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Imagining the Orient: Representations of the Chinese in Modern Spanish Culture

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation examines representations of the Chinese in twentieth and twenty-first century Spanish cultural production. I argue that many internationally circulating models for representing the Chinese in the West have been re-imagined in Spanish texts in ways that respond to cultural and economic anxieties particular to modern Spain. Adopting a cultural studies approach, this project reads a wide range of texts including film, literature, television, news media, magazines, and visual culture. This project is divided into three chapters, which address the imaginary Chinese, the Chinese migrant, and the Chinese Spaniard.

The first chapter focuses on the cultural legacy of representations of the Chinese in Western cultural production, examining the ways in which orientalist discourses such as the "Yellow Peril" and the "Chinatown Myth" have permeated the Spanish imaginary. I argue that Spain's uneven modernization during the early twentieth century reveals an ambivalent relationship with racial otherness. For example, the unofficial naming of Barcelona's fifth district as "el Barrio Chino" in 1925 is indicative of a desire to construct within the city a cosmopolitan cultural capital. The chapter also reads representations of the film star Anna May Wong in

Spanish film magazines and the serial appearances of the fictional Fu-Manchu character within Spanish cultural production, particularly in the work of novelist Juan Marsé.

The second and third chapters deal more specifically with representations of the Chinese diaspora in contemporary Spain. In the second chapter I look at Chinese migrants as they are represented in Spanish literary and visual culture, including films like *La fuente amarilla*, *Tapas*, and *Biutiful*, and the novels *Sociedad negra* and *Laberinto de mentiras*. I argue that in these texts the Chinese are generally portrayed in terms of their economic roles and in ways that mitigate the economic anxieties of a Spanish audience dealing with a devastating financial crisis.

The final chapter addresses texts by and about Spain's growing generation of Chinese Spaniards. Through an analysis of texts such as the graphic novel *Gazpacho agridulce* and the documentary *Generación Mei Ming,* I explore how the Chinese community's second generation interrogates established notions of Spanishness and highlights the reality of Spain's increasing ethnic and cultural diversity in the twenty-first century.

Dedication Page

To Fede.

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

In December of 2014 a cargo train arrived in Spain after travelling over 8,000 miles from its origin in China, a journey of record-breaking length in the history of rail travel. Dubbed "the twenty-first century Silk Road," the recently debuted train route is indicative of an increasingly significant cultural and trade relationship between Spain and China. In the same month, Spain's Ministry of Employment and Social Security reported that the Chinese constituted the second largest non-European immigrant group in Spain. Having grown nearly 450% since the late 1990s, Spain's Chinese population has become one of the largest in Europe. Resisting the effects of Spain's recent economic crisis, Spain's Chinese residents have successfully expanded into economic sectors generally neglected by other migrant groups, at times producing tensions between Chinese business owners and their Spanish neighbors. More importantly, Spain's growing Chinese diaspora represents a new facet of Spanish ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

In many senses a response to the rapid growth of Spain's Chinese community, this dissertation explores the dynamics of contemporary migration to Spain and the broader history of the Chinese in Spain though the analysis of cultural texts. To date, many studies on migration and ethnicity in Spain have focused on migrants from Latin America and Africa, who formed a majority of Spain's first wave of immigration during the 1980s and 1990s. Although they tended to arrive later than these other migrant groups, the Chinese community in Spain has continued to grow as other migrant populations have decreased after the onset of the 2008 financial crisis. Despite this increasing presence, the Chinese remain relatively underrepresented in Spanish cultural production. This dissertation builds on the excellent research of scholars such as Daniela Flesler, Benita Sampedro, Susan Martin-Márquez, Pavarti Nair, Rosi Song, Michelle Murray,

Tabea Linhard, Isabel Santaolalla, and Isolina Ballesteros, among others, whose work on migrations, ethnicity, and Otherness challenges those definitions of Spanish identity that erase the nation's historical and contemporary diversity. Unlike much of this research, which positions migration to Spain against the backdrop of Spain's imperial legacy, my dissertation focuses on a migrant group that was preceded primarily by orientalist fantasy as opposed to colonial occupation.

In Spain, as in much of the West, China has long been a source of mystery and intrigue, desire for and fear of the Other. Reflecting on the history of Western representations of China and the Chinese, Zhang Longxi asks, "Indeed, what can be a better sign of the Other than a fictionalized space of China? What can furnish the West with a better reservoir for its dreams, fantasies, and utopias?" (110). However, the allure of Chinese culture in the West, displayed in the *chinoiserie* fashion of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, transformed into a more complex combination of fascination and repulsion with the onset of large-scale migration from China during the nineteenth century. Until then trade had been the primary form of contact between Asia and the West, but economic and political turmoil in China spurred emigration patterns that would result in a global Chinese diaspora. Brought to Latin America and the Caribbean as indentured servants, or "coolies," and arriving in parts of North America and Europe as migrant laborers, thousands of Chinese migrants travelled west during the nineteenth century, a migration pattern that continued until the mid-twentieth century. Combined with China's resistance to Western military and missionary presence within its territory, the arrival of thousands of Chinese migrants produced a panicky fear in the West known as the Yellow Peril.

The Yellow Peril portrayed the Far East as poised for world domination, producing discriminatory legislation, such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States. In the

cultural realm the Yellow Peril was made manifest in narratives and fictional characters, such as the Chinese mastermind Fu Manchu, that succeeded in reinforcing the perception of the Chinese as *essentially other* throughout the West. With *Imagining the Orient: Representations of the Chinese in Spanish Culture* I propose an analysis that positions the reception and representation of contemporary Chinese migrants in Spain within this tradition of orientalized portrayals of the Chinese in Western cultural production. More specifically, I argue that many of the models for representing the Chinese in the West that have circulated internationally, such as the figure of Fu Manchu and the Chinatown slum, have been re-imagined in Spanish texts in ways that respond to cultural and economic anxieties particular to modern Spain.

Even before the arrival of a significant Chinese migrant population in Spain during the final decades of the twentieth century, a series of myths and caricatures associated with the Chinese had already entered the Spanish popular imaginary. During the early years of the Franco dictatorship, for example, the marketing campaign for a popular dessert, Flan Chino Mandarín, drew on a series of pre-codified images and tropes. Flan Chino Mandarín was a powdered version of a popular homemade dessert marketed as an economic alternative for families of limited means. The individual powder packets would become a stable in many Spanish homes and the illustrated Chinaman on its packaging easily recognizable to multiple generations of Spaniards. Dressed in traditional Han clothing typical of the Qing Dynasty, the illustration is based on similar depictions of Chinese migrants to the West during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (fig 1). Similarly, a television advertisement from the late 1970s or early 1980s features cartoon mascots wearing a queue (traditional Chinese braided hairstyle), alluding once again to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century caricatures of Chinese migrants. (fig. 2).

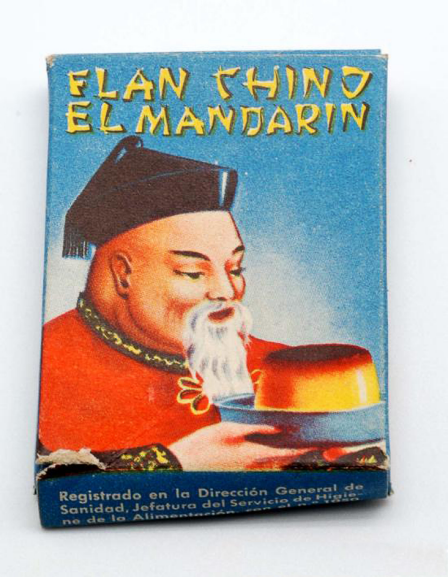


Figure 1: The marketing campaign for the El Mandarín brand of powdered flan packets features an illustration of a Chinese man.

Figure 2: A television advertisement for Flan Chino Mandarín features cartoon mascots that reference stereotyped caricatures of Chinese migrants from the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In a more recent television advertisement for Flan Chino Mandarín from the 1990s the cartoon mascots are replaced with child actors who bop along to the Flan Chino Mandarín jingle as they pull their eyes back with the fingertips, imitating "Chinese" eyes (fig. 3). Cultural ephemera related to the Flan Chino Mandarín brand such as empty powder packets or boxes and promotional figures are frequently found on collector's websites such as todocoleccion.net, evidencing their value as nostalgia items. I highlight the evolution of the Flan Chino Mandarín brand and its Chinese mascot because of its reliance on stereotypical Chinese caricatures and because of its persistence in the Spanish imaginary. It is one example of the way in which a common visual language for representing the Chinese in the West, developed largely in the Americas and northern Europe during periods of large-scale immigration from China, circulated throughout Spain and conditioned the Spanish perception of "Chineseness" prior to the arrival of a significant Chinese migrant population on the Iberian peninsula later in the twentieth century.

Figure 3: Children imitate "Chinese" in a television advertisement for Flan Chino Mandarín.

My study is concerned not only with understanding how the representation of Chinese migrants differs from the depiction of other migrant groups, such as North Africans and Latin Americans, but also with how these portrayals of the Chinese in Spain dialogue with a transnational network of representations that dates back over a century and continues to shore up a legacy of orientalism that conditions the experience of contemporary Chinese Spaniards. In order to address each of these interlocking questions the dissertation is divided into three chapters, each of which includes two or three subsections. Each chapter focuses a different facet of the Chinese presence in Spain: the imaginary Chinese, the Chinese migrant, and the Chinese Spaniard. By structuring the dissertation in this way the analysis moves not only chronologically, but also parallels the evolution of the Chinese diaspora in Spain. In this sense my approach allows me to consider representations of the Chinese in cultural production as well as address the social and economic reality of the Chinese diaspora in Spain. The dissertation examines the representation of the Chinese in Spanish film, literature, and visual culture by looking at a wide range of texts including novels, films, television, magazines, news media, graphic novels, blogs, and cultural ephemera.

Because they remain a relatively underrepresented ethnic minority there has been little theoretical work on the Chinese in Spain. However, Joaquín Beltrán Antolín y Amelia Sáiz López, both affiliated with the Departamento de Traducción e interpretación y de Estudio de Asia Oriental at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, are two scholars who have published extensively on the phenomenon of Chinese migration to Spain. Beltrán Antolín in particular has been recognized as an expert on the subject and is often cited in the Spanish press and on television regarding questions related to the Chinese in Spain. Their work takes a more sociological approach and focuses largely on the nature of Chinese migration patterns and

entrepreneurship, addressing some of the cultural reasons why there have been tensions between Chinese business owners and their Spanish counterparts. While their research does not directly address the representations of Chinese migrants in Spanish literary and visual culture, it does provide a socio-economic foundation for this dissertation.

