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

DUTCH TRAVELLERS IN SPAIN (1950-1960)
From the 1950s onwards tourism became an important part of Spain’s economy. Within the context of a remodelling of Franco’s government, a new Ministry for Information and Tourism was created in 1951 and in that same year the number of foreign visitors to Spain had risen to over a million (Moreno Garrido 2007: 196). In July 1953 the new Ministry published a National Plan to further promote international tourism to Spain.

In The Netherlands the number of tourists visiting Spain began to grow steadily in the 1950s, although in intellectual circles a visit to this dictatorially governed country was considered debatable at the least. As a consequence of the increase in foreign travel, publishing houses began to take an interest in the publication of travel information especially designed for Dutch tourists. Photography played a key role in this respect. In 1953 the publishing house Contact began a popular series of photo-pockets about various European countries. In these booklets pictures by well-known photographer Cas Oorthuys (1908-1975) were accompanied by texts written by connoisseurs of the country in question. Another typical phenomenon of this decade was the ‘personalized travel guide’, in which an expert author shared his own views and experiences with the reader/tourist. Furthermore, a growing number of informative books and booklets were produced with inviting titles like Spanje, een droom van schoonheid260, and Spanje’s pracht en praal. Liefde * bloed * mystiek en vuur.261

Two travelogues, published in 1952 and 1958 respectively and one ‘personalized travel guide’, published in 1952 and in which the author’s personal experiences are prominently present, will be described in this chapter.

1. BERT SCHIERBEEK, Op reis door Spanje262 (1952)

Bert Schierbeek (1918-1996) belonged to a group of experimental Dutch writers in the 1950s (“Vijftigers”). The ideal of freedom that was characteristic of this Movement was not restricted to a rejection of existing literary forms – it also expressed itself in a distinctly anti-bourgeois view of society.

Schierbeek’s interest in Spain dates from the early 1950s, when he travelled through the country with a friend. Later he had a house built on the island Formentera where he liked to spend the winters until his death in 1996. Apart from Op reis door Spanje, a travel guide which also includes his personal experiences, Schierbeek, in the 1950s, also wrote the text for photographic books

260 Spain, a Dream of Beauty. (J.J.A. Rebel-Runckel, 1952).
262 On a Trip through Spain.
about Spain, like Spanje, land en volk\textsuperscript{263} (1955) and the Contact photo-pocket Hart van Spanje\textsuperscript{264} (1956).

After a long introductory chapter in which Schierbeek paints a detailed picture of the Spanish people, he begins to guide his readers through the country from the border town of Port Bou. The first destination is Barcelona, where, apart from the city itself, a visit to the Tibidabo mountain, as well as Monserrat, is recommended. Via Tarragona, the journey continues to Valencia and then further to Granada. A visit to Ronda is suggested to those who have a feeling for majestic mountain scenery – while others might prefer to drive on to Gibraltar and spend some time in Spanish Morocco. Back in Spain, Cadiz is worth a visit before going on to Seville. Via Cordoba, Schierbeek takes his readers north to Madrid and recommends reaching the capital via Ubeda and Badajoz in Extremadura. In the environs of Madrid, the Escorial, Toledo, Avila and Segovia are visited. En route to Burgos, the author advises a detour via Salamanca and Valladolid. While many tourists go from Burgos directly to the French border, Schierbeek tells his readers that they should drive along the Cantabrian coast, as well as visit the Basque provinces. They might also go to Jaca after visiting Pamplona and then on to Zaragoza and return north from there. As a final suggestion the author mentions the unique possibility to fly from Barcelona to Palma de Mallorca for little more than fifteen guilders\textsuperscript{265}.

Between descriptions of places and historical information, the reader/tourist is addressed directly by the author. At times these remarks serve to reinforce the impression that author and reader are travelling together, as in: “And then there is another thing that strikes me time and again, as perhaps it also strikes you […]” (1). Sometimes, the author adds a personal touch to his route suggestions: “From San Sebastian, you can now drive to the border at Irun and then leave Spain. I don’t do this as yet” (2). At other times the suggestions take the form of near commands: “[…] – that I was glad to be in Saragossa. But you should not miss it. Make that trip” (3).

Schierbeek’s admiration for the Spanish people is abundantly clear and in the final paragraph of his book he explains the reason why:

I have made no attempt to disguise my admiration for the passionate attitude to life of the Spanish, because this is an oasis and a relief in a more and more commercialized world, and thus it gives us an example

\textsuperscript{263} Spain, country and people.
\textsuperscript{264} Heart of Spain.
\textsuperscript{265} Schierbeek, Op reis door Spanje, 197.
again of the source of life and culture which, in our civilization, often seems so painfully forgotten (4).

The Spanish National Character

On the first page of his book Schierbeek summarizes the reason why Spain attracts a rapidly growing number of foreign tourists:

[...] this force of attraction is mainly due to the friendly, helpful and courteous way in which the Spanish people know how to receive their guests, without losing anything of their singularity in the process (5).

