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# La Leyenda Negra in British and American Children's Literature: 1583 to the Present

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It has now been more than 400 years since the Spanish Golden Age novelist and satirist Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas first commented on the anti-Hispanic phenomenon that came to be known as La Leyenda Negra, the Black Legend, in his treatise *España Defendida*. While a significant amount of literary, historical, and cultural research has been completed by scholars both in Spain and abroad regarding the origins and evolution of La Leyenda Negra, little, if any, research has focused on the propagation of the legend in children's literature, particularly in the literature produced for British and American children. Karen Sánchez-Eppler notes the link between "the processes of national formation" and children's literature, remarking that "the nineteenth century motivated the production of a veritable sea of cheap moral tracts for children" whose rhetoric "explicitly articulate the felt similitudes between the national projects of raising good, white, middle-class, Christian, American children and that of raising an economic and cultural American empire" (399). The challenge in applying such a statement to depictions of Spain, Spaniards, and the Spanish New World in British and American children's literature is heightened by the knowledge that anyone truly familiar with Spain possesses: the Spanish can raise "good, white, middle-class, Christian" children as well as any of its European counterparts. A brief examination of the origins of La Leyenda Negra will serve to illustrate how English-language children's literature that deals with the Hispanic world problematizes the Spanish reality (intentionally or not) through xenophobic, religiously bigoted, and ethnically prejudiced representations.<sup>1</sup>

In respect to books that deal with history in one form or another, there is an "assumption that children are an identifiable group that requires a particular kind of text written for it by a superior group"

(Reimer 111). Taking this into account, one would have to wonder how these authors imagined that their child readers would respond to such information. While the academic field of mass media and culture has rarely intersected with children's literature theory with the exception of film adaptation studies, I would propose looking at two competing media effect models in respect to the author's intent in writing historical children's literature, especially those which have colonizing aspirations. The first is the hypodermic-needle model that first surfaced in wake of the dissemination of political propaganda via film and radio in the early twentieth century. This model "suggests that media shoot their potent effects directly into unsuspecting victims" (Campbell 516). On the other hand, this paradigm has been discredited by the minimal-effects model which argues that "we selectively expose ourselves to media messages that are most familiar to us, and we retain messages that confirm values and attitudes we already hold" (Campbell 517). One could argue that the most virulently anti-Hispanic and anti-Catholic of authors believed in a hypodermic-needle effect which would allow them to inculcate their biased beliefs on impressionable Protestant youth. On the other hand, one could argue that the minimal-effects model more accurately explains the success of such literature since it plays to people's worst fears and exploits them by repeating familiar motifs and ideas.

While these two mass media theories are helpful, they are limited in scope. Nonetheless, it would be wise to keep them in mind, as well as various other post-colonial theories referenced in this work, while reading over the descriptions of books discussed in this article.

I have grouped the books used in this examination into five sections that demonstrate the evolution of this assembly of literature—all of which, whether unconsciously or not, are direct descendants of the earliest incarnations of the Black Legend in English-language children's literature. The first section, "La Leyenda Negra and Its Early Manifestations," briefly details the origin of the legend and how it revealed itself in the English consciousness and in children's literature from the 1500s to the 1800s. The following section, "Motifs of the Ethnic Other in Southern Spain," chronicles the rise of the "typical" Spaniard in children's literature: a dark and indolent ethnic Other from the southern region of the country who possesses Moorish blood. The subsequent section, "The Spanish New World," chronicles how by the early 1900s Spaniards began to be depicted in a

more honest light only in order to satisfy a racist agenda that equated the white Spaniards as superior to the natives of the Spanish New World much like Anglo-Americans were deemed superior to Native Americans. The fourth section entitled "A New Spain?" discusses how Spain and Spaniards began to be depicted during Spain's Franco years: better, but not entirely. The final section, "Spain in the 21st Century," optimistically examines two books published in 2003 and 2004, respectively, which deal directly with Spain and Spaniards in a refreshingly frank and honest manner.

