One World Periphery Reads the Other
One World Periphery Reads the Other: Knowing the “Oriental” in the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula

Edited by

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To Juan Callejo
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INTRODUCTION

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In her study of the genealogical affinities between theory and cultural studies carried out in the first chapter of her Ethics after Idealism, literary and cultural critic Rey Chow presents the critique of Orientalism as one of the four main forms of analysis to have developed in cultural studies in the United States in recent years. As she posits, the controversial and seminal study Orientalism (1978) by the U.S.-based Palestinian literary and cultural critic Edward W. Said (1935-2003) does not offer viable alternatives:

Because the issue of otherness is delineated by Said on the premise of a racial dyad—namely, the white West as opposed to the non-white non-West—his logic seems to foreclose the possibility of the non-white non-West every having its own “culture.” Said’s work begs the question as to how otherness […] could become a genuine oppositional force and a useable value. (2)

Chow proposes to carry out alternative studies of the racism and sexism that appear—in a latent or overt form—in the stereotypical assumptions, misperceptions, and representations of cultural “others” present in cultural artifacts: “We need to explore alternative ways of thinking about cross-cultural exchange that exceed the pointed, polemical framework of ‘antiorientalism’—the lesson from Said’s work—by continually problematizing the presumption of stable identities and also by continuously asking what else there is to learn beyond destabilized identities themselves” (75).

This second interdisciplinary volume on (the critique of) orientalism and the Asian and Arab diasporas in the Americas and the Hispanic World, a follow-up to the first one, Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond (2007) addresses Chow’s question as well as several others: Can we speak about orientalist discourse when the exoticist gaze comes from formerly colonized countries? Can a text be considered orientalist if it exoticizes the other without an obvious idealization of self? Can we talk about Orientalism when dealing with non-eastern cultures and
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peoples? How can strategic self-orientalization be used for economic or political profit? Is the “Orient” still helping Europe and the Western Hemisphere to define themselves? From Latin America to the Philippines and from the Iberian Peninsula to the United States, these studies cover a wide range of geographical areas, topics, approaches, disciplines and genres, including literature, philosophy, music, film, painting, mass media, and advertising. As could be expected, several essays in this volume take Said’s *Orientalism* as a point of departure to examine the imaging of the Near and Far East in the Western world. Other essays, including mine, deal directly with cultural production by or about people of Asian or Arab descent in the Americas and the Hispanic world. Most of them, however, share a common interest in issues of assimilation, racism, migration, transnationalism, citizenship, exile, identity, transculturation, and hybridity (including musical hybridity, as we see in Kevin Fellezs’s and Marco Valesi’s essays). And non-Asian social groups can also be “orientalized,” as Carlos Bazua and Michael Barba argue in their essays on the representation of the ethnic Other in magazines, television programs, and films.

While it is true that in some cases, as Julia A. Kushigian posits, the orientalist discourse in the Hispanic literary tradition has been very different from the one described by Said (she cites the cases Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz and Severo Sarduy, and José I. Suárez, in this book, adds Lusophone authors José Maria Eça de Queirós and Fernando Pessoa), it is also true that the other type of orientalism—hegemonic, dehumanizing, prejudicial and racist—has also had a long tradition in these regions. Several of the essays included in *One World Periphery Reads the Other* attest to this other use of orientalism in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. This volume also addresses other types of orientalism as well as related approaches. A key concept, for instance, is self-orientalization, in its diverse filmic, literary, and musical expressions (as we can read in Valesi’s essay on the western exoticism of the Chinese musical group Twelve Girls Band). Along these lines, in both Valesi’s and Héctor Hoyos’s essays, we will see how Occidentalism—that is, the reverse phenomenon of the “Orient”’s othering, demonizing and inventing the Occident—also informs and redefines cultural exchanges and interpretations.

1 For additional cases, see, for example, the first volume, *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond*, my monograph *Imaging the Chinese in Cuban Literature and Culture*, or my forthcoming articles “Latin America and the Caribbean in a Sinophone Studies Reader?,” “Los japoneses en la obra de Mario Vargas Llosa,” and “Refugiados y Asalto al Paraíso” de Marcos Aguinis: apropiaciones y reapropiaciones del discurso palestino.”
Other studies, such as Fellezs’s, examine creolization, a process by which local cultures and ethnic minorities, even if they are in a subordinate position, can creatively assign different meanings and uses to commodities and cultural artifacts they import as a result of global interconnections. They can create “creolized,” hybrid products and identities by selecting and fusing heterogenous elements from the adopted and the receiving cultures. Another related concept re-visited in this book is “glocalization,” which argues that “universal,” globalized goods, ideas, norms, and practices can be interpreted or appropriated by local cultures in highly different ways, which may result in new, hybrid forms and cultures.

Considering today’s increasing global interdependence and consciousness, Michel Foucault’s theories about the connection between discourse and power and Said’s practical exploration of cultural hegemony and the way in which knowledge is produced—in spite of its many contradictions—continue to be relevant, as new intellectual developments, particularly in post-colonial studies, have drawn from their original ideas. This volume examines both the traditional and the new ways in which writers, intellectuals, philosophers (see Pilar Valero-Costa’s essay), painters (see María A. Castro’s study), filmmakers (see Barba’s and Moisés Park’s studies), musicians (see Fellezs’s and Valesi’s essays), and even advertising agencies (see Malgorzata Skorek’s essay) continue to relate to the Near and the Far East and their inhabitants, with which they may or may not have had direct contact, depending on each case. As we will see, in most texts references to these regions, as well as to local Chinatowns or other “ethnoburbs” (urban ethnic enclaves) do not reflect direct experience or knowledge, but have been mediated by idées reçues from previous readings. At times, texts and films that, in a cursory reading, seem to continue the Orientalist tradition of manipulative appropriation, exoticization, essentialism and reductionism, simply respond to a self-conscious and parodical play on superficial decodifications of clichés. In a closer reading, one can realize that these authors make clear, from the onset of the narrative, that this lighthearted defamiliarization, with all its essentialized caricatures and stereotypes about the “typically oriental” (the “fictive orientalism” in the title of Paula Park’s essay), have little or nothing to do with the real-life “Orient.” Rather than claiming to be to the product of Sinologist research, these representational practices approach the East from a ludic standpoint that disregards verisimilitude. In fact, they often echo a situated knowledge of “South-South” dynamics between formerly colonized peoples.

On the other hand, several essays study the authors’, filmmakers’, and musicians’ admiration and even emulation of Asian cultures: for example,
Juan Ryusuke Ishikawa analyzes José Juan Tablada’s use of *haikai*; Moisès Park studies the Chilean film’s *Kiltro*’s imitation of Hong Kong martial arts films; and Fellezs’s explores Fred Ho’s formation of an “Afro-Asian new American multicultural music.” In all these cultural borrowings, as well as in others, instead of romanticizing, fetishizing or exoticizing Asian cultural production (although it would not be too far-fetched to argue that they may be commodifying it), they simply incorporate, from a position of respect and sometimes even veneration, their impressive cultural achievements to their own local traditions. In my view, it would be absurd, for example, to argue that Tablada’s imitation of the Japanese *haikai* is a “hegemonic act of oppression”; on the contrary, it responds to a sincere will to understand (rather than control and manipulate) the “Oriental” Other or to a desire for “humanistic enlargement of horizons” (Said xix).

Other cultural artifacts under discussion also reflect an awareness of the effects of globalization. The transnational export and import of culture is, of course, affected by economic and political developments. Fear of cultural imperialism or a global monoculture (not only the so-called McDonaldization of the world but, increasingly, also of its Sinicization through global markets), be it justified or not,² drives expressions of social and racial anxiety at both local and global scales. The drive for cultural survival in the face of the rapid extinction of minority languages (and, in some cases, of cultures as well) informs the feelings of cultural shock, as well as of attraction and rejection for the Other. At times, this negotiation of cultural difference is eerily reminiscent of political scientist Samuel P. Huntington’s arguments in his much-criticized theory of the Clash of Civilizations; that is, that after the fall of communism, “civilizations” have replaced nations and ideologies as the driving force in today’s volatile global politics, and that cultural and religious identities will inevitably be the source of armed conflict in the future. Yet, as we see in Chapter 5, “Erasing the Arab Heritage in Spain,” similar fears as well as the strategy of misrepresenting, excluding, or even erasing the Other’s presence and historical legacy are certainly not new. On a more positive note, Chapter 6, “Adopting the Other’s Culture in Spanish Cultural Production,” shows how cultural flows coming from both sides can also be well received by both “Orientals” and Westerners, establishing a fruitful dialogue among (and hopefully, one day, an alliance of) civilizations.

² Contrary to common belief, Joana Breidenbach’s and Ina Zukrigl’s ethnographic work claims that, rather than homogenizing world cultures, globalization has had a diversifying effect.
While Said focused on the perceptions and stereotypes of the Near East “Oriental” in England, France and the United States, most of these essays study the decentering interplay between “peripheral” areas of the Third World, “semiperipheral” areas (Spain and Portugal since the second part of the seventeenth century), and marginalized social groups of the globe (Chicanos, African Americans, and Filipino Americans). We will see, for example, how China and the Far East in general are imagined and represented in Latin America and the Caribbean, or how ethnic minorities in the United States, such as Chicanos and African Americans, incorporate Filipino characters in their novels or creolize their music with Chinese influences. As the title of this book suggests, sometimes these “peripheral” areas and social groups talk back to the metropolitan centers of the former empires or look for their mediation, while others they avoid the interference of the First World or of hegemonic social groups altogether in order to address other “peripheral” peoples directly, thus creating rich “South-South” cross-cultural flows and exchanges. The main difference between the imperialistic orientalism studied by Said and this other type of global cultural interaction is that while, in their engagement with the “Orient,” they may be reproducing certain imperialistic fantasies and mental structures, typically there is not an ethnocentric process of self-idealization or an attempt to demonstrate cultural, ontological, or racial superiority in “South-South” intellectual and cultural exchanges. This way to de-center or to “provincialize” Europe—pace Dipesh Chakrabarty—disrupts the traditional center-periphery dichotomy, bringing about multiple and interchangeable centers and peripheries, whose cultures interact with one another without the mediation of the European and North American metropolitan centers. As Chakrabarty puts it, “European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought—which is now everybody’s heritage and which affects us all—may be renewed from and for the margins” (16).

