

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN TRAVELERS AND ART DEALERS OF THE SPANISH ARTISTIC AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE: ARTHUR AND MILDRED STAPLEY BYNE AND THEIR DOUBLE LIVES AS PLUNDERERS AND TRAVEL WRITERS

JOSÉ RUIZ MAS
Universidad de Granada
jrmass@ugr.es

Received 6 November 2023
Accepted 16 December 2023

KEY WORDS: American travelers in Spain; twentieth-century travel accounts; Arthur and Mildred Stapley Byne; Spanish art; American Hispanism; Archer Milton Huntington; American art dealers; The Hispanic Society of America

PALABRAS CLAVE: Viajeros estadounidenses en España; libros de viajes del siglo XX; Arthur y Mildred Stapley Byne; arte español; hispanismo estadounidense; Archer Milton Huntington; marchantes de arte; Hispanic Society of America

ABSTRACT: In this article, I analyze the unorthodox activities carried out by the American travelers and art dealers Arthur Byne and his wife Mildred Stanley Byne in their search for artistic treasures in Spain during the first third of the twentieth century. Whilst they plundered, Mr. and Mrs. Byne published a number of quality works on Spanish art, all of them profusely illustrated with photographs and maps. This article sets out to contrast their travel writing with their predatory endeavor in Spain. The Bynes took advantage of the backwardness and the political weakness of Spain, its institutional and ecclesiastical corruption and the poverty of the common people to carry out their looting activities easily. Their literary production between 1914 and 1924 began by being purely descriptive analyses of Spain's artistic heritage, but gradually evolved into more personal travel accounts on the country (1925-26). However, behind the strategy of showing their willingness to promote foreign cultural tourism in Spain and the encouragement of tourists' *in situ* visits to the sites described in their works, the Bynes were stealthily looting

the Spanish artistic treasure to sell it in the USA, a practice that they successfully managed to disguise in their travel writing.

RESUMEN: En este artículo analizo las actividades poco ortodoxas llevadas a cabo por los viajeros y marchantes estadounidenses Arthur Byne y su esposa Mildred Stanley Byne en su búsqueda de tesoros artísticos en España durante el primer tercio del siglo XX. Simultáneamente a su saqueo artístico, los Byne publicaron una serie de valiosas obras sobre arte español, todas ellas profusamente ilustradas con fotografías y mapas. Pongo aquí en contraste su escritura de viajes con su actividad depredadora en España. Los Byne se aprovecharon del atraso y la debilidad política de España, de su corrupción institucional y eclesiástica y de la pobreza del pueblo llano para llevar a cabo sus actividades de saqueo. Su producción literaria entre 1914 y 1924, que comenzó siendo un análisis puramente descriptivo del patrimonio artístico español, fue gradualmente evolucionando hacia el relato de viajes más personal por el país (1925-26). Sin embargo, tras la estrategia de sus intentos de promover el turismo cultural extranjero en España y de fomentar las visitas *in situ* de los turistas a los lugares descritos en sus obras, los Byne estaban despojando sigilosamente el tesoro artístico español para venderlo en los EE. UU., práctica que consiguieron disimular durante la redacción de sus narraciones de viajes.

Before the Spanish-American War of 1898, a number of American travelers' accounts on Spain continued to transmit the usual romanticized clichés about the country to their readership (Romera-Navarro, 397-433). In *The Land of the Castanet: Spanish Sketches* (1896), H. C. Chatfield-Taylor (1865-1945), for example, only bothered to describe idealized landscapes of peasants, priests, gypsies, bullfighters, and bandits in Arabic palaces in ruins. Spain also aroused interest among American travelers for its turbulent and at the same time glorious past, but the religious issue remained the dominant one among the themes of Spanish life that attracted the gaze of the Protestant visitor. Although American travelers did not fail to perceive some faint glimpses of economic and industrial improvements in the country during the first two decades of the twentieth century, most of their accounts continued to insist on attributing Spain's backwardness to the alienating blind obedience of its population to the Catholic Church and to its superstitious practices. Traveling through Spain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was still comparable to traveling through a quasi-oriental, picturesque, medieval and temperamental country, an experience that was only suitable for the brave. Crisscrossing Spain, still considered as semi-

civilized, eminently agrarian and almost oblivious to modernization and industrialization, was perceived as a true “adventure” worth writing home about.

For centuries, in Anglophone cultural and literary environments, Spain, Spaniards and all things Spanish in their most varied manifestations had often been victims of the persistent anti-Spanish defamatory campaigns of the so-called “black legend”, but on the eve of and during the Spanish-American War in 1898 this trend gained renewed strength (Kagan 37). Bartolomé de las Casas’ *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* was republished in the US in 1898 with the sensational subtitle of “An Historical and True Account of the Cruel Massacre and Slaughter of 20,000,000 of people in the West Indies by the Spaniards: Horrible Atrocities of Spaniards in Cuba”. It became a best-seller in pre-war North America.

