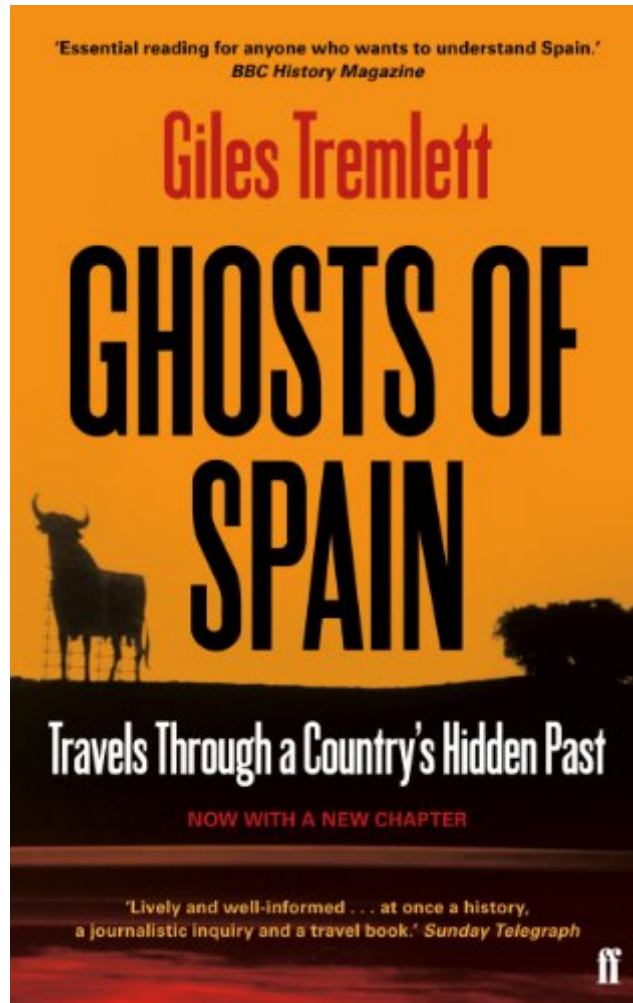


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Ghosts Of Spain: Travels Through A Country's Hidden Past



Synopsis

The Spanish are reputed to be amongst Europe's most voluble people. So why have they kept silent about the terrors of the Spanish Civil War and the rule of dictator Generalísimo Francisco Franco? The appearance - sixty years after that war ended - of mass graves containing victims of General Franco's death squads has finally broken what Spaniards call 'the pact of forgetting'. At this charged moment, Giles Tremlett embarked on a journey around Spain - and through Spanish history. As well as a moving exploration of Spanish politics, Tremlett's journey was also an attempt to make sense of his personal experience of the Spanish. Why do they dislike authority figures, but are cowed by a doctor's white coat? How had women embraced feminism without men noticing? What binds gypsies, jails and flamenco? Why do the Spanish go to plastic surgeons, donate their organs, visit brothels or take cocaine more than other Europeans? 'Lively and well-informed . . . at once a history, a journalistic inquiry and a travel book.' Sunday Telegraph

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Customer Reviews

This is a great journalistic account of the social and political changes that have transformed Spain up to the present day. Tremlett discusses the country's past and present in fairly equal measure. He

begins by looking at the legacies of the Spanish Civil War, discussing how only in the past decade has the full scale of the atrocities that took place come to light. He discusses how Spaniards whose relatives were killed by the Francoists have pushed in recent years for their relatives to be given decent burials. He also writes an interesting chapter on Franco's overall legacy, arguing that after his death and the country's transition to democracy he has been largely purged from public discourse. Despite this collective amnesia that he identifies, Tremlett points out that the same left-right cleavage that drove the war still lurks below the surface of Spanish society. The book also contains chapters on the Basque, Catalan, and Galician regions. Tremlett provides very insightful analysis of the origins of and main forces behind Basque and Catalan nationalism, while his chapter on Galicia details that region's emergence as a conduit for Columbian cocaine. One of my favorite chapters looked at gender relations in Spain, in which Tremlett provides some very amusing anecdotes that reveal contrasts between Spain and his native Britain. This chapter also discusses Tremlett's quest to understand the paradox of how a country can be so awash in brothels (which, he reports, 1/4 of Spanish men visited) yet relatively conservative in terms of the sexual mores of its people.

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