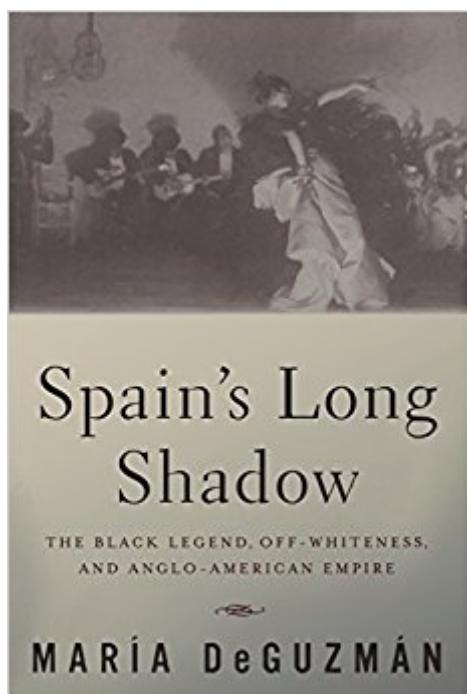


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Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, And Anglo-American Empire



Synopsis

England and the Netherlands, Spain's imperial rivals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, imagined Spain as cruel and degenerate barbarians of *la leyenda negra* (the Black Legend), in league with the powers of "blackest darkness" and driven by "dark motives." In *Spain's Long Shadow*, Maria DeGuzman explores how this convenient demonization made its way into American culture - and proved essential to the construction of whiteness. DeGuzman's work reaches from the late eighteenth century - in the wake of the American Revolution - to the present. Surveying a broad range of texts and images from Poe's "William Wilson" and John Singer Sargent's "El Jaleo" to Richard Wright's "Pagan Spain" and Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote*, *Spain's Long Shadow* shows how the creation of Anglo-American ethnicity as specifically American has depended on the casting of Spain as a colonial alter ego. The symbolic power of Spain in the American imagination, DeGuzman argues, is not just a legacy of that nation's colonial presence in the Americas; it lives on as well in the "blackness" of Spain and Spainards - in the assigning of people of Spanish origin to an "off-white" racial category that reserves the designation of white for Anglo-Americans. By demonstrating how the Anglo-American imagination needs Spain and Spainards as figures of attraction and repulsion, DeGuzman makes a compelling and illuminating case for treating Spain as the imperial alter ego of the United States. Cross-cultural and interdisciplinary, ambitious in its chronological sweep, and elegant in its interpretation of literary and visual works, DeGuzman's book leads us to a powerful new understanding of the nature - and history - of American ethnicity.

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Customer Reviews

Reveals the dependence of American ethnic identity on Spain and Spanish imperialism.

England and the Netherlands, Spain's imperial rivals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, imagined Spain as cruel and degenerate barbarians of *la leyenda negra* (the Black Legend), in league with the powers of "blackest darkness" and driven by "dark motives." In *Spain's Long Shadow*, Maria DeGuzman explores how this convenient demonization made its way into American culture - and proved essential to the construction of whiteness. DeGuzman's work reaches from the late eighteenth century - in the wake of the American Revolution - to the present. Surveying a broad range of texts and images from Poe's "William Wilson" and John Singer Sargent's "El Jaleo" to Richard Wright's "Pagan Spain" and Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote*, *Spain's Long Shadow* shows how the creation of Anglo-American ethnicity as specifically American has depended on the casting of Spain as a colonial alter ego. The symbolic power of Spain in the American imagination, DeGuzman argues, is not just a legacy of that nation's colonial presence in the Americas; it lives on as well in the "blackness" of Spain and Spaniards - in the assigning of people of Spanish origin to an "off-white" racial category that reserves the designation of white for Anglo-Americans. By demonstrating how the Anglo-American imagination needs Spain and Spaniards as figures of attraction and repulsion, DeGuzman makes a compelling and illuminating case for treating Spain as the imperial alter ego of the United States. Cross-cultural and interdisciplinary, ambitious in its chronological sweep, and elegant in its interpretation of literary and visual works, DeGuzman's book leads us to a powerful new understanding of the nature - and history - American ethnicity.

