later stage were installed in some of these writers’ houses.

While the book under review convincingly argues that the celebrity culture which developed in late nineteenth-century Paris was a fertile ground for the rise of the French writer house museum from the start of the new century, it is less persuasive when it comes to demonstrating a direct link. The example of the Maison Hugo itself suggests that such a link might be much more oblique than is argued here. At the height of the unprecedented personality cult around Hugo at the time of his death in 1885, the initiatives to transform his apartment on the Avenue Eylau (now Victor Hugo) into a museum failed repeatedly. They were successful only some twenty years later, when the hype of the Hugo cult was fading, and produced the opening of a museum in a house where almost no trace of the author’s domestic life survived.

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This is a rich collection of essays on Spanish art in America from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, published by the Center for the History of Collecting at the Frick Collection, New York (established in 2007) with the assistance of the Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica in Madrid. Although comprising a range of contributions, there is a sense of a cohesive whole to this volume, which is conveniently divided into three sections: the formation of the American taste for Spain; great collectors of Spanish art in America (Isabella Stewart Gardner, Henry Clay Frick, Charles Deering, William Randolph Hearst, Archer Milton Huntington and Algur H. Meadows); and the evolution of taste for the great masters (Velázquez, Murillo and Goya).

Some themes appear and reappear, for example the question of exporting works of art from Europe to the States, an aspect with which many today might feel uncomfortable. Richard Kagan quotes the dealer Arthur Byrne, writing in 1934 to Julia Morgan, ‘My only role in life is taking down old works of art, conserving them to the best of my ability and shipping them to America.’ Another (more positive) thread which we perceive again and again is the awakening of a taste for Spanish art, a renaissance of sensibilities, partly inspired by some of the collectors discussed here, and partly by nineteenth-century American writers such as Walt Whitman and Nathaniel Hawthorne, and artists such as John Singer Sargent and Mary Cassatt.

Richard Kagan’s opening piece gives an overview of some of the questions of collecting art, and the literature of art in the nineteenth century, noting the shift in American taste in the 1880s, the flood of wealthy collectors, and the fact that major Spanish paintings entered public collections in the States. Kagan talks too about the role of contemporary artists in raising the profile of Spanish art. He also makes the point that the east coast was particularly vital, collections in Philadelphia, New York and Washington playing an important part.

M. Elizabeth Boone writes entertainingly about the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, and the Spanish contributions to that show, which she tellingly describes as a ‘mixed affair’. Contemporary Spanish paintings on display were not always of the highest standard, and Boone reveals that contemporary press reports in the States were not always sympathetic to Spanish art. This essay is complemented by Javier Barón’s study of the same exhibition, as well as Chicago’s World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, while also looking at some of the other European exhibitions incorporating Spanish art and culture in the late nineteenth century. Barón additionally mentions some of the contemporary sculptures shipped over for the American exhibitions, most of them plaster or terracottas, and many broken in transit. Unsurprisingly Spanish owners and artists were loath to send valuable works of art for exhibition, which might be damaged, and this may partly explain why no first-rate works were included, and why Spanish art failed to attract favourable comment from critics and visitors to those exhibitions.

The article by Ellen Prokop on Isabella Stewart Gardner and her great collection and museum at Fenway Court in Boston presents a brief history of this celebrated collector’s life and collection, summing up her exceptional response to Spanish art and to Spain itself. She apparently remarked on her second trip to the Iberian peninsula in 1904, ‘I like countries
when Americans aren’t in them’. The sense of
discovery, finding aesthetic pleasure in areas perhaps
not immediately predictable, is another leitmotif in
this exploration of American taste for Spanish art.
Gardner’s taste was much influenced by the aesthetic
of Sargent, whose works she also collected, and whose
paintings could be said to mirror some aspects of
Spanish baroque art.

