

European Modernity and  
the Passionate South

*Gender and Nation in Spain and Italy*  
*in the Long Nineteenth Century*

*Edited by*  
Xavier Andreu and Mónica Bolufer



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## European Modernity and the Passionate South

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# Contents

Notes on Contributors VII

Introduction 1

*Xavier Andreu and Mónica Bolufer*

- 1 Gallantry and Sociability in the South of Europe: Shifting Gender Relationships and Representations 14  
*Mónica Bolufer*
- 2 On the Spanish National Character: Gender and Modernity in Joseph de La Porte's *Le Voyageur françois* (1772) 36  
*Ester García-Moscardó*
- 3 More Than One Modernity: North and South America in Enlightenment Debates on Empire, Gender and Nation 56  
*Nuria Soriano*
- 4 Nations, Sexuality, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century National Narratives 73  
*Alberto M. Banti*
- 5 Honour and Violence: Mediterranean Exoticism and Masculinity 92  
*Joep Leerssen*
- 6 Meridian Ambivalences: Gendering the South in the Writings of the Coppet Group 108  
*Diego Saglia*
- 7 Peoples of Bandits: Romantic Liberalism and National Virilities in Italy and Spain 126  
*Xavier Andreu*
- 8 The Moral and Civil Primacy of Italian Women: Female Models between Italy and Europe in the Era of the Risorgimento 145  
*Maria Pia Casalena*

- 9 Men, Women, and a Virtuous Nation: Spanish Radical Novels of the  
Mid-Nineteenth Century 164  
*Florencia Peyrou*
- 10 Northerness in the South: Basque Stereotype and Gender 184  
*Coro Rubio Pobes*
- 11 A Growing Distrust of Southern Italy: Images and Theories about  
National Backwardness in Liberal Italy, 1876–1914 205  
*Antonino De Francesco*
- 12 Love, Gender and Class in the Nationalist Project of Emilia Pardo Bazán:  
An Unsentimental Story 223  
*Isabel Burdiel*
- 13 When the Empire Is in the South: Gendered Spanish Imperialism in  
Morocco at the End of the 19th Century 241  
*Ferran Archilés*
- Index 263

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# Introduction

*Xavier Andreu and Mónica Bolufer*

European culture is full of stereotypes about southern Europeans' passionate and impulsive character, either as a strong rejection or a more or less veiled envy. These stereotypes provide a plot or a setting to countless literary, cinematographic or television comedy or drama fictions, inspire advertising campaigns and appear in debates about the policies of the European Union or the most severe problems that have challenged it from the 2008 financial crisis to the COVID-19 crisis. They also underlie the development of certain areas of study, such as the Mediterranean studies that have recently emerged in the American academic sphere. As Giovanna Fiume (2016) acutely pointed out, these are not exempt from a romanticised vision of the *Mare nostrum* inherited from the distinguished French historian Ferdinand Braudel. His classic *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (Braudel 1949) is an impressive piece of research that invented what Lucien Febvre called a "beautiful false topic". Following in the footsteps of Braudel, Mediterranean studies tend to over-generalise projecting, on the set of territories bathed by the Mediterranean Sea and in an almost immobile time, of extremely long duration (Braudel's famous *longue durée*), cultural features (such as the culture of honour or the extended family) that are documented only in specific geographic and temporal contexts.

The extended survival and significant extension of these clichés can be explained because they help to give meaning to reality by offering narrative and representation structures connecting with preconceptions so profoundly embedded that they are not always made explicit (Leerssen 2016). However, their broad scope and long duration do not mean that they are eternal. From a historical point of view, they have their origin, reasons, and evolution, which are always contingent and linked to precise political, cultural, and economic circumstances. Our volume builds on the legacy of several decades of research analysing the complex and conflictive symbolic construction of the European borders, precisely from those places that have been defined as peripheries at different times (Herzfeld 1987, Wolff 1994, Todorova 1997, Schneider 1998, Dolan 2000, Çirakman 2002, Moe 2002, Jakobson 2009). However, we adopt a different perspective, which aims to relate and compare the cases of Italy and Spain and to highlight the open nature of these processes and the plurality of conflicting opinions.

The meanings attributed to the South derive from its place in a discourse articulated in terms of opposition. There is no South without a North, just as there is no North without a South (Fjågesund 2014, Leerssen 2019). These meanings need to be fixed through the articulation of their differences, in a continuous process irrevocably doomed to failure: geographical essences do not exist. The consistency and sharpness of contours induced by cartographic thought are just mirages. The symbolic borders of the North and the South are tremendously unstable. They are like a couple that changes position on the dance floor over and over again, rather than spaces to locate on a map.

The very idea of Europe, whose borders are equally blurred, historical, and unstable, was articulated on a North-South divide crossed by other axes of equal importance, such as the East-West one.<sup>1</sup> These conceptual pairs are mutually constituted and always involve power relations, as many specialists have highlighted. The debate between “ancients and moderns” was not only a temporary conflict but also a geopolitical one, as Roberto M. Dainotto (2007) has perceptively reminded us. The superiority of a civilised Mediterranean South over a cold and barbarous North was in jeopardy since the seventeenth century, as the power game in the continent began to shift towards northwestern areas. This new situation led some intellectuals of the Enlightenment to believe the flame of “modernity,” which had been extinguished in a decadent Catholic South (Spain, Italy, Portugal) or in territories dominated by Ottoman power (Greece), was now sheltered in the North.

All these variables, in turn, intersected with and were an inherent part of the eighteenth-century debate on “national characters,” as Ester García-Moscardó analyses in her chapter. In the encyclopaedic pastiche of travel accounts *Le Voyageur François* [The French Traveller] (1765–1795), Joseph de La Porte constantly used the European South to establish by contrast the features of a modernity that he ended up associating with the French. The text evidences the relevance of genres such as travel accounts (and more precisely, travel collections, a commercial synthesis product, adapted and plagiarised from previously published texts) in the simplification and popularisation of stereotypes about the European South, as well as in the dissemination of a “national thought” and the configuration of the clichés associated with the various national characters of the continent. In La Porte’s work, climate and history, as well as certain anthropological features, become the main factors that justify a hierarchy among the various European peoples gradually turning into the *orientalization* of Mediterranean Europe. This is much more visible in his

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1 On the symbolic borders of Europe, see the classics by Febvre (1999), Chabod (1995), and also Mikkeli (1998), Pagden (2002), Bolufer (2005), Dainotto (2007).

narrative than in other accounts, more nuanced and attentive to details. In the discourse on European modernity, Mediterranean Europe became then one of the “internal Others” that made it possible to affirm and legitimise the recently established cultural and political dominance of the North.

Nuria Soriano analyses the eighteenth-century dispute over the New World from these coordinates and underlines the implicit political dimension in these debates. According to Cornelius de Pauw or the Abbé Raynal, to what extent should the Spanish and Portuguese empires be replaced in America by other more modern and efficient forms of imperial domination? (Iarocci 2006). The analysis of Pedro de Estala's *El Viajero Universal* [The Universal Traveller] (1797–1799), a free adaptation of the fragments dedicated to the American continent by La Porte, as well of other contemporary texts written by Spanish authors on this same question, reveals that the association of the North with modernity could be internalised and discussed at the same time. Estala accepted the climatic arguments to justify a commonplace in that debate: the differences between a prosperous and active North America and a stagnant South America with childish features. However, he reconsidered the responsibility attributed to Spain in the last issue. For him, on the contrary, those same arguments could be used to highlight even more the titanic civilising enterprise that the Spaniards had carried out in such a hostile territory, thus affirming the European modernity of Spain and its empire against those who denied it.

Both García-Moscardó and Soriano show how gender was one of the categories that allowed these discourses of power to be articulated. The relationship between the sexes became a clear indicator of the degree of civilisation of peoples in the Enlightenment narrative of progress (Moran 2005, Bolufer 2009, Sebastiani 2013). Self-control and the moderation of passions were conceptualised as unmistakable signs of modernity. The stability of a well-arranged family structure was a precondition and guarantee of the proper functioning of a political order that had to be based on subjects capable of governing themselves. Courteous relationships between the sexes, love and sexuality had to be aligned with the principles of female modesty and domesticity and male self-restraint (Patriarca 2005 and 2010, Babini, Beccalossi and Riall 2015, Bolufer 2016). In the eighteenth century, the eastern harem was in the European imaginary a symbol of disorderly passions and a metaphor for the inability of non-European peoples to host free representative institutions. In a not so extreme way, the idea that passions overruled reason in the domestic as well as in the political realm also applied to descriptions of alleged female confinement and excessive forms of gallantry in the European South (Bizzocchi 2014, Bolufer 2016). However, since the end of the eighteenth century, the hegemonic

forms of French gallantry started to be questioned in defence, precisely, of the virtues of nations, considered the ultimate depositories of sovereignty.

In this regard, Mónica Bolufer's chapter analyses in a comparative way how some travellers and philosophers from northern Europe who visited Italy or Spain in the eighteenth century, in person or from their desks, judged the gallant relations between women and men, and particularly the bond between a married lady and a gallant known as *cicisbeo*, *chichisveo*, or *cortejo*. The chapter also looks at how local male and female authors responded to those views. The former, coming from Great Britain or France – and in some cases, Prussia –, tended to interpret these relationships as adultery, making them proof of the inability of the southerners to control their passions due to climate or religion. More insightful or empathetic, only a few understood the logic of a practice that had its specific reasons in aristocratic values and in the intense sociability of the century. The latter often hesitated between sharing the critiques of the northerners – which were, in turn, a critique of the very possibility of modernity in societies that were burdened by their past – and counteracting them. Some of them, in fact, defended the Italian and Spanish forms of gallantry as a morally respectable and more respectful alternative either to the separation of masculine and feminine spaces typical of Great Britain or the “frivolous” manners imposed by French hegemony. In any case, for Spanish and Italian intellectuals, morality was at stake and, with it, the capacity for the progress of their nations, both being questioned by many external observers. They all sought to locate their country and grant it a proper position on a reconfigured map of cultural and political hegemonies in Europe.

These and other debates remained central throughout the following century. The new nations forged in the nineteenth century were imagined through familiar metaphors that were key in liberal revolutionary processes (Hunt 1992, McClintock 1995, Blom, Hagemann and Hall 2000, Landes 2001, Banti 2005, Porciani 2006, Andreu 2011). The modernity and viability of these nations were made dependent on the respectability of their respective national characters. The honour and purity of their maidens were extended to that of the entire nation, as Alberto M. Banti shows in his chapter. The author underlines the relevance of inter-ethnic sexual violence in the narrative of romantic nationalism throughout the continent, as can be seen in some of the most famous contemporary novels, operas or paintings that put rape at the centre of their plots. Through these narratives, nations were imagined as kinship communities, showing the political dimension of the discourses on sexuality and the morality of European women. The link between national modernity and the respectability of men and especially women increased throughout the century (Mosse 1985, Malecková 1996).

However, in the South, these discourses clashed with those that emphasised certain immorality intrinsic to the inhabitants of the Mediterranean shores – immorality that questioned the modernity of these nations (Patriarca 2010, Andreu 2016). Southern Europe fascinated nineteenth-century romantics: it was for them an exotic and picturesque territory situated on the edge of Western modernity (Pemble 1987, Calvo Serraller 1995, O'Connor 1998, Saglia 2000, Luzzi 2002, Brilli 2006, Saglia and Haywood 2018, Varela 2019). Hence, as Joep Leerssen points out, it was possible to consider the “Byronic hero,” interpreted as a mixture of southern and eastern features, as characteristic of that Mediterranean. This hero remained in the European imaginary and influenced – and continues to influence – how the social sciences address the anthropological features of the Mediterranean countries. This new ideal of masculinity, whose *raison d'être* has much to do with the logic of romantic exoticism, was born from crossing an ethnotype (the temperament typical of a warm climate) and a sociotype (the outlaw that roams freely in lawless countries).

As Leerssen points out in his text, deep down, if the South was fascinating and exotic like other places on the planet, it was because it was supposedly rooted in the past. In other words, romanticism did not change the assessment of the position these territories occupied in the narrative of European progress but the critical assessment of this progress. The three gods of modernity – reason, work, and freedom – seemed to have abandoned southern regions, decimated by passion and religious fanaticism, by idle indolence and blind servility to authority. In this regard, the South was progressively associated with the quintessential “Other” of Western modernity in the European mindset: an Eastern world to which the Mediterranean Sea would not have functioned as an impassable barrier.

Historizing this entire process is essential. The conceptual opposition North versus South – as well as their links with the languages of the nation and gender – is always articulated in specific spatial and historical contexts and is endowed with equally variable meanings. One of the purposes of this collective work is to understand this historicity, renouncing excessively simplistic dichotomous explanations that cancel out the complexity and obscure the agency of those who participated in the process. For historians, it is essential to escape teleological accounts. The hegemonic rise of the identification between the European North and modern civilisation cannot be taken for granted. Likewise, it cannot be conceptualised as a zero-sum triumph of the North over a South that is only recognised in the drama as the scapegoat. This account, by the way, ends up reproducing an archetypal and gendered vision of North-South relations that assigns each of the protagonists, respectively, an active and a passive role.



On the contrary, the essays collected in this volume recover a debate in which several voices took part, and in which the identification between North and modernity had not yet been decided. It is precisely for this reason that we have chosen a long-term chronology between the age of Enlightenment and a long nineteenth century that spans the first decades of the twentieth. This question allows us to perceive how, at the beginning of this period, the apriorism pairing the North with modernity competed with some views (many internal and some external) that not only underlined the historical importance of Italy and the Iberian Peninsula in the origins of European culture but also valued the processes of economic growth, social change and intellectual renewal experienced in those territories during the eighteenth century.

Furthermore, the hegemonic link established at the dawn of the late modern period between the North and modernity was discussed right from the beginning, and not only by southern authors. The opinions of the participants in the debate did not always coincide with the latitude from which they were writing. The “estrangement” of the South made it a space through which authors who wrote from there or elsewhere could imagine alternative forms in their critique of the dominant “modernity.” Despite being suspiciously related to the eastern peoples, imperial Spain, the Portugal of the discoveries, classical Greece and Renaissance Italy could not fail to be considered fundamental parts of European history. For this reason, the Mediterranean South – in its historical and geographical proximity with its extra-European “Others” – became an in-between space and a liminal territory that contained untraveled routes or different ways, for example, of understanding freedom or the relationship between the sexes. Diego Saglia underlines in his text, for instance, the ambivalent character of southern Europe according to some authors of the Coppet group who contributed the most to establish a romantic stereotype decisively crossed by gender categories. In general, Madame de Staël, Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de Sismondi or Charles Victor de Bonstetten based their works on the same gendered stereotypes that they also questioned, laying the groundwork for future reinterpretations, reimaginings and criticism.

Xavier Andreu’s text connects particularly with the reflections of Leerssen and Saglia. He analyses how the figure of the romantic bandit, of Schillerian roots and Byronic inspiration, was particularly associated with the Mediterranean South in the European romantic imaginary. This identification – generally rejected by southern countries – implied accepting the backwardness and lack of modernity of these territories, but also the survival in them of some admirable peculiarities lost definitively in “modern” Europe. This ideal could be mobilised to defend a revolutionary liberal subject that was mixed with the protean hero of romanticism. Both Spanish and Italian radicalism

appropriated these figures to articulate an ideal of national masculinity that fused elements of the citizen-soldier of civic humanism with others coming from the new romantic sensibility.

Other southern intellectuals, on the contrary, reacted vehemently to such associations. The similarities that many travellers identified between the sexual and love manners of eastern peoples and those of the passionate inhabitants of the Mediterranean coasts became a weighty matter of public interest for many southern authors. In her chapter, Maria Pia Casalena addresses Italian reactions to some influential authors, such as Sismondi, who had taken for granted in their works the moral corruption of the Italian peninsula after the Spanish domination in early modern times. Far from accepting these judgments without further ado, various Italian authors defended the moral superiority of Southern Catholic women against the Protestant North in their historical-biographical repertoires of great women, published in the first decades of the nineteenth century. This moral superiority, a mirror for the “new Italian woman,” guaranteed a specific modernity for Italian civilisation.

Florencia Peyrou analyses, in her essay on Spanish democratic radicalism in the central decades of the nineteenth century, how this political culture conceptualised the virtue of men and women and the morality that should govern relations between them as a necessary condition to ensure the survival of the political community. Peyrou points out to what extent this question was a central element of the political project of radicalism and how it influenced ideals of femininity and masculinity that partially challenged the liberal hegemonic ideas about the complementarity of the sexes and the public-private divide. By defending the virtue of their men and women, these radical authors also implicitly defended a specific modernity for the Spanish nation, which required the triumph of its political project.

Thus, those who wrote from the shores of the Mediterranean were not merely passive recipients of northern imaginaries questioning their anchorage in the modern world. Many of them discussed in their accounts such a link and articulated alternative ways of understanding modernity or the place of their nations. Others, in turn, strategically appropriated and took advantage of that same conceptual framework, which established a relationship of superiority between North and South, for their own political or cultural projects, applying it to their territories. Coro Rubio analyses, from this perspective, the case of the Basque Country. The Basques were part of a Spain that European romanticism frequently exoticised and orientalisised. However, they were idealised as a people because they retained features bringing them closer to Northern European values, as seen in travel guides published in Spain and the rest of the continent

throughout the nineteenth century. Once again, a gender dimension crossed this interpretation. Basque men and women could have qualities distancing them from the common denominator of the Spaniards and were used by certain intellectuals from these territories to articulate a particular identity that was defined mainly in contrast to the south of the peninsula.

Images and stereotypes about the internal south also played a fundamental role in Italy (Schneider 1998, Dickie 1999, Moe 2002, De Francesco 2012). As Antonino de Francesco points out in his chapter, the image of a backward and lawless *Mezzogiorno*, fanaticist and superstitious, was decisive for post-Unitarian Italy's political and social dynamics. De Francesco highlights the extent to which these imaginaries about the south of the peninsula were present in the Italian public sphere of that period and how the most critical Left used them, precisely, to explain the political paralysis of the entire country. In 1893, the last government of Francesco Crispi and, at the end of the century, the new sociological and anthropological discourses promoted this interpretation. They read Italy from a new scientifically based moral cartography representing the inhabitants of the South as a homogeneous ethnic reality incapable, unlike the North, of joining the modern world. In this regard, as all the authors of the volume emphasise in their essays, both categories, North and South, were always disputed territories – also for those who reflected on them from the southernmost countries of the continent. How they did it would depend a lot on the position taken in each historical context within that dialogue, as the different chapters in this volume also demonstrate. It was not the same to participate in it as a man than as a woman, as a Catholic than a Protestant, as an inhabitant of a prosperous region than an eminently poor one. Nor was it the same to do it from the political assumptions of enlightened reformism or absolutism, advanced liberalism or moderatism. These religious, political, or social categories conditioned the possible responses and wove complicities that crossed national borders and could even blur the centrality of the South-North axis.

In any case, as early as the nineteenth century, at a time characterised by the affirmation of national sovereignty and the construction of modern national public spheres, the discourse about modernity built on the North-South axis would condition how those nations were being imagined while questioning their Europeaness. “Modernity,” or its absence, was an unavoidable concern for the architects of the nations of the European South: a concern running through national narratives articulated from these continental areas (Liakos 2013). Isabel Burdiel's text particularly illustrates how the axes of tradition and modernity, nation and region, North and South, and class and gender intersect in each specific context concerning various political and national projects.

Burdiel analyses the case of the great Spanish novelist and feminist Emilia Pardo Bazán and the meanings conveyed in her unsuccessful attempts to be recognised as a “national writer.” In the discussion about the place that she should occupy in the Spanish canon or in the debate she held with Manuel Murguía on the differences that separated her from the other great Galician writer of the time, Rosalía de Castro, what was ultimately discussed were questions of great importance such as the national meanings of Spanish cultural diversity and the role of women in the public sphere, the nation, and national regeneration projects. Pardo Bazán actively participated in all those projects with a class and “anti-sentimental” proposal that closely questioned any “essential” or “natural” understanding of identities.

Ferran Archilés analyses, in turn, the mirror images of orientalisms, imperial desires and national self-assertion that affected Spain in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Spanish Africanist imperialism articulated in those decades responded to the implicit denial of Spanish modernity within a debate on the degeneration of the Latin *races*. This *fin-de-siècle* Spanish imperialism was founded on a civilising discourse homologous to that of other European imperialisms. However, it put into play a series of discourses that entered originally into dialogue with those orientalisising the Spanish people and interpreting it from the parameters of the South. Intellectuals such as Joaquín Costa or anthropologists like Luis de Hoyos or Telesforo de Aranzadi defended a certain racial kinship between Spain and Morocco that gave the former primacy in the civilising mission over the latter. This issue did not prevent the development in Spain of a particular orientalism, whose gender variable was equally essential.

Thus the texts collected in this volume reveal how discourses on nation and modernity, gender and other categories were mixed in the construction of national imaginaries on and from the European South. They also show the variety of cultural devices through which these nations were imagined. The chapters cover a vast repertoire of cultural materials, many of them widely disseminated across the social spectrum: factual and fictional travel stories, philosophical stories, moral treatises, satires and criticisms of customs, biographies and autobiographical writings, political, scientific, or historiographical texts, novels, operas, dramas, and other kinds of literary or artistic materials (in particular historical paintings).

All these resources – and the national imaginaries and narratives they allowed to project and articulate – were decisive in constructing Mediterranean nations that started from extraordinarily different conditions. Again, historical uniqueness and context are determining factors. Spain and Italy, which ended up becoming paradigmatic examples of great European civilisations in

decline, had to deal with accounts that cast doubt on their full attachment to the present. They did it, however, also from different places. Spain had lost its hegemonic position on the continent since the seventeenth century, but it remained an imperial power throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although it experienced a remarkable decline, particularly from the first decades of the nineteenth century, after the independence of most of the American colonies, it could still culturally mobilise a relatively recent great past. Also, its construction as a modern nation started from a not questioned political unity and a new founding myth – the victory over the Napoleonic troops at the beginning of the nineteenth century – on which its restoration to the modern world could be planned (Álvarez Junco 2001, Burdiel 2010). On the contrary, the greatness of Italy was more distant in time. The nation, as such, existed for most of the nineteenth century more as an ideal than a reality (Banti 2000, Banti and Ginsborg 2007, Riall 2009, Patriarca and Riall 2012). More peremptory was the reflection on the causes of its division and decline, as well as the urgency of reversing so many centuries that were perceived as lethargic. Because of this, the setbacks suffered in the unifying enterprise of the *Risorgimento* were also felt more bitterly. Once unity was achieved, and new and long-standing problems had to be faced, all those shadows were projected towards the Italian south itself.

Despite these differences, Spanish and Italian men and women of letters, or those writing from other countries related in the European imagination to a Catholic South, a warm climate and suspiciously oriental features, such as Portugal, had to face the same challenge: the one represented by those discourses questioning their full membership in modern Europe. This volume explores how they dealt with it, especially highlighting the gender dimension of their responses.

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# Gallantry and Sociability in the South of Europe: Shifting Gender Relationships and Representations

*Mónica Bolufer*

## 1 Parallel Figures

“To the Most-Impotent Mohammed Ben Abdallah, ben Juzeph, Chief of the Black Eunuchs of the Seraglio of Fez.” Thus begins the dedication of the satirical *Colección de diferentes escritos relativos al cortejo* [Collection of Writings on Gallantry], a slim volume printed in Madrid in 1764 with a fake title page announcing it had been published in Cortejópolis by the Oficina de Lindo Monito (Charming Little Monkey’s Office).<sup>1</sup> These opening words are penned by a Moroccan traveller in Spain – some years before the posthumous publication of José de Cadalso’s *Cartas marruecas* [Moroccan Letters] (1789), written in the 1770s in the wake of the fictional travels typical of the age.

The dedication evokes the masculinity of eunuchs in the oriental harems that so fascinated European readers. Rousseau had used the seraglio as a metaphor in his *Lettre à M. d’Alembert sur les spectacles* [Letter to M. D’Alembert on Spectacles] (1758), which the author of the *Colección* paraphrases without revealing his source: “every Parisian lady gathers in her apartment a harem of men more feminine than she, who know how to pay all kinds of homage to beauty, save that of the heart of which it is worthy.” (Rousseau 1821, 136; Velázquez de Velasco 1764, 7, note 1) For Rousseau, the outcome for any man willing to play this game was a symbolic castration, a brutal image that attacks the very roots of gallantry understood as a formative discipline of aristocratic manhood. His outrage at a model of sociability in which nobles and men of letters bowed down to salon hostesses symbolizes a visceral rejection of the social and aesthetic authority wielded by aristocratic ladies in fashionable society in favour of women’s domesticity that would, over time, become the norm in France and the rest of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The genuine details appear in the colophon.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the *mondaine* model and its moment of crisis, see La Vopa (2017); for Italy, Betri and Bambilla (2004), Brambilla (2013).

This chapter analyses the figures of the Italian *cicisbeo* and Spanish *cortejo* or *chichisveo*<sup>3</sup> – male companions of married ladies – and the codes of gallantry to which they subscribed by investigating how their contemporaries viewed them in comparison to one another and in relation to the practices of other countries and the (imaginary) customs of the past. My aim is to shed light on the role played by gender models in the pull between cosmopolitan ideals and the symbolic construction of the nation, at a time when Enlightenment preoccupations shaped the discourse of national character, which was “everywhere a discourse of ‘virtues’ and ‘vices,’” but which defined the nature of later nationalisms in their own distinctive fashions (Patriarca 2005, 381).

Hiding behind a Moroccan alias, the author of the *Colección* was in fact Luis José Velázquez de Velasco, Marqués de Valdeflores (1722–72), known for his attendance of literary salons, involvement in political factions and erudite interest in his country’s history, with a particular focus on Arab antiquities. He was arrested in 1764 when the *Colección* was interpreted as a political satire, perhaps because his fictitious Chief Eunuch was seen as a disguised portrait of some leading figure at court, or because the work questioned the manhood of those who practised gallantry and linked the morality of love with the strength of the nation, suggesting that a corrupt country ran the risk of being conquered:

In all parts of the inhabited earth the passion of love sets the tone for all other passions; and it can truly be said that one who knows a country’s theory of love knows its entire system of customs and thus its strengths and its weaknesses ... When the customs of one People are better than those of another, the latter’s risk of subjugation increases. (1764, 4)

Comprising various short pieces, the *Colección* had a far-reaching impact in Spain and South America on a readership represented by its author as both extensive and select (“the most numerous and most distinguished of the People” [Velázquez de Velasco 1764, 6]).<sup>4</sup> Its fragmentary and polyphonic structure gives voice, among others, to the Moroccan traveller; a woman who defends her own sex by blaming men for courting their fellows for reasons of political ambition; Gerundio, a strict moralist; and Razonador, a worldly philosopher.

Like the Marqués de Valdeflores, many writers in Italy and Spain used the *cicisbeo* or *cortejo* to symbolize the corruption of contemporary manners, something

3 The same terms are used in the two languages for both practice and practitioner.

4 In 1770, the Inquisition of New Spain sent back to Madrid a manuscript copy of *Elementos del cortejo para el uso de las damas principiantes*, by Cayetano Sixto García, included in the *Colección* (Martín Gaité 1972, 214–6).

for which they held outsiders responsible – the pernicious influence of France in particular. Sometimes, however, a parallel was drawn between the two practices. In 1738 the *Diario de los literatos de España* [Literary Journal of Spain] likened them, voicing the thoughts of an imaginary observer from the North (“one sees *chichisveo* in Spain just as in Italy, and in Germany no right-thinking man will be unmoved by it but will regard it as an illicit activity” [285]), and noting that the neologism *cicisbeo* had been used in Italy, since the early eighteenth century, to refer to what had previously been designated by the Spanish term *galanteo* (292–3).

That connection between *cortejo* and *cicisbeo* was lost after the late eighteenth century. Unearthed in a famous study by Carmen Martín Gaité (1972), since translated into English, it continued to go unnoticed in Italy until recent years (Bizzocchi 2015, 20). This is in part due to the limited communication between two national historiographies which have upheld the “exceptional nature” of their respective histories; Italian historiography long reiterated the idea asserted by writers of the Risorgimento that *cicisbeo* was unique to the Italian lands (Patriarca 2013; Bizzocchi 2015). The similarities and differences between the two practices have not, therefore, been thoroughly investigated, nor has the role they played in the construction of northern European images of the South or in forms of self-representation. There are various reasons why an analysis along these lines is both relevant and necessary. Firstly, because of the close cultural and political relationships between Spain and Italy – as well as dynastic links (three Spanish queens were Italian born, and Charles III was Duke of Parma and King of Naples before being crowned King of Spain), there were many Italian artists and musicians at the Spanish court, longstanding connections between artistic and literary academies, numerous works were translated into Spanish from Italian, and the Jesuits expelled from the Hispanic monarchy were exiled to Italy. Secondly, because in both territories intellectuals constructed the image of their nation in a complex relationship – both reactive and symbiotic – with representations projected from outside. In the eighteenth century, an important symbolic gulf opened up between Northern and Southern Europe, with the southern, Catholic lands seen as backward-looking compared to the progressive Protestant North, Great Britain in particular (and, in a different way, France). Foreign observers contrasted the glories of the Roma Empire and the Renaissance with the alleged prostration of contemporary Italian culture, and Spain’s former political and military hegemony with its present decline. The Italian and Spanish thinkers who reacted to those images also thought in terms of national decadence, a notion that would profoundly influence the respective nationalisms of the nineteenth century.

As far as we can tell from literary and iconographic representations (Figure 1.1) and personal writings (memoirs and correspondence), *cicisbeo* was an institutionalized custom within the context of Italian family alliances and aristocratic

sociability, notably (but not only) in northern cities such as Genoa, Venice and Florence. It was an arrangement that allowed respectable ladies to participate in polite sociability (*conversazioni*, theatre and other entertainments) with a male companion, with their husbands' acquiescence (Bizzocchi 2014, 8). In the absence of personal testimony, Spanish sources are far more limited to the literary realm, although some prints might be interpreted as visual allusions to the *cortejo* (Figure 1. 2). Plays and satirical pamphlets circulated widely in both territories, some in translation, such as the comedies of Carlo Goldoni. Mixed sociability was also the subject of transnational debate for Catholic theologians in France, Portugal, Italy and Spain. Much to the outrage of authors such as Antonio Salvini, Costantino Roncaglia and Giuseppe Brocchi – suspicious that lust lay behind any encounter between the sexes (“in the heart of a young man or woman, the fire of intemperance is greater than that of Vesuvius or Etna”



FIGURE 1.1 Pietro Longhi, *The Visit*. 1746. Oil. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



FIGURE 1.2 Francisco de Goya, plate 27 from *Los Caprichos*: “¿Quién más rendido?” [Which of them is the more overcome?], 1799. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

[Roncaglia 1786, 52]) – other clerics, notably Jesuits, considered these practices compatible with Christian morality and sought to regulate them (Ossorio de la Cadena 1766, 68–9; *Diario* 1738, 293, 317, 327).

## 2 An Exchange of Gazes

Comparing the ways in which foreign travellers represented gender relationships in Spain and Italy with those in which Italian and Spanish writers



thought about both foreign practices and their own, offers some interesting perspectives on how differences and similarities were constructed through an exchange of gazes which affected how one imagined the other, how one represented one's own reflection in a foreign mirror, and whether the view from outside was rejected or imitated. All this in the context of tensions common in the eighteenth century but particularly intense for Italians and Spaniards: between cosmopolitan aspirations and the construction of a national identity; between rejecting external stereotypes and (sometimes unconsciously) identifying with them.

Protestant observers believed that by condemning any contact between men and women as sinful Catholicism was encouraging an unrestrained satiation of desires, and therefore generally presented Spanish *cortejo* and Italian *cicisbeo* as variations on a single immoral theme. One extreme case is that of Christoph Meiners (1747–1810), professor at Göttingen and a leading intellectual and political voice in the emergence of the Prussian State (Anderson and Benbow 2009). His *Geschichte des Weiblichen Geschlechts* (1788–1800), translated into English in 1808 (*History of the Female Sex*) and widely read, adapts the models of Scottish conjectural history, which takes the condition of women and relations between the sexes as indicators of civilization, to uphold his theory of Germanic superiority. It suggests the same ethnic determinism postulated by Meiners in other works on the superiority of Europeans over the “savages” of the Pacific by representing a Europe divided between the civilized North, epitomized by Germany, and the sensual South. Rather than basing his argument either on climate or on the usual cultural and political reasons (Catholicism and political despotism), he claims the differences in Spanish customs are due in great part to the influence of Moorish and Jewish blood, thus anticipating Romanticism's sexualisation and essentialization of national characteristics (IV, 276–77). According to Meiners, keeping the women of the South in seclusion had temporarily curbed natural urges but, since the end of the seventeenth century, French-influenced mixed sociability had degenerated into adultery and led to the corruption of the social fabric (IV, 333, 343).

Meiners' gaze is distant, both geographically and in terms of perspective. As an armchair traveller who relied on the accounts of others without comparing them to indigenous sources, and as a philosopher trying to prove a pre-established thesis, he rhetorically subsumes Italy, Spain and Portugal into a virtually homogeneous *South*, an example followed by the Romantic travellers (Andreu 2016; Moe 2002). His long-distance judgement contrasts with the vision of others more sensitive to nuance, more inclined to compare what they read with local testimony and to make an effort to understand the logic of other social practices; with that of Italian, Spanish or Creole observers which

challenges the ideas of external observers; and with that of women which qualifies certain aspects of those male opinions.

Scottish physician John Moore's *A View of Society and Manners in Italy* (1781), a work which enjoyed many reprints in Britain and North America and with which Meiners disagreed, is an example of the inquisitive gaze, in search of a balance "between distance and sympathy" (Brewer 2014). Moore rejects the sweeping definition of *cicisbeo* as a form of adultery common throughout Italian society for being based on imprecise and biased information (1781, II, letters LXXIX and LXXV; particularly 412–17). From his own observations and details sourced on the spot, he finds a political explanation for this brand of aristocratic sociability, to which he does not attribute any negative moral consequences: lacking freedom and active employment, Italian noblemen seek out the company of ladies, unlike their British counterparts, who involve themselves in Parliamentary activity or country pursuits and therefore do not benefit to the same extent from women's softening influence (II: 398–99).

There are echoes in Moore's work of the rebuttal aimed at Samuel Sharp (*Letters from Italy*, 1765–66) by the British-based but Turin-born Giovanni Baretto (1719–89), who attempted to translate the ways of his homeland – both linguistically and culturally – in various dictionaries (Spanish-English and English-Italian) and, especially, in *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy* (1768). Baretto refuted various Grand Tour stereotypes, including the association of *cicisbeo* with widespread adultery among women and a loss of virility among men. Writing from personal experience ("having myself been, in my bright days, both a *cicisbeo* and an humble imitator of Petrarch's poetry" [1769, 117]), he defines the social logic and territorial frontiers of the practice, denying that women of all classes from across Italy indulge in it ("when he [Sharp] says the Venetian Ladies, the Neapolitan Ladies, the Florentine Ladies, and, what is still worse, THE ITALIAN LADIES... he vomits slander" [92–3]). In his account of his travels in Spain in 1760, Baretto proves he has paid close attention to the conversations he has had with locals, notably a perhaps fictionalized female informant, Doña Paula, who defends the respectability of the "chichisveo" (later defined by Baretto in his Spanish-English dictionary as "a courteous gallant" [1778, unpaginated]), rejecting the malicious interpretations of outsiders:

"I have heard much, said she, of your Italian *Cicisbeo's*, and as far as I can judge, they are the same thing with what we call *Cortejo's* [sic]." "I will have the confidence to say of my townswomen of the better sort, that the greatest part live as they ought, *whatever notions foreigners may form* of our *Cortejo's*, and *whatever liberty they may take with us when they expatiate on the freedom in our manners.*" (1770, 61, 63; emphasis added)

The fact that Baretti relays her indignation about the ease with which travellers questioned the virtue of her fellow countrywomen shows his empathy with Spaniards, who were subject like Italians to distorted depictions, an empathy similar to that with which female British travellers such as Hester Thrale (Piozzi) or Lady Morgan changed the stereotypes of the Grand Tour to show their own sex in a more favourable light (Agorni 2002; Bizzocchi 2015; Brilli and Neri 2020). Perhaps because he was at the same time an Italian and an outsider himself in Spain, Baretti was the traveller who best captured the meaning of both *cortejo* and *cicisbeo* as an intrinsic part of aristocratic culture.

When it comes to Spanish travels in Italy, the manuscript account (1793) by dramatist Leandro Fernández de Moratín (1760–1828) is of particular interest. Very knowledgeable about Italian culture, he attempted to sum up sociologically the “national character” of each of the territories he visited (rather than generalising about the peninsula as a whole). However, his description agrees with some of the commonest assumptions of British and French travellers regarding southern sexual immorality (“any foreigner who familiarizes himself a little with Rome, instantly hears a multitude of curious and merry anecdotes on this matter”), painting a panorama of adulterous wives, tolerated by meek husbands and courted by “foppish, affected” *cicisbei* (Moratín 1991, 568). He concludes, echoing Grand Tour travellers: “Though Italian men are sometimes jealous, they have long ignored the effects of this terrible passion” (592). Similarly, he describes the decline of Italian culture in terms of effemination compared with the past: modern art has “a certain effeminate and puerile quality,” but bad taste goes even further in the literary realm, with female roles played by male actors in Rome and the opera house dominated by *castrati*, to whom he refers disparagingly as “eunuchs” (605–8). Moratín’s criticism is revealing in a writer who fought to establish a new national theatre, reforming the Baroque tradition with a neoclassical aesthetic and moral models of restrained masculinity and domestic femininity as seen in his play *El sí de las niñas* [The Maidens’ Consent] (1805).

We find a different perspective in the diaries of Creole Francisco de Miranda (1750–1816): that of a cosmopolitan and gregarious ladies’ man, who originally saw himself as a Spanish citizen but then claimed American identity in rebellion against the empire. Far from seeing *cicisbeo* or *cortejo* as an anomaly of the South, he labels with these terms various forms of gallantry, practised from Italy and Spain to Switzerland and the United States, thus including them in a shared culture of gallantry in which he himself participated (1978–81, I: 312, II: 15, 23–24, 44; III: 165, 420, 412; IV: 17, 99, 151, 152, 159, 169, 172, 180–81). He also displays a curiosity about local peculiarities presumably inspired by his reading matter (including numerous travel accounts and the Marqués de Valdeflores’



satirical *Colección*) and his own inquisitive personality. In Turin, “Mademoiselle Morel” tells him about “the matters of the Cicisveo, which I desired to know” (II: 169); in Venice, Isabella Teotochi Marin, Countess Albrizzi (1760–1838), explains to him that any widowed or married lady “must conform with the customs of the land” and “cannot decently present herself in public without being accompanied by a *cavaliere servente*” (I: 23–24). In Genoa, nobleman Benedetto Centurione talks to him about *cicisbeo* as a male rite of passage (IV: 159). From these conversations with educated locals, Miranda learns that the practice not only enables young noblemen to learn sophisticated manners but allows women to participate in society in respectable fashion and helps families keep their sons away from gaming houses and brothels; reversing the roles, he answers the questions of a Danish lady curious about Hispanic love customs (IV: 15, 314). He also points out territorial and social differences invisible to the superficial observer, such as the exclusivity of a freedom tolerated among the élite but censured for the lower classes (IV: 181). It is no coincidence that he reserves his most cutting comments for the French, describing ladies attending an opera as “intolerably simpering and affected” and the “*cicisveo* (or *ami de la maison*)” attending them as “so servile and insincere that anywhere else he would have been a laughing stock” (IV: 99), in language recalling the well-known *Viaggi di Enrico Wanton alle terre incognite australi ed ai regni delle Scimie* [The Travels of Henry Wanton to the Undiscovered Austral Regions and the Kingdom of the Apes] (1749, translated into Spanish in 1769) and its simian protagonists (Seriman 1769, 110–13). The Anglophile and pro-Republican Miranda thus returns the gaze of French travellers and uses this satirical image of French gallantry to represent his censure of the Ancien Régime.

### 3 Inadequate or Excessive Masculinity, Dissolute Femininity

One thing that emerges from debates between British or French travellers and Italian or Spanish writers is the idea that the outside gaze simplifies and distorts a custom of complex meanings. Is *cicisbeo* a socially exclusive and morally innocent code or a corrupting influence? Is gallantry a requirement of civilization or does it subvert the natural order of the sexes? For those attempting to understand and explain its logic, those practices are part of the realm of civility, which since the Renaissance had interpreted gallantry as a sign of aristocratic distinction. In female company, young noblemen could refine their mastery of word, gesture and the art of seduction, useful not only in their relations with women, but also in their dealings with their peers and male patrons. For their part, women could enjoy a certain amount of power

and freedom within the limits of fashionable culture. Baretti, with whose work both Miranda and Moore were familiar, places *cicisbeo* in that tradition and establishes for his British readers an intellectual genealogy reaching back to Neoplatonism in Italian Renaissance courts, according to which a courtier's love for his lady elevates him spiritually, enabling him to curb his instincts and perfect his manners: quite the opposite of emasculation, it is the art (long-lost in Britain) that makes a man a true man, or to be precise, a nobleman. In Spain, Eugenio Gerardo Lobo (1679–1750) hinted at those Platonic origins in his poem “Definition of the *chichisbeo*, written in obedience to a lady,” which plays with the paradox of courtship as an elegant artifice characterized by ambiguity and erotic tension (“noble and respectable idea/of Plato,” “pretty fiction,” “treacherous truth” [1717, 145–46]). Himself an educated and worldly nobleman and soldier, described by his contemporaries as a “handsome youth,” Lobo embodied the aristocratic code still very much alive in his day, which explains the prolonged success of his gallant poetry despite the disapproval of moralists (Haro de San Clemente 1729, 23).

Explicitly contradicting Lobo, a dictionary published in 1786 defined *chichisbear* as to compliment a woman “with flattery, words of love, deception” (Terreros y Pando 1786, I: 535 and 416). By this time, courtly forms of masculinity, femininity and sociability were being ridiculed through depictions of the vain and foolish *petimetra* and affected *petimetre* or *damerino*, a man who enjoyed female company. Years later, satirical leaflets and cartoons about the supposed adultery of Maria Luisa of Parma with the royal favourite Manuel Godoy and Charles IV's weakness as husband and monarch gave that relationship of dependence, affect and trust between the three, comparable to *cortejo*, a pornographic interpretation.<sup>5</sup> The new standards of female decorum, conjugal morality and political behaviour led one nobleman and diplomat to ridicule in his memoirs Godoy's willingness to receive female petitioners, a common practice in courtly politics and gallantry, by likening it to the harem, a symbol of role reversal which sees the women in charge, the favourite reduced to the role of eunuch (García de León Pizarro, 1894, 106, 149).

By the final decades of the century, there were many opposing voices to be heard across Europe and the Americas decrying mixed sociability and gallantry as foreign, effeminate practices, but the intensity and connotations of that symbolic link varied significantly. In Italy, outside observers, British travellers

5 Compare his portrait by Francisco Folch de Cardona as a dashing young man in military uniform (c.1788) to Goya's depiction of the older, bloated Godoy (1801); both paintings are housed in the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. About contemporary satire, see Calvo Maturana (2013).

in particular, saw *cicisbeo* as the very embodiment of the inadequacy of Catholic gender models, as opposed to those of marital fidelity, female domesticity and restrained virility attributed to the Protestant world. In part reflecting that foreign gaze, Italian reformist discourse in turn clamoured against a loss of manhood among effeminate *cicisbei* and husbands who tolerated their wives' infidelity. Writers such as Ludovico Muratori (1672–1750), admired by educated Spaniards, or Vincenzo Martinelli (1702–1785) traced the origins of *cicisbeo* to the occupation of the Italian peninsula during the War of the Spanish Succession, when French soldiers seduced Genoese ladies, violating the social usages of gender separation, female fidelity and male honour, inherited from Spanish previous influence (Bizzocchi 2014, 18, 28). While this attribution is historically imprecise, the connection between a relaxation of marital morality and the decline of the proud city republics of the Renaissance, linked to successive foreign occupations thought to have destroyed Italian moral fibre, fixed itself in Enlightenment thinking. It lived on into the nationalist era, when there was an urgent focus on creating new models of austere male citizenship and virtuous femininity on which to build the nation (Bizzocchi 2014 and 2015, 16–17; Patriarca 2005).

In Spain, the motif of lost manhood also appears in both religious and secular writings. Witty images portray husbands powerless to impose their authority (“to the utmost affront of the male sex” [*Diario* 1738, 326]), and *cortejos* as weaklings who have exchanged real swords – noble privilege and phallic symbol – for ornamental dress swords (Haro de San Clemente 1729, 2–3; Ramírez y Góngora 1774, 35). “Because of you/I have denied my sex,” states a *cortejo*, the protagonist of one of Ramón de la Cruz’s (1731–1794) very popular short plays (1996, 233). In Spanish America, Creole writers who rejected the theories of European intellectuals (Cornelius de Pauw, Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon, William Robertson) claiming that the New World was inferior because its natural conditions made men less virile and women immoral, blamed instead any male effeminacy on lenient upbringings (Alegre Henderson 2019) and the bad habits of any man who was “happier conversing in the drawing room than in a philosopher’s study” (*Mercurio Peruano* [Peruvian Mercury], 19 February 1792, IV, 121).

As in Italy, Spanish Enlightenment reformism called for regenerating the nation around the ideal of the domestic woman and the good citizen, husband and father, presented as an updated version of Spanish traditions, far removed from feminized foreign (i.e. French) customs. In implicit dialogue with Montesquieu’s stereotypical vision of Spain in letters 78 and 136 of his *Lettres persanes* [Persian letters], Cadalso embodies female and male ideals them in the virtuous characters of his *Cartas marruecas* (1774), the mirror image of the frivolous

protagonists of *Los eruditos a la violeta* [Men of Superficial Learning] (Ewalt 2015; Andreu 2016, 54–6). Concern about effemination does not, however, seem an especially accentuated feature of the Spanish Enlightenment, nor do I think that the Spanish *petimetre* caused any greater anxiety in this respect than did the French *petit-mâitre* or the British fop or “macaroni” (Haidt, 1998, 111–16). Comparatively speaking, inadequate manhood was a less recurrent theme in literature on gallantry and courtship than it was in Italy. More present for outsiders was the shadow of an archaic, aggressive virility, indebted to the “Black legend about Spanish brutality in America, reactivated in the eighteenth century by the rivalry between colonial powers. In 1788, British consul Alexander Jardine characterized the Spanish, unlike their Portuguese neighbours, not as victims of modern feminization but bound to the legacy of the conquistadors:

the Spaniard is ever the same proud, obstinate, lazy, but manly character ...; with a high sensibility, and a determined character, he may be led to be vindictive and cruel; with strong nerves, and a persevering mind, he may be fit for desperate enterprize and conquest. (I, 415–16)<sup>6</sup>

For some clerics, the traditional Spanish virtues of male virility and female seclusion had established an only recently breached barrier against licentious behaviour. The Carmelite author of *El chichisveo impugnado* [Denunciation of chichisveo] (1729; plagiarized by Salazar, 1737) claimed that once foreign ways had been introduced into a “Christian, honourable and zealous nation,” they had gravely harmed “its ancient splendour, honour, reputation and esteem” because the warmth of the South meant closeness between the sexes could simply not be as morally innocent as it was in the cold countries of the North (Haro de San Clemente 1729, 7–8). For his part, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744–1811), in his devastating critique of the nobility as responsible for Spain’s decline since the glory days of the Empire is less harsh on the *petimetre* or effeminate *cortejo* than he is on those nobles who appropriate the ways of lower-class *majos* and *majas*, characterized by the disorders of excessive virility (*Second Satire to Arnesto*, Jovellanos 1984, 335–38) and depraved, sensual femininity (*First Satire*, 220–25). Cadalso criticizes Don Juans with no regard for religion or morality and no respect for the opposite sex, metaphorically representing the libertine as “womankind’s Cortés” (Cadalso 2006, Letter X, 190), an ambiguous image that also betrays some admiration for the conquistador he extolled elsewhere in his work as a national hero (Letter IX).

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6 On the conquistadors’ masculinity, see Molina (2011).

#### 4 Gallantry in the Mirror of Time

Reflecting on national customs involved comparing them with those of other places, but also with those of other times, resignifying the past in the process of national construction in a European context. Were the new codes of mixed sociability a sign of progress or decline? Was gallantry the same throughout civilized Europe or did it acquire different features depending on climate or politics? Were there ancient and modern forms and if so how did they differ? These interrelated debates were crucial to the ways in which Enlightenment thinkers represented Europe compared to “primitive” or “despotic” societies, reflected on the advantages and dangers of civilization and exchanged gazes about the role in its progress they attributed to their respective countries. While many French travellers and writers flew the flag for *politesse* and *mixité*, the English and Scots exalted a model of female modesty, masculine restraint and separation of the sexes. Though under-emphasized, this discussion was also important when it came to defining the place assigned to Southern Europe and the ways in which Italians and Spaniards interpreted their own history as reflected in the European mirror.

The present circumstances of both Italy and Spain were seen in terms of a decline from different but equally renowned glorious pasts. British writers and artists in particular were wont to symbolize in their images of ruined landscapes the distance between the peaks of the Roman Empire and Italian Renaissance and the current degeneracy of the Italians (Luzzi 2002), epitomized by their sexual immorality. By contrast, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hispanic hegemony had left a more ambiguous legacy of admiration and fear which explains the endurance in the European imagination of the motifs of female seclusion and male jealousy, recurrent themes in Spanish Baroque plays and novels. Even the satirical *Don Quixote*, successfully translated into English and French, was read literally, as proof that the old-fashioned worship of ladies was very much alive; the anonymous French writer M\*\*\* wrote in 1756 that a lover who has spent the night serenading his beloved, “consoles himself with the pleasure he experienced on touching the bricks of the house of his incomparable Dulcinea” (García Mercadal 1972, 487). Many travellers portrayed a country attached to the amorous customs of the past (“love here is an arduous task”), its women either enslaved to tyrannical husbands or potential adulteresses restrained by close vigilance (García Mercadal 1972, 275, 487). Casanova’s memoirs of his erotic adventures in Spain in 1768 revolve around the idea, typical of Enlightenment and libertine thinking, that mysticism and sensuality were connected and repression stimulated desire (“Gallantry is sober and uneasy in that country, for it has as its object pleasures absolutely

forbidden there"; Casanova 1993, III: 572), while the Baron de Bourgoing, influenced by Montesquieu, emphasises the crucial influence "of a climate that communicates its heat to the senses and imagination" (Bourgoing 1797, II: 307). Others, however, declare that such customs have fallen into disuse: "All that has been said about the precautions of *jalousie* employed by husbands to guard their wives is no longer pertinent. The only *jalousie* visible here today is the kind used to screen a window," wrote Father Norberto Caimo of Lombardy in his *Lettere di un vago italiano ad un suo amico* [Letters to a Friend from an Italian Traveller], published anonymously between 1759 and 1767 and successfully translated into French (García Mercadal 1972, 418). His judgement was endorsed, among others, by British writers Edward Clarke (1763, 1v), William Dalrymple (1777, 45) and Joseph Townsend (1792, 244–7).

The images are complex and the nuances revealing, for diagnosing the state of amorous customs is the equivalent of situating the country visited – as well as one's own – in a hierarchy of progress. In the eighteenth century it was understood that forms of love had a geography that was also a living history: the prevailing instinct among "savages" was to achieve carnal union with any member of the opposite sex; this had been gradually refined into the spiritual attraction which Europe saw as one of the keys to its superiority (O'Brien 2009: 112, 143). For Montesquieu, the idea that men should respect women rather than imposing themselves by force stems from courtly societies; other Frenchmen, such as Jean-Baptiste La Curne de Saint-Palaye, would attempt to prove that the medieval courts of Provence were the birthplace of the concept then beginning to be known as *amour courtois*. While David Hume, commenting on Montesquieu, justified gallantry as natural benevolence, Rousseau and civic republicanism abhorred it as an unnatural and hypocritical code, advocating in its place a political and moral ideal whose cornerstone was female domesticity and modesty (La Vopa 2017). In England and Scotland, interest in medieval chivalry developed in the late eighteenth century for different reasons: from an aesthetic fascination with the Gothic as an alternative to neoclassical taste, to the political search for the historical roots of the British constitution. As an ideal that implied a strong emphasis on Christianity and protection of women, the Christian knight offered a solid base on which to ground national British masculinity combining virtue, virility and refinement, in opposition to the polite gentleman, perceived as foreign and effeminated (Cohen 2005; O'Brien 2009).

Those northern European writings on civilized love tend to assimilate courtship in Southern Europe with an old-fashioned gallantry based on gender separation, associated not so much with the legacy of the Moors (as would be the case in the nineteenth century) as with medieval chivalry, and to regard

modern gallantry in mixed spaces as typical of France. While they agreed that changes in manners had affected the entire continent by this time, there were different views on their reach. In his criticism of southern immorality, Meiners writes of Portugal as still keeping women in seclusion, whereas Italy and Spain, influenced by France, have been thrust from segregated spaces to the licentiousness of *cicisbeo* or *cortejo*: “The Spaniards and Italians, from distrust of the virtue of their wives, confined them like slaves till the commencement of the eighteenth century; and [...] at the present day they allow them unbridled liberty” (Meiners 1808, IV: 314–5). For William Alexander, it is the Spanish knight errant who symbolizes a bygone past within a more advanced Europe, that of a medieval chivalry which was by then was regarded with ambivalence (“The Spaniard goes a step further, the whole sex is for him an object of little less than adoration; he retains still a tincture of the spirit of knight-errantry” [1779, 209]), while in both Italy and France civility and indiscriminate liberty now reign. Both writers agree that female sexual virtue and domesticity are crucial to the moral superiority of Germany and Britain respectively, compared to the old southern gallantry and its modern French version.

In French *mondaine* society, worshipping from afar and segregation of the sexes were not seen as worthy of the name gallantry because, once any external barriers had been overcome, Spanish lovers had no inner restraints such as modesty with which to refine their courtship. In the early eighteenth century, the Marquise de Lambert (like Montesquieu) therefore reserved the term for the “delicate art of love” which for her had reached its peak only in “the French nation” and by her own time had been lost (1781, 183). Decades later, by contrast, Antoine-Léonard Thomas’s *Essai sur les mœurs, l’esprit et le caractère des femmes* [Essay on the Manners, Genius and Character of Women] (1772), translated into Spanish, English and Portuguese and widely disseminated, claimed that French gallantry had begun with the Spanish-born queen and regent Anne of Austria, who introduced to court “some of the customs of her homeland, to wit a mixture of gallantry and majesty, of sensibility or gentleness of heart and circumspection, in other words, a relic of the ancient and brilliant gallantry of the Moors married to the graceful pomp and majesty of the Castilians” (1773, 173–74). Thomas presents Spanish gallantry as a cross between Castilian discretion and oriental sensuality (understood as a sophisticated art, not crude desire), compared to which dealings between the sexes in France are “a cold and artificial custom [...] which is not love, or passion, or even gallantry” (1773, 203). His tone, far removed from the Marquise de Lambert’s pride in women’s moral and cultural authority, reveals the doubts of a man of letters torn between loyalty to that worldly tradition and Rousseau’s moralistic, anti-aristocratic and misogynous rejection of it.



The complexity of representations of gallantry can be seen in *La Conversation* [The Conversation] by Carle Van Loo (1705–65), brother of Louis-Michel Van Loo – court painter to Philip v. Exhibited at the Salon of 1755, the oil painting was sold in 1772 to Catherine II and is now housed in St Petersburg’s Hermitage Museum (there are other versions as drawings -fig. 1.3- and engravings). It was commissioned by Mme de Geoffrin (1699–1777), hostess of the most famous literary salon in Paris, as a companion piece to another work entitled *La Lecture* [The Reading], with a request that they should both have a Spanish theme, in the tradition of aristocratic and courtly Hispanophilia. Van Loo’s *Conversation* portrays a gentleman dressed in seventeenth-century



FIGURE 1.3 Carle (Charles André) Van Loo. *La conversation espagnole*. 1754. Drawing. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



style paying court to a lady in an unsegregated setting. Emma Baker (2007) has interpreted this scene as a self-portrait of French salon society in the latter half of the eighteenth century whose nostalgic vision of former Spanish splendour would project the idea of gallantry as a fragile treasure under threat from Rousseauian criticism. But what can also be seen here, as in the essay by Thomas (a member of Mme de Geoffrin's salon), is the ambivalence with which French intellectuals portrayed Spanish culture (as both alien and familiar, anchored in the past and modern) and against which eighteenth-century Spaniards had to measure themselves.

It is entirely understandable that enlightened Italian and Spanish thinkers would reject the idea that amorous customs were any less moral or civilized in their countries than in those laying claim to a higher rung on the ladder of progress. For Baretti, as we have seen, respectful gallantry, rooted in medieval chivalry and neoplatonic philosophy, was key to the superiority and modernity of Italy – and, by inference, Spain – far preferable to French frivolity or the boorish habits induced by gender segregation in Britain (Baretti 1769, 101–113). In his *Lettere piacevoli* [Pleasing Letters] (1791), Giuseppe Compagnoni upheld gallantry as “one of the strongest of social bonds,” fostering harmony among families and citizens (as quoted in Bizzocchi 2014, 17).

As for Jovellanos, who adopted Hume's belief that it was a civilizing force, he imagined in 1804 combining the “manly and brave gallantry of our knights of old” with the “ideas of a more educated and enlightened century” in the upbringing of the Spanish nobility, seeking to find that ever difficult balance between virility and civility, national tradition and a sophisticated openness to the wider world (2009, 217–18). Cadalso evoked a bygone Spain in which, in the words of a lady, “women, a little more restricted in their dealings, were held in greater esteem; old men and boys looked at us with respect; now they look at us with contempt” (2006, 189). He was not suggesting a return to the past, since Cadalso, like Jovellanos, understood that a modern society demanded a certain level of mixing between men and women, but the way in which both men idealize the chivalric spirit points to their ambivalence about new forms of sociability and the public presence of women. Other contemporaries expressed this uncertainty using ironic inversion as, for example, Manuel Antonio Ramírez y Góngora does in *Óptica del cortejo* [Optics of the *cortejo*] (1774), a dream allegory in which the protagonist, observing the gallant practices of his contemporaries through an optical instrument, listens to a maiden praising the freedom enjoyed by modern women:

“Our Spanish Ladies of bygone days [...] lived shut away in seclusion; [...] and lived without education, without freedom, without enjoyment, but with fear and timidity, purely because men esteemed them for their good

sense and venerated them for their prudence.” “[...] Now we may truly say that we are living, because a life spent in captivity is no life at all.” (1774, 6)

The male personification of Understanding contradicts her, asserting that *cortejo* in fact undermines the dignity of the rational man (Ramírez y Góngora 1774, 12, 50–51). Inés Joyes and Josefa Amar, two female writers who towards the end of the century denounced gender inequality, were critical of the past but, unlike the maiden in *Óptica del cortejo*, far from complacent about the present. Like their contemporaries they too reject “this spirit which, under the names of chichisveo, cortejo, etc., has gradually insinuated itself into society, plaguing it and destroying the peace of families” (Joyes, 1798, 286), but unlike Cadalso and Jovellanos they do not idealize the old chivalric veneration. “Did the much-praised modesty and seclusion of women in the past free them from assaults by men?” asks Amar. “When have murder, assassination, violence and abduction been more frequent than when women were shut away behind lock and key?” (1786, 422). In her opinion (not so distant from British republicans Mary Wollstonecraft and Catherine Macaulay) the violence of less civilized times has been replaced by the subtle forms of deception, self-deception and dependence that characterize modern gallantry – a practice that sees men worshipping women generically, without respecting them as individuals, and compromising the reputation demanded only of the female sex.

## 5 Conclusion

The similarities and differences in the ways travellers to Italy and Spain and Italian and Spanish thinkers reflected on amorous relations reveal close cultural links, but also subtly different ways of representing and gendering national stereotypes. Northern observers often lumped the two territories together as a single South, marked by the moral weaknesses of Catholicism – blamed for repressing human passions rather than teaching self-control and therefore failing to ensure effective resistance against modern licentiousness. Such clichés both infuriated and influenced enlightened Spanish and Italian thinkers who, while often happy to use those images as ammunition against one another, were equally vocal in contesting preconceived ideas about their own homeland. They represented new ways of behaving with the opposite sex as foreign novelties, within narratives that lamented decline from past splendour and exhorted the moral rearmament of the nation. At the same time, some writers advocated the cultivation of home-grown forms of decorous gallantry that offered an alternative to both the rougher habits of the past and excessive French-style civility.

There were, however, significant differences, largely connected to the two territories' different political traditions and positions on the international map. Italian Enlightenment reformism – and, more obviously, nineteenth-century nationalism – tended to link *cicisbeo* with the city-states' loss of autonomy resulting from the hegemony of France and Spain (who had been fighting one another on Italian soil since the fifteenth century), comparing the conquest – military or cultural – to a genuine emasculation. Spain itself escaped invasion in the early modern era, instead building its own empire. External images of the country harked back – as to a degree did the national ideal of enlightened patriotism – to clichés dating from the zenith of Spanish power, those of proud conquistadors and women kept behind closed doors: a mythical bygone age or, for those condemning the nation's backwardness, a burdensome past. As the new century dawned, there emerged the Romantic image of Spain which modified that legacy to build long-lasting stereotypes of excessive, dangerous masculinity and seductive, sensual femininity.

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## On the Spanish National Character: Gender and Modernity in Joseph de La Porte's *Le Voyageur françois* (1772)

Ester García-Moscardó

“Europe,” wrote Louis de Jaucourt in the *Encyclopédie*, “may be the smallest of the four parts of the world in terms of the size of its territory, [but] it is the most considerable of all in terms of its commerce, navigation, fertility, the enlightenment and industry of its peoples and their knowledge of the arts, sciences, trades.” As further evidence in support of this claim, he pointed to the importance of two traits that completed the portrait of Europe. Firstly, its Christianity, the positive impact of whose moral teachings could bring nothing but happiness to its societies and which ensured a principle of political right. Secondly, the fact that its people were white-skinned, a feature enshrined in the very etymology of the word “Europe,” from the Phoenician *urappa*, meaning “white face,” and one appropriate for Europeans, since they were not brown – “swarthy” – like South Asians or black like Africans (Jaucourt 1756, 211–212). This tendency to consider human variety as homogeneous within continental borders was displayed by Linnaeus at around the same time in his updated description of *Homo Europaeus*: white, muscular, of sanguine temperament, light-hearted, wise and inventive (1758, 21).<sup>1</sup> Such definitions show how the modern idea of Europe was constructed in the eighteenth century – a specific group of nations who shared, objectively speaking, certain distinctive traits. Aspects such as knowledge, industriousness, taste, political government or physical complexion overlapped with civility and sociability in the eighteenth-century conceptualisation of European man, distinguishing him from the *others*, the *savages* or *barbarians* (Pagden 2002; Diz 2000). Both examples illustrate – and are constituent parts of – a self-referential image of *Europeanness*, understood as a universal civilizing norm encapsulating the qualities thought to be typical of modern, civilized nations.