This open attitude towards strangers stems, the author thinks, from a time when fear was not yet necessary, while progress has led, in many countries, to a growing distrust between people as their merit was more and more determined by material wealth.266

The most important aspect of its singularity is, for Schierbeek, the humanity of the Spanish people. In Spain, the human condition is visible in all its extremities,267 a characteristic which the author attributes largely to the fact that the Spaniard is strongly connected to his historical roots. The past, whether it survives in buildings or in traditions, is alive in this country, where it seems as if society has not changed since the Middle Ages.268

It is the common man that is close to the author’s heart, the Spanish people that have always been more important than its leaders. It is true that Spain has lagged behind compared to the rest of Europe, both materially and where the educational level of its people is concerned. Schierbeek confirms the old cliché when he writes: “One should realize, at all times, that south of the Pyrenees Europe is finished” (6). However, what the Spanish lack in material wealth is amply compensated for by their vitality. The Spaniard is capable of rising above hunger, cold and thirst by turning life into a glorious, ritualistic feast.269 Their joy for living, furthermore, expresses itself in a passion for decoration. Their undeniably lower level of development does not imply a lack of culture or character. What the Spaniards know about man might be devoid of any encyclopedic knowledge, however, “it lies deep in the lines of their faces and hands”.270

266 Ibidem, 40.
268 Ibidem, 39.
269 Ibidem, 88.
The Spaniard, even the lowest of the low, has an innate dignity, the dignity of an ancient and culturally gifted people.\textsuperscript{271} Furthermore, he is an individualist and he values his freedom, above all. As an example Schierbeek describes a man with a huge moustache whom he met in the north of the country:

He wanted to do everything by himself! On his own! In this man there was something that many Spaniards, particularly in the north, have in common. They don’t want the burden of the world, they don’t want to be the victim of interference! (7).

Because of his strong individualism, the Spaniard tends, politically, to anarchism and separatism and, for the same reason, national unity has always been, more or less, a fiction in Spain.\textsuperscript{272} At the same time, Spain is the most democratic country in the world, as the Spaniard considers himself, by nature, equal to any other.\textsuperscript{273}

The Spanish might be called naive, but their naivety could also be taken as a lack of banality, as one can see in the plays of Lorca, where

the feelings of the Spanish become, naively, not banally, but in all their extremity, a symbol of human joy and suffering. They are more human and closer to the source of life than the average, materialistic European. They show us a humanity that is not draped with soft veils of neurosis, migraine and other ailments, but instead presents a thoroughly realistic and inspired tableau (8).

While guiding his readers through the various regions of Spain, Schierbeek pays some attention to regional character differences: the Catalans work hard, the inhabitants of Valencia seem to be forever cheerful and those who live in Madrid are called \textit{gatos} (cats) because of their fierceness, their quick reactions and receptivity, their agility and their shrewdness, as well as the unchangeable typicality of their character.\textsuperscript{274} In central Spain the people are more taciturn and surly, as well as more diligent than in the south. In the north they show more energy and adaptability, the Galicians being particularly clever, polite and cordial, while the Basques are religious, proud and even more independent than the average Spaniard. The Andalusian thinks it more important to enjoy life than to work hard. All of these character nuances, however, are related to what Schierbeek sees as the fundamental elements of the Spanish national character: basic humanity and a strong desire to be free.

\textsuperscript{271} Ibidem, 36.  
\textsuperscript{272} Ibidem, 46.  
\textsuperscript{273} Ibidem, 40.  
\textsuperscript{274} Ibidem, 137.
Schierbeek sees in the bullfight, a healthy and purifying element and watching the fight is more human, he thinks, than standing still to see the consequences of a car-crash. Sensible men might discover, after visiting a bullfight, that there is something left in them of primitive humanity.\textsuperscript{275}

Lastly, the Gypsies mainly stand for flamenco music and dance. The author is aware of the fact that this “proud and friendly, but unapproachable people”\textsuperscript{276} have become, primordially, a tourist attraction, but he, nevertheless, takes the view that “these people deserve to live if only because of the divine way in which they give the human body the illusion that it is not pinned to the ground” (9).

\textit{Formation of the Image Content}

\textbf{Self-image.} Schierbeek’s profound admiration for the Spanish people as well as the nature of the characteristics that he attributes to them, to a large extent stem from the anti-bourgeois mentality that was typical of many of the artists and intellectuals of his generation. They not only sought artistic freedom, but also rebelled against the conservatism of the older generation that was, in their eyes, merely interested in a quick economic recovery after World War II, by means of the primordial Dutch virtues of thrift and self-control.

Schierbeek’s image of the society to which he belongs is often implicitly contrasted with that of the Spanish people that “show us the source of life and culture”\textsuperscript{277} with which modern society has lost touch. Particularly in southern Spain, the author writes, the man from the north won’t recognize himself. There he will discover in his own personality human traits which he did not know he had and he will feel melancholic while experiencing a strong connection to the past. The author even advises his readers not to spend too much time in Spain:

In time, you will, just like the Spaniards, not understand about what you should make such a fuss and perhaps gain a healthy dose of scepticism with regard to the so highly praised northern resoluteness (10).

\textbf{Past Relations.} Tensions between the Dutch and the Spanish are, at least for the latter, a thing of the past, as the reader might experience in a fictitious meeting with a certain Don Antonio, who will, when he meets the Dutch tourist in a bar, raise his glass and drink to the Peace of Munster.\textsuperscript{278} From the Dutch point of view,
the author criticises the over-simplified picture painted by the history books in his country, as the fact that King Philip lived his life based on a sacred conviction could just as well be a reason for admiration:

I am also saying this to shed an alternative light on this Philip who is, in some ways, also ours, than is shown in our history books. History books and newspapers belong to the particularly bad things in our present-day life. The first mar and distort the past, the latter the present (II).

