

ArkeoGazte

Revista de Arqueología - Arkeologia Aldizkaria



Monográfico
Identidad, Alteridad y Arqueología

Monografikoa
Identitatea, Alteritatea eta Arkeologia

REVISTA ARKEOGAZTE/ARKEOGAZTE ALDIZKARIA

Nº 6, año 2016. urtea 6. zk.

Monográfico: Identidad, Alteridad y Arqueología /
Monografikoa: Identitatea, Alteritatea eta Arkeologia

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Monográfico

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(DE)ORIENTALISING SPAIN: THE 'OTHER' FROM WITHIN

(Des)orientalizando España: el "otro" desde dentro

Espainiaren (ez)orientalizazioa: "Bestea" barrutik

Beatriz Marín Aguilera (*)

Abstract:

Since the 19th century, Spain was repeatedly 'orientalised' by northern Europeans, as foreign visitors and diplomats indulged in oriental fantasies when reflecting on the Muslim-Arab heritage of the Peninsula and its people. Orientalist narratives and stereotypes created an alienation in Spaniards, raising fuddling questions about their cultural identity –European/Christian vs. Arab/Muslim. This paper specifically addresses this 'Orientalisation/Africanisation' of Spain as a European 'Other' through the analysis of literary and historical sources, focusing in particular on the description of Arab-Muslim architecture and females' clothing.

Keywords:

Orientalism, Spain, Travel literature, Identity, Europe, Arab heritage, Spanish women.

Resumen:

Desde el siglo XIX, España fue repetidamente "orientalizada" por los europeos del norte, pues tanto visitantes como diplomáticos extranjeros se entregaron a fantasías orientales al describir el patrimonio árabe-musulmán de la Península Ibérica y su gente. Las narrativas orientalistas y los estereotipos crearon una alienación en los españoles, que les llevó cuestionarse su identidad cultural – europea/cristiana vs. árabe/musulmana. Este trabajo examina específicamente la "Orientalización/Africanización" de España como el "Otro" europeo a través del análisis de fuentes literarias e históricas, centrándose en particular en la arquitectura islámica por un lado, y en el vestido y complementos de las mujeres españolas por otro.

Palabras clave:

Orientalismo, España, Literatura de viajes, Identidad, Europa, Patrimonio árabe, Mujer española

Laburpena

XIX mendetik, ipar europarrek Espainia behin eta berriz "ekialdetu" izan dute, atzerriko bisitariak eta diplomazialariak deskribatu bait zuten ekialdeko fantasien arabera Iberian Penintsulako ondare arabiarr-musulmanak eta bere jendea. Narratiba orientalistek eta estereotipoek alienazioa sortu zuten espainiarrengan, bere iden-

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titate kulturala eztabaidatzera eramanez – europarra/kristaua vs arabiarra/musulmana. Lan honek Espainiaren “ekialdezazioa/afrikatzea” aztertzen du, “beste” europarra bihurtuz. Horretarako iturri literario eta historikoen analisia bideratuko da, bereziki, alde batetik, islamiar arkitektura eta, bestetik, emakume espainiarren soinekoak eta osagarriak.

Hitz-gakoak

Ekialdezazioa, Espainia, Bidai-literatura, Identitatea, Europa, Arabiar ondarea, Emakume espainiarra.

*Who, me confused? Ambivalent? Not so. Only
your labels split me.*

Gloria Anzaldúa, “La Prieta” in *This bridge
called my back*

*Sabe, a Europa é longe como um raio, fica lá
para o fim do mundo.*

José Saramago, *A jangada de pedra*

1. Introduction

This paper examines the ‘Orientalisation’ of Spain as a European ‘Other’ in 19th-century travellers’ descriptions of urban buildings and women’s clothing. It is thus neither a history of premodern or 19th-century Spain, nor is it a study of the relations among (nowadays) European countries or between Spain and the Maghreb. Instead, I address the perception of 19th-century Spain by British, French and US-American travellers. There has been, at least since the 1970s, a growing interest in the analysis of ‘Western attitudes’ towards the *Others*, i.e. the rest of the world. The influential work of Edward W. Said (2003 [1978]) and Talal Asad (1973), among many others, easily spring to mind. I apply their theories of the construction of ‘otherness’ in order to show how the ‘orientalising’ discourse regarding 19th-century Spain was put into practice. I therefore focus on two aspects: (i) historical buildings and urbanism, and (ii) female clothing and ornaments, as encountered by travellers during their visits to the

country. In other words, this paper is a study of material culture.

