

## When faraway is nearby: European travellers through Spain

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**Abstract.** *Leading foreign artists in the Nineteenth Century elected Spain as a destination during their travels, in pursuit of an exotic land. The image of Spain was recreated through their memoirs, travel guides, novels, librettos and paintings. While these travellers encountered the Spain they dreamt about, national artists depicted a specific iconography about what it meant to live “in the Spanish style”, including the practice or the presence of music in their works.*

*These art works included musical instruments to establish a dream of exoticism, even for the Spanish painters and writers. While these travellers discovered their own dreams about Spain, Spanish artists created a specific image of what “a la española” meant. The real world was transformed when the artist considered that it was not typical enough. In fact, they could be criticized if their canvas did not look “really Spanish”. These images allow us to analyze the representation of music as a significant recreation of national identity and its cultural and social significance.*

**Riassunto.** *I principali artisti stranieri nel XIX secolo individuarono la Spagna come meta preferita durante i loro viaggi alla ricerca di una terra esotica. L'immagine della Spagna è stata ricreata attraverso i romanzi, i libretti, i dipinti, le memorie e le cronache di viaggio che essi realizzarono. Mentre questi viaggiatori incontrano la Spagna che avevano sognato, gli artisti crearono un'iconografia specifica sul “vivere alla spagnola”, includendo nelle loro opere anche la presenza della musica.*

*Gli elementi musicali presenti in queste opere, realizzate da pittori e scrittori spagnoli, contribuivano a definire un sogno di esotismo, una specifica immagine di ciò che vuole essere “a la española”. Quando si accorgono che il mondo reale non è abbastanza tipico, essi lo trasformano, consapevoli che i loro lavori sarebbero stati criticati se non fossero sembrati “abbastanza spagnoli. Queste immagini mostrano come la creazione dell'identità nazionale e del suo significato culturale e sociale trovi nella rappresentazione della musica uno dei suoi mezzi più efficaci.*

«You are leaving for Spain. I am glad that you have finally decided. Amazing discoveries, great joy and unique delights await you. Your journey will not be fruitless»<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> C. MELCHOR, *La España de Manet*, Málaga, Edinexus, 2003, p. 47.

In 1865, the writer, painter and composer, Zacharie Astruc, wrote these encouraging lines to his friend Edouard Manet concerning the journey of an artist already fascinated by the image of Spanish musicians prior to his visit to the country. Like Manet, other leading foreign artists in the Nineteenth century also elected Spain as a destination during their travels, in pursuit of that which they hoped to find, a land brimming with exoticism. Acting as cultural agents, during their visits they encountered the elements they believed intrinsic to a uniquely evocative country, overflowing with beauty, guitars and festivities. The image of Spain was recreated through their works, and they incorporated apparently irrefutable symbols in their memoirs, travel guides, novels, librettos and paintings.

When Manet was a child, his maternal uncle, Captain Edouard Fournier, took him to the Spanish Gallery in the Louvre Museum, organised by another traveller to Spain, Baron Taylor<sup>2</sup>.

The exhibition exerted an important influence, as it introduced many artists to an artistic style defined by the art critic Charles Blanc as «impassioned, dedicated, sombre, mystical and brutal». The sensation evoked on moving from the French galleries to those of the Spanish collection was «[...] as though midst the sound of worldly music one suddenly heard the lugubrious strains of the *Dies Irae*»<sup>3</sup>.

The Spanish painter Martín Rico wrote of Manet's predilection for the folkloric image of Spain: «I met Manet early in his career; he was very fond of Spain, and extraordinarily enthusiastic about our customs and people [...]»<sup>4</sup>. Among Manet's oeuvre, amply endowed with works of Spanish inspiration, is an 1862 portrait of Dolores Melea, a dancer with the Spanish Ballet whose stage name was Lola de Valencia<sup>5</sup> (Fig.1) and who had performed successfully in Paris with the company's principal dancer, Mariano Camprubí. Manet was not of course the only artist to portray Spanish musicians. Gustave Courbet, for example, had his own model, the dancer Adela Guerrero<sup>6</sup>. Every detail of these works seems to have been chosen to depict a colourful and picturesque image. The portrait was considered a remarkable artistic expression of exoticism and intensity; its strength was admired as an example of Spanish passion, but was also heavily criticised for what was seen as uncontrolled eroticism. The painting was the subject of a poem by Charles Baudelaire: «Among so many beauties as we can see everywhere/I understand, my

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<sup>2</sup> Isidore-Justin Taylor (Brussels, 1789-Paris, 1879) was commissioned by King Louis Philippe to organise the exhibition of the Spanish collection at the Louvre Museum. He authored the *Voyage Pittoresque en Espagne*, two volumes with engravings based on his drawings. Cfr. H. MACARTNEY, *Baron Isidore Justin Taylor*, in «Enciclopedia del Museo Nacional del Prado», Madrid, Fundación Amigos del Museo del Prado, available at: <https://www.museodelprado.es/enciclopedia/enciclopedia-on-line/voz/taylor-baron-isidore-justin/> (last accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> CH. BLANC, *Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles: École espagnole*, vol. 5, Paris, Renouard, 1869, p. 4. In P. BESAS, *The written road to Spain. The golden decades of Travel: 1820-1850*, Madrid, the author, 1988, p. 115.

