

# Catholic civilization and the evil savage: Juan Nuix facing the Spanish *Conquista* of the New World

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I.

This contribution is focussed on the *Riflessioni imparziali sopra l'Umanità degli Spagnuoli nell'Indie*, published in 1780 by the exiled Spanish Jesuit Juan Nuix<sup>1</sup>. My aim is twofold: first of all, I will try to analyze some issues debated in late eighteenth century Spanish culture; secondly, I would like to grasp Nuix's peculiar point of view on 'otherness' in relation to the Spanish *Conquista* of America. In other words I wish to study his ideological framework and how an eighteenth century European Jesuit evaluated pre-Columbian civilizations and cultures.

Starting from some biographical information, Juan Nuix y de Perpinyà was one of the about five thousand Spanish Jesuits expelled by Charles III in 1767. Reaching Italy during the following years, this large colony of ecclesiastics concentrated itself mainly in the North Center region of Emilia-Romagna, within the Papal States, till 1814, when the Pope restored the Society of Jesus (which had been suppressed in 1773). Nuix was born in Cervera in 1740; in 1754 he joined the Aragonese Province of the Society; with his provincial group he lived in Ferrara until he died on 15 July 1783, at the age of 43 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Juan Nuix y de Perpinyà, *Riflessioni imparziali sopra l'Umanità degli Spagnuoli nell'Indie, contro i pretesi Filosofi e Politici, per servire di lume alle storie de' signori Raynal e Robertson* (Venezia: Francesco Pezzana, 1780).

Within the Spanish Assistance in exile, the Aragonese Province, even before the expulsion, distinguished itself for humanistic studies and a strong interest in philosophical debates: contemporary historiography, starting from Miguel Batllori and Antonio Mestre, has explained this fact with the local erudite tradition and with the current of *novatores*, like Gregorio Mayans, born in the Reign of Valencia. We can extend this argument to the Society in its entirety. Within the Jesuit Spanish group too, during the eighteenth century (especially after the suppression ordained by Pope Clement XIV and the collapse of the ancient hierarchy), two cores or trends clearly emerged: a conservative wing, defending the Catholic orthodoxy and the Scholastic-Thomistic tradition; and an open-minded tendency, that tried to absorb philosophical, theological and epistemological breakings or cultural challenges. This latter wing developed a peculiar cultural technique based on syncretism and eclecticism, following the same method adopted by the Society's missionary strategy. These two wings had existed since the seventeenth century, but the emergence of the *Nova Scientia* and, afterwards, of the Enlightenment made this split and this double identity more evident within the Society. Usually the more open-minded wing tried to combine Cartesianism, Newtonian Physics, Lockean philosophy and the Leibnizian-Wolffian system with the Scholastic tradition, and in the first half of eighteenth century it engaged itself in a dialogue with the *philosophes* (as the French Jesuit Guillaume-François Berthier, editor in chief of the famous *Mémoires de Trévoux*). At the same time, the more traditional trend labeled every approach to modern philosophy by the insulting term of 'Spinozism'.

During the second half of eighteenth century, even after the suppression, the open-minded group was determined to take possession of the *sociabilité des Lumières* – academies, salons, libraries, Masonic lodges – and decided to reach the reading public by the press and the new fashionable literary genres, like the philosophical novel. We can consider this syncretist and enlightened wing as a part of that "moderate main-stream", which Jonathan I. Israel is making reference to in his *Radical Enlightenment*: in fact the basic aim of the open-minded wing was to fight atheism and, like their conservative *confrères*, to defend papal supremacy, political order and Catholicism. In other words these 'enlightened Jesuits' tried to Christianize European Enlightenment.

It is necessary to underline that both wings often co-existed within the same national group, in every Province and even in the same Jesuit college or house. After the French Revolution and the quick polarization of European political atmosphere, the enlightened wing suffered a clear defeat: even those Jesuits who had kept open a continuous dialogue with reformers and Enlightenment thinkers changed strategy and assumed more cautious attitude; the restoration of the Society allowed these two cores converge again.