In what follows, I will firstly explain briefly the construction of the Mediterranean as a concept in Europe in the 19th century. Secondly, I will trace the origin of the Orientalist discourse applied to the European south analysing 19th century British and French travel literature. Later on, I will analyse the Orientalisation of Spain focusing on two aspects: the Arab heritage buildings and urbanism—, and the Spanish female—clothing and ornaments. I will end this paper by applying Said and Asad’s concepts of Orientalism and Islamic/European identity to the Spanish case.

2. Europe and its ‘Others’

When Anouar Abdel-Malek (1963) challenged orientalist studies, he knotted political and cultural imperialism arguing that European colonial powers constituted themselves as subjects while misrepresenting and demonising the Orient as their object. Following his assertion, Edward W. Said (2003 [1978]) criticised the colonial roots of ‘Orientalism’, for it was not only an academic discipline, but an ideological and imperial discourse inseparable from the perpetuation of Western power in the East.

Said argued that in distributing particular images of the Orient, Western scholars essentialised

and caricaturised the East with no empirical data to prove their statements. In doing so, they pictured the Orientas inferior, depraved, lazy, and uncivilised. Furthermore, in identifying themselves as the 'civilised' nations, European countries constructed a borderland, a *limes*, a divide between them and the uncivilised 'Others' – in this case, the 'Orientals'.

Orientalist discourses, however, were not only applied to the colonies in the East, but also to define northern Mediterranean countries and their people in the 18th-early 20th centuries. Southern Europeans became the 'uncivilised Oriental' in the European narrative. The intimacy and *longue-durée* of the contact between people on both sides of the Mediterranean corrupted and polluted them, in contrast to northern countries.

The division between the 'modern' and 'civilised' people from the North and the 'primitive' and 'uncivilised' people from the South created a borderland that helped to establish the 18th- and 19th-century notion of European identity.

Furthermore, the end of the 18th century was the period of the 'invention of the Mediterranean' (ORTEGA GÁLVEZ, 1996; BOURGUET *et al.* 1998; SCHMITZ, 2002). It is the beginning of the marginalisation of the Mediterranean countries *vis-à-vis* the northern 'civilised' nations, the construction of the 'Other' within in a Romantic idealisation (HERZFELD, 1984, 1987; PINA CABRAL, 1989).

Once the idea of the Mediterranean was established and registered in the southern European region, the continental discourse suffered a crucial split. On the one hand, the 'European identity' against the 'Other' outside the continent; and on the other, the identity of Europe itself at the domestic level. Since the beginning of the 18th century, Europe was defined in opposition to 'the Oriental world' (BERNAL, 1987; SAID, 2003 [1978]). The East, in contrast to the 'virtuous'

Europe, designated metonymically a space of exoticism and eroticism, on one side, and a geography inhabited by lazy, irrational and barbarous people, on the other (ABDEL-MALEK, 1963; SAID, 2003 [1978]).

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the very same metonymy was applied to Europe itself. In this logic, virtue, courage, and progress represented northern Europeans; whereas eroticism, backwardness, and vices described southern Europeans—the 'new Orient' imprisoned in Europe (HERZFELD, 1984, 1987; PINA CABRAL, 1989, 1991; DAINOTTO, 2000). Such narratives of the unmodern Mediterranean were spread by northern Europeans who travelled the Mediterranean through the 18th, 19th, and early 20th century.

3. Travel literature and the Mediterranean Other

The idea of the Mediterranean decadence was mainly disseminated by numerous British and French travellers who visited the Mediterranean countries in the 18th and 19th centuries. From the end of the 17th century, noblemen and wealthy landed gentry embarked on the Grand Tour to France and Italy, but also to the Netherlands, Belgium and the German lands in order to admire the art and culture of those countries. Nevertheless, when the journey headed towards the Mediterranean, it mainly served to reaffirm the hegemonic and 'civilised' position of northern Europeans at the expense of the southern countries they visited.