Direct Contact. Schierbeek’s travel guide is densely interspersed with his own experiences in Spain. Numerous conversations with Spaniards are described, personal meetings as well as conversations the reader might have, like the one with an innkeeper in whose mouth the author puts a correction of the wrongly understood image of contemporary Spain. Or the little boy, whom the reader/tourist might find when he stops his car to have a picnic. He is obviously poor and the Dutchman will give him some bread and probably suppose that he will steal something, but instead the boy offers him a flower: “A flower for the stranger who gave him bread and showed compassion. That is Spain!” (I2).

Travel/Tourism. As his book is directed at potential tourists, Schierbeek does not explicitly criticise this category of travellers, although on one occasion he lashes out at English tourists who behave like “a batch of haughty colonists visiting the backward natives” (I3). On the other hand, the author regularly makes a remark that reflects his own view on travelling. In Madrid, for example, he tells the reader that he is unable to tell him where everything is because he personally prefers to wander around and just see where he will end up, as knowing everything in advance would kill the spirit of enterprise. Furthermore, he calls himself a romantic, a romantic tourist, although he does not expand on the meaning of this concept.

Travel guides, in any case, are of limited value as they are too directive and often leave out what is really interesting. To inform himself, the tourist should rather read books like Spaanse Aspecten en Perspectieven (Aspects of and Perspectives on Spain, 1933) by the Dutch hispanicist Brouwer, whom the author quotes in his chapter about the Spanish national character.

Intertextual References. Literary sources are often referred to in this travel guide, mainly texts by Spanish authors. The reader is advised to read Unamuno,

279 Ibidem, 53/54.
280 Ibidem, 143.
281 Ibidem, 148.
282 Ibidem, 6.
Ortega y Gasset and Lorca, while Schierbeek particularly admires the poet Rubén Darío, for whose work alone, he writes, it is worth the effort to learn Spanish.283 Other authors from the last decades of the 19th and the first of the 20th century, with whom the author was obviously familiar, are Pío Baroja, whose Las noches del Buen Retiro (1934) he remembers in the park of the same name in Madrid, and the poets Manuel Machado and José María Gabriel Galán. The latter, whose conservative poetry defended tradition, family and Catholic dogma, is mentioned for his poems about the simple rural life.

From Spain’s Golden Age, Fray Luis de León gets special attention in Salamanca where he used to teach at the university. The author thinks that his work La perfecta casada (The Perfect Wife, 1584) has become a code of behaviour for Spanish women that has not lost its currency in modern times.284 The only literary quote in Schierbeek’s book is from Calderón’s play La vida es sueño (1635), translated by the author in a footnote: “What is life? A frenzy / What is life? An illusion / A shadow, a fiction / And the greatest good’s but little / While this life is but a dream / And the dreams are only dreams” (14).

Foreign authors are rarely referred to. To support his observation that Spanish society is still that of the Middle Ages, Schierbeek quotes a phrase that he thinks is from Stendhal’s De l’Amour (1822):285

I consider the Spanish people to be the living representatives of the Middle Ages. They lack the knowledge of little truths of which their neighbours are so childishly proud […], but they know, deep within themselves, the great truths (15).

When the author tells his readers that they should visit Pamplona during the festival of San Fermin in July, a reference is made to Ernest Hemingway’s novel The Sun also Rises (1926).

From his own country, Schierbeek recommends another book by Johan Brouwer, Johanna de Waanzinnige (Joanna the Mad, 1940), as well as a translation of Quevedo’s Psalms by the Dutch poet Gerard Diels, who, like Schierbeek himself, was a member of the editorial staff of the literary magazine Het Woord that existed between 1945 and 1949.

**Politics / Religion.** Schierbeek pays considerable attention to the political situation in Spain. At the end of the long introductory chapter he explains the reason why: because he wants to make it clear that there is no real objection to

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283 Ibidem, 101. Darío was a Nicaraguan poet who introduced a literary movement known as ‘modernismo’ in Spain at the end of the 19th century.
284 Ibidem, 162/163.
285 In Chapter 41 of Stendhal’s De l’Amour Andalusia is described.
a visit to Spain and to avoid unnecessary discussions.\textsuperscript{286} Spain is, undoubtedly, a dictatorially governed country, but that does not mean that it can be compared to Hitler’s Germany.\textsuperscript{287} Anyway, the Spanish people - those who really matter - are politically indifferent and their strongly individualistic nature prevents them from submitting to any government. The rich may support Franco because they believe he will protect their interests, but for most Spaniards politics are an abstraction and have no real meaning. This last point is illustrated by the introduction of a Spaniard who fought against the Russians in the Blue Division\textsuperscript{288}, not because he was against communism, but because his sister was murdered by the reds. Had she been killed by the Falangists, then he would have fought against them.\textsuperscript{289} The tourist has nothing to fear from the authorities in this country and to get to know the Spanish people will give him an invaluable experience.

