The image of Spain in Dutch travel writing (1860-1960)
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CHAPTER III:

DUTCH TRAVELLERS IN SPAIN (1900-1936)
Towards the beginning of the 20th century, the Spanish state began to intervene in the organization of tourism. In 1911, the Comisaría Regia de Turismo was founded, which organized an exposition, *Sunny Spain*, that was presented in London and New York at the beginning of 1914 (Pack 2006: 51). During Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship, the governmental involvement in tourism was intensified, resulting, amongst other activities, in the construction of a chain of state-run hotels. The number of foreign tourists visiting Spain remained stable during the first five years of the Republic, about 200,000 a year (Pack 2006: 59).

In the Netherlands, a trip abroad for recreational purposes was undertaken only by those who had either the money or were paid, for example, by newspapers and magazines, as international correspondents. In 1911, the first professional groups, typographers and diamond workers, got a fully paid one week holiday, but travelling abroad remained uncommon until the 1950s. A touristic trip to a relatively unknown country, like Spain, was even more exceptional. In 1926, journalist Herman Menagé Challa wrote in his book *Spanje*, that a visit to this country was something for “male tourists who can cope with fatigue, oil, garlic, etc. and who will not let their night’s rest be disturbed by flees or lice” (I).

Seven travelogues from this period will be described in this chapter, published in 1905, 1907, 1910, 1915, 1924, 1929 and 1934, respectively.

1. **C.M. VISserING, *Uit Spanje***

Cornelia Vissering (1859-1943) was a popular author of travel accounts that appeared mainly in the magazine *Onze Eeuw* (Our Century), a monthly for politics, letters, science and art that was published between 1901 and 1924. Miss Vissering’s travel accounts, about France, Italy and Spain, but mainly about the Dutch Indies, were positively reviewed in *Onze Eeuw*’s column “Leestafel” (Reading Table). In Volume 11 (1911), the reviewer wrote about “the splendid work, from a literary viewpoint, delivered by Miss Vissering” and added that “it reminded one of fine lacework produced by a competent hand”.

Vissering’s account of her trip to Spain was first published in 1905, in Volume 15 of *Onze Eeuw* and in 1910 a compilation of her travelogues about France, Spain and Italy was published in a book titled *De Kust van Smaragd* (The Emerald Coast).

Cornelia Vissering entered Spain from Gibraltar, having crossed the Mediterranean by ship from Italy. No year is mentioned, but the visit took place in the spring.

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165 From *Spain*.
167 For the analysis, the part titled *Uit Španje* from this book has been used.
The author made the trip in the company of two other Dutch travellers, probably relatives as they are referred to several times as “the Dutch family”. In Cordoba they were, furthermore, accompanied by a Dutch friend who had been living in Spain for the past 12 years. Their first destination was Ronda, where they arrived by train from Gibraltar. Next, Cordoba was visited and the experiences in this city and its surroundings are described in the remaining pages of the travelogue.

Having come straight from Italy, a comparison between the two countries was inevitable and on the fifth day of her visit, Miss Vissering concludes:

Spain and Italy, two southern countries, completely different; Italy, apart from its antiquities, so much more modern than Spain, so much more up to date with the new times; the Spanish land unchanged, just like it was centuries ago (2).

This “unchanged Spain” is mainly reflected and admired in its Moorish heritage, which enchants Cornelia, together with the unique Spanish light. This light is regularly and lyrically described. “The light! That is the great, uncomprehended mystery of this country” (3).

Cornelia Vissering’s travelogue is much more about people than about places. When she arrives in Ronda, in the heat of the day, she is reminded of Pompei, a city of the dead, but soon the place comes to life with the shouting and laughter of children and from that moment a chain of people crosses her path and paints a lively picture of Andalusian Spain.

The Spanish National Character

Miss Vissering rarely refers to general character traits of the Spanish people. A guide in Ronda is considered to be prototypical, because “like every Spaniard, he looks upon his own city as the centre of the earth” (4).

The most important image is represented by Don Agustin de M., a mining engineer whom they meet in Cordoba. Shortly after making Cornelia’s acquaintance, Don Agustin proposes to her: “I wish to marry”, Don Agustin says, speaking quietly now, “and I should wish for a blond bride. Tall and slender people like you and I would form a handsome couple” (5). A friend of Cornelia, a Dutchman who lives in Spain, warns her that Don Agustin is engaged and that his present fiancée is number 13 in a long row. Furthermore, he reacts to Cornelia’s shock at Don Agustin’s unexpected proposal by explaining that this is a typical character trait of the Spanish: “There are things in life about which a Spaniard does not know any false modesty, he expresses what he feels” (6). During their visit to
Cordoba, which takes up the main part of the travelogue, Don Agustin continues his advances to Cornelia, fulfilling the classical role of Don Juan.

In Cordoba, a bullfight is visited, in this case a novillada, in which junior toreros fight young bulls. The fight is described in great detail in a separate chapter. Cornelia is eager to see this spectacle, as it offers the opportunity to see the people in “the authentically Spanish context of the oldest Andalusian game” (7). When the first fight is finished, a Spanish father, sitting next to her, explains the history and the rituals of the bullfight to his young son. This background information makes the author realize that she has watched the spectacle until now with the eyes of a child, not really understanding it, like the Spanish do, for whom every movement has its meaning. At the same time, however, the experience has to be, for her, a one-off, as a second visit would imply “the humiliation of knowing. Of knowing what was going to happen” (8).

Formation of the Image Content

Direct contact. Contact with Spanish people is an essential part of Cornelia Vissering’s visit to Spain. Two figures especially, Don Agustin and Don Blas, a mysterious, dwarflike figure who works in the mines as a metal-searcher, appear regularly during their visit to Cordoba. Furthermore, several families are visited at home, resulting in lively descriptions of both interiors and Spanish family life. During the first of these visits, in Ronda, Miss Vissering asks the daughters of the family to teach her some elementary Spanish, which suggests that she did not speak the language well. When possible, conversations are held in French and on other occasions their Dutch friend “Don Pedro”, a resident in Spain, acts as an interpreter.

Intertextual References. As background information to her descriptions of Moorish remains, Miss Vissering mentions unspecified Arab epic poems,168 explains to the reader the history of some of the buildings and tells the story of Abd-el-Rahman I, the sole survivor of the Umayyad caliphate of Damascus, who arrived in Spain in 755 and in 756 was declared Emir.

Politics/Religion. Miss Vissering’s admiration for the Moorish heritage leads to critical remarks about the way in which Christians have treated Islamic buildings like the Mosque in Cordoba:

168 Vissering, Uit Spanje, 147.
On our way through the darkness, we see all the greatness that was founded by the Mohammadans, all that was sinned by the Christians in this powerful, holy house of prayer of the followers of the Prophet (9).

At the same time, however, the author carefully explains the different feelings provoked by visits to Christian and Islamic religious buildings. Comparing her impressions in the cathedrals of Cologne and Rouen with what she felt in the Mezquita, she comes to the following conclusion:

But we have felt powerful sensations of high religiousness from a great past, of which the fantastic spirit and exotic splendour cannot take shape for us. The Mosque is for us, just like the Spanish light, a marvel of magnificence; but of a magnificence which we do not fully understand (10).

2. MAURITS WAGENVOORT, Van Madrid Naar Teheran (1907)

Writer and journalist Maurits Wagenvoort (1859-1944) made numerous journeys during his adult life, to many different destinations. Apart from trips to the United States and Russia, he visited the Middle East and India as well as parts of Africa.

In the beginning of 1898, Wagenvoort went, via Paris and Bordeaux, to Spain, where he stayed until the end of 1899. During this long trip, he crossed the country from north to south and from west to east. Almost immediately after this journey, Wagenvoort travelled to North Africa, where he stayed practically all the year 1900. From Tunis, he crossed the Mediterranean and visited Rome and Naples, travelling on to Egypt and from there to Greece, Serbia, Persia and Turkey, returning to The Hague in the autumn of 1905 (Van de Schoor 1999: 16).

The year in which Wagenvoort began his journey was a crucial year in Spanish history. In 1898, the US declared war on Spain after an incident in Cuba. In this conflict Spain was hopelessly outmatched and had to accept a peace treaty that meant the end of a once great empire. Later, in 1930, Wagenvoort looked back on this political background of his journey in his autobiographical De Vrijheidzoeker. Roman van het werkelijk leven. His conclusion about the conflict was that, as had happened so often in Spanish history, the brave and proud people showed...

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169 From Madrid to Teheran.
magnificent examples of self-sacrifice and dedication to the nation, while their despicable government did nothing to prevent their suffering.

