CHAPTER 2

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).[1] 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

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

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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.[2] 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

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

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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*.[3]

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).[4] 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

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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).[5] 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*

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).

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(1765–1795).[6] 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

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–XLII (1788–1795).

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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.[7]

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.[8] 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 luimesme. Rédigés et traduits de l'Espagnol* [The Travels of Don Quevedo. Written by him.

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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.[9] 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)

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).

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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,[10] 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 Hottentots, 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

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).

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> 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).[11] 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.[12] 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.

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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.[13] 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

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

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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.[14] 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.[15] Instead, his account consists of the kind of historical, geographical and ethnographic depiction typical of the encyclopae-

14 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.

15 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

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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.[16] 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

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.

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by a natural indolence.[17] 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).[18] 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.

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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.[19] 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.

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

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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

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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).[20] 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

20 See Nuria Soriano's chapter in this volume.

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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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