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SPANISH ORIENTALISM:
WASHINGTON IRVING AND THE ROMANCE OF THE MOORS

by

MICHAEL STEVENS

Under the Direction of Denise Davidson

ABSTRACT

Edward Said's description of Orientalism as a constitutive element of the modern West is one of the enduring concepts of cultural history. The Orientalism thesis begins with the observation that in the 19th century Westerners began describing the "Orient," particularly the Middle East and India, as a place that was once gloriously civilized but had declined under the influence of incompetent Islamic governments. This construction was then employed to justify Western Imperialism and the expansion of Christianity into Asia.

This dissertation examines a case of Orientalism with a twist. Between 1775 and 1830 a group of Anglophone writers and artists depicted Spain as a state with a cultural trajectory similar to that described by the Orientalists. But in the Spanish case, the glorious past was the age of the Islamic Moors who had ruled parts of the Iberian Peninsula from 700 until 1492, while the current Christian rulers were the backwards and religiously intolerant impediments to progress. Thus the case of Spanish Orientalism employs an argument structurally identical to Said's Orientalism, with the role of the Christians and Muslims reversed.

In examining this phenomenon, I focus on three particular issues. The first is the representation of the Moors in early modern European popular culture. I argue that these earlier traditions use the Moors as an emblematic manifestation of oppositionality to the centralizing state and elite authority. The romantics found in the Moors a symbol comparable to such other proto-Europeans as the Celts and the Goths, worthy predecessors to the warlike, chivalric, and liberty-loving modern Europeans. The second is the political context of Spanish Orientalism. Like “classical” Orientalism, Spanish Orientalism had a clear political payoff. Its articulators meant to show that the Spanish government was an unworthy steward of its rapidly disintegrating empire, thus Spanish Orientalism is closely associated with attempts to assert Anglophone authority in the Caribbean. Third, I examine in detail the work of the author most clearly associated with Spanish Orientalism, Washington Irving. In the four books he wrote while in Spain during the 1820s, Irving became the individual most responsible for reframing the long representational tradition of the Moors into a modern idiom and bringing it to a mass audience.

INDEX WORDS: Orientalism, Washington Irving, Alexander Hill Everett, Spanish-American diplomatic relations, Romanticism, The Moors, Early modern popular culture

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WASHINGTON IRVING AND THE ROMANCE OF THE MOORS

by

MICHAEL S. STEVENS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2007

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2007

SPANISH ORIENTALISM:
WASHINGTON IRVING AND THE ROMANCE OF THE MOORS

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MICHAEL S. STEVENS

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Abbreviations

- AHEP Alexander Hill Everett Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Boston.
- CWWI Irving, Washington. *The Complete Works of Washington Irving*. Ed. Ralph M. Aderman, Herbert L. Kleinfield, and Jennifer S. Banks. 28 vols. Boston: Twayne, 1979.
- PHC Clay, Henry. *The Papers of Henry Clay*. Ed. James F. Hopkins. University Press of Kentucky, 1972.
- PMI Irving, Pierre M. *The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*. 4 Volumes. New York: Putnam, 1864.
- STW Williams, Stanley T. *The Life of Washington Irving*. 2 Volumes. New York: Oxford University Press, 1935.

Preface and Acknowledgments

This dissertation deals with the books Washington Irving wrote about Spain between 1828 and 1832, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada*, *The Companions of Columbus*, and *Tales of the Alhambra*. It turns out that these books require a lot of explanation. I encountered them during my first year as a history graduate student and across almost two centuries they inspired both an immense admiration for the author and an evocative array of issues. These issues range widely, from diplomatic wrangling over political authority in the post-colonial Caribbean basin, to the emergence of the modern category of “the artist” as a function of capitalism, to the relationship between the Enlightenment and romanticism. In large part, I have focused on a case study in Orientalism, the depiction of the Spanish Moors. My attempt to do justice to the many issues the books raise has resulted in a dissertation perhaps wider than it is deep and since this is not typical for a dissertation, a little background seems called for.

My mother took me to art galleries when I was a little kid, and from the beginning I understood that the paintings in the gallery had a lot to say. Most of my adult life I had a vague notion that I would like to be an art history teacher somewhere along the line. When the same capitalist system Washington Irving negotiated so skillfully presented me with a golden handshake in the late 1990s I began to pursue that goal, albeit fitfully, as an art history graduate student at Georgia State University. I enjoyed the program thoroughly, and about half way through, after a last minute flakeout by what I now realize must have been some underpaid adjunct, I was drafted to teach an art history

survey class. The highly intimidating prospect of keeping the attention of a big roomful of undergraduates led to frantic study and preparation, and helped crystallize a notion that already had started to form: I seemed to be more interested in the historical context and cultural implications of the images I was projecting on the screen than in their compositional effects or esthetic nuances. I spent the term reading desperately in European history to establish some context: What exactly was the Reformation? How did the French Revolution change David's subject matter? Why is Impressionism called the art of the *bourgeoisie*? After the semester concluded I came back to one book that seemed to discuss images the way I wanted to think about them, Simon Schama's *Citizens*. With that inspiration I walked over to the Georgia State History Department office, knocked on the door of the Director of Graduate Studies and explained I was interested in doing further graduate work in "art...history, but, like...the 'history...of the art', not 'art history' if you know what I'm trying to say."

It turned out that he did know what I was trying to say, and in fact he actually had a name for it, "cultural history." By then I had decided my master's thesis needed to address some major event in European culture and I picked a good one, the encounter between Europe and the Americas. I wrote my thesis about a seventeenth-century painting by an obscure follower of Velasquez that depicted a battle in Brazil between the Dutch and Spanish. When I entered the history program a year later, I knew my dissertation would deal with the representation of Europeans in the "New World" and I began a wide survey of this topic. I quickly ran across something interesting: during the mid-nineteenth century the exploits of Christopher Columbus and his men became a popular subject for painters in both the United States and Europe. The paintings often

seemed to have been scripted – they depicted a relatively small number of incidents, and took the same narrative approach to these events. They were all, I soon discovered, based on a single literary source, Irving’s *Columbus*, and my work on this book immediately seemed to require a study of all the issues mentioned in the first paragraph.

Beyond the thematic issues Irving raised, his personality and writing style have both influenced this study. Irving wrote during an era when the modern literary genres had not yet fully crystallized, but even compared to his peers, his work resists categorization. Fiction in the guise of memoir, history cast as fiction, political commentary presented as anthropology, folk tales resituated into the metropolis and tales of the city as folk legends – all these are easy to find in Irving’s vast *oeuvre*. This disregard of categories, a grievous affront to modernist esthetics, seems to me one reason that Irving’s work is so lightly regarded in the US literary canon; another is his inability to pass up a joke. Even in his most serious moments, he seems to have found the opportunity to slip a wry observation or an ironic juxtaposition into the text utterly irresistible. In my own work, I have often sensed myself at a fork where I could make this more a traditional dissertation and less a free-wheeling essay, or wrestled with the impulse to insert a little comic aside. From the beginning I have made, or perhaps justified, my choices by simply asking “What would Washington Irving do?” And one more thing about Irving. All historians are familiar with the feeling of really knowing a person after reading extensively in his or her private correspondence. I can say with utmost confidence that Washington Irving would have been for his peers, as he has been for me, the best of companions.

One of the attractive things about Irving's engagement with early modern Spain is that the issues he raises resonate so powerfully with contemporary cultural and political matters. Because many of these themes are so fraught in today's world, and because this is, after all, cultural history, with its notorious sensitivity to linguistic issues, a note on usage seems called for. Using the adjective "American" to reference The United States of America in a study dealing with all of the Americas seems both confusing and incorrect. There have been a number of not wholly satisfactory solutions proposed for this problem; my own not wholly satisfactory solution will be to use US as the adjectival form, as in the previous paragraph. For those parts of the American continents and Caribbean basin originally colonized by the Spanish, I will use Spanish America, which seems more accurate and relevant than Latin America. The term "Moor" has some problems, too. Is it a racial term? Does it denote North Africans, or Arabs, or the unique collection of Arab-led North Africans who conquered the Iberian Peninsula in the eighth century? What about the argument that the term "Moor" is a throwback to a time of...Orientalism, to deploy another term with a complex definition, and should be replaced by "Islamic," as in Islamic Spain? These are all valid questions, and a look at the complicated identity of Western culture's best known Moor, William Shakespeare's Othello, the Moor of Venice, makes it clear just how slippery a descriptor Moor is. Washington Irving used Moor in the broadest possible sense. He modified it with "black" to describe a unit of North Africans in the army of Boabdil, Spain's last Moorish King, and used it interchangeably with "Arab" in discussing a book he was reading during his preparation for his trip to Spain.¹ I believe Irving found the term both useful

¹ Washington Irving, "Journal," April 8, 1826, *Journals and Notebooks Volume III, 1819-1827*, CWWI vol. 3, 473.

and romantically evocative. As usual, I will follow his example and use the term in the same loosely defined way he did. Finally, as a general referent to the entire project of representing the Moors in Spain, I will use the term Spanish Orientalism, a decision that assumes Edward Said's definition of Orientalism is now the stipulated usage among cultural historians.

While Washington Irving has been not just a principal subject but also one of the inspirations for this study, there are a number of more contemporary figures who deserve my sincerest thanks. In fact, the prospect of writing these thank yous has been the single greatest reason I wanted to finish this dissertation. For someone as sentimental as I am, the inclination to thank everyone I have ever known or worked with is almost irresistible, and my decision to restrict my thanks to those directly involved in my academic career represents a titanic act of self-discipline. Ironically, though, my first acknowledgment must be to someone I have known my whole life, Jenny Weiss Bloch. I ran into her in 1997 or so at a family bat mitzvah where, after hearing about my happy departure from the world of commerce, she immediately announced I needed to go to grad school. She had come to the same conclusion about herself, and it serendipitously turns out that we are both members of the 2007 crop of Ph.D.s. So to Jenny, congratulations as well as thanks.

Once I started in the Georgia State art history program, I immediately found that I had a natural peer group, made up of others who after decades in the real world had returned to graduate school. These "non-traditional" students actually embody the best of the traditional academic virtues, diligence and thoughtfulness, tempered with plenty of perspective. My fellow art history students, especially Susan Crawley and Charles

Leonard, were wonderful colleagues and companions who helped me figure out I might have a place in the academic world and what it might be. In addition to a bunch of smart, hard-working students with life experiences similar to mine, grad school immediately introduced me to a totally new type of character, the postmodern academic. Ten years later it is difficult to remember just how astounding I found the complete collapse of my beloved modernist paradigm. I had learned as a young man that the heroic struggle of such artistic geniuses as Giotto, Michelangelo, Picasso, and Jackson Pollack had lifted our society out of the mire of kitsch, elevator music, and cultural backwardness. Imagine my surprise, then, to hear a professor explain that our reverence for these heroes was actually a culturally constructed myth, perpetrated by a white, male elite whose intellectual lackeys enforced and normatized a series of hierarchical values aimed at perpetuating the rule of The Man. Happily, the professor who introduced me to this way of thinking was a brilliant, cheerful, and down-to-earth Midwesterner, Jane Blocker, and her classes were wide-ranging, erudite, and wonderful. This dissertation is in part a critique of postmodern ideology, but I took it so seriously because she presented it so vividly. Jane had left Georgia State by the time I wrote my master's thesis, and a series of unpleasant circumstances resulted in my being unable at the time to properly acknowledge and thank my thesis adviser. Florencia Bazzano-Nelson helped me read seventeenth-century Spanish, whipped my prose into shape, and guided my thesis project through some stormy waters. I owe her a tremendous debt, and I am happy to have the opportunity to acknowledge her help and friendship.

By the time I finished my thesis I had decided I wasn't quite done with school and was fortunate enough to get a teaching fellowship in the Georgia State Department of

History in the Fall of 2001. Along with the fellowship I got an office in the Graduate Instructor's Office, or cube farm. Two weeks after I started came the events of September 11. Standing around the cube farm trying to make sense of that incomprehensible tragedy, I listened to my colleagues, amazed at the depth of their knowledge: Robert Woodrum explaining how Al-Qaeda got to Afghanistan, Eric Kleist telling us about the region's history back to the Khanates – it was a good place to be on a terrible day, and a congenial home for five years. The friendship and collegiality that prevails there stays with me. I have so many rich memories of my cube farm colleagues that I am reluctant to start naming names, but Abou Bamba, Heather Lucas, and Aubrey Underwood have been unfailingly great friends and good advisers. My very own cubemate, Robert Woodrum, taught me and a whole generation of GSU history students how to handle grad school, and I owe him a lot. One of the best things about the cube farm is that the communal atmosphere helped all of us stay afloat as rookie teachers. In addition to this support, I particularly appreciate the help of two history department faculty members, Larry Youngs and Mark Dupuy, who spent enormous amounts of time helping me master material I was supposed to be able to teach.

The history department faculty members in general have been some of the most congenial people I ever met. A number of them went out of their way to help me clarify recondite issues raised in the course of my dissertation research. Being able to informally consult with Don Reid on travel literature, Hugh Hudson on Prince Dolgorouki, Steve Rapp on Washington Irving's theories of world history, Wendy Venet on John Quincy Adams, Joe Perry on Irving's experiences in the Saxon court, Isa Blumi on Mediterranean politics, Michelle Reid on Cuba, Jared Poley on attitudes toward

money...truly an embarrassment of riches! My thanks to them and the entire faculty. In addition to these informal consultants, a surprising number of people enrolled themselves among the saints by actually reading parts of the manuscript. I am deeply appreciative for the comments on draft chapters from Michael Galchinsky, Deb Kowal, Joe Perry, Wendy Venet, Joyce de Vries, Dana Wiggins, and Larry Youngs. Two years ago, Jennifer Dickey, Edie Riehm, and I constituted a dissertation-writing support group, the euphoniously acronymed FLOGME. Jennifer and Edie are among my non-traditional student peers, and their care in reading every word of this dissertation as well as their diligence in meeting our self-imposed deadlines confirmed everything I already felt about our well-seasoned cohort.

During the last ten years I have begun about 90% of my days by dropping in at Aurora Coffee. There, sitting around the big table on any given morning, one can hear the world's leading experts on subjects as varied as the Georgia State Legislature, Tom Glavine, or the ski rental problem. The Aurora regulars have been a constant source of encouragement during my graduate career, and I want to particularly thank Professors Dan Klenbort, Dana Randall, and Bill Thomas for their advice, support, and companionship. Bill Thomas is well-known around Georgia State for shepherding many an undergraduate into law school, many a grad student into a teaching job, and many a young professor through the tenure process. I get why – he gave me a couple of great pieces of advice, and he is the person who got it across to me that I would be able to write a dissertation. An Aurora irregular, Shalom Goldman, has been a long-time supporter of this project. Like Michael Galchinsky, he is a distinguished scholar with enormous

expertise in my research area, and both of these friends from my past have helped me as I made my way into their world.

I have had a particularly felicitous set of dissertation readers. Maria Gindhart reintegrated me into the world of art history and contributed a lot to the narrative flow of this manuscript. David McCreery brought a wealth of knowledge about the colonial Caribbean world. He was particularly helpful in figuring out what to do with any number of interesting sidelights I turned up during the writing process. Since he found the lore of the privateers, for example, as interesting as I did, he was well-suited to encourage me to integrate it into the larger narrative, not just savor it for its own fascinating weirdness. It may strike the reader that he was not all that successful in this effort, but believe me, he helped. Among my advisers, Christine Skwiot had the closest scholarly relationship to the characters I was working on. She encouraged me to see Irving and his associates as part of the phenomenon of Creole and colonial writers trying to make a mark on a metropole-dominated intellectual world, and to see my own project as part of an articulation of transnational history. These ideas will, I feel, be more fully developed should this project evolve into something more publishable. Had Duane Corpis not left Georgia State for colder pastures, he would have been a member of this committee, and, at one point during my dissertation defense I suddenly realized I was arguing with him rather than anyone in the room. I encountered the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment in his classroom, and it seems to me that this dissertation is in large part a continuation of the many conversations we had on the subject.

The single most profound intellectual moment I had at Georgia State occurred in the most quotidian of grad student circumstances. I was sitting in my cube reading a

draft of an article my adviser was submitting to a scholarly journal. As I read her description of something I knew nothing about, French women in the post-Napoleonic era planning a civic celebration, I found myself muttering “yes...yes, exactly...yes, that’s just how that would have worked, that’s just what how we see it....” In a flash I realized I had been educated. Or, if not educated, I had been assimilated into a very specific historical viewpoint. Not only did I see things the way my adviser saw them, I was connected through her to her own distinguished teachers, and through them, well, perhaps all the way back to Peter Abelard and his twelfth-century buddies who decided to band together to see if they could attract enough students to make a go of it. Denise Davidson has kept me on task and on schedule, has introduced me and my work to her scholarly community, and has been the ideal adviser. I can’t thank her enough.

One happy result of my half-retiree, half-student status is that throughout this process I have had the time and opportunity to share my work with my family. My parents set the achievement bar high, and they have been both great supporters and strong advocates for finishing the dissertation. My sibs, my in-laws, and my pack of charming and delightful nieces and nephews in the extended Brown and Stevens families have all been warm and enthusiastic supporters. One of the nicest parts of my academic career had been sharing it with my children. Amanda and I wrote our master’s theses the same semester, and I can tell you that editing your daughter’s thesis while she is editing yours is a delightful experience. Corey contributed a crucial thematic element to this dissertation – he is the one who encouraged me to look at the importance of *commedia dell’arte* in the family tree of Orientalism. And of course Corey and Amanda’s roles in the lives of my two granddaughters, Rosemary and Eliza, are far more significant – and

appreciated – than even their contributions to my academic life. Through the last 38 years Debbie Brown has been the constant in my life. As wife and mother she has grounded and supported our family and lifted us up with her love and care. She has been unfailingly supportive of my foray into the world of teaching and scholarship. She took on far more than her share in managing our household while I dabbled with writing this dissertation, and, somehow, that brought it into being. I dedicate this work to her, with love and gratitude.



David Wilkie, *Washington Irving in Seville*.

Under the discouragement...and the unpromising circumstance of passing over ground often and nicely examined, I yet do not despair of conveying such information on many heads...if, from a laudable desire of improvement, any will venture with me along so beaten a track. Part of my route is fresh land; and where I shall be under the irksome necessity of treading in the footsteps of preceding authors, I hope something will be struck out that has escaped their penetration. Far be it from me, wantonly, to impugn their authority, or detract from their merits; I only wish to insinuate, that, as two persons seldom consider an object in the same point of view, and are still more rarely led by their perceptions to a combination of ideas exactly similar, it is but reasonable to hope that many openings may be left for subsequent observers.

Henry Swinburne, *Travels in the Two Sicilies* (London, 1783), iii.

Introduction

In this study I will examine the depiction of Spain and the Spanish past by American and British writers and artists who traveled and worked in Spain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Spain and the Spanish past are topics of long standing in the Western canon, but the opening of Spain to Enlightenment thinking, foreign visitors, and other metropolitan influences in the years around 1775 led to dramatic changes in the trajectory of this representational tradition. I have chosen 1830 as an end point not for its resonance with revolutionary politics in Europe but as a moment when, with the final defeat of the last Spanish army in Mexico, the disposition of Spain's colonial empire reached an equilibrium that lasted until the Mexican-American War. The decision to use both cultural and political events as temporal parameters reflects my intention to ground this study in the intersection of culture, economics, and politics of the Atlantic World, but the significance of these dates extends beyond any particular events. These years frame Europe's "dual revolutions," the emergence of the two key attributes of the modern world: nation-states grounded in republican political ideologies and capitalist economics.¹

Although I will argue that qualitatively new themes in the representation of Spain and the Spanish past emerge after 1775, the topic has a long history in European and

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (Cleveland: World, 1962; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1990) 2, for a basic articulation of the idea that the political revolution in France and the industrial revolution in Britain are constitutive of the modern era. Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman present a less binary and more culturally inflected version of this argument in the introduction to their edited volume *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France, 1750-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Anglo-American culture, often following two persistent themes. The first was the “black legend,” where Spain was viewed as a repressive theocracy controlled jointly by the Inquisition and a pious, violent, and often poverty-stricken aristocracy. The roots of this discursive tradition extend back to the Protestant Dutch rebellion against the reign of Philip II in the late sixteenth century. Works from this era are among the first manifestations of modern political propaganda, and include editions of Fray Bartolomeo de las Casas’s critique of Spain’s administration of the Caribbean Indians, illustrated with inflammatory images of Spanish cruelty to colonial subjects.² A wide range of early modern figures contributed to the black legend. Those who weighed in on the problematic nature of the Spanish character and leadership range from Protestant political leaders such as William of Orange and Oliver Cromwell to giants of the European intellectual tradition such as Montaigne and Voltaire.³

The other key theme in the representation of Spain and the Spanish past, often found in early modern performance traditions, was the depiction of Spain as the site of conflict between Moor and Christian. Called *moros y cristianos* or *morescas*, the folkloric depiction of legendary medieval conflicts between Christian and Islamic Spain was a common feature of festivals throughout Iberia and the Spanish colonies.⁴ Typically appearing in mock battles, performers depicting the Moors were marked by their flamboyant behavior and dress, featuring turbans, pantaloons, and curved swords. Works based on Ariosto’s fifteenth-century *Orlando Furioso*, an epic poem with a taste for

² Lewis Hanke is the historian most associated with the study of de las Casas and the use of his material in subsequent anti-Spanish polemics. His *Bartolomeo de las Casa: An Essay in Spanish Historiography* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1952) is a good overview.

³ Charles Gibson, ed., *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (New York: Knopf, 1971) include excerpts from these and numerous others.

⁴ Max Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). Chapter 1 examines medieval and early modern cases.

burlesque and farce that recounts the legends of the battles between Charlemagne and the Saracens originally recorded in *The Song of Roland*, are widespread.⁵ From *Orlando* emerged a stock character of the *commedia dell'arte* tradition, Il Capitano, a Spanish knight and braggart whose tales of his heroic resistance to the infidel and general martial prowess were constantly undermined by the crafty servant Punchinello.⁶ The theme also appears in more elevated genres, especially the many eighteenth-century operas based on *Orlando*. One of the best known variations on this theme is also one of the latest, Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, first produced in 1785.⁷ This opera's libretto leaves no exoticized trope of Islamic representation behind, weaving fantastic dress, fecund orchards, religious apostasy, a chorus of Janissaries, and even a wisecracking Christian maid named Blonde, into its depiction of the conflict between a Spanish nobleman and a Turkish pasha for the love of an Englishwoman.

While the emergence of Enlightenment-influenced depictions of Spain and its past, based on actual observation of existing places and antiquities, does represent something strikingly new, none of these empirical works are produced in isolation from their longstanding discursive context. The earliest manifestations of the new style are sporadic and occur through the latter 1700s, just as Mozart's comic pashas were amusing all Vienna. They stem from both a new Spanish interest in the national past and from a trickle of foreign travelers. Spain's Islamic legacy was an early focus of these works. The Enlightenment-influenced administration of Spain's King Carlos III commissioned a survey of Islamic antiquities published in 1785 that included images of the Alhambra, the

⁵ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Guido Waldman (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983).

⁶ John Rudlin, *Commedia dell'Arte: An Actors Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1994), 119-124.

⁷ Julian Rushton, "The Abduction from the Seraglio," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2001 ed.

last capital of Islamic Spain, *al-Andalus*. British travelers expanded the boundaries of the Grand Tour to include the Iberian Peninsula, and Henry Swinburne, grandfather of the romantic poet Algernon Swinburne, published an account of a journey through southern Spain that was the first to note the significance of the Alhambra and reproduced several early views.⁸ These efforts laid the groundwork for the future, both in their actual empirical work and, significantly, by demonstrating that both public sphere and royal patronage models would be part of the project of reconstructing and reproducing the Spanish past.

By 1800 it seemed that the Spanish government was ready to adopt a far more expansive attitude toward self-knowledge, an attitude marked by both the commissioning of Alexander von Humboldt's voyage to map the Spanish Empire and firmer assurances that Protestant visitors to Spain would be less subject to Inquisitorial discipline.⁹ A further key to increased understanding of Spain's Islamic past was the development of a cadre of western philologists who knew enough Arabic to translate inscriptions, a direct result of the increased need to administer and otherwise relate to Mughal India.¹⁰ All these ingredients came together in the first major project designed to definitively catalog the Alhambra when James Cavanah Murphy began work on his *Arabian Antiquities of Spain*. Murphy was embedded in the world of Enlightenment public-sphere patronage as a protégé of William Burton Conyngham, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat with a longstanding interest in antiquities on Europe's peripheries. Murphy combined his own experience as

⁸ Discussion of earliest images of the Alhambra from the unpaginated introduction to James Cavanah Murphy, *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain* (London, 1816); Henry Swinburne, *Travels Through Spain, in the Years 1775 and 1776*, (London, 1778). On Carlos III and the Spanish Enlightenment, see Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 60-72.

⁹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 116.

¹⁰ Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 141. See also Cohn's *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

a traveler, writer, and artist in Portugal with an expanding commercial publishing marketplace and the availability of expert Arabists to undertake an enormous project. It ultimately took fifteen years to complete, but included Murphy's collection of more than 100 engravings, a translation of the extensive Arabic transcriptions in the Alhambra, and a 300-page history of Islam.¹¹

The publication of *Arabian Antiquities in Spain*, along with several more modest works on the same subject, in the years after the Congress of Vienna, occurred as a new era in the relationship between Spain and the rest of the Atlantic powers was taking shape. One of the many devastating outcomes of the Napoleonic wars on Spain's political culture was the emergence of a widespread consensus among colonial elites that the time for independence had arrived.¹² Thus in the years 1815 – 1825, while Spain desperately scrambled to reassert some level of colonial authority, the Atlantic powers, especially Britain and the United States, were faced with the not uninviting prospect of a vacuum of power in the Caribbean and South America. From this period forward, the opportunity for Anglo-American assertion of political authority in the former Spanish empire was a crucial contextual element for works such as Murphy's. After 1815 this led to a new category of writings about Spain: general interest articles in commercial periodicals. Early examples include reviews of the works published by those who actually had traveled to Spain. Gradually, however, journalists used these early empirical studies as a constitutive element in the construction of a new discursive consensus on the nature of Spain and Spanish culture. This emerging genre amalgamated traditional views

¹¹ John Shakespear and Thomas Hartwell Horne, *The History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain* (London, 1816); Theodore Besterman, *The Publishing Firm of Cadell and Davies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), x.

¹² Charles Esdaile, *Spain in the Liberal Age: From Constitution to Civil War, 1808-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 32.

of Spain, the new empiricism, romantic views of the premodern world on the European margins, the colonial aspirations of the British world, the potential to sell Spanish culture and Spanish antiquities in the Anglo-American market, and a dramatic increase in interest in Spain on the part of the United States.

The representation of Spain in the United States before 1820 was not materially different than in Britain, there just was less of it. There were, however, three important thematic elements in American representational traditions that were of little concern to the British. The first was that the Spanish conquest of the Americas put Spain very much in the family tree of all Euro-America, including the former British colonies of North America. Given Spain's long history of political and religious antagonism with the United States' more respectable British ancestors, this was a matter that called for careful management. The second was the significance of the US military confrontation with the Barbary pirates during their heyday. For the British, this conflict was merely one aspect of the global assertion of British authority.¹³ The latitude afforded by the Napoleonic Wars to the ad hoc states along the Mediterranean coast of Africa, however, occurred during the first years of the young republic's attempt to enter the Atlantic trading networks, and the US reaction to the Barbary States was a constitutive element of American foreign policy and identity.¹⁴ Thus the conflict between the West and Islam imagined in US representational traditions was strongly influenced by these events, and was often framed in naval terms. Finally, an interest in incorporating Spanish colonial

¹³ Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York: Pantheon, 2002).

¹⁴ Robert Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) presents a wide range of representations of Islam from the early republican era.

holdings, especially Cuba, into the United States, emerged in the early republican era and persists throughout the years of this study.

The career of Washington Irving, the most important American writer about Spain in the early nineteenth century, clearly shows the gradual transition in the representation of Spain. His early works encompass both the black legend and the early modern fascination with the harem as a site for melodrama. The short story “The Student of Salamanca” takes place in a world where alchemy and the Inquisition seem to be the two most important factors in Spanish life while his play *Abu Hasan* revolves around a clever pair of lovers who wittily manipulate the quaint customs of the caliph’s court to earn a place of honor in society.¹⁵ In 1826 Irving arrived in Spain and quickly became the leader of a circle of British and American visitors who reframed the representation of Spain and the Spanish past into a tradition that both fully reflected the emergence of romanticism and participated in the process of framing Anglo-American relations toward Spain and its newly independent colonies.¹⁶

During his time in Spain Irving was part of a vibrant cultural circle convened by the American consul in Spain, Alexander Hill Everett. Not only did these men rearticulate the romantic version of the Spanish past, in their individual careers they reconciled personal romantic ideals with the hard work of building a career in the

¹⁵ Washington Irving, *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), CWWI vol. 9, 100; *Abu Hassan* (1823), CWWI vol. 28, 192.

¹⁶ Irving was a regular subject of biographical study from the time of his death in 1859 – see William Cullen Bryant, “A Discourse on the Life, Character and Genius of Washington Irving” (New York, 1860) – until the mid-twentieth century, when noted scholar Stanley T. Williams wrote what is still considered the standard biography, *Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935). Irving’s reputation fared poorly in the post-World War II era of high modernism, on the general grounds that his work, in contrast with that of the New England transcendentalists, was overly commercial and not truly in the realm of literary art. While scholarly work on Irving in the last fifty years has focused particularly on thematic, rather than artistic, elements in his work, a new biography, Andrew Burstein’s *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Basic, 2007), suggests a revival of interest in Irving’s career.

capitalist market. Irving's father and brothers were Yankee traders involved in international commerce. He was invited to accompany his close friend Stephen Decatur on his mission to suppress the North African maritime threat to American commerce and eventually filled several diplomatic posts. Irving resided and worked in Europe from 1815 until 1832, where he became known as the premier man of letters of the young American republic.¹⁷ This led to his invitation to Spain, his extensive access to Spanish archival material, his official status as an American diplomat, and unofficial access to Democratic Party leadership circles through fellow New Yorker Martin van Buren. The diplomatic career of Alexander Hill Everett unfolded in a structurally similar milieu. He began as John Quincy Adams's secretary and served in a number of European capitals.¹⁸ He wrote extensively on the imperial prospects of the European powers, with a particular focus on the rapidly dissolving Spanish Empire. While ambassador to Spain, he was an aggressive spokesman for both the rights of the newly constituted republics of Latin America and the special role of the United States in ensuring their independence.

These individual stories all recapitulate the larger story at the center of this study: how people made sense of the astounding changes in the world of the early nineteenth century. In their earlier work, both Irving and David Wilkie, a British romantic painter who accompanied Irving on many of his Spanish travels, found much to admire in the folkloric world that was being so rapidly plowed under by the advancing marketplace, thus their interest in and admiration for premodern Spain came naturally. But at the same

¹⁷ Ronald Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 26-28. James Tuttleton, ed., *Washington Irving: the Critical Reaction* (New York: AMS, 1993).

¹⁸ Elizabeth Evans, "Alexander Hill Everett, Man of Letters" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1970) is the only full-length study of Everett, and treats him as a minor literary figure. Everett's tenure as editor of *The North American Review*, immediately after his departure from Spain, is analyzed in Marshall Foletta's *Coming to Terms with Democracy: Federalist Intellectuals and the Shaping of an American Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

time, both Irving and Wilkie succeeded in negotiating the chaotic world of the marketplace and participated enthusiastically in institutions like the stock market. This is a vivid example of the transition from early modern to modern, a phenomenon that is manifest in this study, and frames the topic along three principle axes. The first is the transition from Enlightenment empiricism to romantic estheticization in the Western depiction of peoples outside their everyday experience. The second is in the financial basis of art and literature, which in this era moves from the traditional model of aristocratic and elite patronage to one where the commercial, public sphere provides the fundamental economic and thematic underpinnings for professional artistic expression. The third is the dissolution of the Spanish American Empire and the political implications of this event for the Atlantic World.

The question of “the other” was a fruitful one for the intellectuals of the early modern era and the Enlightenment. From the *de facto* ethnographers of the Spanish exploration to the encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, the transition from the mythical humanoids of Columbus’s cosmology to modern, empirically derived racial and national types was a matter of considerable interest.¹⁹ By the nineteenth century, one of the most significant elements of nonwestern societies seemed to be their potential to retain some of the cultural elements that seemed most under attack by the implacable advance of capitalist market relationships. In empirical studies, speculative philosophy,

¹⁹ Anthony Pagden has addressed this issue extensively. See *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Also see his foreword to Bartolomeo de las Casas’s *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, trans. Nigel Griffith (New York: Penguin, 1992). Hugh Honour’s *The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discovery to the Present Time* (New York: Pantheon, 1975) includes many of the most important visual representations of the early ethnographers. Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1970) provides a valuable theoretical framework for this issue.

and self-consciously fictive forms of expression, the ability to resist a world where considerations of matters like honor or tradition seemed anachronistic – whether located in the past or outside the mainstreams of western life – seemed a worthwhile subject.²⁰

While the modern Spanish nation had woven into its own foundational mythology figures from the classical and early Christian worlds such as Athena, Pan, the Apostle James, and Mary Magdalene, Anglo-American visitors to Spain found it easier to locate Spain's past in the more rough and tumble medieval struggles between Christian and Saracen. With characters such as Roland, El Cid, and Boabdil, such evocative types as the inquisitor, the alchemist, the gypsy, and the ever-fascinating struggle between flashing-eyed señorita and her forbidding *dueña*, Spain's past was clearly imagined outside the universalizing neoclassical traditions of the late eighteenth century. It seemed instead to reside in the less rational, more emotionally fraught, and more nationalistic traditions coalescing under the rubric of romanticism.²¹ This transition from neoclassical to romantic denotes more than a change in subject matter or focus; the rise of the romantic is a phenomenon that has much to do with the transition to commercial culture. Ironically, the appeal of romantic topics to both mass market publishers and those

²⁰ Important works in this tradition include the eighteenth-century publications of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Jonathan Swift, the nineteenth-century novels of Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper, and the invention of historical national traditions, as in the cases cited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) or Fiona Stafford's *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988).

²¹ For a general introduction to romanticism, see Hugh Honour's *Romanticism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979) and Jacques Barzun's *Classic, Romantic, and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975). Honour lays out the complexity and multivalent nature of romanticism, while Barzun particularly argues for a clear distinction between romanticism and neoclassicism. The place of Spain in Anglo-American romantic discourse is discussed in the introduction to Richard Kagan's *Spain in America: the Origins of Hispanism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002) and Charles Esdaile's *Fighting Napoleon: Guerillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain 1808-1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Ann Rigney's *Imperfect Histories: The Elusive Past and the Legacy of Romantic Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001) and Stephen Bann's *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York: Twayne, 1995) help frame the specific place of writers of romantic history, whose work ultimately helps clarify the modern distinction between history and fiction.

interested in acquiring visual motifs that could be employed in industrial production are essential to the spread of this cultural *homage* to the primitive and precommercial values romanticism finds so compelling.²²

One of the richest sources of exotic cultural material suitable for commodification was immediately adjacent to Europe in the Islamic world. Depictions and descriptions of Islamic architectural decoration and the exquisite intricacies of Kufic script, when combined with the already extant cultural overlay of violence and harem sexuality, entered European markets quickly and through many media.²³ Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, this phenomenon has been understood by scholars as one of the constitutive events in the emergence of western modernity.²⁴ Almost thirty years after its original publication, the second generation of scholars wrestling with the implications of Said's work has been increasingly interested in the applicability of the phenomena he described to contact between western and non-western cultures outside the context of the Islamic world.²⁵ Because of the negative view of Spanish Catholicism in

²² Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987). See essays by both John Seed and Janet Wolff in their edited volume *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988). Also, see the introduction to John Kuo Wei Tchen, *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) for specific examples of the early nineteenth-century commodification of exotica.

²³ Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism 1798-1836* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). This study traces the rapid diffusion of objects and motifs encountered by the Napoleonic armies in Egypt throughout European commercial life. The British painter David Roberts's interest in using Islamic design elements in wallpaper and other domestic applications is discussed by Briony Llewellyn in her catalog essay for a 1986 exhibition, Helen Guiterman and Briony Llewellyn, eds. *David Roberts* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986).

²⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, Pantheon, 1978). The magnitude of the reaction to Said's work is clear from the corpus of scholarship directly engaging the issue. Many important contributions are collected in Alexander Macfie, ed., *Orientalism: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000). Particularly significant for this study are Linda Nochlin's "The Imaginary Orient," in *Race-ing Art History*, ed. Kimberly Pinder (New York: Routledge, 2002), 69-85, the first application of Said's thinking to the visual arts, and John MacKenzie's *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

²⁵ Ann Stoler and Frederick Cooper lay out the argument for a more nuanced view of Orientalism in the introduction to their *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of

the Anglo-American imagination, the relevance of Orientalism to the Spanish case has been understood as problematic. Nevertheless, Spain's Islamic past has been a subject of increasing academic and popular interest; the New York Metropolitan Museum's 1992 exhibition, *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain*, accompanied by the most elegant visual record of these antiquities since Murphy's study in 1816, marked the topic's increasing importance.²⁶ There have been suggestions that the nineteenth-century representation of Islamic Spain could fruitfully be analyzed through the lens of Said's Orientalism, but the contrast of an honorable Islamic world with the black legend-inflected representation of early modern Spain has seemed debatable to scholars who have addressed the matter.²⁷ More recently, Robert Irwin has thoughtfully analyzed the relationship between Orientalist discourse and Spain in his study of the Alhambra. Irwin's arguments about the place of the Alhambra in British literature further reflect contemporary scholarship in their association with the psychologically inflected thinking associated with memory studies.²⁸

While romanticism in general and Orientalist romanticism in particular were clearly shaped by the emergence of the capitalist marketplace, the impact of capitalism

California Press, 1997), 17. See Madeleine Dobie's *Foreign Bodies: Gender, Language, and Culture in French Orientalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) for an argument that the political overtones of Orientalism extend beyond the European interaction with the Islamic world. Dobie suggests that Orientalism reflects displaced anxieties and tensions about the nonwestern world in general and the Caribbean colonies in particular – relevant to my view that representation of Islamic Spain relates to issues around Spanish decolonization. Todd Kontje's *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004) expands the argument for understanding Orientalism not as a cultural *mano a mano*, as in the models of Said or Bernard Lewis – see Lewis's *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) – but as a tradition that emerged throughout the west in response to specific national issues.

²⁶ Jerrilyn Dodds, ed., *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000).

²⁷ Mackenzie, *Orientalism*, 65; Todd Porterfield, "Baghdad on the Hoosic: American Orientalism" *Art in America* 80 (Feb 2001): 110-117.

²⁸ Robert Irwin, *The Alhambra* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Alan Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *American Historical Review* 102 (Dec 1997): 1368-1403.

was equally significant in the daily lives of the artists and writers involved in this study. Critics of the rise of capitalism found at the heart of their objections a deep regret for its destruction of traditional social relations. Edmund Burke characterized these behaviors as “the pleasing illusions which made power gentle and obedience liberal” while Karl Marx saw them as the “the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’.” Despite their ideological differences, Marx speaks for both when he states that capitalism “left no other nexus between people than naked self-interest.”²⁹ Cultural historians, while not typically without sympathy toward critiques of capitalism, have suggested that this era is, in fact, characterized by the emergence of a great many new vectors and modes of interaction between people, including changes in gender roles, the emergence of domesticity, a self-identified industrial working class, and nationalism in many manifestations. An aspect of capitalism’s emergence, well-illustrated in this study, is the reconciliation of the marginal status in elite society of those who work for a living with both a new fluidity in class distinctions and an economy where the traditional earning power of landowners is increasingly subordinated to cosmopolitan commercial culture. This particular manifestation of the transition to capitalism – the weaving together of traditional and negative views of commerce with its rapid spread – has been the subject of some important scholarly analyses, and will be one of the foundations of this study.³⁰

²⁹ Edmund Burke, “Reflections on the Revolution in France,” *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin, 1999), 447; Karl Marx, “The Communist Manifesto,” *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. and trans. Eugene Kamenka (London: Penguin, 1983), 206.

³⁰ Good examples include William Reddy, *The Invisible Code: Honor and Sentiment in Post-revolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Alan Taylor, *William Cooper’s Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Knopf, 2001); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

In examining the emergence of a cultural reconciliation between traditional elite attitudes toward commerce and direct participation in the marketplace I will focus on the articulation of market-friendly attitudes and values that make a distinction between the old-fashioned acquisitiveness of the counting house and something altogether more refined. Public institutions such as the stock market, increasingly accessible to bourgeois investors, manage to combine the *rentier's* distance from trade with the opportunity to invest in commerce and industry. Another example of this phenomenon is the increasing sense of professionalism among writers and artists. This is directly associated with the transition from systems of elite patronage to a system of customers. For writers, this transition is effected by the publishing industry, which quickly provided publications for every market level. The transition to the market system is more complex, but still dramatic, for visual artists. The production of prints and public exhibitions accessible to a mass audience, activities ancillary to painting such as connoisseurial evaluation of old master paintings of collectors, and a system where even such elite patrons as the King of England must compete to buy paintings all contribute to this development.

The works examined in this study illustrate this point vividly. The earliest cases, including Murphy's pre-1800 studies of Portugal, are clearly embedded in traditional patterns of patronage. Murphy's magnum opus, the *Arabian Antiquities* (1800-1815), is transitional – when the patronage support was inadequate to carry the project to completion the publishing firm of Caddell & Davies stepped in to complete the project. By the 1820s, the authors and their sponsors had a clear understanding that their work must rise or fall in the marketplace. Even more fortuitous for this study is the fact that the frequent and specific discussions of the commercial prospects of their literary, artistic,

and professional efforts on the part of Irving, Everett and their peers is often accompanied by a wide range of more general commentary about jobs, finances, and the relationship between money and a satisfactory human existence. When juxtaposed to the romantic valorization of characters understood to be immune to the pervasive financial anxieties of modern life, these concerns provide a profound, and poignant, glimpse into the relationship between romanticism and its cultural and economic milieu. The good fit between Irving and the rise of capitalism suggests another important conceptual pillar for this study. The world of the arts was actually one of the venues most available for the reconciliation of traditional social attitudes with the realities of the new capitalist world.

In addition to the general context of the rise of capitalism, I examine the more specific contextual matter of Spanish decolonization. At the beginning of the period covered in this study, the Spanish Atlantic Empire was a stable, peaceful, and orderly institution of more than 250 years' duration. At the end, it consisted only of Cuba and Puerto Rico, and the Spanish authority over these territories was being vigorously contested. The importance of this as a factor in Anglo-American representation of Spain seems clear – current theories of political authority included evaluations of the worthiness of sovereign governments. Ideas of this type are well illustrated in Alexander Hill Everett's two surveys of the world's governments, both published in the 1820s. The first, *America*, was published in 1822.³¹ In this work, Everett articulates two somewhat contradictory views that would characterize his future political advocacy. He makes a

³¹ Alexander Hill Everett, *America; Or, A General Survey of the Political Situation of the Several Powers on the Western Continent with Conjectures on their Political Future* (1822; reprinted New York: A. M. Kelley, 1970). Everett's companion piece to this work, *Europe; Or, A General Survey of the Political Situation of the Principal Powers with Conjectures on their Political Future* was published in 1827 while he was serving as attaché in Spain – Irving was helpful in Everett's efforts to secure a publisher for this work.

case for the sovereignty of nations such as Mexico, where independence was not yet clearly established, and simultaneously asserts the possibilities of a role for the United States in such remaining Spanish colonies as Cuba.

Everett's direct involvement in the Caribbean question points out another contextual issue affecting representation of Spain. After 1800, when the United States joined Britain in expressing a significant level of interest in hemispheric geopolitical dispositions, political influence in the Caribbean basin was a significant area of tension between the two Anglophone nations. From the issuance of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 through the end of the nineteenth century, policy towards the Caribbean and northern South America divided Britain and the United States. While the two national cultures shared in common many views about Spain, Catholicism, and the Bourbon monarchy, this difference in national political agendas may be a factor in Washington Irving's work, often more flamboyantly anti-Spanish than anything being produced by British artists. Irving's biography of Christopher Columbus, published in 1829, the year of Andrew Jackson's inauguration, is clearly associated with the ethos of Jacksonian expansionism. Irving's biography is the source of the popular understanding of Columbus as a figure whose scientific and progressive agenda was impeded by the Spanish theological establishment. This construction mediates Columbus's obvious Catholicism, an important aspect of earlier representations of the great explorer, thus qualifying him for his role in the decidedly Protestant pantheon of American manifest destiny.³² In Britain, 1829 was the year of Catholic Emancipation and the abolition of the Test Act. This extension of

³² Hugh Honour, *The European Vision of America* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975), 277-286. For a thoughtful look at the representation of Catholicism in American political iconography, see Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

civil rights to Catholics suggests a milder view of Catholicism than that current in the United States, a view supported by the work of such British Orientalist painters as Wilkie or David Roberts. A hint that this distinction may be worth close examination is the long association of Catholic rights in Britain with the question of American independence – the “Gordon riots” in opposition to the war against North American independence stemmed from mass opposition to an eighteenth-century attempt to modify restrictions on Catholic civil rights.³³ The argument that these works are worth examination rests on the same interpretation that serves as the basis for this entire study. Irving’s romantic histories were not one-dimensional polemics; rather they both articulated the existing views of the culture, and, through their wide dissemination and distribution through the political nation, actually helped establish and shape political and cultural views.

³³ George Rudé, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (New York: Wiley, 1964), 255. Charles Dickens’ *Barnaby Rudge*, a fictional treatment of the Gordon riots published in 1841, is an important source for the marginal status of anti-Catholic discourse in nineteenth-century Britain.

Chapter 1

The Moors and Spain in Medieval and Early Modern European Culture

The rise of European artistic culture is one of the great signifiers for the rise of the West. Since the fourteenth century, art, theater and literature have expressed the values and aspirations of the culture. For most of this time, society's elites have followed Plato's advice by using Academies and censors to manage these representational traditions. But alongside official, academic art, popular artistic traditions have persisted; it is here where we find the early modern representation of the Spanish Moors. Stories about the medieval encounters between Christendom and Islam, and the *reconquista*, the gradual conquest of Islamic Spain by Christian kingdoms, largely occur in popular performance culture. The best known examples are the many versions of *moros y cristianos*, a ribald, raucous, and carnivalesque tradition that had been an important element of European popular culture since the late medieval period. The *moros y cristianos*, or *morescas*, recapitulated the battles of the *reconquista* in pageantry and dance with a strong emphasis on costume, mock violence, and sexuality – certainly a recipe for popularity, but one that emphasizes the ephemeral nature of the tradition. The sixteenth-century epic poem *Orlando Furioso* was the first important written work written in the spirit of the *moresca*. It also provides the first significant written documentation of the key themes addressed in popular representation of the conflict between Moor and Christian.¹

¹ Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

It is important to note that *Orlando Furioso* (first published 1516) emerged from the same early Renaissance milieu as Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (first published 1532). The contemporary scholarly understanding of Rabelais is helpful in building a convincing analytical framework for *Orlando's* place in defining the romantic representation of the Moors in Spain. In one of the foundational documents of twentieth-century literary studies, Mikhail Bakhtin identified the unbridled sexuality and scatological raunchiness of Rabelais as a vector of social opposition within European society. Bakhtin associated the appetites and discharges, sexual and otherwise, of his gigantic protagonists with the Carnival tradition, in which he memorably located the spirit of resistance to the emerging order and hierarchy of Europe's agricultural society. Bakhtin argued that while the centralizing institutions of European monarchical society suppressed these impulses with increasing efficiency, there emerged certain places where the expression of oppositionality was, within certain temporal and spatial limits, sanctioned. The fact that these stories were generally performed in ad hoc theatrical milieus reinforces their identification with resistance to cultural centralization.²

Bakhtin spent a good deal of the famous introduction to his study of Rabelais detailing those elements of the carnivalesque that turned it into an institution of oppositionality. In particular, Bakhtin associated the carnivalesque with the institution of the marketplace, an institution which allowed for the "creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came in contact with each other and liberating them from norms of decency and etiquette imposed at other times" (10). He described this "marketplace speech" as the

² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). Note especially the Introduction, 1-58.

basis for carnivalesque behavior: “laughter which gives form to carnival rituals [and] frees them completely from all religious and ecclesiastical dogmatism, from all mysticism and piety. They are also completely deprived of the character of magic and prayer; they do not command nor do they ask for anything” (7). Bakhtin argued that carnivalesque ritual was most effective when dealing with representation of either the foreign or that which occurred around borders, borders of both the individual body and the institutions of the society. The grotesque elements from “the immense mass of legends and literary works connected with the ‘Indian Wonders’” (27) were absorbed into the carnival tradition and so were “forms that seemed interwoven as if giving birth to each other. The borderlines that divide the kingdoms of nature in the usual picture of the world were boldly infringed” (32). Thus Bakhtin identifies the carnivalesque with both the marketplace and secularism, two elements that are traditionally corrosive to established authority, and notes that on the other hand the carnival is at home with the exotic, the foreign, and the culturally transgressive.

In his own admirable description of the centralized state’s cultural construction, Norbert Elias has identified the suppression or hiding of bodily functions as a key element of social control.³ Bakhtin is equally impressed with the importance of the uncontrollable emissions from the bowels and genitals of Gargantua and Pantagruel, viewing this as both comic device and metaphor for peasant discontent with aristocratic order. Both Elias and Bakhtin would agree that since these impulses, like those of the human body, cannot be eliminated, they must be contained, both through the imposition of codes of manners and by institutions designed to let off steam. The scholars of the late

³ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: The History of Manners*, transl. Edmund Jephcott (1939; reprint, New York: Urizen, 1978), 129-155.

twentieth century who realized that representation of the Orient was an important element of Western self-definition were right, but the process started earlier than they generally understood. Early modern representation of the encounter between Moor and Christian was an important locus for the processing of the tensions created by the emergence and internalization of these critical western social controls.

Roland and El Cid

The longstanding Western interest in the story of the Moors and Spain began with two important medieval hero-tales, the stories of El Cid and of Roland. Both stories, not coincidentally, date to around 1100, the beginning of the Crusading Era. The historical figure Rodrigo Díaz, or El Cid (a name derived from the Arabic *El Sayyid*, or The Captain), was likely an actual historical figure who lived in the eleventh century. As his name suggests, he was a successful military commander. In the traditional version of his story, El Cid is presented as the strong right arm of various *reconquista*-era Christian Kings, who were usually depicted as unworthy of the services of such a noble warrior.⁴ These flawed royal characters help explain one of the surprising aspects of this great hero of Christian Spain's story – he frequently switches allegiance from Christian to Muslim ruler. The revisionist historians have weighed in on El Cid, and one of their first points contextualizes this inconstancy. They argue that we should understand eleventh-century Spain not as the scene of a straightforward battle between implacable Christian and Muslim rulers, but as a fluid and politically decentralized area where religious affiliation was just one node in a kaleidoscope of territorial disputes. This explains the historical

⁴ For a good version of this traditional *Cid* see Ramon Menendez Pidal, *The Cid and His Spain*, trans. Harold Sunderland (London: Frank Cass, 1971). See his Chapter 1 for a review of the eleventh- and twelfth-century primary sources.

accounts of El Cid's affiliation with Islamic rulers in certain battles, and seems more convincing than the tortuous arguments of his Christian biographers who explain El Cid's fickleness as an effort to convince his Christian patrons to take their confessional responsibilities more seriously.⁵ The significant point here is that regardless of the actual facts of El Cid's biography, the Cid of legend was fully affiliated with the project of the reconquista.

While the historical events addressed in the French epic poem *Song of Roland* occurred much earlier, during the eighth-century reign of Charlemagne, the poem itself is also dated to approximately 1100, contemporary with the first *El Cid* chronicles. Like El Cid, Roland's epic persona was that of an implacable fighter against the Moors, particularly celebrated for his heroic leadership and honorable death in a rear-guard struggle to protect Charlemagne's retreating army. However, the actual source for the Roland story, Einhard's contemporary biography of his friend and master Charlemagne, states that the ambush of Roland was effected by *Wascones*, generally assumed to be Basques, who were intent on looting Charlemagne's supply wagons. Just as in the El Cid story, religious zeal, which had little to do with Charlemagne's actual incursion into Spain or the attack on Roland, is at the forefront of the Crusader-era narrative. In the twelfth-century epic, Roland, like El Cid, was unambiguously engaged in a war with the Islamic infidels, and died defending Charlemagne's army from the worshippers of

⁵ For the revisionist case, see Simon Barton and Richard Fletcher, eds. and trans., *The World of El Cid: Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). This volume provides new translations and introductions to the traditional sources cited by Menendez Pidal.

“Mahum,” or Muhammad. The exigencies of Crusade-era narrative require that Roland, like El Cid, be enrolled unambiguously in a war against the enemies of Christendom.⁶

While both *El Cid* and *The Song of Roland* have long been understood as part of the “Western Canon,” until the last few decades their significance has been understood to center on the emergence of the modern nation-state rather than on the relationship between Christendom and Islam. Scholars have traditionally argued that both works employ the Islamic enemy as something of a device, one that helps to create a sense of difference against which the Christian nobility and valor of Roland or El Cid would stand out more sharply. In this argument, both tales reflect the emergence of a self-conscious and centralized French or Spanish national identity from the tangle of local, feudal obligations – any polemical assertion of Christian solidarity against Islam is a secondary element.⁷ Today’s scholars are likely to find the theme of religious conflict and the “clash of civilizations” between Islam and Christendom to be the central theme of earlier Western representations of the Islamic world. To those who produced the earlier works, descriptions of the Islamic world were not meant as a critique of a foreign culture. They helped frame ambivalence about the emergence of the powerful national state.

But the persistence of the Roland and El Cid stories in Western culture was not strictly based on their utility as a vehicle for such elevated matters. In the early 1500s, the Italian poet Ariosto recycled the basic ingredients of the Roland story into a spicier

⁶ This transformation of the Roland story into a crusader-friendly narrative is described in the introduction to Gerald Brault’s *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University, 1978). Brault’s explanation is not meant to emphasize the battle between Christian and Moor as central to this construction – he argues that the introduction of an infidel enemy was a device to frame Roland as a Christian hero.

⁷ Peter Haidu’s *The Subject of Violence: The Song of Roland and the Birth of the State* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) provides a good description of the transition in critical understanding of this work. As an example of his sensitivity to more recent scholarship, his very first footnote references Edward Said.

stew. He created an epic poem *Orlando Furioso* (and its lesser known predecessor, *Orlando Innamorato*) that transposed not just the medieval hero's name, but his entire ethos. Rather than a devoted, pious Christian crusader motivated by faith and honor, Orlando is a hero whose martial prowess is subordinate to a fiery temper and a taste for the ladies. The work blends a substantial dose of sexy comedy into the earlier expression of the chivalric ideal. *Orlando* dwells on themes that resonate throughout the early modern lore of the *reconquista*, particularly the attraction between Christian knight and infidel maiden, and the idea that the knights engaged in fighting off the Moors were not always the most diligent of warriors. Not only did Orlando have an eye for a pretty face, his most consequential attractions were to the daughters of various infidel princes. In fact, his predilections were so well known that these princes actually journeyed to the court in Paris and subtly trolled their daughters at court in hopes of sowing discord in the ranks of the Christian knights. But these strategic considerations were, like the religious insults that the warriors occasionally unleashed, secondary to the basic farce. Given the long-standing appeal of sex and comedy, it will come as no surprise that Orlando, rather than Roland, became the source for further literary iterations of the story.⁸

None of these medieval and early modern stories represent original authorial creations – El Cid, Roland, and the other characters of medieval fiction are all characters who originated in oral folk traditions. While the spread of written literature brought these works into the realm of elite literary culture, as in the case of *Orlando*, folk traditions

⁸ In analyzing these early examples of the literature of the Moor-Christian struggle, the most recent scholarly literature typically is the most helpful in the crucial task of establishing historical contextualization. A good example in this case is Daniel Javitch's *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando Furioso* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). On the other hand the contemporary scholar's sensitivity to context seems often to result in a lack of appreciation for the work's outrageous ribaldry. A scholar of a previous generation, E. W. Edwards in *The Orlando Furioso and its Predecessor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924) provides a more perceptive appreciation of the work's gamy vitality.

persisted, especially in the coarse burlesques of *commedia dell'arte*. Carnavalesque performance of the *moros y cristianos* or *moresca* also reproduced the *reconquista* in dance and pageant.⁹ The *commedia* tradition was most influential in developing narrative themes and characters, including one embedded in the story of battle between Moors and Christians, *il capitano*, a comic warrior type known in one of his incarnations as *matamoros*, the Moorslayer. Even the earliest descriptions of *il capitano*, from the period when both Spain and the Ottoman Empire were still forces to be reckoned with throughout Europe, contains the seeds of the later and more purely farcical Spanish warrior. Always the braggart, both in matters of military and romantic prowess, the *capitano* betrays his cowardice at the slightest sign of confrontation [Figure 1].

The great Michelangelo's sixteenth-century description confirms the early provenance of this description: "Stiffly formal the Captain stands, twisting his enormous black Moustache into monstrous shapes, pretending he is full of passion and cruelty. Proudly he boasts of his wonderful prowess, he who is a greater coward than a bailiff, the very type of a vainglorious poltroon."¹⁰ As Spain's influence in European politics waned through the seventeenth century, the character of *il capitano* became more risible. In another script, he retreats from a threatening gesture by the harmless Pantalone and when reproached for this timorousness he testily replies "I just went to prepare the old man's grave."¹¹ *Il capitano's* poverty, usually signified by elaborate outer garments or a hat, feathered but thread-bare, over ragged or non-existent underclothes also became a more

⁹ See Max Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 31-67 for examples of the *moros y cristianos* theme in medieval and early modern performance.

¹⁰ Quoted in Paul C. Castagno, *The Early commedia dell'arte (1550-1621)* (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 102.

¹¹ Joseph Kennard, *Masks and Marionettes* (1935; reprint, Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1967), 58.

significant element of his character as the fortunes of Spain declined [Figure 2]. As the memory of Islamic military prowess receded in the eighteenth century, *il capitano*'s self-description as a valiant participant in this struggle became more prominent – one example is the claim that he clothed his retinue in the turbans of his victims. One of the key attributes of the *il capitano* type is an extremely large sword, prominent in both Figures 1 & 2. This prop was strongly associated with phallic humor and sexualized slapstick.¹²

Along with the development of a trivialized, hypersexual, and laughable Spanish warrior character, early modern popular culture provided a set of visual and aural images and signifiers for the Moorish and Islamic world. These characters figure in carnivalesque performances of ritualized battles between Christian and Moor (the *moros y cristianos* or *morescas*) and persist into the era of anthropology and photography, where some have been recorded. Although the current manifestations of these performances, in both Spain and Latin America, should clearly not be understood as identical to those of the early modern era, they do provide an interesting record of visual signifiers for the world of the Moors. Exactly when the tradition of including symbolic *moros y cristianos* battle reenactments emerged is a contentious question among scholars, but the evidence has been carefully reviewed by theater historian/anthropologist Max Harris. He demonstrates that this tradition was integrated into the Spanish festival calendar not long after the actual *reconquista* in the early modern period, which is to say while the Moors still represented an actual military threat to the Iberian homeland and empire.¹³ Thus, like the epic poems and *commedia* characters, the early *moros y cristianos* are best understood as part of the post-*reconquista* construction of a mytho-historic culture of the

¹²John Rudlin, *Commedia Dell'arte: An Actor's Handbook* (London: Routledge, 1994), 119.

¹³Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians*, 31-36.

not-long-ago medieval world. The pictorial evidence available from modern sources presents an interesting series of visual signifiers for the Moors. Along with the predictable turbans and scimitars [Figure 3] the tradition includes a wide range of military accoutrements, including hobby horses and antiquated firearms that suggest the same serio-comic military milieu of *il capitano*.

Jacques Callot

Mikhail Bakhtin noted the close relationship between the carnival tradition and *commedia dell'arte*, and a series of prints created by the French early baroque master Jacques Callot provides an excellent example of this. Callot was skilled at creating enormous engravings that captured the scope of early modern life. He was an honored favorite at courts throughout Europe for his striking depictions of royal spectacle. He recorded scenes from the courts of the Medici, France's Louis XIII and Spain's Philip IV. He is better known today as one of the first European artists to examine the social question; his *Miseries of War* series is one of the earliest and greatest documentations of the horrors of large, organized bodies of troops turned loose amidst a civilian population. He recorded not just elite spectacle, but detailed views of fairs and festivals full of vivid and witty detail, as in his famous engraving *Two Pantaloons* [Figure 4], a longtime favorite of visitors to Washington, D.C.'s National Gallery.¹⁴

In a group of images thought to date from his time in Italy, the *Balli di Sfessania* ("Asinine Dances") series, Callot depicts a group of *commedia* characters in what is clearly a carnivalesque setting. These twenty-four prints, usually dated to the 1620s,

¹⁴ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 34. For the *Two Pantaloons*, including an interesting comment on the identification of the figures, see H. Diane Russell's encyclopedic *Jacques Callot: Prints and Related Drawings* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1975), 87-88.

emphasize the Rabelaisian lewdness I have argued is an important thread of the traditional representation of the *moros y cristianos* motif. While this series has been described as an inventory of the stock *commedia* characters, Donald Posner has pointed out that Callot was not recording the entire ensemble but focusing particularly on various examples of the *capitano* type. Posner concludes that this series actually reproduces the various folkloric dances of a Sicilian *moresco* festival, and the presence of these *capitanos* ties this series to the comic soldier theme of *moresco* performance tradition. *The Grove Dictionary of Music* describes the “carnal and scatological” as central elements of the *moresca*, and these images vividly confirm that description.¹⁵

The prints of the *Sfessania* series focus on the individual figures and have less of the fantastic and impeccably observed background detail of the *Two Pantaloons* and so many of Callot’s other slices of early modern life. But the central figures themselves, with their leering expressions and prominently displayed buttocks and swords, bring the more static figures reproduced in **Figures 1 and 2** to life. While the frontispiece of the work [**Figure 5**] is set in a theater, the other figures depict the world of the large and bustling outdoor fair. The zany detail in the background of these scenes show that the *commedia* characters had to compete with other acrobats and clowns doing their best to attract the fairgoers’ attention [**Figures 6, 7**]. Callot’s prints leave little to the imagination in terms of the phallic comedy associated with the swords, particularly in **Figure 6**. In this image not only does *il capitano* thrust suggestively at his partner’s exposed buttocks, the background image echoes the joke even more dramatically. There,

¹⁵ Donald Posner, “Jacques Callot and the Dances Called *Sfessania*,” *Art Bulletin* 59 (June 1977): 203-216; See Russell, *Jacques Callot*, 59 for the consensus argument identifying the *Sfessania* prints as a sort of inventory of *commedia* characters. See also Alan Brown and Donna Cardamone, “Moresca,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2001 ed. for more on the prevalence of sexuality and crude humor in this genre.

one clown is riding a donkey backwards while the other is in the process of giving the donkey an enema.¹⁶ If this was the competition, it is not difficult to see why Callot's *commedia* characters engage in such flagrant gestures themselves. **Figure 7** makes an even clearer association with the Rabelaisian interest in bodily emissions as a key element of carnivalesque humor. Here one of the *zanne*, or clowns, unloads the suggestive-looking contents of what appears to be an early modern Super Soaker at the buttocks of another *capitano* type. These images were memorable enough to inspire copies, and several were redone as oil paintings by anonymous seventeenth-century artists. In one of these images, a figure dressed as a Moor, with turban and scimitar rudely shows his bottom to *il capitano*, demonstrating his enemy's traditional cowardice **[Figure 8]**. Thus Callot's series of images reinforces the argument that the sexual elements associated with early modern representation of the Moors may fit in well with the Rabelaisian celebration of the power of the body to transgress social control.