From then on, and above all after the United States’ resounding victory over Spain in 1898, the majority of American travelers of the first decade of the twentieth century continued to describe Spain as the perfect example of a decadent country that had fallen into disrepair because of its historical popish fanaticism and its constant and perverse antagonism toward triumphant Anglo-Saxon Protestantism (Valis 2015).¹ Not surprisingly, the English-speaking civilization (represented by the Americans) had defeated the Latin one (represented by the Spanish) in the Spanish-American War of 1898.

The spiritually and economically crestfallen Spain of 1900 was easy prey for any other nation aspiring to become an imperialist power. The new giant of the western world, the US, had humiliated the old nation before the whole international community. Spain had demonstrated

¹ According to Valis (2015), Catholicism was the main culprit for Spain’s secular backwardness. Between 1900 and 1913, in a relatively large number of accounts by Americans in Spain, an evident missionary intention of a Protestant and anti-Catholic nature is clearly perceived. This is the case of *Spanish Highways and Byways* (1900), by the pioneering American educator, poet and lyricist of popular songs Katherine Lee Bates (1859-1929, also known for her English translation of Bécquer’s legends in *Romantic Legends of Spain*, 1909); or *Spain of To-day* (1909), by the prolific American author of detective novels Joseph Thompson Shaw (1874-1952); or *Spain of To-day from Within* (1909), by Manuel Andújar (1856-1929), a Galician convert to Evangelism and editor of *El Defensor Cristiano*, conveniently nationalized American; or *Rambles in Spain* (1910), by the American Romanist John D(riscoll) Fitz-Gerald (1873-1946), professor at the University of Illinois, member of the Hispanic Society of America and corresponding member of the Royal Spanish Academy; and *Four Months Afoot in Spain* (1911), by the ex-military man, ex-professor and tireless American traveler Harry A(lverson) Franck (1881-1962).

its inability to defend its colonial possessions and was exposed to whatever the outside world wanted to do with it. After the “Disaster” of 1898, a weak and impoverished Spain was furthermore fully imbued in an erratic political and social evolution. Spain was also ignored by the main European powers who now saw it as a third-rate power. Its decadence was the ideal breeding ground for a number of astute travelers and foreign art dealers. They were zealous in their search for as much as possible of Spain’s greatest treasure: its artistic heritage. This interest in colonial or medieval Spanish art moved opportunistic American art dealers to travel to the country to acquire architectural gems for wealthy and capricious American millionaires. Indeed, these buyers wished to build their own mansions with a taste of ancient heritage in order to artificially recreate an aristocratic past with European roots (Kagan 2010).

The philanthropist Archer Milton Huntington’s (1870-1955) dynamic pioneering of American Hispanism on the other side of the Atlantic between the end of the nineteenth century and the years immediately prior to the Second Spanish Republic (1915-30) was a result of growing cultural admiration in the US for Spain’s art, music, language and literature (Lenaghan, Coddling, Figueroa Villota and O’Neill 2000; Coddling 2003). A fondness for all things Hispanic in the US, the so-called *Spanish Craze* in American cultural circles and the *Spanish Revival Style* in artistic circles encompassed not only the art of Spain (often reduced to the Mudejar or Hispano-Muslim or Gothic styles) but also Spanish colonial and Mexican styles (Macmillian and Gainer 2002; Gebhard 2005; Kagan 2010). Spain was perceived as a Hispano-Arabic space (Hooper 288), and duly admired thanks to an American revival of interest for oriental architecture *à la espagnole* (Kagan, 40). The most visible and striking aspect of America’s new-Orientalism, albeit not the only one, was the artistic reproduction throughout the southern states of some fifteen of Seville’s Moorish “giraldas”² and the occasional “torre del oro”³ in emblematic and majestic public buildings.⁴

² Giralda is the name given to the bell tower of Seville Cathedral, a former minaret of the Great Mosque of Seville, dating back to the Almohad dynasty in Moorish Spain.

³ Torre del Oro is the name traditionally given to a 13th century military watchtower in Seville erected by the Almohad caliphate in order to control access to the city via the Guadalquivir river.

⁴ The best known American “giraldas” built during the late 19th century and the first third of the twentieth century were the Madison Square Garden tower in New York (built in 1890 and demolished in 1925); the one built in 1923 at the Country Club Plaza in

Through the creation of the Hispanic Society of America and its consequent prolific editorial work, Huntington tried to spread an image of a Spain of great regional variety and therefore insisted on depicting the country's multiculturalism to the US public (Proske 1963; Codding 2002; Jiménez-Blanco 2011; Socias Batet 2015). In his approach to Spanish culture, Huntington endeavored to present both the centripetal Castilian idea of Spain of the *Generación del 98* and the more modern, open, and optimistic view of Spain of the *Generación del 14*. Despite his intense promotion of the two main representative pictorial visions of the country associated with Ignacio Zuloaga (whose vision was closer to the "black" Spain of 98) and Joaquín Sorolla (whose vision was closer to the "white" Spain of 14), Huntington finally leaned more toward that of Sorolla's vision (Jiménez-Blanco 2011). Proof of this were the fourteen murals on various provinces that the American philanthropist commissioned from Sorolla that make up the series known as "Vision of Spain" for the Hispanic Society of America. Huntington owned more than one hundred and fifty of Sorolla's canvases.⁵