Although Schierbeek does not pay much attention to religion, religious feeling is, in his view, unique in Spain. The Spaniard is one of the few who still knows real devotion, the Romantic devotion that lifts him up from the raw conditions of his life and lets him become part of higher entirety.\textsuperscript{290} It is unfortunate that the Church has not always appreciated the religious talents of the Spanish people, the soul of which prevails over its material needs.\textsuperscript{291}

2. HANS ALMA, \textit{Carmen zonder Make-up. Vrijmoedig verhaal over een vreemde reis door het Spanje van heden}\textsuperscript{292} (1952)

Journalist Hans Alma (1917-1960) was one of the first who, after the Second World War, responded to the growing interest in The Netherlands in books about touristic journeys to foreign countries. With a friend, the artist Teun de Vries, he travelled to Spain in 1951.

Entering the country by train, the two friends first visited Fuenterrabia, a village near Irun, then Avila, Madrid, Aranjuez, Toledo, Cordoba, Seville and Granada. From Granada they went to Alicante via Murcia. Travelling northward along the coast, by way of Valencia and Sitges, they paid a visit to Barcelona and then left Spain at Port Bou. When travelling from one place to another, they would take

\textsuperscript{286} Schierbeek, \textit{Op reis door Spanje}, 62.
\textsuperscript{287} Ibidem, 48.
\textsuperscript{288} A military unit of Spanish volunteers who fought in the German army against the Russians in World War II.
\textsuperscript{289} Schierbeek, \textit{Op reis door Spanje}, 29.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibidem, 41.
\textsuperscript{291} Ibidem, 105.
\textsuperscript{292} \textit{Carmen without Make-up. Outspoken Story about a Strange Trip through Today's Spain.}
the train or the bus most of the time, except for when they were short of money and were forced to hitchhike.

After declaring that the purpose of his book was to describe Spain as it really is, without make-up,293 Alma admits that he had a secondary motive: in Austria, two years earlier, he had spent five romantic days with a young and beautiful Spanish widow, whom he calls Carmen (her real name was Manuela). Two years later, he received a postcard from Carmen, with the message, in French: “Quand tu veux, tu me peux trouver”.294 This was not an easy task, however, as there was no address, the postmark was illegible and the picture only showed a few houses at the seaside. The search for Carmen turns the journey into a quest and adds a strongly personal dimension to the travelogue.

At the beginning of his book, Alma tells the reader that he went to Spain for the light and the colours, to experience the reality of a police state as well as the Romanticism of an Andalusian dance-party. He expected that the stench of misery would, at times, suppress the smell of orange-blossom and jasmine, but hoped to find, nevertheless, an atmosphere of sun and warm-blooded life.295 Aware of the fact that a visit to Franco Spain was a sensitive subject, he addresses the reader frequently and, more than once, appeals to him:

For I want to tell you about the country, the regime and in particular about the people. About their lifestyle, their poverty and joy and if I don’t have your confidence, my writing is in vain (16).

At the end of the trip, Alma’s most important conclusion is that Spain is different, different from his own well-behaved country and different from what the reader probably had in mind and the main reason for this difference is, he writes, that only in this European country the Islamic and Christian cultures merged into a fascinating amalgam.296

The Spanish National Character

Notwithstanding his firm intention to see the ‘real Spain’, without make-up, Alma’s image of the Spanish national character does not deviate far from the traditional stereotypes. The Spanish are warm-blooded, full of passion, individualistic and proud, their furia and innate cruelty linger just below the surface of a ubiquitous

293 Alma, Carmen zonder Make-up, 15.
294 “If you want to, you can find me.”
295 Alma, Carmen zonder Make-up, 5.
296 Ibidem, 181.
and charming courtesy and a sense of style. These last qualities are mentioned most frequently and are confirmed by a German whom they meet in Avila and who has lived in the country for twenty years. This Bernardo Funck has come to the conclusion that the Spanish are less petit bourgeois than other Europeans and have more style, while, at the same time, life is simpler in this country because the Spanish are more carefree.\footnote{Ibidem, 48.} The only thing that can come into conflict with their innate hospitality is their national pride. When a couple of drunken Americans criticise Franco in a bar in Madrid, they are thrown out. A Spaniard explains that he does not like Franco either, but that the Spanish people do not accept criticism from foreigners:

> Since the days of the Armada, when it lost the battle against the elements and not against the English, we lost practically every war and degraded from an empire to a second-class state, but we kept our pride. Do not touch our pride. Not our national pride either (17).

Contrary to the common stereotype, Alma takes the view that the Spanish cannot be called lazy. As they are less materialistic, do not need much and are more carefree, they tend to work only when necessity forces them to do so and they are experts in the art of dolce far niente.\footnote{Ibidem, 43.}

National identity plays an important part in the bullfight. For Alma, the spectacle is so inherent to Spanish tradition and style that it is impossible for the foreigner to understand or appreciate this “mysterious game”.\footnote{Ibidem, 110.} Personally, he is torn between disgust and fascination and finally comes to the following conclusion:

> However, a cool-minded person can also simply determine that a Spaniard occasionally feels the need to be psychologically “released” and that he, with his feeling for style and tradition and also with an innate cruelty deep inside him, finds a unique opportunity for all this in the bullfight (18).