These popular characterizations flourished into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but as state-sponsored Academies emerged with the mission of defining and canonizing elite artistic criteria, similar themes appeared in new, and, perhaps regrettably, more refined genres.¹⁷ Callot's own works make it clear that at least in the early seventeenth century these distinctions had not been fully instantiated. Another of

¹⁶ Lynne Lawner, *Harlequin on the Moon: Commedia dell'Arte and the Visual Arts* (New York: Abrams, 1998), 108-112. "The enema" is one of the classic *commedia lazzi*, or stock routines – after the enema itself was played for laughs, various comic props would emerge from the victim's bottom, thus adding to the hilarity.

¹⁷ Robert M. Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Although this work deals mainly with the eighteenth century, his Part I captures the earlier political and social tension between traditional street performance and the more easily controlled theaters. See John Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 117 for another work that though it deals with later material describes the resistance of outdoor performers to social control. The use of pantomime and highly topical and rapidly changing referents was not easy to manage through the system of pre-production censorship.

Callot's theatrical projects, meant to show his Florentine patrons at their most puissant, depicts an enormous pageant entitled *The War of Love* [Figures 9 & 10]. Unlike the bawdy folk comedy depicted in the *Balli de Sfessania*, in this series we see marchers, dancers, floats and tableaux specifically identified with various members of the Medici court.¹⁸ Although the *War of Love* was clearly associated with elite rather than folk culture, the creators of this gigantic spectacle also found the Orientalist stories useful. The central conceit of the pageant was a conflict between two Italian princes for the love of Lucinda, a visiting Queen of India, whose magnificent float appears on the right in the second row of **Figure 10**. This adaptation of the *Orlando* theme – Christian knights losing their heads over a beautiful woman from the exotic East – demonstrates how this literary trope remained one of the principal vehicles for introducing Orientalist materials into elite as well as popular Western culture.

The *War of Love* was a consummate multi-media public performance, the type Jacob Burckhardt described as the central and self-defining spectacle of Italian Renaissance culture.¹⁹ The performance included the parade, dance, music, and various visually spectacular items, including the floats reproduced in **Figures 9 and 10**. While spectacle on this level could not be part of everyday life, the emergence of opera presented these elements within the more modest confines of a stage. Thus opera, especially, particularly with its friendliness toward sexualized material, became an important locus for the evolution of the narrative themes associated with the *moros y*

¹⁸ Russell, *Jacques Callot*, 60-61.

¹⁹ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860; reprint, New York: Modern Library, 1954), 299-315. Burckhardt's study of festival culture posits a linear model where secular themes were gradually layered on to an originally religious festival culture rooted in Mystery plays and Corpus Cristi processions. The secular themes he was interested in are those that helped establish Court prestige and authority. Burckhardt had no taste for the crude or the vulgar, and his teleological model does not concern itself with the market roots of festival or the cruder elements of popular culture, but is still convincing in its general chronology.

cristianos. Simultaneous with the emergence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the “Black Legend,” the trope of Spain as a backwards theocracy, there emerged, particularly in the genre known as “*opera alla turca*,” a parallel tradition that built a framework of operatic tropes associated with Spain before the *reconquista*. These featured sexually charged stories of pashas, harems, and desirable women, especially pale-skinned slaves, under the control of the Oriental potentates. The stories were typically tied to the *moros y cristiano* tradition through the inclusion of an ardent Christian/Spanish suitor whose passionate pursuit of these maidens followed in the footsteps of Orlando.²⁰

Orientalist Opera in the Eighteenth Century

Operatic treatments of these themes abounded in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the many composers who tried their hand at Spanish material was Georg Fredrich Handel, whose career is itself a case study in the transition from artists as part of patronage retinues to artists as individual economic agents.²¹ Handel used the tales of the Moors and Christians for other *moros y cristianos*-themed opera, including *Almira*, *Queen of Castile* and *Rodrigo*, the story of the last Visigothic King, whose defeat at the hands of the Muslims in the eighth century established *al-Andalus*. The Rodrigo story also has an important place in British operatic history – it supplied the libretto for the first opera produced in London in the “Italian Style,” with its

²⁰ The device of a Spanish nobleman attempting to win a maiden from the harem was widespread in eighteenth-century opera. See Eric Blom, “*Die Entführung aus dem Seraglio*,” in *The Opera Reader*, ed., Louis Biancolli (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1953), 277-78.

²¹ Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp, *Handel's Operas 1704-1726* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). This encyclopedic work includes both biographic material, extensive research into Handel's sources, and a thorough discussion of *Rodrigo*.

roots in the courtly tradition memorialized by Callot.²² While Rodrigo's story can be framed as a straightforward problem of military politics, its operatic manifestation is utterly typical of other Western descriptions of medieval Spain in that it foregrounds sexuality and lust. Rodrigo's ability to resist the Moorish invasion, it turns out, was compromised by a dispute about his rights to the throne, a dispute precipitated by Rodrigo's promise to put aside his faithful wife and make the daughter of an ally queen. By his sexual misconduct, Rodrigo created a whole class of natural allies for the invading Moors. This, of course, led to the destruction of the Christian Visigothic kingdom and 700 years of Islamic Iberia, a dramatic moral consequence, indeed!²³

While neither the *turqueries* or the Rodrigo legend are particularly nuanced stories, by late in the eighteenth century the harem tale had evolved into something more complex, including stories that increasingly reflected the more positive Enlightenment view of Islam and the Moors. A typological case for this is Mozart's opera *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, first performed in 1782 (just a few years after Henry Swinburne had returned from Spain and the same year he was preparing his *Travels through the Two Sicilies* – see Chapter II). The libretto, mostly cribbed from a 1781 play by a Leipzig merchant-playwright, contains characters and scenes familiar from a long line of Orientalist harem fantasies: as the story opens, the sultan Selim and his wicked vizier Osmin have purchased for the harem some recently captured Christian prisoners,

²² J. Merrill Knapp, "Handel's First Italian Opera: 'Vincer se stesso e la maggior vittria' or 'Rodrigo' (1707)." *Music and Letters* 62 (Jan 1981): 12-29. In this study, Merrill unearths the original libretto for this opera, and uses it to argue that the links between Handel's work and the Italian operatic tradition were closer than has been generally understood. In addition to the Rodrigo story, Handel also composed an opera based on *Orlando*.

²³ Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas*, 95-113. See also Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 127 for an interesting discussion of epic history in eighteenth-century discourse.

including the fair Costanza and her wise-cracking servant Blonda.²⁴ Costanza's love, the noble Spaniard Belmonte, arrives to attempt Costanza's rescue and the predictable action is underway. The resolution of the relationships is something new, however, resonating with Swinburne's Islamophile approach to Moorish civilization.

The moral center of the opera, commissioned for the German National Theater in Vienna, where 150 years earlier the Turks had been defeated after an epic siege of the city, is the Turkish Pasha Selim. In the final act, the captured lovers are brought before Selim for what promises to be a brutal sentencing. Rational Westerner that he is, Belmonte immediately attempts to turn his affair of the heart into a commercial matter by describing his father, Lostados, in terms of his capacity to pay a generous ransom. Unfortunately, it turns out that Lostados, as commandant of the Spanish outpost of Oran, was the very knight who had captured Selim in his younger days and ruined him financially. Not only that, Selim tells the appalled captives, but also "he deprived me of my beloved whom I treasured more than life itself" (Act III, Scene 6). Despite this, the Pasha's wisdom and generosity cut through social expectations and longstanding enmities. He overrules his bloodthirsty councilors and pardons the lovers in a stirring *recitative*:

It must be typical of your family to commit injustice, since you take them for granted. You are mistaken. I despised your father far too much ever to follow in his footsteps. Take your freedom, take Costanza, tell your father that you were in my power, that I released you so that you might tell him that it is a far greater pleasure to repay injustices suffered by kindness than to compensate evil by more evil (Act III Scene 8).

The Pasha Selim's enlightened response to his Christian prisoners in Mozart's opera is an innovation. In the earlier play that provided the plot, the conflict between the

²⁴ For the libretto, including the dispute over the sources, see Biancolli, *Opera Reader*, 277.

Pasha and Belmonte was resolved when it turned out that the two were actually father and son – note that Handel’s *Almira* also used this timeworn device. Mozart’s opera (to its great credit!) eschews this *deus ex machina* in favor of a demonstration of the Pasha’s enlightened wisdom.²⁵ The Pasha’s ability to transcend the sectarian violence that had seemingly been the malevolent and inescapable fate of the pre-Enlightenment world hints at the subject of my next chapter, the work of men like Alexander Swinburne, who in the same decade began the process of building an empirical study of Moorish culture. The fact that Selim’s wisdom is framed in terms of his refusal to indulge in sectarian revenge suggests one of the important bases of the Enlightenment’s attraction to Islam. A number of Enlightenment authors had found in Islam a handy device to expand their basic critique of the Western church and clergy. As Bernard Lewis has pointed out, this process began with arguments like that of a 1730 pre-romantic biography that described Muhammad as the leader of a “nation of noble savages.” This argument then evolved into an anti-clerical critique in which authors, including Voltaire, Goethe, and Gibbon praised Muhammad for his “wisdom, rationality, moderation, and tolerance.”²⁶ This depiction of the Islamic leader and world (which was by no means unequivocally favorable) resonated with normative Enlightenment anti-clericalism, and is reflected in artistic and literary depictions of Islam that emphasize the image of leaders expressing their primitive nobility untrammelled by the clergy.

Westerners in the late eighteenth century clearly did view the “Orient” as a world saddled with the regrettable, but titillating, cultural problems of the harem. Still, there was a clear and growing sense that somehow this world also possessed the capacity to

²⁵ David Cairns, *Mozart and His Operas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 83-84.

²⁶ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 89-90.

avoid some of the intrinsic contradictions of the modernizing “Occidental” world. In particular, the *Abduction* libretto articulates the consummately romantic idea that the antiquated societies of the Oriental world were still resisting a full surrender to hegemonic market forces. While the Oriental characters may have held pagan or even absurd religious beliefs, priests and organized religion did not take a prominent role in making public policy, thus individuals could act with more personal honor than could, for example, a Spanish knight. This view sits easily with the Enlightenment assumption that Catholic Spain had stupidly sabotaged its economy by persecuting the conquered Moors also discussed in the next chapter. Although Mozart and his librettist had absorbed a new and enlightened view of Islam, this new wine has been poured into an old wineskin. Their story was part of a centuries-old tradition that saw the Islamic world as a place where matters of sexuality had the potential to destabilize attempts to govern society rationally and absolutely.

Although the Pasha in Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio* lives a life surrounded by the harem, his Janissary slave army, a court full of sadistic torturers, and all the other uncivilized trappings of despotism, he is blessed with the same primitive sense of justice and chivalry that Enlightenment authors attributed to the Prophet. This attitude was reified as a touchstone of romanticism, and elements that will be characteristic of romanticism pervade other aspects of the opera. It was one of the first works Mozart created as an economic free agent, coming at the end of his vexed tenure in the Archbishop of Leipzig’s retinue; this necessity to negotiate the marketplace would become a key element of the romantic era arts. The libretto was also one of the first

presented in German, and important in the emergence of a national operatic tradition.²⁷

Since at least the publication of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, cultural historians have been especially sensitive to the important role national literature played in the emergence of national identity and the modern state, but John Bokina argues that in Europe, opera played a comparable role somewhat earlier. He notes that from the time of Machiavelli to the twentieth century, rulers and states have used this genre as both a manifestation of court power and a venue for expressing the ideology of central authority.²⁸

The difference between Mozart's Orientalist works and those of the nineteenth-century romantics may be most aptly characterized by the lack of empirical grounding in Mozart's story. His Orientals are characterized through long-established tropes: turbans, scimitars, a predilection for the garrote, and, particularly important in this context, a series of musical signifiers. These include "sharply dotted rhythms and an accompaniment of castanets, cymbals, or bells..., and the great drum, cymbals, triangles and the Turkish crescent...characteristic of the janissary music played by the bodyguards of the Turkish sultans."²⁹ What his Orientals lacked was the narrative specificity and grounding in actual history available to the next generation of composers and authors. For artists working in the genre after 1800, the efforts of Swinburne, the Napoleonic *corps de savants*, and the British and German Orientalist scholars provided a wealth of narrative material that was fresh, colorful, and grounded in empirical study.

²⁷ The Milos Forman film *Amadeus* presents the commissioning of *Abduction* as a triumph for the German nationalists in the self-consciously Enlightened court of Joseph II. See Cairns, 84-87 for a more scholarly version of the story that essentially confirms the idea that this opera was meant as a demonstration of the power of both German culture and the Emperor Joseph II's enlightened rule.

²⁸ John Bokina, *Opera and Politics: From Monteverdi to Henze* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 1-11.

²⁹ Biancolli, *Opera Reader*, 277.

Early Modern Orientalism and the Empirical Turn

To get a sense of the magnitude of this change the Enlightenment brought to the representation of the Islamic world, compare, for example, *Abduction from the Seraglio* with imaginative depictions of the Orient from the 1820s. Note that in his classic *Orientalism*, Edward Said identified the essence of Orientalism in the use of the privileged discourse of scholarship – “learned study” is Said’s expression – to frame and present demeaning critiques of the “Orient.” Said does note the prior existence of an essentializing and anti-Persian literary tradition in the culture of the ancient Greeks, and suggests that this attitude, like other ideas identified with the “Classical” world became a touchstone for Western culture in the eighteenth century.³⁰ But while this ancient tradition provided historical grounding, he associates the true modern phenomenon of Orientalism with European Imperialism, particularly the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attempts to dominate India, Egypt, and the other Asian territories in the primary European sphere of influence. Literary and artistic scholarship on Orientalism has followed Said’s lead in identifying Orientalism with the process of empirical observation associated with the Enlightenment.

The use of what Salman Rushdie describes as the “information-heavy” style of nineteenth-century prose actually puts Orientalism in the mainstream of the era’s polemical tradition – citation of historical and other empirical data were the basis of all successful argument in this era. As I turn to an examination of Spanish Orientalism in literature and art after 1800 I want to expand this point. Not only is the empirical orientation of Spanish Orientalism part of a much larger intellectual trend, the fascination

³⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 21; “learned study,” 49.

with sexualized, autocratic, and other behaviors not controlled or moderated by the rational values of market capitalism is part of this same process. The idea that the Orientalists meant to denigrate the Islamic world through its intellectual objectification is clearly a legitimate observation, but it does not conclude the story. The romantic project's fascination with societies where the desires of the human heart, or at least of some human hearts, could be expressed in all their wild and glorious and frightening totality does not imply a wholly negative perspective. This inherently contradictory argument, that Orientalism is simultaneously critical and admiring of its object, is not particularly problematic; as early as 1757 Edmund Burke had argued that the highest esthetic experience, the sublime, was induced by that which engendered "astonishment...and some degree of horror."³¹ Hugh Honour's study of romanticism makes the point less dramatically but more generally. He argued that romanticism, since it encompassed all of the reaction to the dislocations precipitated by the Dual Revolutions, is of all cultural movements the least susceptible to easy definitions or limits.³² Clearly, the most striking aspect of Spanish Orientalism is its Islamophile nature. In the following discussion of the emergence and solidification of Spanish Orientalism it is important to keep in mind the significance of thematic issues that long predate nineteenth-century Imperialism. In particular the centuries-long association of the *moresco* with carnivalesque and sexually charged oppositionality made the story of the Spanish Moors particularly appropriate for use by the romantics.

³¹ Edmund Burke, "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful," *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin, 1999), 64.

³² Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 11-19. David Beran's *Early British Romanticism, the Frankfurt School, and French Post-Structuralism: In the Wake of a Failed Revolution*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2001) expands this argument in a fascinating study that frames contemporary critical theory as a form of romantic discourse.

In my discussion of the scholarship on literary Orientalism in the Introduction to this dissertation, I noted that Orientalist motifs became a staple for the romantic poets of the early nineteenth century. Less carefully chronicled in modern scholarship but equally important are the use of Spanish Orientalist themes in opera and prose fiction. This interest is not simply a result of the fact that the Age of Imperialism is well and truly underway. While Orientalist stories had been part of the European cultural milieu throughout the early modern period, what was new in this era was an important product of Enlightenment empiricism: a fascinating array of new stories and details unearthed and systematically presented by travelers, scholars and literary historians. The works, generally poetry, cited by such well-known scholars of Orientalist literature as Emily Haddad and Albert Hourani differ from the works that came before them because they are rooted in a level of specificity unavailable to pre-Enlightenment authors. Before discussing some of the specific thematic material of the romantic era, it is important to note something that does not change – these writers do not choose and examine Oriental themes in an urgent or systematic way. The Oriental world is part of a wide, and growing, range of romanticized themes of interest to authors like Southey, Gautier, or the anti-Turkish Philhellenes like Percy and Byron.³³ The early romantic poets were not attempting to examine Islamic or Moorish society systematically, although Haddad does note the emergence of scholarly citations or footnotes in romantic poetry.³⁴ That project is still the purview of more self-consciously prosaic compilers of empirical data like

³³ Emily Haddad, *Orientalist Poetics: The Islamic Middle East in Nineteenth-Century English and French Poetry* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2002).

³⁴ Haddad, *Orientalist Poetics*, 41; Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient*. (London: Taurus, 1994); Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 138-145. See also C. M. Woodhouse, *The Philhellenes* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969).

Horne and Shakespear, who wrote the history of Islamic Spain discussed in the next chapter. For these poets, the lore of the Moors was just part of a suite of romantic images; those who wrote about the Moors also wrote about such romantically evocative subjects as holders of sincere religious beliefs, bleak stony mountainscapes or seashores, outlaws and pirates (occasionally with hearts of gold), and the binary relationship between fertility and death. In part this reflects the inchoate nature of romanticism in which a pastiche of cultural elements was cheerfully absorbed with little concern for context. I will return to this point, but first, what were the new, historically grounded subjects of interest to the romantics who dabbled in Spanish Orientalism?

Among the most vivid were the last years of the conflict between the Spanish monarchy of Ferdinand and Isabella and the Moors. This story emerged as a rich source of narrative, and this inevitably led to a focus on the last stronghold of the Spanish Moors and the last surviving Muslim palace in Europe, the Alhambra in Granada. The Alhambra was the palace of the Nasrids, a dynasty that only emerged in the twelfth century. This is relatively late in the history of Islamic Spain, well after Christian princes had conquered the Islamic rulers of central Spain. The Nasrid dominions were restricted to modern Andalusia in southern Spain, and for most of its tenure the dynasty was on the defensive against its Christian neighbors. Despite this, Granada was a capital known for its culture, prosperity, and, just as important for the nineteenth-century romantics, a series of intriguing dynastic disputes.

The most compelling of these stories were those surrounding the last years of the dynasty, which ultimately ended with the surrender of the Alhambra to Ferdinand and Isabella on January 2, 1492. The last two rulers of the dynasty, known to the Spaniards

as Muley Hassan (the father, reigned 1456-1482/3) and Boabdil (the son, reigned 1482/3-1492) engaged in a dynastic dispute that had all the appurtenances of every Orientalist drama since *Orlando Furioso*. Boabdil, the heir apparent to his father's throne, suddenly found his inheritance at hazard when his father dumped his mother for a beautiful young bride, the Christian convert Zoraya. The Abencerrages, a family of al-Andalusian nobility whose impeccable lineage ran all the way back to the companions of the Prophet, enlisted on the side of Boabdil and his mother; together they defeated and expelled Muley Hassan. The Abencerrages exemplified chivalric honor in all its complexity. They were key allies in the fight to retain Boabdil's inheritance – the final Moorish warrior to fall in single combat outside the walls of the Alhambra was the Abencerrage hero Almansour – but prone to making bad decisions when it came to fair maidens. Ultimately, some sexual shenanigans resulted in a falling-out with the ruler and a group of Abencerrages were invited to the palace, then disarmed and executed. All in all, an excellent source for romantic dramatists – the legacy of the Abencerrages was regularly recycled into nineteenth-century opera.³⁵

Of all the Moorish characters the one whose tale resonated most deeply with the romantics was that of Boabdil, the last King of the Moors. Boabdil – the name is a westernization of Abu Abdullah – was seen as a consummately tragic figure, but was not a hero in the key of Roland or of the hard-fighting, hard-loving Abencerrages. Boabdil's tragedy was much of his own making. His nicknames, *el rey chico* or *al-zogoybi* (the

³⁵ This account of the expulsion of the Moors reflects the “romantic consensus” as summarized in Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*. The many colorful aspects of the Nasrid's final years are discussed in a number of the recent examinations of the lore of the Alhambra examined in the next chapter, including Michael Jacobs, *Alhambra* (New York: Rizzoli, 2000) and Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978). See Stanley Williams, *The Spanish Background of American Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955) for details on the emergence of these stories.

unlucky), give some idea of his basically ineffectual nature. He spent several years of his reign as a captive of Ferdinand and Isabella, and like many of his Nasrid forebears, seemed more than happy to enter into a relationship of vassalage with *los reyes catolicos*. Circumstances, especially the exigencies of dynastic threats, did not allow this status quo to continue, and he was obligated to carry out a long and ultimately unsuccessful defense of his rapidly shrinking territories against both internal enemies and the aggressive Ferdinand and Isabella. The most problematic figure in his life was his ferocious mother, and the story that best captures their public relationship is the often told account of their departure into exile. In this incident, memorialized in the title of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Boabdil stopped on the road to exile to gaze back in tears at his beloved home. In Irving's description of this well-known scene he quotes Boabdil's mother's legendary rebuke to the defeated monarch: "You do well to weep as a woman over what you could not defend like a man."³⁶ Perhaps this psychologically charged variation on the always gendered Oriental court intrigue motif accounts for the popularity of Boabdil's story for the romantics; of all the new themes introduced by weaving the new historical accounts into the traditional *moros y cristianos* structure, this one was the most popular.³⁷

By the early nineteenth century, the novel was emerging as the quintessential literary form of the modern era. This phenomenon has been examined by literary scholars of the greatest eminence, but one of the clearest voices on this subject is one of the most familiar voices in U.S. letters today. Maureen Corrigan, book reviewer for

³⁶ Washington Irving, *The Alhambra*, CWWI vol. 14, 95.

³⁷ Previously cited works examine the appearance of the Moors in poetry. The use of these themes in opera is less well chronicled, but they were widespread in the early nineteenth century. The prolific Gaetano Donizetti wrote operas about both the Abencerrages (*Zoraida de Granata* in 1822) and Muley Hassan (*Alahor in Granata* in 1826).

Fresh Air on National Public Radio, is a scholar whose dissertation dealt with the place of the novel in the early nineteenth century and the Gothic Revival.³⁸ She recommends to her readers the work of Ian Watt, whom she describes as the pre-theory dean of eighteenth-century scholars. Watt defines the emerging genre of the novel as works that record “an ordinary person’s daily activities.” Corrigan expands this definition to point especially to an interest in work and other everyday activities as a key element of the novel. To these accurate observations I would only add that the project of depicting “daily activities” is a large-scale one, more effectively essayed in a large-scale genre like the novel. It is not surprising that by the early nineteenth century the ascendancy of empirical argument favored a literary genre free of the size restraints imposed by Shakespeare’s “two hours traffic of our stage” or the metrical requirements of the epic poem. Increasingly, the most significant expressions of literary ideas were in the emerging genre of the novel.

The land and legend of the Moors plays a small but significant part in Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, perhaps the most influential novel of the romantic era. In addition to this work’s thematic and cultural importance, it is an excellent example of the importance of historical grounding in romantic fiction, and following Corrigan’s argument, *Ivanhoe* is full of the details of everyday life. *Ivanhoe* is set in the aftermath of the ill-fated Third Crusade. Scott presents this military fiasco in notably frank terms. He describes the Western military defeats and presents a nuanced portrait of King Richard I, the Lion-hearted, whose many admirable characteristics were undermined by his fatal flaw, excessive impetuosity. Above all, he emphasizes the hypocritical greed and villainy of

³⁸ Maureen Corrigan, *Leave Me Alone, I’m Reading* (New York: Vintage, 2005), 85-87. The quote Corrigan cites is from Ian Watt’s *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

the Western religious/military orders. In an appallingly familiar foreshadowing of recent events, Scott describes these religious orders as self-serving conspiracies that, having set up shop in the Holy Land, manipulated Western enthusiasm for the Crusade's spiritual goals to their own ends. Their emotional appeals for vast and expensive military expeditions not only benefited their own interests but, more important in the tradition of early modern Orientalism, worked against the critical impulse toward nation-building. While *Ivanhoe* is clearly set in the world of big issues, the work still manages to extensively savor the quotidian details of medieval life; the daily activities of the many colorful servants, woodsmen, maids, cooks, and other everyday characters are at the heart of the rich tapestry Scott weaves.

Scott had thoroughly assimilated the idea of the Islamic world as a vector for the chivalry and honor that seemed on the decline in Europe. In a story full of figures whose moral orientation is suspect or worse, one character whose behavior is never less than exemplary is Saladin, the commander of the Islamic forces in the battle for control of the Holy Land. His word is genuinely his bond, and in *The Talisman*, a second book dealing with the Crusades, Saladin demonstrates his chivalry by sending his personal physician to tend to the health of the Christian army. In *Ivanhoe*, Scott ties down another key element of the romantic sympathy for Islam, the idea that Christianity was crippled by its clergy. This was a theme in a number of the early empirical descriptions of Moorish Spain, in particular Henry Swinburne's discussion of the malicious influence of religious intolerance on the Spanish economy. But for a literary manifestation of the spirit of *écrasez l'infame*, one would be hard-pressed to find a greedier or more hard-hearted batch of villains than the malicious clerics of *Ivanhoe*. From the warrior-priests of the

Templars, to the abbots of the great Norman monasteries that exploited the Saxon peasantry, to the Monks who suppressed the news of Athelstane's emergence from a coma for fear of losing the bequests they received to pray for his eternal soul, the clergy represents an entire class whose watchword is the exploitation of religious perquisites for personal ends.

Ivanhoe is, of course, a great meditation on the reconciliation of Norman and Saxon in the foundation of modern Britain, and there is one sympathetic priest in the story, but his good deeds are the exception that proves the rule of clerical perfidy. His humble rustic hut was a cornucopia of signifiers for true romantic spirituality: it sat alongside a large rock surrounded by ivy, oak, and holly bushes whose "roots found nourishment in the cliffs of the crag." The sanctity of the spot was marked by "a rude emblem of the holy cross" made from a fir tree with a piece of wood tied near the top, and the sanctity of the spot was further marked by a "fountain of the purest water" that trickled into a "hollow stone, which labor had formed into a hollow basin." This friar, whose surroundings testify so clearly to his romantic religiosity, is connected not to one of the great Norman families but to the men of the greenwoods. His hut is a safe house for the irregulars associated with the master woodsman known in public as Will Locksley and among his friends as Robin Hood, and the friar's familiarity with "a baton of crab-wood, so thick and heavy that it might well be termed as a club," identifies him as none other than Friar Tuck.³⁹

In his anticlericism and construction of the nation's grounding in the spirit of the primitive but honorable men of the medieval forests, Scott advanced ideas that were already widespread in the romantic atmosphere. His story also adopts another theme

³⁹ Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (1819; reprint, New York: Modern Library, 1997), 172-177.

straight out of the *Orlando* tradition, the idea that a Christian knight, even one pledged to an upright Christian maiden, may have his head turned by an Oriental beauty. Here, however, Scott adds something very new to the story. Scott's hero, Wilfred of Ivanhoe, does not fall for a princess from the family of a noble Muslim knight; his forbidden *amour* is Rebecca, the daughter of an itinerant Jewish moneylender. Fortunately, both Ivanhoe and the fair Rebecca are of such exemplary character that, although they save each other's lives in the most romantic fashion, their relationship never exceeds the limits of propriety.

The association of the Jews with the Orient and with medieval Spain is well understood in *Ivanhoe*; at the end of the story Scott again demonstrates his grounding in empirical history by foreshadowing the declining tolerance for Jews in Medieval England – Jews were not allowed in England from 1290 until 1655. At the end of the novel, Rebecca and her father are preparing to decamp for the court of “Mohammed Boabdil, King of Granada” where, she explains, they can expect a level of acceptance and “peace and protection, for the ransom the Moslem extracts from our people” (517). Again, Scott demonstrates his historical knowledge; by referring to Granada rather than Spain, he reminds us that, the Iberian Peninsula of the twelfth century was in no sense one country, but, like the British Isles, a group of antagonistic kingdoms. The idea of Rebecca and her father finding refuge in Islamic Spain also points to another historic phenomenon of great interest to contemporary historians, the idea that Islamic Spain was the land of *convivencia*, where the Moors presided over a nation that tolerated both Christian and Jew.

The existence of this tolerant, multireligious society is a major theme in both modern scholarship and the popular understanding of medieval Spain.⁴⁰ Yet our fascination with this topic points out clearly the complete invisibility of the Jews in the Spanish Orientalist tradition; the Jews were simply not part of the popular tradition of *moros y cristianos*. Even Swinburne's 1776 discussion of the ability of Jews to travel through Spain with *ad hoc* permission from the Inquisition, discussed in the next chapter, was treated as a contemporary oddity, principally interesting as a demonstration of the Jews' ability to subvert *de jure* prohibitions. In his criticism of the forced conversion and subsequent expulsions and economic suppression of the Moriscos, Swinburne never generalizes the discussion into one that addresses the parallel fate of the Spanish Jews.

Scott's insertion of a Jewish character into a role that had been traditionally filled by Muslim characters raises some interesting questions, and bears on my argument about the structural role of the Moors in both early modern and romantic representation. In the next chapter I will discuss in detail how in the romantic tradition, the Moors were enrolled as "honorary proto-Europeans" in whose society reposed the traditional spirit of freedom that was so vividly under attack in the age of capitalism. I will further argue that this romantic construction of the Moors has its roots in the early modern trope of the Moors as figures who participated in the Rabelaisian resistance to the imposition of central authority and order. Neither early modern or romantic era constructions of the Jews allow for this sort of characterization. While the Moors and other medieval peoples were imagined as part of a premarket economy of communal give and take, the Jews were identified with the very market forces emerging with capitalism. I have mentioned

⁴⁰ The literary scholar Maria Rose Menocal's *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Boston: Little Brown, 2002) is a popular version of the *convivencia* story with a solid scholarly foundation.

the importance of Edmund Burke in articulating the romantic ethic; he provided an equally vivid and important description of the Jews that makes it clear how unlikely it was that they would be valorized in the romantic imagination. In his horrified first reaction to the French Revolution, Burke identified the egalitarian impulse as essentially a smokescreen, and argued that the actual result of the upheaval would be to put the property of the refined and gentle traditional ruling class into the hands of “Jews and jobbers.” These comments, along with observations by such Enlightenment luminaries as Voltaire and Goethe about the association of the Jews with commerce and financial trickery, make the connection between the Jews and the other forces driving society toward what to the romantics was the appalling yet inescapable transition to capitalism. Thus, in early modern representation the Jews were outside the category of honorable proto-European ancestors, and the emergence of tolerance toward Jews or philosemitism is a separate process.

The question of whether Scott meant his work to be friendly to the Jews has been frequently addressed by scholars, and both sides of the question can be argued effectively.⁴¹ Rebecca’s father, the moneylender Isaac, is in the tradition of Shylock. Granted he is the victim of injustice – he is perhaps too keenly aware of this, and “perhaps owing to that very hatred and persecution, had adopted a national character in which there was much, to say the least, mean and contemptible” (46). Any sympathy the reader may have for him is overwhelmed by his avarice. He grinds the peasantry for every *zecchin* of interest owed, and he will do business with good guy and bad guy alike. One of the main reasons he decides to leave for Granada is his apprehension at what will

⁴¹ See Michael Galchinsky, *The Origin of the Modern Jewish Woman Writer: Romance and Reform in Victorian England* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), chapter 1 for a review of this argument.

happen when Richard learns he has, in the normal course of business, engaged in “simple traffic with his brother John” (512). But Rebecca clearly has the powerful sense of morality Isaac lacks. Although she and Ivanhoe have an intense emotional bond, they both have the moral fortitude to contain their passions.

Ivanhoe’s attraction for Rebecca is shared by Brian de Bois-Gilbert, the knightly hero of the Templars, who in this tale are the principal enemies of Ivanhoe, Richard, and an independent England. Unfortunately, Bois-Gilbert, whose very name proclaims his foreignness, lacks Ivanhoe’s moral standing and is unable to keep his love in a chaste or courtly vein. Throughout the story he urges the beautiful Jewish maiden to run away with him as his lover, to a “new life of pleasure” somewhere outside the boundaries of chivalric order. In fact, Bois-Gilbert makes his moral flexibility even clearer by suggesting they might find succor in the very court of Saladin (504). In this depiction of a Christian knight whose passion for a maiden overwhelms his confessional duty, Scott draws directly on the *Orlando* tradition.

Scott’s reframing of the place of the Jews in this tale of the middle ages demonstrates the dialogic power of empirical discourse. Ivanhoe’s relationship with Rebecca imagines her as a woman who is as capable as he is of acting with honor. Scott received many letters from readers pointing out that Rebecca seemed a more suitable match for the brave knight than Rowena, the beautiful and ethnically appropriate but rather boring bride he ends up with. His response was to note that both Ivanhoe and Rebecca demonstrate “the duties of self-denial, and the sacrifice of passion to principle,” (xxiv), an argument that resonates with the parliamentary movement toward Jewish

emancipation that began in 1830.⁴² But Bois-Gilbert's relationship with Rebecca, in which the Jewish maiden tempts him away from duty, was not meant as a negative construction of the Jewish character. By grafting Rebecca's story onto a traditional *topos* of Orientalism, Scott is placing the Jews in the same "interesting outsider" category as the Islamic Orientals. Edward Said notes the importance of E.S. Shaffer's '*Kubla Khan*' and *The Fall of Jerusalem* in clarifying the cultural context of nineteenth-century literary representations of the Orient. Shaffer's argument is that the quintessentially Enlightenment-influenced field of nineteenth-century biblical studies, including the German "Higher Criticism," is rooted in the assumption that the biblical Jews were a part of a larger Oriental culture.⁴³ This hints at the power of the empirical methodology. All its techniques: the unearthing of new data and the systemization of old, the construction, dissemination, and evolution of hypotheses, were turned on information and ideas that were already widespread in Western culture. The empiricists framed their new approach to culture by addressing the most traditional ideas and concerns of Western society. Washington Irving's works suggest that the novel had not yet been fully differentiated from other prose forms at this point, but it was clearly emerging as the form best suited to process these complex, "information-heavy" arguments. All this was in place when Washington Irving arrived in Spain in 1825, ready to undertake a new and detailed look at the historical underpinnings of the whole series of *moros y cristianos* genres, the history of medieval and early modern Spain.

⁴² The quote comes from a new introduction Scott prepared for an 1830 reprint edition.

⁴³ E. S. Shaffer, '*Kubla Khan*' and *The Fall of Jerusalem: The Mythological School in Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature 1770-1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).



Figure 1. *Il Capitano*. Joseph Kennard, *Masks and Marionettes*, 59.



Figure 2. *Capitan Matamoros*. Alardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin: A Critical Study of Commedia dell'arte*, 100.



8. Dance of Saint Sebastian. Valldellop, early twentieth century. Drawing by Marianne Cappelletti after Amades, *Costumari*, 1: 572.

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9. Hobby horses and giants. Sant Feliu de Pallerols, 1996.

Figure 3. *Dance of Saint Sebastian; Hobby Horses and Giants, Saint Felix de Pallerols.*
Max Harris, *Aztecs, Moors, and Christians: Festivals of Reconquest in Mexico and Spain*, 46; 52.



Figure 4. Jacques Callot. *The Two Pantaloons (or The Two Zanni)*. H. Diane Russell, *Jacques Callot: Prints and Related Drawings*, 88.



Figure 5. Jacques Callot. *Frontispiece, Balli de Sfessania*. J. Lieure, *Jacque Callot: Catalogue de L'Oeuvre Gravé, Tome 2*, 379.



394. — Cap. Babeo — Cucuba. 1er état.

Figure 6. Jacques Callot. *Balli de Sfessania*. J. Lieure, *Jacque Callot: Catalogue de L'Oeuvre Gravé, Tome 2*, 394.



400, — Cap. Cardoni — Maramao. 1er état.

Figure 7. Jacques Callot. *Balli de Sfessania*. J. Lieure, *Jacque Callot: Catalogue de L'Oeuvre Gravé, Tome 2*, 400.



Figure 8. *Balli de Sfessania, Captain Spezzamonte and Zanni Bagattino.* Lynne. Lawner, *Harlequin on the Moon: Commedia dell'Arte and the Visual Arts*, 111.

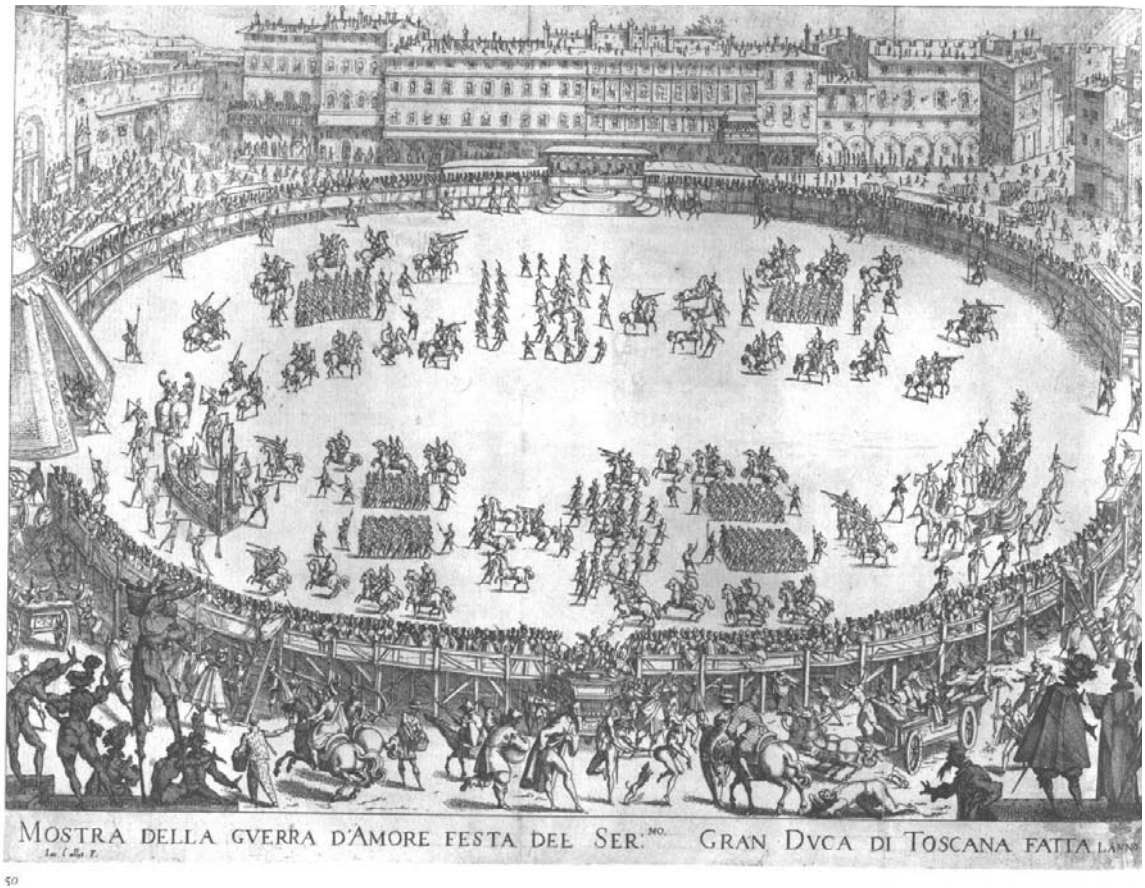


Figure 9. Jacques Callot. *The War of Love*. H. Diane Russell, *Jacques Callot: Prints and Related Drawings*, 86.

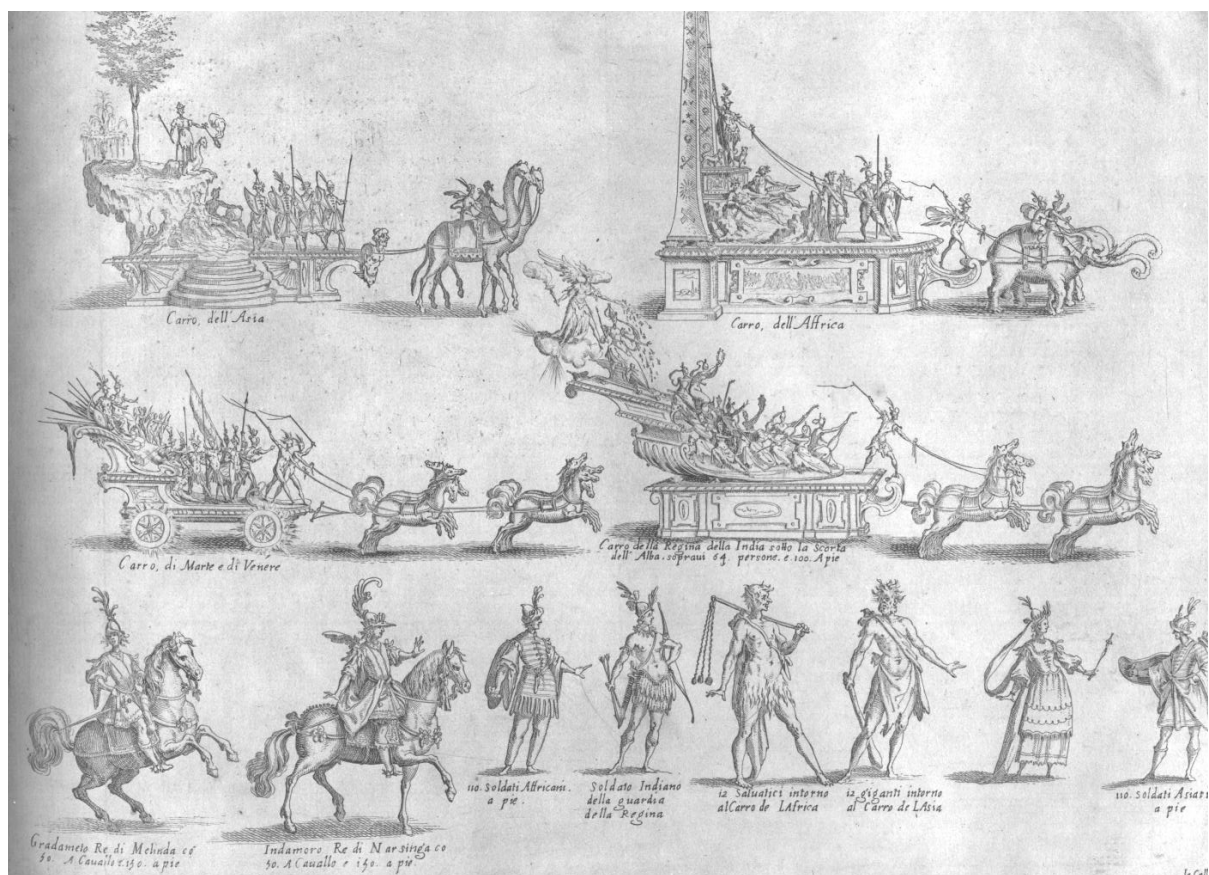


Figure 10. Jacques Callot. *The War of Love*. H. Diane Russell, *Jacques Callot: Prints and Related Drawings*, 85.

Chapter 2

Spanish Orientalism: Anglophone Representation of Moorish Spain 1775-1818

*When these fam'd walls did Pagan rites admit
Here reign'd unrivall'd breeding, science, wit
Christ's standard came, the Prophet's flag assail'd
And fix't true worship where the false prevail'd
And such the zeal its pious followers bore
Wit, science, breeding, perished with the Moor
-- H. F. Gr_____lle, Feb 7, 1790¹*

This graffito, inscribed on the walls of the Alhambra by an eighteenth-century traveler, succinctly and charmingly expresses the idea that Ferdinand and Isabella's triumph over the Spanish Moors had been a cultural disaster for Spain. Publicly expressed admiration for the Moors – even in the form of a snarky epigram – cuts against the modern expectation that Islam has always been seen as a vector for backwardness and resistance to modernity, yet for early Anglophone travelers in Spain this attitude was ubiquitous. Although the tenor and tone of the critique evolved from 1775 forward, travelers from northern Europe and the U.S. typically contrasted Catholic Spanish culture and civilization unfavorably with that of Moorish Spain. In this chapter I will argue that through a close reading of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century texts and images dealing with the Alhambra, al-Andalus, and the history of Moorish Spain we can explain this apparently anomalous Islamophile attitude. Beyond tracking an unexpected tradition in the depiction of the Moors, this representational trajectory illustrates the growth and evolution of modern ideological argumentation. This arc moves from the “classical” Enlightenment world view,

¹ Recorded in James Cavanah Murphy, *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain* (London, 1816). Text accompanying Plate XXXII. This volume is unpaginated; future citations will follow the convention of citing the appropriate plate number.

encompassing a universalist and rational ideal, to “traditional” romanticism, with its nationalism, particularism, and its public embrace of the wondrous and irrational.

The story begins with the earliest English-language publication to include images of the Alhambra, *Travels through Spain*, a 1775 account by Henry Swinburne.² Swinburne was an aristocratic traveler and an aspirationally “objective” Enlightenment observer whose early career as a travel writer gave way to more traditional domestic pursuits. James Cavanah Murphy’s monumental *Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, published in 1815 but the fruit of fifteen years of tenacious labor continued and expanded this process.³ Along with its companion volume, *The History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain*, this project was well-researched and documented, and established a baseline understanding of Moorish history in the Anglophone public sphere. This arc concluded with the assimilation of the Moorish story into a broader literary and artistic context in the 1820s. Interesting examples of this process include Chateaubriand’s *Last of the Abencerrages* (1826) and Victor Hugo’s *Les Orientales* (1829), as well as the work of a group of Orientalizing painters, most notably David Wilkie and David Roberts. The most typological case for this development is the subject of my Chapter VII, Washington Irving’s *Tales of the Alhambra* and his three other accounts of medieval and early modern Spain, all published between 1829 and 1832. In this chapter I will deal with the material up to

² Henry Swinburne, *Travels Through Spain, in the Years 1775 and 1776* (London, 1778). The Spanish Academy also undertook a study of Spain’s Islamic heritage during the 1770s, a part of the emergence of the Enlightenment-oriented Spanish secular intelligentsia described in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra’s *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 161-162.

³ Murphy, *Arabian Antiquities*; John Shakespear and Thomas Hartwell Horne, *The History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain* (London, 1816).

and including Murphy's *Arabian Antiquities*. The insertion of the story of the Moors into a wider range of genres will be the subject of subsequent chapters.

This analysis will show that from Swinburne's conscious and largely successful attempt to "objectively" depict the Alhambra and the legacy of the Moors, the story of Islamic Spain (along with the entire project of travel writing, of which this was a subset) was increasingly woven into ideological narratives. These narratives articulated the growing sense of British, and later, US national identity and aspirations. The idea that the earlier studies, more clearly associated with the Enlightenment, are more "objective" than later, romanticized studies should not be construed as an argument that the Enlightenment valorization of empiricism is outside ideology. Rather, I mean to reinforce my argument that empiricism is a *method*, useful – even essential – in any ideological construction. Thus the Encyclopedist's belief in the intrinsic merit of piling up accurate observations as a means to understanding is itself an ideological assertion, one of the most successful in the history of Western culture.

The representational and ideological trajectory I will trace in this chapter is not merely a manifestation of cultural change; it has particular resonance in the politics of the Atlantic World colonies. The project of representing Islamic and early modern Spain quickly became an apt vehicle for processing political issues raised by the impulse to independence in the Spanish colonies. In particular, this project became a useful lens for framing arguments about the suitability of Britain and/or the U.S. as imperial successors to Spain's Atlantic and Caribbean Empire. Swinburne differed from his followers in the early nineteenth century on many issues but, as

noted earlier, what they have in common is an admiration for the accomplishments of the Moors and a lack of respect for Spain's *reyes catolicos* and their heirs. Between Swinburne's time and that of his followers, however, contemporary political events focused these general impressions, and by the nineteenth century the Moors had been thoroughly woven into the romantic project that enrolled medieval Europeans as proto-nationalist precursors of the European nation-states.⁴ When contrasted to the political and technological sophistication of the Spanish Moors, the contemporary backwardness of Spain became a signifier for the nation's inadequacy. By the 1820s, this paradigm was part of the larger argument that Anglo-American intervention in Spain's traditional colonial sphere was not just expedient, but an entirely reasonable response to Spain's failure to measure up to its past.

The idea that the Moors contrasted favorably with Spain's Christian rulers brings to the foreground of this discussion the poor fit between late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century descriptions of Islamic Spain and Edward Said's Orientalist paradigm. Perhaps the most fundamental conceptual building block of Said's thesis is that the work of Western intellectuals, colonial administrators, and others effected a discursive domination over the Islamic world. They achieved this by building a set of descriptive categories for Islamic history and culture that were intrinsically subordinate to the comparable institutions of the West. These concepts then facilitated the imposition of Western political authority over the Islamic world. In the case of

⁴ See Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) for a discussion of how the construction and articulation of a proto-national past worthy of the glorious nineteenth-century sense of nationhood was a Europe-wide project. Simon Schama's attention to the use of what has been traditionally understood as "high art" to articulate national identity originally attracted me to this approach, and his *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Knopf, 1995) is a wonderful example.

Spain, a comparable process took place: the Anglo-American project of describing Spanish history used an idealized Moorish past to subtly – or not so subtly – demonstrate the unsuitability of Catholic Spain for the discharge of its colonial responsibilities. This process employed the techniques of Said's Orientalism, yet the strategy is aimed at a Christian state. This anomaly simply suggests that the discursive strategy Said identified – building a condescending critique of a society in order to justify an aggressive political policy toward that society's political autonomy – existed, but that it was not deployed exclusively against the Islamic world. The modern Orientalism paradigm projects late twentieth-century political attitudes back onto the early days of modern colonialism, and in so doing, effaces the specifics of the arguments used by the early Anglophone chroniclers of Spain's past. Thus a careful reading of early texts on the Alhambra and the Moors (as well as such descriptive works as Alexander Hill Everett's *Europe*, discussed in detail in Chapter 3) can help broaden our understanding of Anglophone attitudes toward Islam in the Age of Revolution.

While these authors by no means brought to the faith of Muhammad a warm and fuzzy 1990s-style multicultural embrace, from Swinburne to Irving Islam was held to instantiate some highly desirable social values. The most important of these, and one that emphasizes the extent to which our contemporary views of Islam cannot be uncritically projected into the past, is that all these writers viewed Islam's freedom from a meddlesome and intrusive priestly class as one of the religion's great strengths. This is, of course, Exhibit A in the case against the Spanish Catholic monarchy; few *topoi* are more persistent in the representation of Spain, and all of

early modern Europe, than that of the bloated and avaricious clerical class. The attitude of the Moors toward commerce is another theme that rolls through these works. However, while the characterization of the Islamic clergy as an institution of modest significance is consistent throughout, the description of commerce undergoes an interesting transition. In Swinburne's eighteenth-century description, the suppression of a vigorous Moorish commercial tradition is seen as one of the catastrophic results of the *reconquista*. For Irving, writing fifty years later, participation in commerce was morally suspect. Ferdinand and Isabella's conquest of the Moors was expedited by their reliance on the commercial marketplace and thus tainted by this immersion in the commercial sphere. For Irving and the romantics, their deployment of fungible hardware, mass-produced cannon, and an ample logistical supply line against the personal courage and honor of the Moors tarnished their triumph. Irving wove this critique of Ferdinand and Isabella's moral position into a wider critique of Catholicism, then a far more inviting target than Islam for Anglo-American polemics. Anti-Catholicism reinforced a geopolitically aggressive position toward the Spanish colonies, and both the movement for Catholic civil rights in Britain and Catholic political participation in the U.S. were important vectors of internal social tension.⁵ In examining the representation of Islam and the Moors in this era, the social tension around Catholicism is another issue that works against a simple "Orientalist" discourse and adds richness to the careful analysis of these early studies of Moorish Spain.

⁵ See Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) for an excellent description of this process in the British context.

Eighteenth-Century Travelers and the Alhambra

For eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travelers from Britain or the U.S., a visit to Spain began with a tangible illustration of the difference between modern and premodern roads. Overland travel to Spain required patience – if it was raining, the roads were sure to be impassible and the traveler had no choice but to wait out the weather.⁶ The conclusion that Spain had missed out on northern Europe’s engineering advances, with all this implied about the technological inadequacy of the Spanish state, was inevitable, immediate, and obvious. For the few travelers who proceeded all the way to Granada, the last capital of Islamic al-Andalus, in the hot, dry mountains of southern Spain, the lack of amenities extended from the inconvenience of primitive roads to the even more fundamental problem of spotty access to drinking water. Visitors traveled to this depressed and isolated corner of Spain for one reason, a visit to Spain’s Moorish antiquities, particularly the Alhambra. Situated on a hilltop overlooking Granada and the Alpujarras Mountains, the Alhambra was, in Swinburne’s words, “an *unique*,” and perhaps the finest remaining structure from the Islamic dynasties that ruled in the Iberian Peninsula from 711 to 1492.

But even after arriving at the site of this remarkable monument, Spain’s lack of urban infrastructure was a problem for the traveler. The absence of potable water in the vicinity meant that visitors to the Alhambra were dependent on the presence of itinerant water peddlers. Based on Washington Irving’s description, their huge earthenware water

⁶ Swinburne, *Travels through Spain*, 1-9; other detailed descriptions of road troubles: Ticknor: “imagine roads so abominable that the utmost diligence, from four o’clock in the morning until seven at night, would not bring us forward more than twenty-one or twenty-two miles!” *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1877), 185; Irving: “On most of the roads in Spain you are obliged to travel on mules. We met with no robbers, but occasionally, on setting off in the night we had three or four soldiers for escort.” “WI to Susan Storrow, February 26, 1826” *Letters Volume II, 1823-1838*, CWWI vol. 24, 185; Orientalist painter David Roberts: “riding on mules, fording streams, climbing rocks – for roads there are none....” Katharine Sim, *David Roberts R. A. 1796-1864* (London: Quartet, 1984), 73

jugs and handy wooden dippers must have been virtually identical with those of the *Waterseller* depicted by Diego Velasquez in the early 1600s [Figure 11]. Again, Spain's technological backwardness was obvious, and again, most travelers compared contemporary Spain unfavorably with a society skilled enough to deliver water in plenty to a dry hillside like this one. The contrast this time, however, was not with their own societies but with that of the Moors, who built the Alhambra in the thirteenth century. After all, just as striking as the Alhambra's remarkably elegant decorative elements was the evidence of its sophisticated technology, and the contrasts that most readily struck the early visitors were the ones that demonstrated the availability of copious quantities of fresh water to the palace's original designers.

Swinburne was quite conscious that he was one of the first to report to the world on Granada, Spain's Moorish antiquities, and the Alhambra, and while he was anxious to express his astonishment at the Alhambra's sophisticated decorative schemes he combines this with a profound appreciation of the building's plumbing. In describing one of the building's best known features, the Lion Fountain [Figure 12], Swinburne focuses on both the monument's esthetics and its engineering:

In the center of the court are twelve ill-made lions muzzled, their hindparts rough, which bear upon their backs an enormous bason, out of which a lesser rises. While the pipes were kept in good order, a great volume of water was thrown up, that, falling down into the basons, passed through the beasts and issued out of their mouths into a large reservoir, where it communicated by channels with the jet d'eau in the apartments. (294)

In fact, Swinburne's discussion of plumbing moved into the realm of synecdoche. He first observes that "in [Islamic] Granada, no house was without its pipe of water, and in every street were copious fountains for public convenience, and for religious ablutions...(261)," then expands this into a comment on the relationship between

eighteenth-century Granada and Spain's Islamic past. Swinburne was one of the first to frame the idea that Islamic Spain was a Golden Age that had, regrettably, passed away, to be replaced by a decidedly inferior Christian civilization:

You have hitherto been shown the brilliant side of the picture; alas! how different will you find it, when considered from another point of view, that of its present state! The glories of Granada have passed away with its old inhabitants; its streets are choaked with filth; its aqueducts crumbled to dust; its woods destroyed; its territories depopulated; its trade lost; in a word, every thing except the church and law in a most deplorable situation. (261)

This paragraph reflects Swinburne's view of Granada's former grandeur and present degenerate state, amplified by his decision to depict the fountains not crumbled to dust but in glorious operation. It suggests some of his opinions about the nature of the problem, which he locates in the economic failure of the region. He lays this regional economic catastrophe at the feet of Ferdinand and Isabella's 1492 conquest of Islamic Granada, their despoliation and exile of the Islamic populations, and the ensuing destruction of the regional economy. For Swinburne, this disaster was a process that took place over time. Not only had the immediate aftermath of the conquest been a catastrophe in its own right, but he cited an eighteenth-century renewal of religious attacks against those descendants of the original Muslim inhabitants whose skills or economic value allowed them to avoid the original persecutions: "So late as the year 1726, the inquisition, with the sanction of the government, seized upon three hundred and sixty families, accused of secret Mahometanism, and confiscated all their effects, which have been estimated at twelve millions of crowns; an immense sum, of which no account was ever given!" (262).

Swinburne's description of the Alhambra and Moorish Spain provides not only an eighteenth-century baseline for all modern Anglo-American representation of this

tradition, but an interesting contrast to the later romantic empiricism described in the previous chapter and later in this one. Swinburne's intellectual affiliation is clearly with the high Enlightenment, and his description of Moorish Spain provides a nice example of some of the differences between his intellectual milieu and that of the post-Napoleonic world. Swinburne raises the banner of the Enlightenment on the very title page of his book with an epigraph. The quote, attributed to the French poet-historian Nicolas Boileau, is a one-line statement of Enlightenment principles: "Rien n'est beau que le vrai; le vrai est seul aimable." Not only does the quote emphasize Swinburne's commitment to accurate observation, the reference to Boileau itself reinforces the point. Boileau's best known work was a satirical volume demanding that Irish priests be brought in to the French university system in order to overthrow Galileo and Descartes and reimpose medieval scholasticism.⁷ Swinburne emphasized this commitment in the preface, stating "There is but one merit I insist upon, that of a steady adherence to Veracity, as far as I was able to discern Truth from Falsehood. I may be detected in many mistakes...but I shall never be detected in a willful perversion of the truth" (vi). In fact, it is difficult to find an assessment or description of the Alhambra for the next 75 years that seems as faithful to the actual structure as Swinburne's.

His account of the conditions that led to the decline of Granada and its surroundings are also quintessentially Enlightenment. In describing the destruction of the indigenous silk-making industry by religious zealots Swinburne embodies a description of the British commercial spirit that seems straight from Voltaire's *English Letters*.

Swinburne's contempt for a system that would sacrifice prosperity on the altar of

⁷ Éamon Ó Ciosáin, "Attitudes towards Ireland and the Irish in Enlightenment France" in Graham Gargett and Geraldine Sheridan, eds., *Ireland and the French Enlightenment, 1700-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 142-44.

religious orthodoxy precisely reflects the values Voltaire identified in the English marketplace where “the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian transact together as though they all professed the same religion and gave the name of Infidel to none but bankrupts.”⁸ His ready assumption that clerical greed motivated the religious persecution of crypto-“Mahometanism,” implicit in the quote cited above, also reflects one of the central tenets of Voltaire’s crusade against *l’infame*. In fact, as one of the very earliest British travelers to Spain, Swinburne felt the need to address basic British curiosity about Spain. One issue he clarified was the assumption that a traveling Protestant would be subject to the Inquisition: “The proceedings of the Inquisition are grown very mild,” Swinburne reported, emphasizing the point by noting that even a Jew could travel in Spain, although the Inquisition “appoints him a familiar to attend him all the time he stays ashore, to whom he pays a pistole a day.... Yet I have been assured that a Jew may travel incognito from Perpignan to Lisbon, and sleep every night at the house of a Jew, being recommended from one to another” (104-05). This account emphasizes Swinburne’s larger view that Spanish religious backwardness was more a function of clerical greed and cupidity than true zealotry.

Swinburne’s commitment to objective and accurate reportage should not be considered simply an example of faithfulness to Enlightenment principles. In fact, Swinburne was also doubtless attempting to differentiate his description of Spain from other popular books on the subject, works which were suspected at the time and now have been demonstrated by scholars to be clip jobs based on accounts of Spain that had been circulating in manuscripts and journals. Best known among these were two books

⁸ Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters Concerning the English Nation*, Letter VI “On the Presbyterians,” (1733; reprint, London: Davies, 1926), 34.

about Spain written by Marie-Catherine de la Motte, Baronne D'Aulnoy, in the late seventeenth century, mentioned approvingly by Alexander Hill Everett's friend George Ticknor in 1815 and still cited in standard reference works in the twentieth century.⁹

While I argue that Swinburne's faithfulness to his source material is more pronounced than that of many who come later to Granada, his establishment of actual observation as the requisite basis for a work of this type will persist. Again, this reminds us that the strongest legacy of the Enlightenment may be its empirical methodology rather than a commitment to a particular interpretive lens.

Along with an accurate and appreciative description of the Alhambra and its surroundings, Swinburne executed the first engravings of the monument to be published outside Spain – *Las Antigüedades Arabes de España*, a survey of Moorish antiquities commissioned by the Spanish Royal Academy, does not appear, based on references cited by early Anglophone travel writers in Spain to have been widely circulated outside Spain.¹⁰ Swinburne, always insistent on the veracity of his accounts, was doubly so with regard to this monument: "The Alhambra of Granada is an *unique*, and its excellent preservation affords an opportunity of studying all of their designs and ornaments....I can answer for the exactness of the drawings: I never took the liberty of retrenching a single object for the sake of improving the beauty or harmony of the landscape" (vii). This assertion is reinforced by Swinburne's most fundamental understanding of the esthetics of the Alhambra. Ultimately, he concluded that the most significant accomplishment of

⁹ Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars, 1660-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 97-100.

