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Mapping Spanish American Orientalism

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Abstract
This paper demonstrates specific ways in which theoretical critiques of orientalism are relevant to Spanish America while providing historical, literary, and theoretical analyses of the region's varied positions in relation to Asia. Orientalist moments in works by Rubén Darío, Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, and others illustrate ways in which authors have mapped the complex connections between Spanish America and Asia.

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When I first began studying representations of Asia in Spanish America, I encountered resistance to the idea that they might have anything in common with the kinds of creative and scholarly works from Europe and the United States that Edward Said critiqued in *Orientalism*,1 whereas in recent years, such a framework has become more common in analyses of Asian images in Spanish America.2 It is useful to reflect on the complexity of the relationship of Spanish America both to postcolonial theory and to Asia. This paper demonstrates specific ways in which theoretical critiques of orientalism are relevant to Spanish America while providing historical, literary, and theoretical analyses of the region's varied positions in relation to Asia.3

Said discusses orientalism in terms of a relation between the United States or Europe and the Orient, arguing that the West's power to represent the Orient is complicit with the power to dominate it. Other critics, such as Regina Lewis and Lisa Lowe, have extended the critique of orientalism to artists and authors who were excluded from or in opposition to state power. This is pertinent because Spanish America does not have a political or economic influence over the Orient that corresponds to the power to represent it. For this reason, in my work here and elsewhere, I focus on the way in which orientalism functions at home rather than on its effect in the Orient, an approach which allows for an analysis of the intersection of orientalism with domestic discourses of power and resistance.

To discuss orientalism in Spanish America, it is helpful to consider ways of mapping the relationship between Spanish America and Asia. Since some countries in Asia have more economic power than Spanish American countries, the terms North and South seem in some cases to suit a particular relationship better than East and West. Yet a North-South mapping ignores the strength of the idea of Orient and Occident in Spanish American culture. Spanish American orientalism exists in the overlapping spaces between the categories East/West and North/South. In fact, Spanish American authors write from multiple perspectives, positioning themselves in the North, South, East, and West at different times, as I discuss in more detail below.

In any attempt to place Spanish America on a cultural and political map, the region's history and that of Spain are crucial considerations, as the various countries in Spanish America have inherited some of Spain's stereotypes of the East. Spain's history includes relationships with two Orients: one associated with North Africa and the Middle East, the other with the Pacific and East Asia. Though distinct, these Orients are related, with America often serving as a bridge. For Spain, Islam, particularly as represented by North Africans, was not an exotic Other, but rather an intimately familiar one. Long before Spain established a world empire that extended to America and Asia, or even established itself as a nation, it was colonized by the Moors. Most observers believe that almost a millennium of Christian coexistence with the Moors on the Iberian Peninsula had a profound effect on Spanish culture.4 Spanish America, almost from the time that it became "Spanish," was involved with Spain's interests in Asia and the Pacific. Christopher Columbus thought that the lands he visited on his four voyages were part of Asia.5 Even when these lands were eventually understood to be separate from the continent where China was located, calling America the West Indies was not simply the perpetuation of an erroneous appellation, but part of a mindset that considered America and Asia as two parts of a New World, "ambas Indias," awaiting conquest and

conversion to Christianity (Headley 644). According to Julia Kushigian, the Americas were part of a changing relationship between the "old" and "new" worlds: before the *reconquista*, Arabs occupied an "Old World" in contrast to the newer Iberian peninsula, whereas after the discovery of America, it became the "New" World against a Spanish/Portuguese "old" one (5). Meanwhile, colonial writers such as Hernán Cortés and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz associated the "new" American world with the "old" Arabian one (Kushigian 6). The history of Spain's colonization of its Indies—America and the Philippines—also shapes Spanish American orientalism. Spain's American colonies have been identified both as East and West, depending on perspective. At the same time, since Spanish American authors are often writing consciously as part of a Western tradition, the history of orientalism in Europe and the United States and more to the point, critiques of those orientalist writings, are also important considerations in mapping orientalism in Spanish America.

Aside from the colonial Spanish view of America as part of the Indies, some twentieth-century Spanish American authors have privileged pre-Columbian connections between Asia and America in order to portray Spain, Europe, or the West in general as less important. Enrique Dussel, for example, writes that indigenous people of America were "asiáticos por razas, lenguas, culturas" inhabiting the "Extremo oriente del Ásia" (132). Placing the Americas in an Asian context is important to Dussel as evidence that America has a place in World History apart from its "discovery" by Europe. In Dussel's version of world history, pre-Columbian American urbanized societies were among the six major civilizations of the ancient world. It is not unusual to praise the Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas, but Dussel specifically allies America with Asia against Europe: "Esta propuesta . . . tiene el propósito explícito de *incluir América Latina*, desde su origen, en la Historia Mundial (lo mismo que el Africa bantú y el Asia), y no ya como antecedentes de la cultura posterior europea . . . sino como los pilares . . . de la Historia Mundial" (italics in original) (125).**6** Dussel is most interested in the Pacific as an important "zona de contacto" for great civilizations after 1700 BC (124, 135). He describes the Pacific as an active locus for cultural exchange very much distinct from pre-1492 Europe, which he characterizes as peripheral to the Islamic world (138-9, see also 147-51). Without giving Asian visitors credit for establishing Mesoamerican and South American civilizations, Dussel sees the orientation of pre-Colombian America towards the East as an essential part of unlinking its place in the world from its relation to Europe.