Although this image pervades all Enlightenment intellectual production, it should be noted that tension between the general and the specific was

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1 The process which led to a continental division of different races is discussed in Hudson (1996).



inseparable from the construction and experience of European modernity. In the first place, the debate about the factors that influenced the formation of national characters reveals European thinkers' preoccupation with the conditions that enabled progress to continue apace, with a marked interest in the anthropological aspects of the issue. Two particular aspects of that debate are worth mentioning here. On the one hand, beyond the explanatory weight placed by different writers on sociocultural or climatic factors, no one in the mid-1700s seemed to be in any doubt about the existence of such a thing as national character, seen as a composite of physical traits, moral inclinations, customs and manners that reflected a nation's level of civilization (Sebastiani 2011: 188–189; Kra 2002). On the other, we should note that the supposedly *universal* Enlightened subject was, generally speaking, implicitly male – as regards national character and, more broadly, the *science de l'homme* – even if the status of women and models of relationships between the sexes were central to the debates about societies' levels of civilization, because of their political implications.<sup>2</sup> While the production of knowledge about human diversity depicted an epic narrative of European modernity that celebrated virile values, it also showed itself to be open to exploring what was true of both men and women and what was specific to each gender (Tomaselli 1991). In this respect, the old symbolic contrast – one not always easily definable – between North and South, or East and West, had new implications in the discursive context of the eighteenth century and the gender meanings that shaped it, insofar as they expressed contemporary thinkers' reservations about the viability of the modern subject who was to foster societal progress.

In the second place, and closely linked to the previous point, debates about issues such as luxury, cosmopolitanism or mixed sociability reveal the ambiguities involved in the very concept of modern European civility, often thought of in national terms. It is significant that Jean-Jacques Rousseau had decried a certain want of distinctive character in national tastes, passions and customs, lamenting that there were no longer any Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards or Englishmen, but only Europeans (Rousseau 1755: 13). Not only is this sentiment anti-cosmopolitan, it also alludes to what Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli called “French Europe,” a reference to the controversial level of cultural influence wielded by Paris as a “model of foreign nations” (Caraccioli 1777). Attributes such as *politesse*, *franchise* and *galanterie* in particular added a distinctively French flavour to modern sociability and virtuous, free-flowing relations between men and women, a practice that did not meet with universal

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<sup>2</sup> See Montesquieu (1748), in particular Book XVI, which deals with the link between domestic servitude and the natural climate. See also Bolufer (2019).

approval. All these debates reflect the tension between an imagined Europe – and the subtle variations of the narrative of modernity that it embodied – and the national peculiarities described comprehensively, and with genuine anthropological interest, by travellers and naturalists (Rubiés 2002).

Despite the generalising aims of that self-referential image of *Europeanness*, various studies have shown how the discursive and conceptual universe that was constructing the meaning of modernity was destabilised by a problematic perception of the continent's natural, cultural and human diversity. Examining the symbolic construction of the *border* territories of Southern and Eastern Europe – an operation which, it should be noted, often included alienation via comparison with the Orient – has underlined the biased stances of producers of philosophical-scientific knowledge who were expounding their ideas about global hierarchies not from a monolithic, undifferentiated Europe, but from specific spaces within Europe conceived in relation to the image held of *others*. Enlightenment thinkers were developing visions of the world based on their image of themselves and everything they knew – or thought they knew – about the other territories, a process resulting in an intricate array of overlapping images that only acquire meaning from the position the observer attributes to himself. It is interesting to highlight here the dialogic nature of the complex process of construction of modern subjects from the frameworks of meaning that shape them, as well as the destabilising effect of inner *others*.<sup>3</sup>

Following on from these reflections, the aim of this text is to analyse the tension between that problematic self-referential image of European modernity and the perception of the national peculiarities destabilising it from the South, based on the characterisation of the Spanish people that we find in Joseph de La Porte's compendium of travel writings *Le Voyageur François* [The French Traveller]. Particular attention will be paid to the gender meanings that construct national otherness and to the symbolic connections established with the oriental world in the period before the Romantic orientalisation of the South in the nineteenth century (Andreu 2016: 70–116). The North-South opposition not only fed into the heated debate about civilization, but also, as noted by Joep Leerssen, played a key role in the nation-building processes that began in the mid-eighteenth century, in that it was an invariable factor in the discursive construction of national stereotypes (2000, 275–278).<sup>4</sup> Despite the fact that

3 The opening up of these perspectives owes much to Edward W. Said's influential *Orientalism* (1978). For the case of Southern Europe see Moe (2002), Schneider (1998) and Bolufer (2003). For Eastern and Northern Europe see Wolff (1994), Todorova (1997) and Dolan (2000).

4 The North was symbolically linked with central-western Europe. The Scandinavian and polar regions made up the so-called *savage North*, the subject of growing anthropological attention

some travellers contributed more optimistic and nuanced accounts, clichéd negative views of the South – and, more specifically, of Spain – disseminated by leading observers of the day, and French writers in particular, were enormously influential (Checa Beltrán 2010; Paquette 2011; Bolufer 2003; Hontanilla 2008). In short, the stereotypical assumptions made about the southern territories did not fit in with the discursive universe behind the normative concept of modernity elaborated by Enlightenment thinkers, which in turn raised doubts about these countries' potential for improvement and even about their men's ability to govern themselves.

Finally, the abundance of academic works that have been written on the subject of travel literature underline its importance as a means of constructing modern European subjectivities, and as raw material for the development of philosophical-scientific knowledge and regimes of truth during the Enlightenment (Pratt 2003; Rubiés 2002; Forsdick 2019). While there is a copious bibliography on travels and travellers in Spain, what is significant about *Le Voyageur François* is that it is not a compilation of original travel writings, but part of a specific, encyclopaedic genre of travel literature based on reworked first-hand accounts and other materials, one which enjoyed great success in France in the second half of the eighteenth century (Pimentel 2003: 213–249; Jammes 1990: 266–268).<sup>5</sup> Indebted to the literary tradition rather than direct observation, its characterisations do not constitute any kind of original contribution to Enlightenment knowledge, but it did represent the world to its readership in an imaginative way and make it accessible to them. In so doing, it actively helped popularise knowledge, disseminate stereotypical images of the *other* and, therefore, construct the reader's own identity. La Porte's account not only reimagines Spanish *otherness* and suggests what attitudes to adopt towards it, but also constructs, in dialogic fashion, a modernity that is equally imagined but specifically French in style, in a play of fictions that orients the multiple ways of experiencing the modern.

## 1 The Baggage of a French Traveller in Spain

In 1772, Joseph de La Porte (1714–1779) published a new volume, all about Spain, in his monumental compilation of travel writings *Le Voyageur François*

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during the eighteenth century (Jammes 1990, 266). A historical survey of perceptions of the northern and Arctic lands in Europe can be found in Fjågesund (2014).

5 The key reference work here is the *Histoire générale des voyages* [General History of Voyages] (1746–1759) by Antoine François Prévost, who rewrote many travel narratives with the aim of creating a “comprehensive system of modern history and geography” (Duchet 1975: 76).

(1765–1795).<sup>6</sup> A former Jesuit priest, born into a merchant family in Belfort in Alsace, La Porte was a man of letters close to the Encyclopaedists, whose circle he began trying to join in the late 1750s. He shared the views of Voltaire, was apparently a friend of the Abbé Raynal, was acquainted with D'Alembert and is known to have visited Diderot (Sarrailh 1934; Chouillet n.d.). Although many thought of him as a mediocre writer, he was one of the few who managed to make a living from his trade in late eighteenth century France; according to Louis-Sébastien Mercier, in 1780 only about thirty French writers could make that claim. La Porte wrote for various periodicals – including Louis-Marie Stanislas Fréron's *Année Littéraire* [The Literary Year] – and published around 215 books on a wide variety of subjects. He wrote few original works, essentially devoting his time to compiling, digesting and abridging those of others to create his own anthologies, leading Robert Darnton to refer to him as “the supreme scissors-and-paste man, the king of the hacks” of the period before the Revolution. For La Porte, it was publishing, not writing, that mattered (Darnton 1992, 4–6).

*Le Voyageur François* is a good example of his skill, consisting as it does of a fictional account of the round-the-world journey made by an unnamed French traveller. His itinerary, described through a series of letters written for the entertainment and instruction of an anonymous *Madame*, enabled his readers to learn about the history, geography, natural environment, products, character, morals and customs of every people on earth. In the case of Spain and the Spanish, La Porte's summary is fairly unfavourable, espousing all known clichés about the country's decadence, backwardness and religious fanaticism, not to mention reproducing every stereotypical idea about the proud, idle and passionate nature of its people, as repeated time and again in eighteenth-century travel books and the philosophical-scientific literature derived from them. Much of what was known about Spain was based on reports of these (negative) traits, as disseminated by writers as influential as Montesquieu in Letters 78 and 136 of *Lettres Persanes* [Persian Letters] (1721) and in *De l'Esprit des Lois* [The Spirit of the Laws] (1748), or Voltaire in *Le siècle de Louis XIV* [The Age of Louis XIV] (1751) and *Essai sur l'Histoire Générale, et sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations* [An Essay on Universal History, the Manners, and Spirit of

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6 The collection consists of 42 duodecimo volumes. La Porte did not live to see its completion – he died in 1779 after the publication of Volume XXVI on the Papal States and the city of Rome. Former Jesuits Louis-Abel Bonafous and Louis Domairon completed the ambitious work: Bonafous edited volumes XXVII and XXVIII (1781–1782), which covered the rest of Italy, while Domairon dealt exclusively with the survey of France found in volumes XXIX–XLI (1788–1795).

Nations] (1756). La Porte was undoubtedly aware of the negative images propagated by the *philosophes*, but our main interest here is to take stock of the specific sources on which he drew when compiling his fictional journey, since that will clarify – to some extent at least – which particular materials were enabling these stereotypical images to circulate in Enlightenment France.

For his research on Spain La Porte drew primarily – and directly – on *Les Délices de l'Espagne et du Portugal* [The Beauties of Spain and Portugal] (1707) and *Annales de l'Espagne et de Portugal* [Annals of Spain and Portugal] (1741), both published in Amsterdam by an unknown writer who used the pseudonym of Juan Álvarez de Colmenar. The *Annales* are in fact an expanded reissue of the *Délices*, with the addition of a volume devoted to the history of Spain. According to Jean Sarrailh, La Porte's journey essentially jigsaws together texts taken from the *Délices* as included in the 1741 edition, a work in which Colmenar himself drew extensively on Madame d'Aulnoy's hugely popular *Mémoires de la Cour d'Espagne* [Memoirs of the Court of Spain] (1690) and *Relation du Voyage d'Espagne* [Account of a Journey to Spain] (1691) and the Abbé de Vayrac's *État présent de l'Espagne* [Present State of Spain] (1718). The latter work in turn had used, among others, royal chronicler Alonso Núñez de Castro's *Sólo Madrid es Corte* [Only Madrid is the Court] (1669), but also borrowed from the 1707 first edition of the *Délices* – giving us some idea of the self-referential nature of the *Spanish travel* genre. La Porte additionally consulted Jean-Baptiste Boyer d'Argens' *Lettres Juives* [Jewish Letters] (1736–1737), an epistolary novel itself based on the writings of Madame d'Aulnoy.<sup>7</sup>

Given the fact that La Porte's knowledge of Spain was informed by this entire literary panorama, two points in particular stand out. Firstly, it would appear he made no direct use of any original travel writing, including the most recent accounts of travellers such as Edward Clarke or Giuseppe Baretti who – while continuing the trend of hegemonic interpretations – did at least offer a more nuanced view of late eighteenth-century Spain and so contributed to a subtler understanding of the cultural differences within Europe (Bolufer 2003 and 2009: 92–97). Nor did he consult any texts in the Spanish language, limiting his research materials to older publications in French, indebted to the Baroque tradition and fairly stereotypical. He even includes a literal quotation of a long fragment of a text he attributes to Francisco de Quevedo, but which is in fact an imitation by a French writer.<sup>8</sup> This practice was not unique to La

7 A detailed comparative analysis of La Porte's text and those of Colmenar, Boyer d'Argens and Madame d'Aulnoy can be found in Sarrailh (1934).

8 La Porte took the quotation from *Voyages récréatifs du chevalier de Quevedo. Ecrits par lui-même. Rédigés et traduits de l'Espagnol* [The Travels of Don Quevedo. Written by him.

Porte – the libraries of the great *philosophes*, men such as Voltaire and Montesquieu, were characterised by an absence of eighteenth-century Spanish writers or works and a predominance of French translations of Golden Age literature (Bas Martín 2018, 47–49). It is striking how incurious they seem to have been about contemporary Spain, a country about which little was known – and about which, according to Voltaire, there was in fact nothing worth knowing (Guerrero 1990, 15). Secondly, the writings of Madame d'Aulnoy clearly played a key role in influencing the creation of the *Spanish travel* genre, and this is significant given the authoritative status travel literature had achieved by the mid-1700s. The most influential philosophers and naturalists of the time, figures such as Hume, Montesquieu and Buffon, based their portrayals of the Spanish on her travel narratives and on Classical writers – Strabo, Pliny, Julius Caesar.<sup>9</sup> Her work helped bring about the symbolic construction of the South as imagined by Enlightenment thinkers.

Using all these sources, direct and indirect, La Porte assembled the collage of Spain about which his fictional French traveller writes fifteen letters to his *Madame*, dated between January and June 1755, their main aim being to provide “an introduction to Spanish manners.” Notably, when presenting the people of Spain, La Porte used a very specific image to help his readers understand them. Before detailing their characteristics, customs and manners, he compares the Spaniards with the people of ancient Egypt who were, he says,

dry, thin, swarthy, proud, vain, spiritual, superstitious men, combining faith with enchantments, devoted to the study of their theology, filled with veneration for their priests, bequeathing funds to be used after their death to maintain temples and support ministers, putting portraits of their gods on their ensigns; grave of countenance, serious of discourse, suited to the sciences, cautious in their resolutions, constant in pursuing their enterprises, sober, quiet, hospitable, loyal to their kings, disdainful of other nations; courageous at times, firm in execution, patient, jealous, ceremonious, vindictive, unclean, sensual & boastful. (La Porte 1772, 181–182)

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Compiled and translated from the Spanish] (1756) by the Abbé Bérault-Bercastel – a free translation of fragments of Quevedo's *Sueños* [Dreams] interwoven with fragments of the Abbé's own writings (Roig Miranda 2011).

- 9 In 1770, traveller Étienne de Silhouette noted in his *Voyages de France, d'Espagne, de Portugal et d'Italie* [Journeys through France, Spain, Portugal and Italy] that Strabo was still a good reference for any description of Spain. Silhouette's text was quoted in later travel books, including Jean-François Peyron's *Essais sur l'Espagne. Nouveau voyage en Espagne fait en 1777 et en 1778* [Essays on Spain. Further travels in Spain undertaken in 1777 and 1778] (Bas Martín 2018, 29).

In the same place, he compares the British with the Romans and the French with the Athenians – not the Greeks. As for the Italians, their analogues were to be found, like those of the Spaniards, on the Mediterranean coast of Africa, for he compares them with the Carthaginians.

It is worth noting that the symbolic link established here by La Porte between Spaniards and ancient Egyptians has less to do with the decline of a once industrious and enlightened empire, as the French traveller himself had claimed during his passage through Egypt,<sup>10</sup> and more with the physical and moral constitution of the two peoples. The image suggests the creation of a discursive context in which Spain, or rather southern, warm countries, could be thought of in the same terms as the Orient, thereby implying a sense of alienation from the perspective of a Europe which thought of itself as the civilized North. It is not difficult to find this reflected in the philosophical-scientific writings of the Enlightenment, and while many such instances are inclined to generalise and exaggerate, they result in the construction of otherness. We have Voltaire, for example, claiming that Spain's geography was as strange to him as the "wildest parts of Africa" or that travelling to the country was like heading "into the deserts of Arabia" (Guerrero 1990, 15; Voltaire 1761b, 96–97). The rhetorical association with the exoticism of Africa and Asia was also invoked by physician William Alexander to express his lack of familiarity with Spaniards, who struck him as being as difficult to characterise as "the Hot-tentots, or the Indians on the banks of the Ganges" (1782, 454).

Much-discussed climatic theories, meanwhile, gave philosophers a scientific context in which to reflect on the character of nations with warm climates. The arguments sometimes present *oriental* and *southern European* examples with little distinction between the two, making generalisations based on indirect and usually unattributed information. In his *Essais sur le Génie et le Caractère des Nations* [Essays on the Genius and Character of Nations] (1743), Espiard de Laborde reflected on the warm southern regions in notably vague terms, placing the South in the same category as the Orient. Perhaps his most eye-opening statement comes in *L'Esprit des Nations* (1753), where he talks about the "nearer southern lands" – with relation to France, of course – as including,

the Spaniards, Pelopponesians, Sicilians, Syrians, Cretans, Arabians, Persians, the inhabitants of the province of Susa, the Gedrofii or inhabitants

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10 There is a contradiction here because, in the text relating to travels through Egypt, La Porte states that the ancient Egyptians – while false and superstitious – "were hard-working, active, industrious, enlightened, creating and carrying out the greatest of undertakings" (1765, 148).



of the province of Tarsus, the Indians, Carthaginians, Numidians, Libyans, Moors, and the inhabitants of Florida in America. (Espiard de Laborde 1753, 7)

Clearly the *philosophes* did not include France itself in their imagined geography of the South, although this was problematic to a certain extent, given that examples relating to the French Midi were included in portrayals of the South written by figures such as David Hume in *Of National Characters* (1748) or, later, Charles Victor de Bonstetten in *L'Homme du Midi et l'Homme du Nord* [The Man of the North and the Man of the South] (1824). Laborde adopts a more ambiguous attitude towards Italy: although he includes it in the same latitude as France and higher Germany, he constantly uses it as an example of the southern character, frequently extending this to include Spain and the Orient: when writing about the intimate sociability of the Italians, very different from French gaiety, he adds, "I include the Spaniards and Orientals in the same class as the Italians" (1753, 64).<sup>11</sup> The real benchmark of the kind of literature that offered a symbolic framework for combining the South and the Orient, however, was perhaps the influential *De l'Esprit des Lois*. Montesquieu's thoughts on the decline of Spain and on its indolent, proud, idle and sensual nature helped establish the map of an imagined Southern Europe, whose contours were not well defined, but which had more in common with the eastern and African regions with which it shared a latitude than it did with an industrious Northern Europe.<sup>12</sup> Finally, to complete the picture, climate had an effect on skin colour, which therefore also played a part in distinguishing Southerners from other Europeans. According to Buffon, the Greeks, Neapolitans, Sicilians, Corsicans, Sardinians and Spaniards were all alike in being "swarthier" than the French, English, Germans, Poles, Moldavians, Circassians "& all the other inhabitants of the north of Europe as far as Lapland." He uses the Spanish as his example, explaining that the difference in skin colour became noticeable from Bayonne – if one were travelling into Spain from France; one could easily tell a Spaniard from any other European by his "yellow & swarthy skin" (Buffon 1749, 442). This is another feature common to all descriptions of the day, and one which added weight to the parallel drawn between Spanish and oriental peoples. The symbolic alienation of Spain and other southern territories, converging into a vanishing point on the oriental horizon, shows the *philosophes'*

11 See Patriarca (2010) for the role played by national character in Italian political and social discourse.

12 See in particular Books XIV to XVIII, in which he sets out his climate theories, and Book XIX.

discomfort with a geography that seemed to resist being thought of in fully European terms.

These examples demonstrate a certain tendency in Enlightenment thinking to resort to exotic figures – by looking beyond European borders – when assigning a symbolic place to the people of Spain. La Porte's use of the ancient Egyptians to sum up the Spanish character in a single image is evidence of this, but it has to be said that its potential to destabilise the self-referential image of European modernity resides in the fact that at the time, no one was in any doubt that Spain was part of Europe. The symbolic link between Spain – and, more broadly, all the countries of Southern Europe – and the Orient was comparative in nature, in the sense that the latter, as a discursive construct, was a useful tool to employ when reflecting on the state of progress in Europe (Rubiés 2005). In general, despite the country's Islamic past and occasional allusions to the mixing of Moorish and Christian blood, the arguments used at this time to explain what made Spain different were based on climatic, social or historical factors, and not on its oriental ancestry. That came later, in the late 1700s and, above all, from the turn of the nineteenth century onwards (Andreu 2016, 70–106; Bolufer 2016, 456–464).

This gives rise to some unresolved ambiguities in the arguments, and La Porte's narrative is significant in this respect. Despite his ancient Egyptian parallel, he at no point links the character of the Spanish people to their country's Islamic heritage – an aspect of its history shared with other southern territories such as certain regions of meridional Italy – but instead mentions the immense superiority of taste, wisdom, and industriousness of the Arabs, who enhanced the country, made the most of its fertility and encouraged the flourishing of arts and sciences. For La Porte, Moorish gallantry was proof of the vigour of this courteous and quick-tempered people – in his opinion the only one not weakened but made more courageous and spirited by love.<sup>13</sup> The barbarous and monstrous Spaniards, however, played no part at all in this prosperity: “they were unskilled in the arts that enrich civilized nations, and even lacked the virtues that characterise savage peoples.” Caught up in fratricidal treachery and all kind of intrigue, the Spanish were incapable of bettering themselves unaided: “Hence that ignorance, that barbarism of the peoples, who [...] were unable to apply themselves to the sciences, or cultivate the arts, or refine their tastes, or hone their morals in those times of trouble, oppression and plunder, so contrary to the perfection of enlightenment and sociability” (La Porte 1772, 20–27, 403–408). Although he does refer on occasion to

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13 See Mónica Bolufer's chapter in this book for more on this aspect.

the mixing of Christian, Jewish and Arabic blood through marriage (54–55), he does not comment on its having affected the Spanish character, nor does he examine its consequences.<sup>14</sup> He also mentions the survival of some Moorish communities in the Alpujarras who continue to practise *morisco* customs – about which he gives no details – and whom he distinguishes from the rest of the population (411). In his imagination, the cruel and barbaric Spaniards have nothing in common with the refined and industrious Arabs. The same religious zeal that had put an end to the Islamic presence in the territory had also led to its downfall: the expulsion of *moriscos* and Jews had signalled the end of diligence and commerce, while the emergence of the Inquisition had prevented intellectual development. It was for these reasons that Spain had made so little progress in philosophy, art and science, “whereas Germany, England and France have discovered so many useful truths” (64–65).

## 2 Separated by Two Centuries from France: La Porte’s Spaniards

Having compared the Spanish in terms of physiognomy and character to the ancient Egyptians, La Porte then embarks on a more detailed description, saying that although he dare not claim that the two peoples are alike in every way, he believes his reader will find numerous similarities “above all before the Bourbons ruled this kingdom” (1772, 182), in other words, before French customs were introduced to Spain and adopted primarily by its elites. In fact, however, his portrait mirrors that of the Egyptians point by point, apart from what he says about the Spanish having no aptitude for the sciences.

In observing the people of Spain, he is entirely lacking in sentiment or empathy. There is never any sense of his having had direct contact with those he describes, nor does he appear to make any attempt to understand their singularities in their own context, other than noting that their problems stem from their history, education and institutions, and in particular from the pernicious influence of the Inquisition.<sup>15</sup> Instead, his account consists of the kind of historical, geographical and ethnographic depiction typical of the encyclopa-

<sup>14</sup> Voltaire (1761a, 231) similarly notes that after the Moorish conquest, “Not only did the widow of King Roderic marry the young Abdalis, but after her example the Moors and the Spanish often mingled their blood,” leading to the people known as Mozarabs, which he says meant “half Arab,” but like La Porte he does not take this any further. According to Carmen Iglesias (1997), the issue of Arab and Jewish ancestry had in fact been an important element of the European image of Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

<sup>15</sup> La Porte shared the North-South image of the Enlightenment period, but rejected the excessive emphasis placed on climatic factors by writers such as Montesquieu. In his

dic nature of anthologies such as this. The examples he chooses as evidence to support his claims present a virtually unnuanced image of a people whose character contradicts the spirit of the century – its enlightenment and sociability. In short, La Porte reiterates – and explains – the most stereotypical view of the Spanish national character based specifically masculine points of reference, even if he does mention certain feminine specificities to complement the knowledge he is offering his readers about their southern neighbours.

It should be noted that La Porte primarily characterises the Spanish based on the traits he attributes to the men of the urban popular classes, although he does establish some differences between them and those of higher social status.<sup>16</sup> He therefore targets religiosity and popular beliefs – miracle-working saints, pilgrimages, relics, processions and penitents, but also spectres, spells and apparitions – when criticising Spaniards' ignorance, superstition and credulity. The fact that they place greater trust in the curative power of holy relics than in man-made remedies explains the lack of focus in Spain on sciences such as surgery or medicine, areas in which Spain seems to be “separated by at least two centuries from France” (99). He blames the characteristic and ongoing dirtiness, poverty, idleness, roguery, licentiousness and violence of the Spaniards on the use of the traditional *a la española* clothes worn by its men – the cropped jacket, long cape and broad-rimmed hat, complemented by “a sword three and a half feet in length” – which were conducive to laziness, criminality and lechery. A simple change of clothing, in his opinion, would make the people active and industrious (182–184). Their seriousness, pride and love of ceremony are reflected, for example, in working men's appearance on feast days – dressed in silk, decked out with their swords – and in the multitude of honourable titles used in their dealings with one another (192). Physically the men have “dark skin, trim waists, small but well-shaped heads, attractive eyes and long dark hair. They are [...] very slim.” They see it as dishonourable to betray any sentiment at all and their outer appearance speaks of their cool, composed nature. As for the women, he simply says they are beautiful and tall of stature, with shapely figures (189).

Spaniards were not all bad, then, but even their good qualities, such as courage, patience – both stemming from their bellicosity – trustworthiness in business affairs or a certain vanity, bore little fruit because they were outweighed

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opinion, it was a people's “way of thinking” that was crucial to any consideration of national character. See the critique of Montesquieu in La Porte (1751).

16 This is not something commonly found in first-hand eighteenth-century travel writings, whose authors usually describe the customs of the elites with whom they have been mixing.

by a natural indolence.<sup>17</sup> La Porte's harsh judgement, with its social bias, created a map of all that was unbecoming of the modern and civilized man, the perfect moral subject and citizen, who was active and thoughtful, physically and intellectually fit, and schooled in the customs of polite society. This ideal of course relates to a model of élites: any man of the Enlightenment would have accepted the *coarseness* and *vulgarity* of the popular classes – the *domestic savages* – inside his own society. That aside, however, it is interesting to highlight the role played by courteous dealings between the sexes in the Enlightenment discourse about the civilization of customs, in that such conduct was considered a prerequisite of civilized societies and ascribed a fundamental role in the refinement of manners (Bolufer 2019, *passim*). The new mixed sociability demanded a form of masculinity – and femininity – that was virtuous, cordial and restrained, and the Spanish character as sketched by La Porte seemed in no way suited to achieving this *spirit of society*, especially if considered from the perspective of the French model of modern civility. That image was summarised by Diderot, in equally stereotypical terms as regards the qualities attributed to the French national character, when he noted that it was impossible to find “any people as gentle, affable, generous, frank, courteous, witty and gallant as the French” (quoted in Ginzo 2003, 114).<sup>18</sup> Not only, then, did Spaniards lack Enlightenment, they lacked the qualities that would allow them to hone their sociability: *politesse* – gentle, affable and considerate manners, according to La Porte's own definition – *franchise* and *galanterie*. To quote Hume, “We have reasons to expect greater wit and gaiety in a Frenchman than in a Spaniard” (1987, 197–198). The Spanish temperament was the opposite of the cheerfulness, affability and frivolity considered typical of the French sociable spirit and which gave a particular tone to the ideal of mixed sociability, far more deeply rooted in France than it was in other European nations such as Britain or Spain (Bolufer 2019, 219).

The difference becomes especially clear when La Porte talks about Spaniards of elevated status. Unlike the popular classes, he notes, the élites have actually adopted French ways, but have no taste and practise a defective kind of sociability. On the one hand, men of a certain rank dress in the French style, but it does not suit them and there is always something not quite right: “a braid-trimmed coat with woollen stockings, a waistcoat of gold fabric & a dirty

17 According to Montesquieu (1748, Book XIX, chapter IX), French vanity was productive, Spanish pride the opposite.

18 A description of the French self-image can be found in Montesquieu (1748, Book XIX, chapter V). See Beller and Leerssen (2007, 154–158) for a historical survey of the French national stereotype.

shirt, a plumed hat & an old wig.” The same can be said of their ladies, who also embrace French fashion, but “without taste, arrangement or grace” (La Porte 1772, 185). The less than flattering picture he paints suggests a certain decadence, but also a lack of refinement – in other words, a poor understanding of social customs. The same lack of taste applies to domestic furnishings, La Porte maintaining that Spain is also two centuries behind when it comes to creating pleasant, comfortable living spaces, with just a small number of exceptions to the rule (187). People’s gravity moreover sets the tone for their sociability. In general, they are reserved in each other’s company and even more so in that of foreigners, their gatherings sober and formal. All is terribly dull and lacking in substance, from their games to their dances and evening promenades.

The tension between the introduction of new foreign customs and the inertia of national character is particularly visible in La Porte’s description of sexual morality and relationships between men and women, an aspect of life central to the reflections of travellers and thinkers regarding the advance of civilization and its dangers.<sup>19</sup> His portrait of Spain’s amorous customs and forms of gallantry substantially echoes the impressions gathered by most travellers in the latter half of the eighteenth century, if in rather summary fashion. On the one hand, Spaniards were inclined to passion and debauchery because of “the heat of their temperament.” They expended so much energy on their lovers that they were incapable of fulfilling their conjugal duties and impregnating their wives; the latter, feeling rejected, ended up indulging in one affair after another, employing every ruse possible to cover up their extra-marital activities (202–203). Alongside this image, far removed from that of a civilized form of love characterised by virtue and restraint, there is also that of an archaic but still extant style of gallantry – a combination of devotion and jealousy associated with the broader, orientalist idea (particularly commonly held by French travellers) that Spanish women led strictly supervised lives. This was the kind of gallantry practised in Navarre, as summed up in these clichéd terms: serenades beneath barred windows, lovers following their ladies to Mass, the vigilance of the duenna, jealousy and suspicion (372–373). The barbaric spectacle of flagellants, with its mix of religious zeal and the eroticism of blood, completed the idea of the Spanish version of *politesse*: it was considered gallant for one of these penitents to scatter a few drops of his blood over the lady of his choice (497). That striking image, mentioned in other texts of the age, epitomises a way of understanding seduction which to Enlightenment minds was strange and excessive.

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19 For more on this issue see Andreu (2016: 46–47) and Bolufer (2003; chapter in this volume).

On the other hand, the changes worked on Spanish customs by influences both French and Italian had introduced certain anomalies to the national stereotype which La Porte fails to resolve. Contradicting himself, he notes that the chivalric, almost religious gallantry of days gone by no longer exists, that locks and bars on windows are no longer to be seen, that jealousy is no longer an issue. On the contrary, “love-making is almost as free as it is in Paris” (203–205); something of which, judging by his tone, he does not approve. On the same subject, he reports that “women have an appointed escort who never leaves their side, just as Italian women have their *cicisbeo*” (188). He does not enlarge on this, but this too relates to arguments over the excesses of the new forms of mixed sociability. Most travellers considered *cortejo*, like the *cicisbeo* of northern Italy, a dissolute and immoral practice, though in Spain it was not associated with the feminisation of men as it was in Italy. This image forms a marked contrast to that of the formality that was such a hindrance to communication in mixed gatherings, with their gravity and conversations of a religious nature. La Porte writes of a fellow French traveller who attempts, unsuccessfully, to puncture this seriousness when he approaches “a company of ladies” in order to “uphold the honour of [his] nation.” He goes on to state quite plainly that if this is Spanish gallantry, it is very different from its French counterpart, “which is no more than a light and playful form of amusement” (370–372). This reference to the unsatisfactory nature of conversation with Spanish ladies is significant, since Enlightenment culture assigned an important role to women when it came to refining customs and taste through the medium of conversation – and writing – in the context of the new form of mixed sociability *à la française*. The lack of witty, flowing conversation is further proof of Spaniards’ scant ability to improve their sociable nature and thus achieve a level of civility worthy of the Age of Reason.

Despite its ambiguities, La Porte’s account about social dealings between men and women does reinforce the idea running through the text as a whole that the Spanish not only were not adjusting to modernity but that there was little likelihood of their being able to do so without help. Not even the country’s élites seemed capable of escaping the coarseness, gravity, indolence and lustfulness that characterised the Spanish. However, in the light of his survey of their national character, the fundamental question remained whether or not a society such as Spain’s could achieve progress and be viable in a modern Europe. The answer clearly lies in its people’s ability to adapt to the ideal model of the modern European subject, but the stereotypical image re-created here by La Porte seems incapable of self-improvement. Any enhancements to Spanish society come from outside – he even on occasion credits French workers in Spain with what little productivity the country enjoys, given the idleness



of its own people (200–201, 468). For La Porte, there appears to be no path to progress without tutelage, particularly from the French; his response imagines the *philosophes* daring to infiltrate this kingdom to sweep aside fanaticism and the power of the Church, superstition and the servitude of prejudice, thereby setting it back on the path to glory (498).

What we find in *Le Voyageur François*, therefore, is the establishment of a hierarchy between two national stereotypes, Spanish and French, which gave its readers their place in the problematic scale of European modernity. The work's importance is based on the social penetration of this kind of literature, which was far more popular and market-oriented than the learned treatises of the great *philosophes*. In fact, La Porte's collection enjoyed considerable success and circulation. As well as four editions in French, it was partially translated into German and there is even a Romanian manuscript translation (via Russian) of the first four volumes, written between 1785 and 1788 (Dima 2013). The rebuttal of La Porte's opinions on New Spain published by José Antonio de Alzate Ramírez in the *Gazeta de Literatura de México* [Mexican Literary Gazette] in 1788 and reproduced soon afterwards in Madrid's *Memorial Literario* [Literary Memorial], indicates the reach and repercussions of the work (Valdez 2017). In Spain, the entire collection was banned by the Inquisition in 1796, "for containing many false propositions and doctrines, greatly injurious to Christianity," as reported in the *Diario de Madrid* [Madrid Daily] on 15 July 1796. Shortly after this, scholar Pedro de Estala began translating the collection, very freely, into Spanish, an undertaking that proved highly successful; even Alexander von Humboldt took an interest in the volume on Mexico (Humboldt 1980, 167). Estala's version was in fact a reworking, purged of anything considered damaging to Spain or Catholicism, and published as *El Viajero Universal* [The Universal Traveller] (1797–1801).<sup>20</sup> Although the forthcoming appearance of the final volume, on Spain, was heralded in the press in 1801, neither it nor that on Portugal was ever published (Arenas 2003). Finally, there also exists a literal Portuguese translation of Estala's version of which two editions were published in Lisbon between 1798 and 1815.

All this serves to prove just how active a role was played by this kind of collection in disseminating national stereotypes, making them an effective tool in the context of the second half of the eighteenth century for shaping modern national subjects. La Porte's narrative not only reproduces the image of a world naturally organised into national entities, each with its own distinctive character that varies little within national borders, it also establishes the terms of

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20 See Nuria Soriano's chapter in this volume.

the hierarchical structure between those entities based on a dialogue between Spanish and French stereotypes. In short, it creates at once both Spanish otherness and a French self-referential model with which its potential – French – readers could identify. It should be stressed that the *other* described is not homogeneous, either, but constructed in differentiated manner according to gender and social status. In this respect, while travel narratives established their readers' place in the world, that positioning, far from being one-dimensional, corresponded to an array of reference points within the overlapping discourses that comprised the symbolic universe of the Enlightenment.

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# More Than One Modernity: North and South America in Enlightenment Debates on Empire, Gender and Nation

*Nuria Soriano*

## 1 America's Part in the Construction of Hispanic Modernity

This chapter examines the role played by travel literature in configuring a specifically Hispanic modernity within the context of eighteenth-century European debates on empire, gender and nation (Dutta 2020; Martin & Pickford 2012; Kuehn & Smethurst 2008; Pratt 2010). These intellectual discussions, which had a significant influence on the political practices of the age, also permeated travel narratives, one of the most popular literary genres of the Enlightenment publishing market. By taking one particular example as a case study, I aim to analyse the way in which such writings, from the perspective of a modern, civilized Europe, painted an image of South America as a savage, immature and infantile region that formed a stark contrast with representations of North America as a space of progress and economic prosperity (Cañizares Esguerra 2018).

I shall attempt to untangle the various threads involved in the dichotomous, if at times ambiguous, portrayals of the north and south of the continent that were already circulating in other areas of Enlightenment culture (Kupperman 1995). Fed by a wide range of different narratives, these images were made up of the kind of intersecting stereotypes encountered within the broader polemics surrounding national character, gender differences and the rise and fall of the European empires (Sebastiani 2008 and 2011). America – its nature, geography and inhabitants – was the subject of a complex debate about the influence of climate on society and national character that reached a peak in the second half of the century. More specifically, one particular strand of that debate was focused on determining the role Spain had played in the processes of conquest and colonization in the south of the continent. It was in this precise context that the Bourbon monarchy was attempting to demarcate and protect the boundaries of its empire, against a background of intense colonial competition between Great Britain, Portugal, France and the Netherlands. The desire to defend the empire was closely linked to reformist measures, with

the governments of Charles III (1759–88) and Charles IV (1788–1808) introducing policies whose aim was to enable the colonies – where depopulation and social conflict were growing issues – to be governed and exploited in a more rational manner (Weber 2007; Rivera Ayala 2009).

Many European philosophers conceptualized an American reality different from its European counterpart, basing their thinking on ideas of inferiority, decadence and idleness. They contrasted an inexperienced America, weakened by its excessive humidity, with a Europe that had achieved “a clearer and more elevated self-awareness” (Gerbi, 1960). Both Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, in his *Histoire Naturelle, générale et particulière* [Natural History, General and Particular] (1749–88), and Guillaume Thomas Raynal, in *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* [A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies] (1770), emphasized the continent’s supposed immaturity and sparse demography. More radical than Buffon, Cornelius de Pauw in *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains* [Philosophical Research on the Americans] (1768) portrayed the Americans as weak and corrupt, and expressed critical views on the impact of Spanish colonialism. As well as the clear colonial dimension involved in European intellectuals’ representations of the continent, the aspect of gender also played its part. Qualities such as weakness, immaturity and infantilism were associated in Enlightenment thought with femininity, and with the idea that women, like children, were both physically and intellectually inferior to men.

In the 1770s America generated a more intense and wide-ranging debate between Creoles and Europeans (Rodríguez García 2006), reflecting the critical spirit so characteristic of the Enlightenment. During this same period, the New World also sowed the seeds of modern historiographical sensibilities (Cañizares Esguerra 2007). An understanding of the polemic on America is inextricably linked to conflicts over colonial possessions and the patriotic attitudes of intellectual élites. Such stances were aimed either at defending the feats achieved by the Spanish in America against the accusations of barbarity and cruelty levelled at the conquistadors or, from the Creole perspective, at demonstrating that the continent was a space of civilization (Guasti 2014).

The interpretative thread of this chapter is the need to understand the tangled web of stereotypes involved in the debate about the Indies and the key role they played in Enlightenment reform (Paquette 2014), central as they were to the propaganda designed to bring prestige to a Spanish monarchy determined to prove the modernity of its political and cultural policies to its European enemies. Linked to this is the need to understand the debates on Hispanic modernity in the Enlightenment as a stage on which an American *otherness*



was presented – its distinctness from Europe was used to justify Spain's actions in its colonies and to underline assumptions as to the degeneracy of the territory and its inhabitants (Stolley 2013; Benzoni 2014).

Many Spanish thinkers extolled the progress evident in North America. This did not, however, prevent them from defending the process of civilization which had taken place in Mexico and Peru under Spanish guardianship – a modernity rooted in the south of the continent which had developed thanks to the government's policies of reform. This representation of Hispanic modernity by the nation's intellectuals can therefore be interpreted as a patriotic reaction to attacks on Spain's colonial record (Cañizares Esguerra 2008; Castilla Urbano 2014) – particularly forceful during the Enlightenment era – and the need felt by political élites to see themselves as having achieved the same advanced level of civilization as the other European nations (Sebastiani 2008).

Criticism of Spain and its colonies came not only from outside the country, as many historians once thought (Domínguez 2019), but also from within a metropolis whose intellectuals were questioning – in spheres free from official censorship such as private correspondence or political satire (Mestre 2003) – the extent, utility and legitimacy of Spanish possessions in the New World. They noted the unfavourable environmental conditions of Spanish America, acknowledging the hostile nature of a continent whose southern half was less than conducive to intellectual development and progress, but upheld the conquest and colonization for having overcome such difficulties.

For these erudite observers, Spain's contribution to America, based on notions of humanity, sensitivity and fair treatment of the indigenous peoples, was proof of Hispanic modernity. They justified their arguments by citing the promulgation of the *Leyes de Indias* [Laws of the Indies]<sup>1</sup> which, in their eyes, acted as a safeguard for the American peoples. By the same token, Spain's intellectuals criticized the conduct of the British in North America, which had proved particularly damaging to slaves and women, two groups whose treatment was seen by educated people as an indicator of a society's level of civilization (Bolufer 2009).

My approach to the travel literature of the period will focus on the work of Pedro de Estala (1757–1812) – a censor, translator and journalist who adapted

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1 The *Leyes de Indias* were issued by order of Charles II (1680) as a compilation of ordinances and provisions to administer the lives of both governors and governed in the colonies of Hispanic America – a summary of the experience of government that regulated everything from institutional appointments to the working hours of the indigenous inhabitants. Many Spanish thinkers regarded these laws as a legal monument worthy of admiration and one of the crucial justifications for the conquest of America as a humane undertaking that would protect the indigenous population from colonial abuse.

Abbé Joseph de La Porte's *Le Voyageur français* (1765–95) into Spanish. I shall concentrate on the volumes of Estala's *El viajero Universal* [The Universal Traveller] (1797–99) that deal with the Caribbean, Mexico, Peru, Chile, Brazil, Boston, Mississippi, Virginia and Philadelphia, and compare his work with texts by other travellers who, unlike him, visited America in person and, from their own varied perspectives, reflected on their first-hand experiences on the continent. This comparison of Estala's writings with other travel narratives will help me analyse the complex relationships between Spain and its entire range of *othernesses*.

More a reinvention than a translation, *El Viajero Universal* travels a considerable distance from La Porte's original. It was not Estala's first translation – he had already created a Spanish version of Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle*, one of the sources on which he based his writing of *El Viajero Universal*. When working on the latter, he left out anything he considered false or unfounded in the French original, modifying any statements that, in his opinion, did not do justice to Spain, including claims that America's indigenous population were subject to deplorable living conditions in comparison to the splendour in which their ancestors had existed.

It is important here to note the genuine significance of Estala's work. In addition to procuring its author notable financial and literary success, it was conceived as a great educational project within the programme of reforms effected by prime minister Manuel Godoy (1792–98). The text reveals the various, different, and conflicting ways in which America was conceptualized during the Enlightenment, as well as the difficulties involved in defining extremely blurred boundaries and the notable contrasts that existed between the social customs of European men and women and those practised elsewhere in the world.

Travel narratives became a literary space in which fact and fiction could be interwoven to perfection, as is true of *El Viajero Universal*. Travels in the Americas served as a means for discussing climatic variations between the north and south of the continent and the influence of climate on geography, government, and society, but also for considering the causes of imperial decline and establishing the differences between men and women (Alegre Henderson 2019). Many Spanish writers, Estala included, encouraged their readership not to trust the subjective impressions of foreign travellers, who were considered less than impartial towards Spain and the history of its Atlantic possessions. These peninsular thinkers capitalized on the success of the travel genre, using it as a platform for the political rhetoric of modernization and civilization, a narrative the monarchy was keen to project in the face of European public opinion.

Estala depicted identities and borders in his descriptions of American geography. The construction of the Americas conjured in his travel narrative was based on the creation of a *difference* between the Spanish and British approaches to colonization (1797a, 101; 1799b, 308) and, at the same time, a *similarity* with other places in the world. The latter included other southern territories such as Andalusia (1799c, 337) where, according to a critical Estala, the Spanish language had been corrupted in the same way as it had in Mexico, and where women were guilty of vanity and desire for luxury, a vice also common to American women. He also points out other similarities between America and Asia, using Turkey (1799c, 209) as an example and comparing the barbaric practices of the Mexican emperors with those of oriental despotism.

These discursive differences and similarities were created at the precise moment at which Spain felt its colonies were at their most vulnerable, under threat as they were from other foreign powers. This chapter will therefore consider how such stereotypical ideas were disseminated by being woven into travel literature. They need to be understood in context, as a fundamental element of the cultural geography of the Enlightenment – a geography whose meanings were plural, flexible and disputed in the extreme, but had a tangible impact on reformist political practices.

## 2 Pedro de Estala and *El Viajero universal*

### 2.1 *The Image of Spain's Empire and National Character*

The year 1785 saw the publication of the first of the many editions which popularized *Le Voyage de Figaro en Espagne* [The Travel of Figaro in Spain], a travel book that elicited an indignant response from Spanish writers to its sarcastic descriptions of their customs and national character, which certain thinkers saw as set in stone but others as liable to change (Bolufer 2003).<sup>2</sup> The perception of Spain in the eighteenth century was altering and becoming darker in tone. As the French explorer Bougainville noted on his round-the-world voyage, the days were gone when “a single Spaniard could rout a thousand Indians” (2019, 48).

Like many educated men of his day, Pedro de Estala was well aware of this negative image and of the criticisms levelled by writers against his country's

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2 In his essay *Of National Characters* (1748), Hume suggested that men who lived in the polar or tropical regions were inferior to the rest of the species. The influence of climate on national character was a matter of much debate during the Enlightenment, with philosophers such as Montesquieu associating warmer climates with indigenous peoples' natural state of servitude.

past and its present (Villaverde Rico and Castilla Urbano 2016). He had after all worked as a censor for the Council of Castile, passing judgement on manuscripts whose authors or translators were seeking licences for publication.

Estala was following in the footsteps of the Duke of Almodóvar (1727–94), an Academician and translator who had highlighted the differences between Britain and Spain as colonial powers in *Historia política de los establecimientos ultramarinos de las naciones europeas* [A Political History of the Overseas Settlements of the European Nations] (1784–94), his translation of Raynal's work. Although both writers used Britain as their imperial countermodel, that role could equally well have been played by the Netherlands, as was the case in the account written by Academician, naval officer and poet José Vargas Ponce (1760–1821) of Antonio de Córdoba's voyage to the Strait of Magellan (1788).

Estala reacted vehemently against those who questioned Hispanic modernity. He seemed to feel himself the victim of a kind of campaign of cultural harassment aimed at denigrating the role played by Spain in its colonies. Like others of his generation, he fought against criticisms of the empire and lamented the fact that what he saw as the achievements of his ancestors – be they scientists, conquistadors, or explorers – were disappearing from the collective cultural memory. Estala was keen to refute the accusation that Spain was responsible for destroying the indigenous population of America, an allegation made by de Pauw and Raynal in their respective works, both distinctly anticolonial in tone. As well as criticizing the British empire, whose representatives he believed to be indifferent to the tears of downtrodden indigenous women, he also took the opportunity to praise the hustle and bustle of imperial capitals such as Lima or Havana (1797b, 126; 1797a, 13). Given that commerce was seen as a key ingredient of the civilization to which enlightened thinkers aspired, the prosperity of these major trading hubs within the Spanish empire contradicted the claim made by many that Spain was backward in this respect.

Estala thought the theory of indigenous destruction dubious and exaggerated. Clearly irritated by criticisms of the Spanish empire's degeneracy and lack of modernity, he was keen to underline "the injustice with which foreigners treat us" (1798, 76). In his view, Spain's colonies were not frozen in some distant past; although he condemned the times in which the Hapsburgs had seen Spanish America as nothing but a resource and stripped it to the bone by plundering its precious metals, he believed that the territories had been transformed by the advances of paternalistic Bourbon reform, solely responsible for the restoration of some of Spain's lost splendour. In that respect he agreed with Vargas Ponce, who had collated the material he needed to write his *Relación del último viaje al Estrecho de Magallanes* [A Voyage of Discovery to the Strait of Magellan] (1788) before the publication of Estala's *Viajero*. Despite the fact

that they concurred on certain specific points, however, the two writers' views on and conceptions of the geography of the Enlightenment were quite divergent, owing to their different backgrounds, perspectives and intentions.

The account offered by Pedro de Estala to his readers in *El Viajero Universal* is absolutely in line with the interests of the Spanish government and its desire to modernize the empire. The text looks at the issue of the decline of indigenous customs, taking Peru as an example. Estala brings together evidence from some very disparate ethnographic ventures in order to compare the colonial models developed by the different European powers, a process that leads him to come down in favour of Spain, whose conduct he sees as brimming with moderation and humanity. His was not a lone voice in championing this aspect of his nation's colonial approach – the same qualities would be noted by other travellers, including Félix de Azara during his time in Paraguay (1847, 279).

Estala was keen to address a question that was worrying the intellectuals of his generation: had America caused the downfall of the Spanish empire and harmed its inhabitants? Like many of his fellows, he was aware of the ills being suffered by a country that, having once been a “glorious nation” had become a “desolate wilderness,” a situation for which its conquests were in part to blame.<sup>3</sup> Estala was also alive to the negative image of the conquistadors, who were starting to be held responsible for the deaths of millions of Americans. As noted by Montesquieu in *Lettres persanes* (1721), Spain had drifted from a rich and glorious past towards a state of moral and material decline. Some French observers were able to forgive the peoples of South America for their alleged cannibalism, but still saw cruelty as one of the most ingrained traits of the Spanish national character (Carrère-Lara 2006).

Whatever Estala's perception may have been, there was in fact no single, unanimous view of the Spanish empire in France and there were plenty more moderate, even positive, stances to be found there. In his text, Estala condenses a wide range of perceptions into a small number of negative impressions then constructs a narrative in favour of an alternative Hispanic modernity, in an attempt to rectify his nation's damaged reputation and loss of prestige on the European stage and to disprove claims relating to the ruinous economic and cultural situation of the colonies in the eighteenth century (1797a, 28).

He goes so far as to invite his readers to laugh at the “ridiculous declamations of foreigners who accuse the Spanish of idleness because they are sober

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3 The satirical *Testamento de España* [Testament of Spain], first printed in the late eighteenth century with a fake imprint and invented year of publication, denounced Spaniards' proud and vain disposition and questioned Spain's right to rule colonies that, now destroyed, were left to lament their enslavement (Mendoza Díaz-Maroto 2001).

and content themselves with life's essentials, lacking that aspiration for luxury which motivates the industriousness of other nations" (1798, 75). His aim of disputing this interpretation of the Spanish national character can be seen in his exasperation with the large number of "tiresome novels" and "tales" inundating the European publishing market and giving less than reliable accounts, as far as the Spanish were concerned, of the state of Spain's American colonies. Although Estala himself found this infuriating, his fellow countrymen's attitudes towards the empire varied widely – some believed its indigenous peoples were either savages or enfeebled, others that Spain had lost its colonies by neglecting them, others again that the conquest of these territories had brought honour to the nation. In circles far from officialdom and, consequently, free from government censorship, certain Spanish writers, such as diplomat Bernardo de Iriarte (1735–1814), had no qualms in accepting, if with some resignation, "how little we deserve to continue to own the lands we possess so uselessly" (Gimeno Puyol 2010, 910).

## 2.2 *The Climatology Issue and the Dimension of Gender*

As well as drawing on Buffon's *Histoire*, Estala also based his writings on texts by other scientists and travellers, including Jorge Juan's *Relación Histórica del Viaje a la América Meridional* [Historical Account of a Voyage to South America] (1748). This was considered a serious and rigorous work in Europe, even though it sought to challenge the image of Spain as an intellectually and scientifically backward nation. Along with Antonio Ulloa, Juan had been a member of the Spanish-French expedition organised by the Académie royale des sciences in Paris (1735–1746) whose participants also included the French mathematician and naturalist Charles Marie de La Condamine among other scientists and explorers.

Adopting a far less critical attitude towards the British empire than that taken by Estala, Jorge Juan appreciated the civility and civilization represented by Britain. He also wrote about the effect of the tropical climate on life in the south of the continent (Juan and Ulloa 1748, 510), ideas later taken up by Estala. In North America, meanwhile, again according to Jorge Juan, the most notable characteristics of a growing population were work, wealth, and fertility, in contrast to the south where the women suffered from lower fertility and the men were lacking in education and manners.

He claimed that the excessive heat of South America had played a crucial role in feminizing men, damaging women's beauty, and obstructing social relations between the two sexes. Estala agreed that the region was more inclined to degeneracy and feminization than was North America. However, his discourse reveals a certain degree of ambivalence. Estala defends colonization

in America against the criticisms of foreign intellectuals, commending his compatriots precisely for the achievement of building an empire in a region more difficult to civilize and control, as well as putting greater emphasis on the progress made in the colonies during the eighteenth century.

Estala also established a model of an indigenous woman characterized by strength, savagery, and immorality – this became a benchmark of primitive femininity that formed a sharp contrast with the equivalent models of an enlightened European modernity, where women were seen as the embodiment of delicacy, sensitivity, modesty, taste, and compassion (Knott and Taylor 2005). Linked with other variables of identity such as nation and empire, the debate about indigenous and European women fed into the construction of the colonial difference.

Estala's writings exemplify the ambivalences that run through the Enlightenment discourse on America. He praises the territories of the north while simultaneously claiming that the fact that the Spanish "possess[ed] the greatest and most precious part of the New World, acquired with industry, bravery and the blood of our own men" (1797a, 155) was a good thing for Europe as a whole. Despite this, he concedes that, even for the metropolis, Spain's colonies are too extensive to populate and cultivate. The situation was different in North America, whose territories were thriving, thanks to the commercial, demographic, and agrarian growth of cities such as Pittsburgh, New Jersey, and New York (1797a, 157). Estala points to the wealth and economic prosperity of the Spanish colonies – underlining their trading prowess in particular, driven by liberalizing economic reforms – as the basis of European modernity. However, this comparison of the colonial experience of the north and south of the continent, in terms of both costs and economic benefits, did not show South America in the best light.

Estala sets out a series of arguments which enable him to elaborate a geography profoundly influenced by climate. The clearest example is found in his description of the prosperous and flourishing colonies of the north, which he sees as radically new and different in terms of a population made up of "original characters, worthy of the greatest admiration" (1799a, 283–288). That same sense of urbanity and wealth had been noted, and praised, by Juan and Ulloa as they visited the colony of Boston during their New World travels. The northern climate favoured the progress of its patriots, of entrepreneurs and educated people, it also boosted the fertility of both its women and its land, encouraging good practices and pastoral customs, with the accent on the myth of the countryside as a source of happiness, a cliché reflected in much of the literature of the period.

The Spanish American colonies, by contrast, were thought to be inhabited by savage and childlike Indians, indigenous peoples who, in a natural environment



surrounded by swampland and home to huge insects and reptiles, gave into debilitating passions – specifically jealousy, where women were involved. The native inhabitants despised anything that was not part of the traditions of their homeland. Women with deformed breasts and men capable of suckling their children were proof of the wild and uncivilized temperament of the continent which, significantly, is represented as being in direct opposition to the gender models considered appropriate by Europeans.

Intellectuals built the architecture of their imperial discourses on the concepts of civilization and progress. In spite of the idea that civilization, as a process involving moral improvement and the curbing of instincts, ratified the superiority of the Old World, it was by no means a univocal concept in the age in which Estala published his text. Enlightenment civilization required inequalities between the sexes to be smoothed out and indigenous peoples to be taught useful values and virtues, as well as the knowledge of Catholicism imparted by the missionaries. Civilization might be a remedy for the Americans, but might equally become a disease they would have to fight. The vices of the Europeans might harm the Americans and might even, as stated by Bougainville when referring to the missions of Paraguay, make them detest “too heavy a yoke” (2019, 86). This tension arose when the concept of civilization was applied as “a mere veneer” (Estala 1799d, 348), nothing but a mask concealing the passions and vices that would ultimately corrupt the European empires. Prime among these was the aspiration for luxury, something seemingly incompatible with the religious character that had been part of discourses about colonization, but seen by some European thinkers as a dynamic factor in individual freedom, growth and wealth.

Estala brings together the main arguments with which to construct a *difference* between empires, tied together with a broader differentiation between North and South as cultural concepts, primarily for reasons of climatology and gender. The South – the city of Veracruz, for example – was warmer, wetter, less healthy and less fertile, and therefore lacked the conditions not only to encourage cleanliness and social interaction, but also to foster intellectual, judicial, and economic development, and a healthy coexistence between men and women. South America is, then, depicted as a less civilized space – with the possible exception of cases such as that of the Araucanians – in which there was proof of the crucial role played in social life and organization by pernicious human passions, in contrast to the value placed on emotional self-control in civilized societies (Dwyer 1998).

A clear example of this can be found in Estala’s description of the pre-Colombian Mexican empire. He rejects the idea that it should be seen as an example of great civilization, as many European authors had done. On the

contrary, he presents it as a place where the carnal and irrational pleasures of the native inhabitants were the opposite of the sentimental refinement of the Enlightenment, where wisdom was overruled by ignorance, and where the Mexican emperors had established the most barbaric and absurd despotism imaginable, based on the debasement of their subjects. According to Estala, this attitude could be compared with that of Turkey, although “its humiliations have no equivalent among even the ancient or modern despots of Asia” (1799c, 209). Mexico was also, in his opinion, a place in which all significant events were marked with blood and where religious superstition and cannibalism prevailed. “Such was the empire,” he notes acerbically, “whose destruction was so lamented by those philosophers who call themselves friends of humanity” (1799c, 237).

No matter how much knowledge of astronomy or medicine the indigenous Americans might have, Estala portrays them as “schoolchildren” (1799c, 171) incapable of controlling their own bodies. The contrasts he highlights in his writings between these indigenous populations and life in European society involve the issues that sparked most controversy among Enlightenment thinkers: discussions about the character of indigenous people, painted as anything from gentle and docile to cruel and hard to subjugate; criticisms of luxury and the moral consequences of acquisitiveness, especially where women were concerned; the feminization of men; the long-term impact of discovery and conquest on the Americans; and the demarcation of civilization, in its various stages, as opposed to barbarism.

Definitions of civilization and barbarism grew out of different arguments, with a variety of mechanisms being used to establish a graduated scale of higher and lower levels of savagery and civility. These ranged from the means of waging war used by indigenous peoples and Europeans – the form of warfare employed in the Old Continent was considered more compassionate and humane – to the cannibalism allegedly practised in America. Particular emphasis was placed on the latter because of the shock of some observers who watched in astonishment how women, supposedly the gentler sex, delighted in the consumption of human flesh, as reported by Benito María de Moxó, one of the last archbishops of the colonial period in the province of Charcas in modern-day Bolivia (Moxó 1837, 101).

Social customs were also included in this scale, with descriptions of the sorts of conduct and tasks that were appropriate for men and women respectively. Like others of the time, Estala’s text notes that such dividing lines were blurred in America – useful ammunition for those arguing in favour of the kind of social and sexual hierarchy found in Europe but often absent from more primitive societies where women did not fit the mould of good wives and mothers, but instead carried out more laborious activities. This in turn meant

they had lost sight of the sweet and affectionate nature that had always been “the true characteristic of their sex” (Malaspina 1885, 168).

In a similar vein to that of Estala, Jorge Juan relates how women in indigenous societies are stronger than their menfolk, who are weakened by giving into their intemperate desires at an early age (Juan and Ulloa 1748, 372), and how relationships between the sexes are profoundly unequal. By contrast, he is full of praise for the Creole women of Lima – docile, obedient, and capable of inspiring love in European suitors. Race became a central concept in travel writings, used to establish a difference between native and white or mixed-race Creole women. Indigenous women were characterized as prone to excessive and cruel behaviour, especially when it came to their treatment of their children and their sexual practices. Cruelty was seen as a feminine trait, but women were also its victims at the hands of men. These considerations served only to reinforce the belief that they lived in a state of savagery which, as Estala himself recognised, was more questionable in the case of the populations inhabiting the lands between Chile and Argentina (1797a, 280).

The desire for luxury was another indicator of the level to which social customs had been corrupted. It was particularly associated with women because of its close links with the idea of weakness and to female excess and desires, perceived as dangerous. In fact, the debate about the risks involved in the pursuit of luxury, linked to a feminization of customs, runs through all Enlightenment thinking. Estala’s opinions on the matter are emblematic in this respect: whereas Juan Sempere y Guarinos highlights its more beneficial aspects in his *Historia del Luxo y de las leyes suntuarias de España* [The History of Luxury and of the Spanish Sumptuous Law] (1788), arguing that luxury should be embraced in order to encourage social and economic growth, Estala views it as immoral and liable to lead to the downfall of the most educated of nations.

He criticizes the Creole women of Mexico City and Lima for emulating Spanish women and becoming vain and interested only in superficial appearances, and for their extravagance, symbolic of the triumph of the material over the spiritual. He emphasizes the fact that an aspiration for luxury could both bring misery to individuals and damage society as a whole, drawing similarities in this respect between Madrid and Mexico City. His tone is notably different here from that adopted by Juan, who saw Spain’s American colonies as “a land of widespread sartorial luxury” (Earle 2003, 219–227).

### 3 Conclusion: A Cliché-Ridden Cultural Geography

I should like to end by highlighting four main strands that have been examined in this text, moving from the more general to the more specific. Firstly, there is the

argument that, as noted by Juan Pimentel, because exploration was associated with the acquisition of knowledge, travelling was an intellectual venture with which Enlightenment thinkers could fully identify (2003, 15). There is also the fact that those long and costly transoceanic voyages functioned as a discursive device that enabled travellers and translators to configure an imaginary geography much contested throughout the Enlightenment. This was a time when universalist ideas allowed a figure such as the British navigator and explorer of the Pacific James Cook (1728–79) to be elevated to heroic status, regardless of his nationality, because of his contributions to scientific understanding of the day.

Secondly, I want to emphasize the fact that the voyages of the Enlightenment led to various ways of categorizing *otherness*, a means of inclusion and exclusion with which we can designate a complex play of relationships between Europe and those regions that its intellectuals considered to be different. These relationships were presented by travellers as dichotomous, fixed and defined, although in reality they were no more than a variable, ambivalent and dynamic range of possibilities.

Thirdly, and more specifically, I have focused on the example of the Spanish empire, considered by many observers and travellers to be behind the times, repressive and decadent. While the modernity of Spain and its colonies was under discussion, Spanish America's identity was being reformulated and questioned in travel writings, although also in the press, political discourse, and moral and philosophical reflections. It is in this context that we must see Estala's defence of Spain's role in America, in other words, with an awareness of the controversies that had arisen over the way in which Spain had conducted itself in the New World, what its colonies had represented in Europe's past, what the Spanish empire was claiming to be and to what extent the Spanish government was in fact disguising the reality of its colonial situation in order to present itself in a more modern light to other European powers. The notions of civilization and progress were used to form the basis of the colonial discourses being constructed by many other European intellectuals as well as Estala.

In reality, the image of Spain and its colonies was not quite as black as Estala believed. Despite the opinions about America which he reports in *El Viajero Universal*, some observers were also aware of the transformations that the Spanish empire had made during the course of the eighteenth century to improve the situation of its American territories (Paquette 2008). His perceptions on the matter disregarded any of the more balanced or even positive assessments or impressions of Spain and its colonies in Mexico and Peru that were circulating in his day (Checa Beltrán 2012).

With a whole series of discourses generating singularities, similarities, and differences between the various regions of the north and south, Estala's

narrative can be understood as part of Spain's battle to be seen as part of modern Europe at a time when the United States had achieved independence while Spanish America was being singled out as a savage, degenerate, and infantile space. Like many others of his generation, Estala concealed behind his writings about the issues facing South America a whole multitude of movements and connections between the north and south of the continent, a network of inter-relationships highlighted by recent historiography (Cañizares Esguerra 2018).

