The image of Spain in Dutch travel writing (1860-1960)
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CONCLUSION
Looking for something different is, and always has been, one of the main objectives of touristic travelling. Spain has, within the European context, from the Napoleonic era until the end of the 20th century, been seen as particularly different by visitors from Northern European countries. In the process of highlighting the differences two aspects mainly have been put under the microscope: Spain’s supposed timelessness and orientalness.

The limited number of studies concerning the image of Spain in The Netherlands that have been published in this country since the 1950s, show that this image has, since the 16th century, never been univocally, or even predominantly, negative. It is true that Black Legend stereotypes were regularly repeated, particularly by those who, for some reason or other, bore a grudge against the Spaniards, but these cliché’s were also frequently refuted, nuanced or combined with appreciation. The studies in question have, furthermore, mostly been reduced to an inventory of the images as they appear in a great diversity of sources and, in general, do not, or only incidentally, examine underlying motives that determine the formation of the stereotypes.

This dissertation has focused on, on the one hand, an inventory of stereotypes as they appear in a homogeneous corpus, Dutch travelogues in prose form and, on the other hand, on the study of factors that underlie the images the authors have of Spain and the Spaniards. A further objective has been to determine how these images have evolved between 1860 and 1960, and how this evolution can be related to the underlying motives.

Where the inventory of stereotypes is concerned, it is clear that an evolution of the images is visible in the travelogues from the three separate periods that have been investigated. The travel accounts from the first period, 1860-1900, although chronologically close to the Romantic image of Spain that was created by famous 19th century foreign predecessors such as Théophile Gautier and Richard Ford, show a remarkable open-mindedness. The best example of a serious effort to present an objective picture of the country is Marcellus Emants’s travelogue *Schetsen uit Spanje* (1886), in which the author’s often clearly expressed desire for objectivity kept him from repeating Black Legend or Romantic stereotypes without confronting them with his own experiences. Emants, and several travellers who came after him, seems to have been particularly inspired by the much admired travelogue *Spagna* by the Italian Edmondo de Amicis (1873), which had already been translated into Dutch in 1875. De Amicis who, like many Dutchmen, entered Spain with negative preconceptions, visited the country at the time when an unpopular Italian monarch was on the Spanish throne and had been warned in advance of strong anti-Italian feelings amongst the Spaniards. Nevertheless, he described the country not only with a great eye for detail, but also with a clear willingness to put negative stereotypes to the test. The same
lively and detailed descriptions, as well as a tendency to correct or nuance negative clichés, is a typical feature of the Dutch travelogues that were written before 1900. Even Abraham Capadose, the reluctant tourist whose priority it was to visit victims of Roman Catholic fanaticism, was more than once appreciative of aspects of Spain varying from surprising examples of modernity to honest patriotism.

The general view of Spain and the Spaniards in the travelogues that were published between 1900 and 1936, is more critical than in the period before. It is as if the gap between backward Spain and modernized Northern Europe were more strongly felt from the early 1900s. In part, this led to a greater interest in Spanish politics and a more severe criticism of Spain’s leaders and of the Roman Catholic Church, combined with compassion and admiration for the oppressed and basically good and courageous Spanish people.

On the other hand, a more ambiguous attitude towards modernity in the authors themselves began to play a part in this period. As has been described in the introduction to this dissertation, a climate of optimism about perfectibility and progress that was dominant in the last decades of the 19th century, gave way to a mood of doubt and anxiety in the first part of the 20th century, particularly after the horrors of the Great War. These doubts about modernity are also visible in the majority of the Dutch travelogues from this period and manifest themselves in, for example, a stronger emphasis on and appreciation of the supposed timelessness of Spain.

Thirdly, this second period distinguishes itself from the first in the fact that the authors began to feel, more acutely, the difference between the traveller and the tourist. The clearest example in this respect is Louis Couperus who, precisely because in Spain he had the feeling that he was urged on, had to move quickly from one place to another, realized that this made him the tourist he did not want to be, which, in turn, influenced his predominantly negative image of the country.