According to Dussel, it is important to look at the history of the world from a Pacific perspective in order to see through the eyes of the marginalized, specifically the indigenous (150-51). In Dussel's interpretation of the relationship between America and Asia, identification with the East is equivalent to identification with the South. He reminds us that, although many Spanish American elites identify with the West, for the United States, the West does not include the South, so "Western Hemisphere" really means "Northern Western Hemisphere" (243).

To support some of his claims, Dussel cites Gustavo Vargas Martínez, who has studied fifteenth-century cartography as well as accounts of Chinese travelers to the pre-Columbian Americas. In *América en un mapa de 1489*, Vargas Martínez situates his research as contributing to the decline in Columbus's reputation and correcting the European version of American history, which he characterizes as "una historia que no es la nuestra sino la de los invasores" (Vargas Martínez 91). In his 1990 *Fusang: Chinos en América antes de Colón*, Vargas Martínez analyzes in more detail Chinese accounts of the journey of Hui Sheng to a country on the coast of America in the fifth century AD. Like Dussel, Vargas Martínez situates his study as a way of aligning pre-Columbian America, and by extension twentieth-century Spanish America, with the East as opposed to the West.**7**

Whereas Dussel orients his argument for America-as-East toward pre-Columbian contact between America and Asia, after the conquest, Spain's American colonies had something in common with both the Western colonizer and its Asian possessions. While sharing the experience of colonization as part of the Indies, Spanish America also acted for the mother country in many aspects of its relations with the Philippines. Most of the expeditions to the Philippines set off from *Nueva España* (now Mexico), and the American colony provided administrative and material support for the Philippine government until the nineteenth century (Headley).

The Manila galleon, or "la nao de China," which sailed between Acapulco and Manila until 1815, was the primary mode of communication between Spain and the Philippines, with *Nueva España* as mediator. The *nao* appears in Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora's seventeenth-century *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* (1690). The unfortunate Alonso Ramirez, having failed to support himself in *Nueva España*, decides at the end of the first chapter to take himself to Manila: "Desesperé entonces de poder ser algo y, hallándome en el tribunal de mi propia conciencia, no sólo acusado, sino convencido de inútil, quise darme por pena de este delito la que se da en México a los que son delincuentes, que es enviarlos desterrados a las Filipinas" (79-80).

Here and in other fictional accounts, we see the Philippines receiving not only administrative direction and financial support from *Nueva España*, but expatriates in need of a new start as well. The move to Manila allows Alonso

Ramírez to travel all over the Pacific and to survive capture by pirates, returning to *Nueva España* a man of different character.

Manila is also cast as a place of punishment in *El Periquillo Sarniento*, by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi (1816), in which the picaresque protagonist, an American-born Spaniard, is sentenced to serve in the army in Manila for eight years, but manages to secure himself a sinecure as assistant to a colonel. The stay in Manila serves a number of functions in the novel. It shows yet another example of Periquillo failing to heed the advice of a wise mentor, in this case the colonel. Although he seems to have reformed himself in Manila, behaving well and saving money, Periquillo is too greedy to continue acting virtuously after the colonel dies. The episode also illustrates the role of the China trade. In addition to an inheritance from the colonel, Periquillo makes a fortune by buying Chinese goods in Manila and sending them to be sold in *Nueva España*. He plans, upon his return to Mexico, to parlay his profits and his inheritance into property and position, dreaming of becoming the next viceroy. Even before the shipwreck that destroys his plans, his excessive and unrealistic ambition has led him to disdain his friends and acquaintances and the other travelers on the *nao*.

The trip to Manila also affords the character an opportunity to meet with foreigners. One encounter described in detail from the eight-year stay in Manila is between a man from England and a Black man who discuss slavery and prejudice with Periquillo. On the trip home, Periquillo is shipwrecked and washes up on an island occupied by "Chinese" that serves as a space from which to criticize the values of *Nueva España*, including the hereditary nobility as well as the aversion to labor embodied in Periquillo.

Benedict Anderson cites *El Periquillo Sarniento* as an example of the emergence of imagined national communities in novels: "Here again we see the 'national imagination' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape . . . that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside" (30). To Anderson, a distinguishing feature of the novel is that "the horizon is clearly bounded: it is that of colonial Mexico" (30). Yet Periquillo spends eight years in Manila. The prominence of the *nao* and Manila in *Infortunios de Alonso Ramírez* and *El periquillo sarniento* is evidence of the significance of the Philippines as a familiar Other for the emerging Mexican nation.

The importance of the Philippines in Spanish culture can be seen in one of the opening chapters of the nineteenth-century novel *Fortunata y Jacinta* by Benito Pérez Galdós, published in 1886, twelve years before Spain ceded its Asian colony to the United States. In *Fortunata y Jacinta*, the Philippines and its products are the source of profit and sensual delight. Barbarita, the mother of the main male character, Juanito Santa Cruz, is the daughter of shopkeepers who sell Chinese merchandise from the Philippines. She grows up among the sights, smells, and textures of oriental goods: "Creció Bárbara en una atmósfera saturada de olor de sándalo, y las fragrancias orientales, juntamente con los vivos colores de la pañolería chinesca, dieron acento poderoso a las impresiones de su niñez" (I: 126). To the child, her parents' livelihood, manifested in the goods in their store, is an ongoing source of pleasure.

Asians are represented by two mannequins, a life-sized painting, and decorations on fans. To Barbarita, the two Chinese mannequins are like members of the family. In one sense, the mannequins are as good as real Chinese people, because Chinese are not real people. This is clear in Barbarita's reaction to the decorated fans that are among the shop's treasures: "se embebecía contemplando aquellas figuras tan monas, que no le parecían personas, sino *chinos*, con las caras redondas y tersas como hojitas de rosa, todos ellos risueños y estúpidos, pero muy lindos, lo mismo que aquellas casas abiertas por todos lados y aquellos árboles . . ." (italics in original) (I: 129). Here, Chinese have more in common with exotic houses and trees than with people. If Barbarita thinks of the Chinese mannequins as almost real, it is because she is projecting characteristics and life onto them. This is analogous to the process of orientalism in which images of the East are animated by Western fantasies.