Aware of negative impressions of the Spanish empire, Estala manipulated a discourse that could have been used to damage his nation's reputation to defend it instead. He acknowledged the climatic and degenerative theories relating to South America, theories that had already been disseminated by other writers such as De Pauw and Buffon, but also expressed his admiration for the North and responded to criticisms of the Spanish monarchy which had so commendably taken control of a hostile territory and succeeded in modernizing and civilizing it. He justified this version of Hispanic modernity by drawing comparisons with, for example, the Turks, with a view to demonstrating the zealotry and barbarity of the Mexicans before the arrival of the Spanish and, ultimately, to legitimizing the Spanish conquest of America at a time when anticolonial voices were beginning to make themselves heard in Europe.

Thanks to Estala's writings, the Spanish empire was added to the European rhetoric of progress; and the Bourbon monarchy was able to restake its claim to be part of a modernity that did not, in fact, exist only in the North. Travel literature cannot be dismissed as a historical source in terms of demonstrating some of the key aspects of Enlightenment political rhetoric – it had the capacity to strengthen the image of reformist politics and the potential to bolster the reputation of the nation and grease the cogs of the imperial machine.

Fourthly and finally, I should like to underline the role played by gender difference in these intersecting issues. The identity of America was established on the basis of a thick web of gender-related clichés that contributed to the construction of polarizing divisions and hierarchical categories into which male and female behaviour could be classified, producing countermodels that legitimized the version of femininity seen as proper in Europe, where men celebrated their masculinity and the tasks and obligations appropriate to it. It was precisely such balanced and virtuous relationships between men and women that Estala found lacking among the Americans.

His perception of the indigenous peoples endorsed the idea stated by José Vargas Ponce that “there [was] a much greater difference between the two sexes than there is among our own people” (1788, 338). Ponce's intention was to uphold both the ideal characteristics of civilized European society and the prevailing state of affairs regarding the customs of his own age. He, along

with many other participants in this debate, was calling for a reduction in the inequality between the sexes that existed in America, as part of a process of genuine civilization. This Enlightenment controversy over the different roles and conduct of men and women revealed the major inequalities that fed into the modernizing discourses of the period (Bolufer, 2009).

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# Nations, Sexuality, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century National Narratives

*Alberto M. Banti*

## 1 Nationalisms Present and Past

In recent years we have frequently seen the leaders and activists of Europe's right-wing neo-nationalist movements angrily condemning assaults by foreign migrants on women from the host national community. The explosions of aggression by right-wing militants and sympathisers have often been uncontrolled, if not ferociously primitive. This was the case on 3 February 2018 when Luca Traini drove through Macerata, Italy, firing from his car at any African migrant he saw, finally stopping in front of the war memorial, getting out with the Italian flag round his shoulders, and making a Fascist-style Roman salute: all ostensibly to revenge the death of a young Italian woman, Pamela Mastropietro, who had been assaulted and killed in the city on 29 January by Innocent Oseghale, a Nigerian drug dealer still in Italy after the expiry of his residence permit (Caccia and Morosi 2018). In another recent episode of violence in Italy, in Viterbo on 29 April 2019, Francesco Chiricozzi and Riccardo Licci, two activists in the neo-fascist Casa Pound movement, assaulted a thirty-seven-year-old Italian woman befuddled by drugs and alcohol, filming this “exploit” on their mobile phones. Strangely – or perhaps not – Chiricozzi, a few months earlier, had posted on Facebook a poster printed in 1944 under the Italian Social Republic, in which the Fascist government urged Italians to defend their women from assaults by African troops within the Allied forces; Chiricozzi had projected the Fascist exhortation (“Defend the white woman!”) onto recent cases of Italian women assaulted and killed by African migrants. As Ida Dominijanni and Sara Farris have both observed, in the most brutal vision of Fascist machismo, evidently shared by Chiricozzi, the nation's men believe it is their right to make use of the community's women as they please, but the same behaviour, when performed by someone outside the community, is regarded as sacrilege, and when their “outsider” nature is emphasised by a different skin colour the indignation is almost uncontainable.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the post accompanying the 1944 Fascist image, Chiricozzi had written “Defend her. The next Pamela or Desirée could be your daughter, your wife or your sister. Wake up!”

We could compile a long list of such episodes, relating not just to Italian neo-nationalism. While it is certainly true that the two instances highlighted are extreme in their unrestrained brutality, they are still consistent with an overall ideological and rhetorical perspective that is regularly employed by influential commentators within right-wing movements. This discursive system has the following key elements:

1. Responsibilities for physical, military, and symbolic protection are reserved for men.
2. Women are – generally – seen as requiring protection, both because they cannot defend themselves on their own and because they are especially valuable to the community’s wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>
3. The protection of women is, however, selective. As far as I am aware, nationalist movements have never made the issue of violence against women in general central to their political agenda. If someone commits violence, whether physical or sexual, against a woman of the same nation, this might be criticised or censured, but not with the same emphasis applied to rape by the ethnic “other;” often, in fact, such an event is simply silently forgotten.
4. In some extreme situations – in the conflict after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, for example – inter-ethnic rape has been considered an appropriate punitive measure against the enemy. In such cases, the sub-human nature of the “other” – those who belong to different ethnic or national groups – is in play.
5. Central to this whole mental universe is the symbolic system expressed in the phrase “national honour”. The content of this symbolic field may vary, but in the case of early twenty-first-century nationalist movements it revolves around two objectives: preservation of the purity of the community’s genealogical line, and expression of a robust virility, made manifest in the control and protection of “its” women and in the ability to defeat and humiliate its enemies.

If we want to explain why a value system as seemingly archaic as the one I have just described might re-emerge at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we have to understand that this value system has been one of the

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The references were to Pamela Mastropietro and to Desirée Mariottini, a sixteen-year-old who had been assaulted in Rome on 18 and 19 October 2018 and then left to die (Dominijanni 2019; Farris 2019).

2 Among current nationalist movements, France’s Rassemblement National has distanced itself from this position, at least in its rhetoric, in view of its programme’s exaltation of victories by French women, used as a weapon against the entrenched positions on gender espoused by Muslim culture.

principal symbolic pillars of classic nationalist discourse ever since the birth of Romantic nationalist movements at the beginning of the nineteenth century. At that time, the fact that the idea of “nation” spread and took root owed much to the circulation of stories with a nationalist orientation in media that then had great power, such as historical novels, poetry collections, plays, paintings, prints and operas. I am not going to dwell on the specific aspects of this process, which have already been amply explored in classic works on nationalism (Mosse 1975; Anderson 1983; Thiesse 1999). Instead, I would like to emphasise the fact that many of the important texts that were responsible for structuring nationalist thinking devoted a considerable amount of time to stories of inter-ethnic rape in which one or more of the nation’s heroines are targeted or, actually, violated by foreign enemies (or, instead, by traitors who have crossed over into the ranks of the nation’s enemies). I offer here a summary list of narrative and visual works that include this kind of story, developed in varying degree: Friedrich Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, 1804; Heinrich von Kleist, *Die Hermannsschlacht* [The Battle of Herrmann], 1808–1821; Theodor Körner, *Leyer und Schwerdt* [Lyre and Sword], 1814; Giacomo Leopardi, *All’Italia* [To Italy], 1818; Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe*, 1819; Francesco Hayez, *I Vespri siciliani* [The Sicilian Vespers], 1822, 1835, 1844–46; Eugène Delacroix, *Greece on the ruins of Missolonghi*, 1826, and *The Abduction of Rebecca*, 1858; Étienne de Jouy and Louis-Florent Bis, *Guillaume Tell*, 1829, Italian translation by Calisto Bassi, for the music of Gioachino Rossini; Massimo d’Azeglio, *Ettore Fieramosca, ossia la disfida di Barletta* [Ettore Fieramosca, or the Challenge of Barletta], 1833, and *Niccolò de’ Lapi ovvero i Palleschi e i Piagnoni* [Niccolò de’ Lapi, or the Palleschi and the Piagnoni], 1841; Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, *L’assedio di Firenze* [The Siege of Florence], 1836; Eugène Sue, *Les Mystères du peuple* [The Mysteries of the People], 1849–1857; James Grant, *First Love and Last Love: A Tale of Indian Mutiny*, 1863; Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Clelia ovvero Il governo dei preti* [Clelia, or the Government of the Priests], 1870, *Cantoni il Volontario* [Cantoni the Volunteer], 1870, and *I Mille* [The Thousand], 1874.<sup>3</sup>

It might be observed that within the literary and visual culture of the nineteenth century, which was pervaded by misogynistic sadism, the theme of sexual aggression takes many different forms but often emerges as a moral tale whose aim is to portray the innocence and tragic purity of a female character confronted by the unchecked animality of some brutal aggressor (Praz 1933; Dijkstra 1986). This idea runs through works that had a major impact and were

3 The materials and analysis presented here reprise the much fuller discussion offered in Banti (2005); for the more specific case of the Italian Risorgimento, see Banti (2020).

of crucial importance in the cultural landscape of the era; perhaps the most notable of all examples, in view of its enduring success in the Italian context, is Alessandro Manzoni's *I Promessi sposi* [The Betrothed] (1827/1840–42). In this essay, however, I am more interested in examining the meaning of these narratives within the framework of nationalist discourse. Why make use of stories of sexual aggression, and just how were these episodes narrated?

## 2 Inter-ethnic Rape in the Narratives of Romantic Nationalism

I am going to choose the most extreme point of reference by starting with a work in which the narrative reaches unusual levels of dramatic intensity: Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Hermannsschlacht*.<sup>4</sup> This play tells of the endeavours of Hermann (Arminius), the leader of the Cherusci, to unite the various Germanic tribes in common cause against the Roman invaders: a clear allusion to the situation of Prussia and Germany as a whole, which at the time were completely subordinate to Napoleonic France after the Battle of Jena. Hermann's efforts bear fruit when everyone becomes fully aware of the atrocities and brutality of the Romans, which von Kleist illustrates by staging an episode of disturbing violence.

It is night. Among the Germans' houses shouts are suddenly heard and a crowd collects. Hally, a girl, scarcely recognisable and seriously wounded, is carried in, and a Cheruscan man drapes her with a piece of cloth. Roman soldiers, encamped nearby, have surprised her on her own and brutally raped her. Her father Teuthold is immediately called and arrives with his cousins. Hally is his only daughter. Realising what has happened to her, he quickly kills her with a thrust of his dagger and then throws himself upon her body, crying "Hally! My only daughter! Have I done right?" Hermann arrives, and is told by another Cheruscan warrior that a group of Roman soldiers have savagely assaulted the young woman:

SELMAR: A whole pack

Of salivating Romans, roaming around their camp

At dusk, have shamelessly subjected her ...

HERMANN (*leading him onto the stage*). Quietly, Selmar, quietly!

As you know, walls have ears.

A group of Romans? (von Kleist 1927, 567)

4 Written in the second half of 1808, the play was published in 1821 and performed for the first time on 18 October 1860 in Breslau, in an adaptation by Feodor Wehl. The extracts presented here have been translated by Alberto Banti and Stuart Oglethorpe.

The rest of the conversation is too quiet to hear. Hermann then addresses all those present, calling for revenge on the Romans. They cluster around the Cheruscan leader, who turns to Teuthold:

HERMANN: Listen now, and don't talk back.  
 Go, wretched father, and with your cousins  
 Carry the dishonoured virgin  
 To a corner of your house!  
 We have fifteen tribes amongst us Germans;  
 With the sword's blade, cut her body  
 Into fifteen pieces, and let fifteen messengers  
 – For this I'll give you fifteen horses –  
 Take one each to the fifteen tribes of Germany.  
 For your revenge, in Germany this body  
 Will even rouse inanimate elements:  
 The storm, blowing through the forest,  
 Will shout: Revolt! And the sea,  
 Battering the country's shores, will cry: Liberty!  
 THE PEOPLE: Revolt! Revenge! Liberty!  
 TEUTHOLD: Go! Take her!  
 Carry her home, and cut her into pieces! (569)

This macabre ritual paves the way for a meeting of the fifteen Germanic tribes. Brought back together by this episode, and by Hermann's charisma, they succeed in defeating the Roman legions, led by Varus, in the battle of the Teutoburg Forest.

In this case, after the sexual violence has taken place, it is the father who kills his abused daughter, freeing her from the dishonour she has experienced; the morally redemptive killing is followed by a ritual dismembering. This, of course, is just one variant of the stories of rape. Events in other cases, often narrated in not such overheated forms, may come to a conclusion in, essentially, three further ways:

1. with the suicide of the female protagonist, either before or after being violated;
2. with her death from unbearable anguish, after being violated;
3. with the timely intervention of one of the nation's heroes, who saves the heroine just moments before she is subjected to the dishonour of rape.

This somewhat limited variety of resolutions should give us food for thought; in particular, we should consider the absence of realism in the portrayal of these redemptive deaths. The nation's heroines, assaulted by foreigners (or

traitors), die either because they commit suicide, or because they are killed by a relative (often their father), or because they cannot withstand the shame and experience an irremediable mental and physical breakdown. Why should an unfortunate young woman, after her violation, also be destined for an inescapable death? For the answer, we should look to the thinking about kinship that lies beneath the more general descriptions of national communities offered by the spokespeople for nineteenth-century nationalism.

Within the nationalist discursive system of the Romantic era, national sovereignty was exercised on behalf of the nation, which owed its existence to a shared literary language and a cultural history expressed in this language. However, this is somewhat less than a fully inclusive definition, and was actually not that convincing for the large numbers who were not literate and could not yet speak the national language. A more effective description of the nation sees it as a kinship community that projects itself back into the past (in the story of its ancestors), develops itself in the present (in current political events), and also envisages itself in the future (in the life of its descendants). The kinship-based description is particularly important, because it allows nationalist spokespeople to use the concept of shared genealogy in relation to the national community. In the modern era, genealogical descent has been what legitimises the sociopolitical pretensions of the families of the nobility, and provides the basis for claims to sovereignty by ruling dynasties; similarly, in nationalist language, the existence of a national genealogy, whose previous generations have performed heroic deeds, is what legitimises a national community's aspirations to the exercise of political sovereignty over the territory that has "traditionally" belonged to that community. We can imagine the nationalist train of thought as follows: by extolling "our" history we are demonstrating that genealogical continuity does not just belong to nobles and monarchs, but also to all "our" people, who because of this continuity can aspire to the exercise of sovereignty, as sovereigns did in an exclusive manner in the past. Use of the genealogical conception of sovereignty propelled the champions of national sentiment into describing the nation as a community consisting of a specific "stock" or "race," distinguished by possession of one and the same "blood." Further to the use of this kind of "biopolitical" vocabulary, as it might be termed, the nation also comes to be systematically described by using the vocabulary of kinship: in Italian, the *"patria"* (a term that already relates to *"terra dei padri"* or "land of the fathers") becomes the *"madre-patria"* ("mother-fatherland"); the leaders of nationalist movements become the *"padri della patria"* ("fathers of the fatherland"); and the members of the nation are each other's *"fratelli e sorelle"* ("brothers and sisters").



This being the case, we can better understand the symbolic meaning of the narrative outcomes of stories about rape. The rescue or sacrificial death of women not only ensures the national community's moral purity but also guarantees that the sexual offence will not result in any mixed-race strains, and that no "impure blood" will contaminate the genealogical uniformity of the nation. Although these solutions might seem disturbing, they are entirely consistent with the overall structure of national and patriotic discourse.

### 3 Visual Allegories and Representations

In the texts that deal with inter-ethnic rape the meaning of the stories is symbolically highly charged, and in at least some of them we might search in vain for any particular psychological development of their female protagonists. There was no real need to explore the personality traits of these figures, since their function was to express a system of values whose essence was based on the moral purity of women, the unadulterated capacity to reproduce the nation, in cultural as well as physical terms, and the defence of the nation's honour. While the portrayals of girls and women lack much character development, this is also sometimes denied to the negative figures of enemies and traitors. In nineteenth-century stories with a national and patriotic orientation, the "baddies" take on their role as such simply by virtue of their membership of another nation, and their evil nature is demonstrated by their primitive inclination towards the sadistic sexual perversion that was supposed, in the narrators' intention, to frighten and impassion both male and female readers, awakening in them the sense of belonging to their own national community.

As well as being applied to fictional victims and predators, this model was also used with allegorical subjects – much-used devices of visual communication in nineteenth-century national discourse – in the dramatic depiction of rape scenes suffered by female figures representing the nation as a whole. Examples of this variant can be found in late eighteenth-century British caricature prints on political themes (Dresser 1989, 34–35), and in many French prints of the revolutionary period. In one from 1799, for example, with the title *The Constitution of Year III ... By Violating Me Three Times They Have Caused My Death!!!! May She Rest in Peace*, Marianne, wearing a Phrygian cap, in classical dress, and with bare breast, is pictured appealing to Heaven for her death because of the sexual violence she has endured, in reference to the series of coups, up to and including that of 18 Brumaire 1799, launched against the French constitution of 1795 (Landes 2001, 166–67).

In Kleist's *Die Hermannsschlacht* there is a comparable development, which derives from the episode of Hally's rape and dismemberment, discussed earlier. In the play's final scene, after the Germanic tribes have defeated the Romans, Hermann meets their other leaders and is addressed by the chief of the Catti:

WOLF: Hally, the dishonoured virgin,  
 A piece of whom you sent to each tribe  
 As a symbol of our fatherland,  
 Exhausted the patience of our peoples.  
 You see all Germany roused to arms,  
 To punish the atrocity she suffered:  
 But we have come to ask you  
 How you propose to use the army that we have  
 Provided for you in the war on Rome? (1927, 604)

Hermann's answer is that Marbod, chief of the Svevi, must decide. The latter arrives, and, kneeling down in front of him, declares that Hermann should be leader of all the tribes: "MARBOD: Glory be to you! I proclaim Hermann the saviour of Germany!" (605) At the play's climax, the unfortunate Hally thus ceases to be a real person in order to become an allegory for Germany, displaying its appalling suffering: the dishonour of the assault it has endured; dismemberment, symbolic of the division of its peoples; and reconstitution, rendered by the reunion of its fifteen tribes, recipients of the fifteen wretched body fragments.

In a less brutal but no less crude way, the violence suffered by the nation was given symbolic representation in the image of rape suffered by its female allegory in the ritual exchange for initiation into an Italian secret society, the *Guelfia*, believed to date from 1816:

Q. Are you Guelph? A. My mother has the sea for her husband and the highest mountains for her nourishing bosom. Q. Who is your mother? A. The woman with the dark braids and the abundant fruit, the most beautiful in the universe. Q. What are your mother's gifts? A. Beauty, wisdom, and, in times past, strength. Q. What is the provision made for her? A. A delightful garden, with beautiful flowers, in which grow fruit trees, olives, and vines, and where blows a gentle breeze. Q. What does your mother do now? A. Wounded, she groans. Q. Who has wounded her? A. Her neighbours, aided by her degenerate children. Q. Why did they wound her? A. Out of jealousy of her beauty. Q. Where did they wound her? A. In her breast and her vagina. Q. How did they manage to wound her? A. Through the neglect

of her guardians. Q. For how long has she lain wounded? A. For fourteen times a hundred years. Q. Where are you going? A. To seek a remedy for my mother. Q. What is the remedy? A. The root of a plant once indigenous to our mother's garden, and transplanted elsewhere. Q. Will you find it again? A. Yes. Q. What impels you to seek it again? A. The love for my mother. Q. When will she recover? A. I cannot say. Q. Tell me? A. When the cockerel crows again; the eagles clash; the bulls wage war; the harp calls in the dolphins and the moon is drenched in blood; and the ship runs aground. Q. What will there be of your mother after her recovery? A. She will come back ever more beautiful, strong, and feared. (Ottolini 1936, 124–25)<sup>5</sup>

The text is dense with allusions that are difficult to interpret, especially in the final part where they relate to the society's more directly operational plans. By contrast, the references are very clear when they revolve around the allegorical figure of Italy, the mother of all her children, who has been abused by foreigners in her erogenous zones due to the laxness of those who should have protected her: the nation's men and the guardians of her honour.

Stories of sexual aggression inflicted on allegories of the nation, either directly or by implication, through verbal or physical attack, were also depicted in the most significant pictorial art inspired by national and patriotic themes. An example of this is Eugène Delacroix's extraordinary painting *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, completed in 1826.<sup>6</sup> In this work, the allegorical representation of Greece comes in the very realistic form of a woman stripped of her defences, as her men lie dead, with the bloodied arm of one of them showing in the foreground. This image of a beautiful, exposed, and desirable woman, with tattered clothing leaving her breasts largely revealed, is being approached from behind by the threatening figure of a dark-skinned soldier; we are led to think that she will shortly risk being overwhelmed by a final assault, on her honour as well as her life.

The theme of physical or sexual assault on the weaker members – women and the elderly – of a defeated community, which Delacroix only suggested in the picture just discussed, was made explicit, with great dramatic intensity, in some of his other paintings: for example, *The Massacre at Chios* (painted in 1823–24), *Entry of the Crusaders in Constantinople* (1840), *Attila the Hun* (1847) and *The*

5 For a slightly different and longer version, see Spadoni (1924, 732–34).

6 Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux-Arts. The painting alludes to the siege of the city of Missolonghi in 1825–26, when its 4,000 men were outnumbered by a surrounding army of 35,000, backed up by the Turkish fleet. On 25 April 1826, to avoid falling into enemy hands, the last few defenders blew themselves up with their women and children.

*Abduction of Rebecca* (1858), the last of which was inspired by an episode in Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.<sup>7</sup> These works, despite Delacroix's apparent disavowal of the horrors represented, draw the viewer – or rather, more specifically, the male gaze – into identifying with the vicious sadism inherent in the physical and sexual violence inflicted by victorious male soldiers on their victims.<sup>8</sup>

With the exception of *The Abduction of Rebecca*, the other scenes depict the moment immediately after a defeat, in which women are left exposed because the men have not been able to protect them. These women could be saved, however, or even revenged, if their men could respond and demonstrate that they possess the virile qualities of courage, strength, and military capability. This is precisely the theme of the scene that Francesco Hayez devotes to the episode of the “Sicilian Vespers,” one of the national myths embraced by the Italian Risorgimento, which he dealt with in three different versions.<sup>9</sup> Hayez took the subject from Sismondi's *Storia delle Repubbliche italiane* [A History of the Italian Republics]; in a letter dated 31 January 1821 to Michele Bisi, the intermediary between him and his patron, the marchioness Visconti d'Aragona, he offered this description:

On Monday, 30 March 1282, the day after Easter, the people of Palermo, as was their custom, set off to attend Vespers at the church of Monreale, three miles outside the city; the French troops stationed in Palermo took part in the festival and its procession. The latter had had a proclamation published banning the carrying of arms. While the people were busy gathering flowers in the meadows and greeting the spring, a beautiful young noblewoman was making her way to the church with her husband and

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7 The first two works are in the Louvre, Paris, while the third was painted for the north half-circle of the vaulted ceiling in the library of the Palais Bourbon, seat of the French parliament; Delacroix received the commission for this in 1838, and finished it in 1847. The final picture is also in the Louvre, while an earlier version, finished in 1846, hangs in the Metropolitan Museum of New York.

8 The picture by Delacroix that portrays the most disturbing degree of sadistic aggression towards its female figures, however, is surely *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827), also in the Louvre, which actually has no direct relationship with national and patriotic narratives.

9 In 1822 Hayez painted the scene of the uprising in a picture commissioned by the marchioness Visconti d'Aragona, the wife – in her second marriage – to the marquis Alessandro Visconti d'Aragona, who had been charged with taking part in a patriotic anti-Austrian plot in 1821, and then absolved. A second version was produced by Hayez in 1835, as a commission from Francesco Arese, who in 1827 had been released from the Spielberg castle, where he had been imprisoned for his part in the plot of 1821. The subject was depicted for the third time in 1844–46, commissioned by Vincenzo Ruffo di Motta e Bagnara, Prince of Sant'Antimo; this version, the most well-known, is reproduced in Figure 1.

her brothers. A Frenchman arrogantly searched her upper body on the pretext of checking whether she was carrying hidden weapons, and when the young woman fainted in the arms of her husband, one of her brothers killed the Frenchman with his own sword. The cry went up, 'Death to the French', and the Sicilian Vespers had its beginning". I seized the moment, which was one single point: the arrogance, and revenge, which were the origin of the massacres subsequently perpetrated in Sicily. (Mazzocca, quoting Hayez, 1999, 150)

Hayez' third version of the picture (see Figure 4.1), from 1844–46, has a group in the foreground that consists of the abused Sicilian woman, her left breast exposed, who has fainted and is supported by her husband; her French abuser at their feet, with a sword wound from the woman's brother; and around them friends and relatives, who have a noble and restrained demeanour. The looks they cast at the Frenchman convey disdain rather than fury. Meanwhile, behind them and to the right, a commoner brandishing a dagger, wearing, significantly, a Phrygian cap, exhorts the people to revolt.

The detail of the abused woman's exposed breast suggests a strong intertextual relationship with allegories of the nation; this internal reference thus



FIGURE 4.1 Francesco Hayez, *I Vespri Siciliani* (third version), oil on canvas, 1844–46, Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Mondadori Portfolio

appears to place particular emphasis on the national and patriotic nature of this representation of the Vespers. The woman is not just that individual woman, but every woman of the Italian nation, or in fact an allegory for the nation itself; the presence of just one element from the allegory's original configuration of symbolic features is thus sufficient for it to re-emerge. In Hayez' *Vespri* this imagery is presented within a narrative context that makes its role allocation explicitly clear: the woman is the repository for the community's most prized symbol of its honour, sexual purity, while on the other hand the men, her relatives to the fore, are the people directly responsible for defending her honour and, by this means, the honour of the entire community.

Alongside Hayez' depiction of the Sicilian Vespers, there are other works in which he has an allegorical figure appearing in a highly innovative visual context. He demonstrates the most exceptional virtuosity in this regard in the two paintings given the title *La meditazione* (1850–51 and 1851), and especially in the second of these (see Figure 4.2). We see a young woman with a very melancholy appearance, her right breast exposed, holding with one hand a book that has “Storia d'Italia, XVIII” (“History of Italy, Nineteenth [Century]”) along the spine and in the other a cross inscribed with the date of the “Five Days” uprising in Milan.<sup>10</sup> The image is constructed by a process of allegorical condensation that draws on the meanings furnished by the many national and patriotic images and narratives already in circulation by the early 1850s. In this second *Meditazione*, we see a figure that undoubtedly evokes the national allegory, through the bare breast of the young woman in the picture; her melancholy is clearly the product of the political setbacks of 1848–49; the pride apparent in her look signals a determination to defend herself; but despite this, she is also beautiful and open to attack, desirable and now unprotected, and potentially vulnerable to the depredations – not least sexual – of those who might wish her ill; and, finally, she is a godly woman, as we are reminded by the crucifix that alludes to her religious observance and to the persistent religious elements that structured the vocabulary and conceptualisation of the “nation” of the Italian Risorgimento movement.

Hayez' juxtaposition in these paintings of the references that feed national narratives – to history, current politics, religion, the kinship element and the sexual allusions – is an act of artistic daring and communicative intensity rarely seen in the history of the visual representation of nations; at the same time, this imagery illustrates one of the possible outcomes of complex discursive processes in which female allegories with a rich legacy from the classical tradition underwent surprising enrichment and profound semantic transformation.

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<sup>10</sup> Verona, Civica Galleria d'Arte Moderna. For discussion of the painting's details, see Mazzocca (1994, 306–8; 2002, 106–7).





FIGURE 4.2 Francesco Hayez, *La Meditazione*, oil on canvas, 1851, Verona, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Mondadori Portfolio

#### 4 Intertextual Relationships

By means of the communicative forms discussed, the nationalism of the Romantic era thus incorporated into its discursive system the theme of sexual aggression, which had manifold emotional and cultural resonances for the contemporary public.



On the one hand, fictional story lines evoked episodes that were painfully real, having happened many times during the wars fought by revolutionary and Napoleonic France with the various coalitions that had opposed it. The tales of rape in national and patriotic works were given a special believability by the disturbing reality of actual events that people had either experienced directly or had heard discussed. This aspect is particularly worth emphasising because the connection between national and patriotic fictional creations and the reality of wartime violence that people had experienced had a further effect: for the first time in European history, wartime acts of rape, which had previously always been seen as inevitable events that were not particularly worthy of attention, became the direct object of political controversy. This significant shift allows us to understand the importance subsequently attached to this theme, for example in the propaganda generated during the Franco-Prussian war, and even more so in that of the Great War.

On the other hand, by means of these narratives Romantic nationalism added a fresh development to the value of “honour.” In the modern era, this sort of value had primarily affected the behaviour of members of the nobility. Its semantic field had diverse elements, but could be related to specific profiles of masculinity and femininity: for men, honour might consist of the credibility of their given word, respect for their courage, and appreciation of their qualities of loyalty and trustworthiness. It then also had a specific sexual development, in that defending their own honour – perhaps by challenging someone to a duel – meant being capable of defending the sexual integrity of “their” women. Male honour thus had a direct relationship to female respectability, which was built on chastity and purity: a verbal or, even worse, physical assault on these cornerstones of female virtue demanded an “honourable” manly reaction, which was expressed by challenging the perpetrator of the insult to a duel. Now, while it is true that this system had been brought into question by the social and sexual practices of at least one segment of the eighteenth-century European nobility, it is also true that it had at the same time been given fresh importance as the mainstay of a new bourgeois morality by the political and philosophical currents critical of the *Ancien Régime*, involving Jean-Jacques Rousseau amongst others.<sup>11</sup> As a result, at the start of the nineteenth century in Europe, in one form or another – in the classic variety of the nobility or the new bourgeois variant – the value of honour and the ritual nature of the duel were still very widely observed as an idea and a practice. In a process similar to that discussed earlier in relation to genealogy, by incorporating the

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<sup>11</sup> This is not the place to explore this area of historical and cultural interest; I will have to restrict myself to reference, once again, to my own analysis: see Banti (2018).

perceived meanings of stories of inter-ethnic rape into the value system of nationalism, nationalist advocates were strikingly successful in their adoption of honour as an aspect of nationhood. As with the incorporation of a genealogical concept of the nation, with this operation nationalist intellectuals and leaders were able to transfer values that came from an earlier time, but were still widely held, to the semantic field of the new political project centred on the idea of nation. With this in mind, it seems clear that the idea of nation was not so much “invented” out of nothing: rather, it was constructed by means of a reassembly of ideas, figures and values that already existed. This operation gave potency to the new political project, because it endowed it with features that a significant portion of the contemporary public recognised as “familiar,” despite being politically innovative and perhaps even subversive.

If we now focus more closely on the stories involving inter-ethnic rape, we can easily see that these also derived from earlier narratives that had been of substantial importance within previous moral and political systems. I am particularly referring to two discursive systems: the republican ideology that developed between the late Middle Ages and the modern era; and the eighteenth-century attack on the abuses and dissolute nature of the nobility.

In the former case, republican discourse of the modern period had constructed a stringent critique of the monarchy as a system that automatically tended to drift towards tyranny. In the discursive, fictional, and visual development of this critique, particular importance was held by two episodes of rape, both relating to heroines with central positions in the republican pantheon: Lucretia and Virginia, whose stories were drawn from the affairs of classical Rome. In the first case, from the sixth century BC, the rape was committed by Sextus Tarquinius, son of the seventh and last king of Rome Tarquinius Superbus, with Lucretia the victim; in the second, from the fifth century BC, the attempted rape of Virginia was by Appius Claudius, one of the decemvirs who had become a tyrant. In both episodes a private event, or rather a private attack on the honour of a woman and her family, developed into a public reaction: the women's relatives appealed to the entire Roman population to rebel against the outrages perpetrated by tyrants, overthrowing the existing monarchical or para-monarchical system in order to establish a republic that would be more free, more just and clearly also more moral, because it would be without the brutal dissoluteness of despots. In both cases, the political transition required a sacrificial victim: Lucretia, assaulted by Sextus Tarquinius, committed suicide to wash away the stain left by the rape; Virginia, lusted after by the decemvir Appius Claudius, was killed by her father before the tyrant could abuse her. Both stories had been reinterpreted many, many times, from the late Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, generally through the lens of

republican critiques of the monarchy and tyranny, and had in the end become two archetypal models that exerted a major influence on the stories of rape included in national and patriotic narratives. The influence of Virginia's story on the development of the episode involving Hally, in *Die Hermannsschlacht*, seems very clear.

On the other hand, as Mario Praz (1933) observed, various heroines of nineteenth-century fiction, including some in the stories with national and patriotic themes that are our concern here, can just as well be seen as the "daughters" of Pamela and Clarissa: the title characters in Samuel Richardson's novels of 1740 and 1748, which were an essential model of reference in the development of eighteenth-century critiques of the arrogance of the nobility. *Clarissa* is of particular significance, because it offers the model of the violated woman who experiences an overwhelming mental and physical breakdown: a narrative development that has a significant presence in stories with a nationalist orientation, as discussed earlier.

The path between an eighteenth-century type of narrative, pitched against the monarchy or nobility, and a narrative in a national key is short and direct, and provides a good illustration of the work of transposition and reassembly that authors inspired by nationalism practised on earlier models. For one good example, we start with a work suffused with the republican spirit published in 1783 by Vittorio Alfieri, a writer prominent in Italian literary circles of the period, which takes up the story of Virginia and turns it into a play (Alfieri 1955). This more or less follows the original model narrated by Livy in his *History of Rome* (Book 3), both in its narrative development and in the political meaning to be attributed to the story: a tyrant wants to abuse Virginia; her father intervenes and kills her before the violation can take place; the act arouses the anger of the people against the tyrant and impels them to rebel, leading to the fall of the tyranny. Fourteen years later, the impact of the French Revolution in the Italian context, through the conquests of France's *Armée d'Italie*, had led to the construction of new republics and the first incorporation of the concept of "nation" into Italian political vocabulary. At this point, Francesco Saverio Salfi, a writer well known in Napoleonic Italy, returned to the events narrated in Alfieri's tragedy but transformed their political meaning. In publishing and staging his play *Virginia bresciana* (1797) he provided what I believe may be one of the first examples of the co-option of honour and stories of rape for the purposes of a nationalist project.<sup>12</sup> Salfi expressly stated that his work had been inspired by Alfieri's famous tragedy, whose overall structure he studiously

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<sup>12</sup> The play appeared in print towards the end of 1797, and was staged in Brescia itself and in other cities within the Cisalpine Republic.

reproduced. However, to add to some minor variations, he made two extremely significant modifications: the action was set in medieval Brescia rather than ancient Rome, and the tyrant for the occasion did not come from within the community but was given another ethnicity, that of a Frank. As a result, the whole story developed around the conceptual national and sexual border that separated the Brescian and Italic community from that of the Frankish invaders. In killing his daughter Scomburga to rescue her from the lustful Frankish leader Ismondo, Doduno was now defending national rather than – as previously – republican honour.

## 5 Conclusions

The development of Salfi's *Virginia bresciana* is just one of the many examples that could be highlighted in an exploration of the sources of the rape narratives that breathe life into construction of the idea of the nation. I do not want to dwell any longer on this, but must first observe that the process of slippage that shifts the narration of rape from a republican and anti-nobility perspective to a national one deepens the reasons for condemning these acts. It is no longer just the moral depredation perpetrated by the rapists that is censured; in national and patriotic stories, something more is in play: the value of genealogical connection, its meaning in relation to sovereignty, and the need to preserve its purity. Earlier, I noted that the theme of national purity was developed with the use of terms such as "stock," "race" and "blood," which all fit very naturally into the national and patriotic imaginary of the early nineteenth century. This is demonstrated by, for example, the poem "Matilde," written in 1824 by the Italian poet and patriot Giovanni Berchet, who despite being in exile at the time was well known and held in high esteem by all those active within the Risorgimento movement. In the poem, a young Italian woman is portrayed dreaming that her father has handed her over in marriage to an Austrian soldier; the dream then becomes a nightmare, which gives rise to her heartfelt despair. In a key passage, the theme of blood as a mark of national belonging appears with all its emotive force. In her dream, referring to the Austrian, Matilde addresses her father:

Remember who he really is,  
Remember Italy, and our travails;  
Do not mix the oppressed  
With the blood of the oppressor.

Between the slaves and the tyrants  
 Let anger be the only pact.  
 The perfidious have drawn them all  
 To feed on hate,  
 Even the purest souls  
 Who were created to love. (Berchet 1992, 278)

“Do not mix the oppressed / With the blood of the oppressor”: in the sort of genealogical thinking that underwrites the story that Berchet put into verse, women’s purity must be preserved if one people’s blood is not to corrupt the purity of another’s. When seen from this perspective, the racist developments to which nationalist discourse has been subjected from the end of the nineteenth century onwards can scarcely be considered a surprise.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the general importance of these imaginative constructs in the nationalist value system may help us to understand how they might still have their place in the minds of leaders and activists in Europe’s neo-nationalist movements at the start of the twenty-first century.

*Translated by Stuart Oglethorpe*

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<sup>13</sup> For my development of this thinking, see Banti (2011).

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# Honour and Violence: Mediterranean Exoticism and Masculinity

*Joep Leerssen*

## 1 Exoticism and Vraisemblance

In the long European tradition of Orientalism, a crucial position is taken up by the encounter of Byron with the Balkans. Ottoman Europe began south of Zagreb and Novi Sad, and in the eyes of many European travellers their encounter with the Islamic East began when they travelled into Bosnia or Albania.<sup>1</sup> So too it was with Byron, whose Grand Tour in 1809–1811 took him from Malta to Albania and thence to Athens (the usual tour route, involving France and Italy, being inaccessible in these Napoleonic years). In Joanina, a town in the Albanian-Greek Pindos region, Byron had a formative meeting with the local war lord, Ali Pasha, and his impressions of Ottoman Europe were expressed in four dramatic romances that he published in the years 1813–1814: *The Giaour*, *The bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair* and *Lara* (Alber 2013, Cochran 2008, Cohen-Vrignaud 2019).

The image of Ottoman Europe was in flux in these years.<sup>2</sup> While Ottoman culture was no longer seen in terms of straightforward cruelty, but rather in a mixture of apprehension and fascination (Mozart's *Entführung aus dem Serail* [The Abduction from the Seraglio] testifies to this), the combination of sensuous refinement and archaic ruthlessness remained a powerful formula for Romantic representations. So it was with Byron, whose own personality and poetic persona were predicated on the combination of tenderness and bitterness, sensitivity and misanthropy – a stance which has become known as 'Byronic' and which strongly influenced the pose of the Romantic male, from Heine and Mérimée to Pushkin.

The Byronic inflection of Ottoman exoticism coincided, furthermore, with the beginnings of Romantic philhellenism, which saw the Balkans as the theatre of a moral and national conflict between noble, oppressed Christians/

<sup>1</sup> For a representative source sample, see Berchet 1985.

<sup>2</sup> I highlight the very important collection Kuran-Burçoglu Miller 2005, and Schiffer 1982. Also, Çirakman 2002, Katz 2006, Kural-Shaw and Heywood 1972.



Europeans and suave, ruthless Turkish/Oriental despots (Konstantinou 1992, Noe 1994, Spencer 1986).<sup>3</sup> All these elements (Byronism, philhellenism, Orientalist exoticism and Oriental Despotism) conspired to make the romances of 1813–14 decisively important in the Romantic perception of the Eastern Mediterranean. The image we may summarize as follows: a picturesque landscape where the openness of the sea confronts the rugged terrain of mountains; where colourful cultures and traditions meet and mingle; where under the hot sun passions run high; where women are seductive and men driven by fierce affects such as honour and jealousy; and where sensuousness, violence and cruelty are closer to the surface than in civic societies and temperate climates.

This Byronic image of the Levant was subsequently widened to include the Western Mediterranean as well, when it was taken up by French Byronists such as Prosper Mérimée and Alexandre Dumas. These belated Romantics wrote when a colonial drive was reaching out towards the Mediterranean's Southern, African shores. France started its colonial conquest of Algeria in 1830 (it was completed in 1875) and of Tunisia (1881); Spanish expansionism in Morocco started in 1830 and accelerated after 1860. Since the culture of the Maghreb was Islamic, these lands could easily be seen in Orientalist terms. The Mediterranean thus became, in the Romantic century, an overlap of Southern and Eastern stereotypings.

This tradition continued well into the twentieth century, witness films like *Pépé le Moko* (about a Marseille gangster hiding in the Casbah of Algiers, 1937) and its indirect spin-off *Casablanca* (about refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe in Humphrey Bogart's casbah café, 1942).<sup>4</sup> The extent to which these films continue a Romantic *imaginaire* is indicated, not only by the exoticist, Orientalist trappings of the setting (labyrinthine casbahs where petty criminals mingle with haggling traders) but also by the type of protagonist whose actions take place in this setting: Jean Gabin and Humphrey Bogart play roles that are straightforwardly Byronic. Byronic, that is to say: full of the masculine qualities of self-control, courage, and willpower, and combining an aristocracy of spirit with an outlaw position in society. They are abrasive, scornful of social conventions or of the rule of law, and lonesome; but under this misanthropic carapace their inner tenderness may be awakened by the charm of a woman, rendering them more sympathetic and more vulnerable.

3 The notion of "Oriental Despotism" was made proverbial, in Cold-War terms, by Karl A. Wittfogel's study of that title (1957); a classic at the time but by now an example of the quasi-scientific rationalization of contemporary/domestic values and prejudices.

4 *Pépé le Moko* indirectly inspired *Casablanca* through the intermediary of the former's American remake, *Algiers* (1938). More on this, and on the *imaginaire* of the casbah, in Leerssen 2017.

Byron had patented the “Byronic hero” in his various verse romances and was himself seen in precisely those characterological terms:

Lord Byron could exhibit only one man and only one woman, – a man proud, moody, cynical, – with defiance on his brow, and misery in his heart; a scorner of his kind, implacable in revenge, yet capable of deep and strong affection; – a woman all softness and gentleness, loving to caress and to be caressed, but capable of being transformed by love into a tigress. (Macaulay 1831, 567)<sup>5</sup>

That profile was drawn as early as 1831, but its masculine part uncannily fits the later roles of Jean Gabin and Humphrey Bogart in *Pépé le Moko* and *Casablanca*. And the line from Byron to Bogart leads us along French Romantic authors like Prosper Mérimée and Alexandre Dumas.

Mérimée, now known mainly for his archetypical tale of *Carmen* (1845),<sup>6</sup> had a broader exotic palette than only a Washington-Irving image of Andalusia. He was intrigued by entire Orientalist breadth of the Mediterranean shorelands. Balkan culture is thematized in his pastiche/imitation of Serbian oral epic in his *La Guzla* of 1824 (Cf. Yovanovitch 1911); but he also took the Byronic mix of sea/mountains, sensuousness/violence, eroticism/hatred into the settings of Corsica in stories such as *Matteo Falcone* (1829) and *Colomba* (1840).

In the Romantic imagination, these Orientalists aspects of the Mediterranean intersect with an ethnotype (hot temperaments in a hot climate) and a sociotype (outlaws in a lawless country). The ethnotype is climatological in nature and has been extensively studied: it is that of a hot South vs. a cool North, with temperaments to match (“hot”, easily-inflamed feelings vs. “cool”, cerebral rationality). In the Hippocratic theory from which we actually derive the notion of “temperament”, hot climates were held to favour the sanguine and choleric humours, and these accordingly are the temperamental attributes with which Italians and Spaniards have habitually been represented since the sixteenth century: the Italians sanguine, with their elegance and their immoral

5 On the Byronic hero, Thorslev 1962.

6 Archetypical as it is, *Carmen* has attracted reworkings and scholarly analysis in equal measure. The specifically imagological aspects revolve around *Carmen* as the intersectional incarnation of “fatal” femininity, Roma/“Gypsy” and Andalusian characterizations, in what is variously an exoticist hetero-image (from a French/European/bourgeois/masculine point of view) or an internalized Spanish auto-image. For these intersectionalities, see Leerssen 2012.

lustfulness, the Spaniards choleric, with their morose and passionately intense pride and severity.<sup>7</sup>

This intersects with the sociotype of lawlessness and, in particular, banditry. Bandits had been an occasional presence in *Don Quijote*, but in Massenet's 1911 opera they provide the action of the entire act III, and banditry looms large also in providing the frame story for Mérimée's *Carmen*. More specifically, the image of Italy was deeply imbued with notions of banditry. Having provided an edge of danger to the cultural Grand Tour, they developed into fictional stock characters of eighteenth-century romance (Rinaldo Rinaldini, Abaellino); that iconography was echoed and augmented by the documented outlaws of Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic times (Fra Diavolo) and has fed into the mythologization of the mafia.<sup>8</sup>

Mediterranean Orientalism, ethnotype, and sociotype come together in one of the most representative tales of the European nineteenth century, Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1845–46). The hero of that book, Edmond Dantès, is repeatedly compared with Byron himself: solitary, misanthropic, with bitterness (owing to cruelly disappointed love) and dark passions under the surface of refined dandyism. Moreover, although much of the action is set in fashionable Paris, Dantès (the self-styled 'Count of Monte-Cristo') is linked almost obsessively to a Mediterranean setting. He is originally a sailor from the *Catalan* quarter of *Marseille*, has found his fabulous wealth in a treasure hidden on the island of *Monte Cristo*, was in touch with Napoleon during his *Elba* exile and was imprisoned off *Marseille* in the island-fortress of the *Château d'If*. He has contacts among Italian *banditti* and *Maltese* contraband sailors, has picked up a *Corsican* servant (characteristically dedicated to the pursuit of vendetta), has bought a house slave in *Algiers*, and a harem girl – appropriately given the Byronic name of Haydée – in *Istanbul*. He follows an oriental lifestyle involving the use of hashish and sumptuous food from all

7 On the climate theory in general, Zacharasiewicz 1977. Case studies in Stanzel, Weiler and Zacharasiewicz 1999, and the Italian and Spanish articles in Beller and Leerssen 2007.

8 There is an important eastward extension in the *imaginaire* of the heroic-romantic outlaw (Slavic hajduk, Greek klephtes); Mérimée's *La Guzla*, once again, serves as an example; but it is strictly speaking not Orientalist, but rather a part of a generalized Robin-Hood tropology. Cf. John Neubauer et al. 2004. For the Orientalist fascination with, and glorification of, the mafia: Dickie 2007. There is a lively discussion among literary scholars in the various (South-) East-European literatures about outlaw themes, usually tracing the relationship between oral balladry and print literature, but wider, trans-regional comparisons are scarce, and are still struggling to get out from under the shadow of Eric Hobsbawm's *Primitive rebels* (1957). Hobsbawm applies to his erudite and widely assembled source material a deterministic and reductive Marxist typology: bandits as insurgents against social injustice without, as yet, proper class conscience (hence the "primitive" and "archaic" qualifiers in his title).

around the Mediterranean coastlands. In one instance among many, the fruits on offer include “des ananas de *Sicile*, des grenades de *Malaga*, des oranges des *îles Baléares*, de pêches de France et des dattes de *Tunis*” [pineapples from Sicily, pomegranates from Malaga, oranges from the Balearic Islands, peaches from France, and dates from Tunis] (Dumas 1963, I, 398). His hospitality is lavish, his sense of revenge is merciless. He is compared variously, not only to Byron, but also to an undead vampire (because of his pallor, result of his long imprisonment) and to Sinbad the Sailor. He lives outside the law according to a primitive and ruthless honour-code. To top it all, Haydée, the slave-girl he has acquired, is the daughter of Ali Pasha of *Joanina* himself, of Byronic fame,<sup>9</sup> whose doomed insurrection against the Ottoman authorities provides an important subplot.

In the summary given here, the place-names, italicized and highlighted, from Málaga to Istanbul, indicate a Mediterranean that stretches along the entire width of Europe and that forms, not a division between the different islands, peninsulas and coastlines, but a single imagined, ethnographic space. Twice over Dumas evokes the Mediterranean as an “inland lake” accessed by way of Marseille. This “inland lake” is the habitat of wandering heroes – fugitives, sailors, outlaws, voyagers – and is characterized by a shared lifestyle: hedonistic and grim, the opposite of bourgeois moralism.

Even in the twentieth century, that image of the Mediterranean has continued in force. Fernand Braudel’s classic *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* [The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II] (1947, rev. ed. 1967) evokes a terrain dominated by the encounter between the sea and impenetrable mountainous coasts; there are “bandits, of course” (*les bandits, bien-sûr*, as one of the chapters is headed). Braudel also indicates that there may be a social reason, rather than just a romantic stereotype, why these lands are associated with outlawry. In such a terrain, he argues, state control and centralizing forces must be hampered by the terrain, and locals can always find refuge from central authorities (weak as they are in these peripheries) by hiding in the mountains.

This raises the question whether we are here dealing with fantasy or with reality. Is Braudel presenting us with an analysis of actual social patterns such as they have played themselves out in the course of documented history, or is he rationalizing what is in fact a literary cliché? Neither possibility fully excludes the other: the cliché may draw on empiric observations as well as on *Pépé le Moko*, and the historian’s view may embellish or “frame” the source

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9 On him: Fleming 1999.

material in terms derived intertextually from adventure romances and fairy-tales. However, to state that the question “is complicated” or that “the truth is somewhere in the middle” or that “the terms of the opposition are misleading” (What is a “fact”? What is a “fiction?”), while it sounds like superior wisdom, may be only a cop-out, camouflaging what is in fact our reluctant laziness to grasp the nettle and focus on the complexity.

Schematizations like these flourish in precisely the intermediary zones between narrative invention and factual reporting. In fictional narrative, they conveniently fill in the background detail that surrounds the action, situating it in a world such as the reader is presumed to know it. Aristotle had already highlighted this as a pivotal strategy: to rely on the audience’s prior assumptions, and never, without strict necessity, to represent a slave wiser than his master or a woman more forceful than a man. For while such individuals might actually exist, they do not figure in the audience’s horizon of expectations, and the tale-teller is concerned, not with verity, but with verisimilitude (Cf. Leerssen 1991).

Accordingly, we encounter stereotypes usually as “background material”: underwriting the motivation of characters, and, since secondary characters are less complex in their motivation than main characters, predominantly there, in the backdrop or *coulisses* of the action. In that background setting, the stereotypes usually crop up as “local colour” which embellishes rather than determines the action, or in digressions and side-plots. For similar reasons, ethnotypes are often invoked as generic patterns rather than in specific instances. How incidental and un-essential such local colour is, is demonstrated by the ease with which narratives can be re-told in alternative settings. The *Seven Samurai* of Kurosawa’s film (1954) easily become cowboy gunslingers in the remake *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), the genteel upper-middle-class Englishness of Jane Austen’s *Emma* can be reimagined in affluent Southern California or Delhi (the films *Clueless*, 1995, and *Aisha*, 2010), and *Carmen* can be Americanized as *Carmen Jones* (musical 1943, film 1954). In each case, the narrative structure (*fabula*) and its motivation by means of actorial types remain intact, and what at first sight would appear to be centrally characteristic elements, the heavily-emphasized local colour, can be easily exchanged.

## 2 A Trope of Otherness: The Secluded Encounter

Similarly, stereotypes are often generic rather than case-specific. Narrative tropes and configurations often turn out to be formulaic at those very moments when they would appear to be most strongly localized or ethnicized. One such trope, for instance, is the “encounter in a secluded spot.” It is noticeable in the

beginning of *Carmen*, where the narrator penetrates along a narrow gorge into a natural amphitheatre:

En effet, en m'approchant, je vis que la prétendue pelouse était un marécage où se perdait un ruisseau, sortant, comme il semblait, d'une gorge étroite entre deux hauts contreforts de la sierra de Cabra. [...] À peine eus-je fait une centaine de pas, que la gorge, s'élargissant tout-à-coup, me montra une espèce de cirque naturel parfaitement ombragé par la hauteur des escarpements qui l'entouraient. (Mérimée 1967, II, 346)

[Indeed, as I drew nearer I perceived that what had looked like sward was a marsh, into which a stream, which seemed to issue from a narrow gorge between two high spurs of the Sierra de Cabra, ran and disappeared. [...] Before I had advanced a hundred paces, the gorge suddenly widened, and I beheld a sort of natural amphitheatre, thoroughly shaded by the steep cliffs that lay all around it. Translation by Lady Mary Lloyd, 1941].

It is here that the narrator encounters the fugitive delinquent José. He establishes relations with him by offering him a cigar, which is gratefully accepted, and in passing the scene is Orientalized, almost without the reader noticing: "En Espagne, un cigare donné et reçu établit des relations d'hospitalité, comme en Orient le partage du pain et du sel." [In Spain, giving and accepting a cigar develops bonds of hospitality similar to those found in Eastern countries on the partaking of the bread and salt] Spain is held up as a country obeying the ancient customs of hospitality, which it shares with the Orient and with pre-modern Europe. There is more to be said about this, and I will return to the vignette, but my point here is that the flagging is done so very unobtrusively, in a passing aside without direct bearing on the action.

A very similar "natural amphitheatre" had been used 25 years previously, in Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*. The hero's progress from England into the Scottish Highlands culminates when his hostess at a clan dinner party leads him along a river which emerges from a cleft, and further upstream leads into a "natural amphitheatre". It is here that the hostess enchants the hero (who by now is beginning to feel "like a knight of Romance"). Aided by the picturesque qualities of what Scott repeatedly likens to a setting from, indeed, chivalric romances (Tasso and Ariosto), the hostess performs an ancient Highland ballad, which she introduces as follows:

I have given you the trouble of walking to this spot, Captain Waverley, both because I thought the scenery would interest you, and because a Highland

song would suffer still more from my imperfect translation were I to introduce it without its own wild and appropriate accompaniments. To speak in the poetical language of my country, the seat of the Celtic Muse is in the mist of the secret and solitary hill, and her voice in the murmur of the mountain stream. He who woos her must love the barren rock more than the fertile valley, and the solitude of the desert better than the festivity of the hall. (Scott 1814, I, 340)

In both cases, the “natural amphitheatre” is a hidden recess in what is already a remote countryside, and in such places the narrator, who has travelled a long way to reach this Heart of Otherness, encounters a pristine example of the exotic: bandits in Spain, minstrelsy (and seditious rebellion) in the Highlands. Post-romantic literature turns out to be studded with such scenes: we stumble across such “natural amphitheatres” in the romances of Karl May, Henry Rider Haggard, H.G. Wells, John Buchan and even Lionel Davidson, and also, in a very anti-romantic variation, in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*. Here, the Marabar Caves are a secluded recess which forms the end-point of the exoticist yearnings of Adela Quested, but the encounter here is an unsettling echo-chamber, confronting her only with her own anxieties and with the unknowable hollowness of the exotic Other.

The “secluded encounter” is, then, a trope, a *locus communis* of the exotic imagination, and used as a narrative technique to showcase the Other.

We can be more specific. The secludedness of the spot also means in narrative terms a suspension of *vraisemblance*, and indeed the normalcy of “life as we know it.” The narrator, who is the link between the reader’s middle-class domesticity and the exotic *couleur locale* of the story, encounters an otherness here that represents precisely the Other’s lack of domesticity and non-bourgeois character. Which in turn leads us to conclude that, if indeed mountains and mountain recesses were (as Braudel asserts, and we have no immediate reason to actually call into doubt) the hiding-places of actual outlaws and brigands, this trope also appeals to the literary imagination because it meshes with a strong narrative correlation between the setting of the events and the motivation of the characters. The link between sublime scenery and romantic characters is, in other words, overdetermined. It does not necessarily follow a North-South polarity, because we find the correlation also in the Walter Scott’s Scottish Highlands, home to romantic characters like Flora MacIvor and Rob Roy Macgregor. Both of these characters are in fact outlaws, much like Mérimée’s José, defying the law of the land, but in a damp chilly climate rather than under the Mediterranean sun.



So what does the comparison between the Byronic Mediterranean of *The Count of Monte Cristo* with the sublime, secluded recesses of *Carmen* and *Waverley* suggest? In all three cases, we see that the heroes whom we encounter here derive their interest from, precisely, being at odds with normalcy and the law. The narrator is in all cases the explanatory voice that speaks to us from within the conventions of the reader's domestic situation; he is the voice of normalcy. What he encounters is, however, quite the opposite: passionate bandits and wild women, a rebellious clan chief and his seductive sister singing an ancient ballad by a waterfall. In Dumas's tale, an embittered voyager who has spectacularly escaped from wrongful imprisonment, discovered an Aladdin's cave of stupendous treasures, and now embarks on a quest of personal revenge. In all cases the tale is one so full of wayward incident and suspense that it belongs to the genre of romance rather than the realistic novel; and this suspension of plausibility coincides with characters who are outside the conventions and laws of bourgeois society.

The deep opposition that generates these narratives is, then, the one between the rule of law and those who live outside it. It schematizes even the analysis of ethnographers who have studied Mediterranean society, and who have developed a theory now known as "honour and shame."

### 3 Honour and Shame: Knowledge Production and the Literary Imagination

The narrator of *Carmen* found a real-world successor in the British ethnographer Julian Pitt-Rivers, who, after a period of field work in the Andalusian village of Grazalema, published his *The People of the Sierra* (1954). It characterized this small-scale, isolated, and traditional village society in terms of the ethos of honour. Since then, anthropologists and ethnographers continued to evince an interest in Mediterranean-mountainous "honour codes," also involving, in a belt stretching from Corsica and Sardinia by way of Sicily and the Peloponnese to Albania and Montenegro, a pattern of transgenerational family feuds known as "vendetta" or "blood feud". A particularly fertile notion was the oppositional twinning of "honour and shame." From the early 1960s on, anthropologists were struck by the tension between the family code of "honour" (enforced by males, if necessary by violent means, and expressed in the values of hospitality and loyalty to one's given word) as against the threat of "shame" (incurred by the sexual approach of female members of the family by strangers). Originally used as a concept to define the fact that many pastoral communities regulated their codes of behaviour while remaining outside the rule of law and the order of the

modern state, “honour and shame” has since then become a favourite term to describe the lawlessness and behavioural codes of a non-civic Mediterranean (Campbell 1964, Peristiany 1966, Gilmore 1987).<sup>10</sup> To put the stereotype crudely: the masculine ethos of honour, exemplified by proud, tight-lipped, mustachioed men in boots, has its feminine counterpart in taciturn, black-scarved women kept severely secluded in the household. The stereotype was widespread because it seemed so very plausible (*vraisemblable*): habituated as we are to films like *Zorba the Greek* or the Sicilian episodes in *The Godfather*, or even the pastiche of the comic strip album *Astérix en Corse*, we feel little inclination to second-guess the “honour and shame” model when we encounter it in an academic, scholarly context rather than a fictional one. The two mutually reinforce each other’s convincing powers. The tropes (like that of the “secluded encounter” may have been diffused so widely in our cultural memory that they become an unspecific background assumption, a prejudice in the true sense of the word: knowledge-from-hearsay, imprecise as to its provenance and as impervious to factual testability as the proverbial wisdom that “money cannot buy happiness.”

But the model’s hyper-applicability smacks, again, of overdetermination. Underlying problems were first gingerly hinted at by Michael Herzfeld in 1980,<sup>11</sup> and since then, critics have become aware that the observational frame seems to impose an orientalist, exoticizing *parti-pris* on the data. More recently, Sandra Busatta (to name but one) has deconstructed the model from a feminist perspective, pointing out that the honour concept is used ambivalently: as social precedence or as moral-behavioural standard. And she observes, witheringly:

During the three decades that follow the Second World War, Anglo-Saxon anthropologists have elaborated an honour and shame model as a tool to explain Mediterranean societies conceived as a homogenous culture area. Although historians consider the Mediterranean as the cradle of urban civilization, scholars focused mostly on small scale, marginal-rural communities on its northern shore, according to an extra European field-work tradition. (Busatta 2006, 77)

Imagologists will note that the scholarly procedure of these ethnographic studies follows the parameters of a much earlier literary ethnotype, dating

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<sup>10</sup> I have commented on the literary roots of this anthropological model in Leerssen 1996. For an oblique comment on the incompatibility honour code with the restraint implied in the civic virtues of the modern western nation-state, see Bowman 2006.

<sup>11</sup> “Massive generalisations of ‘honour’ and ‘shame’ have become counter-productive; their continued use elevates what began as a genuine convenience for the readers of ethnographic essays to the level of a theoretical propositions” (Herzfeld 1980, 349).

back at least from Balzac's *La vendetta* (1830), but taken at face value, nowhere acknowledged as such or tested as to the tenability of its commonplace. From Balzac and Byron to Bogart, the Mediterranean honour-code is a literary, Romantic formula, effective for narrative and dramatic purposes, and functioning in patterns and oppositions, and often as gratuitously random as the setting of the *Magnificent Seven Samurai*.

The Mediterranean locale for this ethnographic honour-and-shame model is an intersectional imagined space where a "southern" climatologically defined temperament (sanguine, choleric, passionate) meets the orientalist, Byronic combination of elegance and ruthlessness. The notion of violence-prone honour is easily projected into that space, and the climatological and temperamental connotations of choleric passion and sanguine hot-bloodedness can, and often are, be invoked to establish the typology.

But outlaw honour has non-Mediterranean analogies. The Scottish Highlands of *Waverley*, *Rob Roy* and R.L. Stevenson are a similar locus where bourgeois heroes (and readers looking over their shoulder) encounter Byronic heroes and Haydée- or Carmen-style heroines. The most American form or Romance stories involves the struggle between law-and-order-enforcing sheriffs and cowboys in the "Wild West" confronting outlaws of the Jesse James variety, and natives who can be, as occasion demands, savages or Noble Savages. What appears to be structurally invariant in all these cases is the conflict between, precisely, the force of law (represented as part of modernity) and the honour code (represented as a relic from a pre-modern, and historically receding social lifestyles). The encounter between narrator/hero and outlaw anti-hero is an encounter between modernity and archaism, between a modern society governed by law and civic virtues and an older society with a warrior ethos from which a sense of honour is derived. The constitutional scholar Sir Henry Maine, in the mid-nineteenth century, distinguished between these two societal forms as "status-based" vs. "contract-based," the latter being a modern development. The distinction between them boils down to the different social imperatives of honour and virtue, respectively (Maine 1861; and Leerssen 2015).

This schematization correlates with what Max Weber sees as one of the central features of modernity: the state's monopoly on legitimate violence.<sup>12</sup> This monopoly has been hard-won over the past centuries and even now is not easily maintained in the face of mafia/gangster culture and other forms of group delinquency. But the principle is universally accepted: while in the pre-modern state, families and petty noblemen could entertain feuds and private wars, this endemic belligerence has gradually been overtaken by modernity and the only

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12 In his *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Chapter 1 § 17: "Das legitime Gewaltmonopol als konstitutives Element des Staates"). Online at <https://www.textlog.de/7321.html>.

legitimate use of violence is now that exercised by the sovereign state within its own legal self-restrictions. Whenever individuals claim the right “to take the law into their own hands” and to resort to violence (especially if it to avenge one’s insulted honour or status), this strikes modern readers as something inherently pre-modern, archaic, part of a warrior ethic à la Achilles, Beowulf, Sir Gawain or El Cid. Giovanni Verga, in describing a duel in a contemporary Sicilian village community, caught that connotation perfectly when he called it “rustic chivalry” (*Cavalleria rusticana* – the story dates from 1860, Mascagni’s opera from 1890).

And so the grand generalizations of 19th- and 20th-century knowledge production (Tönnies opposing *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*, Weber on the modern state’s violence monopoly, Maine on Status vs. Contract) form chains in a tradition that stretches from 16th-century climate theory to 20th-century “honour and shame” models, all of them feeding into, and in turn being fed by, the literary ethnotypes and sociotypes schematizing our notions of a Mediterranean temperament.