Wagenvoort’s book about his journey to Spain is not a travelogue in the traditional sense of a chronological account of his travel experiences. He begins his account by stating that he wants to “encompass the country and its people in a general survey” (II). To this purpose, he presents his conclusions more or less thematically, comparing, for example, in one paragraph, the cathedrals of Burgos, Avila, Toledo and Seville, the Moorish remains in Seville, Cordoba and Granada, or the different Spanish landscapes.

The author’s impressions of Spain are, apart from criticism of its political system and the role of the Church, unreservedly positive. He calls it one of the most beautiful countries in the world, inhabited by a people with a typical, strong character. He finds it incomprehensible that Spain is so little known in the other European countries, while it has so much to offer. When he leaves the country, he remembers the mountain near Granada, called the suspiro del moro, the sigh of the Moor, in reference to the last Moorish king who had to retreat to North Africa, after having been defeated by the Catholic Kings. Although he personally hopes to return, Wagenvoort realizes, regretfully, that the experience will never be the same.

The Spanish National Character

When Wagenvoort presents his image of the Spanish people, which he does often and in detail, he explicitly concentrates on the common man. Both the nobility and the bourgeois, he finds, are the same as in any other European country, showing the same defects. What he sees as the most dominant trait in the Spanish national character, is their passion, which manifests itself in a variety of ways: in the central role that sexuality plays in their life, in their easily aroused jealousy and anger, in their religious fanaticism, in their sentimentality, in their generosity towards strangers, but also in their readiness to sacrifice their lives in the service of their country. The sincerity of all this joy of living is very attractive to Wagenvoort, but he also finds the Spanish endearingly superficial and naive. He sees them as a typically oriental people, indifferent to their own well-being. In De Vrijheidzoeker, a young Spaniard voices this attitude as follows:

Perhaps you are right. When the sun shines – and the sun practically always shines in this wonderful country – and we have eaten a slice of dry bread with some garlic, and, what’s more, we have four pennies in

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171 Wagenvoort, Van Madrid naar Teheran, 40.
our pocket to buy cigarettes, then we think that all is well, and that there is neither a happier people, nor a better country on earth (12).

The naivety of this people is further enhanced by the fact that the level of education is very low. While in countries like The Netherlands, England or Germany, young men dedicate themselves first and foremost to study and work, the Spaniard is only interested in the conquest of women - everything else is of secondary importance. The young Spanish woman is exclusively trained for marriage. More than once, Wagenvoort regrets the fact that this good, sincere, but naive and uneducated people have, throughout their history, with a few exceptions, been exploited by incapable and selfish leaders.

The Spaniard, in the view of the author, generally sees himself as independent and free. Furthermore he is a democrat through and through. He may be a porter or shine shoes, in his heart he knows he is as much a caballero as anyone else.

Wagenvoort, more than once, feels the need to refute negative stereotypes that are held by his compatriots, like the often repeated pride and cruelty. People think that the Spanish are proud because of their predominantly serious facial expression and because they are proud of their country’s glorious past, but their courtesy, hospitality and generosity towards strangers are proof of a lack of pride in the sense of a feeling of superiority. And although there is an element of cruelty in their character, “like all the other peoples of the sun” (13), their sentimentality is stronger and acts of cruelty, more often than not, lead to immediate and fervent remorse.

A visit to the bullfight is, for Wagenvoort, a reason to express his views on (western) civilization. As he has serious doubts about the so-called civilized modern world that pretends to have left barbarism far behind, while, at the same time “all over the world young men are being trained to shoot down other young men like wild animals in times of war” (14), it is highly hypocritical, he thinks, to qualify the bullfight as proof of typically Spanish barbarism and cruelty. For Wagenvoort, the corrida is ugliness mixed with great beauty, which is the essence of life itself. Furthermore, although the custom does, indeed, relate to a certain element of cruelty in the Spanish national character, it shows, just as much, a Spanish tendency to oversentimentality, which expresses itself in a great compassion for both animals and other human beings.

A visit to the Gypsies in Granada is recommended, because it is one of the places where the tourist can experience the national amusement par excellence in Spain: music and dance. The performances, full of passion and sensuality, are
not suitable for children or ascetics, but “the dances of those sun-tanned, semitic people show a passionate, indomitable zest for life” (15).

*Formation of the Image Content*

**Self-image.** The concept of civilization is an important factor in Wagenvoort’s ideology and, at the same time, a theme that illustrates the difference between northern and southern countries. Already at the beginning of his travel account, he explains what civilization means to him. In a civilized society every individual is free to live his life according to the spontaneous needs of his ennobled nature, following the self-imposed laws of his own clear thinking. In the author’s view, there are, at that moment, no civilized people in the world. Perhaps one can say that there is a beginning of consciousness of how human society should be. And this consciousness originates in those races that have the purest equilibrium of mind: the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon races. In Latin countries, like Spain, these concepts are absent, or, at most, in an embryonic state. And because the Spanish people are essentially good, but at the same time extremely passionate and naive, they need good guidance, something that has proved miserably lacking in practically all its history.

At the same time, Wagenvoort strongly criticises those who call the Spaniards barbaric. The country might lack a formal civilization, like a well organized administration with complete legal certainty, but this does not mean that there is a lack of decency in the Spanish. On the contrary:

Not a civilized people then, but, nevertheless, a good people, a people with the very best qualities of mind: frank, honest, sincere, hospitable, informal, courageous bordering on reckless, on occasion foolish in their readiness to self-sacrifice, exactly the opposite of us, the Dutch, who might be the most civilized people in the world, but who, on the other hand, do not have a spark of spontaneity (16).

At the end of the book, the difference between north and south is symbolized by a northern oak and an African date palm. Two completely different ways of living life: for the northerners, the purpose of life is to work, to study, to aspire and, between these activities, to occasionally relax, with a serious face and with their minds elsewhere. The main objective of the southerners is to enjoy life, working only when necessary, loving life and living it from their hearts.

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172 Ibidem, 7.
Although Wagenvoort maintains that he cannot choose between these two ways of life, his great enthusiasm for the Spanish and their way of seeing and doing things, as well as his occasional critical remarks about typically Dutch attitudes, give the impression that he prefers the southern way. When he praises, in *De Vrijheidzoeker*, the self-sacrificing mentality of the Spanish people, he adds that many Dutchmen, more sensible in their judgement, but not, therefore, necessarily more correct, would sooner consider this foolish. And Spanish patriotism is contrasted with the lack of this sentiment in the Dutch, when the author meets a Frisian family, living in Spain, whose son does not speak, nor understand, one word of his native language.

**Direct Contact.** To enter into direct contact with the Spanish people was an important objective of Wagenvoort’s sojourn in Spain. In *De Vrijheidzoeker* he writes, looking back on his trip to Spain, that he learned some Spanish beforehand and that his knowledge of the language steadily improved. And it is particularly his frequent contact with the ordinary people, which strengthens his impression of the unique politeness, generosity and hospitality of the Spanish. He is deeply impressed by their constant offering of everything they have to the foreigner, even when they are very poor. In La Mancha, Wagenvoort spends six weeks living alone in an isolated house on the plain. Apart from enjoying the great and tragic silence, he seeks the company of the simple people in the village nearby. And it is in places like this that he finds what he sees as the essence of the Spanish people: hard-working, frank, always friendly to the stranger, always ready to sing and dance, happy, carefree, with a passionate joy for living and an unflagging vitality.

**Intertextual References.** Wagenvoort’s thoughts on Spain and the Spanish people are frequently similar to those of members of the Spanish Generation of 1898 that made the analysis of the Spanish national character a central topic of their work. Although he does not mention authors of this group explicitly, he emphasizes, like Miguel de Unamuno, the presence of the *Volksgeist* in the common man and, like Joaquín Costa, he deplores the absence of a strong leader, like Napoleon or Bismarck. If only the Spanish people had a head, then they would be the most powerful people in the world. Politics in Spain is the work of a couple of hundred immoral scoundrels, who sell and betray their people. On the other hand, the author has to admit that, while politics in Holland are as
honest as politics can be (which does not mean much), they are also boring, while in Spain, politics are both tragedy and comedy, but never boring.

