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Orientalism and Identity in Latin America: Fashioning Self and Other from the (Post)Colonial Margin. Ed. Erik Camayd-Freixas. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2013.

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University of Arizona Press

This timely volume of essays, which analyzes the centuries-old encounter between Latin Americans and Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese cultures, adds to other recent collections that look at Orientalism in the Hispanic world. In this case, the focus is on the "the formation of Latin American constructs of the Other and the self, from colonial times to the present" (3). In the introduction to the volume, titled "The Orientalist Controversy and the Origins of Amerindian Culture," the editor, Erik Camayd-Freixas, provides an enlightening approach to Hispanic Orientalism that concomitantly provides coherence to the volume. Perhaps its most original contribution is his analysis from the perspective of the probable Asian origin of Amerindian peoples. As he points out, the connection between orientalization of both "degenerated" Asians and "primitive" Amerindians produces a continuum of exoticization and otherness. Camayd-Freixas also presents the traits that make Hispanic Orientalism different from that of other European countries. He then delves into the self-orientalization that characterizes some Latin American publications, including the Bolivian Alcides Arguedas's *Pueblo enfermo* (1909) and the Peruvian César Augusto Velarde's *Patología indolatina*. Next, the editor addresses the veneration of the Orient in Latin American literary *modernismo*, which, in his view, "departs from hegemonic paradigms to reconfigure the Orient in parallel with Latin America's own peripheral, uneven, and conflictive modernity" (8). Camayd-Freixas eventually comes to the conclusion that the orientalization of the Amerindian has been used as an ideological tool by Europeans, *criollos*, and mestizos at the expense of the first peoples themselves. He closes his

introduction with a study of Octavio Paz's appropriation of Asian philosophy and culture to understand his native Mexico: "Paz's poetic quest-to return to Asia in order to arrive at America through the time bridge of dualistic thought and ideographic writing--may be considered a culmination of Hispanic Orientalism" (16).

Brett Levinson opens the volume with the most theoretical of its essays, "The Death of the Critique of Eurocentrism: Latinamericanism as a Global Praxis/Poiesis," which was originally published in 1997. Focusing on the topics of truth, silence and objectivity, he explores the contradictions present in the Latinamericanist and de-orientalist critiques of Orientalism and Eurocentrism. In his view, the American academia's attempt to redeem the purportedly "silenced" voices in the Third World ends up reinforcing Western hegemonic concepts of truth and othering the objects of study. At the same time, it clings to a First World/Third World dichotomy that globalization has rendered obsolete: "De-orientalism stages the Other's metaphorical death or silence in order to save itself--a postcolonial discourse that perhaps should have been dissolved along with the Second World in 1989" (28). Levinson suggests that De-orientalism's exposing of the "truths" about the "Other" as well as the illusion of Western superiority is futile, as this is something that its readers likely already know as untrue. In Levinson's own words, "Latin American de-orientalism repeats Orientalism rather than critiquing it, because it ontologizes alterity and cultural difference" (21). Among the texts that he presents as examples of de-orientalism are Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* and Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*. Levinson ends his essay by warning that De-Orientalism runs the risk of taking advantage of the Other, instead of freeing him, by capitalizing on the academic and intellectual marketplace.

The second essay, Hernán G. H. Taboada's "The Mentality of the Reconquest and the Early Conquistadors," and the third, Christina Civantos's "Orientalism *Criollo* Style: Sarmiento's 'Other' and the Formation of an Argentine identity," concentrate on Arabic influences in Latin American during the colonial and independence periods. The first analyzes the Eurocentric ideological remnants of the Reconquest mentality during the Spanish Conquest of the Americas and, in particular, the association of Amerindians with Muslims that contributed to the negative orientalization of the former. Taboada provides numerous examples of analogies or identifications between Indians and Muslims made in texts by Columbus, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Motolinia, and others. In many cases, we learn, conquistadors compared their deeds to those of heroes of the Reconquest of Spain to imply that they deserved similar rewards. This Orientalist discourse, however, turned out to be ephemeral: Cortés, for instance, soon abandoned the term "mosque" to refer to Aztec edifications, calling them "temples" instead. In other cases, such as Las Casas's writings, the conquistadors are the ones compared to Moors. The Tlaxcaltecs and the Peruvian chronicler Guamán Poma de Ayala would likewise call Spaniards who mistreated them Jews and Moors. In the late seventeenth-century, the Moor disappears from the Latin American imaginary and is "transmogrified into the Oriental, not because of a new real presence but because of the new dimensions he had acquired in European discourse" (42).