The Gypsies have lost their significance as \textit{effet de typique}; their fortune telling and dancing is mainly “hollow show”\footnote{Ibidem, 87.} for the benefit of the tourists. Only once, in Toledo, Alma is charmed by the spontaneous dancing of a group of Gypsy children, until the passengers of a French car notice them and the little dancers become little beggars.
The essence of the Spanish national character is resumed by Alma in the last chapter of this travelogue, which is called “Adiós España”:

They make mistakes, they are sometimes cruel, these southerners, but dios mio, what a grandeza, what a gift to keep their “style” in everyday life, at which they look, in many ways, differently than we do, we self-important and industrious people from the Low Countries who are indeed more aware, sometimes, of the value of labour, justice and charity, but whose society must seem horribly flat and petit bourgeois in the eyes of the Spanish (19).

Formation of the Image Content

Self-image. Alma is pleasantly surprised by the sympathy which the notion holandés seems to provoke in Spain, but comes to the conclusion that this sympathy is not so much caused by appreciation of the Dutch national character, as by the pleasant sound of the word Holanda and by the fact that every Spaniard knows and likes Holland’s most important export products: tulips and cheese.301

Like many of his countrymen, Alma has been warned about the lack of cleanliness in Spain, compared to the proverbial Dutch neatness, but he has to admit, more than once, that the Spanish are surprisingly hygienic.

Several aspects of Spanish hospitality and generosity may seem extravagant to the sober-minded Dutch, but Alma is appreciative and thinks that the Dutch could use the Spanish as a model where restraint and courteousness are concerned. In saying this, he refers especially to the Dutch curiosity, which in the Spanish is held in check by an innate politeness.302

Direct contact. Alma regularly lets himself be informed about Spain and the Spanish by the ‘interesting people’ he meets, by chance or on recommendation, both Spaniards and foreigners. His deficient knowledge of the Spanish language does not seem to be an obstacle, in this respect, although on one occasion he complains that his laboriously acquired knowledge of the language is only sufficient for the simple things of everyday life.303 A good example of a ‘personal informant’ is the young solicitor, Pedro G., whom he meets in Avila and who tells him a long story about his complicated love life. Alma presents this story as a synopsis of the Spanish outlook on love, sex and marriage. Also, where

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301 Ibidem, 122.
302 Ibidem, 21.
303 Ibidem, 47.

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the bullfight is concerned, he takes the trouble to visit and interview one of the participants after the fight, to learn more about the subject.

In general, the truthfulness of aspects of the national character is ‘proven’ by Alma’s presenting them in, or deducing them from, conversations with either Spaniards or foreigners, instead of describing them as merely personal impressions. Further examples are his meeting with labourer José Martínez, who is interviewed for two hours about his life, and his casual encounter with the daughter of the German chancellor, Adenauer, who met General Franco in person.

**Travel/Tourism.** As far as his attitude towards travel is concerned, Hans Alma is an anti-tourist pur sang. Tourists, when they inevitably cross his path at famous hotspots, like Toledo or the Alhambra, are denigratingly called fools, shameless hordes or human herds. Taking the meaning of travel as ‘travail’ literally, Hans and Teun have decided to take with them as little money as possible and earn their keep along the way by conjuring magic tricks (Hans) and drawing pictures of passers-by (Teun). They leave without a previous plan for the trip, nor do they use a travel guide. Their motto for the journey is: when you haphazardly find your way in a foreign country, you will, without fail, meet interesting people.304 Places with a touristic reputation are always disappointing. Seville is the only city where the two friends get ripped off, the Alhambra is completely spoiled by the touristic hordes, Valencia is bourgeois and styleless and Barcelona is un-Spanish. On the other hand, the little village of Fuenterrabia, which is off the beaten track, is presented as a microcosmos of real Spanish life. Places to visit are preferably chosen by chance and, once in a place that is also listed by guidebooks, they try, at least, to see unusual sights and do unusual things. In Avila they visit a football match and in Granada, turning their backs on the disappointing Alhambra, they watch a fight between a dog and a cat on the bank of the Darro, which leads to conclusions about the Spanish attitude towards animals.

The prototype of the tourist these travellers do not want to be, are the Americans, who ‘do’ Europe at high speed. Once, in Toledo, Hans accompanies an American family, with their booklet “A day in Toledo” and comes to the conclusion that, by being a tourist for one day, he has not experienced any of the real atmosphere of the city.305

Because they are chronically short of money, the two travellers inevitably stay in the cheapest hotels or hitchhike in donkey carts, when train or bus tickets can’t be afforded. This, on the other hand, provides them with the adventure they seek and, on the other hand, strongly colours their image of the Spanish as poor.

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304 Ibidem, 141.
305 Ibidem, 81.
but proud, fundamentally non materialistic and much more carefree than the hard-working Dutch. At the end of the travelogue, Hans tells the reader that the most important lesson he has learned in Spain is the art of doing nothing.\footnote{Ibidem, 183.}

As anti-tourists, the use of a travel guide is a mortal sin for Alma and his friend. In Toledo, Alma refuses to give the reader more than superficial information about its famous cathedral, “for I am not a Baedeker that gives you names with and without asterisks” (20).

**Intertextual References.** Although they reject the use of travel guides, these travellers are not a blank page when they begin their journey through Spain. The Baedeker guides are obviously familiar to them and Alma also quotes a description of the patio by the travelling Italian writer Edmondo de Amicis,\footnote{Ibidem, 121.} whose *Spagna* was admired by quite a few Dutch travellers before him.