Some of these essays, therefore, challenge the inevitable “centrality” of Europe, proposing new transmodern, intercultural paradigms. As Enrique Dussel explains, “The Eurocentric view reflects on the problem of the crisis of modernity solely with the European-North American moments (or now even Japanese), but it minimizes the periphery. To break through this ‘reductive fallacy’ is not easy” (17-18). The Eurocentric paradigm claims that the phenomenon of modernity is exclusively European; it developed, according to them, in the Middle Ages and then expanded to the rest of the world. Against this model, Dussel presents a planetary- or world-system
from which Europe, having been itself the periphery for centuries (the centers being in Bagdag, China, India and other civilizations), became the center at one point thanks to the incorporation of the American territories as their periphery. He proposes, therefore, a transmodern liberation that emerges from the periphery to transcend a Western modernity that he considers simply as a “rational management of the [Western] world-system” (19). Dussel argues for recouping what is redeemable in modernity, a “civilizing” system that has come to an end” (19), and halting “the practices of domination and exclusion in the world-system. It is a project of liberation of a periphery negated from the very beginning of modernity” (19). A good part of this book echoes this proposed encouragement of transmodern, inter-(semi)peripheral, and South-South cultural dialogues, which claim their own place beyond the traditional Western modernity that had excluded previously them.

The first section of the book focuses on this discourse of Orientalism as seen in Mexican cultural production as well as on description of the Maya in the U.S. mass media. In his first essay, Alán José proposes a guide to read Farabeuf o la crónica de un instante (1965), a short novel by the Mexican author Salvador Elizondo (1932-2006), which should provide the reader with the necessary clues to grasp its secret meanings, including the pleasures and horrors of hypnotic submission and a Chinese game with ivory balls, as well as the aesthetics of dismemberment and corporal deformation. This novel also offers, according to José, unrecognizable images of ourselves in forbidden fantasies, exotic monsters, the aesthetics of torture, and the magic of divination. Elizondo’s literary project, explains José, was to experiment with the creation of meaning by using non-logical inference and non-sequential narratives. With this goal in mind, he followed Eisenstein technique of montage, the structure of Chinese pictogrammatic signifying, and the fortune-telling rules of the I Ching, the Chinese book of mutations.

In turn, Ishikawa’s study illustrates how Mexican poet José Juan Tablada (1871-1945) molds the Japanese poetic subgenre of the haikai in order to create a new conception of the poem and to perceive his surrounding environment in a different way, always marked by Modernismo. Yet, Ishikawa explains, in his modification and adaptation of the haikai to a Western literary framework and to a different natural world, he never forgets the fundamentals and the minimalism of this centenary style. The study traces the gradual changes that Tablada adds to the haikai in three different collections of poems.

In the third essay, Roberto Cantú proposes a different reading of Blanco, one of the most experimental poems by Octavio Paz. He deploys
multiple sources and various methods (close reading, Structuralism, cultural studies) to locate the key this poem’s hermetic cultural codes. Generally associated with the poet’s residence in India while serving as Mexico’s ambassador in Delhi (1962-1968), *Blanco* has been read as the result of the poet’s studies of Tantrism, Buddhism, and other religious and cultural aspects of India’s ancient civilization. Cantú considers this poem to be more complex and inclusive of other civilizations, thus best understood in the context of Paz’s own reflections on twentieth century avant-gardes, such as Cubism and Surrealism, art movements which Paz unified under one name: Simultaneism. Searching for the meaning of Simultaneism and modernity as found in Paz’s writings, Cantú applies his findings to a reading of *Blanco*, finding in art history and Mesoamerican civilization the other elements that make *Blanco* intelligible as a poem next to India’s ancient past. No less important, he raises a question often neglected by critics: the historical conditions in the 1960s that remain implicit in the writing of this poem.

Closing the first chapter, Bazúa argues that the Orientalization of the Maya people has been a constant activity of western intellectuals and mass media. This Orientalization, a way of studying and representing those who were colonized, has imposed a hierarchy of representation and ownership of geographical territory. More specifically, Bazúa analyzes the National Geographic’s misrepresentation and Orientalization of the Maya: they have chose to romanticize and highlight the Maya’s ancient and mysterious glories, while disregarding the most urgent human rights violations committed against these diverse populations. As the critic points out, the National Geographic refuses to acknowledge how millions of Maya people are considered either second-class citizens in their own nations (Mexico and Guatemala) or leveled as illegal aliens in the United States.

The second chapter explores prose, poetry, and testimonials produced by Peruvian authors of Chinese or Japanese descent. First, Debra Lee-DiStefano’s essay focuses on a short story collection by Sino-Peruvian author Siu Kam Wen (1951-) entitled *El tramo final*. In her view, this book, which has the barrio chino as the unifying connector, is a great example of how Latin American writers of Asian descent are offering their distinct visions of the societies in which they live. Against the background of a city of Lima that is described from the perspective of Chinese Peruvians from different generations, the stories explore different identitarian issues and interpersonal relationships not only among members of Lima’s Chinatown but also between Chinese or Sino-Peruvian characters and the rest of society. More specifically, Lee-DiStefano
analyzes the nature/nurture debate in the story “La conversión de Uei Kong.” The main character, Tío Keng, is plagued by his own prejudice against the kuei (or non-Chinese) and their phenotype. Lee-DiStefano unravels the various levels of identity issues in this short-story and how it also portrays the complexities of Latin American identity.

Moving from the Chinese community in Peru to the Japanese one, Rebecca Riger Tsurumi studies images of the Japanese in the works of two Peruvian Nisei poets: José Watanabe and Doris Moromisato. According to Tsurumi, their poetry reflects their own unique experiences as first generation Peruvians struggling with the complexities of identity and assimilation. She explores the commonality of their expression and the divergence of their poetic voices, reflecting differences in gender, age and sexual orientation in Elogio del Refrenamiento, La piedra alada, Chambala era un camino, Diario de la mujer es ponja, and several essays.

Still in the realm of the Japanese Peruvian community, in my essay I analyze Seiichi Higashide (1909-1997)’s remarkable testimonial Adiós to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps (2000) (Namida no Adiósu, 1981), which adds a new page to the history of the Japanese diaspora, and to the sad episode of the deportation of Latin American residents and citizens to U.S. concentration camps with the purpose of using them as pawns for the exchange of prisoners of war with the Japanese Empire during World War II. At the same time, this text reveals additional nuances to the historical notion of citizenship in Peru and the rest of Latin America. It is also crucial to understand how an outside influence (in this case American anti-Japanese agitators) successfully overturned Peruvian officials’ widespread support for the Axis powers, and turned mainstream population against their Japanese neighbors, including those naturalized Peruvian or born in Peru. Cultural prejudice together with economic competition and wartime anxiety had become the perfect culture medium for the birth of anti-Japanese hysteria. As we will see, even though the cosmopolitanism of “flexible citizenship” can be socially and economically rewarding in times of peace, Higashide’s testimony shows its structural limits, dangers, and personal costs during wartime, regardless of how much hard-earned cultural capital and social prestige have been accumulated as a strategy of flexible positioning.

After dealing with orientalism in Mexico and Peru, the third chapter includes two essays that still deal with Latin American literature, but concentrating on fictive and parodical orientalisms: one on the novel De donde son los cantantes, by Cuban author Severo Sarduy, and the other focusing on novels by the Colombian Santiago Gamboa, and by the Argentines César Aira and Ariel Magnus, Hoyos presents a comparative
study of three contemporary novels by these three Latin American authors that reflect the changing ways in which Latin Americans conceive of China in a time of globalization. By examining how ideology shapes narrative structures in these works, Hoyos analyzes visions of Sino-Latin American relations that express anxiety about the implications of global transformation through the use of exoticism and comedy. As Hoyos states, “Chinese products may have become ubiquitous in Latin American markets—or have “flooded” them, as a frequent metaphor goes—but China remains by and large an invisible, underrepresented culture in Latin America. Fictionalizations of Sino-Latin American relations have something of dealing with repressed dreams, perhaps nightmares.”

Switching to the Caribbean basin, Paula Park analyzes Severo Sarduy (1937-1993)’s constantly playful imprecision when dealing with real Oriental referents in De donde son los cantantes (1967). In his quest for the Orient, argues Park, the West is absorbed. In the novel, a blond Spanish military man becomes obsessed with Flor de Loto, an idealized transvestite Chinese opera singer. After “her” show, he waits outside her changing room but he can never see her because, without her make-up, she walks out as an unattractive male Chinese man. In spite of his failures, the General still wants to “conquer” and possess her, so he sends her a sinister gift (a bracelet with miniature blades) to at least see her dead body. Nevertheless, before his plan is executed, the chapter ends. The author shapes a textual stage in which an imprecise notion of void manages to expand and escape infinitely, unreadable and unperceivable as it is.