In the case of the Spanish Jesuits we can note that both wings, especially after the expulsion, developed a strong patriotic attitude: this has been usually explained as a reaction to the expulsion itself because, during their long exile,

Iberian Jesuits protested their innocence against the impeachment they had been charged with. But, within the Spanish Assistance, we can observe the existence of different forms of patriotism. The conservative group engaged itself to extol the imperial past of Habsburg Spain, the essential foundations of which were *casticismo*, *limpieza de sangre* and militant Catholicism; on the contrary, the open-minded current did not ignore the economic, cultural and political decline of Spain, but anyway strove to demonstrate the important contribution Spain had given to European civilization: as Juan Andrés, one of the most important figure of Spanish Assistance maintained, Spain needed more an “indirect apologia” than a partisan one. These two patriotic or apologetic tendencies characterized not only Jesuits, but the overall Spanish culture of the eighteenth century: the clearest definition of the first kind of patriotism was that of Benito Jerónimo Feijóo who, in his *Glorias de España* (in *Teatro Crítico*, vol. 4, speech 13), exalted the civilizing role – beginning with the spread of Christianity – achieved by Spaniards in America. The second perspective came out from the *Austracismo* and Mayans’ erudition: not accidentally, because of its rejection of a Castilian-centric and imperial point of view, it was charged with anti-patriotism by Bourbon official culture, whose champion was Feijóo.

As we shall see, Juan Nuix – in spite of his Catalan origins – shared the first apologetic interpretation, following just Feijóos ideas on Iberian *Conquista* of America.

## II.

It is neither possible to describe here every aspect of the Spanish Jesuits’ publishing activities during the exile, nor to explain the strategies they developed at the end of eighteenth century to counter Enlightenment culture. Suffice it to say that the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1776 not only caused the appearance of a great quantity of writings dedicated to America and the European colonies, but it gave also impulse to the Enlightenment movement: with his *Riflessioni*, Nuix aimed at opposing “the prosecutors of Spain [...], who in our century are called philosophers”<sup>2</sup>. Like many Spanish exiled Jesuits, he tried to question the new ‘enlightened’ version of the centuries old ideological paradigm defined *leyenda negra*.

Paradoxically the fact that the Spanish monarchy took side with the thirteen revolted British colonies did not help to assert a positive image of Spain, as Bourbon reformers like Camponanes endeavored to do in Europe. French, Scottish and Italian *philosophes* – taking their starting point from Las Casas’ *Relación*, Garcilaso de la Vega’s *Comentarios Reales* and other Iberian historians and chroniclers – described Spain with unprecedented polemical vigor as the prototype of the colonial nation whose unrelenting thirst for riches had caused the ruthless exploitation of innocent native peoples; they strongly insisted

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<sup>2</sup> Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 14.

on two main topics, that is the cruelty of the conquest of the New World and the ineptitude in ruling the colonial territories. Therefore, during the 1770s, some political and historical texts, working out themes already expounded by Montesquieu, Buffon, de Pauw, Voltaire and Jaucourt, condemned Spain for its colonial system and for its religious fanaticism: among them, Raynal and Diderot's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1770; 1774; 1780) and William Robertson's *History of America* (1777). Some novelists too, influenced by the noble savage myth, blamed *conquistadores'* violent insults against Amerindians: dramas and novels like Marmontel's *Les Incas* (1777) collaborated with Raynal's 'machine de guerre' to draw a black image of Spanish colonization. The climax of the anti-Spanish polemic was achieved in 1783, when Masson de Morvilliers published his famous article "Espagne" in the first volume of the geographical section in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique*.

Therefore, at the end of 1770s, French and Scottish Enlightenment circles had reinforced two main topics belonging to the black legend, that is the inhumanity showed by sixteenth century *conquistadores* and the tyrannical oppression on consciences and on Spanish culture exercised by Inquisition: the 'Olavide affaire', blown up at the same time as the American Revolution, revived the never soothed charges against the "monster", as Voltaire called the Spanish Holy Office in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*.

Bourbon government, led from 1776 by the count of Floridablanca, reacted immediately against this press campaign. With the support of José Gálvez (the minister of Indies) and in opposition to the count of Campomanes, Floridablanca decided to organize an effectual propaganda operation in order to refute the black legend's topics: his government enrolled to this purpose the best Spanish writers. This strategy will reach its climax with the prohibition of the translation Robertson's *History of America's* sponsored by Campomanes, with Pedro Suárez de Góngora's, Duke of Almodovar, revised version of Raynal's *Histoire philosophique* and, finally, with an official history of America written and published in 1793 by Juan Bautista Muñoz.

In order to win this cultural war, Floridablanca did not hesitate to recruit exiled Jesuits: from then on, Madrid would give granted honors and money to those Jesuits who, as any Spanish writer (José Cadalso, Juan Pablo Forner, José Cavanilles, Juan Sempere y Guarinos) and journalist, had criticized the "slandorous reports" spread by foreign philosophers and travelers. In the case of the expelled Jesuits, Floridablanca stipulated a tacit agreement with them: Bourbon government would systematically warrant a second pension for "literary merits" in exchange for their apologetic zeal.