As literary sources, Hans mentions, firstly, the “clever novella”\footnote{Ibidem, 114.} by Prosper Mérimée. Not only his own Carmen, with her excitedly sparkling eyes\footnote{Ibidem, 12.}, was obviously modelled on Mérimée’s heroine, but all over Spain he saw and admired those beautiful, dark-eyed creatures. Furthermore, Alma quotes from Schiller’s *Don Carlos*, not only in the usual reference to the pleasant days of Aranjuez having come to an end, but also remembering that the unhappy prince did not find solace there in the beautiful surroundings of the royal palace. In Toledo, Alma summarizes a short story (*El beso*) by the Romantic Spanish writer Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer.

Films also play a role in Alma’s preconceptions of Spain. The images of “Hollywood’s Andalusia”\footnote{Ibidem, 119.} do not correspond with reality when the two friends first enter this part of Spain. Later, when they see more of Cordoba, Hans has to admit that Hollywood, with its technicolour, did not get it completely wrong. Another, more specific, cinematographic reference has to do with a German actress whom he greatly admired as a young boy, Brigitte Helm. He remembers a film in which she spent a few wonderful days with her lover in Aranjuez\footnote{In the film *Die schönen Tagen von Aranjuez* (1933) Brigitte Helm played the Hochstaplerin (deceiver). In 1935 a remake of the film, with Marlene Dietrich in the same role, was made.} and admits that this is what attracted him to the city in the first place.

The inheritance of Romanticism is not only visible in Alma’s anti-tourist mentality. In the following word of warning to the reader, he shows that he is well aware of the image of Romantic Andalusia that had been created in the 19th century:

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{Ibidem, 183.}
  \item \footnote{Ibidem, 121.}
  \item \footnote{Ibidem, 114.}
  \item \footnote{Ibidem, 12.}
  \item \footnote{Ibidem, 119.}
  \item In the film *Die schönen Tagen von Aranjuez* (1933) Brigitte Helm played the Hochstaplerin (deceiver). In 1935 a remake of the film, with Marlene Dietrich in the same role, was made.
\end{itemize}
And, above all, don’t think that Andalusian Romanticism is omnipresent. I had expected to find a guitar-player in every bar, who would transport me to another world with wonderful fandango’s; or a Gypsy, who perhaps did not dance perfectly, but still with such temperament and so “charged” that passion would shine through. Such bars I have not found, neither in Seville, nor anywhere else in the south (21).

Also in his conclusion about ‘the real Spain’ that he has come to know during this trip, a Romantic sense of sublimity echoes: “That is, above all, grandiose and sometimes horrifying, but is it not so, that genuine beauty often includes an element of horror?” (22).

**Politics/Religion.** While religion plays only a small part in this travelogue and Alma’s comments do not go much further than the conclusion that the life of the Spaniard is, from the cradle to the grave, imbued with Catholicism. Politics are a much more important theme. This is not surprising in the early 1950s, when a visit to Franco Spain still raised quite a few eyebrows in The Netherlands.

From the beginning, Alma makes it clear that he is fully aware that he is visiting a police state and has strong reservations, for “like almost every inhabitant of the Low Countries, I am suspicious of a region where dictatorship and fascism are familiar concepts” (23). On the other hand, he also emphasizes that he has come with an open mind and without prejudices. Whatever his preconceptions, his predominant impression of this police state is positive. Although the sight of many policemen and military in the streets is daunting at times, they are always courteous to the foreigner. And more than that, their presence is necessary, Alma concludes. The proof of this is presented during a football match in Avila, which nearly leads to riots:

The Spaniard has to be protected from himself, from time to time. Perhaps I am wrong, but I think that this, indeed large, police force in Spain has little to do with dictatorship and Franco. If, one day, there will be a democratic regime, this Guardia Civil and Policia Armada will be maintained in full strength. Simply because the population cannot do without it (24).

Furthermore, the decrease in the number of beggars on the streets and the fact that Spain is now a safe country to visit, are also attributed to Franco’s leadership.

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312 Alma, *Carmen zonder Make-up*, 22.
Jacques (Izaak) den Haan (1908-1982) was a Dutch author who, after years of working in a book store, published a series of essays about the collecting and selling of books, as well as articles about mainly English and American literature. For his works of literary criticism he was awarded the Pierre Bayle Award in 1963.

In 1958, Den Haan’s account of a two months’ trip to Spain was published. The author arrived in the country in April, travelling by coach via France. The first city visited was Barcelona, from where he went to Tossa del Mar in the hope of spending some time on the beach. The weather, however, was cold and wet and continued to be so until almost the end of his journey. A few days before leaving the country he was told that this had been the coldest spring of the century in Spain. After returning to Barcelona, Den Haan flew to the island of Mallorca and, following a short visit to Ibiza, returned to the mainland by boat, disembarking in Valencia. From there he travelled, via Tarragona, back to Barcelona again. Next, the author took the train to Madrid, interrupting the long journey in Zaragoza. On the 7th of May he arrived in the capital, from where he made excursions to the Escorial and Toledo. Finally, Andalusia was visited, first Seville, later, briefly, Cordoba, then Granada and Malaga. The last days of his trip were spent in Torremolinos where he was finally able to enjoy the sun on the beach. Travelling by plane, Den Haan returned to Holland, via Madrid and Barcelona, on 29th May. During part of his trip the author was accompanied by his wife, who flew to Barcelona shortly after he had arrived there by bus and returned to the Netherlands on the first of May.