Another theme of the Spanish Generation of 1898, shared by Wagenvoort, was the recognition of the national character in figures of literary fiction. For Wagenvoort, five protagonists of literary works, especially, jointly reflect the Spanish national character: El Cid, Don Quixote, Sancho Panza, Don Juan and La Celestina. El Cid symbolizes the unrelenting willingness to serve the nation and this is combined with Don Quixote’s readiness to keep fighting, against his better judgement, for an ideal. Sancho represents the common sense that is also a fundamental ingredient of the Spanish national character, combined with a fatalistic attitude. But more important than these three are Don Juan and La Celestina. They represent, in the eyes of Wagenvoort, the most important characteristic of the Spanish: their passion and sexuality, stimulated by the sultry climate, which dominate every other aspect of life. Lascivious Don Juan is their prototype and La Celestina the go-between in their all important amorous adventures. As a more recent example of a literary prototype, Wagenvoort mentions Doña Perfecta, protagonist of the novel of the same name by Benito Pérez Galdós (1896). She represents the virile qualities of the Spanish woman, her fervent religiousness and her merciless energy and stubbornness.177

Apart from these literary prototypes, the inheritance of Romanticism is also present in Wagenvoort’s portrait of Spain. Like many predecessors, he confirms that Spain is and will always be the country of Romanticism.178 For him, this is particularly evident in its landscapes. The Guadarrama mountains, the plateau of La Mancha and the Sierra Morena, in particular, offer a unique and sublime experience of pristine nature.

**Politics/Religion.** While Wagenvoort, more than once, deplores Spain’s failing leaders, the dominant role of the Church in Spanish society is also criticised. Although the Spanish race is essentially strong and healthy, they are mentally dead from a very early age. The Church drags them down in its tedious routine and bewitches them with the hope of an afterlife.179 Also the wealth of the Church is shocking to Wagenvoort, in a country where there is so much poverty:

Do you want to know what splendour is, do you want to have an image of the treasure-chamber in which Ali Baba got lost? In that case, pay a visit to the sacrists of the Spanish cathedrals: the treasury of the sultans in Istambul isn’t any richer than that of the “needy Church” in Spain,

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177 Ibidem, 18.  
178 Ibidem, 49.  
179 Ibidem, 44.
which, because it is “needy”, burdens the Spanish budget with 40 million pesetas, while 7 million has been allocated to public education (17).

Wagenvoort does not say much about his own religious convictions. Nevertheless, one can deduce from his remarks on the subject that faith is a private matter for him. The realistic images of Christ, with wigs and ugly skirts, irritate him and insult his soul, which “renders Christ a devotion higher than cathedrals” (18) and to be able to appreciate all the splendour and glitter of Spanish Catholicism, he has to guard a little corner of his soul, where he keeps safe his devotion to the Man from Nazareth. At the same time, he admires the cathedrals of Spain, their beauty, but especially their mysticism, which Wagenvoort sees as an essential part of the Spanish national character.

3. HENRI VAN WERMESKERKEN, *Door Spanje. Schetsen en Verhalen* (1910)

Writer and journalist Henri van Wermeskerken (1882-1937) began his newspaper career in England, writing for the *Haarlemsch Dagblad*. At the beginning of the 20th century, he got a job as an international correspondent for the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* (*NRC*), an influential Rotterdam-based daily newspaper. In this capacity he was sent to several Southern European countries. In the prologue of *Door Spanje*, dated 1st May 1910, he tells the reader that the paper has given permission to publish the articles that he has written about Spain. He has personally chosen articles written in Madrid between February and September 1908 and in Barcelona between October 1908 and July 1909.

Van Wermeskerken’s book presents a mixture of descriptions of and comments on Spanish sights, types and customs as well as stories, like the tragic life story of the beggar Don Pedro, which the author has heard from a Spanish friend or the legend of Count Arnau, told to the author by a Spanish folklorist.

In the articles written in Madrid the author describes, amongst other things, the processions on Good Friday and the celebrations on 2nd May, in memory of the Spanish rebellion against the French in 1808. Furthermore, he visits a bullfight and makes an excursion to the Escorial. In Barcelona, he attends and comments on another religious feast, All Souls, and pays a visit to the convent on the mountain of Montserrat. Also, he reports about the presence of a Dutch warship, the “Utrecht”, in the city’s harbour. The selection of articles written in the two most important cities of Spain gives the author the opportunity to present two different sides of the country. Madrid, for him, represents everything

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180 Ibidem, 39.
181 Through Spain. Sketches and Stories.
Spanish, while Barcelona is, at least on first impression, a completely different world.

The general impression of Spain resulting from this collection of articles is negative. Although Van Wermeskerken repeatedly states that Spain does not belong to the civilized nations of Europe, it is precisely civilized Spain which he most sharply criticises. Only on two occasions: on the mountain at Montserrat and in the Pyrenees, does the author feel real enthusiasm. Amidst the pristine countryside, the same country that is, on many occasions, a world of annoyance to the foreigner,\(^{182}\) becomes an undervalued paradise for the traveller. In the prologue, Van Wermeskerken declares, furthermore, that the main purpose of his articles had always been to amuse the readers, as he himself likes to be amused. And, he writes, Spain and the Spaniards have given him ample opportunity to do so:

> And for that I have had ample opportunity in Spain, more than I cared for. The first thing that made me laugh were the Spaniards themselves. [...] There was so little seriousness and so much foolishness. They can be so childishly naive, those Spaniards, when they boast about the great Spain of the past and refuse to see that the guilding of those days has turned to rusty copper in the present (\(^{19}\)).

**The Spanish National Character**

In the prologue of his book Van Wermeskerken resumes the negative stereotypes that form the principal constituent of his image of Spain and the Spaniards. In this backward country that has missed the boat in a new and faster age, a naive and childlike people are, themselves, responsible for the country’s lagging behind: their innate laziness prevents them from both making an effort to stop their politicians exploiting them and from pulling their weight in bringing the country forward. At the same time, their national pride makes them blind to the country’s deplorable situation:

> In the meantime, the Spanish citizen is puffing away for all he is worth and dreams, following the clouds of smoke with his eyes, of his wonderful homeland, his country of sun and flowers, the like of which there is no other (\(^{20}\)).

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\(^{182}\) Van Wermeskerken, *Door Spanje*, 125.
Another characteristic that catches the author’s attention is the Spaniard’s overwhelming desire to be stylish. Everyone tries to be like an aristocrat and outward show is more important than anything. The Spanish man is a fullblooded dandy in the eyes of Van Wermeskerken, who thinks it is beneath his dignity to work and rather spends his money on clothes than on food.\textsuperscript{183} The Spanish woman is even more useless. As it is impossible for her to get an education or a job, her only destination is marriage and her only goal in life to catch a suitable husband:

Imagine a Spanish woman who would be discussing studies, politics or literature, this would, after all, be seen as vulgar and what Spaniard would want such a woman, who would be informed about such things. As long as she can read, write, sing and play the piano, knows how to dress and look stylish, this is, after all, more than sufficient. Not to mention the physical qualities he asks of her. Mental qualities he does not desire, that’s only ballast in a marriage and, what’s more, tiresome (\textit{21}).

The all-important marriage market leads, in the eyes of Van Wermeskerken, to a shameless taxing of the opposite sex. Even the \textit{piropo}, the florid compliment that is a remnant of chivalrous Spain, has degenerated into brutal and perverse remarks about a woman’s physical qualities.\textsuperscript{184} Although Barcelona seems, in the first instance, to represent a very different kind of Spaniard, busy and hard-working, which makes the country rise one hundred percent in the author’s estimation,\textsuperscript{185} this is actually the only difference, as the marriage market and the emphasis on outward appearances are the same on the Ramblas as on the Puerta del Sol in Madrid.

The bullfight, dutifully visited by the author, is described in all its gory details and seen as nothing more than a clear symbol of Spanish barbarism, especially for the “the calm and cool-minded inhabitant of northern regions” (\textit{22}).

\textit{Formation of the Image Content}

\textbf{Self-image.} The Centre-Periphery opposition is already present in one of the first articles, where the author declares:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{183} Ibidem, 160.
\item \textsuperscript{184} Ibidem, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{185} Ibidem, 128.
\end{itemize}
Yes, it is true, we are in Spain, and we do not have the right to demand a complete European civilization. This we should remember at all times (23).

Following his own maxim, Van Wermeskerken makes Spain’s backwardness, subsequently, a recurring theme in his travel book. The position of the Spanish woman functions as a symbol of this backwardness and the author compares her situation with that of women in northern countries, who have found their independence, as a result of studying and working and have come to realize that they are equal to men.186 The fact that in the Spanish press Dutch women are seen as just like men is for Van Wermeskerken one more example of the disappearance of Spanish chivalry.

Van Wermeskerken’s sense of superiority is more generally northern than specifically Dutch. His own compatriots, when he meets them in Spain, are described with mild irony and although the presence of Dutch sailors in Barcelona produces a pang of homesickness, their drunken singing is, at the same time, contrasted with the never unbending dignity of the Spanish, which makes public intoxication a rare exception.187

**Travel/Tourism.** The author’s ecstasy about unspoiled Spanish mountain scenery leads to a diatribe against annoying tourists:

Not, like in Switzerland, annoying tourists everywhere, skinny English misses, or ach-wie-wunderschöne fat German housewives, no … perfect solitude, no music of wind bands or organs, no smell of Bratwürstchen, which usually spoils the atmosphere of the German mountains! All is pure ether and complete peace and quiet (24).