As I have mentioned already, the history of Chinese migration to the West and the anxieties it provoked beginning in the nineteenth century are essential in framing my analysis of tropes borrowed by Spanish cultural production from other geographic locations and historical moments. Scholars such as Rey Chow and Lisa Lowe, among others, have produced important work in the field of Asian American studies and their theorization of the Asian Other in North American society has provided this dissertation with a theoretical framework for analyzing a similar phenomenon in Spain. In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe describes the citizen as inhabiting "the space of the nation, a space that is, at once, juridically legislated, territorially situated, and culturally embodied" and while it is through the law that the nation most clearly controls its populace, "culture—the collectively formed images, histories, and narratives that place, displace, and replace individuals in relation to the national polity—powerfully shapes who the citizenry is" (2). Both Lowe and Chow discuss the stereotyping of Asians in Western society, which Lowe argues has resulted in the position of the Asian American as perpetually outside the citizenry:

> […] it is precisely the unfixed liminality of the Asian immigrant—geographically, linguistically, and racially at odds with the context of the "national"—that has given rise to the necessity of endlessly fixing and repeating such stereotypes. Stereotypes that construct Asians as the threatening "yellow peril," or alternatively, that pose Asians as the domesticated "model minority," are equally indices of these national anxieties. (18)

Similarly, my dissertation examines the cultural, economic, and legislative limits to the assimilation of the Chinese into Spanish society. More specifically, I identify the factors that condition the Chinese-Spanish experience and contribute to the "fixing and repeating" of the same stereotypes in new contexts.

In terms of theorizing the images and tropes associated with the Chinese, the work of Ruth Mayer and Homay King provide important references. In *Lost in Translation: Orientalism, Cinema, and the Enigmatic Signifier*, Homay King argues that Western cinema "imagines East Asia as the site of enigmatic indecipherability" (2). I posit that her argument extends to Spanish cultural production as well. Ruth Mayer's writing on the significance of the Chinatown as a trope in early American cinema and the seriality of the Fu Manchu character frame this study's central concerns about the transnational circulation of these icons and their significance in Spanish popular culture during the early twentieth century. According to Mayer, "seriality relies on iconicity, on emblematic constellations, and on recognizable images, figures, plots, phrases, and accessories that, once established, can be rearranged, reinterpreted, recombined, and invested with new significance and thus constitute major parts of the serial memory that upholds complex serial narratives and representational networks in the first place" (10-11). This dissertation is concerned precisely with the kind of rearranging, reinterpreting, and recombining Mayer refers to, with the goal of discerning the significance assigned to these transnational icons in the Spanish context.

The dissertation's first chapter, "The Imaginary Chinese," focuses on the legacy of the kinds of visual cultural of orientalism exhibited in the advertisements for Flan Chino Mandarín. By examining the appearance of cultural icons associated with the Yellow Peril and the American Chinatown in Spanish cultural production, I explore how they are re-purposed in the

Spanish context. I focus initially on the naming of Barcelona's Barrio Chino as such in 1925, arguing that its development as a "Chinatown" in the absence of a significant Chinese immigrant population—the hallmark of other Chinatowns worldwide—reveals that in Barcelona the Chinatown myth was employed as a way of framing the city's emerging modernity. This chapter also considers the international circulation of orientalized bodies, specifically that of the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong, who travelled to Madrid in 1935 and performed at the Casablanca Theater. Here I examine the ways in which Spanish film magazines construct Wong's identity as simultaneously Oriental, American, and European, arguing that for the Spanish (and largely female) readers access to Wong's celebrity through these film magazines served as a tool for constructing themselves as modern and cosmopolitan. The final contribution to this chapter is a study on the use of Fu Manchu in the writing of novelist Juan Marsé. Although published during the final decades of the twentieth century, Marsé's novels draw on popular cultural intertexts originating in the 1930s and 1940s. I focus on the novels *Si te dicen que caí* (1973), *El amante bilingüe* (1990), *El embrujo de Shanghai* (1993), and the short story "Historia de detectives" (1986) to explore how Marsé re-invents the Fu Manchu character in the service of his overarching theme of identity construction.

The second chapter, titled "The Chinese Migrant" examines representations of Spain's Chinese immigrant community, focusing on literary, cinematic, and media representations from the late 1990s to the present. I argue that in these texts the Chinese are generally portrayed in terms of their economic roles and in ways that appease the economic anxieties of a Spanish audience, particularly since the recent economic crisis. To support this claim I begin by looking at two films from the early 2000s, *Tapas* (2005) and the short *Ming* (2008). Both of these films engage with stereotypes about migrant Chinese workers and the kind of work they perform

within the Spanish economy. In this chapter I also address the ways in which the cultural forces analyzed in the first chapter, such as the Yellow Peril and the Chinatown, condition the representation of the Chinese in contemporary Spain. Framing these readings with a discussion of the 2012 investigation into an alleged money-laundering racket organized by Chinese entrepreneur and Spanish resident Gao Ping, I examine the fictional representations of the Chinese mafia that appear in the films *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley* (1998) and *La fuente amarilla* (1999), as well as in the recent detective novels *Sociedad negra* (2013) and *Laberinto de mentiras* (2014). The final section of the second chapter looks at the use of the nuclear family as an allegory to make sense of Spanish society's increasing diversity in *Biutiful* (2010) and a short film titled *Amigo no gima* (2004). While both of these films position themselves as liberal critiques of racial and cultural prejudice and global capitalism, the exclusion of the Chinese from their proposition for what I call a "new Spanish family" highlights the Chinese community's erasure from much of the discourse on tolerance and social inclusion.

The dissertation's third chapter is titled "The Chinese Spaniard" and reads texts by and about individuals who identify as both Chinese and Spanish. Spain's increasing racial diversity in the twenty-first century has raised the question, "What does 'Spanish' look like?" The construction of identity for Chinese Spaniards growing up in Spanish society with Chinese families is complicated by their role as trailblazers in a new kind of society. This chapter looks at a series of texts that engage with its protagonists' questions about ethnicity and identity, including the novel *La ciudad feliz* (2013), the graphic novel *Gazpacho agridulce* (2015), and the popular prime-time television drama *Física o química* (2008-09). The arrival of migrant workers from China has coincided with another type of migration: the adoption of infants and young girls from China by Spanish families. According to the China Center of Adoption Affairs, Spain has

adopted more children from China than any other country aside from the United States, which is significant considering that Spain's total population is much smaller than the United States' and in view of Spain's historical lack of racial diversity. The 2014 documentary *Generación Mei Ming* profiles six girls adopted from China as they struggle with an adolescence complicated by their ambiguous relationship to their cultural heritage and its impact on their coming of age. While the protagonists of the all the texts studied in this chapter identify as Chinese Spaniards, the challenges faced by the adopted children of Spanish families differ in many ways from those encountered by the first generation of children born to Chinese migrants in Spain. These differences underscore the complexities of ethnic and cultural identity construction and highlight the need for platforms that foreground voices otherwise marginalized or erased.

By considering the figures of the imaginary Chinese, the Chinese migrant, and the Chinese Spaniard, this dissertation addresses the depiction of the Chinese community in Spain and the cultural legacy of the transnational circulation of popular images and tropes associated with the Chinese globally. In this way it is situated strategically between studies on Otherness in the Spanish context and research that examines the Chinese diaspora in other geographic locations and historical moments. Thus it fills a gap in current scholarship by unpacking the orientalist discourse that has conditioned the reception of Spain's growing Chinese community and examining the ways in which their assimilation differs from that of other migrant groups. This study contributes to an ongoing dialogue about Spain's increasing ethnic and cultural diversity by arguing that the country's Chinese diaspora plays a significant role in re-defining traditional notions of Spanishness.

CHAPTER ONE

THE IMAGINARY CHINESE

Mapping Chinatown in 1920s and 1930s Barcelona

Barcelona's Barrio Chino, a historically working class neighborhood, has witnessed the many transformations of Barcelona's urban space and political and social life. El Barrio Chino is a socially marginal, yet geographically central district that represents a space of ethnic, cultural and demographic diversity that, over the course of many decades, has supported Barcelona's self-proclamation as Spain's most "cosmopolitan" city. El Raval was first referred to as el Barrio Chino in the inaugural edition of the sensationalist weekly periodical *El Escándalo* in 1925. The magazine's co-founder and regular contributor Francisco Madrid repurposed the term as a way of characterizing the exotic allure of Barcelona's "barrios bajos." However, unlike the Chinatowns of New York, San Francisco and La Habana, Barcelona's Barrio Chino did not boast a large Chinese immigrant population during the 1920s and 1930s. Instead, when Madrid writes that Barcelona has its own "barrio chino," he is not referring to a specific Chinese enclave, but rather to a mythical notion of the Chinatown that had been circulating throughout the West, including Spain, since the mid-nineteenth century. The "Chinatown myth" frames the Chinatown as a space of exotic otherness that exists within the domestic frontiers of the city. Here I explore the deployment of the Chinatown myth in Barcelona and the neighborhood's role in establishing the city as part of an international circuit of cosmopolitan, modern metropolises while also serving as a frame for exploring marginal identities in 1920s and 1930s Barcelona.

The Chinatown myth is rooted historically in representations of Chinese migration to the West. Driven by socio-economic and political changes taking place across the globe, Chinese emigration—voluntary migration and the coolie slave trade—began during the nineteenth century, spurring a large-scale Chinese diaspora that in turn provoked social and political anxieties in the West. Chinese indentured servants were brought in slave-like conditions to

places in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly Cuba and Peru, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to satisfy the need for inexpensive labor following the abolition of the African slave trade. The Chinese arriving in the United States, on the other hand, were largely voluntary migrants enticed by the possibility of striking it rich in California's gold mines and who later worked on the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. In each of these distinct but overlapping contexts the image of the Chinese laborer became codified in the collective imagination of the (North and South) American public. The caricature of the Chinaman with small eyes, a long braid and a triangular straw hat began to appear in political cartoons that commented, often critically, on the growing Chinese immigrant population. This unprecedented migration from China to the Americas eventually resulted in the creation of Chinese ethnic enclaves in major urban centers, or Chinatowns.

In the United States, as large numbers of Chinese migrants arrived in major metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, Chinatowns became an established facet of the urban landscape. The earliest Chinese immigrants were almost exclusively male, many of whom had the intention of establishing a degree of financial stability before sending for their families later on. However, the Chinese Exclusion Act, signed into law in 1882, banned Chinese immigration to the United States and prevented immigrants' families from joining them. As a consequence, the ratio of men to women in the American Chinese diaspora remained extremely unequal even after decades of steady immigration (Wu 72). This unfavorable ratio was aggravated by anti-miscegenation laws, which prevented Chinese immigrants from marrying women of other races, and left the majority of Chinese males in the United States without familial ties. As such, American Chinatowns were populated primarily by single adult males with limited personal and professional opportunities, their social exclusion further reinforced by

legal policies barring the Chinese from most aspects of public life. The establishment of bars, brothels and opium dens that catered to these marginal "bachelor societies" in conjunction with the racial prejudice of the period contributed to the image of the Chinatown as a bastion of lawlessness and low morals.

The perception of the widespread availability of inexpensive Chinese labor as a threat to white workers was compounded by the persistent, forced isolation of the Chinese immigrant population from mainstream American society. While Chinatowns provided a social and economic safe haven, they also encouraged a lack of assimilation among Chinese immigrants. The Chinese Exclusion Act remains one of the most restrictive immigration laws in the history of the United States, and stands to illustrate the socio-political anxieties associated with the Chinese in the United States, and the West more generally during this period.[1] In Latin America, Chinese migrants and their descendants incited fears similar to those that produced the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States. Francisco Morán reminds us that "a través de todo el siglo XIX el asiático es objeto de una creciente discriminación que lo marca, en algunas regiones del continente [latinoamericano], como una otredad radical más allá de la cual el sujeto nacional y el latinoamericano no pueden ser imaginados" (387). Morán goes on to cite an article by the Cuban intellectual José Antonio Saco, "Los chinos en Cuba," written and published in Madrid in 1864, in which Saco warns that the moral and political dangers of large numbers of Chinese migrants on the island likely outweigh the benefits of their inexpensive labor (387).

