

Secrets and Glory:  
Baron Taylor and his  
*Voyage pittoresque en Espagne*

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scholars give *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne* (which I will frequently abbreviate to *VpE*) only the most cursory mention and perpetuate misleading information about it.<sup>3</sup> My book will be the first extensive interrogation of Taylor's *VpE*; it investigates the various claims that have been made for and with *VpE*, and aims to interpret it in a more critical and historically informed manner.

Misunderstandings and confusion about *VpE* already existed during Taylor's lifetime, and others were generated later, even over such fundamental aspects as the title of the work and its publication dates.<sup>4</sup> Most scholars have trusted in the book's title pages that indicate that the three volumes were completed between 1826 and 1832, though a few twentieth-century bibliographers indicated problems with this chronology.<sup>5</sup> That erroneous dating placed Taylor's book well before some of the best known and entertaining French texts on Spanish culture, such as the travelogues by Gautier, Dumas, and Desbarrolles, and Mérimée's novel *Carmen*.<sup>6</sup> Correcting such false ideas about *VpE* is not my study's principal objective. Instead, by relying on visual, material, and documentary evidence—some new, some already known—I try to convey a more complex understanding of the book, both through its evolution and completion as well as its relationship to other travel literature on and imagery of Spain.

Aristide Rumeau's article of July 1936 is the single exception to the lack of critical and documented study of *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne*. Unfortunately, his contemporaries and later scholars do not appear to have read his article, for they repeat the same erroneous facts and ideas about the book that Rumeau tried to correct and dispel. On the other hand, Rumeau's scholarship is colored by some strange ahistorical judgments. At the very end of his article, Rumeau assessed *VpE* as "incomplete, half true, half fictional, on the whole, of little interest,"<sup>7</sup> a bizarre comment to make after having invested so much time and effort into studying Taylor's book. Furthermore, his assessment can be challenged on several grounds. Why does he consider the book to be incomplete? What is considered "truth" in a travel book, and, is a travel book only of interest if it is "accurate"? Who is qualified to measure that accuracy? In 1838, the French journalist Alfred Michiels maintained that "the books in which one finds information on Iberian art are nearly all travel books and dictionaries," suggesting that nineteenth-century travel literature did serve as scholarship, at least for some subjects like Spanish art.<sup>8</sup> Rumeau also seems to have been motivated by a nationalist concern to assert Taylor's sole authorship of the book and to refute Spanish critics and scholars who offered evidence that the Spaniard Mariano José de Larra had written

<sup>3</sup> As just one example, Gloria Mora's very fine essay gives incorrect publication dates for *VpE* and for Taylor's trips to Spain in the excellent critical study edited by CASANOVAS and QUÍLEZ 2006, p. 274.

<sup>4</sup> CHENNEVIÈRES 1881, p. 9, mentions a *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne, en Portugal et dans le Maroc* of 1826, and a *Voyage sur la côte d'Afrique* in 1843.

<sup>5</sup> FOULCHÉ-DELBOSC 1896, pp. 191–192, no. 301A; FARINELLI 1944, p. 211, citing DENIS, PINÇON, and MARTANNE 1857.

<sup>6</sup> GAUTIER 1945, originally in feuilleton as *Tras los montes*, Paris, 1843, then revised in 1845; DUMAS 1848; DESBARROLLES and GIRAUD 1851; DESBARROLLES and GIRAUD 1862; MÉRIMÉE 1845.

<sup>7</sup> RUMEAU 1936a, p. 493.

<sup>8</sup> "... les livres dans lesquels on trouve des renseignements [sic] sur l'art ibérique ont presque tous la forme de voyages et de dictionnaires. Tels sont, parmi les premiers, les ouvrages de Duperron et de M. Delaborde, les lettres de Swinburne et les Délices d'Espagne de Colmenar; parmi les autres, l'illisible dictionnaire de Palomino Velasco, celui de Ceán Bermúdez et l'imitation française qu'en a donnée M. Quilliet." MICHIELS 1838, n.p.

Another factor for the critical obscurity in which Taylor's book languished was that it was produced during a period, 1823–1850, which historians of Franco-Spanish relations long ignored. Countless scholars in various disciplines have investigated the Napoleonic occupation of Spain from 1808 to 1813, which brought tens of thousands of Frenchmen to live, work, and fight there and greatly extended French awareness of and interest in Peninsular culture. Other historians concentrated on the 1850s and 1860s, believing that a second wave of French interest in Spain came with the 1852 marriage of Louis-Napoléon to the Spanish aristocrat Eugenia de Guzmán,<sup>11</sup> and the opening of the French rail line from Bordeaux to Irún in 1855.