3.1. The uncivilised Mediterranean

Progress was measured mostly by technological development, seen as 'the corollary of the intellectual and cultural liberation in the Enlightenment' (BORGMANN, 1984: 35; see also RAPP, 1981: 99–100). In the late 18th century, Goethe wrote in his *Italianische Reise* that Italy 'which en-

joys nature's richest favour, has lagged very badly behind other countries with respect to mechanics and technology, which after all are the basis of a more modern and comfortable way of life' (quoted in MOE, 2002: 16).

Similarly, the British nobility compared Italy with France during their Grand Tour, and they remained astonished by the little progress of the former:

Count d'Erfeuil went through every town, guidebook in hand. At one and the same time, he had the double pleasure of wasting his time seeing everything and of asserting that he had seen nothing worth admiring when one knew France. [...] Count d'Erfeuil made amusing laments on the environs of Rome, 'What! No country houses, no carriages, nothing which suggests the proximity of a big city!' he said. 'Oh, my goodness, isn't it dreary!' (STAËL, 1998 [1807]: 19).

Nevertheless, the 'civilised' sometimes felt tired of refined manners and civilisation, and therefore (s)he dreamed of barbarians and savages, praising their lack of corruption, innocence and happiness (HAZARD, 1985: 321–323; FERNÁNDEZ HERRERO, 1992: 84). This weariness was reflected in Madame de Staël's *Corinne, or Italy* (1807), in which she stated: 'I should like to see all the countries where there is something unique about their manners, dress, and language. The *civilized world is very monotonous* and it does not take long to know it all. I have lived long enough for that already' (STAËL, 1998 [1807]: 291 emphasis added).

This idealisation of the 'noble savage' emerged in the Spanish Kingdoms in the 16th century, and spread later on across Europe to emphasise the innocence of the conquered/colonised 'Others' (FERNÁNDEZ HERRERO, 1992: 85–87; BARTRA, 1997: 28–79). Ironically, in the 19th century the concept was also used to describe southern Europeans like Spaniards: 'L'Espagne est

ignorante, mais elle n'est pas corrompue' (CUENDIAS and FÉREAL, 1848: 245). If in the 16th century Spaniards idealised the innocence, purity, and lack of corruption of Indians in the Americas, they became themselves 'Indians' in the imaginary of 19th-century northern Europeans.

In the same period, the term 'civilization' acquired racist connotations due to the prominence of evolutionary theories in 19th-century Europe (ALLEN, 1997; HAWKINS, 1997) that had serious consequences in the colonies (NZEKWU, 1999; CASAÚS ARZÚ, 2002; VANN, 2003). Those theories also affected southern Europeans as they became considered 'inferior races'. In this respect, Anna Jameson was shocked at the sparse civilisation, and even at the wildness of Italians when they were travelling around the country:

Let the modern Italians be what they may, –a *dirty, demoralized, degraded, unprincipled race*—centuries behind our thrice-blessed, prosperous, and comfort-loving nation in civilization and morals. [...] I am not come to spy out the nakedness of the land, but to implore from her healing airs and lucid skies the health and peace I have lost, and to worship as a pilgrim at the tomb of her departed glories (JAMESON, 1875: 277–278, emphasis added).

The idea of 'civilisation' muddled with the concept of the 'picturesque' in the 19th century travel literature (MUNSTERS, 1991; COPLEY and GARSIDE, 1994). The picturesque was a new aesthetic ideal developed first in England in the 18th century that spread to Germany and France in the following one. As part of the Romantic Movement in Europe, picturesque artists focused particularly on landscapes, emphasising their irregularities, disorder, and decay (Fig.1). Travel writings in the 19th century idealised natural and untamed beauty, the poetry of the non-industrialised countries, and their sunny climate (PREMBLE, 1987; BERTY, 2001; GUYON and REQUEMORA, 2012). Nonetheless, such descriptions equally condemned the



Figure 1. 'Ruines et monuments antiques dans les environs d'Agrigente', drawn by Chatelet and engraved by Allix for the book 'Voyage pittoresque, ou, Description des royaumes de Naples et de Sicile', written by Jean-Claude Richard de Saint-Non (1781-1786).

lack of industrialisation and the backwardness of Mediterranean countries, albeit in a poetic fashion:

Civilization, cleanliness, and comfort, are excellent things, but they are sworn enemies to the picturesque: they have banished it gradually from our towns, and habitations/ into remote countries, and little nooks and corners, where we are obliged to hunt after it to find it; but in Italy the picturesque is every where, in every variety of form; it meets us at every turn, in town and in country, at all times and seasons; the commonest object of every-day life here becomes picturesque, and assumes from a thousand causes a certain character of poetical interest it cannot have elsewhere (JAMESON, 1875: 321–322, emphasis added).