In this section, Galdós also has a passage praising the "mantón de Manila," a typical Spanish shawl that actually comes from the Philippines. He states quite clearly that first, the *mantón de Manila* is important because it is worn by women of all classes and because it is handmade and not an industrial product and second, that it has been adopted as a national costume even though it is a product of Asia.

The passage weaves together commerce and sensual pleasure. The child Barbarita experiences everything in the shop in sensual terms: visual, olfactory, and tactile. To her, the flowers embroidered on the shawls seem like a garden of fresh blooms. Yet the occasion for her to see so many of them together is a day when the shop is crowded and the employees have spread numerous shawls over the counters for the gaze of the customers. The connection between commerce and the senses is even clearer at the end of the section, where the competition for status among Barbarita and her two friends at school is based on treasures that they bring from their parents'

shops. The smell of Asia clinging to rice paper is so delightful to the girls that Barbarita defeats her rivals:

> Barbarita . . . llevaba unos papelitos muy raros de pasta, todos llenos de garabatos chinescos . . . de repente ponía el papel en las narices de sus amigas . . . Quedábanse Castita y Eulalia atontadas con el aroma asiático, vacilando entre la admiración y la envidia; pero al fin no tenían más remedio que humillar su soberbia ante el olorcillo aquel de la niña de Arnaiz. . . . Por último, las dos amiguitas y otras que se acercaron movidas de la curiosidad, y hasta la propia doña Calixta . . . reconocían . . . que ninguna niña tenía cosas tan bonitas como la de la tienda de Filipinas. (I: 132)

Significantly, one of the other contenders is a girl who brags that her father receives letters from England every day that "olían a hierro" (I: 131). Her father does business with England, specifically Birmingham, symbol of industrial progress. Barbarita's association with colonial commerce and its attendant pleasures nevertheless wins her the place of honor over the girl who depends on industry.

Oriental objects, though seen as works of art rather than consumer products, are also sources of pleasure in Rubén Darío's 1890 story "La muerte de la emperatriz de la China" in which a porcelain bust of a Chinese woman disrupts the relationship between the sculptor Recaredo, and his wife Suzette. As the empress of China, the figure represents that nation in a political sense; as a collectible object, she offers the Western sculptor power over a feminized Orient. Recaredo's obsession with things Asian, specifically Japanese and Chinese, manifests itself through a collecting instinct. Although he also reads orientalist texts, the objects he has acquired from Yokohama, Nagasaki, Kyoto, Nanking, and Peking are his most direct access to exotic Asian cities.**8** These "trabajos legítimos" include: "los cuchillos, las pipas, las máscaras feas y misteriosas como las caras de los sueños hípnicos, los mandarinitos enanos con panzas de cucurbitáceos, abiertas y dentadas, y diminutos soldados de Tartaria, con faces foscas" (201). In Recaredo's collection, China and Japan are represented by a combination of the monstrous and the ridiculous, all neutralized by their miniature form. The soldiers are tiny, and the knives are reduced to the status of collectibles. Ironically, the narrator describes Recaredo as "en esto un original," although his collection consists mainly of caricatures and reflects the popularity of Asian objects that makes Barbarita's family rich in *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

The porcelain bust of the empress of China, a gift from a friend who has become involved in the import-export business in Hong Kong, seems designed for export, as it is labeled in French and English, in addition to Chinese. This inanimate Asian woman is beautiful primarily because of her exotic mystery. Her aspect is "enigmática" and her smile is "de esfinge" (203). Together, the exotic details of her features and clothing do not simply animate the figure, but rather make it magical, "todo dando magia a la porcelana blanca" (203). The empress of China becomes the queen of all Recaredo's Asian objects. He builds a cabinet for her that is both a throne and an altar, arranges his other objects around her as her subjects, and makes offerings of flowers to her. Contemplation of her sends him into ecstasy: "llegaba frente a la emperatriz, con los manos cruzadas sobre el pecho, a hacer zalemas. . . . Era una pasión. . . . Tenía, en momentos, verdaderos arrobos delante del busto asiático que le conmovía en su deleitable e inmóvil majestad" (203). All of Recaredo's fascination with things oriental, previously dispersed among a number of objects, becomes concentrated in the figure of one woman who embodies the allure of the Orient.

The empress on her throne is a concrete manifestation of the figurative pedestal upon which Recaredo has placed his wife. Similarly, while contemplation of the Chinese empress sends him into an ecstatic trance, his love for Suzette is "casi místico" (201). Suzette herself hates the Chinese empress, seeing in the bust a rival who endangers her domestic happiness. The contrast between Suzette and the empress is expressed partly by colors. The bust is a gift from the "país amarillo" reigning over Recaredo's workshop from a throne on which "Predominaba la nota amarilla" (202, 203). In contrast, the idyllic love of Recaredo and Suzette takes place against the backdrop of a blue living room, and love makes them see things through a blue-tinted lens.