Civantos's essay, taken from her 2006 *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab Immigrants, and the Writing of Identity*, looks at Sarmiento's *criollo* orientalism in his ambivalent comparison of Argentine gauchos with Bedouins. In particular, she studies what this comparison made in *Facundo: Civilization and Barbarism* and *Viajes por Europa, África y América 1845-1847* meant for Argentine self-identification. When Sarmiento attempts to find tools in French-dominated Algeria to "civilize" the gaucho, the Orient suddenly

acquires an important role in Argentine national identity. As Civantos points out, however, Sarmiento often identifies ambiguously with elements of barbarism, imitating and identifying with Bedouins in a typically Orientalist fashion. Thanks to these Orientalist moments of opposition and identification, he believes to have finally understood his gaucho other and self. In Civantos's words, "he uses the figure of the Arab as a graspable counterpart to the gaucho and as part of the translation, the crafting, of the Argentine" (59).

A second cluster of essays centers on Mexican Orientalism. Blake Seana Locklin's "Orientalism and Mexican Nationalism: Catarina de San Juan as the China Poblana's Asian Mother" studies the popular assimilation of the China Poblana costume and the Asian-born mystic Catarina de San Juan. Locklin studies this trajectory from loose woman to national symbol as well as the connections between Mexican independence, sexuality, and patriotism in portrayals of the China Poblana: "The equation of the China Poblana with Mexico will eventually lead to the sublimation of the China Poblana's sexuality into the more acceptable love of country" (66). She comes to the conclusion that "the changing roles of Catarina de San Juan reflect the dynamics of Mexican self-fashioning through the centuries" (62). As Locklin explains, the China Poblana ends up being embodied in her clothing, the standardized national costume. When Catarina de San Juan is linked to her through legend, the former becomes more sexualized and the latter from respectable. Ironically, Locklin adds, "the same type of *proyecto nacionalista* that adopts Catarina de San Juan as the foremother of the China Poblana excludes Chinese immigrants" (74). In other words, Chinese in Mexico never benefited from Catarina's fame as a virtuous and saintly woman.

In turn, Julia María Schiavone Camacho's "Journeys and Trials of the Fu Family: Transpacific Reverberations of the Anti-Chinese Movement in Mexico," which draws from her

2012 book *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960*, reveals the trial of Chinese immigrants during the 1930s anti-Chinese movement, focusing in particular on one Chinese Mexican family as a microcosm of its community. The essay begins with the story of Fu Gui, who migrated from Guangdong Province to Sonora around the turn of the century. He married a Mexican woman who would later die partly as a result of the stress produced by the viciousness of the anti-Chinese movement. Sonoran officials deported the widower and his seven young children to the U.S., where they were soon deported to Macau. Schiavone summarizes anti-Chinese campaigns and exclusionary policies in different Mexican states, especially in Sonora during the Mexican Revolution. As she explains, "anti-Chinese sentiment was neither widespread nor organized in Sonora until the revolutionary era" (82). Economic competition and anxiety over the gender imbalance (most Chinese were men) fueled these sentiments. The new discourse of *mestizaje* and the *indigenismo* of the revolutionaries never benefited blacks or Asians in Mexico. In fact, beginning in 1931, Sonora and Sinaloa carried out mass expulsions of Chinese until their population declined dramatically. Their Mexican wives were also considered Chinese refugees in the U.S. and deported to China, where they congregated in Portuguese Macau: "Mexican women would fall deeper into the interstices of the nation-state once they reached China, where in some cases Chinese men's previous marriages removed the possibility that local authorities would consider them Chinese citizens either" (87). President Lázaro Cárdenas began a repatriation program of these women, leaving their husbands behind. Schiavone ends the article by describing the Fu family's futile efforts to reunite in Mexico and by stating that "The anti-Chinese movement and its mass expulsions have yet to be assimilated into the Mexican national psyche" (91).