Lack of civilisation, bad manners, comfort, and sanitation defined –albeit romantically– Mediterranean countries from the 19th century onwards. Unsurprisingly, the lack of hygiene was also one of the key definitions of indigenous societies in the colonies by northern European anthropologists in the 19th century (DOUGLAS, 1966). If there was a picturesque destination in this period, however, that was Spain. Seldom visited in the former century, Spain became the obligatory tour for wealthy northern travellers.

3.2. Searching for a picturesque destination: 19th-century Spain

Spain, mostly ignored in the 18th century, was suddenly 'discovered' in the following century depicted by romantic travellers, whose interest no longer lied in the intellectual and artistic journey,

but in adventure and recreation (FREIRE, 2012; VEGA GONZÁLEZ, 2004): 'L'Espagne, dont tout le monde a parlé et que si peu de gens connaissent n'est pas, comme on le croit généralement, parée des mêmes charmes que la voluptueuse Italie [...] mais toujours grandiose' (CUENDIAS and FÉREAL, 1848: 1–2).

The search of the picturesque was associated with the orientalism of southern Europeans, Spaniards in particular. While Europe places its border on the shores of the Mediterranean; Spain, Italy, and Greece (which also touches Asia), 'sit atop Africa' (DOTSON-RENTA, 2012: 7). The history of the northern Mediterranean, especially in the case of Greece with the Turks, and Spain with the Arabs, generated both a romantic idealisation and a political and social rejection:

L'Espagne, qui touche à l'Afrique comme la Grèce à l'Asie, n'est pas faite pour les mœurs européennes. Le génie de l'Orient y perce sous toutes les formes, et il est fâcheux peut-être qu'elle ne soit pas restée moresque ou mahométane (GAUTIER, 1870: 192).

The orientalism of southern Europeans nurtured an alienation in their consciousness: not only had they lived with the other, but they were undergoing a process of (re)conversion into that other who they fought in the past (KRISTEVA, 1988: 24–25). This process was enhanced by travellers, who precisely stressed the African character of the northern Mediterranean landscape and its people.

4. The Orientalisation of Spain

The association between northern Mediterranean and African/Asian people was more obvious in Spain given the traces that both Jews and Muslim Arabs left in its territory, society, and culture. In the 19th century, northern European travellers emphasised Spanish Orientalism—Arabism—focusing primarily on two aspects: Arab architecture

and urbanism, and female's clothing and complements. In analysing both themes, I particularly examine British, French, and US travel writings dated to 1810–1920.

4.1. Muslim-Arab architecture in Spain

In the 19th century, British, US, and French upper-class men and women (re)discovered the Spanish Muslim heritage, and promoted Spain in their travel literature books as an uncanny and picturesque destination for people of means.

Arab castles and urbanism were easily visible in the Spanish territory, and consequently widely described by northern visitors:

Nous sommes en Afrique. Mettez-vous à la fenêtre, et regardez. Grand soleil, grande mer. A droite, des côtes sablonneuses vont s'abaissant vers le sud jusqu'à ce qu'elles disparaissent dans la lumière; à gauche, des rochers suspendus, âpres et dépouillés, *portent à leur sommet une citadelle moresque*; le tout éclatant de blancheur (GASPARIN, 1869: 154, emphasis added).

While Italy and Greece had to belong to Europe because they were understood as the cradle of European civilisation (MORRIS, 1994; MARCHAND, 1996; MUNZI, 2004; DAVIS, 2007); Spain was characterised mainly by its Arab inheritance. The construction of the 'Spanish-Arabness' strongly stressed the difference between the country—and its people—and northern European regions. It is in this respect that Dominique Georges Frédéric Pradt, a French diplomat, accused Spain of being more Arab than European:

C'est une erreur de la géographie que d'avoir attribué l'Espagne à l'Europe; elle appartient à l'Afrique: sang, mœurs, langage, manière de vivre et de combattre; en Espagne tout est africain. Les deux nations ont été mêlées trop longtemps [sic], les Carthaginois venus d'Afrique en Espagne

ne, les Vandales passés d'Espagne en Afrique, les Maures séjournant en Espagne pendant 700 ans, pour qu'une aussi longue cohabitation, pour que ces tranfusions [sic] de peuples et de coutumes n'aient pas confondu ensemble les races et les moeurs des deux contrées. *Si l'Espagnol était Mahométan, il serait un Africain complet*; c'est la religion qui l'a conservé à l'Europe (PRADT, 1816: 168, emphasis added).