**Intertextual References.** No textual sources are explicitly mentioned in Van Wermeskerken’s book with the exception of the Baedeker guide, which is mentioned twice. The author is familiar, however, with some of Spain’s literary heroes, such as El Cid, whose blood, he writes, still runs through the veins of the Spanish people.188 The Spanish woman is, furthermore, on several occasions, associated with the archetypical figure of Carmen.

**Politics/Religion.** Van Wermeskerken’s political views do not seem to play a significant role in his judgement of Spain, although he refers, on a few occasions,

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186 Ibidem, 166.
187 Ibidem, 149.
188 Ibidem, 45.
to the inefficiency and lack of decisiveness of the country’s institutions and the acceptance of swindling and fraud as normal practices. The strong alliance between the State and the Church is referred to, when the author angrily reports about a priest in Seville who has, to the surprise of many, asked to give the vote to Spanish women. The hidden agenda behind this initiative is crystal clear to Van Wermeskerken:

It is common knowledge that the influence of the clergy, which is strongly involved in politics here, is now mainly reduced to women. Hence, in my opinion, this attempt. For once Spanish women obtain the right to vote, the clergy will instantly regain the upper hand. Then it will become clear that female suffrage is a disaster for Spain, just as, until now, it has been obvious that it is as a result of clericalism that this country is a century behind the times (25).

In one of the first articles, face to face with the cathedral of Burgos, Van Wermeskerken expresses a negative comment on the destructive force of Christianity in general:

Centuries ago, heathen temples disappeared from there, on their foundations synagogues and mosques were built, but Christianity zealously destroyed or rebuilt them, smeared the Moorish mosaic with concrete. Can anything be more Christian? (26).

And although the author assures the reader that it is far from him to mock the faith of others, two aspects in particular of Spanish Catholicism, as he sees it, merit his disapproval. In the first place, the liberal interpretation of religious rites, which makes celebrations of mourning look like parties, and, secondly, the formalism in the observing of religious traditions, which shows, in the eyes of Van Wermeskerken, a lack of depth of thought and feeling.

4. LOUIS COUPERUS, *Spaansch toerisme*190 (1915)

Novelist and poet Louis Couperus (1863-1923) travelled through Spain during a period of three months in the spring of 1913. He was accompanied by his wife Elisabeth and his friend Orlando. This Italian friend, whose real name was Giulio Lodomez, was nicknamed Orlando Orlandini by Couperus, who took the name probably from a book of the same name, published in 1802 by the German author

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189 Ibidem, 25.
190 *Spanish Tourism.*
Christian Vulpius (Bastet 1987: 360). Orlando was a well-to-do cosmopolitan who understood and spoke Spanish.

During all of his adult life, Couperus travelled the world, writing regularly about his experiences. In December 1913, the author and his publisher, L.J. Veen, reached an agreement about the publication of five volumes of serials, with the overall title *Van en over alles en iedereen* (Of and About Everything and Everyone). Each volume would consist of two parts and each part would be sold separately. As part of this project *Spaansch toerisme I* and *II* were published in 1915.

After their arrival in Spain, Louis and Elisabeth spent a fortnight in Barcelona, waiting for Orlando. After Orlando’s arrival, the group bought a kilometre ticket book for 5,000 kilometres and 3 months travelling first class by train and then decided to begin their journey in a southerly direction. From Barcelona they travelled to Tarragona and Valencia and from there, via Cordoba, to Seville and Granada. Madrid was the next destination, only visited as an operating base for excursions to Toledo, Avila and the Escorial, as the travellers found the capital uninteresting, apart from the Prado Museum. The last city visited was Burgos, mainly for the fame of its cathedral and the fact that that El Cid was born in nearby Vivar. From Burgos they returned, by train, to Barcelona in the last days of May 1913.

Reading the first sentence of the first chapter of Part I, one wonders what had induced Couperus to visit Spain, as he proclaims, on his arrival in the country, that it is for the simple reason that fate wanted him to be there. It is known that two acquaintances, in particular, had brought the country to his attention. In the winter of 1912, Couperus met the Spanish painter Javier Cortés in Florence. There were plans for a trip together, but after Cortés returned to Spain they never met again (Bastet 1987: 429). The author, furthermore, heard about Spain from his friend Maurits Wagenvoort. Not only did he meet this author/journalist regularly in Florence, he had also read Wagenvoort’s travel account *Van Madrid naar Teheran*. The immediate cause, however, was an invitation from Orlando who was in Buenos Aires at the time and joined the author and his wife in Barcelona to make the journey together.

The dominating feeling during the trip, as it was expressed by the author, was that of being a stranger. A novelty for Couperus, as he did not feel like a foreigner in Italy or like a tourist in Switzerland, Germany or France. This feeling of strangeness is a recurring theme in this travelogue, combined with

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192 Ibidem I, 1.
continuous comparisons between Spain and Italy, comparisons that turn out, almost without exception, in favour of the latter country. Furthermore, famous destinations like Seville and Granada did not live up to their reputation. However, the author admits that the main reason for all this disillusionment lies within the traveller himself. In the chapter “Sol y Sombra”, where he tries to analyse his disappointment, he comes to the conclusion that he, fundamentally, does not like travelling, but prefers to stay in one place for a longer period of time.193

The Spanish National Character

Couperus’s characterizations of the Spanish are limited and in general follow the familiar clichés. He observed the Spaniards from a distance, as an onlooker. In Barcelona, the petit-bourgeois, who parade on the Ramblas, did not interest him at all and although he praises the ordinary working men, the “caballeros of the Ramblas”, the “real gentlemen in this modern city”,194 these qualifications sound more like observations that the readers might expect from this “city of brandy and anarchism”195 than like heartfelt sympathy for the working class. What the author saw in the faces on the Ramblas was mainly, if not Castilian, then Catalan pride. Furthermore, he found the people too serious and believed that they think too much and enjoy life too little.196

In Granada, where Couperus once more complains that in Spain one constantly has the feeling of being urged on to the next destination, he adds that this is “in spite of all Spanish courtesy”,197 but no specific examples of this courtesy are mentioned and the adjective ‘courteous’ sounds more like an ingrained epithet than a judgement based on experience.

Reluctantly, and assuring the reader that he is not an aficionado, a fan, Couperus describes a visit to the bullfight in the chapter “Palmas y pitos”.198 Partly charmed by the colours and the elegance of the movements and partly horrified by the blood of the dying animals, the author is reminded of the arena’s of ancient Rome and wonders: “[…] does it not warn us that we don’t have old-Roman souls anymore, yes, not even possess modern Spanish souls?” (27). His conclusion about the event is that the bullfight is nothing but a remnant of a time of chivalry which has degenerated into cruelty.

193 Ibidem, 55.
194 Ibidem, 5.
195 Ibidem, 2.
196 Ibidem, 6.
197 Ibidem, 56.
198 Palms and whistles. The title refers to a bullfighting magazine of the same name that appeared from 1913.
The Gypsies get to play their part, as in all (post)Romantic travelogues, but they are also characterized in a highly stereotypical way. When, in Granada, a Gypsy approaches the party, they presume that he is a robber and after visiting a dance performance Couperus does not feel the need to say much about this “picturesque race of beggars, that I find creepy with greasy, black locks around pockmarked, copper-coloured faces and outstretched grasping fingers” (28).

Formation of the Image Content

**Self-image.** Traits of the Spanish national character are on no occasion compared or contrasted with a Dutch self-image. In this respect it is not unlikely that Couperus, who spent six years of his youth in the Dutch East Indies and a large part of his adult life outside The Netherlands, did not have a strong Dutch self-image. When he compares two countries, it is not Spain and The Netherlands, but Spain and Italy, the country in which he perhaps felt most at home.

**Past Relations.** Memories of the Eighty Years War are especially vivid in the Escorial, which is grey, immense, stern, like “the stern monarch, for whom we did not care” (29). All that he sees there reflects the rigid soul of that king, who was hated by the Dutch people. The author warns the reader that everything in the Escorial, “where our Counts of Egmont and Hoorne, and other national noblemen, were received in a cold, merciless and harsh manner” (30), will remind him of Philip II.

**Direct Contact.** More than superficial encounters with Spaniards are very rarely described in Couperus’s travel account. A limited knowledge of Spanish might be a reason, but one gets the impression that Orlando’s Spanish was good and that he could serve as an interpreter, if necessary. Couperus is an observer in Spain, looking at the people from a distance. Direct personal contact is avoided, or was not considered worth mentioning in the account.