<sup>4</sup> M. RICO, *Recuerdos de mi vida*, Madrid, Imprenta Ibérica, 1906, p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> E. MANET, *Lola de Valence*, 123 x 92 cm, Paris, D'Orsay Museum, 1862.

<sup>6</sup> G. COURBET, *Signora Adela Guerrero, Spanish dancer*, 158 x 158 cm., Brussels, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, 1851.

friends, how the desire doubts/But in Lola of Valencia shines/an unexpected charm of a pink and black jewel»<sup>7</sup>.

Meanwhile, Astruc composed a work inspired by the portrait, *Serenade*<sup>8</sup>, which he dedicated to the Queen of Spain. Astruc had also travelled through Spain, and his experience inspired him to produce musical, literary and pictorial pieces. Fifteen years earlier, in 1846, Baudelaire had commented on the importance of perception in works of romantic art: «Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subject nor in exact truth, but in a way of feeling»<sup>9</sup>. Thus, he decided «[...] to proudly resign myself to modesty, and be content to feel»<sup>10</sup>. His attitude was closely echoed by another great traveller, Stendhal, who wrote: «My aim is not to describe things as they are, but rather to describe the sensation they have provoked in me»<sup>11</sup>.

The goal of travellers in pursuit of new experiences was to explore feelings and emotions, and Spain offered this possibility. Rarely considered a destination within the Grand Tour, it was Spain's promise of adventure that attracted travellers. For many, that was what a trip to Spain meant.

### 1. *To travel around Spain was a romantic endeavour*

«Spain is the quintessential romantic country».  
Théophile Gautier

Its peripheral location and the cultural perception of Spain as a far flung country connecting civilised Europe and the exotic South, fostered the image of a unique country. Spain was both censured and praised for its apparent unfamiliarity and strangeness. In the early Nineteenth Century, Cruzy de Marillac noted that «to speak of Spain to a Frenchman is like speaking of China [...]»<sup>12</sup>. The same opinion

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<sup>7</sup> «Entre tant de beautés que partout on peut voir./Je comprends bien, amis, que le désir balance;/Mais on voit scintiller en Lola de Valence/le charme inattendu d'un bijou rose et noir». CH. BAUDELAIRE, *Les Épaves*, N. 15, «Les fleurs du mal», Arvensa Edition, 2014, p. 222 (translations by the author).

<sup>8</sup> Z. ASTRUC, *Lola de Valence (Serenade)*, Paris, L. Parent, 1863.

<sup>9</sup> «Le romantisme n'est précisément ni dans le choix des sujets ni dans la vérité exacte, mais dans la manière de sentir». CH. BAUDELAIRE, *Curiosités esthétiques. L'Art romantique et autres œuvres critiques*, chapter 3, Paris, Garnier Frères, 1969. In the National Library of France, available at: <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k101426n> (last accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> «[...] je me suis orgueilleusement résigné à la modestie: je me suis contenté de sentir». *Ivi*.

<sup>11</sup> F.J.S. ROLAND, *Viajeros ilustrados. El Grand Tour, el siglo XVIII y el mundo catalogado*, Histórica, 2005, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> C. DE MARILLAC, *Nouveau voyage en Espagne*, Paris, Normant, 1803, p. 9. Cfr. M. DEL M. SERRANO, *Viajes y viajeros por la España del siglo XIX*, Barcelona, GeoCrítica, 98, 1993, p. 11.

was asserted, at the end of the Century, by the critic Charles Whibley, who remarked: «The Peninsula is further from England than Australia»<sup>13</sup>.

Fleeing from progress and a life of peace and security, some travellers delighted in every discomfort they encountered. For example, Prosper Mérimée, who played such an important part in the recreation of Spain as an intensely unique country and who had visited it six times, wrote in 1830, the year of his first six month visit<sup>14</sup>, of the difficulties enjoyed during a trip from Algeciras to Granada<sup>15</sup>, describing it as a romantic experience: «It took us eight days to reach Granada. It is true that we followed the most romantic route in the world, in other words, the hilliest, the stoniest, and the most deserted track that ever tried the patience of a traveller»<sup>16</sup>.

These difficulties formed part of several anecdotal stories. For example, Washington Irving enthused: «What a country is Spain for a traveller, where the most miserable inn is as full of adventure as an enchanted castle, and every meal is in itself an achievement»<sup>17</sup>. Less generous in this regard was the opinion of the aforementioned Manet, who declared: «[...] although this country provides a feast for the eyes, one's stomach suffers tortures»<sup>18</sup>. Meanwhile, Mérimée considered Spain a less civilised country, and this state of affairs an advantage, since «as the century advances [...] it renders everything the same, [...] and degrades everything»<sup>19</sup>. He noted that «in a short while, all countries will have become so alike that it will no longer be worth travelling»<sup>20</sup>.