#### LA LEYENDA NEGRA AND ITS EARLY MANIFESTATIONS

La Leyenda Negra can be defined as the systematic denigration of "the character and achievements of the Spanish people" (Maltby 3). The tail end of the fifteenth century offered Spain a string of unparalleled achievements: the unification of Aragon and Castile and Leon with the marriage of the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, Christopher Columbus' discovery and conquest of the New World, the expulsion of the Moors from southern Spain in 1492, and the publication of Antonio Nebrija's *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, the first grammar book to be compiled in any modern European vernacular. With these feats in hand, Spain's supremacy grew to unprecedented levels in the sixteenth century at the same time that nascent nationalism was becoming a powerful trend throughout Europe. With Spain controlling the New World and portions of both the Low Countries and Italy, and standing as the flagship of Christian military might with the defeat of the Ottomans in the 1571 Battle of Lepanto, other European countries looked on with envy and awe.

Much to the detriment of Spain, the nation's rise to power also coincided with the expansion of the movable printing press and the exponential growth of Protestantism. Although Spain's King Philip II was arguably the most powerful man in the Western World during Queen Elizabeth's coronation, anti-Spanish sentiment in England can be traced to an earlier sovereign: Catherine of Aragon. As the youngest surviving child of the Spanish Catholic monarchs, her failed marriage to England's King Henry VIII led to the severing of English ties to the Catholic Church. Throughout Henry's reign and many divorces, anti-Catholic sentiment began to proliferate in England; thus, while Italy and the Pope may have been the most obvious targets, Spain and its growing fortunes became equally prevalent foils. As a result, the

Black Legend became a favorite subject for Protestant states which “orchestrated a virulent propaganda campaign, in which Philip was portrayed as a ruthless tyrant bent on world domination and Spain was caricatured as a hotbed of fanaticism, obscurantism, and unparalleled cruelty” (Barton 118). After the death of England’s Catholic Queen Mary in 1558 and the ascension of the ambiguously Protestant Queen Elizabeth I, anti-Catholic sentiment began to disseminate from the island nation in both a more vitriolic and uninhibited fashion. In effect, Spain was fast becoming the first target of a new mass media—even if the phrase was invented centuries later.

Apart from the imaginative yarn that many of these propagandists engendered with the help of their own imagination, Spain itself produced much of the material that Protestant nations used to levy against the Spanish. Unlike the lack of toleration for even the most constructive of internal criticism in Elizabethan and Stuart England, “freedom of speech was a cherished Spanish prerogative during the Golden Age, and it was not suffered to lapse through disuse” (Maltby 12). The most infamous example of Spanish self-criticisms is the priest Bartolomé de Las Casas’s 1551 text *Brevissima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* which bemoans the cruel tactics that Spaniards used to subdue the native population of the New World and criticizes the encomienda system which often led to the enslavement and abuse of natives.<sup>2</sup> While Casas’s critiques of the Spanish Crown resulted in some positive reforms, the published English translation of the text in 1583 clogged London bookstalls and served only to reinforce the acrimonious relationship between the two nations. King Philip II’s determination to avoid entering the propaganda war resulted in a “highly negative and one-sided view” of Spain “peddled by the king’s enemies” which “persisted in many historiographical accounts until relatively recently” (Barton 18).

As Benjamin Harris writes in the 1679 preface of *The Protestant Tutor* to all “Protestant Parents, School-Masters and School-Mistresses of Children,” (A5) the main aim of the plethora of explicitly anti-Catholic children’s literature in both Britain and the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was “to arm our Innocent Children against the cursed and continual Practices of our Romish Adversaries, who designed not only the Murder and destruction of the bodies, but the ruin and damnation of the souls of our poor Children also” (Harris A5). Although *The Protestant Tutor*’s main utilitarian purpose was to

aid children in their learning of the English language, these sections come after lengthy diatribes against Catholic countries and nationalist Protestant discourses about the “purity” of the English nation.

The dissemination of anti-Catholic tracts and tales of King Philip II being Queen Elizabeth’s “most Bitter and Inveterat Enemy” (Harris 57) are even passed down in rhyme form: “She made the Anti-Christian Kingdom quake, / She made the Mighty Power of Spain to shake [. . .]” (Harris 116). Harris’ language always depicts a strict black and white dichotomy between England and Spain. Rare is any positive comparison between the two nations despite their obvious demographic, religious, and political similarities. As in most instances of anti-Catholic propaganda, Catholics are likened to heathen Jews or Muslims in *The Protestant Tutor* despite their inclusion in the ecumenical sphere of Christian belief.