Huntington claimed that he did not wish to buy works of art from Spanish lands in order to avoid depriving the country of its valuable treasures, but he did send a legion of agents and art dealers to crisscross the Iberian Peninsula and other European and American countries in search of pieces of the Hispanic artistic heritage for his museum in New York. Many of his dealers even acted as commission merchants. Among his most relevant agents in Spain was the American painter, designer and illustrator Francis Augustus Lathrop (1849-1909), who was the first compatriot to work for him. Among other prized bounties, in 1901 Lathrop managed to purchase a Greco for Huntington that belonged to a royal infanta residing at the Royal

Kansas; the tower of the Ferry Building in San Francisco (1898); the Wrigley Building in Chicago (1925); the temple tower of the United Methodist Church in Los Angeles (1924); the Terminal Tower of Cleveland Station (1930); the Freedom Tower and the Biltmore Hotel in Miami, from 1925 and 1926 respectively; the Dreamland Tower in New York (1904, destroyed by fire in 1911); the Minneapolis Railroad Depot (built in 1901 and destroyed by a storm in 1941), etc. The most famous American "torre del oro" is the one located in St. Petersburg (Florida), inaugurated in 1926 and still standing (Kagan 40-42).

⁵ The other great collector of Sorolla's works was Thomas Fortune Ryan (1851-1928), a wealthy tobacco merchant and capricious American philanthropist who acquired more than twenty of his canvases. During his stays on the other side of the Atlantic, Sorolla did not waste his time: he painted portraits of the most distinguished citizens of the American society of the time, including one of President Taft.

Palace of Aranjuez, for a meagre price (Socias Batet 293). Other relevant and effective agents who worked for Huntington were the American Horace Townsend (1859-1922), antiquarian and correspondent for the *New York Herald* in London (303), the British Lionel Harris (1862-1943), a London antiquarian with strong connections with Madrid and Seville, and the Anglo-Frenchman Jorge Bonsor (1855-1930), a resident in Seville who provided him with a myriad of archaeological finds from the Itálica ruins (304). Paradoxically enough, despite Huntington's purchases of Spanish art works to be transferred to the US, the Spanish cultural establishment continually praised him. In 1923, for example, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando in Madrid described him as an "entusiasta hispanófilo, fervoroso admirador de nuestras glorias nacionales" (1907), "eminente hispanófilo, fundador (...) y propulsor entusiasta y generoso de cuanto significa enaltecimiento de la cultura histórica y artística de España" (1949) and "eficaz hispanófilo que consagró su vida y su fortuna al mantenimiento del arte español" (1955) (Navarrete Martínez 295-96). Spain awarded him the Great Cross of the Order of Charles III (1918) and the Great Cross of the Civil Order of Alphonse X the Wise (1946) in recognition of his promotion of Spanish culture in the western world.

On the other side of the cultural spectrum, the American architect and photographer Arthur Byne (1884-1935) and his wife Mildred Stapley Byne (1879-1941), undoubtedly the greatest plunderers of Spanish art of the twentieth century, stand out for their rapacious work in the country during the years of the *Spanish Craze* in America, especially after leaving their service as agents for Huntington in the early 1920s (Brotherston 2014). Arthur Byne's real name was Arthur Gustave Bein. To avoid social repercussions both in the US and in Europe due to his Judeo-German origins, he decided to change it to a more Anglo-sounding version (Merino de Cáceres 1984, 241-42). With the inestimable collaboration of Mildred Byne, Arthur Byne played havoc among the artistic heritage of Spain from 1921, when he and his wife separated from Huntington's advisory and photographic patronage as well as his payroll. They did this by dedicating their time to becoming freelance art dealers, a much more lucrative activity where they did not have to respond to anyone or to any imposed rules from above (Rodríguez Thiessen 1998; Socias Batet and Gkozgekou 2012).

The Bynes arrived in Spain soon after their marriage in 1910 with the purpose of getting to know the country's art. They decided to settle

in Madrid in 1912. Arthur Byne introduced himself to Huntington in 1913 as a historian, architect, draftsman and photographer and soon became a highly valued collaborator due to his versatility (Gkozgekou 2015). In his commercial dealings in Spain, he used a letter of introduction from the Hispanic Society of America and from 1916 to 1918 he and his wife held the appointment of Curators of Architecture and Allied Arts of the Hispanic Society of America, an extremely useful title which opened many official doors to them. They used to boast of their “official” status as members of the Hispanic Society of America in their first books on Spain. For years, the Bynes visited numerous places of historical interest and artistic collections throughout Spain to take photographs and make reports of monuments and artistic treasures of all historical periods. They lived in Spain until 1935, the year Arthur Byne died in a car accident.