It was not only foreign travellers who expressed themselves thus. In 1864, the poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer wrote that «the prosaic levelling rod of civilisation is rendering everything the same. An irresistible and mysterious impulse merges one culture with another [...]. As [...] civilisation invades our country, its characteristic features, immemorial customs, colourful costumes and antiquated ideas are lost»<sup>21</sup>.

Some texts distinguished between travellers depending on the geographical destinations that these elected. For example, Alexander Laborde classified them as follows: «The infirm headed to Nice and Montpellier; the most intrepid to Pisa [...], connoisseurs of the arts travelled through Italy; economists believed there was

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<sup>13</sup> CH. WHIBLEY, *Spain at the new Gallery*. Cfr. A. ATERIDO, *Corpus Velazqueño*, vol. 2, Madrid, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2000, p. 812.

<sup>14</sup> The list of journeys is given in A. PARDO, *La visión del arte español en los viajeros franceses del siglo XIX*, Valladolid, Secretariado de Publicaciones, University of Valladolid, 1989, p. 402.

<sup>15</sup> That is, a distance of 256 kilometers.

<sup>16</sup> M. DEL M. SERRANO, *Viajes y viajeros por la España del siglo XIX*, cit., p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> P. BESAS, *The written road to Spain. The golden decades of Travel: 1820-1850*, cit., p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> E. MANET, *Letter to Charles Baudelaire*, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1865. Cfr. J. WILSON-BAREAU, ed., *Manet by himself, Correspondance and Conversation*, London, Macdonald and Company Limited, 1991, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> N. ORTEGA CANTERO, *El paisaje de España en los viajeros románticos*, in «Eria: Revista cuatrimestral de geografía», 22, 1990, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> P. MERIMEE, *Viajes a España*, in G. RAMOS GONZALEZ, ed., Madrid, Aguilar, 1988, pp. 223, 269. Cfr. N. ORTEGA CANTERO, *El paisaje de España*, cit., p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> J. VEGA, *Viajar a España en la primera mitad del siglo XIX: Una aventura lejos de la civilización*, in «Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares», 59, 2, 2004, p. 121.

nothing to be learnt beyond the homeland of Smith and Arthur Young», and so the latter remained in England<sup>22</sup>.

The writer Théophile Gautier described Spain as a nation that evoked longing, as follows: «Beyond his own country, each man has an adopted country [...] a dreamt-about country [...]. For us, it is Spain»<sup>23</sup>. Gautier's work possessed an abundance of elements considered intensely Spanish, evidencing a taste for the folkloric among a public eager to read exotic stories.

The perception of Spain as a romantic country meant that each work of art contained the promise of exoticism. This was the image pursued because it was what people expected to see. Curiosity spurred journeys in search of the distinctive elements of a country that, so close to the borders, seemed to promise a far off charm.

## 2. *Artistic practice and national identity*

«The most beautiful things are in the South».

Prosper Mérimée<sup>24</sup>

The beauty of Spanish women was a recurrent theme, often associated with music through the inclusion of instruments in stories about performances, in turn mainly based on the use of guitars and tambourines (Fig. 2). In this regard, in 1799 the writer Alexander Jardine commented: «We have been pleasantly surprised in this country to find such quick wit, grace and reason in the women [...]. Their talent and disposition for music, their beautiful songs and, more importantly, their fascinating and charming manner of singing, all contribute to crown all their power and influence»<sup>25</sup>.

From among a wide range of musical styles, travellers preferred those elements which reflected what was considered «Spanish identity». They were especially interested in Andalusia, recounting a characteristic way of life in which music formed an important element. Works inspired by Spain often depicted musical instruments, used to illustrate an artistic practice possessed of an aura of uniqueness.

The German traveller Christian August Fischer chose picturesque events and customs, such as festivals, bullfights and theatres. Fascinated, he described dances such as a particularly intense *Bolero*: «[...] The castanets can be heard and two

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<sup>22</sup> A. LABORDE, *Itineraire descriptif de l'Espagne, et tableau élémentaire des différences branches de l'administration et de l'industrie de ce royaume*, vol. 1, Paris, H. Nicolle et Lenormant, 1808, p. 142. Cfr. M. DEL M. SERRANO, *Viajes y viajeros por la España del siglo XIX*, cit., p.11.

<sup>23</sup> «Outre sa patrie naturelle, chaque homme a une patrie d' adoption, un pays rêvé [...]. Nous, c'est en Espagne que nous avons toujours élevé ces châteaux fantastiques». TH. GAUTIER, *Quand on voyage*, Paris, M. Lévy Frères, 1865, p. 245. M. GINE JANER, *Las traducciones españolas de los relatos fantásticos de Gautier. Análisis y Perspectivas*, in «Narrativa fantástica en el siglo XIX: España e Hispanoamérica», J.P. IBANEZ, Milenio, ed. Lleida, 1997, p. 236.