**Travel/Tourism.** How he saw himself as a foreign visitor in Spain was to a large degree influential in the formation of Couperus’s images of Spain and the Spanish. He constantly feels the need to justify his negative judgements to the readers and, in the chapter “Granada”, explains that for him Spain is a country that forces you to be constantly on the move:

Spain is not a welcoming country to the tourist and stranger, like Italy. Spain has many beautiful things in nature and art, but once you have seen them, there is something in the atmosphere that urges you on […] (31).
On the other hand, Spain is not entirely to blame for this. Couperus realizes that the tourists have changed. He has seen and hated them also in Italy, these modern tourists who hurry from one place to another and ‘do’ Florence in five days and Rome in ten. And because he feels, somehow, forced to do the same thing on this trip through Spain, he becomes a kind of tourist he would rather not be.

**Intertextual References.** In accordance with the general Black Legend reputation of Spain, Couperus writes that this country has, even before one arrives there, a dark colour, a sombre hue:

> [...] when you think of Spain, a large shadow descends, then you see blackness, the black shadow of Gothic cathedrals, blackness of fanaticism and Inquisition, black in Ribeira and Velazquez, black in its seriousness and pride; when you think of Spain, you see the southern, dark country (32).

Apart from this general picture, various specific textual sources of information about Spain and the Spanish are mentioned in this travelogue. During their trip through Spain the three travellers are, in the first place, accompanied by the Baedeker guide-book on Spain and Portugal. Since the first edition of this volume in the Baedeker series was published in 1897, it was commonly used by Dutch travellers in the Iberian Peninsula.

Maurits Wagenvoort’s travelogue on Spain may have stimulated Couperus to undertake the journey, but he does not share his friend’s enthusiasm in any way and even calls him to account in the chapter “Sol y sombra”, asking him rhetorically why he has never revisited Spain after singing its praises so loudly.199

The strongest intertextual connection is that with the works on Spain of Washington Irving, whose books Couperus had read with pleasure. They not only inspired him to visit the Alhambra extensively, but also to write no less than four chapters about the Moorish inhabitants of the palace.

The rare bout of enthusiasm Couperus experienced in Avila, was also inspired by literature. He mentions having read *La gloria de don Ramiro*, a novel by the modernist Argentinian author Enrique Larreta that was published in 1908. The novel is set in 17th century Spain, during the reign of Philip II. Larreta himself had lived in Avila for four years. Saint Teresa’s autobiography as well as the poetry of San Juan de la Cruz are also praised.

Not only in the Alhambra and in Avila, but in many other places, the echoes of Romantic Spain ring out in Couperus’s travelogue, especially its aspects

199 Ibidem, 49.
of sublimity. It is tangible in Toledo, the “most Romantic city of Spain”, dark city of occult secrets, as well as in the countryside around Granada. Furthermore, the manifest antipathy against modernity is also part of the Romantic heritage. The capital is not worth a visit (apart from the Prado Museum), because of its trite and boring modernity and in Avila a midnight walk is necessary to find the right atmosphere, undisturbed by the irritating pylons with telephone wires.

**Politics/Religion.** While references to the political context are virtually absent, the author’s visits to Spain’s cathedrals and the confrontation with the country’s religious life, do play a part in the formation of his impressions of Spain. Louis Couperus did not adhere to one specific religion (Bastet 1987: 290, 291). He did not reject Christianity, but was also inspired by Buddhism. Spirituality was important to him and he searched for a mystic atmosphere in Spain, particularly in the Gothic cathedrals. In this respect as well, he is often disappointed, because the gloom and seriousness give the impression that the mystic soul is pressed down into the big, cold churchstones. Toledo’s cathedral, at dusk, is as black as the city itself and Romantic in its almost satanic appearance, more suitable for a black mass than for Christian rituals. Only in Avila, full of atmosphere, the author has an almost mystical experience, more Romantic than religious, however, and provoked by both the moonlit darkness and passages of Larreta, Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz. The religiousness of the Spaniards is compared, as so many other things, with devotion in Italy, the latter having kept some of the “pagan laughter”, while the former is too serious and oppressive.

5. **FELIX RUTTEN, *Spanje* (1924)**

Writer and journalist Felix Rutten (1882-1971) spent about 30 years of his life in the southern Dutch province of Limburg. In a lecture delivered at the end of the First World War, he declared that Limburg was, in his opinion, a Romantic land, a land that fed the imagination. The fact that Catholicism was the dominant religion in this part of The Netherlands, was a considerable factor in this qualification, as the Catholic Church was, for Rutten, “sheer Romanticism” (Schulpen and Spronck 2003: 18).

Rutten’s fame as a writer was limited and he is mainly known for his travel accounts in daily and weekly magazines and for his travel books. As a travel reporter he visited practically every country of Europe, as well as North

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200 Ibidem II, 28.
201 Ibidem, I, 21.
202 Ibidem II, 28.
203 Ibidem I, 21.
Africa and Israel. From 1937 he lived in Rome where he frequently acted as a guide for visiting Dutch tourists.

In the spring of 1924, Rutten entered Spain from the south, crossing by boat from the Algerian city of Oran to Gibraltar and from there to Algeciras. The author recommends this entrance to other visitors, as, in his opinion, the real Spain is situated in the southern part of the country. Next, Ronda was visited and much admired for its association with the Romantic struggle against the Moors. From Ronda, Rutten travelled, by train, to Seville, where he experienced both the Semana Santa and the Feria. After these events, he travelled on to Granada, where he had high expectations of the Alhambra, pictures of which he had already seen in his childhood. After visiting the Moorish palace complex and the Albaicín, where the Gypsies live, he took the train to Córdoba, and from there another train to Toledo. The next destination was Madrid and the Escorial. The last cities visited were Avila, Salamanca and Burgos, from which city the author travelled to France, to return to his home country.

Rutten does not appear to begin his journey with great enthusiasm. The book opens with four lines from a poem by the Irish author Padraic Colum: “Once I went over the Ocean / In a ship that was bound for proud Spain; / Some people were singing and dancing, / But I had a heart full of pain”, which are followed by an introductory remark by the author that this is a journey to be undertaken only once and when one is still young, unburdened and carefree. No names of travel companions are mentioned, but, on the other hand, the author is constantly in the company of other authors who have written about Spain. Places and events are described in great detail and personal views on things seen and people encountered are, almost invariably, compared to those of others. In this respect, this travelogue is a rich source of texts about Spain that could be consulted by visitors in the 1920s. Rutten’s visit to the Escorial, with the explicit purpose to “finally, face to face, look Philip II straight in the eye” (33), may serve as an example. Literary portraits of the King from texts by Karl Gutzkow, Friedrich von Schiller, Victor Hugo, Philarète Chasles, François Mignet, Théophile Gautier, Ludwig Passarge and Catulle Mendès are summarized or quoted, before Rutten offers his own judgement of the monarch, whom he considered to be neither sensible, nor practical and too convinced of the infallability of his convictions, but, at the same time, honest in his devotion to God.

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204 Rutten, Spanje, 1.
205 The quote is from one of Padraic Colum’s so-called Spinning Songs: Girls Spinning.
206 Rutten, Spanje, 1.
The Spanish National Character

Felix Rutten’s image of the Spanish is strongly influenced by the fact that, from the outset, he did not only feel unwelcome in Spain, but also, as a foreigner, an object of derision and ridicule:

It is remarkable to see the expression on the face of the Spaniard, when he realizes that you are a foreigner. The pilgrim in Jerusalem is, for him, someone to laugh at, for the best of them, someone to be pitied. Even dressed in the most ordinary clothes you are, as a foreigner, a creature to be gaped at, by the lower-class people you are simply persecuted as such, a plaything of a cruel and mocking race (34).

The lack of hospitality and the tendency to ridicule the stranger, are such conspicuous character traits of the Spanish that Rutten dedicates a separate chapter to this subject, titled, ironically: “Welcome Stranger”. In this chapter he catalogues his negative experiences in this respect and wholeheartedly agrees with his fellow-countryman Henri van Wermeskerken, who had written that Spain is a world of annoyance for foreigners.207 To this uncomfortable sense of being laughed at Rutten retaliates by ridiculing the Spanish sense of national pride. In a country that is swamped by beggars and where every day is like Sunday, because very few people actually go to work, the persistent glorifying of the past is not only ridiculous, but also detrimental, as it stands in the way of progress:

What kind of people is this, anyway, that continues to live within a Chinese wall, puffed up with its excellence and ignorant of everything. It scorns everything that isn’t Spanish and considers everything Spanish to be perfect. In its narrow-minded delusion it is still living in the age of Charles V, as if not aware of the fact that the sun has long since set (35).

One of the few positive aspects of Spanish society is, for Rutten, the lack of class consciousness. Especially in popular feasts, like the Feria in Seville, he finds the informal mingling of all social classes touching and an example of how a popular festival should be.