¹⁰ Many of the images from this volume have been reproduced in Delfín Rodríguez Ruiz, *José de Hermosilla y Las Antigüedades Arabes de España : La Memoria Frágil* (Madrid: Fundacion Cultural, 1992).

the Alhambra's builders was in the realm of exquisite decoration rather than in achievements of a more monumental scope. Note that this is not a judgment on Moorish architecture as a whole – his careful description of the mosque/cathedral at Toledo concludes that the Moorish structure was far more successful than anything subsequently built by the Christians. Swinburne's commitment to accuracy and appreciation of the Alhambra on its own terms is notable in that it celebrates the Alhambra's difference from, rather than equivalence with, medieval Christian monuments. Swinburne was not in fact a fan of Spanish medieval architecture, describing Barcelona's Christian cathedrals as "gothic piles," (16) dark, gloomy, and, of course, infested with eccentric and parasitic priests. His engravings did not mask the fact that parts of the Alhambra were in poor repair [**Figure 13. View of Puerta de los Siete Suelos & Puerta del Juicio** – note crumbling brickwork on façade], although, like subsequent authors, he noted that some of the most poorly conceived repairs had been carried out by the Spanish authorities. He described the monument's pervasive graffiti in the text but did not include this in his images, a reasonable editorial judgment also adopted by most subsequent illustrators of the Alhambra. Ultimately, Swinburne's commitment to rendering a faithful report of the marvels he found in Granada reflected his commitment to Enlightenment ideals, but it did not hurt that he was the first man in. Later travelers, and even Swinburne in his subsequent works, would be faced with the problem of reporting on no-longer-virgin territory.

The Next Wave

The sense of being the very first to visit and write about exotic locales within Europe passed quickly. Henry Swinburne followed up his Spain book with a journey to

southern Italy, and in the preface to this work felt called upon to apologize for writing about a subject that others had already described. His apology is worth quoting in detail, not only for the insight it offers into the mental world of the eighteenth-century travel writer, but also because it characterizes the entire project of modern scholarship, which from its origins has encompassed a constant sifting and resifting of previously examined material.

Under the discouragement ... and the unpromising circumstance of passing over ground often and nicely examined, I yet do not despair of conveying such information on many heads, as may justify my boldness to the Reader, if, from a laudable desire of improvement, any will venture with me along so beaten a track. Part of my route is fresh land; and where I shall be under the irksome necessity of treading in the footsteps of preceding authors, I hope something will be struck out that has escaped their penetration. Far be it from me, wantonly, to impugn their authority, or detract from their merits; I only wish to insinuate, that, as two persons seldom consider an object in the same point of view, and are still more rarely led by their perceptions to a combination of ideas exactly similar, it is but reasonable to hope that many openings may be left for subsequent observers.¹¹

As Swinburne's apology suggests, the travel writer was soon thick on the landscape of Southern Europe. Robert Kerr's 1811 bibliography of travel literature, appended to his survey of notable European travels, records several more publications dealing with Spain in Swinburne's aftermath, but makes it clear that no one else matched his extensive knowledge of Granada.¹² This efflorescence of travel writing reinforced the powerful emergence of European nationalism, and this, in turn, reinforced and shaped travel writing. Thus the contrast between Swinburne's work and that of his followers helps demonstrate the rapid rise of particularizing ideological ideas that stand in contrast to Swinburne's universalizing Enlightenment

¹¹ *Travels in the Two Sicilies By Henry Swinburne, Esq. in the Years 1777, 1778, 1779, and 1780* (London, 1783), iii.

¹² Robert Kerr, ed., *A General History of Voyages and Travels to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1811), 590-91.

views. The most significant of these is nationalism, and the trajectory of travel writing about Spain provides an excellent case study for the scholarly examination of nationalism's emergence in the period between 1775 and 1800.¹³

As Swinburne imagined, the process of returning to and reinterpreting foreign sites did indeed prove intellectually – and commercially – viable, and, by the end of the century, there were two separate plans to undertake an exhaustive survey of the marvels of the Alhambra. Both were organized by aristocrats who had been active in the project of recuperating European antiquities and were deeply enmeshed in the project of interpreting these antiquities as part of the emerging idea of the modern nation. Ultimately, the Earl of Bristol deferred to the project led by the Anglo-Irish aristocrat William Burton Conyngham.¹⁴ The project was an enormous one – the recording of the visual elements of Spain's Islamic antiquities, especially the Alhambra, in exquisite and encyclopedic detail. The principal architect of the project, James Cavanah Murphy, recorded several examples of Moorish architecture, but the work focused on the Alhambra, subject of 100 of the work's 110 images.

Murphy began his public career as a young Dublin bricklayer. His skill as a draftsman earned him entrance to an architectural school and an introduction to Conyngham. Conyngham, a member of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, was a consummate Enlightenment figure, a founder of the Royal Irish Academy and an associate and correspondent of the London Royal Society's longtime president Sir Joseph Banks. His

¹³ Lloyd Kramer, *Nationalism: Political Cultures in Europe and America, 1775-1865* (New York: Twayne, 1998), 1-2; 51-60 for a helpful definition of modern nationalism as it emerges in this era.

¹⁴ In the introductions to both *Batalha* and *Arabian Antiquities*, Murphy includes generous acknowledgments of Cunningham's patronage. He also included a warm appreciation of the Earl of Bristol's commitment to scholarship and his gracious decision to leave the Alhambra project to Murphy and Conyngham in the introduction to *Arabian Antiquities*.

interests ranged widely from the commercial to the antiquarian. He developed Burton Port, an important fishery meant to exploit the shoals of herring off the Donegal coast and, as founder of the Hibernian Antiquarian Society, developed a particular interest in memorializing Irish architecture. This project brought him into contact with Murphy, one of the skilled draftsmen he employed to make comprehensive drawings. This avocation took a crucial turn in 1783 when Conyngham visited Portugal, making his own detailed drawings of the antiquities he encountered. Predictably, Conyngham's motives were not strictly antiquarian. Britain was an exporter of woolen goods to Portugal, and Conyngham sent samples to Irish linen manufacturers in hopes they could find a niche in this market. While in Iberia he was on the lookout for agricultural products that might flourish in Ireland, and he bought and sold some rare manuscripts for the Royal Dublin Society.¹⁵

In 1788 Conyngham commissioned Murphy's first trip to the Iberian Peninsula, a journey meant particularly to document Portugal's cathedrals, but with the additional goal of providing a general English language introduction to Portugal. Murphy published three volumes based on this trip. The most important of these was one encompassing twenty-four enormous and detailed architectural drawings and views of the magnificent fourteenth-century monastery at Batalha, principal monument of the Portuguese Gothic. In the two other publications, Murphy and his coauthors provided a more traditional travel narrative, including detailed and wide-ranging examinations of climate, geography, colonial economies, technology, folklore and more, proving himself a man of the

¹⁵ For biographical details on Conyngham and Murphy, see C.E.F. Trench, "William Burton Conyngham, 1733-1796," *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 115 (1985): 40-63. For details on the emergence of antiquarianism in Ireland, see the introduction to Damien Murray, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and Irish Antiquarian Societies, 1840-80* (Maywood: National University of Ireland, 2000), 1-7.

Enlightenment in his own right.¹⁶ Murphy's examination of the Portuguese architectural heritage extended beyond his study of the Gothic; he catalogued and recorded a number of Roman and Islamic antiquities, including copies and partial translations of a number of Arabic inscriptions. The preparation of the Portuguese materials for publication by Cadell and Davies led Murphy to London and the project that would engage the last twelve years of his life, the study of the Islamic antiquities of Andalusia.

Murphy's first major project, the study of the Batalha cathedral, provides an interesting contrast to Swinburne's earlier study and hints at the ideological power of nationalism's emergence. Swinburne had found the medieval cathedrals of Spain a gloomy and unattractive contrast to the lighter architecture of the Alhambra. In this view he reflected one of the foundational beliefs of the modern West: that between the "classical" ancient age and the vibrant, rationalizing, commercial early modern world that emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there was a vast, dark, uncivilized epoch. The few monuments remaining from that era, particularly the medieval cathedrals reflected these unrefined, tribal roots and, in the words of Giorgio Vasari, the father of art history, they lacked "grace, proportion and dignity." By the sixteenth century this argument had been crystallized by Vasari and his fellow humanists to the point that a tribal name, "Gothic," had come into use as a demeaning rubric for the era's decorative arts.¹⁷ But in Murphy's work, the ornate Gothic monuments begin to take on a romantic and nationalistic valence. The romanticism emerges in the sense that the cathedrals were seen as the remnants of a simpler and less affected time when the relationship between

¹⁶ James Cavanah Murphy, *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Views of the Church of Batalha in the Province of Estremadura in Portugal; with the History and Description by Fray Luis de Souza* (London, 1790); *A General View of the State of Portugal* (London, 1798).

¹⁷ See "Preface" to Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. George Bull (1546; reprint, New York: Viking, 1978).

man and God was purer, clearer, and less subject to the pressures of capitalism and the myriad other uncertainties implicit in the emerging industrial state. The nationalism resides in a development that would have shocked Vasari to his periwig: by the late 1700s, Gothic architecture emerged as a signifier for the European peoples' articulation of unique national traditions outside the classical heritage so honored by the Enlightenment secularists.

Murphy's *Batalha* is one of the documents that framed the Gothic as a powerful manifestation of European culture rather than the work of a tribal people unable to master the classical principles of architecture. Murphy's studies of Portugal view not just Batalha, but all the antiquities of Portugal, including those from the Roman and prehistoric periods, as constitutive of indigenous European culture. In his introduction to the Batalha material, Murphy addresses this matter quite specifically:

Whilst the remains of the edifices of ancient Greece and Rome have been measured and delineated with the greatest accuracy by many persons well qualified for the task, very few have directed their enquiry towards the principles of that style of architecture called Gothic. This neglect may, in great measure, be attributed to a prejudice arising from a mistaken notion of its having originated with a tribe of barbarians, from whom nothing excellent could be expected.¹⁸

Here Murphy has identified two weaknesses in the intellectual understanding of the Gothic monuments, the lack of precise measurements and renderings and the failure to grasp the theoretical underpinnings of Gothic architecture. He immediately set to work to correct this lack.

Although Murphy was participating in a dramatic intellectual shift, the recuperation of medieval culture, he set about his task by marshalling arguments in the

¹⁸ This and subsequent quotations in this section are from the unpaginated Introduction to Murphy's *Batalha*.

style of his empirically-minded contemporaries. The project of measuring and recording these buildings is in the heart of Enlightenment tradition – Murphy’s precise, analytical renderings owe much to Diderot’s *Encyclopedia* [Figure 15]. Murphy’s argument that the Gothic was a worthy subject for esthetic contemplation also relied on two significant eighteenth-century ideas. The first is the idea of the sublime, notably articulated by Edmund Burke in his “*Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.”¹⁹ Murphy made what would quickly become a commonplace observation about Gothic architecture: “No other mode of building is so well calculated to excite sublime and awful sensations; and if we admire the Heathen temples of ancient Greece and Rome, because they awaken these emotions in us, we must surely esteem these Christian temples, as they certainly produce that effect in a superior degree....” But Murphy paired this evocation of the sublime with a more rationalized argument for the merit of Gothic architecture. While acknowledging that Greek and Roman architecture abides by strict mathematical rules, he argued that the key design feature of the Gothic style, the pointed arch, had its own ancient roots - in the Egyptian pyramid! Murphy argued that this association was amplified because, like the Egyptians, the Gothic architects exclusively employed “the mere produce of the quarry,” and that in their work, as in the Egyptian pyramids, “the simplicity of its matter but augments the gracefulness of its appearance.” It seems fair to note that while Murphy’s astute observation that the Gothic cathedral is well-suited to the theory of the sublime powerfully anticipates

¹⁹ *The Portable Edmund Burke*, ed., Isaac Kramnick (London: Penguin, 1999). That Burke has already appeared in this thesis as a political theorist and now as an esthetician reminds us that he belongs with the many other broad-gauge characters we have discussed – perhaps the Renaissance man could be more accurately labeled the “Man of the Enlightenment.”

nineteenth-century ideas, his argument about the congruence of Egyptian simplicity with the Gothic has stood the test of time less successfully.

Murphy attempted to reinforce his argument about Batalha's conformity to classical simplicity by noting that there were "none of those trifling and superfluous sculptures, which but too often are seen to crowd other Gothic edifices. Whatever ornaments are employed in it, are sparingly, but judiciously disposed; particularly in the inside, which is remarkable for a chaste and noble plainness." To the twenty-first-century eye, Murphy's images of Batalha do not speak of plainness, chaste, noble or otherwise. The appealing thing about the images is, in fact, their exquisitely rendered decorative detail, although Murphy's dramatic use of high-contrast shadow does effectively set the more ornate portions of this façade, for example, into a very clearly delineated geometric framework [**Figure 16 – Batalha, West Elevation**]. This analysis is, of course, not meant as a critique of Murphy's esthetic understanding of the monument he treated in such loving detail. The significance of Murphy's approach is that he was essaying the difficult task of weaving an appreciation of medieval architecture into the era's normative classicizing Enlightenment sensibility. In doing so he naturally and properly employed the cultural categories of his world.

As the project of blending the European past into the nationalism of Protestant Europe and the United States continued, the problematic prominence of Catholicism emerged as a key issue. Murphy's Batalha project provides an early indication of how this issue would be addressed. He constructs an explanatory hypothesis that would be greatly amplified in the romantic era, the association of Catholic monuments not with the hierarchical, Roman church but with the idea of the simple, unmediated faith of

Christianity's Patristic beginnings. Murphy's description of his hosts in Batalha employs this device. In describing the "piety, hospitality, and simplicity of these Reverend Fathers" he compares their behavior and belief to "the description historians give us of the Christians of the Apostolic ages." This reference elided contemporary tensions between Protestant and Catholic by employing one of Protestantism's basic arguments, that beneath the rouged and perfumed institution Martin Luther denounced there was a simple, reverent, and more authentic Christianity. In this construction, the monks and villagers Murphy encountered at Batalha were part of the earlier, more authentic tradition, thus their faith and reverence were unsullied by Roman superstition and worth admiring. In fact Damien Murray's recent study describes the emergence of Irish Antiquarianism among Conyngham and the Irish Protestant elite as a contested assertion of control over Ireland's medieval heritage.²⁰ Nationalism and romanticism revered the past, and the idea that earlier religious practice was free of the excesses of Catholicism was a key device for bringing traditional Catholic practice into the Protestant nationalist narrative.

The small figure of a cleric, dwarfed by the massive and ornately sculpted doorway also presages the romantic. The depiction of a small figure in an enormous setting is one of the most familiar devices of the nineteenth-century romantics, an effective way to represent the immensity of the views that evoke those "sublime and awful sensations" Murphy found in his contemplation of Gothic architecture. Beyond emphasizing the vast scale of this monument, this figure, whose outstretched hand suggests piety and devotion, is a first step toward still another narrative device used extensively in romanticism and in Murphy's later work. These figures will multiply in

²⁰ Murray, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and Irish Antiquarian Societies*, 3-4.

Murphy's Alhambra images, and will increasingly carry substantial narrative importance. Through costume and attitude, they will express the place of different national, ethnic, class, gender, and social categories in Murphy's interpretation of the rooms and view depicted. The narrative significance of these small, carefully costumed figures in British romantic landscape painting of the nineteenth century are a visual equivalent to Salman Rushdie's "information-heavy" writing style of the nineteenth century mentioned in the discussion of Washington Irving's early prose.²¹

I have characterized the difference between Swinburne's work and that of Murphy by placing it in the transition from the Enlightenment to the romantic. Their respective depictions of monumental architecture demonstrate this. Briefly, Swinburne presented the buildings more or less as he found them while in Murphy's attempt to frame both Batalha and the Alhambra as part of a larger emergence of European culture he never felt constricted by any commitment to a mimetic ideal. This approach will be easily demonstrated in my discussion of his Alhambra images below, but can also be discerned in the Batalha project. I have already noted how the prominent, geometric shadows in **Figure 16** reinforce Murphy's argument that Batalha is constructed following rigorous mathematical principles. In fact, in his introduction, Murphy acknowledges the idealized nature of his renderings more directly, noting that his images include an important departure from the monument as it actually existed. He reports that the spire over the Mausoleum of the monastery's founder, King John I (the spire on the right of

²¹ See the introduction to John Barrell's *Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980) for a powerful description of the narrative significance of the small figures that populate romantic scenes of the English landscape. Barrell's combination of art historical and political analysis – he cites E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* as one of his principal inspirations – has been one of my own scholarly models. His discussion of David Wilkie's early genre paintings (114-15) helps frame our understanding of Wilkie's friendship with Irving – they both saw much merit in traditional social hierarchies.

Figure 16) had actually collapsed during the great earthquake of 1745, and although “the other parts of the Mausoleum which received most injury, have been decently repaired in their former style, through the munificence of His Most Faithful Majesty the Late King, Joseph I” this tower had not yet been replaced. His account of this catastrophe does include the reassuring news that the fall of the spire had not hurt anyone or anything inside the chapel, perhaps a reference to Voltaire’s meditations on this catastrophe in his “Poem on the Lisbon Disaster.” It can safely be assumed that this informs Murphy’s entire approach to the images. His intention to ignore the inconvenient details of decay and destruction can be inferred from his first textual reference to the building as “this pile” and his subsequent expression of hope that the desperately needed repairs will soon be underway. After all, a focus on the monument’s decrepitude could undercut both the prestige of the patron and the argument that the medieval Europeans developed an artistic style that was a rival to the classical world in terms of both beauty and intellectual rigor.

This suggests that Murphy’s lack of interest in mimetic depictions of Batalha or the Alhambra is not a failure of intellectual or artistic rigor, but rather a manifestation of the era’s emerging *zeitgeist*. Unfortunately, this romantic turn has not been acknowledged by the few scholars who have turned their attention to Murphy; his work has generally received the same dismissive attention as that of the romantic historians. Scholarship on the Alhambra itself has become a growth industry, and the typical study of the Alhambra addresses, at least briefly, the emergence of Western interest in the Alhambra in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These studies typically include a passing reference to Murphy, ranging in tenor from the condescending to the actively hostile. Oleg Grabar’s *The Alhambra* was one of the first general appreciations of the

Alhambra to be published in the recent past. Grabar's study is in the mainstream of his generation's artistic consensus, befitting his lofty status in the world of Islamic studies and art history, and it includes a warm acknowledgment of Hugh Honour's suggestion that he look into the subject of the Alhambra. Grabar uses Washington Irving's account of Ferdinand and Isabella's conquest of the fortress as the narrative frame for his introduction, but when he turns to early depictions of the monument, he ignores Murphy's contribution. Instead, he focuses on the project led by Owen Jones a generation later, in the 1840s, which he describes as part of "a search... for new doctrines about the arts and especially about ornament." This is perhaps a predictable choice for Grabar, given his own artistic focus and Jones' importance in canonizing the new, exotic decorative style of Victorian Britain in his design of such modernist masterpieces as the Crystal Palace (constructed 1851). Grabar's interest in Jones is particularly focused on the decorative motifs published under the rubric "Moorsque ornament from the Alhambra" in Jones' canonical *The Grammar of Ornament*, a publication that definitively marked the assimilation of this material into the Victorian commercial world of fabric design and wallpaper.²²

Michael Jacobs' *Alhambra* takes a more historicized view of the place of the Alhambra in romanticism, and adds some valuable historic depth to the story by summarizing a 1760 reference to the Alhambra from the unpublished travel journal of a relative of William Pitt. In a fascinating snippet, this Mr. Pitt raises the possibility that the "Saracenic" style may be a source for Gothic architecture, thus providing an early

²² Oleg Grabar, *The Alhambra* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 17-19. The reference to *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856; reprinted New York: Van Nostrand, 1982) emphasizes the importance of the Alhambra and the "Moorish" style in the Gothic Revival of the mid-nineteenth century. While Grabar presents Jones as the source of "Moorsque" ornament in Victorian Britain, Murphy is noted as a contributor to this tradition in Ian Gow's article from Guiterman and Llewellyn's *David Roberts* catalog.

citation for the attempt to enroll the Moors among Europe's honored ancestors. Jacobs also clearly notes the importance of the Alhambra as a manifestation of Edmund Burke's description of the Sublime power of ancient monuments – he feels that the building's designers consciously eschewed classical rationalism for something less mathematical but more awe-inspiring. But when he turns to Murphy's romanticized images of the Alhambra, Jacobs regretfully reports that by the nineteenth century, the early attempts at “careful stylistic analysis and thoughtful reflections on architecture had been succeeded by the blatant expression of feelings and prejudices fuelled – in the case of Protestant travelers – by an unflinching belief in the superiority of Moorish civilization over Spanish Catholicism.” Jacobs is clear on the identity of the principal culprit: “In their search for the sublime they began to perceive the Nasrid Palaces in a totally distorted way, as can be seen in the engravings of the English architect James Cavanagh Murphy.”²³ Jacobs does carefully analyze several of Murphy's images, accurately describing his attempts to transpose the intimate, open rooms of the Alhambra into a Gothic key, a process I will describe in detail below. His analysis of this process, however, is incomplete. Jacobs astutely notes the underpinnings of Murphy's project as the identification of Moorish architecture with the Gothic, and the attempt to contrast Catholic Spain with its Islamic predecessors. But his explanation of this falls back on the basic “Orientalist” paradigm: English and French interest in the Alhambra and Moorish culture is a manifestation of their imperial aspirations. This explanation addresses neither the romantic admiration of the Moors nor the attempt to absorb their architecture into the

²³ Michael Jacobs, *Alhambra* (New York: Rizzoli, 2000), 157-167. On this subject, see also John Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Obsession in British and American Art and Architecture 1500–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 119.

European family tree – in my analysis I will attempt to provide a more satisfactory explanatory framework for Jacobs’ accurate and thoughtful observations.

Jacobs’ criticism of Murphy’s work compares it unfavorably to the Spanish *Antigüedades Arabes*, making the point that Murphy would have done well to adopt the Enlightenment objectivity of the Spanish work. Ironically, Robert Irwin, in his *The Alhambra*, takes precisely the opposite approach to the relationship between Murphy and his Spanish predecessors, stating that the *Antigüedades Arabes* were “plagiarised by an amateur archeologist, James Cavendish Murphy.”²⁴ This scathing but contradictory attack sadly confirms the well-known fact that once you get a bad reputation, pretty much any criticism will do. The condescending reference to “amateur” is anachronistic (as Irwin, a prodigious scholar of the early Orientalists, well knows), and inaccurate, as Murphy, along with most of the other people I am discussing, was, in fact, making a living in the emerging literary marketplace. The comparisons to the *Antigüedades Arabes* are also unfair. That work, part of the historiographic flowering of Bourbon Spain described in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra’s *How to Write the History of the New World*, was, as he acknowledges in his introduction, a source for Murphy, particularly in the inventory of decorative motifs.²⁵ But a look at the plates from the *Antigüedades Arabes* actually reveals a pre-Enlightenment artistic tradition. The artist who created **Figure 17**, a view of the Alhambra’s Lion Fountain, was still struggling with some of the visual basics. Without the ability to execute a foreshortened view of the lion figure, all the lions flanking the central figure had to be rendered in profile view; similarly, the central lion viewed head on appears to be behind rather than in front of the pack. Comparing this to

²⁴ Robert Irwin, *The Alhambra* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 138-39.

²⁵ Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 161-182.

the more skillful renderings of the Lion Fountain by Swinburne [Figure 12] or Murphy [Figure 22, background], makes it obvious that Murphy was not simply cribbing off the *Antigüedades Arabes*.

Irwin also refers slightly to what he calls the “half-baked” speculation about the relationship between “Saracenic” and Gothic architecture.²⁶ Again, he is right to observe that this speculation was incorrect, but merely noting that these comparisons have not panned out ignores the larger story. In the process of creating and then testing hypotheses, mistakes, even those later tested and discarded, are a necessary step toward the emergence of sounder theories. Although I believe Irwin’s comments about Murphy’s *Arabian Antiquities* are too dismissive, his general assessment of the romantic take on the Alhambra is highly perceptive. In particular, he foregrounds the anti-Catholic valence of the representation of the Moors, noting, for example, the problematic contradiction between the generous access provided to Murphy and others by the Spanish government and the negative press the government got from the romantics. Even if Irwin does not do justice to Murphy, his contribution to the question of romantic representation of the Alhambra is incisive and in keeping with his larger reputation as an astute interpreter of Islam for the Anglophone world.

The chapter on the romantics from Irwin’s 2004 book on the Alhambra was actually something of a warm-up, and in 2006, Irwin published a full scale study of the early Orientalists. In this work, he deals with some of the same problematic aspects of academia’s “Orientalism” that inspired this dissertation. In particular, he addresses the poor fit between the image of the early Orientalists as conspiratorial perpetrators of a malign discourse of domination and their actual practice, particularly the tedious, solitary,

²⁶ Irwin, *Alhambra*, 138.

obscure, pedantic and decidedly unglamorous projects of “making philological comparisons between Arabic and Hebrew, or cataloging the coins of Fatimid Egypt, or establishing the basic chronology of Haroun al-Rashid’s military campaigns against Egypt.”²⁷ Irwin makes the task of separating the actual work of the earlier Orientalists from the image constructed in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* easier by excluding from the category of early Orientalists the entire canon of literature and art in favor of the scholarly grunt-workers described above. The idea that there is an important distinction between the tedious, empirical scholarship Irwin admires and the flamboyant depictions of Delacroix or Disraeli is certainly reasonable, and definitely may lower the temperature on discussions of the early Orientalist scholars. But Murphy’s *Arabian Antiquities of Spain* shows that the distinction between scholar and artist is itself somewhat anachronistic, assuming a strict classification that was not yet in place in the early nineteenth century.

In discussing the significance of *Arabian Antiquities*, it is important to recall that Murphy’s immense volume of images was only part of his project. Simultaneously, Murphy and his associates published *The History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain* described on its title page as “An introduction to *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, by James Cavanah Murphy, Architect.” While published as part of a larger project, this volume can also easily stand on its own. In an 1818 review of three recent publications on the subject of Islamic Spain, the stature of this work is obvious. The reviewer dealt quickly with two other works, dismissing them as casual clip jobs, indebted to sources well known to the reviewer but not acknowledged by the authors. The Murphy project

²⁷ Robert Irwin, *The Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies* (London: Penguin, 2006).

was a different story. The reviewer describes it as a well-researched and fully documented volume containing both a:

political and military history of the Mahometan empire in Spain...and the translation of the Arabic inscriptions [in the Alhambra]...executed by professor Shakespear of the hon. East India Company's military seminary....and a topographical account of the principal seats of the Moorish empire in the peninsula, which treats of the literature, science, arts, manufactures, and commerce, as well as of the civil and military institutions of the Arabs...composed by Mr. Horne, sub-librarian of the Surry Institution. [Along with this] comes the splendidly executed '*Arabian Antiquities of Spain*,' by Mr. Murphy (to which the preceding work is designed as an introduction,) who is already advantageously known to the public as the author of a volume of '*Travels in Portugal*' and some very elegant and correct architectural '*Plans of the Church of Batalha*.'²⁸

The author of this lengthy review, like most literary journalists of this period, spends more time summarizing the information presented in these works than in articulating the sort of critical evaluation a modern essayist might undertake. But the review is still helpful in making it clear that Murphy's project was viewed by his contemporaries as a first-rate production, not least in the illustrations, which "in addition to a singular delicacy...present a rare combination of accuracy and beauty" (486).

Murphy's project was the first major effort to depict and historicize Islamic Spain for the Western audience and was regarded at the time as both an intellectual and financial success. The active hostility of modern scholarship toward Murphy seems part of the same phenomenon by which romantic historians such as Irving were written out of the academic family tree, a process discussed in depth in a subsequent chapter. Murphy's status in the marketplace and his literary reputation make it clear that he (like Irving) was in his time an authoritative source on Moorish Spain. The suggestion in the scholarly

²⁸ Review of Murphy, *History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain*; George Power, *The History of the Empire of the Mussulmans* (London, 1815); Thomas Bourke A *Concise History of the Moors in Spain* (London, 1815), *Analectic Magazine* 12 (1818): 482-508.

literature that Murphy, and the romantic historians, saw their reputation decline because they were succeeded by historians more faithful to the facts seems overly simplistic; the next generation of historians (and all generations since!) had their own agendas, perspectives and analytical lenses. A closer examination of Murphy's Alhambra will help to define his particular contribution, and may explain why this important work is so deeply out of scholarly favor.

Murphy's *Arabian Antiquities*

From Murphy's time down to Salman Rushdie's 1997 novel *The Moor's Last Sigh*, which ends with a scene set on a vista overlooking the Alhambra, the old fort/palace has been the principal signifier for Moorish Spain. Murphy's work began with an examination of the monument's striking setting, framed against a rugged mountainous background and looming over Granada's skyline [**Figure 14**]. As much as its historical status as the site of the surrender of Boabdil, the last Moorish ruler of al-Andalus, this dramatic setting has helped establish this monument's importance. Murphy recorded every major room and view, the individual decorative motifs and variations that Swinburne had found so compelling, and all significant textual inscriptions.²⁹ While Murphy's relationship with Conyngham had its roots in early modern patronage, *Arabian Antiquities of Spain* was a modern economic venture that aimed to expand the market for high-priced books. A contemporary observer of the publishing industry noted of the *Arabian Antiquities* that the "work employed a capital of ten thousand pounds. It was published at forty guineas per copy!"³⁰

²⁹ Translation of all the inscriptions in the Alhambra were included in the work's companion volume, Shakespear and Horne's *History*.

³⁰ *The Aldine Magazine* (1839), 309-310, quoted in Theodore Besterman, *The Publishing Firm of Cadell and Davies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), x.

The enormity of Murphy's project amplifies its significance as a source for the idea that Moorish Spain represented a Spanish "Golden Age," an epoch that stood in contrast to contemporary Spain's inability to assert itself as a powerful sovereign state and imperial power. Thus for Murphy, as well as John Shakespear and Thomas Hartwell Horne, authors of the *History*, the emerging idea of European nationalism was a critical theme. Both volumes address this issue by making the argument that Moorish Spain should join their hairier and less civilized contemporaries, the European "barbarians," as honored ancestors of European statehood. This constructed equivalence between the Moors and the tribal Europeans, articulated clearly throughout the Murphy project, is the key premise in the argument that the Spanish Moors rather than the Spanish Christians are the actual locus of Iberian culture. Shakespear and Horne drew parallels between Arab and medieval European culture (referred throughout as "Gothic," a usage I will adopt in this discussion) and Murphy achieved the same effect by actually reimagining the Alhambra along the lines of Gothic architecture.

Shakespear and Horne begin their *History* with a description of the historical land and culture of the "Arabians" and, in this discussion specifically suggest their equivalence to the "Goths," understood in their romanticized and positive, proto-European sense: "What the Goths were in Europe, the Arabs always had been in Asia, – preeminent in boldness to act and in patience to suffer; and hence they have been particularly distinguished by the sense of personal freedom, and the love of national independence" (4). This retrospective application of these consummately modern ideas onto ancient Arab culture echoed widely in the early nineteenth century. They resonate with Washington Irving's 1807 description of the Bedouins discussed in Chapter V, and

in Walter Scott's highly favorable characterization of Saladin as a chivalrous and worthy foe for Richard the Lionhearted in his 1819 novel *Ivanhoe*. In an interesting amplification of the comparison between the Arabs and Goths, the authors go on to cite the Arabs' participation in commercial culture as one of the sources of their upstanding character. The attitude that "caravans and trade routes" are among the sources of the Arabs' nobility of spirit resonates with Swinburne's notably positive feelings about the cultural importance of commercial life. This attitude, however, contrasts with later works, especially Irving's, in which the Moors are admired for their aristocratic contempt for commerce. This may suggest that the fully realized version of romanticism, which I have argued helps resolve the nineteenth-century anxiety over the inescapable economic realities of capitalism by affecting an aristocratic disdain for the marketplace, had not yet emerged. This pro-commerce point of view also clearly reflects Shakespear and Horne's association with John Company and the British Imperial project, the source of both the Arabic linguistic skills required for the translation of the Alhambra's inscriptions and the general knowledge required of a historian of Europe's Islamic heritage.

In turning to a detailed look at *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain* one is faced with the problem of dealing with the sheer volume of images. In order to facilitate analysis, I will divide the images into five general categories: 1) overall exterior views of the Alhambra in its environment, or landscapes; 2) schematics, plans, and sections; 3) views of individual rooms and important architectural features; 4) depictions of individual decorative elements, including furnishings and paintings; 5) detailed renderings of the mosaic and tile work. This categorization suffers from the problems of any analytical scheme imposed after the fact. On a mundane level, many of the plates do not fall clearly

into one category or another. One element of overlap is that some of the room views and details of exterior entrances include elements associated with landscape painting by depicting detailed views of the picturesque exterior countryside. Both Murphy and Shakespear interpret this penchant for the incorporation of sweeping views within the architecture as a device by which the building designers compensate for the assumed lack of decorative freedom imposed by Islamic traditions.³¹ Additionally, some of the large interiors, including the Hall of the Ambassadors and the Lion Court, are treated as elaborately as the exterior vistas, both in scope and in the inclusion of small folkloric characters to add Spanish or Moorish atmosphere, as required.

1) General and overall exterior views of the Alhambra in its environment.

Murphy included four full landscape-painting-style views of the castle, including expansive views of rugged terrain and peaceful sky [**Figure 14**]. These views include native wild foliage, with several different types of plants depicted but little effort at botanic specificity. The wildness of the surrounding terrain is emphasized in these images, with no sign of the orchards and fields that prose writers commonly include in their description of the view from the Alhambra, nor any sign of the city of Granada, the proximity of which is clearly noted in Murphy's plan of the building and grounds (Plate XI). The plates generally include small human figures, all decodable as particular types. In addition to the priest and artist in **Figure 14**, other images include folkloric *majo* types, both male and female, and military figures. Several of the interiors include figures in turbans, meant to represent the residents of the Islamic era, but the exteriors are populated only with the Spanish types.

³¹ Shakespear, *History*, 193-95.

These exteriors, immediately identifiable as part of the English romantic landscape's family tree, combine the *reportage* of Murphy's study of the Alhambra with an appreciation of exotic vistas. Thus they become an important building block for constructing the early nineteenth-century Anglophone world's understanding of Spain. Central to this understanding is the presence of inquisitorial Catholicism at the center of Spanish life. An 1818 review of Murphy's study notes that, immediately upon the conquest of the Alhambra, "the piety or superstition" of the Spaniards required erection of a cross on the decorative walls of the Hall of Ambassadors.³² In **Figure 14**, Murphy has created his own version of this story, inserting the cross and a priest with his arm outstretched in a blessing in the foreground of this landscape, otherwise empty except for an apparent self-acknowledgment, a seated artist with a sketchpad. The presence of the artist between the priest and the cross puts the seated figure in the line of the blessing, but the artist's smiling face may suggest that for observant westerners, the religious traditions of Spain are rather risible and not to be confused with genuine spirituality.

2) Schematics, plans, and sections. There are seven of these views. The first and most extensive (Plate XI) is a full plan of the Alhambra and its surroundings that emphasizes its conformity to the rugged terrain on which it was built. Other plans focus on the interrelation of living quarters or the relationship of decorative elements in the biggest rooms, including the Hall of Ambassadors (Plate XLI). Among these technical illustrations are several dealing with plumbing and air flow. In this volume's accompanying text, Shakespear's *History*, an enthusiastic appreciation of the Alhambra's engineering is an important theme. The author states that in every room, "two currents of air were constantly in motion, apertures being formed near the ceiling to discharge the

³² Review of Murphy, *History of the Mahometan Empire*: 504.

warm and unwholesome air which the pure inferior current forced upwards.” The facility of the Moorish engineers with both warm and cool water, a signifier for Moorish civilization earlier employed by Swinburne, is also noted appreciatively: “In every part of the palaces they had water in abundance, and a perfect control over it; making it high or low, visible or invisible, at pleasure.”³³ Murphy also observed the constant availability of cool water in the text for his plan and section of the palace’s Great Cistern, “constructed with the design of keeping the water in a state of perpetual coolness.”³⁴ Typically, Murphy pointedly contrasted this engineering expertise with current conditions; the frequent appearances of the water-seller, a recurring character in the *Tales of the Alhambra*, confirms that access to water at the Alhambra had indeed declined since the conquest.

Among the engineering elements depicted in detail by Murphy are the devices used to warm the bathrooms, what Shakespear describes as “tubes or caleducts of baked earth,” used to diffuse warmth from “a subterranean hypocaust...not only through the whole range of baths, but to all the contiguous upper apartments.”³⁵ **[Figure 18]** By contrasting this figure with a twentieth-century photograph of the room’s side wall that hints at a far from pristine state of preservation in these rooms **[Figure 19]**, we can continue to frame Murphy’s general presentation of the Alhambra. The photographic evidence reminds us that Murphy imagined this small detail, and the Alhambra as a whole, as a pristine and carefully engineered architectural monument, suffused with order and rationality. By the early 1800s the depiction of ruins was an established artistic device, and as the inclusion of architectural decay is held to be typical of Orientalism,

³³ Shakespear, *History*, 194–195.

³⁴ Murphy, *Antiquities*, Plate XIX text.

³⁵ Shakespear, *History*, 194.

this decision deserves some comment. The precise renderings of the entire monument echo the admiration Murphy and his literary cohort had for Spain's Moorish heritage. Swinburne's earlier view of the Hall of the Baths **[Figure 20]** reminds us that although his renderings are generally more faithful to the source, his images were also meant to enhance his arguments. Like Murphy, his principal interest in the room was the remarkable duct system, and he had his own strategy for bringing this to the readers' attention – the prominent display of the duct-shaped shadows. Still, Murphy's depiction of the room seems to be of a vast and magnificent hall whereas Swinburne's room seems on a more human scale. While Swinburne depicts only one bay, Murphy's three-bay arcade with a dramatic perspectival rendering – note how much larger the bay in the foreground is than the one in the rear – suggests a much larger space. This strategy of presenting the Alhambra as a vast, cathedral-like space, clearly observed in his depiction of the main rooms of the Alhambra, is the precise characteristic that has seemed so troubling to Murphy's academic critics.

3) Views of individual rooms and important architectural features. This broad category includes seventeen plates ranging from careful renderings of doorways and particularly decorative niches to expansive views of the best-known features of the Alhambra, including the Hall of the Ambassadors **[Figure 21]** and the Lion Court. **[Figure 22]** Swinburne's image of the Lion Court **[Figure 12]** focuses on the fountain – recall he thought that although it demonstrated the Moors' mastery of plumbing, the figures were "ill-formed," and his image makes this clear. Murphy avoided having to idealize the individual lions by framing them at a distance and, again, vastly exaggerating the scale of the courtyard **[Figure 23]** for a photograph of the same view]. Murphy's

views of the larger rooms share the expansive sensibility of the exterior views and often include human figures whose minuscule size is strongly reminiscent of the tiny human figures that populate romantic landscapes. As in the exterior views, these characters wear garb characteristic of occupation or nationality. While the characters in the exteriors are all contemporary Spanish types, several of the interiors include figures wearing turbans and robes, clearly meant to evoke the Alhambra's Islamic builders. In Murphy's view of the Lion Court Christian and Moor actually share the scene. Here Murphy's work serves as a precursor to Washington Irving, in whose stories and letters the Moorish shades lurking in the old fortress regularly assume a vivid corporeality. A further suggestion that these figures are meant to serve a narrative function appears in **Figure 20**. The Hall of Ambassadors was particularly significant in the Christianization of the Alhambra and of Spain. It was the scene of the first mass held in the newly captured Alhambra and a few months later the venue for the issuance of the decree expelling all Jews from Spain. In this image, all the figures are Spanish types, reinforcing the place of the Hall of Ambassadors in establishing Spain as a religiously homogeneous nation.

4) Depictions of individual decorative elements, including furnishings and paintings. These plates include renderings of some of the oddest elements of the Alhambra's decorative program, especially three paintings of chivalric scenes [**Figure 24**]. While these paintings are held to depict authentic Moorish costume and customs, their general sensibility would seem thoroughly at home in a late medieval Christian context. Since Swinburne's description of the Alhambra in 1785, the provenance of these works has been debated; they are probably best viewed as part of the Mozarabic tradition, the work of Christian artists who worked in and were strongly influenced by the Islamic

decorative traditions.³⁶ The commentary to these plates illustrates Murphy's general approach to the task of memorializing the Alhambra. He notes that "in the original, the horseman is accompanied by two or three ill-shaped dogs, which are here omitted, as we have selected only those parts which are in the best state of preservation."³⁷

Again, a comparison with the originals reflects Murphy's approach. Murphy's image, despite its fantastical content, is rationally composed and executed with enough awkward visual elements to suggest an early provenance. The original, however, is quintessentially medieval [**Fig. 15**]. Instead of a natural foreground, action-packed midground, and illusionistic background, the original is part of an oval ceiling painting in which the individual figures each stand on an irrational and curving ground plane (the vignette depicted in Murphy's plate curves around the top of **Figure 25**.) The castle that Murphy has solidly set into the distance is part of the original composition but takes its own place on the ground line, separating the lady, whose interaction with the wild man is far less direct in the original, and the unlucky knight who has been defeated by the turban-clad warrior. Once again, Murphy has transformed a thoroughly medieval image into one that follows modern, rational, and mimetic principles. The extensive editing of this image suggests that in addition to presenting Spain's Islamic heritage in a favorable and familiar light, Murphy was also domesticating this image and making it more palatable to his audience.

A parenthetical issue raised by these paintings deserves comment. The divergence of these paintings, along with the Lion Court and several other well-known examples, from the Islamic prohibition on the depiction of animal or human figures has

³⁶ Jacobs, *Alhambra*, 19.

³⁷ Murphy, *Antiquities*, Plate XLIII text.

been addressed by many scholars. Two critical al-Andalusian realities are at play here: geographic isolation from the mainstream of Islam, and a long and fractious internal history. *Al-Andalus: the Art of Islamic Spain*, the catalog for the 1992 Metropolitan Museum exhibition, includes a wide range of these representational items and clarifies this issue. Simply put, during its first 400 years, al-Andalus's culture was created through a blending of European and North African traditions, and representational art was part of this syncretic world. While the Alhambra was built late in the Empire's existence, it contains a number of elements, including the Lion Fountain, with an earlier provenance.³⁸

Another small stucco animal sculpture, with a repeated motif of a lion attacking a stag, both illuminates Murphy's rationalizing approach to the material and serves as an example of the Alhambra as repository for earlier artworks [Fig. 16 – plate LXVII]. Murphy's engraving renders the animal's musculature skillfully and illusionistically while an undated but apparently later reproduction of the same scene shows the contours of the lion depicted in a linear, composite style more in character with a premodern provenance [Figure 27]. Finally, an actual photo of the work shows a sculpture less well preserved than either engraving suggests, but with the awesome power of early medieval animal sculpture [Figure 28]. Once again, Murphy has effaced the powerful but perhaps dangerously raw, medieval elements of the work in favor of a more delicate composition. Nowhere in his rather decorous depictions of the lions' assault on the deer or, in the lower register, the badgers' confrontation with the kids, is there any hint of the savage

³⁸ Jerrilyn Dodds, ed. *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), Introduction.

power suggested by the actual photograph of the carnivore's stylized but powerful muscularity.

5) Detailed renderings of the mosaic and tile work, emphasizing their geometric intricacy, and careful renderings of decoratively inscribed text. The volume includes twelve detailed renderings of particular tile patterns, seven pages of decorative inscriptions with multiple images per page, and two more pages of miscellaneous decorative elements including columns, capitals, panels and borders. A comparison of Murphy's drawings with twentieth-century photographs again points out the extent to which Murphy's project was an idealized and pristine rendering of their crisp geometric fabulousness. Throughout the book, Murphy offers brief translations of the inscriptions, which are generally ritual invocations of God's prowess or omnipotence, or repeated inscriptions of the phrase "There is No Conqueror but Allah," the motto of the Nasrid dynasty, builders of the Alhambra.

This motto reflects the problematic history of the Nasrids. The dynasty's founding, like the Alhambra itself, dates to the last 250 years of Islamic Spain, an era when the Christian monarchy of Castile had already established itself as the dominant force on the Iberian Peninsula. The Nasrids, like all secular Iberian powers of this era, were obliged to come to terms with the Castilians – in fact the rulers of the Alhambra were tribute-paying clients of the Castilians for 200 years before the 1492 conquest. Scholars have speculated that the emphasis on Allah as the fundamental force behind conquest may reflect criticism of the dynastic founder's decision to ally himself with the Castilians in order to establish his own authority over other Islamic aspirants to rule in

southern Iberia.³⁹ While his colleagues in the preparation of the *History of the Mahometan Empire in Spain* discuss these issues, it seems far more likely that Murphy's interest in these small panels and engravings was due to their spectacular decorative effects. These elements are generally reproduced in small illustrations, with attention to their astounding level of graphic complexity. It seems likely they were meant as a source for British designers interested in adapting Islamic decorative elements into their own repertoire.

Spanish Orientalism?

Given the contemporary academic expectation that Islam was represented as a deeply problematic “other” in the nineteenth century, what are we to make of the favorable treatment afforded the Spanish Moors? My answer has three parts: 1) What we call Orientalism manifests the triumph of empiricism, and shows that the Enlightenment approach to problems had moved beyond the realm of the *philosophes* to the much broader public sphere. 2) As empiricism became the default technique for marshalling arguments, it pervaded all forms of public discourse, including artistic, literary, diplomatic and more polemical versions of political expression. 3) The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century empiricists developed powerful historical hypotheses. An example in the current case would be “the cultural life of Spain has degenerated since the time of the Moors because the successor state was a benighted theocracy.” These proved to be powerful arguments when employed in contemporary political and policy disputes. The example here might be “due to its fundamentally inadequate government, the

³⁹ Jacobs, *Alhambra*, 45-50 and Dodds, *Al-Andalus*, 127-132 for Nasrid dynastic history.

Spanish need to cede control of their colonies to a more able colonial party or self-governing independent republics.”

Several scholars have addressed and theorized pieces of this problem. Madeleine Dobie, an art historian, has argued that the “Orientalizing” categories created for the Islamic world most closely represent cultural stereotypes that had been developed in the process of theorizing Western dominance over the Atlantic World colonies. She suggests Orientalism as described by Said is associated with late nineteenth-century era of High Imperialism and Realist painting. This argument fits well with Robert Irwin’s argument that the early Orientalists were scholars, not polemicists.⁴⁰ Todd Porterfield argues that it is possible to correlate visual representations of Napoleon’s expeditions to Egypt with specific political agendas, and that this may also be true of nineteenth-century representation of Spain, a possibility also addressed briefly by John MacKenzie.⁴¹ Brian T. Allen has pointed to Washington Irving’s importance in this project. His argument that Irving’s addition of a “bona fide imperial agenda that had been missing in previous treatments of the Islamic Orient,” fits neatly into Dobie’s description of the early nineteenth century as the era when the Orient was estheticized.⁴² Taken together, these authors suggest that Said’s *Orientalism* paradigm is a phenomenon relevant to a good deal more than the specific issue of Western representation of the Orient. What seems clear is that Swinburne, Murphy, and their contemporaries constructed a solid empirical foundation for future studies of Spain and its Islamic heritage. This new body of

⁴⁰ Dobie, *Foreign Bodies*, 4, 21, 33.

⁴¹ Todd Porterfield, “Baghdad on the Hoosic: American Orientalism.” *Art in America* 80 (Feb. 2001): 114; John M. MacKenzie *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

⁴² Brian T. Allen, “The Garments of Instruction from the Wardrobes of Pleasure: American Orientalist Painting in the 1870s and 1880s,” in *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America 1870-1930*, ed. Holly Edwards, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 61.

knowledge intersected with a number of long-standing Western images of the confrontation on the Iberian Peninsula between *los moros y los cristianos*.

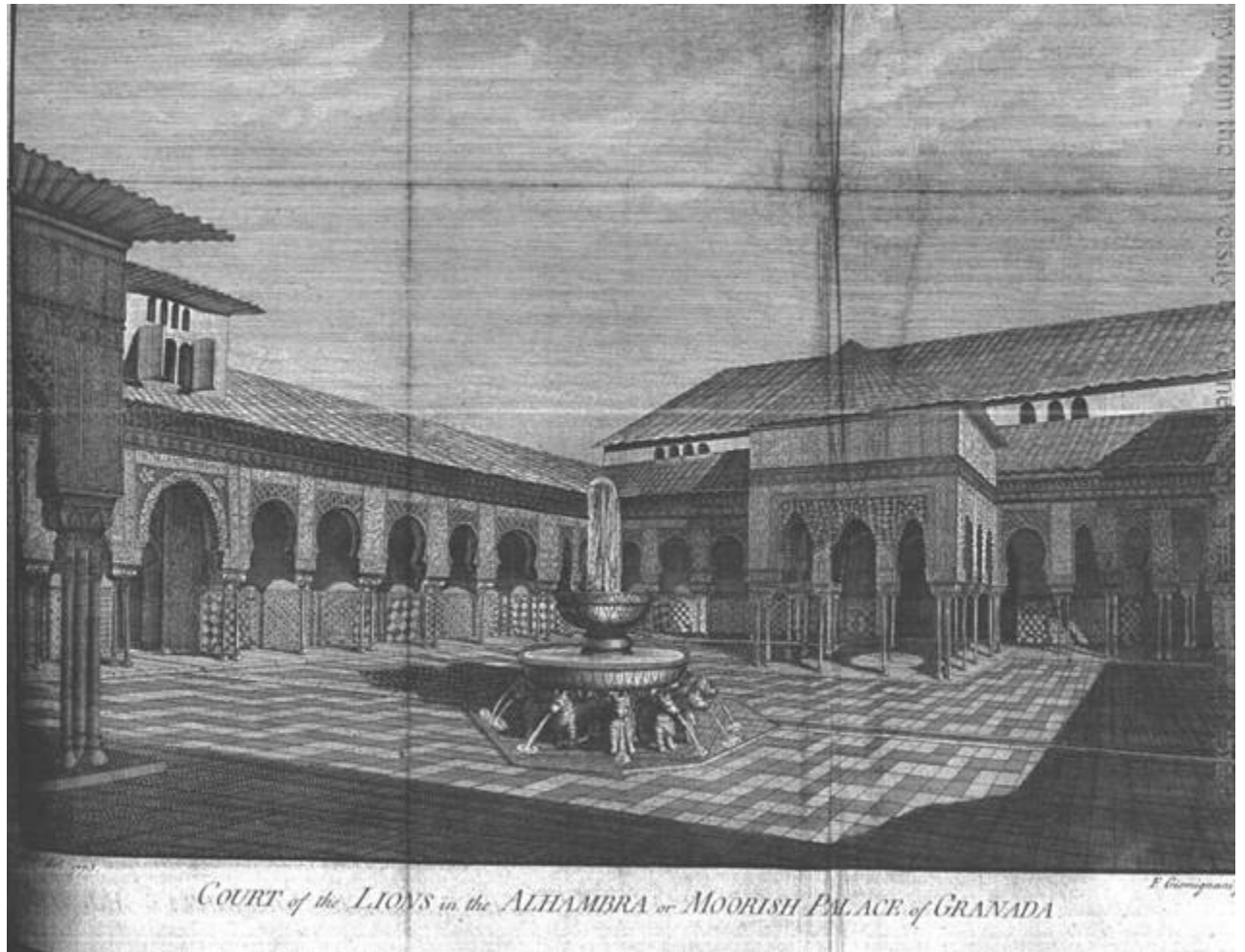
Simultaneously, this new interest in Moorish History intersected with a political debate.

Spain's current political ineptitude guaranteed major changes in Spain's colonial sphere.

For the rising Atlantic World powers, this prospect created problems but also some appetizing opportunities; this is the subject of the next two chapters.



Figure 11. Diego Velázquez, *Water-Seller of Seville*. C. 1622. José Gudiol, *Velázquez 1599-1660*, 42.



COURT of the LIONS in the ALHAMBRA or MOORISH PALACE of GRANADA

Figure 12. Henry Swinburne, *Court of the Lions*. 1778. *Travels Through Spain*.

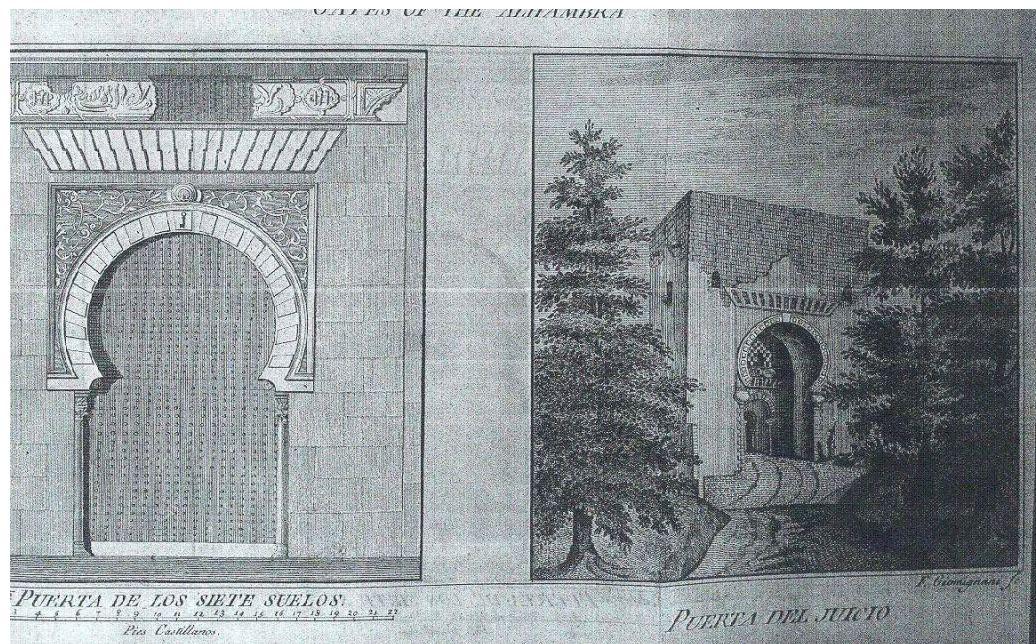
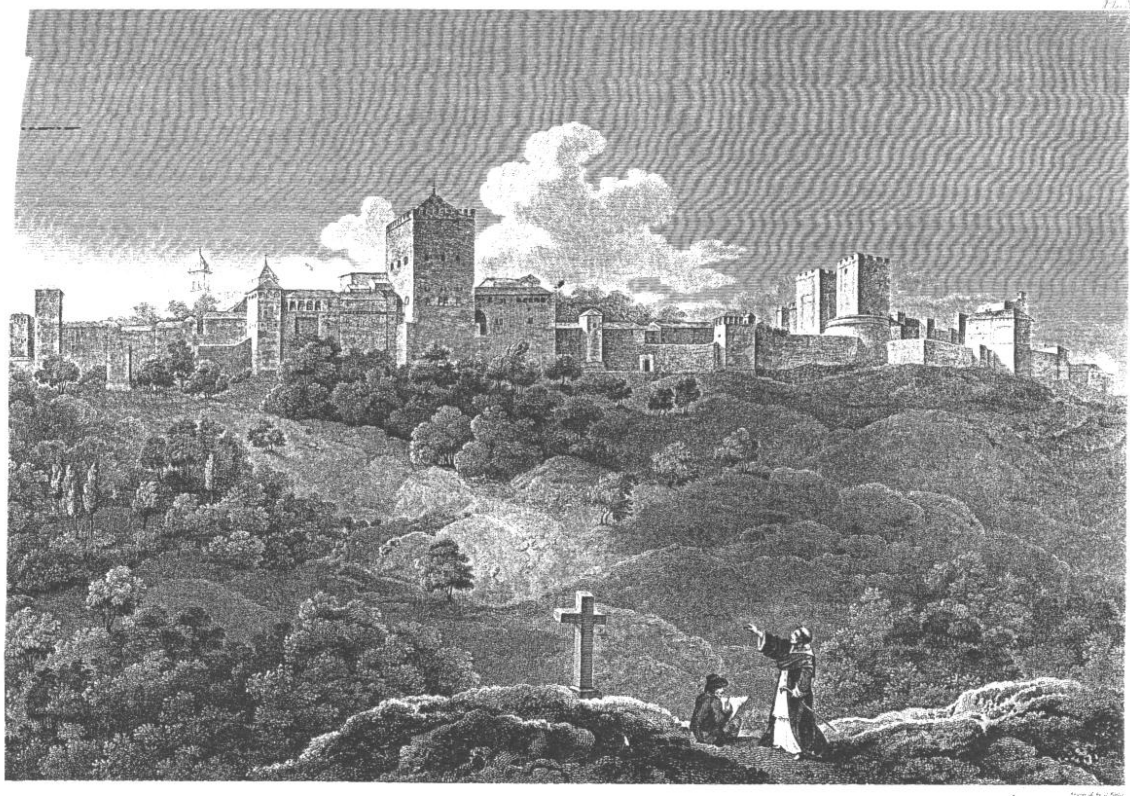


Figure 13. Henry Swinburne, *Gates of the Alhambra; Puerta de los Siete Suelos & Puerta del Juicio*. 1778. *Travels Through Spain*.



THE ROYAL PALACE AND FORTRESS OF ALHAMBRA, AT GRANADA.

Figure 14. James Cavanah Murphy. *The Royal Palace and Fortress of Alhambra*. 1816. *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, plate XX.

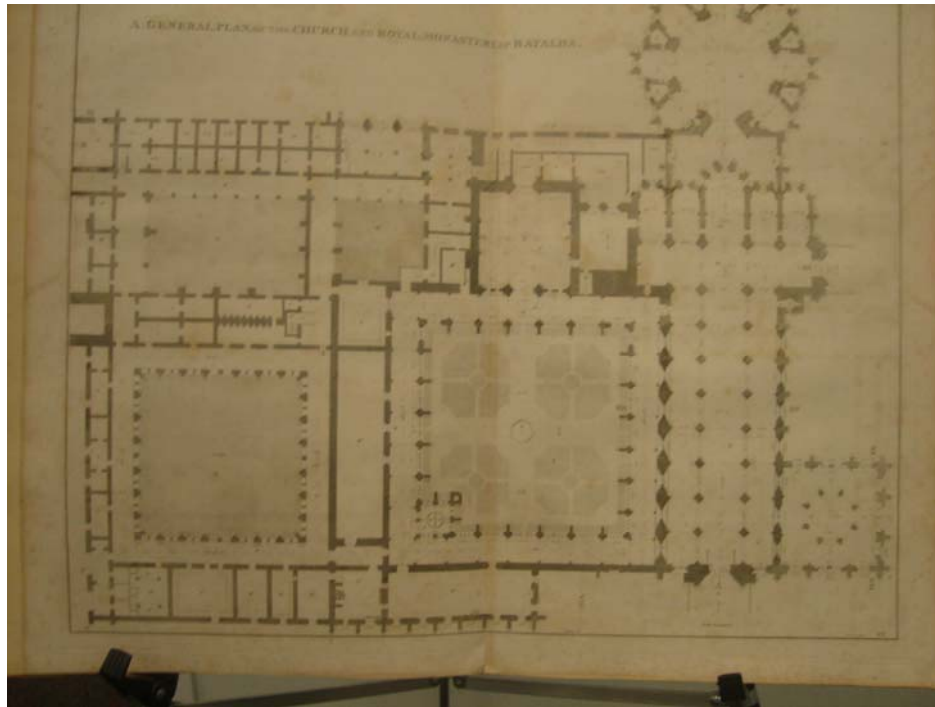


Figure 15. James Cavanah Murphy. *A General Plan of the Church and Royal Monastery; The Spire of the North End of the Transept.* 1790. *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Views of the Church of Batalha.*

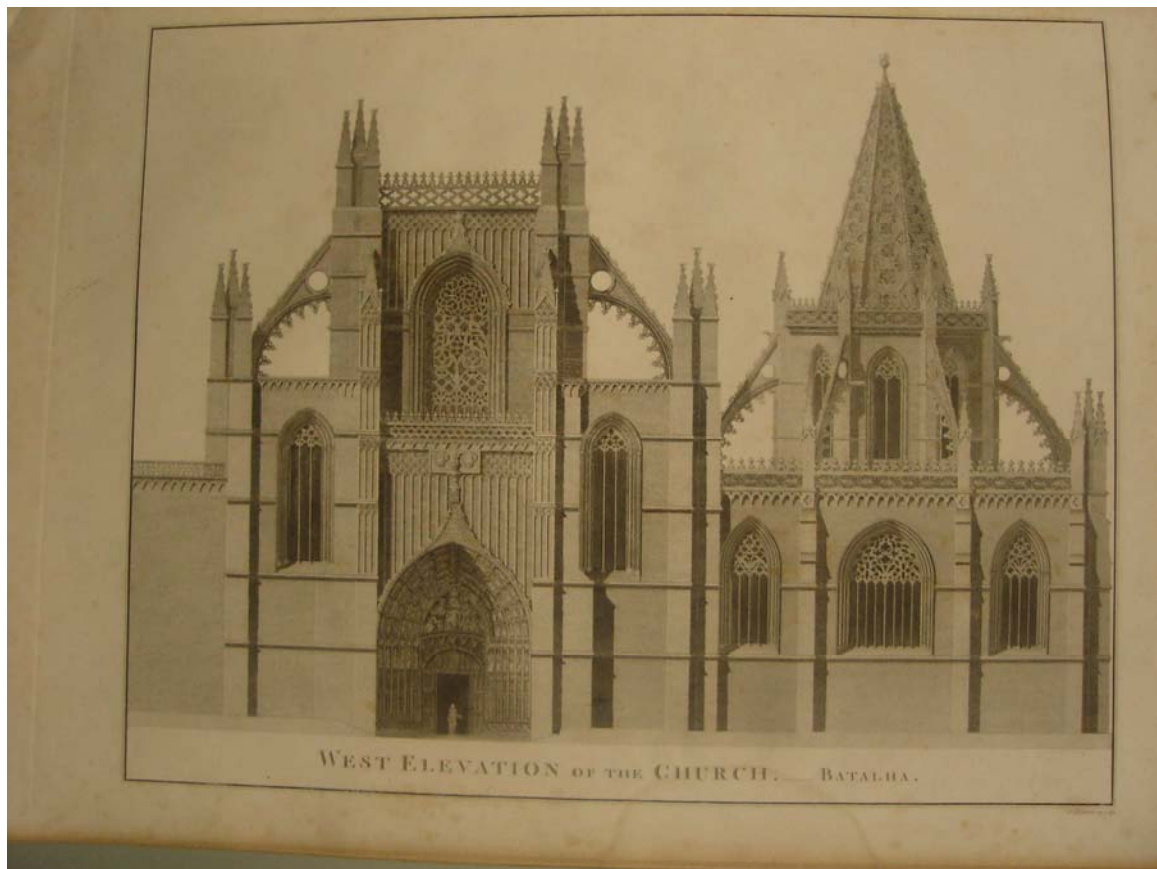


Figure 16. James Cavanah Murphy. *West Elevation of the Church at Batalha.* 1790.
Plans, Elevations, Sections and Views of the Church of Batalha.