In comparison, *The Castilian Martyrs: A Narrative of the Conversion and Martyrdom of two Spanish Maidens and their Brother, who were Burned at the Stake in the Sixteenth Century*, which was published anonymously sometime between 1857 and 1868 in New York by the Sunday-School Union, engages in a less violent, if nonetheless equally explicit attack, on Spanish Catholicism. The trans-Atlantic journey of this book’s publication mirrors not only the passing down of English colonial ideas but the international dissemination of the Black Legend, especially in light of Spain’s varied New World and Pacific territories.

While England’s demonization of Spain is neither a colonial nor a racial power struggle in the strictest sense, the rivalry between the two is ongoing because of their geographic proximity and, in colonial times, their powerful commercial conflicts. This history of Anglo-Hispanic relations lends weight to placing such a study within the framework of postcolonialism by employing Roderick McGillis’s definition of the subject “as an activity of mind [. . .] quite simply intent on both acknowledging the history of oppression and liberating the study of literature from traditional and Eurocentric ways of seeing” (xxii). Since England has attempted to ostracize Spain from the European community at large (despite their insistence throughout the years that the United Kingdom itself is distinct and sometimes superior to “the Continent” of Europe) it can be argued that a postcolonial approach to the xenophobic, and religious and ethnic othering of the Spanish is well supported. Furthermore, believing that “virtually all (English-language)

histories of children's literature agree that children's books, always fundamentally involved in reflecting and transmitting culture, were the witting or unwitting agents of the empire-builders," (Hunt and Sands 40) places more importance on the examination of these English-language texts written for children in light of the continual study of the widespread effects of the Black Legend.

For instance, the publication of *The Castilian Martyrs* in the United States brings to light the anti-Catholicism that was prevalent in the U.S. because of both inherited English tradition as well as domestic immigration concerns. Furthermore, it mirrors "the global rise of the Anglo-Saxon/Protestant hegemony" which sought to transform the Spanish language into "a subaltern group or 'minority'" much like Portuguese and Italian were being depicted as subaltern languages "within imperial conflicts and the building of new linguistic and cultural hegemonies" (Cervantes-Rodríguez 525).

Although published in the mid nineteenth-century, *The Castilian Martyrs* is set in sixteenth-century Spain. The protagonist, Mercedes, is one of three children to an affluent nobleman in Seville. The mother of the children has died before the story takes place and the father is criticized for being indulgent. This fatherly indulgence can be seen to represent the negative extravagance of the patriarchal Catholic Church from a Protestant viewpoint: its luxuriously-dressed priests, its ornate churches, its sumptuous rituals, and the baroque nature of Mass. The narrator explains that the indulgence of her father and the Popish Church do not satisfy Mercedes; she arises "wearied and unrefreshed" from the "vain devotion" of Catholic prayer (*Castilian* 15). These daily prayers to the Virgin Mary and the Saints are contrasted to a Jesus Christ-centric "humble meditation and reliance on a dying and a risen Saviour" which leads "to the diligent performance of daily duties" (*Castilian* 19). The emphasis on employment is reminiscent of the much-lauded Protestant work ethic and stands in contrast to the depiction of Spaniards as "indolent, poor, and jealous" (2) which appears in Mrs. Jamieson's 1820 *Stories from Spanish History, for the Amusement of Children*, which was also originally published in England.

Likewise, it is interesting to note that Mercedes and her sister belong to a noble family and thus enjoy "advantages of education superior to those possessed by most females of that time" (*Castilian* 15). Since the protagonists of this novel convert to Protestantism, the author makes a concerted effort to demonstrate that these girls are

intelligent and exceptional, unlike the Spaniards who “know nothing, speak nothing, and do nothing” (166), as described in the anonymously-written 1868 text *True Stories; or, Pictures from the History of Spain*. Mercedes later finds solace from her “vain” devotion to saints when she is clandestinely instructed by Pedro, an elderly vine-dresser, about the ways of the Protestant faith. Mercedes in turn instructs her younger sister. The siblings’ nascent Protestant faith is soon discovered by the family’s priest, Father Ignacio, who has already punished Pedro by having him burned at an Inquisition-imposed *auto da fe*.