The third cluster of essays concentrates on Latin American Orientalist poetry. Ivan A. Schulman devotes his "Narrating Orientalisms in Spanish American Modernism," which was previously published in 2004, to the *Modernista* cult of the Orient during the years 1880 and 1930. He questions previous critical positions, claiming that this interest in the Orient should not only be conceived as an intertextual phenomenon but also as a social one, since Chinese and Japanese plastic arts were as influential in creating the Latin American Oriental discourse as literary texts: "the engendering sources of Modernist Orientalisms were the written word of literary texts and art criticism (principally French), paintings, and the decorative arts. And while exoticism stands out as the sharper of their discursive modalities, it should not be taken at face value" (105). Among the authors reviewed are José Martí, Efrén Rebolledo, Enrique Gómez Carrillo, Rubén Darío, Julio Herrera y Reissig, Julián del Casal, and José Juan Tablada.

Along these lines, Zoila Clark's "Enrique Gómez Carrillo's Japan and Latin American (Peripheral) Orientalism" revisits, from the perspective of Said's and Bhabha's theories, the Guatemalan *modernista* Enrique Gómez Carrillo's travel narratives about Japan *El alma japonesa* (1907) and *El Japón heroico y elegante* (1912). In her view, "these chronicles may have actually set out to prove that tradition had survived in Japan despite the rapid modernization it underwent during this early globalizing period. Latin American countries were at a similar juncture: trying to consolidate their postcolonial identity after independence, while at the same time finding themselves immersed in the mercantilist progress of the United States" (112). , Therefore, having beaten Russia at war, Japan is presented as a model that gives hope to Latin America. Gómez Carrillo's approach, argues Clark, is one of veneration and respect, rather than being hegemonic or imperialistic; the Guatemalan even identifies with the Japanese, calling them brothers.

The editor, Camayd-Freixas, also contributes to this section with an essay titled "The Tao of Mexican Poetry: Tablada, Villaurrutia, Paz," where he reveals Mexican avant-garde poets' use of Eastern thought and the Japanese haiku. He argues that "Underlying the *modernista* creed was a rejection of Western rationality" (120) and that their use of synesthesia is actually related to Eastern mysticism. In his late period, Tablada introduced and adapted the haikai into the Spanish language in a lighthearted way. Villaurrutia, instead, "internalized, digested, and transformed influences into a deeply personal style" (124), adopting the haikai in a more grave way and departing from the Japanese strict metrical form. And, as announced in the introduction, Paz used these forms of Eastern culture to reconstruct poetically the lost high culture of Mexican indigenous peoples. He tried to "construct modern Mexican sensibility as that 'other pole' of the Eastern world" (135).

The fourth cluster of essays examines the Chinese diaspora in Cuba and Panama. Rogelio Rodríguez Coronel's "The Dragon's Footprints along Cuban Narrative," originally published in Spanish in 2002, deals with the presence of the Chinese in Cuban literature and culture, addressing works by Severo Sarduy, Ramón Meza, Regino Pedroso, Wifredo Lam, José Martí, Hernández Catá, and Lezama Lima. In turn, Kathleen López's "Renace el sueño: Remaking Havana's Barrio Chino" analyzes the Cuban government's sponsorship of the rehabilitation of Havana's Chinatown and the annual festival of overseas Chinese, as it influences the formation of a Chinese Cuban identity. Unfortunately, she explains, these projects organized by "mixed" descendants of Chinese have left the aging native Chinese--who are actually commodified as part of the tourist circuit--as mere observers. López studies the history of Havana's barrio chino and of the revitalization project. Because it coincided with the government's efforts in promoting international tourism, it has been criticized in Cuba as being more of an economic than a cultural

enterprise. As to the Chinese descendents, López argues that "Even third-generation descendents of Chinese in Cuba have created imaginative ties to an ancestral homeland" (166). Some are taking advantage of the economic opportunities created by this project, and redefining themselves as a result. In contrast, native Chinese have only seen incidental economic benefit. In her own words, "While it has not attracted new Chinese immigrants, the revival has created economic and cultural pull factors to draw descendants who may have had little prior Chinese identity. It has also enabled connections between native Chinese and descendants" (169).