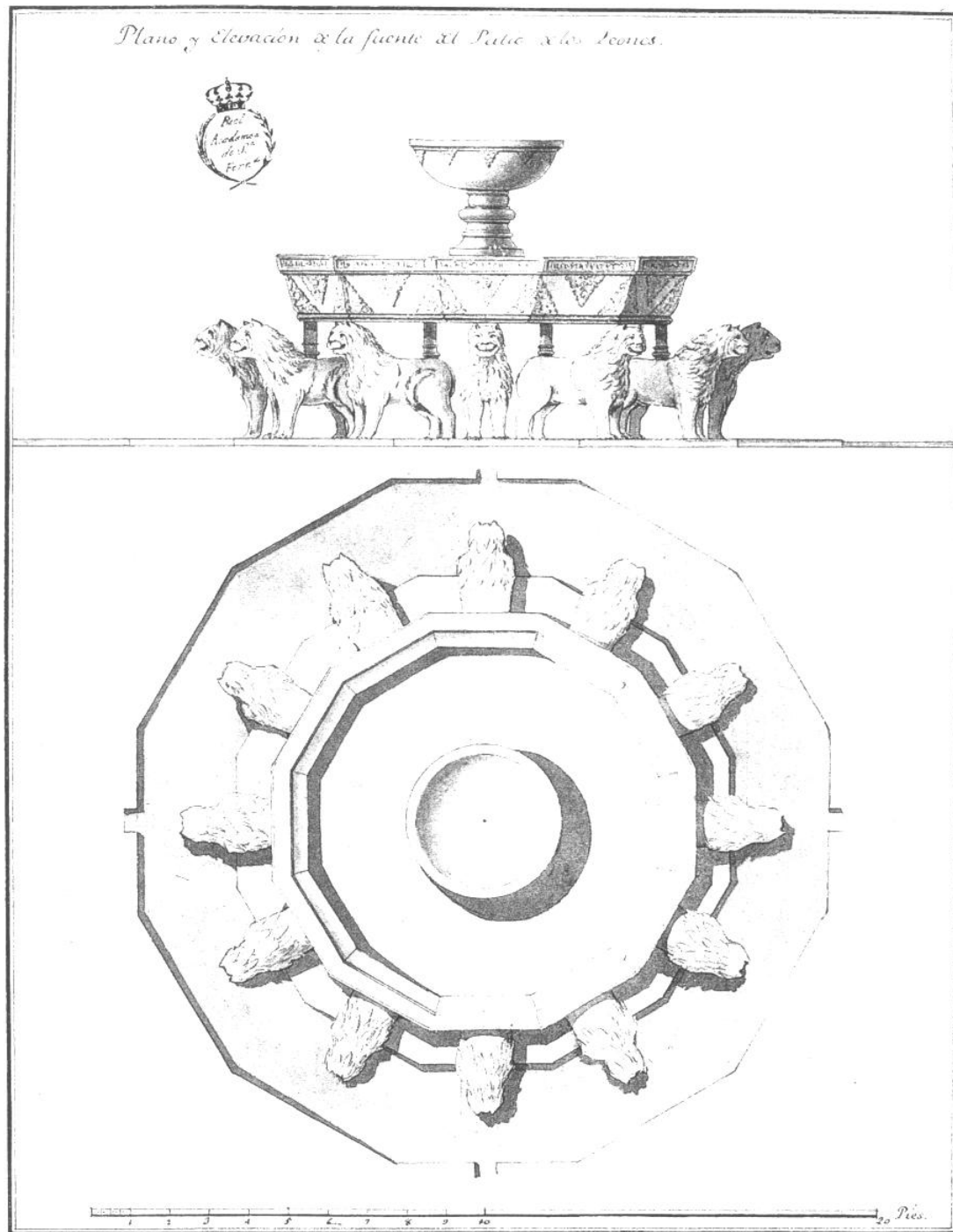


Fig. 95. J. de Hermosilla, Dibujo de la fuente de los Leones en la Alhambra, 1766, A.S.F.

Figure 17. Jose de Hermosillo. *Lion Fountain*. Delfín Rodríguez Ruiz, *Las Antigüedades Arabes de España*, Plate 95.

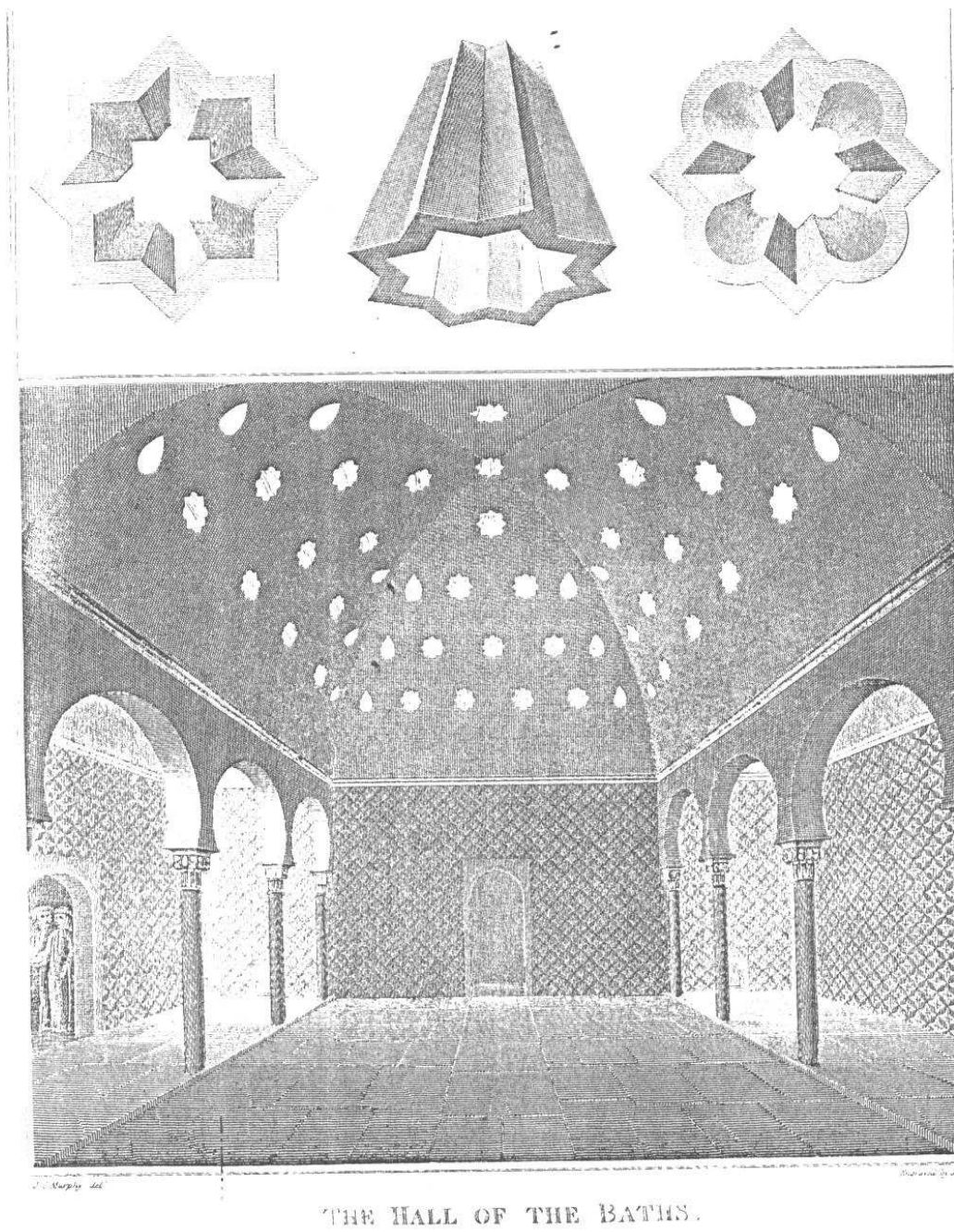


Figure 18. James Cavanah Murphy. *The Hall of the Baths*. 1816. *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, plate XX.

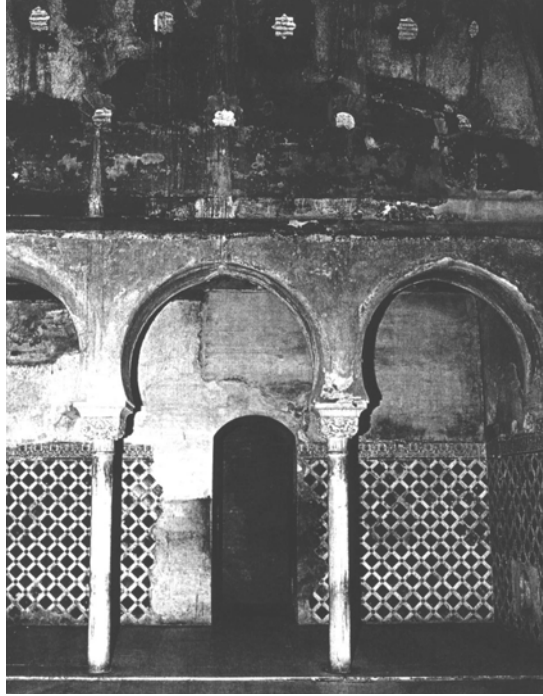


Figure 19.
Hall of the Baths. Jacobs, *Alhambra*, 107.

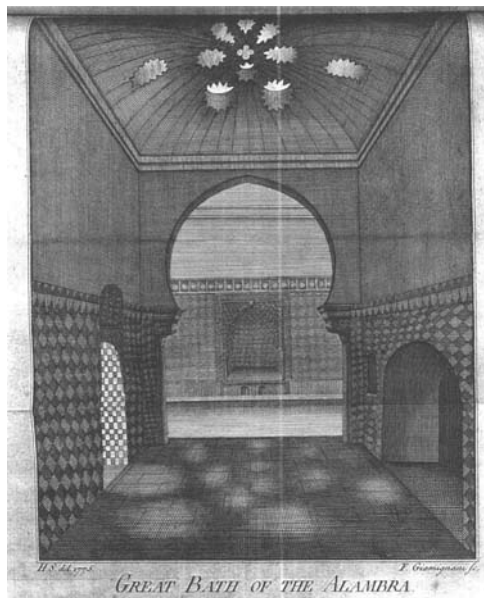
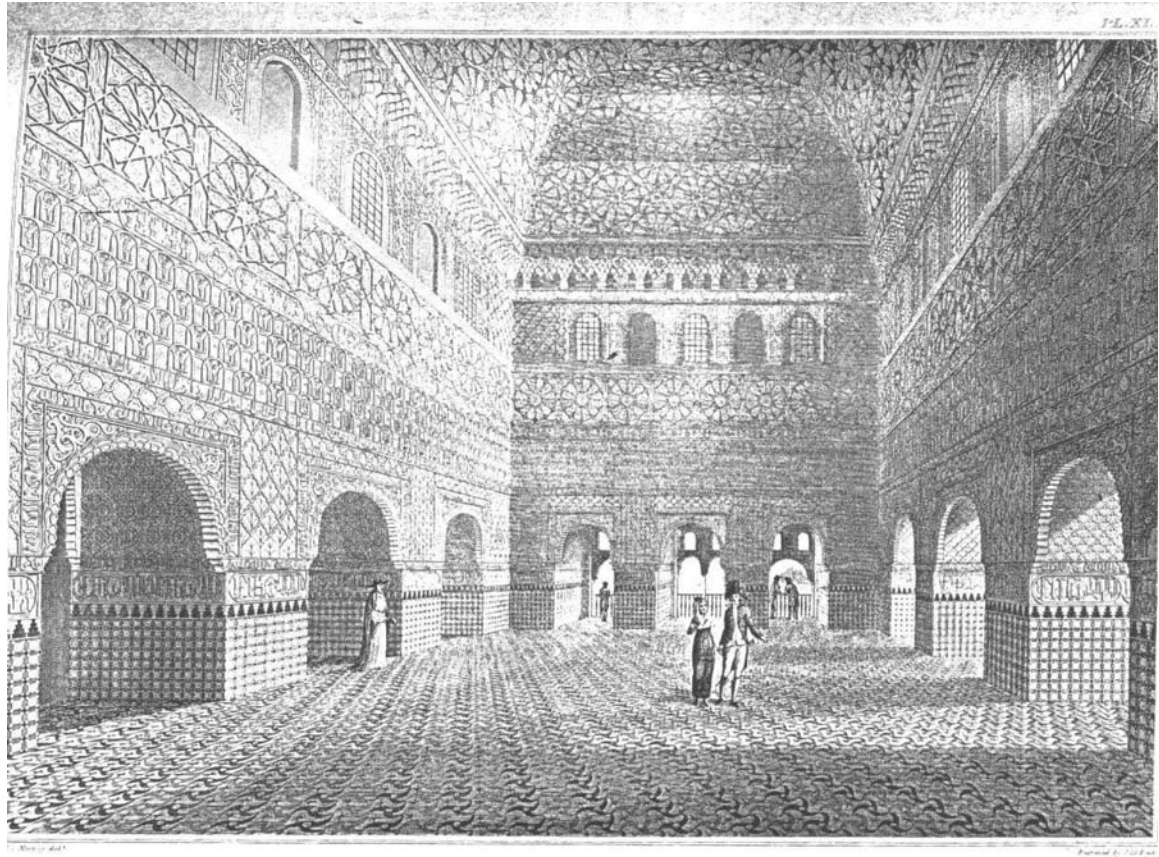
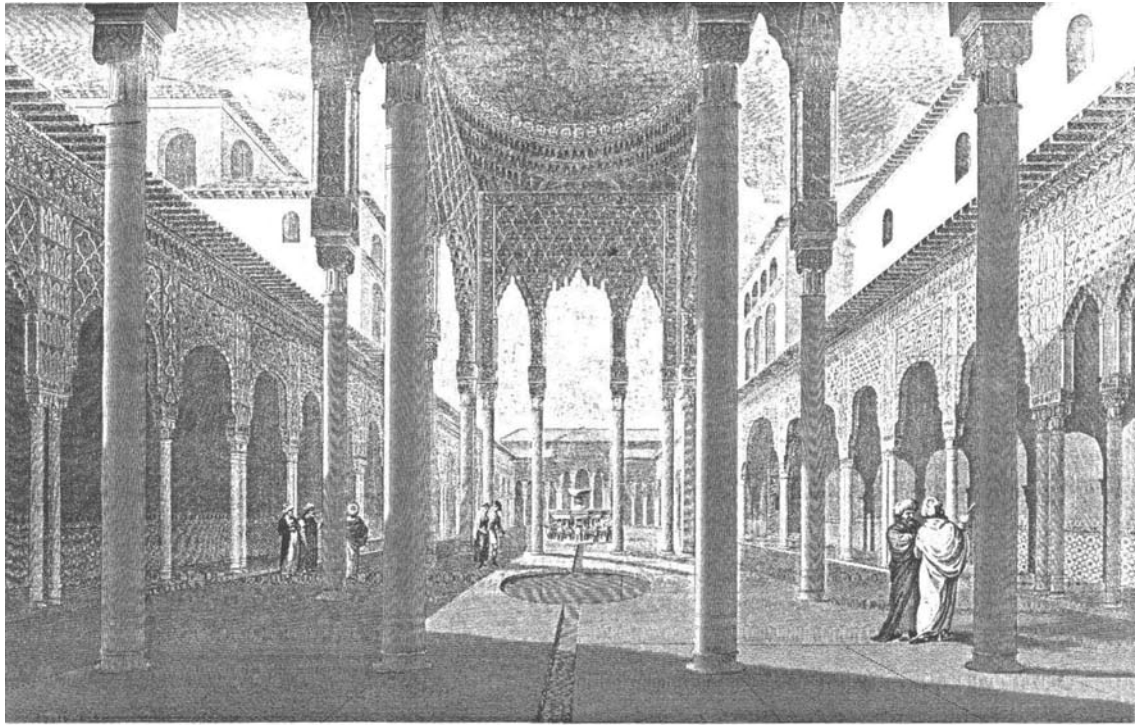


Figure 20. Henry Swinburne, *Great Bath of the Alhambra*. 1778. *Travels Through Spain*.



A PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE GOLDEN SALOON, OR HALL OF AMBASSADORS.

Figure 21. James Cavanah Murphy. *The Hall of Ambassadors*. 1816. *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, plate XL.



A PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE COURT AND FOUNTAIN OF LIONS.

Figure 22. James Cavanah Murphy. *Court and Lion Fountain*. 1816. *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, plate XXXIII.



Figure 23. View of Lion Fountain. Jacobs, *Alhambra*, 112.



A MOORISH BATTLE PIECE, FROM A PAINTING IN THE ALHAMBRA.

Figure 24. James Cavanah Murphy. *Scene from a Painting in the Alhambra*. 1816. *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, plate XLII.



Figure 25. *Ceiling Painting, Alhambra*. Michael Jacobs. *Alhambra*, 127.

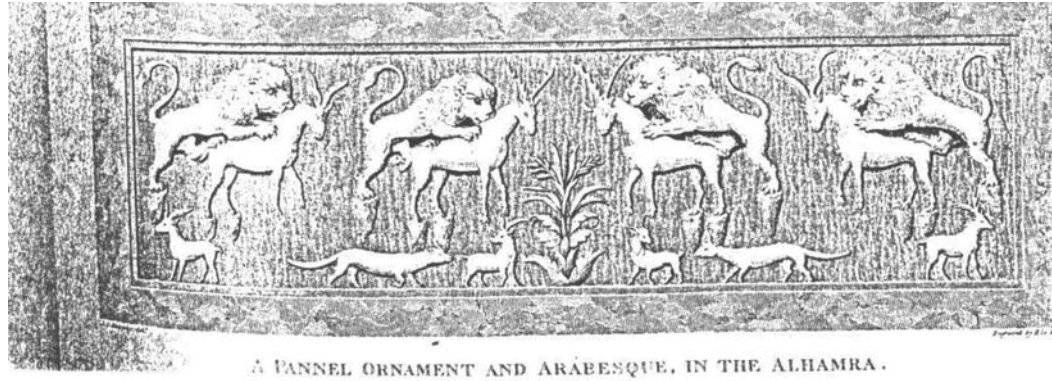


Figure 26. James Cavanah Murphy. *Marble Basin*. 1816. *The Arabian Antiquities of Spain*, plate LXVII.



Figure 27. *Marble Basin*. Michael Jacobs. *Alhambra*, 127.



Figure 28. *Marble Basin*. *L'Alhambre: il Palazzo Reale*, 29.

Chapter III

Alexander Hill Everett, Diplomat and Scholar

When a nation has once entered upon a retrograde course, the natural progress is undoubtedly from bad to worse; and the natural conclusion is a state of utter desolation and complete physical ruin, as we see exemplified in the Mahometan countries.

-- Alexander Hill Everett, on Spain¹

In the conclusion to the previous chapter I note the emergence of a scholarly consensus that notwithstanding disputes about the nuances of Orientalism, the close relationship between cultural discourse and politics is clear and incontrovertible. In the next two chapters I will present a case study of this assertion. I argue that an understanding of the cultural romanticism described in the previous chapter provides key context to the political issues surrounding the breakup of the Spanish Empire in the Americas. Both in their specific reaction to political events and in their general approach to the international world around them, the political actors of this era demonstrate the powerful influence of the romantic world view. Not only is this relevant to our understanding of the politics of decolonization, this approach may help resolve some of the methodological unease created by the ‘top-down’ nature of traditional diplomatic history. The diplomats and public figures I discuss in this section are, of course, thoroughgoing members of the political elite, yet this story demonstrates how firmly their stories are embedded into broader cultural movements.

During the 1820s, Anglo-American writers and artists working in Spain reframed the long-standing “black legend” into an empirical critique of the fitness of the Spanish

¹ Alexander Hill Everett, *Europe: Or, A General Survey of the Present Situation of the Principal Powers; with Conjectures on their Future Prospects* (Boston, 1822), 120.

political system. This was not simply a disinterested exercise in political analysis. National aspirations regarding the disposition of the rapidly fragmenting Spanish empire were alive throughout the Atlantic world and, like all political movements in the nineteenth century, they required and generated an ideological undergirding. The new iteration of the black legend articulated by the expatriate community in 1820s Madrid served this purpose well. In the next two chapters I will examine the political background of this reframing of Spain and Spanish history, and its relationship to the era's romantic cultural milieu. My discussion will center on Alexander Hill Everett, US envoy to Spain between 1825 and 1829, whose career and writings intersected the literary, artistic, and political communities. The first chapter will emphasize politics and diplomacy, using Everett's copious contemporary analysis as a guide map. The second chapter will deal with Everett's tenure in Spain, emphasizing the personal political and economic challenges he faced, all of which he addressed through the same post-revolutionary cultural lens that framed the great events of diplomacy.

The fate of the rapidly dissolving Spanish Empire was the political issue most directly relevant to the reframing of Spanish history and the black legend. Everett's extensive writings on this topic are a crucial primary source. They help identify the historiographic issues of most concern to the actual participants and they demonstrate the interconnectedness of the ideological and cultural elements of nineteenth-century political discourse. Throughout this study I have noted the centrality of empiricism to the romantic sensibility. In analyzing Everett's diplomatic and political writings the privileged position of empiricism in romanticism and other discursive traditions typical of the rise of the modern is again apparent. This is the case in Everett's two most

significant political books, studies of Europe and the Americas respectively, published in 1822 and 1826.² These works were meant to be both descriptive and policy-oriented; Everett presented empirical descriptions of the respective states and policy recommendations based on these descriptions. Using the conceptual framework Everett laid out in these books as a guide, I will first describe the general state of post-Napoleonic Western political and diplomatic relations and then turn to the specific issues at stake among the Spanish colonies, especially those of the Caribbean. Although Everett did not actively embrace the romantic valorization of the past, his more practical world view still was based on a quintessentially romantic hypothesis. He saw the world as a place where the struggles between nations were decided not through structural or economic competition but by the respective merits of innate national characters and destinies.

Chapter IV expands this argument by emphasizing the interrelatedness of Everett's political mission, his status in the marketplace, and the larger cultural milieu. The first layer of the story is a traditional examination of diplomatic affairs, full of crafty intelligence-gathering, subtle alliances, hard-headed *realpolitik*, and difficult decisions, all framed by the participants in flowing prose designed to present problematic issues in a flattering light. The second level of the story shows how these issues were embedded in a very particular cultural context. For Everett, as well as his artistic brethren, carving out a place in the market economy combined extensive and careful planning with an evocation of aristocratic insouciance toward the concerns of the counting house. This should not be construed as a hypocritical attempt to justify a morally questionable self-

² In addition to the previously cited *Europe*, during his tenure in Spain he produced the companion to this volume, *America: Or, A General Survey of the Political Situation of the Several Powers on the Western Continent with Conjectures on their Political Future* (1826; reprint, New York: A.M. Kelley, 1970).

interest, although any of these pioneers of the commercial marketplace could well have framed it that way. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, these negotiations are part of what Georg Simmel described as a nexus of a romanticized interest in the past and the spread of the market economy.³ The rich variety of issues that Everett dealt with as ambassador provides case after case for the practical application of these principles.

In my discussion of the Orientalists I addressed the transition from a system of individual aristocratic patronage to one where artistic production increasingly took place in a mass marketplace. This led to the possibility of the modern artistic paradigm in which the artist was expected to create an individual and personal vision of the world rather than one that amplified that of the patron. I will argue that this element of the emergence of modernism also occurs in the political sphere, and in discussing Everett's career, his place in the public financial marketplace will be a central focus. I will be able to closely follow Everett's own thoughts and words on this issue, because the question of securing the financial wherewithal to pursue a political career is never far from his thoughts (or his flowing pen). Thus my examination of particular incidents from Everett's tenure in Madrid, interesting in their own right, also helps demonstrate the intimate association between cultural romanticism and the emergence of the modern idea of the autonomous individual.

Everett, appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States to Spain on March 9, 1825 and serving through 1829, is a particularly apt subject for my argument that this era saw a convergence of hard-nosed policy issues and

³ Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, ed. David Frisby, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (London: Routledge, 1978), 474.

new traditions in cultural representation. He was an experienced professional diplomat, a wide-ranging political theorist, and a prolific author. As the official US representative in Spain, he was at the center of much diplomatic pulling and hauling. As a classically-educated cultural sophisticate, his efforts were crucial in convincing Irving, David Wilkie, and other artistic wanderers that a visit to Spain could be both broadening and professionally productive. Once they arrived, his patronage guaranteed their political standing; he facilitated their access to civil and monastic archives and, particularly in Irving's case, arranged for congenial working facilities. Everett's experience presents a case study for examination of the relationship between the shaping of actual events, romantic history-writing, and romantically constructed images of the past.⁴

A close look at Everett's correspondence and political writing during his tenure in Spain demonstrates that the official American position toward the Spanish Empire was linked through attitude and language to that expressed by Irving and the romantic historians. I have already noted that one basis for the political significance of romantic history is its weaving together the known historical matrix – what we might optimistically call the historical facts – and various elements and events from the national past. Notably, romantic history does not shy away from problematic issues from the national past – think of Scott's frank discussion of the character flaws of Richard the Lion-Hearted. Explanation of difficult facts is at the heart of diplomacy, too. Diplomats, like writers of romantic fiction, are seldom guilty of slavish adherence to some verifiable standard of historical truth, but for both groups the construction of meaningful

⁴ For Everett's appointment as consul to Spain, PHC vol. 4, 119; for Everett's relationship with Irving, "Washington Irving to Alexander H. Everett," Jan. 31, 1826, *Letters Volume II, 1823-1838*, CWWI vol. 24, 168. For Everett's relationship with Wilkie, "AHE to Salmon [Spanish Minister of State]", Dec. 28, 1827, AHEP.

interpretations of events is effectively enhanced by a firm grounding in the actual historical record. This highlights and helps explain romanticism's close ties to Enlightenment empiricism. It also illuminates the intimate relationship between the empirical grounding of romantic nationalism and its emotional resonance.

Author and Diplomat

John Quincy Adams appointed Alexander Hill Everett as consul to Spain in the first week of his new administration. As Everett read a note of congratulation and advice from the newly elected President, the father of American diplomacy and Everett's long-time patron, he must have reflected, with appropriate New England modesty, on his manifest suitability for this appointment. As a 19-year-old Harvard graduate, Everett had joined Adams's retinue in 1809 as private secretary on Adams' ministerial assignment to the Russian court. He served, first with Adams and later on his own, at courts and capitals throughout Europe. Over the next two decades, as Washington Irving was carving out a career as a literary man, Everett was establishing his own reputation as both a diplomat and public intellectual, official representative of the United States throughout Europe, and a prolific writer on both foreign relations and more general issues in social policy and politics. Upon assuming the presidency in 1825, one of Adams' first acts was to appoint Everett as consul to Spain.⁵ Just as Washington Irving's writings provide a culturally nuanced argument for US authority over the Spanish colonial territories, the

⁵ For Everett's biography, see the family history in Paul Revere Frothingham, *Edward Everett, Orator and Statesman* (1925; reprint, Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971); Edward Everett Hale, *Memories of a Hundred Years*, vol. I (New York: McMillan, 1902), 6-22; see also the biographical introduction in Elizabeth Evans, "Alexander Hill Everett, Man of Letters" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, 1970), 1-3. For Adams' letter appointing Everett consul to Spain, see Andrew McLaughlin, "Letters of John Quincy Adams to Alexander Hamilton Everett, 1811-1837," *American Historical Review* 11 (January 1906): 332-333.

work of Everett, Irving's host in Madrid, frames the same issues in more policy-oriented terms. A close look at his writings shows how his depiction of Spain and Spanish culture employed both empirical political analysis and the already familiar tropes of romanticism to explain the facts in terms amenable to US policy interests.

Everett published widely on matters both literary and political. He was one of the first US authors to address the new ideas emerging from thinkers now enshrined as the founders of classical economics, which he described as a system based on the fundamental principle that "every thing in nature occurs by the operation of general causes." His lengthy critique of Malthus's dire warnings about an impending population crisis exudes an American confidence and optimism, summarized when he wrote to his brother "the famous mathematical demonstration of Malthus is dispatched more easily than you think."⁶ Along with his brother, Edward Everett, a Harvard professor who was eventually to serve as that institution's president, in the United States Congress, and as ambassador to Britain, Everett helped manage the *North American Review*, a prestigious literary and political journal. During the 1820s, while serving in The Hague, he wrote the previously mentioned books dealing with the politics of the great states of Europe and the Americas.

These two works provide a unique and broad overview of US consensus political views of the world in this period, and were viewed at the time as the most significant US publications on international affairs. A young New England schoolmaster named Ralph Waldo Emerson went even beyond that in his praise of *Europe*, calling it "the most

⁶ For the quote on general causes, see Everett, *Europe*, 121. For Everett on Malthus, see *New Ideas on Population: With Remarks on the Theories of Malthus and Godwin* (Boston, 1823); for letter dismissing Malthus's arguments, see "AHE to John Everett," April 9, 1823, Alexander Hill Everett Collection, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Box 1, Folder 3.

considerable American book that has been published, the most removed from our business-like habits, the most like Burke. Its author is Alexander Everett, the professor's brother at the Hague...."⁷ Just as Irving's early works help frame his basic attitudes toward the issues that he would deal with when he began his work in Spain, Everett's two major studies help frame the whole diplomatic side of this study. They provide important context for Everett's basic approach to the United States' role toward the erstwhile Spanish colonies in the Caribbean. Equally important for this study, they expand our understanding of romantic culture, particularly in the use of explanatory models based on national character and national destiny.

Everett's study of foreign policy does not extend much beyond Western politics, the world he refers to as Christendom, but within Christendom, his interests were extensive. In particular, he closely followed the struggle for Greek independence from the Ottomans. His philhellenism was no doubt due in part to the influence of his brother. Emerson's reference to Alexander Everett as the "professor's brother" emphasizes Edward's early scholarly prominence. At the time of *Europe's* publication, brother Edward had completed a long stay in Europe, mainly in Germany, where he succeeded in becoming the first US citizen trained in the new Greek-oriented Classical scholarship. He assumed Harvard's first chair in Classical Studies in 1819. Edward's European sojourn culminated in a trip to Greece, and his visit must have influenced the enthusiasm Alexander expressed for the potential of the Greek rebellion against the Ottomans. This enthusiasm appears in *Europe* and continues as a theme in both brothers' public life.⁸

⁷ "Ralph Waldo Emerson to John Boynton Hill," March 12, 1822, in *The Letters of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Ralph L. Rusk, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 106.

⁸ For Edward Everett's significance in the philhellenic movement, see C. M. Woodhouse, *The Philhellenes*. (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), 23-24; Orie Long, *Literary Pioneers: Early*

While Everett's *Europe* was a general survey, his *America*, published after he arrived in Madrid, had a much clearer focus, helping articulate and implement a grand American diplomatic strategy directed toward commercial and territorial expansion. As a diplomat he was able to take practical steps toward the implementation of this goal. He was quite at home in the realm of traditional political diplomacy and equipped by training and inclination to exert influence in the established corridors of political power. But it was in the public sphere, the larger and more public commercial marketplace of ideas, where Everett's letters and published prose were in play alongside the works of Irving and the many writers and artists who followed these pioneers to Spain. Here Everett adopted the traditional representation of Spain as a nation full of color, tradition, and folkloric charm. He expanded this argument into the policy realm, noting that these very characteristics regrettably left the Spanish ill-equipped to play a role in contemporary geopolitics and thus an unsuitable steward of its Caribbean colonies. As a diplomat, Everett was skilled and experienced in the task of framing problematic issues in the light most favorable to US interests. It is in the construction of this public or semi-public discourse that we can most easily examine the relationship between Everett's project and that of Irving and the Spanish Orientalists, whose representations of Spain would circulate in the same political community.

Everett's two book-length treatments of politics and diplomacy present a strategic political vision framed in an examination of national character. One thing that the earlier

American Explorers of European Culture (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 63-77 for more on Edward Everett's academic career. Alexander shared his brother's romantic enthusiasm for the cause of the Greeks. For AHE's vivid articulation of the idea that Greek culture was the wellspring of Western freedom, see "An Address to the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Bowdoin College, on the Present State of Polite Learning in England and America, Delivered at Brunswick, Me., September 3, 1834," (Boston: Charles Bowen, 1834).

volume, *Europe*, makes clear is that Spain and its history were not much on Everett's mind before he actually arrived in Madrid. After a general introduction, Everett's *Europe* is divided into chapters examining each of the principal European powers; his one-chapter discussion of both Spain and Portugal is among the shortest in the book. Nevertheless, Everett was clearly familiar with the issues facing the Restoration-era Spanish monarchy. His description focused on the nation's struggle to modernize while negotiating the conflicting demands of both the liberal constitutionalists and the advocates for traditional rights and privileges, with the latter group reinforced by the King's own strong anticonstitutional inclinations. In his analysis of Spain's place in the political world, Everett does not address the question of the Spanish Empire in any detail. Rather, he considers the proposition that Spain should be lumped in with the "the sad spectacle of decay and misery that we see in Turkey, Persia and Morocco."⁹ Liberally applying the Enlightenment notion that "general causes" drive political events, Everett explains that "when a nation has once entered upon a retrograde course, the natural progress is undoubtedly from bad to worse; and the natural conclusion is a state of utter desolation and complete physical ruin, as we see exemplified in the Mahometan countries" (120). He was not quite ready to consign Spain to this category, however, noting that Spain had demonstrated some signs of emerging from its decline. He cited especially the Bourbon Reforms, the movement in the late eighteenth century to adapt some economic and political liberalization to the more restrictive environment of Spain, as evidence that Spain could reasonably be viewed as "part of Europe." Further evidence for the affinity of Spain with the advanced societies was the national resistance to Napoleon – David Wilkie also found this a key point in Spain's favor – which Everett

⁹ Everett, *Europe*, 13; subsequent parenthetical references refer to this volume.

believed must have been “inspired by the enterprise and success of the friends of liberty in England, France, and America” (137). The nation’s intermittent resistance to Ferdinand VII’s attempts to suppress constitutional government also weighed in support of Spain’s potential.

This ambivalent assessment of the Spanish political nation became the starting point for a brief but telling assessment of the prospects of the Spanish colonies. There the struggle for independence was underway and already showing signs of being long, protracted, and inconclusive.

The struggle for independence in the Spanish colonies had been precipitated by the convulsions in the mother country, and is not, like our revolution, a spontaneous effort, resulting from an internal consciousness of capacity for self-government. This is the most unfavorable circumstance attending it. It is this cause which draws out the contest into such a weary length, and which, after the formal emancipation shall be effected, may very probably entail upon these countries a long period of anarchy and discord. A spontaneous effort for freedom implies a maturity of intellectual and physical resources sufficient to secure the advantage with ease, and to improve it to the best advantage. A colony, thus emancipated, is like a ripe fruit, that drops from its parent tree at the moment of full maturity and springs up naturally into a new and vigorous plant. The freedom of South America is a premature birth....Considered as a rebellion against the Spanish government, it is just, if any enterprise ever deserved that qualification....But, considered as a measure intended to promote the happiness of the South Americans, the revolution...might probably have been delayed with advantage for two or three centuries. (135-136)

These condescending comments reflect a normative dismissal of the Spanish state’s capacity for modernization and progress. Everett’s empirical study of Spain emerges from a matrix rooted in traditional Western depictions of Catholic Spain.

When Everett returned to the question of Spanish American independence in his 1827 *America*, he was suddenly at the center of US policy-making, and his words were no longer the casual observations of a well-informed but distant observer. Instead, he

was obliged to articulate the administration position, which was influenced by the natural inclination of US policymakers toward republicanism, the desire to sabotage Britain's strategic effort to present itself as the patron of the emerging Spanish American republics, and the many opportunities raised by Spain's manifest inability to maintain order within her traditional imperial domains. Notwithstanding the personal misgivings that Everett continued to express privately about the prospects for the new American republics or the abilities of Bolivar, San Martin, and the Latin American republican leadership, *America* avoids his earlier skepticism toward the prospects for these new nations. Instead, he both argued for their independence and attempted to justify the heretofore rather unenthusiastic US advocacy of this position.¹⁰

Everett's overview of this issue is particularly worth close examination because, unlike even the earliest comprehensive examinations of US Caribbean policy, such as James Callahan's excellent 1899 study, he does not take for granted US ascendancy in the region – the possibility that Mexico or Colombia might expand into the Caribbean was alive and well.¹¹ Everett's overall view of diplomacy in the nineteenth century is that it is a struggle within what he calls a "family of Christian communities." He frames the entire issue as a three-sided struggle within "Christendom," which he defined as a system that "extends from Kamschatka on the one hand to Cape Horn on the other, comprehending the whole of Europe and America and a considerable portion of the two other continents and their neighboring islands."¹² The three principal parties to this struggle, in Everett's view, were the United States, Britain, and continental Europe.

¹⁰ "AHE to Charles E. Davis" Dec. 3, 1827, AHEP.

¹¹ James Morton Callahan, *Cuba and International Relations: A Historical Study in American Diplomacy*, Johns Hopkins Press, (1899; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1972).

¹² Everett, *America* 11. Subsequent parenthetical references to this volume.

Significantly, this was a post-Napoleonic, pre-1830 Europe, dominated by the Holy Alliance, and it seemed clear to Everett that the leading continental power would inevitably be Russia. He noted that “a glance at the map of the world is sufficient to show...how completely the west of Europe is crushed beneath the mass of this political Colossus” (16). Subsequent political developments did little to change Everett’s view on Russia’s importance on the continent. In a letter assessing the establishment of the French July Monarchy in 1830, Everett noted that this would inevitably “redound...to the prospect of the great Northern Colossus, who seems to be determined to extend his ‘huge legs’ over the whole continent of Europe.”¹³ Everett relished this contest, not least because it would serve as a test of political and economic systems, with the United States representing popular government and liberal economics, the Europeans representing despotism and controlled economies, and the British a mixture of the two.¹⁴

To Everett, this contest impacted the future of the Spanish colonies in several ways. First, he viewed the Spanish government as fundamentally hostage to the continental powers. Not only had the Russian government provided military hardware to the Spanish Navy, albeit of a somewhat dubious quality, but the attempts of Spanish constitutionalists to reform the monarchy had been militarily suppressed by the French, with strong Russian support, during the 1820s.¹⁵ The preeminence of Czar Alexander within the Holy Alliance was taken for granted by Adams and Everett, both of whom had fond memories of the old gentleman from their service in St. Petersburg. US diplomats

¹³ “AHE to Sam’l Leon,” April 7, 1831. Pattee Library Special Collections, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA.

¹⁴ Everett, *America*, 20.

¹⁵ Michael P. Costeloe, *Response to Revolution: Imperial Spain and the Spanish American Revolutions, 1810-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 110 on the military hardware supplied by the Russians, especially a fleet of half-sunken naval ships.

took Alexander's influence over Spain for granted; his good offices were seen as the key to pressuring King Ferdinand into a more reasonable position toward the inevitable independence of the Spanish colonies.¹⁶ Regrettably, in the face of Ferdinand's intransigence, even the Czar was not much help. Everett sent a long letter to Clay in 1826 detailing the Russians inability to reconcile Spain to colonial independence: "The Russian Minister communicated with me ...the substance of the new instructions...on the subject of the relationship between Spain and her Colonies." All parties were concerned that the Spanish government has not accepted "offers of amicable mediation by the United States and to the overtures made by the Emperor Alexander last year in consequence."¹⁷ The inability of the Spanish government to act independently of the Holy Alliance was based on a genuine dependence. The struggle between Ferdinand and Spanish constitutionalists was long-standing – in both the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat and again in 1820, Ferdinand had been forced to acknowledge a constitution, which, in both cases, he renounced after a few months. In 1827, his authority again weakened, he was forced again to call on an outside party, the French military, to suppress the constitutional party.¹⁸

¹⁶ AHE on Alexander's charm: *America*, 56; on Russian predominance in Holy Alliance: *America*, 226. For a long discussion of US hopes that Russia would influence Spain to moderate its position on the colonies, see new Secretary of State's Henry Clay's first letter of instruction to the new ambassador to Russia "Henry Clay to Henry Middleton (May 10, 1825), PHC vol. 4, 355; also "HC to James Brown" Sep 7, 1825, PHC vol. 4, 621.

¹⁷ "AHE to Henry Clay" Official Letter #55, Nov. 7, 1826. AHEP. James Lewis references the mysterious death of Alexander in 1825 as a blow to American efforts to influence Spain in *The American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood: The United States and the Collapse of the Spanish Empire, 1783-1829* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 202.

¹⁸ The standard Anglophone treatment of Spanish political history in this era is Raymond Carr's *Spain 1808-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982). He deals with the ebb and flow of Spanish constitutionalism in chapters II and III. Charles Esdaile's peppier *Spain in the Liberal Age: From Constitution to Civil War, 1808-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) argues that the adoptions and revocations of constitutional systems were less a titanic struggle between reformers and reactionaries than a struggle within Spanish elites. He argues that the fundamental project of economic modernization was never seriously retarded, since it was driven by the state's never-ending financial desperation.

Everett's breezy discussion of Czar Alexander's character in the context of Russian influence emphasizes the important point that Everett's study of the Americas was more than just an analysis of hemispheric politics with a pro-Adams subtext. The realities of the marketplace were never far from Everett's mind, and the contingent nature of political appointments must have been especially clear given John Quincy Adams' narrow election to the presidency. The success of Everett's book in the marketplace in part rested on a judicious blending of political analysis with juicier elements, and his charming reminiscence of seeing Czar Alexander mingling with the people on the streets of St. Petersburg was part of an effort to humanize the story. Washington Irving repaid some of Everett's hospitality by championing Everett's *America* to John Murray, his own British publisher. In his letter to Murray, Irving praised the quality of the work, noting especially "public characters sketched with great spirit and candour," of which Alexander was a notable example. Irving also noted Everett's potential future importance as a reason for doing business, reminding Murray of something that must have been all too commonly mentioned by those advocating for Everett: the eminence of his brother Edward, who Murray remembered from the professor's European travels.¹⁹ These details about the publication of Everett's *America* reminds us that even during his service as ambassador Everett was concerned with maintaining his position in the literary marketplace – in addition to keeping a close eye on the work's critical reception in the United States, he arranged for republication of the work in England, and in French and Spanish translation.²⁰

¹⁹ "WI to John Murray II" Jan 14, 1828, *Letters Volume II, 1823-1838*, CWWI vol.24, 262.

²⁰ "AHE to Edward Everett," Oct. 15, 1827, AHEP.

This failure of Spanish reform amplified Everett's pessimism on the larger question of the future of the Latin American republics. During his last two years in Madrid, in the face of a status quo which, disturbingly, seemed to include both the establishment of Latin American independence as a *fait accompli* and no weakening whatsoever of the Spanish resolve to pursue reconquest, Everett no longer bothered to temper his public criticisms of the Spanish government. In *America*, he publicly referred to "the notorious decrepitude and imbecility of Spain" in a comparison between Spain's attitude and Great Britain's toward newly independent colonies.²¹ In private his comments were predictably harsher:

Without ever having been much of an enthusiast in regard to these new states...I nevertheless thought...that after sixteen or seventeen years of civil war and confusion they had succeeded in surmounting the first difficulties in the way of independence and were beginning to assume very slowly and gradually a consolidated shape....Had events in America continued favorable to independence, this might perhaps after a while have been got over, but unluckily just at this critical moment nearly all the new governments thought proper as if by common consent to fall into utter confusion. Bolivar displayed his ambitious views and unsettled completely the Republic of Colombia, before the most flourishing, to appearances, of these states; and in a great measure Peru. Buenos Ayres got into a war with European Pedro and has ever since been passing through a course of successive revolutions. A civil war broke out in Guatemala; Chile seemed to be within an ace of the same catastrophe, and even Mexico, which is just at present a more solid & prosperous than the rest, has declared a national bankruptcy. Under all these appearances the previous danger of an invasion of Cuba from the continent of course vanished, and with it the strongest and almost only argument in favor of an immediate recognition by Spain. We have accordingly been obliged for some time to discontinue the negotiations, and there is little prospect of their being soon resumed. In fact if the mother country were not if possible worse governed than the colonies, the chances would be at present greatly in favor of the former. The apparently incurable and to a foreigner wholly inconceivable system of maladministration that prevails here is the only security of Spanish America's independence. This, however, will probably be an effective one; although should matters be as well managed for some time to come at Cuba and as badly in Colombia as

²¹ Everett, *America*, 172.

they have for some time past, I am not quite sure that H.C.M. may not recover a part of his ancient Colonial Empire.”²²

Here is a frank, if private, acknowledgment of the failure of the administration’s efforts to facilitate an orderly transition to an independent Latin America. But, particularly in raising the possibility of the reestablishment of Spanish hegemony in South America, it also helps construct the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of the idea that the United States could and should take a more active role in framing the post-Spanish political structure of the Caribbean. The reference to his disappointment in Simon Bolívar, with its implicit unfavorable comparison to George Washington, foreshadows another theme that will reappear in the Everett family. Both Alexander and his brother became well-known public speakers, and the comparison with Bolívar became a stock element in brother Edward’s oft-delivered tribute to George Washington. By the time he wrote this letter, late 1827, Everett had already exhibited what would become an abiding interest in schemes to replace the colonial government in Cuba with one more directly influenced by the United States, a matter discussed in more detail below.

Plan for the Caribbean

President Adams’ letter of congratulation to Everett on his appointment as ambassador emphasized the pitfalls implicit in dealing with aristocratic European diplomats – Everett was known to be somewhat prickly toward bluebloods. The letter concluded with a strong reminder to Everett that the “Affairs of Spain and South-America” were at the heart of his mission.²³ The affairs of Spain and South America had been of concern to US diplomats for as long as there had been US diplomats, and they

²² “AHE to Charles E. Davis” Dec. 3, 1827, AHEP.

²³ McLaughlin, “Letters of John Quincy Adams,” 332-333.

have a central, and early, place in the thorough historiography of American diplomacy. One of the most eminent of American diplomatic historians, Samuel Flagg Bemis, observed that American diplomacy is “concerned definitively with the frontier and overseas commerce.” In the early nineteenth century the most problematic and promising American commercial frontier was the one to the south. Although there were several issues in play between the United States, Spain, and the present and former Spanish colonies of the Americas in the period after the War of 1812, certain critical themes run through all of them. By far the most significant of these was the general matter of American territorial aspirations. Whether framed as the establishment of defensible borders, the expansion of the republican ideal, or the natural right of the United States to control the continent, this issue was a constant subtext. A second matter, directly related to the outcome of the war, was an emerging Anglo-American consensus that the United States and Britain should cooperatively ensure the stability of the Caribbean, and that the best way to achieve this was by maintaining Spanish authority over Cuba and Puerto Rico. This second matter intersected with the longstanding dispute between Britain and all states with small navies, including the United States over the “Freedom of the Seas,” the rubric for the rules governing maritime commerce and warfare. Two particular Freedom of the Seas issues persisted throughout this era. The first was the question of privateering and blockading strategies employed in the struggle between Spain and revolutionary republics in South America and Mexico, an issue that was on the front burner throughout the 1820s. The second issue, that of the slave trade, had seemed headed toward resolution following the adoption of the Non-Importation Act in 1807, but reemerged in the deepening anxiety over the place of slavery in the United States.²⁴

²⁴ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: a Study in Commerce and Diplomacy* (New Haven: Yale University

Everett's *America* provides a good starting place for describing the diplomatic issues in the post-War of 1812 Caribbean, both the general state of the relationship and its two most significant practical developments, the Adams-Onís treaty of 1819 ceding Florida to the United States and the issuance of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. In analyzing Everett's text, it is important to keep in mind his close relationship with Adams and the administration, since Adams' observation about the importance of the "affairs of Spain and South-America" was based on his own long-time stewardship of Spanish-US diplomacy. Everett's work was in part a loyal protégé's defense of the Adams record for the general public. To accommodate this audience, he introduced the numerous nations and would-be nations shaping the future of the Americas and the diplomatic history of the hemisphere in a somewhat simplistic fashion. This aspect of the work was noted with some asperity by contemporary critic Robert Walsh, a literary rival of the Everett brothers, whose review ignored the fact that Everett, as always, was writing for a broad audience of both experts and the public sphere as a whole. An important contextual note about Everett's study is that he wrote it while serving as ambassador, so as he explained how the resolution of each issue had been shaped by Adams' astute balancing of the

Press, 1962), 1. Other important early contributions to a detailed understanding of American-Spanish diplomatic relations begin with Callahan, *Cuba and International Relations*, and include Samuel Bemis's *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Policy* (New York: Knopf, 1949). More recent works include, Timothy Anna, *Spain and the Loss of America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Michael P Costeloe, *Response to Revolution: Imperial Spain and the Spanish American Revolutions, 1810-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Lester Langley, *Struggle for the American Mediterranean: United States-European Rivalry in the Gulf-Caribbean, 1779-1904* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976); Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*. For the part of this story specific to Cuba, see the work of Louis Perez, especially *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990).

needs and goals of all parties, his comments were meant in part to frame current policy positions and initiatives.²⁵

The most urgent diplomatic issues between Spain and the United States were those precipitated by US territorial aspirations. Summarizing these issues is difficult, because these aspirations were decidedly a moving target. By the time Everett prepared his study, the scope of American territorial goals was expanding rapidly, but at the conclusion of the War of 1812 the most urgent territorial issue had been the status of Florida, which remained a Spanish colony subsequent to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The existence of Spanish Florida appeared to American expansionists as an affront on many levels. It harbored such potentially dangerous forces as the Creek Indians previously chased out of Georgia and Alabama, it served as a safe haven for agents attempting to opportunistically expand British influence in the Caribbean, and it was a potential, if seldom actual, destination for runaway slaves. These problems all were exacerbated by the deterioration of Spanish authority in Florida after the War of 1812, and probably made the ultimate transfer of the Florida territory to the United States inevitable. Andrew Jackson's 1818 incursion into Florida and the subsequent vigorous defense of Jackson's actions by both President James Monroe and Secretary of State Adams made it clear that the American government was going to view Spanish sovereignty in Florida skeptically. When the British declined to take official offense at Jackson's arrest, court-martial, and execution of two British citizens for fomenting anti-

²⁵ "AHE to Edward Everett," Oct. 15, 1827, AHEP; Robert Walsh, review of *America: or a General Survey of the Political Situation of the several Powers of the Western Continent, with Conjectures on their Future Prospects* by Alexander Hill Everett, *American Quarterly Review* 2 (June 1827): 494.

American guerilla warfare by Spanish and Indian Floridians, the maintenance of Spanish sovereignty over Florida was no longer a possibility.²⁶

The justification for Jackson's invasion of Florida seemed less than compelling to some Americans, especially to Jackson's potential political rivals such as Henry Clay and John Calhoun – note that Adams, ultimately Jackson's election opponent, was his great advocate in the cabinet. Still, there was a broad national consensus around the strategic significance of Florida's potential to disrupt access to New Orleans. Everett was one of many writers to describe the significance of this issue, noting that the territories of Florida and Cuba "would in powerful hands command the outlets of our western waters."²⁷ The US acquisition of Florida was achieved through one of the masterpieces of Adams' diplomatic career, the Adams-Onís Transcontinental Treaty of 1819. In this agreement, Spain ceded sovereignty over Florida to the United States in return for the acknowledgment of a largely theoretical western boundary for the Louisiana Purchase, one that conceded Spanish control over such dusty outposts as Santa Fe but little else. This modest quid pro quo in return for the cession of Florida reflects Spain's growing inability to project its military power into the western hemisphere, but the Spanish reluctance to acknowledge this reality had not flagged by the time Everett arrived in Spain in 1825.²⁸

The other best known diplomatic event of the period, the issuance of the Monroe Doctrine, has long been understood as an early assertion of the United States into the role

²⁶ Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, 313-316 for a detailed and straightforward chronology of the Jackson expedition's diplomatic ramifications. See James Lewis's *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, Chapter 5, for the same with a more contemporary emphasis of the place of racial ideologies in Jackson's attitudes and activities.

²⁷ *America*, 209.

²⁸ For a detailed chronology of Adams' role, based on his voluminous diary, see chapters XV and XVI of Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*. For an analysis of the differing agendas of Americans advocating the assimilation of Florida, see Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*.

of leading state of the Americas. It is also important to note that it was part of the contentious US effort to establish legal principles and precedents protecting American shipping from the superior British navy. Monroe's clear call for European non-interference in the American hemisphere, principally written by Adams, began with the statement that European wars were not the concern of the American states. This seemingly straightforward observation actually was meant to assert the right of freedom from confiscation for neutral American merchant shipping during wartime, a key element of the Freedom of the Seas concept. It also hints at another longstanding issue, American efforts to secure access to markets in the British colonies of the Caribbean, an issue ultimately resolved during the Jackson presidency. These seemingly abstruse issues of international law seem in retrospect to be less important than the gradual assertion of US imperial aspirations, but were in fact tremendously significant at the time. They were at the center of Everett's work in Spain and they make clear that the United States was still among the minor naval powers, finding its way in a watery world dominated by Britain. Still, the Monroe Doctrine's principle of non-colonization of American territories and the "hands-off" dictum regarding the independent American states is specifically directed at "any European power," a qualification that clearly did not rule out the possibility of American expansion.²⁹

Everett's analysis of the Monroe Doctrine has the advantage of topicality, as it was published less than four years after Monroe's speech. Everett argued that the most significant aspect of the Monroe Doctrine was its establishment of the United States as the patron and godfather of all American independence movements. His discussion emphasizes this at the same time it reiterates the claim that European states have no

²⁹ Bemis, *John Quincy Adams*, chapter 18.

business in the Americas. Everett notes that with regard to the emerging South American republics, “interference of any other government in favor of Spain is unfriendly to us. The continental powers of Europe, on the other hand, have exhibited and continued to exhibit, as far as they can do it, consistently with the observation of formal neutrality, a strong sympathy with the other party [Spain].” Note that Everett’s strong expression of US sympathy for Latin American independence is an example of contemporary policy initiatives shaping the text of his *America*. In his *Europe* volume, written only a few years earlier but before he was involved in hemispheric policy, he viewed the movements for Spanish colonial independence as premature and misguided, a view he continued to reiterate in private correspondence.

By the time *America* was published, the establishment of the United States as a firm friend of Spanish colonial independence was administration policy, hence the assertion that French and British attempts to broker independence agreements for the Latin American republics were simply cynical attempts to gain commercial advantage. Everett argued that the European powers’ criticism of the Monroe Doctrine on grounds that it appeared to be an assertion of US authority throughout the hemisphere was not based on a genuine sympathy toward the independence of the former colonies. He claimed this position reflected a willful rejection of the idea that the United States and Britain might be joint guarantors of the region’s independence. Although Everett insisted that the United States was the great supporter of colonial independence, this policy had its limits. In reply to a complaint from the Mexican president that President Monroe had not been as active in defense of Mexican independence as the Doctrine suggested, he was

at pains to make it clear that the Monroe Doctrine did not require or even imply any obligation toward the defense of a particular Latin state.³⁰

The Mexican president had, in fact, put his finger on this problematic element in this interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. It suggested that US policy toward Latin American independence viewed the actual success of the Mexican and South American revolutions as just one of several issues raised by the independence movements, and not necessarily the most important. Everett's final comment on the Monroe Doctrine made it clear that the document and his own diplomatic efforts in Spain were both meant to establish positions that had more to do with domestic politics than any selfless and principled commitment to Latin American independence:

“The influence of the United States has been actively employed at the court of Madrid, in endeavoring to bring about a general pacification in America; and with the leading powers of Europe.... With a view of contributing to the accomplishment of the same great object, and **of better securing our own domestic interests** [my emphasis], the government has also counselled the Spanish American states not to disturb for the present the existing position of the islands of Cuba and Porto Rico. For instituting and prosecuting these negotiations, the administration has been, I believe, represented, in the course of some debate in congress, as playing the part of a *busy body* in the cabinets of Europe.(293)

Most significantly, this quote points out that despite the mistaken notion of the Mexican president, nothing in the Monroe Doctrine, or any other element of American diplomacy in the Caribbean, was meant to imply a particular limit to American territorial aspirations. This point is relevant to the current historiographic interest in the abortive 1825 Hemispheric Conference in Panama. Lewis and others argue that US willingness to participate in this event suggests that a less expansionist posture for the United States was

³⁰ For Monroe quote, Everett, *America*, 228; for Everett's earlier views, *Europe*, 135; for critique of British position, Everett, *America*, 247-52; for comments on America as guarantor of Mexican independence, Everett, *America*, 290-91.

a plausible policy option in this era, but the qualifications in Everett's description of US policy suggests otherwise. This noncommittal attitude toward the conference is further reflected in Clay's correspondence with US ambassador to Mexico Joel Poinsett, in which he frames the national willingness to participate within a bristling ring of qualifications and limitations on the subjects to be discussed.³¹

In addition to the traditional goals of advancing the national interests in territorial expansion and the freedom of the seas, by the 1820s the question of slavery increasingly affected the US diplomatic mission. Diplomatic intervention in the problems caused by the continuing slave trade was just beginning in the 1820s, and still revolved around issues implicated in the Freedom of the Seas controversy, especially the right of British ships to inspect non-national vessels for slave cargoes. Adding urgency to these discussions, one of the loose ends outstanding from the Treaty of Ghent, the settlement document signed at the conclusion of the War of 1812, was the matter of compensation for slave cargoes seized by the British during this conflict.³² The divisive emergence of abolitionist sentiment was already discernible, and the controversy over the expansion of slavery, temporarily dampened by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, was central to US reaction to Adams-Onís treatment of Texas. The possibility of a definitive boundary for Texas, even though the matter was left fuzzy in Adams-Onís, was troubling to slavery expansionists who recognized it as a potential western limit to slave territory. Thus the

³¹ Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 196-199; "Henry Clay to Joel R. Poinsett" September 24, 1825, PHC vol. 4, 683-685; This and other matters relating to US-Mexican policy issues in the 1820s are covered astutely and in great detail in the first two chapters of William R. Manning, *Early Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Mexico* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1916).

³² For details of these negotiations, see Secretary of State Clay's first letter of instruction to Rufus King, newly appointed ambassador to the Court of St. James, "To Rufus King" May 10, 1825, PHC vol. 4 341-355.

diplomatic valence of the slavery issue was woven into the always-central matter of US territorial aspirations.³³

Everett's 1827 review of the struggle of the Latin American colonies for independence makes it clear how far this situation had changed in the first two years of his tenure in Madrid. While the Spanish military had continued to contest the issue throughout the 1820s, Simón Bolívar's 1825 defeat of the last Spanish colonial armies made the subsequent persistence of the Spanish military seem increasingly arbitrary and futile. Everett's analysis of the relationship between the United States and the new states reflects this clearly. Rather than address the merits of the colonial cause, now a moot point, he articulates a rather defensive justification for the United States' long reluctance to recognize the independence of the new republics. He noted that "between the kingdom of Spain and the Spanish American nations there has long been and is likely to be for a length of time to come, a state of open and declared war" (227). In fact, this was no exaggeration, as Spain's disastrous reinvasion of Mexico in 1829 was still in the future. Having established that the conflict was by no means over, he demonstrated his diplomatic skills by framing the long reluctance of the United States to recognize the new republics not as a judicious attempt to discern the winner before choosing a side but as a matter of delicacy. While as the world's beacon of liberty, the Americans had sympathized with their comrades to the south, "we neither embarrassed our young neighbors with officious and premature aid, before we knew in what way we could best serve them, nor did we wait to be the last in bidding them welcome into the family of Christian communities" (274).

³³ Bemis, *John Quincy Adams* for a through discussion of the place of early disputes over slavery in US foreign policy.

In fact, the long-standing reluctance on the part of the North Americans to recognize the Latin American republics was intimately tied to the larger cultural and diplomatic context. Throughout the colonial struggle for independence, blocking international recognition of the sprouting states until they could be brought to heel militarily was a central goal of Spanish diplomacy. The Transcontinental Treaty stood unratified for two years after the handshake between Adams and Onís, from February 1819 until 1821, awaiting the approval of King Ferdinand. His recalcitrance was based on the reasonable belief that the desire for his approval kept pro-recognition elements among American diplomats and the public from agitating even more vigorously in favor of Latin American independence.³⁴ The recognition issue also created another point of contention in the competition between the United States and Britain for influence in the Caribbean. Everett discussed the British side of this equation in depth, framing it in the competition for influence between Europe, Britain, and America. He argued that British interest in the Americas specifically, and the British colonial project in general were the result of Britain's estrangement from the reactionary regimes of Europe. In order to reestablish the economy, and relieve some of the massive debt incurred fighting Napoleon, the British, under George Canning, their aggressive new foreign minister, were cynically employing such techniques as the recognition of the Spanish colonial republics to insert themselves into the American political arena.³⁵

³⁴ Lewis, *American Union and the Problem of Neighborhood*, 136.

³⁵ Everett, *America*, 43-46.

Conclusion

From his description of the political degeneracy of Spain, to his description of the impending Russian domination of Europe, to his view of the intrinsic merit of the US institutions and leaders, Everett's political writing is saturated with a romantic view of national character and destiny. This is not to suggest that Everett's empirical romanticism was a simple or mechanical phenomenon. Like Irving, Everett was in the habit of basing his theories and syntheses on empirical observations. It is not difficult to note how the observations that undergird his hypotheses – the brute savagery of Russian soldiers, the susceptibility of the Spanish to clerical appeals, the natural nobility of US statesmen – and the political conclusions Everett draws were shaped by romantic cultural tropes. But to suggest that as cultural constructions they must be dismissed as arbitrary ignores the power and place of empirical political discourse in the age of an emerging mass culture.

