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BETWEEN TWO SHORES: TRAVELLERS  
AS CULTURAL MEDIATORS. THE JOURNEY TO SPAIN  
IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper, drawing on travel narratives of a journey to Spain in the eighteenth century, seeks to explore the role of travellers as cultural interpreters, by examining how they presented themselves as providers of new knowledge about "distant" or "exotic" countries (even within Europe); how their images of the territories they visited were the product of a negotiation between their literary and philosophical background, and actual experience, and how those visions were appropriated by eighteenth-century philosophers to build their own theories about human nature, the workings and "progress" of societies, and the rules governing "national characters"; more specifically, how they contributed to redefine European identity and its internal hierarchies.*

*Key words: travellers, philosophers, European identity, national identities, centre and periphery, gender*

IN MEZZO A DUE COSTE: VIAGGIATORI COME MEDIATORI DI CULTURA.  
IL VIAGGIO IN SPAGNA NEL SETTECENTO

**SINTESI**

*Attingendo ai racconti di viaggio in Spagna del XVIII secolo, il presente contributo si propone di investigare il ruolo dei viaggiatori come interpreti di cultura, esaminando come questi fungessero da provveditori d'informazioni su paesi "lontani" o "esotici" (persino entro i confini d'Europa); come l'idea che questi si fecero dei territori che visitavano fosse la combinazione di conoscenze precedentemente acquisite attraverso la letteratura e la filosofia, da una parte, e di un'esperienza reale dall'altra; e come i filosofi del Settecento si appropriassero di queste visioni*

*per elaborarle nelle loro teorie sulla natura umana, sui meccanismi e il "progresso" delle società, nonché sulle regole che governerebbero i "caratteri nazionali". Più specificatamente, l'articolo studia come i viaggiatori contribuissero a una nuova definizione dell'identità europea e delle sue gerarchie interne.*

*Parole chiave: viaggiatori, filosofi, identità europea, identità nazionali, centro e periferia, sesso*

## I.

Drawing on travel narratives of a journey to Spain in the eighteenth century, I wish to explore the role of travellers as cultural interpreters, by examining how they presented themselves as providers of new knowledge about "distant" or "exotic" countries (even within Europe); how their images of the territories they visited were the product of a negotiation between their literary and philosophical background, and actual experience, and how those visions were appropriated by eighteenth-century philosophers to build their own theories. My work on eighteenth-century travel accounts is inspired by the wish to understand their philosophical subtexts; that is, the way in which they echoed, and at the same time, they helped to develop, current theories about human nature and the workings and progress of societies. More specifically, I am interested in exploring eighteenth-century narratives of travels to Spain because they throw a particular light into how theories of civilization, and European identity itself, were constructed, and also about the role gender relations, and the politics of gender sociability, played in those theories. Deeply influenced by Enlightenment concerns, travellers with a philosophical spirit, and also philosophers who used information and judgement provided by travellers, struggled to integrate their observations on government, economic life, culture, manners and morals of different societies which tried to integrate all human societies into a scheme of progress in stages.

Travellers played a significant role as cultural mediators at different levels. Firstly, between literary genres (novels, drama, travel accounts, philosophical tracts), by drawing on fiction and philosophy to elaborate their views on the countries they visited, and at the same time being used themselves as sources for literary and philosophical inspiration. Secondly, between different social strata. As members of the elites, who shared cosmopolitan codes of propriety and civility across national frontiers, they tend to stress their similarity and complicity with their counterparts in other countries, while transmitting an acute sense of superiority over the lower classes. There is, though, a contrast here between eighteenth and nineteenth-century travellers. While the former focus their interest in urban society, tending to underline similarities rather than differences between polite manners in different countries, the latter will dwell on rural manners and customs, the more exotic the better, showing a

typical Romantic interest in the "picturesque" and the "primitive" (Freixa, 1993; Ortas, 1999 and 2005). Thirdly, and here lies my main focus, the role of travellers as cultural interpreters concerns in particular the relationship between different national cultures; more specifically, between centre and periphery, in an age when discussion about "national characters" was part of redefining European identity and its internal hierarchies. Some travel narratives, such as letter XLII of Henry Swinburne's *Travels through Spain in the years 1775 and 1776* ("Character of the Spaniards") contain, in fact, extremely interesting reflections on the virtual impossibility of giving an impartial account of any "national character", because both the opinion which the inhabitants of a certain country have of themselves, and the impressions developed by travellers, conditioned by prejudices and values alien to the society they observe, are necessarily distorted and subjective (Swinburne, 1779, 366–368).

It is well known that the idea of "Europe" has always been a cultural notion, rather than a strictly geographical, or even political one. Also, a notion whose limits have often been vague and fluctuating (Bolufer, 2005). In particular, some territories, because of their peripheral position in relation to what was perceived, at any given time, as the cultural, economic or political centre of Europe, were defined as borderland, halfway between what was, and what was not, European, and therefore "civilized". As recent studies have shown, for instance, Eastern Europe, particularly Russia, was conceived as an area of cultural transition between the European world and Asia (Wolff, 1994; López-Cordón, 2005), while Scandinavia aroused interest because of the presence within its borders of peoples with "exotic" customs, such as the Lapps (Barton, 1998; Dolan, 2000). At the same time, the Balkans took shape in the European imagination as a liminal territory, too familiar to be assigned to the legendary 'Orient', yet too strange to be fully integrated (Todorova, 1997). Also, the Italian territories, specially the Mezzogiorno, were identified with the 'South' of Europe, in the twin senses of backward and primitive and at the same time wild and picturesque, in contrast to the modern, civilized North (Schneider, 1998; Moe, 2002).