The ominous tribunal of the Spanish Inquisition “seated in a semi-circle behind the table, and completely secured from recognition by the black drapery which enshrouded them” is the setting for the next time the siblings meet before being burned at the stake (*Castilian* 106). This exemplifies how the Spanish Inquisition plays as large a role in the propagation of the Black Legend as the Spaniards’ cruel treatment of the New World natives. For example, John Foxe’s 1583 *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*, arguably the second most popular book after the Bible in Protestant households, already served as the formal introduction to tales of the Spanish Inquisition for many English men. The book describes an *auto da fe* in Madrid where 21 prisoners are burned at the stake and 50 Jews are sentenced to a “long confinement” (Foxe 167). Likewise, in the anonymous 1891 book *The Spanish Brothers: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, the author details an *auto da fe* procession and mentions a group “altogether of more than eighty in number,” that is followed by a list of about 20 assorted characters including noble men and women, doctors, students, and artisans (301). The book creates the impression that these daily burnings would include up to about 100 victims a day. The incongruity of such statements when compared to the reality of the Inquisition demonstrates the success of La Leyenda Negra and the firm conviction that English Protestants and, later, most of the Western-influenced world held (holds) regarding the severity of the Spanish Inquisition.

In fact, according to recent historical research on the Spanish Inquisition, “the numbers killed or tortured by the Church may be far fewer than initially thought” (Dunk 63). Despite the ubiquitous estimations that the Spanish Inquisition claimed the lives of anywhere between 30,000 and one million people, only about one percent of the 125,000 heretic trials in Spain led to execution (Dunk 63). These 1,250 executions are a far cry from 30,000, let alone one million.



This analysis does not attempt to excuse the numerous inhumane tortures and deaths of people at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition. It only serves to place depictions of these events in a different light that examines the way in which the Spanish Inquisition's notoriety has been firmly ensconced in the Western imagination while other more noble feats of the Spanish culture have been allowed to fall by the wayside.

#### MOTIFS OF THE ETHNIC OTHER IN SOUTHERN SPAIN

Most of these novels share a common denominator: they tend to depict the southern part of Spain—nearly exclusively. By showcasing southern Spain, these authors aim to xenophobically problematize the ethnic character of Spaniards. This is achieved by the constant mentioning of southern Spain's Moorish and Jewish past. *The Spanish Brothers*, *The Little Spanish Dancer*, *Our Little Spanish Cousin*, *Witch Winnie in Spain*, and *Lupe Goes to School* all take place in either the cities of Seville or Granada or the Sierra Morena region—all located in the most southern part of Spain. The exotic element of these novels is highlighted with scenes that take place in the Moorish Alhambra and Seville's ominously-named "Street of the Serpents" or with photographs and artistic renderings of the Oriental architecture of Toledo's Puerto del Sol. Although these colorful locations serve as a good catalyst for a story's atmosphere, the stated goal of these books is to offer the reader a "fair" depiction of Spain and Spaniards. Therefore, by avoiding the fairer-skinned people of the Moor-free Asturian, Galician, and Basque regions and the cooler climes of Spain's mountainous regions, these authors focus solely on what makes Spain foreign and alien to other European countries, attempting to bridge the miles-wide gap that separates Spain from Morocco via the Strait of Gibraltar.

The foundations for this particular element of the Black Legend were laid with *William of Orange's Apology [or Defense] Against the Proclamation and Edict Published by the King of Spaine* in 1580. Orange writes: "I will no more wonder at that which all the worlde beleeveth, to witte, that the greatest parte of the Spanyardes, and especially those, that counte themselves Noble men, are of the blood of the Moores and Jews" (Griffin 94). Orange's reference to the mixed-blood of Iberians is yet another manifestation of Spain's internal criticisms being absorbed by foreign detractors.

Like other European countries at the time, Spain's society followed strict racial and religious lines. Spaniards who were known to have Moorish blood certainly would not be a common sight in the circle of powerful noblemen to which Orange refers. Even those Moors and Jews who converted to Catholicism were still derided in society. It has been noted that after the Spanish Armada conflict the strain of ethnic discourse purported by Orange became common as "English Protestant polemicists began to play the Spanish 'race-card' over and over again, virtually flooding the English public sphere with an essentializing typology that marked 'the Spaniard' as cruel, duplicitous, arrogant, bestial, hypocritical, over-sexed, Antichristian, and ethnic" (Griffin 95).

