

A Tale of Two Empires? The Earl's Court Spanish Exhibition (1889)

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'Nothing's Spainful in the Exhibition'
(*Funny Folks*, May 4 1889)

Between September 1888 and March 1889, a number of articles appeared in the British press announcing the imminent opening of a grand Spanish Exhibition at Earl's Court in London. This would, it was said, repeat the enormous success of the American and Italian Exhibitions held on the same site in 1887 and 1888. After several weeks of silence, another burst of articles appeared in April 1889, remarking on the delays the project was experiencing. By May, the general feeling was that the announced Exhibition had simply been a figment of the collective imagination. When a sparse and underwhelming Spanish Exhibition finally opened to the public on 1 June 1889, after a couple of days of Press previews, it was greeted with a mixture of apathy and cynicism. One journalist, asked to comment on the Exhibition and its contents, wrote wearily that 'it is difficult to criticise what is not there' (*Saturday Review*, 8 Jun. 1889: 702–3). When the Exhibition finally stuttered to a close in October 1889, the general consensus was that it would not be much missed. And so it came to pass. The Earl's Court Spanish Exhibition of 1889 is now all but forgotten. It does not feature in studies of the nineteenth-century exhibitionary boom, nor has it attracted the attention of scholars of nineteenth-century Spanish history and culture. Even a book about international exhibitions at the venue published just three years later in 1892 spared it only a passing mention (Lowe 225).

This essay reconstructs the history of the controversial conception and dismal reception of the Earl's Court Spanish Exhibition of 1889 to argue that this long-forgotten story provides a valuable window onto the complex relationship between the British and Spanish empires at the moment of one's expansion and the other's fragmentation. The exhibitionary form is an exemplary arena for examining national and imperial self-representations

and their reception as they emerge through dynamic networks of investors, exhibitors, exhibits and observers. In the Spanish context, the years between 1887 and 1893 are particularly fruitful for such analysis, with Spain hosting the *Exposición General de las Islas Filipinas* in Madrid in 1887 and the *Exposición Internacional de Barcelona* in 1888, and prominent Spanish contributions to both the *Exposition Universelle de Paris* in 1889 and the Chicago World Exhibition of 1893. This proliferation of exhibition activity was no accident. As Alda Blanco argues in her analysis of the Philippines Exhibition, it was intimately connected with Spain's need not only 'to maintain her shrinking imperial presence on the international stage of imperial expansion,' but also 'to preserve her imperial consciousness in the metropole, where it had also begun to fade' (54).

The Earl's Court Spanish Exhibition was conceived by a group of Spanish expatriates in London as an arena to showcase Spain's modernity, industry and culture and thus to project Spain's faltering 'imperial presence' at the heart of the British imperial metropolis. Three publications survive to tell us about the industrial exhibits and cultural performances to be found in there: a pair of identical copies of the *Official Daily Programme*, a copy of *The District Railway Guide to the Spanish Exhibition*, and a copy of *Darbyshire's Guide to the Spanish Exhibition*.¹ The first two, both priced at two pence, are official publications produced in connection with the organizing committee. The twelve-page *Official Daily Programme* that survives includes the listing of performances to take place that week, along with prominent advertisements for Cadbury's Cocoa, Chas. Baker & Co's Stores for Gentlemen's and Boys' Superior Clothing, and Dr J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne ('The Great Specific for Cholera, Diarrhoea, Dysentery'). The *District Railway Guide* runs to forty pages and includes historical and geographical sketches of Spain, suggested itineraries for visitors, and detailed descriptions of a selection of stalls, their holders and their wares. Aside from the cover, the most prominent advertising (on the inside cover and page three) is for the specialist language publishers Hirschfeld Brothers, whose *Polyglot Correspondent* and suite of Spanish-language aids (*Hossfeld's Spanish Reader, Correspondent, Dialogues and Verbs*) emphasise the aspiration to appeal to British commercial or industrial employees desirous of building connections with Spain.

In contrast to the official publications, the independent, commercially-produced *Darbyshire's Guide*, half the price at only one penny and a quarter of the length, opens with a short text that gleefully describes the historical disasters of a country now dismissed as a 'fourth-rate power, despised and insulted by those who had formerly favoured it' (4). The text ends with the underwhelming assessment that 'although the arrangement of [exhibits] is far from being as good as it might be, yet they give a fair idea of what

Spain is able to produce' (4). The *Guide's* dismissive tone illustrates the importance of taking into account Catherine Vallejo's reminder, in her discussion of Spain's presence at the Chicago World Exhibition, that an exhibition 'is not a neutral space, since it inevitably carries large quantities of cultural and ideological baggage pertaining to the site of origin' (155). In the case of the Spanish Exhibition, the hefty cultural and ideological baggage of British journalists, audiences and investors is crystallised in the *Guide's* reminder of Spain's current indebtedness to both the British Army (for saving the country from Napoleon) and British Industry (for saving the economy from underdevelopment). Playing on widespread British fears about the dirt and dangers of travelling in Spain, the rather jingoistic introduction is accompanied by a full-page advertisement for Keating's Insecticide Powder.²

The Spanish Exhibition in London thus had a great deal of baggage – of all stripes – to contend with. Part I of this article assesses the limited archival evidence together with media reports from both Spain and Britain to uncover the Exhibition's origins in London's Spanish expatriate business community and its takeover by British businessmen with interests in Latin America. Drawing on Tony Bennett's concept of the 'exhibitionary complex,' Part II reconstructs the Exhibition's layout and contents in order to explore how the contrasting geocultural logics of Spain's renewed self-projection as a modern Empire and the longstanding British obsession with Spain's Islamic past play out in the exhibitionary space and its contents. Part III analyses the rhetorical and imaginative strategies employed in British press coverage of the Exhibition, to argue that their coded representations of Spain and Spanish culture open the door to understanding the Exhibition in the context of Spain's partial absorption into Britain's nineteenth-century 'informal empire'.

I. The Project

In July 1888, a flurry of irate letters appeared in the Spanish press, warning readers that announcements about a Spanish Exhibition to be held at Earl's Court in London, placed by the director of the Italian Exhibition currently in progress there, were unauthorized and inaccurate (e.g. *El Día*, 24 Jul. 1888: 1; *La Época*, 27 Jul. 1888: 3).³ According to the letters signed by 'el secretario' Alberto Bergés, the announcements gave the erroneous impression that the Spanish Exhibition was to be a British-led project from the stable that had produced the American and Italian Exhibitions of 1887 and 1888. Bergés swiftly dismissed the Director of the Italian Exhibition as 'a person entirely unfamiliar with Spanish business,' who 'does not even know the language,' and who was 'involving himself in what does not concern him' (*El Día*, 24

Jul. 1888: 1).⁴ The Exhibition, he stressed, was an entirely Spanish project, conceived back in April 1888 by a group of Spanish gentlemen ‘of significance’ at the London house of Sr. Francisco del Riego Losada (*La Época*, 27 Jul. 1888: 3).⁵ Unfortunately, this would be Bergés’s first and last act as Secretary of the Spanish Exhibition, for in an unwelcome omen of the problems to come, he died unexpectedly in London before the year was out, aged just 49.

