EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DIDACTICS: CREATING STEREOTYPES[1]

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The advertisement for a new monthly journal, *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine*, to be published on 1st, February 1799, announced that it would "open the tender mind to an acquaintance with life, morals, and science, the works of nature and of art". The aim was to publish a number every month, subsequently building up a complete "juvenile library", suitable for the instruction and entertainment of young people. Among its varied didactic contents were different kinds of anecdotes about foreign countries, nations and individuals. Sometimes the subjects were exalted as examples to follow: "The Arab's Fondness for his Horses", "Anecdotes of the Grandfather to the Present King of Prussia", "Virtue excited by Emulation; or, Historical anecdotes of Great Characters", "A Portuguese Anecdote", etc. At other times the foreigners' failings were criticised and contrasted with British characteristics and behaviour: "The Death of Charles IX of France", "Russian Manners and Customs", or "On Prevailing National Amusements". Within the critical category the editors published an article entitled "Characteristic Anecdotes of the

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Spaniards", in which pride is highlighted as a major Spanish defect. This paper examines negative stereotypical accounts, linking them to the background of Anglo-Spanish relations and historical events, and within the context of educating young eighteenth-century readers.

Spanish pride

Two lines of a poem by the satirist Charles Churchill are used to introduce several stories in the journal which ridicule the Spaniard's presumed arrogance: "Spain gives us pride, which Spain to all the earth / May largely give, nor fear herself a dearth" (*YGLM,* Vol. II, Nº VII, 1799 [63][2]). Before launching into the anecdotes themselves, the anonymous author allows himself (herself) a commentary on the appropriateness of such characterisations: "Few things can afford greater entertainment to a reflecting mind than to be able to make accurate observations upon the various traits of national character which marks the individual of different countries." Two elements in this introduction require comment: "a reflecting mind" and "accurate observations". Given that the didactic objective of the journal, set out in the preface to the first number (*YGLM*, Vol. I, Nº I, 7) was "to enforce the grand principles by which society is upheld and happiness diffused; and while it opens new avenues to general knowledge and harmless amusement, it will uniformly be directed to still higher aims—the moral improvement of the mind", this comment seems to be contradictory, and to ignore moral and cultural values associated with the Enlightenment, such as tolerance, equality and solidarity. It hardly seems reasonable, therefore, for a "reflecting mind" to accept stereotypical characterisations and not question them. As to them being "accurate observations ... of national character", the historical events they refer to occurred almost two hundred years before the journal's publication, and so they should, perhaps, be considered as a reflection and reinforcement of contemporary attitudes towards Anglo-Spanish relations.

In the introduction to the article it is stated that "'As proud as a Spaniard' has long been a proverbial expression", and it is subsequently linked to several examples of "the haughtiness of that nation". Exactly when and in what circumstances the

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[2] *The Young Gentleman's and Lady's Magazine:* henceforth *YGLM*.

expression was coined is not clear, but the connection between "proud" and "Spaniard" may have its origins in the failed invasion by the Spanish Armada two centuries earlier (1588). Even today, the Armada is for the British the classic foreign threat to their country and its defeat is a powerful icon of national identity. The fact that it had been launched as the "Grande y Felicísima Armada" (Great and Most Fortunate Navy) and then subsequently labelled *Invincible* by its victorious enemies, only served to highlight the disaster it represented for Philip II's ego. In the early Tudor period England had normally been aligned with Spain due to repeated conflicts with France, but the situation changed under Elizabeth I for several reasons: religion, Mary Queen of Scots' claim to the English throne, English support of the Dutch revolt against their Spanish rulers, and the struggle for trade in the New World (Bartlett, 1997, p.880). As the husband of Mary Tudor, Philip II had considered himself king of England, although he was not crowned as such. For Philip, the marriage was a diplomatic move, as part of Spain's struggle against France, but in England the connection with Spain became very unpopular, since it used up large quantities of money and resources, and brought as a result the loss of Calais, England's last continental possession. When Mary Tudor died in 1558, Elizabeth rejected Philip's marriage proposal, even though Spain would have been a useful counterbalance to France, since the queen's councillors suspected Philip's intentions. Alford (1997) sums up Anglo-Spanish relations at this time in the following way:

> There was a sharp anti-Spanish turn in policy in 1569 which set the pattern for the rest of Elizabeth's reign. Philip was involved in plots against her – Ridolfi and Babington – and formal invasion plans – the Great Armada in 1588, and further scares in 1595, 1596 and 1597 (p. 747).