The career of Alexander Hill Everett's brother, Edward Everett helps clarify this category, which now seems so clearly distinct from either history or literature. Edward has already appeared in this story – Emerson identified Alexander as his brother, Irving noted his importance in his letter to the publisher Murray, and his career was indeed distinguished. As mentioned earlier, he studied the classics in Germany and Greece and has been described as the founder of classical studies in the United States. After returning to Harvard to occupy a newly endowed chair in Greek studies, where he made such an impression on Emerson, he won a series of elected and appointed offices, including seats in the US House and Senate, the presidency of Harvard, and the ambassadorship to Britain. He served as Secretary of State under Millard Fillmore and

reluctantly accepted the vice-presidential nomination on the ill-fated Constitutional Union party ticket for the 1860 presidential election.³⁶ Yet he is best known as a public speaker; it was Everett whose two-hour oration was the centerpiece of the dedication of the Civil War battlefield where Abraham Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address. In *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, Garry Wills analyzes the classical roots of US oratorical traditions, and Everett's importance in establishing them. He concludes that "Everett, in effect, ran for and held office in order to attract an audience for his speeches."³⁷

While this is a good line, it reflects a modern economic determinism that oversimplifies the attraction for Everett, who began his career as a minister, of a bully pulpit. From the point of view of this story, it would be more accurate to say that he succeeded in building up the multiple layers of income that an aspiring professional needed to make a career in the public sphere. Edward Everett's financial success, ensured in his later years by his popularity as a touring speaker, provides an effective transition to the chapter that deals more specifically with his brother Alexander's career. Edward's biographer and great-nephew Paul Revere Frothingham makes clear that Edward's financial success was central to his identity – he describes his life as "one of ease, prosperity, and honor." In fact, he notes that "among all the brothers and sisters he was the only one who was not constantly in want....Even Alexander was a financial failure, borrowed money freely, and attended to many things more faithfully than to matters of business."³⁸ Edward's financial success appears in Frothingham's account to be a result of Edward's diligence and that was certainly part of the story, but Edward also

³⁶ Orie Long, *Literary Pioneers: Early American Explorers of European Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 63-77 for Edward Everett's academic career.

³⁷ Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 44.

³⁸ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 313.

had the advantage of a financially favorable marriage to the daughter of Mr. Brooks, a successful merchant who settled a substantial allowance on the newlyweds. Brooks' financial wherewithal remained a consideration in Alexander's planning as well as Edward's. A letter from Alexander to Edward when the brothers were in the process of purchasing the *North American Review* refers to his application to Brooks for a loan of the purchase money. In his letter Edward notes ruefully that "as you have probably learned before this time directly from himself, unsuccessful."³⁹ The purchase was eventually effected on an unsecured basis, and for what Alexander acknowledged was too much money, \$15,000.⁴⁰ This must have added to the tension between the two brothers, as Alexander's attempts to reinsert himself into the Massachusetts political scene led him into an oppositional relationship with the Massachusetts political establishment, of which his brother was a stalwart.

In his *Age of Jackson*, Arthur Schlesinger includes a brief and not particularly sympathetic assessment of Alexander's problematic relationship with the Boston political establishment that includes a quote from Edward's wife, whose grouchy comments can be assumed to reflect her father's unhappiness at being dragged into this business through the back door.⁴¹ By the middle of the 1830s, Alexander's reputation had sunk even lower. His mentor, John Quincy Adams, was concerned that he seemed to be grasping for public office and in the press he appeared as a caricature of an opportunistic politician. Along with trying to reestablish himself in political life, Everett pursued a

³⁹ "AHE to Edward Everett," Feb 22, 1830, AHEP.

⁴⁰ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 313. Brooks' rejection of Alexander's request for a loan turned out not to be enough to keep him out of the woods. Due to Edward's involvement as a promissory, he ultimately had to make the note good.

⁴¹ Frothingham, *Edward Everett*, 154; Arthur Schlesinger, *Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little Brown, 1945), 145 for a brief and not particularly sympathetic assessment of AHE's problematic relationship with the Boston political establishment.

number of other ventures. He published *The North American Review*, was always available as a public speaker, applied unsuccessfully for the presidency of Harvard College and served briefly as president of Jefferson College in Louisiana, but never found an outlet for his considerable talents. He reentered the diplomatic service in the 1840s, when President Tyler appointed him to represent US interests in China in the turmoil following the Chinese defeat in the Opium Wars and the opening of China to western commercial interests. The trip was a difficult one for Everett, and he died in China in 1842.

Yet in the 1820s, Everett's political and cultural work vividly demonstrated the emergence of modern diplomacy. He was himself the founder of a national style of foreign policy analysis and he had the opportunity to put his theories into action. As I will discuss in the next chapter and in Chapter 7, he embraced the opportunity to advance his political work by sponsoring important writers and artists, facilitating their access to US diplomatic resources. Like other participants in the emerging professional class, he was deadly serious about the obligation to carve out a place in the marketplace. In fact, his failures in the financial arena are the likely root of his marginalized public status after he returned from Madrid. In the next chapter I will turn from the larger political issues Everett dealt with to a closer look at his place in the cultural milieu. This analysis will focus on both the manifestations of romantic culture in Everett's professional life, and in his ultimately unsuccessful attempt to establish the financial required for a career in public life.

Chapter 4

Everett in Spain: Diplomacy and Romantic Culture

The expulsion of the Moors from Spain, and of the Protestants from France...have commonly been considered as among the most impolitic measures that ever were adopted.

-- Alexander Hill Everett¹

During his tenure in Spain, Everett was involved in the typical diplomatic matters we would expect to find at the center of an ambassador's agenda. But in his daily work we find that a romantic sensibility framed his attitudes toward Spain and approaches to policy. These attitudes embody the contradictions inherent in the romantic view of the onrushing modern market – a warm sympathy toward Caribbean proponents of independence coupled with an unwillingness to countenance the disorder and violence of actual rebellion and a scorn for the apparently hypocritical Spanish Catholic establishment along with a deep and abiding faith in the spiritual purpose of his mission. When President Adams sent Everett his orders about focusing on “the affairs of Spain and South-America,” he clearly expected much from his longtime protégé. Everett's first official communications clearly show that he meant to live up to the newly elected president's high expectations. He directed to Secretary of State Henry Clay frequent letters containing detailed and thoughtful analyses of the goings-on at the Spanish court and among the close-knit diplomatic community. Both the subject matter and tone of Everett's correspondence bespeak his own long diplomatic career. His letters resemble those he sent during his tenure as chargé d'affaires in The Hague to Adams, then Secretary of State, but their increased length and detail reflect his new ambassadorial

¹ Alexander Hill Everett, *America* (1826; Reprint, New York: A. M. Kelley, 1970), 223.

rank.² His remarks demonstrate a keen eye for anything that might jeopardize American interests, and though he did not ignore affairs peripheral to this matter, such as British interventions in continental politics, he demonstrated his faithfulness to Adams' guidance in a particular focus on suggestions that the British might be attempting to expand their influence in Latin American affairs.

More generally, he commented on the atmosphere of the court, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the public nature of the most personal activities of the Bourbons. He attended the *accouchement* of the Infanta Doña Lecita Carlotta and his circumspect but humorously suggestive description of the court's childbirth practices in a letter to his sister is a classic of this genre:

The good people of the House of Bourbon have always had a fancy of bringing a crowd of strangers into their wives' apartments upon these occasions when most other persons like to keep them a little retired. The object is to give the world appearance of a legitimate.³

This description is typical of Everett's predictably condescending attitude toward a society where, it seemed to him, political matters were hostage to womanly indecision. Everett's gentle mockery of foreign customs relating to courtship and marriage reflects his own not inconsiderable private wit, but also mirrors devices used by his literary contemporaries. The tone is reminiscent of Washington Irving's remarks about "bundling" in old New England: "their courtships commencing where ours usually finish."⁴

² The copybooks containing Everett's sequentially numbered official letters to the Secretary of State, interspersed with his other official correspondence are reproduced in AHEP Reel 1, vol. 6 and Reel 2, vols. 7-8. For his official letters from The Hague, see AHEP Reel 1, vol. 1-5.

³ "AHE to My Dear Sister," June 1, 1827, AHEP.

⁴ Washington Irving, *History of New York*, CWWI vol. VII, 119.

Each of these early letters is a small – or not so small – masterpiece, drawing on Everett’s extensive political experience, wide general knowledge, and substantial literary skills, but, as Everett quickly and clearly perceived, they were of no great interest to Henry Clay. Instead, when Clay finally replied (through a letter from his assistant), his interest had been captured by what seemed to Everett a matter of the utmost triviality, the case of a Philadelphia ship-owner who claimed his small and peaceful merchant vessel, harmlessly plying the waters of the Caribbean, was, while in American territorial waters, set upon by the Spanish navy and improperly confiscated.⁵ To the Spanish, this matter – and many like it – was a case of an imprudent opportunist receiving his just desserts. This captain had unwisely attempted to take advantage of the rebellious Colombian government’s assertion of the rights of civilized nations to employ blockades and letters of marque and had been duly halted as a pirate. If the matter of recovering this man’s ship was of little interest to Everett, a suspicion clearly held and expressed by Clay, it was of no interest whatsoever to the Spanish Foreign Office. During Everett’s tenure in Madrid, his attention was consistently drawn by Clay to matters relating to the grievances of these quasi-pirates, and he was never able to resolve any of the matters to Clay’s satisfaction. Although Everett had some hopes of continuing in Madrid following Adams’ defeat in the 1828 presidential election, shortly after the inauguration he received a letter from the new Secretary of State, Martin van Buren, announcing his replacement by one of van Buren’s political associates, Cornelius van Ness. When Everett left Madrid, having, in the words of his friend Washington Irving, “fallen beneath the edge of the old

⁵ “Daniel Brent [assistant to Henry Clay] to Alexander H. Everett,” April 28, 1825, PHC vol. 4, 307, including correspondence forwarded from individuals asserting claims against Spanish government; a recopied version of Brent’s original letter is included in AHEP, along with an extensive group of enclosures documenting over fifty claims against Spain and Spanish colonial governments.

Generals Sword, which certainly spares not” the matter of the confiscated ships was still unresolved.⁶

Everett’s tenure in Madrid was characterized by his attempts to navigate between the issues of grand diplomacy to which he was drawn by his own background and training under Adams, and the less exalted practical concerns of the ship owners who engaged Clay’s attention. Everett attempted to resolve this conflict by working simultaneously along three paths. First, he continued to participate in “big issue” diplomacy – the contention between the great powers to maximize their strategic position and authority. This effort included both the direct exertion of influence toward policy ends and the articulation of political and cultural arguments meant to buttress the ideological positions supporting the respective government’s “big issue” ideologies. Second, he did his best to attend to the problems of US citizens who needed help in doing business in the Spanish Empire. In practice, these efforts primarily consisted of helping the group of ship owners who had so effectively captured Clay’s attention, many of whom had run afoul of the Spanish government’s attempts to suppress piracy and anti-imperial military operations in the Caribbean. Third, throughout his service, Everett did not – could not – lose sight of the contingent nature of his employment. Everett’s participation in the public sphere was not that of the citizen-landowner who donates his disinterested public service as a mark of republican virtue. Just as Washington Irving

⁶ “Martin van Buren to Alexander H. Everett,” June 8, 1829, AHEP; “Washington Irving to Alexander H. Everett,” July 22, 1829. *Letters Volume II, 1823-1838*, CWWI vol. 24, 449. A reevaluation of the Jacksonian spoils system both as to magnitude and ethics, was initiated by Arthur Schlesinger in *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little Brown, 1945), 45-47 and amplified in subsequent scholarship, generally in the direction of finding it less unique and less morally objectionable. Nevertheless, the close relationship between Everett’s successor, Van Ness, and Van Buren, Jackson’s Secretary of State, and subsequently vice-president and successor, and Everett’s close identification with Adams, presumably made Everett’s dismissal inevitable. For some informed speculation on Everett’s desire to remain in Madrid, see Claude Bowers, *The Spanish Adventures of Washington Irving* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940), 127.

needed to navigate the promising but shoal-filled artistic marketplace that succeeded the age of the individual patron and his liveried retainers, Everett's continued participation in the public sphere was contingent on earning a living. Everett was, of necessity, well aware of the tenuous nature of public employment, even before the election of Andrew Jackson and the emergence of a clearly articulated "spoils system."⁷

A Yankee Diplomat and the Pirates of the Caribbean

Everett's enduring and central interest during his tenure in Spain, and in his subsequent public career, was the articulation and implementation of a grand American diplomatic strategy of commercial and territorial expansion. He pursued this end in both the public sphere and in the traditional and established corridors of political power. As skilled as he was in the ways of the public sphere, Everett was also equipped by training and inclination to be highly effective as a traditional diplomat. In the larger public sphere and the marketplace of ideas, Everett's letters and published prose were in play alongside the works of Irving, Wilkie, and the many writers and artists who followed these pioneers to Spain. Here Everett contributed to the emerging tradition of representing Spain as a nation full of color, tradition and folkloric charm, but ill-equipped to play a role in contemporary geopolitics. Everett's participation in this sphere demonstrated his skill and experience in the task of framing problematic issues in the light most favorable to US interests, and this was just as true in his traditional diplomatic work. The descriptions

⁷ Everett's assessment of Adams' chances for reelection got progressively more pessimistic in late 1827 and early 1828. See "AHE to Charles Davis," Dec. 3, 1827, AHEP; "AHE to G. Barrell," Dec. 22, 1827, AHEP for Everett's view of Adams' prospects. The earlier letter reflects Everett's confidence in Adams' chances, but he was more pessimistic in a letter written to his brother after seeing the results of the off-year elections in New York. In this letter, Everett discusses his impending need for a job, "AHE to Edward Everett," Jan 15, 1828, AHEP. The importance of the midterm elections in anticipating the failure of Adams' 1828 campaign and the general dissolution of Adams' political authority are discussed in Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy* (New York: Norton, 2005), 293-300.

and analyses of the great issues of the day included in his official letters to Henry Clay were based on a dazzling array of private sources. He had access to the inside story on discussions within the Spanish court and on several occasions provided Clay with detailed summaries of confidential British proposals and strategies. He also managed to establish himself as a key counselor for representatives of the new American republics, appearing, at least in his own descriptions of the relationships, as a wise, sympathetic, and potentially very helpful ally in their quest to formalize their independence from Spain. Despite this success in what would seem to be the heart of the diplomatic effort, the matter of the pirates of the Caribbean was a constant and increasingly irritating sore spot in his relationship with Washington.

As disappointing and frustrating as Everett's failure to successfully execute Adams' policy of facilitating Latin American independence must have been, his inability to achieve Clay's project of securing the release of American ships and seamen arrested by Spanish naval authorities undoubtedly caused him even more practical aggravation. Everett's lack of success in resolving the nagging issue of the American merchant-privateers provides a starting place for the project of expanding our understanding of Everett's tenure beyond traditional diplomatic history and into the cultural realm.

In part, piracy and disorder in the Caribbean actually are the stuff of traditional diplomacy. Everyone involved understood this problem as a manifestation of Spain's increasingly circumscribed ability to police the seas of her vast empire. Clay expressed this view in his first official letter to Everett, in which he enumerated the issues facing the new ambassador. Unlike Adams, who put "the affairs of Spain and South-America" at the head of the to-do list in his private note to Everett, Clay quoted a letter to Everett's

predecessor at the embassy, Hugh Nelson, instructing him to direct his attention to “1. The piracies; 2. Indemnity for spoliations on our commerce.” Clay clearly understood these problems as a manifestation of Spain’s inability to assert its authority in the colonial sphere. He says that the problems “may be ascribed partly to her weakness, and partly to the countenance and connivance which they experienced from some of the inhabitants, and some of the local Authorities in those Islands.”⁸

In these instructions, Clay demanded that the Spanish pursue two fundamentally contradictory policies: suppression of piracy and an end to confiscation of US ships. The attack on Caribbean piracy called for a policy that Spain intermittently attempted to implement, aggressive naval patrolling. This inevitably led to the occasional capture of US ships, some of whom, like most other ships in the Caribbean, were opportunistically taking advantage of whatever commercial opportunities came their way without an overly fussy consideration of the legal niceties. The policy doomed Everett to a series of diplomatic failures. He was obliged to send Clay a constant stream of increasingly formulaic assurances of a “determination to arrange the claims without delay” or a report that “he is meditating a pretty serious & pointed remonstrance on the subject of delay.”⁹ He was never able to succeed in convincing the Spanish that American shippers in the Caribbean were not subject to their authority. Nevertheless, Clay’s policy viewed in total may actually have been a success. As contradictory as it appears, it supported Adams’ goal of facilitating the independence of the Latin American rebel republics. By pursuing a policy that coded the existence of Caribbean piracy as a signifier for Spain’s inability to fulfill the responsibility of a colonial power and simultaneously restricted the ability of

⁸ “Henry Clay to Alexander H. Everett,” April 27, 1825, PHC vol.4, 293.

⁹ “AHE to Henry Clay,” December 18, 1826, AHEP; “AHE to Henry Clay,” February 13, 1827, AHEP.

the Spanish to suppress piracy, Clay reinforced a persistent symbolic representation of Spain's unsuitability for the exercise of colonial power.

The phrase "pirates of the Caribbean" suggests a unitary phenomenon – we think of ruthless criminality and low cunning, perhaps filtered through a Disney- and Johnny Depp-inspired pastiche of broadswords, parrots, and eyeliner, but Caribbean piracy in the 1820s was a complex phenomenon, situated at the nexus of a group of emerging social, cultural, and legal categories. Among the knottiest issues facing the politicians and diplomats attempting to stabilize the Caribbean in the post-Napoleonic era was the fact that pirates were not always pirates. The early modern tradition of equipping civilian sailing ships with letters of marque during time of war, thus authorizing their crews to prey on enemy shipping, had evolved into something of a free-for-all in the Caribbean. Both Mexico and the loosely federated city-states of Colombia generously issued letters of marque to all comers. Since Spain had not recognized the independence of any of these entities, Spanish efforts to suppress privateering spotlighted the problematic status of private warfare in an era when both the global economy and the powers and authority of the centralized state were rapidly expanding. The "letter of marque" phenomenon intersected directly with the growth of the commercial marketplace in the Caribbean. Ships owned by commercial interests and entrepreneurs in Philadelphia and Baltimore engaged in privateering opportunistically, typically under one of the Colombian flags, as a supplement to peaceful commerce.¹⁰ The owners of these ships included respectable merchants with enough political clout to interest the State Department in intervening on

¹⁰ For a description of the federalized nature of the early Colombian state, see Marixa Lasso, "Race, War, and Nation in Caribbean Gran Colombia, Cartagena, 1810–1832," *American Historical Review*, 111 (April 2006): 336-340; US congressional dissatisfaction with the efforts of the Spanish to suppress piracy is reviewed in William R. Manning, *Early Diplomatic Relations between The United States and Mexico* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1916), 103-104.

behalf of crews arrested by the Spanish Navy, whose anti-privateering fleet based in Cuba obviously viewed them as criminals subject to capture and confiscation. Further complicating the role of these privateers, a matter clear in retrospect but only dimly discernible to the principals in the 1820s was the intersection between illicit maritime activity and the slave trade. As the value of Spanish shipping was increasingly vested in human cargoes, the privateers found a profitable economic niche in meeting the demand for imported slaves in the United States, where the importation of slaves had been illegal since 1807.

Thus my original argument that the romantic-era representation of Spain was part of the construction of ideological justifications for Anglo-American assertion of authority over the Spanish Empire intersects with the dispute over piracy in the Caribbean. These pirates, especially in the period after the American Revolution, have a somewhat surprising historiography, even leaving aside Walt Disney and Johnny Depp. The colorful era of early modern piracy was chronicled enthusiastically by their contemporaries. There are lavishly illustrated pirate histories from the very beginning of mass publishing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ Modern historians, from Immanuel Wallerstein to Markus Rediker have found in these early swashbucklers clear evidence of an emerging world-system or a self-consciously democratic proto-proletariat, depending on the individual historian's analytic lens of preference.¹² Significantly,

¹¹ Pirate literature has been published since at least 1678, when the first edition of Alexander Exquemelin's *The Buccaneers of America* was issued. For details of this work's rapid translation and republication throughout Europe, see preface to the reprint edition (London: George Allen, 1951.) Daniel Defoe followed up his *Robinson Crusoe* with the encyclopedic *A General History of the Pirates*, first published in 1724.

¹² Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origin of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

however, this romanticization of the early modern pirate comes to a halt with the actual arrival of the romantic era. In the early nineteenth century, when Sir Walter Scott's depictions of Robin Hood and the bandit-patriots of the Scottish Highlands were at their height of popularity, the depiction of the pirate with a heart of gold was still many decades away.

There were two high-profile pirate-related events in early US history – the persistent troubles along the Barbary Coast and the emergence of the pirate Jean Lafitte as a hero of the Battle of New Orleans. Like the interaction with the Caribbean pirates of the 1820s, both events demonstrate that piracy in the emerging modern, capitalist world had little in common with early modern buccaneering. Wallerstein argues that the actions of the Barbary pirates were simply another element of the Atlantic World commercial system, and that their collection of tribute was a normative national commercial policy.¹³ On this issue, his position fundamentally agrees with that of John Adams, who, along with Thomas Jefferson, negotiated the first round of the struggle with the Barbary Coast states in 1785. Adams argued that the payment of tribute to these states was a long-standing reality, and that notwithstanding their desire to reframe world trade outside the mercantilist tradition associated with colonialism, there was no practical alternative to these payments. Jefferson, typically, viewed the situation in more idealistic terms, arguing for a military solution that would enhance both American prestige and principles, but both men agreed that the problem was ultimately economic, comparing the potential cost of tribute against the expense of deploying naval forces in the Mediterranean.¹⁴ By describing the suppression of the Caribbean pirates by the Spanish in these *realpolitik*

¹³ Wallerstein, *Modern World-System I*, 348.

¹⁴ Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2005), 48-60.

terms, Clay clearly understood piracy as one of the challenges a capitalist nation must be able to address. His apparent willingness to tolerate quasi-piratical activities as long as they applied pressure in a desired direction also is resonant with the Barbary case where, throughout the Napoleonic Wars, both Britain and France alternated attempts to keep the Barbary States in play for their potential strategic advantage.

Privateering, the hire by a state of fighting ships to prey on enemy shipping during times of war, had been ubiquitous in the Atlantic and European worlds since the early modern emergence of extensive maritime economies.¹⁵ Although US citizens and diplomats deeply resented Britain's extension of this legal status to the North African states, the United States used privateers extensively throughout the early republican era. Privateering was well established in the maritime communities of New England and the Mid-Atlantic States. Thus one aspect of the vigorous political support for military action against the Barbary States was a refusal to acknowledge these particular maritime warriors as privateers acting according to the law and customs of the sea, in their own struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire. This construction was certainly exacerbated by their status as racial and religious outsiders, but post-September 11 attempts to frame this conflict as a manifestation of the long-standing war between Islam and Christendom are not well-supported by the evidence. In my chapter on Western representation of the Moors, I discussed scenes and images of piracy and lawlessness in this tradition, and concluded that they were simply part of the generally farcical martial tropes of this cultural tradition. Robert Allison's excellent 1995 summary of the understanding of Islam in the early United States has been distorted by some recent

¹⁵ For the origin and codification of privateering law, see David J. Starkey, "The Origins and Regulation of Eighteenth-Century Privateering," in C. R. Pennell, ed., *Bandits at Sea: A Pirate Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 69-76.

writers to suggest a religious oppositionality which was specifically denied by the principals on the US side. Adams, Jefferson, and Madison all agreed that it was in the interests of the United States to make clear that their national interest in the Mediterranean was outside the European crusading tradition, and all three concurred with the wisdom of including an assertion included in the 1797 Tripoli Treaty stating that the United States was not a Christian state. This is not to suggest that the US diplomats were friendly to Islam. Rather, their vigorous opposition to the rule of the North African bashaws and emirs was framed in terms of opposition to “barbarism” and “despotism,” not “terrorism” or “religious fanaticism.”¹⁶

The significance of the Barbary experience for Clay, Everett, and the diplomatic community of the 1820s was in establishing a conceptual framework for analyzing the problem of the pirates of the Caribbean. I have argued that the advance of capitalism reframed the understanding of the arts and letters, and transformed their practitioners into modern economic agents. It appears that this process also reframed the understanding of the criminal world. The encounter with the Barbary pirates had undercut any simple understanding of the pirate/privateer continuum and a further complication emerged in the wake of the War of 1812. In the climactic Battle of New Orleans, Jean Lafitte and his freebooters emerged from their camps on Lake Barataria west of New Orleans, an extra-national space that was informally acknowledged as a buffer between the Louisiana

¹⁶ Lambert, *Barbary Wars*, 118; Robert Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). For the post-September 11 view see Joseph Wheelan, *Jefferson's War: America's First War on Terror, 1801-1805* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003); Michael Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: Norton, 2007). For an excellent look at specific arguments among the founding fathers about the relationship between Islam and the United States see Denise A. Spellberg, “Could a Muslim be President? An Eighteenth-Century Constitutional Debate” *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 39 (Summer, 2006). Marcus Rediker argues that commercial sailors were aware that the threat of capture along the North African coast was moderating in the later eighteenth century in *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 37.

Territories and Spanish Mexican province of Texas, to provide critical aid to Andrew Jackson. Familiar with every harbor and sand bar in the area, and amply supplied with flints, powder, and martial prowess, Lafitte and his men were uniquely suited to provide vigorous aid to Jackson's outnumbered and ill-equipped troops. The idea of Lafitte and his men, all under indictment, and many actually under arrest in New Orleans, rallying to the cause of liberty in its desperate hour inevitably resonated with the tale of Robin Hood and other romantic heroes whose exploits were imagined by Byron, Scott, Irving, and their followers.¹⁷

Lafitte's status was not straightforward. Like the Algerine corsairs, Lafitte styled himself a privateer, not a pirate, and the Cartagenan flag of the newly declared Colombian republic flew over his base. He was reasonably careful not to attack US or British vessels, and to restrict his depredations to Spanish shipping, although this was undoubtedly because it was the Spanish who carried the most valuable and desirable cargo in the western Caribbean, slaves, and Lafitte was a major supplier of slaves to Louisiana and Texas. Despite these back-story problems, the easy fit between Lafitte's willingness to set aside his morally ambiguous past and enlist under the banner of the United States and the story of Robin Hood in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* was not lost on the romantic writers. Scott's Robin Hood had become the touchstone for the romantic paradigm of nationalist unity trumping divisions based on class and ethnicity and Lord Byron had "The Buccaneer" in print by 1815. The last line of this poem, published in the wake of the Battle of New Orleans, has often been associated with Lafitte: "*He left a*

¹⁷ Robert V. Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans* (New York: Viking, 1991), 27-29; also see 48-49 for a romantically-inflected recap of Lafitte's career and the critical role he and his men played in the Battle of New Orleans.

corsair's name to other times, Linked one virtue to a thousand crimes."¹⁸ This association grapples with what is in fact the central theme of the poem, and of Byron's life, the conflict between a society devoted to orderly commerce and a rebellious, oppositional spirit. Although this poem is often associated with Lafitte, the actual text frames the conflicted title character's dilemma in a more familiar context: the battle between Christendom and the Moors. The heroic deed that redeems Byron's Corsair is not defense of the nation, but the rescue of a maiden from "within the Haram's secret chamber." By transposing the Corsair's story into the familiar Orientalist key, Byron reinforces a key aspect of the romantic valorization of the heroic rowdies of the past. Their activities were not particularly welcome in the contemporary world.

The differences between the representation of Lafitte and Robin Hood are also significant. In *Ivanhoe*, discussed in more detail in Chapter I, Walter Scott wove together and rationalized earlier stories of bandits who stood up for the poor into the definitive modern construction of Robin Hood. Earlier articulations of this great character combine medieval legends of a green-clad woodland sprite with a traditional folk poetry tradition, the "garland ballad," in which Robin Hood's social banditry is detailed. Like the romantic heroes of the nineteenth century, these early Robin Hoods were available to a wide range of political interpretations, although generally opposed to mercantilist interests. For all the importance of the character, Scott's Robin Hood plays a relatively minor role in *Ivanhoe* (1818), only self-identifying as Robin Hood late in the book. Otherwise, he is Wil Locksley, the leader of a band of indigenous Saxon Englishmen,

¹⁸ George Gordon Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933), 366.

deadly woodland fighters who make it a point to defend the weak and fight injustice.¹⁹

Robin's role in *Ivanhoe*, though small, is crucial. He and his men recognize that the Norman King Richard III, the Lion-Hearted, is worthy of their support, and this facilitates the bridging of the gap between conquering Norman and conquered Saxon, the book's central nationalist message.

Literary scholars have carefully analyzed the emergence of Robin Hood as a character in the nineteenth century. R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor demonstrate that the romantics made use of the Robin Hood tradition in two key ways. First, the rational, empirical work of collecting, editing and publishing the many versions and manifestations of the stories took place with Robin Hood, as it did with the Moors and the rest of folkloric Europe. Second, the oppositionality and social banditry of the character required extensive management in the early nineteenth century, an era of rickburning and other manifestations of rural unrest. Dobson and Taylor describe this process as "convert[ing] him from a real outlaw into a literary symbol of a vanished and largely illusory medieval Arcadia." Stephanie Barczewski argues that Robin Hood does not emerge as an important English national figure until the nineteenth century when his cult is associated with emerging ideologies of the nation as an expression of racial characteristics. While not identical, both of these arguments point out that the appeal of the Robin Hood story to the romantics has little to do with his advocacy of the "leveling

¹⁹ The Robin Hood representational tradition is well-summarized in Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood, A Complete Study of the English Outlaw* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Knight aptly describes Robin Hood's role in *Ivanhoe* as comparable to "the part of the gruff non-commissioned officer who really runs the show in a 1940s British war film."

principle of taking from the rich and giving to the poor,” a concept that raised far more problems than it solved in the 1820s.²⁰

As Knight points out, even within the text of *Ivanhoe*, Robin Hood’s character is treated as folkloric – he is not the sort of fully realized character required in the emerging genre of the novel. Scott bids him farewell in his final scene with a remarkable sentence:

As for the rest of Robin Hood’s career, as well as the tale of his treacherous death, they are to be found in those black-letter garlands, once sold at the low and easy rate of one halfpenny “Now cheaply purchased at their weight in gold.”

This emphasis on the commodification of this national legend, reflected in the money-denominated “collectability” of Robin Hood ephemera, makes it clear that Scott saw the legacy of Robin Hood as very much requiring recuperation and reframing outside the world of commerce. Of course, the only way to do this was to release a counter-discourse in its own commercial form, one that could survive the maelstrom of the commercialized public sphere.²¹ Another demonstration of the mediation of the oppositionality in the Robin Hood story is its increasing use as a trope in elite amusements. Everett’s account of a party that took place while he was serving in The Hague shortly before he was assigned to Madrid provides an interesting example of the absorption of the Robin Hood story into elite society: “they exceeded everything that has been witnessed in these parts – twice the carousal of Louis 14. Among the divertissements [were] ... persons decked in the costumes of the principal characters of *Ivanhoe* got up under the direction of Meyerdorff who appeared himself in the guise of

²⁰ R. B. Dobson and J. Taylor, “The Legend since the Middle Ages” in *Robin Hood: An Anthology of Scholarship and Criticism*, ed. Stephen Knight (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), 155-186. See also Stephanie Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 125-132. The quotation describing Robin Hood’s traditional appeal is taken from the introduction to one of the late eighteenth-century edited collections, *Percy’s Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, quoted in the epigraph to Dobson and Taylor’s article.

²¹ Knight, *Complete Study*, 173.

Robin Hood.”²² It would be hard to imagine a more vivid demonstration of the disassociation between the Robin Hood story and social banditry than Everett’s reference to its appearance in a recreation reminiscent of “Louis 14.”

Further demonstrating that the appeal of characters like Lafitte or Robin Hood rested on their service to the nation and not on their status as dashing individuals or primitive economic democrats, by the 1820s, writers, especially journalists, in the United States had begun the process of articulating the case against privateering. In this journalistic tradition, the potential strategic utility of a privateering fleet seemed far less significant than the fundamental lawlessness embodied in their activities in the Caribbean. The American journalist Hezekiah Niles, a vigorous foe of both piracy and privateering in the Caribbean, dubbed these ambiguous figures “pirateers” and observed “we were always opposed to the *privateering system*, and have only to wish that those who got it up were sufferers by it.”²³

Niles’ journal was a digest of important news, curiosities gleaned from the rural press, correspondence, and official documents from Congress and the State Department, and his focus on the issue of the “pirateers” clearly frames their activities as inimical to the interests of the liberal, commercial state. Over a short period in the early 1820s Niles reported on several incidents notable for the sheer destructive ruthlessness exhibited by the pirates toward both crew and civilian passengers of their victims. In one incident, rescued passengers reported that the pirates who took over their ship had made the

²² “AHE to John Everett,” April 9, 1823, Alexander Hill Everett collection, Box 1, Folder 3, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C..

²³ *Niles’ Register*, XXIII (Nov 12, 1822), 132; XXII (June 22, 1822), 265. This periodical, published between 1811 and 1849 under three similar names, was printed in book form designed for binding, and paginated by biannual volume. In citing this publication I will follow the conventions established by Norval Luxon in *Niles’ Weekly Register: News Magazine of the Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1947).

captain walk the plank and then shot him when he surfaced, clubbed the captain's fourteen-year-old son before throwing him overboard, and set the rest of the passengers adrift in a jolly boat with a few ship's biscuits, one bucket of water and no compass. Fortunately they were picked up by a passing ship after only one night. In another, even more violent incident, a ship was commandeered in a "most horrid act of piracy" en route to New Orleans. Passengers and crew were beaten, and hung from the yardarm while being interrogated about the possibility of hidden specie aboard. Unable to find any hidden treasure, even after staving in the decks, the ship was thoroughly plundered. In the first report of this incident, it was reported that "the villains crowned their crimes, by ravishing the women that were on board, and committing the most brutal and shocking excesses on their bodies." In a follow-up printed six weeks later it turned out that the sexual assaults had been restricted to slave women, an observation meant to make the account less horrifying.²⁴ While this normative racism seems callous, it is also noteworthy as an early example of the convergence of anti-pirate and abolitionist discourse – comments of this type are harbingers of an emerging understanding of the close association between slave trading and piracy in the Caribbean.

These accounts were interspersed with numerous short items reporting the construction and fitting out of privateering vessels by individuals from all nations in the region, including the United States, Spain, and what Niles refers to as "the independents," Mexico and Colombia. Numerous reports attest to the ease of access to privateering ports, in "Porto Rico" and Cuba, where "the people...are very indifferent to these things – in response to the quasi S. American privateers fitted out in the United States, they say 'it is so much for so much,' and think no more about it." Note that in referring to "quasi

²⁴ *Niles' Register*, XXII (June 22, 1822), 265; XXII (July 13, 1822); XXIII (October 5, 1822), 70.

S. American privateers” Niles is clearly aware that the legal status of privateering is being exploited – or rationalized and commodified – by economic opportunists. Niles also reports more encouragingly about steps being taken to suppress the practice, including a long passage from a letter written by an American naval officer serving aboard the *John Adams*, recently arrived off Puerto Rico, who reported

It appears that the object of our visit here was to make some inquiries in relation to the capture of some American vessels by Spanish cruisers, supposed to have been connived by the Spanish government. Captain Renshaw had an interview with the governor on the subject; the result of which is, that such a supposition is without foundation; and that these privateers have been fitted out by private individuals; and that if any American vessel is taken by their cruisers in the future, and brought into this port, a retribution shall be made to the owners, and a reasonable sum paid by the captors for their detention. In case any of the privateers are taken by our men of war, they shall be considered lawful captures, and taken to the United States for trial. Our captain was much pleased by this satisfactory and amicable settlement.²⁵

This would seem to be a reasonable approach to dealing with US citizens rounded up in anti-privateering activities by the Spanish colonial navy. Yet Secretary Clay’s transmission to Everett of an endless series of instructions concerning the negotiation of the release of men and ships confiscated under this policy demonstrates that it was not the actual policy. Widespread privateering in a situation as politically fluid as the Caribbean made the clear definition of individuals’ relationship to the law essentially impossible to ascertain. The emergence of mariners acting as privateers who were actually the employees of Yankee ship-owners respectable enough to command the attention of a cabinet member confirms this problem. Although Clay was unrealistic in expecting Everett to convince the Spanish court to treat these individuals as ordinary merchants, he was correct in perceiving that the solution to nineteenth-century piracy was likely to be

²⁵ *Niles’ Register*, XXIII (November 12, 1822), 132.

found in the realm of diplomacy. We can add to this insight the further observation that this was also an issue with cultural significance – the emerging marketplace demanded an end to the long tradition of the sea as a place where the legal system was fluid.

Niles' anti-privateering articles make an interesting contrast with the romantic fiction of Irving and Scott. Both deal with outlaws in a period when centralized governments were attempting to extend their authority, but the cultural meaning of the two sets of outlaws is very different. Irving's Moors and Scott's bandits of the greenwoods were both attempting to maintain a traditional social structure based on the prowess of the society's warrior/hunters. Kings Ferdinand and John stood for modern, capital-intense military and agricultural systems that diminish the importance of individual martial prowess. The privateers and pirates Niles describes share both the oppositionality and the pre-industrial behavior of these romantic heroes, and yet their behavior is irredeemably wicked. What is the difference? The answer is not simple – the notorious complexity of romanticism, with its combination of accommodation and resistance to modernity, is a central theme of this study – but one key point is the place of the emerging nation in the respective stories. Both Irving and Scott acknowledge the triumph of the centralizing state. For Irving, the triumph of the Catholic Monarchs has significant elements of tragedy. "The Moor's Last Sigh," as Boabdil's departure from Granada comes to be known, captures the tragic aspect of Ferdinand's triumph. For Scott, the result of Robin Hood's resistance to King John is an unqualified triumph of virtue leading to the unification of Saxon and Norman, the foundational event of the modern British state. Recall that the opponents of *Ivanhoe* and the disguised King Richard in *Ivanhoe*'s climactic battle are led by the Templars. In Chapter One, I

discussed the identification of the Templars with the malicious and fanatical clergy. This set them outside the liberal nationalist paradigm; they were not just religious fanatics, but also an extra-national institution. At the end of the battle with Ivanhoe, the Templars (like the Jewish characters) could simply pull up stakes and cross a border without ceding their fundamental identity.

Niles' story is not fictional and he does not have the advantage of hindsight, but his proposed solution to the problem of the Caribbean pirates shares much with the romantic novelists. To Niles, the two key issues facilitating the "pirateering" culture were, first, the existence of unpoliced refuges among the backwaters of the Spanish colonies and, second, the greed of the ship-owners who were complicit in a system that so clearly led to the excesses he described. Niles also makes clear the solution to the pirateering problems: imposition of law and order by US national forces. Thus the emergence of the powerful modern state is a key to all these narratives. In Irving's tale of the Moors, the resolution has elements of tragedy, consistent with the larger argument that Irving was in part critiquing the fundamental nature of the Spanish Catholic state. Irving's characterization of Ferdinand emphasized his financial greed, and especially that of his clerical supporters. Here too, the romantic ideal of financial disinterest helps locate both Ferdinand and the pirates outside the realm of acceptable behavior. The romantic valorization of the past is seldom uncomfortable with the idea of a large and powerful state – think of the romantic affinity for Napoleon, even among Scott and the Anglophile Irving.²⁶ Ferdinand's Spain was far too centralized and friendly to commerce to meet the

²⁶ "WI to Henry Brevoort," July, 1815, *Letters Volume I, 1802-1823*, CWWI vol. 23, 401 for Irving's positive views of the Emperor; Scott's *Life of Napoleon* has much in common with Irving's histories – Scott went to France in 1826, absorbed a huge amount of source material, and quickly reframed the material into a vivid 9-volume biography, published in 1827.

standards of the romantics, but in the case of the pirates, their very existence demonstrated the failure of state power in the Caribbean. The existence in the 1820s Caribbean of an apparently irresolvable state of rebellion between Spain and its colonies, the multiplicity of jurisdictions issuing letters of marque, and the uncontrollability of the pirates, manifested in murder, rape and destruction of property, all called out for a solution imposed by a powerful centralized state. Robin Hood's acceptance of a role subservient to Richard the Lion-Hearted in the English state-building project demonstrates the idea that nationalism offered a device for resolving conflicts with those modern characters whose class or racial status might otherwise lead to a more structural oppositionality.

In their own way, both Everett and Irving clearly perceived that the United States might play the same centralizing and stabilizing role in the Caribbean basin. The imposition of a state-based solution to the disorder in this area was, of course, precisely the goal pursued by both US and British diplomats in the 1820s.²⁷ Although they differed on certain details, particularly in the identity of the protagonist, they both imagined an orderly Caribbean whose political stability was guaranteed by a great Anglophone power. Although Clay's efforts on behalf of the US "privateers" do not seem helpful in creating a more orderly Caribbean, he seems to have understood the resonance of the issue better than Everett. The reframing by the romantics of European folkloric heroes and events into elements constitutive of the modern state is a critical element in the actual emergence of ideologically cohesive national policy. As this is true in the public aspects of Everett's career, it is also the case in his private project of securing his financial independence. Just as the romantic construction of the relationship between modern society and piracy

²⁷ Manning, *Early Diplomatic Relations*, chapter 3 for a review of this conflict.

provides a metaphor and framework for describing Everett's public diplomatic work, the romantic construction of the relationship between modern society and Catholicism helps illuminate his attempts to ensure the financial basis for continuing his participation in politics.

Everett and Literary Labor: "I Expect to be paid at \$2 a page..."

The relation between early nineteenth-century society and social outlaws was a central one for the romantics, and this interest helps explain the approach adopted by US diplomats to the political situation in the Caribbean. Another great theme the movement addressed was the place of religion in society. This interest often focused on two particular issues, first, the relationship between the dominant Protestant culture and its predecessor religions, Catholicism and Judaism, and second, the place of enthusiasm and orthodoxy in an increasingly secular society where religious practice was migrating into the domestic sphere. Again, *Ivanhoe* is a touchstone for these themes. One issue at the heart of the book is the relationship between the Christian characters and the Jewish moneylender Isaac and his beautiful and chaste daughter Rebecca. Another is the place of the Templars, whose fanatical religious enthusiasm is ultimately defeated, at least temporarily, by *Ivanhoe* and King Richard. Washington Irving also addresses this matter in depth; fanatical priests are the nemesis of Christopher Columbus and the fictional narrator of the *Conquest of Granada* is the very personification of nineteenth-century anti-Catholic tropes.

In turning to the question of Everett's attempts to ensure his financial future, sensitivity to the romantic view of religion provides an entry to this apparently most

secular subject. One of Everett's most telling and carefully crafted critiques of Catholicism in Spain occurs in a letter to his fellow New England intellectual, George Ticknor, who was beginning the process of publishing journalistic accounts of his own travels in Spain, where he had traveled with Edward Everett.²⁸ At the end of a long letter, Everett shared a detailed and arch account of the state of Madrid's diplomatic community, which Ticknor had gotten to know well as Everett's guest on a recent visit. He ruefully described his own dinner companions, the Archbishop of Athens, serving as papal nuncio, and the Archdeacon of Madrid, and clearly expected Ticknor to share his assumption that as dining companions these gentlemen would be less than amusing, noting:

I expected as you may naturally suppose to be a good deal edified by the neighborhood of the two Arches and was hugging myself in the hopes of hearing a learned colloquy on the three persons of the Trinity, the fine points of Calvinism, or the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. Instead of this, the worthy Archdeacon (a lad of some fifty-five or three score years) entertained us with a dissertation upon the thirty things that go to make up a completely pretty woman, which he detailed at length with much complacency....²⁹

This deployment of the trope of the Catholic clergyman as a worldly libertine is more than a predictable or normative anti-Catholic comment. It is part of Everett's perpetual attention to matters that may affect his financial well-being. This entire long letter was part of a carefully thought out strategy for maintaining Ticknor, who had been feuding with Everett's brother and other associates at the *North American Review* over the terms of his employment as a contributor to the *Review*. A letter from Everett's

²⁸ Anna Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1877), 184-240 for Ticknor's memoirs of his own 1819 trip to Spain. See David B. Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 44 for details on the trip to Europe; Stanley T. Williams, *Life of Washington Irving*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935), 113-15 for Irving's service to Ticknor in the Spanish libraries.

²⁹ "AHE to George Ticknor," Jan. 7, 1828, AHEP.

brother Edward received the previous month had contained the disturbing news that as a result of a falling out, Ticknor was dallying with Robert Walsh, publisher of *The American Quarterly Review*, a new, competing American literary/political journal appealing to the same Federalist / Whig constituency that had always supported the Everetts' publication. Everett told his brother he would attempt to keep Ticknor's services and this letter was the result. The letter is a long one, and dealt with several issues. Everett began by updating Ticknor on a book-buying commission Ticknor had left with him on departing Madrid. He mentioned that the commission had been handed to Obadiah Rich, the bibliophile who had been long associated with the American consulate in Spain, and whose library had been the basis of Irving's early Spanish researches. Everett went on to emphasize the many services he had done for Ticknor, occasionally at the expense of other authors, and Ticknor's memoirs include a mention of at least one more large package of "books and manuscripts" received from Everett the previous year.³⁰ In particular he notes that, regarding one of the books on Ticknor's list, the *Chronicles of Alfonso el Sabio*, he "should have dispatched this two or three months earlier, but Washington Irving saw fit to borrow it and would have kept it till the day of judgment had I not lately recovered it from him by main force."³¹

Having made clear that he and Ticknor had a relationship of mutual obligation, Everett turned to the matter of the new publication, assuring Ticknor that Everett was not personally angry at Walsh despite the fact that "he has thought proper to perform upon my last work [*America*] the operation technically called cutting up and will probably do the same by any other that I may publish hereafter." Far from it, in fact. Everett allowed

³⁰ Anna Ticknor, *George Ticknor* vol. I, 380.

³¹ "AHE to George Ticknor," Jan. 7, 1828, AHEP.

that the new competitor's attitude would spur him and his associates to greater efforts, all of which were liable to improve the state of American letters, and that he hoped whatever personal problems exist between Ticknor, Sparks, and the brothers Everett might be quickly resolved. Perhaps referring to the potential financial benefits accruing to a friendly relationship with the family, Everett then turned to another project of interest to Ticknor, the establishment of a gallery of American art. He had learned that the heirs of Benjamin West were contemplating the sale of a large collection of West's paintings. These would, Everett suggested "form an excellent foundation for an American gallery," and could "probably be bought en bloc much cheaper than the same number of equally good pictures could be procured in any other way." In describing the collection he stated "West's merit, though perhaps overrated a little just before his death, is admitted by all to be of sterling ~~merit~~ character; and his paintings have a peculiar value to us as the works of a countryman."³²

Everett's brief comments about West are of interest, beyond their place in his courtship of Ticknor. In assigning the title "countryman" to West, who was born a British colonial subject in Massachusetts in 1738, moved to London by 1763, and, as president of the Royal Academy was a pillar of British cultural life, Everett expressed an expansive notion of the American community. His somewhat dismissive assessment of West's career is also telling. Not only was West associated with the academic esthetic of neoclassicism, his relationship to his great patrons, George II and George III was more reminiscent of the premodern courtier patronage model than, for example, that of David Wilkie with George IV or Victoria. The great public success of West's paintings was clearly understood to reflect honor on his patron the King, and the King's permission was

³² "AHE to George Ticknor," Jan. 7, 1828, AHEP.

necessary before West could make copies of the most notable works, such as *The Death of Wolfe*. This is a clear contrast to the nineteenth-century situation of David Wilkie who, though also styled a court painter, presented his work to the king as one of a number of clients who might favor him with a purchase.³³

Only after attending to this business does Everett relax back into conversational mode to recount the events of the dinner party with the “two arches.” Although Everett’s humorous tone was undoubtedly meant to mark this anecdote as a lighthearted coda to the more serious business of the letter, the story actually seems meant to illustrate another key difference between the Everett’s *North American Review* and Walsh’s *American Quarterly*. Walsh was, as Everett was clearly reminding Ticknor, a Catholic himself, in fact one of the most prominent Catholics in the early republic. Walsh had been educated at one of the first Catholic institutions of higher education in the United States, St. Mary’s in Maryland. He also was a prominent member of the Georgetown University community, and delivered the welcoming address when George Washington made an official visit to the campus. Walsh, like Everett and Irving, spent much of his adult life in Europe, and like them, was at ease in a world of cosmopolitan elites. His own longest lasting contribution to American letters was an enormous book dealing with Atlantic trade and the same issues of maritime authority still so vexing in the 1820s.³⁴ Although Everett apparently felt free to play the Catholic card with Ticknor, this did not suggest Walsh was an apologist for Catholic orthodoxy. Walsh seems actually to have adopted

³³ Details of West’s patronage relationship are included in John Dillenberger’s *catalog raisonné* of West’s religious paintings, *Benjamin West: The Context of His Life’s Work* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977). This work also includes a helpful biography of West, focusing on his religious affiliation, and enough information on the posthumous distribution of West’s work to make it clear that that no mass purchase was made.

³⁴ Robert Walsh, *An Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Mitchell, Ames, 1819).

the “enlightened tolerance” for Catholicism characteristic of the British elites with whom he had spent so much time.

The issue of Walsh’s journal that contained the wounding review of Everett’s *America* also had a study of Mexico in which the influence of the Church on both Spanish and Mexican society was discussed at length, an article that does a good job of expressing this tolerant view of Catholicism. The article clearly acknowledges the retrograde influence of the vast clerical establishment on Spain, but, with a carefully constructed set of empirical data tables, demonstrates that the religious establishment in Mexico is far smaller and more benign than that of Spain. The heart of Walsh’s analysis of the prospects for Mexico consists of a fascinating restatement of the contradictory attitudes toward commerce that pervade the thoughts of so many of the figures in this study. Walsh excoriated those responsible for selling stock in Mexican mining ventures, the precise characters who crafted the schemes Washington Irving found so irresistible. He distinguished these British stock jobbers from US citizen-merchants flocking to the newly independent Spanish colonial states, whose “schemes and speculations were merely of a commercial nature; and as in these, unlike the lottery of mining operations, much depends on intellect and exertion, however mortified and disappointed many may have been, they are safe from the reproach of having been accessories to schemes of doubtful character.” Walsh’s criticisms of the London stock jobbers are profoundly reminiscent of those of Edmund Burke, like Walsh a figure who founded his own romantic anti-commercial ethic on a Catholic heritage. An interesting aspect of Walsh’s critique of the mining stock promoters is his bitter attack on the credibility of Alexander von Humboldt, the German scientist and explorer whose multi-volume accounts of his

travels through the Spanish colonial world were still being published in English translation in the 1820s. He characterizes Humboldt's positive assessment of the commercial potential for colonial mining operations by pointing out that "not only was it natural in Humboldt to speak as he has done, but it would have been unreasonable to expect anything from him that could admit of an unfavorable construction. He was the favored individual, in whose behalf an exception, without parallel, has been made." Walsh then adds a footnote to the effect that "we are inclined to think on good authority, that this distinguished traveler has, within a few years, gone so far as to admit that many of his statements are incorrect, and that the influence of the peculiar circumstances which affected him was quite as great as we have supposed."³⁵

This critique of commercial behavior and attitudes is, as we have observed many times in this study, completely typical of romantic-era discussion of commerce, even – perhaps especially – among those participating in the new market place. Everett was one figure who did not indulge in a great deal of this conflicted rhetoric. As his tenure in Madrid moved toward its conclusion, his correspondence becomes increasingly focused on planning his commercial future in publishing. The Ticknor gambit was a failure – Ticknor mentioned the letter from Everett, but only to acknowledge that he had received the package of books, and his next literary contribution, an article on the works of Daniel Webster, appeared in Walsh's quarterly.³⁶ Meanwhile, Everett continued unabashedly to prepare for the life of a literary entrepreneur. In a letter from early 1828, Everett remarks to his brother that he intends to buy out their third partner, George Sparks, and replace the expenses of Sparks' owner's share of the proceeds by hiring an editor who would work

³⁵ "Mexico," *American Quarterly Review* II: 338-360. For comments on the religious establishment, 356; comments on stock jobbers, 338; comments on Humboldt, 341.

³⁶ Anna Ticknor, *George Ticknor* vol. I, 392.

for less money. Since this had not yet taken place, however, he wanted to be sure Edward did not forget that “I Expect to be paid at \$2 a page...” for the material he had already submitted to the review. While in general his speculations about the potential profitability of the publishing venture proved to be unfounded, Everett did demonstrate an unerring eye for a source of cheap intellectual labor by noting “we could employ for this purpose a competent person, say one of the Professors at Cambridge who would consider \$1000 as a generous compensation.”³⁷

Everett and Cuba

Everett’s increasing focus on his career after Madrid was reasonable given the likelihood of Adams’ defeat in the upcoming election, but also seems to have been a consequence of the failure of the US diplomatic agenda. This sense that the orderly application of a sound diplomatic approach had been unsuccessful in extending US influence in the Caribbean may account for Everett’s sudden interest in a mysterious visitor he received in the summer of 1827. This visitor, a certain Col. Clouet, introduced himself as a former resident of New Orleans and close associate of Governor William Claiborne. If Everett knew Claiborne by reputation, he may well have found Clouet’s claim plausible. Claiborne arrived in Louisiana as a Virginia planter appointed to office by Thomas Jefferson, but ingratiated himself with the New Orleans Creole elite, even taking a Creole bride. He was elected governor after Louisiana achieved statehood, and fell afoul of Andrew Jackson during the Battle of New Orleans, in part because of his bitter opposition to any dealings with Lafitte during the British invasion.³⁸ At Clouet’s

³⁷ “AHE to Edward Everett,” January 15, 1828, AHEP.

³⁸ Remini, *Battle of New Orleans*, 30-35.

first meeting with Everett, he informed the diplomat that he was associated with figures at the highest level of the Spanish government, a group that was dedicated to preserving Spain's traditional forms of government and bitterly opposed to constitutionalism. The colonel had unjustly been denied promotion when he refused to pay a bribe to the Minister of War, an event that seems to have reinforced his opposition to constitutionalism. Clouet wanted Everett to know that Spain was concerned about political designs on the sovereignty of Cuba and wished to emphasize that he and his associates hoped the United States would serve as guarantor for the political status quo in Cuba.³⁹

As previously discussed, the control of Cuba was an issue that added urgency to the entire question of political stability in the Caribbean. Not only was Cuba an island of great economic value – since the Haitian revolution it had become the world's largest sugar producer – but, like Florida, it was strategically located across the access routes to New Orleans and the Mississippi River. Principally because of the example of Haiti, Cuban colonial subjects, fearing that an outbreak of republicanism would spread to the enslaved population, had chosen not to participate in the general outbreak of republicanism sweeping the Spanish colonies.⁴⁰ The faithfulness of the Cuban Creole community did not entirely assure the Cuban status quo; there had been a nagging concern throughout this era that one of the several newly independent Latin American republics might consider seizing control of Cuba.⁴¹ Beyond the strategic problems this

³⁹ Everett sent a report on this meeting in an unusual and undated "Confidential Letter No. 2" that must have been written in October, 1827: "AHE to Henry Clay – Confidential No. 2," AHEP Reel 2.

⁴⁰ Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 1-3 for Cuba in the 1820s. Baron von Humboldt's pioneering study *The Island of Cuba*, first translated into English in 1855 but extensively reviewed in the Anglophone press earlier, includes analysis of the racial politics in Cuba in the immediate aftermath of the Haitian revolution.

⁴¹ Manning, *Early Diplomatic Relations*, 103.

might have raised Everett saw another, perhaps even more disturbing development. Particularly as he began to lose faith in Bolivar, he imagined that general establishing “an advanced post on the Island of Cuba...with the aid of the coloured casts.” This could have led to a most disturbing prospect: a “military despot of talent and experience at the head of a black army is certainly not the sort of neighbor whom we should wish, if we had the choice, to place upon our Southern frontier.”⁴²

Clouet was raising the most unwelcome prospect that in addition to the threat from Bolivar, Britain was contemplating restirring this pot. As any fan of secret agent stories knows, no tale of this nature is complete without a “panic factor,” an element that is designed to move the listener from skeptical contemplation to action, and Clouet clearly understood this. In this case, the panic factor was some confidential information: the British were planning a preemptive strike, and had sent two frigates to lay the groundwork for the conquest of both the Azores and Cuba. This was, in fact, just the sort of issue Everett had assumed would be at the heart of his tenure in Madrid before Clay pointed him to the less congenial task of restoring the civil rights of a bunch of pirates. Clouet concluded by assuring Everett that the King was well aware of his activities, and would soon be happy to publicly acknowledge the relationship.⁴³

The hint that the King was aware of these developments caught Everett’s interest, and also presented the possibility that the story could be confirmed. In fact, as Everett explained to Clay in a letter describing the meeting, the unprecedented rapid compliance of the court with one of Everett’s requests for the release of some captured sailors suggested to Everett that the King might be attempting to send a confirmatory message.

⁴² “AHE to Clay,” January 7, 1827, AHEP.

⁴³ “AHE to Henry Clay – Confidential No. 2,” undated, October 1827, AHEP.

Everett had then requested a meeting, he explained, ostensibly to thank the King, but also to feel him out concerning Colonel Clouet's proposition. The King had, in fact, not seemed to want to discuss the matter, despite Everett's opening. When Everett shared this observation with Clouet and his associates, they assured him that their public acknowledgment was imminent, and he would soon see them with ministerial appointments. They also handed him a letter detailing the English conspiracy concerning Cuba. In fact, Everett continued in the letter to Clay, he had not seen them for several months, and assumed they were in Catalonia participating in the anti-constitutional insurrection. He concluded by observing that the meetings themselves were inconsequential, but he is reporting for "confirmation it gives for the prevalent opinion respecting the origin of the insurrection."⁴⁴

Despite this casual conclusion, Everett was clearly fascinated by Clouet and his story. He transmitted this report to Clay outside regular diplomatic channels, in a separate "confidential" series of reports which he employed again to report subsequent developments in December.⁴⁵ By this time the possibility of ministerial portfolios seemed far less likely given that several of Clouet's associates were under arrest for their participation in the Catalanian riots, and the tenor of Clouet's remarks had changed. He wanted Everett to know that it seemed entirely possible that he and his associates were themselves going to be obliged to invade and overthrow the government of Cuba on their own. Should that occur, Clouet wanted to be sure that the United States and its officials understood that this group held the warmest of feelings toward the United States and would even look favorably upon an eventual confederation. While Everett expressed

⁴⁴ Charles Esdaile, *Spain in the Liberal Age: From Constitution to Civil War, 1808-1939* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 64-65 for the Catalan disturbances fomented by *apostólico* fanatics of Clouet's ilk.

⁴⁵ "AHE to Henry Clay – Confidential No. 3," December 10, 1827, AHEP.

skepticism toward this scheme, he did take the trouble to evaluate Clouet's contemplated invasion route through the Bay of Jagua – ironically, this harbor near the city of Cienfuegos was a notorious pirate lair – and concluded that given the proximity to the capital and the quality of the roads, the invasion seemed feasible. Even more plausible to Everett was the possibility that the threat of British action in the Caribbean was serious enough that it would persuade the Spanish to be more amenable to US guidance in the region. On this basis, Everett passed on to Salmon, the Spanish Minister of State, the note detailing a British reconnaissance mission described to him by Clouet and confirmed through Everett's confidential sources, and met with Salmon to discuss the situation. Everett concluded his follow-up letter to Clay by noting that Salmon assured him that the Spanish were aware of this British hanky-panky and were confident that given the legendary faithfulness and tenacity of the Cuban garrison, there was nothing to fear.

This matter may well have ended there – by the end of 1827 Everett had clearly turned his attention to his post-Madrid career. Unfortunately though, Clay had apparently been so disturbed by Everett's dalliance with Clouet and his associates that he brought the matter to the attention of President Adams. The idea of a US diplomat consorting with a character as sketchy as Clouet in a scheme to invade Cuba, or even the idea of expanding the United States through an opportunistic alliance with disaffected foreign military elements could not have appealed to Adams. In fact, Adams expressed himself eloquently on this very topic, and since he did so in a way that emphasizes one of our key themes, the importance of the romantic sensibility in expressing the ideology of the era, we must subject Adams to the same literary scrutiny we have employed for the likes of Irving, Byron, and Scott.

Shortly after the conclusion of his presidency, Adams created what must be one of the most extraordinary documents ever penned by an American ex-president, a 250-stanza epic poem on the subject of the twelfth-century conquest of Ireland by the English King Henry II.⁴⁶ Not that the question would arise with an author of Adams' moral standing, but in the preface of the work Adams emphasized that the work was not meant merely for the readers' esthetic appreciation, but also to convey moral instruction. The story Adams told is that of Dermot Mac Morrogh, one of a number of regional medieval Irish kings. Having fallen out with another Irish king over a matter of Dermot's inappropriate attentions to the other king's wife, Dermot fled Ireland and allied with Henry II – of England! – who, with Dermot's aid, conquered Ireland, first established English rule over Ireland, and installed Dermot as a puppet ruler.

The idea that the Irish lost their independence through the connivance of an immoral traitor who "by his licentious tyranny, rendered himself odious to his subjects" (Preface, Verse VI) seemed to Adams to reflect the fundamental and pernicious consequences of arbitrary aristocratic rule. But the story of a ruler jeopardizing his authority by chasing someone else's wife was not just an example of aristocratic indifference to morality. This story is a typological explanation for the fall of a dynasty – recall that in the story of Roderick of Spain's defeat by the Muslims in the eighth century his philandering left him unable to unite his Visigothic tribesmen to oppose the Moors. Adams' argument extended to other key ideological elements of the republican era. Into his narrative of the betrayal of patriotic ideals Adams wove attitudes toward religion that mirrored those of Scott and Irving. Mac Morrogh, the villain of the piece, financed his

⁴⁶ John Quincy Adams, *Dermot Mac Morrogh, or, The Conquest of Ireland: An Historical Tale of the Twelfth Century in four cantos* (Boston: Carter, Hendee and Co., 1832).

approach to Henry by plunging into the grasping commercial milieu typically associated with wrongdoers in romantic discourse:

And here he found among the sons of trade
 Jews, tender hearted souls, who money lent,
 And freely furnish'd charitable aid,
 On good security, at cent per cent;
 And banish'd kings, and ruin'd spendthrifts made
 Their special care, in kind compassion meant –
 And for a mortgage of his whole domain,
 With means provided him to reach Aquitaine (Canto II, Verse XII)

Adams also framed the motives of Henry, the beneficiary and exploiter of Mac Morrogh's villainy, in a discursive association between religion and avarice. In this case the typical "black legend" paradigm portrays an expansive and avaricious Catholic church cynically giving Henry permission to conquer Ireland if he will enforce church discipline:

For Erin fair, it was by all agreed,
 Did to his Holiness the Pope belong:
 Nor was there mortal dar'd dispute the creed:
 St. Peter's keys had made the title strong.
 And Constantine had granted him by deed
 All islands – so 't was broad as it was long.
 Of both the grants she fell within the scope –
 Fee simple to his Holiness the Pope.