Initial reports in the London press support the Spanish claim. In May 1888, the magazine *Bow Bells* reported that ‘it is proposed that the Spanish Chamber of Commerce in London should co-operate with the Chambers in Spain for the celebration of a Spanish Exhibition in London,’ and noted that ‘*pourparlers* are taking place upon the subject between the Spanish Government and the Count de Bayonne, who is the President of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce in London’ (18 May 1888: 20). Spain’s London Chamber of Commerce had been created along with those in New York and Paris as part of Foreign minister Segismundo Moret’s project to embed in some of the world’s biggest financial centres an image of Spain as a modern, industrialized country worthy of investment. Its President Manuel de Misa, the Conde de Bayona (1815–1904), was a sherry shipper from one of Jérez’s most prominent families who had been resident in London for some thirty years. Misa had a personal interest in improving British reception of Spain and its produce, because the sherry trade was at this moment undergoing a serious public relations crisis in Britain thanks to the circulation of cheap, often German-made imitations (Simpson 373–9).⁶ The new Chamber’s leading role in the Exhibition emphasises that it was conceived – on the Spanish side, at least – as part of the mission to showcase the economic viability of Spain’s reconstituted Empire, encapsulated in the announcement that ‘the fourteen South American Republics will not be represented’, but ‘it is hoped that [the remaining colonies of] Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines will send their products’ (*El Día*, 11 Oct. 1888: 1).

A precedent for such a showcase was already in progress in the *Exposición Internacional de Barcelona*, which took place over the eight months from April to December 1888. This, the first international exhibition to be held in Spain itself, occupied a 150-acre site at Barcelona’s Parc de la Ciutadella, which as Joan Ramon Resina notes, was ‘a former garrison, from which field guns were fired on the city in times of revolt’ (182). As Resina’s emphasis on the symbolic reclamation of the site suggests, the *Exposición* has often been seen through the lens of Catalan history, as a transformative moment in the country’s modern development. Resina calls it ‘a rite of passage signalling Barcelona’s recognition as a budding metropolis’ (7), which ‘ushered Catalan industry into the arena of European trade’ (45). However, to see the *Exposición* purely in Catalanist terms is to miss its wider significance. As

Christopher Schmidt-Nowara argues, the Exposición was less ‘an expression of a nascent Catalan nationalism’ than ‘an expression of a Catalan, especially Barcelonan, patriotism that saw itself as part of a broader Spanish liberal and national community’ (63).⁷ Indeed, for Schmidt-Nowara, the raising of ‘a huge Columbus monument as [the Exposición’s] centerpiece’ tied it firmly into ‘a glorious chapter in Spanish history’ in which ‘Columbus served as a symbol of Spain’s reinvented colonialism and national history’ (63–4).

Misa and his colleagues sought to translate this ‘glorious chapter’ into English. Aware that the multivalent significance and international profile of the Exposición made it an ideal venue for the project to reinvent the nation and counter the ‘black legend’ of Spanish backwardness and brutality, they sought to extend its reach to London. An advertisement published in the Spanish press in April 1889 reveals their motivation:

The objective of this Exhibition, like the American and Italian ones that preceded it in the past two years, is none other than *to publicise in London, today the great marketplace of the world, the forward-looking and progressive state of Spain and its colonies* in arts, sciences, industries, and the goodness and wealth of its natural products, and wherever possible, something of its characteristic customs in the form of entertainments. (*El Liberal*, 2 Apr. 1889: 6; emphasis mine).⁸

In other words, the emphasis was on projecting a view of Spain in terms that would enable it to compete with the British Empire, as ‘forward-looking’, ‘progressive’, and (crucially) still a colonial power:

The venue where this purely national exhibition is to be held, is the same where the American and Italian [exhibitions] achieved such extraordinary success, being comprised of a vast central building, surrounded by spacious gardens, where many other small venues for diverse objects are located. The past exhibitions were visited by millions of people, leaving lucrative profits for the exhibitors. The *Spanish Exhibition* is sponsored by eminent personages from London’s aristocracy and business community, and the Company that owns it is providing free of charge to the exhibitors the space they need for their installations (*El Liberal*, 2 Apr. 1889: 6).⁹

The plan was that most of these installations would be transferred wholesale from Barcelona. As *Bow Bells* observed, ‘Should the proposals now under consideration be carried into effect, many of the exhibits at the Barcelona Exhibition this year would be secured as a substantial nucleus for a Spanish Exhibition in this country’ (18 May 1888: 20). Unfortunately, the organizers of the Spanish Exhibition had not taken into account the World Exhibition in Paris, which was scheduled to take place the same summer, and which – once Spain eventually decided to take part – dominated the time and attention of

Spain's chief businessmen and manufacturers to the detriment of the London project (Lasheras Peña 300–320).

This was only the beginning. On reaching London, the Spanish-led project of national reinvention would crash headlong into a deadly combination of British apathy and imperiousness. While the Spaniards adopted a defensive position from the start, their mistrust may have been misplaced. Bergés had identified the Director of the Italian Exhibition, John Robinson Whitley, as the man trying to take control of the Spanish project. In truth, if Whitley was involved at all, he was a front for a group of British investors who saw the potential of an Exhibition not for the bilateral development of Spanish commerce with Britain, but for their own interests in Spain and South America. In September 1888, these investors registered 'the Spanish Exhibition in London (1889)' as a limited company with a capital of £50,000 (the equivalent of around £3m today), divided into £1 shares. While a set of company records is held in the National Archive at Kew, it contains mainly generic procedural forms.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the papers do reveal how the planned exhibition followed the logic of what Tony Bennett has called the 'exhibitionary complex'. On the one hand, the primary objective (as reprinted in the *Financial Times*) was:

To prepare, arrange, open, manage, and carry on an exhibition in London or its suburbs, to be opened in the year 1889, of the arts, sciences, inventions, manufacturers, industries, natural products, costumes, national sports and pastimes of and other matters and things connected with or relating to the Kingdom of Spain, its colonies and dependencies (*Financial Times*, 7 Sep. 1888: 4).

In this way, the company would promote the official exhibitionary culture, organized around an ideological economy that '[transformed] displays of machinery and industrial processes, of finished products and objets d'art, into material signifiers of progress – but of progress as a collective national achievement with capital as the great co-ordinator' (Bennett 80). On the other hand, the organisers were acutely aware of the need to appeal to the general public who were unlikely to be satisfied by a drily pedagogical canter through the industrial achievements of some foreign country. This would be achieved through the incorporation of less closely-regulated, open-air amusement areas or 'fair zones' (Bennett 86), in which the company intended 'to carry on the business of refreshment purveyors, contractors, licensed victuallers, and dealers in wines, spirits, beer and other liquors in connection with the exhibition' (*Financial Times*, 7 Sep. 1888: 4). In fact, as we will see, the purveyance of refreshment would be a key dimension of the Exhibition's public and media reception.

The new company's administrative organization reveals much about its stakeholders' priorities. An executive committee was first established, comprising Sir John Morris, Chairman of the River Plate Trust;¹¹ Captain RR Hutchinson, Spanish Vice-consul in Brighton; Colonel John Wilkinson, and Lionel Leighton Woodhouse.¹² A larger honorary reception committee, consisting principally of British businessmen and minor gentry, was rapidly formed to oversee the social side of things.¹³ The real work was to be done by a small Executive Council, presided over by Col. George Fitzgeorge, a cousin of Queen Victoria, with five additional members including the venue's regular entertainment manager Vincent Applin, and just one Spaniard, Francisco del Riego (*La Dinastia*, 12 Apr. 1889: 2).¹⁴ They set to hiring a secretary to oversee the project, although commercial acumen did not appear to be a primary qualification. In September 1888 they appointed, at a projected salary of £20 per week (*The Observer* 8 Dec. 1889: 2), Sir Harry Paul Burrard, 'the well-known pigeon shot and member of the Royal Yacht Squadron' (*Bow Bells*, 18 May 1888: 20), who was to endure a very public bankruptcy within a month of the Exhibition's closure (*The Observer*, 8 Dec. 1889: 2).

