

For scholars of European seaborne empires in search of a point of reference for comparative purposes or seeking new avenues for inquiry, this book provides a well-documented, authoritative, and readily accessible font of knowledge. The format of chapters (about twenty pages each for vol. 1 and closer to thirty for vol. 2), each with some half-dozen subtitled sections, makes for easy reference and focused readings, giving teachers the option of selecting sections relevant to a particular line of inquiry and providing students with a user-friendly way to engage in directed readings in preparation for classroom discussion or writing an essay.

Disney attributes to Fort Jesus in Mombasa harbor the inspiration that led him to write this important book. His own enthusiasm for Portugal and the Portuguese Empire is palpable. Few readers will be immune to its infectious quality.

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The Eve of Spain: Myths of Origins in the History of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Conflict. By *Patricia E. Grieve*.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. Pp. xvi+312. \$60.00.

In 711, a host of North African Berbers landed in southern Iberia and battled northward, subjugating almost the entirety of Visigothic Spain to Muslim rule within just eight years. Readers of Spanish histories from the Renaissance forward have always known whom to blame for the Visigoths' stunning defeat. Unsurprisingly, the Visigothic Count Julián (who conspired with the Peninsula's Muslim invaders) and his king Rodrigo (whose rape of Julián's daughter sparked the count's conspiracy) make the shortlist. But so, too, does Julián's violated daughter. Known as Florinda "la Cava," she not only seduced the passionate Rodrigo but also counseled her father's catastrophic vengeance. One hardly needs to know that she tempted Rodrigo in a garden to recognize her as the Eve of Spain, whose role in propitiating the downfall of the Visigothic monarchy launched modern Spaniards' ancestors on a centuries-long quest for redemption.

The story of Rodrigo and la Cava is often assumed to have originated with the Visigoths themselves. Yet, as Patricia Grieve shows, this was far from the case. La Cava was all but invisible in Iberian chronicles before the fourteenth century; early authors explained Rodrigo's and Count Julián's failings by other means. Where, then, did the legend of la Cava originate? How, and why, did she become the focal point of early modern and modern retellings of the Visigothic fall? Most important, what does the apotheosis of la Cava tell us about the centrality of misogyny and Christian-Muslim-Jewish antagonism to Spanish national identity? In searching for the medieval origins of Spanish nationalism, Grieve's provocative book promises to intervene in some of the thorniest debates in modern Spanish historiography, at the same time as it engages the larger scholarly public interested in the premodern contribution to nation building and nationalism.

There is much to admire in *The Eve of Spain*, not least of all its chronological ambition. Refusing to treat 1492 as an inviolable barrier between the medieval and the modern Spain, Grieve's "drama in three acts" (18) follows the legend of la Cava from its origins in early medieval Islamic texts, through the Golden Age of Spanish literature, and into the Oriental fantasies and libraries of the great scholarly canon

makers like Ramón Menéndez Pidal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because Rodrigo has garnered the lion's share of scholars' attention, Grieve strives to supply a complementary "feminist" study of la Cava's "evolution through the centuries" that "examines the shifts in how La Cava is portrayed . . . with an eye to the larger social, political, religious and cultural contexts" (29). On this score, *The Eve of Spain* succeeds, and the omnivorous reception history at the core of the book is a worthy companion volume to Menéndez Pidal's famous studies of el rey Rodrigo. Indeed, Grieve's unsentimental account of Spain's national mythology surpasses them in at least one important respect: she is far more sensitive to the ways in which a Catholic majority has honed and wielded the legend of Spain's fall and redemption as a weapon with which to exclude Jews and Muslims from the "true" narrative of Spanish history. It is a strange feature of Iberian historiography that the eight centuries of Muslim rule in the Peninsula are often treated as an accidental digression within an otherwise linear and unitary history of "Christian Spain," and Grieve's dissection of the legend of la Cava lays bare one of the primary channels through which Spain's early modern historians and poets managed to bequeath their version of the Iberian Middle Ages intact to modern scholars, dramatists, and propagandists.