The idea 'l'Afrique commence aux Pyrénées' was engraved since then in the Spanish consciousness. Spain represented a crossroad where savage/Oriental people had left their mark on the territory and on the Spanish population, and therefore it could not belong to the 'civilised' Europe.

The orientalisation and romanticism of Moorish Spain was particularly stressed by Washington Irving in his *Tales of the Alhambra*:

Behold, for once, *a day-dream realised!* Yet I can scarce credit my senses, or believe that I do indeed inhabit the palace of Boabdil, and look down from its balconies upon chivalric Granada. As I loiter through these Oriental chambers, and hear the murmur of fountains, and the song of the nightingale; as I inhale the odour of the rose, and feel the influence of the balmy climate; *I am almost tempted to fancy myself in the paradise of Mahomet, and that the plump little Dolores is one of the bright-eyed houris*, destined to administer to the happiness of true believers (IRVING, 1835: 37, emphasis added).

His publication greatly influenced the conception Europeans had of Spain, and increased the number of foreign travellers to the Spanish territory (FERNÁNDEZ CIFUENTES, 2010: 201–202) (Fig.2). Northern Europeans who visited Spain in the 19th and early 20th centuries continuously emphasised the Arab features of the country in Toledo, Seville, Alicante, Granada, and many other cities. Describing Alicante, for instance, A. Andros wrote:

We are now surrounded by lofty, rugged mountains, yellow and bare, without the slightest sign of vegetation. The outline of the hills is picturesque: the hard profile of the craggy rocks and deserts of stone, glittering in the already burning rays of the morning sun, form *a truly Arabian picture, and one would scarcely feel surprised to see a train of camels* issuing from any of the defiles we are rapidly passing (1860: 65, emphasis added).

Andalusian cities were particularly 'Oriental', and therefore attracted more visitors than other Spanish regions. Many travellers were amused by

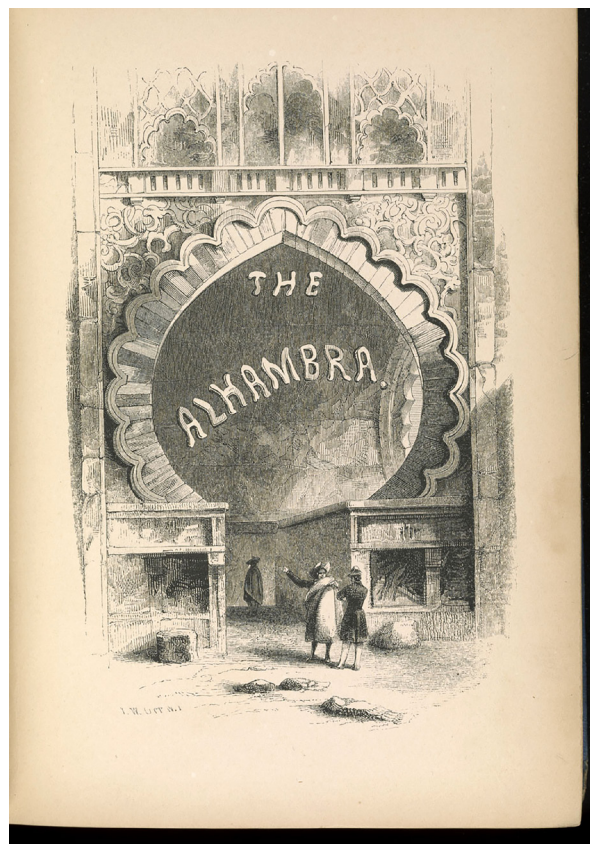


Figure 2. 'The Alhambra', by Washington Irving. Author's Revised Edition. Illustration by Felix O. C. Darley, and engraved by the most eminent artists. New York, G.P. Putman, 1851. The Carl H. Pforzheimer Collection of Shelley and His Circle, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

the Arab architecture in those cities, and complained that Spaniards did not care about the 'poetry and romance' of the Alhambra. Similar to the Bedouins who disregarded the ruins of Palmyra, Spaniards 'lack[ed] the organs of veneration and admiration' (FORD, 1861: 276).