In December 1888, a press release announced the appointment as Honorary President of 'the Duke of Wellington, Grandee of Spain,' albeit not the hero of the Peninsular Wars, but the third Duke, previously known as Henry Wellesley.¹⁵ Wellington's honorary role was intended to evoke the gravitas of an Anglo-Spanish connection that went back some eighty years, but what really captured the press's attention was the announcement of his Vice-President, Colonel J[ohn] T[homas] North. North was a British entrepreneur known as 'The Nitrate King' thanks to his controlling monopoly over the Chilean nitrate industry.¹⁶ A profile published in *The New York Times* in July 1889 gives an indication of his towering personality, calling him 'A Chilian Monte Cristo ... one of the lions of the London social season, the entertainer and companion of the Prince of Wales, and, under the name of the Nitrate King, the hero of countless tales of wealth and magnificence ... a veritable Aladdin' ('The Nitrate King' 8). North's involvement in the Spanish Exhibition was a matter of some discussion, especially as he had ostentatiously departed England for Chile six months before the Exhibition opened, with 'an extravagant farewell ball for over 1,000 guests,' for which he dressed as Henry VIII (Edmundsen 107-8). As *Punch* magazine asked in its 'Examination Paper for the Dull Season': 'Who is Colonel NORTH and why is he Vice-President of the Spanish Exhibition?' (24 Aug. 1889: 88).¹⁷ The answer appears to lie at least in part in social connections. North had chaired the Local Reception Committee of the Italian Exhibition the previous year (Edmundsen 78), and on hearing the announcement of North's appointment, one society columnist immediately attributed his involvement to the effect of the old school tie:

We wonder if Colonel North will help his old schoolfellow, Mr Whiteley [sic], with his moneybags this time. It is a well-known fact that the 'Nitrate King's' sovereigns – 'quids', the Colonel calls them – puts this year's exhibition on a solid footing (*Bow Bells*, 14 Dec. 1888: 50).¹⁸

Even if the Whitley connection was overstated, since Whitley would make clear in his 1890 interview that he had no input into the Spanish Exhibition (Lowe 225), the column captured the popular view that North was in it for the money. As 'London Life' bitinglly observed after a disappointing visit,

One would have expected something better from an enterprise with which Colonel JT North allowed his name to be associated.

But the Nitrate King, whose portrait our artist has sarcastically given as the boss of the show,

Is far away on his travels,

And has probably long ago forgotten that any such scheme as a Spanish exhibition in London was ever mooted.

Possibly he saw too little prospect of "dollars in it" to take much interest in its fate (*Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, 11 Jun. 1889: n.p.).¹⁹

While British preparations for the Exhibition were largely concerned with committees and honorary appointments, Spanish public interest was focused on the event's potential to transform the nation's profile in the Anglophone world. In April 1889, Del Riego visited Barcelona, where he held a press conference announcing the Exhibition, which was to include seventeen display classes, ranging from rocks and minerals to education. His speech, reported at length in the Madrid newspaper *La Dinastia* (among others) emphasised the importance for Spain's economic development of winning over the Anglophone market:

The Exhibition is intended to publicize in that extremely important market the scientific, industrial and artistic state of Spain ... The fact that the products of our nation are very little known in Great Britain makes the aforementioned exhibition more interesting, since it will without doubt be a great novelty for the English public (12 Apr. 1889: 2).²⁰

Unfortunately, and perhaps inevitably, Del Riego's optimism proved unfounded. The following month, *La Época* reported that not only had the Exhibition's opening been pushed back from April to May and then June, but that members of the Spanish Chamber of Commerce in London had turned against the project, and had been speaking 'unfavourably' of it to their colleagues in Barcelona (29 May 1889: 2). The withdrawal of the Chamber's support left Del Riego as the Exhibition's only active Spanish collaborator.

In response to Spanish complaints about their want of representation, he told *La Época* that this – like the Exhibition's late opening – was due to the relative scarcity of Spaniards in London (*La Época*, 29 May 1889: 2). Whatever the reason for the lack of input from the 'significant personalities from the hereditary and mercantile aristocracy' who had apparently been present and willing only six weeks earlier (*La Dinastia*, 12 Apr. 1889: 2), Del Riego became an increasingly isolated figure at the head of the Exhibition; by early July, a report in *La Iberia* even described him as its Director (7 Jul. 1889: 2).

II. The Exhibition

When the Exhibition eventually opened on 1 June 1889, it was in a state of such disarray that even the journalists who were wined and dined at the Welcome Club launch luncheon on 30 May struggled to find good things to say. 'Life in London' of the *Licensed Victuallers' Mirror* was 'among that select few of guzzlers and bibbers' and, after querying the origins of the sherry – 'I should very much like to know who shipped it, and whether it was a natural sherry' – confessed that 'the thing, as a luncheon, was jolly enough, and put the press men in a humour to say all sorts of pretty things about exhibits which have not yet arrived' (4 Jun. 1889: 222). This faltering start only emphasised the Exhibition's major problem: that the official exhibitionary culture, with its 'displays of machinery and industrial processes, of finished products and objets d'art' (Bennett 80) was far less attractive to the British public than the less closely-regulated, open-air amusement areas or 'fair zones' (Bennett 86). Furthermore, the distinction between the two parts of the exhibition can be mapped onto the conflicting geocultural logics in play, for while the indoor spaces were organized to display the industry and products of the modern Spanish metropolis and colonies, the outdoor spaces were organized according to the British fascination with Spain's exotic past, and above all the Hispano-Moorish history of Andalusia.

The Exhibition, in a layout familiar to visitors from previous exhibitions, ranged over the venue's three primary spaces: the Exhibition Hall itself, the Central Gardens, and the Western Gardens. Indoors, the Hall was divided into three aisles or avenues, holding over three hundred stalls between them: The Prado Promenade in the centre, and Giralda Avenue and Alcazar Avenue to either side. Although many of the Spanish and Catalan owners were elsewhere (probably in Paris) and represented by British agents, these stalls were – eventually – filled with items which according to *La Iberia*, 'the British public delights in buying' (7 Jul. 1889: 2). In the Prado Promenade alone were displays of maps, furniture, ceramics, fine arts, tambourines, glasses, plaques, fans,

woodwork, toys, bronzes, silks, earthenware, olives, statuettes, lithographs, basketwork, soaps, perfumery, smoking caps, damascene work, chocolate, jewellery, cut flowers, leather work, iron work, porcelain, corals, purses, and pianos. The Hall was not, however, restricted to Spanish products and crafts. Interspersed among the 'fairy-like,' 'picturesque,' and 'handsome' Spanish exhibits (*District Railway Guide* 18) were stalls selling quintessentially British household products such as Dickson's Beef Tea, Crescent Carpet Sweeper, and The Lightning Eradicator, 'which removes stains from clothing, &c., &c.' (*District Railway Guide* 17). The presence of the Huelva Marble Company, and of civil engineer Julian Deby's collection of Spanish ores – which *Darbyshire's Guide* described as 'a most interesting exhibit' (4) – highlighted Britain's position as the biggest foreign investor in Spain's mineral industries (Harvey and Taylor 189).

