

Mirrors on a Highway - Some British Travellers in Franco Spain

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«Whatever the reason, if you want good reading
on Spain, read the English»

James MICHENER - *Iberia* (1968)

'In pursuit of this great boon, a widow lady and her children with a doctor and two other friends started off in the winter of 1866, in spite of the ominous warnings of the revolutions and grim stories of brigands, for that comparatively unvisited country called Spain'. So wrote Lady Herbert in her *Impressions of Spain in 1866*. Nearly a century later, during the years immediately following the Second World War of 1939-45, Spain continued to enjoy the 'great boon' of a sunny climate, and the country was still practically as unknown abroad, as it had been in 1866. In the twentieth century, the advent of the Second Republic in 1931 had focused international attention on Spain, especially during the civil war that ended in the collapse of the Republic. From 1936, Spain became a country difficult or even unwise to visit, unless one had official business or a commitment of some kind there. The sense of remoteness and isolation was intensified during the war years and for some time after, while Franco Spain, former ally and friend of the defeated Axis powers, was ostracised by most of the outside world. It was during the height of this period, characterised by ignorance of conditions within Spain and by a real desire to know the truth, that the country attracted a number of articulate English visitors, who bequeathed to posterity a unique personal picture of that ten-year span between the end of the world war and the decisive mass touristic invasion of the Peninsula. The picture painted by those 'early' British visitors not only reflects the day-to-day conditions under which the post-war generation of Spaniards lived, but it also produced some important classics of their kind in Spanish travel literature.

One of the earliest and best known of the above mentioned was the novelist, Evelyn Waugh, who visited Spain briefly to attend a Pax Romana congress in the early summer of 1946. The trip appears to have been unpleasant and unrewarding for the author. Writing to Laura Waugh from the Hotel Parador, Burgos, Waugh declared: 'I shall not bring back much from Spain as the famine here is worse than in England and prices are enormous. Even sherry is as expensive in Madrid as in London'¹. Entries in his diaries concerning the visit refer to 'nasty food and illness' (Vitoria) and the 'tedious and pointless' nature of the Congress sessions (Salamanca). He summed up his impressions of contemporary Spanish intellectual life in a single sentence: 'Spanish policy seems to be to

1. E. WAUGH, *The letters of EW.* ed by Marc Amory, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson (1980)

appoint all literates to professorships and pay them too little to support life'². In language more appropriate to the military barracks Waugh had recently abandoned, than to the lost world of Brideshead, he recorded his meeting with representatives of Falange officialdom: 'Here and elsewhere the alcaldes all seemed young shits, not worthy burgesses'³. Not surprisingly, the principal outcome of Waugh's Spanish trip was the satirical novel, *Scott King's Modern Europe* (1947). The author and traveller, Dr. Halliday Sutherland, went to Spain not long after Waugh's visit, travelling as an official guest of the Spanish government, spending some months in the country to visit prisons, hospitals and sanatoria, and recording his impressions. A Catholic like Waugh, an admirer of General Franco ('If England were what England was, Franco's record would be better known and there would be fewer long haired parlour pinks yelping at his heels')⁴, Sutherland consequently carried over to the post-war years attitudes developed among English Catholics during the Civil War. He nevertheless honestly attempted to report the truth as he saw it, in order to 'tell readers what I saw and heard, and thereby promote a better understanding of Spain'⁵. He accepted the existence of a Police State in Spain, a country he had known in happier and freer times, as a sad necessity, blaming the post-war encroachments of the Soviet Union and communist ideology for the continuation of Franco's military dictatorship. Sutherland also blames the Republicans, a Red 'rabble' from which 'Franco rescued Spain'⁶. The government's reprisals against Republican atrocities, although probably too numerous in Sutherland's opinion, were controlled and legal, unlike the spontaneous mob violence that characterised the defeated enemy, while Sutherland also felt that, in all fairness, sentences passed on political offenders in Spain were 'no more severe than those passed in Britain for like offenses' (he is referring to IRA bomb attacks before and during the World War)⁷.