Nevertheless, *VpE* was mentioned, described, and promoted throughout its long gestation and after, while Taylor was still living. Such publicity frequently came via portrayals of Taylor, a larger-than-life personality whose reputation in Europe and the Middle East spread from his activities in the fine arts and theater through his contacts in government, diplomacy, and industry. Because so much of the characterization of Taylor's *VpE* was either premature and second-hand or embedded in aggrandizing accounts of the baron, it tends to be superficial and misinformed. These descriptions are often contradictory: several critics regarded *VpE* as a scholarly publication, while others considered it a traveler's impressions, and some critics called it a literary work when others saw it as a primarily visual one.

*Voyage pittoresque en Espagne* has also served to support Taylor's reputation as an expert on Spain and Spanish art, and in particular, to justify his principal role in creating the Galerie Espagnole, an impressive collection of more than 400 paintings, mostly attributed to Spanish old masters and acquired in Spain, that hung in the Louvre museum in Paris between 1838 and 1848.<sup>12</sup> In heroic praise, Alexandre Dumas père described Taylor as risking his life in war-torn Spain to save hundreds of valuable Spanish paintings, purchase them at bargain prices, and bring them to France.<sup>13</sup> With the opening of the Galerie Espagnole, Taylor's status as deeply knowledgeable about Spain and Spanish art was publicly performed and institutionalized, which in turn became proof of his expertise. No scholar has ever questioned the assumption that *VpE* prepared Taylor for his role in the new art collection, for it was believed that he had finished his book before he began his curatorial mission. In fact, the book was not finished until *after* the Galerie Espagnole closed, thereby demanding a reconsideration of the relationship between the book and the art collection. Furthermore, scholars have endowed the Galerie Espagnole with a radical aesthetic that they see as catalyzing Realist artists like Courbet and Manet, and several biographers projected an image

<sup>11</sup> See the excellent new study on the empress by MCQUEEN 2011.

<sup>12</sup> The fundamental sources are GUINARD 1867; BATICLE and MARINAS 1981. In LUXENBERG 2008, I reconsider Taylor's reputation as an expert on Spanish art and art historical interpretations of the Galerie Espagnole as an altruistic, and primarily modern, even radically new collection of art.

<sup>13</sup> "Enfin, comme artiste, il a, par dévotion pour l'art, jeté sa vie au milieu des révolutions, disputé les chefs-d'œuvre du génie de la paix au démon de la guerre, doté la France d'un trésor qui allait être perdu pour le monde, et rapporté pour 800,000 francs, quatre cents tableaux qui valent trois millions." DUMAS 1837, n.p.



2.5. Pharamond Blanchard, *Contrabandier, matelot et femme du peuple*, in *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne: Planches, Première Partie*, no. 75. Engraving by Finden, 129 x 191 mm. New York, The Hispanic Society of America.

<sup>64</sup> “Le marquis de Santillane est né dans cette ville le 15 août 1398 . . . Notre Bibliothèque Royale à Paris est riche de manuscrits inédits laissés par cet écrivain. Elle possède quatre exemplaires de sa *Comedieta de Ponza*, ouvrage si rare que Moratín lui-même ne l’a pas connu. Ces précieux manuscrits . . . portent les numéros 8168, 7813, 7824, 7825.” TAYLOR 1826–1851, p. 88. In 1838–1839, Taylor helped to procure work for his Spanish friend in Paris Eugenio de Ochoa, including a catalogue of the Spanish manuscripts in the French royal library (published 1844). See RANDOLPH 1966 and ANF, Dossier Eugenio de Ochoa.

landscapes are rendered not only accurately, but with the aesthetic improvements that only artists can make.

Speaking as the artist of the illustrations, Taylor asserted the novelty and accuracy of the views in *VpE*, which he implies were made on the spot, “I offer the album of a traveler in which, on the recto of one of its pages, he drew a monument, a site, or a picturesque scene, and on the verso, he inscribed some notes.” Here he distinguished himself as an artist rather than as a scholar or antiquarian. Nevertheless, many passages in his book have an academic, or antiquarian air, even beyond the common citation of other travel authors. Taylor made numerous references to historic manuscripts, even giving their present location,<sup>64</sup> as though he had personally consulted them, creating a particularly erudite impression. Few other travel writers did that. Many of the first-person sentences in *VpE*, such as “we visited” (*nous avons visité*) work to assure the reader that the author observed these sites or events rather than present a personal opinion.