Another fundamental frontier is represented by the peninsular territories of the Hispanic monarchy. Within the variety of eighteenth-century travel literature, the Spanish case is particularly interesting because it was (to some extent) and (above all) it was rhetorically presented as a peripheral land, unknown to European readers. In this respect, travel accounts of a journey to Spain help to understand how European identity was constructed by reinforcing on a symbolic plane the economic, political and cultural inequalities between countries.

## II.

When representing Spain in their narratives, travellers found themselves at odds to describe and interpret a country which held a very particular, and changing place,

in European imagination. Having lost its former privileged position as a leading international power, although still the possessor of an immense colonial empire, Spain was perceived in the eighteenth century as a nation in decline. It was and appeared geographically and culturally distant from what had been taking shape, since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as the political, economic and cultural centre of Europe, the north-western countries, particularly England, France and the United Provinces. Part of Mediterranean Europe, whose weight in the continent had gradually decreased with the swing of hegemony from the *Mare Nostrum* to the Atlantic (a process started in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century), it did not enjoy, though, the prestige which made the *iter italicum* an essential intellectual and aesthetic experience for European elites. On the contrary, the image of Spain most commonly transmitted by French *philosophes*, like Voltaire and Montesquieu, emphasized political despotism, religious obscurantism (embodied by the Inquisition), the cruelty of its colonisation of America and the archaism and poverty of its intellectual and cultural life (Iglesias, 1989; López-Cordón, 1992; Diz, 2000, ch. XII).

Nevertheless, the journeys undertaken by foreigners increased remarkably from 1760 onwards, culminating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ford Bacigalupo, 1978; Robertson, 1988; Guerrero, 1990; Soriano, 1990). Those travellers were merchants, diplomats, clergymen or officers, travelling on duty but also for pleasure, seeking to experience the emotions of a less hackneyed itinerary than the customary routes. In fact, Spain was a country less known to the cultivated European reader than others, such as Italy or France, included for centuries in the itineraries of the *Grand Tour* (Turner, 2001). This relative neglect gave it an aura of legend and adventure, accentuated later by Romantic fondness for the mysterious and the picturesque. Travellers' narratives tended to emphasize, precisely, their originality and daring in getting off the beaten track into what was presented, with great exaggeration and for commercial, strategic purposes of selling more books, as a mysterious country: according to *The Critical Review*, "the Hottentots themselves, and the Esquimaux of America, are better known [...] than the Spanish nation is at present" (*The Critical Review*, 1763, 295–302).

References to Spanish history and society also take up a considerable space in the works of 18<sup>th</sup>-century philosophers, who rarely visited Spain, but used extensively information and judgement provided by travellers to develop their theories about human nature and the origins and development of societies. The specific characteristics of both its past and its present offered a particular interest from the point of view of theories of civilization. Its position as a Catholic country governed by absolute monarchs provided *philosophes* and Protestant, especially British, travellers with an opportunity to draw lessons about the pernicious effects of 'despotism' and religious intolerance (Black, 1997, 230–231). However, there were particular features that, for foreign eyes, made Spain different from other Catholic States. Firstly, the contrast between its position as a leading power in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the secondary

role that it was then playing on the international scene made it an attractive object for philosophical and political inquiry. Secondly, the fact that Spain experienced considerable political, cultural and economic changes, accelerated in the second half of the eighteenth century, fuelled reflections about luxury, consumerism and cosmopolitanism. Because of the accession of the Bourbons to the Spanish throne in 1700, the country was considered by many an extreme example of "Frenchification" – a shorthand for the growing convergence of social and cultural habits among of the European elites (Bolufer, 2003 and 2004). All those changes, which were complex and had their roots in the preceding century, were simplified and identified by most contemporaries with the influence of foreign fashions and manners, which were said to have dissolved in a few decades, whether for better or for worse, the features of the old 'Spanish character', and were therefore understood as a particularly interesting case-study to consider the social and moral consequences of progress and the tension between national and European identities. Thirdly and lastly, its geographic position in the extreme south-west of Europe and its past marked by ethnic and cultural diversity between Christians, Muslims and Jews made Spain, much more than Italy, a liminal area which could be perceived as a borderland between Europe, Africa and the Orient. Spain's Islamic past – a peculiarity among European countries – was used to explain some habits and traditions, and, what's more important, to define the place the country occupied in an imaginary – and hierarchically organized – cultural geography of Europe.

