Evolving Concepts: Spain, Painting, and Authentic Goyas in Nineteenth-Century France

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NOT LONG AGO, I received a call from an editor at a publishing firm that was bringing out the 5th edition of a widely read history of art. After several days, I managed to reach him, to find that he had called to ask whether the Metropolitan Museum’s Majas on a Balcony (Figure 1), included in earlier editions as a Goya, should remain so labeled. Yet in the time that had elapsed between his first call and my response, he had contacted the book’s author, whose response was: “Oh, these people are always changing their minds . . . I say, it’s a Goya.”

Is “authenticity” so subjective? Most art historians would like to think that it isn’t. Of course, there are Goyas and there are “not Goyas”—but until the artist returns from his grave, we may never get everything straight. Yet what constitutes authenticity, where Goya or any other artist is concerned, clearly changes over time. Looking at many paintings once firmly attributed to the artist, the modern viewer inevitably asks the question: How could anyone have ever thought that painting was by Goya? The answer is that at a given point in time, the painting fulfilled a set of expectations that qualified it as a Goya. Before we assume that connoisseurship in 1995 is simply better than that practiced a century earlier, we might give our predecessors the benefit of the doubt and ask how we would formulate expectations of authenticity without illustrated art-history texts, photographic reproductions, and X rays.

How might we have come to know Goya had we been born in Paris about 1800? A select few might have been lucky enough to have traveled to see paintings by the artist in private collections in Spain. In Paris, they might also have seen some of his masterfuletchings: Los Caprichos or La Tauromaquia (Los Desastres de la Guerra and Los Disparates were published posthumously in 1863 and 1864 respectively). But given the negligible number of paintings by Goya accessible to the public, he would have been known to most not through images but through the words published in literary journals by critics such as Louis Viardot or Théophile Gautier. Verbal, rather than visual, conceptions of Goya—often based on preconceptions of what Spanish painting was about—provided the criteria for judging authenticity. The changing image of Spain, and of its painting, is essential to tracing the emergence of traits that became identified with the authentic Goya.

Conceptions of Spain popularized in eighteenth-century France provided a point of departure for discussions of its painting. Madame d’Aulnoy’s Relation du Voyage d’Espagne (1691), which during the following century would be issued in twenty-nine editions in French, English, and German, shows the extent to which Spanish identity was schematized. Madame d’Aulnoy never traveled to Spain: her lively tale of manners, aristocratic intrigues, and customs was in fact a compilation of other accounts and sources. Using these as her point of departure, d’Aulnoy covers themes to become constants in narratives of Spanish travels: poverty, the poor quality of inns, bullfights, and religious processions—particularly those featuring flagellants or disciplinantes. The Spanish character is sketched out as proud, opinionated, sober, lazy, vengeful, amorous, and superstitious: in other words, as the antithesis of the rational French.

Madame d’Aulnoy’s narrative was one of several accounts used by Montesquieu in his satirical Lettres persanes, in which the portrait of the Spaniard takes one step more toward caricature. Spanish gravity is here reflected by the use of eyeglasses (an outward sign of extensive study) and a mustache, and social standing is shown by a large sword. Again, Montesquieu comments on the Spaniards’ salient character traits: laziness, devotion, and jealousy. The inevitable decline of Catholic countries is predicted because of the premium placed on celibacy (letter 117). Elsewhere, Spain is seen as an example of how colonization weakens the mother country (letter 121). The collapse of the Spanish economy, dependent upon New World riches, is further explained in L’Esprit des lois; even the good faith (and here, gullibility) of Spaniards

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The notes for this article begin on page 200.
is seen in a negative light because it allows the merchants of Europe to take trade out from under their mustaches.\footnote{6}

Voltaire concurs with Montesquieu in attributing Spain’s economic demise to its overly zealous conquest of the New World. Beginning with the reign of Philip III (1598–1621), the decline continued through the seventeenth century and is summarized in the words that Voltaire credits to the emperor Charles V: “En France tout abonde; tout manque en Espagne” (All abounds in France; in Spain, all is lacking).\footnote{7} This lack is reflected in the culture of Spain. Although theater of its Golden Age was emulated by both the English and the French, and its novels are worthy of admiration, superstition reigns: philosophy is ignored, and mathematics was never developed. The visual arts represent an antithesis to French accomplishment: the Escorial, according to Voltaire, was built after the designs of a Frenchman; Spain produced only painters of a second rank and never a school of painting.\footnote{8}

That the three authors discussed so far had never ventured south of the Pyrenees did not diminish the influence of their accounts. These works serve as a foil for one published in 1788 by Jean-François Bourgoing, who had, in fact, spent several years as ambassador to the Spanish court.\footnote{9} Bourgoing opens his chapter on the Spanish people by questioning the validity of portraying “the character of a nation.”\footnote{10} Bourgoing places the Spaniards’ gravity in a more positive light, seeing in their manners a directness at odds with the superficial and sometimes hypocritical politesse of the French: the Spaniard gains in stature by his position somewhere between a noble savage and the overly cultivated Frenchman. Bourgoing thus formulates two traits that distinguish the Spaniards in a positive manner in opposition to the educated and logical French, and by so doing implies the possible shortcomings of his fellow countrymen. This more positive appreciation of Spain enables Bourgoing to acknowledge its school of painters. By the 1807 edition of his works, he compiles a list of artists well known in Spain who deserve to be better known beyond the Pyrenees: Navarrete, Alonso Cano, Zurbarán, Cerezo, Cabezalero, Blas de Prado, and Juanes, in addition to those already familiar outside of Spain: Velázquez, Murillo, and Ribera.\footnote{11} However, no specific works are mentioned, no salient traits or overall character of a school are addressed.