<sup>24</sup> P. MERIMEE, *Viajes a España*, cit., p. 88, in N. ORTEGA CANTERO, *El paisaje de España en los viajeros románticos*, cit., p. 132.

<sup>25</sup> A. JARDINE, *Cartas de España*, letter 29, 1799. Cfr. M. BOLUFER PERUGA, *Civilización, Costumbres y Política en la literatura de viajes a España en el siglo XVIII*, in «Estudis», 29, 2003, p. 285.

dancers seem to fly from each corner of the theatre, both wearing the beautiful Andalusian costume created for the dance. They soar one towards the other as if they had been searching for each other». Fischer depicted this performance in ardent terms: «[...] the more passionately the strings sound, the more abruptly they change their movements. Delirium, ecstasy and sensuality seem to unite the two [...]. Suddenly, the music stops, the dancers draw back as if in a sweet daze, the curtain falls and the audience awakes»<sup>26</sup>. It is easy to understand the fascination aroused by these descriptions. At the same time, references to the morality of Spanish dances were sometimes negatively charged. For example, Samuel Widdrington considered that his compatriots had «made so many unwarranted comments of various sorts concerning the morality of the women from Cádiz and Málaga that they have provoked their anger»<sup>27</sup>.

Fischer considered the *Bolero* an example of Andalusian identity: «Only the Andalusian people possess the ability to perform this dance, thanks to the climate, their temperament, their beauty and their agility. It is a marvel to see them dancing in a couple [...] the great and the minor ballets are forgotten, as dances of lifeless figures»<sup>28</sup>.

Meanwhile, Théophile Gautier categorically stated:

In Spain, dancing is a joy to the performer. Every toss of her head, every gesture of her hands is a delight. Her feet barely touch the ground, she exudes excitement, and the magnetism of her passion galvanizes every man who watches her. [...] I can assure you that nobody can hold a candle to the spontaneous delirium of fifty or sixty Spaniards cheering those dancers in the upper room of a café in Sevilla<sup>29</sup>. (Fig. 3)

Despite the aforementioned criticisms of their morality, Spanish dances aroused intense interest. Often, the term “Gypsy dance” was used to describe an experience even when it did not correspond to the reality. Baron Charles Davilliers expressed his lucid opinion in this respect: «These dances, organised in advance and tailored to the taste of foreigners, have nothing of their original savagery nor the unique flavour of the unexpected»<sup>30</sup>. This view coincided with the opinion of the Finnish painter, Albert Edelfelt, who was disappointed by a dance performance because he did not feel that this spectacle for tourists was authentic, especially when it was performed by dancers whom he considered to be far removed from the expected ideal of beauty. The entire show was «a bad farce, aimed at extorting money from

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<sup>26</sup> C.A. FISCHER, *Reiseabentheuer, Erstes Bändchen und zweites Bändchen*, Dresde, 1802, p. 396. Cfr. H. FRIEDERICH-STEGMANN, *Andalucía vista por Christian August Fischer, viajero alemán del siglo XVIII*, in «Los Extranjeros en la España Moderna», vol. 2, Málaga, 2003, pp. 217-218.

<sup>27</sup> S.E. WIDDRINGTON, *Spain and the Spaniards in 1834*, London, T. and W. Boons, 1844. Cfr. M. DEL M. SERRANO, *Viajes y viajeros por la España del siglo XIX*, cit., p. 4; Serrano indicates: «The judgments about the dubious morals of the Andalusian women to which this author refers, were often based on the way they performed traditional local dances, which shocked the English», p. 26.

<sup>28</sup> H. FRIEDERICH-STEGMANN, *Andalucía vista por Christian August Fischer, viajero alemán del siglo XVIII*, cit., p. 225.

<sup>29</sup> P. BESAS, *The written road to Spain. The golden decades of Travel: 1820-1850*, cit., p. 181.

<sup>30</sup> CH. DAVILLIER, *Viaje por España*, Madrid, Adalia, 1894, vol. 1, p. 271, (first edition, 1863). Cfr. M. DEL M. SERRANO, *Viajes y viajeros por la España del siglo XIX*, cit., p. 26.

foreigners. However, beneath this grotesque imitation of the Gypsy dance, one can catch a glimpse of what it was originally»<sup>31</sup>.