Margarita Vásquez studies, in "Of Chinese Dragons and Canaries on the Isthmus of Panama," the Chinese presence in Panamanian literature as well as Sino-Panamanian cultural production, focusing on the struggle to preserve a collective memory. Among the Panamanian novelists mentioned are Yolanda Camarano de Sucre, José Franco, Luis Pulido Ritter, and Juan David Morgan. Vásquez analyzes short stories by Rosa María Britton, Enrique Jaramillo Levi, and Rogelio Sinán. The essay also mentions Sino-Panamanian authors such as Raúl Wong, Carlos Francisco Changmarín, Antonio Wong, , Enrique Chuez, Carlos Wong, Lis Wong Vega, and Gloria Young, analyzing only works by Eustorgio Chong Ruiz and César Young Núñez.

The final group of essays explores Asian migration in contemporary South America. Debra Lee-Distefano's "Siu Kam Wen and the Subjectification of Chinese Peruvians in 'El tramo final'" provides an overview of Chinese migration to Peru and an analysis of Siu Kam Wen short story "El tramo final," which shows the transnational experience and the inner workings of Lima's Chinese and Tusán community, as just one example of the Asian Latin American experience. In Lee-Distefano's view, the author rewrites the Peruvian experience, representing an overlooked part of its society: "Siu displaces the focus away from the dominant culture, objectifying it, while subjectifying the characters" (197). Cristina Rocha's "Zen in Brazil:

Cannibalizing Oriental Flows," adapted from her 2006 book *Zen in Brazil: The Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity*, documents the reception of Japanese Zen Buddhism in Brazil in contrast with how Japanese Brazilians understand it. As Rocha explains, European (mostly Parisian) ideas of Orientalism, rather than the Japanese Brazilian community, were the ones that impacted the Brazilian cultural elite's understanding of Zen, Buddhism, and Japan. The reason for this paradox is that Japanese immigrants were not seen as legitimate carriers of this heritage: their manual labor carried a low social status and prestige. This is evident in the numerous French terms used in reviews of Japanese-themed operas. The haiku and zen were two of the most influential Japanese cultural forms in Brazil. Yet, although Japanese immigrants have written haikus from the inception of the immigration waves and often half of their local newspaper was devoted to poetry, the most visible Brazilian haiku writers are not of Japanese origin. Zen, which provided cultural capital and prestige to the Brazilian cultural elite, was also creolized. The article closes by pointing out that Zen is taught to new generations of Brazilians in a different way from how Nippo-Brazilians practice it. For instance, the latter no longer feel the need to sit on the floor; instead, they see devotion to ancestors as a priority. As Rocha points out, "This Western construct of Zen and Buddhism in general, which is strongly inflected by Orientalism, is so pervasive in the West that conflicts have sprung up in many Western countries between immigrants and converts on the issue of what constitutes authentic Buddhist practice" (214). Karen Tei Yamashita's "Writing and Memory: Images of the Japanese Diaspora in Brazil," which includes a second epilogue to her novel on Japanese immigration to Brazil *Brazil-Maru*, closes the volume with an autobiographical account of her interest in the Japanese presence in Brazil. The volume ends with the bibliography, notes about the contributors, and an index.

Overall, with a chronological organization from north to south, *Orientalism and Identity in Latin America: Fashioning Self and Other from the (Post)Colonial Margin* offers an excellent overview of the study of Orientalism in Latin America, including the study of works by Asian Latin Americans. Perhaps the only flaw is that several of the essays included were previously published elsewhere, some of them over a decade earlier, which has the inconvenient of missing the dialogue with recent scholarship on the same topics. In any case, it is undoubtedly a key volume to understand the development of studies on Latin American Orientalism and Asian Latin American cultural production in recent years.