Bourgoing’s desire that the Spanish school be better known would be fulfilled over the next fifty years. Simultaneously, the term “Spanish" as applied to painting would evolve from a neutral classification indicating origin to a more loaded term denoting a combination of stylistic and thematic indicators that became an unambiguous sign of Spanish culture. The discovery of Spanish painting brought an expansion, followed by a contraction. The phase of expansion entailed the discovery of Spanish painting by Napoleon’s invading armies and culminated three decades later with the exhibition of paintings in the Spanish Gallery of the Louvre from 1838 to 1848. The subsequent contraction involved the formulation of a narrowed canon as works that did not fit an increasingly specific concept of Spanishness were relegated to secondary status.

By 1808 Napoleon’s soldiers would enter Spain and become the first major French “collectors” of its paintings. Having placed his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne, Napoleon found it expedient to make a per-
sonal appearance in late 1808. His artistic adviser, Vivant Denon, accompanied him on that mission and realized the need for Spanish paintings to complement the growing collections of the Musée Napoléon. The novelty of Vivant Denon’s enterprise is worth stressing. Up to this point, Napoleonic confiscations of paintings served tastes formulated by the Old Regime: paintings of the Italian and Flemish schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, previously represented in royal and aristocratic collections, were sought out. Vivant Denon’s quest for paintings of the Spanish school marks an attempt to expand the accepted art-historical vocabulary. Much to Vivant Denon’s displeasure, Joseph Bonaparte also took an active interest in forming official collections of Spanish painting and even of opening a national museum in Madrid. Joseph’s interest in protecting the Spanish patrimony is antithetic to the militaristic tone expressed by Vivant Denon in a letter from Valladolid on January 18, 1809. In it he vents his frustration with Joseph, who has stood in the way of his collecting the “twenty paintings of the Spanish school absolutely needed by the Musée...[which] would have been a trophy in perpetuity of this last campaign.”

The concept of art as “trophy” reinforced the view of art as a reflection of a national identity, since trophy art was to be an explicit symbol of the nation conquered. Thus, while works by Rubens and Titian had been eagerly sought out in Belgium and Italy, respectively, the paintings by these masters in Spain were, for the most part, left in place; conversely, the portrait of Duke Francesco I by Velázquez had been considered not worth taking from Modena. Vivant Denon’s quest for Spanish paintings also illustrates the entrenched nature of Old Regime tastes: he knew what he liked when he saw it, but when it came to painters in Spain, there wasn’t much that he liked. Of 250 paintings sent from Spain to Paris by September 1813, only seventeen would be exhibited in the Musée Napoléon. Vivant Denon’s taste reflected his appreciation of Italian and Flemish works, as illustrated by his decision to include in the Louvre the Meeting at the Golden Gate by Eugenio Cazes and a Magdalen by Juan Carreño de la Miranda, paintings seen today as examples of Italian and Flemish influence.

Even at this very early date, we see how selective the French could be in approaching an essentially unknown school of painting. In exhibiting Spanish pictures, the French chose to emphasize religiosity and low-life realism with works such as Magdalena Ventura by Jusepe Ribera and Saint Elizabeth Healing the Sick by Murillo (an artist long favored by the French). Portraits and history paintings were overlooked: Joseph’s Bloody Tunic by Velázquez, a painting much admired and much copied in eighteenth-century Spain, arrived in Paris but was apparently never exhibited; likewise ignored were two battle scenes by Cazes and the seventeenth-century painter Juan Bautista Maino (originally part of a series commemorating victories under Philip IV). Although the Spanish painters had included a portrait of Baltasar Carlos by Velázquez, and two of Carlos V and Philip II attributed to Pantoja de la Cruz, the Velázquez seems not to have reached Paris, and the Pantoja portraits were apparently excluded by Denon.

The publication in 1820 of the final volume of Alexandre Laborde’s Voyage pittoresque et historique de l’Espagne solidified the concepts implicit in Vivant Denon’s 1814 exhibition. In concluding his monumental study of the history and culture of Spain (the first volume had been published in 1806), Laborde added a Coup d’Oeil sur l’État des Arts en Espagne in which he described the unique character of the school. Qualifying the unknown in terms of the known, he saw the Spanish school as somewhere between the Italian and the Flemish: closer to nature than the former and nobler than the latter. The Spanish school distinguished itself by its religious painting: mysticism and fervent spirituality were never rendered better.

Since his text was illustrated with only nine line engravings, Laborde’s readers would gather an idea of the Spanish school based on subject matter rather than technique, even though the author attempted to make up for the shortcomings of the reproductions offered. Laborde’s description of Velázquez’s style betrays a new admiration, and the Watercarrier of Seville is used to illustrate the artist’s naive faithfulness to nature. This naturalism is also linked to the works of Claudio Coello, Zurbarán, and Ribera; only Murillo is exempt from the “naive and faithful character of the Spanish school, this sometimes trivial imitation of nature.”

The main traits of the Spanish school were now in place, echoing the eighteenth-century travelers’ remarks on the national character. Definition of a national school is based on difference: truly “Spanish” painting had to reflect a uniqueness, a counter-identity to the rational intellectualism of the French school or the ethereal idealization of the Italian. And as painting became a reflection of national temperament, certain artists and works were inevitably excluded. A canon was gradually formulated in fulfillment of these expectations: still-life painting was not acknowledged, and hybrid styles—such as the work of painters under the Bourbons who assumed the throne of Spain in 1701—were largely ignored.