The final period, 1950-1960, shows a strong revival of the mid-19th century Romantic appreciation of Spain. The key factor in this neo-Romantic view of the country and its inhabitants is the authors’ radical rejection of the bourgeois and conformist climate in post Second World War Holland. Modernity, for these travellers, had become no less than a term of abuse. Everything Spanish that was opposed to Dutch middle-class mentality was magnified, exaggerated and admired. Just like in the period of Romanticism, stereotypes that once had negative connotations were now positively valued, work-shy becoming, for example, an admirable non-materialistic attitude and arrogance a sign of individualistic freedom. Furthermore, the image of Spain as a living Middle Ages was strongly emphasized and the country was seen as a last refuge in Europe.
where age-old values that had disappeared in the rest of Western Europe, were still alive. Also, the traveller-tourist opposition was more strongly felt than before, with the Americans and their ‘see Europe in seven days’ mentality becoming the new prototype against which the neo-Romantic traveller shaped his own anti-tourist identity.

The political context of the Franco regime was something which the Dutch travellers of the 1950s could not ignore. While some Dutch authors who loved Spain, like Albert Helman and Hendrik the Vries, refused to visit the country after the Civil War, the next generation was less bothered by political scruples. The travelogues of this period that have been included in this study show a tendency to either ignore, trivialize or even justify the need of a dictatorship in a country like Spain. Obviously, the values of the last remaining refuge of non-modernity outweighed the political incorrectness of a visit to a country with a regime that was generally regarded as condemnable in The Netherlands.

In the formation of the image content, firstly, a North-South opposition is clearly visible. The Dutch travellers saw themselves, faced with the Spanish Other, as representatives of a different part of Europe, a further developed and more modernized part of the continent, where people are more rational and cool-headed. However, this fundamental difference was not always appreciated in the same way. Whether the supposedly more irrational character of the Spaniards, as well as the relative backwardness of the country, was despised, pitied, criticised, trivialized or admired, is strongly related to each author’s personal perspective on modernity. Between 1860 and 1960 the attitude went from open-mindedness and a desire to be objective, to a more critical as well as patronizing position and from there to an unadultered appreciation and admiration of everything that made Spain, in the eyes of the observer, different from northern regions.

Secondly, and in spite of the often expressed conviction that in The Netherlands the Black Legend was particularly strong and long lasting, at least in the Protestant part of the country, as a consequence of the tenacious repetition of negative stereotypes in Dutch schools, the researched travelogues show only a limited effect of this inheritance of the past. It may be true that there is some relation between the historical past and the remarkably widespread annoyance with Spanish chauvinism, at least until the middle of the 20th century when this stereotype of the Spanish people had practically disappeared. On the other hand, the echoes of the past do not seem to have sounded much further than the walls of the Escorial palace. In most cases it was the visit to this site, where the travellers came face to face with the image of King Philip II, which evoked stereotypes of cruelty, intolerance and religious fanaticism.

Thirdly, where the formation of the image content is concerned, this study has made clear that intertextuality plays a key role in the shaping of the images,
the travellers being influenced by the reading of travel guides, previously written travelogues, informative books about Spain, as well as literary fiction. It is clear, furthermore, that the density of quotes from and references to literary works exceeds that of the other types of frames of reference, while their influence, as well as their continuity is proved to be particularly strong.

When authors made use of travel guides, it was in most cases Karl Baedeker’s *Spanien und Portugal* that accompanied them on their journey. Baedeker’s guide not only influenced the travellers’ itinerary, but also offered characterological stereotypes, echoes of which can be found in the travelogues.

Amongst the travel accounts written by foreign authors, De Amicis’ *Spagna* (1873) seems to have been more popular than any other, even as late as in 1952, when Hans Alma quoted the description of a Cordobese patio by the Italian.