Outside, the visitor was invited to visit a series of familiar 'Spanish' spaces. The Central Gardens hosted a 'magnificent panoramic landscape' of the Alhambra, a Madrid Market Place, and the Theatre and Concert Hall. In the Western Gardens, amid the perennial Earl's Court favourites of the bandstands, electric switchback railway, Grand Orchestra, and Welcome Club, were the principal themed installations. According to the *Official Daily Programme*, these included The Gitano's Retreat, ('a mountain gorge in the Sierra Nevada with a picturesque gipsy encampment'), Kowalsky's Diorama of a Spanish bullfight ('a most realistic representation of this very exciting national pastime'),²¹ The Cosmorama, or, A Journey Through Spain ('a series of artistically coloured Transparencies, enabling the visitor to accomplish, in the space of a few minutes, a rapid excursion through the most interesting Scenes and Monuments of the Peninsula'), Columbus's Cabin ('a Cero-Plastic Tableau, representing Christopher Columbus in the cabin of the "Santa Maria," the vessel in which he discovered America, in 1492'), a House in Manila, a Moorish Pavilion, and a model of a Jerez Bodega, with wines by Gonzalez Byass and Sandeman Buck of Jerez de la Frontera, and Leacock of Las Palmas. The programme of performances included a Troupe of Spanish Serenaders, the Spanish Strolling Players, and Manuel Mas's Spanish Estudiantina and Andalusian Girls, along with the rather less authentically Spanish Band of the Grenadier Guards, and 'Mr Charles Bertram's Wonderful SÉANCE MAGIQUE' (*District Railway Guide* 5). As this list shows, 'Spanishness' was projected in both the Exhibition's indoor and outdoor space primarily through the familiar orientalising repertoire that '[conflated] Gypsy, Andalusian and Spanish identities as mutually interchangeable signifiers' (Colmeiro 127), and bestowed a special significance on traces of the Hispano-Arabic past, such as Seville's Giralda tower and Alcazar palace, and Granada's Alhambra.

For the Spanish, the Hispano-Arabic dimension had very different connotations. Early in July 1889, when the Exhibition had been open five weeks and the displays were at last filling up with exhibits, Madrid's *La Iberia* newspaper celebrated the Exhibition's potential to transform Spain's place in the hierarchy of civilization, rejoicing that:

Those who had previously believed Spain to be on a par with Morocco, or worse, are now beginning to be persuaded of their error, given the evidence of notable progress offered by the objects on display, some so superior to all the things of their kind made in the principal nations that they provoke the admiration of those who previously looked on us with disdain (*La Iberia*, 7 Jul. 1889: 2).²²

The reference to Morocco, Spain's nearest African neighbour whose geographical and racial proximity was a constant source of both terror and temptation throughout the nineteenth century (Goode; Martin-Márquez 12–63), explicitly foregrounds the imperial anxieties driving the Exhibition project. If Morocco, so close to the mainland, had to be kept rhetorically if not geographically at bay, the distant Atlantic and Pacific archipelagos of Spain's fragmenting Empire had to be drawn into the body of the nation. As Schmidt-Nowara writes, by the late nineteenth century, 'the colonies held not only the lure of wealth, but also the promise of unity' (10). This is evident in *La Iberia's* emphasis on one of the outdoor exhibits, a 'House in Manilla' (*The Times*, 3 Jun. 1889), which was sponsored by the Compañía General de Tabacos de Filipinas (Philippine General Tobacco Company). According to *La Iberia*, the young Company (founded in 1881),

has taken charge of providing a worthy representation of Spain, and has done so with its usual skill and magnificence, putting up a pretty house exactly in the style and construction of those in Manila, where it displays and sells its excellent products (*La Iberia*, 7 Jul. 1889: 2).

The foregrounding of the 'Manilla House' as 'a worthy representation of Spain' rather than of 'the empire' or even 'the nation' reveals the extent to which the exhibitionary space could be used to project a fantasy of unity between the metropolis and a distant colonial possession that was now, of necessity, a core plank in Spain's self-projection as a viable Empire. In this way, the 'Manilla House' could play a double role. On the one hand, reminding British visitors of Spain's admittedly shaky imperial status, it projected outwards the imperial 'memory-work' of the Philippine Exhibition in Madrid two years earlier, where the 'Tabacalera' had also provided a building for the display of Filipino artisan cigar production as a means of '[naturalizing] empire for its national visitors' (Blanco 58). On the other hand, it supported the case then being made in Spain for incorporating the remaining colonies more closely

into the core Spanish nation, when ‘the diminished colonial regime played a central role in the construction of Spanish national identity and symbols, indeed the very “idea of Spain”’ (Schmidt-Nowara 41).²³

In contrast to their Spanish peers, British journalists have little to say about the Exhibition’s products and displays. ‘The Man about Town’ makes a rare British mention of the ‘Manilla House’ as a ‘picturesque feature ... covered over inside and out with matting and bamboos’ (*The County Gentleman*, 1 Jun. 1889: 746), but British reporters focus rather on the exhibitionary landscape, familiar to many of them from previous events. As ‘The Man About Town’ notes, recalling the previous year’s Italian Exhibition, ‘The marble railings of the “Borghese” gardens have been repainted in a style worthy of Alma Tadema himself; the bridges have been re-christened, and a Spanish market-place appears on the site of last year’s Roman Forum’ (*The County Gentleman*, June 1 1889: 746). Such repurposing, layered with fresh memories of earlier events, made observers feel that these spaces were ‘haunted’ by previous incumbents, whose spectral presence could still be glimpsed beneath the fresh paintwork:

Where old Rome once stood the Alhambra now rears its head. Not, of course, the Alhambra of Leicester Square. But the Alhambra - that famous Moorish Palace whereof the historian has garnered us with so many lies. These open-air landscapes, seen in the daytime, always look to me like ghostly things. It is a strange jumble now, to a man who has seen all the exhibitions. (*‘Life in London,’ Licensed Victuallers’ Mirror*, 4 Jun. 1889: 222).

Many people did ‘see all the exhibitions,’ but it is difficult to gauge just how many people the Spanish Exhibition eventually attracted. Certainly by July 1889, the Great Western Railway was offering cheap excursion trains to the Exhibition from Bridgend in Wales, via Reading. We have no record of how many people took up that offer, but it soon became evident that despite Del Riego’s optimism, the British public was less interested in the ‘scientific, industrial and artistic state of Spain’ than in the opportunities the Exhibition afforded for eating, drinking, and socialising. As *Horse and Hound* reported a week after the public opening, the Spanish exhibits barely impinged on many visitors’ consciousness:

The so-called Spanish Exhibition opened on Saturday, although I must admit I saw little Spanish in the concern. Lights, good music, pretty gardens, eating and drinking, are the chief features at West Kensington, and for the myriads who like to spend their evenings in the open air this is a cheerful resort (8 Jun. 1889: 347).

This is not entirely surprising. By the time of the Spanish Exhibition, almost four decades had passed since the Great Exhibition of 1851 that sparked the boom in nineteenth-century exhibitionary culture (Greenhalgh). During this

time, the exhibition as a form had developed into Bennett's 'exhibitionary complex,' in which the exhibition proper was detached from the pleasure-oriented 'fair zone' (86). While the core of the exhibition remained a deeply ordered space of national and imperial self-projection, the fair zone provided an outlet for visitors, 'forming a kind of buffer region between the official and the popular culture' (86). In consequence, the provision of outdoor entertainment had become crucial to an exhibition's success by the late 1880s, when as Elfie Rembold has shown, it 'proved a necessary element to keep [exhibitions] going, as augurs had already predicted their end' (223).