Similarly, the fascination of modern novelistic narrators or ethnographic observers with the clansmen of the Scottish Highlands, or with the bandits of Andalusia, or the vendetta-prone communities of rural Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, Greece, or Albania, appears to be, precisely, that in these settings there is no such thing as a modern state being able to monopolize legitimate violence. The existence of an honour code, so romantic novelists and ethnographers have taught us, thrives in the absence of a working legal system, and the use of personal violence and self-administered vengeance to assert that honour code renders that lifestyle pre-modern, chivalric, and indeed, Byronic-Romantic.

This pattern, which at first would seem ethnotypically linked to the Mediterranean, affects all narratives involving a combination of honour codes and personal, unmonopolized violence: the gunslingers of the Far West, the clansmen of the Scottish Highlands, the hill tribes of the Pakistan-Afghanistan frontier, and even the Corleone or Soprano mafiosi of the contemporary USA. For the Mob Movie is the American successor to the Western genre. In the heartland of modernity, Sicilian-immigrated “families” under their patriarchal “Dons” defy the state with their gangland turf wars, rationalized by quasi-ethnographical idealizations of “Respect” and “Family” – a *Cavalleria urbana* which has moved from Sicily to the mean streets of Little Italy.

#### 4 Realism and Romance Revisited

The novel, that middle-class, nineteenth-century genre par excellence, addresses itself to a wide, middle-class readership, located to a large extent in towns and cities, and involving lending libraries, bookshops, periodicals,

and evenings of reading leisure by artificial light. The emergence of the post-romantic novels correlates with the emergence of a middle-class readership, female to a not inconsiderable degree. And this correlates, in turn, with the genre's turn towards Realism and the problematics of contemporary domestic life. But the middle-class readership also liked to read about lives different from their own. We note the explosive rise of panoramic literature, *costumbrismo*, and travelogues representing exotic parts of the country to "armchair travellers," from *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* [The Spanish Painted by Themselves] (1843–44) to Almeida Garrett's *Viagens na minha terra* [Travels in My Homeland] (1843–46) to the French *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France* [Picturesque and Romantic Travels in Old France] (1828–78). And as that last title indicates, amidst the rise of novelistic Realism, a taste for the romantic and the picturesque continues, as Scott, Mérimée and Alexandre Dumas also demonstrate.

There is, in fact, a pronounced tradition of escapism and "reading for thrills" at the heart of the Realistic period, which will continue to feed the audience appeal of films like *Pépé le Moko* and *Casablanca* (or, for the honour-meets-violence code, the Clint Eastwood Spaghetti westerns and the *Godfather* trilogy).

In this respect, the lifestyles and gender relationships of the Byronic Mediterranean offer a rich menu for an escape from the predictability (the hypertrophy of *vraisemblance*) of settled, middle-class, sub-urban life. "Northern" bourgeois, modern, sensible predictability finds an escape in an encounter with "southern", history-soaked, passionate adventure: that is even thematized as the narrative pattern of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* or E.M. Forster's *Room with a View*. In such novels, English, straitlaced heroines see their respectability challenged and find emotional fulfilment as the result of an unsettling, liberating voyage to Italy. The North-European woman encountering a Latin Lover has over the last centuries become an institutionalized cliché, to the point even that an entire series of "Harlequin" romances (low-budget, formulaic-escapist fiction for female readers) carries (in the Netherlands) the series title *Zonnige Landen, Vurige Mannen* [Sunny Countries, Fiery Men]. Individual instalments sport titles such as *Spanish Passion, Iberian Dreams, Greek Passion, Greek Pride, Italian Seduction, In Love in Venice*.<sup>13</sup>

13 I here paraphrase these titles from the Dutch subsidiary of the Harlequin publishing company's website: <https://www.harlequin.nl/collections/zonnige-landen-vurige-mannen>). While Harlequin is an international publishing house, I am unaware if such titles also reach a Spanish, Greek or Italian readership. The English-language originals of these books appear to be published, for the American public, in a more generically-titled series: "Foreign Affairs". Cf <https://www.harlequin.com/shop/miniseries/foreign-affairs.html>.

The implied pleasure of the Romantic Mediterranean seems to be, even here, that the rules of normal life are suspended. The female protagonists, usually self-disciplined, “give in” to their desires even while this goes against the moral code they have internalized, seduced into sensuality by the exotic charms of the setting.

In the classic novelistic opposition between the head and the heart, the novel as such stands for realism (both the literary register and the cerebral attitude); its exotic setting is what beguiles the heart with Romance (both the literary register and the amorous affect). The irreconcilable registers of honour and virtue, rebellion and conformism, passion and morality, romance and realism, are reconciled and commodified by turning the former into an escapist holiday destination for the latter, a temporary, colourful suspension of normality. That, I am afraid, is what European modernity has done to the Mediterranean. It's like Waverley following Flora to her secluded location, and beginning to feel, as he does so, “like a Knight of Romance.” Feeling, going to the movies.

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## Meridian Ambivalences: Gendering the South in the Writings of the Coppet Group

*Diego Saglia*

A well-travelled *cosmopolite*, in her lifetime Madame de Staël developed some precise ideas about Mediterranean peoples and civilizations, which she did not hesitate to express in characteristically trenchant terms. In late antiquity, the inhabitants of the South were *énervés* (weakened and effete), and so were many of their present-day descendants (de Staël 1991, 163), while all “Italians have women’s characters” (qtd in Garry-Boussel 2000, 62). More than passing remarks, such wholesale assessments and their markedly gendered implications issued from an encompassing view of Southern European nations and cultures developed by de Staël and several of the intellectuals associated with her *salon* at the Castle of Coppet on Lake Geneva. Their pronouncements on the South converged into a discourse of these countries and civilizations, which was itself comprised within an overarching notion of the continent as “neither a single, uniform whole, nor the sum of distinct units,” but rather “a system of values in which mental and cultural geography is superimposed onto physical and political geography” (Hofmann and Rosset 2005, 126). Within this frame, Coppet intellectuals elaborated interconnected, multidisciplinary interventions on the South (and its Northern counterpart) that crystallized new ways of categorizing, discussing, and imagining it; and through the *salon’s* international resonance, their formulations exerted significant influence on other contemporary and later visions of Southern Europe. As Stendhal wrote in the first edition of *Rome, Naples, Florence* (1817), Coppet was the “estates general of European opinion” (qtd in Mortier 1994, 17), and, thanks to this transnational authoritativeness, its discourse of the South spread to intellectual milieus and literary-artistic traditions around the continent.

If, as Nelson Moe remarks, “[t]he first few decades of the nineteenth century constitute a particularly intense phase in the elaboration of north and south” (2002, 27), the Coppet group contributed to this process by creating new ways of envisaging the South and assessing its participation in (or exclusion from) modernity. This chapter addresses Coppet’s constructions of the South as major components in Romantic-period delineations of Mediterranean Europe. At once conceptually determined and variable, these constructions were in

keeping with contemporary ideas of a European cultural continuum characterized, as Georges Gusdorf notes, by an “internationalism of geographic and historical specificities” that, however, did not “in the least sanction a dissociation from the European domain” (1993, 290, 289). In addition, members of the Coppet group transposed their definitions of the South into a variety of formats ranging from fiction, history and literary history, to cultural theory, proto-sociology and anthropology. What follows explores part of this multifaceted output to examine the gendered features of Coppet’s South and, thereby, re-evaluate the intricacies and ambivalences of what we may otherwise be tempted to write off as an unproblematically straightforward geo-cultural discourse.

Coppet’s visions of the South and the role gender plays in them reflect conceptions of Mediterranean Europe as an *other* geo-cultural dimension, which were gaining currency between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Roberto Dainotto observes, in the context of eighteenth-century notions of Europe as a cultural continuum and the transnational *republic of letters*, both centred on France, there gradually emerged a “marginalization of the south of Europe” and countervailing emergence of a “north-centric cosmopolitanism” (Dainotto 2007, 95). Northern cultures such as the English- and German-language were seen to present conspicuous “traces of Europe’s modernity,” whereas the South appeared a site of pre-capitalist antiquity, a “dialectical negation and internal Other” of “north-centric” progress and enlightenment (Dainotto 2007, 80, 84, 95). This conception became manifest in such eighteenth-century dismissals of Mediterranean cultures and countries as Nicolas Masson de Morvilliers’ provocative treatment of Spain in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* [Methodical Encyclopedia] (1782), which was the origin of a bitter and protracted polemic among Spanish intellectuals (Donato and López 2015). In general terms, the Coppet group endorsed this discourse of cultural primacy, promoting the North-South dialectic and contrast in internationally resonant works including Madame de Staël’s *De la littérature* [Of Literature] (1800) and *De l’Allemagne* [Of Germany] (1810, 1813), August Wilhelm Schlegel’s *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* [Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature] (1809–11), J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi’s *De la littérature du midi de l’Europe* [On the Literature of the South of Europe] (1813), and Charles Victor de Bonstetten’s *L’Homme du midi et l’homme du nord* [The Man of the South and the Man of the North] (1824). Collectively, this textual corpus confirms the neat separation of North and South from a climatologic perspective made popular by Montesquieu’s *De l’esprit des lois* [The Spirit of the Laws] (1748), itself anticipated by Jean Bodin’s sixteenth-century political theorizations. From these antecedents, Coppet intellectuals inherited the

association between a vigorous, thrusting (and masculine) North, and a sensuous, soft (feminine – and potentially effeminate) South.

This seemingly straightforward attribution of gendered features has often found favour with critics and commentators. Dainotto stresses the unbroken continuity between Coppet's pronouncements and earlier eighteenth-century statements on Southern countries and civilizations (2007, 63). Along the same line, John Isbell remarks that de Staël's *De la littérature* contrasts "the ancient world of the South" and the "Ossianic literatures" that represent "the only way of progress for a post-revolutionary society" (Isbell 1994, 309). Undeniably, *prima facie* Coppet's intellectuals subscribed to and reproduced universal categories such as national stereotypes. Yet, as François Rosset helpfully argues, they invoked these formulaic axioms in order repeatedly to "put into question the received ideas they convey" (Rosset 1994, 57). Stressing that if a Coppet author "uses a generalizing formula, this is to question the pertinence of a generalizing formula" (Rosset 1994, 57), Rosset alerts us to the instabilities permeating these geo-cultural modellings of the South, which become visible as soon as the authors shift from a panoramic to a detailed view. This change in their focus transforms their depictions and discussions of Spain or Italy into ambivalent constructs in which general principles clash with specific geo-cultural manifestations. In Coppet formulations, in other words, climate theory and cultural stereotypes are primary structures of reference existing in a state of tension with local variations, tension which, re-echoing Rosset, we can see as encapsulating the conflict between an incipiently Romantic notion of national identity and eighteenth-century ideas of a universal "human spirit" (Rosset 1994, 56).

Coppet's treatment of the North-South antithesis and its gendered implications work by endorsing stereotypes and simultaneously suspending them, a process central to Madame de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie* [Corinne or Italy] (1807). This paradigmatic novel pivots on a female embodiment of Italy who, as an Anglo-Italian, blends physical and spiritual features of the North and the South. Also, and more significantly, Corinne chooses her own identity in spite of climatologic and geo-cultural conditionings, as she makes plain when she tells Oswald, Lord Nelvil, of her decision, at the age of twenty-one, to leave Britain and "return to Italy to lead an independent life entirely devoted to the arts" (de Staël 1998, 255). As Corinne Edgermond eludes pre-scripted geo-cultural patterns and writes her own narrative, the novel portrays a clash between a matrix of collective identity and the individual's own self and choices, in keeping with the tendency – recurrent among Coppet authors – to focus on individuality as a "hostage to collectivity" (Rosset 1994, 64).

These premisses throw Coppet into relief as a laboratory of new directions in fashionings of North and South as far from unified and monolithic

dimensions. As I discuss in what follows, the South emerges from this context as a texture of ambivalences, most visibly of a gendered kind, within Coppet's historiography, cultural-anthropological investigations, fiction, and cultural theorizations more broadly. Envisaged both as the *belles lettres* and within a broader eighteenth-century conception of the literary, as Brigitte Leguen remarks, literature at Coppet represents an instrument "to explore the ways of human 'becoming' from a perspective close to anthropology" (Leguen 2002, 172) and, we may add, to the wide-ranging field of moral philosophy, as manifested in exemplary form in Madame de Staël's *De la littérature*.

### 1 Madame de Staël's Gendering of North and South

Published in 1800 and a major instance of cultural theorizing at the *tournant des Lumières*, *De la littérature* innovatively places the North-South opposition into a narrative punctuated by masculine and feminine traits. Gérard Gengembre and Jean Goldzink aptly remind us that, for de Staël, the North is where progress happens and, with a nod to Montesquieu's celebration of northern countries as the home of social and political liberty, a dimension "engaged in the destiny of modernity" (de Staël 1991, 31). In contrast, the South designates a backward and largely stagnant space bearing specifically gendered connotations. Associated with keywords such as "soil," "nature" and "virginity" (de Staël 1991, 92), it is unmistakably female and maternal. As the northern tribes invade this feminine geography at the end of the classical era, the foundations of modern Europe are laid by a sexually connoted transgression that is then complemented by the mitigating influence of Christianity (de Staël 1991, 163, 168–9). Of course, there is hardly anything surprising or unexpected in this narrative. The distribution of masculine and feminine traits is reassuringly neat, and confirms interpretations such as Isbell's, quoted above; but, at closer scrutiny, it appears that Madame de Staël is staking out a terrain that is much less even, a multifarious panorama that is not so straightforwardly legible.

Classical Mediterranean civilizations, on which the cultural precociousness and pre-eminence of the South rests, are distinguished by the masculine vigour of staunchly patriarchal societies. Beginning with Homer, the literature of the South bears his seminal imprint and the textual-ideological patterns of an epic ethos centred in the "strength of the body" of the "Greek heroes" (de Staël 1991, 96). Subsequently, Madame de Staël expatiates on the subjugated condition and constricted lives of Greek and Roman women, their exclusion from "social relations," and their subjection to "some of the conditions of slavery" (de Staël 1991, 136, 170). Thus, in spite of her collective qualifying of the South

as a feminine and maternal body, her more particularized narrative stresses its original masculine components, tying the muscular virility of its foundational epos to the condition of women in the Greco-Roman world. In contrast, the Northern peoples, whose invasions of the South gave rise to post-classical Europe, brought with them a cult of woman (ascribed to them since Tacitus' *Germania*, 98 CE) which de Staël connects to the influence of the Christian creed as feminizing forces that placed European societies on the path to progressive refinement and progress.

*De la littérature* regularly harks back to the fundamental axioms that inform Coppet's modellings of cultural and historical reality. In this respect, Madame de Staël declares that "in order to delineate the principal features characterizing a literature, it is absolutely necessary to put some details aside" (de Staël 1991, 202), while also repeatedly opening up localized textual spaces where seemingly antithetical categories overlap and blend. Thus, in Italy's sensual context, poetry and the arts "intoxicate the imagination [...] with their inimitable charms," whereas (masculine) philosophy has not progressed for the same reason. Even so, Italians "have distinguished themselves thanks to the remarkable progress they have unceasingly achieved in the sciences" (de Staël 1991, 188). From antiquity to the present, the South appears a mixture of gendered traits: on one hand, passions and feelings, and social phenomena associated with a feminized objectified position such as slavery and a tendency to subject to power (in opposition to a Northern propensity for freedom); on the other, and simultaneously, masculine features and achievements. Contemporary Southern cultures such as the Italian do not manifest the virile strength of their Northern counterparts, but traces of the earlier masculine features remain visible. In other words, while tipping the balance in favour of the North and its engagement with modernity, *De la littérature* offers a nuanced vision of the South as a blend of variously gendered characteristics. Mediterranean Europe is a meeting-point of contrasting features that make it a contradictory and, in many ways, problematically decadent geo-cultural space, but, by the same token, also a continuously productive crucible of cultural phenomena.

Perhaps unexpectedly, this ambivalence occurs in Madame de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*. With its unswerving focus on Germany as the "heart of Europe" (de Staël 1968, 1, 41), this enormously contentious and influential work relies heavily on the North-South opposition and its implications. At some specific moments, however, pre-established categories collapse and the dividing line becomes blurred. Significantly, this happens in the opening of the short but crucial chapter 11 (placed in the middle of part 11, "Literature and the Arts"). Here, drawing upon the Schlegel brothers, Madame de Staël outlines the distinction between classic and romantic art and literature through a familiar set

of binary oppositions – North and South, antiquity and the Middle Ages, chivalry and Greco-Roman institutions – and decrees that classical poetry is “that of the Ancients,” whereas romantic poetry is that which is “somehow related to chivalric traditions” (de Staël 1968, 1, 211). Nevertheless, the opening sentence in the chapter does not endorse this clear-cut picture, as the author begins by saying that *romantique* is a term “recently introduced in Germany to designate poetry originating from the songs of the Troubadours, [poetry] which was born from chivalry and Christianity” (de Staël 1968, 1, 211). By invoking medieval Occitan poetry, de Staël undermines the North-romantic axiom, awarding the South a central role in the post-classical rebirth of European culture, and presenting romantic art as a hybrid of Northern and Southern features and contributions. In addition, in Coppet’s cultural theorizations, Troubadour literature blends the civilization of Southern France, the Northern institutions of chivalry and feudalism, and Eastern influences from Islamic Spain. Underlying this admixture is once again a combination of feminine and masculine cultural traits, since Coppet authors (and Sismondi in *Midi*, most extensively) read Troubadour poetry both as a combination of different geo-cultural elements, and as the manifestation of a cult of woman and love originating from a warlike culture.

Placed at a crucial turning-point in *De l’Allemagne*, this unexpected complication of an otherwise neat distribution of geo-cultural features throws light on a productive intersection through which the South generates a romantic poetry marking the start of modern (post-classical) European culture. It may be objected that this association of the South with cultural rebirth is only valid for past ages, and that after all the Middle Ages were a period of convulsive transformations throughout Europe. Yet, Madame de Staël associated the South with cultural regeneration also in the present. In “De l’esprit des traductions” [On the Spirit of Translations] published in Italian in the Milanese journal *Biblioteca italiana* [Italian Library] in 1816, she pointed to the possibility of a reinvigoration of present-day Italian literature (which she saw as prey to feminized languor, in contrast to the vigorous new developments from the North) through an intercourse with the Northern literatures, as well as a renovated conversation with the Greco-Roman classics (Wehinger 2021, 85–6).

In *Corinne ou l’Italie* the difficulties implicit in defining the South are encapsulated in the titular *ou* [or], which, as Michel Delon notes, signals the novel’s “critical interrogation” of the protagonist’s role as either an allegory or a symbol of Italy (Delon 2008, 81). Opening up a space of oscillation, this ambivalent conjunction problematizes Corinne’s Italianness from the outset and, relatedly, the novel’s depiction of Italy and its gendered connotations.

In geo-cultural terms, *Corinne* relies on clearly outlined dimensions: climate separates the nations of the North from southern ones. Expanding the gendered



idiom of *De la littérature*, de Staël figures the South through images of sunny warmth, fertility, and femininity: re-echoing familiar imagery, the narrator notes how the sun inspires Southern people with “the most poetic language” (de Staël 1985, 22) and “their fertile land produces fruit [...] with the help only of beneficent nature” (de Staël 1985, 26). Southern peculiarities increase the further South we go: “separated from the rest of Europe,” Naples and its lands are where “the South really starts” (de Staël 1985, 188). But, as a novel that, as Wehinger reminds us, is deployed along countless border-crossings (Wehinger 2021, 75), *Corinne* eschews linearity both in its narrative structure and its ideological layout. Though couched in the taxonomic idiom of eighteenth-century proto-anthropological and sociological discourse, the novel’s reassuringly clear constructions are undermined by unevenness, variations, and discrepancies. These become visible in the references to the characterological extremes proper to the peoples of the South, supported by the author’s observations and historical evidence, and ranging from warmth-induced torpor to “great excitement,” which translates into sudden explosions of “tireless activity” (de Staël 1985, 93), irrational religious outbursts, uprisings, and revolts.

In *Corinne*, Madame de Staël delineates the South as a separate geo-cultural sphere, though one with unstable and mutable features (“the most contradictory virtues and vices”; de Staël 1985, 93), then places within it a male and female character who variously move across permeable geo-cultural and gender boundaries. The opening chapter introduces Lord Nelvil as an embodiment of the North. Specifically, his being Scottish *and* English qualifies him as a blend embodying the British North (the novel’s opening line defines him as a Scottish peer, but later in the novel his “native land” is England; de Staël 1985, 304.) He represents the North’s energy and entrepreneurship, and conspicuously so through the active role he plays during the fire in Ancona (Book I, chapter 4), when, in contrast to the locals’ fatalism and utter loss of “presence of mind” (de Staël 1985, 41), he orders water-pumps from one of the English ships to be put to use, has the locked-up gates of the Jewish quarter opened by force, and personally helps in the rescue of the inmates in the city’s lunatic asylum. Moreover, owing to his “emotional, acutely sensitive temperament” (de Staël 1985, 5), Lord Nelvil personifies the deep sensitivity of the Northern soul. Motivated by this geo-psychic trait and troubled emotional history, his journey into the South exposes him to the power of the feminine that confronts him in many different guises in Italy and, most intensely, in *Corinne*.

The heroine herself is the South, Italy, its literary tradition, history, past and present, which she celebrates in her improvisations, and explains and vindicates in Books VII and VIII. Specifically, *Corinne* personifies Italy (and the South) as a “mystery” (de Staël 1985, 19), an indecipherable quality present

in her body and spirit. In keeping with the ambiguities of the titular *or*, she is an amalgam of contrasting features that come into view especially in her linguistic and literary agency. An Italian and proud of being one, yet also an Englishwoman from her paternal side, she speaks English with a “pure island accent” (de Staël 1985, 34). Her poetic creations, too, are nourished by her study of foreign literatures and poetries written in all the languages she knows: aptly, the English listeners attending her improvisation on Cape Miseno discern Northern “melancholy feelings” mixed with Italian passion (de Staël 1985, 238). Also, from the outset Corinne’s literary profile is set in a jointly masculine and feminine frame through her poetic crowning on the Capitol in Rome. This coronation had a real-life antecedent in that of the poet and improviser Maria Maddalena Morelli, ‘Corilla Olimpica’, in 1776. It is also mapped on the coronation of Francesco Petrarca in 1341, a poet whose creation of a woman-centred sentimental aesthetic – which his detractors found feminized or even effeminate – simultaneously promoted a markedly male-centred gaze on the female. In *De la littérature*, de Staël defines Petrarch’s verse a manifestation of the “inimitable charms” of the Italian imagination, though ultimately marred by “excessively romanticized exaggeration” (de Staël 1991, 197).

Tellingly, on several occasions in the novel, the geo-cultural and gendered markers that appear so easily decodable in light of Madame de Staël’s use of the language of travel-writing sociological and anthropological categorizing, become frayed and opaque. If *Corinne* lays out polarities based on “an over-determination of iconic signs,” it is also a “site of questioning” which refocuses them through the “individualizing” filter of fictional writing (Garry-Boussel 2000, 55, 57). Even as it fixes its geo-cultural objects, the novel persistently blurs their contours. *Corinne* delineates the South by placing taxonomic descriptive discourse into a fictional texture where the particularities of plot, characterization and setting subvert neat distributions through the aleatory and mutable evidence provided by the novel’s “individualizing” processes.

## 2 Sismondi, Literature and Constructing the *Midi*

In 1813, the year *De l’Allemagne* was published in London (the original French edition of 1810 was suppressed on the orders of Napoleon), Sismondi’s *De la littérature du midi de l’Europe* appeared in Paris. An ambitious history of Mediterranean Romance literatures, it was informed by one of the main tenets in his *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen âge* [A History of the Italian Republics in the Middle Ages] (first published in 1807–08): liberty inspires the emergence of enlightened institutions that, in turn, instigate progressively civilizing

processes in societies and polities (Balayé 1976, 263). Tracing the evolution of the literatures of 'Provence', Italy, Spain and Portugal, Sismondi's work narrates how the vigorous impulses of early medieval cultures originated a variety of political structures, with promising civic and republican outcomes in the Italian *comuni*, yet all of which eventually declined – from the County of Toulouse to the Italian *signorie* and the Iberian monarchies. As with Madame de Staël, Sismondi reads literary history through a teleological and all-encompassing theory of civilization (he also planned a companion work to *Midi* on the literatures of the North). He sets out to identify general principles – the “fundamental rules” of each literature – in order to “write the history of the human spirit [...] and show how it is everywhere subjected to regular and corresponding phases” (Sismondi 1813, I, ii). Once again, however, the result is much less straightforward than what the author so confidently promises. For, as Rodrigue Villeneuve remarks, *Midi* is pervaded by contradictions and ambiguities that produce a “constant oscillation between two poles” – fixed categories and free readerly interpretations, respectively (Villeneuve 1976, 276). If Sismondi's construction of the South mirrors the fluctuations pervading his entire work, in turn, gendered attributes play a key role within his oscillating definition of the South.

In the *Avertissement*, while outlining the differences between Romance and 'Teutonic' literatures, Sismondi reassures his readers that, though his focus is on the “voluptuous peoples” of the South, he will be mindful of the high moral standards of his protestant Genevan public (Sismondi 1813, I, 111). Invoking meridional sensuality, he reaffirms the association between the South and gendered (feminine) features, and thus stays true to his explicit intentions. But, as soon as he moves from principles to practice, from theory to the actual literatures, the South gradually takes shape as a tangle of conflicting manifestations.

Following Juan Andrés's encyclopaedic *Dell'origine, progressi e stato attuale d'ogni letteratura* [Of the Origin, Progress and Present State of All Literatures] (1782–99), a work well known to the Coppet group (Dainotto 2007, 159–60), Sismondi begins from the Arabs and their literature as a crucially formative influence on the post-classical South. In this fashion, he identifies a strong element of variability in Southern literatures, which once again manifests itself in gendered terms. He conventionally portrays the Arab conquerors of large swathes of Northern Africa and Spain as a terrifyingly violent horde threatening to take over the entire West before Charles Martel stopped them at Poitiers in 732 AD (Sismondi 1813, I, 95), and he links this warlike spirit to the primitive energy descending from their desert origins. Yet, even though the resulting picture is that of a bellicose and virile civilization, Sismondi notes that their literature boasts only one genuine epic and, at that, not even an Arabic one – the Persian Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (10–11 century CE). In fact, the majority of Arabic poetry is in the gentler, feminine mode of the lyric (“their poetry

is all lyrical"; Sismondi 1813, I, 60) and overflowing with sensuous details and features, so that their compositions "overwhelm by their [very] richness" (Sismondi 1813, I, 59). More broadly still, in Sismondi's view, Arabic civilization combines a cultivation of the (masculine) sciences and philosophy with a cult of women that, though similar to that of the Germanic tribes, was the actual source of this socio-cultural phenomenon in Europe: "It is from [the Arabs] that we also got that inebriation of love, that tenderness, that delicacy of feeling, that cult of women, alternatively slaves and goddesses, which exerted such strong influence on our chivalry" and on "the literature of the South as a whole" (Sismondi 1813, I, 64–5).

Sismondi subsequently transfers these gendered oscillations wholesale to the origins of Southern (literary) civilization, which he identifies in Troubadour culture also thanks to his close intellectual exchange with the *occitaniste* François Juste Marie Raynouard (Dainotto 2007, 159). Sismondi explicitly ties the flourishing of medieval Occitan literature and culture to the Arabs by stressing, in the title of his third chapter, their direct influence on "the talent and taste of the Troubadours" (Sismondi 1813, I, 78). The gendered oscillations in Arabic civilization and letters reappear in the 'Provençal' domain in the mixture of masculinity and femininity that distinguishes the dual nature of chivalry (the cult of women and feelings, and an inflexibly warlike ethos), which Sismondi presents as coeval with Troubadour poetry. The Troubadours' "delicacy of sentiment" and "mysticism of love" are intimately related to Arabic poetry (Sismondi 1813, I, 93), Sismondi asserts, advancing a "Saracenic theory" that is still envisaged as a possible explanation for the formal-ideological innovations of Troubadour poetry (Cohen 2017, 162–3). With regard to formal features, Sismondi highlights rhyme as a major link between medieval Arab and Occitan poetry, as well as its role in connecting the twofold nature of an output oscillating between the masculine sphere of war and politics and the feminine-oriented domain of love, later encapsulated in the emblematic genres of the *sirventes* and the *canço*. These two sides, then, merge in the practice of the *tensos*, the poetic competitions among Troubadours 'fought' within the institutionalized contexts of the *cours d'amour*, the tribunals of love where the ultimate adjudicating power rested with women (Sismondi 1813, I, 131–6).

Though short-lived, this most precocious of Southern European literary cultures instigated the development of other Romance literatures through its dissemination across the Iberian and Italian peninsulas. In turn, the inbuilt gendered ambivalences and oscillations Sismondi finds in this earliest phase of Southern civilization resurface in later eras and areas. Thus, he sees Italy's earliest poetic flourishing, that of the twelfth-century Sicilian school, as a filiation of the 'Provençal' tradition and a body of poetry produced by men of power or linked to power at the court of Frederick II of Swabia, poetry which

however was limited to “songs of love” composed to “please” women (Sismondi 1813, I, 347). The same blend of gendered traits informs Sismondi’s reading of the Renaissance *romanzi cavallereschi*, such as Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*. On the one hand, this acknowledged masterpiece of modern Italian literature inspires (male) readers with the “enthusiasm of valour,” the “inebriation of fighting” and “the individual’s superiority of will and courage over all the powers aiming at his destruction” (Sismondi 1813, II, 68). On the other, it interweaves this ideology of virile heroism with figurations infused with “delicacy” and “graces” sanctioned by an overarching cult of women, and with features of the oriental imagination (Sismondi 1813, II, 70), while the poem’s versification is distinguished by “grace, sweetness, elegance” (Sismondi 1813, II, 74).

As these instances reveal, Southern letters do not yield materials for a neatly divided discourse on a uniformly feminized civilization; instead, from their inception they are permeated by ambivalences that continue to emerge across the ages. This is not to downplay that Sismondi is extremely alert to the fact that the tensions within Old Occitan literature and culture stimulated a flourishing that, however, came to a tragic close with the thirteenth-century Albigensian crusade. As with *Républiques*, the narrative of *Midi* is about discontinuities, cycles of growth and decay that sometimes result in cultural extinction as with the ‘Provençal’ tradition. In particular, as Simone Balayé highlights, Sismondi differs from Madame de Staël’s more deterministic approach, since in *Midi* “literature is not necessarily a direct manifestation of social value,” a precondition that intensifies the forms of variability and oscillation in his constructions of the South (Balayé 1976, 273). Evidently, Sismondi’s *Midi* does not tell a story of unchecked development or undimmed flourishing. In this respect, Udo Schöning emphasises how the gradual loss of political liberties in Italy, as in other countries of the South, corresponded to a loss of creative originality, with the “blight of imitation” paving the way for involution and decay (Schöning 2008, 216). Even so, if we attend to Sismondi’s oscillatory logic, it is clear that the conflicting impulses of masculine and feminine traits in Southern cultures result in a contradictory, problematic, though also incessantly prolific, cultural continuum. His two-sided gendered assessment of Ariosto’s masterpiece is symptomatic of this dual vision, one which, as seen above, he significantly ties to the process of subject-making of the individual reader.

### 3 Bonstetten and the Ambivalence of Southern Subjectivities

Focusing on the individual as emblematic of an entire cultural group, Bonstetten’s *L’Homme du midi et l’homme du nord* appeared in 1824, though most

of it was written by 1812 under the aegis and influence of Madame de Staël (Houwald 1997, 226). As the title indicates, it posits a sharp antithesis between these two human typologies in accordance with de Staël's remarks in *De la littérature*, where she contrasts the "moral nature of the man of the South" in late antiquity as "entirely lost in the pleasures of voluptuousness" with that of "the man of the North" as concentrated "in the exercise of strength" (de Staël 1991, 166). Mixing personal observations and anecdotes with the lessons learnt from the philosopher Charles Bonnet and a universalizing materialistic outlook indebted to the French *idéologues* (Klemme and Kuehn 2016, 88), Bonstetten offers a socio-anthropological interpretation of humanity in the North and South of Europe. Moreover, his approach is informed by a combination of Protestant ethics, post-revolutionary and post-Napoleonic liberalism, the pragmatism of an administrator with experience "in the three parts" of Switzerland (Bonstetten 1824, 11), and cosmopolitan attitudes interlaced with a strong feeling of national attachment (Rosset 1994, 57).

In Nelson Moe's view, Bonstetten's treatise aims at "construct[ing] an overarching sociocultural dichotomy between the man of the north and south" (Moe 2002, 28) in order to imagine "a balance between the two climates and forms of human civilization," a balance which seemingly reflects the position of Switzerland as geographically central and containing "nearly all the climates of Europe" (Bonstetten 1824, 11), but which Bonstetten actually finds in his "beloved France" (Moe 2002, 29). This balanced perspective is reinforced by his self-presentation both as a *cosmopolite* and a loyal citizen of his federative country. However, Moe concludes, *L'Homme* ultimately holds up "northern civilization" as "the unquestioned subject of modernity," something which provoked the Italian economist and intellectual Melchiorre Gioia into publishing his 1825 pamphlet *Riflessioni di Melchiorre Gioia in difesa degli italiani* [Reflections by Melchiorre Gioia in Defense of the Italians] in reply to what he saw as Bonstetten's unconditional relegation of Italy to Southern backwardness (Moe 2002, 29, 31).

In actual fact, *pace* Gioia, Bonstetten's delineation of the South reprises the variations and ambivalences seen in Madame de Staël and Sismondi. Presenting alternate moments of appreciation and censure, it conveys a far from uniformly dismissive approach to the South. Instead, it opens up the ambivalences implicit in the titular term *homme* and, relatedly, in the figurations of Southern femininity as an incarnation of the Southern ethos.

In the opening pages, as he projects his gaze beyond the Alps, Bonstetten launches into a *vol d'oiseau* exploration of Italy as a country pervaded by softness and sweetness stimulating "the external organs of the senses" (Bonstetten 1824, 18). It is a place of pleasurable sensations and feminine qualities visible

in its geography, where the “sharp peaks” of the Alps are replaced by “rounded summits” and, more darkly, womb-like “caves” and “catacombs” (Bonstetten 1824, 19). This warmly embracing context is antithetical to the North, which Bonstetten evokes as a vast watery expanse of glaciers, lakes and gulphs, rain and mist. But Italy also presents geographical features bearing overtly masculine connotations, such as its volcanoes described as “colosses” surmounted by “terrible” clouds of smoke in the shape of “black pyramid[s]” (Bonstetten 1824, 20). Largely based on the equivalences masculine/North and feminine/South, at closer inspection Bonstetten’s work occasionally circumvents these binarisms, making the connection between South and femininity unstable and fragile.

The treatise ascribes social and moral traits either to each geo-cultural dimension or to both in varying degrees. Freedom is Northern, as confirmed by the “gradual abolition of servitude” in those countries (Bonstetten 1824, 38). Instead, a carefree attitude to the future is Southern, because of the ease of life made possible by the warm Mediterranean climate and fertility of the soil (for the same reasons, begging is an ineradicably Southern ill). Also, on the strength of the Germanic invasions in late antiquity, Bonstetten distributes the roles of conquered and conqueror to South and North respectively: Southern peoples are “always conquered,” whereas “heroic” Northern ones “almost always victors” (Bonstetten 1824, 70–71). The virile connotation of conquest is contrasted with the feminized state of subjection, bearing out the idea of an inherently Southern effeteness. And yet, a conventionally masculine attribute such as military courage is ascribed also to Southern men in the following fashion: “The inhabitants of the South would be the most cowardly, or the bravest of men, depending on their reason for fighting,” so that “if some reason inflames them, they will accomplish what no Northern nation would be in a position to do, in comparable conditions of discipline and tactic” (Bonstetten 1824, 132). Similarly, bloodthirsty revenge is typical of the man of the South, as exemplified by the notoriously quarrelsome Renaissance artist Benvenuto Cellini, who in his memoirs recorded the pleasure felt in “the moment of murdering the object of a long resentment” (Bonstetten 1824, 144). More positively – and decisively for an experienced administrator such as Bonstetten – the importance of agriculture in Southern countries testifies to a paradigmatic intersection of the human and the natural, the physical and the moral. In the South, the joint influence of the sun, year-round agricultural occupations and “ever awake sensations” help “thought spring out of the depths of the soul” (Bonstetten 1824, 33). Agriculture in the South merges feminine fertility (the “richness of the soil”; Bonstetten 1824, 32) and masculine husbandry, resulting in thoughts and



ideas that, unlike the Northern tendency to impractical reverie, become manifest in the “external senses” (Bonstetten 1824, 33).

Bonstetten's work is a miscellany of impressions and opinions organized and given objective validity through climatological principles. Explicitly aimed at “generalizing [his] observations” (Bonstetten 1824, 1), it swings between “perceptive single remarks and a systematizing tendency to order nations and peoples on a polarized scale” (Houwald 1997, 226). Throughout, it veers between a North-South antithesis and finding points of connection between them in order to outline the ideal *homme*. Yet, precisely when it comes to this central notion – the *subject* of the book and a term with obvious semantic oscillations (‘individual’, ‘man’) – the gendered import of Bonstetten's construction of the South become apparent. *Homme* often designates a person or an individual, as in the following passage:

The happiness of the inhabitant [*habitant*] of the South is made up of external objects; the inhabitant [*habitant*] of the North finds it in himself. Like the flitting fly, the former lives day by day off the nectar of the flowers covering the land they [*il*] inhabit; on the contrary, the Northerner [*homme*] is the diligent bee who nourishes their mind with what they [*il*] gathered in the flowering season. (Bonstetten 1824, 190)

This sentence conventionally contrasts sensation and thought, surface and depth, and human types expressive of fertile and inhospitable territories, respectively. Such attributes are applicable to men and women alike, to humankind, given the synonymous use of *homme* and *habitant*. More often, however, Bonstetten focuses specifically on masculine attributes and activities, on men as the pivotal socio-cultural, political, and economic agents within a polity. In turn, Southern women are examined in selected instances to demonstrate the heightened manifestations of Southern attributes, and especially sexual features. The following *vignette* is an emblematic case in point: “An Italian woman can spend a whole day at the window watching the men she likes or dislikes go by, without feeling bored, whereas a woman of the North would die of boredom” (Bonstetten 1824, 46). Couched in the assured tones of first-hand observation, this remark is intended to demonstrate that “lack of foresight produces idleness” (Bonstetten 1824, 46). That of the Italian woman at the window is a fairly stereotypical scene in literature: in the British tradition, for example, it is present from the Renaissance (as in Act II.1 of Ben Jonson's *Volpone*) to the Romantic period (stanza 15 in Byron's *Beppo*). In Bonstetten's articulation, it conveys theatricality and confident self-display: the woman is the centre of the scene, controls the gaze, and expresses untrammelled sensual enjoyment. Yet,

she is also pure body and thus a macroscopic representation of the reduction of the South to the merely physical. This type of figuration returns in the opening of the chapter on love:

An Italian woman in love has an inexhaustible stock of different feelings, all subordinate to the supreme feeling which dominates her. Following one another with prodigious rapidity, her ideas produce brilliant and varied fires, which are nourished only by the heart itself. (Bonstetten 1824, 103)

Bonstetten connects Italy and the South with love as excess, not with its genuine manifestation as a balanced and rational feeling, in view of “the defective education of women” (Bonstetten 1824, 114) that, in turn, translates into corrupt phenomena, typical of feminized societies, such as *cicisbéisme*. More broadly, the sensuousness and superficiality of Southern women dominated by their bodies and emotions is a negative key term in the distinction between *homme à imagination* and *homme à pensée* (Bonstetten 1824, 122), the latter axiomatically ascribed to the reflective inhabitants of the North.

As these examples indicate, Bonstetten's South largely conforms to Coppet's geo-cultural interpretations of it as a feminized dimension, which, however, also regularly oscillates between masculine and feminine traits. The author's initial crossing of the Alps and panoramic description of Italy convey feminine Southernness, but subsequent sections delineate a much less straightforward picture. Reflecting the ambivalences in Coppet's discourse of the South, as well as Bonstetten's jointly subjective and objective argumentation, this construction constitutes a locus for defining the physical and moral make-up of *l'homme* intended sometimes as ‘individual’ and more frequently as ‘man’. It also serves to delineate the ideal of “the superior man” harmonizing antithetical impulses, and who “by his enlightenment, will be an eminently social man” (Bonstetten 1824, 87).

Threaded through with variations and oscillations, while also re-echoing familiar axioms, Bonstetten's treatise offers an opportunity for some conclusive remarks on Coppet's discourse of the South. Undoubtedly, this discourse originates from Northern viewpoints, even when Bonstetten defines his Swiss location as ensuring a middle ground and a balanced perspective. But this ‘north-centric’ vision does not inevitably yield reductive interpretations. In general terms, modernity lies in the North, while backward features are more pertinent to the South. Still, it is equally true that Coppet authors piece together a multifaceted picture of the South, which seeks to do justice to its richness and variety, so that, in turn, it is always to some extent associated

with a blend of masculine and feminine attributes. Rehearsing and consolidating stereotypes, Coppet's discourse of the South also highlights its peculiar potentialities and, in particular, its mix of gendered features. Madame de Staël and her acolytes identified a paradigm of the South comprising variable conceptions of the countries, societies and cultures of Mediterranean Europe, a protean panorama made up of mutable features and shifting attributes. The far from stagnant, uniform, or predictable geo-cultural dimension they delineated provided an influential blueprint for subsequent re-elaborations of Southerness, a reservoir of knowledge of the South widely available for reinterpretations, reimaginings, and criticism in a wide range of discursive fields in the Romantic period and beyond.

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## Peoples of Bandits: Romantic Liberalism and National Virilities in Italy and Spain

*Xavier Andreu*

European Romanticism endorsed, and in turn transformed, a certain imaginary geography between the North and the South of Europe that had been built in previous centuries. This process was clearly traversed by a gender dimension. In *L'homme du midi et l'homme du nord, ou l'influence du climat* [The Man of the North and the Man of the South: Or the Influence of Climate] (1824), Charles Victor de Bonstetten established, for example, a stark contrast between Mediterranean masculinities and those of the inhabitants of northern Europe. Men of the South showed no concern for the future or for work, and they had a closer relationship with nature and a less rational control of their instincts. They were also individualistic, so they did not abide by the rules and resisted being educated or reformed. Men of the North, on the other hand, were hard-working and far-sighted. Reason and self-control, which they put at the service of their fellow citizens, prevailed over their individual needs. In the South, misguided passions led to all kinds of excesses. In Italy, where “everything seems to favour the murderer,” for example, the “almost national taste for revenge becomes an obstacle to the establishment of good criminal laws [...]” (Bonstetten 1824, 144–5). Although Bonstetten pointed out the convenience of a balance between both extremes, the truth is he was establishing a clear hierarchical relationship between them.

According to George L. Mosse, in the nineteenth century the traits of respectable masculinity that became hegemonic in France, Germany or the United Kingdom were identified with the Protestant North. The inhabitants of the Catholic South functioned, along with other non-European men, as their specular “others” (Mosse 1985, 20). However, in the process, this “natural man” from the South was endowed with several traits and qualities that were attractive to the romantic sensibility. Mediterranean men could be seen as tough, passionate, and violent, but also as bastions of a freedom and a manly character that resisted the “domestication” imposed by modern civilization. Through them, in fact, the constitutive tensions of contemporary masculinities were made explicit: the struggle between an ideal of virility and independence, which had been fundamental for the constitution of the new male political

subject, on the one hand; and the necessary submission to the norms and values of modern life – understood in terms of domestication and feminization – imposed by a civilized society, on the other (Mosse, 1998; Dudink, Hagemann and Tosh, 2004; McCormack, 2005; Tosh, 2007).

The Spanish bandit and the Italian brigand, whose traits extended to those of the nations in which they lived, were some of these liminal figures situated on the margins of modernity. The purpose here is to explore how this identification came about and what reactions it generated in Spain and Italy. There is also a particular interest in pointing out the different ways in which the image of the romantic bandit was appropriated – and nationalized – by revolutionary liberalism in both countries.

## 1 Romantic Bandits and the European South

Romantic Europe was deeply fascinated by crime and by those who committed it (Marcandier-Colard, 1998; Kalifa, 2005). At the turn of the nineteenth century, outlaws enjoyed considerable literary success, although interest in them was not new. For centuries, bandits and brigands had served to literarily embody the cruel and ruthless criminal or the “noble robber,” who protected the community from oppressors or enemies (Hobsbawm 1969). However, these literary figures acquired a special relevance during the revolutionary decades between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The new romantic sensibility praised the outlawed men, who seemed closer to a nature drowned out by modern (corrupt and effeminate) civilization. The romantic revision of Robin Hood gives a good account of this interpretive change and explains how easily it could be linked to liberal projects (Knight 2015, 103–86).

The archetype of these rebellious heroes was Karl Moor, the leading character in Friedrich Schiller’s play *Die Räuber* [The Robbers] (1782): a young patriot with revolutionary ideas who, betrayed by his family and by society, decides to abandon them, lead a gang of bandits and take the law into their own hands. Moor, like Satan in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, from whom he is descended, accepts no other authority than his own and is invested with certain diabolical traits that give him a sublime aura (Praz 2014, 55–84). Other romantic authors, especially Lord Byron, developed this rebellious, passionate, and transgressive hero. His violence is that of the protean genius capable of transforming society with his revolutionary energy (Mercandier-Colard 1998, 11–51). It is not by chance, therefore, that this character was used repeatedly by romantic liberalism as a hymn to freedom and independence, both for “free men” and for the fatherland.



The image of the bandit was particularly associated with a Mediterranean world that was as ambivalent as the bandit himself (Leerssen in this book). This association was already made in the eighteenth century, when the shadows of those figures prone to violence and reluctant to submit to the laws of civilization had been linked to the national character of the inhabitants of the warmest countries on the continent (Romani 2002, Moe 2002, Patriarca 2010, Andreu 2016a). It is no coincidence that the Gothic novel was often set in a Catholic South inhabited by demonic bandits such as Montoni in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), a man "in whom passions, of which revenge was not the weakest, entirely supplied the place of principles" (Radcliffe 1794, III, 257). Climate and civilizational backwardness in these regions explained a supposed special relationship between the Mediterranean South and banditry. The confusion between land, climate and character of inhabitants continued in the nineteenth century. The inhabitants of Terracina, writes the American writer Washington Irving in "The Italian Bandits," "are apparently a listless, heedless race, as people of soft sunny climates are apt to be; but under this passive, indolent exterior are said to lurk dangerous qualities. They are supposed by many to be little better than the banditti of the neighbouring mountains, and indeed to hold a secret correspondence with them" (Irving 1824, II, 62). To romantic authors like Irving, however, these southern bandits were also attractive: some of them retained several qualities that made them completely romantic. For this reason, in the first decades of the nineteenth century these bandits were prominent protagonists of the stories of some European travellers who both feared and wished to cross paths with them. In the second third of the nineteenth century, the Spanish bandit and the Italian brigand became an integral part of a picturesque and folkloric vision of both countries. This image was popularized and commercialized throughout Europe through a series of cultural products that eventually fossilized it. Around 1846, the English traveller Richard Ford recognized that writing a volume on Spain without bandits would be as insipid as savouring "an *olla* without bacon" (Ford 2000, 175).<sup>1</sup>

In the stories set in southern European countries during this time, the image of the inhuman bandit protagonist of the Gothic novel persists but is mixed with that of the romantic and chivalrous highwayman (Tatasciore 2017). The romantic bandit is always a person with two faces of varying importance. The one that showed him as a person faithful to values that modern civilization had corrupted is usually associated with those areas of the continent supposedly

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1 *Olla* is a traditional Spanish dish.

trapped in time. Precisely because of their “backwardness,” these areas still seemed to put up noble bandits who respected the ladies and protected the oppressed that had existed throughout Europe in more chivalric times. In 1793, the Girondin Giuseppe Gorani popularized in revolutionary France the figure of the Neapolitan “extraordinary brigand” Angiolino del Duca: “a man of unfailing courage and not lacking in wit. He stole from the rich and did much good to the poor. He never attacked travellers [...]” (Gorani 1793, 60–1). Other Italian brigands would take over from him in the romantic era.

However, the image of the frank and generous bandit tends to be more closely tied to Spain. The difference is only one of degree, but it is important to point it out. “Except in rare instances the Spanish brigands do not use travellers badly,” declared Prosper Mérimée in 1830. Mérimée made José María “el Tempranillo” the prototype of them all, the only man who “in so prosaic a day, has revived the chivalrous virtues of old knighthood” (Mérimée 1989, 86–7, 99).<sup>2</sup> The reason could be that in Europe, as Mónica Bolufer rises in this volume in relation to other issues, the myth of the Spanish gentleman and the memory of his not so distant greatness were still very important. Also, undoubtedly, due to the impact of two other processes: the romantic discovery of a medieval (and literary) Spain of gallant Moorish and Christian knights, on the one hand, and the revaluation of the national character of the Spanish after the revolt against Napoleon in 1808, on the other (Saglia 2000, Andreu 2016a, Saglia and Haywood 2018, Varela-Ortega 2019).

The prevailing image in Italy was different. The difference between the perceptions of both peoples is evident, for example, in Madame de Staël. She, who saw the Goth warriors revived in the Spaniards on May 2, 1808, had lamented shortly before in *Corinne, ou l'Italie* [Corinne, or Italy] (1807) that the warrior spirit of the Teutons had left very few traces on the Italian peninsula (Staël 1985, 285–6). The fact that the Italians were unable to establish themselves as a political unit and the constant defeats they suffered in the fight for their freedom only corroborated these assertions. These conceptions of the national character of the Italians were mixed with the vision of a country of bandits who always seemed to resort to unmanly forms of violence. In the romantic recreation of the South of the continent, it is easier to find Italian bandits as bloodthirsty and treacherous murderers. In the European mindset of the first decades of the century, Italians were also often associated with secret societies of philanthropists and Carbonari and with their dark initiation rites. The customs of these sects were often confused with those of brigandage, as Charles

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<sup>2</sup> On the inaccuracy of this romantic image and the contrast with the reality of Spanish banditry, see Oscar Bascuñán and Jesús-Carlos Urda (2016).

Macfarlane did in *The Lives and Exploits of Banditti and Robbers in All Parts of the World* (1833) (Tatasciore 2019, 31–2).

In line with the pattern established by Schiller though, southern bandits and corsairs were also the protagonists of multiple novels, poems, and dramas of all kinds in which they embodied the struggle of nations for their freedom. After all, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Mediterranean Sea was the core of the liberal revolutionary process that shook the entire continent. Jean-Henri-Ferdinand Lamartelière's *Robert, chef de brigands* [Robert, Chief of Brigands] (1792) or Christian August Vulpius' *Rinaldo Rinaldini* (1798) are good examples of Italian brigands embodying these ideals. So is Salvatore Rosa, a Neapolitan liberal and patriot *avant la lettre*, whom Lady Morgan imagined living among some bandits from the Abruzzi “so formidable in the eyes of the Austro-Spanish government, and so respectable in the estimation of the people, that, by a strange inversion of principle, these natural enemies of society frequently became its chosen champions” (Sydney 1824, I, 79). The best known of all these rebellious bandits would be the Spanish *Hernani* (1830), the protagonist of the well-known drama in which Victor Hugo announced the dawn of both a political and a literary Romanticism.

## 2 Southern Visions of Southern Banditry

Authors from southern European countries perceived the association of brigands and bandits with their territories ambivalently. In general, Spaniards and Italians rejected an essential identification that questioned the modernity of their nations (O'Connor 1998, Isabella 2009, 186–212, Patriarca 2010, Andreu, 2016a, 223–7). These authors insisted on the historical causes of southern banditry. They pointed out that this phenomenon was common to all those territories that were disrupted by social and political conflicts and that it would end up disappearing with the pacification and modernization of both countries. The defects of the southern peoples were historical and, therefore, repairable (De Francesco 2012, 27–70).

However, this did not prevent southern authors from strategically using these same images of southern banditry for a variety of purposes. Invoking the dangers of a South crawling with bandits served, for example, to legitimize and promote the various modernizing projects of different Italian state administrations in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Davis 1988, 90). Italians and Spaniards used these images, above all, to denounce those who refused their political projects. Bandits were thus associated with revolutionary danger or ultramontane reaction, as happened in France (Sottocasa 2013

and 2016). In Spain, during the Liberal Revolution, both the patriotic guerrillas of the Peninsular War (1808–1814) and the counterrevolutionary squads of the first Carlist War (1833–1840) were systematically confused with banditry. The accusation was relatively easy to sustain, given the close relationship between these forms of armed struggle and banditry, as well as the thin line separating them (Gómez Bravo 2006; Moliner 2009; Paris 2012). The figure of the Italian brigand was also politicized in very different ways since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Tatasciore 2019). Famous brigands such as Michele Pezza ‘Fra Diavolo’ or Gaetano Coletta ‘Mammone’, for example, were used as symbols of a servile and superstitious people that would have wrecked the Neapolitan Republic in 1799. In the historical writings by Carlo Botta, Cesare Cantù or Pietro Colletta, brigands appear systematically interpreted as the paramilitary resource to turn to when the Bourbon absolutism or the great nobles and landlords need it. At the same time, brigands are also recurrently associated with revolutionary disorder by both supporters of the Ancien Régime and moderate liberalism.

Among these political appropriations of the figure of the bandit, the one carried out by radical sectors stands out. Romantic bandits and brigands were adopted by these sectors as symbols of national virility whose viability was being discussed – by excess or by default, depending on the case. In turn, they made it possible to imagine forms of “national masculinity” that defied normative discourses.

### 2.1 *Brigands and the Re-virilization of the Italian Nation*

The European image of an indolent and effeminate Italian character concerned the same Italian patriots, who shared it. For this reason, they considered that national regeneration could take place, to a large extent, thanks to the re-virilization of Italy. In their opinion, it was necessary to restore a martial masculinity lost after long centuries of foreign domination (Patriarca 2005). This masculinity was associated with the classic ideal of the citizen-soldier, but it had traits of the new romantic sensibility (Riall 2012). Furthermore, according to them, female sexual manners needed urgent reform, as they were held largely responsible for the loss of Italian virility (Bizzochi 2008; Casalena in this book).

The patriotic literature of the Risorgimento insistently recreated historical models to imitate that were located especially in the Middle Ages (Banti 2000; Lyttelton 2001). This period, prior to foreign rule and absolutism, was celebrated as the time when municipal autonomy, economic prosperity, and artistic and literary splendour had flourished on Italian soil. It was also the time when Italians still preserved their manly virtues, exhibited in historical

episodes such as the Battle of Legnano or the Sicilian Vespers (Balestracci 2015, 68–75).

To the Risorgimento writers, the comparison of these heroes of the past with their countrymen of the nineteenth century was hurtful. The condemnation of the *ozio* in which the latter lived and the apathy in which they had fallen, were constant in some writings searching for a cathartic reaction of the readers. Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi's first historical novel, *La Battaglia di Benevento* (1827) [The Battle of Benevento], begins, for example, with a lament over the situation in which Italy finds itself, which is attributed to the lack of heroes like those of the past: "Every sod contains the ashes of a hero's heart. We tread upon the dust of the great... we, who are more worthy of being buried in the dust. [...] To a degraded generation the grave only represents the abode of the decaying corpse, rather than the altar of magnanimous inspirations; our mind turns to corruption rather than glory, and we have long been so cowed down that we dare not people the tomb with the sublime fancies of greatness" (Guerrazzi 1827, I, 5–6).

*La Battaglia di Benevento* shows the origins of that decadence. This romance, recounting the battle for the throne of Sicily that took place between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines in the thirteenth century, underlines the connection between loss of political independence, absence of national unity, despotism, and degradation of national character. The Italian knights, driven by their revenge, ambition or personal envy, allow themselves to be dominated by tyrants and foreign powers. The novel is full of traitors.

Significantly, the most noble and virtuous character in the story is the captain of bandits Ghino di Tacco. Born the son of a nobleman disgraced by envy and betrayal of his peers, this fearsome bandit robs only the rich and protects the oppressed. In the romance he is presented as a man of unbreakable will, gigantic height and majestic forms, a zealous defender of his freedom and the freedom of Italy. Di Tacco is, along with the protagonist Rogiero, the only knight to appear at the tournament organized in Rome after Charles of Anjou was proclaimed king of Sicily. He does it to confront the French knights who mock the weakness and cowardice of the Italians. Furthermore, the bandit would join King Manfred's army to defend Italy from invaders.

Guerrazzi describes Ghino di Tacco following the archetype of the Byronic hero. Byron's influence on the national narrative of the Risorgimento, and particularly his male heroes, was highly relevant. Byron himself, who was a member of the Carbonari and actively participated in the revolutions of 1820, earned the respect and admiration of the Italian patriots, who made him a symbol of the struggle for Italian unity and the independence of nations. The relevance of Italy for Byron, and of Byron for Italy, has been well studied by

scholars (Rawes and Saglia 2017). At this point we are interested in highlighting how Byron's writings made it possible to counteract the romantic image of the Italians incapable of self-government by presenting a series of brave figures willing to sacrifice their lives to preserve their ideals. Byron's influence is evident in the Mazzinian Guerrazzi and in those left-wing authors of the Risorgimento such as Giuseppe Mazzini himself (Schmidt 2010).<sup>3</sup> As Giulio Tatasciore highlights, Mazzini praised Guerrazzi's novel and the Italy he described in it, "that country of [Salvatore] Rosa in which a leader of bandits appears lonely, ferocious, like the sad genius of that desert." In addition, the Republican leader endorsed the analogy between the brigand and the patriotic guerrilla (Tatasciore 2019, 32, 43).

In this regard, the romantic image of the Italian brigand could be seen with patriotic eyes to show the continuing existence in Italy of forms of martial virility that were those the patriots wanted to restore. In his novel, Guerrazzi established a link between Ghino di Tacco and his modern descendants through clothing and, very particularly, through a garment that would become a symbol of the Italian struggle for independence: a hat crowned with a feather (Guerrazzi 1827, II, 24). The success of Giuseppe Verdi's opera adaptation of *Ernani* (1844) further consolidated the link between the generous and righteous bandit and Italian patriots. Verdi insisted on this relation in his later adaptations of Schiller's drama and Byron's poem, *I Masnadieri* [The Robbers] (1847) and *Il Corsaro* [The Corsair] (1848) respectively. The agitated reception of *Ernani* is explained by the obvious political readings the audience made of the work, especially the Italian patriots (Sorba 2018).

As Carlotta Sorba has studied, the "*Ernani* hat" became a key garment of the "Italian dress," which functioned as an element of self-identification with the patriotic cause during the revolutionary mid-century years. Likewise, the "Calabrese hat," pointed and covered with a feather, which years later the painter Francesco Hayez would enshrine in his famous canvas *Il bacio* [The Kiss] (1859) as one of the symbols of the Risorgimento, also became a symbol of Italian nationalism in the months of intense melodramatic theatricalization of politics that took place during the Italian *Quarantotto* (Sorba 2015, 173–228). The connection between the rebellion of the brigand from Calabria and revolutionary patriotism was, in fact, a central motif of the Calabrese romantic school (Mellone 2015, 572–5). In verse novels, like Biagio Miraglia's *Il brigante* [The Brigand] (1844) and Domenico Mauro's *Errico. Novella Calabrese* [Errico.

3 Interestingly, this eminently positive political interpretation of Byron coincides with that of the Spanish republican leader Emilio Castelar in his *Vida de Lord Byron* [Life of Lord Byron] (1873).

Calabrian Novel] (1845), the actions of these vigilante brigands become metaphors for Italy's struggle for freedom. Vincenzo Padula's five-act drama *Antonello, capobrigante calabrese* [Antonello, Calabrian Chief Brigand] (1850), set in Calabria during the ill-fated attempted insurrection of the Bandiera brothers in 1844, can be interpreted in a similar vein. In the case of this drama, which was not published until 1864, the fusion between brigand, avenger and patriot is, however, much more explicit.

The romantic image of the brigand helped to imagine (and perform), in this way, a certain model of masculinity. This model was partly confused with that image and allowed the construction of a certain national identity associated with Italian patriotism and, in particular, with the most radical sectors. The process is especially observed in relation to Giuseppe Garibaldi and his supporters. The colourful uniform worn by the *Garibaldini* was also confused with that of the Italian brigands. Likewise, the Italian Legion volunteers on their South American or European adventures also exhibited the manly traits and camaraderie of Italian brigands. As Lucy Riall has brilliantly analysed, the myth of Garibaldi, which he himself helped to create, was largely forged through the romantic and revolutionary reading of a character that seemed to embody the romantic heroes through his actions. This mix of brigand, corsair and Argentine *gaucho* exhibited a masculinity that was rebellious and seductive, virtuous and emotional, romantic and passionate. This masculinity was celebrated by democratic sectors as the expression of the true Italian national character and widely disseminated through the new mass media (Riall 2007 and 2012). In his memoirs, Giuseppe Cesare Abba, one of the "Redshirts" of *i Mille* [the Thousand] who accompanied Garibaldi on his expedition to Sicily in 1860, did not hesitate to identify the Italian leader with the Byronic characters, and recognise his companions as the heirs of those medieval romantic heroes extolled by Italian patriotism (Schmidt 2010, 72–4).

## 2.2 *Guerrillas, Bandits and Spanish Radical Liberalism*

The Spanish case was different from the Italian one. As already noted, the historical and literary memory of the Spanish "knight" and his virtues was very much alive in romantic Europe. The virility of the Spaniards, moreover, seemed out of the question after the victorious fight of their guerrillas against the Napoleonic troops. The peninsular authors also endorsed this interpretation. The hero in 1808 was the guerrilla man, rather than the soldier, who became an expression of the true national character of the Spaniards (Hocquellet and Michonneau 2008; Andreu 2021). As José María de Andueza wrote in the pages dedicated to this Spanish "type" in *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* [Spaniards Painted by Themselves] (1843), the acclaimed General Francisco Espoz y Mina, the great



guerrilla hero of the Peninsular War, was the successor of Pelayo. The latter, who in national mythology had resisted in the eighth century the arrival of the Muslims from the northern mountains and initiated the Christian “restoration” of the peninsula with their exploits, had emulated in turn, according to Andueza, the exploits of the one who had been the original model of all the Spanish guerrillas: Viriatus, the Lusitanian shepherd who took the mountains and heroically confronted the Romans (Andueza 1843, Pérez Isasi 2013).

However, the good qualities of the guerrillas could turn into vices – those of the bandits with which they were confused – if they were not restrained or if they were maintained once the conflict had ended. In this sense, what was worrying in the Spanish case was an excessive masculinity that made a well-ordered government impossible. Robert Southey, a great defender of the Spanish guerrillas, explained in these terms the fratricidal violence that Spain experienced in the first decades of the nineteenth century. For Southey, the medium-term consequences of the Peninsular War were obvious: “The good soldier becomes a good citizen when his occupation is over; but the guerrillas were never likely to forego the wild and lawless course in which they were engaged; and, therefore, essential as their services now were, thoughtful men looked with the gloomiest forebodings to what must be the consequence of their multiplication, whenever this dreadful struggle should be ended; they anticipated the utter ruin of Spain” (Southey 1832, 68). At this point, other long-established elements in the stereotypes about Spaniards came into play, linked to their history and their southern temperament: an inordinate pride and a zeal for their honour that often ended in blood. The willingness to take up arms shown by the Spanish guerrillas could lead to excessive and gratuitous violence. The spirit of independence could turn into stubborn resistance to constituted authority. In times of peace, it was difficult for them to participate in community life. Ultimately, it prevented the Spaniards from adapting to the modern world.