Moving on from Hispanophone to Lusophone Orientalisms, the two studies in the fourth chapter look at the Arab heritage in the works by Brazilian Raduan Nassar and at a different type of orientalism in the works of Portuguese authors Eça de Queirós and Fernando Pessoa. First, José I. Suárez argues that, although Edward Said was perhaps accurate in his observations regarding Orientalism in French and English literature, he missed the mark when he included Portugal among colonial powers whose literature reflects this bias. He examines two novels by José Maria Eça de Queiroz, The Mandarin (1880) and The Relic (1887), as well as two poems by Álvaro de Campos, Fernando Pessoa’s heteronym: “Opium Eater” and “Ode (an excerpt).” According to Suárez, these Portuguese writers were unprejudiced against the East, even though they included in their works the themes of colonialism and modernity in the Orient, and topics such as Eastern religions, the Holy Land, opium, and mandarins. They developed these themes, he argues, in a sympathetic light, one that today would be categorized as culturally diverse.
From Portugal, the second essay of the fourth chapter turns to Brazilian literature. Lizbeth Souza-Fuertes studies the orientalist component in the works of Raduan Nassar, heir of a rich Arab cultural tradition that he incorporated into his novel, *Lavoura Arcaica (To the Left of the Father, 1975)*. This Middle Eastern legacy is clearly reflected in the lyricism that permeates the narration, the insertion of descriptions that originate in *The Arabian Nights*, the power of reminiscence, and the predominant role that religion, the erotic, and sensuality play in the novel. Incorporating traditional values and customs within modern times, argues Souza-Fuertes, it contributes to define the complex world of interrelationships between characters, the family, religious and cultural conflicts, and the difficulties that emerge.

Arab heritage is again studied in the fifth chapter, albeit this time it is its erasure from Spanish history that is addressed. Thus, Camila Pastor explores the possibility of imagining the Spanish language as a vehicle for the *Thousand and one Nights* as a living narrative tradition, a genre with both textual and oral variants. She argues that the invention of the *Nights* as a single artifact is an eighteenth-century Western European phenomenon later imported back into the Arab East. French Orientalist Antoine Galland’s translation and subsequent ones can be read as the realignment and inscription of the tradition within the crucial modern binaries of religious/secular, East/West, and textual/oral. Following Slyomovics’s conceptualization of the oral performance of stories from the *Nights*, Pastor maintains that the Iberian history of the *Nights* can be re-scripted once we recognize them, rather than as a single text that needs to be reconstructed and authenticated, as an oral-textual discursive tradition, a genre of verbal art. She proposes the reconstruction of the historic elasticity of the various boundaries according to which the Nights have been codified and of the various discursive universes they have traversed in their thousand years of textual circulation.

Along the same lines, Nicolás Alemán reminds us about how after the expulsions of Moors and Jews from Spain in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, official national histories tried to erase their cultural heritage. However, argues Alemán, two passages from *Don Quixote* echo the fact the Church and the monarchy acted against the people’s will in their religious and political decisions. The first scene takes place in chapter 54 of the second part of *Don Quixote*, when Sancho Panza encounters his Moorish neighbor and friend Ricote. The second passage deals with “The Story of the Captive” in chapters 38 through 42 of the first part of the novel, which reflects the author’s own experience as a captive in Algiers. The captive in the novel is a new Christian and son of
converted Jews, who is married, or about to marry, a Muslim woman, also about to become a new converted Christian. By mixing the three ethnicities (Christian, Jewish, Moorish) in the character of the captive, the author is questioning the authenticity of the “Pure blood” decree. Implicit is also the criticism to the myth that Spain was founded by only one social and religious group.

And closing this exclusion of the Arab/Muslim past in Spain, María Castro demonstrates how Francisco Pradilla’s historical paintings La rendición de Granada (1882) and El suspiro del moro (1892) present a dualistic and compelling image that celebrates the triumph of Christian self-affirmation, power, and control over Muslim defeat, sadness, and loss. She argues that this Orientalist approach glorifies the will to dominate non-Christian peoples and emphasizes the spatial and psychological separation between Islam and the Christian West, thus signaling Pradilla’s lack of understanding, knowledge, and respect for the non-Christian “Other.” The deliberate expression of failure and displacement of the Muslim group depicted in the paintings attests to an Orientalist vision that victimizes “other peoples” as a way to gain power and superiority for the triumphant group. La Rendición de Granada and El Suspiro del Moro, claims Castro-Sethness, represent an artistic model characterized by denial of coexistence, compassion, and understanding.

Still in the sphere of Spanish cultural production, but now going from exclusion to inclusion and dialogue, in Chapter 6 we have two essays that consider Sufi influences in the philosophy of María Zambrano and the topic of transculturation in Don Quixote. Both reflect the adoption of the Other’s culture or voluntary acculturation. Valero-Acosta analyzes María Zambrano’s Los bienaventurados (1990) y Los sueños y el tiempo (1998) from the perspective of the symbology of Light and the way, among others, using the teachings of the Sufi mystic Ibn Arab and a spiral movement that goes, beyond philosophical thought, from the outside to the inside. The result, argues Valero-Acosta, is a crossing of lights in which Oriental consciousness enlightens the roots of Western thinking. Zambrano, explains the critic, proposes rescuing what she calls a “poetic reason” or “philosophy of light,” which will help Western reason (blinded since Descartes’s times) recover the right path. As to Juan de Castro’s essay, it looks at an example of acculturation in “The Captive’s Tale,” one of the interpolated tales in Miguel de Cervantes’s Don Quixote. Narrating the conversion to Catholicism and escape to Spain of Zoraida, a young Moorish woman, this fragment from Don Quixote would seem to illustrate José María Arguedas’s version of acculturation. However, on closer examination, it is possible to read Cervantes’s text as problematizing
acculturation understood exclusively as cultural substitution, as well as contemporary notions of hybridity as necessarily subversive.

Two of the essays in the seventh chapter deal with Filipinos in the United States and the Philippines and the third one, with the portrayal of Asian Americans in U.S. magazine advertisements. In the first one, Stephanie Fetta analyzes the politics of a Chicano novelist writing the Filipino into the Chicano cultural imaginary in Alfredo Véa’s *The Silver Cloud Café*. Common labor conditions provide a framework that legitimates Véa’s presentation of the Filipino, but a shared sense of humanity is wrought through mutual subjugation to his notion of racialized brownness. In assuming this conceptual cultural authority, Véa articulates Filipinoness by employing thematic and literary strategies of the body, cultural ritual, and language. These strategies succeed in voicing subaltern knowledge, while at other times they seem complicit with marginalizing discourses. This politic of discernment and commonality, argues Fetta, makes an incursion into the discourse of multiculturalism but from the perspective of anOther, a Chicano writer, writing anOther, a Filipino. *The Silver Cloud Café* corrects the historical frame by remembering the Filipino presence and struggle alongside the bracero, but demonstrates a complex engagement with multiculturalism that both broadens the space of receptivity and contracts the complexity of Filipinoness into melancholic exoticism.

Going back in time, Roberto Fuertes explores the cultural configuration of the Philippines during the first century of Spanish colonization, which was based on the political structures and cultural experiences that Spaniards had already had in Latin America. As Fuertes explains, although the Philippines were of great strategic importance to the Spanish Crown—both Charles III and Phillip II made them their base of expansion towards the East—, the reality is that the cultural center of gravity continued to rotate around Latin America. Since there was no direct control of the viceroy, almost all cultural institutions were left in the hands of the religious orders, which created a unique system, different from the one in Latin America. This project would soon obtain full autonomy, beginning with the predominant role of the Catholic Church, not only in the structural and cultural design, but also in the colonization *per se* of a territory defined by its geographical uniqueness, racial complexity, variety of previous cultural influences before the Spanish conquest: indigenous religious practices mixed with Islam and a commercial relationship with neighboring countries, especially Siam, the Moluccas, the Malaysian peninsula, Borneo, Java, and Sumatra had already been well-established.
Blai Guarné studies the Orientalist imaginary in the representation of Japan. Its implications, he explains, run deep in the stereotypical characterization of Japan as well as in the modern recognition of the very idea of the West. Guarné’s essay considers that image through the genealogical analysis of the oxymoronic narrative as a discursive formation involved in the imaginary construction of Japan, in and out of its frontiers. He considers the historical conformation of this narrative, considering especially its prefigurement in the early Jesuit chronicle and its modern resignification in the Nihonjinron or Nihonbunkaron (“discourse on the Japanese and on Japanese culture”) thought, as a representational practice that turns Japan into a dialogic Other of the West.

Within the field of advertising, Malgorzata Skorek investigates whether the “model minority” stereotype of Asian Americans is reflected in U.S. magazine advertisements and discusses the potential consequences of its presence for both the Asian minority itself and the broader public. Her analysis of 620 advertisements from five different American magazines published between 2006 and 2007 shows that certain aspects of the “model minority” stereotype were indeed present in advertising. Asian Americans were over-represented in magazines focusing on business, science and technology, and personal and office electronics. Asian models were most often found in decorative roles although every fifth ad featured an Asian model in a working role (twice as often as models of other races). Moreover, Skorek found that the majority of Asian models were gazing away from the camera and that they do not have a user function in the ads but are rather shown in a symbolic association with the product.

There are several harmful effects associated with this reinforcement of the “model minority” stereotype. Following the expectancy theory, for example, several individuals may experience heavy pressure to excel at math and sciences, and failure to fulfill this expectation may lead to lower self-esteem or increased anxiety. At the same time, it may lead the broader public to accept the stereotype as a reality and exert even more pressure on the Asian minority.

