

INTRODUCTION

AMERICAN TRAVEL WRITING ON SPAIN: OLD PATHS AND NEW TRAILS

This special issue of the *Revista de Filología* published by the Universidad de La Laguna features twelve papers whose overarching goal is to shed new light on the representation of Spain in American travel writing. They provide a wide range of approaches and in some cases draw attention to texts and writers hitherto ignored or understudied. American travel writers, together with those from other literary traditions, have played a significant role in the modern representation of Spain. During the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth the land of Cervantes enticed the American imagination with its exoticism and the allure of its oriental, medieval and romantic past. Poor tourist facilities and the lack of a sound transportation network initially turned the journey to Spain into a rather arduous affair, as the writings of early diplomats like John Jay, Arthur Lee or Mordecai Manuel Noah poignantly manifest. They often expressed discomfort at the rough roads, badly ventilated inns and scarce victuals, for instance. However, improvements in transport gradually increased the number of those landing in the Peninsula or in the Spanish insular territories. Their impressions, collected in a growing number of letters, diaries and full-fledged narratives, mixed personal recollections with historical facts and assorted data. They disseminated a stereotyped image of Spain as a picturesque «land of romance» that had its epicenter in the Spanish works of Washington Irving, though it extended itself well into the turn of the century thanks to other travel writers like George Parsons Lathrop, August F. Jaccaci and William H. Downes. Their cultural contributions cannot be underestimated.

The American travel writers of the twentieth century, following on many occasions in the footsteps of their predecessors, shared similar pursuits. They wished to see the sights, explore the landscape, learn the language or bear witness to events that left indelible marks on the country. General Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the proclamation of the Second Republic, the outbreak of the Civil War, the Franco regime, or the advent of democracy are but some of the historic episodes they took care to record in books, newspaper chronicles and works of fiction based on first-hand travel experiences. Narratives by the likes of John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Richard Wright or James Michener now stand on bookshelves as classics of twentieth-century American travel texts on Spain and their influence on other travelers and writers continues today. In the age of internet, global tourism, fast communication and ongoing academic exchanges, the old ties between Spain and the United States appear to be stronger than ever, yielding equally engaging

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travel writing. With the twenty-first century now under way, the voices of Jason Webster, Michele Morano, Gwen Van Velsor and Stephen Nightingale have joined the long list of those blazing, both physically and metaphorically, the old paths and new trails of Spain.

Given the breadth and scope of American travel writing on Spain, the study of sources, its development and representational strategies have constituted for almost a century a fruitful subject for interdisciplinary academic enquiry. If one leaves aside the brief chapter on travelers that Miguel Romera-Navarro included in *El Hispanismo en Norte-América* (1917), Carrie Evangeline Farnham may be considered the initiator of this line of research with her seminal *American Travellers in Spain: the Spanish Inns, 1776-1867* (1921). It was followed years later by Iris L. Whitman's *Longfellow and Spain* (1927), Claude G. Bowers's *The Spanish Adventures of Washington Irving* (1940) and Stanley T. Williams's *The Spanish Background of American Literature* (1955), along with scores of brief case studies on specific authors. These texts launched an enduring and dynamic line of inquiry that has situated itself at the intersection between American Studies and other disciplines such as Hispanism, Comparative Literature or History. Among further studies that have explored single authors or have sought to expand the canon of travel texts, Catalina Montes's *La visión de España en la obra de John Dos Passos* (1980), Edward F. Stanton's *Hemingway and Spain* (1990) and Pere Gifra-Adroher's *Between History and Romance: Travel Writing on Spain in the Early Nineteenth-Century United States* (2000) might be mentioned. Combining traditional biographical and historical methodologies with new theoretical approaches, the most current research in the field aims either to retrieve neglected travel texts or re-read the canonical ones with contemporary emphases on gender, race, and nation. María Christina Ramos's *Mapping the World Differently: African American Travel Writing about Spain* (2015) is a significant case in point. Yet, for all its longstanding commitment and multidisciplinary scope, the study of American travel writing on Spain occupies not more than a niche within the field of American Literary Studies and therefore available outlets for making itself visible are to be welcomed. This is the reason why we are in debt to the editorial board of the *Revista de Filología* for offering the opportunity to devote an issue of the journal to researchers studying American travel writers from different methodological and theoretical perspectives.