The Jesuits who, during the previous years, had polemized against the Bourbon ministers responsible for their expulsion (first of all, Campomanes), chose to support Floridablanca's propaganda for two main reasons. First, after the suppression of their order in 1773, every Jesuit had to survive as any other member of the secular clergy. In the case of the Spanish Jesuits, Charles III's *Pragmática de expulsión* (1767)

had granted them individual pensions, but such a poor amount also because of an increasing devaluation, could not secure a decent life. So, taking advantage of the Jesuits' critical financial situation, Bourbon ministers could 'blackmail' and 'enlist' this group of exiled clergymen: Madrid would reward those who defended their own country from foreign black propaganda. As the Spanish ambassador in Rome José Nicolás de Azara said, it was a double kind of opportunistic "prostitution": the Jesuits sold themselves for money, while Floridablanca's government made a unscrupled use of their pens to build up a white legend.

In the second place, some ex-Jesuits – especially those who belonged to the conservative wing as Nuix – seized the opportunity to polemicize against French and Scottish Enlightenment thinkers. Floridablanca did not really want to seal up Spanish culture from Enlightenment influences, but only to fight *leyenda negra*'s topics; instead, taking advantage of the greater degree of freedom granted by Madrid, the Jesuits went often beyond with their apologetic zeal: they were able to make use of the government encouragement to fight their own battles. For example some Spanish Jesuits – like Nuix himself – wanted to show their patriotism not only to polemicize with Enlightenment writers, but also to demonstrate the injustice inflicted on them by Charles III in 1767.

On the other hand, Madrid succeeded in considering useful the Jesuits' competence basically for their knowledge of the American situation: exiled Jesuits – not only the Creole ones, but also the native European missionaries – had taken with them to Italy their "saber americanista", according to Miguel Battlori. Spanish government, in spite of the violent polemics on the Jesuit's experience in Paraguay, knew well that Jesuits had a personal practice, a deep familiarity and first-hand information on Spanish America: this knowledge could be efficacious to help Bourbon propaganda to refute the 'black legend'. Certainly not all the apologetic works written or published by Spanish Jesuits used this "saber americanista": in the case of Nuix's *Riflessioni*, a text upholding strongly partisan theses, this practical and empirical knowledge was subordinated to ideological passions, although he claimed exactly the opposite: "I relied on – we read in his preface – more than 100 skilled men [that is, ex-Jesuits], who lived many years in those [American] regions"<sup>3</sup>.

In this respect, exiled Jesuits chose two different strategies to defend the Spanish conquest of America against the 'black legend'. The first perspective, fostered by a group of Creole Jesuits and a few of European ex-missionaries – Francisco Javier Clavigero, Pedro José Márquez, Josef Fábrega, Juan Ignacio Molina, Juan de Velasco, Francisco Iturri, Josef Jolís, Gian Domenico Coletti – consisted in defending native culture from a proto-anthropological point of view; those who had been forced to leave their notes and manuscripts in America, where they were confiscated by Bourbon officials, succeeded anyhow in drafting valuable treatises during their long exile. These Jesuits decided to question de Pauw, Buffon, Raynal and the whole philosophical historiography by

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<sup>3</sup> Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 6.

making use of a rigorous historical method, founded both on erudition and on their own experience. The second perspective, developed by peninsular Jesuits – like Nuix himself, Antonio Torres, Antonio Julián, Ramón Diosdado Caballero, Francisco Javier Llampillas, Juan Francisco Masdeu, Marián Llorente, Domingo Muriel, Filippo Salvatore Gilj – tried to confute Raynal, Robertson, de Pauw by claiming the validity of Spanish and Catholic civilization: for them native culture was inferior and Europeans gave to the *indios* a civilized government and the true religion. They considered History – as Nuix clearly said – as just a tribunal where conflicting opinions confronted each other, and the historian as a lawyer who tried to defend his cause: in other words, this group of Jesuits, regarding History as a rhetorical discourse, challenged philosophical history on its own battle-field. Therefore their works are simply apologetic.