The social anxiety associated with the Chinese in Cuba is echoed more than half a century later in the short story "Los chinos" (1927) by the Spanish-Cuban writer and diplomat

[1] For more on the history of immigration policy affecting Asian Americans and their impact on American culture see Lisa Lowe's seminal book, *Immigrant Acts.* For more on Chinese laborers and the Chinese diaspora in Cuba see Kathleen López's *Chinese Cubans*. Ignacio López-Calvo's monographs on the Chinese in Cuba and Peru are valuable resources on the Chinese diaspora and literary production in Latin America: *Imagining the Chinese in Cuban Literature* and *Dragons in the Land of the Condor*.

Alfonso Hernández Catá. “Los chinos” relates the tragic demise of a group of Chinese laborers brought in to replace striking plantation workers. At first the striking workers are convinced that the Chinese, described as “hormigas amarillas, diligentes y nerviosas,” are too frail to withstand the punishing work in the fields (Hernández Catá 117). However, when the Chinese prove more capable than expected, a number of the workers on strike hatch a plan to poison the Chinese. A few day after the massacre the narrator is surprised to see a small truck appear on the plantation: “de la vagoneta habían descendido treinta hombres amarillos, iguales, absurdamente iguales a los que yo vi caer muertos en la tierra” (121). The workers’ plan to kill off the Chinese scabs in an attempt to force negotiations with the plantation owners is foiled by what is described as an interminable supply of “hormigas amarillas.”

Lisa Lowe has written about the notion of the Asian “automaton whose inhuman efficiency will supersede American ingenuity” as part of a collection of images and attitudes that gave rise to the Chinese Exclusion Act, which effectively prohibited the integration of the Chinese into the fabric of the nation (18). “Los chinos” is evidence that similar anxieties were associated with the Chinese diaspora in the Caribbean during the early twentieth century. These Western fears associated with the Far East, and China in particular, are the foundation of the so-called Yellow Peril. In broad terms, Yellow Peril refers to the perception of the East as a threat to Western civilization. This view, widespread during parts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is the bedrock of many contemporary orientalist motifs, including the Chinatown myth, which has perpetuated representations of the Chinatown as a hotbed for drug use, prostitution and crime for over a century.

From its inception, the Chinatown was considered a “city within a city,” a world apart from the larger metropolis (Mayer, “Introduction” 6). The Yellow Peril ideology proliferated not

only via discriminatory legislation but also, and perhaps more significantly, through literature, film and popular media. William F. Wu has written on the history of the Chinatown novel in American fiction, many of which chronicle the downfall of white tourists, especially white women, in Chinatown's opium dens. Lascivious narratives about the decay of white women's morality include examples like *Stories of Chinatown: Sketches of Life in the Chinese Colony of Mott, Pell and Doyers Street* (1892) and *Edith: Story of a Chinatown* (1895). By way of these fictional narratives the stage was set for the mythical Chinatown, represented as a threat to Western society and defined by its opposition to Anglo-European morality and codes of conduct.

The popularity of Chinatown narratives was compounded by a plethora of visual depictions of the Chinese that promoted the Yellow Peril discourse. The role of visual culture in the spread of Yellow Peril is particularly relevant in terms of studying its expansion beyond national and linguistic frontiers.[2] While Chinatowns began to appear across the Americas during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was the image of the North American Chinatown as portrayed in sensationalist fiction that came to represent the quintessential Chinatown in the minds of readers and spectators throughout the West. The Chinatown of Hollywood films had a particularly expansive influence; films like *East is West* (1930) and *Charlie Chan Carries On* (1931) were set in Chinatowns and established popular tropes such as the curiosity shop and organized crime syndicates that would continue to appear in Chinatown films throughout the twentieth century. Interestingly, both films were among the dual language productions made by studios like Universal and Fox to cope with the language problem posed by the introduction of synchronized sound. The Spanish-language versions of these Chinatowns

[2] For more on the history of immigration policy affecting Asian Americans and their impact on American culture see Lisa Lowe's seminal book, *Immigrant Acts.* For more on Chinese laborers and the Chinese diaspora in Cuba see Kathleen López's *Chinese Cubans*. Ignacio López-Calvo's monographs on the Chinese in Cuba and Peru are valuable resources on the Chinese diaspora and literary production in Latin America: *Imagining the Chinese in Cuban Literature* and *Dragons in the Land of the Condor*.

films—*Oriente y occidente* and *Eran trece*—were distributed throughout the Spanish-speaking world and highlight the degree to which the fictionalized image of the North American Chinatown proliferated and took hold beyond the United States. Thanks in large part to the effectiveness of visual media circulating throughout the West, the construction of the Chinatown and the notion of Yellow Peril in the West are overlapping and interdependent.

Established in reaction to anti-Chinese sentiment and policies, Chinatowns, while providing a haven for immigrants excluded from the national body politic, also offered fodder for the development of the Chinatown myth. Originating in the wake of Chinese migration and the anxieties it provoked, the Yellow Peril and Chinatown rhetoric soon spread beyond those initial paths, propagated through what Ruth Mayer terms "shared political and cultural frameworks of segregation, marginalization, and exoticization" in the form of a "transnational fantasy, based on invented traditions" ("Introduction" 1). Theorizing the Chinatown myth as a transnational fantasy is essential to understanding the origins of Barcelona's Barrio Chino. Although Spain did not host a significant Chinese diaspora during the early twentieth century, the channels of dissemination that Mayer refers to circulated through Spain as these transnational fantasies crossed the Atlantic.

At the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the terms "el barrio chino" and "Chinatown" appeared frequently in Spanish newspapers and periodicals, most commonly in reference to the internationally infamous Chinatowns in New York and San Francisco. The earliest references in Spain come from nineteenth century periodicals and coincide in their negative depictions of Chinatowns and their inhabitants. In 1886, *La ilustración*, published in Barcelona and distributed throughout Spain's remaining colonies in the Americas and the Philippines, included a story entitled "La cruzada anti-china en los Estados Unidos y Australia"

on its front page. In the article, the author Federico Rahola comments on the rise of anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States:

> [Una] razón en que apoyan su cruzada anti-china es la inmoralidad que consigo han traído los chinos a los Estados Unidos […] Según afirman, en Chinatown, barrio de los chinos en San Francisco de California, la inmoralidad llega a su colmo, y la suciedad de las viviendas y la falta de higiene constituyen peligro constante de infección para la población blanca. (Rahola 211)

The article identifies the Chinese population of San Francisco as a physical threat to the health and well-being of the city's Anglo-American residents. What's more, it frames Chinese immigration as the spread of a contagion that places the white population in danger of infection. Rahola goes on to remind his Spanish readership that they, too, are at possible risk:

> Hasta ahora Europa no ha sufrido las consecuencias del desparrame de la fabulosa población de la China, evaluada en más de cuatrocientos millones de habitantes, pero el día que ese colosal imperio se vea organizado a la europea y disfrute de las ventajas de la civilización, entonces tal vez ese temible hormiguero humano reproduzca la historia de las espantosas invasiones mogólicas que asolaron el Occidente de Europa a fines de la Edad-Media. (210)

Rahola suggests that it is only the Chinese empire's lack of organization—read backwardness—that prevents it from becoming a world power. In this way he contrasts the East's implied primitivism with Europe's modern civilization. Anticipating the metaphor later employed in Hernández Catá's story of Chinese laborers in Cuba, he dehumanizes the Chinese people, portraying them as a terrifying and overwhelming mass of insects, a "temible hormiguero humano." Finally, Rahola makes reference, presumably, to the Mongolian invasions of Europe in

the thirteenth century, and as such reinforces and normalizes the East/West binary that shores up the Yellow Peril logic within the article. Press coverage of Chinatowns like this is evidence that the Yellow Peril ideology was well established in the Spanish imaginary despite the lack of a significant Chinese, or other East Asian immigrant population in Spain during this period.

The perceived threat of East Asia to Western civilization, embodied in the mythical Chinatown and defended against by anti-immigration policy, informed myriad representations of the Chinese in Western literature and film during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Perhaps the most well-known and widely adapted of these is Dr. Fu Manchu, the maniacal Chinese mastermind first brought to life by British novelist Sax Rohmer, who has said that Fu Manchu was inspired by a shadowy figure he encountered lurking in the allies of the Limehouse, London's Chinatown. Rohmer's first novel featuring Fu Manchu, *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu*, was published in 1913 and was quickly republished in the United States as *The Insidious Fu Manchu*, appearing in Spanish translation no later than 1920. The Fu Manchu character became larger than life, embodying a collection of fears and anxieties associated with the East. "Invest him with all the cruel cunning of an entire Eastern race," Rohmer wrote, and this is precisely what many Western readers did (25). A terrifying marriage of cunning and cruelty, Fu Manchu would become the face of the Yellow Peril in the West. The fictional villain, described as skeletal and vaguely effeminate, the antithesis to Western ideals of masculine strength, became rooted in the collective consciousness of readers, and later film audiences, throughout Europe, United States and Latin America as they imagined the goings-on within the growing, yet insular, network of Chinatowns worldwide.

On the subject of literary Chinatowns, Wu argues that "the desire of certain white authors to sensationalize their depictions of Chinatown results in the creation of fantasy stories [and] a

feeling of familiarity with Chinatown" (162). While Wu's study of Chinatown and Yellow Peril is limited to North American fiction I argue that the "feeling of familiarity" Wu identifies in the American public extends to the Spanish public as well. The Fu Manchu character, for example, would become deeply ingrained in Spanish popular culture throughout the twentieth century by way of literature, film and popular cultural ephemera.[3] This is particularly the case in post-war Barcelona, as is evidenced by Juan Marsé's frequent references to Fu Manchu in the context; the 1940s series *The Drums of Fu Manchu*, which was subsequently reimagined by José Grua Hernández as a comic in 1943, appears in a number of his novels.[4] Indeed, Fu Manchu has been played by numerous actors and reimagined in countless forms in what Mayer has called "the transnational serial unfolding of Fu Manchu" (*Serial Fu Manchu* 6). These multiple manifestations of the Fu Manchu character became integrated into the fabric of Spanish popular culture during the first half of the twentieth century.

While the circulation of the Yellow Peril discourse and the Chinatown myth precedes a substantial Chinese diaspora in Spain, this is not to say that there was a complete absence of Chinese residents in Spain during the early twentieth century. To the contrary, Spain's first wave of immigration from China began during the 1920s and 1930s and there is evidence that a few Chinese residents in Spain joined the Republican ranks during the Spanish Civil War.[5] Of course,

[3] Like *The Insidious Dr. Fu Manchu*, Rohmer's subsequent Fu Manchu novels were also translated into Spanish, many of which were published and distributed by Editorial Molina as part of the publisher's highly successful popular literature line, Biblioteca Oro. Both Warner Orland and Boris Karloff's performances as Fu Manchu were discussed in the popular Spanish film publication *Cinegramas* during the 1930s. The extremely successful serial *The Drums of Fu Manchu* was released in Spain during the 1940s and was later reimagined as a comic by José Grua Hernández in 1943. Fu Manchu also reappeared on screen in the 1946 Spanish production *El otro Fu-Manchú.*

[4] See the section titled "Hollywood Cinema and Orientalism and the Work of Juan Marsé" for more on this.