Inns regularly organised free festivities and dances for clients. The musicians might be amateurs, often inn employees or owners and their relatives. Washington Irving recounted how the innkeeper's daughter and waitress danced a *Fandango* for travellers, accompanied by a cheerful shoemaker playing the guitar. Pepita «slipped away to put on her dancing togs, and to place a rose in her hair. When she reappeared, she proceeded to dance a *Bolero*»<sup>32</sup>. Albert Edelfelt also enjoyed several evenings in the Toledo home of a carpenter considered an excellent guitarist, whose daughter Petra reminded him of Goya's *La Maja*. The entire evening reminded him of the inn in Don Quixote, and was thus a unique experience. For Edelfelt, Petra was «Sarah Bernard in *Hernani* [...] but more authentic, with much more character, because there was no artificial stage scenery, but the tall yellow-grey walls of Toledo, and the stage was not lit by gas, but by the moon and thousands of stars»<sup>33</sup>.

Some might even have considered evenings without Spanish guitars and dances to be at odds with the national identity. The philologist Wilhelm von Humboldt disdained the soirées of the upper classes<sup>34</sup>. Thus, although he met the musicologist Antonio Eximeno, he made no reference to him, nor to the elegant parties to which he was invited and where he listened to music. However, he did describe works that were considered to exhibit “the national character”, such as *The Gypsy and love*. In this piece, the artist Lorenza Correa created

An eternal game of eyes and vocal inflections. It is the most refined, sweet and yet folkloric coquetry and seduction that anyone could witness [...]. Lorenza Correa, the best Spanish singer there, performed the role to perfection. It is well worth seeing because it is completely typical of the country<sup>35</sup>.

It was not only foreigners who expressed an opinion on the subject. Manuel de Cuendias, a Spanish exile teaching in Paris, defined Spanish dances as «a challenge to human passion, a derangement of the soul, an intoxication of the senses». Thus, music became «a delightful interlude to this tragicomedy called civilised existence, [...] a demented work of that pedant known as reason which heart always spurns»<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> M. GRONVOLD, *El pintor Albert Edelfelt y su viaje por España*, in «Academia: Boletín de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando», 14, 1962, p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> P. BESAS, *The written road to Spain. The golden decades of Travel: 1820-1850*, cit., p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> M. GRONVOLD, *El pintor Albert Edelfelt y su viaje por España*, cit., pp. 62-63.

<sup>34</sup> M.J. DE LA TORRE MOLINA, *La música y el baile en España a través de la mirada de Wilhelm von Humboldt (1799-1800)*, in «Los Extranjeros en la España Moderna», 2, Málaga, 2003, p. 752.

<sup>35</sup> W. VON HUMBOLT, *Diario de viaje a España, 1799-1800*, M. A. VEGA, ed., Madrid, 1998, pp. 112-113. Cfr. M.J. DE LA TORRE MOLINA, *La música y el baile en España*, cit., p. 756.

<sup>36</sup> M. DE CUENDIAS, V. DE FERREAL (Mime. DE SUBERWICK), *L'Espagne pittoresque, artistique et monumentale. Mœurs, usages et coutumes*, Paris, Librairie Ethnographie, 1848, p. 38. Cfr. M. DEL M. SERRANO, *Viajes y viajeros por la España del siglo XIX*, cit., p. 18.

### 3. Romantic *Costumbrismo*

« Will you fly with me from the dull toil of vulgar life?  
Will you wander for a moment amid the plains of  
Granada? ». Benjamin Disraeli<sup>37</sup>

The use of music within a specific social and cultural sphere transcended the bounds of its own creative space to permeate that of painting, demonstrating the value and function of music in a given society and period. Musical instruments were depicted on canvas to present an exotic image, even when this was the artist's own country. This quest for originality also formed part of the works by Spanish creators. Thus, while foreign travellers encountered the Spain they dreamt about, national artists depicted a specific iconography about what it meant to live «in the Spanish style». Their works allow us to analyse the representation of music as part of an influential recreation of national identity that included the social uses of music.

One of the places considered most exotic was Granada, described by the painter Martín Rico as a «charming town, brimming with legends, festivals, Gypsy dances and tournaments»<sup>38</sup>.

Rico was invited to Granada by his friend, the painter Mariano Fortuny, who wrote: «Come here [...] it is more picturesque than Seville»<sup>39</sup>. The artists shared spaces and interests, modifying the real world when it was not sufficiently characteristic or distinctive.

From Eighteenth century *majas* to Nineteenth century female dancers dressed “in the Spanish style”, Spanish and foreign artists produced works infused with an inspired sensuality that included music. An analysis of these works provides an insight into the aesthetics of an era. Thus, we can assess the interest that musical instruments endowed to an image. They repeatedly appeared as an element accompanying those who desired to display a talent, whether real or feigned since it was not considered necessary to know how to play an instrument to stand by its side in a portrait, and were also used to depict an economic, social and cultural level that might be imaginary, a fiction, or realistic.