Since most of the books that deal with Spain in the latter nineteenth century and throughout most of the twentieth century take the form of a travel narrative, totalizing generalizations of Spaniards tend to be the goals of such novels. In Mary Nixon-Roulet's 1906 novel *Our Little Spanish Cousin* (part of a popular foreign cousin novel series) the narrator informs the audience of various characteristics shared by all Spaniards including the "fact" that "nearly all Spanish children are named Maria, whether boys or girls, because the Spaniards are devoted to the Virgin Mary" (3) and that "Spanish children are brought up very simply, and have little excitement, though they have many pleasures" (13). The fallacies of such generalizations are obvious. When considering the fact that this novel is part of a larger genre of book series that deal with foreign travel and foreign settings like 1889's *The Knockabout Club in Spain*, 1934's *The Spanish Twins*, and 1964's *Let's Travel in Spain*, one realizes that these series are marketed and produced in a manner that implies an educative function for these books. If parents are expected to buy these books for their children in order to enhance their knowledge of the world, the fact that these books operate with stereotypes and hasty generalizations not only displays the uselessness of these books, but demonstrates their imperialist aims of influencing a new generation of English-speaking children to other the Spanish.

*Our Little Spanish Cousin* features the protagonist Fernando, described as having "a lean brown face" and "great black eyes" (Nixon-Roulet 89), interacting with unsavory gypsies who huddle around the Alhambra. Interestingly enough, Fernando's friend Antonio is described as being blonde-haired and blue-eyed. The narrator feels

it necessary to note with wonder that some Spaniards do have light features. While this inclusion of another, more palatably skin-colored Spaniard shows promise for a more honest portrayal of the Spanish, the author's intentions soon come to light. Antonio tells his young friend a story about Spanish princes who risked their lives by entering Moorish territory to rescue the daughters of a sultan they were in love with. The happy ending implies the creation of miscegenated offspring running through the Spanish people. This is yet another allusion to the *sangre pura* dilemma that was often discussed in Spain's own literature. Hence, the author finds it necessary to temporarily include a Spaniard with lighter, and thus more English features in order to inform the dark Fernando about his country's Moorish past. This sort of dialogue mirrors the relationship that the English nation, and in turn their American counterpart, imagined as occurring between a "superior" English people and an "inferior" Spanish people.

#### THE SPANISH NEW WORLD

California and Mexico are often chosen as the settings for American texts of the early twentieth-century that deal with Spain. It is within this removed, historical setting that authors reared with *La Leyenda Negra* begin to depict Spaniards as unquestionably white and European. However, this is done only in order to fulfill implied racist agendas.

In fact, the protagonist of *Tomás and the Red Headed Angel*, Angelita Marenga, not only offers an honest depiction of Spaniards from the Galician region who tend to have Celtic roots (thus the copper-colored hair), but stands as a Spanish-speaking counterpart to the daughters of wealthy American families who interact with the native populations of the New World. So, while the Spaniards' ethnic and racial character was once questioned, these authors use unquestionably white Hispanic characters in order to reassert a more familiar racist attitude, with Spanish-Americans playing the role of the newest white imperialists.

For example, Esther Brann, author and illustrator for *Lupe Goes to School*, depicts the light-skinned Lupe with a sleek bob haircut reminiscent of American women in the late 1920s. These physical descriptions are essential in order to contrast Lupe with a doll she finds at a Cortéz exhibit within the Castilleja's museum. A miniaturized version of a native, or perhaps mestizo, Mexican woman is standing under a glass display case. The narrator describes it as

a “brown-skinned [. . .] squaw-doll” (Brann 21). Lupe presses her nose against the glass and exclaims “Perhaps Papá will buy one for me!” as she silently studies the “tiny ears, and gold bracelets on the brown arms” (Brann 21). Lupe’s intense scrutiny of the doll, and the context of its location, a museum on Cortéz’s conquering of Mexico, reminds one of how the doll that Lupe interprets as being a “toy” serves as “the physical embodiment of the fiction: it is a device for fantasy, a point of beginning for narrative” (Stewart 56). If Lupe’s father were to purchase such a toy for her, much like a wealthy slave-owning family would purchase a young caretaker/nanny for their daughter, it is easy to imagine what Lupe’s narrative would entail: a dark-skinned woman roaming the countryside of colonial Mexico in search of food and water in order to feed her family, and more importantly, fulfill her duties in the Spanish colonies’ *encomienda* system. Hence, without having Lupe travel to Mexico, Brann finds a way to imply Lupe and her nation’s superiority to the native populations of the New World. So, the Spanish have now gained footing with the British conquerors of the Americas, albeit roughly 400 years later and only in order to fulfill an implicit and generalized racist agenda. More interesting to ponder is what this might entail in respect to Anglo-American opinions about dark-skinned Hispanics in both Spanish-speaking American nations and in the United States.

