

1

A Changing Spanish Identity

It is no wonder that [. . .] Cervantes's hero [Don Quixote] has become a symbol of Spain and Spanish culture.

Robert Bayliss, *What Don Quixote Means (Today)*, 387

In the eighteenth century, Spaniards and Spanish Americans found themselves embedded in changing political, economic, and cultural environments that forced them both to negotiate new ideas and goods and to define what it meant to be “Spanish.” A Spanish individual living on either side of the Atlantic, for example, might have adopted French fashions and phrases in imitation of the new Bourbon court in Madrid, while enjoying American foods like turkey on British dishes that were meant to imitate Asian porcelain. While some individuals attempted to integrate these new influences into their lives and redefine their sense of cultural identity, others protested the adoption of non-Spanish influences by promoting customs that they perceived as characteristically Spanish.

This struggle to delineate Spanish cultural identity can perhaps best be seen in the iconic Spanish novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha* by Miguel Cervantes de Saavedra. During the eighteenth century, the book regained popularity after having been out of print from 1674 to 1704. Despite being translated into numerous languages and enjoyed throughout Europe in the century following its publication in 1605, it was not until 1780 that the Spanish Royal Academy accepted it as a classic piece of literature and printed a new edition. While some scholars have suggested that the lack of new editions in the late seventeenth century could be related to criticisms of the novel during this period (Santos 2012), its resurgence is also an example of the struggle to define Spanish identity and cultural heritage during this period.

Cervantes's novel, as humorous and fictitious as it is, is both quintessentially Spanish and reflective of the cultural influences that impacted early modern Spanish society. The knight's preoccupation with status and earning the appropriate social standing to be worthy of his love, the "peerless Dulcinea," for example, is indicative of contemporary Spanish attitudes toward social structure and class. The casual references to the Americas and non-Christians, in contrast, hint at the external cultural influences that had been present in the Iberian Peninsula for generations.

This book is not, however, an analysis of *Don Quixote*, but rather a study that relies on the knight to escort us through the cultural negotiations of the early modern Spaniards and Spanish Americans who might have read and enjoyed the adventures of this unusual gentleman and his faithful squire, Sancho Panzo. On both sides of the Atlantic, these nonfictitious individuals attempted to amalgamate new ideas and fashions from the Americas, Asia, and other parts of Europe with their Spanish heritage and identity. In doing so, they created a distinct Spanish Atlantic identity that was neither wholly Spanish nor wholly Spanish American, but rather reflected the increasing globalization of the time while also maintaining some Spanish traditions.

Although Spaniards and Spanish Americans constituted a significant portion of the Atlantic world and represented one of the largest and most powerful early modern imperial enterprises, they have been largely underrepresented in trans-Atlantic studies. While numerous scholars have addressed British and British-American history and archaeology (Armitage and Braddick 2002), there are currently only two archaeological studies of the Spanish Atlantic (Lister and Lister 1987; McEwan 1989), neither of which addresses domestic sites or the eighteenth-century Spanish Empire.

One reason for this lack of comparative research is that, to date, the majority of scholarly work regarding early modern Spanish sites concentrates on settlements in the Americas, while Spanish archaeologists have only recently begun to investigate sites from this time period. This state of imbalanced research has resulted in several unfortunate consequences. Because scholarship in the Americas has been conducted without the aid of a comparable data set from Spain, interpretations of Spanish American sites have relied on conjectural ideas of contemporary Spanish lifeways, rather than on models established from empirical archaeological research. Additionally, differences in research methods and approaches

to studying and interpreting the data have resulted in incompatible data sets between Spain and her former territories, which makes such trans-Atlantic research difficult at best.

Despite these challenges, the situation is improving. An increasing number of archaeologists in Spain are studying the *moderna* (1492–1809) and *contemporanea* (1809–present) eras and collaborating with American colleagues, while researchers in other fields, such as history and art history, are also conducting trans-Atlantic studies. Although these scholars focus on the Spanish Empire, the results of their research and their new methodological approaches for this type of work are beneficial to others studying the Atlantic world. The more we know about early modern Spaniards and Spanish Americans, the better equipped we will be to study their role in Atlantic history and how they contributed to, participated in, and shaped political, cultural, and economic policies throughout the region. This book, therefore, represents one possible way of exploring how individuals in Spain and the Americas lived in the eighteenth century and how the multidirectional nature of colonialism impacted their representations of cultural identity and heritage.

The Sites and Research

This study focuses on three eighteenth-century domestic sites in Spain and Florida. The first site, La Calle Corredera, is located in Jerez de la Frontera, Spain and was most likely occupied by a series of middle-class families during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second site, Palm Row, belonged to Chief Adjutant Francisco Ponce de León and his family, who lived in St. Augustine, Florida in the middle of the eighteenth century; they left the town in 1763 when the territory was ceded to the British. While the last site, known as the Monson Motor Lodge, was occupied by numerous individuals who lived in St. Augustine in the mid-1700s, this study uses the evidence for one phase of occupation that corresponds to Spanish-born merchant Juan de Salas and his family in the 1760s.

La Calle Corredera and the Ponce de León and the de Salas households are indicative of the kinds of individuals who populated the Spanish Atlantic and contributed to developing this Spanish Atlantic identity, either in person or through long-distance exchanges. While earlier Spaniards saw the Americas as a place to make their fortune before returning home

to a life of leisure in Spain, the eighteenth-century families who lived at these sites saw the Americas as legitimate parts of the Spanish Empire. For the Ponce de Leóns and the de Salas families, St. Augustine was very much a home rather than a temporary settlement until they could afford to return to Spain. The family at La Calle Corredera, in turn, decorated their house with Mexican ceramics and enjoyed American foodstuffs such as chocolate. Together, these individuals are prime examples of how Spaniards and Spanish Americans navigated the cultural developments of the time.

The present study focuses on the ceramics recovered at these sites, because of their predominance in the archaeological record and their ability to serve as proxies for social activities such as entertaining, cooking, and dining. For modern scholars, these vessels are valuable sources of information, as they can provide clues to foodways, fashions, aesthetics, and cultural trends and, when compared among sites, can indicate cultural exchanges and behavioral differences.

These items, however, represented only a small percentage of the average household's goods. Indeed, in *moderna*-era Spanish paintings, ceramics seem rarely to be depicted, unless the image is of a still life or shows dining or cooking, such as in *casta* paintings. Similarly, references to ceramics are somewhat rare in texts of the period; they are hardly mentioned in *Don Quixote*, and household inventories inconsistently document ceramic objects. Because early modern consumers appear to have viewed ceramics as relatively disposable, somewhat unimportant elements of a household assemblage, it is also important to include other lines of evidence and consider both the items that went into and onto the ceramics as well as those that surrounded the vessels, in order to obtain a more holistic view of the past.

Consequently, this study also includes nonceramic elements, such as early modern texts, food, aesthetics, and ideas, all of which might have had an impact on the function, shape, use, or decoration of the vessels. By combining archaeological and documentary research, we can create a snapshot of both the individual sites in question and life in eighteenth-century Jerez de la Frontera and St. Augustine.

Based on this glimpse of life in the Spanish Atlantic, many early modern Spaniards and Spanish Americans were very willing to incorporate and adapt a variety of cultural influences. In Spain, individuals of various social ranks strove to copy the French fashions popular in Madrid.