Romantic *costumbrismo* also provided the opportunity for criticism, this time with reference to a religious ritual. A priest come to administer the last rites would be announced by a boy ringing a bell to the cry of “God's majesty”. As described by the author José María Blanco White, «the sound produces a magical effect on the Spanish. [...] the most absurd effect can be seen in the theatre [...] everyone falls immediately to their knees. The actors fall silent, the drumsticks accompanying the *Fandango* fall mute, and all movement ceases for a few minutes until the chime of

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<sup>37</sup> B. DISRAELI, *Contarini Fleming, A Psychological Autobiography*, New York, J. and J. Harper, 1832. Cfr. P. BESAS, *The written road to Spain. The golden decades of Travel: 1820-1850*, cit., p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> M. RICO, *Recuerdos de mi vida*, cit., p. 65.

<sup>39</sup> J. BARON, *El paisajista Martín Rico*, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, 2012, p. 31.



the bell fades away into the distance, the performance resumes and the devout performers rise again to satisfy the public after the unexpected interruption»<sup>40</sup>.

#### 4. *Social gatherings and popular music*

«Nothing can be more oriental or picturesque than these *tertulias* in a courtyard». Richard Ford<sup>41</sup>

The paintings depict the presence of music and musical instruments in everyday life. They show differences in popular, bourgeois and aristocratic spaces, the wealth or simplicity of the objects in these environments, the place and importance they are assigned, and their use. Musical instruments could be depicted in customary use or displayed as a decorative object. They constitute iconographic elements employed to represent characters with a specific identity, either as performers or consumers of music. These spaces depict the model of music education and its function. An analysis of the elements surrounding the people portrayed provides an insight into the symbols employed to represent a given style and behaviour. Hands on guitars or studied poses were possibilities for inclusion in each work.

The representation of modest spaces and environments occasionally transmitted a traditional character appreciated by the wealthiest classes, in pursuit of a unique feature far removed from their affluent surroundings, as a charming entertainment. Dressing «in the Spanish style» but using expensive fabrics, dancing popular dances or imitating the language of the masses: everything could become an amusing diversion that in turn fostered the recreation of the so-called «real Spain».

In *Militona*<sup>42</sup>, Gautier relates the confrontation between two social classes, each described through their musical tastes and interests. Like the author, the young protagonist, Andrés, is passionate about popular Spanish music. His boredom with the musical tastes of his own social sphere reflects his interest in other ways of life that he considers authentic, and his reluctance to attend aristocratic gatherings. At one of those meetings, «Andrés [...], unfortunately sat at the piano, performed his part of Bellini's duo inordinately out of tune [...]. No other elegant evening had ever caused him more pain, and he wished the Marquise de Benavides and his coterie in hell»<sup>43</sup>.

Gautier's assessment of Spanish music gatherings was also negative, as can be seen from his journals: «I went to a few parties, or *tertulias*, but they did not offer any very peculiar features. The guests dance to the piano as they do in France, but

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<sup>40</sup> J.M. BLANCO WHITE, Madrid, 1972, pp. 45-46. Cfr. J. L. DIEZ, J. BARON, *El Siglo XIX en el Prado*, Madrid, Museo Nacional del Prado, 2007, pp.136-137.

<sup>41</sup> R. FORD, *Manual para viajeros por Andalucía y lectores en casa. Reino de Sevilla*, Madrid, Turner, 1981, p. 47. Cfr. N. ORTEGA CANTERO, *El paisaje de España en los viajeros románticos*, cit., p. 133.

<sup>42</sup> TH. GAUTIER, *La maja y el torero*, Sevilla, Barataria, 2010, (first edition, 1845, entitled *Militona*).

<sup>43</sup> ID., *La maja y el torero*, cit., p. 59.

in a still more modern and lamentable fashion. [...] The fear of being exposed to a charge of indulging in a *Bolero*, a *Fandango*, or a *Cachucha*, renders the ladies perfectly motionless»<sup>44</sup>. The financial outlay, in his opinion, did not seem to be high: «The *tertulias* cannot be very expensive. The refreshments are remarkable for their absence; there is neither tea, nor ices, nor punch. On a table in one of the rooms are a dozen glasses of perfectly pure water and a plate of *azucarillos*; [...] it is not the result of avarice, but custom»<sup>45</sup>. Mérimée also unhesitatingly chose a more popular atmosphere (Fig. 4), since «[...] there is a heightened sensation and natural education among the common people that attracts me just as much as salon discussions repel and bore me»<sup>46</sup>.

Compared with salon music, Gautier assigned a taste for popular music to a more modest social class. Militona, the *maja* of the novel's title (Fig. 5), describes her interests, which consist of attending the bullfight on Mondays, as «[...] us women, who do not have books, pianos, theatres or social gatherings like the ladies, enjoy these simple but grandiose spectacles [...]»<sup>47</sup>.

### 5. Spain, the dream of exoticism

«Bulgaria, Turkey, Crimea, Spain, have been vast feasts  
for the eyes [...]». Charles Baudelaire<sup>48</sup>

Visitors did not want to see what they already had in their own countries. Mérimée was disappointed by the limited number of bandits and guitars he encountered, and by those Spaniards who “talked of industry and railroads”<sup>49</sup>. However, he described an abundance of musical elements in his works: «[...] I have seen a mandolin leaning against a wall. In Spain there are mandolins everywhere»<sup>50</sup>. His distaste for a level of reality was clear: «Everything is changing in Spain, it's becoming as dull as France»<sup>51</sup>. Richard Ford also categorically concluded: «[...] Here, everything that is an imitation is [...] second hand, and

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<sup>44</sup> ID., *Wanderings in Spain*, London, Ingram, Cooke and Company, 1853, pp. 89-90.