Henry Clay Frick’s paintings, and his Galerie
Espagnole, are discussed by Susan Grace Galassi.
Arguably Frick’s collection includes more echt
Spanish masterpieces than those of his contempo-
raries; he purchased for instance Velázquez’s por-
trait of Philip IV for $475,000 (prices being another
topic which run through these essays), and El Greco’s
Purification of the Temple, as well as the same artist’s St
Jerome, and masterpieces by Goya. Charles Deering is
a less familiar name as a collector of art; the piece by
Bonaventura Bassegoda and Ignasi Doménech on his
collection describes Deering’s house and collection at
the Palacio Maricel in Sitges (Barcelona) and Tamarit
Castle, also in Catalonia. His collection was dispersed
after his death, partly because he fell out with Miquel
Utrillo, the father of the painter Maurice Utrillo, who
had acted as his agent and adviser, and whom Deering
was to accuse of defrauding him. Because the collection
survives only partially (some works went to the
Art Institute of Chicago for example), much of this
essay depends on evocative photographs of the now-
lost interiors in Catalonia. Deering was interested
not only in painting, but in a gamut of decorative
arts. Mary Levkoff’s portrayal of William Randolph
Hearst deftly sums up his passion for collecting,
and his desire to house his works of art in substan-
tial and appropriate architecture, for which he could
pay handsomely following his inheritance and his
own successful business enterprises. He followed his
own taste, like Deering accumulating a great swath of
works, including choir screens, armour and tapestries.
Some of his collection has been dispersed, but many
important items are now in public collections, includ-
ing the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Archer Milton Huntington specialized in Spanish
art, and Marcus Burke’s chapter on him emphasizes
that, unlike many other collectors, he always wanted
to set up a public museum, rather than merely to fur-
nish his own home. Famously, in his twelfth year, on a
visit to Europe, he stated that ‘he wished he could live
in a museum’. The outstanding collection he assem-
bled, now housed by the Hispanic Society of America
in New York, is testament to his genius and his gen-
erosity, embracing great paintings by Velázquez, Goya
and Sorolla, as well as many others, great baroque
sculpture, and an extraordinary group of items from
the decorative arts, such as the magnificent collection
of lustreware ceramics and historic textile. Mark
A. Roglán’s essay on Alqur H. Meadows is likewise
about a figure whose passion was Spain, and who
wished to encourage public viewing of this art. He
said he wished to create a ‘small Prado in Texas’. The
Meadows Museum is a monument to his capacity to
buy and display Spanish paintings, and in recent years
has been superbly renovated.

José Luis Colomer’s contribution on the paintings
by Velázquez owned by New York collectors presents
a fascinating picture of the growing taste for this great
painter in the States. Only Britain has more works by
Velázquez than America, outside Spain itself. Colomer
analyzes the activities of Henry G. Marquand,
J. Pierpont Morgan, Benjamin Altman, Jules S. Bache,
as well as Huntington and Frick. In this essay we can also
perceive the risks of buying any Old Masters: ‘school
of’ and even fakes can trap the unwary buyer. Suzanna
Stratton-Pruitt’s expertise on Murillo is well-known,
and her essay looks at the early appreciation of this artist
in the States, beginning in the early nineteenth century,
when a painting by Murillo of Roman Charity was in
an American collection (exhibited at the Pennsylvania
Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia from 1816 to
1845), though it was subsequently destroyed in a fire.
Stratton-Pruitt draws attention to the numerous prints
and copies after paintings, especially Murillos, which
also spread a taste for Spanish art: she makes the point
that poor copies did not help Murillo’s reputation. In
addition the Catholic subject-matter did not always
appeal to American, often Protestant, viewers. Few
people remember now that Joseph Bonaparte was
exiled to New Jersey in 1815, and probably brought
Spanish paintings to the New World, which may also
have built up a taste for Iberian art. Ignacio Cano
and Casilda Ybarra write too about the early collecting
of Murillo, similarly mentioning Joseph Bonaparte. Their
essay usefully includes as an appendix a catalogue of the
Murillo paintings now in the States.

The final chapter by María Dolores Jiménez-Blanco
on collecting Goya helpfully looks at the impact of
Goya’s work on artists who wished to break away from
the academic tradition (this indeed is another theme which seems to come up in different contributions to this collection of essays), the anti-classical slant, and the ways in which even quite recent artists, such as Robert Motherwell, have been affected by the Spanish heritage of painting. The book is superbly designed and printed, and the quality of the illustrations, texts, and academic apparatus, the bibliography and notes, uniformly high. This book must be of interest to all Hispanists, as well as all students of American art collecting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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