The last two chapters concentrate on music and film. Chapter 7 includes two essays, one dealing with Fred Ho’s articulation of a “popular avant-guard” and the other one with the self-orientalization of the Twelve Girls Band, and the last chapter explores orientalism in Star Trek Deep Space Nine and second-hand in the Chilean martial arts film Kiltro. Fellezs’s essay focuses on composer Fred Ho’s articulation of a “popular avant-garde” as a critical aesthetic stance. Ho’s work engages a wide variety of musical traditions—jazz, rhythm-and-blues, funk, Chinese opera, samurai film soundtracks—creating a rich mélange he describes as “Afro
Asian new American multicultural music.” Understanding his own work as operating within a tradition he terms the “popular avant-garde,” Ho argues that his use of popular culture elements is both aesthetic strategy and political advocacy. Binding his sense of a popular avant-garde to his iteration of an Afro Asian new American multicultural music, explains Fellezs, Ho’s creative works demonstrate the inherent power of subaltern cultural production despite its marginalization, occlusion, and/or defamation by dominant cultural hierarchies by voicing truth to power.

Moving on now from the United States to China, Marco Valesi’s study offers an historical overview of the hybridization process between Western and Chinese musical traditions and elaborates on the relation between trans-modern and commercial music, focusing on 12 Girls Band and analyzing a questionnaire about this musical group. Recruited from China’s major music conservatories and trained to play traditional Chinese instruments, the band—backed up by Western artists—mixes Chinese and Western music, traditional and contemporary sensations, and ethnic and pop features. Thanks to a process of self-orientalization, they have become one of the most successful international Chinese popular music groups. Valesi emphasizes the concept of commercial appropriation and distribution of a cultural identity through a process of selection, invention, and utilization of traditions. He also explores what it means today to juxtapose Asian and Western notions of popularity, sexiness, and world music. Tied up with these notions are issues of national and cultural identity. Drawing on Said’s, Bhabha’s and Canclini’s perceptions of Orientalism and colonialism, he demonstrates that 12 Girls Band incorporates images of otherness, foreign aesthetic, commercial and musical standards, simultaneously feeding Western interest for the exotic and pan-Asian request of global acceptation. He shows how vulgar processes of music commercialization the provoke a decline of traditional music because of its relegation from central ritual and social functions to an entertainment for a global public or a touristic celebration of the past.

Closing the book, we have the studies on Orientalism in film by Barba and Moisés Park. Barba’s essay argues that while the mission of Star Trek was to portray a future in which a peaceful Earth has done away with problems of racism, Star Trek often perpetuated the Western idea of the creation of the Other, specifically in its treatment of alien races. In 1993, Star Trek introduced Deep Space Nine, thematically the most ambitious of the Star Trek series, which broke ground for the series by challenging accepted notions of equality within the constructed Star Trek Universe. The series presented a complex view of the Other, which simultaneously
reinforced traditional Western ideals and orientalized alien cultures, while challenging and resisting the accepted construct of the Other.

Moisés Park closes the volume with his analysis of Kiltro, the pioneering Chilean martial arts film featuring Palestinian and Korean characters. The paper recognizes and evaluates several seemingly Orientalist aspects such as the exoticism of the scenography, the casting of actors with physical Asian features, the sexuality of women and the portrayal of violent characters of Arab and Korean heritage. The Orientalist aspects of the film are not political in the sense that it does not perpetuate stereotypes that demean Eastern cultures, as Edward Said points out in his book Orientalism. In fact, the purpose of representing the Orient is characterized by its frequent references to other martial arts films, Hollywood action films, Japanese pop culture and kitsch cult films. Although this film fails to break any stereotypes and does not portray a realistic view of the Arab and Korean community in Chile, the purpose of the making this film are exclusively commercial and burlesque. This film is second-hand Orientalism since the film represents an already represented Orient, rather than distorting a direct view of the Orient. The imaged Orient in Kiltro, therefore, is merely an imitation and/or a parody of other imagined representations and self-representations of the Orient by other films. Several questions still remain concerning the justification of Orientalist representations for the sake of entertainment, in the form of martial arts comedy. While this kind of misrepresentation could have an anti-Orientalist effect to those spectators who understand the manifest exaggeration, the parody and the mocking homage, the ignorance of these references could result in a perpetuation of Orientalist schemes, unintentionally demeaning the representation of Arabs and Koreans in Chile.

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CHAPTER ONE

MEXICAN ORIENTALISMS
**WHY YOU CANNOT READ FARABEUF: ELIZONDO AND ORIENTALISM**

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*Farabeuf or the Chronic of an Instant* (1965) is an important text that ensured Salvador Elizondo’s place in the pantheon of Spanish-language literature.1 Because of textual complexities and unsettling imagery, this work defies easy interpretation. Aside from shocking bourgeois sensibility—épater les bourgeois—Salvador Elizondo’s project was to experiment with the making of meaning out of non-logical inference and non-sequential narratives. It is impossible to read, because it has to be played, and it is impossible to be played because the game it proposes has but one outcome in which the audience is an accomplice to a disturbing crime and in which you—whom the narrative voice addresses—die and fall into oblivion while struggling to discern signs from meaningless scribbles.

Romero argues, from a postcolonial perspective, that Elizondo is one of the major orientalists in the Hispanic tradition, together with Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz and Severo Sarduy, the figures on which Julia Kushigian focuses her book *Orientalism in the Hispanic Tradition* (1991). Romero essentially agrees with Kushigian’s argument that, in contrast with Anglo-French Orientalism, Hispanic Orientalism “Reflects not so much a political posture toward the Orient rendered in innumerable oppositional structures but is, rather, a more thoughtful approach that values a dialogue of discourses, reflecting an antithetical denial of, and openness to the Other.” (10). For Romero, *Farabeuf* is a reaction against the idea of nationalism sought by the Mexican School of Arts. In his view, Elizondo establishes a dialogue between the spectacle of pre-Columbian sacrifices to Huitzilopochtli and Chinese death by dismemberment, the *Leng t’chê*. “Clearly,” he says “America first appeared to the European imagination as Asian.” He then proceeds to quote from Richard

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1 I would like to thank Ignacio López-Calvo for his careful reading and edition, which made this a better essay.
Rodriguez: “The Indian is forever implicated in the roundness of the world. America was the false India, the mistaken India, and yet veritable India, for all that—India—the clasp, the coupling mystery at the end of the quest” (7). “After all,” Romero concludes, “America was but a joke that the Orient pulled on Europeans. America was their Madame Butterfly” (1998: 39).

Romero’s metaphor is memorable although not completely on point. In partial support to his reading, one could recall that Salvador Elizondo first explored the possibility of being a painter. He joined the workshop of Jesús Guerrero Galván, from whose Mexican-School influence he repeatedly struggled to escape, according to his personal diary, which his wife Paulina has recently started publishing in the Mexican magazine *Letras Libres*. Although I would suggest a different name altogether for the “Hispanic representation of the East,” I would essentially agree with Romero too in that Kushigan’s argument for the distinction of American and European Orientalism, has significant explanatory power both inter- and intra-nationally, and in that other writers should be added to her list, José Juan Tablada being perhaps the most striking but not the only example. It is unfortunate, however, that Romero’s idea of “a dialogue between Mexico and China that goes through France,” appealing as it sounds, is difficult to substantiate in his thesis. In Farabeuf, there is clearly a dialogue involving France and China, but no mention of Huitzilopochtli or indigenous individuals, a central omission that Romero explains as Elizondo’s reaction against the Mexican School of Arts, and that he goes around by quoting from Richard Rodriguez, a different writer.

Mexican sources in Farabeuf are very subtle. Consider for example the description of the peculiar demeanor of the first known Mexican serial killer, Gregorio Cárdenas—a.k.a. “The monster,” as recounted by Alfonso Quiroz Cuarón, the doctor and criminologist in charge of him: “[Gregorio Cárdenas walked] very slowly, hesitantly, and dragging his feet in small

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2 The murders committed by Gregorio Cárdenas (1915-1999) took place from August 15 to September 2, 1942. They were widely covered by the Mexican press, especially in the 1940s when they were committed and in the 1960s and 1970s, when the process of his reformation occurred. Cárdenas, a chemistry student, avid reader of poetry, music lover, piano player, painter, and director of a literary magazine, is a unique serial killer who, after conviction, managed to study law and medicine in order to achieve “ideal reformation” and be pardoned by a president. He would go on to publish four books, participate in a play about his murders, and inspire a dozen novels and movies. He also tried to copyright his crimes in order to receive royalties. Since Cárdenas became a media phenomenon, it is improbable that Elizondo missed this information.
steps.” Now consider Farabeuf’s characteristic form of walking: “We had anticipated his hesitant wandering along the street of the École de Médecine” (78); “Farabeuf’s footsteps on the stairs, slowly dragging his feet on the landings” (1); “the dry sound of his little orthopedic boots on the steps of the deserted stairs” (5). It is unlikely that the similarities are coincidental; yet Elizondo never mentions Cárdenas by name. The reason might be, as Romero suggests, Elizondo’s reaction against the Mexican School; but also, I argue, that Cárdenas’s criminal activity and pre-Columbian sacrifices simply falls outside the short and accidental meeting between a modern Western photographic camera and an obsolete Eastern punishment at the turn of the twentieth century, the chronotope of Farabeuf.