To sum up, both groups shared the same objectives – to fight ‘black legend’ and philosophical history (in all their details and inaccuracies) – but pursued them through two opposite strategies reflecting their ideological positions. The main difference originated, as we have seen, from different historical methodologies<sup>4</sup>. The second one was characterized by its insistence on the connection between colonization/civilization and Indian cultures. Most of peninsular Jesuits (even those who had worked in American missions) thought that Spanish colonization was just a synonym of civilization: naturally the main element of this European civilization was considered the spread of Catholic religion, not only because Christianity allowed the salvation of natives’ souls, but also because it permitted to cross out customs (like human sacrifices) that the simple natural right considered barbaric and cruel. As another Catalan Jesuit, Antonio Julián, said Spanish *Conquista* could be considered a real redemption of Indian peoples: the preaching of the Gospel and Spanish colonization had allowed to defeat Satan’s monarchy in America, that is heathen religions and cultures. On the contrary, most of the Creole Jesuits (especially the Mexican ones), even if they agreed on the benefits of christianization, tried to understand ‘otherness’: starting from Lorenzo Boturini’s point of view, they granted pre-Columbian States (particularly the Aztec and Inca Empires) a high degree of civilization; using the interpretative prism provided by Greek and Roman history, they went so far as to explain and even justify such controversial native customs as cannibalism. This marked historical awareness, resulting from the same ‘anthropological’ insight which had helped Jesuit missionaries to adapt Catholic religion to any world-wide contexts and cultures, led American Jesuits to express a quite different sort of patriotism from the Hispanic one of their European brothers. Contemporary historiography usually interprets this glorification of the ‘provincial’ mother-country by Creole Jesuits as a part of a complex cultural and political process leading, at the beginning of nineteenth century, to Latin America independence from Spanish monarchy:

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<sup>4</sup> Anyhow both groups can be considered part of a long historiographical tradition shared by the Society: in fact Creole Jesuits seemed to follow the Bollandist school, while European fathers shared the Jesuit tradition of Renaissance historiography (recently elucidated by Marc Fumaroli).

from this point of view, Creole Jesuits contributed (as David A. Brading has showed) to give rise to the consciousness of a political diversity between Spain and American Creole societies.

### III.

Nuix's *Riflessioni* belong to this cultural climate. The treatise was published in Venice in the mid-1780s, because Venetian censorship – the *Riformatori dello Studio di Padova* – gave its license on 28 and 29 April, and in July the printer Francesco Pezzana advertised the book in *Notizie dal Mondo*. Afterwards some Italian and foreign reviews ensured the work a good success, since two distinct translations into Castilian appeared between 1782 and 1783: the first one was by Pedro Varela y Ulloa, *oficial de la Secretaría de Estado*, one of the government officials in Floridablanca's service; the second one was published in Cervera by Nuix's brother, José, with some original remarks and notes. In other words the first translation was sponsored by the Madrid government because, on Varela's opinion, it could help Floridablanca's propaganda; the second revised edition instead derived directly from the Nuix family and from his home town and country (Cervera, Catalonia). I think that José Nuix, with his version, made an attempt to claim a sort of copyright on his brother's behalf; at the same time he tried to offer a different product – not only correcting some misprints and mistakes in Varela's translation, but also adding new notes and paragraphs – with the intention to compete with and possibly overcome the Madrid edition.

The *Riflessioni* are divided in five chapters or “reflections”, preceded by two prefaces where the author explains his aims. It is immediately obvious that Nuix wanted to polemize against Raynal and Robertson, although he treated with greater respect the Scottish historian. Indeed if Nuix used a rough conservative rhetoric against Raynal (“his philosophy – Nuix says – is irreligious and his politics is symptomatic of the lack of every sovereignty”<sup>5</sup>), he seems more careful when he makes reference to Robertson, whom he considered a serious historian: “as regards Robertson, I won't mingle him with libertine philosophers, or with the enemies of Spain. But I thought necessary to rectify his mistakes. [...] This Scotsman is one of the best historians in our century when he follows Spanish writers; but when he does not use them to be a philosopher, he almost stops being a historian”<sup>6</sup>. It is possible that Nuix's point of view was affected by just a prosaic reason: he could not forgive Raynal to be a Society of Jesus apostate, whereas Robertson was at least a religious (albeit heretic) man.

Nuix's strategy to dismantle Raynal's and Robertson's works is founded upon three main points. First of all, he reversed the negative opinions on Spain

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<sup>5</sup> Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 8.

expressed by Enlightenment writers: intolerance, for instance, is praised because it guaranteed to Spain a lasting religious peace<sup>7</sup>, while he pointed out Inquisition as a universal model of legal politeness<sup>8</sup>. In other words our Jesuit claims the positive role of just those cultural and political aspects which Raynal and Robertson had vigorously condemned.