This background of suspicion, discontent and anti-Spanish feeling should be taken into account when reading the anecdotes offered in the eighteenth-century journal, and which the author attributes to "Baron Bielfield, the Spanish historian[3]". They are offered to the reader in order to "prove the justice" of the author's observation that the arrogance of the Spaniard makes him contemptible, while his

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[3] Author of "The Elements of Universal Erudition, containing an Analytical Abridgement of the Sciences, Polite Arts, and Belles Lettres", 1770. He was, according to the title page of this work, "Secretary of Legation to the King of Prussia, Preceptor to Prince Ferdinand, and Chancellor of all the Universities in the Dominions of his Prussian Majesty, Author of the Political Institutes, &c". This well-travelled and knowledgeable foreign politician is offered as a *reliable* source, in spite of his having lived over 150 years after the reign of Philip III.

strict observance of form and etiquette make him ridiculous. Isaac Disraeli, who had also collected related anecdotes published under the general title of *Curiosities of Literature* (1798), seems to confirm this strict adherence to protocol and decorum. His introduction to the anecdote, which is examined below, also cites Baron Bielfield as his source. It is reasonable to suppose that the *YGLM* author, who was writing one year later, based his version on Disraeli's account (1798), which reads:

> The Etiquette –or rules to be observed in the royal palaces—is necessary, writes Baron Bielfield, for keeping order at court. In Spain, it was carried to such lengths as to make martyrs of their Kings. Here is an instance; at which, in spite of the fatal consequences it produced, one cannot refrain from smiling— (p. 397).

This first instance (*YGLM*, Vol. II, Nº VII, 1799 [63]) tells how Philip III[4] was "*gravely seated*, as Spaniards generally are[5]", by the side of a roaring fire. Although he felt very uncomfortable, he resisted moving his chair backwards from the excessive heat, because this would have been "derogatory to his dignity". Instead, he waited for a courtier to come and quench the fire, but this nobleman begged to be excused from such a task, since making and extinguishing fires corresponded to the Duke *d'Usseda* (de Uceda), and etiquette would not allow him to touch it. Unfortunately, the duke was not at court, and none of the servants dared enter the king's room. The result was that the king resisted in front of the fire, was thoroughly overheated by it, and was taken ill with a violent fever from which he eventually died.

Defourneaux (1979) highlights the rigid nature of Spanish court protocol which, he says, struck all foreign visitors. He offers a slightly different version of the anecdote, apparently recorded by Madame d'Aulnoy[6]:

> The King, at his desk on a winter's day, was incommoded by the fumes of a brazier which had been placed near him. But none of the gentlemen present dared remove it, for fear of encroaching on the functions of the Duke of Uceda, the 'Court Cellarer', who was then absent from the palace. During the

[4]Philip III: 1578-1621

[5] Generalisation is obvious from the very beginning, and it is hard to see how this description could be justified. Perhaps it is based on portraiture of Spanish monarchs in circulation at the time, although a comparative study may well reveal that sixteenth-century portraits of both Spanish and English nobility show equally *grave* figures. Solemnity would be part of a ruler's attempt to project a powerful image. In the original journal the words *gravely seated* are italicized.

[6] Madame d'Aulnoy lived from 1650/51 to 1705. Her reliability is as questionable as Baron Bielfield's, since her account must have been written at least forty or fifty years after Philip III's death.

> following night the sovereign was seized with a violent fever, complicated by erysipelas, which carried him off a few days later. (Defourneaux, 1979, p. 49)

Erysipelas is a skin disease caused by a streptococcus and characterized by large raised red patches on the face and legs. If Philip III's death was due to this infection, then the stories of the heat of the blazing fire or the fumes of the brazier causing a fever are pure invention. Nevertheless, they are emphasised by foreign sources wishing to underline "the inflexible tyranny of etiquette" which "made a monarch a semi-sacred personage who was – or must at least seem to be – impervious to the uncertainties of the world" (Defourneaux, 1979, p. 49).