Spanish liberals also brought up, in part, this concern. In December 1834, an anonymous editor of *Eco del comercio* [Echo of Commerce] pointed to the popular spirit of faction and banditry as characteristic features of the Spanish nation. That spirit had been decisive during the Middle Ages, in the long war against the Muslims, as well as in 1808, when facing the French. However, it had subsequently been encouraged and manipulated by absolutist forces, which had led to the spread of banditry throughout the country that was a disservice to the nation in civilized Europe. For this reason, in the 1830s the moralizing tone predominated among liberals in the representation of a *bandolero* whose figure is difficult to distinguish from that of the simple bandit (Álvarez Barrientos and García Mouton 1986; Reyero 2008).

Banditry was, at the same time, an expression of the Spanish national character and a distortion of it. Agustín Durán considered the peninsular *bandoleros* the product of the degradation of the noble and chivalric character of the medieval Spaniards due to monarchical despotism and inquisitorial fanaticism. However, he could not fail to recognize in them traits of the Spanish character, which he linked directly to their uniqueness and the superiority of the Spanish bandits in relation to other European ones: “Could it not be said that our smugglers and thieves are the degeneration of the chivalrous spirit of the nation that highly valued individual courage, and remembered its spirit of independence? [...] There have been *condottieri* or gang leaders elsewhere, or miserable and cowardly thieves and murderers; but not the Corrientes, the Jaimes, or the Jose-Marías” (Durán 1851, II, 389–90).

The Spanish liberals, therefore, both accepted and rejected that ideal of the Spanish *bandolero*: acceptable as an expression of the national spirit by transferring his qualities to the figure of the guerrilla, but reprehensible in peacetime for posing a threat to social life. For this reason, in the wake of the enlightened reformism of the previous century, these liberal authors made it a priority to eradicate the widespread chapbook literature dedicated to reciting the feats and crimes of famous bandits (Caro Baroja 1990, 409–89, Gomis 2012). In 1834, the progressive Salustiano de Olózaga requested their replacement by other cultural products that would strengthen the “instinct of nationality” among the Spaniards (Olózaga 1864, 115–35). Olózaga tried to convince the great romantic writer José Zorrilla about it with little success. However, the result of this pressure was the publication in 1835 of Zorrilla’s song “El contrabandista” [The Smuggler], in which the poet highlighted the courage, independence and manly nature of a character he saved by associating him with the Spanishness and the fight against the French.

Thus, the figure of the bandit could be accepted and saved through its “nationalization,” a strategy that would be followed especially by the authors closest to progressivism and radicalism in the 1830s and 1840s. These sectors participated in the liberal hegemonic discourse that advocated a respectable masculinity at the head of an orderly family and understood as the basic cell of society (Peyrou 2011, Romeo 2014, 121–30). At the same time, they remained more faithful to a model of virile and revolutionary masculinity that was progressively abandoned and rejected by conservative liberalism and that incorporated, as in the Italian case, elements of Romanticism (Andreu 2016b, Peyrou in this book). This was a model of romantic, rebellious, and sentimental masculinity, which did not give in to anything and was willing to break all existing restraints.

The protagonist of the very popular “Canción del pirata” [The Song of the Pirate] (1835) by the Byronic José de Espronceda was the maximum expression

of this revolutionary ideal. His friend José García de Villalta turn the bandit Diego Corrientes ‘El Niño’ into one of the protagonists of his historical novel *El golpe en vago* [A Blow in Vane] (1835). The action is set in Andalusia in the second half of the eighteenth century. Although ironically, this bandit is compared in the novel with the famous knight El Cid, symbol of those low-ranking noblemen who in medieval Spain had faced the ambition of their kings and their vile courtiers (García de Villalta 1835, 123–38). In the novel, Corrientes and some of his companions are decisive with his actions for the triumph of freedom. The same occurs with the bandit Luis Candelas in the novel of manners *Los misterios de Madrid* [The Mysteries of Madrid] (1844) by the republican Juan Martínez Villergas. However, it was the progressive Tomás Rodríguez Rubí, the main representative of an Andalusian genre who in those years entered dialogue with the romantic myth of Spain and who obtained great success throughout the peninsula, who dedicated more works to banditry (Romero Ferrer and Álvarez Barrientos 1998). In “El vandolero [sic]” [The Bandit] (1841), for example, he presents this figure as the king of the forests and the roads, as a free man who despises death and, above all, as a fierce enemy of the powerful and protector of the poor and the ladies.

In the context of the revolutionary movement of 1848, up to four dramatic works starring bandits were premiered, all written by authors linked to progressivism or radicalism: *El corazón de un bandido* [A Bandit’s Heart] and *Treinta días después* [Thirty Days After] by Ramón Franquelo, *El rayo de Andalucía o Guapo Francisco Esteban* [The Ray of Andalusia or Handsome Francisco Esteban] by Francisco Sánchez del Arco and *Diego Corrientes o el bandido generoso* [Diego Corrientes or the Generous Bandit] by José María Gutiérrez del Alba. The Spanish *bandolero* is linked in these dramatic works to a brave and manly national character, which is imposed both on the Frenchified (and effeminate) attitudes of “fashionable” people and on foreigners who try unsuccessfully to seduce Spanish beauties. In this sense, it raises an ideal of virile, seductive, and defiant masculinity that is identified as typical of the Spanish “popular” national character.<sup>4</sup>

However, through channelling their instincts in favour of the fatherland, these characters can be ennobled and accepted as an incarnation of the ultimate core of the national character of all Spaniards. This is the case in the drama *Jaime el Barbudo* [Jaime the Bearded man], by the well-known socialist Sixto Cámara, which was premiered on May 2, 1853, at the Teatro de la Cruz in a commemorative act of the 1808 uprising against the French. The story of

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4 On the radical “national populism” of the 1840s see Andreu 2011.

Jaime el Barbudo is once again that of an honest man who is forced to commit a crime due to an unjust aristocratic persecution. The social reading that Cámara makes of this banditry is observed in the song sung by the bandits around a bonfire in the epilogue of the drama, a version of Espronceda's "Canção del pirata" that was set to music by the composer Joaquín Gaztambide. In this last scene, Jaime and his men achieve their redemption through their conversion into patriots and guerrillas: the new liberal government of Cádiz offers them a pardon in exchange for taking up arms against the French, something they will do thereafter with enthusiasm (Andreu 2016a, 232–3).

### 3 Conclusions

The European radical liberalism of the first decades of the nineteenth century explored, through the figure of the outlaw, the heroic attributes of an ideal of masculinity that affirmed the virility, self-control, will and independence typical of the citizen-soldier of civic humanism against the servility and effeminacy of the subjects of despotism. Furthermore, it added to these traits other characteristics of the romantic hero that made him much more complex and confronted him with the normative model of bourgeois respectability. A tough man, but capable of tenderness; enemy of men, whom he abandons to take refuge in nature, but committed to his fellow men and to his fatherland; lonely but surrounded by some comrades with whom he maintains a fraternal relationship of manly camaraderie that is sometimes confused with the revolutionary principle of the nation in arms; melancholic, but passionate. A man of aristocratic spirit he shows off among those who have been thrown to the margins of society and who, despite being good-natured, violently rebels against social conventions and laws perceived as unjust.

The European romantic imaginary placed this figure in very different places. However, it tended to associate it to a series of liminal spaces or regions such as the Mediterranean South.<sup>5</sup> The warm climate or the backwardness and primitivism supposedly allowed forms of masculinity that conserved characteristics of the "natural man" that had been perverted in the most advanced societies. Romantic Spain and Italy were fascinating, among many other things, because they were peoples of bandits. This identification bothered some southern authors who defended the modernity of their nations. However, in some cases, they took advantage of it strategically for different reasons and with different

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5 Or other European or non-European territories, like the East (Leerssen in this book) or the American border (Frazer 2006).

results. In Italy, the romantic brigand served to respond to those who considered that Italians lacked the virile fibre necessary to become a free and sovereign nation. Garibaldi and his companions embodied a model of romantic heroism that spread throughout the nation and enjoyed enormous popularity in the Italian public sphere and among radical sectors. In Spain it was the guerrillas who were praised as an expression of a national character of whose virility and independence there was no doubt. On the contrary, the concern in this case was the unfortunate consequences of an excess of these attributes. It was this excess that produced a banditry that had to be regulated and corrected: for the radical sectors that defended an ideal of virile and revolutionary masculinity, the bandit was acceptable as a national symbol, but only if he was able to abandon his worst instincts and act like a patriot. His figure also served to affirm a seductive and defiant national virility in the face of nations considered effeminate like the French one.

The political fortunes of the Spanish *bandolero* declined in the second half of the nineteenth century. His figure was recreated on various occasions by progressive and radical authors such as Víctor Balaguer, who in 1858 reactivated the liberal myth of the good bandit in his historical novel *D. Juan de Serrallonga o los bandoleros de las Guillerías* [D. Juan de Serrallonga or the bandits of the Guillerías]. However, conservatism harshly attacked the bandit's romantic aura. In *La familia de Alvareda* [Alvareda's Family] (1849), the Andalusian writer Cecilia Böhl de Faber initially seduces her readers with the romantic appeal of the bandit Diego Padilla, captain of the gang 'The Children of Écija'. However, Böhl de Faber later shows him as a person with whom it is hardly conceivable to identify. The reaction against this romantic figure intensified after the worsening of the problem of banditry starting in the 1860s and the publication of the influential study *El bandolerismo. Estudio social y memorias históricas* [Banditry: Social Study and Historical Memories] (1876–1880) by Julián de Zugasti. However, the romantic image of the Spanish bandit maintained its vitality among certain republican sectors or among Andalusian anarchism, which found in this figure a model of rebellious and independent virility. Sixto Cámara's drama *Jaime el Barbudo*, for instance, enjoyed great popularity for decades among radical political sectors (Capellán, 2017). Likewise, the romantic bandit's identification with some of the traits of Spanish masculinity was strongly maintained, to vindicate it or to regret it, until well into the following century.

In Italy, the very identification between brigandage and Garibaldism very early facilitated the criticisms of their enemies, which intensified after 1848. The Jesuit Antonio Bresciani recovered in popular serial novels such as *Lebreo di Verona* [The Jew from Verona] (1850–51) the counterrevolutionary tradition

that united revolutionaries with bandits and murderers. One of his stated goals was to confront Byronic heroes or the myth of Garibaldi himself, to whom he dedicated his little-concealed “anti-biography” *Lionello o delle Società Segrete* [Lionello or the Secret Societies] (1852) (Dickie 2017). However, it was in the 1860s that the liberal myth of the Italian brigand was seriously compromised. The *Bringantaggio* (1861–1865) consolidated the association between this social type and counterrevolutionary absolutism among the ranks of Italian liberalism. It was also essential in the appearance of the so-called “Southern Question”: the image of southern regions inhabited by bandits and murderers began to be considered as the product of a fundamental difference in the character of their inhabitants that threatened the entire national project after the Italian Unification (Schneider 1998; Dickie 1999; Moe 2002; De Francesco 2012 and this volume; Lacchè and Stronati 2014; Tatasciore 2015; Pinto 2018).

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# The Moral and Civil Primacy of Italian Women: Female Models between Italy and Europe in the Era of the Risorgimento

*Maria Pia Casalena*

## 1 Biographies, Gender Roles and National History in the Risorgimento

As the entire nineteenth century in Europe, the Italian Risorgimento used biography as an instrument and vehicle of education and instruction. To the merit of instilling historical knowledge (although very schematic and simplified), especially about the significant events in the nation's history, biography added the merit of clearly showing the triumph of the virtues and the condemnation of the vices. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, and especially in the Restoration decades, a new repertoire of public and private values was elaborated, in the light of which to judge the actions and behaviours of the men and women of the past. Actually, this repertoire did not only include truly modern components, such as patriotism, nationalism, the worship of civil and political liberties, which derived from the new atmosphere created between the French period and the Congress of Vienna. In the inventory of the virtues that had to be taught to men and women in the first decades of the nineteenth century, some values came from tradition. These were validated by a new interpretation of national history and became a moral and domestic, affective and spiritual equivalence of the new Italian civilization, which aspired to consolidate itself in the concert of European nations based on the merits acquired both in the past centuries as at the turn of the nineteenth century (Banti 2005).

Since the Enlightenment, private conduct and domestic manners had acquired unprecedented significance in passing judgment on individuals and peoples. Civic and warlike courage and self-sacrifice in the battles for freedom should be reflected in praiseworthy manners such as respect for parents, a regular and faithful marital life, the proper fulfilment of parental duties (towards children, both boys and girls), a serious and honest career and, last but not least, a certain commitment to the poorer classes. Above the private and public virtues worthily stood an honest Christian faith, cleansed of the stains of

bigotry and superstition, which in turn reinforced enthusiasm for the progressive fate of civilization and the nation.

Interpreted and combined in several ways by several writers of the first half of the nineteenth century, sometimes more related to the Italian, Roman and Catholic heritage, sometimes more in line with the dictates of the “new morality” of the illustrated matrix perfected in the pedagogical masterpieces of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Bizzocchi 2001, 2007), these were, in any case, the ingredients forming the galleries of the illustrious historical figures. These figures were meant to form, through biographies, especially the younger generations (Porciani 2002). Moreover, this is where a twofold problem arises.

On the one hand, Italian manners and history had to contend with the heavy legacies of the dark ages that, from the *Histoire des Républiques italiennes* [The History of the Italian Republics] by Jean Charles Léonard de Sismondi, mostly coincided with the early modern period (from the sixteenth century to the early eighteenth century, or perhaps even up to the nineteenth century), which had seen the decline of all manifestations of private virtue or public ethics along with political freedom and independence. As Roberto Bizzocchi has recently pointed out in an excellent essay, Chapter 128 of the *Républiques*, with a denunciation of the Spanish evil influence, the corruption of marriages and the decadence of any form of public-spiritedness, proved to be a heavy burden for the nationalist intellectuals who wanted Italians to develop some sort of patriotism after 1814. Furthermore, if Chapter 128, which instead denounced above all the decline of religion after the Council of Trent, perceived the intervention in a short time of an already famous scholar like Alessandro Manzoni involved in defence of the national spirituality (Manzoni 1819), it seemed more challenging to claim the purity of the Italian manners during the centuries of Spanish rule. Moreover, this was already a problem for those who wanted to propose progressive reviews of the virtues and merits of the Italians: what could be said about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Despite all, had there been virtuous and worthy Italians – both men and women?

The other issue is directly related to gender. After Rousseau's *Emile* and after the era of French codes, it had also become necessary to design and rethink female models. For the patriotic and honoured Italian men, women should be companions: mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters, pure and exemplary in both private and public sphere, respectably educated, lovers of the fatherland and mothers of future excellent Italians (Banti 2000; D Amelia 2005). It was – at least from what the strictest biographical canon of the Risorgimento seemed to be – a new type of woman, generated from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Where could historical models be taken from? Moreover, above all,

what women of the centuries denounced by Sismondi could be redeemed and presented as ideal mothers of the Italian women of the Risorgimento?

The problem of building new galleries of illustrious Italian women had already arisen in the Kingdom of Italy (1805–1814), even before the last volume of the *Républiques* – published in Paris in 1818 – was available (Casalena 2018). However, perhaps the problem was already Sismondi, this time together with Pierre-Louis Ginguené, an illustrious historian of Italian literature in the Paris of the Empire. In fact, since 1811, the fascicles of the *Biographie Universelle Ancienne et Moderne* [Universal Biography Old and New] (Chappey 2013) had been published in Paris. Although promoted by conservative Catholics like the Michaud brothers, the *Biographie* included Sismondi and Ginguené as biographers of the illustrious Italian men of politics and literature. The work got close attention in the Italian peninsula, so much so that as early as 1822, a few months after the conclusion of the original, a translation enriched with many voices was published in Venice, designed precisely to redeem the virtues and merits of Italians of an especially recent past (Casalena 2012). Thus, it was clear from the first fascicles that Sismondi (but also Ginguené) was mercilessly condemning all politicians who had arrived after the end of medieval communes, from minor provincial lords to entire famous dynasties such as the Medici of Florence. It was the prefiguration, through biographies, of his interpretation of Italian history in the last volumes of the *Républiques*.

There were some women in the condemnation, both in the reported centuries and in the Middle Ages. Suffice it to say that the revered Matilda of Tuscany, a member of the House of Canossa, was portrayed as an authoritarian and bigoted margravine. In short, if exemplary Italians had died before the fifteenth century, there had never been virtuous Italian women, at least not in the political field, according to Sismondi. Nor in the history of literature, according to Ginguené, except for very few examples.

Thus, the reconstruction of galleries of Italians on the peninsula, and especially of exemplary Italian women, adapted to contemporary needs and context, should be guaranteed, even if it started from not very encouraging premises. Ginevra Canonici Fachini tried it with her work *Prospetto biografico delle donne italiane rinomate in letteratura dal secolo XIV fino ai giorni nostri* [Biographical Perspective of Italian Women Recognized in Literature from the Fourteenth Century to the Present Day], openly controversial towards the prejudices of foreigners and inspired by the patriotism of a woman of culture, close to the Carbonari (Canonici Fachini 1824). In 1824, the work had great success, and the author became quite well known. However, the significant undertaking would come from the capital of the book, Habsburg Milan, which

had just recovered from the traumas of the 1820s (Meriggi 1987). Also, in Milan, the capital of translations, the Italian version of the biographies of Laure Junot, Duchess of Abrantès, a distinguished and controversial author and a famous figure of the Napoleonic establishment and now a successful memorialist, was published (Toussaint 1985; Autin 1991).

However, why did Anton Fortunato Stella's publishing house, already very strong in translating and disseminating French novels, choose an unfinished work featuring almost exclusively female celebrities related to Napoleon I's life and difficult to propose to the Italian women of the Restoration? The project was much more ambitious. Abrantès was famous, and to the lives of famous women already present (French, but also English and Russian), a long gallery of famous Italian women could be lined up, who would immediately have demonstrated the even "superior" virtue of the women of an oppressed nation and respond in a dignified way to all the condemnations, criticisms, prejudices of any Sismondi, Ginguéné or Morgan (Verga 2011; Banti 2011).

The result was remarkable: a long series of famous Italian women, from pre-Roman antiquity to 1830, quickly stood out for their merits over other European women, especially Protestants. In addition, there was something good about France (and even Spain) in her work, compared to the heretical and barbarous north of Europe. In this regard, the five volumes of *Vite e ritratti delle donne celebri d'ogni paese continuata per cura di letterati italiani* [Lives and Portraits of the Celebrated Women of All Countries] achieved even the most unthinkable of goals: to demonstrate the historical excellence of Italian women and to reassess with a sense of proven superiority the entire Catholic civilization of southern Europe, including the Counter-Reformation and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, against the presumption of the Protestants and the "barbarians of the North," starting with Sismondi (Bolufer 2000; Pellegrin 2004).

## 2 From Napoleonic Europe to the Primacy of Italy in Catholic Europe

Anton Fortunato Stella employed many of the most famous writers from Milan and the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia, and other Italian regions and states (Berengo 1980; Albergoni 2006; Albergoni 2011). Specialists such as Gaetano Barbieri (already famous as a translator of Walter Scott's historical novels) took charge of the translation of Laure Junot Duchess of Abrantès' biographies. In turn, authors such as Michele Sartorio, Ambrogio Levati, Defendente Sacchi, Luigi Carrer, Francesco Ambrosoli and especially Ignazio Cantù wrote the lives of Italian women. These authors had different political and religious ideas.



However, in the end, due to the number of biographies written by the Catholic Cantù (Ambrosoli 1975), the gallery of Italian women acquired a remarkable confessional, almost Philo-Tridentine imprint. So did the fact of how female readers should behave. However, fundamental values were shared, such as reforming women's studies and the necessary creation of literature written by women (fiction and poetry, but especially pedagogical literature) in Italy. The "new morality" values – marriage for love, self-denial linked to the maternal role, patriotism, and spirit of sacrifice – were also shared. These same values were presented, with much stronger assertions, in the biographies signed by the most famous women writers of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia: Bianca Milesi Mojon, Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, Adele Curti and Giuseppina Poggolini (Casalena 2003).

Only the first volume of the original work and the few biographies written by Laure Junot of Abrantès remained intact. In the end, out of the 112 biographies included in the five volumes, 37 were Italian. Abrantès herself had written about Mary of Medicis. Later, in Milan, figures from different eras were progressively added, from Ermengarde, wife of Charlemagne, to Giuseppina Tornielli, a Piedmontese philanthropist and contemporary of Carlo Alberto, King of Piedmont. Italian women formed the largest group, along with French women. As will be seen later, the Milanese edition was not limited to adding national biographies but also biographies signed by Italian or foreign writers, many voices about other French and even Spanish or Russian women, and some mandatory tribute to the women of the House of Habsburg. Nevertheless, biographies signed by men, although heterogeneous, were quite different from biographies signed by women, starting with the choice of characters.

Male authors collaborating with Stella made many common decisions. Of course, they refuted critics in line with Sismondi but also tried to confer a certain autochthony on the "new moral," replacing Genevan Rousseau (Capra 1990) with the local enlightened academics, from Arcadia theorists of "good taste" to Vico, Muratori, Parini, Verri and Romagnosi (Sofia 2011), to Alessandro Manzoni. Thus, Italy vindicated not only its merits but also a perfectly national modernity, which was enough to make people forget certain moments of moral crisis. The French Revolution was primarily a memory to delete, and neither was much spared from the Napoleonic Empire in the history of Italian civilization. Almost all the women chosen as models had died at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This was already a big difference from the importance of the Napoleonic era celebrated in the original by the Duchess of Abrantès.

There were not only Italian authorities and models: the biographies added by Lombard writers, from Chateaubriand and his *Martyrs* (who influenced Ignazio Cantù in particular, but not only) to the historical novel in the style of Scott with

his heroines inspiring heroic feats, to the French novelists Cottin and Genlis (not by chance they became biographical models) had echoes of a vast and composite European culture (Casalena 2018, 2019). Thus, the passions of the moment were reached, from the “good taste” and the eighteenth-century “civilization”: family, nation, but also the religion of the Pope and Empire (France 2011). On the other hand, there were the controversial idols, although rarely mentioned explicitly: especially Sismondi and Ginguené and, in general, the treatment of Italian history disseminated by the *Biographie Universelle*. This is shown, among others, by the biography of Matilda of Canossa included in the fourth volume, where an anonymous author presented the countess as a model even of the purest nationalism, precisely for being Christian and loyal to the Pope:

From the greatness of philosophical knowledge, observing human affairs, we know well that every kind of error is possible for our immortal spirit until it is deposited in the fragile earth, so it would not be strange to venture to say that, among the many beautiful gifts that Matilda had, the fault of passionate affection or reprehensible condescension was one of them. Few would have more than her the right to indulgence, but even fewer deserved to be accused with the slightest suspicion. It does not seem unlikely that, alongside her devotion to popes, there was always a spasmodic affection for people [...]: that the tiara was the only splendour that could attract her, who could believe a similar extravagance? [...] Thus, she remained passionately attached to the interests of Rome. (Abrantès 1836–9, IV, 66)

Once again, according to Sismondi, if Spanish times could have corrupted men, it was women who had safeguarded national virtue in their husbands. As Eleonora d’Este had done according to Nicolò Cesare Garoni: “The vital spirit of those illustrious women revived the virtue that slept in those masculine bodies. How much work they had experienced to always stay on the straight and narrow path of glory, virtue, decorum, and usefulness for the country. History does manifest itself in a thousand ways” (Abrantès 1836–9, V, 57).

Instead, it was Michele Sartorio who explained all the educational purposes of the work in the preface and anticipated the fundamental characteristics of the “new Italian woman” to be formed, beyond all the controversies of the time:

The time is not far off when legislators will seriously address women’s education, the protection of civil laws, the imposition of duties and the guaranty of happiness. [...] If there were not more women cultured enough to appreciate their judgment or noble enough in their manners

to inspire genuine respect, the societal opinion would have no healthy power over men's actions. [...] Women without vivacity in conversation and knowledge in literature usually have a better pretext to be exonerated from their duties, and uneducated nations cannot be free but often change their leaders. (Abrantès 1836–9, I, 6)

What was the background of this “new woman” worthy companion of the Italian Risorgimento man? Furthermore, what “Risorgimento” was it about?

The most numerous positive examples date back to the Renaissance. Italian women had had a Renaissance and had been protagonists of the Renaissance. From Sofonisba Anguissola to Vittoria Colonna, women artists and poets of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries wrote about and personified true love and the fatherland and religion of the forefathers. A triumph of talent and feminine virtue that biographers located in the most renowned poets of Arcadia two centuries later, in Corilla Olimpica – who was crowned as poet laureate on Capitol Hill. From this splendour and excellence, a new start was required, forgetting the excesses of the Revolution and the most bigoted manifestations of the Catholic faith (Asor Rosa 2009). The ideal was a woman – a bourgeois woman indeed, not a peasant or a worker – whom the father encouraged in the study: not to turn her into an unbalanced genius and all madness and passion, but into a woman cultured, refined and successful in public, who nevertheless always had a dignified marriage, motherhood, and mercy as her goals.

Marriage had to arise from a pure and selfless feeling, not be the fruit of family alliances. Husband and wife should have the same affection and respect and share interests and activities (Bizzocchi 2019). On the other hand, the domestic sphere went far beyond the physical confines of home: Italian women could and had to publish their writings, undertake serious studies, and even dedicate themselves to philanthropy or, if the occasion required it, even to the state government. However, they had to remain women and Italian, what is to say, good daughters, good wives, good mothers, good Catholics and good patriots (Mori 2011). Even the study of sciences could be accepted in the nineteenth century but provided they were combined with public and private virtues, as the life of the Bolognese physicist Laura Bassi shows: “Being in public office, she necessarily had to participate in meetings and events, receive visits and deal with people who wanted to meet her. Thus, she acted under the circumstances and, indeed, her heart accompanied her since she was an excellent consort and an affectionate mother and began to embrace her marital condition. [...]” (Abrantès 1836–9, III, 117).

As for Ignazio Cantù, he precisely recovered the time of the Counter-Reformation as an era of incredible feats, not only ecclesiastical but also

feminine. Saint Charles Borromeo had as a friend Eleonora Gonzaga, a worthy Habsburg and a mainstay against the Reformation in a Lombardy that had already lost freedom but never lost faith:

[...] she received the most precious reward, a letter from the Cardinal of Milan congratulating her on her mercy and promising her the inescapable reward of heaven. A letter from the Cardinal of Santa Prassede, the cornerstone of faith in Lombardy, the soul of the Council of Trent, the dismay of the infidels: how could it not be a valuable reward for a woman as religious as Eleonora? (Abrantès, 1836–9, v, 119)

In short, nineteenth-century women had to study and not renounce any of the public and private commitments they had to fulfil. The “new Italian woman” could be a famous intellectual and a great scientist, or even a woman of government and politics if the family required it. However, she had to remain purely “Italian,” what is to say, virtuous in private, religious and honest in public. A “new Italian man” model was also derived indirectly, but no less intensely. Together with these women, the young males of the peninsula had to cultivate serious studies, filial affections, civil and political passions, and a non-authoritarian conjugal love beyond the legitimate differences in legal status between husband and wife. Young males had to marry for love; male children had to respect their parents and love their fatherland and religion; and finally, fathers had to encourage and watch over their daughters’ studies and never impose their own choices on their destiny. In short, these “new Italians” were ready to die in war but also for religion and were no less virtuous in intimacy than their female companions. It seemed to be a mainly Italian way that went back to the purest Catholic spirit and linked it to the progress of national civilization and modernity, which would prove to be suitable for men and women.

Some biographers went even further. Marriage should be an option, and it could be avoided or rejected when advised by other activities or interests or in the absence of worthy candidates. This is how Sofonisba Anguissola was justified by her biographer Vincenzo Lancetti:

[...] as she turned thirty, the august teachers suggested that she would get married. However, absorbed in the exercise of her art and gifted with sensible manners and virginal modesty, she seemed not to have a tireless desire that nurtured marriage, much less that she made it apparent. Moreover, when they suggested that she gets married (something that might seem like an order in her situation), she asked for nothing more than to marry in Italy. (Abrantès 1836–9, II, 56)

Although evoking the figure of the Nun of Monza (Manzoni's *The Betrothed* was already a bestseller in the 1827 first edition) served to condemn the cruelty of a father who wanted to impose his choices on his daughter, it remained true that even convents could be worthy places for the exercise of feminine virtues even in the nineteenth century, as long as there was a sincere vocation and free choice. Therefore, although very few, there was no lack of historical examples of illustrious nuns, such as Leonarda Giustinian. This nun was a saint because she performed real miracles. However, she was also a model of patriotism because, with her pure faith and virtues, she redeemed the fourteenth-fifteenth century Venice so devalued by Daru and, once again, by Sismondi.

The first woman to receive an academic degree in Italy, Elena Cornaro Piscopia, also belonged to the Republic of Venice, almost always approached by Luigi Carrer. In this case, too, spinsterhood is legitimate, but because after all, this woman was a great "priestess" of orthodoxy in the century of the scientific revolution:

More unique than anything that has been said about her youth so far is the vow to remain a spinster for her entire life. First, age-related recklessness could explain this resolution had it not been renewed over the years until her death. In fact, for someone who paid so little attention to deafening gatherings and the most common of pastimes that even showed an actual abhorrence for one thing and another, it was natural that she – to dedicate herself entirely to cultivating the spirit – would flee from a bond that imposed many particular obligations on her and made it difficult, if not impossible for a woman, to exercise her intellect. (Abrantès 1836–9, v, 227).

In short, if it was true – for Cantù, Carrer, Ambrosoli and many other authors – that Italian history had had some moments of crisis and decadence, it was equally valid that models of feminine excellence had not lacked even in those moments. As Sartorio claimed, it was time for the peninsular states – mainly the House of Habsburg – to improve women's social and legal status. They are highly original positions and can also seem extraordinarily modern in some ways. However, with few exceptions, it was always part of the fate – idealized as it was – of wives and mothers.

Particularly interesting are, precisely, for this reason, some of the biographies written by women, who sometimes took their requests much further, especially in terms of studies and career.

Bianca Milesi Mojon, already an illustrious writer, translator and pedagogue for some time (Arisi Rota 2010), was very explicit about the true inclinations of fathers and husbands towards the intellectual aspirations of their women. As

she wrote in her biography of the scientist Maria Gaetana Agnesi, prejudices had to be definitively eradicated:

[...] [Maria Gaetana Agnesi] proved that higher education and actual knowledge do not prevent women from exercising domestic virtues, contrary to the false rumour circulating among ordinary people. We must confess that Agnesi might have been the most fruitful example for women [...] if her father [...] had prepared her to become a model for brides and mothers, being this status the natural culmination of female destiny. Nevertheless, if it can be called that, censorship is more aimed at the times than at her father. (Abrantès 1836–9, II, 47)

Even more controversial was Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi, perhaps together with Bianca Milesi Mojon and a few others, the most famous woman of letters of the first decades of the nineteenth century (Malamani 2010):

Education, universal opinion and, to a great extent, nature itself prevented half the human species from learning science and letters at any time and in any country. Then those few women had to overcome all the challenges of nature and all social difficulties, and unable to contain their liberal soul and fervent ingenuity that were projected to a noble purpose, they knew how to transcend those austere limits that men imposed on them – I do not know if I am right – because of their natural superiority or arrogance. (Abrantès 1836–9, II, 137)

Young Italian women still had many obstacles against them, according to these female authors. It was no longer about Sismondi, Spain, or the Counter-Reformation, but about Italian manners not yet prepared to inaugurate new destinies of female life (Soldani 1989). Studies, in particular, remained a forbidden target unless public law and private law were profoundly reformed. Milesi and Teotochi had gone beyond the intentions of the work. In turn, they were educating and patriotic wives and mothers, but not always under the canons of Italian virtue. They were two powerful voices that, however, remained isolated in the five volumes. Young Italian women had behind them many examples of female excellence (in all fields and all periods of national history), and from these examples – and some of the examples dedicated to other countries –, they had to assume specific learning: they had the right to study under their fathers' care and choose a life partner. However, whatever role they played in society or politics, they should always and above all be mothers and educators of wise and prudent citizens and, at best, of patriots loyal to the Catholic God and the nation.

### 3 From Italy to Europe: The Redemption of the South versus the Barbarism of the North

When reading the five complete volumes published by Stella, it is observed that Italian women shone in all centuries, even in the “dark” centuries, by virtue, ingenuity, domestic affections, and the public commitment developed in the most varied ways. In short, the Italian edition went far beyond the original intentions of the Duchess of Abrantès. With the biographies, she pretended to celebrate above all the time of the Consulate and the Empire, and therefore a multitude of French women who had lived between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whose main virtue had been to be related to Napoleon I and support him in his great civilizing work. Not everything was invalidated. The condemnation of the Jacobin Terror remained without any concessions, by which Napoleon himself had restored law and order, as well as wise freedom. However, periodization had changed considerably in the Italian program, which, as mentioned, was aimed above all at rescuing an almost thousand-year-old history of female dignity and national dignity, with an emphasis mainly on the Renaissance and the reformist eighteenth century.

At this point, we must focus on women from “other” nations, who also make up most of the biographies in the Milanese edition. In fact, in addition to the portraits of Madame d’Abrantès, Italian writers had also added the lives of famous women, mostly French, but also from other European and non-European countries. Moreover, each life was closely linked to an interpretation of the respective national history that changed concerning the absolute centrality of the Napoleonic era of the first volume, the only one written by Abrantès. Something else remained in the Italian edition: the original intention of the author to demonstrate the excellence of her country, through its women, in comparison with other European nations, in addition to dividing the latter between potential “sisters” and sworn “enemies”. In the Italian edition, the scheme provided by Abrantès was heavily modified, as we will see. However, the emergence of an idealization of Latin and Catholic Europe from Italy to Spain was necessary, including a profound homage to Austria, and only Austria, in the “North”.

First of all, as mentioned, Abrantès’ female models belonged almost exclusively to the Napoleon Bonaparte family. Letizia was the perfect mother of the modern hero:

She is, in my opinion, a most remarkable woman – perhaps the most remarkable I ever knew – for her courageous firmness in misfortune, her dignified and admirable mildness in prosperity, and her resignation



under the bitter affliction she has borne during the last eighteen years. For, knowing what she now suffers, I cannot compare this latter period with that during which she was only unfortunate. This is a different and more bitter trial, and if the accents of despair have sometimes been wrung from the lacerated bosom of Napoleon's mother, who among us can be surprised? (Abrantès 1834, 4)

Josephine had been the ideal wife, also ready for the supreme sacrifice for the good of her beloved and the Empire (I, 182–9). So far, all the options are explained by the same biography of Abrantès. In order to build a genealogy of these nineteenth-century heroines, she chose to exalt figures such as Joan of Arc (the great Frenchwoman of the Middle Ages) or Charlotte Corday (the heroine of freedom in the dark years of Terror), and then pay an intellectual and sentimental tribute to Madame de Staël (even though being the protagonist of a confrontation with Napoleon I) in the name of the purity of her family affections and her literary merits. However, the true greatness of these French women derives, above all, from the comparison with the other figures present in the original.

From England, Abrantès stood out from Jane Grey to Mary Tudor and Anne Boleyn. All were carriers of vices, devoid of virtue, dissolute in customs, fierce in government or ambitions, and above all, heretical in religion because they were followers of the Anglican schism (Casanova 2014). From the north came Christina, Queen of Sweden, as another example of great negativity because she was incredulous and crazy. Only negative examples came from Russia, among them Catherine II: not the enlightened sovereign of the eighteenth-century myth, but a woman guilty of atrocious crimes, ambitious to the point of ferocity, incapable of governing and devoted to the most despicable vices.

Having separated Catherine from her favourites, [...] Orloff, Potemkin [...], and having placed her in a century in which the novelty of real women [...] far from arousing complacent amazement should provoke universal horror and spite; Catherine [...] had she been able to emulate the glory of Peter and share with him the title of the Great? Moreover, is this august title given to her by her contemporaries the result of glorious and laudable deeds? (Abrantès 1836–9, II, 78–9)

If the Protestant or Orthodox “North,” always in the hands of tyrants, was completely disfigured in comparison with France, not much better was Spain, a country that had “betrayed” the civilizing mission of Bonaparte. The echo of *Gil Blas*, an eighteenth-century bestseller who mocked the Spain of the

previous two centuries, resonated clearly in the only biography dedicated by Laure d'Abrantès to a Spanish woman: Doña Catalina de Erauso. This woman was a nun without a vocation. She escaped from the convent and disguised herself as a man in a series of fights, crimes, and sins until an unlikely final conversion. In short, no nation had ever had women (and a history) worthy of France's. However, the Catholic ruling made the judgment on Spain (and incidentally on Italy) a little more lenient and comprehensive. On the other hand, England was the embodiment, with its numerous queens, of absolute evil, on a par with the empire of the tsars.

Italian intellectuals, who signed almost all the biographies of the other four volumes, did not think so. They certainly did not try to redeem the image of England, and the life of Elisabeth Tudor, written by Lorenzo Martini, was full of criticism in both the public and private spheres. Only Mary Stuart, one of the main characters in Martini's story, was saved from the British Isles. He decided to tell her story, clearly referring to the more traditional legends of holiness and martyrdom.

Indeed, the Milanese writers had to exalt Austria. The first original biography was an exaltation of Maria Theresa of Austria as "maternal" daughter, wife, mother, and empress:

[...] María Teresa wanted more free moments to dedicate to the memory of her lost companion. Thus, she gave her son much of what would henceforth belong to diplomatic relations and limited herself to making more exclusive use of her attributes to make her states happy in the face of all kinds of administrative improvements. She possibly also did it to protect herself from the consequences of the devastating scourge of war. [...] Her pain did not leave her for the rest of her life; her rooms were forever wrapped in mourning. (Abrantès 1836–9, II, 31–6)

Moreover, the same authors also found a way to redeem Russia, albeit without trying too hard to find a heroic figure: they chose the wife of the very Christian Tsar Paul I himself, who in practice had only had the merit of being involved in a lot of charity work.

On the other hand, Spain and modern Spanish women were considered with much more sympathy, as evidenced by the very brief portrait of a heroine of national freedom that lived at the time of the Napoleonic wars. She was Agustina of Aragón, an unknown heroine of the nation and the Catholic religion, much less known and less educated than the illustrious Italian women recovered from the medieval and modern centuries. Furthermore, in 1808, Spanish women had also left cloistered monasteries to serve in the name of

modern values and religion much more favourable to freedom (Musi 2004). The popular Agustina had been among the heroes of the Spanish resistance during the siege of Saragossa:

Palafox buried the worthy heroes killed in that war and thought of rewarding the few braves who had survived. Among them was Agustina, but how to reward this young woman who had played such an essential role in saving Zaragoza? Ashamed, Palafox told her that she was left with the option of a sign of honour. The young woman, flushed, replied that she only wanted to retain her artillery rank in the army and the privilege of carrying the civic shield of Zaragoza on her arm. (Abrantès 1836–9, III, 126)

The “new” Spain, the Spain of Cádiz and the monarchy-religion-nation trino-mial, was undoubtedly a “sister nation,” although it lagged behind Italy and France on the path of civilization. The condition of women clearly showed this. However, the quintessential “sister” had to be France if Catholic prejudice prevailed. But what France? Represented by what women? And identified with what centuries of history, kings, wars, or protagonists?

The writers of the Kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia also proved unanimous in this regard. Except for the Napoleon era celebrated by Abrantès, it was necessary to avoid the Great Revolution altogether and return to the Enlightenment Age, even to the Catholics of the century of Louis XIV. If Italy had had the women of Arcadia and “good taste” before the storm of the turn of the century, France had had the educators as a positive example and the regents or ladies of the court as a negative example. In other words, it was debated between Madame Pompadour and Madame Campan, between Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Genlis, to close with two rare examples of the preservation of virtue in the dark years of debauchery and after the Revolution. The first was a *salonnière* of a proven Catholic faith, and as such worthily represented by Ignazio Cantù:

She always showed lively respect for the Catholic religion [...]. Nevertheless, she had never dared to publicly profess this religious respect, which d’Alembert called clandestine piety. However, in the last year of her life, she showed no respect and revealed the secret, encouraged to a high degree by the pure senses of faith that, by then, had become a sign of weakness of spirit and a blank of the poet’s epigram and the philosopher’s censorship. (Abrantès 1836–9, V, 165)

As for the others, the corruption of morality in the Palace of Versailles was such that it degraded not only women but also men and even kings, as evidenced by

the parable of Madame de Lavallière: “[...] the king wanted Vallière to become a Carmelite. She knew it and no longer hesitated to embrace this position. [...] From that point on, she announced to her friends that she was determined to retire to the Carmelites of San Giacomo [...]” (Abrantès, 1836–9, II, 197).

The second one was Madame Roland, who was guillotined for showing her enthusiasm for private and public virtues. Michele Parma, one of the most “feminist” Milanese biographers, told her story:

What and how many contrasts in women's life events considering their influence on family and public morality and their importance according to legislative improvements and their enhanced titles to the esteem and hopes of society! At this point, [...] opinion proves beyond any doubt that women can and must cooperate in the noblest enterprises of civilization. Nevertheless, it seems to have put a double curse on the shoulders of these creatures considering, in addition to their joint participation in common evil, they were always the targets of particular and violent misfortunes [...]. (Abrantès, 1836–9, IV, 229)

Ultimately, if the “sister nations” were France, Spain, and Austria, only the latter had maintained religious integrity and political and civil enlightenment, as evidenced by the history of its famous women. Spain had recovered, and with it its women, but it had to regain much ground. The Enlightenment and Napoleon had come from France, which means political, civil, legal, and moral modernity; furthermore, Italy had already found them mainly on its own. And then France had not been able to reconcile them well with the Catholic religion and the continuity of good government. Its famous women were either evil geniuses or unhappy and persecuted heroines of virtue.

And Italy? Italy surprisingly came first in the race of values and civilization along with Habsburg Austria. It always had honourable women and never really was ruined by Spanish influences or the most reactionary Catholicism. In fact, by the end of the seventeenth century, Italy was home of “good taste” and good government, and the women of Arcadia became worthy heiresses of the Renaissance poetesses and “mothers” of the very Catholic writers and scientists of the late eighteenth century and the “new Italians” of the Risorgimento.

Valuable women had existed in all stages of Italian history, and in fact, Italian women had already had their own moral, if not legal and institutional, Risorgimento. Virtuous in the private sector, learner by vocation, wise and cautious in government, religious and devout in the first place, Italian women and Italy had entered modernity even before the French conquest. Sismondi was wrong, so was Abrantès with her watchful eye on Napoleon I. She had not captured either the pre-existing excellence in Italy or the awakening of Spanish women.

#### 4 From the Models of the 1830s to the “Long Quarantotto of Italian Women”

Leaving aside some surprising statements about the legitimacy of spinsterhood or the substantial liquidation of the ecclesiastical career, the Milanese censors could rest easy (Palazzolo 1990). There were no ungodly, armed, conspiratorial, or revolutionary women in the Risorgimento's pantheon of Italian women. Moreover, the private virtues, beginning with being mothers and wives, remained indispensable even in the face of an (unlikely) profound reform of the laws and public careers. Moreover, the five volumes published in Milan would easily be presented in Naples in 1839, further evidence of a solid exchange of views on the fate of the peninsula (and its women) (Trombetta 2008).

Guide to the Mediterranean, monarchical and Catholic Europe, which finally knew how to reconcile modernity and tradition, authority and freedom, enlightenment and devotion, Italy, moderate and devoted to the House of Habsburg, only asked for one more step on the road to reforms. Furthermore, if Italy redeemed its history from the dismissive criticism of Protestant foreigners, it was certainly not to legitimize a revolution. Italy was a patriot but prudent, modern but wise, ingenious but judicious, as were the Italian women in all centuries. The model for it was the eighteenth century of the reforms, not the Jacobin Terror nor the Napoleonic wars. Deeply and sincerely Catholic, Italy wanted emancipation and not liberation. Thus, neither bigoted and corrupt like Spain of Don Carlos and Philip II, nor heretical and cruel like England of the schism or Russia of the partition of Poland, Italy was a candidate to be par excellence the first civilization of southern Europe in manners, historical merits, and civic and patriotic virtues. The gallery of Italian women testified on its behalf; the history of past centuries testified on its behalf. Related to France and Spain, Italy would not follow their liberal excesses as it had not followed their liberticidal excesses.

Italy and Austria, Italian and Austrian women (and Polish women subjected to the Habsburgs), could continue to lead together the flame of civilization in northern and southern Europe. Especially in Italy, as some authors claimed, it should not take long to regret the Middle Ages, which were undoubtedly not more civilized or liberal than the present. Moreover, the Risorgimento of the Italian nation could be moderate, Catholic, loyal, and prudent, as the “true” Italian women have always been and as the “new Italian women” would be, finally called to act as role models for the French and Spanish sisters. Thus, amid a decade of reforms, at the height of moderatism, on the eve of the exploitation of the national Catholic-liberal program, after the failure of revolutions

and conspiracies, against the threats of democracy, the Italian peninsula had to project itself in the present and the future. The Italian “new women,” in fact, would have been protagonists, in the private and especially in the public sphere, less than ten years later, in the brief *Quarantotto* blessed by Pius IX, a moderate Catholic monarchist and above all proud of their “moral and civil primacy” and a past that no longer had taints or declines (Soldani 1999).

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## Men, Women, and a Virtuous Nation: Spanish Radical Novels of the Mid-Nineteenth Century

*Florencia Peyrou*

How did Spanish radicals of the middle of the nineteenth century imagine the world? What did they think the men and women who inhabited it were like, and should be like? What difficulties did they foresee, what possibilities, what rights and obligations? Like all the “families” of Spanish liberalism in the era, the radicals sought to construct a new national order, prosperous and cohesive, in contrast to the pervasive instability generated by the revolutionary process that had begun in 1808. This would involve the articulation of a whole series of political, economic, social, and cultural reforms, but would also include the definition of the terms of a particular sexual contract, which would establish the place and functions of men and women, and so guarantee the progress of the fatherland. It was the men and women of Spain who made up and defined the nation, who could bring about its splendour or decline, and, ultimately, determine its status on the international stage. For this reason, it was also necessary to define the moral qualities and standards of behaviour that were required in order to maintain the nation on the path of progress and confront any possible obstacles and dangers of regression and corruption. If newspapers, pamphlets, and manifestos were the primary vehicles for delineating the reforms that were considered necessary, novels constituted a privileged medium for clarifying the desirable norms of ethics and conduct. Hence they are an indispensable resource for gaining insight into the plurality of images of masculinity and femininity that existed in this era, and for re-evaluating the construction and conceptualization of the public/private spheres in nineteenth-century Spain.

Our understanding of these questions, up to now, has been marked by an oscillation between two poles. On one side, a stereotypical vision (which enjoyed hegemonic status in nineteenth-century romanticism) of the men and women of Southern Europe as beings who were violent, passionate, sensual, superstitious, and indolent, which was contrasted with the hard-working nature, self-control, and rationality of the inhabitants of more northerly countries (Andreu, 2016a). On the other, the interpretations that, since the beginnings of historical studies on women in Spain, around 1980, have accepted a little uncritically the validity

of an extension to the country, from the late eighteenth century onwards, of the same complementary/hierarchical sexual order that predominated in other regions, and specifically the British model of the “angel in the house” (the sentimental, caring woman, simultaneously associated with and the opposite of the self-controlled, strong, and rational gentleman), albeit that these interpretations have been increasingly questioned in more recent years (Romeo, 2006, 2014; Burguera, 2010, 2016; Espigado, 2006, 2018).

More specifically, the point has been highlighted that within the discourse of the complementary nature of the sexes, which certainly did enjoy a dominant position in Spain, there were also contradictions and nuances. In first place, traditional images of female inferiority survived – but also, with them, of women’s possible exceptionality, as in the case of celebrated women such as warriors or saints. In addition, even among the sectors of society that incorporated the “complementary” model, there were diverse ways of understanding domesticity. If conservative liberalism proposed a clearer confinement of women within the home, more advanced liberals granted women some broader social functions, such the education of future citizens, or administering areas of welfare (the exercise of so-called social maternity). Anti-liberal sectors, for their part, associated femininity with the Catholic religion and the safeguarding and transmission of religious values in society, which from the 1850s onwards prompted a growing mobilization of women in favour of the Catholic unity of Spain and the temporal power of Pope Pius IX. At the same time, several currents within liberalism gave a high value to the expression of feelings by men, as a demonstration of morality, and advocated an ideal of masculine domesticity, derived in large part from a conception of the family as the basis of the state. On this point, however, views could be contradictory, due to the coexistence of a masculine ideal that valued private virtues, with the myth of Don Juan, which “glorified sexual promiscuity, irresponsibility, the absence of moral impediments,” and a “virility forged in the public arena” (Sierra 2015, 21; Aresti 2014, 288; Romeo 2014, 120, 124).

As to radicals, the public and private spaces were interconnected in their conception of masculinity and femininity. The radical male was a citizen, involved in public life, and ready to take up arms for the sake of his homeland and liberty. However, private virtues were also demanded. The radical man should also love and respect his parents, be faithful to his wife, and be attentive to his children. His conduct should be irreproachable both in the public sphere and in the home. Women, on their part, were weaker and more sensitive than men and belonged to the latter. However, from there they could “influence the political march of the peoples” indirectly, by “exercising their actions upon their husbands, their fathers, their brothers, their children” (Pi y Margall 1869,

5). Instruction was consequently badly required. From the 1850s some radicals suggested women should go further and be active outside the domestic circle. The writer and revolutionary propagandist Sixto Cámara wrote that women should claim their political rights (*La Soberanía Nacional*, 1 August 1855) while his associate Fernando Garrido considered that politics were within the “dominion of female intelligence” (Garrido 1860b, 267–70). Newspapers and manifestoes do not provide much more information on these issues. This text is devoted to deepening our understanding on radicals’ visions of masculinity and femininity through the analysis of various novels they published in the mid-nineteenth century.

Radicals began to become organized in Spain around 1840 and founded their Partido Democrático [Democratic Party] in 1849. They consisted in general of journalists and members of the liberal professions such as doctors and lawyers, who advocated the universal application of political rights and freedoms within the framework of a democratic republic or a monarchy that would have very limited powers and be dependent on the nation’s will. With the romantic myth of Spain in the background, one that was accepted across Europe, and which regarded the country’s people as primitive, irrational, and indolent, but also courageous and independent-minded (Andreu 2016a), these groups of Spanish radicals formed part of a vanguard of European revolutionaries who were fighting for “universal” male suffrage and national sovereignty. A transnational community of revolutionaries who “maintained political convictions beyond national borders and interests” (Freitag 2003, 1), and for whom Spain was not a remote place located on the margins of progress and modernity, but at the very centre of the struggle for the great idea of the century: democracy. The transformative proposals put forward by Spanish radicals, therefore, sought not only to achieve liberty and progress for Spain, but also to incorporate the country into the project for an “alliance of peoples” that would guarantee freedom and the triumph of virtue across Europe (Peyrou 2015).

Like most nineteenth-century politicians, the radicals were prolific writers (Álvarez Barrientos 2004). Added to their articles in the press, pamphlets, manifestos, and treatises were a large number of literary works, poems, plays, and, most of all, novels. The latter were characterized by their authors’ desire to comprehend, to explain, and to provide orientation for their readers in the face of all the changes that had occurred in the course of the century’s revolutions (Burdíel 2015, 264–7). They also provided space for imaginings of what could happen, allowing writers to express desires, and transgress established norms. In addition, and lastly, they were also highly performative in nature. The mission of these novels was to educate, instruct in morality, and, in the cases that concern us here, politicize and mobilize their readers, men and women. The

most favoured genre among Spanish radical writers of the mid-century was melodrama.

This “cultural form,” as Rohan McWilliam has explained, had arisen in France, Germany, Britain, and the United States at the end of the eighteenth century, and became the dominant “mode of conception and expression” in the century that followed; “melodrama provided a cultural resource,” he argues, “a language and set of themes and narratives that enabled the nineteenth century to understand itself.” It combined tragedy and comedy, it had a strong moral content, and it insisted on the struggle between good and evil, a struggle that was expressed through the representation of intense emotions (McWilliam 2000, 60). Spanish radical melodramas were characterized by narratives that abounded in betrayals, intrigues, revenge, violence of all kinds, and even murders, but also acts of heroism and displays of great goodness and generosity. In these stories the expression of feelings played a fundamental role. Spanish radicals considered that “political virtue” existed only in “pure and sensitive hearts.” The obstacles and tragedies that appeared in their novels put their characters to the test and revealed their true moral nature. While these novels were widely publicized by their publication in instalments in the leading pro-democratic newspapers, and by being read aloud in social gatherings, formal and informal, their real impact is hard to evaluate, due to the scarcity of sources and a lack of research focussing on this question. Nevertheless, it is possible they succeeded in giving shape to an “emotional community,” similar to that nurtured by socialist and democratic novels in France in the 1830s and 1840s (Andreu 2017; Lyon-Caen 2002 and 2007).

This chapter will focus on a study of eight novels written by radical publicists and, in several cases, active politicians in Spain in the middle of the nineteenth century: *Pelayo o el Restaurador de España* [Pelayo, or the Rebuilder of Spain], by Juan de Dios Mora (1853); *Don Perrondo y Masalegre*, by Eugenio García Ruiz (1855); Ceferino Tresserra’s *La marquesa de Bella Cruz* [The Marchioness of Bella Cruz] (1851); *La Corona Real de Hungría* [The Royal Crown of Hungary], by Francisco Córdova y López (1860); *Pobres y Ricos o la bruja de Madrid* [Rich and Poor, or the Witch of Madrid], by Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco (1850); *Los Demócratas o el ángel de la libertad* [The Democrats, or the Angel of Liberty], by Francisco Suárez (1863); *La hermana de la caridad* [The Sister of Charity], by Emilio Castelar (1857); and Fernando Garrido’s *Un día de revolución* [A Day of Revolution], first performed in 1855. Our selection includes authors who followed different political trajectories, and whose positions did not always coincide. Emilio Castelar, Eugenio García Ruiz, and Juan de Dios Mora, for example, were champions above all of democracy, decentralization, and economic liberalism, while Francisco Córdova y López, Fernando Garrido,

Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco, Francisco Suárez, and Ceferino Tresserra were more clearly inclined towards the left and federalist republicanism. Córdova and Garrido, in addition, advocated some form of socialism. The novels these men wrote, characterized by a strongly moral content and a constant juxtaposition of good and evil, set out to make sense of the world, but also to delineate the democratic future that the writers and their sympathizers were attempting to construct, not – as in political programmes and manifestos – through the enumeration of detailed sets of projects and reforms, but by defining the general qualities, in terms of ethics, behaviour, and character, of the men and women who would inhabit this new world, of the individuals who would contribute to building it and would ensure its progress and survival. On these points, the areas of agreement were greater than those visible in their authors' plans for specific political, economic, or social reforms.

The years in which these works were published, between 1850 and 1865, were also the period of consolidation and self-definition for the Partido Democrático founded in 1849, of which all these writer-activists were members. Throughout this time Spanish radicals strove to progress in organizing a party that would extend ever more broadly across the country, amid a restrictive and repressive context dominated by the hegemony of conservative liberalism. In these circumstances novels had the advantage of being considered commercial products that were difficult to subject to censorship, since this would be contrary to economic liberty and the free market. They were employed to publicize the main points of the democrats' programme – by putting them into the mouths of leading characters –, to denounce prevailing conditions, and to present, as in French novels of the same period, a “social truth” that, though fictitious, would be recognizable to their readers, and permit them to decode their own social and political experiences (Lyon-Caen 2002).

## 1 Democratic Men

In the preface to his novel *La marquesa de Bella Cruz*, Ceferino Tresserra explained that his purpose was to intervene in the struggle that had been joined between “humanity and error,” and that he would do so by the unmasking of the mysteries of society. In this, like many other contemporary authors, he followed in the steps of Eugène Sue and his intention to reveal misery and degradation in their full vividness, based in a firm conviction (with origins in the Enlightenment), that vice was a consequence of social imbalances and not, or at least not in every case, of human nature. The problems of society, responsible for the poverty and degradation of a large section of the population and

so, therefore, for crime and corruption, were exposed in detail in the novels we have studied. It was necessary to describe such things, name them, decode them. In *Don Perrondo y Masalegre*, Eugenio García Ruiz undertook a very bleak dissection of Spanish institutions, raging particularly against the system of justice. He portrayed the petty corruption, made-up charges, illegal prosecutions, bribes, and excessive costs involved in any litigation or legal process, real or fictitious. He also criticized the organization of education, the electoral system, and the system of taxation, characterized by excessive charges and duties that obstructed production, trade, and consumption. However, it was not just laws and institutions that had to be reformed, but also customs and beliefs, including some as deeply-rooted as the supposed value given to wealth and aristocratic titles. In contrast to such defects, he highlighted the importance of dignity, innocence, honesty, and acts of goodness. Distorted values and the deficient organization of society's institutions had caused the germination of a whole series of vices and passions, especially hypocrisy, egoism, pride, and mean-spiritedness, which were the principal causes of the degeneration of human nature.

The villains of these stories were for the most part the product of the defective organization of society, which had generated moral degradation. Consequently, a solution to these problems would necessarily come through a reformation of social customs (following which would come reform of the law), a transformation that these novels sought to bring about by presenting and portraying a range of scenes, characters, and actions that could effect a change in the hearts of their readers and listeners (García Ruiz 1855, 10). Some, who had fallen by the wayside, might be led back to the path of rectitude and morality, while others would understand the importance of helping the unfortunate through the constant exercise of charity. Everyone capable of being moved could attain virtue, so that the only individuals left excluded would be those "men of a hardened or frozen heart" (García Ruiz 1855, 307), which stemmed from a physical or biological defect, impossible to repair.

The virtuous masculinity that these narratives outlined included at least three ideal types: the democratic leader (normally educated and comfortably off, but who voluntarily chose the hardships associated with the democratic cause); the good man of the people (artisans and workers who sustained the country with their labour, and understood the importance of fighting for freedom and justice); and the man who had fallen but then been redeemed (who could come equally from the upper or lower classes). All these ideal figures had family backgrounds and relationships that varied from the fraternal to the bonds between father and son. All too had their virtues, apparent or potential (when concealed by perversions caused by the disordered nature of society),



including qualities such as energy, courage, talent, honesty, goodness, generosity, enthusiasm, patriotism, self-sacrifice, and magnanimity.

The first two of these stock figures incorporated aspects of the revolutionary masculinity that had taken shape in various countries during the first decades of the nineteenth century, represented by the ideal of the “virtuous, free, and independent citizen-soldier.” In Spain, after approximately 1840, this revolutionary masculinity had been rejected by the hegemonic form of liberalism, due to its excesses, which had begun to appear a danger to social order. Only the groups and tendencies associated with radicalism had remained faithful to the ideal of the “patriotic man,” a virile figure ready to take up arms to regenerate a corrupt nation and defend his honour (personal, familial, or national). Virility was associated with political activity, as expressed through participation in armed uprisings, enlisting in popular militias, and writing and publishing proclamations and manifestos (Andreu 2016b, 96, 104; Andreu 2021). The male heroes of these novels carried these patriotic traits in their veins, sometimes by inheritance, so that they could thus be inserted into the long history of all the struggles faced by Spanish liberals since 1808. Some of the main character’s ancestors had fought against Napoleon or the absolutists (García Ruiz 1855, 284; Suárez 1863, 138). Their descendants also devoted their lives to the cause of liberty, accepting risks such as “persecution, exile, and perhaps martyrdom” (Suárez 1863, 83). The armed struggle for liberty and the nation was similarly an experience that could lead to personal redemption: Eduardo, the corrupt figure in Castelar’s *La hermana de la caridad*, rehabilitates himself precisely by going off to fight for the glory of the homeland in North Africa. A campaign that not only was carried out in the name of civilization, but was also impossible to disassociate from the struggle against the despotism represented by the regime of Queen Isabella II (García Balañá 2002, 63).

At the same time, these citizen-patriots were also expected to be good fathers and heads of families, and so the masculine virtues given prominence in these stories also included an ability to love and “vehemence in affection”. Well managed and regulated emotions were included in the definition of masculinity among some of Spain’s elites, a feature that can also be observed in other countries in Europe and the Americas (Martykánová and Núñez 2020, 49; Begiato 2020). Among radical liberals, however, emotion and the affections occupied an especially central role. It was his feelings that enabled “the private man” to make the leap into “the public arena, with every guarantee,” and to practice the “love for one’s neighbour” necessary to maintain a healthy social order (Andreu 2016b, 11). Only pure, sensitive, impressionable souls could develop qualities such as charity, generosity, self-sacrifice, or a sense of justice. Ability to love was made manifest first in the private, family circle. The heroes

of these novels loved their mothers, fathers, wives, and children intensely. With this as a foundation, love was then expressed outwards as a public virtue (García Moscardó 2019); it was extended to the nation and the whole of humanity, without forgetting God, who in nearly every novel appears as something of an ultimate moral reference point, who validates democratic proposals and acts as the eventual judge of villainy, ensuring the final victory of the humiliated and oppressed. Love made it possible to make the sacrifices that all these different ambits sometimes demanded. Arturo, the hero of *El ángel de la libertad*, declares that he loves “deliriously,” and so lives without sleep to labour for the “part of humanity” that “suffers and groans” (Suárez 1863, 133). Love generated a model of masculinity that was characterized, like the hegemonic image of femininity, by the idea of goodness. It thus shaped the ideal of a man who was “angelical” (Córdova 1860, 63).

These ideas and expectations were reflected in the profound friendships that are described in all the novels, and expressed too in bonds of fraternity between equals, characterized by companionship and generosity. They can be seen most of all, however, in relationships associated with the provision of care, in both the family and the social sphere. The ideal of democratic masculinity was that of a “loving patriarch” (García Ruiz 1855, 247); a guardian angel who should always exercise a kind of social fatherhood, helping and supporting the unfortunate. It was not necessary to be a married man to do this. Normally it would be political leaders who maintained this kind of relationship with the men of the community, of the people, but it was also possible for bonds of this kind to develop within the common people in the right circumstances. An example of the former, a political leader, is Don Perrondo, a rich, single gentleman, who nevertheless leads a frugal and simple life dedicated to aiding his neighbours. “A restorative angel for all kinds of sorrows and misfortunes,” his wealth and independent status enable him to act bravely, without fearing the consequences, and confront every kind of injustice (García Ruiz 1855, 12, 13, 88). He is presented as a strong, protective father who does not allow himself to be intimidated by anyone and is moved only by the sufferings of the wretched. In the second case, of caring figures drawn from the people themselves, we have the labourers Julio and Claudio in Tresserra’s *Marquesa de Bella Cruz*. Julio, who has been able to gather some savings thanks to his own foresight, uses them for the benefit of his friend, in a desperate state due to being out of work, and gives up his own place to him in a workshop (Tresserra 1851, 172). This paternal protection was of fundamental importance in alleviating suffering and despair, the principal causes of social corruption.

Love, at the same time, was inseparably linked to the suffering that resulted from the absence of the object of one’s love, or any misfortune that occurred to

them. The democratic man displayed these emotions and felt them intensely. The working man Julio, for example, has such an “ardent and profound” imagination, and such a sensitive heart, that he needs “not to think, in order not to suffer” (Tresserra 1851, 175, 138). In such cases, passion (suffering, sensibility) that was excessive (and not well regulated, as was proposed in other circles) was an unmistakable sign of virtue, the hallmark that defined a good democratic citizen.