Of course, the danger of introducing a separate entertainment area was that it would prove more attractive than the exhibition itself. This was certainly the case for the Spanish Exhibition, whose British committee members appear to have limited their activities largely to the social activities provided at the 'Welcome Club'. This was a permanent building on the Earl's Court Exhibition site that functioned rather like a private dining room, where the committee and their friends enjoyed many fine lunches and dinners, all faithfully reported in the London society press. It even attracted the elusive Duke of Wellington, who finally made his appearance at the Exhibition of which he was President during the August Bank Holiday weekend. While his social activities on the day are recorded in detail, any visit he made to the exhibition hall itself remains unreported:

His Grace arrived early in the afternoon, and remained throughout the evening, visiting the many places of interest, including the Estudiantina Band and Andalusian Dancers, Charles Bertram's 'Seance Magique', dined at the Welcome Club with Sir Harry Burrard, Bart.; Colonel Coxon, the Hon Mr Sandys, Thomas Burnside, Esq.; Whitaker Busch, Esq.; Captain Thornton, &c. The weather was fine (*The Observer*, 18 Aug. 1889: 5).

No trace remains of the Duke's thoughts on his visit to the Exhibition, but a handful of visitors did leave a record of their impressions. We know from Peter Rivière's study that the prolific collector Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers 'acquired 28 items from the exhibition,' including '17 ... pottery objects, bowls, jugs, etc., and ten gilded silver sconces' (Rivière n.p.), which are now housed in the Pitt-Rivers collection at Oxford University. The art critic and writer Walter Sickert remembered some years later that

I used sometimes to sit on a bench in an exhibition at Earl's Court some years ago, which was called the Spanish Exhibition, in front of an adequate copy of "Las Menas [sic]." One by one, little groups would come round the corner – lovers, or families, or parties. No-one stayed a moment. No one said a word. They passed on with a little spontaneous laugh at the droll fashions or the beautiful crinolines. Their only mental comment was "What frights!" (110 [dated 14 Nov 1896]).

Sickert himself was an admirer of Velázquez, at that time familiar only to members of the more progressive British art circles, and 'Las Meninas' may well have influenced his own 1889 painting, 'Little Dot' (Baron 20). His projection of the inner response of the visitors he observes when faced with Velázquez's masterpiece seems designed to emphasise the general ignorance of the British public with regard to serious Spanish art, a subject on which he published at least once the following year (Baron 20). In contrast, the English polymath Gertrude Bell recalled little of the Exhibition itself. Bell visited a week before her twenty-first birthday, writing to her mother that she had attended after dinner, driven there in a hansom, and been brought home by one 'Captain Foster', a daring act that 'I hope doesn't shock you'. Of the Exhibition, her only observation was that 'there is nothing to see at that Exhibition, nothing at all, but there were delicious lighted gardens to sit in and it was a lovely warm night' (*Letters* 5 Jul. 1889).

III. Media coverage and Informal Empire

Gertrude Bell's comment that the Exhibition had 'nothing to see ... nothing at all' reflects the incomprehensibility for a British audience of the version of Spain and Spanishness being projected through the Exhibition. British responses to the Exhibition drew on an accumulated repertoire of assumptions about Spain and Spanish culture that left little room for Spain's self-projection as a modern, industrialized economic partner. The half-page advertisement in the *Official Daily Programme* for Ellis H Weaver's 'stirring tale' of the Spanish hero Rodrigo the Cid, *Roderic and his Faithful Horse*, encapsulates the prevailing British view of Spain. According to the promotional text, the novel, serialized in the monthly magazine *The Welcome Hour*, 'gives a lively picture of the national character of a people who, by the antiquity of their race, form a link between ancient and modern history' (*Official Daily Programme* 2).

The sense of Spain as inherently of the past remained strong in Britain, even after the early nineteenth-century transformation in British perceptions resulting from the 'massive emotional investment' triggered by the two countries' common cause during the Peninsular Wars (Howarth ix). The result, as Diego Saglia observes, was that during the decades following the Wars, 'British culture ... experienced a visible shift from Enlightenment dismissals of Spain as the antithesis of all rationalist ideas and practices to an enthusiastic "hispanophilia"' (123). Throughout the remainder of the century, this Hispanophilia was in permanent tension with the persistent Hispanophobia generated by three centuries of antagonism between competing

Empires who differed even over the purpose of Empire itself (Schmidt-Nowara 4, 24–6). British repugnance at the Catholicism of convent and Inquisition, which resurfaced at frequent intervals and gave rise to the hugely popular anti-Catholic novel (Burstein), was balanced by a fascination with the Hispano-Arabic history and culture embodied in Granada's Alhambra Palace. And despite the country's gradual opening-up to the kind of ordinary Britons who might have joined Thomas Cook's first Spanish tours in the early 1870s, the 'black legend' of Spanish barbarism retained its thrill in the popular imagination, reinforced in 1888 during the nationwide tercentenary celebrations of Britain's defeat of the Spanish Armada. Such intense fascination, however, was not necessarily accompanied by greater knowledge. As David Howarth argues, 'for all the interest Spain provoked intermittently in Britain, the British never really understood the Peninsula on its own terms' (ix)

The flipside of British unwillingness to '[understand] the Peninsula on its own terms' was the perpetual mission to recast it in terms that spoke directly to British interests and desires. The taxonomic nature of exhibitionary culture encouraged observers to think in terms of hierarchies, competition and the survival of the fittest. Contemporary media coverage, with its knee-jerk responses and appeal to shared sensibilities provides a fascinating showcase for the national conversation about where Spain might sit on such scales of civilization and progress. The familiar rhetorical repertoires of imperialism and orientalism allow us to read the resulting representations of Spain and Spanish culture as a means of placing Spain within the contested discursive sphere of what some scholars have called Britain's 'Informal Empire'. As its name suggests, informal empire operated in much the same way as its formal counterpart, only without the transfer of political power. In the context of the Hispanic world, the concept has been employed primarily to explain Britain's close commercial and economic relationship with South America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and while Spain has not hitherto formed an explicit part of that debate, the economic and discursive similarities are not inconsiderable.²⁴ More recently, its meaning has been extended to include the cultural sphere, with areas such as art, travel, ethnography and archaeology now seen as 'a powerfully effective way of doing the cultural work of informal imperialism, which was heavily dependent on knowledge' (Aguirre xv-xvi). That the Exhibition was seen in part for its potential to draw Spain into the sphere of Britain's 'informal empire' in South America is suggested by the involvement – at least in the early planning stages – of Morris and North, whose business interests lay in the River Plate and Chile respectively.

The rhetorical repertoire underpinning British media coverage of the Exhibition captures the profound asymmetry of the relationship between

the two Empires, frequently coding Spain and Spanish culture as inferior, barbaric or preposterous. The deployment of such strategies in the exhibitionary context should not be surprising. As Elfie Rembold has observed, 'It is the encounter with the Other or, better, the representation of the Other that creates (national) identities; and for this process exhibitions constituted a perfect space' (222). The slippage Rembold notes between the 'encounter with' and the 'representation of' the Other is telling. The Spanish experience of the Exhibition had much in common with that of the group of Egyptian scholars Timothy Mitchell describes visiting the World Exhibition in Paris in 1889, who found themselves transformed by the format from observers to observed, from active creators of knowledge to exoticised objects of curiosity. As Mitchell goes on to argue, and the Spanish themselves would discover in London in the same year, such events had tangible implications for international relations, since they 'were not just exhibitions of the world, but the ordering up of the world as an endless exhibition' (218).

Newspaper accounts of the Exhibition rejoice in rhetorical strategies that echo the representation of subjected peoples in contemporary imperialist rhetoric: backwardness, negation, and authenticity. All are present in the report posted by The Man About Town, who visited during the press previews in the last week of May:

the arrangements are still somewhat backward. The effect of the red and yellow-striped roof is very striking as seen from the main entrance, but from beneath it chaos is not yet banished, and there are indications only of the wines, the leather, the metal work, etc., that will presently fill the stalls. There are some pictures, new and old, many of which are by no means distinctively Spanish; but I cannot tell you much about them, as the catalogue was not available when I was there (*The County Gentleman*, 1 June 1889: 746).