For all those reasons, in the writings of eighteenth-century philosophers Spain became, to a large extent, a negative model of western civilization and progress, a mirror image by which modernity itself was defined. However, the view of Spain adopted by travellers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century does not seem to be framed within the Orientalizing perspective which would become so common in later Romantic versions (Calvo Serraller, 1995; Colmeiro, 2003; Andreu, 2004 and 2005). The full incorporation of the country within European frontiers seemed quite evident, and its decline was interpreted then from two other perspectives: in terms of the rise and 'fall' of empires, a classical theme in political theory, or, later in the century, in accordance with the new Enlightened view which interpreted history as a rising line of progress, as an example of 'backwardness'. The discussion about the causes of Spanish decline was connected with Enlightenment debate about 'national characters'. For those who stressed the influence of natural factors, especially climate, like Montesquieu in *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), hot regions were prone to despotism, indolence and disorderly passions, whereas temperate countries embodied the virtues of moral temperance and political moderation: a principle used to justify the superiority of European civilization over the rest of the world, but also to establish a hierarchy between North and South within Europe. These theories would be contested by other philosophers, such as David Hume (in his essay *Of National Characters*) or Italian (Moe, 2002, 23–27) and Spanish intellectuals, who pointed at social and historical, rather than natural reasons, to explain national differ-

ences; among them, Benito Jerónimo Feijoo in his *Mapa intelectual y cotejo de naciones* (*Intellectual map and comparison of nations*).

Although foreign observers took Spain's membership of the European world for granted, some of their accounts included elements that gradually contributed to the cliché of a kind of Africa or Asia in Europe (Fernández Herr, 1973, 119–128; Freixa, 1993, 114–120; Bolufer, s.a.). Some of them, like the wealthy merchant Henry Swinburne (1779), the army officer William Dalrymple in 1777 (Dalrymple, 1962, 648, 653, 663, 677, 682), the French baron de Bourgoing (1962) or the collector of Asian art William Beckford in 1787 (Beckford, 1966), strove to find traces of Arab culture in Spanish customs and art, such as popular dances or baroque architecture. Alexander Jardine, a British officer and diplomat who lived in Spain in different occasions between 1762 and 1799, and visited Morocco in 1771, reported to have found some similarities between the two, such as religious intolerance, or a sad, melancholy quality (Jardine, 1788a, 215, 219–220). It should be noted, though, that travellers largely found what they expected, and therefore, the degree of interest that Spain's Islamic past aroused in them varied according to their background and preferences. However, everything taken into account, the 'Moorish' or 'Oriental' facets were still not at all the main point from which the country was viewed.

Only when considering two particular aspects of Spanish society travellers and philosophers were more inclined to assign it a kind of liminal status between Europe and the 'Orient'. The first of them is government. British travellers, especially, describe the Bourbon monarchy with the categories of 'tyranny' or 'despotism', used more generally to describe continental absolutisms, as opposed to parliamentary monarchy (Müllenbrocke, 1984; Black, 2003, 142–145), but in the case of Spain with a further emphasis in characterizing it as "short of Asiatic despotism", in Jardine's words (Jardine, 1788b, 383). The second, and the one I shall be considering in more detail, is gender. These two features were closely linked in Enlightenment theories of progress, which tended to connect political and domestic "despotism" or freedom as parallel stages of development.

### III.

For Enlightenment thinkers, gender relations and women's condition, together with economic prosperity, political institutions and intellectual life, were among the main criteria used to judge the differences and evolution of societies (Sebastiani, 2003 and 2005; Mander, 2005; Moran, 2005; Tommaselli, 2005). They deeply informed the theories of "conjectural history", that is, of the development of societies through successive stages of civilization, which were a key feature of the international, particularly the Scottish and French, Enlightenment, and on which travel narratives often prove to be highly dependant. An extremely interesting example is that

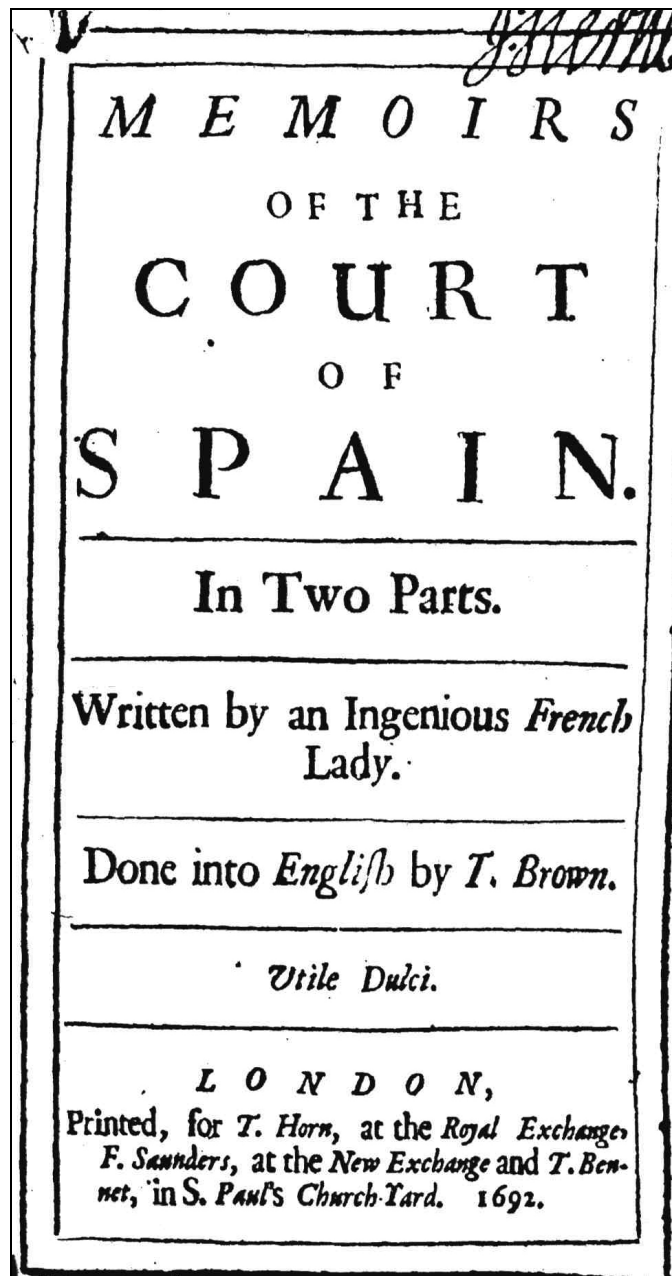


Fig. 1: 'Memoirs of the Court of Spain', 1692, front cover.