Suzette's jealousy is reasonable in the sense that the porcelain bust is a more perfect object than her own living body, which has itself been objectified. The first sentence of the story presents a girl described as "Delicada y fina como una joya humana," which could refer as much to the empress of the title as to a living protagonist (199). The narrator then informs the reader that "Suzette se llamaba la avecita que había puesto en jaula de seda, peluches y encajes un soñador artista cazador" (199). To Recaredo, Suzette is a fairy-tale princess, Sleeping Beauty, "como una deliciosa figura de los amables cuentos que empiezan: 'Este era un rey'" (202). Before the arrival of the Chinese gift, Recaredo even compares Suzette to an oriental figure, with the "perfil hierático de la medalla de una emperatriz bizantina" (201). Suzette was already jealous of Recaredo's workshop (full of oriental knickknacks) before the arrival of the empress. It is not surprising, therefore, that the orientalized Suzette should become jealous of another little treasure from the Orient, the porcelain bust of the empress of China, who invades her luxurious cage and distracts her loving "dueño" (199). The Asian figure thus provides commentary on the limitations of

Suzette's fairy-tale life.

When Recaredo realizes that Suzette's strange behavior is motivated by jealousy, he attempts to reassure her in a manner that unfortunately reveals in its details his awareness of the attractions of a number of other women: Eulogia, with the blond hair; Gabriela, with the black hair and white skin; Luisa, with the fiery eyes; Andrea, with the feline tongue. Suzette's insecurity has a basis both in her competition with other women Recaredo knows, on the one hand, and in her inability to be as perfectly doll-like as the porcelain figure, on the other hand. All her domestic anxieties are displaced fully onto the inanimate figure of the Chinese woman. In the end, Suzette can only turn Recaredo's attention away from the empress by breaking out of her own passive role and smashing the porcelain. Her wildness seems short-lived, however, since the couple's reconciliation in the "saloncito azul" mimics the sort of scenes with which the story started, and the couple's pet bird in its cage provides through its laughter a final ironic commentary (205). Darío's story provides a notable case from Spanish America of the device of encapsulating the Orient in a female figure, while using that figure to critique domestic relations.

Where *Fortunata y Jacinta* gives the reader an image of Asia in Spain, and "La muerte de la emperatriz de la China" brings Asia to Spanish America, *Noli Me Tangere*, published at about the same time, reveals Spain in Asia. *Noli Me Tangere* is an 1887 Filipino nationalist novel written in Spanish by José Rizal, a Chinese-Spanish mestizo; Benedict Anderson cites it along with *El Periquillo Sarniento* as exemplifying the role of the nationalist novel. While the Philippines provide material goods and sensual pleasure to the Spaniards in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Spain is the source of both ideals and corruption for the Philippines in *Noli Me Tangere*. The main character, Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra, considers his loyalty to Spain an integral part of his loyalty to the Philippines, exclaiming at one point, "¡No, a pesar de todo, primero la Patria, primero Filipinas, hija de España, primero la patria española!" (Rizal 52). In Crisóstomo's outburst, the mother country and her daughter colony are both given first place and thereby both figured as the motherland. As the novel progresses, the impossibility of such a double loyalty becomes clear. The men who actually embody the Spanish presence in the Philippines are corrupt or weak or convinced that European ideas about democracy and progress are not relevant to the colony. As a result, attempts at social, educational, and political reform fail in the novel, which concludes with the heroine, María Clara, confining herself to a convent where she is abused and driven insane.

Fortunata y Jacinta and *Noli Me Tangere* focus on the relationship between Spain and the Philippines, eliding the role of Spanish America, which had declined. By the end of the nineteenth-century, the *nao de China* was no longer the only permitted carrier of Asian goods from Manila. This change paralleled developments in Asian immigration to Spanish America. The *nao* that brought silver to Manila and silk to Acapulco had also carried Spaniards to and from their colonial positions and slaves from Manila to America.**9** As a result, there were voluntary and involuntary Asian immigrants in Spanish America from the sixteenth century on.**10** The history of Asian immigration is related to that of the African slave trade and of the treatment of indigenous populations in America. In colonial times, Asian slaves or servants were considered less likely to run away than indigenous ones, since their homes were inaccessible (la Maza 12). In the nineteenth century, Cuba and Peru began importing large numbers of Chinese laborers, in part to make up for the end of the African slave trade.**11** In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Mexico brought in Chinese laborers from Peru, from the United States, and directly from southern China, most of whom were expelled in the 1930s (Gómez Izquierdo 37, 44-45). The demonization of the Chinese in Mexico in the 1930s is an example of the deployment of long-standing Western stereotypes of Asia in a Spanish American country. The twentieth century saw new waves of Chinese immigration as well as significant Japanese immigration to Brazil, Peru, and Paraguay, and the election of the first Asian-American president, Alberto Fujimori of Peru.**12** The twentieth century also brought Asian investment to Mexico, Central America, and South America, putting Spanish America (including Mexico, geographically located in the Northern Hemisphere) in the position of South in relation to an economically and politically powerful North represented especially by Japan.**13**

That Spanish America is often in the position of South, or even East, does not erase the many ways in which it positions itself as West. This is clear in literary images of East Asia, which are often similar to those in literature from Europe and United States. For this reason, I have found it useful to situate my analysis with reference to critiques of Western orientalism by Edward W. Said, Reina Lewis, Lisa Lowe, and Rey Chow, particularly as they address gender issues and the meaning of orientalism in atypical situations.