Taylor recognized that many of his readers would not have artistic training and tried to justify the artistic license taken in the illustrations. In the preface, he explained,

although the Author has copied with the greatest fidelity the outlines of the objects represented, yet he has sought to exhibit them under the most varied accidents of light and shade, and has chosen the points of perspective which appeared to be the least generally known. For these reasons the view of the Rock of St. Sebastian [fig. 3.11] will appear too lofty to him who has seen it only from the city; and that of the Tomb of Pombal will be considered as too somber and austere, by the traveler who visited the original in the glare of sunshine.

As so often in his writings, Taylor assumed a defensive position. Sensitive to the criticism that travel illustrations received for taking liberties with dramatic or emphatic lighting, the baron pointed out that great landscape painters like Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa did that all the time. While different conventions and expectations existed for oil paintings than for travel illustrations, and Taylor knew these well, he nonetheless argued that an accurate view could diverge from the traveler’s memory due to a different perspective, as in fig. 3.11, or to enhanced light effects. Employing the vocabulary and veristic standards that photography would soon embrace, Taylor insisted on his faithfulness to the motif and his presence before it, “if [the spectator] will . . . transport his imagination to the same moment and point of view



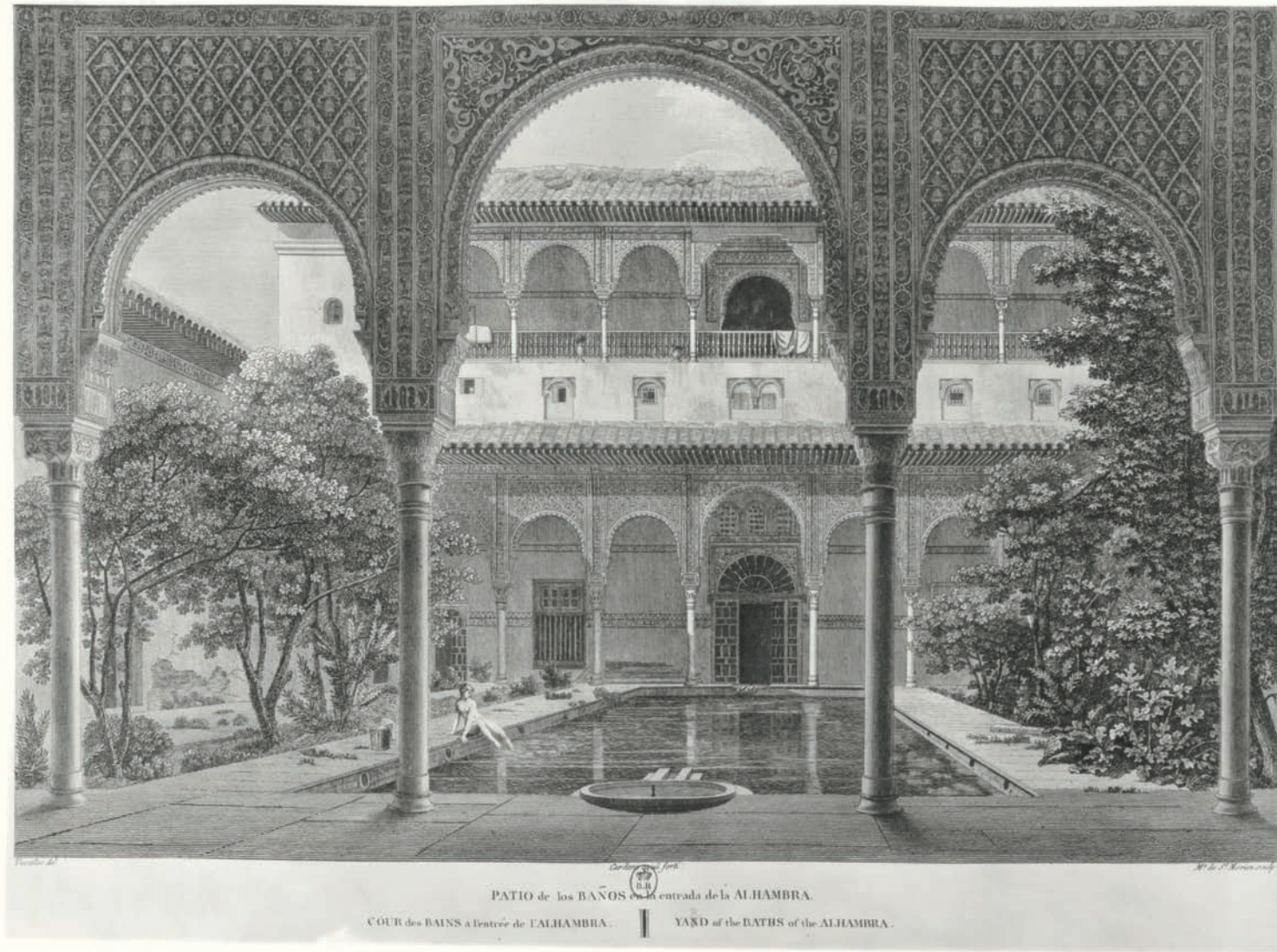
3.11. I.J.S. Taylor, *St. Sébastien*, in *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne: Planches, Première Partie*, no. 5 [Pl. 2].  
Engraving by George Cooke, 124 x 199 mm. New York, The Hispanic Society of America.