Sl. 1: Naslovnica dela 'Memoirs of the Court of Spain' iz leta 1692.

of Jardine, connected with the British radical Enlightenment, whose account of his travels in his *Letters from Spain, Portugal and Barbary* (1788) is particularly inclined to moral and philosophical reflections on passions and the variations of human nature (Pérez Berenguel, 1996–1997; Bolufer, 2003). For him, women's morals and position in society were a measure of civilization. The ideal was a balance between being slaves to men in "primitive" countries, like Morocco (Jardine, 1788a, 109) and being their masters by the force of love and desire, as in over-civilized societies, identified by him and many of his contemporaries with France (Jardine, 1788a, 171–173). Other travellers did not dedicate to the subject such a detailed consideration, but their more scattered comments show that they also considered family arrangements, sexual morals and social "commerce" between men and women among their criteria to define the progress (or lack) of civilization in Spanish society.

The testimonies of travellers are especially interesting with regard not only to their expectations but also to how they were confirmed or belied by experience. They were largely conditioned by literature, particularly by intrigues of love and adventure ('swashbuckling' dramas or *comedias de capa y espada*) from the Spanish theatre of the Golden Age and by the accounts of travellers in the Baroque, especially the *Mémoires de la cour d'Espagne* (1690) by Mme d'Aulnoy (2000; translated into English as *Memoirs of the Court of Spain, written by an Ingenious French Lady*, 1692). Deeply influenced by that type of previous reading, foreign observers, specially those who visited Spain in the first half of the eighteenth century, tended to emphasize the 'reclusion' of Spanish women, the virtual absence of places and opportunities for mixed socializing, and the 'power of the passions'. As Jardine wrote: "You know something of the romantic force of their passions, their strong and inviolable attachments, especially when heightened by the difficulties of intrigue" (Jardine, 1788a, 173). The images most frequently repeated stressed the ingenuity and daring of the women in taking advantage of any possibility to go outside the walls of the house in order to meet their lovers, or the readiness of Spaniards to resolve the slightest offence to their honour by resorting to the use of arms (Dalrymple, 1962, 683; Townsend, 1988, 212).

The idea of ardent love affairs and extreme forms of gallantry as being intrinsic in the national character reflects the influence of novels of chivalry, thus referring to a mythicized image of the real history of Europe, of which Spain, as William Alexander explains in his *History of women*, was considered a living testimony (Alexander, 1782, 209). However, together with this medievalizing view, the clichés of jealousy and gallantry and the 'reclusion' of women, and also the tendency to political despotism, tended to be explained in terms of other reasons, which placed the Spanish case on a different plane from that of 'civilized' Europe; not so much on a temporal plane, however, as a living image of the past, but rather on a spatial plane, as a border area between North and South, between Occident and Orient. It is here, when dealing with



women's condition and gender relations (both sentimental and social), that "oriental" analogies start to emerge as useful descriptive and analytical tools. The influence of the climate could provide an explanation for the allegedly passionate nature of Spaniards of both sexes and also for Spain's tendency to political 'despotism', on the basis of the idea that heat awakened drives, such as amorous desire – introducing the need for compulsory separation between men and women, which aroused sensuality even more with the stimulus of obstacles – but also inspired violence and disorderliness in Spanish subjects and an immoderate urge for power in their sovereigns (Clarke, 1763, 341; Dalrymple, 1962, 660; Swinburne, 1779, 46).

Although these climatic theories were also invoked in descriptions of other southern regions, such as Portugal, Italy or France, the clichés concerning the jealousy, sensuality and violence of Spaniards made a particular impact because they could be justified not only by the influence of the climate, affecting the 'South' in general, but also, more specifically, by the weight of the legacy of Islam in Spanish history. Needless to say, for the European imagination this representation conjured up all the symbolic associations of the harem, which, in countless artistic and literary recreations, symbolized both political and domestic 'despotism' and sensuality, qualities considered characteristic of Oriental societies (Said, 1990 and 1996), as opposed to the moderation of authority, both political and domestic, and the moral restraint attributed to 'temperate' nations. Indeed, love was an ingredient of theories of civilization, which considered its refinement to be a sign of progress: from indiscriminate satisfaction of sensual desire in the "savage" or "primitive" stages, and the flourishing of chivalry and romantic passion in the Middle Ages, to culminate with moderate love, inspired by moral qualities, rather than by mere physical beauty, considered as a distinctive of commercial society. These ideas, philosophically grounded in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité parmi les homes*), David Hume ("Of Marriage", "Of Poligamy and Divorce") or Adam Smith (*Lessons on jurisprudence*), became almost a commonplace in eighteenth-century writings of all sorts, including periodicals and travel narratives.