In the opinion of Isaac Disraeli, Philip III "was a weak bigot, who suffered himself to be governed by his ministers". The anecdote about the fire and subsequent fever illustrates the idea that not only did the king have an apparently exaggerated sense of dignity, but that he was not free to act without the consent of the nobles around him, each of whom jealously guarded his privileges. One of the two nobles mentioned in the anecdote is the Duke d'Usseda (or de Uceda), Cristóbal Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, a *valido* or favourite of Philip III who also held other titles and functions. He enjoyed wide powers under Philip III, but historians consider his administration a disaster. A Spanish source sums up the reign of Philip III by stating that bribery, which had been actively discouraged in the reign of his father, became the norm, and that administrative immorality and chaos undermined his rule (*Diccionario Enciclopédico Espasa*, 1985, Vol. 6, p. 315).

Another anecdote related to Philip III and collected by Disraeli confirms that the king was ruled by his ministers. "A patriot," it says, "wished to open his eyes, but he could not pierce through the crowds of his flatterers". However, this person managed to communicate with him in an ingenious way by causing to be laid on the king's table a sealed letter "which bore this address—'To the King of Spain, Philip the Third, at present in the service of the Duke of Lerma'" (Disraeli, 1798, p. 272).

These reports about the division of powers, functions and influence at the Spanish court are an obvious criticism of the system of favoured nobles taking charge of government and being virtually answerable to no-one, not even the king. Williams (2009) points out that practically from the beginning of the reign of Philip III a new

system of government came into being – government by a *valido* and a network of henchmen and members of the favourite's own family.

The second anecdote in the journal article ridicules the treatment of a soldier accused of breaking into the presence of the king's sister[7]. The "atrocious crime" (*YGLM,* Vol. II, Nº VII, 1799 [64]) committed by the soldier had been to enter the royal apartments in order to rescue the princess from a fire, carrying her to safety in his arms. He had been condemned to "an ignominious death" for what the journal author, in contrast, describes as his "brave and humane action". In this way, according to the author, Spanish etiquette had been totally undermined, though the princess "condescendingly" requested that the sentence should be revoked.

The third anecdote concerns Charles II of Spain[8], who received the Spanish grandees in the customary ceremony known as kissing hands (*YGLM*, Vol. II, No.VII, 1799 [64]). One of these nobles made the unpardonable mistake of presuming to use "the shocking and degrading epithet 'friend'" to refer to his relationship with the sovereign. The king, astonished at such freedom, exclaimed that kings had vassals and servants, but not friends. The author refers to the king as a "haughty monarch", but at the same time recognises that he perhaps spoke "justly without thinking it; since there must be equality of condition to constitute friendship; and who is equal to his king?" Charles II inherited several disabilities as a result of generations of intermarrying in his family; he also had a serious defect which could have made his speech hardly intelligible. The story about his "haughty" outburst may be true, or it may have been exaggerated by those around him in order to safeguard their own positions against would-be royal friends.

The final anecdote in the article is introduced by the claim that "if Spaniards are considered contemptible for their pride, they must be thought detestable for their cruelty" (*YGLM*, Vol. II, Nº VII, 1799 [65]). The author bases this judgement on accounts of Spanish colonisation in America written by the Dominican Friar Bartolomé de las Casas, who wrote that "everything the Spaniards had done in the Indies from the beginning – all the brutal exploitation and decimation of innocent

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[7]It is not specified exactly which of Philip's sisters was involved, nor apparently thought necessary for the sake of historical accuracy. His two half-sisters were Isabella Clara Eugenia (1566-1633) and Catherine Micaela (1567-1597).

[8]Charles II: 1661-1700, last Habsburg ruler in Spain. The lack of a direct heir was to bring about the War of the Spanish Succession.