Edward W. Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), argues that the West's power to represent the Orient is complicit with the power to dominate it. He defines orientalism as a discourse made up of three interrelated parts. First, orientalism is an academic discipline. Although its practitioners may prefer more modern-sounding labels, "Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism" (Said, *Orientalism* 2). The second part of Said's definition, "Orientalism is a style of thought based

upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident,'" encompasses imaginative as well as academic writers (*Orientalism* 2). The third aspect of orientalism arises from the relation between the first two, which leads to "Orientalism . . . as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, *Orientalism* 3). In Spanish America, however, dealing with the Orient does not include dominating it politically, militarily, or economically. Octavio Paz, for example, would seem to be exactly the type of orientalist as scholar, poet, and diplomat with whom Said is concerned—except that the government he represented does not exert great influence in India. It is precisely the position of Paz and other Spanish American authors, apparently outside the scope of Said's model, that interests me. I examine more closely Paz's shifting positions in reference to the East below.

Aspects of Said's work that address the scope of orientalism and the association of the Orient with the feminine are most relevant to my analysis. First, although Said focuses on British, French, and United States representations of and policies toward the Middle East, he extends his conclusions to the Orient as a whole. When it comes to delimiting "the Orient," Said claims that the "imaginative geography" that defines East and West is more relevant to the study of orientalism than a (nonexistent) natural border ("Orientalism Reconsidered"90). As for the "Occident," Said is primarily concerned with those in the West who have the most power over the Orient. He makes a direct link between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European orientalism and late-twentieth-century discourse about the Orient in the United States, for example, despite disclaimers about the different history of United States relations to the Orient: "From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did" (Said, *Orientalism* 4). Said applies his general aim, to underscore the "truth of Orientalism's political origin," to the Occident and Orient as broadly defined ("Orientalism Reconsidered" 91).

In Said's analysis, a primary function of the orientalist construction of the Orient is to define the Western self. For example, "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (Said, *Orientalism* 3). Orientalism becomes a lens through which an author observes and comprehends the Orient (Said, *Orientalism* 58). The existing discourse provides "a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the political confrontation. These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West" (Said, *Orientalism* 58). Said also defines orientalism as "that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line" (*Orientalism* 73). Said reiterates this idea throughout *Orientalism*, noting that even writers from the Orient do not escape the distortions of the lens of orientalism. Clearly, then, that lens can influence other writers whose societies lack power over the Orient, including Spanish Americans.

Since analyses of gender and orientalism have proven particularly relevant to my investigations of representations of Asia in Spanish America, I am interested in what *Orientalism* says about the role of gender and sexuality in shaping perceptions of the Orient, although Said does not treat the topic in depth. Not only does the West associate the Orient with women and with sexuality, but Said also characterizes the role of orientalism in gendered and sexual terms. In the introduction to *Orientalism*, Said compares Gustave Flaubert's ability both to represent and to possess an Egyptian woman to orientalism in general: "My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem . . . fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled" (*Orientalism* 6). Said's most detailed discussion of the feminization and sexualization of the Orient comes with his analysis of Flaubert's writings. Kuchuk Hanem, like the Orient itself, "is an occasion and an opportunity for Flaubert's musings" (*Orientalism* 187). He further notes the "almost uniform association between the Orient and sex" in Flaubert's writing (*Orientalism* 188). The connection was not an innovation of Flaubert's, of course, though Said implies that Flaubert made more of it than others had (*Orientalism* 188). Said suggests that since sex in nineteenth-century Europe was subject to numerous "legal, moral, even political and economic obligations," Europeans looked to the Orient for "the freedom of licentious sex" (*Orientalism* 190). Said seems to believe that sex truly was different in the Orient, but that the repetition of European orientalist sexual quests turned the experience into yet another stereotype available for consumption by readers at home (*Orientalism* 190).

According to Said (though not all of those who have extended his work, as I discuss below), the discourse of orientalism itself "was an exclusively male province" (*Orientalism* 207). Not only are women in orientalist novels and travel narratives "usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy," but in scholarly works "the relation between the Middle East and West is really defined as sexual . . . The Middle East is resistant, as any virgin would be, but the male scholar wins the prize . . ." (Said, *Orientalism* 309). Said focuses on the discourse as masculine in both

perspective and goals, further drawing an analogy between orientalism and patriarchy. Aside from viewing the Orient in feminine terms, orientalists claim for themselves an apolitical objectivity similar to discourses that exclude women:

> Thus, for example, we can now see that Orientalism is a praxis of the same sort, albeit in different territories, as male gender dominance, or patriarchy, in metropolitan societies: the Orient was routinely described as feminine, its riches as fertile, its main symbols the sensual woman, the harem, and . . . the despotic—but curiously attractive—ruler. Moreover, Orientals like Victorian housewives were confined to silence and to unlimited enriching production. ("Orientalism Reconsidered" 103)

Said offers the analogy primarily as an indication of the potential for comparable strategies of resistance to patriarchy and orientalism.

The comparison to Victorian housewives recalls other instances in which Said compares the objects of orientalism to marginalized groups within Western countries, such as when he comments that "The Oriental was linked . . . to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien" (*Orientalism* 207). In particular, Said notes that in the context of nineteenth-century biological determinism, these marginalized categories of people supposedly invited judgment and rule by more advanced Western male elites. Said is less concerned with the way members of one marginalized group might represent another such group. To the extent that he considers marginalized actors, it is when writers from the Orient either internalize orientalism or contest it. V.S. Naipaul is simply one of the "pro-colonial renegades," for example, in contrast to Salman Rushdie "whose fictions and criticism are self-consciously written against the cultural stereotypes and representations commanding the field" ("Orientalism Reconsidered" 98, 105). In *Orientalism* Said does not consider the possibility of women's position complicating their participation in the "male" discourse of orientalism. Others, including Reina Lewis, Lisa Lowe, and Rey Chow, have extended and complicated Said's notion of orientalism, especially as it relates to gender.