The Man About Town's description of 'chaos' concealed beneath a 'red and yellow-striped roof' might well read as a proxy for the backwardness concealed beneath Spain's veneer of modernity. The majority of the displays are 'indications only', that is, characterised more by what they do not contain than by what they do. Worse, even the displays that are present are unintelligible, since the catalogue that would normally do the work of cultural translation is not available, leaving the author without words to describe them. Insofar as the author has been able to decipher the artworks so far contained in the exhibition, all he can say is that they are not 'distinctively Spanish' – that is, that they do not carry the marks of cultural authenticity that would enable the observer to translate them into a familiar national code.

The difficulty of cultural translation, which Graham Huggan calls 'a process ... through which the marginalised other can be apprehended and described

in familiar terms' (24), is a recurring theme in these accounts. During the last week of May, one of the Exhibition's principal attractions, the Estudiantina of Spain, played some preliminary shows at the Cafe Monico at the bottom of Regent Street. 'Life in London' visited for dinner and a show (*Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, 28.5.1889: 210), where he was particularly struck by the performance of the Señorita Rosita Blanco, 'which I suppose,' he says, 'is the Spanish manner of making a mouthful of Miss Rosie Blank.' His translation of the performer's name employs two rhetorical strategies characteristic of imperialist cultural translation: domestication (in the transformation of Rosita into Rosie) and negation. The translation of the performer's surname from 'Blanco' to the near-homophone 'Blank' instead of the semantic equivalent 'White' may be predicated on an aural pun, but also turns our attention to emptiness and the absence of meaning. 'Life in London' was particularly unimpressed with the performance of the Jota, a complicated northern Spanish dance, and his response reveals the competing pressures on British reception of Spanish culture at this time. On the one hand, following the Romantic view of Spanish primitivism, he aligns it firmly with the Orient:

In barbarian lands things on the lines of the Jota are not uncommon. The clapping of hands and intoning and banging strange instruments are characteristic of the dances of Oriental nations. You will see them in India, in the South Sea Islands, even among the poor Maoris of New Zealand. Having seen both, I have no hesitation in saying that the Jota is immeasurably inferior to a ballet at the Empire.

On the other hand, however, he recognises the manipulation of so-called 'primitive' cultures for export: 'Perhaps,' he says, 'it has been pruned and adapted to suit our insular tastes'. Unsurprisingly, given his professional affiliation, he explains the suspect authenticity of the Estudiantina's performance in terms of the suspicions about adulterated sherry then affecting Spanish exporters to Britain: 'It is certain that Spanish shippers never send us a natural sherry. Probably it is also a fact that the Jota is not exported in its natural [state].' The incontrovertible fact that the products and performances to be found at exhibitions were inevitably (and in the case of the products for show quite literally) packaged for export had long made observers anxious, as Thomas Richards has shown in his discussion of the vigorous intellectual debates about the 'authenticity' of manufactured as opposed to hand-made goods sparked by the Great Exhibition of 1851 (27–33). By the time of the Spanish Exhibition, the questionable authenticity of the cultural products on display was routinely accepted, as by the correspondent for *Reynolds's Magazine* who, in his response to the press release announcing the forthcoming Exhibition, predicted without surprise that 'even "Toreador" [by the

very French Bizet] is likely to be sung amid the accompaniments of mimic combats' (*Reynolds's Magazine* 2 Sep.1888: n.p.).

Life in London's recourse to the export of sherry as a means of explaining the parallel process of exporting Spanish culture reveals the important role of commodities as a means of both producing and controlling inter-imperial relations. If British audiences and observers had little interest in Spain's new technologies and unfamiliar industrial products, they knew where they stood with the familiar commodities of sherry, oranges, onions and marmalade. Media commentary on the Spanish Exhibition, above all in the humorous press – which of course relied on the existence of a shared repertoire of associations for its effect – centres around a collection of anthropomorphic figures who give life to commodities familiarly badged as 'Spanish'. One of the most fully-developed examples of this is a double-page cartoon that appeared in early May 1889 in the humorous illustrated weekly magazine *Funny Folks*, under the title 'A Seville-ized Bullfight' (*Funny Folks*: 4 May 1889: 140–141). The cartoon, which neatly encapsulates the major tropes circulating about Spain in Britain at this time, was conceived in part as a response to the controversy that had arisen over the proposal to hold a live-action bullfight as part of the Exhibition. The caption begins with a quotation from *Truth* magazine:

A bull ring is to form one of the attractions at the forthcoming Spanish Exhibition at Earl's Court. We believe it will be under the direction of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals." – *Truth*

This quotation provides the context for what follows. The cartoon's title, a pun on the near-homophones 'civil' and 'Seville,' sets up the comparison between 'civilized' and barbarous behaviour that is the core justification for imperialism. It goes to the heart of Spain's complex place in the British imagination, where Protestant, Romantic, Darwinian and Imperial perspectives in turn all relied on a perception of a barbarous, primitive, backward and declining Spain as a necessary foil for the modernity, civilization, progress and expansion of the British Empire. As Schmidt-Nowara shows, the *leyenda negra* or 'black legend' of 'Spanish cruelty in Europe and the Americas' gradually developed into 'a tale of Spanish backwardness that over the centuries helped to explain the rise to dominance of Protestant powers, especially Great Britain, on a global scale and the eclipse of Spain' (24). The joke is that 'barbarous' Spain is here to be contained by the demands of the 'civilized' British public:

The "function" will be on an extremely careful scale. The bull is to be armoured and his horns well gloved; the matadors, picadors, and banderilleros are also to be carefully protected. Our artist has chosen for illustration the exciting moment when Don Manoel Jose Cachuca y Licoriceo y Onions

(assisted by Don Luis Alfonso Castanetta y Mantilla and Juan Juarez Oranjeo y Marmalado y Fandango y Bolero) gives the bull the *coup de grace* with a pudding-bag. Nothing's Spanish in the Exhibition.

The characters' names reflect the key tropes about Spain in circulation at the end of the nineteenth century. The castanets and mantilla evoke Carmen, the exotic French creation who as José Colmeiro shows, exemplified 'the orientalization of Spain' by means of 'the conflation of Gypsy, Andalusian and Spanish identities as mutually interchangeable signifiers' (127). The exotic connotations continue with the Cachuca, Fandango, and Bolero, three popular dances that would also be namechecked later the same year in Gilbert & Sullivan's operetta *The Gondoliers*.²⁵ The focus on exotic, Andalusian figures, music and dance shows how even by the 1880s, Spain's place in the British cultural imaginary remained dominated, albeit here in a degraded form, by the Romantic visual and textual repertoire that had emerged more than half a century earlier as what Saglia calls 'a kind of fragmentary encyclopedia of a vast array of clichés of Spanishness' (126). Crucially, however, many of these clichés were themselves the product of Spain's own imperial adventures. As Colmeiro points out, Carmen's mantilla and the fan that often went with it were not unambiguously Spanish, but 'products of the Spanish colonization of the Philippines' transformed into 'privileged signs of exotic oriental Spanishness' (133). Similarly, while the cachucha is now associated with Andalusia, it may have originated in at the other end of the Empire, in Cuba, and was popularized in 1830s Paris by the Austrian dancer Fanny Elssler (Arkin).