'T was holy zeal, 't was piety intense,
 To curb and civilize the barbarous crew;
 Make them keep Easter on the proper day;
 And Peter's pence to Christ's viceregent pay. (Canto I, Verses XI & XII)

As interesting as these poetic excursions into political and moral instruction are, the issue that seems both dearest to Adams' heart and most instructive regarding his reaction to Everett's dalliance with the Cuban adventurers was the matter of national honor and

patriotism. Mac Morrogh finally had the opportunity to surrender to Roderick, a worthier Irish lord:

To Roderick's sovereign rule, he must submit;
 And send his British hireling troops away:
 A patriot sure must deem it far more fit,
 To bear a native lord, than foreign sway.
 For Britons, whate'er he might think of it;
 Would turn to no masters at no distant day –
 And Dermot's name in after times would stand,
 Stamp'd to all ages with the traitor's brand. (Canto III, Verse XXXVI)

Given these charmingly expressed attitudes, it seems unsurprising that Adams was not pleased when Clay brought him the news of Everett's association with Clouet. The result of the meeting was a letter from Adams to Everett, transmitted to Edward Everett for private forwarding to his brother. Much of the text of the letter is quoted by Everett in his reply to Adams, one of the last long letters included in the correspondence from Madrid.⁴⁷ The letter from Adams, quoted in Everett's reply, began "Mr. Clay wished me to say that he thought you had been a little indiscreet...in writing a *Note Verbale* to the Spanish Gov't touching the projects of England on Cuba – projects disavowed in London and which it might seriously embarrass you to have charged upon the British Govt should it leak out from the Spanish bureaux that you had done so." It is not difficult to imagine how devastating the charge of indiscretion, coming from his lifelong patron and mentor must have seemed. After all, beyond the accusation of indiscretion – and Everett quickly pointed out that every step of the dalliance with Clouet and transmission of details on the British scheme had been reported to Clay – was the

⁴⁷ "AHE to John Quincy Adams," July 7, 1828, AHEP.

assumption that Everett was sold a bill of goods because he had misunderstood the political situation in the Caribbean.⁴⁸

This criticism crystallized Everett's disappointment and frustration about his tenure in Madrid and it occasioned a response in which the frustrations of Everett's service seep from every line. He alludes to Adams' – and by inference his own – long grounding in diplomacy, reminding the president of “the unfriendly nature of the relations...existing between Great Britain and Spain – the well known policy of the former power in regard to the Spanish Colonies which has been pursued invariably in time of peace as well as war ever since the epoch of our own revolution.” He argued that he had by no means been gullible and cited “the high authority on which the intelligence rested” as justification for transmitting it to Salmon, the Spanish Minister of State. He noted that the Spanish had acted on his tip, and that the British designs on Cuba could not possibly be a matter of indifference to the United States. He continued that despite the urgency of the matter, he had written home for instructions before transmitting the intelligence to Salmon, and only after a long silence had he shared the critical information with Salmon. Everett assures Adams that he received Salmon's word that his memo would not go into the *Bureaux* and that his sole purpose had been to enhance Spanish confidence in the good offices of the United States. He added that since the incident, he had received from his sources in the French embassy information that they too had been aware of the British scheme, and that in fact he was still waiting for further advice on his posture towards Salmon, who anxiously awaited any fresh information available. Everett concluded this painful letter with a request for relief from his

⁴⁸ Everett's correspondence with Clay continued into 1828, when a further letter on the alleged British plot includes the information that the Russian minister D'Oubril had also evaluated the information. “AHE to Clay,” April 4, 1828, PHC vol.7, 214.

assignment, a request obviated by Adams' electoral defeat, but this was not the end of Everett's interest in the political advancement of Cubans friendly to close relations with the United States. Some ten years later, with the Latin American wars of independence concluded, a new series of communications with Cuban colonials anxious to form closer relations with their northern neighbor emerges in Everett's correspondence. Everett eventually made a trip to Cuba, but unfortunately, like many of his other post-Madrid ventures, not much came of it.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Both Alexander Hill Everett and his mentor President Adams exemplified a morally and intellectually rigorous approach to policy and politics. Still, as Adams' dabbling in romantic poetry or Everett's attendance at a Robin Hood-themed costume ball shows, their lives were profoundly influenced by the romantic atmosphere of the 1820s. These examples are taken from the private lives of these two public men, but that should in no way imply that the romantic sensibility did not influence their public responsibilities. The case of Colonel Clouet provides an interesting example. At one level, the conflict over Everett's dalliance with Clouet reflects a political difference. Everett viewed Clouet as a vehicle for achieving two important policy goals. If successful in his plans to take control of Cuba, Clouet had the potential to act as a Chalabiesque character who would both clean up Cuba's problems and be a faithful ally to his friends in Washington. Even if unsuccessful, he had embarrassing evidence of British designs on Spain's colonies that could be discretely leaked to the Spanish court.

⁴⁹ AHEP reel 4. This correspondence is cited extensively in Robert Paquette's *Sugar is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict Between Empires Over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

Clay and Adams took the opposite side of the political argument: Clouet was not credible as an adventurer and his intelligence about the British was sketchy at best, more likely to backfire on its purveyor than to embarrass the British.

These political arguments also resonate with the themes and tropes of romanticism. Both sides of the Clouet argument are part of the ongoing romantic redefinition of the respective responsibilities of the individual and the nation. For Everett, Clouet's motivations could have been those of Robin Hood and his resistance band who were unwilling to submit to King John's lawful but unjust rule. Like Lafitte, or Byron's Corsair, Clouet's intrepid but extra-legal daring had the potential to positively influence political outcomes. For Adams, Clouet may have seemed closer to Dermot Mac Morrogh, who was willing to sell out his national patrimony for his own thoroughly immoral ends. This argument is not meant to suggest a unitary cultural determinism – one of the key points of this study is how personal, ideological, and cultural motivations are inextricably woven together in the process of integrating life in the wake of the dual revolutions. But it does point out the importance of cultural tropes and traditions in the framing of political decisions, even at the highest level. At the same time that Everett was building his diplomatic career, Washington Irving was dealing with many of the same issues, parameters and problems in his attempt to carve out a career as a writer. Irving's literary career required him to successfully navigate the same public and economic pressures that Everett was ultimately unable to master. In moving from Everett to Irving, I turn to a figure whose principal importance was in the cultural rather than political sphere, but one whose political impact was ultimately much more significant.

Chapter 5

The Isle of the Manhattoes: Knickerbocker Village or Yankee El Dorado?

Modern historians assert that when the New Netherlands was thus overrun by the British, as Spain in ancient days by the Saracens, a resolute band refused to bend the neck to the invader...they crossed the bay and buried themselves among the marshes and cabbage gardens of Communipaw; as did Pelayo and his followers among the mountains of Asturias. Here their descendants have remained, ever since, keeping themselves apart like seed corn, to repeople the city with the genuine breed whenever it shall be effectually recovered from its intruders.¹

Washington Irving's contemporaries, both at home and in Europe, acknowledged him as a master prose stylist and viewed him as the premier literary figure of the young United States. Today, however, when scholars or literary enthusiasts consider him at all it is as a minor figure, of regional or antiquarian interest.² Still, most readers can vividly bring to mind Ichabod Crane, the rural schoolmaster whose comical physiognomy reflected his very mockable soul. On his "gaunt and shagged" horse, "knees nearly up to the pommel of the saddle; his sharp elbows stuck out like a grasshoppers," while "the skirts of his black coat fluttered out almost to the horse's tail" (285), Crane is the first memorable character in U.S. fiction.³ Irving's tale of an impoverished, greedy rural schoolmaster who aspired to the hand of the prosperous farmer's daughter nestles snugly in its misty Hudson River setting, but also fits into a long Western narrative tradition. From *il dottore*, the long-nosed quack scheming to marry Pantalone's buxom daughter in

¹ Washington Irving, *History of New York*, CWWI, vol. 7, 286.

² The standard Irving biography, Stanley T. Williams, *The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1935) subsequently referred to as STW, is now over 70 years old. In the 1970s, The Modern Language Association began publication of *The Complete Works of Washington Irving*, subsequently referred to as CWWI. Many volumes in this series contain substantial introductions with important biographical material. The American historian Andrew Burstein has just published *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), which deals with Irving as a significant figure in the early Republican era, perhaps presaging a new interest in Irving studies.

³ Parenthetical text references to Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book*, CWWI vol. VIII.

commedia dell'arte performance, to Shakespeare's Malvolio, simpering at Viola in his canary-yellow cross-gartered stockings, the attempt to parlay a half-baked education and outsized ambition into a marital alliance with some blooming heiress has been a longstanding comic trope.

But Ichabod Crane brings a unique national sensibility to this tradition – he is a man of the frontier. He fully savors the delights that would accrue to the heir of farmer Van Tassel's estate, both in its sumptuous material bounty of pigs and geese and produce and in the opportunity to “kick any itinerant pedagogue out of doors that should dare to call him comrade” (287). But Crane's aspirations were never simply to replace the old farmer as lord of the manor:

... his heart yearned after the damsel who was to inherit these domains, and his imagination expanded with the idea, how they might readily be turned into cash, and the money invested in immense tracts of wild land and shingle palaces in the wilderness. Nay, his busy fancy already realized his hopes, and presented to him the blooming Katrina, with a whole family of children, mounted on the top of a waggon loaded with household trumpery, with pots and kettles dangling beneath; and he beheld himself bestriding a pacing mare, with a colt at her heels, setting out for Kentucky, Tennessee, or the Lord knows where! (279)

This canny evocation of the westward expansion as a homespun Yankee El Dorado loomed large in the imagination of a whole generation of dreamers and helps define Washington Irving's place in this study. Throughout Irving's long literary and public career, he viewed the coming of European culture to North America as a process whereby small, commercially-oriented settlements established and embedded themselves, often with some difficulty, into the abiding “immense tracts of wild land” of the continent. In his earliest published works, Irving comfortably assumed the voice of an urbane New York gentleman swapping *bon mots* “in the rests between

cotillions, and pauses between games at cards,”⁴ but one who was cognizant that very different feet had traveled those paths where he and his friends made their way.

Throughout his long literary career, Irving was deeply enmeshed in both the arts and politics of the nation. By the time he arrived in Spain in 1826 his work engaged with issues directly affecting the emerging US assertion of hemispheric political authority. His work on Spain was a critical component in asserting the case for Spain’s inadequacy as a colonial steward, and establishing the *bona fides* of the U.S. as a successor power. This complex intersection between policy and art is at the heart of this dissertation. I will argue that part of Irving’s importance was in helping to merge the authorial voice of the eighteenth-century public sphere with what Salman Rushdie has called the “information-heavy” nature of nineteenth-century fiction.⁵ The categories of art and politics have been differentiated and professionalized during the modern era, and this process of distinction between professional and cultural categories was just emerging in the 1810s and ’20s. Irving’s engagement with both political and cultural elites provides a vivid demonstration of this process. His efforts to carve out and secure a place in the financial marketplace were intimately connected to his literary efforts, while both efforts enhanced and influenced his engagement in the political sphere.

My focus on Irving’s published texts focuses on several themes that lend themselves to discussion of significant theoretical issues. Irving’s interest in the encounter between the Europeans and the lands and peoples they encountered in the Americas pervades his work. In addressing this matter, Irving embraced the attitudes

⁴ Richard H. Dana, Review of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, by Washington Irving, *North American Review* 9 (September 1819): 334.

⁵ Salman Rushdie, *Step Across this Line* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 131.

and values of romanticism; like many authors of the early nineteenth-century, his fondest ambition was to have his work accepted by the great British author Walter Scott. But, like Scott, his romantic attitudes were undergirded by the empirical methodology that the romantics found so problematic. Irving's work helps define the relationship between romanticism and the Enlightenment, specifically the idea that the romantics constructed an avowedly anti-empirical world view using the empirical tools provided by the Enlightenment. The remarkable body of work that Washington Irving produced in his four years in Spain (1826-29) is his most successful expression of this synthesis. It was in these few years that Irving created the literary case for the assertion of US authority in the Spanish colonial world, both reinforcing and amplifying the diplomatic initiatives being undertaken by Everett, Clay and Adams. This was a complex task, and Irving dealt with a number of questions, two of which will command the most attention. The first was the problem-filled integration of the Catholic-Spanish *conquistadores* into the family lineage of Protestant-British US culture, an issue at the heart of Irving's biography of Christopher Columbus. The second is the triangulation of relations among Islam, Spain, and the rest of Christendom, as manifested in both Irving's tales of Moorish Spain and in his long engagement with the diplomatic/military conflict between the U.S. and the North African states of the nineteenth-century Mediterranean. Irving's literary methodology was as significant as his narrative framing of the issues and provides a case study for romanticism's reliance on Enlightenment-based empiricism as a key validating concept in both artistic and political discourse.

Irving described Spain in a way that emphasized the Spanish government's weak stewardship of its patrimony, and compared the government unfavorably to its Moorish predecessor regime. This discursive strategy clearly mirrors the technique Edward Said describes as Orientalism, except that in this case, a Christian regime is contrasted unfavorably with its Islamic predecessor. What to make of this apparent anomaly? Several scholars have pointed out that the concept of Orientalism is applicable to assertions of Western superiority over non-western societies outside the "Orient" – in other words the Orientalist paradigm is not Islam-specific or Asia-specific. The Spanish case clearly demonstrates this. But I want to suggest that we can expand this argument. The Orientalist paradigm is a discursive strategy that can and should be seen as an example of the way western thought was restructured in the modern era. The early nineteenth-century triumph of the empirical, inductive reasoning that characterized the scientific revolution was enormously amplified by an explosion in the amount and kind of raw data gathered by that whole generation of writers and scholars, including Irving, who were "induced to travel by liberal curiosity."⁶ This new data was widely distributed through periodicals such as the Everetts' *North American Review*, books, lectures, and other mass phenomena. Thus for everyone participating in the public sphere, with its new array of contesting parties and ideologies, empiricism was the *sine qua non* of a convincing argument. The empirical grounding of romantic nationalism lay at the heart of its emotional resonance.

Elizabeth Fay has noted that the use of romantic depictions of the past cut across ideological lines in early nineteenth-century politics – romantic images are of use to

⁶ Thomas Macaulay, *History of England* (1849; reprinted London: Macmillan, 1915), 1.

Whigs, Tories, liberals, conservatives, internationalists, and nationalists.⁷ It seems possible that the emergence of the eighteenth-century classificatory project, memorably described in Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*, was a necessary precondition for the emergence of modern political parties. This phenomenon was echoed in another classificatory project of the early nineteenth century, the emergence and differentiation of distinct literary genres. This new sense of difference distinguished between, on the one hand, the romantic fiction and histories of Sir Walter Scott and Washington Irving, and on the other, an emerging genre of history writing that claimed to eschew Irving's romanticism – its practitioners included Thomas Macaulay and William Hickling Prescott. A significant aspect of this new genre of history-writing is that its difference from earlier genres did *not* revolve around an assertion of fidelity to an objectively discernible standard of truth. Instead, the distinction is one of sensibility – Prescott's own long and generous review of Irving's *Columbus* in *The North American Review*, criticizes Irving for following in the error of Edward Gibbon by failing to acknowledge the historical agency of God's Providence.⁸ The idea that the marker for the rise of modern, "objective" history would be a rational, empirically grounded assertion that God is, in fact, on our side, may be one of the most significant of all romanticism's contributions to modernist teleology.

Because Irving was a man of words, the carving out of his professional career and status was not merely a process but a subject that he analyzed in his correspondence and in his fiction. Irving often addressed the matter of building a career when career-building

⁷ Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and Romantic Literary Ideal* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 1-3. See also Ann Rigney, "The Untenanted Places of the Past: Thomas Carlyle and the Varieties of Historical Ignorance," *History and Theory* 35 (October, 1996): 338-357 for a thoughtful evaluation of the emergence of a distinction between history and fiction.

⁸ William Hickling Prescott, review of *Irving's Conquest of Granada*, *North American Review* 29 (1829).

was culturally suspect, and he was always conscious of the relationship between commerce and honor. Irving was profoundly aware that those whom produced cultural works for public sale were not part of the traditional social order, and that they needed to carve out their own place in polite society. In Irving's case, this is a particularly rich story, weaving together the fortunes of his family, long engaged in the commerce of the Atlantic world, and the major political events of that era including the Napoleonic Wars, the War of 1812, Anglo-American colonialism in the Western hemisphere, and the subsequent construction of an economic system thoroughly integrated into the capitalist economy. Despite his vexed and very self-conscious relationship with this issue, the sense that Irving was fundamentally a commercial writer emerged as a further point of distinction between him and those later writers who history would deem as more literary and respectable. What an irony! Irving, who framed his attraction to the literary life in terms of his revulsion at the drudgery of the counting house, and whose villains are invariably denoted by their worship of Mammon, was himself ultimately dismissed from the leading literary ranks on grounds of being a commercial hack. Thus he manifested one more trope of his era – this dismissal became another case of the revolution eating its own children.

Washington Irving and Romanticism

Along with its substantial charm and still-accessible humor, Washington Irving's 1808 *History of New York* is the first major articulation of the qualities and values that make Irving's work such a valuable expression of early nineteenth-century ideologies and cultural values. *HNY* begins Irving's long examination of the relationship between

European settlers, with their dreams of gain and progress, and the “New World.” The book examines the place of politics and expansionism in the management of the new settler societies, and the development of a specifically American culture. The book is deeply researched; Irving meant to set his whimsical wit in a firmly empirical context. Perhaps most significantly, it was the sort of first triumph every young author imagines. On the strength of its success Irving became a public figure throughout the U.S., befriending First Lady Dolly Madison, and in Britain, where Walter Scott, who had “laughed his sides off” at the work, was pleased to meet Irving and champion him with British publishers. *HNY* was also Irving’s first financially remunerative venture. His earlier writings had been published as letters to the editor or in a series of hand-to-mouth journals and pamphlets, while the first edition of *HNY* may have earned him as much as \$3,000 and was reprinted twice before 1814. The work was reviewed widely in the U.S. and Britain, and in perhaps the clearest manifestation of its significance, the surname of Diedrich Knickerbocker, Irving’s fictional narrator, has become a signifier for all New Yorkers, a charming invented tradition in its own right.⁹

HNY also represents Irving’s first crack at integrating substantial historical research with the emerging romantic sensibility, an effect he achieves through a comic deconstruction of empiricism. Using empirical research to deconstruct empiricism is a key characteristic of romanticism and romantic nationalism, something that has helped obscure the Enlightenment roots of romanticism. For the romantics, and most other early

⁹ Irving’s rapid initiation into Dolly Madison’s circle is detailed in several letters from Washington, D.C., including “To Henry Brevoort,” January 13, 1811, *Letters Volume II, 1823-1838*, CWWI vol.23, 296. The Scott letter is reprinted in PMI vol. 1, 241. Among the reviews were those in *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, (February 1810): 123-128, a predecessor to *The North American Review* and *Port Folio* Philadelphia VIII (October 1812): 344-45. On the financial success of *HNY*, see PMI vol. 1, 245.

nineteenth-century thinkers, the idea that a direct and vigorous application of the Enlightenment's commitment to rational and universalist ideals had led to twenty-five years of war tended to undercut support for the party of man and Voltaire. But despite the failure of the Enlightenment in devising a blueprint for governing France, its commitment to empirical, inductive analysis itself triumphed. Empiricism proved foundational for the new Western intellectual and political disciplines that emerged in the wake of the Napoleonic wars. Once the failure of the Enlightenment's universalizing, progressive, and rationalist theories was carefully observed, the inductive methodology of the scientific revolution that underlay them required intellectuals to discard these theories and get to work on new ones. The emergence of ideologies of national particularity was one of the key innovations of this post-Napoleonic world, articulated innocuously by Irving and far more radically in cases like the Holy Alliance's attempts to restore the *status quo ante* throughout Europe. In both cases, however, the justification and basic principles articulated are grounded in enlightened, empirical methodology.¹⁰

Washington Irving's historical works participate in this process, and although his prose moved between genres, this study focuses principally on that segment of his work. Irving wrote a good deal of history, but one of the first problems that emerges in analyzing his historical works is to sort out their place in the emerging profession

¹⁰ See David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) for individual cases of writers coming to terms with the failure of the French Revolution, as well as an astute comparison of that phenomenon with contemporary intellectual reaction to the declining plausibility of Marxist political theory. Lloyd Kramer's *Nationalism: Political Cultures in Europe and America, 1775-1865* (New York: Twayne, 1998) focuses on the place of nationalism in this process. Lynn Hunt's *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) established the technique of reading social ideology through artistic production. Good examples from the romantic era include Sheryl Kroen, *Politics and Theater: The Crisis of Legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815-1830* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Catherine Hall, *Civilizing Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Denise Davidson, *France After Revolution: Urban Life, Gender, and the New Social Order* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

of history-writing, a relationship that came into question even during his lifetime.¹¹ In fact, history-writing did rapidly move away from Irving's romantic and satirical style. Hayden White's influential *Metahistory* offers some insight into this discursive disconnect. White set out to analyze the methodologies and strategies of nineteenth-century historians and philosophers of history, and locate them in the context of other literary forms. Although he consciously restricted his discussion to canonical writers of the magnitude of Ranke, Burckhardt, Hegel and Marx, his analytical matrix helps explain how Irving's approach conflicts structurally with that of these authors. In particular, White uses categories developed by Northrup Frye to distinguish between comedy and satire, comedy's ironic, post-enlightenment offspring. In this model, comedy is a form that ultimately relies on the possibility of a stable social reality – at the end of the comedy, tears have been shed and lessons learned, but the players are reconciled with each other and society. Satire, however, views comedy's embodiment of the possibility of a saner world as a delusional fantasy, one that simply (and significantly) does not meet the test of empirical analysis. Following this analytical thread, White defines romanticism as a genre characterized by the transcendence of the hero over the world of experience. He argues that because this romantic transcendence requires a conclusion in which the hero has achieved integration, a state unavailable in satire, satire and romanticism are mutually exclusive. There is no possibility of a satiric romance since satire undercuts the romantic's natural seriousness. Since Irving's work typically does combine satire and romance, it is easy to see why his work ultimately could not find a home in the deadly

¹¹ For details on the trajectory of Irving's reputation, see Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

serious world of canonical history. This also explains the rapid marginalization of the entire category of historical romance.¹²

This definitional anomaly also helps contextualize White's work. Although one of the key figures in the rise of postmodern literary analysis of historical texts, White did not envision actual postmodern political praxis, especially the enthusiastic yoking of the ostensible veneration of iconic texts or belief systems with hypermodern media manipulation. I will argue that Irving found the empirical, narrative genre of history-writing to be an excellent vehicle for expressing his view of the world, a view that in fact was both romantic and ironic. Any student of historical romance will quickly observe that the problematic yoking of romanticism and satire leads to a genre studded with narrative contradiction. Examples include Walter Scott's valorization of Saladin as the epitome of chivalry while Britain was extending its imperial authority over the Islamic world, Byron's glamorization of pirates while sea-borne criminals were crushed in the Caribbean and swept from the commercial sea lanes, the emergence of the modern Robin Hood character at the same time enclosure was proletarianizing the rural poor, and Irving's critique of the European conquest of the Americas while U.S. authority was rolling westward. Perhaps the tension in this approach, so astutely observed by White, accounts for its utility as a vehicle for simultaneously expressing dismay at, and justifying the emergence of the era of Western, capitalist dominance over the world, the early nineteenth-century

¹² Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973) 1-31; 267-280. See the introduction to Lloyd Kramer's *Lafayette in Two Worlds: Public Culture and Personal Identities in the Age of Revolutions* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-4 for a valuable demonstration of the usefulness of White's categories in characterizing the historical treatment of Lafayette. As noted in the preface, I have chosen to meta-comment on this matter by including a few jokes of my own in this dissertation. Perhaps their jarring impact may illustrate the problems Irving's work has found with subsequent critics, as well as expressing my own performative *homage* to Irving.

“strategy of innocence” Mary Louise Pratt has described as “anti-conquest.”¹³ It also helps explain William Hickling Prescott’s criticism of Irving’s failure to acknowledge Providence in the story of Christopher Columbus. Providential determinism would provide the sort of integration that Irving’s allusions to the purposeless madness associated with the conquest of the Americas fails to find.

New Yorker

History of New York is a big book, far more substantial than Irving’s previous literary *feuilletons*, but reflects and expands on their insouciant spirit. His earliest published writings appeared in 1802 in the *Morning Chronicle*, a journal whose editor’s included Irving’s brother Peter. They consisted of series of letters under the first of a long list of Irving pseudonyms, Jonathan Oldstyle. The publication was part of the wild cultural mosaic that made up New York’s vigorous public sphere, a tempestuous, commercialized world that reflected the emergence of the port city as a center of the arts, politics, and especially, commerce. Overlaying the emergence of national parties and political alliances, New York had its own dynamic collection of political leaders and factions – Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, and DeWitt Clinton were three of the most prominent leaders. Simultaneously, the city’s cultural and theatrical scene was rapidly emerging as the most vigorous in the young republic.¹⁴

¹³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 7.

¹⁴ For general information on the publication of the Jonathan Oldstyle letters, see STW, Chapter 3; Washington Irving, *Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle, Gent; Salmagundi: or The Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq. & Others*, CWWI vol. 6, xix-xxii. On turn-of-the-century cultural life in New York, see Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect*; Lawrence Levine *Highbrow, Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

The Jonathan Oldstyle letters have been regarded (especially by Irving) as excessively callow, even for a writer in his early twenties, but they do reflect two important attitudes. First, they establish Irving's characteristic point of view – throughout his career he was simultaneously both an observer and participant in events of the day. Most of the letters concern the world of theatergoers, and Irving's protestations about the outrageousness of the dress, behavior, and language of this crowd reflect a deep immersion in the culture. Secondly, they establish a persona immune to the petty concerns of the marketplace. Irving's Oldstyle is one of those characters for whom the struggle to make a living would never be a subject for polite discussion, not least because such considerations suggested a certain lack of moral grandeur incompatible with the critics' Olympian voice. Irving reinforced the alignment of the "Oldstyle" persona with the rapidly disintegrating ideal that gentlemanly behavior takes place outside the realm of financial interest by characterizing him as an elderly bachelor. The "elderly bachelor" narrator reappears throughout Irving's work, and was a role Irving himself embraced in his personal life, with little apparent reluctance.

The letters also engage with some of the political themes that emerged in Irving's later works; an example important to this study is his discussion of a play entitled *The Tripolitan Prize*.¹⁵ Staged in 1802 during one of the intermittent outbreaks of actual fighting between the United States Navy and the Barbary States, the play rested, as Irving the critic pointed out, on some fairly ludicrous plot devices. Most egregiously, the climactic scene of the play, a naval battle between an American in command of a Tripolitan prize and a pursuing Tripolitan cruiser, was set on the coast of England. A romantic subplot concerning the American ship captain's son necessitated this unlikely

¹⁵ Irving, *HNY*, CWWI vol. 7, 8-10.

locale. Irving's two sharpest comments on the play and audience concern its predictability – he sniffs at the gallery's applause and enthusiasm for a series of platitudes concerning the dedication to duty and fighting qualities of the US seamen ("True Blue will never stain!"), and the actual outcome of the encounter ("the tripolitan very politely gave in – as it would be indecent to conquer in the face of an American audience.")

Irving directs his disappointment, expressed in an arch style meant to efface any suggestion of sincere criticism, at the failure to produce any representatives of the Barbary tribe onstage. He expected to see a "fierce band of tripolitans with whiskers as long as my arm," with "those tripolitan scoundrels spitted like turkeys for our amusement." Unfortunately, the producer's resources were not up to this challenge. This juxtaposition of his amusement at the jingoism of the crowd alongside a few cheap shots of his own may have been what Irving found so painful while considering these works for inclusion in a reprinted edition some year's later. Nevertheless, this device reappears in the *Oldstyle* letters.¹⁶ An example is his discussion of the critics: "The beaus of the present day, who meet here to lounge away an idle hour, and play off their impertinencies for the entertainment of the public....They even *strive* to appear inattentive...I have seen one of them perch'd upon the front of the box with his back to the stage...staring vacantly at the audience."¹⁷ This distaste, doubtless richly merited, appears adjacent to Irving's own technical and detailed comments on the merits of theatrical stagings, costuming, and even individual line readings. Irving's scorn for the practitioners of

¹⁶ For all its problems, this letter has received substantial attention. Robert Allison in *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) discussed it as an early example of US attitudes toward Islam, but its significance in the "Oldstyle" *oeuvre* extends beyond its twentieth-century topicality. When a New York publication decided to dredge up and publish some old Irving pieces anonymously, they began with this letter. See *The New York Mirror: a Weekly Gazette of Literature and the Fine Arts* (New York) 1, No. 27: 215.

¹⁷ Irving, *HNY*, CWWI, vol. 7, 13.

criticism, juxtaposed with his own engagement in this dubious practice, is an early example of another issue Irving will engage throughout his career. The struggle to reconcile the necessity of participation in the marketplace (as a paid critic, for example) with cultural norms that provide few models for gentlemanly participation in market activity was a constant concern. The comedy, or even hypocrisy, of this phenomenon is an easy target that few Irving scholars have resisted. Michael Black, the editor of the *HNy* volume in the *CWWI* series, said “his public pose was that of an eighteenth-century gentleman whose writing was an avocation, but in private he horse-traded like any of Diedrich Knickerbocker’s damned Yankees to sell his wares for the best price.”¹⁸ The significance of this apparently contradictory attitude, however, lies in the process whereby Irving, and many other gentlemen participating in the construction of the commercialized public sphere, helped effect its resolution. They brought to life and defined the modern category of the artist/intellectual as an independent economic agent.

Irving’s early efforts as an essayist were strictly a sideline – he was still reading law by day – but as the identity of Jonathan Oldstyle’s creator gradually became known, Irving received enough notice as a writer that his older and more prosperous brothers decided to treat him to the young gentleman’s prerogative, a European journey. Irving’s eldest brother apparently asked him to continue writing during this journey, not for publication but the sort of correspondence and journalizing that became an Irving trademark. Here he began his lifelong habit of sharpening the narrative punch of his anecdotes by using journals and correspondence to refine and retell them. Although Irving’s two and a half years in Europe generated no publications, he stored up experiences, including some genuinely harrowing encounters with bandits and pirates in

¹⁸ Michael Black, Introduction to *HNy*, *CWWI*, vol. 7, clvii.

Italy and the Mediterranean. These helped shape views and attitudes he would more fully explore in his Spanish material. During this trip he refined his prose style, and became familiar with the genre of travel literature.¹⁹

On his return to the U.S., he reassumed his place among New York's young elite – his credentials as a lawyer in training and associate of his commercially successful brothers afforded him this status. Through his general taste for tradition and Toryism, he aligned himself, at least in temperament, with the declining Federalist Party. If his politics were only minimally ideological, he remained fascinated by the cut-and-thrust of the political scene. Along with reentering his New York social milieu, and passing the bar examination (by the skin of his teeth) Irving soon reemerged as a satirist. A sophisticated core group, including Irving's brother William, his brother-in-law James Paulding, and, conveniently, the publisher David Longworth, banded together to publish twenty issues of a satiric journal in 1807 and 1808. They gave this small, yellow-jacketed pamphlet series a name that reflected its flavor of self-conscious mockery: *Salmagundi; or, The Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff & Others*. Like the *Oldstyle* letters, *Salmagundi* reviewed the theater scene, examined fashions in dress, travel, and speech, and dabbled in political satire. Typically, the journal's first issue began with a protestation about the authors' complete indifference to any financial gain:

We beg the public particularly to understand, that we solicit no patronage. We are determined on the contrary that the patronage shall be entirely on our side. We have nothing to do with the pecuniary concerns of the paper....We advise the public therefore, to purchase our numbers merely for their own sakes – if they do not, let them settle the affairs with their consciences and posterity.²⁰

¹⁹ STW, 44-73. In "WI to William Irving," December 25, 1804, *Letters III*, CWWI, vol. 23, 143, Irving quotes from Henry Swinburne's *Travels in Two Sicilies*, which he used as a guide in his own Italian travels.

²⁰ Washington Irving, *Salmagundi* No. I (Jan 24, 1807), CWWI vol. 6, 68.

In the third issue, a new Irving *nom de plume* appeared in the journal's pages, joining the theatergoer Launcelot Longstaff, the man about town Anthony Evergreen, the intellectual Will Wizard, and the domesticated family man Pindar Cockloft. Mustapha Rub-a-dub Keli Khan appeared as the latest in a long line of fictional Oriental observers of Western culture. Like the rest of his clan, stretching back to Montesquieu's Usbek and Rica, his narrative voice was generally employed to comment on those aspects of Western society deemed most distinct from the imagined world of the Sublime Porte: public-sphere politics and matters of gender. Which of these individual pieces Irving himself wrote is not totally clear, and while it would overstate the contentiousness of Irving scholarship to suggest that this is a burning controversy, the authorship of the individual pieces that make up *Salmagundi* is a subject that has attracted some scholarly speculation. As usual, Irving's nephew/biographer Pierre is the most widely accepted source, and he states that although Washington generally wrote the Mustapha pieces, Paulding wrote most of the first one. He notes that Irving did add one paragraph, about the incarceration of the Tripolitans, and he must have done so with great enthusiasm since it allowed him to finally make good the failure to produce a string of bound prisoners in *The Tripolitan Prize*. Irving's paragraph describes Mustapha's arrival "at the head of a ragged regiment of tripolitan prisoners." He is marched off a captive privateer to a fictional prison cell, apparently amply supplied with writing materials. During their march through the streets, Mustapha and the other prisoners receive the warm welcome that Irving's fellow theater-goers had been unable to afford the non-existent prisoners on that night five years previous.²¹

²¹ Washington Irving, *Salmagundi*, CWWI vol. 6, 89-91; PMI vol. I, 178.

The character of Mustapha is anything but original – the great modernist literary scholar Stanley Williams found him “tiresome” (not without justification) – but since Irving ultimately does so much to reframe the representation of Islam in the West, a brief character sketch is in order.²² The Mustapha entries are epistolary, presented as letters most of which are addressed to his friend and peer “Asem Hacchem, principal slave-driver to his highness the Bashaw of Tripoli.” Their political and social commentary is not particularly subtle and seldom strays beyond the formulaic. Mustapha describes every-day activities as seen through the eyes of a *faux-naïf* steeped in the stereotypical militarized, masculinist, authoritarian/primitive culture that characterized early modern representation of the Islamic world. The letters address the behavior of women in public, expressing astonishment that some of them “usurp the breeches” of these “wretched infidels.” He speculates that since the women on the street “with bare arms and necks” are as lovely as houris, “what must be the charms of those shut up in the seraglios...?” (91).²³ Mustapha comments on public political behavior, humorously mistaking rambunctious electioneering processions for heroic military attacks. He concludes that the land must be ruled by those who can talk the most – a form of government he terms a “logocracy.” One of the letters took on a more topical issue, the debate over whether the federal government could or should pay for a modern navy. Typically, Irving takes the expansionist view of the New York merchants, mocking the plans of the Jeffersonian “grand bashaw” to build a fleet of defensive gunboats, “rickety little bantlings,” in lieu of

²² STW vol. I, 80-83.

²³ Malini Johar Schueller contextualizes the gendered elements of the Mustapha material under the rubric of “Algerian Narrators” in her *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 67-73.

the “formidable first-rates and gallant frigates” that might actually be able to help the U.S. merchant fleet project its reach into less than tranquil waters (173).

The character of Mustapha lacks utterly any specific grounding in the culture of North Africa. One of the few characterizing devices Irving allows him is a series of ever more far-fetched oaths: “by the beard of the great Omar, who prayed three times to each of the one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets of our most holy faith” or “by the nine-hundred tongues in the great beast in Mahomet’s vision.” By the end of the *Salmagundi* run, it seems that Irving regretted this shallow approach. The last number includes an Arabian folktale (ascribed to one of Mustapha’s manuscripts – another device Irving would use many times in the future) that describes a member of a wandering Bedouin clan who, though poor, “glory in the unenvied liberty they enjoy.” While this story employs the trope of “natural man” rather than any actual ethnological research, it does begin the important conceptual task of bringing this foreign people out of the realm of literary devices and into the category of ethnographic subject. The difference between Mustapha, with his roots in the Montesquieuesque early modern tradition of and this anthropologically imagined Bedouin are significant. Literary historian Percy Adams notes the Irving’s Mustapha is the very last character of this type to stand as a significant figure, a point that emphasizes again Irving’s place at the end of the early modern literary tradition and the beginning of more carefully defined distinctions between fiction, natural philosophy, history, and other genres.²⁴ Once that all-important step occurs, it is possible

²⁴ Percy Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1983), 114. This excellent study has a very helpful analysis of the structural use of imaginary foreigners as social critics in the works of Montesquieu, his predecessors, and his followers. Adams, a long-time professor of English at the University of Tennessee, was also responsible for compiling the spectacular collection of eighteenth-century travel books at the U.T. library, a great boon to this project.

to speak of foreigners with a modern sensibility and, ironically, to use them much more effectively to make points about modern or topical issues.

This seems to be a lesson Irving assimilated very well. Unsurprisingly, *Salmagundi*, launched with such a straightforward assertion of financial indifference, foundered on the shoals of a financial dispute between the contributors. By June of 1807, Irving, who was in attendance at the trial of Aaron Burr in Richmond, wrote his collaborator Paulding an account of the trial that included an urgent inquiry concerning the paper's finances. Irving made clear that Longworth, the publisher, was understood to be the financial manager of the enterprise, but that Irving expected some remuneration. The story of the papers' financial dealings is based on the biography by his nephew Pierre Irving – among his many firsts, Irving was the first U.S. author to receive detailed biographical treatment. Peter Irving states that, based on interviews with the principals, the publication was a remarkable success – 800 copies were sold on one memorable day! When the time for accounting came, it seems that the publisher Longworth had copyrighted the characters and storylines. With this revelation, the publication came to an abrupt end, but Irving and his brother immediately turned to the *HNY* project, one that would reflect the lessons learned from *Salmagundi*.²⁵

History of New York

Washington Irving and his brother Peter originally conceived their *History of New York* as a modest parody of a book recently published about the city, *A Picture of New*

²⁵ “To James K. Paulding,” June 22, 1807, *Letters III*, CWWI vol. 23, 239; for discussion of *Salmagundi* finances, see PMI vol. I, 179, 192-95, 210-11.

York by Samuel Lathem Mitchill.²⁶ The transition in genre is significant. Irving's earlier work had been in the tradition of the periodical essay, a genre dating back to the eighteenth-century emergence of regular publications aimed at the new bourgeois, commercial marketplace, associated particularly with the essayists Addison and Steele and London publications like the *Tattler* and *Spectator*.²⁷ This Addisonian essay privileges the ruminations of a putatively disinterested social observer/participant (often, a witty bachelor about town) who can comment on a wide range of issues in the public sphere. Irving's collection of urbane bachelor-narrators fits this model closely. The process of parodying Mitchill's work required a level of research and data-gathering that was new to Irving and his brother, a partner early in the project. The parody would resemble new genres that had emerged in the nineteenth century, especially travel narratives and history, works that relied for their authority not on the wit and perceptiveness of the observer, but on the marshalling and synthesis of large amounts of empirically compiled data. Once embarked on this path, Irving turned out to be a gifted and productive researcher. The amount of material unearthed, along with the urgency of getting something to the publisher, ultimately caused him to restrict the scope of the account to the story of New York – or New Amsterdam – under Dutch rule between 1609 and 1664.²⁸

As Scott's famously positive reaction to the work makes clear, *History of New York* was a comedy, and an effective one, but the nature of its comic effect is complex. William L. Hedges has referred to "its remarkable slipperiness of tone and viewpoint," an

²⁶ Samuel Lathem Mitchell, *A Picture of New York: or The Traveller's Guide through the Commercial Metropolis of the United States* (New York: I. Riley, 1807). Irving discussed his intent to satirize Mitchill in the introduction to the 1848 edition of *HNY*.

²⁷ Black, Introduction to Irving, *HNY*, CWWI vol. 7, xix.

²⁸ PMI vol. 1, 218-219.

inevitable reaction for anyone attempting to synthesize the works' elements of slapstick, political satire, expository history and poetic description into one stylistically consistent package.²⁹ From the time of its publication, the most accessible and widely discussed comic elements of the work have been its carefully crafted political and social satire. One of the work's earliest reviewers put it this way: "The account of the honest Dutch governours has been made subservient to a lively flow of good natured satire on the follies and blunders of the present day, and the perplexities they have caused."³⁰ This line of critical commentary has traced the clear correspondences Irving drew between the early rulers of Dutch New Amsterdam and the political leadership of the United States in his own day. The most obvious and topical of these was the close resemblance between the second Dutch governor, Wilhelm Kieft. His nickname, William the Testy, and dilettantish attention to all manner of scientific arcana combined with lack of interest in the obvious need for a navy and other domestic improvements, mocked Jefferson. In particular, Michael Black, the editor of the *HNY* volume in the *CWWI* series deepens our understanding of the work's contemporary political valence by comparing the first edition to later reprints, particularly Irving's major rewrite of 1848.³¹ Black notes that in the context of the Mexican-American War, perhaps the most direct manifestation of US expansionism, Irving softened some of his caustic comments about the acquisitiveness of

²⁹ William L. Hedges, "The *Knickerbocker History* as Knickerbocker's "History," in *The Old and New World Romanticism of Washington Irving*, ed. Stanley Brodwin (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 163.

³⁰ Review of *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York*, *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* (February 1810): 123. Two dissertations meticulously establish the correspondences between Irving's cast of colonial Dutch characters and his actual political contemporaries: Michael Black, "Washington Irving's *A History of New York* with Emphasis on the 1848 Revision" (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1967); Helen M. Loschky, "Washington Irving's *Knickerbocker's History of New York*: Folk History as Literary Form" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1970). Black's argument is summarized in his "Political Satire in *Knickerbocker's History*," in *The Knickerbocker Tradition: Washington Irving's New York*, ed. Andrew B. Myers (Tarrytown: Sleepy Hollow Restoration, 1974).

³¹ Irving, *HNY*, *CWWI*, vol. 7, xxvi.

the early settlers. This reconsideration of his earlier, more skeptical approach makes clear how central the critique of colonial conquest had been to the original work.

This critique of imperialism is articulated in depth in *HNY's* Book I, a remarkable five-chapter prelude that simultaneously constructs an empirical critique of expansionism while mocking the genre of empirical analysis. Another Irving scholar, Mary Weatherspoon Bowden, has contextualized this aspect of the book as part of Irving's longstanding habit of criticizing Jefferson through satiric descriptions of his interest in arcane collections and detailed descriptions of the material world.³² Bowden argues that this mockery is aimed not just at Jefferson but at an entire older generation of New Yorkers as well, especially DeWitt Clinton, recently mayor of New York and a man whose detailed interest in natural history, the American Indian, and technological improvement rivaled Jefferson's. Bowden suggests that Irving's interest in parodying Mitchill stemmed in part from Mitchill's association with New York's intellectual establishment, especially the New York Historical Society. The Historical Society was the recipient of a fulsome and apparently tongue-in-cheek dedication in the original 1809 edition, part of the pseudo-historical trappings Irving used to present the book.

Mitchill was certainly a worthy stand-in for the intellectual establishment – he had his own extensive history of publication on a range of political and natural philosophical subjects worthy of a *philosophe*, including questions of atmospheric chemistry, invertebrate physiology, and a proposed constitutional amendment meant to address the Jefferson/Burr Electoral College debacle. Although perhaps not the crowning achievement of his career, his interests even extended to religious sleepwalking – in an

³² Mary Weatherspoon Bowden, "Knickerbocker's *History* and the 'Enlightened' Men of New York." *American Literature* 47 (1975): 159-172.

1815 pamphlet he described a case and named the phenomenon “Devotional Somnium.”³³ It seems that Mitchill may not have been an unwilling participant in the battle between Irving and the intellectual establishment; in the introduction to his *Picture of New York*, Mitchill emphasizes – beats to death might be a more accurate description – the seriousness of his enterprise. He noted the inaccuracy of previous descriptions of New York, compared his work to some prestigious volumes on London and Paris and added that “nothing is easier than to write works of fancy; nothing more difficult and laborious than to ascertain facts.”³⁴

If Irving was in the process of looking for a more effective vehicle for his version of observation and wit, this comment might have settled the issue. As he notes, his *HNY* ultimately bore little resemblance to Mitchill’s volume, but the decision to “burlesque the pedantic lore displayed in certain American works” (3) by emulating Mitchill’s hyper-empiricism for comic effect was a major and extremely effective shift in style for Irving.³⁵ Irving’s deconstruction of empirical genres actually began before the book’s publication with what today we would describe as a viral marketing campaign. Shortly before the book’s publication, Irving and his friends inserted a series of alarming notices in the daily newspapers, announcing the disappearance of a certain Diedrich Knickerbocker from a New York lodging house. Any information about the old gentleman’s whereabouts was requested, along with help in the disposition of a certain curious historical manuscript he had left behind. The advertisements continued for several weeks, ultimately leading to what must have been the highly gratifying spectacle

³³ Samuel Mitchill, *Devotional Somnium, or, a collection of prayers and exhortations uttered by Miss Rachel Baker in the city of New-York in the winter of 1815 during her abstracted and unconscious state: to which is prefixed an account of her life*. (Sangerfield, NY: Tenny & Miller, 1816).

³⁴ Mitchill, *Picture*, vi.

³⁵ Parenthetical references are to Irving, *HNY*, CWWI vol. VII.

of the New York City Council proposing a more general search for the missing man, who was finally reported to be in an out of the way lodging up the Hudson River. Ironically, as Irving toyed with the normative presumption that information found in the newspaper is accurate, he actually delayed publication of *HNY* (it was being discretely printed in Philadelphia) to weave into the text the results of some last-minute archival research.³⁶

Once the work was published, his introduction made it clear that Irving meant to examine the comic potential of literary parody in detail. While Mitchell's few modest comments about the region's geology and the origins of New York's "aborigines" may have provided Irving's original inspiration, Book I of *HNY* is a tour de force that sends up not just Mitchell's modest work but the entire tradition of Western historical and natural philosophical writing. A preliminary "Note to the Public," written in the voice of Diedrich Knickerbocker, opens with a paraphrase of Herodotus, and expresses the hope that ultimately "*Knickerbocker's New York* may be equally voluminous with *Gibbon's Rome*" (19). The satirical intent of this overblown fantasizing was quickly reinforced with his expression of the hope that in a few hundred years he might see "myself – little I!...posted at the head of this host of literary worthies...pressing forward, like a gallant commander, to honor and immortality" (19).

Having articulated these consciously ludicrous ambitions, Irving offers to the reader an astounding work, one that, as discussed above, stands outside most literary categories. The work anticlally deconstructs the new empiricism while simultaneously demonstrating the power of empirical argument. Because this type of writing seems so fundamentally outside the contemporary genres identified by Hayden White, and because an understanding of Irving's approach seems so important for the rest of this study, I will

³⁶ PMI vol. 1, 236 for publication details.

describe the opening section of the work in what may strike the reader as excruciating detail.

Irving begins by presenting a collection of theories about the nature of the world and its constituent astronomical and physical parts in which he juxtaposes empirically grounded mechanical geological theories with an amalgam of religious speculations. Irving summarizes, and parodies, the current state of knowledge in such varied fields as geology, anthropology, astronomy, history, and international law. He achieves this remarkable effect by creating individual chapters that have the sound – and look – of traditional scholarship. In particular, the pages are anchored with substantial double-stacked footnotes made up of cryptically abbreviated references to the most arcane tomes in the western canon. One of the four footnotes on one page in the survey of theories of the world's creation will serve as a good example:

Aristot. Nat. Auscult. l. ii. cap 6. Aristot. Metaph. lib. i. cap. 3. Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. i. cap. 10. Justin Mart. rat. ad gent. p. 20.

Another, in the discussion of the right of the Europeans to possession of the Americas consists of:

Grotius. Puffendorf, b. iv. c. 4. Vattel, b. i. c. 18, &c.

These intentionally obscure, even farcical footnotes emulate those from contemporary works of serious scholarship, and at the same time demonstrate by the significance of the works referenced the depth of Irving's actual research. This sort of satire required a close knowledge of the material being satirized, and Irving's preliminary notes and drafts indicate that the scope of his research was indeed extensive. His journals include extensive passages from those classical and contemporary authors whose names are appropriate for such learned discourse. Along with those cited in the quotes above they

include Boethius, Herodotus, and Francis Bacon. Irving found of particular interest the ideas of Erasmus Darwin, whose speculations that humans and monkeys share their ancestry were published in his *Laws of Organic Life* in 1796, over half a century before his grandson Charles published *The Origin of Species*.³⁷

Chapter 2 of this first book moves from the nature of the universe to its creation, juxtaposing exaggeratedly outlandish folktales with the more orthodox theories of the ancient Greeks and early modern European natural philosophers. Irving's wide-ranging presentation of ideas from nonwestern sources leans toward animistic creation stories, including a Mohawk story of the first woman landing on the back of a swimming tortoise and a Congo legend explaining why the "nose of all his descendants became flat" (28). The description of Western speculation about creation skips over the biblical narrative in favor of arch, but accurate summations of theories of James Hutton and Georges Buffon, the eighteenth-century fathers of classical geology. This juxtaposition of names subsequently enshrined as founders of the natural sciences with mythologizers, fabulators, lesser-known contemporaries, and "profound sages of antiquity" (27) humorously catches the way in which cosmological speculation genuinely was in play in this era. Irving concludes this chapter not by choosing between these theories or judging them against some presumptively authoritative text but with the whimsical observation that irrespective of theories, in fact the "Island of New York will be found by any one who seeks for it in its proper place" (31). Even this facetious remark is significant in its clear privileging of empiricism – in this mockery of speculative systems Irving makes clear that all cosmological hypotheses must account for that which can actually be observed.

³⁷ Irving, *HNY*, CWWI vol. VII, xx-xxi.

Chapters 3 and 4 continue the process of particularizing the story of the New Yorkers. Chapter 3 deals with the “discovery of America,” summarizing the extensive literature meant to rationalize the apparent ignorance of the Americas in biblical and classical sources. Again, Irving’s presentation of the theories under discussion makes clear that this was an era when questions brought forth hypotheses in abundance. In this case the suggestions include a modern-sounding list of potential predecessors to Columbus including the Vikings, Phoenicians, and Chinese. Chapter 4 amplifies the issues raised in 3, moving from the discovery question to the matter of the actual mechanism by which aboriginal Americans populated the continent. Whether the solution was based on the unexplained mobility of the children of Noah or some more mechanical device like “the supposition of the learned Grotius...that North America was populated by a strolling company of Norwegians, and that Peru was founded by a colony from China” (37), the hypotheses were critiqued by analyzing data. Was it possible to discern Israelite behaviors or physiognomies among the Indians? Were there Chinese or European elements in the Amerindian languages? Irving segued into a discussion of the role of Adam and Eve in the process and mentions “the startling conjecture of Buffon, Helvetius, and Darwin, so highly honorable to mankind, that the whole species is accidentally descended from a remarkable family of monkeys” (38). Before concluding this multi-chapter review of the state of natural philosophy, Irving bids a charming and wistful farewell to nonempirical, deductive thinking with a quote attributed to Charlevoix, a “sturdy old Jesuit”: “The common father of mankind [Adam] received an express order from Heaven to people the world, and *accordingly it has been peopled*. To bring this about, it was necessary to overcome all difficulties in the way, *and they have*

been overcome” (39). This delightful assertion of the primacy of presumptive authority makes an interesting comparison to the previously quoted conclusion to Chapter II, which also closed with a statement emphasizing that what is truly incontestable is that which can be observed. In the remarks of this “old Jesuit” Irving further expands his exploration of empiricism by providing an example of an inductive argument in the service of biblical authority.

In the fifth and final chapter of Book I, Irving concludes his survey of scientific and philosophical issues with a long excursus on the legal basis for the European appropriation of the New World lands from their indigenous inhabitants. Just as the earlier chapters summarize the state of natural philosophic speculation, this chapter reviews the various assertions used to justify European hegemony over Native Americans. In this case however, Irving is not merely enumerating ideas – his descriptions of the “Right of Discovery,” “Right of Cultivation,” and “Right of Civilization” all reflect a distinct acknowledgment of the actual indefensibility of the conquest of the Americas on any but purely self-serving grounds.

Irving’s “Right of Discovery” examines Cortez’s conquest of Mexico and rationalizes the dispossession of the indigenous by denying their humanity. Although the Americas “abounded with certain animals that walked erect, had something of the human countenance, uttered certain unintelligible sounds, very much like language” these beings commanded no consideration, especially since their property could be used to “establish fat monasteries and bishoprics.” Although Irving caricatures these arguments for comic effect, he makes one discursive move that will have major significance in his later career. For purposes of this discussion, the Dutch in North America are ignored. Analysis of the

conquest is displaced onto the Spanish, and their most egregious activities are laid at the foot of a greedy and acquisitive Catholic Church. The argument that the Spanish nation and empire were inalterably corrupted by its fundamental religious agenda would persist as a key element of Irving's histories of Columbus and early modern Spain.

Irving's discussion of the "Right of Cultivation" is framed as a more pan-European project. He presents this theory in the context of the idea that ancient Germans or modern Tartars "who, having fertile countries, disdain to cultivate the earth, and choose to live by rapine, are wanting to themselves, and *deserve to be exterminated as savage and pernicious beasts.*" Since the Amerindians "lived a most vagabond, disorderly, unrighteous life, rambling from place to place, and prodigally rioting upon the spontaneous luxuries of nature..., whereas it has been most unquestionably shown that Heaven intended the earth should be ploughed and sown, and manured, and laid out into cities, and towns, and farms, and country-seats, and pleasure grounds, and public gardens, all which the Indians knew nothing about...therefore they were careless stewards...therefore they deserved to be exterminated" (43-44).

In his discussion of the "Right acquired by civilization" Irving resumed making the case that it was the Spanish conquest that illuminated most vividly – and palatably – the problems associated with the conquest of the Americas. Here he described the inability of the Indians to become responsible consumers, of either strong drink or salvific religion. He notes that the Indians' obstinate unwillingness to embrace the benefits of colonization had provoked a painful and troublesome persecution at the hands of zealous Catholics, "in consequence of which indefatigable measures the cause of Christian love and charity was so rapidly advanced, that in a few years not one-fifth of

the number of unbelievers existed in South America that were found there at the time of the discovery” (45). Again, the problems associated with conquest are displaced onto the first Spanish Catholics, carefully eliding the Protestant/North American part of the story.

Irving concluded this discussion by suggesting that a hypothetical case may serve to make the issues clearer. He framed this case, perhaps unfortunately, as a discussion that takes place at a royal court on the moon after that planet’s successful conquest of the earth. This dubious device allowed Irving to make joking references to “lunacy” and “lunatics” in describing the theories put forth by the moon-based *conquistadores*. In this hypothetical case, he supposed a race of lunar inhabitants, who were “as superior to us in knowledge, and consequently in power, as the Europeans were to the Indians....On account of the ferocious barbarity of its inhabitants, they shall take our worthy President, the King of England, the Emperor of Hayti, the mighty Bonaparte, and the great King of Bantam, and returning to their native planet shall carry them to court as were the Indian chiefs led about as spectacles in the courts of Europe” (48). Irving’s grouping of the rulers of the United States, Britain, and France with those of “Hayti” and “Bantam” seems to be making an interesting point about the indiscriminate nature of the European conquest of the Americas, but, this “lunatic” passage differs in tone from the rest of Book I. Since the passage relies on naming the moon-based conquerors “lunatics,” it presumably meant to frame the assertion of rights over our planet even more satirically. In fact, by leaving the world of empirical argument for the more fanciful satirical traditions of early modern writers like Jonathan Swift, the argument seems more tendentious and less effective.

With the beginning of Book II Irving turns in earnest to the topic of the Dutch in New York. Chapter I of this second book begins with a long discursion on the fictive author's great-grandfather's construction of a church in Holland. As a gentleman who was concerned about the quality of life more than financial gain, he made a leisurely project of it. This serves as a reminder that Irving, even when he was engaged in hard work, was anxious to be seen as one who could carry it off with an air of gentlemanly ease. This description aptly captures *HNY*'s presentation of an enormous amount of data about seventeenth-century New Amsterdam in a lighthearted spirit. A contemporary critic summed it up well: "The whole book is a *jeu d'esprit*, and perhaps, its only fault is that no *jeu d'esprit* ought to fill two closely printed volumes."³⁸

In Book II Irving addressed a group of important themes in his examination of the colonial experience, in particular the relationship of the settlers to the marketplace and the role of land speculators on colonial society. He characterized the original encounter between the Dutch settlers on the New Jersey bank of the Hudson River and the Indians as one on which the Indians "instructed the new settlers in the best art of curing and smoking tobacco, while the latter, in return, made them drunk with true Hollands – and then taught them the art of making bargains" (63). He includes a long enumeration of the various techniques of using hand or foot to manipulate scales when buying furs, emphasizing the morally corrupting cultural valence of trade and tradesmen. Book II also introduced two problematic elements to the Dutch Eden on the banks of the Hudson, the land speculator and those would-be conquerors of all North America, the British settlers from the new colonies in Virginia and New England. The spirit of land speculation is

³⁸ Review of *Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York, The New-York Literary Journal, and Belles - Lettres Repository* (New York), Sep 1820: 372.

personified in the figure of Oloffe van Kortlandt who, like all land speculators, “was much given to dreaming...one of those infallible prophets who predict events after they have come to pass” (64). With a series of dreams and bogus prophecies he motivates the colonists to cross the river and colonize the verdant island of Manhattan, where after transacting a deal with Indians and trading trinkets for an indeterminate authority over the Island, he will be at the front of the line for the distribution of real estate.

At the point he begins discussing land speculation, Irving had edged back to a familiar and comfortable narrative point of view, satirizing contemporary social values and behaviors – land speculation as the basis of many an American fortune is one of the cultural aspirations that links our society with the past.³⁹ But with the beginning of Book III, and a chronological political history of New Amsterdam, Irving truly returns to the themes he originally broached in the *Salmagundi* political commentary. Here he described the colonies’ first political governors, and should anyone fail to notice their similarity to contemporary leaders, Irving added: “I must caution my readers against confounding them [early governors]...with those worthy gentlemen who are whimsically denominated governors in this enlightened republic” (96). Here the power of Irving’s new and modern empirical voice becomes clear. When Irving dealt with the same issues – the folly of Thomas Jefferson – and made the same points – the pernicious result of popular politics – as an essayist, his words disappeared. As the author of an empirically grounded comic history, his words resonated down the decades; Irving issued new editions of *HNY* four separate times, and it was a strong seller for fifty years.

³⁹ For an excellent description of the role of land speculators in the early United States, see Alan Taylor, *William Cooper’s Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1995)

Beyond its importance as a stylistic departure and a turn toward more modern writing, *HNY* also shows Irving honing his wit and more clearly articulating certain thematic elements in his work. Irving's description of the conflict between the Dutch colonists and the Yankees from Connecticut and Massachusetts provided an opportunity for the refinement of his critique of both commercial culture and religious enthusiasm. The aggressive Yankees were described as practitioners of both sharp commercial practices and religious fanaticism, a combination that would characterize a long series of villains in Irving's work and ultimately serve as the framing device for his critique of Spanish Catholic culture. The rapaciousness of the New Englanders is dealt with in one of the books' best known flights of slapstick, a description of the "Oyster Wars." This conflict was said to be precipitated by the New Englander's insistence on payment in specie for all their produce while their debts were paid not just in "Indian money" but in "an inferior kind of wampum made of oyster shells with which they deluged the province" (145-46). The Oyster War story is one of the zanier incidents in the book, concluding with a victory celebration featuring all the elements of a Roman victory. The victors staged a triumphal procession featuring captured Yankee standards (codfish on poles), onions and Yankee "notions" as spolia, and several captive coiners of oyster shells marched in chains behind the Dutch commander "to grace the hero's triumph" (147). While several scholars have noted the topicality of this passage with regard to long-standing US anxiety about paper money, Irving also used the tale to advance his general critique of overly commercialized social elements, and he emphasizes the easy fit between avarice and religious intolerance. When his Connecticut rabble-rousers began preaching up a crusade against Peter Stuyvesant, Irving noted this as "the first we hear of

the ‘drum ecclesiastic’ beating up for recruits in the worldly warfare of our country. It has since been called into frequent use. A cunning politician often lurks under the clerical robe....and instead of a peaceful sermon, the simple seeker after righteousness has often a political pamphlet thrust down his throat, labeled with the pious text from scripture” (187).

Irving’s treatment of the ultimate conquest of the Dutch by his own British ancestors developed other themes that would resonate in his subsequent work. He suggested that the Dutch influence did not persist simply in the continuing presence of Knickerbocker and his Hudson River farming family compatriots. He spins a romanticized tale based on the legend of Pelayo, the leader of the indigenous Spanish who refused to submit to the eighth-century Moorish conquest and kept themselves apart, waiting for their eventual redemption. Irving uses this trope to imagine the existence of some “genuine descendants of the Nederlanders who inhabit New York [and] still look with longing eye to the green marshes of ancient Pavonia, as did the conquered Spaniards of yore to the stern mountains of Asturias, considering these the regions whence deliverance is to come” (286). Irving would go on to examine the theme of the persistence of conquered peoples in his work on Spain. He produced a fuller treatment of the Pelayo story, and his book on the war between Ferdinand and Isabella and the Moors concludes with a detailed treatment of the expulsion of Boabdil and the Moors from Granada.