Whereas Said only touches upon the feminization and sexualization of the Orient, and is not much concerned with the gender of orientalists, Reina Lewis focuses on these issues in *Gendering Orientalism*, her 1996 study of Henriette Brown's harem paintings and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. According to Lewis, because women did not have direct access to positions of power within Western culture, their gaze on the Orient differed from men's. In particular, women "registered difference less pejoratively and less absolutely than was implied by Said's original formulation" (Lewis 4). As a result, analysis of women's cultural production can "throw light on the internal schisms within the fantasized unity of the sovereign imperial subject, as it was constituted by contemporary cultural discourse" (Lewis 4). Lewis insists on the significance of women both as critics of male orientalism and as orientalists themselves, cautioning against the impulse to romanticize women as necessarily free from the imperialist perspective of their societies. In fact:

> imperialism played a role in the very construction of professional creative opportunities for European women. The ways in which European women imagined and propelled themselves into the potentially transgressive position of cultural producer, and the ways in which their output and demeanor as creative professionals were assessed, relied on the differentiating terms of race, class and nation, as well as gender. This series of relational categories activated and was maintained by a set of hierarchical differences and value judgments that could only be imperial. (3)

Despite their marginal position, women's success was complicit with orientalism, even when they contested dominant masculine images of the Orient. For example, women artists, like men, often cast the Orient as a woman. In the case of women artists, portraying the Orient as a woman allowed them to claim a special access to or affinity with the subject.

However, while European women claimed a privileged position when it came to representing oriental women, Lewis argues that they were not necessarily more neutral in their depiction of the "other woman" (26-27, 238). She notes that "the textual status of the other woman in women's cultural production cannot be separated from the economic and social conditions necessary for the emergence of Western women's cultural agency; conditions which relied, among other things, on the displacement onto the feminized colonial other of forms of gender exploitation now unacceptable at home" (Lewis 27). Instead of positing women as simply complicit in orientalism or resistant to it by virtue of their own oppression, Lewis finds that their work necessitates a more complicated critique of orientalism: "Attention to women writers and artists . . . does not just add to but actively reforms Said's original version . . . highlighting the structural role of sexual as well as racial difference in the formation of colonial subject positions"

(20). Lewis's extension of Said's analysis to include gender is useful to my analysis of women and men writing about the Orient from the periphery of Western power.

Reina Lewis draws upon Lisa Lowe's 1991 *Critical Terrains*, which argues for the heterogeneity of orientalism on many levels. Although she is concerned with French and British literature, Lowe's analysis is important to my study of orientalism in Spanish America because she demonstrates that orientalist discourse does not necessarily involve imperialism. Lowe explores the network of discourses that interact with orientalism and the manner in which writers with varied concerns and motives make use of similar constructions of the Orient. While calling attention to the persistence of certain orientalist moves, Lowe emphasizes the diverse meanings of the Orient in different times, places, and texts. The construction of the Orient for the West involves more than the expression of colonial desire. Lowe's analysis of Kuchuk Hanem and the figure of the oriental woman in Flaubert notes that she is "an antifigure that articulates by negation a profile of desired traits for the nineteenth-century French bourgeois community" (78). The idea of the Orient as an Other against which to define European virtues is not new, but Lowe traces the impulse to represent the oriental woman in this way not to French confidence in cultural superiority to the East, but rather to "cultural anxieties" in nineteenth-century France brought on by "The instability of the regimes oscillating between revolution and reaction after 1789; the crisis of class definition in the bourgeois age of rapid industrialization; the changes in family, gender, and social structure in a time of urbanization and emigration" (77). Lowe analyzes in detail the manner in which Kuchuk Hanem's female figure embodies the Orient, even as her supposedly oriental characteristics represent anxieties about French society.

In France in the 1960s and 1970s, the oriental woman takes on a different meaning. Julia Kristeva's *Des chinoises* (1974) depicts the oriental woman not as a negative counterpoint to French identity but rather as a representative of utopian matriarchal space that embodies what is lacking at home. Instead of colonialism, "Kristeva's China expresses a confluence of the discourses of feminist theory, psychoanalysis, and semiotics, as well as orientalism" (Lowe 137). For Lowe, what links Flaubert and Kristeva is not a colonial impulse but rather the construction of the Orient "as a fiction of absolute cultural and sexual difference from the West" (186). She concludes that "the orientalist gaze may reemerge, even when the purpose of its project is to criticize state power and social domination" (Lowe 189). In fact, the very absence of colonialism as a factor distorts reactions to ethnic relations at home: "these postcolonial refigurations of China continued to figure the Orient as Other, no longer as colonized but as utopian, and this romantic regard for China permitted intellectuals to disregard the situation of actual postcolonial peoples residing and laboring in France itself" (Lowe 188). Lowe's conclusions have a direct bearing on orientalism from Spanish America, where portrayals of Asia and Asians have more to do with local power dynamics than international ones.

Like Lisa Lowe, Rey Chow examines Western portrayals of the oriental woman and the Orient as a woman, specifically addressing the impact of orientalism in East Asia. On the relation between orientalism and imperialism, she argues that, despite many East Asian countries having maintained their territorial and linguistic integrity, the region nevertheless suffers from Western dominance. In Chow's opinion, confining discussions of orientalism to colonial relationships ignores "the most important aspect of orientalism—its legacy as everyday culture and value" (*Writing Diaspora* 7). In fact, East Asia as a whole "offers even better illustrations of how imperialism works -- i.e., how imperialism as ideological domination succeeds best without physical coercion, without actually capturing the body and the land" (Chow, *Writing Diaspora* 8). Thus, unlike Lisa Lowe, Chow sees orientalism as primarily implicated in imperialism, broadly defined. In addition, Chow criticizes the West for "allochronism, the casting of the other in another time" and for its persistent vision of Asia in feminine terms (*Woman and Chinese Modernity* 30). This is evident, for example in Kristeva's *Des chinoises*, which conflates thousands of years of Chinese history and which also exemplifies the "seductiveness of . . . [the] metaphysics of feminizing the other (culture)" (Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity* 9). Spanish America, insofar as it at times aligns itself culturally with the West, contributes to the portrayal of Asia as feminine and timeless.