Pivotal to the French formulation of a Spanish school was the collection of 438 paintings exhibited in
the Louvre from 1838 to 1848 and known as the Spanish Gallery. But prior to its opening, Romantic interest in Spain—encouraged by the accounts of travelers and French soldiers—nurtured the formation of an imaginary Spain. These perceptions broadened the expectations to be met by the Spanish Gallery when it opened in 1838.

Prosper Mérimée’s Théâtre de Clara Gazul, Comédienne espagnole (1825), a collection of plays that gave form to an idealized woman of the people, typifies the Romantic image of Spain. Clara embodied the mixture of ethnicity and nationality preferred by the French: she claims both Moorish and Gypsy blood, revealed by the savage expression of her eyes, her dark hair, and olive skin. The Spanish woman of the people, direct, noble in spirit, and of natural dark beauty is formulated as an antithesis to the cultivated women of Restoration Paris: it is a type soon to become a cliché, reflected in Murillo’s dark-haired Madonnas and the majas of Goya’s Caprichos.

Another aspect of Spain adopted by French writers was that of an antiquated nobility, an image that served progressive authors as an incarnation of corrupt government. In Victor Hugo’s play Hernani nobility is challenged by the sympathetic and virtuous representative of the people. The most visually memorable scene of the play occurs in Act 3, in which the outlaw hero Hernani comes to the palace of the Aragonese noble Don Ruy Gómez, who is making arrangements to marry Doña Blanca, his niece and Hernani’s beloved. The scene is described: “Le château de Silva, dans les montagnes d’Aragon. La galerie des portraits de la famille de Silva; grande salle, dont ces portraits entourés de riches bordures et surmontés de couronnes ducales et d’écussons dorés font la décoration. Au fond, une haute porte gothique. Entre chaque portrait, une panoplie complète; toute ces armures de siècles différents.” The portraits are by no means mere accessories to the scene. Don Carlos (yet to be proclaimed emperor) arrives in search of the outlaw Hernani. Don Ruy, following an ancient oath to harbor his guests, hides Hernani in a niche behind the last portrait in the series—that of himself. When Don Carlos tells Don Ruy to surrender Hernani, the aged nobleman leads the king along the row of portraits, explaining the identity of each. Finally, when he arrives at his own, he addresses the enraged king: “Ce portrait, c’est le mien—Roi don Carlos, merci!/ Car vous voulez qu’on dise en le voyant ici:/ ‘Ce dernier, digne fils d’une race si haute./ Fut un traître, et vendit la tête de son hôte!’” (III, 5, lines 1179–82).

Don Carlos tries to bargain and finally threatens to abduct Don Ruy’s niece. Tempted to break the oath to protect his guest, Ruy turns toward the portraits and asks for pity, but is stopped by their stern faces. It seems to be with Hernani that the noble portrait (formerly excluded by Vivant Denon) enters into the French canon of Spanish painting, an inclusion that becomes pronounced in the Spanish Gallery. The debut of Hernani (originally subtitled L’honneur castillan) has often been discussed in accounts of French Romanticism. The play opened on February 25, 1850, at the Comédie-Française, managed by Baron Taylor, who had himself undertaken a picturesque account of Spain in 1826. Baron Taylor would subsequently represent the French king Louis-Philippe in selecting works for the Spanish Gallery on an eighteen-month expedition that began in 1835. The results of his collecting efforts have been well documented. The opening of the Spanish Gallery generated a variety of critical discussions concerning the nature of national schools and of the Spanish school in particular.

In confronting the number and varying quality of the paintings exhibited in the Spanish Gallery, crowded from floor to ceiling in rooms insufficiently lit (according to contemporaneous accounts), critics had to impose order. One way of doing this was to select recognized masters and comment on individual paintings whose quality (if not their attribution) could not be disputed. As a result, a highly selective canon was formed. Murillo alone was unanimously acclaimed, and artists less familiar to the Parisian audience were often identified with a single work or group of works. El Greco was identified with the so-called Portrait of the Artist’s Daughter (today Lady with an Ermine, Glasgow, Pollock House); and Zurbarán with Saint Francis in Prayer (today London, National Gallery), Ribera with Cato Tearing Out His Entrails (today given to Luca Giordano). Velázquez was identified with his portraits of nobility (most of which are now disattributed). Reading the criticism today, the little attention paid to Goya seems surprising. But this is readily explained: he did not fit the conception of what Spanish painting was about at this time.

In fact, critical response to the Spanish Gallery showed that the very existence of a “Spanish” school was still being debated: embraced by progressives, conservative writers questioned its very existence. In art history as well as politics of the early nineteenth century, nationalism was an idea promoted mainly by the liberal intelligentsia. The critic Étienne Delécluze stood in opposition to such progressive tendencies, interpreting Spanish painting as a reflection of other European schools. For Delécluze, Spain did not offer one school, but several, those of Córdoba,
Grenada, Castille, Valencia, and Madrid. (Delécluze’s omission of Seville might lead us to question his authority on the subject.) According to his account, the outstanding figures of Spanish art are Ribera, Zurbarán, Velázquez, and Murillo. Yet Ribera and Zurbarán illustrate the influence of Caravaggio; Velázquez that of Rubens and Titian, and of lessons learned during his visits to Italy. Velázquez remains inferior to painters such as Raphael, Michelangelo, and even Rubens because of his insistent naturalism.23 The Spanish school is based on the art of the Carracci, and of Rubens and Van Dyck; if it has a unique trait, this might be its colorism, analogous to that seen in the Venetian school. Delécluze concludes that Spanish painting lacks the “generating principles” seen in Italian and German art, as each artist seems to have followed his own inclinations.24 What Delécluze is in fact arguing against is an opening out of the long-venerated art-historical canon that a valorization of Spanish painting would imply.