Travellers, but especially philosophers, repeatedly established this connection. For example, Voltaire compared the Spain of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries to Africa, as examples of societies where gender separation revealed a lack of civilization: 'The women, almost as confined as in Africa, felt more wretched when they compared that slavery with the freedom of France' (Voltaire, 1969, 1040). And Antoine-Léonard Thomas, in his *Essai sur les moeurs, l'esprit et le caractère des femmes dans les différents siècles* (1772; translated into Spanish 1773) associated the fiery nature of the Spaniards with the heat and the Muslim legacy (Thomas, 1773, 203), a heritage which Jardine thought might have been responsible for the alleged lack of sociability of Spaniards until quite recently (Jardine, 1788a, 185–186).

Love habits, thus, allowed travellers to put forward a subject with great moral and

political implications: that of the relationship between manners and political systems, or, according to their own categories, between morality and freedom. Political despotism and religious bigotry, the two axis of their comments on the material decline of Spain, were also charged with a great responsibility for the "corruption of manners". The main implicit (and sometimes explicit) argument was that the seclusion of women and religious condemnation of all forms of social relation with men only intensified passion and stimulated imagination to circumvent prohibitions. This argument, which underlaid the commonplace about oriental sensuality and despotism (including the myths about Turkish "seraglios"), stimulated in British travellers some morbid fascination about Catholic convents, and would be later developed by Spanish and foreign anticlerical and scandalous literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

All that gave an additional argument to condemn absolutist monarchy and the omnipresence and influence of the Catholic Church. It was implied that repression did not stop vice but stimulated it, getting people used to external control, severe but inefficient, and thus did not strengthen their own inner moral sense but educated them in the arts of hypocrisy and made them an easy prey to pernicious novelties (Casanova, 1962, 599, 615, 619–620; Townsend, 1988, 212–214). An authoritarian system, with a moral policy based on laws and inquisitorial intervention not only in matters of religious orthodoxy, but also of social habits, could not warrant moral purity. The consequence implicit was the following: political liberty, identified with the British system, was the best way to preserve morality, through the practice of what their contemporaries considered to be responsible freedom and social scientists conceptualize as internalised coercion.

This idea of confinement of women and male jealousy as constitutive characteristics of Spanish society, which appears in the accounts of Enlightened travellers (often inspired by their 17<sup>th</sup>-century predecessors), held sway in the European imagination for many years and was repeated over and over again in Romantic literature. Yet there are important differences between the two images. What was invariably explained in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when referring to the legacy of Islam, not only as a collection of inherited traditions but also, more deterministically, in terms of biological fatalism, diluted in the ethnically mixed blood of the Spaniards, was made to depend on a variety of causes in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as we have seen: the weight of history, sometimes Christian (chivalry) and sometimes Muslim (the harem), or else the influence of the climate. But also, although Enlightened philosophers such as Montesquieu or Voltaire, who did not visit Spain, gave total credence to an image taken from Baroque accounts, 18<sup>th</sup>-century travellers had to readjust their expectations in relation to the experience acquired. Some, such as William Beckford, acknowledged their disappointment at not finding confirmation of their prior ideas about the country's Romantic archaism (Beckford, 1966, 88). Others, such as Edward Clarke, warned their compatriots about the danger of taking novelistic descriptions too literally:

"the *romance*-accounts of Spain have had this bad effect upon us, that they have in a manner infused themselves into our ideas of that country. The manners of the most inflexible people, and such the Spaniards are, undergo some alteration in every age; the mad exploits of chivalry, and the extravagant gallantries of the old Spaniards, are now no more [...]. The more refined manners of France passed over the Pyrenees with the house of Bourbon [...]. French *politesse* has given a new air to, and softened the ferocious features of that country" (Clarke, 1763, IV).

Indeed, travellers had to face the evidence of a reality more complex than the literary stereotypes: that of a country in the 18<sup>th</sup> century immersed in a process of economic development and social and cultural modernization: a growth of production and commercial exchanges, which based an incipient consumer culture; a flourishing of print culture; a push for economic and cultural reforms; the rise of politeness and sociability, transformations in which women of the aristocracy and the middle classes played a prominent role. The narratives of travellers such as Richard Twiss in 1773, Townsend, Beckford and Jardine in the late 1780s, dwell largely on women's participation in these forms of cultural gathering, from the famous "tertulias" (equivalent to the French salons) of the aristocratic ladies at the Court (the duchesses of Osuna, Alba and Berwick, the countess of El Carpio...), to their more modest likes in other cities and towns (Twiss, 1999, 167–169, 180, 218; Townsend, 1988, 210). Especially those who visited the country in the last third of the century, when the effects of these changes could be seen more clearly, were surprised at the dynamism of the social habits, far removed from the sombre gravity considered natural to the Spanish character; according to Jardine:

"In most of their considerable country towns, we still meet with some gentry, who, with the church and the military, form very agreeable little societies, *tertulias*; the merits and pleasures of which are chiefly owing to the good humour, native graces, wit, and affability of the ladies, so generally remarkable in this nation" (Jardine, 1788a, 192).