Mrs. Byne’s pen and Mr. Byne’s camera were their main working tools in their artistic “studies”, field investigations and travels which eventually turned into numerous scholarly works on Spanish art. They described the rich Spanish artistic patrimony and insisted on portraying their “selfless” activities for the protection of the country’s heritage: *Rejería of the Spanish Renaissance* (1914), *Spanish Ironwork* (1915), *Spanish Architecture of the Sixteenth Century: General View of the Plateresque and Herrera Styles* (1917), *Spanish Architecture of the 16th Century* (1917), *Decorated Wooden Ceilings in Spain* (1920), *Spanish Interiors and Furniture* (1921-25), *Spanish Gardens and Patios* (1924), *Popular Weaving and Embroidery in Spain* (1924), *Provincial Houses in Spain* (1925), *Forgotten Shrines of Spain* (1926),⁶ and *Majorcan Houses and Gardens* (1928). These works were all accompanied by dozens of black and white photographs of great technical quality taken by Arthur Byne himself. In all of them, the travel narrative was mixed with specialized artistic studies, although the descriptive study of artistic objects and monuments dominated by far. The travel element became more extensive in *Forgotten Shrines of Spain* (1926) and in later works, written either solely by Mildred Byne or with her more prominent role in their co-authored publications. Both in the cultural environments of Spain and in the US, the Bynes enjoyed great prestige in the field of localization, photographic reproduction, and scholarly analysis of the Spanish artistic heritage.

⁶ It was reviewed by T. R. N. in *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, Liverpool, vol. 4, no. 14, April 1, 1927, 104.

Huntington had financed the Bynes' first three photographic and furniture location campaigns (1915-21), but the fourth and last, in 1921, was blatantly used by the married couple for their own selfish benefit. Their intention was to disseminate their Spanish findings in order to sell them to American millionaires. Huntington reacted by severing all professional connections with the Bynes in 1922, when their dubious methods used to obtain relevant works of art or of historical value for the California and Florida mansions of other powerful American art collectors reached their patron's ears. The Bynes were clearly using their works—published initially by Huntington's Hispanic Society of America—as catalogues of pieces for sale to the highest bidder. At this stage the Bynes already knew of the existence of numerous forgotten remains of ecclesiastical buildings previously abandoned by the various government confiscations and could boast of useful contacts with several often corrupt Spanish cultural institutions such as the *Comisaría de Turismo* (Tourism Agency), the *Asociación de Pintores y Escultores* (Painters and Sculptors' Association), the *Sociedad Española de Excursiones* (Spanish Society of Excursions), the *Sociedad Española de Amigos del Arte* (Spanish Society of Friends of Art) as well as with numerous poorer Spanish aristocrats who were in desperate need of selling their private treasures so as to be able to extend their luxurious lifestyles in time or to guarantee their survival (Gkozgekou 2013).

However, the Bynes were only two of a legion of American collectors, architects, historians, photographers and Hispanists who practiced the systematic pillage of artistic and historical treasures in order to increase the artistic heritage of the US and the private collections of rich American businessmen, an enterprise that was perceived by American art dealers and buyers alike as a highly patriotic activity. One of the Bynes' best clients was the newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst (1863-1951), one of the main instigators of the Spanish-American War of 1898 from his provocative newspaper, the *New York Journal*. Hearst also benefitted amply from the widespread plundering of the Spanish heritage during the twentieth century (Merino Cáceres and Martínez Ruiz 2012). Arthur Byne placed in Hearst's hands complete architectural ensembles that he had first disassembled in Spain, packed in thousands of numbered boxes, loaded onto ships at Spanish ports with the approval of the Spanish ministerial authorities, who believed (or pretended to believe) that they only contained building materials, to finally be reassembled stone by stone at their final destination in America (Levkoff 2008). The

American millionaire industrialist and engineer George Fox Steedman (1871-1940) also hired the Bynes when the latter toured Spain during the spring of 1923. Their agreement included providing for the design and decoration of his properties and to acquire furniture, decorative elements and architectural fragments for Steedman's newly acquired "Casa del Herrero," a mansion located in Montecito, near Santa Barbara, California, built in 1924 by the architect George Washington Smith (1876-1930) in the style of the Spanish Colonial Revival. The Bynes actively collaborated in the acquisition of valuable pieces for Steedman, especially from Seville (17th century Mudejar doors and a 16th century coat of arms for the mansion's fireplace in the main hall) and from Barcelona (chairs, tables, chests, rugs, tapestries, fabrics, thousands of old tiles, iron grates). They also provided him with the picture "Martyrdom of Saint Lawrence", a portrait of Don Juan de Austria and another of Philip IV of the school of Velázquez, the three of them still hanging today in the main hall of Steedman's mansion. After Steedman's return to the US, Arthur Byne continued to make purchases in Spain on Steedman's behalf and had his finds sent in a shipment of eighty-seven boxes to the Californian mansion (Sweeny 2009).