As a number of essays in this collection demonstrate, some of the writers who have profoundly shaped the canon of American travel writing on Spain continue to attract scholarly interest, and appear directly or indirectly discussed here. Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera revisits Washington Irving's Granada through the works of two twentieth century writers –James Michener and Rick Steves– who respectively employ Moorish Spain as a symbol of political opposition and trite cultural commodification. Eulalia Piñero approaches the Quixotic travelogue of John Dos Passos as a contemporary epic that not only criticizes American materialism but also helped to introduce Madrid and La Mancha into cosmopolitan Modernist circles. Mark DeStephano, in turn, argues that James Michener transformed his travelogue *Iberia* from a personal quest for self-knowledge and self-realization into a sustained chronicle of the essence of eternal Spain. The reexaminations of recognized texts



deployed in these analyses no doubt offer a meaningful counterpoint to the canon expansion sought by other papers included in the volume, which revolve around lesser-known or hitherto neglected writers.

An equally pertinent group of contributions focuses on women's texts, tackling issues of gender and female self-representation. Pere Gifra-Adroher recovers the travel memoirs of Octavia Walton Le Vert, a renowned southern antebellum socialite, to gauge the connections between travel and sentimental discourses in the representation of otherness. Alberto Egea, focusing on the book *Spanish Highways and Byways*, shows how, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Katharine Lee Bates challenged former stereotypes about picturesque Spain, traditionally created by men, and in so doing reshaped the imagology of the country. Likewise, Mercedes Caballer compares two women travel writers –Kate Field and Martha Gellhorn, respectively–, to argue that they use their Spanish chronicles to create spaces of their own. Finally, María Losada Friend delves into Jenny Ballou's neglected travelogue *Spanish Prelude*, published during the Spanish Civil War, to analyze how the author represented the women of Spain during the period of General Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. The current issue also includes a cluster of essays devoted to what might be termed the representation of local or regional identities. Eduard Moyà examines how American travel writers, especially during the interwar period, constructed a representation of Mallorca linked to the notions of pleasure, adventure and unbound creativity, and how their views, pivotal in the rise of the tourism industry, would later be embraced by modern American celebrities vacationing on the island. Similarly, Blasina Cantizano's paper focuses on the image of Andalucía in the travel accounts written by women writers who followed Irving's cultural legacy, whilst Domingo Fernández Maroto and Francisco Javier Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez provide information about several travelers who described the region of La Mancha, occasionally alluding to the town of Valdepeñas and its famous wine.

Since this is a special issue focusing on the multifaceted nature of travel writing, the reader will find that we have allowed a certain degree of latitude in stretching the boundaries of the genre and including two essays that, strictly speaking, appear to be only partially connected to the genre. I am referring to the papers by María Isabel González Cruz and Adriana Kiczkowski, which examine fictional travel texts. The first analyzes novels by Nancy Kennedy and Robin Jones Gunn –partly based on real journeys to the Canary Islands– to examine how they represent the island space as a paradisiacal milieu; the second uses Ben Lerner's research stay in Madrid between 2003 and 2004, later fictionalized in *Leaving the Atocha Station*, to examine how literature responds to traumatic events. By drawing on actual journeys to Spain, the texts analyzed in these two papers illustrate the fertility of the narrow and diffuse territory that separates fictional from nonfictional travel writing on Spain

All in all, the essays included in this special issue, with their diversity of voices, provide a dialogic mapping that we hope will stimulate further research in the field. Those interested in transatlantic cultural relations or in secondary writers undeservedly excluded from the canon will find them profitable reading. Finally, by way of conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to all those who have par-



ticipated in the preparation of this volume, not only to the contributors, but also to the anonymous reviewers and the editorial board of the journal, in particular to Carmen Díaz Alayón, for their diligence, support and patience. Allow me to add that, given the wealth of female voices discussed or alluded to here, I would like to take this opportunity to dedicate this special issue to the memory of Nina Baym (1936-2018), eminent academic and generous scholar, whose outstanding research has shaped and will continue to influence the field of American women's writing for years to come.

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