That is, while some travellers of the late eighteenth century still echoed the commonplaces about the intense passions of both men and women, many also commented on what they considered to be a revolution in manners. That which had substituted the seclusion of women, obsessively preserved by their parents and husbands from the siege of men (a literary image taken by them to be historic evidence), for freer relationships between men and women, including the fashion among well-to-do married ladies to have a polite male company or a lover, called *cortejo*. For foreign travellers, as well as for Spanish Enlightened intellectuals and reformers, this new gallant habit was related to the vanishing of jealousy which characterised the progress of civilization ("Jealousy, ever since the accession of the house of Bourbon, has slept in peace; in proportion as manners become more civilized, that furious passion always loses its force"; Clarke, 1763, 341). But at the same time, it was an immoral practice, opposed

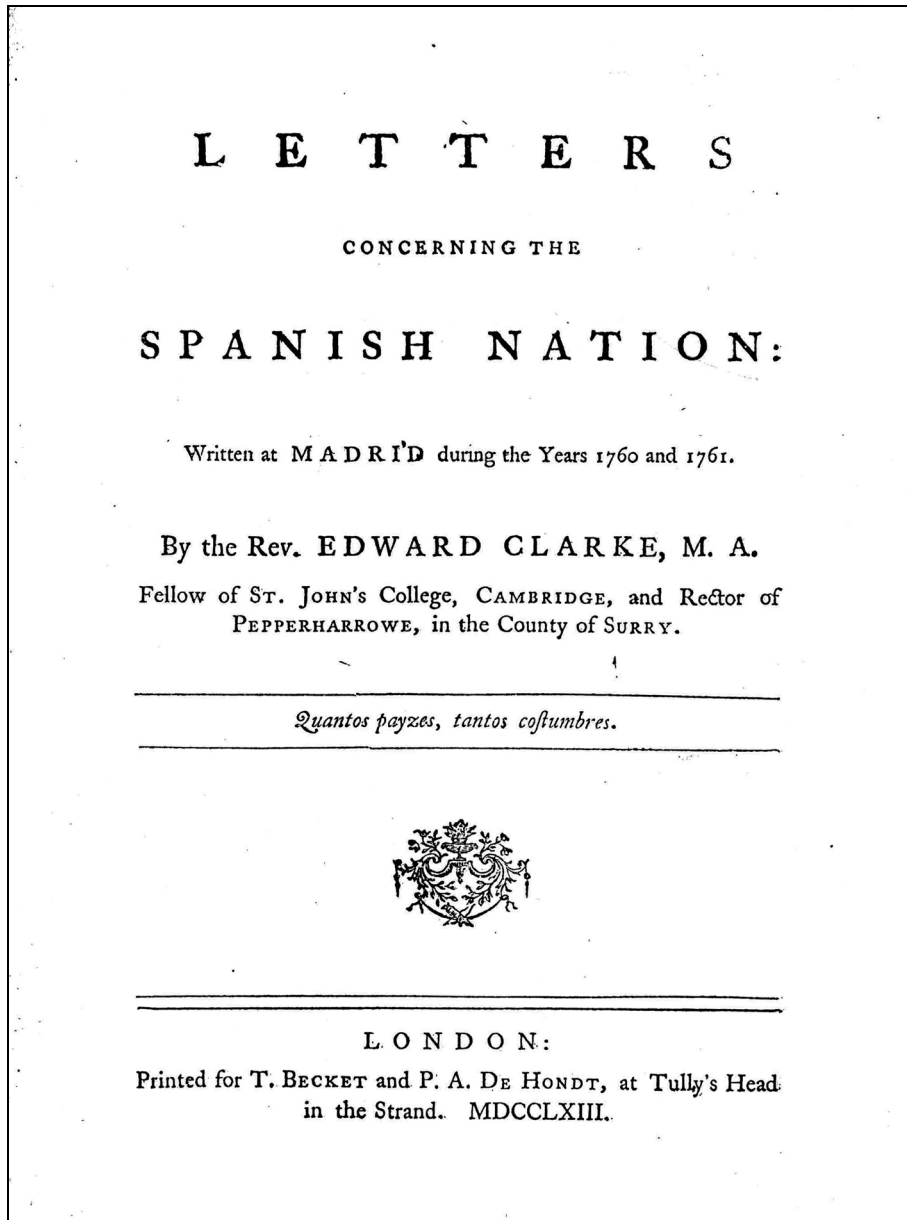


Fig. 2: 'Letters concerning the Spanish Nation', 1760-61, front cover.

Sl. 2: Naslovnica dela 'Letters concerning the Spanish Nation' iz leta 1760-61.

to refined, virtuous love, which could only take place within the bonds of marriage. For many of them, like Townsend, this "corruption" of manners was the reversed image and also, in part, the consequence of the seclusion of women which they thought to be an important trait of the Spanish past. By going from one extreme to the other, that is, by suddenly abandoning its old and severe habits of extreme gender segregation, in favour of new and sometimes scandalous liberties in social and amorous intercourse, Spain had thrown itself in the arms of a dubious, "frivolous" modernity, identified with France as a symbol of the dangers of civilization taken to an excess.