Although a thorough-going public success, the book engendered a certain amount of resentment, particularly among two parties. The New York Dutch took offense at some of Irving’s caricatures. Irving received some sharp letters expressing this view, but

the slight was clearly mitigated by his reinsertion of their story into New York's history. The personification of the New Englanders as sharp-dealing merchants led to a certain amount of potentially more serious resentment. An early review noted between clenched teeth that "the people of New England are the subjects of many humorous remarks, but we are glad to observe made with so much good-nature and mingled compliment and satire, that they themselves must laugh."⁴⁰ The New Englanders were particularly tired of being reminded about their ancestors' practice of "bundling," which Irving had described as "an indispensable preliminary to matrimony; their courtships commencing where ours usually finish...." (119). Bostonian Richard Dana's 1819 discussion of Irving's work includes another unconvincing assertion that he took no offense at being the butt of a few jokes, but he does allow that "it was fortunate, too, that the work made its first appearance in New York, where the people – heaven help them – are the most irregular, crazy-headed, quicksilver, eccentric, whim-whamsical set of mortals that were ever jumbled together....New York being a city of large and sudden growth, with people from all parts of the country, and many foreigners, individuals there do not feel every chance sarcasm or light remark of some foible in the rank or set they belong to, as a personal attack, as is the case in smaller...or older cities".⁴¹

As successful as Irving's *HNY* was, and as much as Irving was understood to be a professional writer in the wake of its publication – reviewer Dana described Irving as "almost the only American who has attempted to support himself by literary labors" – Irving's literary output was modest for the next eight years. He accepted an editing job,

⁴⁰ *Monthly Anthology and Boston Review*, Feb 1810 quoted in PMI vol. 1, 237-38

⁴¹ Richard H. Dana, review of *The Sketch Book*: 334-35.

and produced several modest biographies of U.S. military figures, but did not work on any substantial literary project. He was again supported by his family's trading enterprises, and made some modest contributions to this effort, particularly in helping combat the enthusiasm of the Virginians in federal office for trade boycotts. He both used his prestige to lobby against anti-trade sentiment in Washington – this is where he joined Dolly Madison's circle – and, on a more direct level, helped smuggle specie generated by *sub rosa* trade across the Canadian border. Like most New Yorkers, he was appalled by the War Hawks' enthusiasm for conflict with Great Britain. The destruction of Washington D.C. by the British in 1814 forced Irving off the fence and into an active role as a member of the New York militia. In another demonstration of Irving's community prestige, he was immediately appointed aide-de-camp, with the rank of colonel, to Daniel Tompkins, the state's governor who also served as military commander. Irving's service was by no means trivial – he carried out several important missions along the Great Lakes border with Canada, one of the important fronts in this war, and was authorized by Tompkins to give orders to the field commanders in the area.⁴²

The consequences of the war were catastrophic for much of the young nation's commercial sector. At its conclusion it was clear that Irving could no longer rely on a sinecure from the family enterprise. In fact, he was designated to travel to Britain and see what he could do about whipping the family fortunes back into shape. He arrived in Liverpool in 1815 and spent the next two years simultaneously attempting to salvage the

⁴² Irving's correspondence during his time in the service is a model of military efficiency interspersed with the usual nuggets of witty observation. See "WI to Henry Brevoort," October 16, 1814, *Letters I*, CWWI vol. 23, 79 for a vivid example of Irving's increasing and somewhat bemused sense of becoming a hardened officer. For a description of Irving's responsibilities, see "Daniel Tompkins to Colonel Irving [WI]," September 28, 1814, *Public Papers of Daniel D. Tompkins, Governor of New York, 1807-1817* vol. 3 (Albany: J. B. Lyon, 1902), 551-52. For Irving's relationship with Tompkins, see Ray Watkins, *Daniel D. Tompkins: Governor of New York and Vice-President of the United States* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1968), 183-187.

family business and laying the groundwork for a career as a full-time, professional writer. In this process, he expanded the reach of the technique refined in *HNY*: his subsequent works combine elegant wit, close empirical observation, strong grounding in politics, and, at their best, a strong grounding in place. In turning to Irving's 17 years in Europe, we see the emergence of a writer who is working in both a new literary genre and creating a new social category. Irving was an emerging type – an independent, professional literary man who made his own living and whose views were a crucial element of both national culture and political nation.

Chapter 6

Washington Irving, A Transatlantic Writer

“REMARKABLE LIBERALITY! At a meeting of gentlemen at Dumfries, Scotland to celebrate the birth day of Robert Burns, the following toast was given by Mr. Harkness: “The health of Washington Irving, the author of the Sketch Book – A transatlantic writer, to whom we are indebted for one of the richest and most varied intellectual repasts which perhaps has ever been served up to the votaries of literature; and who has embalmed his memories in a work which will float his name to after ages in a noble stream of melodious prose.”¹

Washington Irving sailed for England in 1815 and remained in Europe until 1832. In these seventeen years he became the first US author recognized as an equal of his British literary contemporaries and a notable celebrity. His well-known literary subjects negotiated the encounter between traditional culture and the spread of the urbanizing and market economy. Fictional characters like Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane, and historical figures like Christopher Columbus, Ferdinand and Isabella, and Boabdil, last Sultan of Granada, all expressed Irving’s romantic ambivalence toward the implacable spread of centralized and rationalizing systems of government, commerce, and religious practice. Irving was dealing with these same cultural transitions in his own life. The process of reconciling traditional attitudes toward commerce to the reality of the new capitalist marketplace required what historian Michael Gilmore has called a “mixture of accommodation and resistance.”² In Irving’s prose, aimed very accurately and specifically at the emerging mass market, he articulated his ambivalence about mass culture. This apparently contradictory construction reinforces one of the key themes of this dissertation, the fitful and uneven emergence of modern institutions and roles,

¹ *Niles' Weekly Register* (Baltimore), April 27, 1822.

² Michael T. Gilmore, *American Romanticism and the Marketplace* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 11-12.

including that of the professional artist. Like the characters and cultures depicted in Irving's tales of the Hudson River or early modern Spain, the accretion of new functions and meanings onto already-existing forms, structures, and traditions helped resolve this simultaneous impulse toward both accommodation and resistance.

This chapter will deal with both Irving's construction of a romantic vision of society and his personal "accommodation and resistance" to the marketplace. These two topics did not seem so far from each other to Irving, whose correspondence often dealt simultaneously with the topics of his literary vision and his market status. As his career progressed, the construction of a persona that reflected the empathy with the past required of a romantic gentleman while still affording a prosperous lifestyle emerged in several ways. The stock market provides a vivid example. Irving, who expressed his scorn for the life of a merchant many times, found in the stock market something altogether different. He was an enthusiastic participant in the South American mining bubble and several other stock ventures. The coding of stock market participation as something outside the morally suspect commercial world demonstrates how cultural processes reconciled participation in economic life with notions of acceptable gentlemanly behavior.

We have already seen how for most travelers in Europe, the quality of a nation's road system became a signifier for the nation's general state of progress. On his travels, Irving added another key datum to this list of civilizing markers: a society's integration into modern economic institutions. Long stays far from home required frequent cash infusions, and the access to this cash was effected not by traveler's checks or the corner ATM but through the establishment of creditworthiness. Travelers like Irving needed to

identify a banker or merchant who could advance funds based on his notes of hand. Irving, and his fellow traveling literary and professional men, relied on local merchants and bankers to accept their word that funds kept in London or New York were on call, thus the maintenance of reputation was critical. It is also significant that problems with this system were generally not the fault of provincial merchants, but of the all too frequent incidence of bank or business failures in the metropole. In fact, like so many other hallmarks of premodern tradition, the idea of a gentleman whose word was his unquestioned and unquestionable bond seems to be in part simply one more invented tradition. The exigencies of commercial culture, far more than knightly or chivalric tradition, demanded a system where contractual and financial obligations were backed with the full faith and credit of the honorable and financially solvent individual.³

Irving between Two Worlds

Like most members of the New York commercial world, Washington Irving had first viewed the War of 1812 as another bad idea foisted on the urban United States by the Virginia planter elite. The British destruction of Washington, D.C., however, led Irving to enlist. He joined the staff of his good friend General Daniel Tompkins, who as governor of New York had assumed command of the state's militia. By January, 1815 peace was in the air, and Irving was looking to the future. The consequences of the war were catastrophic for much of the young nation's commercial sector, and Irving's literary

³ See Margot C. Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 6-18 for a discussion of the late eighteenth-century emergence of ideas about the sanctity of contracts. In contrast, see Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England*. (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 174 for an argument that contractual obligations in the seventeenth century were far more flexible and subject to extra-contractual negotiation than those of the capitalist era.

career and family finances were both profoundly caught up in the disaster. *The Analectic*, the Philadelphia-based periodical Irving had edited and written for until he enlisted, went into receivership in January 1815.⁴ Even more serious for Irving and his brothers, the lack of access to British goods was grinding down the Irving's family trading business. For the first few months of 1815, as Irving contemplated his future he looked into several publishing ventures. He also corresponded with his friend Stephen Decatur about continuing his military service by joining the United States Navy expedition Decatur was outfitting to see to recent problems with the Tripolitan pirates. By May, the family's business affairs were dire enough that Irving could no longer contemplate this extension of his military service. He was designated to travel to Britain and see what he could do about whipping the family fortunes back into shape. Two letters to Moses Thomas, his old editor at *The Analectic*, one ruminating about possible literary projects and one announcing his immediate departure show just how abrupt was the decision to head for England.⁵

Irving arrived in Liverpool in 1815, and, while commerce was a career for which he had little natural enthusiasm, he put two years of hard but ultimately fruitless labor into the task of recouping the family fortunes. While en route to England and during his first few years abroad he again began keeping a journal. This journal makes it clear that from the beginning of the journey he seems to have had in mind the possibility that he would be able to wield his pen more pleasurably and profitably as an author than as an

⁴ Irving's October, 1814 letter to Moses Thomas, publisher of *The Analectic*, shows he was still being paid at that time. "WI to Moses Thomas," October 21, 1814, *Letters Volume I, 1802-1823*, CWWI vol. 23, 382. He received news of the periodical's liquidation in January "WI to William Irving, Jr.," January 15, 1815, CWWI vol. 23, 385.

⁵ "WI to Moses Thomas," May 8, 1815, CWWI vol. 23, 391; "WI to Moses Thomas," May 16, 1815, CWWI vol. 23, 392.

accountant. From this trip forward, Irving's journals and letters are full of lively and carefully drawn descriptions of the scenes and characters he encounters, vignettes that would soon appear in his serialized "Sketch Books" under the *nom de plume* Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. Multiple accounts of the same characters or incidents are common, and the descriptions typically show an increased refinement as they take on a natural storyteller's polish.

One of the characters Irving depicted most frequently and carefully was his own. He set his vivid and increasingly elegant self-presentation between two fixed poles, the warm domestic scene of his sister and brother-in-law Sara and Henry Van Wart's gracious home in Birmingham and the family's grim little commercial office in Liverpool. In this informal literary self-fashioning Irving presented himself as a country squire *manqué*. Like many of the regular characters in Irving's universe, his brother-in-law Henry Van Wart earned an endearing nickname, the Baron Van Tromp. Life at the Castle Van Tromp was a round of wholesome pastoral pleasure, with plenty of fresh air and attention to the numerous sons and daughters of the manor, to whom Irving was the best sort of bachelor uncle. A typical description from Irving's correspondence:

The Lady Baroness has enriched her husband with another son, and both mother and son are doing well. We shall have a famous troop of Van Tromps. They are all uncommonly fine children and a perpetual source of entertainment. We have generally a grand game of romps in the evening between dinner & tea time, in the course of which I play the flute and the little girls dance. They are but pigmy performers, yet they dance with inimitable grace, and vast good will, and consider me the divinest musician in the world.⁶

The world of commerce, on the other hand, was a source of Dickensian, melodramatic misery:

⁶ "WI to Henry Brevoort," January 27, 1817, *Letters I*, CWWI vol. 23, 467.

As I am a complete novice in business it of course takes up my whole time and completely occupies my mind, so that at present I am as dull commonplace a fellow as ever figured upon Change. When I once more emerge from the mud of Liverpool, and shake off the sordid cares of the Counting House you shall hear from me. Indeed the present life is utterly destitute of anecdote, or anything that could furnish interest or embellishment to a letter –& my imagination is too much jaded by pounds, shillings and pence to be able to invent facts or adorn realities.⁷

Despite Irving's characteristic arch tone, both these passages are entirely convincing. Irving's bachelor attachment to domesticity would become a recurring theme throughout his life, and he would take great pleasure in long stays with happy families. His repugnance for the Liverpool – Manchester commercial axis seems equally sincere; the heartland of British industry and the hard goods and textile export trade, this milieu must have been an awkward fit indeed for Irving's urbane wit. But neither of these passages catches the essence of Irving's situation. While he was simply one more wretched soul diligently engaged in the unpleasant task of reestablishing a foundering business, he was at the same time a well-known literary man and one of the most prominent Americans in Europe. Irving traveled regularly to London and closely followed the theatrical and literary scenes. Although he had minimal interest in trading for nails and taffeta, he kept a keen eye out for new publications, especially those that could be reprinted in the US. He reestablished his relationship with Moses Thomas and sent him newly released work by Scott and Byron for publication in Philadelphia; ironically, this casual attitude toward author's rights would be a constant thorn in Irving's paw once his literary career began to flourish.⁸

As one of the leading US citizens in Liverpool, Irving was naturally called upon to deal with problems of his countrymen, and when a well-heeled young American took

⁷ "WI to Henry Brevoort," October 17, 1815, *Letters I*, CWWI vol. 23, 426.

⁸ "WI to Moses Thomas," April 27, 1816, *Letters I*, CWWI vol. 23, 441.

ill on a ship from Ireland, it was not surprising that Irving was summoned to tend to the gentleman. William C. Preston (1794-1860), the traveler in question, was a South Carolinian from a wealthy and cosmopolitan family. In the twilight of his days he decided to write down for the amusement of his grandchildren an account of his youthful adventures.⁹ He met Irving while on a young man's Grand Tour of Europe, but this adventure had been preceded for Preston by a journey to the American frontier where, accompanied only by a euphemistically described "servant," he had stayed with "Gov. Clark, an old friend of the family." Clark, of Lewis and Clark fame, was the governor of the Missouri territories and Preston was impressed with his approach to the American Indians – Clark combined stern tongue-lashings with private charity to "the good ones among them" (15). Preston's sojourn in Europe was full of sights far more shocking than any he saw on the American frontier. On landing in Ireland he was stunned by both the poverty and the conditions of the Irish workmen who "filled the enclosure of the square like cattle in a pound." He purchased a wagonload of bread for the wretched men and hired several as attendants; their response was a gracious "Here's to your honour, and your noble Country of America" and a fervently expressed wish that they could be in "your free country with you" (24-26). These comments reflect a sense of exceptionalism common among traveling US citizens, but Preston later noted that Irving encouraged him not to be too public with his criticism of European class divisions (34).

Preston fell seriously ill on the passage across the Irish Sea, and, on awaking in Liverpool, he found himself gazing into the face of Washington Irving. Irving had opened his trunk and, discerning Preston's importance, had sent for medical help and the

⁹ The manuscript copy of Preston's memoirs from the 1850s is in the archives of the University of South Carolina. Parenthetical references are to the published volume *The Reminiscence of William C. Preston*, ed. Minnie Clare Yarbrough (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933).

US consul, “old Mr. Maury, who had been appointed consul by Washington, held the office with undivided approbation of all ranks and conditions of men, foreigners and countrymen, until under the ruthless administration of Gen. Jackson he was turned out to make room for some divider of the spoils” (34). Ironically, Irving was later to be one of the beneficiaries of Jackson’s purge of the US diplomatic corps. Preston, used to distinguished company, appreciated the attention of Irving and his brother Peter, and the three men became friends and traveling companions. Preston’s description of their adventures seems to belie the image of Irving’s life as commercial drudgery occasionally leavened by a visit to the warm confines of Castle Van Tromp. Preston refers to the threesome as “Bardolph, Peto and I,” an allusion that summons images of Falstaffian roistering. The three traveled through Scotland, and were struck by the evocative power of Walter Scott’s landscape and “the touching poetry of bards and patriots that bathed the whole scene” (43-44). Just as he had been shocked by the impact of the capitalist market on the Irish peasantry, he found Irving’s financial entanglement in the market appalling: “He was a good deal preoccupied...by the disastrous condition of his pecuniary circumstances” (35). Preston described the way Irving’s association with commerce had ensnared him in an impossible web of obligations, and noted that Irving had decided he would henceforth eschew business and “that literature was to be his profession and the means of his support” (36). Although he expressed a certain level of condescending sympathy for Irving’s financial problems, Preston clearly viewed Irving as a mentor and authority figure. He took to heart Irving’s warning that he must avoid American *gaucherie*, especially since Irving himself did not take good manners to the English extreme where “all emotion is vulgar and ardor horrible” (34). Preston continued as a

close observer of manners while in Paris, criticizing the propensity of his countrymen to grovel for invitations to aristocratic events, and describing in detail the one he went to, graced by a bejeweled Esterhazy and the Marquis de Lafayette, “paterfamilias to the Americans” (60).¹⁰

Preston’s charming travelogue makes clear one important attitude he shared with Irving. Even for US citizens of a notably conservative bent, a category that certainly includes both Irving and Preston, the monarchs of Europe did not merit much respect. The triumph of Wellington over Napoleon’s army occurred just after Irving’s arrival in Europe, and Irving expressed deep sympathy for Napoleon. In particular, Irving regretted that the Emperor had not fallen on the field, where he would presumably have been immediately translated into Ossianic immortality. The thought of Napoleon forced to apply to the bloated British “old Royals” for mercy struck Irving as a sight of appalling incongruity:

If anything could place the Prince Regent in a more ridiculous light it is Bonaparte suing for his magnanimous protection. Every compliment paid to this bloated sensualist, this inflation of sack and sugar, turns to the keenest sarcasm; and nothing shows more completely the caprices of fortune, and how she delights in reversing the relative situations of persons...than that of all the monarchs of Europe, *Bonaparte* should be brought at the feet of the *Prince Regent*.¹¹

Like Preston’s reference to Bardolph and Peto, Irving’s reference to an “inflation of sack and sugar” provides a charming indication of just how extensively the lore of Shakespeare’s Falstaff was woven into daily consciousness.

¹⁰ This meeting resonates with Lloyd Kramer’s description of Lafayette’s importance at the nexus of romantic culture and politics, described in his *Lafayette in Two Worlds* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 53-89. The acquaintance between Preston and Lafayette was refreshed during Lafayette’s 1824-25 trip through the United States, where Preston commanded the honor guard that met Lafayette at the South Carolina state border.

¹¹ “WI to Henry Brevoort,” July 16, 1815, *Letters I*, CWWI vol. 23, 401.

Preston provided his own vivid example of the association between Napoleon and progressive thought in the person of a Bonapartist friar he ran into in Turin. Like the Irish peasants Preston encountered on his first European landfall, this monk recognized the significance of his visitors' nationality, greeting him with enthusiasm: "'I have never seen an American before, and yet you are my compatriot, for your country was discovered by an Italian and I too am a Genoese,' whereupon he threw his arms around me, with a sort of ecstasy as if he had found a treasure." The monk's view of the Bourbon restoration also resonated with American republicanism:

My friar strangely enough turned out to be a thorough Bonapartist – and most of his monks. He told me that the king was a great fool, that upon his restoration he had abolished everything that had transpired during his exile and that to pacify the State he and his convent, had walked round the palace chanting a *te deum* and sprinkling themselves and the walls with holy water, whereupon it was announced that there was a pacification of the premises from the contamination of the usurpers, the old things were done away with and a new order, or rather the ancient order, which had been interrupted, reestablished. His majesty passing through the Museum was asked if would not step in and see the ornithological collection. 'No,' said he 'I don't like any of those vile painted things of the French usurpation. Take me to look at the birds, of which I understand you have a great many.' So, 'ornithology' over the door was hastily painted out and 'Birds' put in its place (72-74).

This passage shows Preston's sympathy with Irving's antimonarchic inclinations, but both were Anglophile enough to share a deep affection for the wild land described by Walter Scott. Perhaps the discussions in which Irving revealed to Preston that he had decided to pursue writing as a career took place on their 1817 trip to Scotland during which Irving called on the not yet knighted Scott. Scott was a fan of Irving's earlier works and the warm welcome he gave Irving affords a good look at the prestige the latter had already attained. Irving did not write of his meeting with Scott until much later, in 1832, when he published the account as part of an essay on the homesteads of the two

great romantic icons of his generation, Scott and Byron.¹² This delay is surprising because in the preceding years Irving published many volumes filled with short accounts of his activities, but the Scott meeting seems to have had a special status. In his study of nineteenth-century historiography, Stephen Bann has suggested that this meeting helps illuminate a question addressed in a previous chapter, the uneasy place of humor in the emergence of professionalized historical writing. Bann points out that in his later account of the meeting, Irving suggested Scott saw a place for humor in historical prose, noting a “sly and quiet humour running at the bottom of his discourse, and playing about his countenance, as if he sported about the subject.”¹³ The timing of this comment is interesting. By 1832, when Irving published the Scott/Byron volume, the process of identifying writers like the British Thomas Macaulay and the American William Hickling Prescott as professional historians while recategorizing both Irving and Scott into the lesser genre of romantic historians was well underway. It may be that Irving’s defense of wit in historical writing is something of a counterattack on this categorization.¹⁴

The idea that Irving and Scott wrote in the same vein was not a unique one, but the idea that Scott shared Irving’s urbane and witty detachment is problematic. The relative gravity and self-importance of Scott’s work in comparison to Irving’s was well expressed in this 1824 survey of the literary landscape from the *Blackwood’s Magazine*:

An array of new combatants have burst into the literary field, who canter and caracole and bear down all before them. There is the Waverly knight [Scott] – he of the hundred weapons – and his war-cry rings loudest on the

¹² The *Abbotsford* and *Newstead Abbey* sketches were published after Irving returned to the United States in 1833. For their publication Irving adopted his Geoffrey Crayon persona; the title page notes they are “By the Author of the Sketch Book” (*The Crayon Miscellany*, CWWI vol. 22, xix).

¹³ Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 93-95; 106.

¹⁴ For some of the early attempts to carve Scott out of the category of respectable historians see Ann Rigney, *Imperfect Histories: The Elusive Past and the Legacy of Romantic Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 27-58.

plain;...Washington Irving, dressed in his silk doublet throwing darts into the air and catching them again, riding as easily as if he were on parade.¹⁵

This is not a bad characterization of Irving's earlier works, and makes clear that Scott's voice was always far more magisterial than Irving's detached and humorous ruminations. Still, the comparison with Scott reflects Irving's emergence as a major international literary figure. This rise in Irving's reputation resulted from his decision to devote himself fully to writing, a decision he credited to the encouragement he received on his visit with Scott. In 1817 he began the publication of the series of essays, stories and observations that definitively established him in the ranks of major writers. Originally published in sections, both in New York and London, and including many vignettes he had been polishing since he left the United States, the work as a whole came to be known as *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, or simply *The Sketch Book*.¹⁶ The individual sketches dealt with a wide range of topics including Irving's travels, reminiscences of North America, incidents from English country life and, most memorably, two immortal stories of life in the rural settlements north of New York City along the Hudson River, "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

The Sketch Book: Success and Successors

Irving presented both Hudson River stories as further "discoveries" from the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, but this Diedrich, unlike the garrulous narrator of *History of New York*, quickly faded into the background. With this move to more straightforward narration, Irving further distanced his work from the "Addisonian"

¹⁵ Quoted in *The New York Mirror: a Weekly Gazette of Literature and the Fine Arts* (New York) 1 (Jun 5, 1824): 357.

¹⁶ Parenthetical references to *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, CWWI vol. VIII.

personal essay. Both stories expand on Irving's examination of the relationship between modern, commercial Euro-American society, the vast space of the Americas, and US particularism. These stories are set in a world where the village, the locus of modern commercial and political life, was inextricably embedded in a wild land still pulsing with the ripples from the contact between the first Europeans and the land's indigenous inhabitants. Unlike Walter Scott in his romantic tales of the Scottish Highlands, Irving and other US romantics did not have to visit the past to find their settings. Romantic vistas were still available within a stone's throw of New York City and both stories reflect this. In fact, Irving's rustic landscape was the subject matter for the first important manifestation of the visual arts in the United States, the Hudson River school of painters. Like Irving, these artists depicted the Hudson Valley as a wilderness where the primeval oaks and hickories might bow before mighty storms but still dwarf the few and puny works of man that are a common subsidiary detail in these paintings. And by the early nineteenth century it required a creative hand to efface the all-too-visible hand of man from the artistic representation of these Hudson River vistas.¹⁷

Rip Van Winkle was one of the greatest of the *Sketch Book* characters, and the one who most clearly stands for the premodern and precommercial aspect of the Hudson River Valley culture. The most notable element of his character is the contradiction between his willingness to help pitch in on any communal task and his resistance to participation in the market economy, summarized by Irving as "an insuperable aversion to profitable work" (30). An early reviewer, the senior Richard Dana, whose son would

¹⁷ William Truettner and Alan Wallach, eds. *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). For two vivid evocations of the rapid spread of commerce into rural New York in the very early nineteenth century see Evan Cornog, *Birth of Empire: Dewitt Clinton and the American Experience 1769-1828* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

make his own memorable contribution to the literature of American expansionism with *Two Years before the Mast*, identified this “apparent contradiction in character...set forth in good humor” as the characteristic that made Rip such an attractive figure. Irving clearly coded this characteristic as an expression of premodern values that resisted those of the emerging market economy.¹⁸ He made this point most clearly when Rip returned from his twenty year nap to find the village wise men engaged in an activity appropriate to their participation in the modern public sphere – they were conducting an election. After duly considering Rip’s story about sharing some spirituous beverages with a party of men in antique dress, these village leaders interpreted the story by amplifying his connection to the past. They conclude that the mysterious characters responsible for this dramatic manifestation of Rip’s indifference to progress must have been none other than the shades of Henry Hudson and his crew (40).

In “The legend of Sleepy Hollow,” Ichabod Crane’s adventures also take place along the cusp between domesticated land and the wilderness – the setting is a valley just two miles from “a small market town...by the name of Tarry Town (272).” The modernizing influence of this market outpost was no match, at least in Ichabod Crane’s tortured imagination, for the swarms of ghosts and goblins from the era of “an old Indian chief, the prophet or wizard of his tribe [who] held his powwows there before the country was discovered by Master Hendrick Hudson” (273). For Irving, the memory of the encounter between European and American was still alive in what he called the “drowsy, dreamy influence” (273) that pervaded the area – what we might call the region’s collective unconscious, or even *mentalité*. In both stories the encounter between Hudson

¹⁸ Richard Dana, “Review of *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* No.I, No.II., by Washington Irving,” *North American Review*, 9 (Sept 1819): 353-54.

and the Americas still had the power to affect everyday life. This sense that the first meeting between Europeans and the Americas was still constitutive of the American experience in the nineteenth century is a constant in Irving's work, a companion to the tension created by the encounter between early modern economic values and the inexorable financial pressures attendant on capitalism's emergence. Just as romantic history was an effective vehicle for "accommodation and resistance" to the aggressive assertion of western political authority, the genre also helped provide a mechanism for reconciling capitalism's inexorable financial and cultural pressures with powerful and traditional values from the precapitalist past.

Like the *History of New York*, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* was a success, but on a far grander scale. Irving became a European celebrity, and found himself welcome in the most elevated literary and political circles. He was not unaccustomed to dealing with political and social high society, but this success marked his entrée into the literary elite, especially London's premiere literary "salon," the informal gatherings that took place at the offices of the publisher John Murray.¹⁹ He followed up *The Sketch Book* with *Bracebridge Hall*, another collection of observational humor, travel lore, and accounts of English country life. It had some memorable passages – the description of Christmas at Bracebridge Hall, complete with Yule log, boar's head, and flowing wassail bowl, is one of the foundational documents in the Hobsbawmian construction of "traditional Christmas" – but was not quite the success of the *Sketch Book*.²⁰ Irving

¹⁹ Irving's relationship with Murray is described in detail in the Introduction to Ben Harris McClary, *Washington Irving and the House of Murray: Geoffrey Crayon Charms the British, 1817-1856* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969). The importance of the Murray publishing family continued through the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* and well into the twentieth century.

²⁰ For the significance of Irving in the construction of Christmas traditions, see Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 57-60. Publication chronology from STW vol. I, 192-215.

followed up *Bracebridge Hall* by looking farther afield for subject matter. He traveled to Germany and produced *Tales of a Traveller*, a volume of German folk tales, travel stories and whimsical observation, but this work, along with several plays and poems was met with increasingly modest enthusiasm from both critics and the marketplace. Some of Irving's earlier US reviewers had expressed concern as his work focused more on Europe; now the British critics began making the same point:

"We wish from our hearts *he* [WI] would turn, or rather return to the portraiture of Transatlantic manners. His Sketchbook was admirable, but how infinitely superior the American part of it to the English! His *Bracebridge Hall* was Admirable too; but what did it contain that could bear a moments comparison with *Rip Van Winkle* or the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*? But to speak the plain truth, *Diedrich Knickerbocker* is after all our favorite....Who would not have preferred a *Pennsylvania Farm House* to an English hall or German *schloss* from him?....Why should he dabble among English poachers when we have our own *Crabbe*...? We don't want him to describe the lapdogs of our maiden aunts – what are the pets of his?"²¹

Searching for a Second Act

Washington Irving's biographers view the period between the publication of *The Sketch Book* and *Bracebridge Hall* and his arrival in Spain, roughly 1820 – 1826, as the most problematic period of Irving's life. The charming combination of Americana and Anglophile musings in *The Sketch Book* gave way to a more labored voice in several wholly forgotten plays. *Tales of a Traveller*, Irving's attempt to give the folk legends he collected in his travels through the German and Italian kingdoms the *Sketch Book* treatment was not a financial or critical success. Both biographers and critics have suggested that in this period Irving was far more interested in rubbing shoulders with social elites and engaging in financial speculation than he was in pursuing the muse.

²¹ "American Travellers," *The Museum of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* (Philadelphia), Feb 1, 1824: 158.

Irving's canonical biographer, Stanley T. Williams, entitles a chapter on this period "Hack Writer and Dramatist," while William Hedges, in his psychological biography of Irving, suggests that in this period he was "undone by a variety of distractions, particularly in Dresden, where he found...a social life which involved him to some extent with the royal family of Saxony...."²² These comments seem in part to recapitulate the traditional critical consensus that banished Irving from the pantheon of immortal US authors and into the realm of regionalists. These negative assessments demonstrate the power of the romantic paradigm of the artist as one whose particular gift of "autonomous genius," to use Raymond Williams's description of this constructed category, must always be turned toward elevated ends. In fact, this was an ideal to which Irving, particularly in this era, seldom aspired.²³

This generally dismissive attitude toward Irving's work in the first half of the 1820s actually reflects much of the contemporary critical response to *Tales of a Traveller*. There seemed to be nothing in the *Tales* to the standard of Rip van Winkle's or Ichabod Crane's incomparable Americana. Alexander Hill Everett noted that British critics turned on Irving during the 1820s: "Mr. Irving, who had hitherto been petted, and, as it were, clapped on the back by these sturdy censors, is now 'deficient in nerve and originality.'...The applause bestowed on his works was not so much a tribute to his works as an acknowledgment of the assiduous homage, with which he courted the favor of the British public." Everett, never a fan of aristocracy, went on to note the meanness of such criticism aimed at Irving's "amiable and romantic, but perfectly honest and even

²² STW vol. I, 255; William L. Hedges, *Washington Irving: An American Study, 1802-1832* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 191.

²³ Raymond Williams, *Culture & Society 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 32. See Chapter 2, "The Romantic Artist," of Williams' work for a brilliant articulation of the emergence of the modern idea of an artist.

natural delusion in regard to the refinement and generosity of the British aristocracy, under which Mr. Irving appears to have labored on his arrival in England.”²⁴

This rather backhanded compliment reflects both Everett’s anti-aristocratic streak, which had been noted by some of his diplomatic colleagues, and the beginnings of a larger, and ultimately successful effort on the part of the New England intelligentsia to marginalize Irving as a literary lightweight. Again, this was an idea that was part of the contemporary critical conversation. In a previously cited discussion of literary developments under the rubric of “certain novelties of the day,” *Blackwood’s Magazine* comparison between Walter Scott and Irving makes it clear Irving was not quite as serious as his hero.²⁵ This characterization of Irving as a man of more charm than literary substance was effective, perhaps even justifiable as a literary polemic, and has been amplified in subsequent criticism. One major reason for the skepticism about Irving’s ultimate devotion to the muse was his longstanding and careful attention to financial concerns. His great biographer Stanley T. Williams ultimately decided that Irving’s deep interest in financial affairs was evidence that “he was not born for true literary greatness.”²⁶

Yet his prominence in society and deep interest in financial matters make him an ideal subject for examining the relation between financial structures and the emerging professional world. The complexity of the market place, so obvious in the networks of trust and obligation that stretched throughout the Western world, was amplified by a new phenomenon: wide public participation in the stock market. Irving discussed the stock

²⁴ Alexander Hill Everett “The Tone of British Criticism,” *North American Review* 31 (July, 1830): 26.

²⁵ *The New-York Mirror: a Weekly Gazette of Literature and the Fine Arts*, New York 1: (Jun 5, 1824): 357.

²⁶ STW vol. I, 256.

market extensively. While always careful to insist on his disgust for the counting house, he did not view the stock market with the same jaundiced eye. He was an enthusiastic participant in one of the great stock market bubbles of the nineteenth century, the boom in South American mining stocks. The argument for the mining stocks was simplicity itself, and its siren call will resonate in the ears of anyone who invested in internet stocks during the 1990s. Mining promoters had a compelling story that appealed to the most modern instincts of their listeners while dangling the prospects of the Potosí-like wealth available to those wise and courageous enough to take the plunge. The newly independent Latin American republics, the story went, were poised to apply modern, rational methods to the mines that the Spanish had for centuries worked with inefficient coerced labor. It was an obvious application for the steam-powered equipment that had rapidly mechanized British mining, and the copper deposits in Chile and Bolivia were among the richest in the world. The only thing lacking was capital, and the English investors who provided it would have rights to a predetermined percentage of every bar of copper produced. But stock ownership made the investment even sweeter. Instead of having to wait for the shipment and sale of actual ingots, progress at the mines would immediately be reflected in a rising stock price, allowing investors to cash in on the spot.²⁷ Irving not only participated in this exciting opportunity, he joined his brother in another investment in a company contemplating steamboat transit on the great rivers of Europe. Irving's 1826 correspondence reflects a trajectory, disturbingly familiar to the

²⁷ Walter Howe, *The Mining Guild of New Spain 1770-1821* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949). Chapter 8 deals with the early nineteenth-century attempts to rationalize Latin American mining. The British investment boom in newly independent nations of Latin America was ultimately one of the great financial fiascos of the nineteenth century. For a deconstruction of the mining bubble in its immediate aftermath, including a scathing criticism of the eminent Alexander von Humboldt's role in touting certain mines, see "Mexico," *American Quarterly Review*, 2 (September 1827): 341.

current author, of excitement, concern, and finally an appalled horror as these investments increasingly proved untenable.²⁸

The financial troubles that become increasingly prominent in his correspondence after 1822 exacerbated the critical judgment that this period represented a low spot in Irving's career. Still, it is important to remember that notwithstanding these concerns he was one of the most prominent and important Americans in Europe during the entire decade. In the 1820s, an association with Washington Irving was significant and, for many people who met him, worth discussing in detail. One of the best sources for this period is the correspondence between Irving and an American actor and playwright, John Howard Payne. Irving's interactions with Payne give a clear indication of Irving's stature, significance, and daily life in this fallow era. The Irving-Payne correspondence is also an excellent source for understanding the relationship between the literary and financial world. Additionally, it confirms what we already know from his earlier correspondence: Washington Irving was a consummate gentleman. Evidence for this appears throughout Payne's correspondence, but particularly as he is the source for our knowledge of Irving's putative romantic relationship with a thoroughgoing member of Europe's cultural elite, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley. While Irving's biographers are dismissive of Irving's work and career in this era, Payne's correspondence reminds us of Irving's stature. This in turn helps explain why Irving's subsequent work in Spain was ultimately so influential in both literary and political discourse.

Payne was a figure who had one foot in literary respectability and one in Grub Street. As an actor, he was well known enough to have a nickname, "the Young American Roscius," that equated him to a legendary Roman thespian. He was a prolific

²⁸ "WI to C. B. Coles," February 8, 1826, *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 176.

playwright and poet, and such a close friend to Mary Shelley that he aspired to her romantic affections. His works were prominent enough that they caught the attention of the Lord Chamberlain's Examiners of Plays. On the other hand, throughout his time in Europe – he arrived two years before Irving in 1813 – he was on the ragged edge of poverty, and most of his dealings with Irving are more or less direct attempts to cadge funds. While Payne scrupulously kept his correspondence with Irving, Shelley, and a wide variety of other figures, including copybook copies of his side of the conversation, it is probably to a revival of interest in Payne in the late nineteenth century that we owe the preservation of his papers. In 1875 the “Faust Club,” a Brooklyn literary society, erected a monument to Payne in Prospect Park and Gabriel Harrison, a lawyer and theater buff, carefully compiled Payne's correspondence, periodical publications, and other manuscripts in order to write a biography of Payne.²⁹

As both the monument and the title of the biography make clear, Payne is known less for his entire body of work than for one extraordinarily felicitous phrase, from a song entitled “Home, Sweet Home:”

“Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home!”

Perhaps the fact that these lines were penned while the author was in the midst of a decades-long stay across the sea from his actual home (like Irving when he wrote his tales of the Hudson River valley) gives them an extra poignancy. Despite his current obscurity, we can garner some sense of Payne's importance in his time through his

²⁹ Gabriel Harrison, *John Howard Payne, Dramatist, Poet, Actor and Author of “Home, Sweet Home:” His Life and Writing* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1885). Payne's run-in with the British theatrical censors over the depiction of lascivious material in his play *The French Libertine*, based on the life of Richelieu, is described in John Russell Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 81. Most of Payne's correspondence, along with some interesting literary ephemera is now in the John Howard Payne Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York. Harrison provides details on the provenance of the various manuscripts he collected in his Chapter 1.

prominence in a mid-twentieth-century theatrical preservation project, the twenty-volume *America's Lost Plays*.³⁰ The bad news for Payne is that this is the only place where his plays have been anthologized. The good news is that while most authors in this series are represented by only a single play, or at most a single volume including five or six works, Payne alone merits two full volumes, including twelve individual plays.

Payne's current cultural obscurity and his economically marginal status during the height of his career places Washington Irving's extraordinarily prestigious status in even higher relief. This is, after all, what Stanley Williams has called Irving's "hack writer" period, but in contrast with an actual hack like Payne, who was himself at the top of the hack writer heap, Irving seems like a distant, lordly being. With common roots in the New York theatrical world, Payne and Irving had been acquainted since Irving's *Salmagundi* days, and even then Irving had provided Payne with encouragement and letters of introduction to friends up and down the East Coast of the United States.³¹ As Stanley Williams notes in his "Hack Writer" chapter, their European relationship was not rekindled until the 1820s, when the *Sketch Book* project was beginning to play out. One of Payne's first letters to Irving from this era, preserved in Payne's papers, is both typical and bizarre; beyond Payne's self-presentation as a sniveling weasel, the letter appears to the contemporary reader as a thinly veiled extortion attempt:

I observe your work is announced in England & I assure you I have heard of its success in America with great pride & pleasure....If I can render you any service in aiding its marketable publicity (the great point after all) you may command me. I have already been desired to write a review of it for a magazine.

³⁰ John Howard Payne, *Trial Without Jury & Other Plays by John Howard Payne*, ed. Codman Hislop and W. R. Richardson, *America's Lost Plays* vol. 5: (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963).

³¹ "WI to John Howard Payne," November 2, 1809, *Letters I*, CWWI vol. 23, 276.

I have not heard from you since I wrote a letter some time ago requesting a momentary loan of two pounds; as I conceived your silence to have been in some degrees produced by disadvantageous reports among certain Americans concerning my pecuniary transactions...The fact is, you were nearer to my abode than anyone else, and I applied to you because I thought the anticipation of some money I expected would avert inconvenience for a day or two, which, very providentially, I did not suffer....I do not think you were silent because you were afraid of risking two pounds; but because you wished to throw an obstacle in the way of a system of financiering, which, (I have been repeatedly given to understand, especially no later than yesterday from America) it is reported in the American Circles here, I am pursuing, without any other view than that of raising supplies to be squandered.

But, to drop this unpleasant theme entirely, I wish you to believe that if any aid I can give, or interest, to further the sale of your book will render you a service, it shall be given cordially & industriously. One line, merely to say, whether you have a personal interest in the proceeds, will oblige.³²

This remarkable letter, with its combination of obsequiousness, dissembling, and, in the last paragraph, the offensive suggestion that Irving's actions, like Payne's, were guided only by self-interest, was the unlikely beginning of a significant working relationship.

The sketches that went into *Bracebridge Hall* were published between 1820 and 1822 and following their publication Irving lived a peripatetic life, with long stays in Dresden, Paris, and Bordeaux, culminating in his departure for Spain at the beginning of 1826. Throughout this period, Irving was constantly attempting to put his next career move in hand. He seems to have regarded the Payne relationship as a low cost opportunity to see if writing for the theater had financial or literary potential. Through the first half of the 1820s Irving and Payne corresponded extensively and worked together on a number of manuscripts. Their relationship provides a *leitmotif* for this admittedly problematic period of Irving's career. Little of material substance came from this collaboration, a point made in one of Irving's early comments on the matter: "I have

³² "John Howard Payne to Washington Irving," January 27, 1820, John Howard Payne Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York. Underlining and parentheses appear in the manuscript.

been kept in town by a correspondence with Payne, and an ineffectual attempt to get a little piece of his played at one or other of the theatres.”³³ For the next five years, Payne called on Irving to punch up scripts, to intervene with theatrical producers, and, all too frequently, for small loans.

An undated note from Irving included in the Payne collection catches several elements of their relationship:

“ I have marked your play in such places as I thought might be omitted with advantage to the acting...I have marked, not with reference to the merits of the composition, but to the effect as I saw it performed several nights since. I think with a little of the dialogue thrown overboard it will be more buoyant, and pursue its course more briskly.
P.S. I found my MSS of stories lying on your sopha and put it in your table drawer. I beg of you not to let my papers lie about where they might be seen...you will find the 2nd and 3rd act of your comedy in the table drawer.”³⁴

The allusion to shoddy housekeeping was actually just another one of the recurring themes in this ongoing conversation. In the first letter quoted above, Payne reacts defensively to hints that he has lived extravagantly, but Irving continually returns to this matter in his letters, pointing out in particular that Payne’s housekeeper is not only a luxury but not much of a housekeeper.

One of the ways that this correspondence most clearly marks the difference in the two men’s social and economic standing is in Irving’s frank discussions of Payne’s earning power. At one point, Irving arranged for Payne to meet with a producer who was assembling a repertory of plays to take to the United States. The proposed arrangement was that Payne would provide fifteen plays, including songs and sketches of costumes

³³ “WI to Peter Irving,” September 6, 1821, *Letters I*, CWWI vol. 23, 647.

³⁴ “Washington Irving to John Howard Payne,” nd, John Howard Payne Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

and sets, for a total of 150 pounds.³⁵ To provide a sense of contrast, a few months later Irving was negotiating with Murray for publishing rights to his proposed Columbus project, asking between 1,000 and 1,500 guineas for the volume.³⁶

Payne was also associated with an extensive dalliance on Irving's part in the language and lore of Spain and the Moors. The topic was definitely grist for Payne's mill – among his play titles we can find *The Last Duel in Spain*, *The Spanish Husband*, *The Two Galley-Slaves*, *Ali Pacha*, and a biographic work entitled simply *Mahomet*, with the title role played by the eminent Edmund Kean.³⁷ *The Spanish Husband*, reprinted in the *America's Lost Plays* volume, may be taken as a representative sample.³⁸ Payne's script was a rework of a prose version of a play by the Spanish Baroque author Pedro Calderón de la Barca, an author whose work Irving found both interesting and uplifting. In fact, Irving found much to admire in Spanish literature as a whole:

I do not know anything that delights me more than the old Spanish literature. You will find some splendid histories in the language and then its poetry is full of animation, pathos, humor, beauty, sublimity....there is an Oriental splendor about it. The mixture of Arabic fervor, magnificence & romance with Old Castilian pride and Punctilio; the chivalrous heroism; the immaculate virtue....³⁹

His interest in Spanish literature rekindled, Irving began working hard at the language.

The proximate goal of this study was the prospect of mining the Golden Age manuscripts of Lope de Vega and his contemporaries for works suitable for translation. More

³⁵ Irving's correspondence about this matter is included in *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 123-25, 141, 148. Payne's unsuccessful attempts to sell some of these individual plays to a different producer in London are recorded in his papers: "John Howard Payne to R. W. Elliston," December 27, 1825, John Howard Payne Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

³⁶ McClary, *Irving and the House of Murray*, 78.

³⁷ Harrison, *John Howard Payne*, 395.

³⁸ Richardson, *America's Lost Plays* vol. V, 207-240.

³⁹ "WI to Pierre Irving," March 29, 1825, *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 135.

significantly, by mastering manuscript Spanish Irving was preparing himself for the prodigious researches he undertook when he actually arrived in Spain.

A look at one of Payne's plays helps draw the important distinction between his work and the more empirically based and successful efforts of historically-minded authors like Irving or Scott. Payne's *The Spanish Husband* deals with a jealous aristocrat disguised as a painter. The situation of the painter, whose socially marginal status was not mitigated by his fame, must have resonated with Payne's own self-image as a put-upon artist. The character combines contempt for the common man: "when they have some public rejoicing...they *may* be endured. At all other times I never saw such a drowsy set ..." (225) with extraordinarily insipid paeans to art:

Glorious art!
That which the power of miracles defies
The truth of time the blight of worldly woe,
All earthly trouble. On its tablet smiles
Beauty unsullied, cheeks washed by tears,
Lips that will ne'er grow pale with anxious eyes (228).

The editors of *America's Lost Plays* note that the manuscript copy of this work shows a significant amount of editing by Irving, but Irving's own efforts in the Spanish/Moorish genre are notably livelier.⁴⁰ *Bracebridge Hall* contains one long story set in Spain, "The Student of Salamanca." This story, framed as a tale told around the Bracebridge fireplace by a retired English officer, fits into the long early modern tradition of depicting Spain as a folkloric place redolent of alchemy, religious intrigue, violence, and sexual frustration. Yet Irving's version of Spain has an element of empirical specificity that Payne's slapdash translations distinctly lack. For example, "Student of Salamanca," includes dramatic descriptions of actual alchemical processes. In these

⁴⁰ "WI to John Howard Payne" October 1, 1825, *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 135 for Irving's comments to Payne on his edits, which he describes as marks "that you need not regard."

scenes, Irving describes the heating of various mystically charged substances, including certain mysterious lead sheets inscribed in a forgotten language and dug up from a cathedral vault. This very specific reference to the *plomos*, the lead tablets purporting to document the history of the Christian church in Granada under Moorish rule and now known to be a sixteenth-century forgery, reflects Irving's strong research interest in Spain. He documented this interest not just in his prose but in enthusiastic reports of his extensive reading in Spanish history and literature.⁴¹

Irving also produced his own reworking of the *Abduction from the Seraglio* motif. The play, entitled *Abu Hassan*, is about a pair of young lovers who are kept apart through the machinations of the Sultan's court but whose love is ultimately countenanced by the Sultan himself, a man of instincts far finer than those of his wicked and vindictive courtiers.⁴² This work shares several elements with Mozart's *Abduction*, including a reference to the instrumentation of a small, onstage musical ensemble equipped with kettle drum and triangle, the aural signifiers of Mozart's Janissary scenes. Irving introduces one interesting twist that may serve to mark how much the world of the artist had changed in the fifty years since 1775. Mozart's lovers were prey to the arbitrary maliciousness of court officials, in the person of the sadistic Vizier whose designs on the lovely Constanza were not about to be foiled by the personal preference of the lovers. Irving's romantic couple, on the other hand, is oppressed not by a court official but by the court money-lender, whose aspirations, although expressed in terms of collateral rather than seigniorial prerogative, are equally dastardly. In an example of Irving's inability to

⁴¹ Washington Irving, "Journal," April 8, 1825, *Journals III*, CWWI vol. 3, 473 for a reference to Irving's reading in the history of Spain and the Moors. For the late eighteenth-century research on the *plomos*, see A. Katie Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada: Inventing a City's Past in Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 149-152.

⁴² Washington Irving, *Abu Hassan, Miscellaneous Writings 1803-1959*, CWWI vol. 28, 192-227.

pass up a joke, Mozart's "Chorus of Janissaries" is replaced in Irving's work by a "Chorus of Creditors." This seems an apt evocation of the emergence of the modern artist – while Mozart's career was hostage to the authority of the Archbishop of Leipzig, Irving seems to be reminding us that his was at the mercy of the marketplace.

Irving's correspondence, which enumerates his financial problems in great and painful detail, makes the conclusion that he was anxious about his finances inescapable. Still, Payne's perspective emphasizes that notwithstanding these worries, Irving's status as a great literary figure of the era was little diminished. We can see this nowhere clearer than the fascinating hints in Payne's correspondence about the impression Irving made on Mary Shelley. Shelley and Payne were regular correspondents, and clearly came to be good friends. To characterize this relationship as one in which Payne fell madly in love with Shelley while Shelley was in it for Payne's access to London theater tickets and gossip would be harsh, but not perhaps wholly inaccurate. Accurate or not, Shelley's letters often include the sort of words no ardent suitor cares to hear: "I have been sitting pen in hand for some minutes thinking how to begin my letter..." for example, or "You ask if I will speak to you if you come to see us. What a question – what is in me that should make you think I should repay your kindness with impertinence? Or that I should not feel friendship for one whom I believe to be truly my friend?"⁴³

The story of Payne, Irving and Shelley was unknown to nineteenth-century biographers, but emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century when Payne's carefully saved letters on the matter, retrieved by W.P. Chandler, Payne's successor as United States Consul at Tunis, came on the market. The letters were published by

⁴³ "Mary Shelley to John Howard Payne," November 29, 1825; June 11, 1826, John Howard Payne Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

the Bibliophile Society of Boston in a high quality, limited edition with an introduction and modest commentary.⁴⁴ Perhaps the publication of the letters in association with the Payne revival of the late nineteenth century accounts for the generally misogynistic tenor of the editorial commentary, which suggests that Mary Shelley used her long friendship with Payne to attempt to cultivate a romance with Irving. This view is based on one particular letter from Payne to Irving in which he reveals that although he had been in love with Shelley, the lady's heart had been captured by Irving:

No doubt it will cost you some reflection to appreciate the trouble I am taking to make you well acquainted with one whom I have known so well – to transfer an intimacy of which anyone ought to be proud. I do not ask you to fall in love – but I should feel a little proud of myself if you thought the lady worthy of that distinction, and very possibly you would have fallen in love with her, had you met her casually....

I have felt myself in honor bound to withhold nothing from you, and you must judge of what I now do, not from your own uninterested views of the subject, but from those by which I have been guided and the strong feelings I have sacrificed.⁴⁵

While Payne's early twentieth-century biographer interprets this letter as a case of a jilted suitor nobly stepping aside, it strikes the current reader as another case of Payne attempting to wring some advantage out of his connection to Irving by adding pimping to his already wide array of ungentlemanly behavior.

Shelley's crush on Irving, taken for granted in twentieth-century biographies of both Irving and Shelley, is couched in language that seems innocuous to the modern reader. In a letter to Payne Shelley inquired "Do you ever see W. Irvin? – he talked of visiting England this Autumn – but he has not unfortunately fulfilled his purpose –

⁴⁴ F. B. Sanborn, ed., *The Romance of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, John Howard Payne, and Washington Irving* (Boston: The Bibliophile Society, 1907).

⁴⁵ Sanborn, *Romance*, 18.

Remember me to him & tell him I claim his promised visit when he does come.”⁴⁶ This reminds us that we must be careful in unpacking the internal life of historical figures based on contemporary signifiers.⁴⁷ In another she apparently responds to Payne’s interest in her views toward Irving: “Is it true that I. is writing more tales – they say that he is and that they are worthy of the Sketch Book. You must really come to an end of bantering me on that subject. Because after all – it is all a mistake....”⁴⁸

On an 1825 trip to Paris arranged and financed by Irving for the purpose of introducing Payne to some potential clients, Payne gave to Irving his collection of Shelley’s letters, with their apparently clear message of interest. Speculation on the reaction of Irving, consummate gentleman and confirmed bachelor, to this egregious act is outside the scope of this study (although several Irving biographers have been unable to resist), but Payne’s matchmaking did not result in any connection between Irving and Shelley. Payne interpreted Shelley’s rejection of his own suit as a result of her choosing to restrict any further romantic connections to a man whose genius was of the magnitude of her first husband’s. This description, he suggested, included Irving, yet Shelley recognized the unlikeliness of the connection: “How can Irvine (sic) surrounded by fashion rank & splendid friendships pilot his pleasure bark from the gay press into this sober, sad, enshadowed nook?”⁴⁹

The significance of Shelley’s apparent interest in Irving, aside from the obvious juicy human interest angle, is that it helps make clear how influential a figure he was in

⁴⁶ “Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley to Louisa Holcroft,” Jan 6, 1825, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Volume I “A Part of the Elect.”* Ed. Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 463. Spelling and punctuation transcribed from original.

⁴⁷ Emily Sunstein, *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989), 267-68; STW vol. I, 286.

⁴⁸ “Mary Shelley to John Howard Payne,” November 29, 1825, John Howard Payne Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

⁴⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Letters* vol. I, 495.

the mid-1820s. Recall that this era is framed by Irving's biographers as his "hack writer" period, where he is generally understood to have been engaged in desultory and unproductive travels, wracked by financial troubles, and increasingly desperate for some productive work. Yet F. B. Sanborn's interpretation of the Shelley incident in the essay that accompanies the correspondence in *The Romance* (albeit based on Payne's account) is that Shelley's interest in Irving was based not on his genius but his influence.⁵⁰

Sanborn suggests that Irving appealed to Shelley because of his access to Scott, Murray, and the other great literary lights of the day. This explanation may be overly mechanical, but reminds us of Pierre Bourdieu's definition of cultural consumption as something that can "fulfill a social function of legitimating social difference."⁵¹ The difference in status between the two authors is confirmed by the marketplace. While Irving was negotiating for rights fees of £1,000 or more (and Payne was producing a basketful of plays for £150), Shelley's novel *The Last Man*, a work she referred to as a romance but which is now viewed, along with her *Frankenstein*, as a key forerunner of science fiction, earned her a fee of £300.⁵²

This interpretation flows against the general tenor of most Irving biographies, which view him as floundering and searching for an economic lifeline in this era. It is certainly true that he was anxious about his career, as he always was, but he remained one of the best-known authors in Europe. In mid-1826, Alexander Hill Everett, newly appointed to the American consulate in Madrid, met Irving while en route to his new

⁵⁰ Sanborn, *Romance*, 9-12.

⁵¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 7. Bourdieu's basic argument about the role of the arts as signifier of status in bourgeois society is at the heart of much of this general argument.

⁵² "Mary Shelley to John Howard Payne," November 29, 1825, John Howard Payne Collection, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

posting. He invited Irving to visit Spain, where Everett thought Irving might find some interesting material, and Irving accepted this offer with great alacrity. Just how quickly Irving accepted is obvious in his correspondence, but the interpretation that Everett's offer was a lifeline to a drowning man seems unfair to Irving. After all, he had spent the previous year as a guest of the Saxon Court, in a fine Paris neighborhood, and as a guest at a chateau in the Loire Valley. Even though he was delighted at the prospect of finding some lucrative work in Spain, it must also have been true that Everett was thrilled at having the leading figure in US literature as part of his diplomatic household. Whatever the relative prestige of the parties, by the first week of 1827 Irving crossed the border into Spain, where he began the most productive and perhaps the most influential three years of his life.

Chapter 7

Irving in Spain

Having, I trust, in the preceding papers made the reader in some degree familiar with the localities of the Alhambra, I shall now launch out more largely into the wonderful legends connected with it, and which I have diligently wrought into shape and form, from various legendary scraps and hints picked up in the course of my perambulations; in the same manner that an antiquary works out a regular historical document from a few scattered letters of an almost defaced inscription.

– Washington Irving, *Tales of the Alhambra*¹

During Washington Irving's years in Europe, he maintained his interest in Spain both as a literary subject and as a nation. By the time he arrived in Spain in 1826, he was thoroughly at home with the romance of Spain and the Moors. Through his association with US and European elites, he entered Spain with diplomatic status, marshaling the enthusiastic help of the US consul and the expatriate community in obtaining access to recondite archival sources. Thus Irving was able to synthesize the traditional depiction of Spain with impeccable empirical data into a compelling and convincing hypothesis about the nature of Spanish society. Irving's prominence in the both the literary marketplace and the political nation enabled him to successfully integrate the many strands of discourse around Spain and the Moors into one argument: Christian Spain was a charming and colorful place to visit, but remained in thrall to superstition and religious fanatics. He simultaneously managed to become the leading Anglophone Hispanophile and to reinforce the argument for Spain's inadequacy as a colonial power.

With Irving's entry into Spain, the many strands of this story begin to form a legible pattern. The four books on early modern Spanish and Moorish history he wrote during his three years in Spain framed Anglophone understanding of both subjects by

¹ Washington Irving, *The Alhambra*, CWWI vol. 14, 104.

synthesizing longstanding Western cultural tropes with extensive empirical data. These works include a biography of Christopher Columbus and *The Companions of Columbus*, a study of the subsequent voyages of exploration. To complement these chronicles of Spain's Golden Age, he wrote two more books focused on Islamic Spain, one recounting the history of Ferdinand and Isabella's conquest of Moorish Andalusia, and the other the delightful *Tales of the Alhambra*, a mélange of folklore and travel narrative rooted in Spain's Moorish legacy. These works demonstrate the continued process of synthesis and innovation that marks all of Irving's work. He buttressed traditional representational tropes with extensive research, and focused the entire project through an ideologically modern lens, emphasizing themes of nationalism, the tensions of liberal market economy, and international diplomacy.

In Irving's Spanish-themed works, his voice reflects both his successful career and his standing in the literary and cultural marketplace. For twenty years his works had been widely read, reviewed, and purchased by individuals and libraries. His close association with the US diplomatic community and policy makers helped him frame his analysis of Spanish history in a way that reinforced US policy interests, particularly with regard to the potential for territorial aggrandizement afforded by the gradual weakening of Spain's colonial authority. And his authoritative voice began to reframe the long tradition of using the Moors as a vehicle for critiquing the Spanish Catholic state into something that foreshadowed a more Eurocentric view of the long Islamic tenure on the Iberian Peninsula.

The two great topics of Irving's Spanish studies – the "Enterprise of the Indies" and the legacy and defeat of the Moors – were, of course, intimately connected. Christopher Columbus's first meeting with the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, took place during the siege of Granada. Their willingness to help finance Columbus's expedition, like their expulsion of Spain's Jews in the spring of 1492, was part of the expansive spirit that pervaded the aftermath of this great triumph. Almost three and a half centuries later, Washington Irving narrated these events in a way that emphasized the intimate relationship between the Spanish conquest over the Moors and their successful founding of an Empire in the Americas. While Alexander Hill Everett and his superiors in the Adams administration were establishing and implementing their policy towards Spain, her colonies, and the new Latin American republics, Irving was weaving a vast narrative framework that helped provide an ideological justification for this political expansionism. One of the key elements of this project was the creation of a historical persona for Christopher Columbus that imagined his achievements as a logical and constitutive element in the emergence of the United States.

En route to his posting in Spain, Everett, an acquaintance and admirer of Irving, noted the impending publication of a group of documents pertaining to Columbus and his voyages. He felt that an English translation would be well received and proposed to Irving that he take on the task.² Everett did this fully understanding Irving's appreciation of the central place of territorial expansion in U.S. consciousness, his extensive

² "WI to Alexander Hill Everett," January 31, 1826, *Letters Volume II, 1823-1838*, CWWI vol. 24, 168 for Irving's enthusiasm about the offer. "WI to Charles R. Leslie," February 3, 1826, CWWI vol. 24, 169 gives a sense of the dispatch and enthusiasm with which Irving put the project in train. The translation Everett proposed was of Martin Fernandez de Navarrete's *Collección de los Viages y Descubrimientos que Hicieron por Mar los Españoles desde Finos del Siglo XV*.

familiarity with the age of exploration, and his place in U.S. letters.³ Not only did the offer strike Irving as financially promising, the living and working conditions promised by his friend Everett seemed likely to be congenial. Further, in the previous few years, Irving had delved deeply into Spanish lore and literature as a writer, reader, and editor of John Howard Payne's plays. With the prospects of this remunerative work near at hand, Irving's suddenly elastic credit and resources enabled him to quickly plan his move to Spain. With a graceful round of thanks to both his European and American supporters, he departed for Madrid on February 10, 1826. Irving began a new journal for his trip to Spain and, as usual, began immediately to collect colorful details that might be polished into publishable anecdotes. Like many previous travelers from northern Europe, Irving's first impressions emphasize Spain's difference from the rest of the continent. He immediately noted the colorful signifiers marking the singularity of Iberian culture: women in mantillas, hidalgos in old brown cloaks standing in the doorways of shabby houses with coats of arms over the door, border crossings effected not by passports but by the payment of a few coins, and "swarthy, meager" soldiers offering their services as escorts through the "wild, scenic" mountains."⁴

Columbus

As soon as Irving arrived in Madrid, the already promising prospect of some worthwhile work got even better. Everett warmly welcomed him and introduced him to

³ For an Everett family appreciation of Irving, see Edward Everett's "Review of *Bracebridge Hall*, by Geoffrey Crayon, Gent." *North American Review* 15 (1822): 204-224. Instead of recapping the book, Everett used this review as an opportunity to review "the unequivocal tribute the great English and American public have paid" to Irving's success.

⁴ Washington Irving, "Journal," *Journals IV, 1826-1829*, CWWI vol. 4, 6-9; for entire Spanish Journal, see CWWI vol. 4, 3-132.

Obadiah Rich, the bibliophile who had served as part of the small US diplomatic establishment while building a magnificent collection of Spanish manuscripts. Within a day of his arrival Irving had gotten a mouthwatering glimpse at some of Rich's treasures, including an autograph copy of an unpublished Lope de Vega play, letters of Cortez, and a manuscript of Bartolomeo de las Casas's biography of Columbus. Irving arranged to rent a comfortable apartment in Rich's home. By day he began preparing for the translation of Navarette's collection while in the evenings he socialized with Madrid's diplomatic community. Through Everett's good offices and his own reputation he also moved easily through the community of Spanish scholars and historians, including Navarette, who shared with him more sources on Columbus. After a few weeks of familiarizing himself with the sights of Madrid and reading in the Spanish classics, Irving turned with great enthusiasm to the Columbus project.⁵

In March, however, Irving wrote to a friend that his publisher Murray would not offer for the Navarette volume: "They fear it may be *dry*, and...unluckily, it is so in a superlative degree... [being] almost entirely made up of documents which none but an historiographer would have appetite to devour or stomach to digest."⁶ Irving seems to have sensed that the failure of the translation project was actually an opportunity and that in Christopher Columbus he had found a character memorable and important enough to be worth a more imaginative construction. Irving decided to use his unparalleled access to archival material to construct a full-fledged study of the great explorer, and he attacked

⁵ Irving, *Journals IV*, CWWI vol. 4, 10-14; See the first two chapters Claude G. Bowers, *The Spanish Adventures of Washington Irving* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1940) for an informal but judicious assessment of the active social life Irving led while engaged in full time writing and research. See also Adrian W. Knepper, "Obadiah Rich, Bibliophile," *The Papers of the American Bibliographic Society* 49 (1955): 112-126 for the Irving-Rich relationship.