Spanish women, especially the Carmens of the south, receive considerable attention from Rutten. Their looks are admired, but, because of their lack of education and their pride, their beauty is sterile and doll-like208 and their seductive

207 Van Wermeskerken, Door Spanje, 125.
208 Rutten, Spanje, 91.
conduct towards men leads the author to the conclusion that the Spanish woman herself has Don Juan on her conscience.  

Madrid, in the eyes of Rutten, is the most banal capital of Europe and no more than a pretentious village, and the city reflects the character of the Castilian: noble, inward-looking, taciturn, measured, with sobre gestures and a slim figure, as opposed to the lively and happy people of the south.  

The bullfight gets its separate chapter, as in most travelogues. Initial admiration for its colours and costumes turns to revulsion when the picadores enter the arena. That whole families seem to enjoy this horrifying spectacle convinces the author of the fact that human life has no value in this country, let alone the life of animals.  

The Gypsies, crawling in and out of their holes in the rocks like black vermin, live in a separate republic, outside the Spanish race:  

It becomes almost symbolic how this Gypsy folk, that by fraud and thievery seems to take revenge on the civilized world for the lack of a country of its own, lives its life of outcasts in a dense thicket of aloes, cactuses and torch-thistles (36).

Formation of the Image Content

Self-image. There is no pronounced Dutch self-image in this travelogue, which might have something to do with the author feeling more like a Limburguer than a Dutchman in general.

Direct Contact. Rutten’s personal contact with Spanish people is limited, with just a few exceptions, to fellow train-passengers and people who offer their services, sometimes against his wishes, as tourist guides. The fact that he tends to avoid engaging in more than superficial conversations is not suprising, as the feeling of being an object of ridicule predominates throughout his journey. The author’s limited knowledge of the Spanish language probably also played a part, as he once felt the victim of “jeering at my gibberish” (37).

Intertextual References. Both travel writing and fictional sources are constant companions during Rutten’s trip through Spain. Travelling with the Baedeker

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209 Ibidem, 87.
210 Ibidem, 206.
211 Ibidem, 212.
212 Horsemen in a Spanish bullfight that jab the bull with a lance.
guide under his arm, he compares his impressions, firstly, with those of fellow
countrymen who preceded him: Marcellus Emants, Maurits Wagenvoort, Henri
van Wermeskerken and the poet Albert Verwey, who had written a travelogue in
verse, *Spaansche Reis*, in 1893.

As German sources, apart from the Baedeker, Rutten refers more than
once to the Roman Catholic theologian and popular author Alban Stolz, who,
as a result of his travels in Spain, in the 1850s had written the humberous work
*Spanisches für die gebildete Welt*. Another German, with whom Rutten compares
his impressions, is Alfred Kerr, whose travel serials were published in 1920 under
the title *Die Welt im Licht*. Textual sources from France are, apart from the works
of well-known Romanticists, like Mérimée, de Musset, Hugo and Gauthier, the
travelogue *L’Espagne contemporaine. Journal d’un voyageur* (1872) by Louis
Teste and Edmond Joly’s impressions of a trip to Seville, *L’Oeillet de Séville*
(1922).

About writers who had created the Romantic image of Spain, Rutten was
well-informed. Apart from the above-mentioned French authors, Irving, Byron,
Heine and Schiller are quoted or referred to. Rutten’s own opinion about the
Romanticness of Spain is, however, ambivalent. Although his travelogue ends with
the conclusion that the Iberian Peninsula is a land of “immortal Romanticism”, he is,
a neo-Romantic himself, frequently disappointed in this respect, especially
in Andalusia, where poverty and ugliness threaten the Romantic fantasy. What
Rutten particularly misses, is the Romantic sense of nature:

A “Romantic” Spain is plain foolishness: it is a barren and cold and dour
country, where the people don’t even gaze at the stars. They have never
knelt before nature and know nothing but man and the city (38).

**Politics/Religion.** References to Spanish politics are virtually absent, but
religion does play a part, as might be expected from a Roman Catholic traveller
who called himself a pilgrim in Jerusalem. Rutten’s attitude toward religion in
Spain is, however, ambivalent. The Semana Santa in Seville is experienced as an
intensely moving religious spectacle, a wonderful example of pious exaltation.
In his prolonged evaluation of the character of Philip II, furthermore, the author
justifies the monarch’s endeavours to keep Europe on the right Roman Catholic
track. On the other hand, the irradication of remnants of the Islamic past is
more than once criticised. In Granada, Rutten concludes that all prosperity,
beauty and science have disappeared in “the glow of the auto-da-fe, that since
then clouded the air with its stench of smoke” (39) and in Cordoba, face to face

214 Ibidem, 226.
with the Mihrab in the city’s cathedral, he deplores the vandalizing intrusion of the Roman Catholic Church.\(^{215}\)


Henri van der Mandere (1883-1957) is known, first of all, for his activities on behalf of the Peace Movement in The Netherlands. Author of various publications about Peace Treaties and Organizations, he also wrote about episodes of the Eighty Years War between The Netherlands and Spain, in particular about the Twelve Years’ Truce and the Peace of Munster. In the 1920s Van der Mandere became president of the Genootschap Nederland-Spanje (The Netherlands-Spain Society), which was founded in 1920. In this capacity he wrote *Indrukken uit Spanje*, a book that is a mixture of travel guide and travelogue.

After three introductory chapters with information about the history, art and population of Spain, the author, in Chapter IV, begins to describe a journey through the country, introducing a ‘we’, referring to the author and one or more unspecified travel companions, about whose experiences the author reports during part of the described trip. When applied in this sense, the author always uses the past tense. Whether these experiences relate to one specific journey or several journeys remains unclear. No dates are mentioned. Once, however, the author writes about his presence at the awarding of the Grotius Medal to the University of Salamanca, an event which took place in 1926. Secondly, the personal pronoun ‘we’ is used to refer to the reader/traveller using the book as a travel guide, whom the author virtually joins on his trip, like in: “Back in Barcelona, we might consider which is the best route to leave Spain.” In this second sense, the ‘we’ is alternated with ‘one’, like in “When one leaves Jerez”, “those who”, like in “Those who make this journey”, or ‘the traveller/tourist’, like in “But the tourist, who really wants to get to know Spain”. Thirdly, ‘we’ can refer to ‘we the Dutch’, or ‘we Northerners’, like in: “Is it suprising that we, who live in Northern and Western Europe, do not understand Spain […]?”.

Both by virtually joining them and by weaving his personal experiences into the descriptions of places to be visited, Van der Mandere creates the impression that he accompanies the reader who uses the book as a travel guide, on his journey. In this respect his book is a predecessor of the genre of the ‘personalized travel guide’ that became popular in the 1950s.

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\(^{215}\) Ibidem, 178.
\(^{216}\) *Impressions from Spain. Travel Memories and Remarks.*
While a great many places in Spain are described in detail, as is customary in a travel guide, the author includes his own experiences only in the following cities: Irun, Madrid (from where the Escorial was visited), Toledo, Salamanca, Granada, Sevilla, Ronda, Cadiz and Jerez.

**The Spanish National Character**

Van der Mandere offers his images of the Spanish in different ways. Firstly, in an introductory chapter, titled “Spain: the country, its geographic situation, its people, its art”, the character traits are presented as objective, factual information. Secondly, the description of the journey is interspersed with observations about the Spanish national character, while the last chapter, titled “Impressions of the country and its people” suggests a more subjective comment on the country and its inhabitants.

From the beginning, Van der Mandere emphasizes that, other than the picture depicted by tourist brochures of a sunny country, filled with laughing people, the reality of Spain is much more diverse, both in landscape and climate and in the character of its inhabitants. It is possible, however, he writes, to list some characteristics that are common to all Spaniards: proud, noble, gentleman-like, but at the same time, not entirely free of mistrust, particularly towards foreigners. Furthermore,

> the average Spaniard, although certainly not entirely lacking in entrepreneurial spirit, is not exactly notable for his all-conquering energy: he has an objection to manual labour, not so much out of laziness, but rather, because he considers this beneath his dignity (40).

In the last chapter, the author states once more that, although it is difficult to mention a general characteristic of the Spaniard, one can say that he is courageous, both in material and in moral danger. The most striking quality of the Spaniard, in all parts of the country, is, however, his courteous behaviour. This courtesy is challenged only when his pride is at stake:

> The average Spaniard has his pride, in the first place, and then again his pride and then, for the third time, his pride and he who wishes to challenge this gets nowhere with him (41).