Julia Kushigian in *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition* has written that Spanish American orientalism is free of the political issues attributed to writing about the Orient from Europe or the United States (2-5). She sees instead a respectful dialogue with the East. I argue that although writers in Spanish America since the colonial period rarely have been writing from positions of power over the Orient, their literary portrayals of the Orient often echo orientalist writing from Europe or the United States.

The stories and essays of Borges provide a clear example. Here, the dialogue that Kushigian argues is typical of Spanish American orientalism takes place not between Eastern and Western interlocutors but between the self and an Other projected onto an Eastern space. Even though Kushigian distinguishes Borges as portraying a "textual" Orient, she does not consider the hierarchy between Western author and oriental object implied in the creation such a text (104). According to Kushigian, Borges has a medieval-like admiration for the Orient (21). She also

claims that through his irony and parody, Borges brings East and West together while revealing truth about the universe: "through Orientalism opposites may be joined momentarily and the underlying void made evident" (20). Even this statement suggests, though, that the Orient serves a purpose in Borges that does not involve any dialogic exchange. If "the Orient, presented ironically, with familiarity, and at times inverted and parodied, is a metaphor in Borges's works for infinite time, fantasy, and utopia," and is also a convenient space to locate uncanny differences, there is not much space for the actual East (19, 37). In fact, Kushigian here seems to be echoing some of Said's claims about the portrayal of the Orient as the Other of the West while rejecting Said's conclusions. For example, she says that the Orient in Borges is really a version of the Western self, so that, "If in the West we would like to live eternally in the mind, we project this image of eternal life onto the East as Oriental reality" (Kushigian 23). Such projections are clear in the most famous instance of Borges using the East, in the story "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins," a passage later cited by Michel Foucault in *Les mots et les choses*:

> Esas ambigüidades, redundancias y deficiencias recuerdan las que el doctor Franz Kuhn atribuye a cierta enciclopedia china que se titula *Emporio celestial de conocimientos benévolos*. En sus remotas páginas está escrito que los animales se dividen en (a) pertenecientes al Emperador, (b) embalsamados, (c) amaestrados, (d) lechones, (e) sirenas, (f) fabulosos, (g) perros sueltos, (h) incluídos en esta clasificación, (i) que se agitan como locos, (j) innumerables, (k) dibujados con un pincel finísimo de pelo de camello, (l) etcétera, (m) que acaban de romper el jarrón, (n) que de lejos parecen moscas. (Borges 142)

Foucault says in his preface to *Les mots et les choses* that "Ce texte de Borges m'a fait rire longtemps, non sans un malaise certain et difficile à vaincre" [That passage from Borges kept me laughing a long time, though not without a certain uneasiness that I found hard to shake off] (Foucault 9).**14** While Kushigian coincides with Foucault in the appreciation of the laughter engendered by the passage, she concludes that Borges has depicted neither a utopia nor a heterotopia but a way to self-knowledge "through culture, through a dialogue between cultures that brings about a grouping and its resulting disorder indefinitely" (22). This dialogue, however, does not develop out of an exchange with China, but from the creation of a mythical "China" with which to interact. This could be designated a type of dialogue, but not the kind that leads to the "interanimation" that Kushigian invokes.

Zhang Longxi explores such mythmaking on the part of Foucault and Borges in his essay "The Myth of the Other: China in the Eyes of the West" (1988). Zhang treats Borges solely in the context of Foucault and French, British, and American attitudes towards China, but despite the absence of any discussion of Spanish America, his reading of Borges is in certain respects more insightful than Kushigian's. First, he points out that despite his extensive analysis Foucault takes the passage at face value in one sense: "Significantly, Foucault does not give so much as a hint to suggest that the hilarious passage from the 'Chinese encyclopaedia' may have been made up to represent a Western fantasy of the Other, and that the illogical way of sorting out animals in that passage can be as alien to the Chinese mind as it is to the Western mind" (Zhang 110). Instead, Foucault sets the encyclopedia entry against his own fantasy of China as a utopian site.**15** This strangely incommensurable pair in hand, Foucault uses it as a basis for "setting up a framework for his archaeology of knowledge, enabling him to differentiate the self from what is alien and pertaining to the Other and to map out the contours of Western culture recognizable as a self-contained system" (Zhang 110). Ironically, where Foucault sees difference, Zhang points out that Borges emphasizes identity; China is not an exotic Other for Borges but a version of the self (112-13). Kushigian, as noted above, sees this in Borges as well, but still treats his texts as dialogues with the Orient. Readers of *Les mots et les choses* who have not read "El idioma analítico de John Wilkins" will not know that the Chinese encyclopedia is one of many examples, mostly Western, of failed attempts to categorize the world: "He registrado las arbitrariedades de Wilkins, del desconocido (o apócrifo) enciclopedista chino y del Instituto Bibliográfico de Bruselas; notoriamente no hay clasificación del universo que no sea arbitraria y conjetural" (Borges 142-43). The strange encyclopedia serves as proof that Borges's conclusions about the impossibility of knowing the universe hold true worldwide.