[5] For more on the role of Chinese volunteers in the Spanish Civil War see Tsou, Hwei-Ru and Len Tsou. *Los brigadistas chinos en la guerra civil: la llamada de España (1936-1939)*.

those numbers pale in comparison with Spain's contemporary Chinese population, which has grown nearly 450% since the 1990s and as of 2014 is the second largest non-EU immigrant group in Spain (Latham and Wu). Spain's earliest Chinese immigrant population during the 1920s and 1930s were primarily travelling merchants, many of whom would likely have spent time in other European countries as well. While a relatively small population, the presence of this small number of Chinese migrants in Spain during this period is significant because it represents one of the earliest encounters between the Chinese and their fictional representation in the Spanish imaginary.

Evidence of Spain's early Chinese immigrant population appears in a 1935 article published in *Crónica* titled "La vida pintoresca y no siempre alegre de los chinos del Barrio Chino barcelonés, que han sido chinos de todos los barrios del mundo" (fig. 4). Like many of the newspaper and magazine articles that explore Barcelona's Barrio Chino, the author, Trillas Blazquez, begins by outlining the geographic limits of the neighborhood: "De las Ramblas para acá, es Barcelona; de las Ramblas para allá, son los países distantes. Entrando por la Rambla en la calle Nueva, rumbo al Paralelo, la segunda travesía que baja hacia el mar es la calle Guardia. Una calle típica del Barrio Chino, con tascas, traperos, peinadores, casas de dormir y navajazos de tanto en tanto" (19). He positions himself on "this side" of the Ramblas, distinguishing his position from "that side," or "los países distantes." In this way el Barrio Chino effectively expands the city space for the *flâneur* who fancies a stroll across las Ramblas, thereby crossing from Barcelona, Cataluña, Spain to the mysteriously generic "países distantes."

Los chinos del Barrio Chino de Barcelona viven en misérrimos albergues; se contentan, como alimento, con repollo, arroz y patatas, y trabajan sin descanso en la fabricación de las baratijas que luego venden en la calle, sosteniendo con el público los más pintorescos diálogos.

CRONICA en Barcelona.

La vida pintoresca y no siempre alegre de los chinos del Barrio Chino barcelonés, que han sido chinos de todos los barrios chinos del mundo.

ra definitiva, cantadores de *jazz* delgados y olivá-ceos, negros ceremoniosos con cuello de celuloide y bombín; bailarinas javanesas, que cayeron atontadas por estas tierras, y aquí se quedaron; húngaros, ju-díos, griegos, chinos, carteristas, invertidos, emigra-dos políticos de todas las latitudes... Aquí es el único sitio donde puede verse a un chino sin male-tín y sin ristras de collares. A veces entran y ense-ñan en la mano un puñado de calderilla. Son «tles leales para *mi*, *fatsa* y *selajú*».

El tendero, paciente tendero, les hace un paque-tito con lo pedido, y se lo entrega.

—¿Qué gasto le han hecho?

—¿No les ha oído usted? Tres reales.

—Sí; eso, sí. Pero lo otro, lo de *mi*, *fatsa* y *selajú*,

Figure 4: Article featured in *Crónica* about Chinese residents in Barcelona's Barrio Chino.

The author goes on to describe a street scene typical of el Barrio Chino: thieves, heavy-set and bearded prostitutes, a tavern "que hiede a vino y a sudor," and a general store where customers come to purchase goods through a gate guarding the establishment's entrance. The shopkeeper recognizes the Chinese customers who frequent his shop and the author confirms that they live nearby on the calle Guardia. Yet, despite their evident familiarity as neighborhood regulars, the otherness of el Barrio Chino's Chinese residents remains remarkable to the author:

> Gente curiosa ésta, sin la cual Edgar Wallace no hubiera podido dibujar sus más crueles tipos, y los magos de Hollywood se hubieron visto negros para encontrar 'traidores' fotogénicos. Les han saturado de tal manera de literatura folletinesca, que se hace imposible concebir un chino medio decente. Tras cada chino, uno ve fumadores de opio, trapas disimuladas con alfombras, mujeres silenciosas agazapadas tras las cortinas, hombres devorados por los cocodrilos mientras Fu-Manchú echa una partidita de *mah-*

jong. Es una cosa tremenda. Y, sin embargo, estos chinitos del Barrio Chino barcelonés tienen cara de buenos chicos. (19)

In describing the Chinese men, Trillas Blazquez immediately has recourse to literary and cinematic tropes, linking the fictional representation of the Chinese in the Western world to the material reality of Chinese immigrants living in close proximity to their Spanish and Catalan neighbors. He references the work of Edgar Wallace, the prolific British novelist and screen writer, best known for his racist depiction of colonial Africa and for penning the first draft of the *King Kong* screenplay shortly before his death in 1933. Without the Chinese, Trillas Blazquez suggests, writers such as Wallace and Hollywood's "magicians" would have been at a loss for credible models on which to fashion their most terrible villains. In this way, Trillas Blazquez makes evident the pervasive influence of Hollywood and northern European fiction on the Spanish conception of the non-Western subject, particularly the Chinese. He confesses his own conflation of the individuals he encounters on the street with the fictional tropes that populate his imagination: behind every Chinese person he sees an opium smoker, a silent, crouching woman, even the insidious Fu Manchu himself. Although Trillas Blazquez comments that "estos chinitos … tienen cara de buenos chicos" he recognizes that it is almost impossible for a Westerner such as himself to see beyond the exotic caricatures dancing across his imagination.

Still, in 1925, when Francisco Madrid first baptized el Raval as el Barrio Chino in the pages of *El Escándalo*, his inspiration and referent were not the district's few Chinese residents, but rather the Chinatown myth that was already firmly cemented in the Spanish imaginary. The reference first appears in a column titled "Los bajos fondos de Barcelona" in which Madrid addresses his readers directly, writing, "Lectora, lector … he aquí el distrito quinto; he aquí los personajes que han arrancado de su ambiente 'Amichate,' Luis Capdevila, Eduardo Carballo,

para escribir sus dramas, sus artículos, sus novelas; he aquí toda la fiereza y toda la brutalidad del distrito quinto. Es el distrito quinto la llaga de la ciudad; es el barrio bajo; es el domicilio de la mala gente." Madrid links Barcelona to other major metropolitan cities through the notion of the urban underbelly; Barcelona, Madrid announces, "como Buenos Aires, como Moscou, tiene su 'barrio chino.'" In a style reminiscent of Trillas Blazquez's use of literary references to describe the Chinese migrants of el Barrio Chino a decade later, Madrid employs a *costumbrista* style typology to describe the "personajes del barrio chino."

As the magazine's title suggests, *El Escándalo* prided itself on offering its public salacious reading material, making the fifth district an obvious choice for journalists looking for sensationalist stories with shock appeal. With the exception of Robert A. Davidson's reading of the magazine in his study on Jazz Age Barcelona, however, *El Escándalo* has been largely overlooked by studies on serial publications during the 1920s and 1930s in Spain. Robert A. Davidson notes the modernity of the magazine's format and content, arguing that, "even if it partook of hyperbole on many occasions, motives aside, when it came to the job of reporting, *El Escándalo* documented accurately Barcelona's particular zeitgeist. The aspiring modern metropolis, warts and all, was the paper's general focus" (17). On the whole, *El Escándalo* consistently emphasizes el Barrio Chino as a marker of Barcelona's growing cosmopolitanism. A 1926 article on the front page of *El Escándalo* recognizes that "Barcelona goza de una fama que deja bastante que desear en cuanto a moralidad" (1). The author, Andrés Hurtado, contests this notion, however, suggesting that despite the city's reputation the number of couples who have "atentado contra la moral" in the month of May (known for its aphrodisiac effect, he adds) is relatively low; hence the article's tongue-in-cheek title, "Que nos canonicen." To contextualize his staunch defense of Barcelona's morality, the author takes the opportunity to elaborate on the

changing social landscape of modern Barcelona:

> Ciudad cosmopolita, se la considera con una despreocupación en las costumbres rayana libertinaje. La vida nocturna de Barcelona, con sus centenares de cafés conciertos y cabarets, con su censo nutridísimo de mujeres galantes, que se prolonga hasta bien entrada la mañana, es una continua excitación de la juerga. […] Añadan ustedes que hay en Barcelona un millón de habitantes, de todos los países y pudiéramos decir que todas las razas, y como se sabe que la moral cambia según las latitudes, convengamos en que, en general, ello ha de crear un ambiente de tolerancia y de comprensión. (1)

Hurtado juxtaposes the city's vibrant nightlife with its growing immigrant population as evidence of Barcelona's cosmopolitanism. Although Hurtado's claim that Barcelona hosts "todas las razas" might be a generous description of the city's ethnic and racial diversity in 1926, it reveals a desire to conceive of the city as accommodating a wide range of people and lifestyles.

As Davidson notes, "the Jazz Age spirit manifested in Barcelona during the Age's gentrification period was fueled in part by the habits of upper classes that emulated the social codes of Parisians, Londoners and New Yorkers" (35). In other words, Barcelona's fifth district was reinvented as el Barrio Chino with its gaze fixed on cultural capitals in the United States and Northern Europe. Published during the period between Barcelona's two World Fairs (1888 and 1929), the magazine was able to tap into the rhythm of the city's urban life at a moment when Barcelona's was stepping onto the world stage as a center for the arts and culture. Davidson mentions the way in which the emerging gentrification of the city during these decades transformed el Barrio Chino into a nightlife hub during the 1920s and 1930s, drawing middle and upper class revelers attracted by the neighborhood's grittiness. *El Escándalo* itself is a product of this gentrifying force in Barcelona's fifth district. The weekly publication presents itself as going

"where others fear to tread," enthralling readers with salacious details about the city's seediest corners (Davidson 27).

The outward gaze Davidson describes is met by the equally penetrating gaze of foreign tourists for whom Barcelona's fifth district represents an opportunity to experience a more "primitive" culture. Joan Ramon Resina, who has written about the evolution of Barcelona's Barrio Chino through European travel writing, describes el Barrio Chino as a "peephole" through which foreign travelers peer at Barcelona, suggesting that the image of the larger city—and its modernity—is formed through the tourist's perception of the fifth district (103). Resina argues that "exposure to life's hard edges in Barcelona's fifth district was eagerly consumed by interlopers who were, before anything else, voyeurs of abjection […] they scented an atmosphere in which Western taboos ceased to operate. Under their anthropological gaze, those grim and dour streets placed Western morality under erasure" (99). In this way Barcelona's fifth district becomes the site of the same kind of tourism that had been occurring for decades in American Chinatowns. In his study of New York's Chinatown, Jan Lin describes how during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "it became fashionable for middle-class New Yorkers to go slumming in Chinatown […] and other less respectable parts of town to 'rub shoulders with sinners' and see 'how the other half lives'" (174). A similar phenomenon took place in San Francisco's Chinatown, where bus tours carried droves of curious tourists to scrutinize the neighborhood's residents and businesses from the safety of the bus's interior. Barcelona's fifth district experienced a curious inversion of the same process; while growing Chinatowns in North American attracted tourists interested in experiencing the exotic at home, it was the very arrival of foreign tourists to Barcelona's fifth district that transformed the neighborhood from a common working class neighborhood into the city's "Chinatown." The invention of the fifth district as el

Barrio Chino creates a logic within which the urban thrill seeker can experience the exotic and dangerous side of the modern metropolis with relative safety and ease.