Arthur Byne's best-known despoliation activities included the monasteries of Sacramenia (Segovia), currently in Miami, and Óvila (Guadalajara), which still remains disassembled in a New York park, in addition to a great amount of artistic pieces of historical value, including eighty coffered ceilings, church and palace façades, such as that of Vélez Blanco (Almería), currently in the Metropolitan Museum in New York; a number of considerably large chunks of castles (more specifically the Gothic structure of the one in Benavente, Zamora, sold in 1930 but nowadays unaccounted for); grilles, such as that of the Valladolid cathedral, sold in 1922, today in the Metropolitan Museum, although –alas–, partially mutilated so that it could fit in the room in which it is exhibited; tombs such as that of the Duke of Albuquerque from the monastery of San Francisco de Cuéllar, Segovia, currently in the Hispanic Society of America in New York, dismembered between 1907 and 1927; arches and stalls such as those of the choir of the Cathedral of the Seo de Urgel (Lleida), preserved in the castle of San Simeón, in California, owned by Hearst; Mudejar ceilings and coffered ceilings (such as those of the "Casa del Judio" in Teruel) and various private collections of Spanish art such as that of the Conde de las Almenas, later resold by its first buyer, Hearst, and today scattered

throughout the US (Merino de Cáceres 1998, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2011).

In today's Spain Arthur Byne is already perceived as the greatest looter of the Spanish architectural heritage, a white-collar pillager (Merino de Cáceres 2011). He was described also as a "plunderer" (Merino de Cáceres 2001a) and his activities as "looting" (2001b and 2001c). He is considered to be responsible for the illegal demolition of part of the Spanish national heritage for the benefit of his American VIP clients and for the illegal sale of thousands of canvases, sculptures and archaeological pieces that he (among other art dealers) carried out unscrupulously. His "patriotic" mission was to increase the artistic heritage of the US with the treasures of other countries. Indeed, on 1/15/1934 Byne wrote to the American architect Julia Morgan (1872-1957) that "[his] only role in life is taking down old works of art, conserving them to the best of [his]ability and shipping them to America" (quoted in Kagan 55).

Arthur Byne and other American agents used bribery when the weak Spanish laws tried to curb the export of artistic works or prevented them from making their way easily through. Too often, foreign art dealers counted on the corrupt complicity, the guilty consent and the criminal irresponsibility of a number of Spanish politicians in General Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923-30), such as, for example, the Second Marqués de la Vega-Inclán (1858-1942), former royal commissioner of the Spanish Agency of Tourism (Socias Batet 2011, 301); or prominent art historians, such as Josep Pijoan Soteras (1881-1963), founder of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans and collaborator of the Museum of Catalonia, visiting professor at Harvard and Toronto universities and Huntington's personal advisor, or José Gestoso Pérez (1852-1917),⁷ founder of Seville's Archaeological Museum (300-01); or diplomats such as Juan Riaño Gayangos (1865-1939), Spanish ambassador to the United States (1913-26) and an honorary doctor from George Washington University (1921); or renowned painters, such as Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923), Raimundo

⁷ Huntington commissioned Sorolla twenty-five portraits of the most relevant figures of Spanish culture of the time for his museum in New York: Alfonso XIII, Queen Victoria Eugenia, José María Cossío, Gumersindo de Azcárate, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, José Ortega y Gasset, Gregorio Marañón, José Echegaray, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Benito Pérez Galdós, Jacinto Benavente, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, Pío Baroja, Azorín, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, etc., and José Gestoso Pérez! On his part, Gestoso Pérez dedicated to Huntington, "protector of the arts", his *Historia de los barro vidriados sevillanos desde sus orígenes hasta nuestros días* (1903) (Tena-Rodríguez 2008).

and Ricardo de Madrazo (1841-1920 and 1851-1917 respectively) and Sebastian Cruset Campi (1859-1943).

Through unofficial channels, the Madrazo brothers made available to the Hispanic Society of America the pictorial collection of Mariano Fortuny's widow (i.e., Cecilia de Madrazo, sister of the aforementioned painters), consisting of various Goyas, various works by Mazo, some Velázquez canvases and the odd manuscript of Lope de Vega's. Cruset Campi also worked as an artist and was an efficient agent for Huntington. There were also a number of relevant Spanish antique dealers, such as Pedro Ruiz and his sons Raimundo and Luis Ruiz Ruiz, working for Huntington in Madrid. The Ruiz family took advantage of the rise of the Spanish Revival Style in the US, of the corruption and inefficiency of the Spanish administration and of the naivety or the greed of the parish priests of rural areas in forlorn Castilian villages and the bishops of various dioceses of this remote region (such as those of the provinces of Palencia, Segovia and Soria) to furtively acquire thousands of antiquities and all kinds of pieces of historical, artistic and economic value for their US contacts (Socias Batet 2011, 307). Among these bounties, there was an abundance of furniture, tapestries, ceramics, silverware, sculpture, paintings, wall series, coffered ceilings, architectural fragments, choir stalls, Grecos, libraries or even complete monasteries. The Ruiz family systematically bypassed any laws that tried to prevent trade with such pieces, often claiming that they were being transported for exhibitions, not for sale. In reality, they were being sent to the major galleries of New York (Clarke Galleries, Anderson Galleries, American Art Association or French & Co.), especially during the 1920s (308).