⁶ "WI to Thomas W. Storrow," March 15, 1826, *Letters III*, CWWI vol. 24, 187; see also Ben Harris McClary, *Washington Irving and the House of Murray: Geoffrey Crayon Charms the British, 1817-1856* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 80-86 for Murray's side of this discussion.

this project enthusiastically, constructing a massive biography of Columbus along a highly stylized and theatrical narrative arc. The theatricality of the work is not surprising – not only had Irving been writing and editing plays for several years, immediately before he began full-time work on his Columbus biography, he mentioned reading Aristotle’s *Poetics*, known for its elucidation of the rules of classical tragedy. In conformity with Aristotelian principles, Irving’s *Columbus* has a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end.⁷

Irving began the Columbus story with a familiar device: A young man with a dream is foiled at every turn by the forces of reaction and stupidity. Finally, with the help of a good and great woman, Queen Isabella, he gets the resources that enable him to try the fates. Success crowns his efforts. This dramatic opening concludes with a classic “Act One” curtain scene: Columbus’s triumphant Barcelona audience before Ferdinand and Isabella on his return from the first voyage. In the biography’s middle section, the now successful Admiral faces the challenge of living up to his first triumph; predictably, this does not prove easy. This section of the book consists primarily of lengthy descriptions of the tropical islands Columbus visited during his second and third voyages. Irving acknowledged that these details were tedious and repetitive, but urged his readers to keep in mind the momentous nature of the discoveries.⁸ Along with the travelogue, Irving traced the forces working against Columbus: enemies at court, colonists unwilling to accept the Admiral’s wise governance, and, most important, his failure to generate the financial bonanza that would have obviated these obstacles. This middle section of the biography ends with Columbus at his nadir – defeated by his political enemies, under

⁷ Irving, *Journals IV*, CWWI vol. 4, 17.

⁸ Washington Irving, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, CWWI vol. 11, 182. Future references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

arrest, and recalled to Spain in disgrace. The book concludes with a melancholy “Act Three,” recounting the marginalized last years of Columbus’s life, including his final voyage to the Indies, and his attempts to assert the rights and privileges won in the first blush of triumph. Irving’s tale ends with the Admiral’s pious, peaceful acceptance of death, immediately followed by his burial in Valladolid and three reinterments in the next thirty years, the beginning of the five hundred year struggle over Columbus’s legacy.⁹

Irving’s description of the indomitable Admiral, beset on all sides by ignorance, jealousy, and grasping compatriots, yet ever guided by an unflagging vision of the Christian redemption of a land of boundless riches, added an important voice to the romantic imagination of the individual’s place in the modern world. The great themes of Irving’s *Columbus* reflect a coherent engagement with issues critical to both the early nineteenth-century political world and Irving’s struggle to carve out his own career and place in society. The issue within which Irving frames all these themes, in fact the overarching issue in his *Columbus*, is the relationship between Spanish society and the Catholic Church. Here Irving adopted the approach used by his Anglophone predecessors in Spain, including Swinburne and Murphy. He took as his starting point the thesis that the Spanish monarchy and state were irretrievably stained by their relationship with the Catholic hierarchy. He made this argument in two ways. First, he ascribed to the clergy the least attractive elements of both traditional and modern culture. Second, he consistently contrasted their society with that of the Moors, whose long reign

⁹ Irving, *Columbus*, CWWI vol. 11, 562 for the reinterments. Irving takes up the further peregrinations of Columbus’s remains in a subsequent volume entitled *Companions of Columbus*. This work includes both a chronicle of other voyages in the first decade of the exploration of the West Indies and a series of short articles on matters extraneous to the central narrative of the Columbus study, including the discussion of his burial and reburials. The ultimate custody of Columbus’s physical remains is a subject as contentious as that of his moral legacy. There are currently monuments purporting to contain Columbus’s remains in Santo Domingo, Seville, and Havana.

in Southern Iberia he described as a society based on the best of cultured and chivalric behavior.

In addition to these matters of religion, Irving's *Columbus* hypothesized resolutions to a series of questions raised by the contemplation of colonialism from the perspective of the 1820s. These issues included the place of the Indians in the story of the New World, the influence of national character on the colonial project, and, inevitably, the enormous yet deeply problematic influence of the marketplace on both individuals and states. Irving's description of Spain and its citizens advances the emerging ideas about unique and clearly discernible "national characters." He describes a struggle between a generous pre-modern system of interpersonal exchange and the emerging phenomenon of grasping financiers who employ sophisticated financial instruments for shortsighted self-interest. These themes were deeply familiar to Irving – they had been at the forefront of his work for twenty years, since his publication of *The History of New York*.

Irving's discussion of religion negotiated a subtle distinction, honoring Columbus for his deep faith while marginalizing specifically Catholic elements of his practice. The discussion proceeded on two tracks simultaneously. First was the establishment of Columbus's religious *bona fides*. Irving characterized the Admiral's spirituality as intense, but of a lofty and meditative nature, albeit with certain regrettable tinges of superstition. Irving emphasized Columbus's interest in his personal role as agent of a universalizing and triumphant church (30). He enumerated Columbus's descriptions of the sacred nature of his mission, focusing on his often-discussed goal of effecting the rescue of the Holy Sepulcher from the infidels. In the course of the narrative, Columbus

mullets over various schemes to this end. He notes that one of the advantages of an eastbound approach to Asia may be to put military forces within striking distance of Jerusalem and notes that the mission's financial acquisitiveness itself has a sacred element, since the riches of the Indies can not fail to expedite the return of the sacred relics (56; 477).

The emphasis on Columbus's personal spirituality fits easily with the romantic, inner-directed, personal piety of nineteenth-century Protestant practice. Yet like Irving himself, Irving's Columbus is closer to the Enlightenment than to the Second Great Awakening. Both Alexander Hill Everett and William Hickling Prescott, in their respective 1829 reviews, found fault with what they viewed as Irving's insufficient emphasis on Christian faith in the Admiral's story. Everett felt Irving's characterization of the Admiral's faith as "an amiable but somewhat visionary and mistaken enthusiasm" simply did not do justice to the role of Providence in the enterprise. He further argued that the interest in the liberation of Jerusalem may not have been a medieval fantasy at all, but the advocacy of a hardheaded geopolitical intervention against the Ottomans, one of the key enemies of the Spanish Empire. These comments not only reflect Everett's background, both as a New England Puritan and as a diplomat, but expand on the extensive analysis he had presented on the failure of Islamic Western Asia to adapt to commercialized modernity in his *Europe*.¹⁰

Prescott was more directly critical of Irving's depiction of Columbus's spirituality, feeling that the American author might have been infected by the anti-clericalism of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. As part of his critique of the general state of

¹⁰ Alexander Hill Everett, "Irving's Life of Columbus." *North American Review* 28 (1829): 131; *Europe* (Boston, 1822), 120-21.

history writing, Prescott took Gibbon to task for “lack of good faith” in spreading a spirit critical of religion in his constant harping on the faults of the early Christians, and his “Iago-like” attempt to cast suspicion on all religious activity.¹¹ In fact, it is hard to imagine that Irving would have objected to the comparison with Gibbon, and it seems not at all unlikely that the witty and readable prose of *Decline and Fall* was an influence on Irving. Prescott’s review, however, was by no means hostile, and actually reflects the prestige Irving brought to all his professional relationships in this era. Prescott, viewed as a founder of American history-writing and the first American to write “professional” history of early modern Spain and the Spanish colonial project, handsomely acknowledged Irving’s work and his supportiveness.¹² More significant, he chose to give Columbus only minimal attention in his own massive study of the era, noting that Irving had thoroughly covered the topic.¹³ A biographer of William Hickling Prescott reflects the later, anti-Irving scholarly consensus, expressing relief that after consideration Irving left the chronicling of the Spanish conquest of Mexico to more professional hands.¹⁴ Irving’s long stay in Europe may have insulated him from Prescott’s engagement in the Second Great Awakening, but Prescott’s disappointment at Irving’s lack of religious enthusiasm did not engender a wider critique of Irving’s historiography.

¹¹ William Hickling Prescott, “Irving’s Conquest of Granada,” *North American Review* 29 (1829): 302.

¹² Prescott’s relationship with both Irving and Everett is addressed in their contemporary and fellow Hispanophile George Ticknor’s *Life of William Hickling Prescott* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1864). See pages 72-74 for Prescott’s 1826 request to Everett for his imprimatur and help with access to Spanish sources; pages 156-159 for his correspondence with Irving in which he establishes that Irving had not staked out his follow-up project, a study of the Spanish conquest of the Americas.

¹³ William Hickling Prescott, *Ferdinand and Isabella* (1837, reprint; New York: AMS, 1968). Prescott deals with Columbus from his appearance on the scene to the departure on the first voyage in one chapter. Subsequent events in the life of the Admiral are discussed briefly.

¹⁴ C. Harvey Gardiner, *William Hickling Prescott* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 152-53. Prescott’s correspondence with Irving cited above (n.12) appears to make it clear that both Irving and Prescott agreed that Prescott would make a more diligent and orderly job of it, but Irving’s informed and insightful discussion of the principal sources reminds us of the quality of his own historical writing.

As Irving developed the theme of Columbus's personal spirituality, he simultaneously circumscribed the importance of the Catholic Church to Columbus and to the entire Enterprise of the Indies. This was a big project and, especially for those raised under the influence of Samuel Eliot Morison's mid twentieth-century depiction of Columbus as the commander of a fleet of floating chapels, wafting clouds of incense and ringing with hymnody, a difficult one.¹⁵ Two principal themes support this argument. The first, predictably, invokes the tropes of the Black Legend. Here, in the stories of the obstructionist, years-long deliberations of the Council of Salamanca, the group of "flat-earth" theologians who ultimately decided Columbus's theories were doctrinally unsound, is the basis for many of the critiques of Irving's historical accuracy. Irving notes Columbus's opposition to these "schoolmen" – a reference to the Scholastic opposition to Galileo – as an example of Columbus's ultimate identification with heterodox Christianity.¹⁶ The second deals with the long array of bureaucrats and functionaries who constantly attempt to subvert and isolate Columbus. These characters, who range from those responsible for the physical outfitting of the expeditions up to the highest levels of court society, are invariably characterized as the creatures of a malicious church hierarchy. In fact, most of them are under the direct sway of Columbus's archenemy, Juan Rodrigues de Fonseca, for thirty years the Patriarch of the Indies and directly charged with the spiritual and physical welfare of the colonies (169).

¹⁵ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea, A Life of Christopher Columbus* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1942) was the default biography of Columbus for bookish boys of my generation.

¹⁶ Irving, *Columbus*, CWWI vol. 11, 45-53. In addition to incurring the wrath of those who feel he is an apologist for degradation of the Indians and the environment, Irving has also been the subject of criticism from scholars and enthusiasts who feel he is single-handedly responsible for spreading the canard that medieval people believed the earth was flat. Irving's role in this conflict is discussed in Jeffrey Russell's *Inventing the Flat Earth: Columbus and Modern Historians* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 51-57.

A further complicated construction of religiosity is required in describing the role of Queen Isabella. She is the sort of character whom Irving found most congenial and he depicted her as Columbus's ultimate champion, far more important as a source of patronage than the chilly Ferdinand. Again, in the legend of Isabella's supposed offer to pledge her own jewels for the project (65), Irving has been accused of giving the imprimatur of historical authority to apocryphal stories. In fairness, he does deal with this story cautiously, presenting it as something that would have been typical of the Queen's generous heart rather than as definitive fact. The Queen's championing of the rights of the Indians is, to Irving, another example of her sterling character.¹⁷ Yet Irving still has to deal with her zealotry and vigorous advocacy of the persecution of Jews and Moors as alien and heretical dangers to the Spanish body politic. Here Irving reinforced the idea that Columbus's project was fundamentally anticlerical by adopting the same paradigm presented in the story of the jewels: he blames her intolerance on her "ghostly advisers," the queen's entourage of confessors and clerics (64-65).

Irving's emphasis on Isabella's role represents a case where he was most successful in framing a traditional Catholic as a hero suitable for the United States. One of the highlights of the quadricentennial commemoration of Columbus at the 1893 Chicago Fair was a pavilion designed by progressive elements among the "Board of Lady Managers" to depict Isabella as "co-discoverer of America."¹⁸ The depiction of Isabella as an advocate for Columbus and an innately moral woman of deep personal faith, who,

¹⁷ I have analyzed Isabella's reputation as an advocate for the Indians and her role in the process of the early modern world's definition of the ideological underpinnings of racialized slavery and forced labor systems in "Sed Dextera Tua: Imagining History in Golden Age Spain," (M.A. thesis, Georgia State University, 2001).

¹⁸ Karal Marling, "Writing History with Artifact: Columbus at the 1893 Chicago Fair," *Public Historian* 14 (Fall, 1992): 25.

although occasionally led astray by her cynical papist advisers, felt great warmth toward the inhabitants of the Indies, resonated with the nineteenth-century development of a model of supportive, womanly piety. Thus, Irving circumscribed the obvious centrality of Catholicism in the life of one of the traditional symbols of Catholic fanaticism. As he had done with Columbus, he negotiated a problematic element of the entire “discovery” story by framing it in a positivist Protestant paradigm.

The Conquest of Granada

Although the urgency of getting the *Columbus* manuscript to market was never far from Irving’s mind, in the middle of his research he took a break of several weeks in order to examine the sources on the conquest of the Moors by Ferdinand and Isabella.¹⁹ He found traces of this matter lurking at the edges of the Columbus story; Columbus had been present during the final days of the siege of Granada, and closed the deal for Isabella’s financial support in the wake of the conquest. If Irving’s *Columbus* makes the case that the emerging Spanish state was fundamentally corrupted by the influence of the Catholic hierarchy, his *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada, by Fray Antonio Agapida* presents the other half of the argument, arguing for the moral and cultural fitness of Moorish Spain.²⁰ This argument extends the work of Swinburne and Murphy by using the sophistication of the Moorish court to demonstrate the moral and political

¹⁹ Irving’s correspondence with Thomas W. Storrow, who was associated with the US embassy in London and served as business agent for many Americans in Europe, including Irving, represents an excellent source for all Irving’s business plans and concerns about the long and contentious process of arranging for the publication of books in Britain and the US while residing in Spain. See for example “WI to Thomas W. Storrow,” August 16, 1826, *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 207, discussing the publication of *Columbus* or “WI to Thomas W. Storrow,” October 22, 1828, CWWI vol. 24, 349 for the publication of *Conquest of Granada*.

²⁰ Washington Irving, *A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada by Fray Antonio Agamid*, CWWI vol. 11, 18. Future references to this work will be cited parenthetically in the text.

inadequacies of Ferdinand and Isabella's. But, like all of Irving's Spanish material, this work not only used empiricism to reframe early modern representational traditions, it also wove into the story a culturally and politically sensitive romanticism.

In his description of the epic, fourteen-year campaign between Christian and Muslim that resulted in the final defeat of the Spanish Moors, Irving noted many similarities between the two sides who had, after all, shared the Iberian Peninsula for over 700 years. This suggests a distinction between Irving's view and that of Swinburne and Murphy – both Irving's research and his inclination led him away from framing the Moors in an uncritically positive light. He described both the Moors and early modern Spanish society as being made up of three principal groups: a warrior class, dashing and proud, and given to oaths sworn on their respective religious faiths; a merchant class, craven and self-seeking, with no concern beyond financial expediency; and an enduring peasantry that through back-breaking labor reaped bounteously from the fertile valleys in the brief interludes when the respective armies were not looting and burning. The account begins in 1478, nine years after Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile had united Spanish Iberia through their dynastic marriage. The weight of this union made the independence of al-Andalus, Moorish Spain, tenuous enough that the Islamic ruler Muley Hassan signed an oath of tributary fealty to the Spanish monarchs. In return for an agreement that he could rule his land and follow his faith without interference, he would acknowledge the overlordship of Ferdinand and Isabella. Irving tells us that this tense but relatively peaceful status quo was breached by a Moorish attack on one of the old Christian border outposts, but in recounting this episode his sympathy toward the situation of the Moors is clear. The tensions that led to the actual outbreak of war were

not based on religion or ideology. They resulted from a unilateral decision by King Ferdinand to demand a higher level of tribute from Muley Hassan.

In describing this first attack, and throughout the 300 subsequent pages, Irving attributes the string of Spanish victories to two particular factors: a vast superiority in men, *materiel*, and military technology, and the employment of a range of unsavory, mercenary, and frankly dishonorable strategies and tactics. The Christian soldiers who rallied to Ferdinand's standard after the Moors struck the successful first blow were mercenaries whose every action was calculated with an eye to the bottom line. They enlisted only after extensive dickering over the terms by which plunder and spoil would be divided, and the negotiation of a precise formula for splitting the proceeds from the sale of Moorish captives into slavery. Predictably, in the aftermath of the first battle a fight broke out between the assault troops and the reserves over carving up the booty (18). This focus on the mercenary nature of the Spanish forces continues throughout Irving's account, and is a key element in his critique of the Spanish. Irving's sensitivity to the moral nuances of economically motivated behavior is an extension of the romantic critique of commerce in his *Abu Hassan* script. It provides an interesting contrast with Swinburne's 1775 criticism of the Spanish expulsion of the Moriscos on the grounds that it detracted from the Spanish economy. Here is a benchmark for the romantic construction of a gentlemanly distaste for financial strivers. While Swinburne assumed his readers would find the economic disruption of the Spanish economy idiotic, in the face of fifty years of capitalist expansion this commitment to economic rationality no longer seemed so obvious. Of course it made sense to displace this disdain for worldly striving onto a putative ancestor, be it Scott's highland Celts, Dumas's dashing

mousquetaires, or the fictional tribe of Ossian, where it could be admired without necessarily causing a reader to feel obliged to quit his job.²¹

Irving's Moors fit nicely into this model of a pre-modern people whose chivalric virtues were unable to withstand the bottom line values of modernity. Irving amplified this point by continually attributing the military success of the Spanish to their willingness to employ ungentlemanly tactics. In the early days of the conflict when the Spanish had not yet fully marshaled their powers, Ferdinand raised the morale of his troops by sending them on missions of destruction designed only to devastate and terrorize the Moorish countryside. Once his forces were fully assembled he refused to allow his most naturally gallant men to race off and engage the Moorish knights in free-wheeling combat, instead holding them back to provide security for the mule trains carrying artillery pieces forward to the front. This reduction of the combat to a "conflict more of engineers and artillerists than of gallant cavaliers" (143) was unappealing to Ferdinand's hotspurs, but Irving notes that a key element of the Spanish victory was the ability of their guns to destroy castle walls that had stood for centuries. Irving's association of artillery with engineering emphasizes the point that artillery is itself a signifier for the adoption of modern and rational principles.²²

In the final stages of the Spanish conquest of al-Andalus, the battle for the city of Granada and its immediate environs, Irving focuses even more attention on Ferdinand as a captain who fought his battles with craft, policy, and deep pockets rather than valor. In

²¹ William Reddy's *Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Modern Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) is an excellent introduction to the problem of financial acquisitiveness. Rolena Adorno "Washington Irving's Romantic Hispanism," in *Spain in America*, ed. Richard Kagan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 62 for a characterization of Irving's ambivalence on this matter as a contrast between "commerce" (wholesome) and "materialism" (bad).

²² Ken Alder's *Engineering the Revolution: Arms and Enlightenment in France, 1763-1815* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997) is an excellent study of the importance of artillery as a vector for modernization in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French military.

the course of overcoming the outlying forts, he cut deals with their commanders leaving them with substantial fiefdoms and the right to practice their religion in return for their help. He then employed these new allies to get into holdout forts under false colors (210-214). When he finally arrived at the imposing gates of Granada, Ferdinand found the defenses so intimidating that he cancelled any offensive activity for an entire year, a period he spent ranging through the area burning crops, killing peasants, and sowing terror. During this period he issued an order definitively forbidding his men to engage in any single combat with the Moorish knights who regularly strode forth from the city gates pouring invective on the honor of the Spaniards.

The Moors eventually found a way to provoke individual Spanish knights into breaking ranks and accepting an individual challenge. This foolproof provocation was to stop insulting the individual Spaniard and start insulting the Blessed Virgin Mary. Needless to say, Irving treats these individual fracasés in loving detail and they provide an entrée to Irving's representation of religious practice in early modern Spain. Irving's hostility toward the Spanish religious establishment, an important element of his Columbus biography, is sharpened and focused in this work by its association with an individual character. Irving's title for this work includes a reference to its authorship by another in the long line of Irving's fictional narrators, Fray Antonio Agapida. This device suggests Irving was sensitive to some of the issues raised by the emergence of history-writing as a distinct genre. The occasional insertion of Irving's light-hearted comic voice in *Columbus* was one thing, but in *Conquest of Granada* the humor is more central and more pointed, and the work includes several comic set pieces. These, of course, draw on the set of tropes long established in Western representation of Moorish

culture, revolving around romantic affairs complicated by the exigencies of harem life or the attraction of Moorish knights to Christian maidens and vice versa. Irving's use of the fictional narrator was meant to locate the work toward the fictional end of the romance-history spectrum and to afford him a "freer scope in touching up and coloring the subject from my imagination."²³ He wrote a long complaint about his longtime British publisher, John Murray, taking the liberty of including Irving's name on the title page of the first edition along with Father Agapida's, noting that the use of his name implied a higher standard of historical accuracy.²⁴

But Irving's complaints about his name appearing on the title page ultimately seem disingenuous. Fray Antonio Agapida does not act as narrator in the book – rather he is another character who appears intermittently, generally in the aftermath of one of Ferdinand's unscrupulous victories, to express the most vindictive, greedy, and generally repulsive views possible. These comments support Ferdinand's ruthlessness, and justify his most unsavory actions by reflecting on the amount of money they bring to the church treasury and the amount of territory they seize from the "filthy sect of Mohammad" (189). Agapida's comments on other subjects also show him in an unpleasant light. He lauds the Inquisition for helping fund the struggle against heresy by extorting money from as many New Christians (Jews who had been coerced into conversion) as necessary, and he vilifies the soldiers who fell in a losing battle, suggesting they had incurred God's wrath by failing to will their estates to the church. In short, Agapida's function is to bring to the center of the story the Black Legend, the idea that the Catholic Church was a malicious and retrograde weight on Spanish society.

²³ "WI to Alexander Hill Everett," February 14, 1829, *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 382.

²⁴ "WI to Peter Irving," April 10, 1829, *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 400.

Agapida's fanaticism contrasts with Irving's representation of Moorish religious practice. In describing the two societies, Irving found that they shared a warrior elite, a merchant class, and a docile peasantry. What the Christians had and the Moors did not was an influential priestly class. Beyond the frequent swearing of oaths "on the sword of the Prophet" by the Moorish knights, and the adherence to various customary dietary restrictions, religious influence seems virtually non-existent among the Moors. The only figures in their community who appear to be interested in the world of spiritual practice are a pair of eccentric seers who intermittently prophesy woe unto the community. While these characters are prominent enough in the story to have come to the attention of Agapida, who vilifies them as agents of Satan, they appear to function more like the pagan priests of the Celts, the Ossianites, and the whole range of premodern peoples so appealing to the romantics. This depiction further problematizes the ruthless Spanish suppression of this colorful world and aids in Irving's ideological delegitimization of the Spanish Imperial project.

Irving depicts Muslim religious practice as harmless superstition rather than religious fanaticism. Twenty-first-century scholars (and a wide range of other observers, ideologues, and advocates) are inclined to retrospectively project contemporary religious attitudes onto the nineteenth-century encounter between Islam and the West. Michael Oren's well-received and well-researched *Power, Faith, and Fantasy*, for example, takes for granted that the Barbary Pirates "styl[ed] themselves as *mujahideen* – warriors in an Islamic Holy War." Another recent author, Joseph Wheelan, calls the negotiating

positions of the Barbary States “terrorist rhetoric.”²⁵ Yet Irving’s *Conquest* presents a much different image, one which did not encompass the modern idea that “religious war” is the perpetual state of Islamic – Western relations. Irving’s Moors were a courageous and fierce people embodying the complex of premodern values widely found in romantic descriptions of Europe’s honored ancestors. Neither the hookah-smoking, sybaritic tyrants of Delacroix nor a band of jihad-crazed fanatics are anywhere in evidence, at least on the Islamic side of the siege lines. Note also that Agapida was not simply the retrograde, superstitious priest of the “classical” black legend. His unattractive intolerance is deployed in the service of modernity, the commercial and technological elements of Ferdinand’s ruthless suppression of the Moors. He too is a character in the romantic world view, one who empirically marshals the demagogic potential of mass politics to coarsen public life in the service of immoral commercial interests.

David Wilkie in Spain

Irving’s critique of Catholicism was thus not a simple one – he did not frame the faith simply as an agent of old-fashioned superstition or backwardness. He imbued it with a more complex array of negative signifiers identified with the materialistic and cynical elements characteristic of the romantic villain. Interestingly, one of Irving’s closest friends and associates in his travel through Andalusia, the British artist David Wilkie, was simultaneously constructing an artistic narrative about the place of Spain in the modern world that included a much more positive image of the Catholic Church.

²⁵ Michael Oren, *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East, 1776 to the Present* (New York: Norton, 2007), 18; Joseph Wheelan, *Jefferson’s War: America’s First War on Terror 1801-1805* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003), xxiii.

Wilkie's sympathy toward romantic manifestations of Catholicism, somewhat surprising in the son of a Scottish Reformed Church minister, had been notable from early on in his career as a painter. Like most serious artists, he had traveled widely in Europe and been struck by many images of Catholic worship. The sights that he found particularly compelling were those that reflected the individual expressions of piety and faith most in tune with Northrop Frye's description of the reframing of religious sensibility in the romantic era.²⁶

He found inspiration in reverent but distinctly Catholic liturgical art, expressed in his image of Benvenuto Cellini presenting a lovingly and opulently crafted censer to Pope Paul III [Figure 29].²⁷ The attraction of Catholicism to the romantics extended far beyond these evocations of the splendor of church tradition and the prestigious patron relationships evoked by the reference to Cellini and his Pope. On his first trip to Europe Wilkie wrote back to his friend and business partner, the engraver Abraham Raimbach, about the impact of less exalted and more personal manifestations of Catholic piety on the group of young German romantic artists in Rome. Wilkie noted their appreciation for such acknowledged masters of the Renaissance as Raphael and Michelangelo, but was even more interested to note that they were essaying the novel experiment of

copying the masters and precursors of Raphael, not Raphael himself, in hopes that passing over the same course they will arrive at his excellence. They have revived the art of fresco...; and, though their system scarcely admits of originality, it yet has so much of expression, and discards so much of what is meretricious, that I wish their feeling was infused a little into ourselves. Their

²⁶ The principal source for the life and career of Wilkie is Allen Cunningham, *The Life of Sir David Wilkie with His Journals, Tours, and Critical Remarks on Works of Art and a Selection from his Correspondence* (London, 1843). Like Pierre Irving's biography of his uncle, this work intersperses a narrative with extensive excerpts from Wilkie's correspondence and also includes some of his voluminous technical and instructional writing about art. For details about Wilkie's trip to Paris and interest in Catholic devotional practice, see Campbell Dodgson, *The Etchings of Sir David Wilkie and Andrew Geddes, A Catalogue* (London: The Print Collectors Club, 1936).

²⁷ Dodgson, *Etchings*, 27.

names are Schnorr, Veit, Schadow, and Overbeck. Schnorr takes the lead, has married a Catholic, and changed his religion to feel more devoutly the scriptural subjects of his art.²⁸

This is one of the first English-language acknowledgements of such significant figures in German romanticism as Johann Gottfried Schadow and Friedrich Overbeck. His allusion to the work of the “Pre-Raphaelites,” almost unknown *quattrocento* painters such as Masaccio, Fra Angelico, and Ghirlandaio whose expressive and introspective works were destined to become a touchstone of modernism, marks Wilkie as a valuable source for the romantic *zeitgeist*. This should not suggest, however, that Wilkie was about to emulate the German romantics in eschewing modern dress, living communally or embracing monastic poverty. Like his contemporary and friend Washington Irving, Wilkie was a pioneer in carving out a place for the arts in the market economy. Unlike Irving, however, who had to blaze a previously unmarked trail as an artist from the US, Wilkie’s career developed in the context of a well-established artistic establishment, reified in the powerful presence of the British Royal Academy.

Wilkie was outside the Academic mainstream as a young man, trained mainly in Scotland and interested in everyday rather than classical subjects. He ultimately became a pillar of the Academy’s hierarchy, however, serving as president and authoring an important rearticulation of Academic doctrine. But before that, he raised a few eyebrows in the artistic establishment through his aggressive early attempts to find a market niche. Wilkie was a perceptive observer of the segmentation of the market place, one of the key aspects of the emergence of a wider public sphere. Josiah Wedgwood’s identification of the growing interest in goods that had the *imprimatur* of elite taste, and the willingness of

²⁸ Abraham Raimbach, *Memoirs and Recollections; Including a Memoir of Sir David Wilkie* (London: Frederick Shobel, 1843), 190.

a rapidly widening group willing to pay for these goods has a parallel in the artistic world. For Wilkie and his peers the traditional relationship with elite consumers who could pay large sums for paintings lovingly and laboriously crafted by the hand of a master artist still represented the pinnacle of artistic achievement. Wilkie's work appealed successfully to this most desirable market segment – the Duke of Wellington and King George IV were among his key patrons – but he did not ignore the rest of the marketplace. We have a remarkable source for Wilkie's carefully segmented appeal to the market in a memoir begun by Abraham Raimbach and ultimately printed privately by one of Raimbach's sons. The elder Raimbach, a Swiss-English engraver had a keen insight into the nuances of the art market and a deep respect and affection for Wilkie, "an individual who, both as an artist and a man is an honour to his country" (112).

In his descriptions of his own career and Wilkie's, Raimbach provides a fascinating glimpse into the business of art and shows how much the language and attitudes of the marketplace had already become a routine part of the society's cultural fabric. Along with his own memoirs, the Raimbach volume includes a lengthy biographical sketch of Wilkie and several letters from Wilkie, including the one quoted above about his trip to Rome. In this sketch, Raimbach describes one of Wilkie's early attempts to win the attention of the London public by personally mounting a one-man show:

Having resolved to hazard the experiment of a collective display of his works, taking the chances of profit and loss entirely upon himself, Wilkie engaged a room in the Pall Mall for this purpose, and in April, 1812, his exhibition was opened to the public....Nobility and [hoi polloi] attends, but academicians are scarce "whether their absence was merely fortuitous, or was caused by a feeling of dissatisfaction at the circumstance of a young man only twenty-seven years of age, and recently elected to their corps,

presuming to call the public attention to himself, independent of their establishment, was not ascertained. (160)

Unfortunately, as Irving found with his stock market investments, the allure of the market's access to a wide range of art lovers was complicated by the actual interplay of vendors, landlords, lawyers and other disreputable schemers. In Raimbach's description we learn that Wilkie's show was

by far the most popular exhibition of the day, and was attended by throngs, while other pictorial attractions were comparatively deserted by the public. The profits, notwithstanding, were by no means proportionate; as, in addition to the necessary expenses of rent, fitting-up, attendants, wages, advertisements, and posting-bills, a most untoward expense must be added to the debit side of the account – namely, the seizure of the pictures for rent, due by the person of whom Wilkie hired the rooms to the original landlord. The distraint was regularly made...and a man in due form laced in possession. The broker, as was his duty, put a very low price for greater security on the articles selected....This vexatious interference was got over, of course, by the one only method – that of Wilkie paying the debt and costs (113).

Although the experience of having his goods confiscated as security for a debt contracted by another was painful, it did, as Raimbach points out, lead to one of Wilkie's most memorable works, *Distraint for Rent*, a heart-wrenching depiction of a family's eviction by a cruel landlord [**Figure 30**].

Raimbach's relationship with Wilkie was centered on the print-making business. Like the staging of public exhibitions, this was another technique meant to expand the art market, creating copies of important paintings thus allowing those who could not afford an original oil painting to enjoy the pleasures and prestige of art ownership:

I had still continued fully occupied with engagements with various booksellers, when the great success of Burnet's print from Wilkie's admirable picture of the Blind Fiddler, and some dissatisfaction between the parties, led his proposing to me in 1812 a joint-stock adventure, in which we should be the sole proprietors, he finding the pictures and I the engraving.... The mutual conditions of our engagement were promptly arranged upon the basis, with

various modifications, of one-third share to Wilkie and two-thirds share to me; which terms were afterwards changed to one-fourth and three-fourths, respectively, at the generous and unsolicited suggestion of Wilkie, who considered the first adopted proportions as bearing rather hard on me, and throwing an undue advantage into his hands. Several of his pictures were, by permission of their noble proprietors, available to our purpose; and, after maturely balancing the *pros* and *cons* of each, we finally determined on commencing with Lord Mansfield's picture of Village Politicians. There was, yet, a difficulty to be got over regarding this subject, inasmuch as Samuel Reynolds had obtained leave to make a large mezzotinto print from it, and had even proceeded some way with the plate. A negociation was therefore entered upon with Reynolds for the purchase of his right to publish, &c., which ended in Wilkie's payment to Reynolds of one hundred guineas for his claims, and receiving from him the plate, which remains unused and unserviceable, and is likely so to remain (112-113).

The practical issues Raimbach describes remind us that the ground rules concerning control of intellectual property were not yet well-established. They also demonstrate that the basic outlines of intellectual property law, including the concept of licensing the use of an image in a particular medium for a specific purpose, were well understood at this early date.

Despite these complications, in the next few decades the advantages of selling prints of important paintings were clearly established. One issue, originally adjudicated in Restoration-era French courts concerning an iconic pictorial depiction of Napoleonic triumphalism, Antoine-Jean Gros's *Battle of the Pyramids*, addressed the question of "whether the sale of a painting by the artist, without any condition or reserve, conveyed to the purchaser the exclusive right of taking and publishing an engraving of it." The decision, which seemed only to apply in Britain, was "that the entire property of a picture passes with it on a sale, and the subsequent right to make and publish engravings from it, unless there be in the contract or bill of sale an express reserve or stipulation to the contrary...." By this time, Wilkie was a well-established figure in the art world, and

addressed some of the implications of the print market, including complaints about the emergence of “steel-engraving, by multiplying almost indefinitely the number of impressions each plate would produce, may in a great degree be attributed the decline and debasement of the art, exercised on a small scale” (141-143).

Wilkie overcame the problems of a young artist, and became one of the most prominent painters in Britain. His credentials as a member of the British elite were confirmed when he was knighted in 1836 after serving as a high officer in the Royal Academy and as Principal Painter to William IV.²⁹ Wilkie’s advancement to these honors would have been unthinkable had he not demonstrated his mastery of history painting. In the Academy, history paintings traditionally occupied the top rung of the artistic ladder and were to be essayed only by the most accomplished and best educated of painters.³⁰ Appropriate to his high office, Wilkie added to the extensive body of theorizing about the practice of history painting, and his comments are valuable for anyone attempting to use these paintings as primary historical sources.³¹ The traditional basis for history painting’s cachet went beyond the technical skill required to handle the compositional problems arising from the inclusion of large number of important figures in one image. The history painter needed an education on a par with his elite patrons in order to master the classical lore and emblematic vocabulary of the genre.

Wilkie’s comments on history painting, however, show that he was aware that new audiences for painting were emerging in the nineteenth-century. He understood that

²⁹ Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 3, 117.

³⁰ For discussion of the hierarchies among artistic genres see Mariet Westermann, *A Worldly Art: the Dutch Republic 1585-1718* (New York: Abrams, 1996), 165-167; Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), Chapter 1; Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 32-36.

³¹ Wilkie’s essay on history painting is reprinted in Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 3, 180-199.

large and important paintings were increasingly part of the world of the mass public. Wilkie's own best known painting, a subtle memento of the Battle of Waterloo commissioned by the Duke of Wellington, had a highly successful run on public display. Thus Wilkie was keenly aware that a successful history painting had to take the interpretive ability of a wider audience into account. Wilkie compared painting, and especially history painting, to a food that, although "calculated for universal demand, was yet so refined in its composition, and so refined in its flavor, that...none, save a most select portion of society, were from habit and taste fully qualified to enjoy it."³² Despite this, and perhaps with the memory of his own popular success in mind, Wilkie ultimately concluded that "we may far underrate the ordinary observer, and do injustice to the [well-received] work itself, which, to become celebrated...must possess a natural interest of which the most ordinary minds can judge as well as be informed."³³ These comments are particularly helpful in discussing the importance of Wilkie's paintings in helping shape Washington Irving's view of Spain, and especially Andalusia, where Irving and Wilkie traveled together for several months.

An image of Irving in the archives of a Sevillean monastery, deep in his research into Spain's Moorish past [**Figure 31**] stands as a vivid memento of the two men's travels. This painting was commissioned with the cooperation of Irving's London publisher, John Murray, and although it was painted in the early 1830s, recalls an 1828 visit Irving and Wilkie made to a monastery in Seville.³⁴ The work helps define some of the changes that Wilkie brought to Irving's view of Spain – note that this image does not

³² Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 3, 180.

³³ Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 3, 187.

³⁴ Access to this monastery was one of the perquisites secured for Irving by Alexander Hill Everett. For details on the transaction and Irving's profuse thanks, see "WI to Alexander H. Everett," April 23, 1828, *Letters II*, CWWI vol. 24, 325.

shows the Spanish monk playing an active role in the construction of his own national history. In part, the monk attending Irving seems to fall comfortably into the “Black Legend” tradition where the Spanish clergy represents a dead weight obstructing any possibility of progress.³⁵ This corpulent cleric fits the traditional anti-Catholic trope of the priest as the fattest man in the village, the one whose table is groaning while his flock scratches out a scanty living. But his lively and obvious interest in Irving and his work belies such a simplistic interpretation.

For all of the British and Americans working in Spain in this era, clerical figures were a ubiquitous element of Spain’s visual fabric and a traditional national signifier. Characterizations of the clergy served to define Spain and the place Spain might occupy in the emerging modern world. This priest, like many other religious figures in Wilkie’s depictions of Spain, is presented in a notably favorable light. Wilkie’s best known Spanish paintings are a set of four scenes from the Napoleonic Wars, and clerics are prominent in all four. The legacy of these wars was very much with Wilkie during his time in Spain. In a letter written on first crossing from France he noted that he had “traced the steps of the British Army” and that he had entered Vittoria, “on the field whereon was decided the possession of Spain.”³⁶ Wilkie remarked in a letter to his brother that one of the reasons he was so favorably disposed to the Spanish people was that “they were at one time the only continental allies of England.” He then went on to make it clear that these thoughts were not merely nostalgia, adding that “if the recollection of [the alliance] is not past, I am in hopes that this picture, if it reaches

³⁵ Charles Gibson, ed. *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (New York: Knopf, 1971) 3-18. See also Joseph P. Sanchez, *The Spanish Black Legend: Origin of Anti-Hispanic Stereotypes* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Library, 1990).

³⁶ “David Wilkie to his sister,” October 4, 1827, Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 2, 460.

London in safety, will do as much for me as any picture I ever painted.”³⁷ Wilkie’s service as court painter to George IV and William IV, and his important private commissions from Wellington assured his sensitivity to the opinion of British political elites, and he had assessed this issue correctly. The set of four Spanish paintings were ultimately purchased by the King.³⁸

Wilkie’s generous attitude toward Catholicism and Catholics in the late 1820s was not simply a function of nostalgic memories of a wartime ally – as Wilkie was painting in Spain, Britain was on the cusp of Catholic Emancipation, finally enacted in 1829. Linda Colley has noted that the King was no enthusiastic supporter of this measure, but his purchase of Wilkie’s four Spanish paintings in April, 1829, the very month the Catholic Emancipation bill was passed, suggests that anti-Catholicism must not have had its earlier resonance.³⁹ The best known of Wilkie’s Spanish war paintings, entitled *The Defence of Saragossa*, contains the clearest articulation of the association between the Spanish Catholic clergy and the military effort against Napoleon [Figure 32]. The painting depicts the “Maid of Saragossa,” a heroine who sprang to the defense of her city when it was besieged by the Napoleonic armies in the summer of 1808. Wilkie depicts the best known incident of her story: the moment after the maid’s affianced, an artillerist, was struck down. After rallying the dispirited Spanish patriots, she herself seizes the slow match and prepares to fire the cannon. The legend of The Maid as a heroine of the resistance to Napoleon was well-established in England long

³⁷ “David Wilkie to Thomas Wilkie,” February 25, 1828, Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 2, 507.

³⁸ H. A. Miles, “Catalogue of Paintings,” in *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1979), 213.

³⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992), 332. Charles Dickens’ 1832 novel *Barnaby Rudge*, presents a strongly negative view of the anticatholicism in its treatment of the late eighteenth-century Gordon Riots.

before Wilkie turned to this subject. In 1812 Lord Byron had in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* described her heroism as she “Sung the loud song, and dar'd the deed of war” in resistance to “Gaul’s vulture.”⁴⁰ Note, however that Byron characterized his heroine using the language of classicism rather than religion: she “stalks with Minerva's step where Mars might quake to tread.” In Wilkie’s version of the story, however, clergymen are woven into the heroic narrative. While one friar writes out dispatches to be sent by pigeon, another helps lay the gun, actually using his crucifix to point downrange at the enemy.

It is important to emphasize that Wilkie did not mean either the inclusion of the clergymen or any other specific detail of this image as a faithful depiction of what actually took place at the battle. Wilkie discussed the painting in detail in a letter to his sister, noting the pains he took to introduce another key figure, General Jose Palafox, the commander of the Spanish forces during the siege, into the composition.⁴¹ Palafox, whose reputation as a national hero in Spain Wilkie likened to that of William Tell’s in Switzerland, actually participated in planning the painting. He discussed with Wilkie details of his dress; they jointly came up with the idea of depicting Palafox with his shoulder to the wheel of the artillery piece; and Palafox posed for Wilkie in this heroic attitude.⁴² A look at modern historical studies concerning the Napoleonic Wars in Spain, where Palafox is characterized as a demagogic military dictator who carefully nurtured

⁴⁰ Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto the First, Stanza 54.

⁴¹ “David Wilkie to his sister,” March 31, 1828, Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 2, 507.

⁴² Miles, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland*, 214

stories of his personal heroism, suggest that his reimagining of this scene extended beyond his alleged willingness to help position a cannon.⁴³

After bidding farewell to Irving and Spain, Wilkie was extraordinarily busy with new responsibilities for both George IV and the Royal Academy. He returned to Spanish material rarely after his return, but one theme suggested by his Madrid sketches appealed to several of his patrons who engaged him to do a full-size version of an incident from the career of Christopher Columbus. The painting is entitled *Columbus in the Convent of La Rábida* [Figure 33]. This interest from multiple patrons led to what seems to be one of the most economically favorable commissions of Wilkie's career – full payment in advance!⁴⁴ The painting adapts compositional and thematic elements from Wilkie's *Irving in the Archives*. In the earlier image, Wilkie presented the intrepid researcher, with the thoughtful help of an interested cleric, making energetic and wise use of the church's vast resources in the form of archival knowledge. In the later work, Columbus is the one with the knowledge – he is sketching a map that explains to the abbot the feasibility of sailing westward toward the Indies – and the church's contribution in this case is power and influence. The abbot is meant to intervene with a friend at court, Queen Isabel's confessor, to get Columbus a sympathetic hearing for his planned expedition.

Thus Wilkie transforms a charming personal vignette – Wilkie's own comment to Irving about the earlier work was that he had been struck by the “effect your two figures

⁴³ Charles Esdaile, *Fighting Napoleon: Guerillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain 1808-1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 65.

⁴⁴ “David Wilkie to Thomas Wilkie,” September 11, 1834; “David Wilkie to George Jones,” November 17 & 19, 1834, Cunningham, *Wilkie* vol. 3, 89-91.

made together”⁴⁵ – into a history painting. Wilkie’s remarks about the narrative complexity of history painting make it clear that the later work require a detailed analysis from the viewer. Wilkie’s own catalog commentary for an exhibition of this painting makes a good starting point for a close reading of the work. He describes the importance of this event in Columbus’s career: The Spanish court had declined his request for financial backing for the westward voyage to the Indies. He had issued a vague threat that he would take his grand project to the Portuguese, but knew that the Portuguese were uninterested. He and his son stop at a convent for a drink of water and, suddenly, he finds an interested audience in the convent’s guardian, who quickly assembles a group of knowledgeable neighbors. Columbus confidently sketches out his idea and the guardian is won over, quickly agreeing to intercede with his close friend, Queen Isabella’s confessor. Columbus’s project is suddenly approved. Wilkie concludes his comments by acknowledging the source of these details: “The above particulars were first made known to the English reader in the recent *Life of Columbus* by Mr. Washington Irving.”⁴⁶ The remarkable thing about this final statement is not that Irving was the source for a vignette about Columbus’s life – Irving’s biography was the standard source on Columbus until the quadricentennial of 1892 and beyond – but that Wilkie had managed to find an incident in Irving’s book where the Catholic clergy is seen as something other than a pack of scurrilous and malicious spokesmen for privilege and ignorance. Irving’s final Spanish work, *Tales of the Alhambra*, which Irving dedicated to Wilkie, began to reframe Irving’s earlier and strongly anti-Catholic position in ways that resonate both with

⁴⁵ Miles, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland*, 218

⁴⁶ Miles, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland*, 236.

Wilkie's more generous view of Catholicism and a more "Orientalized" view of the Moors.

Tales of the Alhambra

In *Tales of the Alhambra*, Irving turned from historical writing back to the genre of Geoffrey Crayon and the *Sketch Book* – a combination of personal observations, character sketches, and folkloric short stories. But both in style and substance this book speaks in a distinctly modern voice. Instead of employing a pseudonymous narrator, Irving wrote with a vivid and personal subjectivity. After 25 years of observational humor, he no longer required the mask of Jonathan Oldstyle, Geoffrey Crayon, or even Father Agapida. And in *Tales of the Alhambra*, Irving's self-presentation had evolved from modest observer to thoroughly confident man of the world. His descriptions of the journey from Seville to Granada, over some of the roughest country in Spain, eschewed the usual complaints about the bad roads and lack of amenities, heretofore a virtually obligatory starting point for a description of travel in Spain. Instead, he presented an enthusiastic appreciation of the rugged countryside and its characters. The trip itself was carried out in style; the financial success of the Columbus biography afforded private transportation. Rather than a random collection of traveling companions, his companion on this journey was the Russian Prince Dmitri Ivanovitch Dolgorouki, scholar, diplomat, and close friend from Madrid. On arriving in Granada, he avoided the motley local *posadas* by meeting with the governor and securing an invitation to actually live in the Governor's quarters within the Alhambra, "one of the most remarkable, romantic, and

delicious spots in the world.” With this coup, he inserted himself as a central figure in the book.⁴⁷

Tales of the Alhambra, actually completed in 1832 after Irving had left Spain to assume a diplomatic posting in London, was published at a moment when the relationship between Europe and the “Orient” was at a critical transitional state, and the book reflects this. In part, this transition had very tangible manifestations – this was the year that France crossed the Mediterranean and annexed Algeria as a colonial possession, ushering in a new era of European assertiveness in North Africa.⁴⁸ For Edward Said, the era around 1830 was still early in the period when Western scholars were discursively mastering the Orient through imposition of grammatical and other intellectual paradigms based on the assumption of a gradual decline from “Oriental” classical ideals. Said described this period as a moment of transition between the representation of “Orientals” as occasionally amusing, but still potent and dangerous, and one in which the “Orientals” were increasingly depicted as marginalized with respect to their ability to influence the outside world.⁴⁹ This idea, that early nineteenth-century representation of the Islamic world still reflected the Ottoman Empire’s historic role as a powerful enemy of Christian Europe, has been amplified in recent scholarship. Studies such as Linda Colley’s *Captives* point out that the memory of the conflict between Europeans and Islamic states

⁴⁷ *Tales of the Alhambra*, CWWI vol. 14, 3-39 for the journey to Granada and negotiations for lodging in the Alhambra. As usual, Irving’s letters and journals contain passages that rehearse some of the set pieces in the description of the journey. Journal entries relating to the Alhambra project begin Jan 3, 1829, several months before he arrived in Granada, *Journals*, CWWI vol. 4, 246; See Bowers, *Spanish Adventures of Washington Irving*, 98-103 for biographic material on Dolgorouki.

⁴⁸ Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), chapter 3 for a thorough discussion of the French conquest of Algeria.

⁴⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Vintage, 1994), 117-19.

was still fresh in the early nineteenth century, but it is important to remember that the Barbary pirates were rapidly suppressed after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars.⁵⁰

It may be that Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* helps mark this same turning point in the Anglophone representation of Islam, because in this work he began the process of reconciling with Catholic Spain and consigning the Moors to the realm of far-fetched fantasy and dreamy myth. This process takes place on many levels. In the book's opening section, which describes the journey of the friends Irving and Dolgorouki through the mountains, the Spanish characters they encounter are colorful, but neither dirty nor ignorant. Instead they embody a native, if naïve, nobility and culture, demonstrated by their resemblance to characters from Don Quixote. Their guide, of course, was immediately dubbed Don Sancho Panza. Irving's squire was quite familiar with the characters of Cervantes, although, amusingly, he believed them to be actual historical figures (12). This characterization is significant because it contrasts with New Englander George Ticknor's earlier Spanish travelogue, in which he lectures his Spanish guides on the history of Don Quixote, and notes their ignorance of the story as an example of their generally degraded state.⁵¹ Even the sketchy characters encountered at the inns and taverns along the way earn friendly descriptions in the Robin Hood key as "gay and open-handed contrabandistas" (22).

Given the governor's generosity toward Irving it may not be totally surprising to find that the author returned the favor with a warm endorsement of the monument's current management. He praised "the honorable exertions of its present

⁵⁰ Linda Colley, *Captives* (New York: Pantheon, 2002), 99-105.

⁵¹ Note also Ticknor's extensive detailing of the insects in his lodgings in "George Ticknor to Elisha Ticknor," May 23, 1818, *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor* vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1880), 185.

commander...who is taking all the limited resources at his command to put the palace in a state of repair...and has for some time arrested its too certain decay” (26). This acknowledgement of Spanish administrative competence is another new note, seldom found in earlier descriptions of Spain. Irving, perhaps demonstrating his association with the diplomatic community, even has some kind words for the French, who occupied the Alhambra during “the recent troubles” in Spain. “With that enlightened taste which has ever distinguished the French nation in their conquests, this monument of Moorish elegance and grandeur was rescued from the absolute ruin and desolation that was overwhelming it...and Spain may thank her invaders for having preserved to her the most beautiful and interesting of her monuments” (26). There is a sting in the tail of this compliment, however, as he adds that the French demolished several of the palace towers while retreating. Perhaps Irving recognized that the *mission civilisatrice* was not quite an unmixed boon for the conquered populations.

Once Irving settled into the Alhambra, he divided his book between descriptions of the interesting and curious characters he encountered every day and carefully crafted folk legends from the days of the Moors.⁵² During his stay, he alternated exploration of the many nooks and crevices of the Alhambra and its grounds with careful examination of the surrounding precincts. One day, while using the vantage of the Alhambra to train a telescope on the nearby city streets he noted a disturbing interaction between a father, daughter, and a group of priests. This horrifying description of a beautiful young maiden being forced by her tyrannical father into the convent while her heartbroken lover looked on evokes some of the most anticlerical passages in Irving’s earlier works. Irving

⁵² See Susan Jamil Fakahani, “Irving’s *The Alhambra*: Background, Sources and Motifs,” (Ph. D. diss., Florida State University, 1988) for an examination of the sources for the legends Irving recapitulated in *Tales of the Alhambra*.

amplified these impressions with agonizing details like the cruel looks on the faces of the monks and friars as the young beauty speaks the irrevocable vows and is proclaimed “dead to the world” (72). But like so much of the *Tales*, this story is part of the reframing of Irving’s critique of Spanish society. Mateo, his *cicerone* and guide to the Alhambra, reports back that the young lady in question was “neither young nor handsome; she had no lover; she had entered the convent of her own free will, as a respectable asylum, and she was one of the most cheerful residents within its walls” (73).

Well, then! With this cheering bit of information, Irving found himself suddenly far more comfortable with Spanish religious practice, which of course contained much of the colorful detail he enjoyed watching and describing. At Mateo’s urging he attended the Corpus Cristi celebration, one of the great public festivals. It was a particularly fortuitous visit since his account includes a detailed description of a Granadan *moros y cristianos*. This performance recreated one of the most colorful incidents of Ferdinand and Isabella’s Siege of Granada, the daring deeds of “Pulgar de las hazanas,” or Pulgar of the Exploits. This incident, described in loving detail in Irving’s *Conquest of Granada*, dated back to the siege. The Spanish knight Pulgar defied Ferdinand’s ban on individual heroics by staging a raid on the Muslim fortress and hoisting the colors of the Virgin on the Alhambra’s battlements. The restaging of the event in Irving’s era was accompanied by the typical trappings of the *moresca*, including giant puppets, comic costumes, and a parade of citizens who could trace their ancestry back to the days of reconquest. The spectacle of old men marching along with outlandish historic weapons, evoked from Irving the good republican thought that “it might furnish a comment on hereditary honors, to see the sword of the grand captain legitimately declined into such feeble

hands” (124). Significantly, Irving did not frame this description as simply a celebration of current religious practice. He noted that the Pulgar reenactment actually helped assert the traditional rights of the area’s warrior families to particular privileges within the church community, privileges which had been contested by the clergy who had been attempting to centralize their own authority. Regrettably, Irving’s descriptions did not extend to one of the most interesting local aspects of Granada’s church traditions, the place of the *plomos*, a series of mysterious lead tablets, purporting to detail the history of the Christian underground during the years of Islamic rule, that had been discovered in the late sixteenth century. The same impulse that led Enlightenment-era Spanish antiquarians to begin the process of surveying the Moorish antiquities in the late eighteenth century had rekindled a close study of the *plomos*, now understood to be an early modern forgery. Irving must have known something of the lore of the *plomos*, because in his “Scholar of Salamanca,” from the 1820 *Bracebridge Hall* he describes “Arabian tablets of lead, which had recently been dug up in the neighborhood of Granada, which, it was confidently believed among adepts, contained the lost secrets of [alchemy].” The lack of attention to the story of the *plomos*, a subject that seems like a natural for Irving, reminds us that his interest in colorful and folkloric details of Spanish Christian life had not yet led to his admitting the Spanish Christians into the ranks of the romantically imagined predecessors of the civilized Europeans.⁵³

Irving’s earlier “Student of Salamanca” maintained the fiction that the author was a reticent and relatively anonymous observer of British manorial life. That story was presented by another of Irving’s fictional narrator, a retired officer who makes himself

⁵³ For “Student of Salamanca,” see *The Sketch Book*, CWWI vol. 8. For Spanish Enlightenment-era research on the *plomos*, see A. Katie Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada: Inventing a City’s Past in Early Modern Spain* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 149-152.

comfortable around Bracebridge Hall's baronial fireplace and begs the party's permission to relate to them some curious incidents he discovered while campaigning in Spain. In the second half of *Tales of the Alhambra*, Irving presents an exotic collection of tales and legends of the Moors, described as the folklore of the simple folk whom he met in the vicinity of the old monument. The Irving of 1830, with a well-established literary career and an important and reasonably remunerative diplomatic posting under his belt, seems not to require the anonymity of his earlier narrative guises. This change suggests not just an increased confidence in his own authorial authority, but a reconciliation with the increasing solidification of literary categories. Rather than an ambiguous blend of observation and imagination, the *Tales of the Alhambra* consciously combines two clearly delineated genres, prose travel narrative and imaginative Gothic tales based on collected folk stories.

This hybridization brings the story of Spanish Orientalism to a critical turning point. Washington Irving integrated into this centuries-old narrative tradition both empirical data and the power of empirically-based hypothesizing. He changed the valence of the story of the Moors in the Western imagination. From the generalized vector of opposition to modernity they represent in *Orlando Furioso* or the *moresca*, the Moors of *The Tales of the Alhambra* have been transformed into one more set of data. Like all data, the story of the Moors then became available for the singularly Western process of framing arguments by compiling data that supports a polemical stance. As Said memorably pointed out, this quickly led to an explanation and justification of the Western imperial project. In *Tales of the Alhambra*, Irving moves toward the construction of Spain as an authentic member of the Western world. At the same time, his

view of the Spanish Moors takes on a hazier focus, as these long-time antagonists of Christian Spain are reimagined as more remote and foreign, characterized by their folk tales rather than their engineering or administrative prowess. This increased exoticization of the Spain's Moorish past does not prove an intrinsic Western bias toward or against the Moors, however. Rather it demonstrates the irresistible discursive power of the Enlightenment's intellectual legacy. As the changing calculus of colonial authority and the Western powers engendered new challenges, Washington Irving, and his peers, reimagined the empirical data at their disposal into new hypotheses. They projected these hypotheses into the public sphere, where they did their part to help build the new values and behaviors required by a world that was rapidly reframing all its behaviors and values around the powerful forces of the commercial marketplace and the modern nation.



Figure 29. David Wilkie, *Benvenuto Cellini Offering His Censer for the Approval of Pope Paul III.* Campbell Dodgson, *The Etchings of Sir David Wilkie and Andrew Geddes*, 27.



Figure 30. David Wilkie, *Distraining for Rent*. William J. Chiego, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland*, 364.



Figure 31. David Wilkie, *Washington Irving in the Archives of Seville*. William J. Chiego, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland*, 219.



Figure 32. David Wilkie, *Maid of Saragossa*. William J. Chiego, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland*, 215.



Figure 33. David Wilkie, *Columbus in the Convent of La Rabida*. William J. Chiego, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland*, 215.

Conclusion

This study examines one small issue and one large issue. The small, or particular, issue is the manner in which Western culture has represented the Spanish Moors. The large, or general, issue is how the dual revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries changed culture. My fundamental assumption, of course, is that the emergence of a new way of representing the Moors in the 1770s was a small but telling case that illuminates the titanic restructuring of culture in the wake of the dual revolutions. My two basic arguments are easily summarized.

Western representation of the Moors emerged in early modern popular culture. The Moors appeared in various carnival performance traditions that in part celebrated Christian military victories over Islamic Spain and in part were an element of a broader expression of oppositionality toward the rise of centralizing and controlling social movements. As elite performance traditions like opera grew in importance, representation of the Moors grew more refined but still continued to emphasize sexual themes. With the advent of the Enlightenment and the rise of empiricism, representation of the Moors added an element of specificity and historical context; in particular, the stories of al-Andalus and the Alhambra were woven into the earlier traditions. By 1800, the story of the Spanish Moors fit neatly into the outlines of Edward Said's Orientalist paradigm, with the religious affiliation of the principle parties reversed. The technological sophistication, tolerance, and cultured atmosphere of Moorish Spain was used to highlight the intolerance, backwardness and generally degraded state of Spain's

current Christian rulers. This argument was then used to demonstrate the inadequacies of the Spanish government and expanded to justify schemes aimed at despoiling Spain of her highly desirable colonial possessions.

This interesting denominational twist on the understanding of Orientalism leads to my more general argument. Spanish Orientalism is not a hard-coded ideology that rests on presumptively authoritative sources. It is a type of argument. The general argument of this dissertation is that this type of argument, rather than any particular set of beliefs or values, was the great legacy of the Enlightenment and provided the template for reorganizing society in the wake of the dual revolutions. This type of argument develops sequentially. It begins with a hypothesis already in mind. For the early Spanish Orientalists, this hypothesized conclusion was that the backwardness and disorder so manifestly observable to any Western traveler in Spain was the fault of the government and the religious establishment. The second step is the gathering of facts and observations framed in a way that develops the argument. In our case, these observations included the easily verified observation that the Alhambra – and by extension all of Islamic al-Andalus – had once been an oasis of liquid luxury and now was a barren ruin. The final step is the evaluation of the hypothesis against the evidence. Not surprisingly, there was a good fit. The Pandora's Boxful of political ideologies unleashed in the early nineteenth century evolved out of the Enlightenment's successful assault on the presumptively authoritative religious and monarchical pillars of early modern Christendom. These new ideologies spanned an enormous political spectrum, but from the monarchists of Charles X to the economic liberals of Malthus to the democrats of Andrew Jackson, they all relied on hypotheses supported by empirical arguments. Thus

my second argument is that when the dual revolutions melted all that was solid into air, to use Karl Marx's description, the empirical hypothesis became the building block for reconstructing cultural meaning.

Throughout this dissertation I have attempted to frame my analysis of issues as widespread as attitudes toward piracy, the new social status of the artist/author, and the place of Christopher Columbus in the pantheon of US heroes using this same type of argument. In fact, this is the basic structure of the academic dissertation: develop a hypothesis and make sure every paragraph punches it home. This technique is ubiquitous throughout Western polemical discourse. One of the most charming examples is that of self-styled religious fundamentalists who imagine themselves in the vanguard of the attack on empiricism. In institutions like the Creation Museum that opened in 2007 in Petersburg, Kentucky the organizers assert biblical inerrancy by hypothesizing theories that explain the apparent contradictions between the fossil record and the biblical creation story. These hypotheses, of course, are supported not by a presumptively authoritative text but by empirical depictions of cave children romping with their pet dinosaurs.¹ Of course there are also many comparable nineteenth-century cases, empirical proofs of the divine right of kings, for example.

This example illustrates one key reason why empirical argument became ubiquitous – it is a technique available to all, not just those who have the sturdiest facts on their side. With that in mind I would like to turn to an obvious question: Why is this important? The answer helps locate this dissertation in current historiography. In fact, the assertion that social issues can be resolved by competing groups striving to most effectively marshal their arguments has not been universally accepted. Over the decades

¹ *New York Times*, June 4, 2007.

since William Hickling Prescott and his peers differentiated their work from Washington Irving's by emphasizing its rigorous teleology, history has most often been written with the sense that some guiding force, be it the hand of God or the laws of economics, is directing affairs. The cultural turn of the late twentieth century was explicitly anti-teleological, and for a very good empirical reason: in case after case, hypotheses relying on deterministic models were simply not meeting the carefully researched evidence. Still, as Thomas Laqueur, one of the most prominent of cultural historians, said on a visit to Georgia State University, "Now that we have won, what do we do?"

I hope this study is part of the answer. I am responding in part to the idea that since empiricism led to scientific racism, Orientalism, normative heterosexuality, and the other evil offspring of the Enlightenment, the entire classificatory system that underlays Western thought is fatally flawed. This hypothesis is rooted in determinist ideology, and studies meant to demonstrate that empiricism is dangerous ultimately do not fit well with cultural history's sensitivity to context and nuance. The historians I have tried to emulate in this project, Catherine Hall, Sheryl Kroen, and Denise Davidson for example, share two things in common: first, a belief that in the early nineteenth century Western society was obliged to process enormous and unprecedentedly rapid social change, and second, that this change took place through a subtle molding of preexisting attitudes, values, and behaviors of the past around the emerging structures of the capitalist world.

To show that Orientalism was a project that emerged in response to nineteenth-century colonialism but also had deep roots in the early modern fairground, to recognize that the autonomous genius of the modern artist emerged out of the painful birth of the artistic marketplace, to understand that romantic cultural categories constructed in opera

and poetry helped frame diplomatic careers and political events – all these are natural subjects for the cultural historian. Processes like these do not take place in quantum leaps; they result from small, incremental explanations that weave the known cultural universe around new and unsettling data. They do not speak to an inevitable, glorious future, but because they demonstrate the power of humans armed with the awesome tools of empiricism, they at least hint of the possibility that we may be able to weave together solutions to some of our own problems.

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