In his analysis of the fifth district's transformation, Resina suggests that el Barrio Chino might have been a term adopted precisely to evade the period's stringent censorship policy rather than an attempt to evoke a particular sense of place that linked the district to the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco (104). Chris Ealham, on the other hand, reads the adoption of the Chinatown myth in Barcelona as politically motivated in that it offered reformers from both sides of the fractionalized elite a framework through which they could advocate for social control and hygiene by borrowing from the hysteria produced by the Yellow Peril and Chinatown discourses in the United States. For Ealham, *El Escándalo* exhibited a trend within Spanish liberalism that, while self-identifying as politically liberal and modern, "was heavily inflected by the discourse of nineteenth-century reformers and moralists and revealed an unwavering fixation with the preservation of order" (392). While the exact details of its origin may be difficult to determine, the name has nevertheless incorporated the neighborhood into an international circuit of Chinatowns, despite the curious absence of Chinese inhabitants.

Francisco Madrid's fascination with el Barrio Chino as a site for bourgeois tourism and burgeoning Catalan cosmopolitanism extended beyond the pages of *El Escándalo* to his similarly themed novel *Sangre en atarazanas* (1926), in which Barcelona's fifth district features as a central protagonist. The text is constructed as a mosaic of vignettes that explore the neighborhood's darkest crevices. A blend of melodramatic prose and investigative journalism, Madrid's first-person narrative adopts his habitual *costumbrista* style, highlighting the dangers and vices of everyday life in el Barrio Chino. Throughout the novel Madrid continues to draw cultural links between el Barrio Chino and a post-national and multicultural cosmopolitan ideal:

> A mí el barrio bajo, el bajo fondo me inspira una gran curiosidad. Está allí el verdadero sentido primitivo de todas las ciudades. No hay nacionalismo profundo. Un barrio bajo es el principio de la idea internacionalista. Nadie es del país y todos lo son: rusos, montenegrinos, chinos, franceses, ingleses pueblan un barrio bajo y forman una república. […] El distrito V es toda Europa. (77-8)

This passage exemplifies Madrid's invention of el Barrio Chino as a space of tolerance that inscribes Barcelona—and perhaps Cataluña and Spain more broadly—into a network of European cosmopolitanism. Despite his characterization of el Barrio Chino as a den of vices Madrid also celebrates el Barrio Chino as a kind of multiethnic cabaret where diverse identities may be performed, thus creating a link between Barcelona's Barrio Chino and other edgy, progressive spaces of cultural production in Europe and the Americas.

Indeed, in a section of *Sangre en atarazanas* titled "Las tres etapas de la mala vida moderna de Barcelona" Madrid deploys the metaphor of the cabaret in proposing a history of modern Barcelona as divided into three epochs, emblemized respectively by the *café de camareras*, *el cabaret* and *el dancing*. Madrid writes from the third period—*el dancing*—which, he claims, is representative of a new era in Barcelonan public life: "*Dancing*. Esta palabra lo encierra todo. Es la piedra de toque de nuestra civilización; la argolla y el libro de nuestra actualidad. El negro que brinca arrancando del saxofón las notas últimas del Charleston recién llegado; el bajo que ayuda a trasladarnos a la selva virgen a través de un *cock-tail* de veinte licores y de un solo color" (173). Madrid holds the *dancing* up as a symbol of modernity that, in turn, links el Barrio Chino to other emblems of Jazz Age cosmopolitanism: African-American jazz, the Charleston and prohibition-era cocktails. The *dancing* is a space defined by music, motion and the modernity of urban life in the early twentieth century; it is the physical

manifestation of a link that Madrid makes throughout *Sangre en atarazanas* and *El Escándalo* between el Barrio Chino and the emerging modernity of cultural capitals like New York and London. It is important to note that the exotic appeal of this emerging modernity in the 1920s is marked by racial difference. Like racially marked American jazz music and celebrities like Josephine Baker, the Chinatown of the 1920s represented an exoticism accessible to the emerging middle class in Europe and the Americas. Madrid's representation of Barcelona's fifth district appeals to this same curiosity, while serving the dual purpose of affirming the greater city's cosmopolitanism.

The drug use, brothels and bars historically associated with el Barrio Chino represent a uniquely urban, and in many ways modern, way of consuming (in) the city. These avenues for consumption anticipate to some degree the continuing transformation of Barcelona's urban space into a theme-park style venue for tourism and capitalist exchange at the turn of the twenty-first century. As el Barrio Chino became an established and more widely recognized part of Barcelona's urban landscape a broader public began to visit the neighborhood for its rousing dancehalls, taverns and cabarets. In turn, el Barrio Chino began to attract increasing numbers of tourists, and capital, from other parts of the city while the neighborhood itself straddled the categories of the commonplace and the illicit. As urban anthropologist Gary W. McDonogh explains, "by the 1930s the barrio chino epitomized that which was attractive and repulsive for the bourgeoisie who controlled the city. On the one hand, it was portrayed as a zone of manageable vice and pleasure, especially for the males of the city. On the other hand, reformers on both the left and the right […] called for its eradication" (176). For an emerging cultural capital like Barcelona, el Barrio Chino marked the city as definitively modern, while, as we have seen, also representing a problem for social reformers of the period.

In his comprehensive history of the neighborhood's Paco Villar explains how a more heterogeneous population began to visit el Barrio Chino in the 1930s, spurring the gentrification of the neighborhood: "una avalancha [que] provocó unas ganancias cuantiosas a muchos comerciantes y, por consiguiente, también generó reformas; unas reformas dirigidas a un público más acomodaticio" (211). This early gentrification process can be read as a predecessor to the kind of reform and development that would transform Barcelona, including el Barrio Chino, more radically at the end of the twentieth century. This gradual gentrification stimulated by the consumption of the neighborhood as a tourist destination required the sterilization of certain aspects in order to make it more palatable for a less adventurous set of tourists while still maintaining a degree of its initial allure as a marginal space. This was made possible in large part by the neighborhood's appropriation of the Chinatown trope, which alluded to racial otherness and perpetuated the neighborhood's claim to the exotic by way of the name itself.

A 1935 profile of Barcelonan bars and *cafés* by Trillas Blazquez published in *Crónica* demonstrates el Barrio Chino's shift from disreputable and dangerous ghetto to the more sanitized neighborhood that would become increasingly accessible to a broader range of nightlife revelers. In the article Trillas Blazquez claims that "ni en Marsellas, ni Singapoore, ni en Hong-Kong, ni en el viejo Hamburgo, ni en la costa pacífica es posible encontrar cabarets tan limpios y tan económicos como los de Barcelona" (6). It is impossible to imagine Francisco Madrid describing el Barrio Chino's dancehalls as clean and economical ten years earlier in the pages of *El Escándalo.* However clean and reasonably priced, el Barrio Chino's nightlife offerings retain their superior entertainment value over Barcelona's more conventional establishments, which Trillas Blazquez perceives as less authentic and overrun by "unas pretensiones escandalosas." In el Barrio Chino's *cabarets* "sucede todo lo contrario. En cualquiera de estos establecimientos

nocturnos de Barcelona se divierte uno de verdad, y por una peseta se puede tomar una gaseosa o una cerveza inofensiva" (6).

Although Trillas Blazquez downplays the sordid reputation of el Barrio Chino's bars and clubs, the reality is that many visitors to Barcelona's fifth district sought out precisely the kind of transgressive entertainment that was difficult to find elsewhere. What Trillas Blazquez testifies to in his profile of the neighborhood's cafés and cabarets is the mainstreaming of the dirty, dangerous and exotic as a commodity. While the neighborhood was no longer the bastion of petty crime it was at the turn of the century, it remained a space defined by the performance of transgression. Many of el Barrio Chino's cabarets were known for their varied, and sometimes risqué, performances. In particular, *los transformistas* or *imitadores de estrellas* became a main attraction in many of el Barrio Chino's most popular establishments. In fact, the *Crónica* article by Trillas Blazquez includes a photograph of one *imitador de estrellas* (fig. 5) with a caption comparing him to the other female performers profiled in the article: "En cambio, aquí tienen ustedes a un 'imitador de estrellas,' de esos que sólo trabajan hasta la una y media, hora en que se van las familias y llega la gente alegre" (8). These male performers dressed in drag performed *cuplés* and other folkloric numbers for the droves of neighborhood residents and tourists that came to see them. According to Paco Villar, the transformista tradition boasted a long history in Barcelona, and el Barrio Chino in particular, reaching the height of its popularity during the Second Republic.[6] Although not all of el Barrio Chino's cabarets featured transformistas in their lineup, the most well known such as La Criolla, Casa Sacristán and el Gran Kursaal certainly did. La Criolla and Casa Sacristán, along with other similar venues, also became centers for the marginalized homosexual minority of the period.

[6] The life of one well-known transformista and anarchist during the 1920s inspired the play *Flor de otoño* (1973), which was adapted as a film, *Un hombre llamado flor de otoño* (1978), before its first staging in 1982.

En cambio, aquí tienen ustedes a un «imitador de estrellas»,de esos que sólo trabajan hasta la una y media, hora en que se van las familias y llega la gente alegre. A estos transformistas o imitadores les da, en cambio, por los cuplés trágicos y cursis, del tipo de «El Relicario».
(Fots. Torrents)

Figure 5: A photograph of an *imitador de estrellas* published in *Crónica* in 1935.

While homosexuality was more tolerated during the Second Republic than under Franco's dictatorship, the lifestyles and behaviors associated with homosexual subcultures were hardly considered acceptable in mainstream Spanish society during the 1930s, and less so under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship of the previous decade. Madrid writes about el Barrio Chino's homosexuals, whom he describes as "invertidos," in *Sangre en atarazanas* and the subject of homosexuality also appears in various editions of *El Escándalo*. As he did with many aspects of life in el Barrio Chino, Madrid describes the homosexual community with curiosity and a degree of revulsion. In a chapter titled "Vidas estrafalarias" he describes how "generalmente los imitadores de estrellas empiezan por ser invertidos y acaban en artistas" (*Sangre* 76). In other words, el Barrio Chino's bars and cabarets became a space to perform identities that were impossible to express in other parts of Spanish society at the time.