In his review, Bernardo Gómez does *Spain's Long Shadow* a great disservice by focusing so minutely on Spanish whiteness. He disregards DeGuzman's actual historical analysis, which discusses how Spain and Spaniards were represented by "white" Anglo-Americans (and other Europeans) as phenotypically and morally off-white. DeGuzman's work is carefully researched, and she thoughtfully discusses the images, rhetoric, and literary passages on Spain and Spaniards that inform her analysis. What is more, *Spain's Long Shadow* is a pioneering work that helps us re-define how we understand nineteenth and twentieth century Anglo-American literature and how we define the US nation. As a literary scholar, I urge any nineteenth and twentieth century Americanist/US literary studies scholars to read this important work. However, this work reaches beyond US literary studies. As much of DeGuzman's work tends to be,

Spain's Long Shadow is rich and interdisciplinary and offers a lot to people of different interests (e.g., literature, art, newspapers, rhetoric, imperialism, national identity, and race and cultural productions). Spain's Long Shadow is, in my estimation, a classic critical text that should be read by every Americanist/US literary studies scholar. I also feel the need to respond more directly to Gómez Ilvez's phobic claims about Spanish whiteness. Gómez Ilvez spends the majority of his review making claims that Spaniards (as opposed to people in the Americas and of mixed races) are white; and, he suggests that Spain's Long Shadow is based on the "false premise . . . that the popularized vision of Anglo-Americans of Spain is the product of a direct contact with native Spaniards" (i.e. that people in the US have mistakenly assumed the likes of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Central Americans and so forth are Spanish). He proceeds to distinguish between the mixed-race "Spanish people" of the Americas and the white Spaniards to point out these misconceptions as well as to critique Hollywood's conflation of Latina/os and Gypsies with, presumably true, Spanish people who are themselves "phenotypically indistinguishable from white Americans." Gómez Ilvez here deliberately dismisses the historical facts that Spain has been shaped by Moors, Arabs, and Jews (as well as phenotypically white Spaniards), and his argument for a purely white Spain or white Spaniards seems something akin to nineteenth century narratives of an Anglo-American protestant US nation, which continue to inform some people's (mis)conceptions of the US today but which contradict history itself and deny the multiracial, multicultural, and multiethnic formation of the US. Just as Americans are not all white, neither are Spaniards, and I would urge anyone interested on the racial and cultural history of Spain to do more research on this topic; upon doing so, they shall find that Spaniards do, in fact, come in different skin tones. But, again, this concern was not central to DeGuzmán's analysis. She focuses specifically on Anglo-American representations of the Off-white Spanish figure.

"Spain's Long Shadow" is based on a false premise: That the popularized vision of Anglo-Americans of Spain is the product of a direct contact with native Spaniards. In fact, the idea of Spain and of "Spanish people" in the US is that of persons of mixed race in the American Spanish Empire, i. e. of Amerindian or African descent, not of native Spaniards. This vision and the misnomer "Spanish people" applied to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Central Americans, etc. has constructed a false stereotype of Spaniards in the USA, as seen in many Hollywood

movies, already from the early XX cent. In many of these movies Mexican or Cuban actors of mixed race play the role of Spaniards. Hollywood also has predilection for "ethnic" Spaniards; Penelope Cruz of gypsy origin, or Cuban Canary Islander Javier Bardem. This should have been the honest base of the De Guzmán's book. Spaniards have migrated to USA and have integrated seamlessly into the "white" majority because native Spaniards are a mix of Nordic and European Mediterranean (CIA Factbook), and hence phenotypically indistinguishable from so called "white" Americans. Gypsies are a separate minority group that migrated from India to Spain in the XV cent, that has very seldomly migrated to other countries. Moors and Christian of moorish descent were expelled massively in the XV and early XVII cent. as proven by anthropology and population genetics Eupedia map of Haplogroups; Autosomal map of Europe: U. of Rotterdam, 2008. See also: [...] De Guzmán writes that "Spaniards come in different skin tones". Not more than so called so called "white" americans, many of whom have obvious African and Native American ancestry, and many of whom have a quite dark phenotype (for example, a G. Clooney looks ethnically dark in many regions of Spain: León, Valladolid, Asturias, Gerona, Navarra, etc). Only gypsies and Canary Islanders have a dark skin tone; the Spaniard skin tone is within the European white parameters, and not infrequently sometimes fairer than Central and Northern Europeans: see: "The evolution of human skin coloration" by Jablonski NG1, Chaplin G. See also: [...] Furthermore, the readings are many times forced to suit the main thesis announced in the title. For instance, Melville's Benito Cereno, whose protagonist is studied by De Guzmán as another example of an "off white" character, displays a clear case of white solidarity in the face of the dangers posed by the mysterious African character. Apologies for my poor English (English is obviously not my mother tongue).

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