By the 1880s, Saglia's 'encyclopaedia' of clichés would also contain the 'licoriceo y onions' and 'oranjeo y marmalado' that reveal food as central to the shared repertoire of Spanish images available to the British media and their readers. These foodstuffs were persistently connected with Spain in the late 19th-century popular imagination, but like all everyday items, they arrived in Britain as a consequence of transnational, sometimes global networks of commerce and exchange. They may have been transmuted into a mundane source of humour for a handful of British cartoonists, but to the many sherry shippers and fruit merchants who operated between Spain and the UK, they were serious commercial concerns. Spanish oranges were imported from Valencia and the Canary Islands via London and Liverpool, and marmalade, homemade during January's short Seville orange season, was a household staple. Spanish onions, too, were imported in vast quantities. A cartoon published in *Judy: The Conservative Comic* a couple of days before the Exhibition opened shows an onion and a stick of liquorice in conversation, both dressed in bullfighting costume. The caption reads: "Hallo liquorice, where are you off to?" "To the Spanish Exhibition, onion, to be sure" (*Judy* 29 May 1889: 253). For this cartoonist, the onions and liquorice that were both often badged as

'Spanish' were the swiftest way of conveying Spanish flavour to his audience. This technique did not necessarily require a correlation between popular usage and geographical origin, for while Spanish onions were certainly one of Britain's principal imports from Spain during the 19th century, 'Spanish' liquorice was grown not in Spain, but in the Yorkshire town of Pontefract.

All of these threads come together in 'A Castle in Spain at West Kensington', a rhetorical tour de force published in *Punch* a week after the Exhibition's not-so-grand opening (8 June 1889: 28). The article employs a character called 'Don Onion' to pick away at the questions of authenticity and absence that dogged the Exhibition throughout its lifetime. Don Onion has come to the Exhibition from the 'Sunny South' and the 'Alhambra, with its thousand lights' – albeit not the Granadan palace, but the music hall of the same name, located in the familiar surroundings of 'Leicestero El Squaro'.²⁶ He begins his visit like so many other gentlemen at the Welcome Club, not noted for the authenticity of its cuisine, where 'I was regaled with some of the dishes of my own dear land. Many of these were accompanied by a vegetable called *El potato*, which I found to be simply excellent.' Don Onion's account of the Exhibition's content makes clever play with the twin figures of authenticity and absence that dominated virtually all his colleagues' reports as well: 'Imagine...', every paragraph begins, before launching into a colourfully hyperbolic list of the typically Spanish figures that we have seen already to inhabit the British popular imagination:

Imagine an enormous Arcade filled with every possible production of Spain. Imagine thousands and thousands of gaily decked booths erected for the sole purpose of exploiting the merits of Spanish Liquorice. Imagine again thousands and thousands of beautiful counters groaning under the weight of a wealth of Spanish onions, onions so good, so strong, that they draw tears from the eyes of myriads of pleasure-seekers! Imagine tambourines, and tomatoes, and olives! Imagine all this, and you still have but the faintest impression of the real contents of the Spanish Exhibition.

Don Onion's point, of course, is that when it opened – and for a good few weeks afterwards – the Exhibition contained few if any of the promised industrial products, fine arts, or cultural performances. His shifting of the Exhibition into hypothetical terrain does double work: on the one hand it allows the author to invoke the familiar repertoire of Spanishness that provided a source of shared humour for his readers, while on the other hand stripping that repertoire of its material dimension and, in so doing, forcibly vacating the Spanish discursive space.

The trope of emptiness or absence that pervades press accounts of the Exhibition, read against the background of contemporary imperialist rhetoric,

echoes the characteristic discursive construction of what Anne McClintock calls 'the myth of the virgin land' (30). The textual and material representations of Spain emerging from the Exhibition recall McClintock's concept of 'anachronistic space' whose colonized people 'do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire' (30; italics McClintock's). If the Spaniards could be simultaneously figured as anachronistic representatives of an ancient culture *and* demonstrated to be incapable of organizing an Exhibition (not to mention of producing enough products to fill it), their need for the firm guiding hand of the British Empire would be laid bare. Of course, this process was already underway. As *Darbyshire's Guide to the Spanish Exhibition* pointed out, a 'fourth-rate power ... beggared of Capital' had little choice but to submit to being 'opened ... up' by British Industry, whose 'promises to restore to Spain much of its former wealth and prosperity' (4) would inevitably be realised at the expense of Spanish control of her own territory, mineral resources and – as the case of the Spanish Exhibition made clear – her imperial agency as well.

Conclusion

The Earl's Court Spanish Exhibition of 1889 was a financial, political, and commercial failure for its stakeholders, both Spanish and British. The company file in the National Archive suggests that all experienced a rapid and definitive loss of interest in the project soon after its launch, since it contains nothing between the report of the first shareholder meeting in January 1889, and the submission of a flurry of winding-up documents, signed by Francisco Del Riego on 9 April 1891. On the printed form 'Summary of Capital and Shares of the Spanish Exhibition in London, 1889', Del Riego - described as 'Acting Secretary,' but evidently by now the last man standing - added a handwritten note stating that: 'No meeting has taken place since 1889, the Company proved abortive, one of the Directors is dead and others have been abroad'.²⁷ The company was formally dissolved on 17 November 1891, more than two years after the Exhibition's closure.²⁸ Del Riego died of mouth cancer in London less than eighteen months later, at the early age of 46.

Although some of the blame must be laid at the door of the individuals involved, the Exhibition was, above all, a victim of poor timing. On the one hand, the organizers had counted on access to funds and exhibits that went instead to the concurrent Paris Exposition. On the other, four decades of familiarity with the exhibitionary genre had left British audiences suspicious of any claim to authenticity in a space dominated by what Robert Davidson has called 'a fantasy world of economic possibilities, reification and visual

extravagance' (228). As the correspondent of the *Sporting Times*, reporting on the Exhibition's opening day, put it: 'The Spaineries will be found good goods all the way round, with plenty of local colour, [but] don't, ducky, don't lean the back of that new light dress against it, or you'll find that local colour comes off' (1 Jun. 1889: 5).

The Spanish expatriate business community in London conceived the Spanish Exhibition as a means to showcase their country's renewed national-imperial project at the heart of the booming British Empire. However, it swiftly became a battleground for competing views of Spain's place in the late 19th-century world. The Spanish desire to promote 'the forward-looking and progressive state of Spain and its colonies' (*El Liberal*, 2 Apr. 1889: 6) conflicted directly with a quasi-colonial British attitude that mobilized strategies common to both imperialism and orientalism in order to prepare the ground for Spain's absorption into the contested sphere of Britain's informal Hispanic empire. The consequence was a pervading sense of failure, emptiness and inauthenticity in which Spanish agency was both practically and rhetorically diminished, crystallised by the 'Wandering Minstrel' correspondent of *The Musical World* in a curt summary published more than two months into the Exhibition's life: 'AUGUST 7 – London. Spanish Exhibition. Don't wish to seem ill-natured, so will say nothing about it except that principal exhibit seems to be advertisement of Moonshine soap' (14 Sept. 1889: 625).