Secondly, Nuix maintained that the historical reconstruction of the Spanish conquest of America suggested by Raynal and Robertson was an overall set of prejudices. These prejudices derived from ignorance because, in Nuix's opinion, the philosophical historians, who had never set foot in America, thought themselves entitled to write on themes or questions they did not really know by direct experience: they spent all their time on over tendentious books, thinking to be able to reconstruct artificially the history of Spanish America from Paris or Edinburgh.

Finally Nuix tried to prove the more evident inner discrepancies between the French and the Scottish Enlightenment movements: he made use indeed of a sort of controversialist technique, coming from his theological training, not only to refute Raynal and Robertson, but also to censure such writers who were points of reference for the whole European Enlightenment, as Voltaire, Rousseau, D'Alembert, Montesquieu, Helvétius, Buffon, Hume. Practically Nuix tried to collide them with each other through a smart inter-textual strategy: thus, for example, when raising the issue of religious tolerance, he contrasted Rousseau with D'Alembert<sup>9</sup>.

The explicit aim of this strategy is to build up a *leyenda blanca* or *leyenda rosada* based on the systematic overturning of 'black legend's topics: Castilian *conquistadores* were human, Spanish governance had always been just, Catholicism civilized native peoples and 'saved' their souls. Obviously Nuix did not forget to praise the Society of Jesus, which (especially in California and Paraguay) helped to bring into subjection many Indian tribes "without bloodshed"<sup>10</sup>. However, his blame against the 'black legend' and philosophical history ends with a methodical challenge of the Enlightenment: he considered it a matter of point of view, just like a two-faced coin. So Nuix's *Riflessioni* pursue a more ambitious object, that is to refute "the so called modern philosophers [...], those irreligious and seditious writers of our times. All of them, having declared war on religion and government, necessarily had to do it against Spain, the most Catholic and orderly State. Therefore it happens that every anti-Catholic is anti-Spanish too"<sup>11</sup>. French and Scottish Enlightenment indeed aimed, according to him, at overthrowing both throne

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7 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 196-208.

8 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 208-216.

9 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 201-208.

10 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 329-330.

11 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 7.



and altar, basic pillars of any civil society: since the best combination of these two elements had been achieved by Spanish monarchy, modern philosophers would discredit Spain to achieve a clear political subversive plan.

Nuix, in other words, not only set the historical mission of Spain within a providential frame, but also showed the dangers of a gradual secularization of contemporary European society. Not by accident in the first *Riflessione*<sup>12</sup>, as well as at the end of the third one<sup>13</sup>, he addressed a violent anathema against modern commercial society, symbolized during eighteenth century by the 'English paradigm', resting upon luxury, self interest, economic profit. This Mandevillian sort of society horrified Nuix because it would relegate religion to the private sphere: Enlightenment, having granted political economy a new scientific status (especially thanks to Physiocracy), was responsible for this dangerous secularization because it provided "lessons diametrically opposed to the spirit of Christianity, lessons of unbounded commerce, lessons of immoderate luxury, lessons of insatiable avidity, and, finally, lessons which make believe that the greatest happiness lays in the greatest wealth. Instructed in a very different doctrine, Spaniards hate both extremes, wealth or stinginess and poverty"<sup>14</sup>.

Thus Nuix set commercial society, founded on protestant ethics and on the *esprit de commerce* (according to the celebrated definition by Montesquieu), against his 'Spanish paradigm', that is a model where Catholic faith, a nobiliary *ethos* and a moderate commerce were able to live together in harmony. In this model – born from the mere idealization of the society where Nuix lived since 1767 – avidity could exist, but only as an individual abuse or sin, promptly sentenced by religious and public powers, and it could not be raised to become the main pillar of civil order. So he explained the greed showed by the first *conquistadores* and *encomenderos* not as the effect of a 'capitalist' mentality linked with modern commercial society, but only as a symptom of human weakness, a consequence of the original sin. This theological frame led to ascribe *conquistadores'* inhumanity to a few Spanish colonizers. However, as Nuix resumed in his fourth reflection, Madrid, with the help of the Roman Church, had always tried to repress and punish these individual excesses: indeed from the *Nuevas leyes* (1542) onward natives were considered as Spanish subjects entitled to the same rights and bound by the same duties as any peninsular Spaniard: by his polemics against Raynal, therefore, Nuix denied the existence in America of a legal Indian slavery.