On occasion, however, this emotional excess went too far, becoming something like a permanent problematic condition that men needed to confront; indissociable from virtue, but bordering on self-destruction. Arturo in *El ángel de la libertad*, when he falls in love, ceases to study or to work, and when his love goes unrequited even thinks of suicide (Suárez 1863). It is also true, nevertheless, that when the time comes to combat the enemies of humanity, the heroes of these novels do not stand aside. They control their passions, and remain calm, due to their readiness to die for the sake of justice. Even so, the tension between extreme emotionalism and the self-control required by their commitment to the nation and liberty is difficult to manage. There are several examples of characters who become engulfed in desperation, and so distracted from their duties to the common good. Excess (which could lead to a loss of self-control) could therefore be something to fear, but at the same time, as we have noted, was also the true proof of the virtue and heroism these writers sought to extol. Strength was revealed in the characters’ ability to recover (and one should note that their state of alienation was always transitory), which in many instances was aided by the support they received from paternal figures or strong women. In the heat of the revolutionary uprising of July 1854, Amalia in *El ángel de la libertad* has to remind Arturo, when he appears to lose his way, that the fatherland “comes before everything” (Suárez 1863, 749). The medieval hero Don Pelayo, in the version given by Juan de Dios Mora, is portrayed as a valiant eighth-century warrior who dedicates his life to preserving the independence of his fatherland from Muslim domination.<sup>1</sup> However he suffers enormously for love. When his beloved one marries the villain Gudila, Pelayo collapses into despair, groaning that “there is nothing left to me but to die.” In

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1 Pelayo, said to have been the first King of the unconquered Kingdom of Asturias in around 718, is also a mythical founding figure of Spanish nationalism, whose story and historical prominence were expanded upon greatly in the nineteenth century. According to legend, he defeated the Muslims at the battle of Covadonga in 722, thus supposedly initiating the “Reconquest” of Christian Spain, but it has not been possible to confirm that he genuinely existed. Numerous literary works of the nineteenth century recreated and evoked the figure of Pelayo.

his case it is an old Jewish wise man, Efraín, who revives his spirits and urges him to gather himself together and rejoin the struggle (Mora 1853, 565).

Efraín is a venerable astrologer, who debates with Pelayo on the usefulness of science. This enables us to introduce one final element associated with radical masculinity, one that indicated a certain distancing from the revolutionary ideal and a potential inclination to reconcile the radical image with the respectable liberalism that insisted on decorum, restraint, and merit. This is the value that all the radical tendencies gave to reason, study, and education. In this regard radical masculinity could be seen to incorporate certain features of a male ideal for the scientific and technical professions that was becoming established in Spain at this time, and which placed the same insistence on intellectual effort, study, and the possession of objective knowledge that would be useful to the nation (Martykánová and Núñez 2020, 74).<sup>2</sup> Pelayo in Mora's novel appears initially as a figure bound to an earlier model; although he claims to understand that "men can attain knowledge of many secrets of nature, through long, nocturnal vigil, and constant study," he says he himself had learnt "nothing more than to hate vice, [and] love virtue and glory." Efraín, however, eventually convinces him, and Pelayo ceases to "doubt the veracity" of the old man's knowledge, accepting its importance and utility (Mora 1853, 178). A good heart, purity of soul, and emotion must be accompanied by reason, reflection, and wisdom.

Democratic political culture valued reading and intellectual activity. The democratic individual was constructed through the exercise of reason, thanks to a willingness to cultivate the latter with constant study. Arturo, in *El ángel de la libertad*, spends whole nights without sleep reading in his study, where "in his library one could see works almost all associated with serious study: history, philosophy, legislation, exact, physical, and natural sciences, politics, economics, administration, literature, nothing was missing" (Suárez 1863, 193). The acquisition of knowledge, and intellectual contemplation, were habits inseparable from a devotion to the common good, because while the struggle for justice and liberty could be carried on with arms, it could also be undertaken, at the same time, and perhaps equally or more importantly, through the pen and the word. It was also furthered by the legitimacy and moral authority that was won by effort and merit, the honourable and fruitful work undertaken for the progress of the nation, which could comprehend a broad spectrum of trades and occupations, without the need to establish any kind of hierarchy.

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2 It was nevertheless also true that the democrats always supported freedom of education, against the insistence in other quarters on a regulated and standardized education for doctors and engineers.

## 2 Democratic Women

While the ideal of democratic masculinity could include the rich man, perhaps even of noble descent, who chose the hard road of democracy, the literary models of women tended to come from the middle or lower classes. They were in general humble women, who had to face frequent misfortunes, and thereby demonstrate their virtuousness. A virtuousness that was seen as related to their capacity for emotion and affection (stemming from their sensitive nature, and maternal function), as well as to purity, innocence, and self-sacrifice. However, in the novels under examination virtue was also associated, as it was in men, with devotion to the common good, physical resilience, and the supremacy of reason.

The ideal women of these novels stand out first, like the men, for their great, overwhelming, hearts. They are sensitive, compassionate women who love and suffer intensely. In effect, the most notable feature of Margarita, the corrupted (but later rehabilitated) soul of *La hermana de la caridad*, is that “she did not feel anything that was great” (Castelar 1857, 51). However, it is important to highlight that this emotionalism and capacity for affection is, as in the male examples, the basis of virtue, and profoundly connected to the public and political arenas. In *Pelayo*, the hero’s, Hormesinda, cannot bear the destruction caused by the Muslim siege of the city of Gijón, and determines to place herself at the head of the Christian troops to put an end to the conflict. Mora describes her as a “maiden of majestic stature and superhuman beauty,” who walks “among the ruins and the corpses, full of a sublime valour, and resigned to sacrifice herself for the sake of the unfortunate people.” Hormesinda scorns danger – amid the fury of battle – and so succeeds in impressing Munuza, leader of the Muslim army. Brought before him, on her knees and with eyes soaked in tears, she pleads for a pause in the fighting, placing her own neck at the disposal of the great warrior, who agrees to end the bitter battle (Mora 1853, 22, 23, 25). This could be seen as reminiscent of the exceptional, self-sacrificing women of more traditional heroic imagery, but it is not the only example that appeared in these novels. Ángela, Castelar’s “Sister of Charity,” cares for the soldiers wounded in the war in Morocco with great bravery, having followed them there in search of her beloved Eduardo. In this instance this is a young woman who, driven to despair by the failure of a man to return her love, decides to dedicate her life to the poor and wretched, performing a role of “social maternity” (Castelar 1857). The charitable work undertaken by women in this period, in roles that were also accepted by many advanced liberals, often brought them closer to political affairs, and moreover allowed them a relative freedom and (unsupervised)

mobility in public space, to a degree that was incompatible with “respectable femininity” (Burguera 2016; Martykánová and Núñez 2020, 48).

In the case of Amalia, Suárez’ “Angel of Liberty,” her love for Arturo consumes and overwhelms her, but she gives herself to the cause of democracy with the same force, declaring “my love for it borders on delirium” (Suárez 1863, 47). Hence, like the men, she becomes a citizen-soldier, and so can move entirely freely around Madrid. She herself justifies the legitimacy of women’s claim to the status of “patriots,” attributing qualities to the female sex normally reserved to men, such as perspicacity, energy, strength, and valour (albeit only when they are well-orientated, as when dedicated to “a noble cause”), as well as, alongside them, the angelical characteristics others evoked to confine women to the domestic world, such as feeling and imagination. All these features made women a “superior being, capable of every kind of selflessness and every sacrifice”; overall, an element of fundamental importance for the revolution. This heroine goes so far as to say that she is ready for martyrdom to ensure the triumph of democracy, and she walks through Madrid with “manly daring” during the revolution of 1854. In letters Amalia transmits news of the preparations for and progress of the insurrection, and it is notable that she is not limited just to passing on information; she generates it herself, since all her despatches are signed by her as “The Angel of Liberty.” She is so active that when, at the peak of the revolution, the people attempt to seize the Saladero prison in Madrid, to free the prisoners inside, she is placed in charge of the operation. In the end, and perhaps as recompense, Arturo realizes Amalia’s qualities, as a woman “young, beautiful, pure, and the daughter of liberals,” and marries her (Suárez 1863, 47, 377, 720, 721, 838).

Although this novel is a little exceptional, one can see that there was an idea of revolutionary femininity, based in large part in love and purity of heart, but which also included intellectual activity. Amalia is the daughter of the landlady of the house where Arturo rents a room, and her commitment arises after she reads his books and writings while he is out. The importance of education for women is a recurring theme in all these novels, even if its consequences do not generally go so far as Amalia’s eruption into public life and active participation in the fight for democracy. Doña Teresa, the paradigm of a virtuous woman described in *Don Perrondo y Masalegre*, “entertains herself by reading the life of Julian the Apostate,” and is also very fond of Plato and other ancient authors. In her case, an attentive education and her reading of classical writers has enabled her to understand that “the lives of citizens belong to their homeland,” and to educate her own sons accordingly, as resolute, patriotic men. Two of them had died for freedom (García Ruiz 1855, 285–87). Reading and education function

here as a kind of barrier of contention against a possible excess of feminine sentiment, which could obstruct the exercise of civic virtue by Spanish men.

In Castelar's *La hermana de la caridad* reference is made to the need for this tension between feeling and reason to be managed and resolved by women themselves. In one passage, Ángela explains to Margarita, the fallen woman, that reason should overcome sentiment. This is what will give her freedom. Domination by the passions, in contrast, leads to slavery. "If you follow the counsel of your reason [...] you will be free," says Ángela; she is referring to being free from base passions, to be able to embrace virtue in the peace of a real home. Reason here is identified to a great extent with the notion of duty, because a sentimentalism that was wholly unrestrained could lead to corruption (in Margarita's case, dominated by hatred), or madness (as seen in Amalia, during a brief period in which she thinks she has lost the man she loves) (Castelar 1857, II, 214–216). However, this insistence on reason as a mechanism of contention could have consequences that were unexpected, even for the radical writers themselves, although this is a point impossible to clarify: it also opened the way to, or suggested, an autonomous female subjectivity, self-aware, with its own volition, and with a capacity for decision-making and, ultimately, for liberty.

Reason made women into individuals with desires and the capacity to follow their own paths, even if the consequences could be disastrous. This is what happens to Hormesinda in *Pelayo*, when she falls in love with the Muslim lord Munuza, although it is important to stress here the historical setting of Mora's novel, which by displacing the reader to a long-past time was allowed a greater degree of transgression. Hormesinda debates with herself between her love for a beautiful young man who is however an enemy of the Catholic religion and her fatherland, and her duty precisely to the latter, religion and country, and considers withdrawing to a convent as a solution. Nevertheless, she eventually agrees to marry him, and gives reasons for her decision. First, because love is "the greatest truth on earth," but also because through this marriage she could become, thanks to her influence over "the Moor," a protector of Christians and a "bond between the two enemy races." This love flying in the face of convention arouses strong resistance among those close to Hormesinda, but she will not give way. She tells her former mentor Veremundo that she is prepared to face the insults and reminds him that during the siege of Gijón the "indomitable Goth" warriors had fled in terror "like women, instead of falling like heroes," so that it was only thanks to her that peace returned to the city. Hence, one could consider that it is her heroic – and masculinizing – actions that have placed her in a position where she can take her own decisions; equally, even though she describes herself as a "poor woman in love," she does not cease to lament



the fact that “[we] unfortunate women” are always “victims of the arbitrary judgements of men.” She thus defies norms and conventions, demonstrating an enormous strength of will. Hormesinda even resists the exhortations of her brother Pelayo, who threatens her with a dagger if she does not reject dishonour and abandon the infidel. She does eventually die, but Mora does not fail to take the opportunity to declare that for a time she had been “the most devoted lover, the happiest wife, the most contented and satisfied of all the Christian women” (Mora 1853, 142, 145, 153, 154, 249, 453).

Normally, it would not have been acceptable for a woman to go so far, but the point that is of interest to highlight here is that strength of will, resistance to misfortune, and resolve were all prominent features of radical femininity, together with an educated intelligence and a thoughtful character. All these features stemmed from the combination of emotion, capacity for love, and reason, which was indispensable if a woman were to confront the agents of corruption (especially the much-feared fall into prostitution), educate her children in the importance of family and the common good, and contain the all-consuming feelings and impulses of men, whether towards despair, faint-heartedness, idleness, or excessive affection. This latter task included the work of aiding and consoling the sick and the destitute, and not allowing them to fall into despair, in accordance with the idea of “social maternity” commonly retained by advanced liberals. However, it also included the mission of keeping forever alive the strength and spirit of the male, of curbing any signs of weakness, demoralization, going soft, or sentimental excess. This combination of features sometimes generated female figures that were characterized by a physical, as well as moral, strength that contrasted markedly with the hegemonic discourse of the era, with its emphasis on women’s weakness. We have already commented on the case of Hormesinda. Other female characters in these novels, from different social classes, resist the blows of hunger, destitution, backbreaking labour, injury, or violent conflict. These are not, therefore, weak beings in need of protection.

Essentially, both male and female democrats, if they were to achieve the glory of the nation, needed to be profoundly sensitive, affectionate, and compassionate. The love and affection felt for their own loved ones was the motor that enabled them to maintain their goodness and their strength, confront misfortune, struggle for justice, and help others. Hence the importance of the family, as the basic nucleus of society. It was due to the desperation of the wretched that villainous men could build up their structures of injustice and corruption; consequently, great insistence was laid on the need to provide care beyond the boundaries of the home (social paternity/maternity). Men and women needed to be masters of themselves, resisting the seductions of sex,

money, or glory, but also resisting their own internal tendencies to despair. In most of these novels there are references to suicide, as a frequent last resort of the lost and desperate, and characters are exhorted to overcome this pernicious impulse. Overall, men and women should always behave like pilots defying a storm, battling “against all the elements conspired against them” (García Ruiz 1855, 448, 140). However, if they lose their way, there will always be means of contention at hand. Only in this way could one struggle for justice and liberty, and maintain and defend them, and so guarantee the regeneration and prosperity of the nation.

### 3 Conclusion

The novels we have examined here sought to make virtue the fundamental basis of the national edifice. This was a concept loaded with ingredients of diverse origin, which are referred to unevenly, sometimes simultaneously, and to a greater or lesser extent depending on the authors and the novels in question. An important component stemmed from the Greek term *arete*, excellence of moral character, represented by the specific virtues of wisdom, strength, forbearance, and justice. Also inherited from antiquity was the concept of civic virtue, which implied placing the good of the community ahead of private interests. Added to this were the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity or love, as well as obedience to God, as the ultimate source of moral authority. One can also see the influence of the sexualization of the concept of virtue, previously associated with masculinity, that had occurred during the eighteenth century, when it had increasingly been linked with chastity, fidelity, abnegation, and morality, for both men and women, in the face of their principal antagonist, vice. It had also been during the Enlightenment that the diverse range of classical and Christian virtues began to give way to the single collective term “virtue,” which came to be understood as a quality of the soul, of pure, beautiful, and innocent human nature when not perverted by the ills of society. Virtuous behaviour was conceptualized as a feature of collective moral life, and not a private matter (Leiteritz 2000).

For the Greeks the virtues were a matter of volition; they derived from a readiness, rooted in reason and the goodness of the soul, to act in a certain way. In radical novels virtue is also understood as a quality, one that defined a person's being and manner of behaviour, that depended on the will, and which could be acquired and lost. In these stories virtue is democratic in character, since it is within the reach of every individual, from all social classes. The degenerate and corrupted could change course and become virtuous once

again. There was a strong belief, perhaps associated with a secularized notion of free will, in the capacity of every human being to take control of their own lives, to head towards one of the two extremes, good or evil, and to rectify the course first chosen. This was a universal capacity, since neither knowledge, nor special intellectual gifts, nor studies, or wealth were necessary to achieve it. Willpower, a sense of individual responsibility, the ability to choose – but also to reconsider – marked out the principal dividing line between those who could be considered political subjects, deserving of the rights of citizenship, and those who could not. It is worth highlighting on this point that this was not a matter so much of simply obtaining the right to vote as the right to participate politically, to work for the good of the community, and to occupy public space. The dividing line between virtue and vice constituted the omnipresent dichotomy that should permanently remind everyone of the paths that were possible, and those that were necessary, in the process of national construction, a guide for the conduct and future actions of citizens in a tumultuous situation, full of risks and temptations. It would do so in a disorderly world that needed to be understood, but also to be reformed, whether violently or peacefully, in order to construct a long-lasting and glorious nation.

From this viewpoint, an analysis of these novels leads us to qualify in part the established view of the hegemony of the complementary/hierarchical idea of sexual order in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and reveals a discourse on femininity and masculinity that was less dichotomous than that of “respectable liberalism.” Both men and women in this radical discourse were, and ought to be, beings characterized by feeling and capacity for affection, by love for others and emotion. This love, which generally began first in the private, domestic sphere, was what then enabled them to give priority to the public good over private concerns. Equally both men and women were and ought to be rational beings capable of self-control and resilience, and so enormous value was given to education and the cultivation of intelligence and industriousness, although at no time was any defence made of the idea of paid work as something that would dignify women of the middle and upper classes. Lastly, love, charity, and reason were the fundamental virtues that permitted a connection between the individual and the public and political spheres, albeit that for women the specific consequences of these tenets could vary. Nevertheless, the insistence laid on the importance of reason and the will for women allowed them a certain independence, which may have contributed to the emergence of a greater level of political mobilization by women democrats in the final quarter of the century.

At the same time, it also seems clear that in the imagination of democrats the freedom and independence of men (and, partially, of women) was still

limited at all times by the control granted to the community in vigilantly monitoring behaviour, and to all those “angels” – fathers and mothers – who were called upon to aid the unfortunate and reclaim the lost, and thus watch over national prosperity in the same way they might watch over the wellbeing of their own homes. The virtuous nation thus imagined formed a vast familial circle of care and protection, but also of demanding commitment and self-sacrifice; a space exhibiting a difficult balance between the desires of individuals and their duties to the community, between the value of emotions and the necessity that they be ordered and contained, and, overall, between domestic commitments and the obligations of public life. A difficult balance that undermined both the romantic myth of the Spaniard (and of Spanish women) as wild and unruly, and the liberal discourse that sustained the idea of a complementary and hierarchical sexual order, two sets of images that had emerged in a close, interconnected relationship.

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## Northernness in the South: Basque Stereotype and Gender

*Coro Rubio Pobes*

The idea of the North and the South (as well as the East and the West) are cultural constructions, imagined places, representations that serve to bring order and make sense of the world. They are perceptions determined through the eye of the beholder. As intricately linked ideas, they complement and rely on each other. One exists in relation to the other and are only understood in mutual interaction. They are invariably the sum of dual internal and external perspectives, carrying with them implicit stereotypes of place. In truth, there are, and have always been, varied conceptions and images of the North, both in time and in space.<sup>1</sup> If throughout the period of classical antiquity and the early Middle Ages the North in Europe was often associated with barbarism, then since the Renaissance, and as a result of the development of the Hanseatic economy, this balance of power between North and South has been inverted. That is, the idea of civilisation and development became associated with the former.<sup>2</sup> The same applied to the values of sobriety, hard work, culture of effort, and even masculinity, which were contrasted with the South and its supposed opposite set of values and ideas. As a consequence of the literary exoticisation of countries such as Italy, Greece and Spain from the early nineteenth century onwards, this perception became increasingly widespread across Europe. It was also, in turn, introduced into the founding myths of the North, implicit in the northern countries' national narratives, as Xavier Andreu has explained. A hierarchical relationship was thus established between the *civilized* man of the North and the *natural* man of the South, with gender metaphors playing a decisive role in feminising the inhabitants of the southern countries (Andreu Miralles 2016, 35–9). In the case of Spain, however, some parts of its territory (such as northern regions or Catalonia) escaped in one

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- 1 Referring, for instance, to the Arctic, the North is an idea related with cold, remoteness, isolation, and the inhabitable white space. See Chartier 2018. A theoretical approach to the idea of northernness from the perspective of cultural studies in Spracklen 2019. A study of the northern consciousness in England from a long-term perspective in Jewell 1994.
  - 2 On the symbolic and stereotypical meanings of these main points, see Viegnès 2005.

way or another this characterisation. In the following pages, I will focus on the case of the Basque Country, which was particularly attractive to European romanticism. Although located in a space that was assimilated to the idea of the South, the Basque Country was culturally constructed as the North. In the exotic and orientalist Spain depicted by nineteenth-century romanticists, the country of bulls and passionate women embodied in the figure of Carmen, the *sunny Spain*, land of castles and gypsy dancers which had aroused so much fascination in the United States through Washington Irving's stories (Kagan 2019), the Basque Country did not fit easily in the view of many of the travel writers who contributed to Spain's exoticisation. The aim of the following pages is to analyse how this discordant image was constructed through travel literature, in particular the role played by the female stereotype.

## 1 Basque Northernness

Stemming from a process of narrative construction that first emerged in the eighteenth century and developed throughout the nineteenth century (particularly from the second third onwards), a stereotyped, uncritical, abiding and idealised image of the Basques was defined and disseminated with great success. Nestled around the foothills of the Pyrenees, the Basques were presented as an ancient and singular people who had managed to remain free from foreign invasion and had preserved their ancient traditions, laws (*fueros*) and culture, including a language of mysterious and remote origin (*Basque*). The Basques were a proud people; strong, brave, virile, freedom-loving, independent, loyal, religious, morally virtuous, hard-working and civilized. Historians and politicians—especially the *fueristas* of the second third of the nineteenth century (defenders of a Basque regionalism infused with a strong Basque identity)—, native writers and painters, as well as visiting travel writers and scholars, partook in the elaboration and dissemination of this image, which was closely linked to a process of Basque identity building in the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> They drew on arguments in defence of the *fueros* that had been articulated since the sixteenth century by learned writers such as Esteban de Garibay, Juan Martínez de Zaldibia, Lope Martínez de Isasti, Gabriel Henao, Pedro Fontecha y Salazar and Manuel de Larramendi, inserting them into a new context of significance. Some of the foreign travel writers who visited the Basque Country also had the opportunity to become familiar with these arguments and

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3 I have dealt extensively with the construction of Basque identity in the nineteenth century in Rubio Pobes 2003.

were, in turn, influenced by them. Moreover, on various occasions, these travel writers used each other as complimentary sources for their own observations, thereby establishing fixed channels of information and perception that reinforced the framework and diffusion of the Basque stereotype. Accordingly, just as political discourse played a fundamental role in the construction and dissemination of this stereotyped image within the Basque Country itself, travel books and tourist guides published from the 1840s onwards, some of them with great commercial success and multiple reeditions, were the main vehicles for its external projection.<sup>4</sup> The construction of this Basque image was thus a process carried out both from the inside (self-representation) and the outside (observation of the “other”).

From the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, the impressions of several foreign travellers (especially French and English) who had visited the Basque Country were published as travel books in their native countries. Some even ended up being published in Spain. Logically, given the different cultural backgrounds and individual worldviews of each of the authors, these accounts were not entirely homogeneous. Nonetheless, the majority tended to describe the Basques precisely along the lines of that which has been outlined above. Although its origins go back further, the construction of this literary narrative was particularly intense during the age of Romanticism, which influenced this process in two ways. On one hand, there were those who were heavily influenced by the romantic stereotypes of *lo español* (the Spanish thing), as was the case with the French writer Théophile Gautier, who upon entering the foothills of the Pyrenees immediately began to search for quixotic types. On the other hand, there were those who were influenced by Romanticism in the opposite direction. In search of the local *volkgeist* — a popular trend at the time —, these travel writers exalted the peculiar, the different and unchanging features of the small forgotten corners of Europe. In their view, the Basque Country was just such a place. Through vivid descriptions of the landscape and portraits of the people who inhabited the territory, the authors of travel books and guides began to associate the land of the Basques with the idea of the civilized North within (and in contrast to) the primitive, backward and exotic South that Spain represented in their minds’ eye.

One of the first foreign travellers to highlight the particularity of the Basque Country was the American John Adams, who passed through the territory on a fleeting trip to France in November 1779 several years before he became President of the United States. While Adams did not have time to study the country

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4 The first modern guidebooks appeared in Europe in the 1830s, published by John Murray in England and Karl Baedeker in Germany. See Palmowski 2002.

he was visiting, he did have time to talk to local elites who were able to provide him with information and help him form an opinion. In his travel diary he wrote that the people of Biscay, Álava and Guipúzcoa—the three provinces that make up the peninsular Basque Country—were essentially different from those of the other provinces of the Hispanic Monarchy, so much so that a traveller could easily perceive this from the locals' appearance and manner of speaking: "It may seem surprising, to hear of free provinces in Spain: But such is the fact, that the high and independent spirit of the people, so essentially different from the other Provinces, that a traveller perceives it even in their countenances, their dress, their air, and ordinary manner of speech" (Adams 1770, 14). Seven years later, as an ambassador of the United States in London, Adams wrote again about the Basque Country in *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*. Although now with a much more critical view of the *fueros*, Adams again stated that the Basque Country was a territory completely distinct from the rest of Spain. Furthermore, it was inhabited by an extraordinary people who had preserved their language, character, laws, and ancestral customs more than any other "nation" in Europe: "this extraordinary people have preserved their ancient language, genius, laws, government, and manners, without innovation, longer than any other nation of Europe". He praised its well-cultivated lands, the large and comfortable houses and barns that populated the landscape, the good condition of its roads, and the well-being of its peasantry, in contrast to the rest of Spain. Adams even added that: "In riding through this little territory, you would fancy yourself in Connecticut" (Adams 1787, 1, 16–7, 19). A quite different traveller, the Prussian Wilhelm von Humboldt, who visited the Basque Country in 1801 and was motivated by a scientific interest in studying the Basque language and the people who spoke it, described the Basques as of "separate pure stock," "a completely peculiar and distinct race," and a "nation" (in the sense of ethnicity) spread over both sides of the Pyrenees. Humboldt also compared the Basques to other Spaniards:

An essential feature of the [Basque] nation is, in truth, this organic strength, joviality and verve that has something subtle, shrewd, even witty about it. There is none of the Castilian expression of intensity and austerity, of strong and sombre eyebrows [...]. Nor is it the exuberance of the Andalusian and his robustness [...]. Even less do the Basques resemble the Valencians, and comparing them to the Catalans, they have a more flattering decorum, more noble and resolute. (Humboldt 1926, 66)

The tendency of many of the travellers to compare the Basques with the inhabitants of other parts of Spain, or with the generic "Spaniards", underlined

their distinctiveness. Viktor Aimé Huber, another Prussian who toured Spain in 1823 and published his impressions in *Skizzen aus Spanien* [Sketches from Spain], wrote that the Basques did not align to the popular image that had been portrayed of the Spanish. For Huber, this was evident not only in their physical and character differences, but also in their cultural disparities:

According to the most generalised opinion, the Spaniards have a dark complexion, a sombre appearance, black eyes and hair. They wear wide-brimmed hats, hairnets, wide brown cloaks, and are lazy, dirty, ragged and without industry. This portrait may indeed suit certain provinces, but in others, as for example in the Basque provinces, it would be pointless to look for a resemblance. The Spanish Basques are more blonde than dark. They do not wear wide-brimmed hats or long brown cloaks, nor do they wear their hair in hairnets; they are active, cheerful, most of them resolute, and they are undoubtedly one of the most industrious populations in the world. (Huber 1833, XIX–XX)

These traits of industriousness and vigour – which are associated with advanced industrial societies – of the North and the Protestant ethic<sup>5</sup> – were often explicitly contrasted by travel authors and indigenous Basque writers to the indolence and passivity attributed to the southern character. This contrast also contained a dimension of gender, in which strength and industriousness translated into virility, in the face of a femininity associated with opposite values. One of the texts that most explicitly exhibited this theme was the 1846-published *Viaje pintoresco por las provincias Vascongadas* [Picturesque Journey through the Basque Provinces], written by the Bilbao native and *fuerista* politician Francisco Hormaeché. Hormaeché praised the virile strength of the Basques, stating that this was evident even in the practice of their “strong and violent” games, unlike “other peoples of more sedentary and effeminate customs [who] tend to dedicate themselves to an indolent repose if not to the satisfaction of enervating vices”:

Look at those stout lads assembled near the cemetery of their church; their brown jackets slung over their shoulders; their red berets, once the badge of war, carelessly hanging over one temple; and leaning on the long stick which their hands easily turn into a terrible weapon, each of them awaits his turn to test his strength by throwing a heavy iron bar a long distance.

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5 In this regard, J. Walton has pointed out that the Basque Country is “an upland area with all the classic ingredients for a northern myth, except Protestantism” (Walton 2000, 87).

Farther off is another group; are those who compose it perhaps listening to some ancient story of romance, or some mysterious tale of bygone times? No, leave those idle entertainments for the sons of the East and South; [the Basques'] youthful restlessness requires other nourishment: they play bowls, thus exercising the powerful endurance of their chest and the strength of their mighty arm [... and to] the speedy handball, which their stiffened palms receive in order to repel it from their adversaries. Solaces indeed worthy of a race of Hercules! (Hormaeche [1846], 19)

The narrative constructed in these travel books, which was later synthesised and disseminated as the first tourist guides, elevated the Basques above the rest of the Spaniards by attributing qualities that distanced them from the southern image of Spain. This stereotype, or ethnotype to be more precise given that the Basques were conceptualised as a distinct people, even race, was reinforced and rounded off with a landscape cliché. In the same way that throughout the nineteenth century the English associated their identity with the countryside, turning it into the image *par excellence* of their country (Lowenthal 1991), a cultural construction of the Basque countryside was also undertaken, infusing it with identity values.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the Basque territory was often described in travel books and tourist guides as “picturesque,” mountainous, with rolling hills and beautiful scenery. The image of the mountain was complemented by that of the sea, both constituting a cliché that was not only physical but symbolic, defining the character of the people who inhabited the territory. The mountain symbolised a strong and indomitable people who had managed to maintain their freedom from foreign invaders over the centuries, and who had preserved their ancient language and secular traditions (the physical protection of the mountain buttressing the thesis of Basque isolation). The sea, for its part, was also associated with ethnic traits, defining the Basques as a brave, intrepid and enterprising people whose characteristics were embodied in the great Basque seafarers of Elcano, Churruca and others.

The landscape cliché of the Basque Country was not only evocative of the character of the people who inhabited it, but also distanced it from the people and plains of Castile, and the southern image of Spain. In contrast, through this cliché, the Basque Country was associated with Europe and the idea of civilization that it represented. A comparison of the Basque Country with

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6 This construction continued into the twentieth century, culminating in the 1930s with a nationalising vision of the countryside that was promoted by Basque nationalism. Discourse around activities such as hiking and mountaineering was often linked to Basque patriotism (*mendigoizales*). See Ostolaza 2018, 273–93.

Switzerland, which appeared repeatedly in numerous travel books and tourist guides, acted precisely in this latter direction. Writing in his *Voyage en Espagne* [Journey in Spain], Théophile Gautier commented that the Basque landscape was “charming and perhaps a little Swiss”; Victor Hugo wondered whether he was in Castile or in Switzerland when he gazed at the mountains around the town of Pasajes in Guipúzcoa on his 1843 journey through the Pyrenees; and another French traveller, M. L. Capistou, affirmed in his *Guide du voyageur dans la province basque de Guipuzcoa* [Traveller’s Guide to the Basque Province of Guipúzcoa] that “it is not without reason that the Basque provinces have been called *little Switzerland*” (Gautier 1845, 25; Hugo 1880, 130; Capistou 1877, 64). The apparent likeness between Basques and Irish, and between Basques and Scots, referred to by various travellers—and by Basque politicians in their discourse in defence of the Basque *fueros*—also operated in the same way. That is, it affiliated the Basques ethnically to the highlanders of the North. The English journalist and writer Thomas Roscoe, who travelled through Spain in 1835 at the height of the First Carlist War and who wrote *The tourist in Spain*, published in London two years later, found the Basque beret worn by an old man in Vitoria to be uncannily similar to the headwear worn in the Scottish Highlands. Although Roscoe appreciated one “feature of the [Spanish] national character” in Vitoria, he added:

The amusing nationality of this gasconading old Basque, which seemed to make his very woolen cap perspire, strongly reminded me of those spiritual natives of the Emerald Isle, who woke lively figures of rhetoric out of whisky. And, indeed, there have not been wanting, among later travellers, those who trace the Vascongades, the Navarrese, the Scotch Highlanders, and the Irishman, to one common Keltic stock, which, if this be true, must have been endued with portentous fertility. In one point, it would give me pleasure to discover a resemblance in the Irish, or, indeed, in the Gael, to these hardy mountaineers; a sober, cleanly, industrious people, who extract from the rude soil, to which they are enthusiastically attached, wherewith to maintain a sturdy independence. (Roscoe 1837, 37)

Alexandre Laborde’s *Itinéraire descriptif de l’Espagne* [Descriptive Itinerary of Spain], published in Paris between 1806 and 1820, reedited multiple times, and translated into Spanish in 1816, explained that “it is widely believed that the Biscayans and the Irish share a common origin” and that some historians claim that about two hundred years before the Christian era, a group of settlers had left Biscay for Ireland to settle there (Laborde 1827, 270). Meanwhile, Richard Ford, one of the most famous nineteenth-century travellers, English writer



and journalist, referred to the Basques with the appellation “highlanders” and compared the country with Wales in a chapter of his *A hand-book for travellers in Spain*. Published in 1845 as part of the famous Murray collection of guide-books, Ford’s text was one of the first modern tour guides of Spain – by 1892, it was on its eighth edition (Ford 1845, 11).

Another of the recurring themes in the narrative surrounding the distinctiveness of the Basques was that of their common nobility, closely linked to the idea that they constituted a more egalitarian society. This was a myth based on a recognition of universal nobility contained in the medieval *fueros* of Biscay and Guipúzcoa—but not those of Álava—, and which had been generalised as common to all the Basque territories by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Basque writers such as Juan Martínez de Zaldibia, Baltasar de Echave and Andrés de Poza. Foreign travellers also began to spread these themes from the eighteenth century onwards. For instance, the French monk Joseph Delaporte, who toured the country in 1755, wrote that: “The most perfect equality reigns among all citizens and nobility has no other authority than that of persuasion.” Delaporte also affirmed that the Basques were “the most beautiful and best nation in Spain. They are brave, hard-working, spiritual and religious” (Delaporte 1772, XVI, 365). Numerous travellers alluded to this Basque universal nobility, translating it into traits of character, and pointing out how it was different from that of the Castilian. The French aristocrat Alexandre Laborde explained that the idea of acquired nobility influenced Basque character and provided them with “a principle of dignity which, even in the lowest of jobs, gives them a proud attitude and an elevated spirit” (Laborde 1827, 272). George Borrow, an English adventurer and Protestant bible salesman, who in 1843 published his impressions of Spain in the best-selling *The Bible in Spain*, spoke of how this sense of pride had helped to constitute a more horizontal society—if all were noble, all were equal. This he described as “a kind of republican pride”:

No people on earth are prouder than the Basques, but theirs is a kind of republican pride. They have no nobility amongst them, and no one will acknowledge a superior. [...] They abhor servitude, at least out of their own country; and though circumstances frequently oblige them to seek masters, it is very rare to find them filling the places of common domestics; they are stewards, secretaries, accountants, etc. True it is, that it was my own fortune to obtain a Basque domestic; but then he always treated me more as an equal than a master. (Borrow 1843, 220)

As reflected in the above extract, Borrow reproduced one of the most successful and enduring myths of the Basques: that is, they had constituted an

egalitarian society since ancient times, in contrast to the rigidly stereotyped societies of the Hispanic Monarchy. By the time Borrow wrote his account, this idea of Basque egalitarianism was already an established truism, even if it did not equate to social reality.

Through these narratives, an image of the Basque Country came to be defined completely at odds with that of the dominant image of Spain in the nineteenth century as an exotic representation of the South. By contrast, the Basque Country was culturally constructed as a representation of the North. This stereotyped image of a virile, hard-working and civilized people of the North was also employed in the portrayal of Basque women by travellers, both foreign and native, and as a consequence, was repeatedly channelled and reinforced. As such, a Basque female stereotype was constructed which depicted the women of these territories as *the* genuine expression of the character of their people, and which was a complete departure from the prototype of Carmen, the passionate brunette of the romanticised vision of Spain.

## 2 The Basque Female Stereotype: Strong and Virtuous Women

The descriptions of Basque women in travel literature did not fit neatly with the depiction of the black-eyed, morally dubious Spanish woman that was diffused via the romantic myth of Spain. This characterisation painted Spanish women as stunning beauties of white skin, dark hair and eyes, small feet and narrow waists, gifted with considerable charm, liveliness (the famous “salero”), sensuality and passion. Their physical features were greeted with pleasure by the Spanish intelligentsia, even though they rejected the women’s accompanying moral traits, which they understood as reducing Spanish women as a whole to the lowest social strata (Andreu 2016, 243). Written by M. Quétin and published in 1841, *Guide en Espagne et en Portugal* [Guide to Spain and Portugal] faithfully reproduced this stereotype: “The women are naturally beautiful, mostly dark-haired and well-shaped; their countenance is modest, but their face is expressive; they are lively, have violent passions and an ardent imagination” (Quétin 1841, 60). The aforementioned English traveller Thomas Roscoe, in *The tourist in Spain* (1837), evoked the same cliché about Spanish women in the following way:

The Spanish women, like all others of southern race, have remarkably fine large eyes, not indeed intelligent, or expressive of anything beyond mere passion; but bright and sparkling, and full of animal fire. Their complexion, moreover, is often good, though dark, and their carriage possessed

of all the grace and charm arising from ease and intense self-possession. Otherwise they appear to me far from beautiful. There is nothing of that classic lightness and sunniness of aspect discoverable in women of Hellenic blood nothing verging upwards towards the region of the ideal, or which wears the semblance of “commercing with the skies”. They are all earth’s mixture of corporeal mould. (Roscoe 1837, 84–5)

Conversely, Roscoe described Biscayan women (in reference to Basque women as a whole) as different and charming:

Unquestionably, in traversing the Peninsula, the eye may now and then distinguish among the crowd of forms pressing around it, some more exquisitely fashioned, and instinct with a nobler soul, than others. What I mean is, that such specimens of beauty are rarer in Spain than in some other countries [...] These exceptions are found chiefly, perhaps, in the north. In fact, a very judicious traveller, not addicted to exaggeration, has given a testimony in favour of the charms of the fair Biscayans, which it may be but justice to add: ‘The women (he says) are beautiful as angels, tall, light, and merry; their garb is neat and pastoral; their hair falls in long plaits down their backs, and a veil or handkerchief, twisted round in a coquettish manner, serves them for a very becoming head-dress.’ (Roscoe 1837, 86)

The descriptions of Basque women in books and travel guides set them apart from Spanish women, elevating them by comparison into a category of their own. Even one of the most avid seekers of Spanish exoticism, the writer Théophile Gautier, who toured Spain from north to south in 1840 in search of “the Spain of the ballads of Victor Hugo, the novels of Mérimée and the tales of Alfred de Musset,” pointed out this difference. While Gautier’s passage through the Basque Country was swift, he nonetheless dedicated a few pages to it in *Voyage en Espagne*, which he first published in 1843 under a different title and 1845 under the definitive one. Gautier wrote that upon entering an inn in Guipúzcoa, he was instantly reminded of the descriptions of Don Quijote and Lazarillo de Tormes, but that he nevertheless found clean rooms with everything neat and tidy, and the attention of “perfectly dressed” portly young women with long braids who in no way resembled the anticipated Maritorneses of Cervantes (the ugly and unkempt maid who Don Quijote finds in an inn). “The difference between one people and another is made up of these thousands of small details,” he added. Speaking of his impressions of a theatre in Vitoria, he commented: “We had hoped to encounter the typical Spanish female type there, of which we had only seen a few examples; but the women

who occupied the boxes and galleries were only Spanish in that they had a mantilla and a fan; this was already a lot, but not enough" (Gautier 1845, 25, 32). Two English travellers of the 1830s, Sidney Crocker and Bligh Barker, co-authors of *Sketches from the Basque Provinces of Spain*, a book on travel prints published in London in 1839, in which it was stated "The Vasques, or as they term themselves, the Escaldunes, do not consider themselves Spaniards, and differ widely from them in character and language," also noted this difference. Among the illustrations in the text, the authors included a print of a "señorita," a young upper-class Basque woman, dressed not in the traditional clothing of her countryfolk peasant women, but rather as any other Spanish woman of her level, with a black shawl, fan, and mantilla, although when explaining the image, the authors pointed out the difference between the two:

La Señorita. The graceful national attire of the Spanish ladies is too well known, to require a particular description. The language and dress of the Southern provinces is so generally adopted by the higher class of the Basque people, that to the eye of a casual visitor, there is but slight variation. The air and deportment, however, of the Andalusian lady is perhaps, less admirable than the composed and graceful dignity of the fair Basque. "Marcher en Basque" is a proverbial expression among their neighbours, the French, in allusion to the nobleness of carriage which distinguishes the people on the Spanish side of the Bidasoa. (Crocker and Barker 1839, 17)

Another of the prints, "Las aguadoras" [The Water Carriers], showed young women beside a fountain and an explanation from the authors that spoke in an admiring tone of their strength:

If anything can enhance the native dignity and grace of these Basque Girls, it is the additional firmness and development of action displayed while carrying the heavy water-jars which, with such extraordinary ease and security, they balance on their heads without the slightest aid from either hand, ascending and descending the most rugged steeps with a jauntiness and indifference truly astonishing, and frequently with a second, may even a third, superadded. (Crocker and Barker 1839, 20)

The Basque female stereotype described strong, austere, hard-working women who were, at the same time, virtuous and beautiful. That is, the virtues traditionally considered positive for the female sex (e.g., beauty, cleanliness, industriousness, morality) were complimented by masculine features of strength and virility. This image was linked to the Basque writers of the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries who, in their historiographical works in defence of the *fueros*, had already given Basque women traits of virility. In *Compendio historial de la provincia de Guipúzcoa* [Compendium of the History of the Province of Guipúzcoa], written in 1625 by Lope Martínez de Isasti and republished in 1850, the author explained that the women of Guipúzcoa were good looking, serious and honest, very clean, strong, and “manly,” attributing their strength “to the virtue of virginity” (Martínez de Isasti 1850, 149). Manuel de Larramendi had also portrayed the women of Guipúzcoa in *Corografía de Guipúzcoa* [Chorography of Guipúzcoa] written in 1754 (although not published until 1882), as “the most beautiful women in all of Spain; of the most beautiful colour, well-built, plump, strong, agile and healthy,” who “go up and down to their houses and mountains with the same air and vigour as if there were no slope,” adding that “they are more robust and have more endurance than men in carrying and bringing heavy loads on their heads from one place to another, perhaps three or four leagues away” (Larramendi 1882, 155).<sup>7</sup>

The nineteenth-century travel writers who visited the Basque Country reproduced and developed this image, which was, in reality, correlated to a masculine stereotype: like men, women were described as strong and hard-working. As the Frenchman Alexandre Laborde (1773–1842), author of *Itinéraire descriptif de l’Espagne*—published in Paris across several volumes between 1806 and 1820, revised and enlarged in 1827, and translated into Spanish—explained, in the first volume of his text, the Basques “are strong and vigorous, brave and agile,” and scale the mountains with the greatest agility; “there is in them a backbone of fierceness, haughtiness and independence; one might say that they are self-satisfied, obstinate, tenacious and very irritable,” defects which are compensated for “by numerous good qualities: they are, in general, hard-working, industrious, active, skilful, industrious, true to their word, humane, hospitable, noble in their behaviour, cheerful, lively and sociable” (Laborde 1827, 271). A similar image was portrayed of Basque women in his text: they are “proud, brave, devoted,” “their plain features and cool, dark complexion evidence their vigour and rude health; a fearless attitude, the lively look, the confident demeanour, a certain imperious air, show in them the feeling of independence that has dominated this province”.<sup>8</sup> Laborde depicted strong, tough, and virile women who even surpassed the men in these qualities:

[...] they work in the fields like the men, and with more diligence; in the ports they are busier than the men: they run ships and also work on the

7 On the feminine ideal in Larramendi’s work, see Altonaga 2016.

8 This last comment was omitted from the Spanish edition of the text, published in 1816.

docks as loaders. This is especially noticeable in Bilbao: there, without socks, without shoes, with short petticoats, their arms uncovered, they show off their vigorous muscles. The heaviest bales do not intimidate them in the slightest: it is often needed the help of two sturdy men to carry them; and while the foreigner is frightened, they carry the load with ease, as if they were carrying nothing at all. After working like this all day long, these women show no sign of fatigue in the evening; they often return home holding hands and dancing to the sound of the tambourine. Sometimes they are seen working on the mountain slopes, climbing steep rocks all at once, traversing them and descending with incredible audacity. (Laborde 1827, 274)

At another stage in his book, Laborde speaks of the preference of people from Guipúzcoa for games that demand skill and strength, such as handball, before adding “the women excel at it and rival the most skilful” players (Laborde 1827, 275). This strength was neither defiant nor dangerous. Conversely, it was fully positive, for it was accompanied by moral qualities: strength and morality went hand in hand in this depiction. Thus, Alexandre Laborde explained when speaking of the Biscayans: “Their domestic happiness is founded on a solid base: moral virtues; the women seem of good character, faithful and attentive to the care of the home; the children are submissive and respectful” (Laborde 1827, 272).

To a traveller like Richard Ford, who briefly mentioned Basque women in his *A hand-book for travellers in Spain*, published in 1845, so much strength and industriousness desexualized the women in his eyes: “The women toil at their hard tasks, and look old and broken; were it not for their white handkerchiefs, sex (the very young only excepted) would be obliterated by their thus doing the work of men” (Ford 1845, II, 929). References such as Ford’s aside, the travel literature written by visitors to the Basque Country, in general, made strength, virility and beauty compatible. Published in 1871 by the philologist José Manterola, *Guía-manual geográfico-descriptivo de la provincia de Guipúzcoa* [Geographical-Descriptive Manual-Guide to the Province of Guipúzcoa] described Basque women in the following way: “The women are of beautiful faces and bright colours, of the whitest complexion and gorgeous hair; serious, honest, neat and manly, especially those who live along the coast”—words that would be reproduced several years later in *Guía general de Guipúzcoa* [General Guide to Guipúzcoa] written by Lamberto Lancis and published in San Sebastián in 1896 (Manterola 1871, 26; Lancis 1896, 21). This excerpt was, in fact, almost a word-by-word copy of Lope Martínez de Isasti’s seventeenth-century description in *Compendio Historial de la Provincia de Guipúzcoa* [Historical Compendium to the Province of Guipúzcoa], once again evidencing the long genealogy of this image (Martínez de Isasti 1850, 149).

The emphasis on the strength of Basque women generated an egalitarian portrayal of their position relative to men. In *Guide du voyageur en Espagne et en Portugal* [Traveller's Guide to Spain and Portugal], published in 1853, the authors Richard and Quéting explained:

Women share all the qualities and some of the defects of men. They devote themselves with ardour to the hardest work, displaying astonishing strength. They are generally tall, slim and cheerful. [...] Men and women are equally interested in dancing, bullfighting and the game of handball, in which they all show great dexterity. (Richard and Quéting 1853, 23)

We also find this image of strong Basque women, as strong or even stronger than men, in the native Basque travel literature. As we have seen, Francisco de Hormaeche, in *Viaje pintoresco por las Provincias Vascongadas* (1846), constructed an image of the Basques that was defined by masculine attributes, as opposed to the feminine ones that he despised as characteristic of the South and the East. As such, he spoke of the strength of Basque women, whom he described as both beautiful and clean: "Admiration, and not only a little, is earned by the hard work performed by the women of Biscay, accompanying the men in the fields, cultivating them on their own in the absence of their husbands and brothers [...] carrying on their heads burdens that seem superior to their strength, and not neglecting for that reason the tender care, the serious duties that nature imposed on them as wives and mothers" (Hormaeche [1846], 20). Hormaeche provided the reader with a visual representation of this type of work. In one of the accompanying lithograph prints, a hard-working Biscayan woman was depicted in a field, ploughing the soil with a *laya* (a hand plough), while another carried a load on her head next to a nonchalant-looking man, lighting a pipe. Regarding the women's work with the hand plough, Hormaeche commented: "It seems incredible that in this violent and, above all, tiring exercise, the fair sex can acquire the same dexterity as the strong sex, alternate with it and not yield to it in anything" (Hormaeche [1846], 7) (Figure 10.1).

Another image showed four women at a port. Of the two women in the foreground—both armed with baskets for selling fish—, one is tending to her young son. Two others in the background are carrying a heavy bundle on their heads. This latter image harmonised the ideas of Basque strength and industriousness with a characteristic stereotype of femininity that could be applied to any era: motherhood. In this instance, however, motherhood was not directly linked to domesticity, but was instead associated with work outside of the home (Figure 10.2).

Hormaeche appears to be the author of the first tourist guide to the Basque Country, *Manual del viajero por las Provincias Vascongadas* [Traveller's





FIGURE 10.1 Illustrations from [Hormaeche, Francisco] *Viaje pintoresco por las provincias Vascongadas*. *Obra destinada a dar a conocer su historia y sus principales vistas, monumentos y antigüedades*. [1846]. Bilbao: Imprenta y litografía de N. Delmas



FIGURE 10.2 Illustrations from [Hormaeche, Francisco] *Viaje pintoresco por las provincias Vascongadas. Obra destinada a dar a conocer su historia y sus principales vistas, monumentos y antigüedades.* [1846]. Bilbao: Imprenta y litografía de N. Delmas.



Handbook to the Basque Provinces], published in Madrid in 1847 and signed “by a Basque.” In the chapter dedicated to Bilbao, in which he describes the city’s women, and by extension all Basque women, he says that they are defined by “their extreme cleanliness, for their good upkeep of their houses and families, and for their readiness not only to do the work that belongs to their sex, but also their readiness for domestic and mercantile business” (Hormaeche 1847, 95–6). Among the illustrations was a lithograph print remarkably similar to that of the above-mentioned port scene.

This strong, virile woman had two representations: the peasant woman (*baserritarra*, in Basque) and the woman of the port, who symbolically expressed the duality of the sea and mountain in the picturesque landscape cliché. In addition to the dockers at the port, the strong woman of the sea was also exemplified in the boatwomen (*bateleras*) of the town of Pasajes in Guipúzcoa. Victor Hugo explained how the women laboured alongside the men in a town whose only activity revolved around the sea: “The two sexes have divided this work according to their strength. The man has the ship, the woman the boat; the man has the sea, the woman the bay; the man goes fishing and leaves the gulf, the woman stays in the gulf and ‘passes’ [transports] all those who, for different reasons of business or interest, come from San Sebastian.” Describing the view from the balcony of his accommodation in Pasajes de San Juan, Hugo said that he was looking at “a group of fishers, men and women, up to their knees in water, pulling in their nets while singing” (Hugo 1880, 129, 134).

This hard-working Basque woman, the female strand within the cliché of the industrious and enterprising Basque, certainly did not fit with the ideal of domesticity of the time. Nonetheless, her fierce strength, described even as superior to men, was perfectly compatible with the care of the household. We have already seen how Alexandre Laborde spoke of the moral virtues of Basque women, stating that they seem “of good character, faithful and attentive to the care of the home” and Francisco Hormaeche pointing out “their good upkeep of their houses and families.” In *Guía histórico-descriptiva del viajero en el Señorío de Vizcaya* [Historical-Descriptive Guide for Travellers in the Lordship of Biscay], published in Bilbao in 1864, Juan Eustaquio Delmas explained:

If you turn your eyes away from these images of Basque life, those of you who do not know it, to the toilsome life of farm work, there you will see the old man and the young man simultaneously exercising their strength with imponderable vigour [...]. And you would see the woman at his side, the man’s companion, a companion in the soil of Biscay, where, in addition to carrying out the chores of the domestic household, driving the plough [...] and she retires, in the evening, to be the woman of her house,

to give bread to her children and comfort and love to those who have shared with her during the day the arduous work of the fields. (Delmas 1864, 23)

This image, combining strength and domesticity, was repeated throughout the nineteenth century. *Guía práctica de Bilbao y Vizcaya* [Practical Guide to Bilbao and Biscay], published in Madrid in 1900, also reflected this double dimension of the Basque female depiction:

“The Biscayan women are worthy companions to such hard-working men; they accompany them in their work in the fields, often cultivating them on their own and at the same time attending with application to their domestic duties. Biscayan women are distinguished by their good build and stature, plainness of features and cleanliness of person” (*Guía práctica* 1900, 20).

This image of the Basque woman, capable of doing the same work as men, and presented as the man’s “companion” rather than as a subordinate wife, also partially referred to the idea (and myth) of Basque egalitarianism in offering a horizontal and *long dureé* image of the relationship between the sexes. The famous Basque ethnographer Julio Caro Baroja wrote in 1949 in *Los Vascos* [The Basques], that among this people “consideration for women is greater than in other parts of the peninsula. The division of labour, another basis of any marriage alliance, does not turn them into chambermaids or house slaves, nor does it turn them into beasts of labour, as in some agricultural countries” (Caro Baroja 1986, 213). This image of the Basque woman can also be placed within the genealogy of modern Basque matriarchal myth, which was diffused in the twentieth century.

### 3 Conclusion

The image of Basque northerness was a resounding success. In January 1922, *National Geographic* dedicated an article to the Basque Country under the title “The Land of the Basques.” Written by Harry McBride, the piece formed part of a wider series on various parts of Spain that was published by the magazine throughout the 1920s (García Álvarez et alii 2013). In his text, McBride described the Basques as “the Yankees of Spain,” and the Basque provinces as “the New England of Spain”. He went on to depict the region, in comparison to the rest of Spain, as “more mountainous, more industrious, more modern,” with a rainy and humid climate, and a landscape that was much more industrialised (qtd in García Álvarez et alii, 2013). This northern image, already fully consolidated by the first decades of the twentieth century, was that which had

been disseminated through travel literature, both foreign and local, since the eighteenth century. He described a strong and virile people, hard-working and enterprising, egalitarian, proud and free. In short, he presented the vision of a civilized North, which stood out in sharp contrast, to the southern, orientalisised, and feminised image of the romantic stereotype of Spain.

This northernness was also expressed in the depiction of women, who were far removed from the prototype of Carmen, and also, at least in part, from the ideal of bourgeois femininity of the time: the demure, domestic woman in need of male protection. They were portrayed as strong women, tireless workers both inside and outside of the home. While they were capable of doing the same activities as men, their strength posed no threat to the social and gender order, for they were, at the same time, women endowed with unimpeachable morality, nobility, and dignity. They were neither Eve nor Mary, the sinner or saint—the traditional poles in which the representation of women in the Spain of Isabella II orbited (Rabaté 2007)—, but women of a different type; women who were both virile and virtuous, whose image was a correlate of Basque northernness. If the South was associated with feminine values, then virilising the image of women implied a reinforcing of northernness. The Basque female stereotype thus constituted a specific inflection of the nineteenth-century narrative of the Basque Country as an industrious and civilized North within—and in contrast to—the exotic South as represented by Spain.

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## A Growing Distrust of Southern Italy: Images and Theories about National Backwardness in Liberal Italy, 1876–1914

*Antonino De Francesco*

In the aftermath of the Second World War, a referendum, held on June 2, 1946, sealed the end of the monarchy established in 1861. On that occasion, the republic received 54.6% of the vote, though geographic distribution of the vote made it clear that there were two Italies: the North backed the republic, the South opposed it. The highest number approving the monarchy were to be found in Naples and in Sicily and such data encouraged criticism from left-wing parties towards Southern Italian society, which seemed to put the brakes on Italy's process of democratisation (De Francesco 2012, 191–4).

Truth be said, accusing the South of representing that part of the country that was the most backward, socially and politically, was nothing new, since similar accusations had started circulating soon after the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, at a time when the provinces of the South were teeming with brigands and seemed to be opposing the establishment of a unitary state (Pinto 2019). And yet, the turning point that would suggest the existence of two Italies – socially and politically at cross purposes – was still some time away. It would not come about until 1874 and 1876, when elections marked the end of long-running right-wing governments and the rise to power of the Left (Mascilli Migliorini 1979). Within the new majority, whose aim was a democratisation of political life, virtually all the ranks were filled by representatives from the South and the Right, which had just been removed from governing, straightaway lamented that the country's precariously held unity was being put in jeopardy now that it was precisely its most backward part – that South which had until then been a national predicament – that had finally reached power (Giarrizzo 1992). Such concerns were confirmed by the inquiries published just at that juncture by Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino, both from Tuscany and both close to right-wing circles: their remarks, the result of an ardently felt journey through the regions of the South, suggested that the South was quite different from the rest of Italy, since violence, cronyism and crime held the ground there. The recipe they proposed was as simple as it was

radical: only a prompt intervention from central government, to deal with and solve the problems lying at the heart of the backwardness of Southern society, would be able to help those regions to bridge the gap that separated them from the rest of Italy. Franchetti and Sonnino's words would be used to throw a sinister light on the new political course started by the Left and marked the official opening of the so-called "Southern question," something which, having started as a political concern, later morphed into an issue for social-economic analysis (Lupo 2015). As a result, Naples came under particular scrutiny, and the following years saw the publication of many studies aimed at illustrating a situation that now ranked among national issues.

## 1 Two Very Different Peoples

Among visitors to the city who immediately put to print their impressions can be found the English Radical Jessie White Mario – who had been in the ranks of Garibaldi's army when it had reached Naples in 1860 –, Cesira Pozzolini Siciliani, a Florentine noblewoman of liberal outlook, as well as two journalists from Tuscany, Pietro Ferrigni and Renato Fucini, both close to political circles of the Right.

It is important to preface this by saying that the above-mentioned observers had nothing in common, that each had his or her own political opinions and social origins and that, as such, each of them showed different approaches to the city's problems. Nevertheless, apart from the different sensibilities and their respective judgments, it is worth remarking that they all started from the consideration that Neapolitan society was split into two very different peoples, living side by side and constituting two inseparable units, being too different to ever be able to turn into a single and homogeneous community (Civile 2005, 47–9; Mozzillo 1995).

White Mario, for example, had deeply-felt words in that respect and it was precisely her democratic principles that moved her to denounce the existence within Naples of veritable Indian-like castes leading the landowners – the *galantuomini* – to dominate the common people. Such concerns would accompany her through the many places of moral and human misery characterising the city and which would prompt her to highlight the fact that the very physiognomy, the very somatic features of its people proved the existence of an anthropological difference: while the inhabitants of middle-class districts appeared proportioned and well shaped, those from the working-class ghettos displayed rickety bodies and were virtually cripples (White Mario 1877, 48–9).

While such a presentation added weight to White Mario's social denunciations, it also risked backfiring against her humanitarian position, since it unintentionally brought grist to the mill of those who, within the city's elite, drew attention to the risks posed by the Neapolitan populace and insisted on maintaining power in order to prevent the city, and the South as a whole, from sliding into a violent social confrontation. Their concerns were echoed by Pietro Ferrigni, who, while visiting the city, was at times led by the mayor of Naples himself and whose descriptions of the city's misery, apparently similar to those of White Mario, actually carried a totally different meaning. His denunciation of plebeian desolation had nothing in common with White Mario's heart-rending solidarity and in his pages the description of lower-class districts appears to be an overt opportunity to induce in the reader repulsion for a barbaric and backward world (Ferrigni 1877, 296–9).

While a chasm separated Ferrigni from White Mario, the fact that both the Right and the Left insisted on the distinction between the two peoples, helped to establish the allegory of a different world: a world which one might fend for or mistrust, to be assimilated or to be dominated, but still a world that was inexorably different and far away. In the writings of Cesira Pozzolini Siciliani, such ambivalence was often present: on one hand, the writer indulged in the traditional descriptions of a ragged and slothful populace, made docile and harmless, though, by the climate and the carefree nature of Neapolitans; on the other, the scenes following the liquefaction of Saint Januarius' blood led her to consider that "in no other country is the rabble as ignorant and prejudiced, believing and superstitious" (Pozzolini Siciliani 1880, 113). Such a two-fold approach led to a precarious balance between praise for a traditional world impervious to the failures of modernity and proof of the profound moral inferiority on which it was founded.

It is precisely in this area that Renato Fucini would show his best work, with remarks on the deleterious aspects of Neapolitan social life accompanied by an admiration for the natural surroundings of the city such as had long since been made popular by travel narratives. Thus, the main thoroughfares of Naples seemed to him to have a European look, while all the other streets, as a result of the shameful conditions in which they were, reminded him of the Orient. Similar references to the South seen as a different reality, in no way a European one, comparable to a world largely regarded as inferior, jump out from all his pages: it is true that the writer showed understanding for the problems of Naples' populace and denounced the inevitable link between poverty and criminality, but his description of the destitute districts of Naples ran under the banner of stereotypes and platitudes intended to highlight folkloric

themes and to fix in the reader the idea of a South as a magical and wondrous place, whose horrific social contradictions were, however, made tolerable by its particularly mild climate (Fucini 1878, 184–5).

There had been precedents, all of which could be found in a form of travel literature, dating from the Eighteenth century, that had presented the South of Italy as a distinct and mysterious place, where one could find usages and customs that had long since disappeared from the rest of Europe (Mozzillo 1992). However, such images were not original in the least, since portraying Naples on a par with an Oriental city was a trope coming from within the city itself, namely from the very same local potentates whose interest it was to present their city as a backward world in order to find legitimacy as the only possible leaders of an uncivilized people that had to be constantly kept in line.

This was the view given in 1882 by Fanny Zampini-Salazaro, a lady from Naples' well-to-do bourgeoisie, who portrayed the life of the city's lower classes in enthusiastic terms:

[...] the deafening popular dances, the songs at times full of brio, at times lugubrious and melancholic, depending on the state of their timeless inspiration, that is, love; the processions, the festivities, the shrieks of peddlers and vendors, and all other outward manifestations, help to distinguish this people from all the others, a people that is always gay, loud, smiling and carefree even in wretchedness and affliction. (Zampini-Salazaro 1882, LXXXV)

For the noblewoman the lack of progress was to be thanked somehow, since it had made it possible to safeguard an age-old order, whose cast-iron hierarchy guaranteed a clear social balance, and because it ranked with painstaking precision the city's groups and trades in accordance with a traditional range of values with which everybody still identified. Her suggestions, behind a heart-rending nostalgia for a well-ordered world which modernity risked destroying, were evidence of how backward the balancing of interests was in Southern society, aiming as they did at turning the mass of platitudes piled on the anthropology of Southern Italy into the identitarian particularity of the city of Naples.

On closer inspection, such an approach should have worried the leading class of newly formed Italy, since magnifying backwardness as a safeguard of social order was a demonstration of the reactionary nature of the elites in power and made the South a bastion of political conservatism. On the contrary, it was precisely the fact that leading citizens of the South were part of the government majority that lent legitimacy to that image, which became a sort of official representation of the South within the new national setting.

## 2 A View from the North

At first the consequences of such a view went unremarked and the stereotype of a backward though well-ordered South soon gained ground as an explicit way of supporting the work of creating a national character. In Angelo Stoppani's *Bel Paese* [Beautiful Country] (1883), facile generalizations on the character of Southern people were, for example, considered a significant part of the country's anthropological identity (Stoppani 1883, 478), while Carlo Collodi, the author of the well-received *Pinocchio*, went back to the same themes in 1886, openly revealing the superstition and the barbarity of the Southern populace, to conclude, however, that patriotism itself would lead it to rapid progress (Collodi 1886, 19).