If Mexican sources are mediated or diluted, Farabeuf presents us instead with four conspicuous systems of assemblage, both aesthetic and philosophic, which are closely related to its set timeframe: James Joyce’s superimposition of classical and modern mythologies; Pound’s imagist proposal of Chinese pictogrammatic signifying as a medium for poetry; Eisenstein’s formalist technique of montage; and the numerological grammar of divination of the Chinese Yi King or Book of Changes. Elizondo uses these different perspectives to glance over six Chinese elements: Lo Shu magic square, the ideogram liù (六), an ivory puzzle ball, the hexogram kuai, a pillow book, and a photograph of a Chinese execution by dismemberment, the leng t’ché.

Farabeuf and the West

Like Joyce’s Ulysses (1918-1920), Farabeuf is a kaleidoscopic text with an extremely formal, schematic structure deeply rooted in classic mythology (Greek for Joyce, Chinese for Elizondo). In sharp contrast with the relatively simple sequence of events, its textuality displays a panoply of techniques (from stream of consciousness to profuse allusions and metatext from other works) in order to convey an obsessive focus on detail. An experiment in pure écriture—typical of the decade in which it

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3 “[Gregorio Cárdenas caminaba] con mucha lentitud, en forma titubeante y arrastrando los pies en pequeños pasos” (27). The report on Cárdenas’s mental condition that lead to his transfer from a jail to a mental institution in 1943 is included in the latter’s anthology and memoir.

4 “Habíamos presentido su paso vacilante a lo largo de la rue de l’École de Médecine” (78); “Los pasos de Farabeuf subiendo la escalera, arrastrando lentamente los pies en los descansos” (1); “el sonido árido de sus anticuados botines ortopédicos sobre los peldaños de la escalera desierta” (5).
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Elizondo was intrigued by Pound’s rendition of the works of Ernest Fenollosa—which he translated into Spanish—and influenced by the “Idenogrammic Method,” according to which poetry can deal with abstract content through the superimposition of concrete images. Pound suggested that this “philology” explained the historical formation of Chinese characters. In Elizondo’s interpretation, the simultaneous perception of two or more concrete signs would produce a specific metaphor and a particular sensation that would prevail as long as both signs remained in sight or were remembered. Farabeuf seeks to pinpoint the maximum extension of time that a vision or memory can persist in the human mind. He also explores the universe of possible metaphors that could be formed out of a limited number of concrete signs. In this sense, Farabeuf constitutes a literary language.

Elizondo used a trope he observed in Pound and combined it with Pascal’s metaphor of men as funambulists suspended across two abysses, the infinite and the infinitesimal. With them in mind, he perfected a textual technique that would simulate the cinematic effects produced by varying depth of field. According to Elizondo, Pound intentionally modified dates or introduced variations in his quotes to send scholars off into labyrinthine disquisitions, while keeping non-academic readers focused in the poetic core of his texts. Elizondo’s objective was not to throw off academic readers—although that might have been a collateral consequence—but rather to control what I have referred to as “textual depth of field.” Elizondo introduces blur in details or distortions in narrative logic, to control how much the background, mid-ground, and foreground are rendered in “acceptable focus” for the reader to make sense out of it. Since Elizondo applies this technique throughout the whole text, examples are profuse: the name of Farabeuf is H.L. Farabeuf instead of L.H. Farabeuf; Fou Chou Li was executed on April 10, 1905, and not on January 29 1901, etc. By distorting details Elizondo discourages the reader from trying to read “too closely” and encourages him or her to go beyond the textual depth in which the literary occurs. By keeping the reader constantly “at literary distance,” Elizondo reminds us to continuously question what we accept as reality, hence, through a simple enthymeme, he shows that our perception is a construct that can be altered.

As one reads and interprets Farabeuf, it is crucial to keep in mind Elizondo’s omniscient recourse to textual depth of field to avoid over-interpreting or projecting personal idiosyncrasies where there is intentional
blur. Variations in textual depth of field are not mere imprecision. Elizondo goes great lengths to caricature the inaccuracies of European texts at the turn of the twentieth century, because for him it is in the typographic error, in the mistake, in the unusual and abnormal where individuality, and thus identity, lie: “We are a typographic error that has gone unnoticed and that makes a text that would otherwise be very clear, confusing; the interchange of the lines in a text that makes us become alive in a prodigious way.” Alterations happen at all levels and go through cycles of what Baudrillard has termed “simulacra” to signify, dissimulate, and simulate: a Chinese execution becomes its photographic representation; then a staged surgery in an amphitheater; then an erotic encounter or abortion in the room of a French hotel; and finally the caricature of a doctor-magician in a Chinese robe presenting a freak-show. Elizondo’s manipulation of textual depth of field brings to central stage the limits or cuts necessary for human perception to signify simulacra. The technique, together with montage, persistence of vision, and suture is a surgical metaphor to describe, in medical terms, the cinematic illusion of reality.

The phenomenon called “positive after images” by psychologists, and “retinal persistence of vision” by film critics, was advanced as a commonsense explanation of the perception of motion in film at the turn of the twentieth century, since it allows one image-frame to “bleed” into another. Psychologists observed that when a person stares at lights, and these are turned off, he or she could still see their color and brightness relations. Elizondo equates the imprint of light in the eye, with terror in the memory of the spectator.7

Elizondo was also familiar with Alexandre Astruc’s concept of camerastyl, but in Farabeuf the pen is not only a camera but also a scalpel with which the writer/doctor/ psychoanalyst/executioner/Dom practices a vivisection over the body of the reader/page/victim/sub. Farabeuf is, in this sense, a pillow book, a more or less permanent calligraphy imprinted on a human body. The “écriture” represents the public-arena/operation-room/amphitheater/hotel where an intervention/torture/ritual/power-transfer/erotic-scene is to be performed. The camera/style/scalpel makes surgical cuts that leave traces of blood/ink over the paper/body, and discover the entrails of the subject for the reader/medical-student/audience to learn and marvel in horror.

Farabeuf’s series of impressive and horrific stills constitute a spectacle inside a box camera. Nine times you enter the dark chamber or camera obscura, and nine times the shutter cuts the light flow of your life to preserve an image imprinted in a photographic silver plate, inverting opposites: light into shadow, pain into pleasure, Yang into Yin. Elizondo conducts the experiment to test two claims: first, Georges Bataille’s notion of orgasm as “la petite mort,” an instant infinite in ecstatic and aesthetic rapture; and second, Roland Barthes’s observation that eroticism is a spectacle produced through successive interruptions of our gaze over an object of desire: “We form part of a spectacle of recreational magic. […]”

5 Manipulation of textual depth of field differs from a Verfremdungseffekt. While the latter refuses Aristotelian categories such as empathy, anagorisis, catharsis, and re-establishment of nomos, the use of “you” throughout Farabeuf is aimed at constructing empathy of horror and disgust. Catharsis exists in the form of death, death of the victim, of the text, of the experience of the reader and thus of the reader himself that ceases to be a reader in the moment he stops reading the book. Finally, the text in its entirety recounts a prolonged anagorisis in which the character named “you” recognizes that you are vivised and dying, and the reader recognizes himself in awe and terror either in you the victim or in the narrative voice of the victimizer.

6 “Somos una errata que ha pasado inadvertida y que hace confuso un texto por lo demás muy claro; el trastocamiento de las líneas de un texto que nos hace cobrar vida de esta manera prodigiosa” (62).

7 Although the term is ubiquitous in film scholarship, it has been proved wrong in scientific literature. On this, see Anderson, Joseph & Barbara. “Motion Perception in Motion Pictures.” The Cinematic apparatus. Eds. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980. Print, Nichols, Bill, and Susan and a terrifying persistence of that image, similar to the photograph of a man at the moment of his death or orgasm, got recorded in his bloodthirsty retina. Why the persistence of that image in the mind? (121) […] The name of the man in the picture, a naked, bleeding man surrounded by curious people, whose face persists in memory, but whose true identity is forgotten (2) […] [Farabeuf] concluded a meditation about the persistence of memory, started previous to the meditation about the effects of time passing. In fact, there is something more tenacious than memory—he thought: oblivion.8


8 “Y una aterradora persistencia de esa imagen, como la fotografía de un hombre en el momento de la muerte o del orgasmo, se grabó en su retina ávida del color de la sangre. ¿Por qué la persistencia de esa imagen en la mente?” (121) […] “El nombre de ése que está ahí en la fotografía, un hombre desnudo, sangrante, rodeado de curiosos, cuyo rostro persiste en la memoria, pero cuya verdadera identidad se olvida” (2) […] [Farabeuf] concluyó una meditación acerca de la persistencia del recuerdo, iniciada con anterioridad a la meditación acerca de los efectos del transcurso del tiempo. “En efecto, existe algo más tenaz que la memoria—pensó—el olvido” (51-52).
We are the fleeting and involuntary image that crosses the mind of lovers as they meet, in the instant when they enjoy each other, in the moment they die.9 Along the way, Elizondo unveils the desperate quest for meaning at that instant, for making sense out of the series of stills [that form] life. While you, in your very last moment, desperately seek to take apart signs from scrabbles, scribbles, doodles, scrabbles and squiggles, those same signs are being severed from their signifiers through oblivion.10

Each of those nine instants constitutes a still in a film assembled according to Eisenstein’s theory of montage—the juxtaposing of images by editing to achieve filmic metaphors or concentrate narrations. Farabeuf, in that sense, is a simulation of cinema and of the physical myths—retinal persistence of vision in particular—that would allow film to offer the illusion of time, of movement, of reality. Scientific gaze kills the object of study through reification, and the narrative strategy reverses the image, presenting perpetrators as saviors, and torture as an act of love.11