In 1934 Casa Sacristán underwent major renovations as part of el Barrio Chino's transformation during the mid-1930s. During the renovations Casa Sacristán was renamed Wu-

Li-Chang and its interior was redecorated in an orientalist style. The bar's new name came directly from the title character of Mr. Wu, a play written by British playwrights Harold Owen and Harry M. Vernon that was first staged in London in 1913. The story takes place in colonial Hong Kong and follows a typical orientalist plotline in which Wu-Li-Chang's daughter is seduced by an English merchant, staining the family's honor, enraging her father, and leading to a tragic ending. A Spanish-language adaptation entitled *Wu-Li-Chang* debuted at the Teatro Lara in Madrid in 1920 to rave reviews. Ten years later MGM produced a Spanish-language film adaptation of the play starring the well-known Spanish actors José Crespo and Ernesto Vilches, who had played Wu-Li-Chang in the stage play as well. The film received significant coverage in Spanish newspapers and magazines and was screened in cities across Spain.[7] Thus the *Wu-Li-Chang* character and narrative would have been widely known and recognizable in 1934 when Casa Sacristán was remodeled and renamed. As Trillas Blazquez exclaims in his article on el Barrio Chino's cabarets "¡cómo había de faltar un Wu-Li-Chang en el Barrio Chino!" (8).

In this way the cabaret Wu-Li-Chang becomes a space in which the racialized exoticness of the Chinatown and the performance of marginalized identities in Barcelona coalesce. In the renovated Wu-Li-Chang Oriental-inspired performances lived up to the cabaret's new name, including the performance by the well-known transformista Mirko, pictured below (fig. 6). Mirko's Chinese costume complements the chinoiserie-style lettering that adorns the ornamental pillars inside the cabaret, and a few of the audience members even appear to be wearing coolie-style straw hats in keeping with the Chinese-themed performance. The transformation of Casa Sacristán into the Wu-Li-Chang cabaret makes evident the powerful influence of the Chinatown myth in establishing the Chinatown—imagined or real—as a place for staging otherness. The transformista performances that took place in el Barrio Chino, and at Wu-Li-Chang especially,

[7] *El Sol* and *Cinegramas* reported on the release of the Spanish-language film *Wu-Li-Chang* in the 1930s.

speak to the way in which the exoticness of the Chinatown serves as a frame within which otherness can be explored, performed and even celebrated.

Figure 6: Mirko performing at Wu-Li-Chang in 1935.

Of particular interest here is the way in which otherness manifests as queer, the "Chineseness" of el Barrio Chino oversimplified and appropriated as a tool for expressing other kinds of marginal identities, such as homosexuality. Like other forms of orientalism, the Chinatown myth produces a curious blend of attraction and repulsion that mirrors in some ways the appeal of the transformista performance. Mayer theorizes the cinematic representation of the Chinatown, a popular trope during the silent film and early sound era, as a tool for negotiating modernity and urban space. It is precisely the overwhelming abundance of the Chinatown, largely available for consumption, which points to the unique experience of the modern metropolis:

The Chinatown presents a particularly fraught version of modern urbanity in its

> configuration of periphery and center, inclusion and exclusion, West and East. Seen in this way, filmic Chinatowns constitute an exemplary instance of the negotiations of modernity, figuring a paradigmatically modern space that corresponds with the "hyperstimulus of the modern metropolis." (Mayer, "Glittering Machine" 664)

Barcelona's Barrio Chino is emblematic of this "hyperstimulus of the modern metropolis." Like the cinematic Chinatowns of the early twentieth century, el Barrio Chino is a space—or a series of spaces, performances and identities—available for consumption. More specifically, el Barrio Chino's lack of actual Chinese demands the exaggerated overfilling of this emptiness with a fetishized representation of Chineseness, which makes the myth more easily consumed. A fictional notion of the Chinatown and the orientalist décor borrowed from the *mise-en-scene* of Hollywood's Chinatown films becomes the backdrop against which a particular series of urban spaces and identities can be performed and consumed in Barcelona. By borrowing this "oriental mystique," so to speak, el Barrio Chino is able to slip in and out of various categories: at once cosmopolitan and European; primitive and non-Western. The Chinatown myth provides an internationally understood framework within which alterity can be absorbed into the fabric of the city, the region, and the nation at large.

Mayer has described the Chinatown as:

> part of a disjointed and disparate new urban geography which is no longer to be charted on the grounds of the old maps. Chinatowns are spaces with their own rules, but they are by no means Chinese-only territory—to the contrary, their very immersion in the traffickings of the tourist industry and in transnational trade relations turn them into sites of contact and exchange. ("The Greatest Novelty" 120)

In the case of el Barrio Chino the orientalist name and décor set the stage for the performance of

otherness in various forms; the neighborhood's prostitutes, drug users and drag performers represent sectors of society that were limited to the geographic space of el Barrio Chino. By demarcating its own Chinatown, Barcelona positions itself within a network of cosmopolitan, Western metropolises and, as such, affirms its modernity and its European identity at a moment when Spain was perceived by many as peripheral to European modernity. If the Chinatown is a marker of modernity and cosmopolitanism, then by establishing one of its own Barcelona also adopts the orientalist gaze implicit in the historic representation of Chinatowns and the Chinese in the West. For a country plagued by a sense of marginality and inferiority in relation to Europe's political and cultural capitals—an anxiety embodied in the well known and often cited phrase "África empieza en los pirineos"—, the exotic otherness of the Chinatown is conveniently *more other* than Spain's own position on the European periphery. However, within the modernity of el Barrio Chino is ingrained a certain kind of orientalism that, I argue, becomes firmly embedded in the Spanish imaginary.

Unlike el Barrio Chino of the 1920s and 1930s, twenty-first century Barcelona hosts a thriving Chinese community. In recent decades the Chinese diaspora in Spain has continued to grow and currently constitutes one of the largest and fastest growing immigrant communities in Spain. As el Barrio Chino has continued to gentrify, continuing its century-long transformation from Barcelona's dangerous underbelly to an epicenter for the consumption of nightlife and entertainment, the Chinatown myth has been successfully commodified in el Barrio Chino in a way that makes the fifth's district's allure more palatable to tourists. Meanwhile, Barcelona's growing Chinese community remains largely absent from the city's original "Chinatown," instead establishing other Chinatowns—in the original sense of term—not in the center of the city, but in its outskirts, particularly the Fondo neighborhood in the northeast suburb of Santa

Coloma de Gramanet. As Chinese-owned businesses began to pop up in major Spanish cities, a 2008 article in *El Mundo* titled "Fondo, un nuevo 'China Town' que crece en el extrarradio barcelonés" asked the question, "pero ¿dónde viven las familias chinas que se establecen en la capital catalana?" The answer was not el Barrio Chino: "hace años que El Raval dejó de ser, de facto, el barrio chino barcelonés […] es el barrio de Fondo, en Santa Coloma de Gramanet, en el que numerosas familias de origen oriental han encontrado acomodo" (Garrido).

Spain's growing Chinese population is making a significant contribution to the country's increasing ethnic and cultural diversity. Unlike Chinatowns in other major American and European cities, which were the very product of racial prejudice and discrimination, Barcelona's Barrio Chino was founded on a myth that easily glossed over the complex issues of race inherent in the logic of the Chinatown. The presence of Spain's contemporary Chinese diaspora, however, has begun to highlight many of those issues in the Spanish and Catalan contexts. How can a degree of "Chineseness" be incorporated into Spanish and Catalan society? How will the country's growing population of Chinese Spaniards fit into existing models for national and regional identities in the coming decades? Historically, Chinatowns have been spaces where these kinds of questions have been hashed out over the course of many generations. For Barcelona, these concerns are coming to the fore nearly a century after el Raval became el Barrio Chino; and they are being addressed not in the center of the city but rather on its edges in a neighborhood that has hosted previous generations of migrants from Andalucía and other parts of the global south. The Chinatown myth and its sensationalized and fetishized reading of Chineseness have long been at the heart of Barcelona's urban space, while the weightier questions of ethnic diversity and its role in the construction of Barcelonan identity remain on the periphery.

Anna May Wong and Cinema Culture of the Silver Age

Early American and European cinemas are replete with orientalist motifs. For the early twentieth century spectator the sumptuous hyperbole with which European orientalism had constructed the Far East in fine art and literature was encountered anew on the silver screen. From biblical epics such as D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) to cautionary tales of miscegenation like *The Cheat* (1915) and *The Sheik* (1921), representations of the Orient quickly became a staple of the Hollywood and European repertoires. Homay King describes the experience of entering Grauman's Chinese Theater in Los Angeles—an icon of twentieth century film culture—as "a hall of mirrors where orientalist décor becomes intertwined with, and to some extent inseparable from, the illusionistic lure of cinema itself" (2) (Fig. 7).

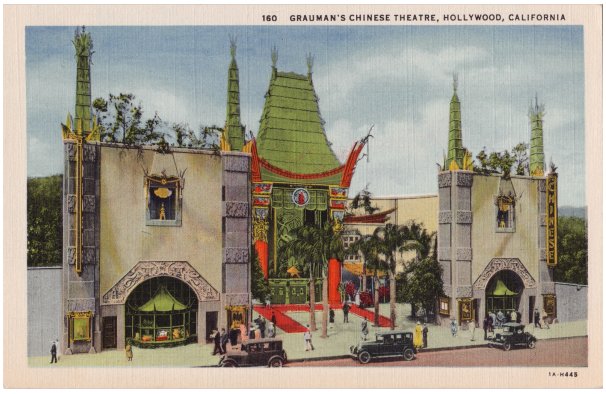


Figure 7: A postcard from the 1940s showing Grauman's Chinese Theater in Los Angeles.

Yet, despite the prevalence of Asian and Arab settings, characters and mise-en-scene, film stars of the teens, 20s and 30s were generally white; Asian characters were almost always played by white actors in yellowface, particularly if those characters were among the film's main protagonists. Well know examples include Warner Oland, the Swedish-born American actor, who played Fu Manchu and later Charlie Chan, two of Hollywood's most well-known Chinese characters. The same was true of Hollywood's Spanish-language productions, in which Spanish and Latin American actors were frequently cast to play Asian characters. Despite the close

proximity of Los Angeles' Chinatown and its large Asian minorities[8] to Hollywood studios, ethnically Asian actors were almost entirely relegated to roles as secondary characters and extras. There were exceptions to this rule; during the silent film period Japanese actor Sessue Hayakawa rose to fame, becoming something of a heartthrob of his time. Hayakawa's brief stardom, however, was surpassed by that of the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong, who broke barriers and contributed to an emerging conversation about race in Hollywood and European cinema.

Although Wong only worked in select European capitals, her popularity quickly spread throughout the rest of Europe. In 1935, during a second residency in Europe, Wong traveled to Madrid where she performed at the Casablanca Theater. Already an international star, Wong's visit to Madrid garnered extensive coverage in the Spanish press, including Spanish film magazines. This trip to Madrid in 1935 coincided with the peak of Wong's celebrity. This section considers Wong's coverage in the Spanish press and film magazines leading up to and during her 1935 visit. With special attention paid to the role of fashion in articulating Wong's celebrity identity, I examine the ways in which Spanish publications of the 1920s and the 1930s construct Wong's identity as simultaneously Oriental, American, and European, arguing that for the Spanish—and largely female—readership, access to Wong's celebrity through these film magazines served as a tool for constructing *themselves* as modern and cosmopolitan.

Born and raised close to Hollywood in Los Angeles' Chinatown, Wong began her film career at a young age. By the time she was a teenager she had appeared as an extra in numerous films and had a small number of credited roles to her name. By the 1930s she was a truly international film star, working not only in Hollywood, but also in Germany and Great Britain.

[8] Both were the product of Chinese immigration to the west coast of the United States during the nineteenth century.

