

Beyond *Balcony of Europe*: Aidan Higgins's Knowing Look at Spain in the 1960s and 1970s

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Abstract: For centuries, Spain has been the object of a special fascination for European and especially British travellers. The golden age of British narratives of encounter devoted to Spain blossomed in the 19th century, especially after the publication of Richard Ford's *Handbook for Travellers in Spain* in 1845, establishing a deeply embedded exotic and romantic image of the country. However, the presence of Irish travellers in Spain is overlooked despite the rich historical relations between both countries, which have often not been given sufficient recognition. Indeed, both countries have historically been poor, peripheral and far from the concerns of the rest of Europe.¹ Therefore, there is a hidden tradition of Irish literature of travel focused on Spain which reveals a representation of the country that veers away from the British colonial mentality and authority of speech. The aim of this article is to explore the image of Spanish society as demonstrated by Irish writer Aidan Higgins in his fiction, especially in his travel journals and autobiographies in the final years of the Francoist regime.

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