



CHICAGO JOURNALS



Miguel Morán Turina. La memoria de las piedras: Anticuarios, arqueólogos y coleccionistas de antigüedades en la España de los Austrias

Author(s): Adam G. Beaver

Source: *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (Spring 2011), pp. 170-172

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of the [Renaissance Society of America](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/660381>

Accessed: 21/04/2011 11:11

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=ucpress>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press and Renaissance Society of America are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Renaissance Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Miguel Morán Turina. *La memoria de las piedras: Anticuarios, arqueólogos y coleccionistas de antigüedades en la España de los Austrias.*

Madrid: Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2010. 460 pp. index. illus. €38.46. ISBN: 978-84-936060-7-7.

It was not so long ago that historians of the Spanish Renaissance did little more than gaze wistfully at the idealized Renaissance of Burckhardt while churning out ever more explanations for the “deficient” nature of Spanish arts and letters. Recent decades, however, have witnessed a profound and salutary change in the field.

Scholars no longer presume to know how the Spanish Renaissance ought to have looked; instead, they have learned to take it on its own terms. Though vestiges of the old pessimism still remain — we probably continue to underestimate the extent of Spanish humanists' Latinity, for example — it is now possible to point to a robust literature that recognizes the wealth and vibrancy of cultural production in Renaissance Spain.

One of the few exceptions to this bright picture, however, is the literature on Spanish antiquarianism. As Arnaldo Momigliano showed in his famous essay on "Ancient History and the Antiquarian" (1950), early modern antiquarians like Flavio Biondo were every bit as innovative as philologists like Valla, and their discoveries every bit as crucial to forming the vaunted Renaissance sense of the past. And yet, even though Spaniards like Alfonso de Palencia, Alfonso Chacón, Antonio Agustín, and Benito Arias Montano were among the most distinguished antiquarians of their age, scholars have paid their work relatively little notice. To the extent that Spain's early modern antiquarians have attracted the attention of modern scholars, it has come almost exclusively from classicists, who tend to treat Renaissance antiquarianism as an early, befuddled chapter in the development of scientific archaeology rather than as the quirky, humanist, aesthetic, and fundamentally creative pursuit that it was.

All of which is to say that Miguel Morán Turina's learned and lucid book on the culture of antiquarianism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain is a welcome addition to the field. Morán Turina, a professor of art history, has spent his career ranging widely over the art, architecture, and collecting habits of Habsburg Spain, and *La memoria de las piedras* is not his first foray into the subject of antiquarian research and collecting. Indeed, portions of the book, including its introduction, have appeared already in earlier versions in *El legado de la antigüedad: arte, arquitectura y arqueología en la España moderna* (2001). Yet this new book certainly is Morán Turina's most extended treatment of the topic, and its combination of lively, accessible prose and deep, sedulous research will reward novice and expert readers alike.

Morán Turina's ten chapters resemble less the interlocking building-blocks of a monograph than they do a series of complementary essays circling a common topic, an aspect highlighted by the decision to print the notes to each chapter directly following it. (On the topic of the notes: they are copious and splendidly erudite, and more than once this reviewer found himself reading a particular chapter's notes as an essay unto itself.) There are advantages to the book's looser, collected-essay format: its flexibility and openness to a digressive, compilatory style also made it the preferred format of the early modern antiquarians whom Morán Turina profiles. But the format also runs two risks. First, the chapters' frequent movements backwards and forwards in time may engender a certain insensitivity to chronology. While Morán Turina forwards some clear chronological preoccupations — he purports to identify the first Spanish humanist to view Roman ruins with the "modern," rather than "medieval," eyes of the antiquarian, for example, and notes a certain shift of antiquarian priorities away from Roman ruins

and towards Christian antiquity in the 1570s — it is difficult to plot change across the two or three centuries that this book covers. At several points, one wonders whether Morán Turina means to say (rather improbably) that antiquarians as distinct as Antonio de Nebrija (d. 1522) and Vicente Juan de Lastanosa (1607–84) were operating with the same toolkit.

The essay format also takes a risk in that the reader must himself play the role of an antiquarian, assembling the fragmentary treasures that the author has scattered throughout his essays into the sort of larger mosaic that a proper survey might have provided. Fortunately, Morán Turina has made this a straightforward and enjoyable task, and the book's main themes are readily apparent in nearly every essay. The central question, which takes several forms, concerns the extent to which Christian Spaniards' approach to antiquities differed from those of other cultures, whether Muslim or Italian. Here Morán Turina labors consistently to prove Spanish exceptionalism. In chapter 2, for example, we learn that Iberian Christians and Muslims attached different meanings to classical spolia; while Muslims cherished them in relation to their aesthetic virtues, Christians saw them primarily as reservoirs of nostalgia for the Visigothic past. In chapter 7, meanwhile, we are reminded that Philip II and his courtiers did not share their Italian counterparts' craze for Roman antiquities, at least partly because cultivated Spaniards had come to see the ancient Romans as Iberia's unwanted colonizers. In chapter 8, Morán Turina argues that Spanish antiquarians even failed to catch the bug for Italian-style *historia sacra*, too, though it was a discipline founded by the Spanish catacomb-crawler Alfonso Chacón. (This argument seems rather less convincing than the others.)

For all of its importance, Spanish exceptionalism is hardly the only theme motivating this book. Morán Turina is also evocative and compelling on the humanists' alternating desires to conserve, collect, reuse, and copy material remains (chapters 2, 9, and 10); the complex relationship between texts, objects, and their artistic representation, whether in antiquarian publications or contemporary works of art (chapter 3); the protean nature of Renaissance historicism, oscillating between criticism and credulity (chapter 4); and the tremendous psychological impact that the consuming and destructive power of time exerted on humanists' and collectors' minds. With great insight, Morán Turina has laid bare the manias and tensions at the heart of the antiquarian passion for communing with the past — plus, in the case of Spain, its vaguely nationalist and Christianizing agenda — in a way that should clarify the ways in which antiquarianism, for all of its important contributions to our knowledge of the past, was not simply a preliminary phase in the development of modern, scientific archaeology.

ADAM G. BEAVER
Princeton University