Other critics were more tolerant. Diametrically opposed to Delécluze is Amadée de Cesena, writing in the Revue française et étrangère, for whom the Spanish Gallery embodied the Spain created and disseminated by travelers’ accounts and in Romantic fiction.25 It was in the presence of the royal portraits, realistically rendered, that one saw reflected the Spain of monarchy, old nobility and Inquisition, monks and beggars, women on balconies serenaded by gentlemen with plumed hats, all of which illustrated Spain’s power, love, and faith.26

More constructively, debates about the nature of Spanish painting led some to reconsider the underlying formulation of the “national” school. Writing for France et Europe, the comte de Circourt described the difference between the school as dry classification (the concept that held sway through the eighteenth century) and the school as a more organic entity, based in features less tangible than brushstrokes and color. For the first, Circourt has nothing but scorn, and we might wonder if he is leveling an attack on Delécluze, whose article had appeared three months earlier, when he writes: “Frankly speaking, these genealogies of painting, based on a series of scrupulous similarities, and often supported by examination of biographic fact, have always seemed to us a puerile and pointless exercise. The classification by schools is the most arbitrary and narrow. . . .”27 He then proffers an alternative definition of a school defined by national character:

The word school, freed from its old accepted usage to take on a more elevated meaning, might express something philosophical and worthy of attention, the analogy that exists among works produced during one great period, under the demanding influence of uniform circumstances, such as the patronage of enlightened princes, the renaissance of letters, the domination of one people over another, and, above all, the pronounced character of the nation for which a school is formed; in a word, one of the forms of the social thought of this period; it is in this sense that there exists a truly original and unique Spanish school.

The complete description of the customs of Spain, of the intellectual anatomy of the bizarre and beautiful people, the Turks of Europe, could be made on the sole basis of the documents furnished by the gallery in Paris where each painting is a new manifestation of the same sentiment, of the exclusive sentiment that dominates all phases of Spanish existence.28 Painting reflects the social conditions, and, most importantly, the national context of its creation. In what seems a circular argument, Circourt then suggests that we need not read the history of Spain: the paintings themselves, as primary documents, enable us to extract historical conditions as well as national character.

Circourt’s contextual history of art illustrated a new relativism in the appreciation of art works and further undermined the universal hierarchy of painting that held Italy at its pinnacle. Such relativism could also lead to reversal. The critic writing for Le Lithographe stated that it was now France, not Spain, that had become a land of darkness, blinkered by its own intellectual prejudices, as schoolchildren mechanically repeated the dismissal of Spanish culture formulated by the “Voltairean school.”29

Chagrined by their ignorance, progressive critics were prepared to admit the sins of their fathers. The school of Spanish painting, once denied existence by Voltaire, now became the embodiment of a nation to be admired for its character so opposed to that of the jaded bourgeois who visited the Louvre. Beyond admiration, one critic went so far as to recommend emulation: just as the study of Raphael had refined French taste, so might the study of Zurbarán and Murillo lead to the contemplation of more serious subjects, to the expression of passions and character.”

Many other critics joined in support of these ideas. Not only was Spanish painting to be appreciated on its own terms, but its spirituality, naturalism, and directness also offered a model to be emulated by younger painters. But Circourt warned against the dangers of such emulation, stating that a truly national style could not survive transplantation, and predicted the medi-
osity of the young painters who came to copy in the Spanish Gallery. Circourt was right: the Franco-Spanish school that some hoped to see emerge with Ziegler and Antoine Brune as its leaders was stillborn.

Enthusiasm for the Spanish Gallery overthrown ingrained prejudices against Spanish painting, which after 1838 was even offered as a viable model for French artists. The path was now open for the formulation of an increasingly schematized conception of “Spanishness” that would find its place within the history of modernism. In 1838 Spanish painting was identified with religious subject matter, an ostensibly direct confrontation with nature, and sobriety in tone. Yet by 1860 critical reaction to Manet suggests that the traits Romantic critics has seen in Spanish painting were largely displaced by an identification of Spanishness with a broad handling of the paint itself, often linked with “Spanish” subject matter. As a reminder of this criticism, which need not be reviewed here, we might turn to Paul Mantz, who, writing in L'Illustration of June 6, 1868, described Manet's use of black tones and chalky whites as a “technique, new in France [that] has been practiced before in Spain. El Greco and Goya himself sometimes played that game. . . .”

How did this ever more schematic definition of Spanishness—once taken for granted in art-historical discourse and which allows such a facile identification of two painters as different as Goya and El Greco—emerge? I think it reflects a new conception of Spain that emerged in France of the 1840s and 1850s. The castles, antiquated aristocrats, and ascetic monks of “Romantic” Spain were displaced by images of its contemporary lowlife, fostered by travelers' accounts and French painters. The 1840s were to see the publication of the first edition of Gautier's Travels in Spain (1841), of Mérimée's Carmen (1845, and transformed into a popular opera only thirty years later), as well as the exhibition in the Paris Salon of works by French painters that recorded Spanish bandits and bullfighters. Consequently, Spain became identified with a land of bravura and transgression, traits that would find a stylistic analogue in the painterly handling that transgressed the politezie of the French Academy. What most facilitated this schematization of Spanish painting was the closing of the Spanish Gallery in 1848. For after that date, the idea of Spanish painting became far more influential than the painting itself.