Today’s films endure a similar series of cuts and editions, but are usually pieced back together—both physically and emotionally—into coherent successions of events or shots. Jean-Pierre Oudart uses a medical metaphor to construct his influential concept of cinematic souture: the completion of one shot with another that reveals the place from where the first was taken. Souture reassures our voyeuristic desire, confirming that our body is absent, that we do not form part of the spectacle, that our experience is therefore free from consequences. Elizondo refuses the reader the safeguard of souture: Farabeuf is an unsettling experiment of textual scrutiny, and not a vehicle of communication and pleasure. It is like the Yi King—also known as Yi Jing or I Ching—, on which it is based, a book that is not read by the reader, but that reads the reader.12

**Farabeuf and the East**

The structure of Farabeuf rests on Lo Shu magic square, also known as the Nine Halls Diagram. Lo Shu is part of the legacy of the most ancient Chinese mathematical and divinatory tradition of the Yi King. It is used as representation of mandalic circumferences in Feng Shui rituals of geomancy—the act of divination through marks on the ground or patterns formed by tossed handfuls of sand, rocks, or soil. The Lo Shu is connected graphically and numerologically with the eight trigrams that can be superimposed to correspond to the eight outer cells, following a circular trigram diagram. The numbers 1 and 9 (beginning and completion) are the most auspicious, while the number 5 at the center represents totality and balance between the two extremes. Chinese literature dating from as early as 650 BC recalls a great flood. As King Yu tried to channel the water out to the sea, a turtle emerged with a curious pattern on its shell: circular dots of numbers that were arranged in a three by three grid pattern such that the sum of the numbers in each row, column and diagonal was the same: 15. Fifteen being the number of days in each of the 24 cycles of the Chinese solar year, Lo Shu magic square helped communicate, understand, and control river cycles. In consequence, the Square of Lo Shu is sometimes referred to as the Magic Square of Time and its numerical values can be obtained from the workings of the Yi King when the trigrams are placed in an order given in the first river map, the Ho Tu or Yellow River (see figure 1).

![Lo Shu Magic Square](image)

Figure 1. Lo Shu Magic Square circa 650 BC, and its western representation.

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9 “Somos parte de un espectáculo de magia recreativa. […] Somos la imagen fugaz e involuntaria que cruza la mente de los amantes cuando se encuentran, en el instante en que se gozan, en el momento en que mueren” (63).

10 A similar idea but on a lighter tone, can be found in El grafógrafo, where Elizondo maintains that in order to attain new levels of expressivity, one needs to forget the beautiful musicality of the Spanish language and sever its links to its normal signifiers. “Sistema de Babel”, in Elizondo, Salvador. El grafógrafo. El volador. Ied. Mexico: Joaquin Mortiz, 1972.

11 Elaine Scarry tells us that it is not uncommon for executioners to use theatrical metaphors: “The production room” is the name given to the torture chamber in Philippines; “The cinema,” in South Vietnam; “The blue scenario,” in Chile. According to Scarry, torture is inflicted in three parallel stages: first, increasingly amplifying pain for the victim’s body; second, increasingly amplifying the perception of pain by the audience; and third, negating the reified pain by increasingly amplifying the obsessive mediation of the agency by the executioner who presents it as an act of social or personal goodness.

12 The relationship of Farabeuf to the Kantian notion of an art that reads the degree of humanity in its audience is discussed in Alán José’s Farabeuf y la estética del mal: el tránsito entre realidad y ficción (Mexico: Ediciones Sin Nombre & Conaculta, 2004).
The ritual of divination of the *Yi* King—or *Book of Changes*—uses the signs on a turtle shell (The Lo Shu Square). However, if you accidentally misspell a “g” for an “r,” it will change the meaning from “tortuga” (turtle and tortoise) to “tortura” (torture). Elizondo places the signs on the body of a victim instead of a turtle and imagines, instead of the reading of a shell with the *Book of Changes*, a divination ritual of anthropomancy using *Farabeuf*.

*Farabeuf* is, therefore, a textual “game” at the center of which is a ritual of anthropomancy performed over a living subject: the act of divination via the interpretation of the entrails of a human sacrifice. The book allows you to access the game from nine different points of entry, each of which leads you to a scene where a precise combination of characters and elements interact with you. The game turns to horror as you realize all combinations and points of entry lead inevitably to the same result: your ritual vivisection and death. All nine scenes are narrated precisely at the instant of your death, while a voice continuously repeats in incantation the Leitmotiv “do you remember?” inspired by Cristina Rossetti’s poem “Remember me when I am gone away,” and associated in *Farabeuf* with the myth that “persistence of vision” is at the source of what makes cinematic reality possible. It is also associated with the philosophical idea that we are but a dream in someone else’s mind: “I am, perhaps, the last image in the mind of dying man. I am the materialization of something that is about to vanish; a memory about to be forgotten.”

Elizondo gives an uncanny turn to the familiar topic of *La vida es sueño* (Life as a dream) as he ponders if the person dreaming is a god, a common person, or a demented:

You could be for example, the characters in a literary fiction that have suddenly become alive and autonomous. We could be, on the other hand, the conjunction of dreams that are being dreamt by different people in separate places around the world. We are the dream of another. Why not? Or a lie. [...] We are the thought of a demented. Some of us are real and the rest are their hallucination.

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13 “Soy, quizá, la última imagen en la mente de un moribundo. Soy la materialización de algo que está a punto de desvanecerse; un recuerdo a punto de ser olvidado” (12).

14 “Podríamos ser, por ejemplo, los personajes de un relato literario del género fantástico que de pronto han cobrado vida autónoma. Podríamos, por otra parte, ser la conjunción de sueños que están siendo soñados por seres diversos en diferentes lugares del mundo. Somos el sueño de otro. ¿Por qué no? O una mentira. [...]”

The nine chapters in Elizondo’s *Farabeuf* correspond to the nine possible positions in the Lo Shu Square. Each number inside is associated by Elizondo to one character, and series of numbers and dates in the book correspond to series in the square. Elizondo does not follow straight lines and diagonals to make those series. Manipulating once again the professional reader’s experience through textual depth of field, and following the cinematic technique of montage, he superimposes on top of the Lo Shu Square two images of oriental and occidental torture: the Christian cross, and the Chinese character for number 6, liu (六), that Elizondo imagines a stylized representation of leng t’ché. Figure 3, might give you the flair of the “grammar” of a montage:

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construction of meaning: Julio Cortázar composed Rayuela (1963), for example, according to the hopscotch grid, and his text is offered to the reader according to the game’s rules; L’amé derniere à Marienbad (1962) by Alain Robbe Grillet (novel) and Alain Resnais (film) is structured following a ritual representation of the game of Nim.16 Elizondo’s work is informed by these texts, and his obsessive and disciplined construction is based on the Square of Lo Shu. However, the Magic Square is not a game to which the reader can be invited like hopscotch, and neither can it pass for a game like Nim. The Lo Shu Square has been made into a mathematical puzzle with which we are familiar today thanks to Sudoku, but it needs an additional element to become a game. Elizondo calls this element “clatro,” and the game “hsiang ya ch’iu”: “through the discipline of the ivory puzzle ball [the master’s memory] has reconstructed, as it is done with a puzzle, the image of a unique moment: the moment in which you were tormented.”17

“Clatro” has been translated in the English and French versions of the text as “ivory balls” or “boules d’ivoire”; a more precise translation would be “ivory puzzle ball,” as those carved pieces are normally called by antiquarians today. Hsiang ya ch’iu or xiang ya qiu, as it is spelled in modern Chinese “pinyin” (using letters to represent sounds), is the name of the ball itself: “xiang (elephant) ya (tooth) qiu (ball).” An ivory puzzle ball is a sculpture carved out of ivory, consisting of a series of concentric spheres that represent the cosmos, and the dragon of life. Spheres are carved one at a time inside the ivory ball, through the holes that are progressively made by the artisan. The technique was not revealed to westerners who were “puzzled” as to how one ball could be inserted into another, and oftentimes called them “balls of the devil”:

Notice that because of an arrangement that only a demonic ability could conceive, the holes at the different levels do not always continue from the periphery to the center; that is to say that if a series of six orifices coincides from the first level to the center of the ivory ball, all other series of six orifices will not necessarily coincide in the same way through each one of the levels.18

Here, again, Elizondo plays with varying textual depth of field. The xiang ya qiu is, in theory, a toy, and the puzzle-game consists of carefully moving the balls using a pointed stick to line up all or some of the holes. In the most complicated xiang ya qiu only some or one of the cone-shaped holes would go all the way to the smallest ball, and some would go only part of the way. Lining up the balls is all the more difficult, which is what the “diabolical puzzle-maker” wants.

In his modified version of the xiang ya qiu, Elizondo imagines that the concentric balls can be thrown or set to spin, and that their ending position can be “read” as are bones, coins, or sticks to determine which section of the Book of Changes to read in an act of divination. Of course, the game Elizondo proposes is impossible to carry out literally and it is but a metaphor of the successive layers of the body of the victim that are progressively exposed during a ritual of anthropomancy. Each “throw of the ivory ball” is a toss of a human body: it is the vivisection of a different individual, who is in addition the character Elizondo calls you.

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16 Nim is a two-player “game” in which each one takes turns removing matches or other objects from distinct heaps. It is normally a “misère game,” in which the player to take the last object loses. One of the oldest versions of Nim, is the Chinese Jianishi, in which stones are picked in turns. In 1901, Charles L. Bouton proved that the game (for which he also coined the occidental name of Nim) was not a game but a mathematical strategy—a ritual one could also say—because the first to play will always win if he is familiar with the combinatorial theory of it.

17 “mediante la disciplina del clatro [la memoria del maestro] ha reconstruido, como se hace con un rompecabezas, la imagen de un momento único: el momento en que tú fuiste el supliciado” (113).