The picture he paints of the Spanish penal system seems almost too good to be true, and undoubtedly missed certain vital aspects of Spanish prisons after the Civil War. On the other hand, his evaluation of the Falange is considerably more reserved. He notes that most Spaniards appear to hate the Falange, and Sutherland himself dislikes the State orientated philosophy of the movement; 'Falange was Fascist, because the essence of Fascism is deification of the State'⁸. His rejection of the movement was further intensified by a reading of a 1934 edition of José Antonio's 26-point 'Programme of the Falange': -and when I read that «Spain is by destiny a unity within the Universe», I realised why most Spaniards would gladly forget Falange'⁹. As an English Catholic, Sutherland also turns a critical eye on the Church in Spain. Although the Church was in full control of education, the presence of large numbers of children in the streets at all hours, many of them begging, betrayed the inadequacies of the educational system under the Church. He also felt

2. The Diaries of EW (ed. MI Davie) London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson (1976)

3. WAUGH, *Diaries* - entry for 16.6.1946

4. H. SUTHERLAND, *Spanish Journey*, London, Hollis and Carter, 1948 p.35

5. *Op. cit.*, pág. 9

6. *Op. cit.*, pág.31

7. *Op. cit.*, pág.63

8. *Op. cit.*, pág.135

9. *Ibid.*

that remote villages were generally neglected and lacked facilities for Church attendance, while the current annual celebration of a national Victory Day, with its accompaniment of Te Deums, could appropriately be replaced, from a Christian point of view, by a national Peace Day. Reflecting on all he had observed in Spain, Sutherland wondered 'whether the Spanish Hierarchy have learned the awful lessons of the Civil War'¹⁰.

Politics were also the concern of two other writers, Gerald Brenan and Laurie Lee, both of whom, like Sutherland, were revisiting for the first time in years a country they had known before the holocaust of 1936-39, but their sympathies were in the main pro-republican. Brenan found that, in spite of the image of oppression current abroad, 'Never have I been in a country whose citizens were so anxious to express their views on their government'¹¹. Yet an element of fear of communism, continually stressed in the national Press, causes Brenan to echo Sutherland: 'But for the widespread fear of Communism left by the Civil War and by the advance of the Russians westwards, Franco would have left long ago'¹². Brenan's unofficial personal contact with the country provides a different picture of Spanish reality from that of Sutherland, including prison experiences of Spanish acquaintances that contradict Sutherland's observations. Apart from the sense of palpable reality that the book communicates, Brenan's narrative of his visit to Granada and the obstacles he overcame to trace Lorca's grave and the circumstances of the poet's death, is perhaps the most memorable section of the book, anticipating, although not equalling, Ian Gibson's more complete account, published many years later.

Laurie Lee also devoted attention to Lorca and while in Granada he spent some time interviewing an unidentified poet friend of Lorca's. A strong aura of taboo hung over mention of the dead poet, causing a flustered reaction of contradictory explanations and evasive answers to enquiries. The atmosphere of the civil war was still close, reflected in the uneasiness felt by many Spaniards when certain details or incidents were broached. Laurie Lee revisited the fishing village, referred to as 'Castillo', where the author witnessed the outbreak of the civil war. 'A silence as of sickness hung over the place now, and I remembered Castillo as I had seen it long ago'¹³.

One of the factors that helped those British visitors to form their pictures of contemporary Spanish reality was the willingness on the part of Spaniards to communicate freely about the political situation of their country, a fact noted by Brenan and also borne out by the experience of a number of other visitors (e.g. Peter de Polnay: 'It is almost impossible to chat with a Spaniard and not hear about the civil war')¹⁴. The political scene had three principal component parts: Falange (already mentioned above), the police and the armed forces, and Franco, all three themes occupying a considerable amount of attention in the works discussed here. Although Gerald Brenan reports on instances of police brutality (the Guardia Civil), he, like Sutherland, finds the existence of strict controls acceptable in the Spanish context. His impression of Spain was of a nation seething with desire for revolution, but the

10. *Op. cit.*, pág.171.