Finally, the lecture of literary fiction particularly influenced the travellers’ image of Spain and the Spaniards. Literary heroes, such as Don Quixote, Don Carlos, Gil Blas, El Cid and Carmen projected their image on contemporary Spaniards. These intertextual influences are reflected both in the characterization of the Spanish people as a whole and in the descriptions of personal meetings with individual Spaniards, real or fictitious, which form an important part of the travel accounts. Within the parameters of their literary context, these figures function, to a certain extent, as floating signifiers, in the sense that they are open to an interpretation that allows the traveller/narrator to add his personal view, either positive or negative, to the image content. Thus a figure like Don Juan is sometimes appreciated as a model of Spanish courteousness and sense of adventure, while, at other times, the same figure is seen as a determinating factor in the predominant lasciviousness which is considered to be responsible for the deplorable work ethic of the Spaniard. The figure of Carmen seems to have had a significant influence on the Dutch authors’ image of Spanish women, whose beauty and liveliness was much admired, while their morality was regularly called into question. The stability of this kind of intertextual baggage that the authors carried with them is, undoubtedly, one of the key factors that contribute to the continuity of the stereotypes over a period of one hundred years.

The question of whether the stereotypes produced by the researched corpus represent a typically Dutch image cannot be answered univocally. Studies about travel writing in general and about journeys to Mediterranean countries in particular show a series of common characteristics that have more to do with a North-South or Centre-Periphery opposition within the European continent than that they find their origin in specifically national stereotyping. From the Age of Romanticism onwards, Southern European countries have attracted Northern European visitors for reasons of their distinct otherness. Attitudes varying
from a patronizing sense of superiority to envious admiration also seem to be a common feature of Northern European travel writing about the southern part of the continent.

In overviewing the list of national stereotypes that figure in the researched corpus of Dutch travelogues, these can be subdivided into three categories: traditional, personal and, perhaps in some cases, national. Traditional stereotypes of the Spaniard, such as proud and passionate, serious and dignified, generous and courageous or work-shy and carefree can be related to a long-lasting inheritance of cliché’s that have been endlessly repeated in travel accounts or else seem to be based on images that find their origin in literary heroes.

As this research has shown, personal motives, such as values and beliefs, prior knowledge as well as personal experiences in the visited country, also play a significant role in the shaping of the images. Perhaps one can say that the frequency of two stereotypes in particular, chauvinistic and egalitarian, can be related to a specifically Dutch point of view. In the first case, a certain relation with the historic past, especially as it has been treated in Dutch education, seems evident, combined with a sense of a lacking of national pride in the home country. In the second case, and in particular in the 1950s, the relief of being in a country with a less prominent parochialism could well be a contributing factor.

The persistence of both Black and White Legend stereotypes outside Spain is and has been the subject of many studies from Spain and abroad. Not only does a detailed study of these stereotypes, as they appear in Dutch travel writing, reveal that the image is in many cases more variegated, but, more importantly, it also demonstrates that the hetero-image is strongly dependent on the auto-image and that Spain, in any case since the beginning of the 20th century, was the country par excellence on which the authors projected their own sceptical view on modernity.

Furthermore, it is important to take into account that travel writing has, since the Age of Romanticism, become a significant carrier of foreign images, while, at the same time, and under the influence of Romantic egocentricity, the travelogues tend to say as much about the visited country as about the travellers themselves. Also, as a result of equally Romantic exoticism, a confrontation with an Other - with a world that is fundamentally different from the author’s own context - has been and still is crucial in travel writing. In this respect, there is reason for optimism for Spain in the fact that, apart from Cees Nooteboom’s portrait of a timeless Spain, untouched by modernity, the publication of Dutch travelogues about Spain has virtually come to a standstill, which might well mean that the country and its inhabitants are no longer seen, at least by the Dutch, as sufficiently different.