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218 Ibidem, 345.
Spanish pride is also reflected in what the author calls the *caballero*-feeling, the fact that every Spaniard, beggars included, sees himself as a gentleman and demands to be treated as such.\(^{219}\) On the other hand, the natural tendency of the Spaniard to strictly maintain certain forms of etiquette implies, paradoxically, that the intercourse between different social classes is less restrained than in other countries.\(^{220}\) Another character trait that catches the author’s attention is the fact that the Spaniard demands little of life and patiently suffers what fate reserves for him, and, nevertheless, is still happier than people in other countries with greater prosperity.\(^{221}\)

Van der Mandere pays considerable attention to regional character differences in Spain. The fact that these differences are pronounced is not only related to the geography of the country, but also to the Spaniard’s being “completely personal”,\(^{222}\) while, at the same time, national consciousness is much weaker in Spain than in countries like France, England and Germany.\(^{223}\) The Castilian is proud and looks down on all other regions, except Aragon. The harsh climate and countryside make him gloomy and hard of temper.\(^{224}\) The Basque is proud as well and aloof towards the foreigner, but also honest and trustworthy, while the Galician is more gentle in character and more cheerful. The latter, furthermore, has a strongly developed religious feeling.\(^{225}\) The Catalan is rebellious and preferably presents himself as the Spaniard who knows how to work.\(^{226}\) The Andalusian most strongly resembles the touristic image of the Spaniard:

> There is something sunny in the figure of the Andalusian, but he is also much more susceptible, much more sensitive, and much more quick-tempered than the Castilian can be (42).

Van der Mandere pays separate attention to the Spanish woman on several occasions. While the Andalusian woman is, without any doubt, generally beautiful and seductive, one should not presume that all Spanish women are like Carmen.\(^{227}\) For a picture of the Spanish woman in general, Van der Mandere refers

\(^{219}\) Ibidem, 209.
\(^{220}\) Ibidem, 330.
\(^{221}\) Ibidem, 204.
\(^{222}\) Ibidem, 232.
\(^{223}\) Ibidem, 322.
\(^{224}\) Ibidem, 325.
\(^{225}\) Ibidem 71.
\(^{226}\) Ibidem, 204.
\(^{227}\) Ibidem, 291.
to Azamat Batuk,228 who explained clearly that her - in the eyes of foreigners - free and informal manners should not be mistaken for a lack of virtuousness.229

Formation of the Image Content

Self-image. On more than one occasion, a Dutch, or northern, self-image is contrasted with a Spanish hetero-image. For example, when typically Spanish joie de vivre is mentioned as something which northerners pointedly lack.230 Furthermore there is, according to Van der Mandere, a deep, unbridgeable gap in thinking and feeling that separates The East from The West. And precisely because in Spain these two worlds have been united, the country is not sufficiently understood in northern parts.

Van der Mandere’s personal perspective on modernity also plays a part in his appreciation of Spain and the Spaniards. While modernity has its advantages, like better roads and more comfortable hotels, one of the main attractions of Spain is the fact that modernity has not robbed the country of its original character:

Spain has been modernized, undoubtedly, as no country escapes modernization. But in Spain this has happened on such a modest scale and of the old, attractive national character, as much has remained as has been created by recent centuries (43).

Past Relations. Whenever King Philip II is mentioned, Van der Mandere is aware of the negative connotations which his name and his Escorial palace evoked in every Dutchman. “We have, during history lessons in primary school, already learned so much about this Escorial” (44), he writes. The author’s own opinion of the King and his representative, the Duke of Alba, is not so negative, however. He calls Philip a greater monarch than most people think and one who, furthermore, undoubtedly had taste,231 while Alba is described as a first rate soldier.232

Direct Contact. In the parts of the travelogue in which Van der Mandere specifically refers to personal experiences in Spain, private encounters with Spaniards are rarely mentioned. The language may well have been a factor in this lack of direct contact, as the author admits that at the Feria in Seville, during which it is virtually impossible to find accommodation, he would have been

228 Pseudonym of the American journalist N.L. Thieblin, author of Spain and the Spaniards (1874).
229 Van der Mandere, Indrukken uit Spanje, 349.
230 Ibidem, 203.
231 Ibidem, 120.
helpless as a foreigner lacking sufficient knowledge of the Spanish language, without a letter of recommendation from the Dutch mission in Madrid. 233

**Travel/Tourism.** The specific nuances of Spanishness can only be appreciated by the “intensely travelling tourists”. 234 Although Van der Mandere uses the terms traveller and tourist, in most cases, indiscriminately, it is clear that, in his opinion, only a certain kind of tourist is able to discover the real Spain. Writing about the subtle difference between Castille and Aragon, he adds:

Different, however, to the insider; identical to the superficial traveller, who, for his part, might see the Aragonese tableland as an extension of the Castilian plain (45).

**Intertextual References.** While the Baedeker guide is mentioned only once, Edmondo de Amicis’s *Spagna* is frequently referred to, and, evidently, much appreciated by Van der Mandere, as he calls him “this brilliant Italian writer”. 235 In the Alhambra, many tourists are observed reading Washington Irving, which makes the author think that in their minds they populate the Moorish court with products of Irving’s fantasy. 236 In Segovia, Van der Mandere quotes the impressions of the city of an 18th century English traveller, whom he calls “the reverend Townsend from Pebsey in the county Wales”. 237

Of his own fellow-countrymen who published travelogues about Spain, Van der Mandere only mentions Jozef Israëls explicitly, as an example of an expert admirer of the Prado Museum. 238

**Politics/Religion.** *Indrukken uit Spanje* offers a considerable number of comments on the contemporary political situation in Spain. Although the author declares, in one of the first chapters, that in a book like his, political considerations are not appropriate, 239 the political context of Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship is, nevertheless, more than once referred to. In the part about Catalonia, for example, where the general spent part of his life, Van der Mandere explains the logic of the military coup of 1923 against the background of growing Catalan separatism,

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233 Ibidem 279.
234 Ibidem, 96.
235 Ibidem, 257.
236 Ibidem, 256.
237 Ibidem, 183. The author meant Joseph Townsend, vicar of Pewsey in Wiltshire, author of *A Journey through Spain in the Years 1786 and 1787* (1791).
238 Ibidem, 134.
239 Ibidem, 51.
symbolized by “barbaric” actions like that of Ferrer\(^{240}\) in 1909.\(^{241}\) The author’s view on both religion and politics in Spain is summarized in the last chapter. Religion, he writes, in this essentially monarchist and ecclesiastical country, is completely integrated into everyday life. Where politics are concerned, Spain finds itself in a transitional phase:

But the significant difference with the old days is that, in the course of recent years, and particularly after the war, the confidence in the power of the State has dwindled. The Spanish masses are beginning to realize, that the State cannot and, in any case, should not do everything, but consequently the superfluity of the State is becoming an issue (46).

7. JOS. JANSSEN, Een reis door Spanje\(^{242}\) (1934)

Jos. Janssen (1891-1963), a Roman Catholic priest from the southern Dutch province of Limburg, travelled to Spain in the spring of 1933. After a friend had taken him, by car, from Maastricht to Liège, in Belgium, he boarded a touring-car there with 11 other passengers. Via Brussels, they travelled to France and, after several stops, crossed the Spanish border at Irun.

In Spain, firstly, San Sebastian was visited. From there they drove, via Vitoria, to Burgos. While the author was full of praise for the Spanish roads, which could easily have borne comparison with the best roads in The Netherlands,\(^{243}\) he found the Castilian countryside bare, monotonous and poor. After admiring the cathedral in Burgos, the next stop was Valladolid, where Philip II was born and Columbus died. Subsequently, Salamanca, called “the brain of the world” by the author,\(^{244}\) in reference to its world-famous scholars, was visited, after which they went to Avila and the Escorial. Again, the long rides across the Castilian plain found little enjoyment, because of the lack of variety in the landscape.

Although Janssen had low expectations about the capital, after reading many negative descriptions in other travelogues, Madrid was paid a visit nonetheless, on Palm Sunday, and there they also attended their first bullfight. Then the group travelled on to Toledo, and via Guadalupe, Merida and Badajoz, Janssen, with two travel companions, paid a short visit to Elvas in Portugal. The next port of call was Seville, the “Queen of Andalusia”,\(^{245}\) where they watched

\(^{240}\) On 13-10-1909 Francisco Ferrer y Guardia was executed, accused of instigating the revolt of the working masses in Barcelona during the Tragic Week (July 25th – August 2nd 1909).

\(^{241}\) Van der Mandere, Indrukken uit Spanje, 336.

\(^{242}\) A Journey through Spain.

\(^{243}\) Janssen, Een reis door Spanje, 19.

\(^{244}\) Ibidem, 51.