11. G. BREMAN, *The Face of Spain*, London The Turnstile Press, 1950 Preface, XII.

12. BREMAN, *op. cit.* pág. 32.

13. L. LEE, *A Rose for Winter*, London, Hogarth Press, 1955. I quote from the Penguin Books edition, London 1971, pág. 92.

14. P. DE POLNAY, *Descent from Burgos*. London, Robert Hale Ltd., 1956, pág. 46.

presence everywhere of the police and the army was sufficient to inhibit efforts to change the state of things: –‘they are the one solid and dependable thing in this ramshackle regime’¹⁵. V.S. Pritchett remarks fatalistically on the ubiquitous presence of the Guardia Civil: –‘the Spanish state is unimaginable without some such body’¹⁶.

Like the photographs of the Generalísimo in every public building, Franco appears in many instances as an everpresent stabilizing figure at the head of a turbulent, unruly nation. Many of the opinions heard by our travellers echo this general sentiment: ‘Thank God we have Franco and may he live for a very long time. That austere man from Galicia has saved this country. We Spaniards need a man like him’¹⁷. (recorded by de Polnay, who found a ‘great affection’ for the Caudillo everywhere he travelled). H.V. Morton asks: Is Franco popular?, and himself provides the answer: ‘Franco is respected for having ended the Civil War and for having got Spain to work again, and in my opinion his feat in steering the country through post-war Europe is a miracle. I think it would be right to say that the average man admires Franco – as much as any Spaniard can admire any other Spaniard – as an honest man’¹⁸. For a priest talking to Gerald Brenan in Puertollano, –‘Franco had brought to Spain order and peace’¹⁹. Spaniards in the main seemed to have absorbed and supported the concept of Spain as a nation requiring a strong hand at the helm of state. Even a resident such as Clifford King, whose sentiments are pro-catalan and decidedly anti-regime, echoes this point of view: ‘Dictatorship, in one form or another, appears to be inevitable. The alternative to the present system would be to overthrow it, to turn it on its head; and the successful and bloody accomplishment of that task couldn’t make any essential difference, though in some respects the results mightn’t necessarily be worse’²⁰. The political position as they saw it, seemed a necessary evil to the English visitors of the early 1950’s. Much depended, naturally, on whom one spoke to, but the anti-Franco sentiments of an inhabitant of Denia –a former Republican– who expressed his views to Rose Macaulay, proved to be more the exception than the rule in this body of travel literature: ‘He said that most Spaniards wanted Franco to go; he himself (polite man) would prefer a democracy on the English plan’²¹.

As an additional factor in the aftermath of the civil war (although some of them also refer pointedly to the Church’s prohibition against the use of contraceptives), English visitors were particularly struck by the presence all over Spain of hordes of children, apparently unattended and uncontrolled, many of them already professional beggars, and who presented an almost insolvable social and educational problem for the future of the nation. Sheila M. O’Callaghan’s defense of the regime, has figures which bear out Halliday Sutherland’s earlier impressions: of some four and half million children of school-going age in Spain, only 2,700,000 were enrolled in schools, leaving apparently over one

15. BRENNAN, *op. cit.* pág. 99.

16. V. S. PRITCHETT, *The Face of Spain*. London, Chatto and Windus, 1954, pág. 202.

17. DE POLNAY, *op. cit.* pág. 76.

18. H. V. MORTON, *A Stranger in Spain*. London, Meuthen and Co. Ltd., 1955, pág. 7.

19. BRENNAN, *op. cit.* pág. 169.

20. CLIFFORD KING, *Barcelona, with Love*. London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959, pág. 100.

21. R. MACAULAY, *Fabled Shore*. London, Hamilton Library, 1949, pág. 105.

million of them uneducated and roaming the streets and countryside²². Pritchett refers to 'The fatalistic neglect of poor children in Spanish cities'²³, and Laurie Lee, spending the Christmas season in Seville, recorded his impressions of the young carol singers, 'the ragged half-naked urchins from the hovels of Triana (who) came out in force and filled the town with carols'²⁴. Honor Tracy was pursued by a mob of child beggars in Cádiz: 'They were so young that some of them could barely lisp out the word 'peseta' and so sharp as already to know the foreigner from the native, on whom they never wasted their time'²⁵.