Indians, with no heed for their welfare or their conversion – was not only completely wrong, but also mortal sin" (Orique. Web, 2009). In his version of the anecdote Disraeli adds that "they hanged those unhappy men *thirteen in a row,* in honour of the *thirteen Apostles!* And they also gave their *infants* to be devoured by their *dogs!"* (Disraeli, 1798, p. 353). The story following this introduction tells of an Indian, about to be burnt at the stake, who was invited to convert to Christianity. His reward would be the certain promise of heaven, but on learning that heaven was full of Spaniards, he declined the offer, since "he had seen too much of them in *this world* to wish to associate with them in the *next*". Vilar (1967, p. 35) states that the accounts of Spanish cruelty towards the indigenous peoples of America had been grounded especially on the "passionate and one-sided denunciations of Bartolomé de las Casas", but they were also encouraged by those countries jealous of Spain's rich and extensive empire.

Anglo-Spanish relations: Propagation of stereotypes

In only three pages of journal, young readers have so far been treated to four anecdotes, and several comments or 'justifications' of the Spaniard's propensity for excessive pride. The anecdotes refer to royal figures, but they are presented to the impressionable reader as standard characteristics applicable to the Spaniards in general. Relations between Britain and Spain had always been problematic, and the spreading of stereotypical ideas about one of Britain's main adversaries could have formed part of a subtle propaganda process. This instance is not isolated, since the same anecdotes mentioned here appear in several different sources and with an identical or very similar format. In other journals corresponding to the long eighteenth century there are similar accounts in which some nations are attributed certain immutable characteristics. For example, *The Gentleman's Magazine or Monthly Intelligencer*[9] for April 1731 cites Spain as an example of how not to run an Empire:

> Nothing is so likely to ruin a country as too much money, as was the fate of Spain…After they were possess'd of that ocean of treasure, which cost the lives of twenty millions of Indians, they lost their senses and industry together (p. 156-157).

[9] *The Gentleman's Magazine,* which began in 1731, was a miscellany of information about people, places and events, and included news summaries, parliamentary reports, biographies and obituary notices, poems, essays, and an account of current publications.

In June 1805, *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners, with Strictures on their Epitome, the Stage*[10] follows the same critical and mocking tendency with a biting commentary entitled “Spanish Grandees”:

> They seem to be a *race* apart in that kingdom; they engross the highest offices, and are employed in attendance on the king's person, though very seldom in the affairs of Government. It is said that their education and talents are generally of a nature to prevent this from being a loss to the public. [...] Their persons, as well as their minds, are thought more diminutive than the usual human size in their country. Those who assert this, impute it to their intermarrying constantly with each other, and to some other physical causes (p. 368).

The education, talents and even intellectual capacity of these grandees are openly ridiculed, while their functions and contributions to the state are minimised. The text continues in the same tone:

> Few of the nobility of Spain display any taste for the pursuits of literature. What is also singular is, that notwithstanding princes of the House of Bourbon have so long sate [*sic*] on the throne of Spain, yet the nobility of this country are less acquainted with the French language than the nobles of any other European nation: they differ from the great of other nations, likewise, in being as superstitious as the vulgar. (*The Monthly Mirror*, June 1805, p. 368)

The nobles, it seems, still lack competence in French, in spite of having already served five monarchs of French origin from 1700 until the publication date of the magazine (1805). It is not clear if the original author of the text was criticising specifically the contemporary Spanish court, or if he was perpetuating previous stereotypical accounts, but the report of the nobles’ lack of linguistic proficiency at a time when French had become the language of culture, and political and social reform all over Europe, would have helped to justify to young British readers their being considered “a race apart”.

Allies and rivals

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[10] *The Monthly Mirror: Reflecting Men and Manners, with Strictures on their Epitome, the Stage* ran from 1795 to 1812. It published reviews of literature and theatre, and original poetry.