The author's sensitivity to the charged valence of la Cava is not, however, matched by equal attention to the larger issues that she conjures. Historians of nationalism will lament the lack of engagement with the massive literature on their topic, which greatly reduces the impact of what *The Eve of Spain* has to say about the fabrication of national identity. The precise way in which "gendered narratives form an essential part of the national legends of Spain" (49) is a welcome contribution, but few serious students of nationalism will not already know "how important cultural patrimony and literary pillars are in forming national identity" or that "the way history is written shapes perceptions of where we come from and who we are" (11). One struggles in vain to understand what Grieve means by basic terms like "nationalism": although she wishes to avoid "a bald transference of medieval meanings into modern ones," she only postulates that "there is nonetheless some resemblance to" modern ideas of nationalism and national identity albeit "not as a conscious belief among the people" (17).

Hispanists, too, may bristle. Grieve often ignores or glosses over recent historiography (e.g., on Spain's Renaissance historians) that would have added salutary complexity to her story. Inexplicably, numerous primary documents that could have benefited from Grieve's close reading are quoted secondhand—several from translated, anthologized excerpts. Of more significant concern is Grieve's curious decision to call the Christian kingdoms of medieval Iberia "Spain" and to write of their inhabitants yearning for national greatness centuries before "Spain" ever existed. Thus one reads, for example, that "Spain enjoyed a period of self-confidence" characterized by "nationalistic impulses" in the thirteenth century (50). Surely Grieve could have avoided describing Spain as an eternal, unitary nation forever awaiting realization at the same time as she denounces the "tragic" consequences of that same canard for Iberia's marginal communities.

Grieve really does feel strongly about the tragic thread of religious and ethnic oppression that runs through Spanish history. She invokes Edward Saïd, Juan Goytisolo, and her own lament for post-9/11 geopolitics to frame her argument. Like Saïd and Goytisolo, Grieve risks fighting a modern battle against what she sees as a sexualized "fear of Islam" on historical terrain imperfectly suited for the purpose (31). The presentist language jars: in this book, medieval Castilians have a "homeland security" problem and seek a "final solution" for minorities (5, 7). A reader could be

forgiven for concluding that Spanish identity comprises nothing more than a litany of “prejudice, intolerance, persecution, and expulsion” that “came about because otherwise good people acted in the belief that they were right and that God was on their side” (16–18). Without minimizing the suffering of Spain’s persecuted minorities, it is worth asking whether any nation could escape that indictment.

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Spain, Europe, and the Wider World, 1500–1800. By *J. H. Elliott*.
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009. Pp. xxii+322. \$38.00.

John Elliott, throughout his career, has filled the interstices between his major monographs with volumes that have gathered together his lucid and sometimes lapidary essays. In this volume, fourteen studies on Spain and its empire published since 1990 are grouped around the three organizing themes of Europe, the wider world, and the world of art. As the author himself confesses in the preface, there is the inevitable overlap and repetition usually encountered in constructing a book in this fashion, but the elegance of exposition, the clarity of expression, and the ability of the author to construct and then to elaborate and document the central arguments of these essays more than compensates for the reiterations. The essays make clear where Elliott’s interests have been focused in the last two decades: on the role of Spain in the changing balance of early modern Europe, on comparative history as a method in general and on the specific comparison of the colonial enterprises of England and Spain, and finally, on the role of art and connoisseurship as an expression and reflection of power.

The volume starts out with “A Europe of Composite Monarchies,” an important general statement that informs a number of the subsequent chapters. Elliott examines the constitutional arrangements and political implications of these states that included “more than one country under the sovereignty of one ruler” (as H. G. Koenigsberger put it; quoted on 5). In Spain and Britain this political form showed remarkable resiliency. The composite monarchy is one of the key concepts that guides Elliott’s understanding of the construction of Atlantic empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and their subsequent dissolution in the eighteenth century. In the case of Spanish America, Elliott’s essay has already stimulated other historians to look more carefully at the attachment of the Americas to Spain in terms of a composite arrangement of kingdoms rather than as “colonies,” a term that only gained cache in the eighteenth century. Elliott himself in a subsequent chapter “Britain and Spain in America” uses the inability of the composite monarchy to survive the push toward more centralized forms of rule after 1750 as a major feature in his explanation of the disintegration of both empires. It is a theme that clearly has influenced his understanding of Spain and its empire.

Much of Elliott’s opera, particularly his *Revolt of the Catalans* (1963) and his *Count-Duke of Olivares* (1986), have been related to that old but still interesting question of the “general crisis” of the seventeenth century. Elliott has thought long and creatively about the origins, continuity, and results of that process and Spain’s place within it. His essay on the “general crisis in retrospect” is not only an excellent summation of the major historiographical positions but also an insider’s look at the academic origins of the original debate in the pages of *Past and Present*. His essay