

TO ROBERT BURNS

On reading him in class

Aye, Robbie we read ye still,
Stout o' limb an' weak o' will,
Ye were a man who liked his fill
O' drinkin' an' the like.
An' from what I hear, ye fared right well
On drinkin' an' the like.

O' mice an' man ye sang ye're praise
An' in ye're own sweet Scottish ways
Th' beasties ye did seek to raise
To th' heights o' men.
Aye, sing ye're praise in ye're own sweet ways
But mice will ne'er be men.

—WAYNE SHINNERS '60

WHILE WALKING THROUGH SPAIN

If it were only a question of getting a visa, of crossing the Pyrenees;—but no! Spain turns her back to you as you near her. She is a country which can leave the tourist on the threshold of understanding while he thinks of himself as having seen all. How many have left that country believing that they have discovered, seen, admired Spain? And how frustrating when they realize that what they saw and what they imagined they saw doesn't coincide.

Spain, a country which begins on the flanks of the Pyrenees, hides itself under an invisible veil. One must come to it unbiased, free of preconceived ideas, curious and loving, in the manner of an Oriental groom beholding for the first time his unknown bride. The understanding of Spain is a painful one. One does not visit her as a museum, passing from one hall to the other. Spain requires of her viewers a power of insight neighbouring passion. One must see it and see it until it becomes painful.

Oftentimes in the strange stillness of dusk settling on the white plains, it seems as if the roads are a graphic reflection of the Spaniard and, as every curve on the winding road opens up new vistas to delight the eye, so does the gradual unfolding of the many-sided Spanish character catch the fancy of the imagination.

The web of Spanish highways lengthens, develops into so many side roads that they are seemingly endless in their structure. Yet they do advance. You come upon a bend, and before you appears a cart. The gypsy asleep at the reins, slowly going where the horse

will take him. This is the silent Spain. The silence of the plains, the old gypsy, and the roads. The silence so full of meaning and so grossly misunderstood. The silence which tells of a history, a language, a land. Cursed land and blessed land which gives life but does not nourish. Land as difficult to possess as cultivate.

The Spanish women's costumes are a display, a show of the idea one has of women. Dream of man and mother of man. These costumes are covered, like those of Arab women, with jewels and necklaces; exterior and priceless marks revealing the woman as attached to the household, to riches, and to the possession of man. Yet it is the Andalusian with her heavily fringed skirts, who conforms more to the myth of the passionate Carmen, free and adventurous.

This is the place we will visit: Granada, the city of kings and gypsies. The city where the palace of the Moorish sultan neighbours with the caves of Sacro Monte, the holy mountain of the gypsies.

The Alhambra, or Red Palace, is a thing of pure oriental splendour. One arrives at its entrance by a small flight of steps and is suddenly engulfed in the world of the Arabian nights. I gazed through the arcaded windows which framed a view of Granada, climbing up the hill in a cluster of tile-roofed houses. I wandered through huge apartments covered everywhere with a lace-like decoration of red and gold.

The court of lions is a thing of light, indeed of weightless beauty. It seems as if it had just alighted there, in the same way that the Parthenon seems ready to fly. The lions looked like a troupe of performing circus animals who had been taught to support the fountain. A tall jet of water rose from the center and fell into the basin, while from the mouths of the twelve lions issued twelve spouts of water, that fell into a channel and splashed back over their forelegs.

I walked beneath the arcade of horse-shoe arches, admiring the balance and design of the oblong court yard, the projecting kiosks with their slender columns, sometimes standing two by two. And there was the lofty roof dripping with stalactites of honeycombed splendour, gilded and coloured, a mathematical symphony of colour and poetry.

Beyond the court is a splendid garden with pools of water where two massive looking lions squat upon the brink; and at the back, terrace upon terrace planted with cypress and orange trees and all manner of scented and flowering shrubs reflect in the glass-like, green waters.

Many a visitor has visions of harems as he walks through these halls. But instead the reality is less poetic. For in these rooms once lived a solemn little Spanish princess, with tutors and governesses, engaged in writing dutiful letters in Latin to a boy called

Arthur, who lived in a far-away country, in a place called Ludlow Castle, in the county of Shropshire. This was Catherine of Aragon, who after the capture of Granada came to live in the Alhambra and while there was betrothed to Arthur, Prince of Wales, heir to Henry VII of England.

I looked down from a window of the Alhambra across a gorge into the Albain, the gypsy quarter where the rattle of castanets filled the air with a pulsating, bewitching sound. Heels clicked, cries were heard encouraging the dancers. A girl sang, then all was silent.

A man's cry, a prolonged, sorrowful, and plaintive cry was echoed and re-echoed by the hills.

The night was filled with song and dancing as the flamenco artists performed for their own pleasure and for that of whoever had the curiosity to stop and listen.

Flamenco is a peculiar type of art. There are thousands of ways of singing it and about as many of listening to it. This is the singing that rises from the hills of Andalusia. A mode of singing that in an instant, through the magic of the artist, by a wail, a cry, a sorrow which finds the word, the accent, the rhythm, expresses itself in a poignant and forceful music.

The art of flamenco is not in its sonority, not even in its musicality, but in that strange blending of both, linking together the heart and the inspiration; the word, the music, and sentiment. Each phrase must be like an individual arrow, thrown by the mere inflection of the voice, or even simply by the facial expression of the singer. Flamenco is perfect cohesion, releasing in one spout, at the same instant, words of music, sorrow, pain, and joy.

The Andalusian peasant can distinguish in a moment by the mere tone of the singing if the artist is imbued with the meaning of his song. Although lacking in musical training, he will discover any artificiality at first hearing. Flamenco singing is difficult, strange, not because it strikes the ear unfamiliar with the Phrygian scale, but because it demands from us a science of the heart simple and true, which most of us don't have.

Often dancing accompanies the guitar and the singing. The Spanish dances, with the exception of those of the Basque country and some of the provinces of Aragon and Navarra, are danced by only two dancers. These dances don't look for zephyr-like effects, but the harsh down-to-earth rhythms of heel work. It is a noble art and a proud one.

What better could I find to say, as I watched the gypsy Carmen Amaya dance that night in front of her cave, but the words of another gypsy: "Flamenco must be danced with virility, hips straight, fingers snapping sternly, and the face alive"?

Night fell on Granada, but the music did not die. Hands were clapping, heels were clicking. It was wonderful.

—RICHARD PATTEE '60

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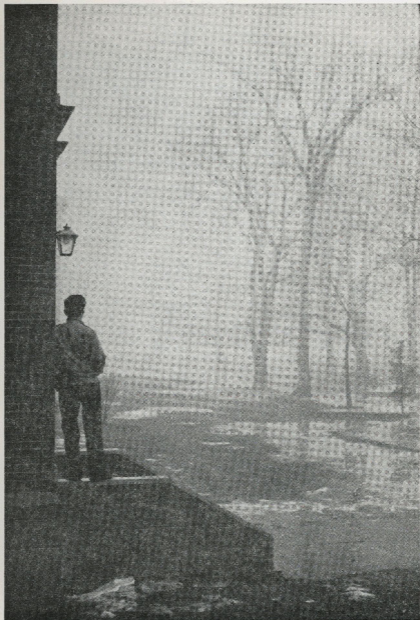
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I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I "stood inclined,"
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

—Wordsworth