The *YGLM* covers only the period from February 1799 to January 1800, but for much of the long eighteenth century Britain and Spain had been, and would continue to be, at odds, both in Europe and overseas, and this fact was reflected in the periodical press. Spain was frequently numbered among Britain's enemies, sometimes as an ally of France, other times because of conflicts of trade and empire (Bartlett 1997). During the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713), Britain and her allies invaded Spain with the aim of opposing the accession of the French candidate. As a result of the Peace of Utrecht, Britain was awarded the key positions of Gibraltar and Minorca in detriment of its rival, Spain. Even three hundred years later, Gibraltar continues to be a stumbling block in Anglo-Spanish relations.

Peace was never a lasting state of affairs, with localised wars developing into wider conflicts during the rest of the century. Tension and mistrust were constant elements in the forced relations between the major powers, with the forging of uneasy temporary alliances for immediate political gain. The mid-eighteenth century witnessed British military successes, with convincing victories in North America and the Caribbean. As a result, "the English saw the Continent through eyes prejudiced by caricatures: they saw poverty, superstition and tyranny" (Porter, 1982, p. 22). This stereotypical view of Europe, and in particular Spain, is reflected in the lines by the poet and satirist Charles Churchill, written around this time, and which were used to introduce the journal article on "Characteristic Anecdotes of the Spaniards":

Spain gives us *pride*—which Spain to all the Earth
May largely give, nor fear herself a dearth—
Gives us that jealousy, which, born of fear
And mean distrust, grows not by nature here;
Gives us that superstition which pretends
By the worst means to serve the best of ends;
That cruelty, which, stranger to the brave,
Dwells only with the coward and the slave;
That cruelty, which led her Christian bands
With more than savage rage o'er savage lands,
Bade them, without remorse, whole countries thin,
And hold of nought, but mercy as a sin.
(Yapp, 1983, p. 752)

These lines clearly constitute a list of negative characteristics (pride, jealousy, distrust, superstition, cruelty, cowardice, savagery) about Britain's rivals, and

occasional allies, even if the details were not recent. For lack of contrasting information, anecdotes and criticism of this kind must have inevitably reinforced anti-Spanish feeling among readers of the periodical press.

In the months immediately before the fall of the Bastille (1789), William Eden, the British ambassador in Madrid, was instructed to sound out the Spanish government regarding a possible alliance with Britain. It is interesting to see how the ambassador showed his reluctance to pursue such an objective:

> I do not conceive that it would be possible for Us, under any Events, to form a regular and avowed system of Alliance with this Country – Religious Prejudices and general Bigotry maintained here by the Influences of Princes at the height, would prevent such an Alliance (Mori, 1997, p. 65).

In spite of this negative evaluation, Britain and Spain did become allies after Louis XVI was executed in 1793. A coalition of European countries intended to invade France and put an end to the revolution. The alliance soon broke up, however, and Spain made peace with France in 1795, while Britain continued to be at war. Furthermore, Spain allied herself with France against Britain after signing the Treaty of San Ildefonso (1796). They planned to combine their forces against the British Empire, but this coalition found itself out-manoeuvred at sea, most notably at Trafalgar. When Napoleon invaded the Iberian Peninsula, the British and most of the Spanish found themselves on the same side once again fighting the Peninsular War, in which the allied forces finally obliged the French to abandon Spain.

National characteristics

In a later issue of *YGLM* (Nº VII. Vol. II [44]) the editors published yet another example of stereotyping in which "prevailing amusements" are said to be *indicative of national character*.

> The amusements of nations and individuals are generally the best index to their characters, and show their progress in refinement, or their mersion [*sic*] in barbarity. [...] To this very day, the Spaniards delight in bull-feasts, in which the assailants are exposed to such imminence of danger, that it might be supposed none but the most brutal minds could bear to witness the scene. In regard to that nation, however, there is something anomalous in the predilection they entertain for such pastimes.