Although recognized since the 1820s as the satirist of Los Caprichos, it is only in the 1840s that Francisco Goya, not included among the most lauded painters of the Spanish Gallery, emerges to epitomize the intersection of Spanish subject and nonacademic handling. The fact that as a painter Goya was practically unknown in France made it only easier for him to be invented as a fulfillment of French notions of Spanish painting. Among the paintings included in the Spanish Gallery were eight canvases by Goya, including the Majas on a Balcony (Figure 2), The Letter (Les jeunes; Femme lisant une lettre) (Lille, Musée des Beaux-Arts), as well as two paintings well known to New York audiences, The Forge (Frick Collection) and the Duchess of Alba (Hispanic Society of America). Also included were a painting entitled The Last Prayer of a Condemned Man (unidentified), the Lazarillo de Tormes (Madrid, private collection), a Self-Portrait (today identified with the portrait of Asensio Juliá, Madrid, Thyssen Bornemisza Collection), and a Burial Scene (unidentified).

Few critics addressed the paintings by Goya in the Spanish Gallery. Writing in La Presse on July 5, 1838, Théophile Gautier acknowledged that only Los Caprichos are known by Parisians. Gautier himself refers to no specific paintings to support his assessment of "Goya's 'eccentric' technique, created by the use of sponges, brooms, and whatever else fell into his hands as he worked from buckets full of color, troweling and mortaring his paint with his thumb." Of the paintings by Goya in the Spanish Gallery at the time, such handling might have been detected in The Forge; but, clearly, a certain hyperbole governs Gautier's assessment. Nonetheless, his description of Goya's "mortared" technique was often echoed by writers who seem to have been more familiar with Gautier's description than with Goya's paintings. And why not? For such a technique corroborated Goya's unique and non-French genius, betraying an impetuous temperament diametrically opposed to that which created the highly finished surfaces of French academic painting.

For Gautier, Goya was a paradigm of the colorist camp—epitomized at this time in France by painters such as Eugène Delacroix and Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps (1803–1860), who countered the linear classicism of the Academy, and of Ingres and his followers. Yet Goya is something more: for Gautier he is a distinctly Spanish painter. What makes him so distinctly Spanish? Gautier's answer is vague. He qualifies Goya as a singular mixture of Rembrandt, Watteau, and Rabelais. And as if writing a recipe Gautier continues: “Add to this a pronounced Spanish flavor, a strong dose of the picaresque spirit of Cervantes . . . and you will only have a very imperfect idea of Goya's talent.”

A year later, Louis Viardot would reinforce Gautier's view of Goya as the nationalist colorist. Goya's talent is described as "incorrect . . . savage, without method or style but filled with vitality, audacity and originality." His style is in the tradition of Velázquez, but "less noble, more impetuous, less by the rules. . . ." Goya's
uncouth style demands a particular imagery. Viardot writes:

Not deluding himself about the range of his talent, Goya never attempted things in a high style; his compositions are limited to village processions, to cantors at the lectern, to bullfight scenes, to tricks of rascals, enfin, to a kind of painted caricature. In this genre, he is full of wit and malice, and the execution is always superior to the subject. I’ve seen sketches of this sort that he daubed at the age of eighty, and almost blind, no longer with the brush, since he could no longer handle it, but with the point of a flexible knife that served to spread the colors on the palette; in these sketches there was still a singular verve and brilliance.36

Viardot’s description makes no mention of the paintings in the Spanish Gallery; we get the feeling that such a confrontation would have put unwelcome limits on his conception of the artist. Goya is celebrat-
ed as original, Spanish in his artistic heritage (to be traced back to Velázquez) and also in his imagery. Viardot also associates Goya with the use of the palette knife, a technique seen in paintings such as the Majas on a Balcony and Bullfight in a Divided Ring; both works are in the Metropolitan Museum and their attributions have been challenged or denied (see Figures 1, 6). Undoubtedly helping to cultivate the taste for the type of nationalist imagery that Viardot associated with Goya was the growing fascination in France with Spanish popular life.

Goya’s identity as a national painter was upheld in Charles Blanc’s volume on the Spanish school in Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles (1867). Among the contributors were Louis Viardot (from whom we’ve just heard) and Paul Mantz, the critic previously cited who had compared the painterly technique of Édouard Manet with that of Goya and El Greco. Blanc’s chapter on Goya also identifies as the owner of a Grotesque Marriage (today unidentified) Paul Saint-Victor, a critic best known for his description of Manet as “Goya in Mexico gone native in the heart of the pampas and smearing his canvas with crushed cochineal. . . .”37 These coincidences of criticism and art history explain the appeal of the notion of Goya in the 1860s as the painter’s painter, a paradigm of Realism done right.

Charles Yriarte further confirmed this view of the artist in his 1867 monograph.38 Yriarte saw realism as innate to Goya, as shown by his dating of two paintings, The Madhouse and the Tribunal of the Inquisition (Figures 3, 4). Today, scholars agree in dating these works to the penultimate decade of Goya’s life: the originality of their imagery and technique is seen as the triumph of a mature artist. But Yriarte thought that they were painted forty years earlier, immediately following the young Goya’s return from Rome (which we know today was about 1770). More than a matter of mere dating, Yriarte understands their imagery as the cathartic outpouring of a young soul: they serve as a point of departure rather than as testimony of a mature style.