18 “Advierte que por una disposición que sólo una habilidad demoniaca pudo concebir los orificios de los diferentes niveles no se continúan siempre desde la periferia hacia el centro, es decir que si una serie de seis orificios coinciden desde el primer nivel hasta el centro del clatro, no necesariamente coinciden de la misma manera los otros seis orificios de cada uno de los niveles” (117-18).
As with the *Yi King*, where a sequence provided by the disposition of the three coins, bones or sticks corresponds to a hexagram interpreted with the help of the *Book of Changes*, the ivory puzzle ball disposition, representing the eviscerated body of the victim, is to be read with the help of Elizondo’s poetic and metaphysical text.

Finally, the ritual of anthropomancy I have been mentioning throughout this reflection is a practice that has been documented in Egypt, Greece, Rome, and amongst the Celtic druids. It is also mentioned in both Old and New Testaments, as Elaine Scarry has shown, and it has been described as relatively frequent in pre-Columbian America as well. However, none of these historical accounts forms part of *Farabef*.

Instead, Elizondo decides to follow the steps of a French doctor as he documents, reproduces, and perfects in France the techniques of human vivisection that he observed in China. This choice is not casual: Elizondo carefully selects the narrow window of time in which modern technology clashes with obsolete institutions, and is first recorded in print; a moment that fascinated Spanish-American writers because it corresponds with the birth of Latin-American republics torn between European modern monstrosity and Indigenous atavistic barbarism.

In chapter seven, *Farabef* includes an actual photograph of an execution by *leng t’ché*. According to the text, the person being executed is Fu Chu Li, charged with stabbing the prince Ao Jan Wan for motives related to the Boxer Rebellion of 1898-1901, a violent anti-foreign, anti-Christian movement led by the “Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists in China” in response to European imperialist expansion and missionary evangelism. The Boxer Uprising served as pretext for a joint intervention of the Eight-Nation Alliance that included Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, The United Kingdom, Russia, Japan, and the United States. On September 7th, 1901, China, defeated, was compelled to sign the “Boxer Protocol” with the Eight-Nation Alliance.

Latin American writers know of *leng t’ché* through Georges Bataille’s *Les Larmes d’Eros* (1961), and Elizondo is no exception. Bataille claims that he got the picture through a friend—Le Docteur Borel—and assumes that the photograph forms part of the series of four, published by Louis Carpeaux in a widely circulated pamphlet, *Pekin s’en va* (1913) of the execution of Fou Chou Li. Bataille thus decides to include Carpeaux’s accompanying text in *Les larmes*. In truth, the picture published by Bataille and reprinted by Elizondo is from another, probably earlier execution by *leng t’ché*, of a person that has come to be known as the “Pseudo-Fou Chou Li.” In Elizondo’s text, *Farabef* is documenting the execution because he is looking—ironically if one thinks of the motives of the Boxer Uprising—for possible martyrs that could be of help to Jesuit missionaries, including a feminine Christ-like figure that would resonate with the fin de siècle discourse of the “New Woman.”

Elizondo was not the only Latin American writer to have included the execution by *leng t’ché* in one of his texts: Julio Cortázar includes it in *Rayuela* (1963) and Severo Sarduy in *Cobra* (1972). In his essay “Del Yín al Yang,” Sarduy discusses chapter 14 of *Rayuela*, where Wong—a member of the “Club of the Snake”—shows Oliveira photographs of *leng t’ché*, which Sarduy interprets as a metaphor of the fragmentary nature of language. This chapter instructs the reader to continue on chapter 114 or 117. In the former, we learn about the capital punishment of a prisoner at San Quentin (114); and in the latter, about the execution of minors by hanging or on the stakes, when it was proven that they could tell right from wrong. Similar to *Rayuela*, in *Farabef* the oriental execution and torture is equated with western forms of torture, especially by doctors and psychoanalysts. Elizondo’s technique is not logical but rhetorical; it aims at persuasion and not at demonstration. Consider, for example, the fictional account of a conversation between Jean Jacques Matignon author of *Dix ans du Pays du Dragon* (1910) and Louis Hubert Farabef:

Doctor Matignon, a doctor of the Legion, a former resident of China, explained to me the origins and the procedure in all its details. I must say that the procedure is completely devoid of subtlety. Much has been said about the refinement of the Chinese on these matters, to the extent that the expression “Chinese torture” has become a synonym of cruel refinement. Yet I believe that for occidental surgery, even in situations of the harshest adversity—let us remember what the battlefields of the seventies, or even of fourteen-eighteen have been—I say this in all modesty, the blinking of an eye sufficed to make the amputation of a leg at the hips or the amputation

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20 This is true for most editions, but there is at least one exception: In Montesinos it appears on chapter two.

21 The influence of Christ’s Passion in the depictions of Chinese supplices—particularly *leng t’ché*—by European travelers in China, has been a topic of recent interest—see for example Maria Pia Di Bella: “Voir le Christ en Chine: les sources chrétiennes des représentations du lingchi” (Paris : MSH: Proceedings of the 1st Réseau Asie Congress, 2003) <http://turandot.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/essay.php?ID=23>. However, Elizondo, to my knowledge, remains a pioneer in exploring it together with gender blur, and with the Freudian trauma of the “primal scene.” I owe to Francisco Morán the insight about the contemporary “New Woman” discourse.
Why You Cannot Read Farabeuf: Elizondo and Orientalism

of the upper maxillary—one of the feats of battlefield surgery. Leng T’ché, on the contrary, is the tedious exhibition of an extreme manual inability.22

Perhaps the most authoritative figure on eastern representation of Chinese torture is Jérôme Bourgon, to whom we owe “Chinese Executions: Visualizing their Differences with European Supplicies” (2003), together with its impressive associated photographic archive “Turandot.”23 According to Bourgon, Fou Chou Li (1880-1905) was a guard at the service of the Mongol prince head of the Aohan. He was executed in the Ta-Tché-Ko plaza of Peking on April 10, 1905, for having stabbed Prince Ao Jan Wan to death, on Chinese New Year’s eve (February 1905), after Jan Wan kidnapped his wife (and not for motives related to the Boxer uprising, as Elizondo claims). The execution was witnessed at close range by a number of observers, and photographed by two or three cameras, none of which were operated by Louis Carpeaux, who was not present at the execution despite his claims. More than a hundred other executions were documented and circulated widely through French, Belgian, and German editions24; and twenty-one photographs are now found of Fou

22 “El doctor Matignon, médico de la Legación, antiguo residente en China, me explicó los orígenes y el procedimiento con todos sus detalles. Debo decir que el procedimiento carece por completo de suerte. Mucho se ha hablado del refinamiento de los chinos en estos aspectos, al grado que la expresión ‘tortura china’ se ha convertido en sinónimo de refinamiento cruel, sin embargo yo creo que la cirugía occidental, aún en condiciones de la menor adversidad—recordemos si no lo que han sido los campos de batalla del setenta e inclusivo del catorce-dieciocho—en que, lo digo con toda modestia, bastaba un parpadeo para hacer la amputation of a pierna in la cadera o la amputación del maxilar superior—una of la más grandes proezas de la cirugía de campaña. El Leng Tché por el contrario, es la exhibición tediosa de una inhabilidad manual extremada” (53).


24 See for example, Jean Jacques Matignon’s Dix ans du Pays du Dragon (Paris: Maloine, 1910); Louis Carpeaux’s Pékin qui s’en va (Paris: Maloine, 1913); F. Commandant Harfeld’s Opinions chinoises sur les barbares d’occident (Paris, Bruxelles: Plon-Nourrit & Cie, Albert Dewit, 1909); Robert Heindl’s Robert, Meine Reise nach den Stauffkolonien Berlin, Vienna: Verlag Rolf Heise, 1913), “Die Strafrechtstheorien Insel.” Jahrbuch der Charakterologie 1 (1924): 89-52, and Der Berufsverbrecher: Ein Beitrag zur Strafrechtsreform (Berlin: Verlag Rolf Heise, 1926); Martin Monestier’s Peines de mort. Histoire et techniques des exécutions capitales, des origines à nos jours (Paris: Le Cherche-Midi Editeur, 1994). Two of these editions are particularly interesting for scrutiny in contrast to Elizondo’s treatment: first, the second edition of Georges Dumas’s Nouveau traité de psychologie (1932), which includes a series of pictures that he dates circa 1880, and that correspond to the ones published by Bataille; and second, the novel by Georges Soulé de Morant, T’sou-Hsi, Impératrice des Boxers (Éditions Youfeng, 1911), which, in chapter IV, “Emueh Ngan Te-hai’s executed by lingchi on Empress Dowager Ci Xi’s order” (86-94), mixes, like Farabeuf does fifty-four years later, historical facts with lurid details inspired from the viewing of Leng tché photographs and Carpeaux’s narrative appended to them.

25 The twelve postcards series “Supplicies chinois,” published in Tien-tsin by Liou-seu, for example, were partly used by Matignon and Carpeaux for their books. Jérôme Bourgon explains that “This serial of 12 postcards was probably made of one same set, taken at Caishikou on the 10th of April 1905, when the last lingchi

Chou Li’s execution, either printed on glass for stereo or on paper prints. In his essay “Chinese Torture and Aesthetic of Contemporary Sensitivity,” Bourgon discusses the frenzy that these pictures caused in Europe at the dawn of the twentieth century:

The perception of “Chinese torture,” and the success that the expression met with, are from 1895 on, closely linked to photographs of lingchi. The photographs taken during the three executions which took place in Beijing in 1904-1905 gave a “documentary” basis to this representation. The photographers were able to take advantage of a rather short period, as the conditions for such photographs to be taken at technical, military and diplomatic levels allowing this, existed only after 1900, while “cruel” punishments were abolished on 24 April 1905. During this period of less than 5 years, over a hundred photographs were shot. “Chinese tortures” disappeared almost a century ago; however the image they convey is still vivid. The short and accidental meeting between a modern camera and an obsolete punishment generated a surprisingly lasting image. These photographs have taken their place in a pre-existing “aesthetics of horror,” which has a definite influence on contemporary sensitivity.