Spanish indifference towards Arab 'pearls' was incomprehensible for British travellers, since for them everything concerning civilisation and advancement in Spain was related to the Arab presence in the country:

Look a little into the history of Spain, and what do facts tell you? *To whom is she indebted for her most sumptuous monuments, her most fertile districts, her most elegant arts, her most picturesque costumes, her most precious products? –To the Moors.* Who brought down the cool waters from rocky prisons, turning whole wastes into sunny vineyards and gardens? The Moors. Who built bridges, fortifications, and watch-towers? The Moors. Who made the Spanish language what it is now, the most sonorous and picturesque of any in Europe? The Moors. Who planted the orange tree and the palm, the fig and the olive? The Moors (BETHAM EDWARDS, 1868: 98–99, emphasis added).

Furthermore, Spaniards were Arabs themselves for northern travellers. 'How much, indeed, has not the Spaniard inherited from the Arab?' –asked rhetorically Matilda Betham Edwards in her trip memoirs (1868: 84). Spanish people, traditions and manners were completely Arabic for northern Europeans:

It is consequently very satisfactory to discover that one can examine almost face to face that people [the Arabs]; [...] so little are the traces of their influence worn away, and so predominant is the portion of it still discernible in the customs, manners, and race of the population of this province, and even to a considerable extent in their language (WELLS, 1846: 316, emphasis added).

It was particularly the Spanish woman the central character of these orientalisising accounts. According to several northern travellers, Arabness was clearly manifested in Spanish females, who like Spain were mysterious and adventurous; traditional but passionate.

4.2. *The exotic and Oriental Spanish woman*

If the Oriental woman was mysterious, exotic and savage, i.e. a femme fatale (HERATH, 2015); the Spanish female was depicted alike by both male and female travellers in the 19th century. The best representation of this hetero-image was the one created and promoted by Frenchman Prosper Mérimée with his novel *Carmen* (1845), further popularised later on by George Bizet's opera. A Spanish Gypsy woman who made every man surrender to her wild sensuality and passion:

There was something strange and wild about her beauty. Her face astonished you, at first sight, but nobody could forget it. Her eyes, especially, had an expression of *mingled sensuality and fierceness, which I had never seen in any other human glance* (MÉRIMÉE, 2006, emphasis added).

The black colour, particularly females' black hair and eyes, was always emphasised in travellers' descriptions following the Oriental imaginary:

Her dress, without being indelicately low, displayed her magnificent shoulders, kissed by her soft and floating tresses, of the *glossiest black and thickest exuberance*. [...] *Her aspect was decidedly oriental*. [...] But what gave to her face its indelible character, and made it such a face as once seen is never forgotten, was the large, lustrous, and *magnificent eyes –black not in the conventional sense of our northern beauties, but blacker than night, or jet, or coal*. An intense depth of dazzling, soul-piercing blackness –eyes of immense volume and roll, now soft as dew, now keen as