Brenan states blankly: 'One cannot walk about the streets of Cordova without being horrified by the poverty'²⁶. Having known the country intimately before the war, he concluded the poverty was 'far worse than anything known within living memory'²⁷. The glimpse Honor Tracy caught of real working class conditions in the back streets of Cádiz, revealed 'terrible figures that Goya might have painted'²⁸, while several years later James Morris could say: 'Sometimes this poverty is so primitive that you have to rub your eyes or blink to make sure that you are in Europe at all'²⁹. On the other hand, and in all fairness to accuracy, changing economic circumstances were already affecting the apparently traditional fatalistic poverty of large numbers of Spaniards. Arriving in Cordova a few years after Brenan's visit, John Haycraft was surprised at not finding the swarms of beggars referred to by him. Most of them had by then been removed to a district called El Refugio, out of the sight of the growing swarms of foreign tourists who were replacing the beggars in the streets of the city³⁰.

In Burgos, H.V. Morton found that the sight of children and their aged nurses was 'a scene that reminded me of a long distant Kensington Gardens'³¹. The Edwardian, or even Victorian tone of post-war Spanish life struck Brenan: 'In short, an old-fashioned society - early Victorian or Second Empire, but beginning to crumble and break down'³². James Morris echoes Brenan's remarks when he also declares that 'the Spaniards were withdrawn from the world so long that in many ways they have a Victorian look'³³. Barbara Borbolla, on her marriage to a Spaniard, took up residence in Seville, 'a city which gives one the impression of having turned back the clock'³⁴, to which she adds, from personal experience: '-even today the average Spanish woman still leads the sort of life an Englishwoman led in the Victorian era'³⁵. A part-Spanish authoress, Nina Epton refers to

22. S. O'CALLAGHAN, *Cinderella of Europe. Spain Explained*. London, Skeffington and Son, Ltd., 1951, pág. 187.

23. PRITCHETT, *op. cit.* pág. 147.

24. L. LEE, *op. cit.* pág. 49.

25. TRACY, H. *Silk Hats and no Breakfast*, London. Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1957, p. 40.

26. Brenan: *op. cit.* pág. 50.

27. *Ibid.*

28. TRACY, *op. cit.* pág. 45.

29. JAMES MORRIS, *Spain*. (Originally published as *The Presence of Spain*, 1964). London, Faber and Faber, 1970, pág. 78.

30. J. HAYCRAFT, *Babel in Spain*. London, Hamish Hamilton, 1958, pág. 54.

31. MORTON, *op. cit.* pág. 253.

32. BRENNAN, *op. cit.* pág. 251.

33. MORRIS, *op. cit.* pág. 107.

34. B. BORBOLLA, *Mantillas and Me*. London, Herbert Jenkins, 1961, págs. 17/18.

35. BORBOLLA, *op. cit.* pág. 34.

a further striking aspect of Spain's old-fashioned social panorama, in the strict decorum and modesty of dress enforced on Spanish beaches, 'especially on the Catalan side where there is such a large influx of French holidaymakers - alleged to be the worse offenders'³⁶. Churton Fairman (not a professional author, but having married a Spanish war-time refugee, he recorded his impressions of his first visit to his wife's native land.) was taken by the spectacle of the beach at San Sebastian on a hot August day: '- it was a little odd to see that everyone who was sitting on the beach was not only fully clothed, but also hiding under large umbrellas. Even the children playing in the sand were all dressed as they might be for a shopping expedition with mother, while the few people who were actually bathing wore costumes that appeared more than somewhat old fashioned'³⁷.