Apart from frequent complaints about the weather and the difficulty of getting correct travel information, two other topics predominate in Den Haan’s travel account: money and the author’s health, particularly the boils from which he suffered and the condition of which is shared with the reader regularly and in detail.

Uninterrupted sunshine and bargain prices are obviously what the tourist of the late 1950s expected to find in Spain and Den Haan informs his readers on almost every page about the state of affairs on both subjects. The boils, another recurring theme, in the first place add to the hardships that turn a relatively common touristic journey into an adventure and, secondly, create the opportunity of meeting special people, such as dubious doctors and charming nurses.

313 The Dutch word “bevindelijk” refers, in the context of Protestantism, to a pietistic experience of God. Den Haan uses the word here to emphasize the strictly personal nature of his travel impressions.

Den Haan tells his tale in a predominantly jocular tone, making light of both health problems and misadventures, as well as mildly mocking the sometimes incomprehensible behaviour of the “natives”. On leaving the country he muses about his experiences and comes to the conclusion that he would like to come back, to correct certain errors and, more importantly, to see the country in the heat that he sees as part of its essence.315

The Spanish National Character

Courteousness is seen by Den Haan as an essential quality of the Spanish that appears in many guises: in the friendly and helpful service in hotels and restaurants; in the fellow train passenger who offers part of his meal to the foreigner; in the civil servant who criticises all government officials with the exception of the Queen of the Netherlands; and in the man who in a restaurant is nearly hit by the falling knife of the author’s wife and who reacts as if a great honour has been bestowed on him.

The difference between the sexes is still clear-cut in Spain, both in dress and in behaviour, something which is, in part, related to a stronger sense of tradition in this country:

A man is recognizably a man here: upright, with a strong back and a pirate’s eyes, especially where women are concerned. And a woman is, unmistakably, a woman: they rock gracefully and they carry their distinctions forward with a pride that sometimes touches me for its tender beauty and that I sometimes find somewhat ridiculous […] (25).

That women are a Spanish man’s main interest is obvious to the author and their impudent staring at every female, beautiful or ugly, keeps surprising him. Spanish women, on the other hand, are highly reserved, especially towards strangers:

The only women who talk to you and give you a smile are “les horizontales”, the rest of them gather their skirts and treat the foreigner as if he were a terrifying skin disease (26).

The pride and sense of honour of the Spanish hidalgo have also been preserved, even in the lowest of the low, like the shoeshiners, about whom the author remarks that although they knelt at his feet, their attitude spoke of pride and a lack of inhibition.316

315 Ibidem, 211.
316 Ibidem, 99.
The fact that the Spanish are profound individualists and that deep down every Spaniard is an anarchist, is something which the author says to have read in every book about Spain. Personally, he is not convinced that this is true as he finds, for instance, that the way in which the Spanish dress is remarkably uniform, while their daily schedule is as regular as the tide.\textsuperscript{317}

As regards the attitude towards the foreign visitor, the Spanish reputation of cheating and extortion seems to be correct, although Den Haan, in accordance with his mildly ironic tone, prefers to call it trickery. A separate paragraph is dedicated to Spanish trickery\textsuperscript{318} in which examples of supplying incorrect information, not selling what is advertised as well as inexplicable price increases are included. On the other hand, this is one of the aspects of Spain that distinguishes the country from the rest of Western Europe:

\begin{quote}
[...] there are marked impulses to double-cr... people here. I mean to trick people; I don’t mean to swindle, of which I have not seen a hint so far, but there are things that remind you constantly of the fact that the Pyrenees exist and that they separate Spain from Western Europe. It seems as if things were, intentionally, done in a slightly different way than in other countries (27).
\end{quote}

Spanish formality, which is connected to Spanish dignity, is another character trait that is sometimes difficult for the foreigner to interpret. It is not unusual, for instance, for a restaurateur to offer his guest “whatever the señor would wish for”, while in fact there is next to nothing in the kitchen.\textsuperscript{319}

As part of his touristic itinerary, Den Haan also dutifully visits the Gypsies in the Albaicin and on several occasions attends a bullfight. The Gypsies have been so completely commercialized that, according to the author, in Granada being a Gypsy has become a profession in the tourist industry.\textsuperscript{320} About the authenticity of the bullfight Den Haan is more positive. Although he does not especially recommend a visit, a bullfight being a tragic and shocking spectacle, he qualifies the often heard criticism of cruel behaviour toward defenceless animals as sanctimonious nonsense:

\begin{quote}
Yes, it is cruel. But it does not have that slow, cancerous cruelty of our so affable, weak, spineless, hollow world, in which the personality of man
\end{quote}
is eaten away day by day and sinks down, without a trace, into a faceless collective (28).

**Formation of the Image Content**

**Self-image.** Den Haan’s self-image is often expressed in terms of nostalgia: much that has been lost in The Netherlands is still alive in Spain. Seeing girls in old-fashioned school uniforms in Tarragona, the author exclaims: “Forty years behind! In other aspects too they are behind the times here, something which greatly pleases us” (29). While he attributes his constant need to mention prices to a typically Dutch frugality, the author’s Dutch self-image is most prominently present in a meeting with a woman of Andalusian origin at Montserrat. The worldly manners of this lady, which in the eyes of the author make her more European than Spanish, are explained by the fact that she is married to a Swede and lives in Sweden. On the other hand, this smiling and singing Andalusian stands out clearly against the cautious Dutchman Den Haan:

Panting I follow with my cautious Hague steps and my steady countenance on which life’s seriousness is depicted almost permanently, as well as the anxious Dutch question what is to become of it all … (30).