#### A NEW SPAIN?

While Spanish characters and Spanish history began to be perceived through a more honest light, showcases of stereotypical aspects of Spanish life were more difficult to remove throughout the twentieth century.

In Maud Hart Lovelace’s 1942 novel *Betsy and Tacy Go Over the Big Hill*, Spaniards are depicted as amiable and desirable. Nine-year old Betsy observes her father reading the newspaper and learns about the upcoming coronation of King Alphonso XIII of Spain. Betsy becomes enamored of the young royal and soon informs her friends Tacy and Tib about her new crush. The three girls form a secret “K.O.S.” (King of Spain) club, wear shawls and mantillas like the great ladies of Spain, and decorate their dresses with red and yellow rosettes to match the red and yellow flowers that strewn the streets of Madrid in preparation of the coronation.

The girls soon find out that they cannot marry the king because they are commoners and have no royal blood. Their love knows no bounds, however, and so they decide to write him a letter. One of the girls remarks, "He ought to know there are such people as us, and that we have a lodge and wear his colors and pin his pictures to our underwaists" (Lovelace 42). This sexually suggestive statement bodes well for a depiction of Spaniards who are not only attractive, but sexually desirable. Such a depiction stands in sharp contrast to past visions of Spaniards.

On the other hand, twenty years later, Napoleon's claim that Europe ended at the Pyrenees Mountains is reiterated by the editor of *Let's Travel in Spain*. Geis's othering discourse continues in her narrative introduction to the country: "The sun beats down mercilessly on a country that, in a large part, is closer akin to Africa than to its own continent" (9). Geis, like so many others before her, asserts that Spain has been isolated from "mainstream" Europe despite all historical evidence to the contrary. *Luckily*, Geis informs readers, Spaniards still remember "their country's past greatness" (9). Additionally, in one quick paragraph Geis briefly mentions Spain's Golden Age, the hundred years or so when it was the undisputed superpower of the Western World, only to emphasize the country's decline and stagnation.

Similarly, while Geis stereotypes Spaniards as "proud people," she lauds the country's *caballeros* for their ideals of "valor and chivalry" as a reflection of their country's past greatness. Further on in the introduction, Geis acknowledges Spain's various regions and their distinctive cultural attributes. A brief look at Geis's description of these regional characteristics showcases both her xenophobia and the never-ending taint of the Black Legend: the people of Galicia, the "Irish" corner of Spain, are described as "sensual, melancholic, poetic, *superstitious*, and shrewd"; the people of Asturias are described as "frequently tall, blond and blue-eyed, and among the handsomest in the country, *though not typically Spanish looking*"; the people of the Basque region demonstrate a "sturdy toughness [. . .] quite unlike anything else in Spain"; the people of Leon and Castile are typically "stern," "austere," and "unbending," yet they are "so overwhelmingly courteous that the *harsh character* is softened"; the people of Aragon "still have a fighting determination to protect their liberty, their faith and their *pride*"; and most notably Andalucia and Extremadura are

where readers must go “[f]or the *dark*, flashing-eyed Spaniard of the *fiery* temperament” (13). (My emphasis).

Geis’s regional stereotypes are strict, unyielding, and repressive. Whether in Europe or the Americas, nearly every country has their own regional characteristics and charms. Charming and characteristic, however, is what they are. Here, Geis takes these regional variations and casts a negative light on nearly every possible Spaniard—leaving little room for child readers to imagine a Spaniard that does not possess a defect.

On the other hand, in Martha Bacon’s 1971 novel *The Third Road* three home-schooled Californian siblings, Berkeley, Roxana, and Caspar Craven, are transported to seventeenth-century Spain by a magical unicorn that travels a “third road” inhabited by chimeras and gryphons. In light of Tess Cosslett’s study of time-slip narratives and national identity in children’s literature it is interesting to ponder how *The Third Road* matches its peers in its “openness to ‘other’ histories” and how “it critiques empty reconstructions of the past” (244). For example, even before the three siblings enter the time warp, the submissiveness of New World Hispanics is portrayed by the grandmother’s Mexican gardener, Esteban, and his wife, Conchita, a wardrobe mistress for the play the grandmother will be acting in. Their subservient roles are contrasted to that of the grandmother who has a starring role in the play “El Camino Real” which depicts missionary life in colonial California. Thus, the grandmother has assumed the colonial powers of the original white Spanish colonizers and has Mexican immigrants, presumably mestizo, on her payroll.