The Spaniards, it seems, showed little progress in refinement and civilization by encouraging bull-fighting, and moreover, they were to be considered an oddity in comparison with more advanced European nations (implicitly Britain). The author then offers three possible reasons for Spaniards enjoying this spectacle: Spanish political institutions, their former contacts with the Moors, and the few advances they had made in learning and science. Quite how the country's eighteenth-century political institutions could be at fault in this respect is difficult to ascertain, unless the author is referring to a lack of legislation prohibiting such contests, but, as explained in the next paragraph, Britain's record on anti-blood sports legislation at that time was more theoretical than real. As for their contact with the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula, a cultural background note on the history of bull-fighting, added by the auctioneers of a Spanish painting explains that:

> Bullfights were popular spectacles in ancient Rome, but it was in the Iberian Peninsula that these contests were fully developed. The Moors from North Africa who overran Andalusia in AD 711 changed bullfighting significantly from the brutish, formless spectacle practised by the conquered Visigoths to a ritualistic occasion observed in connection with feast days, on which the conquering Moors, mounted on highly trained horses, confronted and killed the bulls (Sotheby's Auction House. Web. 2008).

Far from encouraging the original kind of brutal spectacle, it would seem that the Moors had in fact introduced refinement and skill. Moreover, the claim that the Spaniards delighted in bull-fights because they had not advanced in science and learning is certainly debatable, since Spain had experienced its Golden Age from the early sixteenth to the late seventeenth century, a period which coincides, in part, with the reign of Philip III, the object of the anecdotes examined above. Spain's contributions to art, literature, architecture and music in this period of splendour must have been known in Britain throughout the long eighteenth century, and Spanish adventurers and discoverers had already completed notable expeditions and circumnavigations by that time. The author of the journal article then compares bull-fighting with cock-fighting and bear-baiting, which, he says, used to be "favourite though disgraceful diversions" in Britain. However, he claims that his countrymen's good sense, delicacy and refinement, "aided by the authority of the laws, soon put an end to combats only fit for savages to behold. [...] It is only among barbarous and remote nations that a partiality for spectacles of cruelty remains" (*YGLM*, Nº VII. Vol.

II [45]). He makes his last point by giving a further example of “barbarous exhibitions” of combats between wild beasts still being organized, in this case, for the entertainment of the exotic but remote Javanese emperors. However, the author’s claims that “disgraceful diversions” involving cruelty to animals had been abolished at the time he was writing is not strictly true, because cockfighting and bull-baiting were only made illegal in Britain in 1835 (though cock-fighting still continues in secret even today), and badger-baiting came under the same legislation (1835), being included later in the 1911 Protection of Animals Act, in spite of which it has not completely died out even today. Curiously, a good summary of the question of attitudes to bull-fighting is to be found on an Internet site dedicated to the promotion of knowledge of British icons and their connotations. After dealing with banned British blood sports, the text includes a paragraph (and full colour illustration) on bull-fighting:

> Bull-fighting [...] is a good example of how differently two sides view a country’s iconic activity. Is it barbarism or an artistic expression, similar to dance? It does have passionate supporters who justify the act by calling it a tradition deeply ingrained in their national culture. They make the point that the objective is, in fact, to avoid a brutal confrontation by using the human attributes of intelligence, grace and elegance (Icons. Web, 2009).

Conclusions

Over a century of circumstantial alliances, constant rivalry and suspicion form the background for hostile attitudes expressed in the eighteenth-century periodical press. At the core of the Enlightenment was a critical questioning of traditional institutions, customs, and morals. However, stereotypical accounts of the Spanish such as those dealt with here flourished unhampered by contrasting information, due to ingrained mutual mistrust, fluctuating Anglo-Spanish relations, and lack of frequent contact. Prejudice was easily generated, and it perpetuated anti-Spanish attitudes. Anecdotes sometimes two centuries removed from contemporary readers’ experience were certainly difficult to refute. What began as a series of entertaining stories about a real incident or person was gradually converted into a set of fixed images through repetition, exaggeration and dissemination. Thus, the expression “As proud as a Spaniard” became ‘justified’ because of frequent friction between Spain and Britain over a prolonged period of time: “We have too many instances of the haughtiness of

that nation to think the term misapplied" (*YGLM*, Vol. II, Nº VII, 1799 [63]). It was only too easy to make use of this time-worn proverb as a basis for stereotyping the Spaniard, and writing him off as an oddity, lacking in refinement, and prone to uncivilised pastimes. Such was the didactic formation offered to young ladies and gentlemen in eighteenth-century Britain.

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