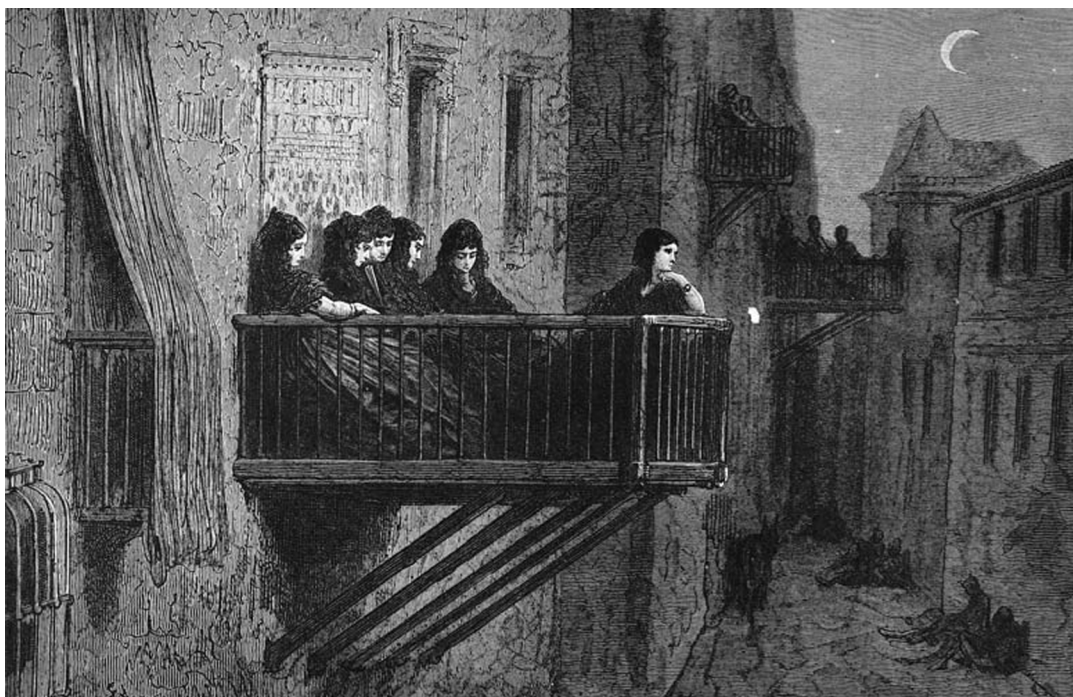


Figure 3. 'L'Espagne', de Baron Charles d'Avillier, 1874. Illustration 'Balcons à Vitoria' by Gustave Doré.

lightning, fringed with long silken lashes of raven hue. What human power is comparable to the influence of such eyes! (HUGHES, 1845: 360–361, emphasis added).

Imageries of the body and dress of women were fundamental in the orientalising narrative of Spain. The Spanish 'mantilla'—a black triangular veil of blond lace—and the fan became common places in the depiction of Spanish ladies by northern European visitors (Fig.3). Once again, they were reminiscences of the Arab past of the country, especially the 'mantilla'. Manuel Manning was sure that it was 'simply a relic of the veil universally worn by the wives and daughters of the Moslem' (MANNING, 1870: 16).

If the veil was a symbol of mysterious but passionate Oriental women (HERATH, 2015), the 'mantilla' and the fan—'abanico'—were used alike by Spanish females to seduce men (or to reject them):

No wonder the 'abanico' is so great a favourite, for none but an Española knows how to wield it; and in her hands it becomes *an elegant as well as a dangerous weapon—a principal auxiliary in the art of intrigue*. With it she speaks a language, understood indeed only by the initiated, but in which, aided by her looks, she can address her admirer almost as plainly as with the words of her mouth; awakening in his breast, by an emphatic furl or motion of her fan, the liveliest joy or the deepest despondency (DENNIS, 1839: 62, emphasis added).

The 'abanico' and the 'mantilla' were a synecdoche of Spanish ladies for foreign visitors. From Navarra and Barcelona to Andalusia, the 'mantilla' was particularly described by British writers and travellers as a fundamental, characteristic, and most of all, authentic element of the Spanish female dress.

Authenticity was key in travel literature. As part of an immovable landscape, travellers expected the Spanish women to always wear the mantilla and the fan, even centuries after the first description of the Spanish female dress was published. Visitors were going to Spain to see, draw and write about what their predecessors described in their journey diaries—Spanish bull fighting, picturesque landscapes, Arab castles, and females with ‘mantilla’ and ‘abanico’, among other essentialist ideas they had of the country.

Similar to the colonial authenticity (cfr. GNECCO, 2012; HARRIS *et al.* 2013), northern European travellers strongly opposed to Spanish females wearing French complements even in the 20th century, because that was not the *real* Spanish clothing (WIDDRINGTON, 1844: 15–17; HERBERT, 1867: 27–28; MOORE, 1927: 62–64). The Other had to be ‘a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite’ (BHABHA, 1994: 122). It needed to be controllable, measurable, cognoscible; and therefore it was necessary to endlessly mark the difference between Spain—the Orient—and the rest of Europe.

5. The Orient within

The Spanish history that 19th-century British and French accounted for was mainly focused on Islamic Spain. Even if there were strong contacts between Jews, Arabs, and Christians in Medieval Europe, it was Spain the country invaded by Muslim Arabs and not their northern neighbours; and therefore it was Spain the one seen as ‘being outside “Europe”’ (ASAD, 2000: 16).