\(^{245}\) Ibidem, 115.
the Holy Week processions. Easter was celebrated in Cordoba and from there they went on to Malaga, this time enjoying the drive through the mountains. After being somewhat disappointed in both Cordoba and Malaga, Granada, “the singing heart of Spain”,246 was much admired. Through the Sierra Nevada, they travelled on to Murcia and from there to the east coast where, successively, Elche, Alicante, Valencia, Sagunto, Tarragona and Barcelona were visited. It was from this last city that the return journey was begun.

In the first chapter, titled: “Why to Spain?”, the author comes to the conclusion that a trip to Spain is an adventure, if only because opinions about Spain and the Spaniards vary so much, while so little is actually known about the country:

> A trip to Rome is the beautiful realization of a long cherished wish. A trip to Spain is an adventure. In Rome one has to have been. And one knows what one misses, if one does not take the opportunity to go there. Spain one can also bypass. But, if one has not been there, one cannot imagine what one has missed (47).

Janssen is fully aware that he is going, in 1933, to a country full of revolutionary and anti-clerical action. Both burnt down and empty churches form a connecting thread in his travelogue, together with the great cathedrals that remain standing and symbolize, to the author, Spain’s essential Catholicism. Stressing the importance of the political context of his journey, Janssen ends his travelogue with two chapters about religious life in Spain and recent political developments, as well as an epilogue titled “Since we left Spain, …”, in which he refers to the November elections, the outcome of which strengthens his hope of a return to a peaceful, Roman Catholic Spain.

**The Spanish National Character**

For Jos. Janssen, the essence of the Spanish national character is, first and foremost, the Roman Catholic religion. Without this faith, which is the soul of the country, Spain would not be Spain anymore:

> And in the new Spain this ardent faith is still alive. The churches may burn, but the Church remains. Demagogues may rail against priests and religion, the people stand by their priests and their religion. […] If Spain

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246 Ibidem, 159.
would be robbed of its religion, it would not be Spain anymore, it would become a mere satellite state of red Russia (48).

The flame of revolution that sparks so easily and so frequently in this country, is a product of the Spanish temperament, the hot blood that so readily goes to their heads.247 Their quick-temperedness is, however, of short duration and quickly turns into sentimentality and remorse. As an example, Janssen writes about arsonists who set fire to the cathedral of Murcia and then returned to save the statue of the Virgin Mary.248 This hot-temperedness is particularly strong in the south of the country, where many things recall the fiery people of the Moors.249

Another essential character trait, which Janssen repeatedly encounters, is the Spanish courteousness. From the beginning, the Spanish strike the author as very friendly and courteous towards the foreigner, which makes him exclaim, rather patronizingly: “What an amiable and obliging little people they are!” (49). Janssen relates the innate courteousness of the Spaniard to the veneration of the Blessed Virgin:

The veneration of Mary in Spain has determined the soul of the Spanish people, has shaped and ennobled it. The mild, gay courteousness of the Spaniard has developed in the worship of the Queen of Heaven (50).

When Janssen establishes that in Cordoba the Sunday rest is not observed, he remarks, cynically, that it is a pity that the Spanish are only diligent on Sundays.250

As regards regional character differences, apart from the mercantile spirit of the Catalan and the good-naturedness of the Valencian, the personality of the Basque is described most in detail:

With legitimate pride, the Basque looks down on the Castilians and, particularly, on the ostentatious, fickle Spaniard of the south. He is stronger and healthier, both in character and in race, robust, broad-shouldered, his appearance fit and well, energetic, and, nonetheless, of a gentle disposition. […]. In general, the Basques are an informal, friendly, courteous and hospitable people, with a cheerful, jolly temperament. Their unimpeachable honesty has of old been known in all of Spain (51).

247 Ibidem, 38.
248 Ibidem, 183.
249 Ibidem, 161.
250 Ibidem, 146.
Most of all, the author admires the staunch Catholicism of the Basques, from whose country originated world-famous Saints and great men like Ignatius of Loyola.

Janssen’s two visits to the bullfight do not lead to deeper thoughts than the statement that, amongst everything Spanish, this tradition must be considered as more Spanish than anything else. And, although the mentality of the Spanish audience is incomprehensible to the sober-minded Dutch, the author does not shy away from personally pulling four banderillas from the body of a dead bull after the fight, to take them home as a souvenir. Neither does the obligatory visit to Gypsies dancing in the Albaicin, provoke more than a casual observation that their dancing is modest and graceful. Rather than giving his own impressions, Janssen includes a long quote on the subject from one of the Spanish travel letters, which his fellow-countryman Alphons Laudy had published in the newspaper De Tijd.

Formation of the Image Content

Self-image. Though Janssen does not often compare a Dutch self-image with a Spanish hetero-image, his love of, and admiration for, his own region of Limburg is strongly present in this travelogue. Even when admiring the fervent religiousness of the Basques, he tells the reader that a Catholic priest, whom he interviewed in the Basque Country, compared his own region to Limburg and admitted that this Dutch province could teach Spain as a whole a great many things.

Past Relations. Janssen’s travelogue opens with a reference to the Eighty Years War:

There was a time, that the Spaniards came to The Netherlands with entire armies. And perhaps it is the need to pay them a civilized return visit, which motivates the Dutchman to travel to Spain (52).

The author’s opinion about the Spanish protagonists of the conflict is, however, more or less neutral. Where Philip II and his predecessor, Charles V, are concerned, he refers to Potgieter’s efforts to nuance the Dutch Black Legend images of the two monarchs. And although, in Toledo, he reminds the reader

251 Ibidem, 88.
252 Ibidem, 167.
253 Ibidem, 69.
of the gruesome spectacle of the auto da fe, he also stresses that the horror stories about the Inquisition should be seen in perspective:

In the days of the Inquisition there was a lot of bloodshed in Spain. However, was it so peaceful and quiet elsewhere? Miss E. Boyle O’Reilly, very appropriately, points out in her book Heroic Spain, that elsewhere, at the same time and also later, much more innocent blood flowed than in the Spain of the “Holy Office” (53).

**Direct Contact.** Janssen’s personal contact with Spanish people is mostly restricted to conversations with Catholic priests and, on one occasion, an interview with the editor of El Debate, at the time, with ABC, the most important Roman Catholic newspaper. His knowledge of the Spanish language is characterized by the author himself as “hairy”, which is illustrated by predominantly incorrect quotes of scraps of conversation.

**Intertextual References.** Janssen departed well prepared, where previous reading was concerned. Although only armchair travellers content themselves with mere paper impressions, the author declares that he had enjoyed a great many travel accounts of all sorts of reputable people before beginning his journey, amongst which De Amicis’s travelogue Spagna and Boyle O’Reilly’s Heroic Spain are mentioned explicitly. As a travel guide Janssen used the Baedeker.

On several occasions, instead of giving his personal opinion, the reader is referred to works of other Dutch visitors to Spain, like Jacobus van Looy, Alphons Laudy, Werumeus Buning and Potgieter.

As foreign sources of information about contemporary political circumstances, the German-Jewish theatre critic and essayist Alfred Kerr and the French journalist Adolphe de Falguairolle are quoted.

**Politics/Religion.** Janssen’s religious convictions and political views played a key role in the shaping of his images of Spain. As a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, he was, understandably, concerned about the anticlerical violence in Republican Spain. Regularly he confronts the reader with statistics of burnt down churches: 32 in Malaga, 30 in Murcia, 30 churches and convents in Alicante, “only” two churches in Cordoba. Furthermore, the churches that had been burnt down.

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254 Elizabeth Boyle O’Reilly, daughter of the Irish poet John Boyle O’Reilly and author of the travelogue Heroic Spain (1910).
255 Janssen, Een reis door Spanje, 38.
256 Ibidem, 5.
257 Alfred Kerr, born Alfred Kemper, author of the travelogue O Spanien! (1924)
258 The quotes are from Adolphe de Falguairolle’s L’Espagne en République (1933)
spared, were dismally empty during Mass. Janssen was convinced, however, that
the days of the red revolutionaries were numbered and that Spain’s inherently
Roman Catholic and monarchist character would prevail:

There is a powerful, Catholic resistance to the rising red flood. The
Catholics may be called conservative, but, as long as that which they
want to conserve is the best thing on earth, it will be considered an honour
to be conservative (54).

In Janssen’s view, the Church and the Spanish State were, at least partly, responsible
for the actual state of affairs. Too long they had paid too little attention to the
urgent social problems that Spain was facing and left-wing movements had taken
advantage of this passivity. The author saw the present “red rage”, nevertheless,
as the drowsy gesture of a people that was waking up. Once awake, they would
understand that they should not be provoked by strangers without God.259 At
the end of his travelogue, Janssen addresses the people of Spain directly in the
following way:

Noble people of Spain! In the shadows of the present, the complete
victory of Catholicism, Soul of Your History, is dawning, with lights of
hope (55).

259 Janssen, Een reis door Spanje, 267.