Given the insistence on Goya as a painter of Spanish life, it is not surprising that the conjunction of “Spanish” themes and painterly technique became essential to judgments of what was a “Goya.” Broad by today’s standards of connoisseurship, these criteria permitted the circulation and acceptance of what are now seen as questionable “Goyas.” Taking such paintings as The Madhouse or the Tribunal of the Inquisition or
The Bullfight in the same series (Figure 5) as a point of departure for Goya’s development, we might understand how the Bullfight in a Divided Ring (Figure 6) (included in the Paris sale of the Salamanca collection the same year as Yriarte’s publication) could be seen as a subsequent development of the artist’s style. Compared to what was thought of as an “early” bullfight, the Salamanca painting shows a breadth of scale, heightened gamut of colors, and looser execution that may all have been interpreted as a mature statement of a colorist’s “temperament.” Yet today our perspective has clearly changed: the redating of the Madrid Bullfight to the mid-1810s suggests that Goya’s mature style was marked by a subtle but reduced palette and an economy of scale that leaves no place within Goya’s oeuvre for the Bullfight in a Divided Ring.

In the Salamanca sale, the Bullfight in a Divided Ring was offered as a pendant to the Zurich Procession (see Figure 13 in Juliet Wilson-Bareau’s essay in this volume). The attribution of this painting has likewise been questioned. Yet viewers in 1867 would undoubtedly have seen it as one of the many village processions that Viardot had canonized almost thirty years earlier as among Goya’s favorite subjects. If the Bullfight passed inspection, surely the Procession was by the master. Interestingly, the more “Spanish” theme of the Bullfight sold for 3,600 francs, while the Procession sold for only 2,500.

In his catalogue, Yriarte does not mention either of these paintings as belonging to the Salamanca collection, leaving room for conjecture. When did they become part of the collection? Did Salamanca buy them shortly before the 1867 sale? If so, did he realize that they were not authentic? Who knew what when? In cataloguing the Salamanca collection, Yriarte does mention a version of the Majas on a Balcony, classifying it as a “repetition, or possibly a copy with variations” by a certain Alemsa—that is, the Spanish Romantic painter Leonardo Alenza (1807–1845). The Salamanca collection Majas was nevertheless listed in the sales catalogue as being by Goya. It sold and is today in a private collection in Paris.

With their painterly surfaces and popular subjects, the Salamanca “Goyas” fulfilled the expectations of what was an “original.” And knowledge did not change all that greatly over the next five decades. Take, for example, the Washington, D.C., Bullfight (Figure 7), which has been traced back to an 1895 sale (and has most recently been given to Eugenio Lucas Villamil). Nevertheless, the will to identify Goya with “Spanish”
subjects was so strong that this painting went unquestioned by such eminent scholars of Goya's work as Lafond, von Loga, Calvert, Stokes, and Mayer and was included in an exhibition called "Spanish Paintings from El Greco to Goya" in the Metropolitan Museum in 1928. Its attribution to Goya was not disputed until 1940, when Elizabeth du Gué Trapier attributed it to Eugenio Lucas Velázquez; more recently, it has been attributed to his son, Eugenio Lucas Villamil.39

The Washington, D.C., Bullfight also brings attention to another trait of many nineteenth-century pastiches: the illogical subject matter. For here, the village entertainments of climbing the greased pole and baiting a young bull are thrown into a kind of bullring which existed only in Spain's larger towns and cities.

Comparison of the Washington painting with the Bullfight in a Divided Ring shows that these cannot be by the same hand, even if one were by Goya. But in the late nineteenth century the limited modes of reproduction forced viewers to use other criteria in judging authenticity: if it was a national, Spanish pastime, in a loose and painterly style, it seems, it was by Goya.

Of course, Goya was not known solely as a "national" painter. Knowledge of Los Caprichos had contributed to his fame as a satirist; the discovery and publication in 1864 of his etched series of Disparates opened eyes to his fantasy. That Goya's prints were used as a source for fake paintings is clear from a series of paintings after Los Caprichos that had been circulating on the Paris market. One such painting remained on exhibi-

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Figure 5. Goya. The Bullfight. Oil on panel, 45 × 72 cm. Madrid, Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando

Figure 6. Style of Goya. Bullfight in a Divided Ring. Oil on canvas, 98.4 × 126.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Wolfe Fund, 1922, 22.181
tion at the Metropolitan, as a Goya, from 1871 to the early 1920s. The Disparates were to be used similarly, as figures of flying men are borrowed from the plate entitled Modo de Volar and added to the fantastic landscape of A City on a Rock (Figure 8) in the Metropolitan, a painting once—but no longer—attributed to Goya. Nor was the master of A City on a Rock the only one to offer pastiches that fulfilled expectations of what Goya should be. Likewise indebted to the fantastic imagery of Los Disparates is a painting known simply as Scène de caprice, today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts (Agen, France). Listed in Yriarte’s catalogue as in the collection of the Spanish painter Federico de Madrazo, its provenance was given as the collection of Goya’s son, a figure to whom so many dubious Goyas might be traced. As with A City on a Rock, the painting borrows motifs from the Disparates, translating them into the kind of impastoed surface readily identified with Goya.

Other paintings from the Madrazo collection give further food for thought. One is the Landscape with a Balloon (Figure 9), which might be attributed to the master of A City on a Rock. Both paintings share a similar palette, and similar “capricious” motifs. They are pastiches and they offer no coherent narrative.

What constituted a “Goya” might have been determined by technique, by “national” subject matter, or
by comparison to etchings. But another obvious way to fake authenticity is to create a work that appears as a first thought, which might be the case with a so-called sketch for Goya's equestrian portrait of Ferdinand VII, once in the Madrazo collection (Figure 10). The finished portrait is in the Museo de la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid. Comparison shows that the sketch reiterates the elements of the finished painting, and there is no sign that it is in any way a "working out" of the larger picture. Again, its attribution to Goya is questionable.