Oriental Spain was constructed in the 19th century as the Oriental Other inside Europe; the region that did not fit the 19th-century European identity narrative of Christianity/purity/modernity. Spaniards were not a ‘pure’ and ‘clean race’ in contrast to northern Europeans (DOTSON-RENTA, 2012: 8–9; see also DOUGLAS, 1966 for the 19th-

century concept of pollution in European anthropology).

Talal Asad rightly points out that ‘while one aspect of the identity of Islamic civilisation is that it represents an early attempt to destroy Europe’s civilisation from outside, another is that it signifies the corrupting moral environment which Europe must continuously struggle to overcome from within’ (2000: 17). If there was a country that better knew that struggle was Spain itself, part of the Islamic Empire for over seven centuries, and safeguard of Christendom virtually since then.

Yet, it was precisely the (corrupting) Oriental past, the Spanish ‘otherness’ what British and French travellers were looking for in their journey to the country. It was the Arab-Muslim heritage what was representative of Spain, in a clear attempt to subvert the Spanish self-identity construction as a Catholic Kingdom since 1492 (FUCHS, 2009: 3).

It is not by chance that Edward Said recognised in the prologue to the Spanish edition of *Orientalism* that Spain was an exceptional case in Europe, because the relationship with the Orient was of coexistence, not of confrontation; for the Orient was inside Spanish culture, not outside as in the French and British case (SAID, 2002: 11–12).

Furthermore, when Oriental Studies were established in France in the 18th-19th centuries, Spain was included in them (DOMÍNGUEZ, 2010: 81). As César Domínguez observes, if Oriental Studies started with the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, so did the Orientalisation of Iberia with the Napoleonic invasion in 1807 (GABILLONDO, 2008: 35; DOMÍNGUEZ, 2010: 81). Spain was for French scholars part of the very same Oriental phenomenon.

As in the case of the ‘Orient’, it was the construction of colonial difference what interested northern Europeans in their definitions

of Spain, especially in the case of French politicians and intellectuals (GONZÁLEZ ALCANTUD, 2006 with bibliography). Spain was usually referred as 'Moorish Mahometan' and 'African' in France (PRADT, 1816: 168), and was commonly associated with Morocco, with whom Spain shared the same stereotypes (GARCÍA ARENAL, 1999; see also CAÑETE JIMÉNEZ, 2011). The association of Spain with Morocco was not deprived of French colonial interests in both areas, but especially in the Maghreb (THOMSON, 1987: 2–9, 144–146).

Additionally, the 19th century was also the period when Spain disappeared from the map of European imperial powers, coinciding with the spread of those stereotypes (GABILONDO, 2008: 35–37). Correspondingly, both French and British accentuated the Oriental past of the country and therefore its Orientalism, whereas barely mentioned their imperial power and significance in the construction of Modernity (cfr. DUSSEL, 1994; see also WALLERSTEIN, 1974; MIGNOLO, 2000).

Said defined Orientalism –albeit excluding Spain– as more than a Western colonial/imperial apparatus. For him, Orientalism is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of “interests” which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world (SAID, 2003 [1978]: 13, emphasis in original).

In a similar way, one could argue that Spain was for 19th–century French and British travellers a distribution of geopolitical awareness, a cons-

cious reconstruction of history that accentuated only the Oriental past practically ignoring the Christian one, more connected to the common European identity.

In a colonial fashion, Spain was an elaboration of a geographical distinction –the Pyrenees as a natural/cultural/political divide between the Oriental Peninsula and Europe. A landscape and sociological description that pretended to define the Orient within Europe, as well as to control and freeze in time the ‘Oriental’ aspects of Spain and its inhabitants.

In this respect, Arab castles and urbanism were implored as truly Spanish, confining Spain to ‘the Orient’ in clear opposition to northern Europe. Similarly, Spanish females were characterised as unequivocally Oriental, not only because of their physical features –black hair and eyes, tanned skin–, but most importantly because of their clothing and complements of ‘Oriental’ origin and style.

Travel narratives showed a (conscious or unconscious) will of manipulating Spanish history through its Orientalisation. Such Orientalism was deeply connected to French and British imperial policies in Africa and the East, where they constructed and marked a clear colonial difference which was not very dissimilar to the one created for the Spanish case.

6. Acknowledgments

This paper benefited substantially from discussion with Stefan Hanß. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this manuscript, as those comments led me to better clarify my argument and improve the work.

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