<sup>65</sup> “. . . nous avons aussi remarqué le palais du duc de Villahermosa, élégante demeure bâtie auprès du Prado.” TAYLOR 1826–1851, p. 117.

in which the Sketch was taken, he will then be struck by the truth of the copy.” In this way, Taylor distinguished his artistic vision from that of the unperceptive tourist.

Prior to the late nineteenth-century proliferation of universities and research institutions, a substantial portion of scholarship was conducted by passionate, comfortably off, and learned amateurs like Laborde and Taylor. Unlike its chief competition, Alexandre de Laborde’s *Voyage pittoresque et historique de l’Espagne* (1808–1820, hereafter *VphE*), which has consistent divisions of epochs and regions, Taylor’s *VpE* is organized more loosely. In *VpE*, the narrative is sectioned into chapters on different regions, but within those sections, the discussion can range from the region as a whole to individual towns, from geology to the people, from royal history to local customs, while the prints vary among architecture, seascapes, local types, and native practices (bullfighting, traveling, threshing wheat). Compared to Laborde, Taylor took an eclectic, less methodical approach to composing his travelogue on Spain. No evidence survives of his original plan or outline, but plenty exists to show that the book changed form as new opportunities or factors appeared. It was a publication that was enthusiastically undertaken and researched, but its evolution waxed and waned, often in response to Taylor’s other projects, pressures, and financial circumstances. This episodic engagement did not necessarily lessen the book’s scholarly tone, but it distinguishes Taylor from Laborde as an author-director.

The narrative and many of the plate descriptions of *VpE* provide two kinds of truth, what I will call the historical-numerical, which consisted of names, dates, events, measurements, and quantities, and the contemporary-everyday, which included anecdotal social information, reputation, or authorial observations. Both accuracy and local color were highly prized in travel writing of the first half of the nineteenth century, and most authors combined the two in various proportions. The author who regularly provided dates and figures in the neutral third person created a scholarly, impersonal voice, in which even opinions were framed as fact. Like many travel books, *VpE* slyly intermingles fact and opinion through first-person comments such as, “we also noticed the palace of the Duke of Villahermosa, an elegant residence built near the Prado,”<sup>65</sup> in which aesthetic evaluations are inserted into and undifferentiated from factual observations. In contrast, a first-person narrator recounting anecdotes produced a less didactic, more entertaining account in which subjective commentary is made obvious. Of course, the first-person point of view can be read as objective, as in the eyewitness report, but to do so, it must be accompanied by a consistent frame or form that declares its objectivity. Taylor’s narrative speaks most often in the neutral, third-person voice, but engages the more intimate, first-person narrator to a greater extent than that of Laborde’s *VphE*.



4.9. Vauxelles [Vauzelle], *Cour des bains à l'entrée de l'Alhambra*, in Alexandre de Laborde, *Voyage pittoresque et historique de l'Espagne*, v. 4, Pl. LXXXIII. Engraved by Mme. de St. Morien, approx. 300 x 400 mm. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France.