The task of searching and collecting data and photographic and collectible pieces allowed the Bynes to crisscross the Iberian Peninsula and travel to the Balearic Islands regularly, at first on outdated motorbuses and trains, more often than not on horseback or on donkeys, but over time they took advantage of the improvements in land communications promoted by Primo de Rivera's governments and traveled on better quality trains and commercial vessels. Mildred Byne recalled in *Forgotten Shrines of Spain* (1926) that the few foreigners who dared cross the Pyrenees at the beginning of the century would only spend a few days at the most in Spanish lands due to the little progress of the country and the discomfort of its transportation (1926, 5). She does admit nevertheless that for some travelers it was precisely Spain's lack of progress that made the journey more appealing (5). The author compares the scarce and poor accommodation and transport

in Spain in the first years of the century with the improvements in services that she was able to perceive during the 1920s (5-6). The railway and road betterment, she goes on to say, should lead foreign visitors to visit medieval monuments, which are so abundant in Spain, no matter how far off the tourist's beaten track they may be: "To be permitted to catch a glimpse of the Middle Ages, petrified, should be regarded as a compensation for indifferent inns" (5), writes Mrs. Byne. Indeed, Spain had been visited in the last decade, she writes, by far more British and Americans than any other nationalities (5). To her, the main difference between the superficial and shallow figure of the "tourist" and the more mature "traveler" is determined by their interest in exploring the places least frequented by incipient tourism:

Railroads and the numerous strangers these bring swing wide of such sequestered nooks, so that whoever penetrates into this medieval hinterland of Spain will have the no small satisfaction of passing out of the tourist and into the traveler's rank. (9)

In the couple's early work, technical and artistic written descriptions (by her) of the monuments and sites photographed or drawn (by him) prevailed over the literary travel experience. *Rejería of the Spanish Renaissance* (1914), their first Spanish work, is a perfect example of this. But in their second work, *Spanish Ironwork* (1915), despite being a fully descriptive book (proof of which is the inclusion in it of a catalogue of one hundred and eighty pieces of ironwork belonging to the Hispanic Society of America [1915, 137-43]), its authors already make the point of recommending foreign scholars, art specialists and students to visit the different monuments in person as it is impossible to dismantle them. The mere mention of this possibility (i.e., of dismantling and transporting the pieces to more accessible places, which they admit is practically impossible), reveals what was probably going through their minds:

Outside of the country itself it is hardly possible to study these achievements, since their size and weight made removal practically impossible; but there, still standing in the very surroundings for which they were designed, they make the journey to Spain well worthwhile for the student. (xxii)

During the 1920s, the interest of American travelers for Spain shifted from the patronizing of its historical monuments and public works

toward a gradual predilection for the house, that is, for the architecture that could better reflect the habitat of the place and the links existing between architectural style and the autochthonous elements of the culture of a province or a region (Mulet Gutiérrez, Oliver Tolleró and Sebastián Sebastián 1994). The Bynes soon echoed this trend and made it visible in the works that they published on antique ceilings, interiors, furniture, but, above all, of Spanish and/or regional houses, gardens, and patios. In *Decorated Wooden Ceilings in Spain* (1920), the Bynes attributed the destruction of many wooden ceilings of high artistic and historical value to vandalism, fire, and artistic commerce with foreign merchants, but this was precisely the practice that the American couple constantly carried out themselves:

Today, even allowing for the many notable Spanish ceilings destroyed by fire and actual vandalism, also for the many sold entirely out of the country, the number still to be seen is surprising. (1920, v)

It seems that the allusion to this kleptotic practice as if it were completely alien to them was arguably meant to exonerate them from any possible criticism that might have arisen among the public or scholarly circles. In the eyes of the Spanish authorities, it certainly removed from them any suspicion of plundering.

A high degree of impudence is demonstrated by Mildred Byne when, after explaining the great artistic and historical quality of the Silos Monastery in *The Forgotten Shrines of Spain* (1926), she dedicates a whole chapter of the book, “The Dispersal of the Silos Treasure” (1926, 63-88), to denouncing its continuous pillage, a practice that, she states, dates back to the early Middle Ages and extends to the present day. It is very likely that the chapter, which exposes exactly what the Bynes (and other art dealers) did regularly and discreetly with Spanish treasures, may be reflecting the couple’s frustration at their not having been the economic beneficiaries of the predation of the sale of such a magnificent Spanish monastery and its valuable contents.

In the three volumes of *Spanish Interiors and Furniture* (1921-25), the pillaging work of the Bynes seems to be limited to acquiring furniture and decorative elements at low prices due to the economic necessity of have-been families of the Spanish nobility. In the 1928 edition, the three volumes were reduced to two, which made the work more manageable as a “catalogue”. On the surface, the Bynes could at best only thank the owners of the mansions that they visited for the permits that they were granted to photograph their interiors: “(...) [Our

thanks go] also to those Spanish families who have graciously placed their collections at the authors' disposal" (1921, I, v). But the reality was that such photographs served as a catalogue for those American millionaires who were willing to pay the prices demanded by the owners in private sales for which the Bynes served as intermediaries.