Kushigian does not address the problem of the overlapping of a fantasy named "China" and an actual place which uses the same name (at least when naming itself to the West). To identify "China" as a suitable place to locate a "Chinese encyclopedia" implies that that space is unoccupied; Kushigian's denial of politics in Hispanic orientalism to the contrary, this seems parallel on a discursive level to the belief that "new" worlds are unused and awaiting productive colonists.

Octavio Paz is another of the authors cited by Kushigian in support of her characterization of Hispanic orientalism. Yet Paz is a better illustration of the tension in Spanish America between identifying with Asia in opposition to Europe and the United States on one hand, and speaking about the Orient from a Western perspective on the other. In the essay "Los hijos de la Malinche," from *El laberinto de la soledad*, for example, he compares Mexicans and other peoples who are the object of the European gaze:

> La sensación que causamos no es diversa a la que producen los orientales. También ellos, chinos, indostanos, o árabes, son herméticos e indescifrables. También ellos arrastran en andrajos un pasado todavía vivo. Hay un misterio mexicano como hay un misterio amarillo y uno negro. (Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* 59)

Here, Paz groups Mexicans together with people from the two—or three—Orients. The Middle East, India, and China are all one, and united with Mexico in terms of their marginality. Seen as living in a world where the past is present, Mexico as much as China is subject to the allochronism for which Rey Chow criticizes the West, and as with China, to European eyes, the contemporary Mexicans do not seem to live up to their past, which is now "en andrajos." The basis of the comparison is the fact that, like oriental countries (represented by people from the Middle East to China, and even Africa), Mexico is seen by Europe as "un país al margen de la Historia universal" (Paz, *Conjunciones y disyunciones* 59). Adding a "misterio . . . negro" to the list changes the passage from a simple identification of Mexico with the East to an evocation of the South as seen in contrast to a West or North which defines itself as universal. The reference to History as written by Europeans recalls Dussel's later efforts to rewrite that history. In other texts, however, Paz himself seems to speak for the West.

As an example, in *Conjunciones y disyunciones* it is Paz who gazes on India and, comparing it to European culture from the Middle Ages to the Reformation, describes the Asian civilization as stagnant. In contrast to the revolutionary changes between medieval Catholicism and the modern age, in India, "no hubo 'reconstitución' sino repetición, manierismo, autoimitación, y, al final, esclerosis" (Paz, *Conjunciones y disyunciones* 55). In other words, India, instead of developing, is living with remnants of its past. Paz completes the comparison with a diagram consisting of lines connecting stages of European and Indian art, as they respectively progress and degenerate. While this scheme places India in dialogue with the West, it is a dialogue constructed to explain Indian culture in terms of Europe.

It is clear, then, that there is more than a dialogue with the Asian Other in Spanish American orientalism. Through the historical, literary, and theoretical analyses above, I have tried to respond to a common question as to the validity and utility of even discussing orientalism in the Spanish American context, given that the power imbalances involved are so different from those with which Edward Said was concerned. A more detailed discussion of the role of orientalist images in Spanish American culture is beyond the scope of this article,**16** but in general I have found that such images reflect power dynamics at home rather than between that home and any part of the Orient.**17**

Notes

1 See Kushigian, whose objections I discuss below.

2 See many of the essays in López-Calvo, ed, *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond*.

3 I follow the custom of using "Orientalism" to refer to a particular literary and artistic movement and "orientalism" to refer more generally to representations of Asia.

4 On the influence of the Moors on Spanish culture, see Vogeley 9.

5 See Colón 319.

6 Dussel names six pillars: the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus Valley, the yellow River, Mesoamerica, and the Andes (133, see also 122-38).

7 In Fusang, Vargas Martínez gives a review of European and American debates over the location of Fusang and over possible Asian or Pacific origins of pre-Columbian American cultures (22-23). One interesting aspect of this survey is the changing position of the academics involved, from Europeans drawing connections between two exotic cultures to Spanish Americans aligning their cultures with the East in opposition to the West.

8 For an important analysis of this story's orientalist images specifically in relation to the commerce in oriental objects, see Tinajero, "Asian Representations" and *Orientalism en el modernismo hispanoamericano*.

9 On the Manila galleon and the slave trade see Luengo.

10 Writers of both Filipino history and Chinese-American history have found forefathers among the founders of Los Angeles, California. See Luengo 110 and Steiner 79-80.

11 Hu-DeHart provides a useful analysis of race and the introduction of Chinese laborers in Cuba.

12 For a study of Japanese immigrants in Latin America, see Masterson. For a review of research on Chinese and Japanese immigration to Peru as well as an analysis of the phenomenon of ethnic Japanese from Peru migrating to Japan, see Altamirano Rua 26-27 and 235-73.

13 In an example of a country depicted as both North and South, Francisco Orrego Vicuña argues that Chile can bring a more honest and less racist attitude to a "special relationship" with the Pacific Islands—but elides the special, colonial relationship Chile already has with Easter Island. Orrego Vicuña portrays Chile as part of the South in opposition to the United States and in alliance with the Pacific but also as part of the North in the sense of being just enough ahead of the Pacific in development to be in the position of giving advice (219-46).

14 Translation from Foucault, *The Order of Things* xvii.

15 Zhang gives a summary of the historical roots of the utopian view of China in French, British, and American attitudes from the seventeenth century on (116-27).

16 For an analysis of orientalist images in contemporary Mexican art in a historical and cultural context, see Gallo, "Mexican Orientalism." For historical, anthropological, and literary analyses of orientalism in a number of specific Latin American countries and texts, see López-Calvo, ed, *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond*.

17 See Locklin, "'Qué triste es ser mujer'" and "'Un país seductor y combativo.'"

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