The Catalan Jesuit expressly devoted to the *indios* many chapters and the whole last *Riflessione*. Striking a final balance of benefits and disadvantages of Spanish colonization, he maintained that the *indios* had gained more than they had lost. Before 1492 native peoples were savages and pagans: so the Spanish

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12 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 74-76.

13 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 253-255.

14 Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 75.

*Conquista*, as Feijóo had already said in his *Teatro Crítico*, was a positive enterprise of civilization because, at the best, *indios* were children and, at worst, bloody barbarians. Undoubtedly Nuix skillfully fought against the *bon sauvage* myth shared by a part of European Enlightenment movement: as Antonello Gerbi noticed, Nuix's topics on this issue are drawn from de Pauw's *Recherches*, that is from one of the most important Enlightenment texts on America. Thus, on the one hand, the Jesuit condemned the barbaric past of native peoples: their evilness, exemplified by cannibalism and human sacrifices, was naturally connected with the lack of Christian Revelation; on the other hand, Nuix admitted that their physiological or racial weakness caused a dramatic demographic crisis after the *Conquista*: *indios* were decimated by epidemics and mine labor. It was just this weakness that convinced the generous Castilians to transport to America the strongest black African slaves.

In my opinion Nuix's ideological 'masterpiece' was achieved when, while treating his subject, he taxed modern philosophers with racism and hypocrisy. He firmly maintained that American natives, once civilized and converted, could be considered 'citizens' of the Spanish monarchy, though he admitted that, at worst, they could be subjected to 'domestic servitude', according to the Aristotelian terminology, or as men-servants or serfs attached to the soil. For this reason Nuix polemized against Robertson and Raynal who had considered the *indios*-allotment (*repartimientos*) to Castilian *encomenderos* a hidden form of slavery. To demonstrate his thesis, Nuix recalled not only Castilian laws, but chiefly the inter-racial marriage practices which he contrasted with the strict racial separation practiced by France and England in their colonies. In Spanish America, the union between whites and *indios*, having produced the *mestizos*, had been fulfilled. This fact, totally absent in English and French North American colonies<sup>15</sup>, confirmed the link between puritan ethics, commercial society and slave-trade: Spanish mentality was immune from racism thanks to Catholicism (the authentic, not the French one, which was contaminated by modern philosophy and Jansenism) and to a natural magnanimity. Thus Nuix upset again Enlightenment opinions on this point. Those who considered native peoples as bestial or inferior creatures were the modern philosophers, as openly showed de Pauw. In fact Catholic Spaniards – beginning from Jesuit missionaries – could administer the sacraments only to human beings (on the contrary, beasts cannot receive the seven sacraments); baptism itself certified that every new Christian, in spite of his race, belonged to mankind. Nuix applied the same argument to black slaves. First of all he remembered that Spain never plied slave trade (even before England obtained the *asiento* with the Treaty of Utrecht); furthermore he maintained that Catholic, and particularly the Jesuit theologians like Diego de Avendaño, always condemned slave trade, while foreign writers, who were scandalized by Spanish cruel treatment of *indios*,

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<sup>15</sup> Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 257, 288-289 and 316.

passed it over in silence or assuming an ambiguous position as in the case of Raynal<sup>16</sup>. Nuix confirmed his main charge against the two-facedness of modern philosophy, which condemned slavery on the one hand, and on the other admitted and even praised the economic exploitation of human beings. To sum up Nuix rejected (by nearly the same words of Linguet) the rising capitalism as supported by the Enlightenment philosophy.

In my opinion the most interesting aspect of Nuix's *Riflessioni* is their explicit attempt, according to the ideological positions of the Society of Jesus's conservative wing, to rework – having recourse to a modern language – the Imperial Spain paradigm within a Counter-reformist frame: he simply claimed as positive all ‘black legend’s favorite topics. No surprise then that the first Spanish translation by Varela was reprinted in Madrid in 1944, with a preliminary note by Ciriaco Pérez Bustamante: Nuix's patriotic paradigm, built around an austere conception of Catholicism and on the firm belief that Providence entrusted Spain with a civilizing task, was not remote from the national viewpoint supported by the *Generalísimo* Franco.

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<sup>16</sup> Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 244: “Raynal declaims with a violent eloquence against black-slave trade. But aware that the matter presents disadvantages in European colonies, he won't that europeans to shake off suddenly slaves's fetters, but to keep them to satisfy masters's benefits”. See also Nuix, *Riflessioni imparziali*, 311.

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### III. The nineteenth century: 'otherness' between identity building and retrieving typicality