In *Spanish Gardens and Patios* (1924), the Bynes credit themselves for making Spanish artistic marvels widely known thanks to their skilled photographs. They constitute a first-rate corpus to spread Spanish culture around the world, they add. They also state that, with the exception of Catalonia and the postcards of magnet cities such as Seville and Granada, Arthur Byne himself was the only specialized English-speaking photographer available for hire. Mildred Byne declares that their artistic work aims at satisfying two different types of reader: a) the experts and art scholars and students: "[they have] put such photographs within reach of students" (1924: 11), and b) the wealthy American aficionados, in an evident wink at the complicity of those compatriots who are fully immersed in the fashion of the Spanish Craze:

In presenting this account of Spanish gardens it is hoped that their unusual features may attract in a practical way those who ought to have a large community of interest with the country that first carried civilization to the New World. (1924, 9)

It is sad that Arthur Byne, unquestionably the most pernicious of all the foreign connoisseurs of twentieth-century Spanish culture, may have passed down in history as a renowned Hispanophile. His obituary appeared in the Spanish newspaper *ABC* (18/7/1935, 34) and in the magazine *Blanco y Negro* (18/8/1935, 135). In the latter he was described in the following terms: "La muerte del Sr. Byne, insigne hispanófilo, constituye una verdadera pérdida para el arte español". Even the War Ministry of Primo de Rivera's regime awarded him the appointment of Knight of the Grand Cross of Military Merit in 1927. The Bynes were extremely discreet, and their looting activities went almost completely unnoticed in the Spain of the time. Nowadays, the Bynes, despite their strenuous attempt to leave no trail of their piratical activities in their travel and descriptive production, have of late been placed where they deserve in the Parnassus of American dilapidations of Spain.

WORKS CITED

- ANON. "Muerte del ilustre hispanófilo y arquitecto norteamericano mister Arturo Byne", *ABC*, 18/7/1935, 34.
- BROTHERSON, Jody G. *Arthur Byne's Diplomatic Legacy. The Architect, Author and Entrepreneur in Spain*. The Lope de Vega Press, 2014.
- BYNE, Arthur and STAPLEY, Mildred. *Rejería of the Spanish Renaissance. A Collection of Photographs and Measured Drawings with Descriptive Text*. The Hispanic Society of America, 1914.
- BYNE, Arthur. *Spanish Ironwork. With One Hundred and Fifty-Eight Illustrations*. Hispanic Society of America, 1915.
- BYNE, Arthur and Stapley, Mildred. *Spanish Architecture of the Sixteenth Century: General View of the Plateresque and Herrera Styles. With Eighty Plates and One Hundred and Fifty Illustrations in the Text, from Drawings and Photographs by Arthur Byne*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.
- . *Spanish Architecture of the 16th Century*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.
- . *Decorated Wooden Ceilings in Spain. A Collection of Photographs and Measured Drawings with Descriptive Text*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920.
- . *Spanish Interiors and Furniture. Photographs, Drawings and Text*. William Helburn, 1921-25, 3 vols.
- BYNE, Mildred Stapley and Byne, Arthur. *Spanish Gardens and Patios. Illustrated, with 175 Examples, 4 Plates in Colour*. J. B. Lippincott and The Architectural Record, 1924.
- . *Popular Weaving and Embroidery in Spain*. William Helburn, 1924.
- BYNE, Arthur and Stapley, Mildred. *Provincial Houses in Spain*. William Helburn, 1925.
- BYNE, Mildred Stapley. *Forgotten Shrines of Spain*. J. B. Lippincott, 1926.
- BYNE, Arthur and Stapley, Mildred. *Majorcan Houses and Gardens. A Spanish Island in the Mediterranean*. William Helburn, 1928.

- CHATFIELD-TAYLOR, H. C. *The Land of the Castanet: Spanish Sketches*. H. S. Stone & Company, 1896.
- COODING, Michael. "Archer Milton Huntington, Champion of Spain in the United States," in *Spain in America. The Origins of Hispanism in the United States*, edited by Richard L. Kagan. U of Illinois P, 2002, pp. 142-70.
- . "A Legacy of Spanish Art for America: Archer Milton Huntington and the Hispanic Society of America," in *Manet, Velázquez: The Taste for Spanish Painting*, edited by Gary Tinterow and Geneviève Lacambre. Yale UP, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003, pp. 307-24.
- FERNÁNDEZ LORENZO, P. *Archer M. Huntington. El fundador de la Hispanic Society of America en España*. Marcial Pons, 2018.
- GEBHARD, P. *George Washington Smith, Architect of the Spanish Colonial Style*. Gibbs Smith, 2005.
- GESTOSO, José. *Historia de los barros vidriados sevillanos desde sus orígenes hasta nuestros días*. Tipografía La Andalucía Moderna, 1903.
- GKOZGKOU, Dimitra. "Los Amigos del Arte: ¿una sociedad de ambiguos intereses?," in *Nuevas contribuciones en torno al mundo del coleccionismo de arte hispánico en los siglos XIX y XX*, edited by Inmaculada Socias Batet and Dimitra Gkozkou. Trea, 2013, pp. 99-124.
- . "El matrimonio Byne: dos hispanistas al servicio de Archer Milton Huntington, 1914-1921." *Cuadernos de arte e iconografía*, 2015, 24, 47, 123-38.
- HOOOPER, Kristy. *The Edwardians and the Making of Modern Spanish Obsession*. Liverpool UP, 2020.
- JIMÉNEZ-BLANCO, M. D. "Archer Milton Huntington, ¿un coleccionista del 98?," in *La dispersión de objetos de arte fuera de España en los siglos XIX y XX*, edited by Fernando Pérez Mulet and Inmaculada Socias Batet. U de Barcelona and U de Cádiz, 2011, pp. 133-40.
- KAGAN, Richard L. "The Spanish Craze in the United States: Cultural Entitlement and the Appropriation of Spain's Cultural Patrimony, ca. 1890-ca. 1930," *Revista Complutense de Historia de América*, 2010, 36, 37-58.