What many of these English travellers found in Spain, and what drew them to the Peninsula, was a sense of having come into contact with a pre-industrial society whose values appeared to have more in common with elemental cosmic world of Lorca's *Romancero gitano* or *Bodas de Sangre*, than with those of post-war Western Europe in general. Gerald Brenan expressed this concept to a Spanish acquaintance: 'As Mediterraneans, you are a people who have not yet been conquered by the pattern of industrial life with its crushing discipline'³⁸. For Nina Epton (*Madrid*, 1964), 'Spain is not only an agricultural but an unmechanised country'³⁹, while Pritchett found that 'the Spaniard, not seriously touched by the industrial age or the nervousness of modern man, is powerfully refreshing'⁴⁰. Churton Fairman found that the extremely simple (to the author) way of life in a remote and relatively inaccessible Castilian village possessed a similar quality: '-no one who has passed in a short space of time from the tortured complexities of our anxiety-stricken civilization into a peaceful and outwardly backward community like Quintanarrraya, and then returned once more into the malestom, can realise what great spiritual advantages lie with such simple country folk'⁴¹. Tynan found certain old-world values in the spectacle of the bullfight: '-a rite in which, on a good day, heroism and beauty, the great absentees of Western Europe, may be seen happily and inextricable embraced'⁴². As H.V. Morton put it: '-it is this older world that we sense and admire'⁴³.

Like their earlier Victorian counterparts, the travellers recalled in this article displayed an indefatigable and all-absorbing curiosity towards the country they were visiting. In addition to the themes mentioned above, there is hardly an aspect of contemporary Spanish life they fail to notice: the political and social role of the Church in Franco Spain; the depressing intellectual and cultural scene; the national spectacle of the bullfight; the widespread prostitution; the hazards of internal travel in the Peninsula, especially in the remoter areas; current popular attitudes towards Franco; the agrarian problem; censorship; the Spanish cinema; the ubiquitous Black Market; the observable

36. N. EPTON, *Grapes and Granite*. London, Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1956, pág. 22.

37. CHURTON FAIRMAN, *Another Spain*. London, Museum Press Ltd., 1952, pág. 18.

38. BRENNAN, *op. cit.* pág. 220.

39. NINA EPTON, *Madrid*. London, Cassell, 1964, pág. 124.

40. PRITCHETT, *op. cit.* págs. 161-162.

41. FAIRMAN, *op. cit.*, págs. 78-79.

42. K. TYNAN, *Bull Fever*. London, The Quality Book Club, 1956, pág. 92.

43. MORTON, *op. cit.* pág. 288.

indications of changes underway or about to take place; and that ever-present but practically indefinable quality once referred to confidently as 'the Spanish Character'. Their writings also tell us much about the authors themselves and their motives for visiting Spain. If at a deeper level they were attempting to recapture the atmosphere of a lost European past, more often than not they were also trying to escape for a while from the mediocrity and the privations of the continuing post-war rationing in England, to a place where they –or some them– could, with the aid of a favourable rate of exchange, indulge in a few luxuries or even excesses. Arriving from Gibraltar, Honor Tracy was aware that many poor Spaniards would have wished to make the reverse journey, to avail of the benefits of the Welfare State, and she remarks: 'As far as I was concerned, they were welcome to all of it'⁴⁴. At the start of his Spanish holiday, Churton Fairman found 'that at first one alone of the very rich platefuls was more than enough for me'⁴⁵, but later he adds apologetically: 'It may seem that I mention the size of Spanish meals too often, but to anyone coming from England they are ever a source of wonder and envy'⁴⁶. An important part of H.V. Morton's Spanish trip was the gourmet's tour it also represented. He waxes enthusiastic about the quality and variety of Spanish regional dishes, and confesses unashamedly: 'How dearly I should like to return to Spain and eat my way northward from Seville to Madrid, then to gnaw steadily through the Castiles and chew on to the Basque country, and so to pass, slowly and appreciatively, devouring like a caterpillar, through the Austurias into Galicia'⁴⁷.