As scholars Karen J. Leong and Shirley Lim have noted, Wong's Chinese-American identity imposed limitations on her acting career, but also offered her a unique position in relationship to Western notions of modernity and cosmopolitanism. Although there has been some research on the impact of Wong's stardom on European conceptions of cosmopolitanism during the 1920s and 1930s—perhaps most notable is Lim's article on Wong's encounter with German philosopher Walter Benjamin, which will be discussed later in greater detail—scholars have given Wong's reception in Europe less attention. And yet, it was precisely Wong's 1928 sojourn in Europe, a period in which she made many of her most highly regarded films, that ignited her celebrity upon returning to Hollywood. For American cinemagoers, Wong's contact with Europe during the late 1920s elevated her status from a struggling actress born in Chinatown to a symbol of cosmopolitan hybridity, and made her a star.

The experience of cinema during the first half of the twentieth century extended beyond the limits of the screen itself. The development of the star system, pioneered in Hollywood and later adopted by film industries worldwide, capitalized on the allure of film stars as a way to draw spectators.[9] The fan magazine, which developed in tandem with the star system, became a fundamental vehicle for celebrity and, in turn, the commercial success of film studios. Alongside news about celebrities and reports on the film industry, these magazines included advertisements directed towards their largely female readership. This kind of content highlights the strong link between the film industry and the development of female consumerism during these decades. Scholars have commented on the role of film culture as a powerful medium for promoting this nascent female consumerism by capitalizing on women's strong identification with the characters and narratives on screen.

[9] For more on the star system in Spain see Vernon and Woods Peiró.

Writing on fan magazine discourse during the 1920s, Gaylyn Studlar nevertheless argues for a more nuanced understanding of the links between female fandom and consumerism, suggesting that these magazines encouraged a more active role for the female reader. She writes:

> The fan magazine's "double perspective" of reading suggests that women's emotional investment in stars should not automatically be equated with a collapse of identity into object. Instead, what is evoked by both the tone and content of the fan magazines is more on the order of an identification with stardom as a kind of "masquerade," a play with identity. […] Such a masquerade, with its suggestion of a "fetishistic" balance of belief and disbelief, no doubt would have elicited the understanding of many women in the 1920s who themselves were engaged in an attempt to resituate themselves in relation to changing concepts of female social and sexual identity. (275)

In contrast to other theories, Studlar suggests that fan magazines offered a new model for feminine agency that appealed to the economically and sexually emancipated "New Woman" of the early twentieth century (278). Studlar's reading of the fan magazine is specific to Hollywood cinema and the American context. Nonetheless, her analysis is also useful when reading film magazines of the same period in Spain, where the medium had an equally significant social and cultural function.

In his exhaustive study of film magazines from the 1930s, Aitor Hernández Eguíluz describes the 58 distinct publications produced during the period of Spain's Second Republic (28). Noting the large number of magazines published during the 1930s, he suggests that even more were likely produced during the 1920s, which is to say that these decades were something of a golden age for film magazines in Spain (39). Although there is little information regarding the distribution and readership of these magazines, many published tens of thousands of copies.

Moreover, Hernández Eguílez suggests that it is likely that numerous readers shared each individual copy, particularly during a period in Spain when multi-generational households were still the social norm, thereby further extending their potential readership (40). In other words, the film magazine in Spain was an enormously popular medium that became a central form of popular cultural expression and consumption. The magazine's focus on visual information—large photo displays often accompanied by minimal text—made the publications accessible to a wide audience during a period of widespread illiteracy in Spain.[10]

Fashion played an important role in developing female consumerism and was a central aspect of celebrity discourse in film magazines. Shirley Lim has written on the role of fashion in Wong's celebrity, claiming that the film star "used modern fashion to claim beauty, humanity and modernity for Chinese Americans." (75). Lim reads Wong's ability to project her public persona as embodying both the "New Woman" and her Chinese heritage—understood in the West to be very traditional—as the key to her success as an icon of female modernity during the 1930s. For example, the "coolie" style hat was part of Wong's signature look long before the model became more widespread in the 1940s. Modeled after the straw hats worn by Chinese laborers[11], Wong often donned a modernized version of the same shape, fashioned in felted wool or straw (fig. 8). Wong pioneered the look over a decade before the coolie hat became a staple of Dior's "New Look" in 1947, evidence that supports Lim's claim that Wong determined fashion trends instead of simply reflecting them (fig. 9).

[10] Rates of illiteracy were still high during the 1920s and 1930s despite advances made by the Second Republic to improve literacy nationwide.

[11] The name of the style, "coolie hat," is a reference to the Chinese who were forcibly brought to the Americas in slave-like conditions during the nineteenth century.

Figure 8: Wong in a coolie-style hat (*Cinegramas* 1934)

Figure 9: Dior's "New Look," 1947.

Wong's two appearances on the cover of *Cinegramas* during the 1930s (1934 and 1935) highlight the role of fashion in constructing Wong's public persona. On the cover of a November 1934 issue of *Cinegramas* Wong is pictured wearing a heavily embroidered Chinese garment, with wide sleeves and a traditional silhouette (fig. 10). She peers out from behind a life-sized statue of the Buddha, gazing coyly at an unidentified point beyond the camera. She appears absorbed in her own thoughts, as though she were unaware of being photographed, thereby creating distance between her and the viewer. In contrast, another cover of *Cinegramas* published in March, 1935 features Wong wearing a much more fashion-forward ensemble (fig. 11). Although it has a certain "oriental flair," the form-fitting, light blue gown shows off Wong's figure in a way that signals her status as a "New Woman." Her more modern wardrobe is matched with a relaxed posture and a smile. Unlike the 1934 cover, here Wong looks directly into the camera, meeting the viewer's gaze. In contrast with the demure stereotype of the

delicate Asian "flower" that appears on the 1934 cover, on the 1935 cover of *Cinegramas* Wong seems to embody a more modern and worldly conception of womanhood. The modernity of her clothing reflects a shift in the celebrity persona she projects, and in this way highlights the importance of fashion in constructing Wong's stardom.

Figure 10: *Cinegramas* (1934)

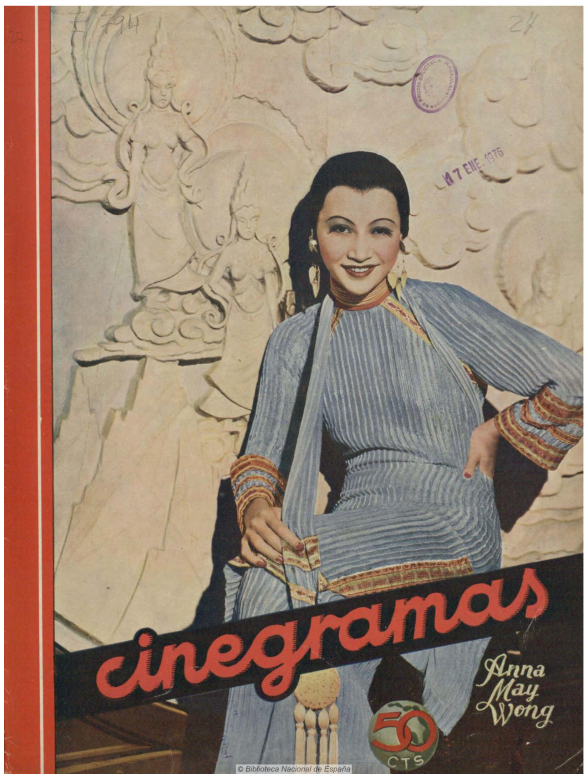


Figure 11: *Cinegramas* (1935)

Interestingly, the same studio photograph used for the 1935 *Cinegramas* cover appeared in a previous issue of *Cinegramas* in an article about Wong titled, "Ana May Wong: fina porcelana bajo los cielos de Hollywood." The article features a photo collage consisting of five images of Wong and further emphasizes the importance of fashion in terms of the star's negotiation of her Eastern and Western identities (fig. 12). Again, Wong appears wearing a modern rendition of a coolie-style hat in addition to other Oriental-style garments. The stylized type-face used to spell her name and the ink illustration set behind the collage, whose trickling creeks, weeping willows and wooden bridges are reminiscent of traditional Chinese scroll

painting motifs, reinforce Wong's Chineseness, while the glamour of her wardrobe emphasizes her star-status and modernity.

Figure 12: A photo collage in a 1934 issue of *Cinegramas* highlights Wong's fashion sensibility.

Wong's first move to Europe in the late 1920s was prompted by the feeling that, despite her increasing fame and recognition, she continued to be typecast based on her ethnicity. It was during this period in Europe that Wong would make many of the films for which she is most famous, including *Picadilly* (1929) and *Shanghai Express* (1932). In 1932 the Spanish film magazines *Popular Film* published an article promoting the release of *Shanghai Express*. The film was a Marlene Dietrich vehicle directed by Josef von Sternberg, but also provided Wong with one of her most complex roles. The article in *Popular Film*, titled "Otra vez Marlene Dietrich," is dedicated primarily to celebrating Dietrich's irresistible on-screen allure. In *Shanghai Express* Dietrich plays Shanghai Lily, a notorious woman of ill repute travelling along the coast of China during the early period of the country's civil war. Wong plays her Chinese companion. Wong's performance in the film is mentioned towards the end of the article where

the author describes Wong as "la linda actriz oriental" (Bello n.p.). However, while the article's text clearly highlights Dietrich's unique star qualities, the layout of the accompanying photographs positions Wong as a symbol for the same kind of modern womanhood more commonly associated with Dietrich's celebrity. A full-body image of Wong, dressed in an elaborate and exotic costume overlaps the film still of Dietrich and her co-star, Clive Brooks. Wong's arms reach up overhead and around her bedazzled headdress in a seductive pose that upstages Dietrich (fig. 13). Wong's expression is frozen in a sly half-smile as she gazes directly at the reader. While the article remarks on Dietrich's powerful "sex appeal," the image of Wong in the glittering costume is what immediately catches the reader's eye.

Figure 13: Wong upstages Dietrich and her co-star, Clive Brooks, in a 1932 edition of *Popular Film.*

The image of Wong featured in this edition of *Popular Film* is not, in fact, from *Shanghai Express*, but rather shows Wong wearing a costume from *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), a Fu Manchu film that debuted the previous year. More so than *Shanghai Express*, *Daughter of the*

Dragon capitalizes on Wong's exotic sensuality. She plays a dancer in London's Limehouse district who is discovered to be the daughter of Fu Manchu. In the image Wong wears an elaborate, glittering costume with an exceptionally large and impressive headdress. This costume is one of many that accompany Wong's performances as a dancer or showgirl, a common role for her and many other ethnically marked female performers during this period. Another facet of the role fashion took in the construction of Wong's celebrity, these slinky dance costumes, unlike the modern gowns and overcoats Wong is often seen wearing in publicity photographs, underscore the magnetism of Wong's racialized body and sexuality for audiences of the period.