Not all travellers, however, envisaged the evolution (or revolution) of manners in such a moralistic light. For example, Giuseppe Baretti, an Italian living in England who visited Spain in 1770, was interested, as a good cosmopolitan, in becoming acquainted with and understanding customs different from his own, and in fact he revealed the falseness of many clichés. He contrasted the grave, ceremonious image attributed to Spaniards with daily life in the urban elites, which he presented as marked by habits and values similar to those of their counterparts in other parts of Europe: refined customs, cultivation of the art of conversation and amiable, elegant sociability (Baretti, 1770, 65–71). In his view, opposed to many of his contemporaries, whether Spanish or foreigners, who frowned at the alleged "immorality" of new habits, fashionable, mixed sociability, and even polite gallantry, went together in Spain with sexual restraint and respectability. He rejected the widespread idea of the 'confinement' of women and considered the Spanish elites as being similar to the French and Italians in their fondness for sociability and mixed company, comparing them favourably with the reticence towards gender mixing in British social life:

"The desire that men and women have here of passing their time in each other's company, is so very eager, that it appears not unlike rage, especially to him who has long lived in England, where men of all ranks seem ashamed in a manner to hang too long about the fair, and where the generality deprive themselves every day of their company during several hours, merely for the sake of talking politics or circulating the bottle" (Baretti, 1770, 64).

Also, Jardine took a positive view of the social presence and influence of women in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Spain, which he considered a sign of modernization. His travel narrative, as many others, is interesting not only for his judgements on Spain but also for being a reflection of the tensions of his own country: in this case, unease about how to assure social order and moral consensus in a commercial society and a cosmopolitan culture. It is in this sense that his thoughts about the consequences of modernization on the "female character" can be understood:

"Although we at present see here little else remaining but the skeleton, so to speak, of the old Spanish character, pride and patience, we must perhaps except the female part of society. The female character is probably improved, while the male may have declined, throughout modern Europe. The sex improves by society, even though we

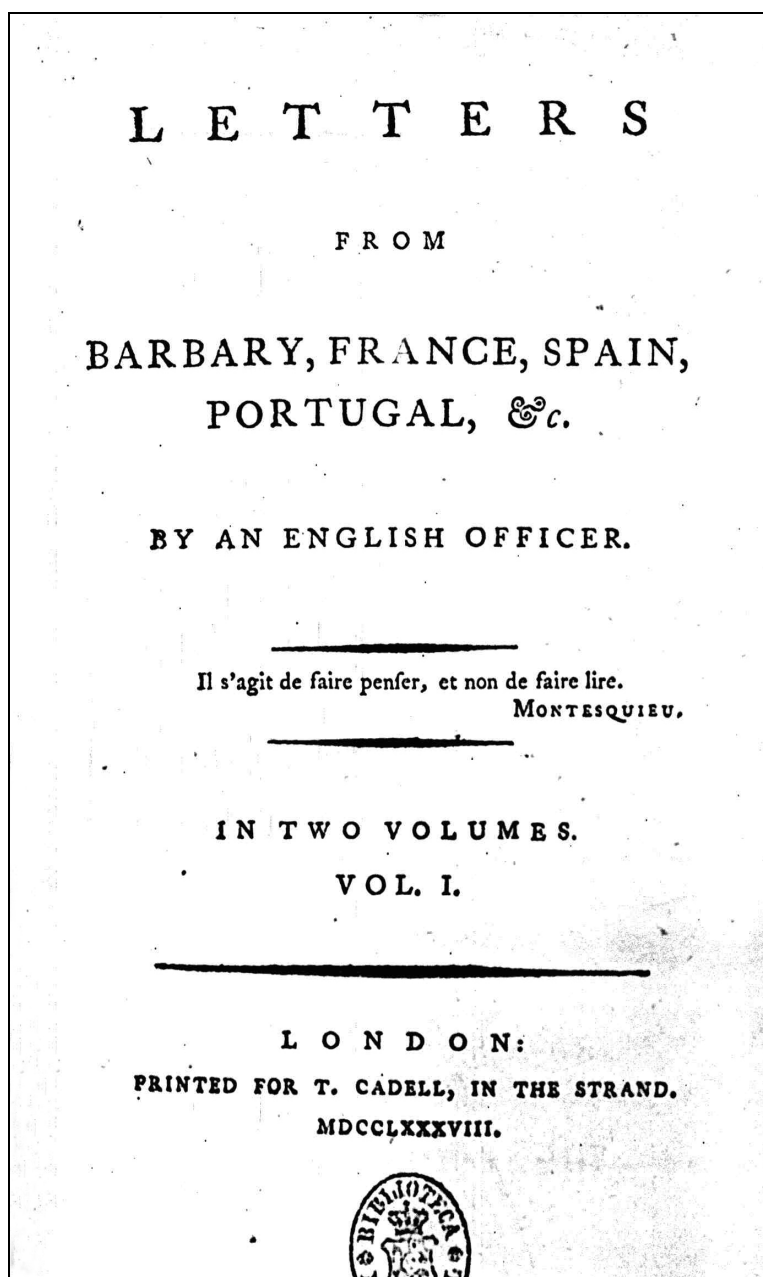


Fig. 3: 'Letters from Barbary, France, Spain, Portugal', 1788, front cover.

Sl. 3: Naslovnica dela 'Letters from Barbary, France, Spain, Portugal' iz leta 1788.

keep them from knowledge; and they here now possess more domestic, social, and useful virtues, than formerly, when more secluded from the world" (Jardine, 1788a, 309–311).