Why the acceptance of the sketch? The myth of Goya created in nineteenth-century France helps to explain. The invention of Goya worked cumulatively, and I've mentioned some who contributed to the nineteenth-century invention of the artist: Gautier, Viardot, and Yriarte. In each of their accounts, Goya is regarded as the Romantic genius whose inspiration is most immediately revealed through scenes of popular life. Those works he did for the court, as well as his commissioned portraits for private patrons, were rarely mentioned and were implicitly regarded as secondary constraints upon his genius. In these terms, a preliminary sketch for an official portrait would have been more highly valued than the portrait itself, as a truer and more immediate reflection of a temperament.

A Realist before his time, Spanish to the core, a man of temperament: this was Goya. Parts of this image remain with us, as some scholars present Goya as a man of the people. Others prefer the view of the artist as an enlightened cosmopolitan. In fact, Goya was probably all of the above.

NOTES

1. I wish to express my gratitude to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars for a research fellowship that enabled me to develop the ideas presented here.

2. This extremely popular and influential narrative enjoyed eleven French editions from 1691 to 1774, fifteen English editions from 1691 to 1780, and three German editions during the same period (1695, 1723, 1782).


4. Ibid., pp. 176, 304, 359-393.

5. Ibid., 204-247; 446-447, 468.


8. Ibid., pp. 632, 633.

10. Jean-François Bourgoing, Tableau de l'Espagne moderne, 4th ed. (Paris, 1807) II, chap. 10, pp. 296–311. Bourgoing's assessment of the Spanish character remains constant from the 1789 edition to that of 1807. Despite his well-reasoned objections, Bourgoing accedes to the expectations of his readers in his sketches of the national character. This is justified since certain immutable national customs can be attributed to the religion, monarchy, and literature common to all Spaniards. Bourgoing describes a variety of traits, some of which we have heard before: pride, sobriety, laconicism, and slowness. But in contrast to other "enlightened writers," he also defends the Spaniards, who have been wrongly accused of laziness, and cites various examples of their industry to prove his point. Bourgoing observes an "oriental spirit," revealed by the Spanish imagination, and suggests that this explains the slow progress of "sound philosophy."


The paintings listed included Carreño's Magdalene (1654) and Cazes's Meeting at the Golden Gate. Collantes, represented by three paintings, was already known to French audiences through his painting of the Burning Bush, formerly in the royal collection. Murillo was represented by an Adoration of the Shepherds, two scenes of the Founding of Santa Maria Maggiore, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary (none of these was sent by Joseph: all except the Adoration had been given from Marshal Soulét's collection). Pereda's Dream of the Knight, Morales's Christ Crowned with Thorns, and Zurbarán's Apotheosis of St. Thomas Aquinas, Adoration of the Kings, and The Circumcision would illustrate the devout nature of Spanish painting: all except the Apotheosis, from the Soulêt collection, had been selected under Joseph's supervision. The only nonreligious subject included apart from the landscape by Collantes was Ribera's Magdalena Ventura.

16. Denon's selection did not have a lasting impact since most of the paintings were soon returned to Spain. The 1823 catalogue of what now had become the Musée Royal, returned to a bare-bones format of the Spanish school, catalogued with the Italian, and represented by paintings by Murillo, Ribera, and the ever-present Burning Bush by Collantes.

17. "... elle tient l'intermédiaire entre l'école italienne et flamande; plus rapprochée de la nature que la première, et plus noble que la seconde, et participe des beautés de toutes les deux; cette école se distingue particulièrement dans les peintures sacrées, et l'on reconnoit dans les tableaux des Espagnols les sentiments que ce peuple éprouve en général pour les mystères de la religion; nulle part l'extase, l'ontion, la vraie piété, ne sont aussi bien exprimées que dans leurs ouvrages; et les passions mystiques rendues avec plus de chaleur; les têtes de vierges sont d'une expression admirable; le coloris et l'effet en sont frappants, et quoique les peintres espagnols ne se soient point livrés à des sujets profanes, et qui supposent l'étude du nu, lorsqu'ils eurent l'occasion de s'en occuper, ils s'y distinguerent."

Alexandre Laborde, Voyage pittoresque et historique de l'Espagne (Paris, 1820) IV, p. 54.

18. "... caractère naïf et fidèle de l'école espagnole, cette imitation quelquefois un peu triviale de la nature." Ibid., p. 34.


20. The salient images of the play are recounted by Théophile Gautier. Traveling in Spain a decade after the debut, he discovers a village named "Ernani": "À ces trois syllabes évocatrices, la sommence qui commençait à nous envahir, après une journée de fatigue, se dissipait tout à coup. À travers le perpétuel tintement de grelots de l'attelage passa comme un soupir lointain une note d'Hernani. Nous revînmes dans un éblouissement soudain le fier montagnard avec sa cuirasse de cuir, ses manches vertes et son pantalon rouge; don Carlos dans son armure d'or, dona Sol, pâle et vêtue de blanc, Ruy Gómez de Silva debout devant les portraits de ses aieux; tout le drame complet...." Théophile Gautier, Histoire du romantisme in Oeuvres complètes (Geneva, 1978) XI, p. 105.


23. The changing nature of the concept of the national school becomes apparent, for although we might see in Delécluze a throwback to late-18th-century tendencies to define Spain according to the better-known schools, his taxonomies and "internationalization" of Spanish painters seem to anticipate tendencies in recent art history, as seen in Jonathan Brown, Painting in Golden Age Spain (London/New Haven, 1990).