This affinity with Spanish colonizers continues when Fox wishes to meet a real princess and the unicorn transports the three children to a Spanish royal court in 1660. The children meet Margarita Teresa of Hapsburg, the Infanta of Spain. The princess is accompanied by her dwarf servant, Maria-Barbola, and her pet spaniel, Guapo, just as they are immortalized in Diego Velasquez’s watershed painting “Las Meninas.” The verbal exchange between the children and the Infanta and her servant are humorous. The children inform the pair that in 1970 Spain no longer has any colonies in the New World and that there is no king in Spain (General Franco was still in power in 1970). The princess is in disbelief and the servant yells “treason!” at the idea of their being no king in Spain. Fox becomes nervous because of this yell, especially since a cardinal has entered the scene and she fears

that he might “cry for the Grand Inquisitor” (Bacon 42). Fearing that she might experience the horrors she has heard about the Spanish Inquisition (perhaps from some children’s literature), Fox informs the Spaniards that where she comes from “they don’t burn witches or heretics” (Bacon 42). The author does not find it necessary to mention the Salem Witch Trials or any of the other government-sanctioned executions of religious and political outcasts that have occurred in the United States.

Later on in the novel, the siblings travel with a 16-year-old cardinal from the seventeenth-century Spanish royal court, José, through the mountains of Mexico. They encounter a native who holds a golden object in the shape of a mounted serpent encrusted with jewels. The boy claims that it is an artifact from Montezuma’s reign. José, ever the greedy colonizer, grabs the object from the boy, informs him that his gods are dead, and asks him “Am I not the white god on the four-footed beast who should bring down the plumed serpent? Am I not what the priests foretold?” (Bacon 112). The terrified native agrees, warns the Spaniard that he will be cursed for possessing the stolen object, and runs away. The depiction of such an encounter is once again, historically accurate, but nevertheless presented as representative of Spanish culture. Thus, the “empty reconstructions of the past” that are critiqued in this book are not those created by the children’s home nation, but one that is imagined as being articulated by Spaniards who wish to avoid any mentions of the Spanish Inquisition and their actions in the New World. Of course, the successful propagation of the Black Legend renders any such inaccurate historical revisions incapable of ever occurring.

#### SPAIN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

While books such as *Betsy and Tacy Go Over the Big Hill*, *The Third Road*, and *The Story of Ferdinand* began depicting Spain and Spaniards in a new light, the wave of liberal advances in the latter half of the twentieth century not only supported post-colonial studies and influenced the accurate writings of texts that dealt with foreign people and places, it also served as an impetus for the nascent era of global consciousness in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. Evidence of such improvements in relation to the evolving depictions of Spain and Spaniards in children’s literature is found in the artist Anno Mitsumasa’s 2003 wordless text *Anno’s Spain* and in Carol Weston’s

2004 *With Love From Spain*, Melanie Martin. The fact that both of these books are parts of a series that deal with foreign locales in an honest manner exemplifies how they are representative of this new global consciousness.

*Anno's Spain* is laid out in a double truck format in which two adjoining pages form one large picture. Mitsumasa chooses one location and creatively melds together different people, events, and styles from various time periods into one unified locale that the eye can wander through. For example, one of the first illustrations depicts a seaside village that contains one of Columbus' famed ships anchored in the distance, a group of young boys playing *fútbol*, a dozen fishermen working on their boats and fishing nets, a troupe of marauding soldiers from the Crusades, a Gothic cathedral with soaring buttresses, and a colorful, fluid Gaudí-like building in the foreground. This landscape spans some 1,000 years of Spanish history.

In a similar enlightened fashion, the narrator of *With Love From Spain*, Melanie Martin is a learned and cultured 11-year-old American girl, Melanie Martin. This book harks back to the novel's epistolary roots with its diary format as Melanie writes about her daily adventures in a journal especially-bought for her family vacation in Spain. Readers are informed that Melanie is familiar with the Spanish language because of the Spanish class she takes at school. Additionally, the unique phonetic pronunciation guides to Spanish words that she devises in her daily entries encourage readers to broaden their foreign language skills. Likewise, connections between the Spanish world and the United States are constantly made when Melanie informs the reader of words that mean the same thing in both English and Spanish such as "piano," "patio," and "radio," and that at one time Spain not only owned Mexico and much of South America, but parts of the United States as well. Furthermore, Melanie explains that people from different regions in Spain have different accents much like a Bostonian will speak differently from a Texan in the United States. To boot, the readers of this book are informed that the castles that Walt Disney drew inspiration from for their favorite Disney films are in Spain.