- LAS CASAS, Bartolomé. *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies. An Historical and True Account of the Cruel Massacre and Slaughter of 20,000,000 of people in the West Indies by the Spaniards: Horrible Atrocities of Spaniards in Cuba.* J. Boller, 1898.
- LENAGHAN, Patrick et al., editors. *The Hispanic Society of America: Tesoros.* The Hispanic Society of America, 2000.
- LEVKOFF, Mary L. *Hearst the Collector.* Abrams, 2008.
- MACMILLIAN, E. J. and Gainer, M. *California Colonial: The Spanish and Rancho Revival Styles.* Schiffer, 2002.
- MERINO DE CÁCERES, J. M. "Arthur Byne y los monasterios extrañados: Óliva y Sacramentia," Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Madrid, E. T. S. de Arquitectura, 1984.
- "Arthur Byne, el saqueador," *Descubrir el arte*, 32, 2001a, 112-15.
- . "Palacios y castillos expoliados," *Descubrir el arte*, 33, 2001b, 118-20.
- . "Expolios del arte religioso," *Descubrir el arte*, 34, 2001c, 112-15.
- . "Arthur Byne, un expoliador de guante blanco," in *La dispersión de objetos de arte fuera de España en los siglos XIX y XX*, edited by Fernando Pérez Mulet and Inmaculada Socias Batet. U de Barcelona and U de Cádiz, 2011, pp. 241-71.
- MERINO DE CÁCERES, José Miguel and Martínez Ruiz, María José. *La destrucción del patrimonio artístico español: W. R. Hearst, "el gran acaparador".* Fundación Zuloaga, 2012.
- MULET GUTIÉRREZ, Maria Josep, et al. "La casa como metáfora del viaje. Fotógrafos y arquitectos en Mallorca," in *La casa. Espacios domésticos, modos de habitar*, edited by Calatrava Escobar, Juan. Adaba Editores, 2019, pp. 1993-2003.
- NAVARRETE MARTÍNEZ, Esperanza. "Archer Milton Huntington y Anna Hyatt Huntington, miembros de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando de Madrid," *Cuadernos de arte e iconografía*, 24, 47, 2015, pp. 295-310.
- PROSKE, Beatrice Gilman, ed. *Archer Milton Huntington.* Hispanic Society of America, 1963.

- RODRÍGUEZ THIESSEN, V. "Byrne and Stapley: Scholars, Dealers and Collectors of Spanish Decorative Arts." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, National Design Museum and Parsons School of Design, New York, 1998.
- ROMERA-NAVARRO, Miguel. *El hispanismo en Norte-América*. Exposición y crítica de su aspecto literario. Renacimiento, 1917.
- SOCIAS BATET, I. "El reverso de la historia del arte: marchantes y agentes en España durante la primera mitad del siglo XX," in *La dispersión de objetos de arte fuera de España en los siglos XIX y XX*, edited by Fernando Pérez Mulet and Inmaculada Socias Batet. U de Barcelona and U de Cádiz, 2011, pp. 285-303.
- SOCIAS BATET, I., and D. Gkozgekou. *Agentes, marchantes y traficantes de objetos de arte (1850-1950)*. Trea, 2012.
- SOCIAS BATET, I. "Archer Milton Huntington (1875-1955): mecenazgo, coleccionismo y comercio del arte," *Cuadernos de arte e iconografía*, 24, 47, 2015, 13-44.
- SWEENEY, Robert. *Casa del Herrero: The Romance of Spanish Colonial*. Rizzoli, 2009.
- T. R. N. "Review of *Forgotten Shrines of Spain*. Philadelphia and London: J. B. Lippincott, 1926," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 1927, 4:14, 104.
- TENA-RAMÍREZ, Carmen de. "El comercio de antigüedades en España a comienzos del siglo XX: el caso de José Gestoso y Pérez (1852-1917)," *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, 2018, 6, 349-66.
- VALIS, Noël. "Crisis, Religion and Turn-of-the-Century British and American Travel Writing on Spain," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 2015, 92:8-10, 441-68.