<sup>45</sup> *Ivi*, p. 90.

<sup>46</sup> P. MERIMEE, *Correspondance Générale établie par Maurice Parturier*, vol. 7, letter 10<sup>th</sup> november 1853 from Madrid to Boissonade, Paris, Le Divan, 1941, p. 210. Cfr. A. PARDO, *La visión del arte español en los viajeros franceses del siglo XIX*, cit., p. 406.

<sup>47</sup> TH. GAUTIER, *La maja y el torero*, cit., p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> CH. BAUDELAIRE, *The Painter from the modern life*, 1863.

<sup>49</sup> P. MERIMEE, *Viajes a España*, cit., letter 11<sup>th</sup> November 1859 from Madrid. Cfr. M. DEL M. SERRANO, *Viajes y viajeros por la España del siglo XIX*, cit., p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> «[...] avisant une mandoline accrochée contre la muraille. Y a partout des mandolines en Espagne», P. MERIMEE, *Carmen*, Classiques du Monde, George Thoné, first edition, 1846, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup> ID., *Viajes a España*, cit., letter 11<sup>th</sup> November 1859 from Madrid. Cfr. J. VEGA, *Viajar a España en la primera mitad del siglo XIX: Una aventura lejos de la civilización*, in «Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares», cit., p.121.

therefore it displeases foreigners, who hope to recapture in Spain everything that has been lost and forgotten in other nations»<sup>52</sup>.

However, this attitude was also criticised. The traveller George Borrow recounted his tour of Spain distributing Protestant Bibles. In his account, he critically remarked: «It is not from having seen a bullfight at Seville or Madrid, or having spent a handful of ounces at a *posada* [...] that you are competent to write about such a people as the Spaniards, and to tell the world how they think, how they speak, and how they act»<sup>53</sup>.

Blanco White criticised the predilection for what he termed “unfaithful charms” in the iconographic representation of Spanish scenes: «Would the English like someone to paint views of London with people in fancy dress? [...] But this is what happens with almost everything that appears on the market here. The same applies to travel books, barring a very few exceptions»<sup>54</sup>.

As we shall see, this fascination with the unusual was also apparent among foreign writers travelling through Spain. When analysing assessments of the reality of Spanish music, it should be born in mind that stereotypes exerted an enormous influence on a Spain whose attraction was a traditional character that was sometimes perceived as the sole national identity, and with instruments such as the guitar. For example, María José de la Torre has remarked: «Foreign travellers [...] dismissed the more sophisticated expressions of music and claimed that the only music native to Spain comprised popular songs (*Seguidillas* and *Tonadillas*) and music for dancing»<sup>55</sup>. De la Torre concluded: «[...] they presented a very incomplete picture of Spanish reality. However, their vision was fundamental in constructing and popularising stereotypes that even today influence the interpretation of Spain's musical history, especially beyond our borders»<sup>56</sup>.

Thus, it would be as well to bear in mind the impact of the eye of the beholder on the reception of the stylistic elements and social habits described, as Peter Burke has remarked:

Studies of the history of travel often focus on the stereotyped ways in which an unfamiliar culture is perceived and described, distinguishing imperial, female, picturesque and other kinds of eye. It can

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<sup>52</sup> R. FORD, *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain*, 1845. Cfr. I. ROBERTSON, *Los curiosos impertinentes: viajeros ingleses por España desde la accession de Carlos III hasta 1855*. F.J. MAYANS, ed., Barcelona, Serbal, CSIC, 1988, p. 237.

<sup>53</sup> G. BORROW, *The Bible in Spain. The Journey, Adventures, and Imprisonment of an Englishman in an Attempt to Circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula*, London, Cassell and Company, 1908 (first edition, 1846). Cfr. P. BESAS, *The written road to Spain. The golden decades of Travel: 1820-1850*, cit., p.73.

<sup>54</sup> J. VEGA, *Viajar a España en la primera mitad del siglo XIX: Una aventura lejos de la civilización*, cit., p. 101.

<sup>55</sup> M.J. DE LA TORRE MOLINA, *Música y baile en los relatos de viajeros extranjeros por Andalucía (1759-1833)*, in «Campos interdisciplinarios de la Musicología », vol. 1, Barcelona, 2000, p. 105.

<sup>56</sup> *Ivi*, p. 105.

be shown that some travellers have read about the country before they ever set foot in it, and on arrival they saw what they had learnt to expect<sup>57</sup>.