However, Weston's novel is no whitewashed ode to Spain and its culture. After visiting the cathedral in Segovia where Queen Isabella was crowned, Melanie explains that "the really evil thing" about the queen was that "if you weren't Catholic, she kicked you out of Spain—or had you killed. Zero tolerance. Hundreds of thousands of



Jews had to leave Spain in 1492. Muslims too” (Weston 172). Unlike other novels that offer only a one-sided view to most of Spain’s history, Weston then matches Queen Isabella’s negatives with a positive: her sponsorship of Columbus’s expedition to the Americas. Additionally, unlike other novels that focus on Spain’s past, Weston even mentions how the festival of *fallas*, paper-maché giants, in Valencia involves Spaniards creating *fallas* that criticize political leaders of both Spain and the United States. This candid allusion to the rift that has occurred between Spain’s newly-elected socialist leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and President Bush is remarkable *for the sophisticated way it approaches adolescent readers*.

The disparity between this novel and older xenophobic ones are found throughout the book. In contrast to 1906’s *Our Little Spanish Cousin* where an American tourist in Spain proclaims that Fernando’s exaggeratedly long complete name, Fernando Antonio Maria Allegria Francisco Ruy Guzman y Ximenez, should “topple” him “over” (Nixon-Roulet 5), Melanie celebrates the fact that “in Spain women keep their names when they get married, and kids use both their parents’ names” (Weston 101).

Through this examination of these representative texts spanning roughly more than 421 years, from Foxe’s 1583 *Book of Martyrs* to Weston’s 2004 *With Love From Spain, Melanie Martin*, one can trace the various manifestations of the Black Legend in English-language children’s literature. What once began as a religious othering of the Catholic Spaniard morphed into an ethnic othering that problematized the racial makeup of Spain. This ethnic othering was swept aside for the most part, however, only in order to paint the dark-skinned miscegenated descendants of Spaniards in the New World as inferior to white Spaniards, and thus other white Americans. After a few other missteps along the way in the twentieth century, such as 1962’s *Let’s Travel in Spain*, children’s books published in the early twenty-first century that deal with Spain offer a more honest portrayal of a people, who like the rest of humanity, possess both a shameful *and* proud past and negative *and* positive attributes.

Since scholars of *La Leyenda Negra* have already discussed the ways in which negative attributes of the Spanish culture have been employed and resurrected over time to satisfy various political and cultural goals, the stated goal and most poignant discovery of this particular literary analysis has been to shed light on the manner in which this legend has

been propagated in children's literature. By combining historical information with a close reading of these texts amassed from the inimitable Baldwin special collection, this examination of children's literature adds a new twist on studies of the Black Legend. If one believes that our outlook on the world and foreigners as adults is partly influenced by the books we read as young children and adolescents, this study demonstrates how the myths of the Black Legend which sought to tarnish the reputation of Spanish culture are programmed not only through the rhetoric of imperialist political policies and adult-oriented literature but also more subtly and effectively in literature marketed to children as objective accounts of Spain and Spaniards.

## Notes

1. By employing the resources of the Baldwin Library of Historical Children's Literature in the Department of Special Collections at the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries one can glean a fair representation of what kinds of depictions of Spain, Spaniards, and the Spanish New World have been offered to children in the United Kingdom and the United States over the past three hundred years. The collection was amassed by Dr. Ruth Baldwin in order to archive "the volumes that were loved and read by children and so ordinary that no one else collected them" (Smith 300). Out of an assortment of approximately 93,000 volumes, I was able to cull a list of nearly 100 books that deal with Spain in one prevalent way or another. By whittling down this collection into a group of 21 representative texts spanning different centuries, an adequate assessment of these Hispanic depictions can be made.

2. The *encomienda* system was set up by Spanish colonizers of the New World in a fashion that resembled the system of feudalism still existent in Europe at the time. The *encomienda* system entailed assigning natives of the New World to a Spanish family who would obtain free labor from them in exchange for Christianizing the natives (Suchlicki 17).

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