Such civic-minded literature, which was intended for young students, aimed at giving expression to a nation-wide plan that could unify, under the banner of patriotism, the pluralistic character of Italy which had been forged by centuries of history (Fiorelli 2012). The goal of giving expression to the myriad small fatherlands making up the larger one by collecting all of them within the framework of a shared national plan was to fail early on, since the cultural context which inspired it – a multifarious Italy that was at the same time a participant in a shared national destiny – had been shattered against the rocks of a differentiating process that had turned the country into a visibly discordant patchwork.

Such a view was confirmed by the cholera epidemic that reached Naples in 1884 (Snowden 1995). At the time, many had highlighted the connection between poverty and disease, and all the main newspapers in Italy had printed detailed reports of the horrific living conditions in Naples, while lining words of sympathy side by side with denunciations of the serious cultural deficiencies to be found among the city's population. The *Corriere della Sera* [Daily Courier], which by then had already become Northern Italy's most authoritative daily, repeatedly denounced popular superstition and the collective hysteria of the urban populace, which it saw as the persistent heritage of a past that would stubbornly not give way. The newspaper repeatedly called for action against religious processions, which the people of Naples saw as a way of gaining divine intercession, but which, for the paper, were only a dangerous opportunity for the spread of disease ("A Napoli dal 23 al 24," *Corriere della Sera*, September 25–26 1884).

The insistence of Milan's daily on popular superstition in Naples should not surprise, as readers in the North of Italy had long been used, since the early years of the unified State, to seeing the South through the prism of stereotyped categories. The reports by [Northern Italian] correspondents from the South

met the expectations of a public that felt sure that it already knew that faraway part of Italy, whose savage violence and barbarity had been brought to light by news of the brigands there. This explains the enormous emphasis given, in 1884, to the story of Calabrian recruit Salvatore Misdea, who, in a barracks in Naples, had killed eight of his fellow recruits as retaliation of the jokes of which he had been the butt (Berré 2012). Another reason why this event hit the national headlines was the presence of Cesare Lombroso among the defence counsel at the trial. Lombroso was the most celebrated scientist at the time and took this opportunity to illustrate his theories on the incidence of atavism in the make-up of criminals (Frigessi 2003, 359–61). In his opinion, the brutal act of violence by Misdea, soon to be sentenced to death by execution, could be understood by looking through the culprit's genealogical tree for those forms of short temper and idiocy, madness and criminality repeatedly shown by the soldier. This story, which would soon dominate the pages of Italy's main dailies, confirmed among public opinion the existence of a barbarous world that had survived the progressive policies started by the unified State, and that still prevailed in whole areas of the South and represented therefore a formidable obstacle on the way to modernity (Scarfoglio 2003, 188).

Adolfo Rossi, a correspondent for Rome's *Messaggero* [Messenger], climbed his way through Calabria as far as the recruit's birthplace to meet his family and for a close examination, in accordance with Lombroso's directions, of the environment in which Misdea had lived. His travel notes are in this respect exemplary of the fact that the journalist intended to stir the reader's attention through the description of a world that was thoroughly foreign to that of the new Italy. The correspondent thought that the recruit's birthplace looked

like an ugly Tunisian village; wretched-looking ramshackle houses, streets that are nothing but cesspools. A number of urchins in shirtsleeves, gaunt and soot-black, were rummaging in the company of pigs and hens; a few women went up and down carrying their *gozze*, water pots, balanced on their heads; a daughter was lovingly and publicly delousing her aged father sitting in the middle of the yard ... And yet how fascinating would these women be in their artistic costumes, wearing those headbands, with those jugs on their head – which give them an Arabian, Oriental air – if only they were cleaner! (Rossi 1893, 44–52)

This pairing of the South of Italy with nearby Tunisia – aimed at excluding that part of Italy from the ranks of civilized countries – was skilfully made up on the basis of a specific image that had been around for quite some time, both drama and literature having equally contributed to its creation, since each had so heavily insisted on the topics of brigandage and the Southern populace.

At first, interest in popular violence in the South had been kept alive by works of fiction such as novels sold in instalments having brigands as their protagonists. This theme had appeared relatively frequently since the early days of the unified State. In 1867, for example, a lawyer from Lombardy, Antonio Vismara, had published a novel which made short work of the South, painting it as a society quite distinct from, and totally foreign to, the civilized world. In the introduction, he revealed to the reader that the facts depicted had not taken place “in Oceania, in Africa, in savage lands, but rather in Italian territory! These events did not take place in times of ignorance, superstition, religious fanaticism, but in 1861...” (Vismara 1866, III–IV).

As a lawyer, Vismara had worked in the military courts convened to try those arrested for brigandage. His aim was, in all honesty, to highlight the long way on the road to progress that the South still had to go, though there is no doubt that the reader might get the opposite impression and would leave the book convinced that all the way across Italy stood a world hopelessly lost in superstition and violence.

The same trick turned up in the following years in the works of Francesco Mastriani, a torrential writer from Naples, whose *Misteri di Napoli* [Mysteries of Naples] had been published in Milan in 1877. Set in a different cultural context, his writings protesting against the new social order (Guardiani 2013) had stirred reactions that went totally counter to what the author intended: in the regions of the North, images of a ragged and vagrant rabble transformed the denunciation of a dramatic social situation into confirmation of a backwardness that was fated to be branded with the marks of an anthropological difference.

A better-known writer from the South, Luigi Capuana, would denounce this attitude in the early 1890s. He imputed to himself, to Federico De Roberto, and especially to his own friend Giovanni Verga – the main exponent of Italian *verismo* – the serious fault of having encouraged, through their respective literary works, the spread of unacceptable clichés about Sicily. The rampant prejudices held by the Nation’s public opinion with regard to the island appeared to Capuana to be the direct result of a warped interest in a literary genre that had put the South under the spotlight within a few decades of the country’s unity (Capuana 1892, 7–10). The writer was no doubt painting a lurid picture of the situation, but it is a fact that throughout Italy the public felt it had a solid knowledge of the South, which had by then become a literary place of indubitable fascination for readers.

If proof was needed, this was to be found in the enormous success among the public – thousands of copies sold throughout Italy in 1887 – of a novel, *Il cappello del prete* [The Priest’s Hat], which the Milanese writer Emilio De Marchi had chosen to set in Naples, a place which he had simply imagined and



never visited, providing a portrait of the city that can easily be evinced from the journalism of the time. In particular, the main characters corresponded to a well-worn cliché that was bound to find an audience among the readers of that period: the protagonist was a priest from Naples' lower-class districts whom the Neapolitan populace deemed a sorcerer thanks to his uncanny skill at guessing the numbers drawn on the lottery, while his executioner, the bankrupt baron of Santafusca, in addition to being an inveterate gambler and frequent visitor of low dives of dubious character, is a direct descendant of a brigand. On one hand, De Marchi was portraying the fanaticism and the superstition of the Neapolitan populace, while providing, on the other, a sketch of the local potentates as backward and lecherous, and accustomed to lording it over in the South. Such a negative understanding of the South, founded on a warped and essentially incongruous use of picturesque news features from the South, found its confirmation in the fact that the very core of the novel – the existence of a priest who is considered a sort of wizard in Naples' underworld thanks to his weird skill at arranging magical numbers – had actually occurred a few years earlier (Adamo 2005).

This image of the South portrayed through the prism of abject poverty and moral degradation, was also haunted by the existence of organised crime, which was ever present in the minds of public opinion. Articles on the camorra, first, and on the mafia, later, had greatly contributed to reinforcing the idea that the South was rife with lawlessness and that the practice of criminal violence was a dangerous germ ready to infect the whole nation. The term camorra quickly turned into shorthand, in all regions of Northern and Central Italy, to denote situations which, though at times quite different from one another, all came under the common denominator of corruption. Thus, already in 1874, the camorra was a subject for popular drama in Milan's theatres, as the term was being used to illustrate a war among poor wretches trying to gain some unlawful, meagre profit (Villani 1874); in 1876 the term is found in Tuscany, where a local broadsheet was suggesting that the bad example set by the Southern regions had affected the municipality of Portoferraio, where criminal trafficking and cronyism were legion;<sup>1</sup> sometime later, in 1887,

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1 "La camorra nel Municipio di Portoferraio," *La Vespa*, March 17, 1876: "This lethal plague also seems to have penetrated several Tuscan municipalities which had once been a model of prudence and uprightness. Many are the facts that we may produce to confirm our claim, and which would show to what extent even the best among our leaders have deviated from the probity of yore, in the wake of the nefarious example of what unfortunately is the staple in other provinces of Italy".

the term was being evoked in connection with multiple thefts perpetrated in Venice against unsuspecting tourists, with the following proviso:

[...] the word *camorra* is a provincial term from the South which thanks to evil customs has gained national currency throughout Italy even though it is not to be found in dictionaries. ... Venice has been for years under the weight of the most grievous accusation that may be laid against a city in the North, the accusation of *camorra*. (Ottolenghi 1887, 5)

However, the portrait of a South ruled by lawlessness was being peddled not so much by news articles on the mafia and the *camorra*, which were indeed numerous in those years,<sup>2</sup> as by other media, among which drama played a very significant role, as a result of repertory plays devoted to the world of the *camorra* being constantly on the stage. This period saw the serendipitous rediscovery, in 1884, of a play by the Sicilian author Giuseppe Rossitto, whose comedy of 1863, *Li mafiusi di la Vicaria* [The Mafia of la Vicaria], was – as the title says – the first work to make explicit use of the word *mafia*. This play, which had been a flop at the time, was later reprised on a successful tour. Its reviewer soon turned it into a detailed catalogue of themes from the criminal world which had by now become part of “Italy’s moral and intellectual everyday experience” (*I mafiusi* 1885, 9). A few years hence, in 1889, even greater success was to be enjoyed by Salvatore Di Giacomo, the leading interpreter of the Neapolitan “soul”. He had studied the city’s history and traditions and would soon turn the city’s dialect into a versatile instrument for verse and drama. *Assunta Spina*, once again a *camorra* play, would enjoy huge and lasting success, to such an extent that it was made into an opera and, on the eve of the First World War, also a film (Di Giacomo 1910).

Truth and fiction were to be found so intricately woven into each other in the end that they could hardly be disentangled, if the success of Neapolitan songs on a national scale is any evidence. Here too, we have a catalogue of images that artistic tradition had identified with the city (Stazio 1991, 16–7); at the same time, through the use of dialect and the revival of ancient notions, those images were being translated into a simple and traditional message, since their motifs evoked the unique natural context of the place – the flowers, the sun, the sea – as well as the enclosure of amorous passion, with disappointment and betrayal as the inevitable sidekicks in the final act.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Umiltà 1878, Alongi 1886 and 1890.

The question one should ask is, however, what form such peculiar turns would assume along the roads of Italy. In this sense, images of barefoot rascals playing musical instruments, or the pictures of everyday life accompanying books of Neapolitan songs, or postcards reproducing the notes of the most popular airs, seem to be saying that the city's melodic genre was enjoying great success, in Italy as well as abroad, precisely because it was harping on the heartrending anthropological difference of the South. Whereas in Naples this was translated into a regret for the loss of the good old days dismantled by the shocks of modernity, elsewhere instead, it took on the hues of a lasting (and, in more ways than one, worrying) preservation of a pernicious traditionalism. This was what photographers from all over Italy were doing, reaching Naples in droves to offer the public a truthful profile of the city's society (Galasso et alii, 1981): the portraits of money grubbers – mostly taken in a studio, in front of fancy backdrops, therefore only apparently fixed in their customary poses and gestures – went hand in hand with photographs describing life in the streets, which was dominated by street brats playing morra, or else the plebs, among whom stood out some boys guzzling maccheroni, captured in their skilful hand and mouth performances (Bertellini 2010, 30–58).

### 3 Two Italies

As a result, one should not therefore be too surprised to find that such an insistence on a specific image of Naples – where superstition and corruption join religious bigotry and political traditionalism – would lead to antagonistic attitudes towards the South, especially among Milan's intellectual milieus close to radical democracy. At the time of the cholera, for example, the Milanese daily *Secolo* [Century] started a series of reports from Naples in which the lack of understanding of the moral universe of the city's populace quickly veered from disbelief to contempt. The newspaper's columns were thus besieged by the description of scenes of superstition in the city that seemed to come one after the other in quick succession: from the denunciation of warning signals to the accusations of being a jinx against anyone who might suggest sanitary preventative measures, from the nefarious consequences of lottery wins, which led to incontinent gorging on food, to the fanatical rush towards votive statuettes long since covered in notes asking for intercessions from the saints, to blind faith in processions, from violence against anyone appearing to be a godless infidel to the theft of church money collections, the *Secolo* did not let any opportunity go to waste to demonstrate the backwardness of Naples' plebs in all its glory. The Milanese daily insisted on those features to show the government where its priorities lay:

The plebs must be enlightened. They must be taught to look danger in the face. Dispel the dangerous prejudices of poisoners. Is it possible that in the middle of the Nineteenth century we should go back to well poisoners, to contamination, to epidemics criminally produced by the government? (*Il Secolo*, September 10–11, 1884)

Still, the frenzied campaign of the *Secolo* against popular fanaticism, though dictated by good intentions, led to the opposite result of antagonising public opinion with regard to the South. In Northern Italy, where socialism was making great strides, impatience with the conditions in which the South seemed to be wallowing, divided between two peoples, one lost in abjection and superstition, with the other, however, in its turn incapable of reforming actions, cajoled as it was by the substantial aid secured for it by central government.

In a nutshell, at the start of the 1890s, it seemed clear that the promotion of specific regional identities – to which history and anthropology, archeology and linguistics had concurred – had gone haywire with regard to political developments, suggesting that in the regions of the South such diversity had a negative impact on society and was the cause of a primitive and backward-looking social equilibrium (De Francesco 2013). In other words, trying to keep the various identities of the country together had led to a lurid picture of the South destined to come into collision with a social frame blighted by backwardness.

All of the above was fostered by the involution of national politics, which had been unable to respond convincingly to the new configuration of Parliament in 1876: in the years immediately following, hopes of a revival of liberalism had been crushed by the practice of political *trasformismo*: the handover of power from the Right to the Left did not lead to a strengthening of bipartisanship, but rather to the fragmentation of the two sides leading to majorities changing from time to time depending on agreements and concessions running across the board irrespective of which side was in power (Graziano 2010, 91–7). The prospects for reform would soon be sacrificed in favour of single power groups dominating the social-economic scene of the young Italian state. It was within such a frame that accusations started landing against the South, at the door of whose political class was laid the charge of having encouraged *trasformismo* decisively introducing into parliamentary dynamics their social conservatism in order to look after their parasitical economic interests.

The serious cases of corruption and criminality in Naples and throughout the South of the country were also evidence of how *trasformismo* practices had troubled the waters of national politics, which ran the risk of collusion with organised crime in more than one instance. The revival of the fortunes of the erstwhile member of Garibaldi's corps, Francesco Crispi, whose last government got its start in 1893, exasperated such concerns. His strong-arming

of opposition parties, his policy of rabid colonialism in Africa convinced the radical and socialist opposition, which were particularly strong in the North of the country, that the elderly statesman was by now the bastion of a corrupted power, which, not surprisingly, found its strongholds among the Southern notables. The *fin-de-siècle* crisis – characterised by Milan's political circles fighting against Crispi – thus became the dramatic clash between the North, which considered itself civilized and advanced, and the South, promptly labelled backward and superstitious. The effects of such a clash were soon to be seen in the 1895 elections, lost by Crispi in the Lombard capital, but easily won in the South, though he had to bow out the following year after protests in Milan as a result of the disastrous military losses incurred by his aggressive policies in Africa. The leading city of the North – the driving force of industrial activity – moved to the opposition in the face of a national government that seemed incapable of responding to its expectations. Relations between North and South immediately felt the blow, which soon turned into open confrontation, also via stereotype attacks, between the two parts of Italy (Petraccone 2000, 136–207).

New fuel had been added to this dispute by developments in the social and anthropological sciences. Between 1897 and 1901, Alfredo Niceforo, a Sicilian disciple of socialist criminologist Enrico Ferri, published a number of works dealing head-on with the issue of the South's political and moral deficiencies. In particular, in *Italia barbara contemporanea* [Contemporary Barbarian Italy], which came out in 1898, Niceforo developed the thesis of the anthropological inferiority of the South, around which would revolve, at the turn of the century, the whole debate regarding the two Italies and their strenuous cohabitation under the same roof of a unitary state. The text made great use of the concept of atavism borrowed from the Lombroso school, applying it, though, to the classification of human races such as had been developed in parallel by the anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi: the joining of those two research perspectives which had until then been proceeding side by side in the world of science, enabled him to identify a Mediterranean lineage of distant African origins which had, in line with primeval characteristics of the South alone, crystallised the deep cause of the degradation of Italy's moral life (Teti 2011, 7–47).

Italians were seen by Niceforo as the imperfect mix of two different races: the Aryan race, which had arrived in a far distant epoch from North Europe, ruling over the Northern regions, and the Mediterranean race, having, indeed, African origins, which had forever been trapped within the enclosure of the South. *Italia barbara contemporanea* entered the cultural debate of the time with explosive force, since not only did Niceforo vouchsafe a scientific way of explaining the mystery of the unbridgeable fissure between the two Italies,

he also had no qualms about the political implications that his argument was opening up. It was anthropological inferiority that led the people of the South to look askance at modernity and that ensured that they would be ever ready to stand in the way of any aspiration to freedom and progress. According to Niceforo, recent Italian history was but confirmation, after all, of his case, since the population of the South

[...] after Garibaldi had captured Naples, rushed to gorges in the mountains and to the forests to spread terror as brigands, assailing whole villages and massacring our troops because it neither wanted nor understood a government that was new, free and far more civilised than the previous one ... that same people, hostile to any idea of progress crystallised in still primitive forms of social life ... has been unable to do anything new and advanced ... It has always stayed with its arms akimbo because of its notorious, damned hostility towards any innovative idea. (Niceforo 1898, 267–9)

In those pages, Niceforo, his eye looking in favour upon the republican and socialist oppositions, came to suggest the end of centralised government for the regions of the North, while demanding – obviously on behalf of a new leading class that did not have to depend on the consensus of Southern plebs – the most extensive control for the regions of the South (Niceforo 1898, 291–9). Niceforo's pages would therefore provide great scientific support to the concurrent political discourse of the radical and socialist Left, which his teacher Enrico Ferri outlined during a parliamentary debate in 1901, when he drew the South as a backward world dominated by criminality, against which the regions of the North could be set apart from their perspective of progress and freedom (Petraccone 2000, 219–24).

It was to no avail that, likewise on the left, republican Napoleone Colajanni and at that time socialist Gaetano Salvemini spoke words of caution against a political line that made it impossible to gain consensus in the Southern regions. What prevailed instead, in the discourse of the Italian Left at the start of the century, was precisely the stereotype of a ragged and backward South, morally uneducated and politically illiterate, cleaving through mostly sordid interests to its own leading class, of which it was, appropriately, the inexhaustible electoral reservoir.

Thus, it was that the early Twentieth century saw the waning of the age-old idea that two distinct peoples lived in the Southern regions, merely juxtaposed, when not opposed, to each other. In fact, in Northern Italy, the political ideas of left-wing forces helped promote the notion that in the South the populace and the local notables shared some kind of repugnant harmony, arising from

the intricate web of interests leading to an unmentionable common ground, which resulted in a social equilibrium on the cheap destined to decant into a clear political deal: the elites would use the uncouth masses as leverage to maintain their firm control of the institutional structure, dispensing favours to their respective electoral blocks, which, in turn, also by means of criminal associations, were able to control the activity of their superiors along the way.

#### 4 Conclusion

Shortly afterwards, this understanding of reality seemed to be confirmed by the case of the Sicilian Member of Parliament Nunzio Nasi, who had been declared unfit to stand as a result of financial misconduct and was later convicted, in 1906, even though he had been re-elected by his constituents in the meantime. On hearing the news that their MP had been convicted, people in Trapani, Western Sicily, broke into riots which were promptly denounced by all the newspapers in the North.

The *Secolo* meticulously listed all the excesses of that “collective madness,” to remind its readership that only the drawing of lottery numbers – namely 5 and 26, on which “the whole of Trapani’s plebs” were constantly betting – could have appeased them (*Il Secolo*, June 10, 1906). The *Corriere della Sera* was even more heavy-handed:

The people of Trapani have a lot in common with Muslim people. The rule of the Arabs was felt more strongly there than elsewhere; ... the character of the people of Trapani has a lot in common with that of the Arabs; exaggeration is in the temperament of these people who have for centuries held in adoration a modest picture of the Virgin rescuing survivors of shipwrecks while immoderately worshiping the statue of the Madonna of Trapani, covered and even buried under the weight of countless silver votive objects left there by all those who have been in any danger whatsoever. In recent years, worship of Mr Nasi has partially replaced that of the miraculous Madonna; his portrait, adorned with flowers, can be found in all homes in Trapani. Villa Nasi has been turned into a sort of temple, consecrated to the devotion of citizens. (*Corriere della Sera*, June 6, 1906)

Last in this list of news media comparing the people of Trapani to the remnant of a long-gone age was the socialist daily itself *Avanti!*, which denounced that the crowd



[...] infringed all rights. It covered in spit, insults, hard blows workers, soldiers, policemen [...] All night long a shrill, constant, unending ringing of bells summoned the whole population. The churches were invaded by the tearful crowd calling for the most dreadful divine punishment. For an entire day the country was at the mercy of this mob, inspired and ignorant, credulous, and savage, ardent and wild. (*Avanti!*, June 13, 1906)

The violent protests in Trapani against the Nasi trial had thus allowed the national press to reopen, by way of an attack on cronyism, the voluminous file on the traditionalist and reactionary character of the Southern population. Nasi, however, did not remain silent: he soon left prison and went on the attack: "Southern Italy looks to the eyes of Northerners like a Vendée of absentee landlords, ignorant plebs and corrupt politicians" (Blando 2017). At the same time, back in Trapani, he was the subject of scenes of collective hysteria and demonstrations of extraordinary and rash affection. After all, the list of his achievements in politics was impressive: Nasi had been elected an MP in 1886 with 47,7% the vote, rising to 76,2% in 1890, finally reaching 96,6% in 1892 and hovering around 90% in 1897 and in 1900. It was only in 1904 that electoral consensus for him had gone down slightly, plateauing at around 80%, but the legal drama that had led to the loss of his seat allowed him to scoop up in triumph virtually all the votes in the eight by-elections that followed, all of them declared invalid, held between 1905 and 1909 to assign his officially vacant seat. Such triumphs were repeated in the general election of 1909 (99,1%) and in the by-elections that followed, and again in 1913, after Nasi had in the meantime been declared once again fit to stand for elections, his ratings, though now down to around 60%, did not prevent him from controlling local political life for a long time to come.

As a result, indignant, if not sarcastic, comments were to be heard, again from the Left, regarding proposals aimed at introducing universal suffrage; the same attitude led to a revolutionary all-or-nothing tendency with its eyes firmly fixed on the proletariat of the North which dismissed as obsolete the suggestions of those who, in the perspective of a democratisation of political life throughout the nation, were asking for concrete actions to solve the many problems of the South.<sup>3</sup>

Openly flaunted criticism of Southern society was destined, at the other end of Italy, to strengthen the hold of the local elites, all set to line up under the

3 It is from within this framework, on the other hand, that the debate on the inferiority of Southerners drew its strength; the voices of the main protagonists may be read in Teti 2011, 127–217. As to that great age of debates on the Southern question, see Galasso 1981, 51–75.

banner of the government while lamenting the existence of unacceptable prejudices. Against those who pointed out the inferiority of the South, resulting from a pernicious psychological universe, would stand those who highlighted the glories of the Southern fatherland at the same time as they complained about the many wrongs they suffered.

The early years of the twentieth century saw a contentious duel between the advocates of the two civilizations: this clash was destined only apparently to empty itself into the collective patriotic effort of the Great War. In the aftermath of the First World War, it was not by accident that early Fascism – omnium gatherum of many revolutionary trade unionists – should show in its turn many a misgiving relative to the South and pointed at its political class as the main culprit of the many shortcomings of the Liberal state.

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## Love, Gender and Class in the Nationalist Project of Emilia Pardo Bazán: An Unsentimental Story

*Isabel Burdiel*

As François Hartog has written, for the great nineteenth-century novelists, portraying the world and perceiving its unique nature meant presenting to their readers a world in the grip of History, permeated and shaped by it. This was the moment at which History acquired almost the same status as that previously enjoyed by theology in terms of giving meaning to the world (Hartog 2013, 9). That History with an upper-case H, understood as time's arrow, confident and creative, as process-progress, was – at the same time – materialising in a myriad of histories with a lower-case h, national and specific histories. The lasting tension between the two – which to a large extent reflects the classic North-South, East-West divides – stems from the fact that those national histories could only be self-aware once they had been inserted into History. It was in this context (with its inescapable tensions) that there emerged the figures of the “national writer” and “nation-builder,” who were, in some but not all cases, one and the same. Both were primarily thought of as masculine, and the social definition of both was bound up in the complex relationships between History and histories, politics and literature, which either brought them together or alienated them from each other.

Certain aspects of these issues are considered by Anne-Marie Thiesse in her recent publication *La fabrique de l'écrivain national. Entre littérature et politique*, whose timidity to challenge the idea that women might also be considered as national writers largely inspired the writing of this chapter. Thiesse correctly notes that “the age of nationalism was also the age of universalism.” In that context, “feminine originality was not enough to warrant the status of recognised national writer, less still the higher rank of universality. And writers from the most powerful literary nations were more universal than others” (Thiesse 2019, 15). This is no doubt a fundamental element, but in my opinion it is too sweeping a statement, and one which conceals the literary operations and political practices of the gender discourses used as a basis for excluding female writers from (or, in exceptional cases, including them within) the category of “national writer,” and also that of “nation-builder.” It also conceals the strategies employed to oppose their exclusion.

What follows is part of an ongoing project addressing this issue; the focus of my chapter is the complex relationships established between nation, gender, and class in the work of the Spanish (and Galician) writer Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851–1921). Over time, these relationships came to designate a very specific, if never categorical, stance on Galician and Spanish identity – and on the fabrication of “North” and “South” – at a crucial moment in the definition of both: the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Despite the fact that she was probably the most famous female Spanish writer of her day, Pardo Bazán was never a “national writer,” in that she never achieved the required level of undisputed acclaim in the public – i.e. national – sphere to be granted that status. Nor, for that matter, did Madame de Staël or George Sand, George Eliot or the Brontës, Bertha von Suttner or Fredrika Bremer in their respective days. None of them succeeded in becoming national writers in the way Sir Walter Scott, Victor Hugo, Alessandro Manzoni, Friedrich Schiller, and Adam Mickiewicz did. And we need to ask why this should be.

There are two women who unquestionably did achieve this status – two apparently very different writers. In England, Jane Austen (1775–1817) wrote about love and levels of income, while in Galicia poet and novelist Rosalía de Castro (1837–1885) also wrote about love, as well as about the emotional bond to one’s *tierra* (homeland or place of birth) and about frustrated ideals. England was the centre of a consolidated nation state. Galicia was a peripheral region of Spain with its own language, a region which at the time was seeking cultural, literary and, increasingly, political recognition. The 1863 publication of Rosalía de Castro’s *Cantares gallegos* [Galician Songs] is conventionally taken as the starting point of the Galician *Rexurdimento*, which was similar, albeit with its own distinctive characteristics, to the Catalan *Renaixença*. Both renaissance movements aroused suspicion, and even profound unease and incomprehension among contemporary Spanish nationalists.

If Jane Austen the “national writer” was above all a Victorian creation, Rosalía de Castro’s equivalent status came out of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century *galleguismo* (Galicianism). In both cases, male relatives played a key role in the authors’ posthumous national canonisation. Austen’s reputation was firmly established by the publication of *A Memoir of Jane Austen* (1869) by her nephew James Edward Austen-Leigh and the *Letters of Jane Austen* (1884) by her great-nephew Edward, Lord Brabourne. As for Rosalía de Castro, her writings were tirelessly promoted by her historian husband Manuel Martínez Murguía, considered the first great Galician nation-builder (Barreiro 2012).

Jane Austen and the other European women writers listed earlier will be assessed in the context of the (im)possible figure of the “national female writer” as part of the wider-ranging research project mentioned above. Here,

however, I shall touch on the case of Rosalía de Castro, for three closely inter-related reasons. Firstly, Castro (who wrote in both Galician and Spanish) and Emilia Pardo Bazán (who wrote only in Spanish) are the only two women to have entered the Spanish literary canon during a key moment of its development, the final decades of the nineteenth century. Secondly, Castro is still seen, today more than ever, as the undisputed literary embodiment of Galicia – for Galician nationalists, she is the “national female writer” *par excellence*. Thirdly, central to the process of her canonisation was the role played by the historical fabrication of a rivalry between her and Pardo Bazán based not only on literary and political issues, but also on opposing notions of *respectable femininity*.

### 1 Literature, Celebrity, and Politics

Along with writers such as Benito Pérez Galdós and Leopoldo Alas (*Clarín*), Pardo Bazán was a leading figure in the late nineteenth-century revival of Spanish fiction and in the way in which the debate about French naturalism spread throughout Spain. Her novels *Los Pazos de Ulloa* (1886) and *Madre Naturaleza* (1887)<sup>1</sup> are now canonical works of that revival, whose originality was to challenge the tenets of conventional naturalism from within. Although Pardo Bazán is most famous for her novels and short stories, which were a notably different addition to the European literary scene and were translated into a dozen languages during her lifetime, she was also an influential cultural and political journalist, literary critic and historian, cultural entrepreneur, and playwright. She took a pioneering interest in Russian literature and, later, modernism, spiritualism and decadentism, as is evident in such intriguing novels as *Dulce Dueño* [Sweet Master] (1911).

On top of all these accomplishments, one of the most innovative aspects of Pardo Bazán's intellectual trajectory was her introduction of feminism (a term she used openly) to the cultural and political debates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She translated John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) and August Bebel's *La Femme et le Socialisme* [The Woman and Socialism] (1891) for her own publishing enterprise, while in 1889 an extended essay of hers, originally entitled *The Woman of Spain*, whose Spanish version is considered one of the foundational texts of Spanish feminism, was printed in *The Fortnightly Review* (Pardo Bazán 1999). Feminism is addressed in several of

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<sup>1</sup> Available in English as *The House of Ulloa* (Penguin Classics) and *Mother Nature* (Bucknell University Press) respectively.



her novels, notably in one of those I shall discuss here, *Insolación* [Sunstroke] (1889),<sup>2</sup> and *Memorias de un Solterón* [Memoirs of a Bachelor] (1896).

At a key moment in the consolidation of the culture of celebrity in Spain and Europe – as new audiences began to take an interest in writers' and artists' private lives as well as admiring their literary or other creative achievements – Pardo Bazán managed to be both an agent and an object of change, attempting – not always successfully – to maintain control over her image as a writer and “famous woman”. As happened with Madame de Staël and George Sand, her passion for public life and her desire to participate in the most important cultural and political debates of the day gave her a literary, political, and cultural celebrity that was always controversial, placing her simultaneously at the heart and on the margins of the public arena (Burdriel 2019).

Furthermore, and most importantly as far as this chapter is concerned, Pardo Bazán's work was steeped to an unusual degree in the notions of History and nation. From the outset of her career as a writer she was aware that constructing a cultural, literary sphere was an indispensable element in forging a modern nation. In that respect, constructing hegemonic national identities – and resisting those identities – were transnational processes which affected all European nation states and drew (or ought to draw) on a hugely diverse range of cultural, imaginative, and emotional material. In that context, Pardo Bazán developed a *defensive*, deeply uneasy form of Spanish nationalism (defensive within Spain and beyond its borders), which sought to make comparisons primarily with France, a country she loved, and England, one she detested. She admired both but resisted the idea of using either as a model (Gabilondo 2009; Torrecilla 2003). Within that uneasy outlook – which had much to do with the exchange of gazes between “North” and “South” (again, inside and outside Spain) – she established a network of reasons and emotions that permeated her idea of Spain and of Galicia: their limitations, their potential and the ghosts that haunted them. I therefore believe, and shall argue here, that the dynamics of political and economic power, and of cultural representation between Western Europe, Spain and Galicia, have to be studied in interconnected fashion in order to understand Pardo Bazán's intentions.

I also want to underline the fact that in order to understand her stance, which was considerably more complex than previously suspected, we cannot limit ourselves to analysing her literary or political criticism. We must also examine her works of fiction – novels, short stories and plays – because Emilia Pardo Bazán was fully aware of two ideas that now pervade the historiography

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2 Available in a Spanish-English bilingual edition (Liverpool University Press).

on nation-building and the construction of national identity. Firstly, the fact that the cultural configuration and orientation of *regions* and the emergence (or lack of emergence) in them of an awareness of nationhood is about not – as has sometimes been thought – the *matryoshka* (Russian doll) principle, but a play of mirrors between nations and regions which has an impact on both (Núñez Seixas 2006; Archilés 2006). Secondly, the fact that the nation is forged (and does not simply materialise) in the domestic space of the emotions, including various different forms of love. In this play of mirrors and levels, the novel – particularly the kind Pardo Bazán wanted to write – was able to become a mechanism (an informal one, we would say now) of enormous intellectual and emotional potential in terms of building or destroying a nation.

Drawing these threads together in order to move my overall argument on, I see Pardo Bazán as a strikingly modern Spanish nation-builder, fully conscious of what she was doing and of the essential role that would have to be played in her task by a literary configuration that incorporated *regional spirit* and the possible or impossible *forms of love* experienced by men and women. One way or another, her entire oeuvre is steeped in that project, in a complex discussion about Spanish nationhood, modernity and emotions – a discussion closely connected to the issue of the place reserved for women in the nation-building sphere. In this respect, Pardo Bazán feminism was conceived as a powerful tool to be used in the new Spanish nationalization project and therefore fundamental for understanding her particular stance towards Galicia and Galician regionalism. To this discussion, it is also important to add the significance of social class (fundamentally important to her and her detractors), which occupies a strategic place in her writings. Pardo Bazán is therefore relevant to discussions of her own time or ours about *how nations are built*, with what materials and in what form, and about the role reserved in them for reason, for emotion, for conscious individual and collective agency, for class and gender conflicts, and for the acceptance – or elimination – of social and cultural diversity.

## 2 The Battle for Galicia: Nation and Gender

I want to begin with an apparently minor or marginal work within Pardo Bazán's literary and critical output: the essay collection *De mi tierra* [About My Land] (1888), effectively the first survey of nineteenth-century Galician-language literature. Its central piece, "La Poesía Regional Gallega" [Galician Regional Poetry], had been given as an address in memory of Rosalía de Castro in A Coruña in September 1885. The publication of the collection (which

includes, among other writings, essays on such key *Rexurdimento* poets as Valentín Lamas, Eduardo Pondal and Benito Losada) three years later was an entirely calculated cultural and political intervention.

On the first reading, Pardo Bazán appears to define “regional literature” as the bridge that linked “high art with the poetry and art of the people”. That connection was produced through emotion, closely associated with childhood, both of which were implicitly (but never explicitly) contrasted with what was understood as maturity, associated with reason, “high art” and *castellano*, the Spanish language. Regional poets, she says, are:

childhood, they are faith, they are tenderness. And dialect, even in countries such as ours, where the educated classes neither speak nor read it, has a welcome and truly restorative aftertaste, which comes unbidden to our lips when we need to *stammer* a loving phrase, lull a baby to sleep, pronounce a festive epigram or let out a sigh of grief; since now that Spanish is our true language, we still feel the closeness of our dialect, which softens it with the warmth of *home* (italics added). (Pardo Bazán 1888)<sup>3</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this way of emotionally amalgamating Galicia and Spain was anathema to the great *galleguista* of his generation, Manuel Murguía. Like Pardo Bazán, Rosalía de Castro’s husband was a builder of national emotions. He waited ten years, however, before giving his response to her speech, and when he did react, projected his own increasing antagonism towards her on to an alleged rivalry between Emilia and Rosalía – or at least the version of Rosalía he had gradually invented over the years, particularly since her death. The fact that this hackneyed device stems from a misogynous perception of relationships between brilliant women does not make it any less interesting. It still says much about the social, cultural, and political tensions and emotions in Galicia at the time in general, and about those aroused by the push for *galleguismo* (however much of a minority movement it may have been) in particular. It also says much about the profound gender connotations that governed the establishing of Galicia’s literary canon and the very different places that Castro and Pardo Bazán have occupied in it ever since the late nineteenth century. What was it that Pardo Bazán wanted to say, at that precise political and cultural moment, in speaking about the only other female writer who could rival her in the Galician and Spanish canon?

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3 This and the following quotations are all taken from Pardo Bazán 1888, 7–8.

First and foremost, she wanted to express something that in fact generated tension within her own conception of History, rooted essentially in traditionalist, anti-Enlightenment thinking. In line with most of the theories of European progressive liberalism, she argued that progress moved ever forward, like time's arrow, guided by a kind of Darwinian natural selection of competing nations and languages. From this perspective, the Spanish nation was the great river into which all tributaries – all emotions, all efforts – would have to flow.

Yet Pardo Bazán was too intelligent and too familiar with political traditionalism, on both a personal and an intellectual level, to have such a blunt, linear vision of the processes of change. She understood that there was never just *one time*, that several times existed simultaneously, and that opposition to the trend to homogenise the nation could be exorcised by allowing for diversity. The river that was Spain could only be truly majestic if it accepted the cultural and linguistic diversity of all its tributaries. Primarily, and significantly, this was because she believed good, even great literature could be created in languages other than Spanish and that moreover, in line with her own early naturalist conception of literature, that was exactly what should happen. She read Catalan without difficulty and had a particular appreciation for the work of poet Jacint Verdaguer and novelist Narcís Oller, prominent figures in the Catalan *Renaixença*. She became good friends with the latter, and with the leading Catalan literary critic Josep Yxart, who was involved in the same cultural mission as Verdaguer and Oller. In the 1880s, Pardo Bazán could still wholeheartedly agree with Juan Valera when he wrote to Oller, "In short, I see the fact that we have three literary languages rather than just one as an enviable treasure and one we must never lose, dilute or mix; but I am inclined to think that every Spaniard should understand and study all three, in the sure belief that they will add to and enrich whichever language he may speak and write, without corrupting it in the process." (Oller 1962, 42).

Xosé Ramón Barreiro has written that "the issue of whether a regional language and literature should be recognised is not directly political but cultural" and that what matters is that Pardo Bazán denied Galician literature that cultural recognition. "We should focus on this rather than on something I see as being of no interest whatsoever, which is what Doña Emilia thought of political Galician regionalism." I myself, however, do not believe it is possible to separate the political and cultural spheres, especially in terms of the debate that raged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I also believe it cannot be said that Pardo Bazán did not appreciate "what the Galician language and literature meant in constructing an identity" (Barreiro 2003, 115–138). She absolutely understood this, in that she was aware of the enormous political power (in terms of its ability to act *on* History) of the close relationship men

such as Murguía were forging between *galleguidad* (Galicianness) and literature written in the Galician language.

Pardo Bazán knew (because it was what she was doing for the Spanish language) that languages too are constructed (and destroyed) and could attain or fail to attain an ability to absorb or marginalise other languages. “The distinction between *dialects* and *national languages* is artificial and has to do only with the form of languages, not their essence” (Pardo Bazán 1888). She was aware of the crucial role played by language, and the emotions surrounding it, in nation-building. Her view on this was, however, anything but essentialist. For her, it was a historical, political process, one which had much to do with cultural power relationships and the “informal” action of individuals such as herself or Murguía.

Murguía’s impassioned response to Pardo Bazán, expressed via a series of articles published in the Galician press in 1896 under the title *Cuentas Ajustadas, Medio Cobradas* [Adjusting Half-settled Accounts], together with the personal tone of his attack, proved that this was a crucial battle for the power to represent Galicia, articulated in terms of the distinct roles assigned to men and women in building and/or embodying the nation. Murguía used Rosalía de Castro as a weapon in this battle, in a way I see as not only biased and decontextualised but also sexist, by quoting the following passage from the prologue (which he is believed to have co-written with her) to *Follas novas* [New Leaves], her 1880 collection of poems in the Galician language: “women’s thoughts are shallow [...] the hard work of meditation is not designed for us. When we engage in it, we imbue it, without even knowing what we do, with an innate weakness, and while it is easy for us to deceive frivolous spirits or those little accustomed to thought, we cannot do the same with men of scholarship and reflection” (Castro 1982, xxiv–xxv). Married to just such a man (an eminent example of the patriarchal authority of scholarship and reflection), Castro would never have attempted to “go beyond the confines of poetry,” an art associated with emotion, as opposed to the history or science which were Murguía’s domain. Her doubts about which language she should write in and the importance she attributed to her writing in Spanish – not to mention the feminist-toned anger that crept into her reflections on homeland, lost love, and abandonment – were destined to remain in the shadows, or even subject to complete censorship.

As far as Murguía was concerned, Pardo Bazán had failed to obey the essential rule of *género*, in its double sense of *genre* and *gender*. She had been too outspoken, and arrogant enough to believe that “in the domains of art and science, nothing was out of bounds, that she could enter them as a conqueror”. The result of this unnatural monstrosity was a “literary magpie” intent on “writing about everything that others had written before her. And I do not blame her for

that. It is part of her condition as female." A condition, however, that she – paradoxically – transgressed time and again with her masculine coldness, ambition, and pride, which were the ultimate expression of an inner chill, “a soul closed to passion and the great emotions”. Pardo Bazán not only lacked “the two qualities required by female poets: imagination and sentiment,” she was also betraying her status as a Galician by moving away from what had always distinguished Galician literature: “[...] a special sweetness of expression [...] which is its true characteristic. Its dominant note is sentiment; to be lacking in this is to be lacking in something natural and essential, it is to deny being a member of the race to which one belongs [...] Only Doña Emilia, who as a woman was *doubly* obliged to follow that general rule, instead entirely diverts from it” (Murguía 2000, 65–118). It is worth emphasising the word *doubly* here.

Murguía’s anger and sexism ended up coming full circle and accepting the very thing that had infuriated him about the way in which Pardo Bazán associated the Galician identity with all that was sentimental, emotional, feminine. His articles of 1896 are therefore of interest not as a mere outburst of rage or somewhat excessive display of personal resentment, but for the insight they give us into the deep-rooted association – and hierarchy – that he establishes between Galicia and femininity on the one hand, and cultural and political *galleguismo* and masculine strength on the other. The supposed rivalry between Emilia and Rosalía is then depicted as pitting a virago (a woman *doubly* treacherous, having betrayed both her nature and her homeland) against a true woman (long-suffering, home-loving and patriotic) protected from one man by another: from Spanish nationalism by Galician nationalism. It is Murguía (who wrote in Spanish but insisted that Rosalía write in Galician) who defines both women, who grants (or denies) them their sexual identity and artistic, canonical, national status, who sets himself up as the authority in these matters. I shall not go any further into the issue of gender and its place in defining and shaping the canon (Galician or Spanish) here, but I see its role as substantial (Pereira-Muro 2013).

I do however want to make the following observation. Manuel Murguía was right in thinking that Pardo Bazán’s objective was the same as his, and that she felt “an overwhelming desire to *preside over* [...] Galician literature, and more besides”. That “more besides” is actually what was truly important. Unlike Murguía’s, Pardo Bazán’s horizons had long since extended beyond the Galician border to encompass all of Spain. In understanding that the cultural and imaginative construction of Galicia was a way of re-creating Spanish national identity, Emilia Pardo Bazán was indeed competing with Manuel Murguía as leader of a *Rexurdimento*, a *galleguismo* which he was increasingly setting against the Spanish nation (emotion) but which she saw differently. Her vision (as Murguía instantly realised) was a *cultural* and *political* rival to his own. Among

other reasons, this was because she (like Castro, whatever the posthumous manipulation of her image may suggest) was not content to be the emotional, sensitive embodiment of a long dreamed-of *tierra* – she wanted to be one of its architects. Pardo Bazán may not have been granted the status of “Spanish national writer,” but she was a “nation builder” who, like Murguía, wanted to delineate, define, and guide that nation. As we have seen, however, in that process of definition the identities of Spain and Galicia are not only closely linked to one another but also (and for that same reason) highly unstable.

### 3 Class and Nation: Two Love Stories

I have serious reservations about applying postcolonial criticism to the national question outside the strictly colonial context – a question whose complexity, in my opinion, still requires calm, composed debate. Nevertheless, as shown by Xavier Andreu for Spain and Helena Miguélez-Carballeira for Galicia – to cite two useful and recent, if very different works – the postcolonial approach can undeniably shed light on the conflicts and dialogues involved in the representation of national identities (Andreu 2016; Miguélez-Carballeira 2013). I am specifically referring here to the way in which the dialogue, and conflict, between Spanish national identity and hegemonic European identities come into contact with the meanings and identities formulated from the spheres of love and domestic life in the various national (or proto-national) projects within the Iberian Peninsula. For decades, we historians have been emphasising the interconnected nature of racial, gender, national or class identities. No identity exists without some form of relationship, without an *other* which is constructed at the same time as the *self*. That two-way relationship is always hierarchical. In fact, a position of economic, social, or political power is largely defined by its capacity to impose subaltern identities – those in which images fabricated by the *other* to legitimise its power are internalised and reproduced as inferior and secondary. Images and relationships that, furthermore, cross the artificial (or rather historical) dividing lines between the private and public spheres.

In this context, class identity has disappeared too quickly from historians' analyses in recent years. It has also vanished from the historiography dealing with the processes involved in constructing national identities, and this, in my view, has dangerous consequences. I shall consider this issue with reference to two of Pardo Bazán's novels, *Insolación* and *Morriña* [Homesickness],<sup>4</sup> pub-

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4 An 1891 English translation is available online via Project Gutenberg ([www.gutenberg.org/files/54742/54742-h/54742-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/54742/54742-h/54742-h.htm)).



lished jointly in 1889 (a year after *De mi tierra*) as *Historias Amorosas* [Love Stories]: two novels about Galicians (Galician women, to be precise) in Madrid. My aim is to answer the basic questions arising from the preceding discussion: what kind of Spain and Galicia did Pardo Bazán imagine? And what roles are played here by love, gender, and class?

The plot of *Insolación* can be summarised as follows. Young Galician widow Asís Taboada, Marchioness of Andrade, meets Diego Pacheco, an attractive young gentleman from Cádiz, at an aristocratic *tertulia*, or salon, in Madrid. The topic of debate that day is the influence of climate, specifically the sun, on the rather barbaric and passionate character of Spaniards, regardless of class or gender. On her way to Mass the next morning, Asís bumps into Diego again and allows herself to be talked into accompanying him to the San Isidro festivities – very much the realm of the lower classes. Asís ends up dazed by a combination of heat, noise, and alcohol (which she is unused to drinking), and the two become intimate. The following day, confused and regretful, Asís attempts to remember what happened between them and to distance herself from Diego. He seeks her out, however and, little by little, she has to admit she is attracted to him despite his reputation as a womaniser. The suave Andalusian Don Juan charms the virtuous lady from the rainy north of Spain with his passion and gallantry.

What interests me in this story is the way in which it is steeped in the issues of gender, class, and nation. The notion of Spanish national character, supposedly distinguished by passion, lack of restraint and the impact of climate, was the subject of heated debate in a Spain immersed in a Europe of nations all looking at one another (and their colonies) in order to define themselves. It is worth remembering that inextricably entwined in this debate were discussions about the constructs of feminine and masculine, which in turn were linked with theories about the degeneration/regeneration of races, classes, and nations, and with representations of Eastern and Western identity.

I believe the open-ended dialogue offered by *Insolación*, with its different perspectives refracted through Asís's doubts and fears, allows us to position this novel – supposedly no more than a love story – in the context of that discussion of the conflicting ideas surrounding Spanish national identity. Was Spain part of Europe or the threshold to Africa? Did it belong to East or West? Were foreign thinkers – the French in particular – correct in their belief that Spaniards were “only any good for dancing the bolero and clicking castanets”? Was Gabriel Pardo, a “secondarily central” character in the novel, right in claiming that all Spaniards, irrespective of their sex, birthplace, or class, were barbaric, African in nature? And was Asís right to challenge him, in the name of her class (and gender), and assert that “ladies” and “well-educated people

were identical in every country of the world”? Was it all a matter of climate, instinct, or race, or was there something else, something more historical and political in nature?

Partially contradicting himself, and thereby revealing the tension between the way we see ourselves and the way others see us, Gabriel Pardo raises the latter issue, one I consider to be of crucial importance, as follows:

[...] here in Spain, since the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy, we've done nothing but cheer each other on. The joke started with all those demonstrations against Don Amadeo: all that business with ornamental combs and mantillas, cropped jackets and wigs, then there was the temerity of the late king when he took to dressing as a *chulo* [Madrid version of a brazen young man], imitated, of course, by all the elegant folk; and now it's become an epidemic of patriotism and flamenco, guitar-playing and *cante jondo*, tambourines with red and yellow tassels, fans decorated with pictures of Frascuelo and Mazzantini and their exploits in the bull ring, we've created a caricature of Spain that's straight out of a Goya tapestry or one of Don Ramón de la Cruz's farces. (Pardo Bazán 1889, 86, 93–94)<sup>5</sup>

What are we to conclude from this? Did that image of patriotism and flamenco correspond to the *real* Spain, or at least to its *real* working classes, or was it a parody of both, created not only from outside but from above, particularly by the aristocracy and élites who had put an end to the democratic monarchy of the Italian-born Amadeo I in the name of Spanish national (and popular) identity? In order to stir up nationalist resistance, many of their members had begun to adopt the fashions of ordinary men and women and to emphasise the shared values that connected Spaniards of all classes. The aim of this symbolic and political process, one in which a young Emilia Pardo Bazán was very much engaged, was what Antonio Cánovas, who served several terms as prime minister, called “the work for Restoration” – the plan being to restore the House of Bourbon in the person of Alphonse XII, son of Isabella II, deposed in the revolution of 1868. In fact, the experience of the *Sexenio Democrático* [Six democratic years] – the period from 1868 to 1874 which included the reign of Amadeo I and the equally short-lived First Spanish Republic – served as the main origins of Spanish modernity for the writers of the Restoration and, above all, the literature steeped in History written by Benito Pérez Galdós and Pardo Bazán. It is no coincidence that the central theme of the latter's first great novel, *La*

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5 Quotations from *Insolación* and *Morriña* taken from *Obras Completas* (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 1999. Vol. II.

*Tribuna* [The Tribune] (1883), was the political impact of the 1868 revolution and its (ultimately thwarted) ideals on the female workers of the tobacco factory in A Coruña. In that respect, the political and cultural project of Restoration, and the mobilisation of popular support in its favour, had contained profound social and cultural ambivalences, causing significant concern among the élites leading the project because, as discussed at the Duchess de Sahagún's *tertulia*, the aristocracy and the *pueblo*, or ordinary people, were becoming indistinguishable from one another, and both were equally prone to barbarity.

From this perspective, it is not just that *Insolación* contains an orientalist vision, with its masculine and feminine stereotypes reversed, as brilliantly analysed by Akiko Tsuchiya in her treatment of the relationship between an initially reserved noblewoman from the cold, wet North of Spain and an Andalusian gentleman who embodies all the temptations of the passionate, uninhibited South (Tsuchiya 2011, 136–61). A South closely tied to Africa, brimming with ethnic and cultural traces of its Arabic past, the internal *other* of a nineteenth-century Spain whose own identity as European was being questioned at this time. This is one aspect of *Insolación*, but there is more to the novel than that. It is a profound (and profoundly unsettling) consideration of class to the extent that through the Cádiz-born Diego Pacheco, the novel's cultural and emotional mediator, Asís comes into contact with the ordinary men and women whom Emilia Pardo Bazán and her circle celebrated, imitated and adulated, and whom they attempted to use and bring under their control during that key political battle of 1868–74.

As a result of that contact, this demure, aristocratic lady sees the very foundations of her primordial identity, that of respectable female, begin to shake, as she allows herself to be swept along in a tide of picturesque plebeian Spanishness. It is the *chulos* and *chulas*, gypsies and cigar-girls who *approach* them, *watch* them, and *touch* them, who excite and daze Asís. It is that whirlwind of voices and hands, staring eyes and laughing mouths, colours and smells, violence and expectation, that constitutes the real *internal other*: the common people, both familiar and alien, a source of both attraction and horror. The barbaric, oriental *pueblo*, which taints all it touches but on which was based a specific idea of Spanish national identity, one that might turn out to be ungovernable, even dangerous. It is not the sun that maddens her, it is mixing with the hot, sweaty crowds of ordinary people beneath that sun, “in whose destructive light she saw an infinite number of things she had always believed to be firm and solid begin to totter”.

The symbolic plebeianisation of Spanish national identity, and not only its orientalisation, is therefore a central theme in *Insolación* which, like many of its author's other works, revolves around what Spain was, what it might be,

and what the relationship between the *pueblo* and the élites should be in any process of regeneration. It is more than just another manifestation of the “defensive nationalism” to which I alluded above. It is an exploration of the fluctuating, threatening shadows, the enormous confusion of identity and emotions evinced by *close contact* with the *pueblo* which if excessive, physically or symbolically, would lead to barbarism. This theme, incidentally, recurs in Pardo Bazán’s oeuvre, from *Los Pazos de Ulloa* to *Dulce Dueño*. The ease with which, despite all the political theories of developed and liberal Europe, the so-called “civilising influence of the upper classes” could be inverted and subverted – an aspect also discussed (not without irony) in *Insolación*.

The Marquesa, however, emerges unscathed from her encounter with the *internal other* and plebeian *passions* because Diego Pacheco is a gentleman who knows he is dealing with a lady. A gentleman, as the critic Juan Sardá joked at the time, “as rare as a winning lottery ticket”. A second-rate Tenorio, “so delicate, so discreet, so prudent; a kite who has sharp talons but sheathes them when he sneaks into the dove’s nest so as not to scratch her [...] until the yielding dove more or less says, ‘Come, dear kite, sink your talons into me!’” Everything is realistic apart from the “idealisation, in other words Pacheco’s exceptional nature” (Sardá 1889). But that was exactly the point – Asís, marchioness of Andrade, can play with fire and not get burnt.

Any notion of either idealising a Don Juan figure or granting a woman salvation is entirely absent from *Morriña* (1889), a love story that rivals *Insolación* for beauty and outdoes it for both tenderness and cruelty. This is one of Pardo Bazán’s most finely-written novels, with a subtler sense of humour and a melancholic lucidity that lingers long in the memory. Its qualities were not, however, recognised by two of the most influential critics at the time, Luis Alfonso and Leopoldo Alas (*Clarín*). Both found the novel dull because (according to the former), “a village woman might be made interesting, even a woman of lowly birth [...] but it is far more difficult to do so with a domestic servant” (Alas 1889; Alfonso 1889). The servant in question, Esclavitud (meaning “slavery”) is gentle and submissive, but “gets above her station” when she believes that the interest shown in her by Rogelio, the *señorito* (the young master of the house), might have something to do with love. A romantic servant! One homesick for Galicia, even though not even the memory of her *tierra* offers her any comfort, since it is associated with the shame of her birth as the illegitimate child of a priest and his servant-girl.

With nothing at all to fall back on, Esclavitud seems doomed to repeat the traumatic experiences of so many village girls and servants: seduction, loss of virginity, abandonment, illegitimate children. The subject that had always interested Pardo Bazán, who had once written (in indignant tone) about the *señoritos* of her class who went looking for lower-class girls, especially servants,

as if they were out to shoot partridges. It becomes more complex here, through discussion of the good intentions of the lady of the house, the Galician Doña Aurora Nogueira de Pardiñas, who welcomes Esclavitud in spite of her background and tries to help her despite what some of those around her think.

In the end, though, when Doña Aurora realises that her only beloved son, a spoiled fop devoid of any recognisable personality of his own, is attracted to Esclavitud, she makes a “moral sacrifice,” dismissing the girl and abandoning her in Madrid while she returns to Galicia with her son. Not even the convent (an option for fallen women of higher social status) is open to Esclavitud, who is now *sin patria*, homeless in every sense, and decides to end her life. She has neither the personal strength nor the capacity for rebellion of the protagonist of *La Tribuna* (1883). And of course, she does not have the wealth and cultural background of Asís in *Insolación* (1889). She is not a factory worker or a noblewoman, she is a humble servant. A figure whose life was thought by some not to be the stuff of novels.

It took a writer such as Pardo Bazán, who always lived between two worlds, to prove that it was. To use the prosaic, sordid practice of the exploitation of servant girls by rich young men for their own sexual initiation in order to reflect on the ways in which gender and class picked at the seams of the nation. A singular and deeply moving reflection achieved by reversing or at least challenging its one-directional gaze, by giving voice to the voiceless Esclavitud.

Everyone at Doña Aurora's *tertulia* gossips about Esclavitud – her origins, her fate, her chances of escaping it. She does not escape it, but not for reasons of immorality or socially or racially congenital submissiveness. Unlike Murguía, for example, who had been so vocal on the matter, Pardo Bazán was always sceptical about the importance of race (Maiz 1984, 137–80). Esclavitud cannot escape her fate because Doña Aurora, her friends, and the guests at her *tertulia* decide that the person who needs to be saved from this “lapse of judgement” is young Rogelio. The reason for Esclavitud's suicide is not the “sombre temperament of the Celtic race”. Every day and in every province of Spain, the author tells us, the newspapers report similar cases of suicide. This has nothing to do with *tierra* or *race*. It is all about class. Esclavitud is not seduced, abandoned, and mistreated because she is Galician, but because she is a servant. Esclavitud – the radical subaltern: one who cannot speak for herself – chooses suicide because it is the only way she can speak, leave a memory of herself, use the tragedy of her death to make an impact on the respectable world of these Galician worthies who have treated her life as if they were watching some sporting event or observing a clinical trial.<sup>6</sup>

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6 I am of course alluding here to Gayatri Spivak's seminal, and still controversial, formulation (Spivak 1985).

#### 4 Conclusion: An Unsentimental Story

The construct of the Spanish nation presented by Emilia Pardo Bazán, notwithstanding a few sporadic and measured declarations of patriotic passion, is fundamentally anti-sentimental. Try as it might, no nation can ever fully provide an emotional, cultural identity that can rescue its people from the concerns that inevitably run through History and the histories of modernity. Those concerns are the stage on which the nation plays out. They a hard and complex stage, home to interwoven class and gender conflicts that are entirely modern and at once universal and local. Conflicts that transcend the inclusive capacity of a nation, or two nations (Spain and Galicia) so closely linked to one another and so profoundly unstable; historically, politically, and culturally unsure of themselves.

In my view, much of the uniqueness of Pardo Bazán's work, of her Galicia, especially in *Los Pasos de Ulloa* and *La madre naturaleza*, books which Jo Labanyi has analysed so meticulously and insightfully, lies in her ability to surpass the essentially picturesque celebration of rural, local, regional life we find in the work of other Restoration writers and, largely, to avoid proto-nationalist regionalism (Labanyi 2011, 409–465). Pardo Bazán was interested in dismantling something so prevalent in the work of many of those writers, namely the contrast between a neurotic, degenerate modernity, embodied by the modern nation and, specifically, by Madrid, and a *natural instinct* to withdraw to the region, to a healthy, virtuous *homeland*. In her novels in particular she challenged the dichotomy between the modern, artificial nation and the region, anchored in the past, in tradition, in the old language and old land, in all that was *essential* and *natural*.

More than that, and this is what is truly original about her writing, she raised the possibility that there is no single, all-encompassing, *real* cure for the malaise of modernity by which both sides of that supposed dichotomy were affected. The *truth* of the nation that solves every problem, and the individual and collective solutions involved in the search for that truth, were always relative and therefore political, subject to discussion. That led to her querying the illusions surrounding what is *essential* or *natural* in a way which, for me, is unmatched by any other novelist of her generation. This is especially true of her ability to open up the debate on the importance of class and the status of women, on the supposed nature of *femininity*, as crucial symptoms of the great internal contradictions of liberalism, democracy and nationalism. Emilia Pardo Bazán is therefore a thinker whose work has to be taken into account if we are to understand the late nineteenth-century tensions – social, political and cultural – between

“North” and “South” in Europe, in Spain and in Galicia. The malaise, fears and ghosts that haunted her are utterly modern, are entirely ours.

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## When the Empire Is in the South: Gendered Spanish Imperialism in Morocco at the End of the 19th Century

*Ferran Archilés*

In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Leopold de Saussure, a leading French Imperialist intellectual, wrote: “Let us consider the whole of the Spanish colonial policy: it is a completely different ‘bloc’ from the colonial policy of England or any other country. Why? Because this bloc has been formed with Spanish psychology, which differs essentially from English psychology”. The problem was rooted, De Saussure thought, in the colonial system adopted by the Spanish, but “emanating from the soul of the race” it was impossible to change: “the entire race is jointly responsible” (Saussure 1899, 1–3). The underlying question was crystal clear: Was the Spanish Race a full European Race, after all? Could it be entitled to rule an Empire?

The imperial crisis caused by the war between the United States and Spain in 1898 seemed to confirm the image of Spain as a “dying nation,” within a critical context for *Latin nations* in the last third of the nineteenth century. Widely spread works such as those written by Edmund Demolins, Giuseppe Sergi or Alfred Fouillée established a very negative image of Spain (Reynaud and Paligot 2011, 132–5). Arguments about the nation’s collective psychology – amplified with racial character – become a key factor in the construction of the representation of national imaginaries. They also greatly affected the geopolitical scene (Sluga 2007). However, the “colonial vocation” did not disappear in Spain with the decline of the empire in America and Asia. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the object of imperial desire moved towards Africa, especially Morocco. Facing the *degeneration* in which Spain seemed immersed, the occupation of Morocco would be the mechanism for the *regeneration* of the nation (and the *race*).

Faced with the dichotomy confronting empire versus nation, in recent years, the nationalizing function of empires has been explored (Berger and Miller 2015). Building an empire was also building (or rebuilding) a nation and this was the expected function of Spanish colonialism.

The peculiarity of Spanish imperialism lies in the fact that Spain was seen, since at least the mid-nineteenth century, as a dubiously *European* country.

The representation and construction of stereotypes (Beller and Leersen 2007) about Spain as one of the countries located in the problematic southern Europe had its roots in European Romanticism (Leerssen 2018). The entire South became an object of desire and rejection, of instability, in a construction of collective imaginaries that ranges from scholarly to aesthetic discourses and finally to mass tourism (Bourguinat 2015). A powerful orientalist gaze – like the one built over Italy (Dickie 1999) – was turned on Spain and provided a powerful account of its uncertain *modernity* (Andreu 2016).

Spain was both the East and the South of Europe. Adopting this discourse and negotiating with it, Spanish imperialism embarked on its own colonial adventure at the turn of the century, trying to show that Spain was just as European (and hence with the same colonizing aptitude) as the neighbouring countries.

In this mirror game of orientalisms, imperial desires and national self-assertion, the gendered image became a central element of the national discourse inward and of the imperial discourse outward (and vice versa). On the one hand, there was a masculinization of the discourse of the empire (and therefore of the colonizing nation) and, on the other, a feminization of the imperial *Other*. “Empire was a man’s business” wrote John Tosh at the forefront of the history of masculinity about the British Empire (Tosh 2005, 193). But the construction, practices, and experiences of the empire (for both colonizers and colonized) were always gendered (Levine 2004, Midgley 1998) and sexualized (Aldrich 2013). The case of Spanish imperialism is just an excellent example of these complexities. Spanish imperialism also asserted itself through a strongly gendered and sexualized discourse.