The theme of Spanish food not only occupies a considerable amount of attention, but it also provides some of the more humorous moments in these records of contemporary Spanish travel. In their attempts to guide foreign tourists through the culinary maze of unfamiliar Spanish dishes, many hotels and restaurants offered what they evidently believed to be clear, intelligible English translations of items included in their menus. Kenneth Tynan gives a choice collection of these: (from San Sebastian) 'Several kinds of shells; calamary in his own ink; anahogs in a seamanlike manner; fruits of the season; tart of the house'; (from Santander) 'cow chops; ham with pea; toadstool omelette'⁴⁸. Several years later, as James Morris points out, many top-grade establishments were still offering 'brekfat, tee or Lundry Serviz'⁴⁹. The English language guide books produced numerous examples of weird phraseology, such as the statements occurring in Tynan's guide to Pamplona, a city surrounded by 'smooth and odoriferous fields'⁵⁰, not too distant from the pass of Roncesvalles where took place 'a happening of 1st grade in the medieval Europe'⁵¹, with a passing reference to Cesar Borgia as 'the queer knight - errant'⁵². Travel by local trains or ramshackle country buses was a further source of discomfort and, on reflection, humour. Honor Tracy who is particularly eloquent about the 'demon who

44. TRACY, *op. cit.* pág. 7.

45. FAIRMAN, *op. cit.* pág. 29.

46. FAIRMAN, *op. cit.* pág. 50.

47. MORTON, *op. cit.* pág. 235.

48. TYNAN, *op. cit.* pág. 69.

49. MORRIS, *op. cit.* pág. 34.

50. TYNAN, *op. cit.* pág. 6.

51. TYNAN, *op. cit.* pág. 12.

52. *Ibid.*

supervises travel in Spain' has some memorable references to country buses in her *Silk hats and No Breakfast*⁵³. And Nina Epton states that 'Galician country buses look as worn out as the women'⁵⁴. Even more apt is James Morris's observation that 'Spanish country buses, so bumpy and gregarious, still flaunt the rollicking gusto of the mail coaches'⁵⁵.

Whether escaping from the rain and the austerity of post-war England, or on a voyage of exploration, or renewing personal contact with a country they had known in pre-war days, the travellers we are dealing with discovered a Spain poised between the misery of the 1940s and the mass foreign invasion of the Peninsula of the mid-to late 1950s. The country was beginning to open up to foreign visitors, so far relatively few in number and in the main selective and anxious to find out something of value about Spain. It seems incredible to discover from Rose Macaulay that 'during the summer that I spent in the peninsula I encountered scarcely any travelling compatriots, and saw only one G.B. car, and that was at the very end'⁵⁶. Foreign visitors were such a rarity, even in the now much frequented holiday resorts, that Rose Macaulay was stared at by the local inhabitants. She felt that the development of the Costa Brava was as yet in the distant future and not a very likely possibility, the area still being 'in the main a succession of little fishing ports and untenanted coves and rocks'⁵⁷, where, incidentally, she saw her first English tourists since entering Spain, who happened to be also the first drunks she encountered. When Brenan visited the South, Marbella was becoming a fashionable seaside resort, mainly for the Spanish *nouveaux riches*, and Torremolinos was on its way towards a similar development. It was only a matter of a few years for the devastation of Spain's entire Mediterranean coastline to become a fact, but the northwest remained relatively unspoiled for a longer period. Nina Epton discovered to her surprise that 'There were so few English travellers at La Toja (nothing appears to have been written about this part of Europe for a quarter of a century) that the astonished employee (at the Post Office) was unfamiliar with the postal rates (to England-'⁵⁸. Whatever might be the situation of the relatively inaccessible Galician rías, Fairman also noted that even in Seville, when he visited the city, 'it was remarkable how few foreigners attended either the Semana Santa or the Feria, and of the few that were there, the majority, by far, were French'⁵⁹.

