of handbooks on Spanish archaeology written in English do exist. The British Classicist Edmund Spenser Bouchier published his *Spain under the Roman Empire* in 1914. In 1968, Paul MacKendrick published his *Iberian Stones Speak. Archaeology in Spain and Portugal*, and in 1988 both Richard J. Harrison's *Spain at the Dawn of History. Iberians, Phoenicians and Greeks*, and S.J. Keay's *Roman Spain* appeared.

And speaking of languages, although Spanish is the second language in the world by the number of native speakers (second only to Mandarin Chinese), with some half a billion native Spanish speakers,[9] the literature of Spain is little known outside of the Spanish-speaking world. Yes, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is on everyone's curriculum (although Cervantes' archaic Spanish is as difficult for modern Spanish readers to parse as his contemporary Shakespeare is for modern English speakers), and many non-Spanish speakers are aware of the work of the Golden Age playwright Félix Lope de Vega, or the Generation of '98 writers Antonio Machado and Miguel de Unamuno, or the Generation of '27 poet Federico García Lorca, or the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. And, through translations, millions have read the works of Carlos Ruiz Zafón, and of the Nobel-Prize-winners Juan Ramón Jiménez Mantecón and Camilo José Cela. Still, many other authors who are household names in Spain, like Dolores Medio, Rosa Montero, Javier Marías, Almudena Grandes, or Dolores Redondo remain virtually unknown outside of the Spanish-speaking world. There is an economic explanation for this. Given that there are millions of Spanish and Portuguese readers in Iberia and Latin America, there is little incentive for publishers in Spain and Portugal to go to the expense of having their books translated into English or any other language.

In her 1866 *Cosas de España*, "Mrs. Wm. Pitt Bryne" described Spain as "that country, by common consent styled '*The* Peninsula' (as if to imply that it is almost disconnected from the civilized world)." I'm not sure if the Nobel-Prize-winning Portuguese novelist José Saramago was aware of this passage when he wrote his *A Jangada de Pedra* (*The Stone Raft*) in 1986, but Saramago used this trope in his magical-realist novel about the events that unfolded after the Iberian peninsula mysteriously broke away from Europe and started to float away in the Atlantic ocean.

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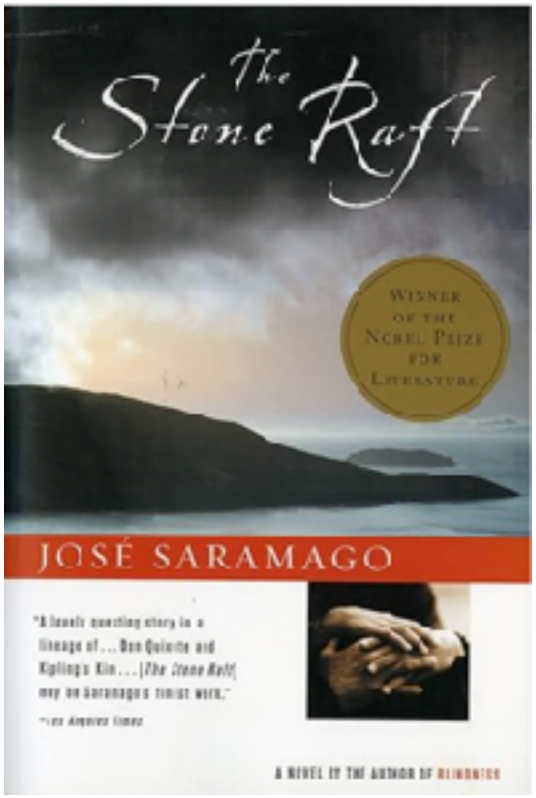
[9] Given that there are some 40 million native Spanish speakers in the United States, the second largest number of any country in the world, there have been calls to make Spanish the second official language of the US. Given, however, that over 350 different languages are spoken at home in the United States, there is a good argument to be made for the nation to continue to have no official language(s).



Title page of José Saramago, *The Stone Raft* (*A Jangada de Pedra*), translated by Giovanni Pontiero, 1994.

So, yes, in many ways Iberia is a cultural island unto itself.

But as the poet John Donne wrote "No man is an island,/ Entire of itself;" (a poem that Ernest Hemingway put on the frontispiece of his 1940 *For Whom the Bell Tolls*). So, yes, you millions of tourists who flock to Spain every year, go ahead and enjoy the sunshine and wine so abundant along the Mediterranean coast. But, please, also take the time to visit the Alhambra and to wander around the Prado. [But, please stay away from the still undiscovered paradise that is my new home of Asturias!]