As we have seen, the writer Théophile Gautier was fascinated by everything loaded with exoticism. His emotions before beginning his journey of discovery through Spain, expressed as follows, are therefore understandable:

After a few more turns of the wheel, I may lose one of my illusions and watch the Spain of my dreams fade away, the Spain of folk songs, of Victor Hugo's ballads, of Mérimée's novels[...]. Crossing the border, I remembered what the good and wise Henri Heine had said to me at a Liszt concert, his German accent full of humour and malice: 'How will you be able to talk about Spain once you've been there?'<sup>58</sup>

Returning to Paris after his trip to Spain, his editor Emile Girardin insisted on a colourful image of the country, and the editor's wife, the writer Delphine de Girardin, asked Gautier ironically: «How, Theo, is it that there are no Spanish in Spain?». Subsequently, picturesque stories frequently appeared in his work:

He rattles the castanets under his cloak. Directly she hears them, the lady pricks up her ears; she smiles, her breast heaves, and the tip of her little satin shoe marks the time in spite of her; she throws aside her fan and her mantilla, and appears in a gay dancing costume, glittering with spangles and tinsel, with a rose in her hair, and a large tortoiseshell comb at the back of her head. The cavalier then casts aside his mask and cloak, and the two personages execute a deliciously original dance<sup>59</sup>.

Spain as viewed through the eyes of artists possessed an exotic way of life in which music was an important element. While Spain was reinterpreted by foreign travellers, Spanish artists created their own way of observing the habits and customs of the country, including the practice or the presence of music in their works.

Fact or fiction, deep or superficial knowledge, picturesque or realistic reflection of Spanish society, all of this is to be found in the stories of those who came to Spain. The quest for originality, of a unique and evocative essence, and a fascination for a country considered remote from civilised Europe, enveloped their works in an aura of exoticism. These elements formed part of the recreation of the image of an entire country that seemed, in the words of Rousseau, to show pride in being if not better, at least different.

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<sup>57</sup> P. BURKE, *What is Cultural History?*, Cambridge, Polity, 2008, p. 65.

<sup>58</sup> «Encore quelques tours de roue, je vais peut-être perdre une de mes illusions, et voir s'envoler l'Espagne de mes rêves, l'Espagne du romancero, des ballades de Victor Hugo, des nouvelles de Mérimée et de contes d'Alfred de Musset. En franchissant la ligne de démarcation, je me souviens de ce que le bon et spirituel Henri Heine me disait au concert de Liszt, avec son accent allemand plein d'humour et de malice: 'Comment ferez-vous pour parler de l'Espagne quand vous y aurez été?'». TH. GAUTIER, *Voyage en Espagne*, 1, Paris, Elibron Classics Series, Adaman Media Corporation, 2006, p. 8. Fac-simile of the edition published by Charpentier, Paris, 1845.

<sup>59</sup> TH. GAUTIER, *Wanderings in Spain*, cit., p. 232.

*Appendice immagini*



Fig. 1. E. Manet, *Lola de Valence*. *The Yorck Project, 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei, Direct-Media Publishing, 2002*. In *Wikimedia Commons*, available at: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edouard\\_Manet\\_044.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Edouard_Manet_044.jpg)

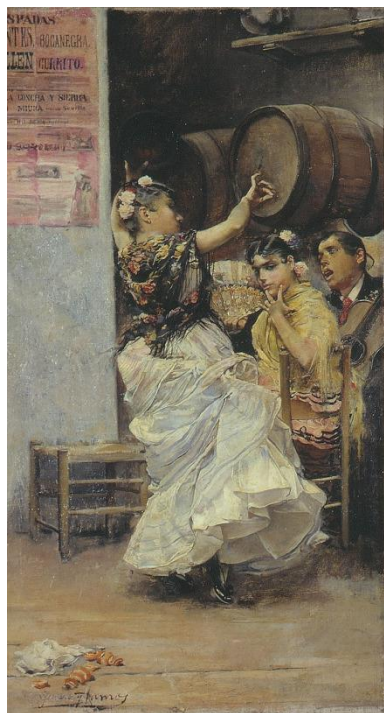


Fig. 2. J. García Ramos, *Dancing Bulerías (Baile por bulerías)*, Museum of Fine Arts of Seville, 1884, available at: <http://www.museosdeandalucia.es/cultura/museos/MBASE/>



Fig. 3. J.J. Rougeron, *Gypsy Zambra (Zambra de gitanos)*, *La Ilustración Artística*, Barcelona, Montaner y Simón, 14<sup>th</sup> may, 1883, p.146. In *National Library of Spain*, available at: <http://www.bne.es/es/Catalogos/HemerotecaDigital/>



Fig. 4. E. Álvarez Dumont, *Gathering of the courtyard* (*Tertulia en el patio*), private collection, 1898, available at Reprodart: <http://www.reprodart.com/a/alvarez-dumont-eugenio>



Fig. 5. J. Llovera Buffil, *Maja*, private collection, available at Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/76509819@N04/8727211620>