Of the travellers who encountered Spain at a particularly unique period of her modern historical evolution, Honor Tracy returned periodically to the country, to record some of the changes that struck the foreign visitor in a position to compare the immediate but fast vanishing past with the present. Her *Winter in Castile* reflects aspects of Spanish life after the 1960s had taken their toll and as the Franco era was entering its final stages. She found several of the changes taking place not at all to her liking. Revisiting a Madrid bar, formerly an exclusive male preserve, 'I found it wholly occupied by girls, some in trousers, some in mini-skirts, playing poker, throwing dice or merely shouting, many of

53. Vide *op. cit.* pág. 98.

54. EPTON, *Grapes and Granite*, pág. 87.

55. MORRIS, *op. cit.* pág. 25.

56. MACAULAY, *op. cit.* pág. 7.

57. MACAULAY, *op. cit.* pág. 39.

58. EPTON, *op. cit.* pág. 128.

59. FAIRMAN, *op. cit.* pág. 137.

them half-seas over'⁶⁰. The sight of drunken young peasants in Segovia, even allowing for the Christmas festive season, caught her attention: 'I had never seen a rustic Spanish boy under the weather before, and these unsteady little figures made some impression'⁶¹. Nevertheless, in the cafés and bars of the capital where 'men and women alike, were drinking on a scale that was formerly unheard of'⁶², what she observed in addition in small towns such as Avila, caused her to acknowledge that 'the sense I got of a culture swiftly, dizzily, transformed was overpowering'⁶³. Honor Tracy regretted the passing of male courtesy— as distinct from manners, which remained deplorably bad in Spain —and she even missed the purple shirts and yellow cords formerly worn as a sign of Lenten penance or in fulfilment of a religious vow. Much of what the authoress witnessed at the beginning of the 1970s was the accumulated result of a rapid and new-found prosperity. The old poverty had gone, but not all had turned out for the better: 'It is sad how a people's character melts away, when the basis of it has gone'⁶⁴.

Honor Tracy's sardonic comments were expended on a country that within a further decade would be transformed yet again, with the palpable rapidity that characterized contemporary Spanish affairs and which makes Spain a sort of sociologists' paradise. The entire Franco era was relegated to that weird and semi-legendary land of Celtiberia, where the non-European and long outmoded aspects of contemporary national life are supposed to belong. The travellers quoted had their blind spots: few statistics were available to them; they were observers above all else, not professional social historians; more than a few inaccuracies and contradictions turn up in their narratives, although, it must be acknowledged in all fairness, there are fewer of these than might be expected in the circumstances, and that they often reflect the corresponding contradictions in the Spain they were observing from the foreign visitor's standpoint; and their judgements and vision were perhaps too frequently partial and limited.

The Spain these English travellers encountered both disturbed and fascinated them. Their contact with that now almost vanished national reality was essentially a lively personal experience of the country at a time when, in the words of John Haycraft, 'Spain's fascination for the foreigner is, above all, this sense of exploration'⁶⁵. In the final analysis, perhaps their most lasting contribution to our literary knowledge of the peninsula is the manner in which they succeeded in communicating this sense of personal adventure and discovery in their journeys of exploration into the unknown. A rereading of their mid-twentieth century records of Spanish travel gives the impression, like the travels of their nineteenth century predecessors of the Romantic period, that the overall result was worthwhile and rewarding. In spite of the discomforts and hardships they had to undergo, Honor Tracy appears to speak for her contemporaries when she states: 'The dreadful journey into the wilderness had been worth making'⁶⁶. For this, if for no other reason, it would be a pity if their work were to be forgotten.

60. H. TRACY, *Winter in Castile*. London, Eyre Meutheu, 1973, pág. 29.

61. TRACY, *op. cit.* pág. 55.

62. TRACY, *op. cit.* pág. 9.

63. TRACY, *op. cit.* pág. 96.

64. TRACY, *op. cit.* pág. 123.

65. HAYCRAFT, *op. cit.* pág. 216.

66. H. TRACY, *Silk Hats and No Breakfast*, pág. 107.