Jardine's praises to Spanish women, which could be in part polite compliments, or subjective impressions due to his own particular experience (he married a Spanish woman), represent, above all, what he considered to be the aim of every society: that of a balance between the progress of civilization and its alleged excesses. This social ideal is symbolised in his *Letters* by the image of the civilized woman, who leads the changes in manners, but is capable of taking profit of modernization, without being corrupted by it; capable, also, of regenerating, through her moral influence over men, society at large, that is, of saving civilization from itself:

"The manner of the politer societies here, and of the higher ranks, are already too closely copied from the French, who, you know, are not naturally delicate nor sentimental, but artificially refined by fashion. By means of the ladies in Spain, who readily adopt the liberty of French manners, which engrafted on their own, they carry beyond the original, this nation will gradually be Frenchified [...]. The women being, of late, admitted to more freedom and society, and at a period of loose manners, retaining all their old habits of art and intrigue, the freedom of intercourse between the sexes will probably be carried further here than in the more polished countries, whose vices they have acquired, without passing through the same *media* or degrees of civilization and arts of luxury. [...] However, the fair sex, as usual, may retard or regulate the progress of depravity" (Jardine, 1788a, 171–173).

As a member of the radical Enlightenment, close to the circle of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Jardine does not trust economic and social changes will bring about moral reform and social justice, but pleads for active social and political intervention to secure gender social and educational equality, which he considered an indispensable requirement of progress. In this and other aspects, he is not at all a "typical" traveller, but rather a singular figure among those who visited Spain in the eighteenth century. However, his interesting and sometimes contradictory views on what was "old" or "new", "traditional" or "foreign" in Spanish society, and on which were the social and moral effects of those changes, show how the case of Spain (represented at the crossroads between "archaism" and "modernity") was used by visitors and philosophers to ponder over the consequences of civilization.

In synthesis, with their wish to describe and interpret a society different (and implicitly inferior) from theirs, drawing on previous literary and philosophical preconceptions, and, at the same time, with their efforts to incorporate unexpected impressions and experiences, even those opposed to received ideas, travellers helped to construct a more complex knowledge of cultural differences within Europe. A knowledge which worked to justify internal hierarchies, but also, sometimes, to problematize them.

MED DVEMA OBALAMA: POPOTNIKI KOT KULTURNI MEDIATORJI.  
POTOVANJE V ŠPANIJO V OSEMNAJSTEM STOLETJU

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**POVZETEK**

*V osemnajstem stoletju so popotniki odigrali pomembno vlogo kulturnih mediatorjev na različnih ravneh: sami med seboj; med literarnimi žanri (romani, dramami, potopisi, filozofskimi traktati), saj so se pri razvijanju svojih pogledov na dežele, ki so jih obiskovali, naslanjali na literaturo in filozofijo, hkrati pa so tudi sama njihova poročila o popotovanjih navdihovala literarna in filozofska dela; med različnimi nacionalnimi kulturami oziroma natančneje med centrom in periferijo, v obdobju, ko je bila razprava o "nacionalnih značajih" del ponovne opredelitve evropske identitete in njene notranje hierarhije.*

*V obilici potopisne literature osemnajstega stoletja so še posebej zanimivi zapisi o Španiji, ker je bila v tem času do neke mere tuja evropskim bralcem, kot neznana in periferna dežela pa je bila predstavljena tudi (in predvsem) v pripovedih. Njena geografska umeščenost na skrajni jugozahod Evrope ter zgodovina, ki je nosila močan pečat etnične in kulturne različnosti med kristjani, muslimani in judi, sta Španijo, izraziteje kot druga južna področja, zaznamovali kot mejno območje, ki ga je moč razumeti kot vmesno deželo med Evropo, Afriko in "Vzhodom".*

*Čerav so tuji opazovalci iz osemnajstega stoletja Španijo še vedno samoumevno prištevali v evropski prostor, so nekatera njihova poročila vsebovala elemente, ki so sčasoma privedli do oblikovanja romantično klišejske podobe Španije kot nekakšne Afrike ali Azije znotraj Evrope, še posebej v dveh pogledih: z ozirom do vlade, ki so jo pogosto označevali za domala "azijski despotizem", ter pri odnosih med spoloma. Predvsem načini, kako so popotniki obravnavali ženski socialni položaj, ki so ga šteli za pokazatelja stopnje civiliziranosti, kažejo na to, da so morali svoja pričakovanja prekrojiti glede na izkušnje, ki so jih pridobili, saj so se vsi soočili z resničnostjo, ki je bila veliko kompleksnejša od literarnih stereotipov: spoznali so deželo, v kateri je potekal proces ekonomske, kulturne in družbene preobrazbe. V želji, da bi opisali in interpretirali družbo, ki je bila drugačna od njihove (ter implicitno manjvredna), so popotniki v svojih poročilih kombinirali predhodna, vnaprej ustvarjena literarna in filozofska mnenja z lastnimi vtisi in izkušnjami (čeravno nasprotnimi veljavnim mnenjem) ter tako prispevali k oblikovanju kompleksnejšega znanja o kulturnih razlikah znotraj Evrope, ki so služile opravičevanju, včasih pa – prav nasprotno – izpostavljanju problema notranjih hierarhij.*



*Ključne besede: popotniki, filozofi, evropska identiteta, nacionalne identitete, center in periferija, spol*

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