Notes

- 1 The four pamphlets are bound together as part of a larger collection of *Sixteen Pamphlets from Industrial Exhibitions, 1869–1895* in Oxford's Bodleian Library. Both surviving copies of the Programme are from the week of 2 September.
- 2 The idea of Spain as a dirty country ridden with vermin from which British travellers needed to protect themselves would be cemented in the popular imagination a decade after the Exhibition, when the first English edition of Baedeker's *Handbook for Travellers in Spain and Portugal* (1898) recommended that 'enemies of repose may be repelled by ... Keating's insect powder, a supply of which should be brought from England' (xxi).
- 3 This may refer to the entrepreneur John Robinson Whitley (1843–1911?), who organized the other four exhibitions, but not the Spanish one. As Whitley himself explained in an interview in 1890, 'Exhibition work counts double, and at the close of the Italian Exhibition I was urged to take rest, and followed the counsel wisely tendered. During my absence my colleagues arranged with several Spanish gentlemen to take over the premises and grounds at Earl's court for the year 1889' (Lowe 225).
- 4 All translations from Spanish are mine unless otherwise indicated.
- 5 Del Riego was of Leonese origin, a nephew of the renowned watchmaker José

- Rodríguez de Losada of 105 Regent St, whose business he took on after his uncle's death in 1871 (Moreno).
- 6 As Simpson explains, the 'Hamburg sherries' were often made from industrial alcohol and some types carried real health risks. The sherry trade's share of the UK drinks market plummeted from the 1870s along with consumer confidence.
 - 7 As Resina reminds us, the Barcelona *Exposición* may have been successful in symbolic terms, but it was not an unqualified economic success, as the budget ballooned, money ran out, and the organizers had to ask for financial assistance from Madrid (45; 182).
 - 8 'El objeto de esta Exposición, cual el que tuvo la Americana e Italiana que la han precedido en los últimos dos años, no es otro que el de dar a conocer en Londres, hoy el gran emporio del mundo, el estado de adelantamiento y progreso de España y sus colonias en artes, ciencias, industrias, y la bondad y riqueza de sus productos naturales, y, hasta donde sea posible, algo de sus costumbres características en forma de entretenimientos'. The advertisement recurs in several Madrid newspapers, including *El Liberal*, *El Imparcial* and *El Día*, during the week beginning 1 April 1889.
 - 9 'El local donde va a celebrarse este concurso, puramente nacional, es el mismo donde alcanzaron un éxito tan extraordinario el americano e italiano, constituyéndolo un vastísimo edificio central, rodeado de espaciosos jardines, donde se asientan muchos otros locales pequeños para diversos objetos. Las exposiciones pasadas fueron visitadas por millones de personas, que dejaron pingües utilidades a los expositores. *La Exposición Española* está patrocinada por eminentes personajes de la aristocracia y del comercio de Londres, y la Compañía que la constituye cede gratis a los expositores el espacio que necesitan para sus instalaciones.'
 - 10 The file contains the legal documents for the setting up of the company, including the statement of nominal capital, and the memorandum and articles of association, which set out the responsibilities and composition of the company directors.
 - 11 See Charles Jones, 'Morris, John (1823–1905)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
 - 12 TNA BT31 4227/27368/26551.3. Articles of Association of the Spanish Exhibition in London, 1889, Ltd: 69. Each member of the executive council was to be paid £200 p.a., and they had the right to appoint two salaried general managers and two salaried business agents, in each case one English and one Spanish, and a secretary at a salary of up to £1000 p.a.
 - 13 According to *La Dinastia* (12.4.1889: 2), the honorary committee included Prince Batthany-Strattmann, Col. Lord Ellenborough, the Hon. FE Moncrieff, Federico D Mocatta, the Hon. FC Hamond-Graeme, Bart., Captain the Hon. Lord Charles Beresford, Sir Charles Palmer, MP, Paul Ralli, Lieutenant-Col. Sidney Burrard.
 - 14 The other members of the executive council were Captain HBM Carrick, John Priestman, and RR Hutchinson. Applin also held the role of Managing Director,

- Riego-Losada was Chief Spanish Commissioner, and a Señor Don Francisco Omerin was named Chief of Spanish Staff (*District Railway Guide* 1).
- 15 The press release appears, with minor variations, in periodicals across the UK, including *The British Architect* (28 Dec 1888: 456); *The Belfast News-Letter* (11 Dec. 1888); *The County Gentleman: Sporting Gazette, Agricultural Journal, and "The Man about Town"* (29 Dec 1888: 1754) and a month later in *The Ladies' Treasury: A Household Magazine* (1 Feb 1889: 122). Wellington seems not to have had a close connection with the Exhibition itself. Indeed, as one journalist, disappointed after an early visit, remarked: 'The President ... though a grandee of Spain, is no doubt a nonentity, and is not responsible for any of [the Exhibition's] shortcomings' (*Licensed Victuallers' Mirror*, 11 Jun 1889).
 - 16 H. Blakemore, 'North, John Thomas (1842–1896)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.
 - 17 The question goes on to instruct the 'student' to 'Describe as fully as you can the various importations from the Peninsula to be seen at West Kensington.'
 - 18 North and Whitley were both born in Leeds, in 1842 and 1843 respectively.
 - 19 I have reproduced the paragraph structure of the original column as it is an important constituting element of the columnist's writing style.
 - 20 'La Exposición está destinada a dar a conocer en aquel importantísimo mercado el estado científico, industrial y artístico de España ... La circunstancia de que los productos de nuestra nación son muy poco conocidos en la Gran Bretaña, hace más interesante el concurso a que aludimos, que revestirá sin duda especial novedad para el público inglés.'
 - 21 A live-action bullfight was originally promised by the organizers, and generated much interest. As *Funny Folks* stated in September 1888, 'A Spanish Exhibition without a Spanish bullfight would be incomplete' (29 Sep. 1888: 307). A press release in December 1889 stated that 'there will be daily exhibitions of bull fights', but 'with one very strong point – viz, without the accompanying cruelty usually practised. A large number of bull fighters and assistants have been engaged, and bulls will be imported; these famed bulls have never been allowed to be taken out of the country before' (e.g. *The British Architect*, 28 Dec. 1888: 456; *The County Gentleman*, 29 Dec. 1888: 1754; *The Ladies' Treasury*, 1 Feb. 1889: 122). By the time the Exhibition opened, the promised spectacle had been reduced to a painted representation, giving rise to mordant comments about British sensibilities. See discussion of 'A Seville-ized Bullfight,' below.
 - 22 'Los que antes creían que España estaba al nivel de Marruecos, o a más bajo nivel todavía, comienzan a persuadirse de su error, en vista de las muestras de notable progreso que ofrecen los objetos expuestos, algunos tan superiores a todo lo que se hace en su género en las principales naciones, que causan la admiración de los que antes nos miraban con menosprecio.'
 - 23 As Beverley Grindstaff has noted, that same colonial possession would be exhibited by its new master fifteen years later, when the US constructed a Philippine Reservation for the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exhibition as a means of '[giving] visible form to political metaphor, a form which effectively

- collapsed proto-nationalist Philippine claims to self-rule into issues of biological race (247).
- 24 Although scholars do not agree on either its meaning or its utility in this context; see Brown for a good range of viewpoints.
- 25 *The Gondoliers* premiered in December 1889. Although set in Venice, its principal characters include the Duke & Duchess of Plaza-Toro, and Don Alhambra del Bolero. One of its best-known numbers has the refrain: 'Dance a cachucha, fandango, bolero / Xeres we'll drink, Manzanilla, Montero / For wine, when it runs in abundance, enhances / The reckless delight of that wildest of dances.'
- 26 Despite the fact that the Leicester Square Alhambra regularly shows its own 'Spanish' production, he says, 'out of a feeling of haughty nationality - for we sons of the due South are as proud as the eagles who peck at our sherry-giving grapes - I thought it my duty to support the great show of the products of my native land.'
- 27 TNA BT31 4227/27368/6.
- 28 *The London Gazette*, 17 November 1891.

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