**Past Relations.** The history of the Eighty Years War is mentioned on only a few occasions. In the Escorial the author remembers his Protestant history lessons where he learned to see King Philip II as a horrifying bloodthirsty monster, but he is also aware of the fact that Roman Catholic schoolbooks painted another picture. When bothered by a couple of begging children he tells them in Dutch to ‘bugger off”, they understand him immediately, which he thinks might be explained by the historical relations between the two countries.323

**Direct Contact.** Den Haan’s contact with Spanish people is generally superficial. He frequently refers to his limited knowledge of the Spanish language, which he studies diligently in his hotel bedrooms, complaining about the frustratingly impractical ready-made sentences supplied by his textbooks; sentences like “I also need a low-necked dress, with a purse of the same material; this looks more formal”, which, at the same time, remind him of the suppleness and nobility of soul found in the style of Carmen Sylva. The author’s most prolonged

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321 Ibidem, 105.
322 Ibidem, 136.
323 Ibidem, 195.
324 Ibidem, 28. Carmen Sylva was the pseudonym of Elisabeth zu Wied (1843-1916), Queen of Romania and author of poetry, novels and fairy tales.
contact is with “enfermera Hirminia”, a nurse who gives him regular injections for his boils. This handsome, mature female, not so very young and clearly a woman,325 becomes part of his very personal experience of Spain, although their conversations are limited to short medical exchanges.

**Travel/Tourism.** The author is obviously not very pleased with the presence of other tourists, which cannot be avoided anymore in the late 1950s. Valldemosa, on the island of Mallorca has become a “Chopin factory”,326 the atmosphere in a bar in Barcelona where local artists appear is “synthetically cheerful”327 and the Escorial and the Alhambra have to be visited at the crack of dawn to avoid the touristic masses. Grumbling occasionally about fellow Dutch visitors, he sees the Americans as prototypes of a new and horrible kind of tourist:

> Obviously they were on one of those trips that are home delivered, ready-made, in America: every seat has been booked, every hotel has been arranged, every tip has been paid, every fart has been timed: have a good time, folks! (31).

**Intertextual References.** Intertextuality plays an important role in Den Haan’s travel account. References to, and quotes from literary sources appear regularly. As travel guides, Den Haan used both the French *Guide Michelin* and the *Guide Bleu*328 and although he makes some critical remarks about the latter, he is generally satisfied with the quality of the information and route suggestions. In preparing for his trip he had also read Louis Couperus’s *Spaansch Toerisme* (1915), to which he refers on more than one occasion, mainly disagreeing with the negative qualifications of his distinguished predecessor.

When alone in his hotel rooms, the author studied Spanish and read Stendhal’s *Journal*329 and George Borrow’s *The Bible in Spain*330. About the bullfight he says to have documented himself extensively and for years on end, recommending in particular Ernest Hemingway’s non-fictional *Death in the Afternoon* (1932).

Apart from passing references to classics like *Don Quixote, Don Carlos* and *Carmen*, it is mainly poetry, both Dutch and foreign, that accompanied Den Haan on his journey through Spain. Spanish women, much admired by the author,

326 Ibidem, 61.
327 Ibidem, 80.
329 The *Journal* describes several of the author’s journeys from the period 1801-1818.
330 Published in 1842.
reminded him, for instance, of lines from the poem *Fin-de-siècle* by the Dutch author H.A. Gomperts (1915-1998): “O time, when women through the green / rolled like ships along the roads, / signalling from top to toe / long-winded such as sailors do … / … frigates white with mighty flesh …” (32).

When confronted with a couple of civil guards on the beach in Torremolinos, with their patent leather caps, he remembers the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca who wrote about their “patent leather souls”, 331 putting in this way the policemen’s polite behaviour in the sinister context of Lorca’s poem. 332

Den Haan’s nostalgia for a lost world, a world long before the invention of America, the camera, tourism and the emancipation of women, 333 is stimulated by the appearance of old-fashioned public figures in the streets of Spanish cities, like the night watchman and the lamplighter, the latter reminding him of the Dutch poet Hieronymus van Alphen, 334 whose edifying poems he learned at his mother’s knee.

**Politics/Religion.** Den Haan is not specifically interested in politics, nor in religious life in Spain. Although frequently asked for proof of his identity, he finds the Spanish police, as well as other government officials, generally polite and efficient. Cathedrals and processions are described more like compulsory touristic highlights than interesting or moving experiences. After complaining, more than once, that he is getting tired of cathedrals, he admits, near the end of his journey, that it is particularly “heathen Spain” to which he is attracted:

> What draws me to Spain is that it is more heathen than its many cathedrals suggest … the cult of the bull, the deep, non-western melancholy of the cante jondo, the “deep singing” and the barbaric dances (33).

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331 From the poem *Romance de la Guardia Civil* in Lorca’s *Romancero gitano* (1928).
333 Ibidem, 190.
334 Hieronymus van Alphen (1746-1803), mainly known for his poems for children.