4.10. Pharamond Blanchard, *Patio de los Arrayanes, Alhambra*, in *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne: Planches, Deuxième Partie*, no. 143. Engraving by Finden, 117 x 177 mm. New York, The Hispanic Society of America.

*Landscape Annual*, whose 1835 issue subtitled *Tourist in Spain, Commencing with Granada*, was a collection of twenty engravings, mostly representing the Alhambra, all designed by the Scotsman David Roberts.<sup>132</sup> It had no text, and despite the periodical's title, did not solely depict landscapes. Some of the engravers for this periodical's portfolios, such as W.R. Smith and R. Wallis, also worked on Taylor's *VpE*.

To attract subscribers and highlight his originality, Taylor sought to distinguish his travel book on Spain from others, including those published in Britain. The primary difference of *VpE* was its geographical extent, addressing not only the Iberian peninsula but including Morocco and the British territory of Gibraltar, thereby spanning two continents and four political states. Taylor's looping itinerary made practical sense for a Frenchman who wished to visit all of these lands, for Spain and Portugal shared a long border, both had southern ports that provided access by sea to nearby Gibraltar and Morocco, whose cities Tangiers and Tetuan were closest to southern Spain. One consequence of this geographical diversity was that Taylor devoted fewer pages and illustrations to any one country, including Spain, even though it received the lion's share of text and plates. Thus, it is not surprising that Taylor's *VpE* did not come close to covering as many regions and cities as Spanish sources like Ponz's 18-volume *Viaje de España* (1776–1794) or De la Cruz y Bahamonde's 14-volume *Viaje de España e Italia* (1806–1813), but his French (or English) readers were probably less interested in completeness than in highlights and difference. A second distinguishing feature of *VpE* was its copious illustration, which surpassed in number every other French illustrated publication on Spain through mid-century except Laborde's *VphE*. Another differentiating aspect was the long narrative that represents more abstract ideas and tries to make larger claims about Spanish culture. Finally, the baron hired English engravers, a decision that was publicized and hailed as providing superior illustrations as well as a model for French artists to improve their printmaking.

Yet, by the time Taylor finished the three volumes of *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne*, witty, entertaining, text-only travelogues were available from literary stars Théophile Gautier and Alexandre Dumas père, signaling a shift in France away from scholarly travel books on Spain whose research and illustration were time-consuming and costly. In addition, Spanish authors and artists had commenced their own illustrated books on their artistic patrimony and customs. One was the large, middle-brow *Recuerdos y bellezas de España* (Memories and Beautiful Works from Spain), published between 1839 and 1865.<sup>133</sup> With approximately 600 lithographs designed by Francesc Javier Parcerisa, this book aimed for a comprehensive visual impression beyond that of Taylor's *VpE*, although it was not as scholarly. In 1842, the Spanish

<sup>132</sup> The frontispiece, also designed by Roberts, bears a publication date of October 28, 1834.

<sup>133</sup> PIFERRER and PARCERISA 1839. After Piferrer's death in 1848, J.M. Quadrado and others wrote texts for the publication.

## Chapter 5: Traveler

### From the Military to Freemasonry

113

“His life is among the best known; it always took place in broad daylight.” Charles Monselet (1885)<sup>1</sup>

“Taylor’s private life is so obscure that it is impossible to confirm anything about it.” Éliane Maingot (1963)<sup>2</sup>

Detail of fig. 5.6.

NO characterization of Taylor’s life could be less critical than Monselet’s statement, but even an inquisitive scholar like Maingot capitulated before the inscrutability of the baron’s biography. This chapter will explore Taylor’s life and character for their relevance to his *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne*, but also for their broader implications in his entire career and œuvre. While I do not hold to the belief that “the” truth or a single interpretation about the man and his work exists to be “found,” I am convinced that certain biographical facts and dominant readings of Taylor—as erudite, Catholic, patriotic, and selfless, as writer, traveler, military man, and illustrator—have directly affected the reception of *Voyage pittoresque en Espagne*, along with his other books.<sup>3</sup> To evaluate those interpretations and to propose others, I have read and analyzed previously known and newly discovered public and private documents, comments, and visual images in a historically and sometimes theoretically informed way. While some of my theories and conclusions about Taylor and his works cannot be proven by traditional means, I hope that they will open up new avenues for understanding his books and images as well as the larger milieu in which he operated.