## 1 Without Empire but with a Colonial Ambition

Missing from general accounts of European or global history are many aspects of the history of Spain. But there is one that stands out in particular: the Spanish Africanist imperialism (MacKenzie 2011, Lorin and Taraud 2013). Historiography has paid much more attention to the building of the Spanish empire than to its decline – especially in the case of the Spanish empire on the American continent (Jacobsen 2012). The Spanish presence in Africa has tended to be minimized, reduced to occupying a minor place, if not anecdotal (Wrythen 2015). Although it was an empire of limited scope, it spread over several territories: Morocco, Sahara, Sidi-Ifni, Equatorial Guinea, and Fernando Poo (in addition to the cities of Ceuta and Melilla). Only in 1975 were the last colonial possessions surrendered.

Due to the lack of means, the Spanish state had to renounce far-reaching imperialist projects. Undoubtedly, Spanish colonial action in Africa was approached with limited resources and the results were equally limited (Morales Lezcano 2002, Martín Corrales 2002b). However, it was not a particularly late action since Spain's African expansion took place at roughly the same time as that undertaken by Italy or Germany.

Regardless of the real scope and the territorial limitations, the Spanish imperial imaginary was actively produced from the metropolis and for the metropolis.<sup>1</sup> The intellectual movement called *Regeneracionismo* (a local version of the fin-de-siècle European palingenetic discourses on the nation) was militantly Africanist from its origins in the work and action of Joaquín Costa. The Spanish "imperial culture" favoured an authentic corpus of printed paper that dealt with Morocco, through travel books, geographical and scientific discourses, journalistic articles, plastic arts, literature – in general, popular mass consumption products –, as well as other artistic manifestations.<sup>2</sup>

But the anxiety of a country in critical condition and the response in demand of an empire should not lead to the conclusion that the Spanish case was an exception. Instead, it can be placed in the context of a true "culture of defeat," as Wolfgang Schivelbusch called it. By definition, imperialism at the turn of the century entailed a dimension of competition between nations (between states), which generated an insistent anxiety at not being left behind, as happened in France. This was the case, for example, of Germany, where the concern for degeneration and national crisis was key in the development of the imperial project (Conrad 2010). It was, in short, the case of Italy after Adua, and Portugal after the 1890 British Ultimatum, linked precisely to the African expansion, which was experienced as a humiliation by questioning the status of a "civilizing" nation (Alexandre 2006). In the case of the "Latin" nations, the argument of their decline after the French defeat in 1871 was extremely important.

But the Italian example is especially relevant because, like Spain, it had to face enormous difficulties in obtaining a small empire. Since the 1880s, Italian imperialism (with a clear African vocation) became one of the vectors of Italian political life (Finaldi 2009). Italy was no further South than Spain, in the perspective of European Romanticism. The anxiety – and doubts about the aptitudes of the national character (Patriarca 2010, 75–108) – to obtain an empire were also linked to the hopes for the future of the nation, before fascism.

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1 The theoretical approaches developed by Hall and Rose (2006) and Eley (2010) are followed here.

2 On the idea of colonial culture, see Sibeud (2013).

However, also in the British case, the feeling of a world that was shrinking and the loss of space (especially after 1880) generated constant discussion about how the nation could overcome the difficulties through the Empire (Bell 2007). As Antoinette Burton has summarised, the will to resist and the feeling of insecurity have always and at the same time characterized the daily life of empire, of any empire (Burton 2015).

## 2 Nostalgia of Africa, Dreams of Empire: An Unsettling Racial Kinship and Spanish Imperialism in Morocco

In 1882 Antonio Cánovas (one of the most influential figures in Spanish politics in the last quarter of the nineteenth century), in a speech devoted significantly to the definition of the idea of nation, pointed out:

Send us our duty, that we visibly became part of the group of expansive, absorbing nations that have taken up the effort to carry out the arduous mission of civilizing the entire world. And to understand why it is sent to us, it would be good to relentlessly remember the honour, not yet extinct, that we inherited from our forefathers. (Cánovas 1882, 131)

Spain could even introduce itself (beyond the Spanish Black Legend) as the precursor and mentor of the modern imperial nations. History served as the foundation of the colonial vocation (Reparaz 1907, 9–42). All of this was inserted in the conviction, similar to that developed by French colonialism, that each people had a “genius of its own” to be necessarily abided by in colonial action (Reynaud and Paligot 2006, 228).

Africanist imperialism was added to a long colonial tradition, which coexisted at the end of the nineteenth century with the reformulation of the idea of “Hispanidad” [Hispanicity] (Marcihacy 2010, Schmidt-Nowara 2006). This discourse continued to present Spain as a country that could and should maintain its colonial vocation. For this reason, it could serve as a bridge to Africanism.<sup>3</sup> As the writer and convinced Africanist Isaac Muñoz mentioned: “The Maghreb must be for Spain like a new America, to which we apply old and wise experiences [...] Will this inert and rigid Spain ever be convinced that the future is an African future?” (Muñoz 1913, 45).

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3 On this game of interactions, see Fleischmann Nenadovic (2020).

In 1884, the prestigious progressive intellectual Gumersindo de Azcárate had already pointed out: "If Spain must use peaceful means in its mission to Morocco, what are these? There can be no more than two: culture and commerce" (Azcárate 1884, 50–1). Indeed, even for the harshest colonialists, the "peaceful penetration" advocated since the 1880s was just that: a task of "civilization" (Reparaz 1907). It was the same trope that most of the European imperialisms defended, in short, and no less ambiguous in its ultimate goal for the Spanish case than for others.

In practice, the more the colonial project failed in the strict sense, the more the civilizing mission was reinforced as a compensatory vision (Mateo Dieste 2003). For this reason, the cultural dimension must be placed at the centre of the analysis of the imaginary of Spanish imperialism since it was something that lasted regardless of the scope and the real failure of the imperial adventures (as noted for Italy, Finaldi 2009, 298).

Without a doubt, the role played by the intellectual Joaquín Costa, a central figure in the development of modern Spanish Africanism from the 1880s, was key. In 1884, he declared: "Spain suffers from nostalgia, and it is nostalgia for Africa". Costa presented a twofold argument, the first one based on geography: "the Strait does not separate us, as if it were a mountain range; the Strait unites us as if it were a river [...] Spain and Morocco each formed one-half of a larger geographical entity" (Costa 1884, 11–2, 31–2). The argument would last in time. Geography became an ally. Morocco and Spain were mirror images of one another, such was the coincidence in geology, climate, products and rivers, Manuel Olivé asserted. Morocco "is not a different country, but an extension of Spain," already since Roman times (Olivé 1893, 6–9). Years later, in 1910, the great promoter of Spanish colonialism in America and from 1898 in Africa, Rafael María de Labra, kept insisting on the idea of Morocco as "an extension of the Peninsula" when the Spanish Protectorate was about to be established (Centros 1910, 56–7).

But also Costa had expressed another idea that was going to have a long journey:

Is it the blood that separates Spaniards and Moroccans, is it the spirit of the race, that which prints such a deep seal on the nationality and opens up a chasm between peoples that are more impossible to cross than mountain ranges and seas? [...] On the contrary, there is a certain powerful secret attraction between Spaniards and Moroccans that can only be explained by some ethnic kinship that unites them.

Moreover, Costa pointed out that "among the various population layers that history has been superimposing, century after century, between the Pyrenees

and the Sahara, one race, at least the primordial, the most advantageous, the dominant, has been common to Morocco and Spain" (Costa 1884, 32). The substratum of this "powerful attraction" was that of a common Iberian racial past.<sup>4</sup> For Costa, the subsequent history, shared but traumatic, would have confirmed the brotherhood. Spain and Morocco were both East and West, which, according to Costa, questioned the incompatibility between the two. But he did not seem to find a solution to the dilemma when he stated that: "if it is true that Spain, because of its geology and its flora, is linked with Africa and not with Europe, the Spanish people, because of their psychology and culture, must seek out the birth of civilization and the elevation of their spirit on the other side of the Strait, rather than on the other side of the Pyrenees" (Costa 1883, 59–75).

According to Costa, the "regeneration" of Morocco was the task of Spain: its mission. The idea of "kinship," the idea of geographical and "racial" proximity between Spain and Morocco, was at the service of Spanish primacy on the ground against the aspirations of other European powers in Morocco (at a time when France, Great Britain and Germany were ready to fight over Morocco). To what extent was this idea of racial kinship a peculiarity of the Spanish case? And if so, how did it modify the nature of the Spanish imperial action?

As Carlos Cañete showed, the genealogy of the thesis of the African origin of the Iberians in historiography appears before Costa in authors such as Francisco Tubino or Manuel Sales Ferré. Actually, it would be reformulations of some ideas defended by the French naturalist Bory de Saint-Vincent, who at the beginning of the nineteenth century (within the framework of a theory of Atlantis) and especially after the occupation of Algeria by France in the 1830s, established an identity between Guanches, Berbers, Iberians and Celts, at the service of the implantation of the civilization promoted from France.<sup>5</sup> On the basis of the Berber/Arab dichotomy, that is, the barbarian with the civilized or assimilable, the idea of the Berber origin or identity of the Iberians would be built. The introduction of the Africanist paradigm in Spain would be the "result of the appropriation of the assimilationist anthropological discourse," so that "civilizing interventionism" or brotherhood would trigger the development and progress of both territories (Cañete 2009, 230–43).

The thesis went from historiography to anthropology that, since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, embarked on the complex process of defining a *Spanish race* (Goode 2009). Since 1891, the anthropologists Luis de Hoyos and Telesforo de Aranzadi had suggested a possible Berber origin for the population of the South and the centre, and perhaps the East, of Spain (Hoyos

4 On the invention of pre-classical pasts for nation-building, see De Francesco (2016).

5 Also in Portugal, Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins and Teófilo Braga defended the identity between Iberians and Berbers (Sobral 2004).



and Aranzadi 1892, 22–3). Years later, De Hoyos would expand his argument about the Iberian presence in the Spanish population of the twentieth century and defend the existence of a “Libyan-Iberian” human group of African origin (Hoyos 1919, 176–7). Both authors were disciples of Manuel Antón y Ferrándiz, the first professor of anthropology in Spain and the first to theorize about this “Libyan-Iberian” race (Antón y Ferrándiz 1895, 31–9). Antón y Ferrándiz was probably the author with a more consistent work from the point of view of the colonial scope, since he wrote, for example, *Razas y tribus de Marruecos* [Races and Tribes of Morocco] published in 1903. In 1910 he broadened his analysis with the publication of *Los orígenes étnicos de las nacionalidades libio-ibéricas* [The Ethnic Origins of the Libyan-Iberian Nationalities], where he stated that: “They are indeed, Aragonese and Berber, Spanish and Moroccan, the same race”. For this reason, “if nations are eventually going to be built, according to their predominant races, as the historical law seems to be, it could be a new restorative and health ideal for Spain, the most powerful of its race, the constitution of a great Libyan-Iberian nationality” (Antón y Ferrándiz 1910, 8, 17, 19).

Antón y Ferrándiz’s “scientific” proposal was well received beyond the strict academic field. An example is the work *El problema nacional* [The National Problem] published in 1899 by the prominent *regeneracionista* Ricardo Macías Picavea, which achieved great popularity and prestige. In this work, he pointed out that in the *Spanish race* (as in the Italian and Greek) “the Aryan trunk predominates” but, at the same time, highlighted the contribution of “Berber and Semitic blood”. This Berber blood was, according to the author, “Libyan-Iberian” blood (Macías Picavea 1996, 78, 201).

In April 1904 the Real Sociedad Geográfica [Royal Geographic Society] (which had absorbed the old Sociedad Española de Africanistas y Colonistas [Spanish Society of Africanists and Colonists]) sent a document to the Government on the Moroccan question. As strong supporters of commercial and industrial action, this document of theirs was a call in favour of “the realization of the transcendental civilizing effort to transform a brother people, united to us by close ties of race and history, and bring it to modern life” (Real Sociedad Geográfica 1904, 14).

Could this idea of racial proximity limit the sense of alterity in front of the colonial “Other”? Could it limit the will to subordinate this “Other”? Absolutely not. Generally, all the authors, from Costa to Antón y Ferrándiz, were careful to point out that beyond the background kinship, historical development and religion had plunged Morocco into backwardness (which in turn, therefore, legitimized in contrast the necessary Spanish colonial action).<sup>6</sup> For example,

6 A theorization about Latin Africa, the Roman past in Algeria that would have been interrupted by Muslim rule, was also developed in France (Ruscio 2002, 117–8). And very similar is the *mitto del ritorno* deployed by Italian colonialism in Lybia, using Roman past as a bridge (Troilo 2021).

in 1910, Idelfonso Yáñez in a textbook for Spanish children in African schools placed the origins of the Moroccan population as “belonging to the Libyan-Iberian race, thus making them children of the same genealogical branch as us”. But from there, he affirmed that despite all the positive contacts with other cultures, the *moros* [Moorish men] “have not lost a bit of their primitive suspicion and have not even been able to assimilate a single concept of our civilization” (Yáñez 1910, 7–9). According to Yáñez, the Spanish presence in Morocco was an “ideal of moral conquest” and access to progress and civilization was a duty and a right of all “inferior peoples,” a task that only Spain could undertake (Centros 1910, 176).

### 3 Orientalism/s Back and Forth

Susan Martín-Márquez has highlighted the importance of the identity ambivalences generated by the will to dominate North Africa in a country that in turn had been “orientalized” in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Martín-Márquez, 2008: 77–63). But this author tends to consider such ambivalence as evidence of weakness in the Spanish national identity (a translation in turn of a weak modernization) that would be transferred to the intellectual sphere. However, this ambivalence was rather evidence of an intense negotiation process, which begins in the enlightened and romantic stereotype of Spain but concludes at the end of the nineteenth century with a powerful essentialist affirmation of Spain as a nation with tasks and missions like those of neighbouring European countries (Andreu 2016). The Spanish imperial project was poor in results, but not in ambition. And it was the result of a powerful Spanish nationalist discourse, and not the result of any weakness in it.

But certainly, these ambivalences opened the door to the “self-exoticization” of the representations of Spanish identity, in what was certainly a unique model with respect to other European countries (at least from the North). Turning the negative image of the “orientalized” country that would be Spain, this image would be assumed – as Costa did – until it became a trigger for self-assertion. In a common mechanism in countries subjected to colonialism or in subaltern sectors, “material” inferiority is transformed into “spiritual” superiority, into superiority of values. The endless discussion on the opening of Spain towards Europe, or the *casticista* closure instead, ran through the Spanish intellectual world from Miguel de Unamuno to Ángel Ganivet. The colonial defeat of 1898 consolidated an essentialist reflection on the being of Spain and its *volkgeist*.

During the late nineteenth century, the predominance of the Andalusian-Orientalist stereotype (deeply rooted in the imaginary of European

romanticism) reached a new impetus to the point of finally becoming a metonymic image of “the Spanish”. Andalusia was southern Spain, its perfect representation, and its close connection with the Muslim past of the seventh to fifteenth centuries was a common place. This essentialization of Andalusia as a representation of the Spanish worked inward and had an extraordinary international echo outward. In the first third of the twentieth century, it was simply omnipresent, both in high culture and popular culture.

But this self-exoticization should not hide the fact that a tradition of orientalism also developed in Spanish culture in the sense proposed by Edward Said. It is true that Spanish orientalism cannot be equated with British or French orientalism. But it can be equated with that of other cases, such as that of the Germanic tradition, where – with or without an empire – it served to fight against cultural and political subordination, emphasize the belonging to modern European civilization and compensate for the limited international role (Kontje 2004).

As has been pointed out, in the academic and intellectual sphere, North Africa, and particularly Morocco, was the “star” of Spanish orientalism (Morales Lezcano 1990). In this regard, the academic field of Spanish Arabism cannot be separated from the orientalist muddle (López García 2011). On the other hand, the plastic arts, from painting to music (and, in another sense, architecture) was a privileged terrain for the deployment of orientalist discourses in Spain, and for its dissemination in mass culture. Also, in the case of literature, the novel with a colonial, exotic and orientalist theme was developed, especially after 1900, with Morocco as the central axis (Litvak 1985, Correa 2007).

Although we can find some nuances, the truth is that compared to Morocco (or any other “oriental” framework) the Spanish were as orientalist and as convinced of representing Western civilization as any other Europeans. Probably the best example is that of the testimonies of Spanish travellers who wandered through “exotic” lands, that is, the East, even beyond the Spanish colonial possessions. But also, Morocco, of course.

In short, Spanish travellers fulfilled the same function in the construction of a colonial culture as travellers from any other European country: to build an image of the non-European for domestic, national consumption (Pratt 2008). In their descriptions, what stands out first is the omnipresence of firmly orientalist clichés as a substrate, as well as the acceptance and defence of colonial action (Villanova 2009, Marin 2015). Second, they share as a common place the contrast between the vision of advanced societies, that is, Europe and therefore Spain (even if it is a country in jeopardy) versus backward Morocco (where, as we will see, gender stereotypes are key). Although the analyses on the causes of the Moroccan backwardness and the possibilities of redemption do vary, the conviction of the “civilizing” mission of Spain does not.

The General Exhibition of the Philippine Islands (Spanish colonial possession until 1898) held in Madrid in 1887 – which displayed an authentic repertoire of imperialist activities and representations that did not differ at all from many other exhibitions that were being held throughout Europe (Sánchez González 2003) – can serve as an example of the Spanish view on the colonies. In this exhibition and on other occasions even human zoos, a distinctively racist spectacle, can be found.

Specifically, towards Morocco, the Spanish colonial culture would display a “civilizing” discourse based on the conviction – of an evident Eurocentric nature – of its own superiority, not exempt from compassion or even sympathy, but inevitably marked by the limits of alterity. The “civilizing” task seemed to point to a belief in the capacity of North African peoples for change and progress.<sup>7</sup> But an “orientalist” gaze (with emphasis on the weaknesses of the character of those represented) and their exoticization perhaps implied an insurmountable limit to the possibility of development, of equating the Eastern peoples with the European.<sup>8</sup>

Were the ideas of Brotherhood or racial kinship anomalies in Spanish colonialism? In my opinion, the answer must be negative. In the first place, because the virtual effects of racial kinship were undermined by the development of the image of an insoluble Moroccan alterity. Religion played a decisive role in the separation of Islamic Morocco from Christian Spain.<sup>9</sup> Secondly because they did not go much further than serving as a cultural cover for the “civilizing mission” and were ultimately comparable to the will of “assimilation” (derived in “association” and finally in pure segregation) exercised by French colonialism (Saada 2007). It is simply not possible to underestimate that Spanish colonialism developed an image of the “Other,” of the North African (the *moro*), ultimately negative and with racist overtones (Mateo Dieste 1998, Martín Corrales 2002).

Was Racial kinship a Gift or a Burden? Or maybe both? The burden of Spanish (white) man, after all.

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7 Something not very different from what the French colonialist discourse proposed. See Reynaud and Paligot 2006, 235.

8 The idea of the North African peoples as “mysterious” was the predominant image in the French case and, despite the will to assimilate the Algerian territory, exoticism was the feature that always stood out. See Hale 2006, 46–66.

9 The Islamic past of al-Andalus was the object of complex negotiations in the construction of Spanish nationalism (Hertel 2015), and it was never resolved.

#### 4 Imperial Culture and Gender in Spanish Morocco

In Spain, at the end of the century, in a context of national and imperial crisis, the movement for national regeneration was filled with references to aggressive virility. In fact, it reflected the anxiety of a masculinity conceived in crisis (Aresti 2015). This virility was linked not by chance to colonialist approaches of a militaristic nature, but not only (Torres Delgado 2015). It was not a Spanish peculiarity, so during the French Third Republic, male virility went through a major crisis and was the object of exhaustive redefinition. The empire was precisely the place planned for redemption (Aldrich 2013, Bertaud 2011).

Significantly, the most characteristic allegory of this national and racial crisis was the one that insisted on the state of prostration of the country (which was in turn the engine that fuelled *regeneracionismo*) described as “Mohammedan indifference” in the words of Miguel de Unamuno or as “Eastern passivity” according to Costa. Even in 1911, the criminologist Pedro Dorado Montero described Spain as “even so African, that is, so lazy, so impetuous, so arrogant and so immoral in a thousand ways” (Dorado 1911, 13).

Initially, it could be thought that women were excluded from the representation of the national crisis (beyond the traditional use of the allegory of Spain as *Mater Dolorosa*). Spain was a “wounded lion” in Cuba and the Philippines. But in reality, such exclusion was the condition of possibility of the longed-for male role and the anxieties that surrounded it. Meanwhile, the image of women could be moved towards an imaginary of desire, within the representations of the late-century decadence culture (which was, however, ambivalent and plural). Not by chance, the image of the Spanish women could be linked to the orientalist and Africanist imaginary that followed this direction. As is well known, the strongly sexualized dimension of colonial desire is one of the most characteristic features of Orientalist discourse (Young 1994, McClintock 1995). The spectre of Carmen (as Prosper Mérimée had traced it to become an omnipresent allegory) as an erotic and orientalized fantasy (in addition to being extremely Spanish) had deep roots, also as a condition of possibility of Spanish masculinity (Andreu 2016, 96–106). However, it was threatened at the tragic end of the century.

However, strictly speaking, there was no comparison between “oriental” or Moroccan women and Spanish women (although some colonial witnesses did it: Marín 2015, 261–2). It could be said that the image of Carmen was displaced to be returned to its origins, towards the colonized woman (Archilés 2017). The alterity of gypsy Carmen possibly acted as a “deep image” in the sense proposed for national imaginaries by Alberto M. Banti (Banti 2005), which would foreshadow the Spanish colonial gaze on the alterity of Moroccan women.

All the arguments about the need to regenerate the country adopted a double gender dimension. On the one hand, with the crisis of virility linked to the degeneration of the race itself (suffering from both physical and moral ills). On the other hand, the discussion on the reproductive body of women and the regeneration of the nation became inseparable elements, while the separation of roles was maintained. The fin-de-siècle nation established its condition of possibility (and, in fact, its redemption or failure) through a chain of meanings that passed seamlessly through the woman's body as the centre.<sup>10</sup>

It is in this context that the process of exoticization of racial difference could make sense, through an "imaginary of desire" inserted in the representations of the fin-de-siècle decadence culture; an orientalist imaginary, in line with European trends (Litvak 1985). Significantly, in Spain this took place on the Africanist scene, with Morocco as the main protagonist. It was therefore a geographically close "Other," with a dense tradition of historical contacts (Martín Corrales 2002). In this regard, it is worth highlighting the role played by the plastic arts, especially painting (but also graphic illustrations in the press). Suffice is to recall that some of the most important Spanish painters at the turn of the century devoted intense attention to Moroccan orientalism: Fortuny, Benlliure or Muñoz Degraín. In fact, the vision of Morocco in Spanish painting has always been characterized as that of a Western visitor, full of sympathy but seeking exoticism. There is little doubt that Spanish painting contributed strongly to the fixation of Moroccan alterity.

The representation of women, the *moras* [Moorish women], inevitably became one of the central elements, and ultimately perhaps the most prominent from the point of view of the attribution of meanings. In this sense, it does not seem very appropriate to point out, as J. A. González Alcantud did, that "Spain never looked for the orientalist East [...] In the Hispanic dream, the Other is not desired, it is fought against. There are no oriental dreams of complacency, but dreams of military glory" (González Alcantud 2002, 17).

Ultimately, the representation by Spanish colonial discourses of the condition of Moroccan women (of Muslim religion but sometimes also Jewish) is key in contrast to white, civilized and especially Spanish women, which is offered by the testimonies collected in descriptions of travellers visiting North Africa since the 1860s (Marin 2015, Cerarols 2015). Soldiers, doctors, botanists, or anthropologists, as well as journalists and writers, enable us to have a very important corpus of materials. These authors devoted numerous pages in their analyses of Moroccan society to reflecting on female condition and describing

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10 This same situation is observed in France (Casmiscioli 2009).

women (drawings and photographs were also often included). By repeatedly influencing their clothing and manners, in addition to facilitating quaintness, they underlined the alterity of North African women, the non-European *moras* (Marín 2015, 136–76). It should not be forgotten that description of everyday aspects was one of the features that most contributed to the construction of alterity and national imaginaries by nineteenth-century travellers.

This corpus of materials provided by Spanish travellers was not homogeneous except for the fact that they are testimonies mostly written by men; even so, they still offer some common features (Archilés 2017). Firstly, they highlight the omnipresence of orientalist clichés as a substrate, as well as an attitude of defence of colonial action (Villanova 2009). Secondly, they share as a common place the contrast between the vision of advanced societies (Europe and, therefore, Spain, with nuances) versus backward Morocco – although the analyses on the causes of Moroccan backwardness and the possibilities of redemption vary, except in the “civilizing” mission that corresponds to Spain. Thirdly, it is in this civilizing background that the centrality of the contrast between the condition of women in Europe, and specifically in Spain, and that of Moroccan women is established. From a double idealized perspective, the supposed condition of Spanish women was highlighted in the face of the conditions of domination and subordination (of exploitation) of Moroccan women (Marín 2015, 257–75). In this way, the representation of Moroccan women allowed the articulation of a redemptive femonationalist discourse *avant la lettre* (Farris 2017). As Rafael Mitjana noted in his 1900 trip when contemplating the harem: “Once again what we had been told about Arab women has been confirmed: i.e., they are real dolls, without beautiful shapes or any kind of spiritual incentives.” According to Mitjana, these “brutalized” women are considered by their masters “mere objects of pleasure,” which unfailingly made them into “soulless beings, in whom the evillest instincts develop” (Mitjana 1905, 200–1).

All this entailed a reading of the masculine condition, of the Moroccan man, but also of the Spanish man, since the former serves to idealize the representation of the latter (Torres Delgado 2015). Faced with the threats to the virility of the Spanish man in the context of the aforementioned post-imperial crisis, the contrast with Morocco would have a soothing effect. Essentially, the underlying idea is the one that corresponds to the highly idealized vision of the Spanish woman as an angel in the house, under the attentive male protection in full triumph of the ideal of domesticity (and, therefore, of the maternal condition) and of a sexuality regulated by marriage, compared to a Moroccan woman who, without the guidance of men (or with a wrong guidance, in the absence of norms of civilization of a regulated sexual morality) is as much an object of oppression as of perdition. In both cases, the image of a woman in



need of guardianship is evident, as if she were a minor. Given that the representation of women played a key role in the representation of Morocco – at the will of travellers and analysts –, in the construction of the colonial difference, the logical consequence was that of a feminized and deviant Morocco, infantilized, in need of the civilizing tutelage of Spain (and implicitly condemned to failure as a people, lost in barbarism without colonizing action). In contrast, the self-representation (once *regenerated*, though) of the Spanish nation and its civilizing mission could not be more obvious.

Probably the most important work are the articles by Doctor Felipe Ovilo Canales, collected in his work *La mujer marroquí. Estudio social* [The Moroccan Woman. Social Study] (Ovilo 1881). Ovilo was always convinced of the right of Spain to intervene in Moroccan affairs. In the wake of Costa or Antón y Ferándiz, as seen before, he was willing to identify ethnic similarities between the North and South of the Strait, but this in no way diminished the nature of the colonization project. On the other hand, significantly, although Ovilo recognized a certain racial kinship, this never led him to annul the alterity of Moroccan women, with respect to Spanish ones (Torres 2009, Martínez Antonio 2009). Whatever the importance of the racial nuance, it was dismantled in the face of the forcefulness of a gendered representation. This is, in my opinion, one of the best examples, therefore, of the limits of the racial Brotherhood. Ovilo's was a "civilizing" discourse similar to what one would expect from any other European:

[...] dreams of conquest over Morocco, if any, have undergone a very remarkable change today. No sensible man thinks today of entering that territory by blood and fire, imposing on its inhabitants our laws and customs by the sword [...] The same is thought and is a general idea among the Spaniards, among those in high positions and among humble peasants; among the wise and among the ignorant; among the generals and among the soldiers: it is necessary, indispensable, unavoidable to consider the independence of Morocco as our own independence. (Ovilo 1888, 39)

North African women described by many of these travellers and other testimonies navigate through the concealment and invisibility of the veil (associated with complacency and a brutalizing life) and orientalist sensuality (with the institution of the harem as an object of desire and rejection, reviewed in many testimonies)<sup>11</sup> especially characteristic in graphic representations and written

11 One of the most extreme negative versions (and from which he drew a direct political consequence) is the one offered by Manuel Olivié, who exclaimed: "The harem, colossal

descriptions frequently modelled on the template drawn by orientalist paintings. But at the same time, it highlights the objectification and animalization by the colonial gaze of a woman described as subjected to the condition of a working beast (in front of the Spanish angel in the house). In fact, as Manuela Marín points out, it is this sharp contrast that fills the imperial desire with symbolic proportions: the veiled woman, the harem (Marín 2015, 265–6).

At the same time, it is worth noting the masculinization of the condition of women as they were forced to work, while the masculine condition of the Moroccan men is attenuated, “feminized” and diluted in the oriental sensuality, also without Christian values or respectable behaviour guidelines. It is, in fact, a process of “devirilization” of the indigenous, through a semantic chain of meanings: environment, complacency, vices, degeneration, which we can find in the different European colonial discourses (Taraud 2011, 348–54, Sinha 1995).

In this regard, it offers a vision perhaps more complex (although no less mystified) than the one the plastic arts used to show. The masculinized Moroccan woman is, in effect, a threat, a questioning of the Moroccan man’s model of virility. This subversion of roles with the Moroccan woman as a “pack animal” reinforces once again, by contrast, the gender discourse of the colonial man. Even *in absentia* (since his function as a traveller is obviously temporary and the Spanish colonization is still virtual), the Spanish man, the bearer of civilization, reinforces his virility, re-establishes the natural order of things: the one that should be kept in the metropolis as well as in the colony.

In conclusion, only the lesser temporal impact and effective scope of the Spanish imperial implantation in North Africa prevented the development of a full racial and sexual legitimation of the Spanish nation versus the colony, as indeed happened in France (Dorlin 2009).

## 5 Conclusions: Southern (dis)Comfort

Although it had deeper roots, the defeat in the Spanish-American War of 1898 exacerbated a serious post-imperial crisis. In the context of the decline of the Latin nations, the Spanish situation seemed compromised. Then, the idea that the regeneration of the Spanish nation passed through the completion of an

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hive of prostitutes and ruffians, which produces only greed and depravity, is the august temple of the laws that govern the Empire! That is how they are! How ridiculous are before this spectacle, the scruples of legality that some writers expose, defending non-intervention, because it is an attack on the principle of freedom!” (Olivié 1893, 157).

“imperial mission” prevailed in the Spanish intellectual and political spheres. With the American empire gone, it was the turn of the African empire, especially in the North of the continent. Spain had to civilize Morocco, which would show that it was still a living healthy nation. Furthermore, the civilizing action that Spain had to exercise over Morocco was the condition to reintegrate Spain into Europe. With the representation of Spain built since at least the eighteenth century as a dubiously modern South, rebuilding the empire was the proof the country needed to show that it was not on the fringes of Europe. Could a South country colonize as if it were a North country? It was not going to be easy. In Europe, Spain was a convenient South, a warped mirror of an idealized representation of European identity.

The Spanish imperial culture built a model to justify the Moroccan civilization in which the game of sexual representations, the colonial desire, was pivotal. The less effective the Spanish imperial action was, the more powerful was the compensatory cultural over-representation of its colonial desires. The sexualization and bestialization of the colonial woman served as a counterpoint to a new construction of manliness (and femininity) in the metropolis.

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# Index

- 1808 Spanish Uprising 129, 134–135, 137, 157, 164, 170
- Abba, Giuseppe Cesare 134
- Abrantès, Duchess of (Laure Junot) 148–149, 155–159
- Adams, John 186
- Agnesi, Maria Gaetana 154
- Agustina de Aragón 157–158
- Alas, Leopoldo (Clarín) 225, 236
- Álava 187, 191
- Albigensian crusade 118
- Alexander, William 28, 43
- Alfieri, Vittorio 88
- Algeria 93, 246, 247*n*, 250*n*
- Alfonso, Luis 236
- Alphonse XII of Spain 234
- Algiers 93
- Almodóvar, Duke of (Pedro Jiménez de Góngora) 61
- Álvarez de Colmenar, Juan 41, 41*n*
- Alzate Ramírez, José Antonio de 51
- Amadeo I of Spain 234
- Amar y Borbón, Josefa 31
- Ambrosoli, Francesco 148, 153
- amor courtois* 27
- anarchism 139
- Ancien Régime 22, 86, 131
- Andalusia 60, 94, 103, 106, 137, 235, 239, 248–249
- Andalusian genre 137
- Andrés Morell, Juan 116
- Andueza, José María de 134–135
- Anglicanism 156
- Anguissola, Sofonisba 151–152
- Anne of Austria 28
- Antón y Ferrándiz, Manuel 247, 254
- Arabic past 19, 27–28, 45–46, 46*n*, 113, 116–117, 129, 172, 235, 249, 250*n*
- Aranzadi, Telesforo de 246
- Arctic, the 184*n*
- Arese, Francesco 82*n*
- Ariosto, Ludovico 118
- Aristotle 97
- Aulnoy, Madame d' (Marie-Catherine le Jumelle de Barneville, Baronne d'Aulnoy) 41, 41*n*, 42
- Austen, Jane 97, 224
- Austen-Leigh, Edward, Lord Brabourne 224
- Austen-Leigh, James Edward 224
- Austria 155, 157, 159–160
- Ayguals de Izco, Wenceslao 167–168
- Azara, Félix de 62
- Azcárate, Gumersindo de 245
- Aztec Empire 65–66, 69
- Baedeker, Karl 186*n*
- Balaguer, Víctor 139
- Balkans 92, 94
- Balzac, Honoré de 102
- bandits and outlaws 93–95, 95*n*, 99–100, 102, 127, 138, 140
- Italian bandits/brigands 127–134, 139, 205, 210–212
- Italian camorra/mafia 95, 95*n*, 102, 212–213
- Spanish bandits/*bandoleros* 99, 103, 127–128, 135–137, 139
- Barbieri, Gaetano 148
- Baretti, Giovanni 20–21, 23, 30, 41
- Barker, Bligh 194
- Basque Country 185–187, 192, 195–197, 200–202
- Basque matriarchal myth 201
- Bassi, Calisto 75
- Bassi, Laura 151
- Battle of Legnano 132
- Bebel, August 225
- Benlliure, Mariano 252
- Bérault-Bercastel, Abbé Antoine Henri de 42*n*
- Berchet, Giovanni 89–90
- biography 145–146
- Bis, Louis-Florent 75
- Biscay 187, 190–191, 197, 200–201
- Bisi, Michele 82
- blood feud 100
- Bodin, Jean 109
- Bogart, Humphrey 93–94, 102
- Böhl de Faber, Cecilia 139
- Boleyn, Anne 156
- Bonafous, Louis-Abel 40*n*
- Bonaparte, Josephine (Josephine de Beauharnais) 156

- Bonaparte, Letizia (Maria Letizia Ramolino) 155
- Bonnet, Charles 119
- Bonstetten, Charles Victor de 44, 109, 118–122, 126
- Borrow, George 191–192
- Bory de Saint-Vincent, Jean-Baptiste 246
- Boston 59, 64
- Botta, Carlo 131
- Bougainville, Louis Antoine de 60, 65
- Bourgoing, Jean-François de (Baron de Bourgoing) 27
- Boyer d'Argens, Jean-Baptiste 41, 41*n*
- Braga, Teófilo 246*n*
- Braudel, Fernand 96, 99
- Bresciani, Antonio 139
- Bremer, Fredrika 224
- Brigantaggio* 140, 210–211
- British Empire 60–61, 63, 242, 244
- Brontë, Charlotte 224
- Brontë, Emily 224
- Buchan, John 99
- Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de 24, 42, 44, 57, 59, 63, 69
- Byron, Lord (George Gordon Byron) 92, 94, 102, 121, 127, 132–133
- byronism 92–93, 102–104, 136  
byronic hero/masculinity 93–94, 94*n*, 95, 100, 102, 127, 132, 134, 140
- Cadalso, José de 14, 24–25, 30–31
- Caimo, Norberto 27
- Calabrese romantic school 133
- Calabria 133–134, 210
- Cámara, Sixto 137, 139, 166
- Campan, Madame (Jean Louis Henriette Campan) 158
- Canonici Fachini, Ginevra 147
- Cánovas del Castillo, Antonio 234, 244
- Cantù, Cesare 131
- Cantù, Ignazio 148–149, 151, 153, 158
- Capistou, M. L. 190
- Capuana, Luigi 211
- Caraccioli, Louis-Antoine de 37
- Carlo Alberto, King of Piedmont 149
- Carlos, Don (prince Charles of Austria) 160
- Caro Baroja, Julio 201
- Carrer, Luigi 148, 153
- Carthaginians 43
- Casanova, Giacomo 26
- Castelar, Emilio 133*n*, 167, 170, 174, 176
- Castile 61, 189–191
- Castro, Rosalía de 224–225, 227–228, 230, 232
- Catalina de Erauso 157
- Catalonia 184
- Catherine II of Russia 156
- Catholicism 19, 24, 31, 51, 65, 126, 128, 146–148, 150–151, 154–155, 157–161, 165
- Cellini, Benvenuto 120
- Cervantes, Miguel de 193
- Ceuta 242
- chapbook literature 136
- character 99
- Charles Borromeo, Saint 152
- Charles II of Spain 58*n*
- Charles III of Spain 16, 57
- Charles IV of Spain 23, 57
- Charles of Anjou 132
- Charles Martel 116
- Chateaubriand, François-René de 149
- Chichisveo* – See *cicisbeo*
- chivalry 27–28, 30–31, 50, 103, 113, 117, 129, 136
- Christianity 27, 111, 113, 145, 250  
Christian values/morality 18, 36, 178, 255
- Christina of Sweden 156
- Churruca, Cosme Damián 189
- cicisbeo* 15–16, 19–25, 28, 31–32, 50, 122
- Cid, El (Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar) 103, 137
- civic humanism – See republicanism.
- civility 22, 28, 30–31, 36–37, 48, 50, 63, 66
- civilization, discourses of 16, 26–28, 30–31, 36–39, 43, 45, 48–49, 56–59, 61, 63–70, 108–109, 111–112, 116, 122, 130, 138, 146, 149–151, 159–160, 166, 184–186, 189, 192, 202, 207, 211, 216, 220, 236, 249, 253
- civilizing mission 245, 247–250, 253–254, 256
- Clarke, Edward 27, 41
- class thinking 47–48, 206–208, 219, 227, 232–238
- climate theory 19, 27, 37, 37*n*, 43–44, 44*n*, 46*n*, 56–57, 59, 63–64, 69, 93–94, 95*n*, 102–103, 109–110, 113, 119–121, 128, 138, 207–208, 234
- Colajanni, Napoleone 217
- Colletta, Pietro 131
- Collodi, Carlo 209
- Colonna, Vittoria 151

- Compagnoni, Giuseppe 30  
 conquest of America 58*n*, 61–63, 66, 69  
 conquistador 25, 25*n*, 32, 57, 61–62  
 conservatism 206, 208, 215  
 Cook, James 68  
 Coppet group 108–113, 116, 122  
 Corday, Charlotte 156  
 Córdova y López, Francisco 167–168  
 Cornaro Piscopia, Elena 153  
 Corsica 94, 100, 103  
*cortejo* 14–16, 19–21, 23–25, 28, 30–31, 50  
 Cortés, Hernán 25  
 cosmopolitanism 15, 19, 37, 108–109, 119  
 Costa, Joaquín 243, 245–248, 251, 254  
 Cottin, Madame (Sophie Ristaud) 150  
 Counter-Reformation 148, 151, 154  
 Crispi, Francesco 215–216  
 Crocker, Sidney 194  
 Cuba 251  
 culture of celebrity 226  
 Curti, Adele 149
- D'Alembert, Jean le Rond 40  
 Dalrymple, William 27  
 Daru, Count of (Pierre-Antoine-Noël-Bruno Daru) 153  
 Davidson, Lionel 99  
 D'Azeglio, Massimo 75  
 De Hoyos, Luis 246–247  
 Delacroix, Eugène 75, 81–82, 82*n*  
 de la Cruz y Cano, Ramón 24  
 Delaporte, Joseph 191  
 Delmas, Juan Eustaquio 200  
 Delmas, Nicolás 198–199  
 De Marchi, Emilio 211  
 Demolins, Edmund 241  
 De Roberto, Federico 211  
 despotism 19, 26, 60, 66, 87–88, 132, 136, 138, 170  
     Oriental despotism 60, 93, 93*n*  
 Diderot, Denis 40, 48  
 Di Giacomo, Salvatore 213  
 Domairon, Louis 40*n*  
 domesticity, discourses on 14, 24, 27–28, 99, 145, 151, 154–155, 165, 174–175, 179–180, 196–197, 200–202, 232, 253, 255  
 Dorado Montero, Pedro 251  
 Dumas, Alexandre 93–95, 100, 104  
 Durán, Agustín 136
- Echave, Baltasar de 191  
 effeminacy 21, 23–25, 27, 63, 110, 115, 127, 131, 137–139, 188, 255  
 Egypt, Ancient 42–43, 43*n*, 45–46  
 Elcano, Juan Sebastián 189  
 Eleanora d'Este 150  
 Eliot, George 104, 224  
 Elisabeth Tudor 157  
 England 27, 46, 98, 114, 156–157, 160, 184*n*, 186*n*, 224, 226, 241  
 Enlightenment 15, 24–26, 32, 36–39, 42–43, 46*n*, 48–50, 56–60, 60*n*, 62, 64–70, 145, 158–159, 168, 178  
 Equatorial Guinea 242  
 Ermengarde 149  
 Espiard de Laborde, François-Ignace 43  
 Espoz y Mina, Francisco 134  
 Espronceda, José de 136, 138  
 Estala, Pedro de 51, 58–63, 65–69  
 exoticism 43, 45, 92–94, 94*n*, 99, 104–105, 184–186, 192–193, 202, 249–250, 250*n*, 252  
     self-exoticization 248–249
- fascism 220, 243  
 female national allegories 79–81, 83–84, 113–114, 251  
 female writers 31, 149, 223, 228  
 femonationalism 253  
 feminism 225, 227, 230  
 Ferdowsi 116  
 Fernández de Moratín, Leandro 21  
 Fernando Poo 242  
 Ferri, Enrico 216–217  
 Ferrigni, Pietro 206–207  
 First Carlist War 131, 190  
 First World War 213, 220  
 Florence 17, 75, 108, 147  
 Fontecha y Salazar, Pedro 185  
 Ford, Richard 128, 190–191, 196  
 Fortuny, Marià 252  
 Forster, E. M. 99, 104  
 Fouillé, Alfred 241  
 France 14, 16–17, 28, 32, 39–40, 40*n*, 41, 42*n*, 43–44, 46–48, 56, 62, 76, 86, 92–93, 96, 104, 109, 113, 119, 126, 129–130, 148, 156–160, 167, 186, 226, 243, 246, 247*n*, 251, 252*n*, 255  
 Franchetti, Leopoldo 205–206  
*franchise* 37, 48

- Franquelo, Ramón 137  
 Frederick II of Swabia 117  
 French cultural influence 16, 19, 24, 28, 31,  
     37, 46, 48–50, 137  
 French Midi 44, 113  
 French Revolution 88, 149, 151, 158, 160  
 Fréron, Louis-Marie Stanislas 40  
 Fucini, Renato 206–207  
*fuertista* 185, 187  
*fueros* (Basque) 185, 187, 190–191, 195  
  
*galanterie* 37, 48  
 Galicia 224–227, 230, 232–233, 236–239  
 Galician regionalism 227–229  
 Galician language and literature 229–230  
 gallantry 14–15, 21–23, 25–27, 29–31, 49–50,  
     233  
*galleguismo* 224, 228  
 Ganivet, Ángel 248  
 García de Villalta, José 137  
 García Ruiz, Eugenio 167, 169  
 Garibaldi, Giuseppe 75, 134, 139–140, 206,  
     215, 217  
 Garibay, Esteban de 185  
 Garoni, Nicolò Cesare 150  
 Garrett, Almeida 104  
 Garrido, Fernando 166–168  
 Gautier, Théophile 186, 190, 192–193  
 Gaztambide, Joaquín 138  
 Genlis, Madame de (Stéphanie Félicité  
     Ducrest, countess of) 150, 158  
 Genoa 17, 22  
 Geoffrin, Madame de (Marie-Thérèse Rodet  
     Geoffrin) 29–30  
 Germanic tribes/invasions 76–77, 80, 111,  
     117, 120  
 Germany 16, 19, 28, 44, 46, 76–77, 79–80,  
     109, 112–113, 126, 167, 186*n*, 243, 246  
 Gherardini, Vittoria (Marquess Visconti  
     d'Aragona) 82, 82*n*  
 Ginguené, Pierre-Louis 147–148, 150  
 Gioia, Melchiorre 119  
 Giustinian, Leonarda 153  
 Godoy, Manuel 23, 59  
 Goldoni, Carlo 17  
 Gonzaga, Eleonora 152  
 Gorani, Giuseppe 129  
 Gothic novel 128  
 Grand Tour 20–21, 92, 95  
  
 Grant, James 75  
 Great Britain 16, 20, 23, 27–28, 30, 48, 56, 61,  
     63, 110, 114, 157, 167, 246  
 Greece 75, 81, 92, 103, 111, 184, 247  
 Grey, Jane 156  
 Guerrazzi, Francesco Domenico 75, 132–133  
 guerrilla 131, 133–136, 138–139  
 Guipúzcoa 187, 190–191, 193, 195–196, 200  
 Gutiérrez del Alba, José María 137  
  
 Haggard, Henry Rider 99  
 harem 14, 23, 95, 253–254, 254*n*, 255  
 Hayez, Francesco 75, 82, 82*n*, 83, 133  
 Heine, Heinrich 92  
 Henao, Gabriel 185  
 Hermann (Arminius) 76–77, 80  
 Homer 111  
 Honour and Shame theory 100–103  
 Hormaeche, Francisco 188, 197–200  
 Hispanic modernity 56–58, 61–62, 69  
*Hispanidad* 244  
 Huber, Viktor Aimé 188  
 Hugo, Victor 130, 190, 193, 200, 224  
 Humboldt, Alexander von 51  
 Humboldt, Wilhelm von 187  
 Hume, David 27, 30, 42, 44, 48, 60*n*  
  
 imperial crisis 241, 251, 253, 255  
 imperial desire 241–242, 251–252, 255–256  
 Inquisition 46, 51, 136  
 Isabella II of Spain 170, 202, 234  
 indigenous peoples 58, 58*n*, 59, 60*n*, 61,  
     63–67, 69, 255  
 inter-ethnic rape 74–76, 79, 87  
 Ireland 190  
 Iriarte, Bernardo de 63  
 Irving, Washington 94, 128, 185  
 Italian African Imperialism 216, 243  
 Italian Quarantotto 133, 161  
  
 Jardine, Alexander 25  
 Jaucourt, Louis de 36  
 Jewish past 19, 46, 46*n*  
 Joan of Arc 156  
 Jonson, Ben 121  
 Jouy, Étienne de 75  
 Jovellanos, Gaspar Melchor de 25, 30–31  
 Joyes, Inés 31  
 Juan, Jorge 63–64, 67

- Julius Caesar 42
- Kleist, Heinrich von 75–76, 80
- Körner, Theodor 75
- Kurosawa, Akira 97
- Laborde, Alexandre 44, 190–191, 195–196, 200
- Labra, Rafael María de 245
- La Condamine, Charles Marie de 63
- La Curne de Saint-Pelaye, Jean-Baptiste 27
- Lamartelière, Jean-Henri-Ferdinand 130
- Lamas, Valentín 228
- Lambert, marquise de (Anne-Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles) 28
- Lancetti, Vincenzo 152
- Lancis, Lamberto 196
- La Porte, Joseph de 38–40, 40*n*, 41, 41*n*, 42–43, 43*n*, 45–46, 46*n*, 47, 47*n*, 49–51, 59
- Larramendi, Manuel de 185, 195, 195*n*
- Lavallière, Madame de (Louise de Lavallière) 159
- Leopardi, Giacomo 75
- Levati, Ambrogio 148
- Lima 61, 67
- Linnaeus, Carl Nilsson 36
- Livy (Titus Livius) 88
- Lobo, Eugenio Gerardo 23
- Lombardy (region) 211
- Lombardy-Venetia, Kingdom of 148–149, 152, 158
- Lombroso, Cesare 210, 216
- Losada, Benito 228
- Louis XIV of France 158
- Lucretia 87
- Macaulay, Catherine 31
- Macfarlane, Charles 129–130
- Macías Picavea, Ricardo 247
- Madrid 14, 15*n*, 41, 51, 67, 137, 167, 175, 200–201, 233–234, 237–238, 250
- Maghreb 93, 244
- Maine, Henry 102–103
- Maintenon, Madame de (Françoise d'Aubigné) 158
- Manfred, King of Sicily 132
- Manterola, José 196
- Manzoni, Alessandro 76, 146, 149, 153, 224
- Maria Luisa of Parma 23
- Maria Theresa of Austria 157
- Martinelli, Vincenzo 24
- Martínez de Isasti, Lope 185, 195–196
- Martínez Villergas, Juan 137
- Martini, Lorenzo 157
- Mary of Medicis 149
- Mary Stuart 157
- Mary Tudor 156
- Mascagni, Pietro 103
- Massenet, Jules 95
- Masson de Morvilliers, Nicolas 109
- Mastriani, Francesco 211
- Matilda di Canossa 147, 150
- Mauro, Domenico 133
- May, Karl 99
- Mazzini, Giuseppe 133
- McBride, Harry 201
- Medici family 147
- Mediterranean 43, 92–96, 99–105, 108–109, 111–112, 115, 120, 123, 126, 128, 130, 138, 160, 216
- Meiners, Christoph 19, 28
- Melilla 242
- melodrama 167
- Mercier, Louis-Sébastien 40
- Mérimée, Prosper 92–95, 95*n*, 98–99, 104, 129, 193, 251
- Mexico 51, 58–60, 66, 68
- Mexico city 67
- Mickiewicz, Adam 224
- Middle Ages 27–28, 113, 116, 131–132, 135, 137, 147, 156, 160, 184
- Milan 84, 147–149, 160, 209, 211–212, 214, 216
- Mill, John Stuart 225
- Milton, John 127
- Miraglia, Biagio 133
- Miranda, Francisco de 21–23
- Misdea, Salvatore 210
- Mitjana, Rafael 253
- modernity, discourses on – See civilization, discourses on
- Mojon, Bianca Milesi 149, 153–154
- Montesquieu, baron de (Charles Louis de Secondat) 24, 27–28, 37*n*, 40, 42, 44, 46*n*, 47*n*, 48*n*, 60*n*, 62, 109, 111
- Moore, John 20, 23



- Mora, Juan de Dios 167, 172–174, 176–177  
 Morelli, Maria Maddalena (Corilla Olimpica) 115, 151  
 Morocco 241–243, 245–250, 252–254, 256  
 Moxó, Benito María de 66  
 Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus 92  
 Muratori, Ludovico 24, 149  
 Muñoz, Isaac 244  
 Muñoz Degrain, Antonio 252  
 Murguía, Manuel (Manuel Martínez Murguía) 224, 228, 230, 232, 237  
 Murray, John 186*n*, 191  
 Musset, Alfred de 193
- Naples 16, 108, 114, 160, 205–212, 214–215, 217  
 Napoleon I 95, 115, 129, 134, 148, 155–156, 158–159, 170  
 Napoleonic Empire 76, 86, 88, 92, 95, 148–149, 155–156, 158  
 Napoleonic Wars 134, 157, 160  
 Nasi, Nunzio 218–219  
 national character 21, 37, 47*n*, 49, 56, 60, 60*n*, 128  
   Basque national character 185–189, 191, 194–196, 198, 201–202  
   French national character 48, 48*n*  
   Italian national character 44*n*, 129, 131–132, 134, 209, 243  
   Spanish national character 45–48, 50, 61–63, 129, 134, 136–137, 139, 186, 190, 192, 202, 233  
 national decadence 16, 31  
   Italian national decadence 26, 32, 132, 146, 153  
   Spanish national decadence 25–26, 32, 40, 44, 49, 59, 61–62, 68  
 national hero/heroine 75, 77, 132, 135, 139, 157–158, 172  
 national honour 74, 79, 81, 84, 86–89  
 national kinship/genealogy 78, 87, 89–90  
 national writer 223–224, 232  
   national female writer 224–225  
 national traitors 77–79, 132  
 nation builder 223–224, 227–228  
 naturalism 225, 229  
 Navarre 49  
 Neapolitan Republic 131  
 Neoclassicism 21  
 Neoplatonism 23, 30
- Netherlands 56, 61, 104  
 New England 201  
 New Jersey 64  
 New Spain 15*n*, 51  
 New York 64  
 Niceforo, Alfredo 216–217  
 North America 20, 56, 58, 63–64, 69  
 novel 164, 166, 211, 227  
 Núñez de Castro, Alonso 41
- Occitan literature 113, 117–118  
 Oliveira Martins, Joachim Pedro de 246*n*  
 Olivié, Manuel 245, 254*n*  
 Oller, Narcís 229  
 Olózaga, Salustiano de 136  
 Orient 38, 43–45, 98, 207  
 Orientalism 14, 49, 60, 92–95, 95*n*, 101–102, 235, 242, 248–255  
   orientalization of Southern Europe 28, 38, 43–44, 49, 101–102, 118, 207–208, 210–211, 218, 233, 235, 242, 248, 251  
 Ottoman Empire 92, 96  
 Ovilo Canales, Felipe 254
- Padula, Vincenzo 134  
 Pardo Bazán, Emilia 223–230, 232–238  
 Parini, Giuseppe 149  
 Parma, Michele 159  
 Pasha, Ali 92  
 passionate excesses and immorality 15, 21, 26, 28, 31, 40, 49, 65, 67, 79, 93, 95, 100, 102, 104, 112, 115, 121, 126–128, 131, 134, 138, 151, 164–165, 168, 172, 176, 185, 192, 213, 231, 233, 236, 251, 253, 256  
   Carmen (Spanish character) 94, 94*n*, 95, 97, 100, 102, 185, 192, 202, 251  
   Don Juan (Spanish character) 165, 233, 236  
   sexual violence against women 74–77, 79–82, 85–89
- Paul I of Russia 157  
 Pauw, Cornelius de 24, 57, 61, 69  
 Pelayo 135, 172, 172*n*, 173, 177  
 Peninsular War 131, 135  
 Pérez Galdós, Benito 225, 234  
 Peru 58–59, 62, 68  
*petimetre* 23, 25  
*petit-maitre* 25  
 Petrarca, Francesco 115

- Peyron, Jean-François 42  
 philhellenism 92–93  
 Phillip II of Spain 160  
 Phillippine Islands 250–251  
*philosophes* 41–42, 44, 50  
 Pitt-Rivers, Julian 100  
 Pittsburgh 64  
 Pius IX 161, 164  
 Pliny 42  
 Poggiolini, Giuseppina 149  
*politesse* 26, 37, 48–49  
 Poland 160  
 Pompadour, Madame (Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson) 158  
 Pondal, Eduardo 228  
 Portugal 17, 19, 28, 41, 42*n*, 51, 56, 116, 192, 197, 243, 246*n*  
 Poza, Andrés de 191  
 Pozzolini Siciliani, Cesira 206–207  
 Praz, Mario 88  
 Prévost, Antoine François 39*n*  
 Protestantism 24, 119, 126, 148, 156, 160, 188  
 Provence 116–117  
 Prussia 76  
 Pushkin, Aleksandr 92  
  
 Quétin, M. 192, 197  
 Quevedo, Francisco de 41, 42*n*  
  
 racial/ethnic thinking 19, 37–38, 44, 46–47, 67, 206, 210–211, 214, 216–217, 233–235, 237, 241, 246, 252  
     racial degeneration theories 57–58, 61–63, 69, 243, 252  
     racial kinship 245–248, 250, 254  
     racial mixture 45–46, 46*n*, 79, 216  
     racism 73, 90, 250  
 Radcliffe, Anne 128  
 radicalism 127, 131, 134, 136, 138–139, 164–168, 170, 176–178, 206, 214, 216–217  
 Ramírez y Góngora, Manuel Antonio 30  
 Raynal, Abbé (Guillaume Thomas François Raynal) 40, 57, 61  
 Raynouard, François Juste Marie 117  
 Realism 104  
*regeneracionismo* 243, 247, 251  
 regional literature 228–229  
  
 religious fanaticism and superstition 40, 47, 49, 51, 66, 114, 136, 146, 151, 207, 209, 211–212, 214–216  
 Renaissance 16, 22–24, 26, 118, 120–121, 151, 155, 159, 184  
*Renaixença* 224, 229  
 republicanism 27, 87–88, 131, 138–139, 168, 170  
     republican virtues 178–179  
*Rexurdimento* 224, 227  
 Richard, J.M.V. Audin 197  
 Richardson, Samuel 88  
 Risorgimento 16, 75*n*, 82, 84, 89, 131–133, 145–147, 151, 159–160  
 Robertson, William 24  
 Roderic, King of Spain 46*n*  
 Rodríguez Rubí, Tomás 137  
 Roland, Madame (Marie-Jeanne Roland de la Platière) 159  
 Romagnosi, Gian Domenico 149  
 romance 100  
 Roman Empire 16, 26, 76–77, 89, 113, 135, 245, 247*n*  
 Romanticism 92–94, 102, 108, 112, 115, 121, 123, 126–128, 130–131, 134, 136, 138, 185–186, 242–243, 249  
     Romantic liberalism 127, 130  
     Romantic nationalism 75–76, 78, 85–86, 110  
 Rome 21, 40*n*, 74*n*, 88, 108, 115, 132, 150, 210  
 Rosa, Salvatore 130, 133  
 Roscoe, Thomas 190, 192–193  
 Rossi, Adolfo 210  
 Rossini, Gioachino 75  
 Rossitto, Giuseppe 213  
 Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 14, 27–30, 37, 86, 146, 149  
 Ruffo di Motta e Bagnara, Vincenzo (Prince of Sant'Antimo) 82*n*  
 Russia 156–157, 160  
  
 Sacchi, Defendente 148  
 Sahara 242, 246  
 Sales Ferré, Manuel 246  
 Salfi, Francesco Saverio 88–89  
 Salvemini, Gaetano 217  
 Sánchez del Arco, Francisco 137  
 Sand, George (Aurore Lucile Dupin de Dudevant) 224, 226

- Sardá, Juan 236  
 Sartorio, Michele 148, 150, 153  
 Saussure, Leopold de 241  
 Scandinavia 38*n*  
 Schiller, Friedrich 75, 127, 130, 133, 224  
 Schlegel, August Wilhelm 109, 112  
 Schlegel, Friedrich 112  
 Scotland 27, 98–99, 102–103, 114, 190  
 Scott, Walter 75, 82, 98–99, 104, 148–149, 224  
 Scottish conjectural history 19  
 Sempere y Guarinos, Juan 67  
 Sergi, Giuseppe 216, 241  
*Sexenio Democrático* 234  
 Sharp, Samuel 20  
 Sicilian Vespers 82–84, 132  
 Sicily 83, 96, 100, 103, 132, 134, 205, 211, 218  
 Sidi-Ifni 242  
 Sidney, Lady Morgan 21, 130, 148  
 Silhouette, Étienne de 42  
 Sismondi, Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de 82, 109, 113, 115–119, 146–150, 153–154, 159  
 socialism 168, 215–218  
 social fatherhood 171, 177  
 social maternity 165, 174, 177  
 Sonnino, Sidney 205–206  
 Spanish America 15, 24, 56, 58, 62–65, 68–69  
 Southern backwardness 16, 40, 50, 61, 63, 111, 119, 122, 128–129, 138, 186, 205–209, 211–212, 214–217  
 Southern Question 140, 206, 219*n*  
 Southern violence and barbarity 45–47, 49, 57, 92–94, 100, 102–104, 126–129, 135, 164, 192, 205, 207, 209–212, 214, 219, 233, 235–236, 254  
 Southey, Robert 135  
 Spanish African imperialism 241–245, 248, 250, 255–256  
 Spanish-American War (1898) 241, 248, 255  
 Spanish Baroque literature 26, 41  
 Spanish Black Legend 25, 244  
 Spanish Empire 25, 32, 56, 61–64, 67–69, 242, 256  
 Spanish influence on Italy 146, 150, 154, 159  
 Spanish knight 28, 30  
 Spanish Liberal Revolution 131, 164  
 Staël, Madame de (Anne-Louise Germaine Necker) 108–116, 118–119, 123, 129, 156, 224, 226  
 Stella, Anton Fortunato 148–149, 155  
 Stendhal (Henri Beyle) 108  
 stereotyping 19–21, 31, 38–39, 51–52, 110, 123, 184–185, 242, 248  
 Stoppani, Angelo 209  
 Strabo 42, 42*n*  
 Suárez, Francisco 167–168, 174  
 Sue, Eugène 75, 168  
 Suttner, Bertha von 224  
 Switzerland 21, 119, 190  
 Tacitus 112  
 temperament 36, 48–49, 65, 94, 102–103, 114, 135, 218, 237  
 Teotochi Albrizzi, Isabella 149, 154  
 Thomas, Antoine-Léonard 28, 30  
 Thrale, Hester (Piozzi) 21  
 Tönnies, Ferdinand 103  
 Tornielli, Giuseppina 149  
 Toulouse, County of 116  
 Townsend, Joseph 27  
 traditionalism 214, 219, 229  
 travel literature 39, 42, 51, 56, 58–60, 68–69, 185–186, 192, 197, 202, 208  
 Tresserra, Ceferino 167–168, 171  
 troubadours 113, 117  
 Tubino, Francisco 246  
 Tunisia 210  
 Turkey 60, 66, 69  
 Tuscany 205–206, 212  
 Ulloa, Antonio 63–64  
 Unamuno, Miguel de 248, 251  
 United States, The 69, 186–187, 241  
 Valera, Juan 229  
 Van Loo, Carle 29  
 Vargas Ponce, José 61, 69  
 Vayrac, Abbé Jean de 41  
 Velázquez de Velasco, Luis José, marquis of Valdeflores 15, 21  
 Venice 17, 22, 104, 147, 153, 213  
 Veracruz 65  
 Verdaguer, Jacint 229  
 Verdi, Giuseppe 133  
 Verga, Giovanni 103, 211

- verisimilitude/*vraisemblance* 97, 99,  
     101, 104  
 Verri, Pietro 149  
 Vico, Giambattista 149  
 Virginia (Roman character) 87–88  
 Viriatus 135  
 virility 25, 27, 30, 74, 82, 112, 116, 118, 120,  
     126, 131, 133–134, 136–139, 170, 185,  
     187, 192, 194–196, 200, 202,  
     251–253, 255  
 Visconti d'Aragona, Alessandro  
 Vismara, Antonio 211  
 Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) 40, 42–43,  
     46*m*14  
 Vulpus, Christian August 130  
 Wales 191  
 War of the Spanish Succession 24  
 Weber, Max 102–103  
 Wehl, Feodor 76  
 Wells, H. G. 99  
 White Mario, Jessie 206–207  
 Wollstonecraft, Mary 31  
 Yáñez, Idelfonso 248  
 Yxart, Josep 229  
 Zaldibia, Juan Martínez de 191  
 Zampini-Salazaro, Fanny 208  
 Zorrilla, José 136  
 Zugasti, Julián de 139