24. "Mais quant à ces grands principes générateurs, comme le sentiment religieux, s'il vivait dans la vieille École allemande, et la recherche du beau dans l'École d'Italie, il n'y en a pas trace dans les peintures des Espagnols, où chaque artiste au contraire a obéi à ses idées particulières et à son goût individuel." Delécluze, "Galerie Espagnole" p. 3.


26. "Il faut être au Louvre, en présence de cette atmosphère si lumineuse et si transparente, de ces têtes royales où la vie et la pensée ont gravé leur forte empreinte, de ces groupes dont le mouvement et l'animation revêtent tant de réalité.... C'est bien là l'Espagne telle qu'on pouvait se la faire en rêve; l'Espagne, avec sa monarchie, sa grandesse et son Inquisition; l'Espagne, avec ses moines et ses mendicants; l'Espagne, avec ses femmes à la longue manille, délicieusement penchées sur les balcons, et ses cavaliers aux plumes éclatantes qui attendent dans la rue un sourire de leur maîtresse; avec ses sérénades et ses prières, ses paysages inondés de
flots de lumière et ses cathédrales voilées sous des nuages d'encens; l'Espagne enfin avec tout ce qui fait la vie heureuse et belle et grande; la puissance, l'amour, la foi.” Ibid., p. 153.


28. “Le mot école, détourné de son acceptation primitive pour en prendre une plus élevée, peut exprimer quelque chose de philosophique et digne d'attention, l'analogie qui existe entre les ouvrages produits pendant une grande époque, sous l'influence exigeante de circonstances uniformes, telles que la protection de princes éclairés, la renaissance des lettres, la domination d'un peuple sur un autre, et plus que tout, le caractère tranché de la nation pour laquelle une école s'est formée; en un mot une des formes de la pensée sociale de cette époque; c'est dans ce sens qu'il existe une école espagnole vraiment originale et unique. La description complète des moeurs de l'Espagne, l'anatomie intellectuelle de ce peuple si bizarre et si beau, les Turcs de l'Europe, peuvent être faites sur les seuls documents fournis par la galerie de Paris où chaque tableau est une manifestation nouvelle du même sentiment, du sentiment exclusif qui domine dans toutes les phases l'existence de l'Espagnol...” Ibid.

29. “En étudiant un peu l'école de l'Espagne, on comprend de suite le caractère et les idées du peuple espagnol, ce peuple mystérieux, si peu compris de nos jours, peuple cependant qui a fait de si grandes et de si belles choses! Mais malheureusement l'Espagne a une réputation d'ignorance et de moindrance à faire reculer les plus intérêts. Cette affreuse réputation, à qui la doit-elle? à l'école vulgaire. Le maître un jour laudait l'Espagne, qui s'obstina à être moindre et ignorante, et alors tout fut dit. Les petits écoliers reprirent à satiété la malédiction qui arriva intacte jusqu'à nous.” Benoist de Matougues, “Musée espagnol,” Le Lithographe (1838) p. 65.

30. “... les peintres espagnols laissent peu à désirer. Si l'expression de leurs idées s'emporta parfois jusqu'à des éclats sauvages, c'est que le peuple espagnol, il faut s'en souvenir, a d'autres moeurs que nos moeurs fades et compassées, que son humeur est fière, jalouse, et vindicative;... que tout en lui, jusqu'à ses croyances religieuses, brûle et rougit comme le fer qui sort de la fournaise.


31. “L'école espagnole est aujourd'hui morte en Espagne, peut-être pour revivre chez nous. Malgré l'admiration que nous avons témoignée pour elle, nous croyons trop que ses beautés sont dues au caractère particulier de la nation qui l'a créée pour ne pas redouter son influence chez nous. Quand ils sont transplantés, les arbres exotiques ne donnent qu'une végétation rabougrie. Les artistes qui, en si grand nombre, copient aujourd'hui dans le musée espagnol les chefs-d'œuvre d'un autre pays et d'un autre siècle que les leurs, feront peut-être bien de méditer cette vérité.” Circourt, “Du musée espagnol,” France and Europe (June 25, 1838) p. 245.


33. Cited in George Heard Hamilton, Manet and His Critics (New Haven/London, 1969) p. 120–121.


35. Ibid.

36. Viardot describes Goya's style as a “talent incorrect, sauvage, dépourvu de méthode et de style, mais plein de sève, d'audace, et d'originalité” and continues to use the terms “plus lâche, plus fougueuse, plus déréglée,” before concluding: “Ne s'amusant point sur la portée de son talent, Goya ne s'est jamais essayé dans les choses de haut style; ses compositions se bornent à des processions de village, à des chants au lutrin, à des scènes des courses de tau- reaux, à des farces de poisson, enfin à des sortes de caricatures peintes. Dans ce genre, il est plein d'esprit, de malice, et l'exécution est toujours supérieure au sujet. J'ai vu des pochades de cette espèce qu’il avait babouillées à l'âge de quatre-vingts ans, et presque aveugle, non point avec le pinceau, car il ne pouvait plus le manier, mais avec la pointe du couteau flexible qui sert à étendre les couleurs sur la palette; il y avait encore dans ces ébauches une verve et un éclat singuliers.” Louis Viardot, Notices sur les principaux peintres de l'Espagne (Paris, 1839) p. 306.

37. La Presse, April 27, 1863, cited in Hamilton, Manet and His Critics, p. 39.