As Philippe de Chennevières remarked in his posthumous homage, Taylor (fig. 5.1) was everything—artist, writer, publisher, military officer, diplomat, secret agent, theater administrator,

<sup>1</sup> “Sa vie est des plus connues; elle s’est toujours passée au grand jour.” MONSELET 1885, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> “. . . en fait, la vie privée de Taylor comporte tant d’obscurités qu’il est impossible d’affirmer quoi que ce soit dans ce domaine.” MAINGOT 1963, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> The principal modern sources for Taylor’s biography are: PLAZAOLA 1989; GERBOD 1986; BERNÉS 1973; GUINARD 1967; MAINGOT 1963; LÉON and LANDOWSKI 1955; SOUBIÈS 1906. Nineteenth-century sources are: JOUIN 1892; OSSORIO 1883-1884; CHENNEVIÈRES 1881; DELABORDE 1880; DUVERT



5.6. Anonymous, *I.J.S. Taylor*, c. 1810?  
Oil on canvas, 54.5 x 45 cm.  
Paris, Collection Mutuelle Nationale  
des Artistes Dramatiques et Lyriques.

Révérènd repeated it in his 1906 peerage. In fact, no marriage act for Taylor exists in the Paris archives, in 1840 or any other year. François may have simply repeated what Taylor told him; why would he question his friend's account of his own wedding? Clearly, Taylor, perhaps with the complicity of François, fabricated this date to legitimize his son and heir who was born that year, and perhaps to avoid embarrassment at having married so much later.<sup>82</sup> This is a good example of how Taylor's unconventional private life was rewritten for public consumption.

Through the aforementioned addenda on his children's birth acts, I traced Taylor's marriage to the municipal archives of Charenton le Pont, a village just outside Paris that has since become integrated into the metropolitan area. The mother of his children, Théodorine-Louise Guido, was born in the second arrondissement of Paris on July 2, 1810, making her 21 years younger than Taylor.<sup>83</sup> A note added later to her birth act states that she married Taylor on August 3, 1854 in Charenton le Pont. Questions might have been raised by this marriage, though not necessarily for the age difference or the two children that they already had together. Many couples in nineteenth-century France only formalized their relationships by marriage toward the end of their lives, usually to facilitate inheritance. But at 65 and 44, Taylor and Guido were hardly at that stage. Couples with children born out of wedlock and who married late tended to come from the bohemian sectors of French society: artists, writers, actors, and other performers.<sup>84</sup> While Taylor engaged with these sectors and led an unconventional private life, he never seemed hostile to the bourgeoisie, unlike many in Paris's artistic bohemians usually affected to be; indeed, he aspired to upper-class status by acquiring a title and a government salaried position.<sup>85</sup> From the piano listed in Guido's trousseau, Maingot speculated that she was a singer.<sup>86</sup> If she brought bohemian attitudes to the couple, this may have caused the upwardly mobile Taylor to keep her in the background.

To hide the act and fact of the marriage, Taylor and Guido wedded outside of Paris, even though they were both life-long residents of the capital. Charenton was an attractive locale for secret nuptials, a nearby but separate municipality, and most importantly for Taylor, the home of Samson, his childhood friend and famous actor of the Comédie Française. Samson provided a local address for the couple and served as a witness to their marriage. As an actor and celebrity, he knew something about crafting and protecting a public image. In their marriage contract, Taylor and Guido legally recognized as their own two children, a daughter Ernestine Isidora born 1833, and a son Justin Félix born 1840. The motives for marrying and for legitimizing their offspring at that time probably came from their children's

<sup>82</sup> RÉVÉRÈND 1906, v. 6, p. 327.

<sup>83</sup> Birth Act, Théodorine-Louise Guido, 2 July 1810; AVP, mf. 5 Mi1 155.

<sup>84</sup> See BROWN 1985 and MCCAULEY 1994, pp. 105–148 for discussions of the “artistic” bohemian image in nineteenth-century France.

<sup>85</sup> The property survey notebooks of 1852 record that Taylor owned a multi-story building, no. 68, rue de Bondy, in Paris, that had four floors, a *corps de logis*, two stables for a total of four horses, and storage space. It seems that he rented additional apartments at no. 54 on the same street. AVP, DP4 Carton 138, Rue de Bondy. MAINGOT 1963, p. 103, says that Taylor had nine-year leases.

<sup>86</sup> MAINGOT 1963, p. 110.