The “short period” Bourgon describes constitutes the timeframe Elizondo chooses for Farabeuf. In it, are circumscribed not only the technical, military, and political, but also the aesthetic, and scientific discourses of Farabeuf. Elizondo’s choice to base it on Chinese elements and his pervasive misrepresentation of the other, make him a target for Orientalist scrutiny. Leng T’ché was certainly orientalized in Said’s sense: it was presented as a morbid curiosity by Carpeaux; it was reified in pseudo-scientific terms by Dumas; it was presented as exotic and as a banal proof of the atavistic cruelty of Chinese by photocards that the post actually accepted and delivered.25 Elizondo, who took his information from
Bataille, could be guilty also of orientalization: his gaze is filled with Bataille's eroticization, and he undoubtedly shares the morbid curiosity of Matignon (1910), Carpeaux (1913), or Heindl (1913; 1924; 1926). He duplicates the physiological tone of Dumas (1932), and also imitates the medical-aesthetics and metaphysics of Louis Hubert (1889). With Georges Soulé de Morant (1911), amongst others, he additionally shares the technique of mixing historical with imaginary facts.

Elizondo is thus not a hallowed sage lost in signs and ancient glyphs, oblivious of world politics; but neither is he an agent for colonial murky plans of world domination. Elizondo accomplishes, in fact, a reversal of orientalization, a reversal that was promised to readers as early as 1909 by the Commandant Harfield in his book *Opinions Chinoises sur les Barbares d'Occident*. The crucial distinction to be made is awareness. While Harfield believed he was reporting an objective account of facts (see for example the epistolary exchange over his book with Maspero in 1910), Elizondo is deliberately bringing to central stage the manipulative nature of discourse to denounce how the occidental notion of self-righteousness is a construct. He is aware, and he wants the reader's awareness, or even better, his or her loss of innocence.

Elizondo's perspective is not orientalist as it does not seek to justify domination. It is not a Verfreundungseffekt either, as he does not conceive art as a tool for social change. Elizondo's orientalistic project distrusts reality as well as representation. He does not seek to justify appropriation, or to instigate social revolution, but to seize the forbidden fruit of knowledge and self-awareness. To construct *Farabef*, Elizondo draws indistinctly from European and Chinese systems of assemblage, and the narrative voices are descriptive and do not posit themselves as better or superior to the other, but as equally perverse. In Elizondo's text, we observe that there is a difference, not in the reification and eroticization of the "other" or in the construction of monsters—Chinese executioners and French doctors appear equally abominable—but in the construction of self. Even when the narrator stands next to the executioner and observes, he helps; if you play the game, it will only be to realize in horror that it ends in the ritual vivisection of you, an androgynous being; or in the realization that your voyeuristic gaze made you, the reader, an accomplice to the perpetrator.

**The gaze of the problematic self**

In *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said argues that the political and academic discourse in the United Kingdom, France and the United States referring to Arabs, Islam and the Middle East, has been an instrument for, and a reflection of European colonialism. The *sine qua non* condition of Said's model is a sharp inequality leading to a *rapport de force* verbalized in the description the strong makes of the weak, and in which cultural difference is subsumed by weakness (*Orientalism* 204). According to Said, the characterization in which the subaltern is not allowed to present his case, but is voiced by an authoritative voice posed as benevolent, cannot be an innocent misrepresentation. It is a calculated strategy identifying otherness with inferiority to legitimize political and economic subjugation (*Orientalism* 273).

Latin-American descriptions of the Far East cannot be Orientalism in *strictu sensu*, as there is no cross-national military, political, or economic domination to legitimize over the Orient. The continent has been the locus of American and European colonial interests for the past three and a half centuries, which places it in a position comparable to the Orient, or even East to it, as Richard Rodriguez, Kushigian, and Romero argue. On the other hand, Latin-American depictions of the East could also reflect the notion of American settlers looking to build a new and better world, "An Occident west to Occident," as Octavio Paz calls it, and to which a number of Criollos, and Upper-class *Mestizo* intellectuals identify. The coexistence of both discourses could indicate that "Latin-American Orientalism" is to be found within national borders, rather than across—an interpretation in line with Said's suggestion that the core element of Orientalism is inequality—and it could also be indicative of the unresolved, and perhaps irresolvable problem of Latin-American identity.

*Farabef* is a characterization in which the victim's condition and weaknesses are introduced by an authoritative voice presented as benevolent, but it is not an example of Orientalism because the speaking voice is presented as monstrous and perverse. *Farabef* is a philosophical text concerned with a problematic identity, a question that resonates deeply in Elizondo's Latin-American "déjà-là." A momentarily loss of identity of the lovers embraced into one another during an instant extracted from time and thus infinite is the root for Georges Bataille's metaphor of orgasm as the "little death". Elizondo zeroes in Bataille's

execution was meted out. Fu-zhu-li's dismemberment (n° 2 to 6, and n° 9) was preceded by decapitations (n° 1, 7, 8, 12). N° 10 and 11 come from other sets (n° 11 dating back to the Boxer's executions, four years earlier). The full series of photocards, sealed and stamped, can be seen at:


28 As most members of his literary generation, Elizondo briefly joined the Communist party, but he soon felt disenchanted and left.
assumption and elaborates on the idea of “Death” as equivalent to identity loss. The symptoms Dr. Farabeuf tries to apprehend are progressive alienation, disorientation, and loss of identity: Death, Elizondo concludes, is oblivion. For him—as for Hegel from whose phenomenology he draws—identity needs to be acknowledged by a significant other who then becomes part of one’s interior identity. Robinson Crusoe is not, until he meets Friday, and the victimizer is not, until recognized by the victim. Identity is thus a collective problem. “Who am I?” is devoid of significance without the complementary “Who are we?” The literary text is the establishing contract between identities and mutual acknowledgments.

Said is suspicious of essential identities, and Elizondo distrusts essential representations. His ontological experiment does not seek to establish an immutable essence but, on the contrary, to expose the mutable substance of identity, its phenomenology and its ecstatic, but not static characteristics. An insight I owe to Tzvetan Todorov is that history is written in terms of we versus they: we, the heroes or the victims; and they, the villains or the passive beneficiaries of goods; we, humans and they, monsters or worm-men. Elizondo reminds us in Farabeuf that the executioner, the perpetrator, is not less human than ourselves. The monster, the criminal is not the other. Humans will not be delivered from Evil until they are delivered from Good.

I argue thus that Orientalism can only occur if both exoticization of the other AND idealization of self occur. In Farabeuf, as in El retrato de Zac y otras mentiras, Elizondo is guilty of exoticization and eroticization of the East, but his more dreadful monsters not only come from Asia. They are also French doctors, albino mutants, and deformed reflections of self. For Elizondo, on the one hand, Western and Eastern philosophies and aesthetics are comparably valid; on the other, in the world presented in Farabeuf, there are only monsters. While for you—the character—there is no alternative, the reader can cling to his innocence and die with you, or accept his voyeuristic gaze in the spectacle and become an accomplice to an executioner. To survive the experience, Farabeuf’s reader needs to accept that he is not a good person, that he cannot only be a good person. That is Elizondo’s dare.

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**ECHOES FROM A DISTANCE: JOSÉ JUAN TABLADA’S HAIKAI**

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My mother kept those conches and seashells in a large Chinese box, like the ones brought to her native port town by the Nao de China.

(tablada, *La feria de la vida* 25; my translation)

José Juan Tablada (1871-1945) is considered by many the first poet to introduce the *haikai* into the Spanish-American literary tradition. Octavio Paz, among others, has recognized his influential role in opening the dialogue between Spanish-America and Asia through literature, art, and culture, and has also signaled his importance as a link between *Modernismo* and the Avant Garde.¹ There is no doubt that Tablada was

¹ “De esos caracoles y conchas mi madre guardaba una gran caja chinesca de las que la Nao de China llevaba antaño a su puerto natal.”

² The name *haikai* derives from *haikai no renga*, which is an all-encompassing poetic genre which includes *haiku*, *haiga* and *senryu*, among other styles. The term *haikai* was the one first introduced into the Latin American literary tradition, therefore it has remained. Later on, at the end of the nineteenth century, poet Masaoka Shiki gave the poem its current name, *haiku*. The characteristics of the *haikai* are the same as the *haiku*. These poems consist of 17 moras (5-7-5) or metrical phrases and they have a *kigo*, or seasonal pivot word. The form was originally practiced as a collaborative poem—in many cases through gatherings called *kukai*—which was also linked, consisting of *hokku*, the short poem, and a prose piece which together were known as *renku*. This poetic form has seen changes throughout history, with some master poets giving it a more humanistic touch, others plainly sketching nature, and others including a humoristic or satirical component.

³ Rubén Lozano Herrera, in his book *Las veras y las burlas de José Juan Tablada* (1995), mentions the following about the influential role of Tablada: “Of everything that has been said, no one would be surprised by placing on him the adjective of innovator. According to the concepts of the Abbot Mendoza, Tablada opened paths through new fields, and if having been the first one to appreciate the