One of Wong's most remarkable costumes appears in the ballroom dance scene of *Picadilly*. Her performance in *Piccadilly* (1929) remains one of her most memorable, and her exotic appeal is highlighted by the extravagance of her wardrobe. A review of *Piccadilly* appeared in the Spanish newspaper *ABC* after the film's Madrid debut in 1930. Despite dismissing the film as "una película malograda," the author considers its redemption to be, largely, Wong's performance:

> Con todo, la realización del *film* tiene aciertos innegables, los escenarios están siempre magníficamente servidos y la revelación de Anna May Wong vale por el *film* mejor conseguido. La encantadora chinita, condenada hasta este momento a la incorporación de personajes 'indeseables'—alma turbia, capaz de todas las traiciones—, revela su inteligencia en el papel de la dulce Sosho, víctima inocente de las pasiones que inspira su rápido encumbramiento. ("Picadilly")

The article notes how Wong's performance in *Picadilly* departs from the stereotype of the Chinese villain—most clearly embodied by the Fu Manchu character—that was a common trope

in early cinema culture. Instead, “la encantadora china” enthralls viewers with her charm and mesmerizing on-screen presence (fig. 14).

Figure 14: Wong performs one of her most memorable dance scenes in *Picadilly* (1929).

Anne Anlin Cheng reads Wong’s performance in *Picadilly* in terms of race and glamour, arguing that Wong’s glittering costume and enchanting dance scene transform the film’s visual experience into a sensorial one by means of a phenomenon she terms “shine.” She claims that, “shine transports the visual into the haptic. We might say that instead of skin we are getting skin-sense” (1034). For a performer whose body was the site of complex negotiations of race, ethnicity, and citizenship in the United States and abroad, Wong’s body and the garments that cover it take on significance beyond that of mere costume. Cheng asks her readers:

> Is it a coincidence that some female performers of color in the early twentieth century, like Wong, Josephine Baker, and even Lena Horne, should be so preoccupied with the temptations and hazards of persona, covers, and what goes on their skin? I think not, for their work involves an unavoidable and constant negotiation with the symptom that is their bodies. And what rests on and substitutes for their skin becomes the site for risky inscription as well as transformation. (1038)

Cheng underlines the significance of dress for these performers of color for whom their skin, and

the garments that covered it, were essential components of their performance of race, personhood, and celebrity. This is significant in Wong's case, in which fashion becomes a primary medium for the performer to express her modernity. Like her costume in *Picadilly*, on-screen Wong often represents an amalgamation of East Asian references for her viewers. Off-screen, however, Wong's celebrity embodies a series of contradictory signifiers that identify her simultaneously as Eastern/primitive and Western/modern.

LA VOZ

ESTRELLAS EN COCHE CAMA

ANNA MAY WONG, EN MADRID

La vida aquí no es demasiado triste

"En esta bella ciudad he visto gentes amables y rostros alegres. ¡Ya es bastante, ya!..

La gentil Anna trabajará en Madrid y volverá a irse en seguida hacia Hollywood.

¡Ay qué pícaros tiempos!... Hasta el mismo "cine", reducto y castillete de toda fantasía, doblaba su cerviz e hincaba su rodilla en tierra. El cielo se alcanza con las manos. Por esos mundos de Dios, cientos de "estrellas" caminan sin un minuto de reposo. Hay un nuevo jinete del Apocalipsis, que abate frondas de poesía. De aquellas fábricas de sueños, ¿qué se hizo?... Están allí, en Hollywood, habitadas por gentes graves y llenas de almas en pena, sin flores de ilusión ni de aventura... ¿Dónde está el buen "cine"?... Quizá, quizá en un coche cama...

* * *

¡Quién lo hubiera dicho!... Madrid es polo de gentes doradas. La vida aquí no es demasiado triste. Quedan resquicios de luz y hay sonrisas en las calles. Poca cosa en verdad... Pero es que el mundo tiene el ceño arrugado y lanza miradas hoscas. En los días que corren, Madrid es una de las escasas ciudades sin reuma.

Aquí tienen ustedes, por ejemplo, a Anna May Wong, llegada esta mañana para trabajar en un salón de té de la villa y corte. Un redactor nuestro, que la ha visitado, ha obtenido estas declaraciones de la célebre estrella de la pantalla:

ANNA MAY WONG

—Es la primera vez que vengo a Madrid. Acabo de llegar... Aun no he podido darme cuenta de cómo se vive y cómo es la gente... Lo que sí puedo afirmarlo, desde luego, es que en mi breve recorrido por las calles de esta bella ciudad he visto gestos amables y rostros alegres... ¡Ya es bastante, ya!..

—¿Y el "cine" americano?...

—El "cine" americano, como ustedes no ignoran, sufre una crisis muy grave. A las dificultades que el mercado presenta hay que unir las acumuladas por esas ligas de decencia y sociedades de cuáqueros que imponen un criterio absurdo en las cuestiones que afectan a la moral que ellos practican.

Anna May Wong se ha referido a continuación al auge del "cine" inglés y ha hecho elogios de Alexander Korda, realizador de "films" de mérito, y en la actualidad, rector de la más importante editora inglesa de "films".

La célebre estrella de "La hija del dragón", que, como es sabido, ha nacido en California, de padres chinos, se propone volver a Hollywood dentro de breves días.

JOSE PIZARRO

(Foto Alfonso.)

Figure 15: *La Voz* announces Wong's performance in Madrid in 1935.

Considering the importance of fashion in constructing Wong's celebrity both on- and off-screen, it is not insignificant that in 1934 the Mayfair Mannequin Society of New York voted Anna May Wong the world's best-dressed woman. As noted earlier, Wong fashioned her modern womanhood through her wardrobe, capitalizing precisely on the blend of Eastern and Western influences that proved so alluring to American and European audiences. This blending of signifiers was central to Wong's self-construction as a Chinese American and as an international celebrity. It is this intermingling of eastern and western fashion influences that made visible

Wong's particular brand of cosmopolitanism during the first decades of the twentieth century. Considering Wong's significant star power by the mid-1930s, it is no surprise that her visit to Madrid in 1935 received considerable press coverage. *La Voz* announced Wong's performance with a rather conservative photo of the actress dressed in traditional Chinese garb (fig. 15), a departure from publications like *Cinegramas* and *Crónica* that focused more specifically on Wong's specific brand of modernity.

Cinegramas announced Wong's visit to the Spanish capital with a headline reading "Una *star* en Madrid" and the actress' name in large, capitalized type. The article's text begins, like many features on Wong, with a reflection on her apparent contradictions:

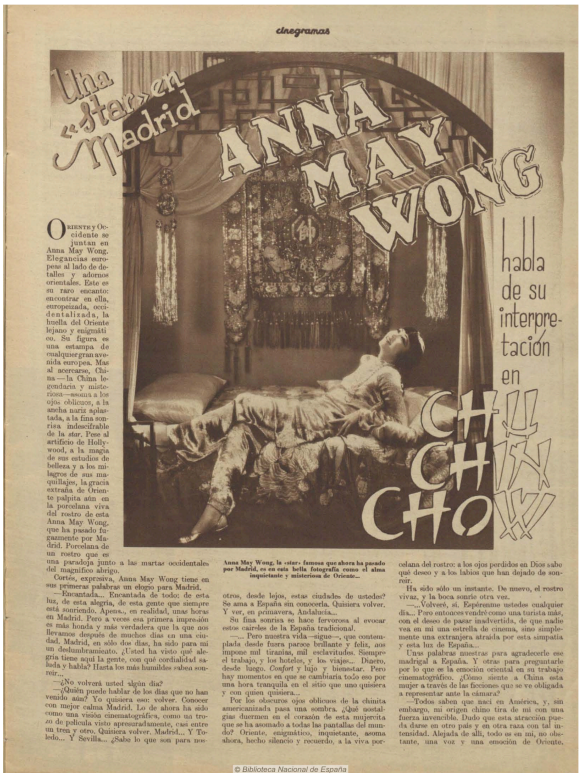
> Oriente y Occidente se juntan en Anna May Wong. Elegancias europeas al lado de detalles y adornos orientales. Este es su raro encanto: encontrar en ella, europeizada, occidentalizada, la huella del Oriente lejano y enigmático. Su figura es una estampa de cualquier gran avenida europea. Mas al acercarse, China—la China legendaria y misteriosa—asoma a los ojos oblicuos, a la ancha nariz aplastada, a la fina sonrisa indescifrable de la *star*.

The author presents Wong's body and face as the juncture where East and West meet. On the exterior she appears Western; yet, as one draws closer, China—"legendary and mysterious"—emerges from within her. While the article resorts to tired orientalist tropes to describe Wong for its readers—her slanted eyes, wide nose and "indecipherable" smile—it also reflects the way in which Wong complicates the dominant East/West or traditional/modern binary. The article occupies two pages of the magazine; on the first page the text is laid out to frame an image of Wong reclining on a canopy bed adorned with a Chinese-style woodcutting and tasseled medallions (fig. 16). Wong is dressed in a silk pants suit and behind her hangs an embroidered

tapestry, its gilded threads reflecting the camera's flash bulbs. The carefully curated fashion and ornamental objects bring to mind Studlar's claim that early twentieth-century fan magazines frame the construction of female identity as a masquerade. Wong's celebrity persona in particular is a complex fusion of Hollywood's commodification of the orientalized body and the actor's self-fashioning as Chinese in a way that promoted her professionally.

The second page of the article features a photo collage (fig. 17). This kind of collage was common in film magazines of the 1920s and 30s, but rarely were they dedicated to actors of color. Instead, they were usually reserved for "big stars," which in this case affirms Wong's celebrity status (as does the photo collage of Wong from an earlier issue of *Cinegramas* previously discussed). It is interesting to note how, like similar collages of the actor, the collection of images highlights Wong's hybrid identity as both Eastern and Western. In addition to film stills and publicity shots, Wong is pictured in a supposedly candid photograph walking through the streets of London. This photograph in particular speaks to Wong's celebrity persona as one that balances signifiers from East and West to construct the identity of a cosmopolitan "New Woman." Her outfit is modern with Oriental details, finished with a delicate, coolie-style hat. She appears to be crossing a street in London's city center, at ease in the bustling European capital. While much of the media's coverage of Wong featured images of the star in the elaborate and orientalized costumes she wore in her films, this photograph of Wong crossing a London street is more indicative of the public persona she projected, which was defined by a cosmopolitanism that capitalized on the "China mystique" while emphasizing her a certain modern, European sophistication as well.[12]

[12] For more on the China mystique see: Leong's *The China Mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, and the Transformation of American Orientalism.*



Figures 16 and 17: *Cinegramas* reports on Wong's 1935 visit to Madrid.

The article about and images of Wong's visit in *Crónica* function in a similar way. However, unlike the images published in *Cinegramas*, which were originally intended for other purposes and likely produced by film studios themselves, *Crónica* published photographs of Wong taken during her time in Madrid (fig. 18). In contrast to much of her coverage in the Spanish press, which tended to highlight her Chineseness, the *Crónica* article is subtitled "Una noche con la célebre 'star' americana, de origen china." Instead of masking her Americanness with claims of Chinese authenticity, the article embraces her hybridity, noting that "[d]esde un punto de vista occidental, Anna May Wong es la china perfecta. Así quisiéramos nosotros que fueran las chinas auténticas" (Martínez Gandía n.p.) What make her so unusual, according to the author, are her large eyes: "Los ojos de Oriente más grande probablemente. Quizás a ellos se debe el éxito de Anna May Wong" (Martínez Gandia n.p.) What sets her apart, however, extends beyond an atypical physiognomy. As the glamorous images in *Crónica* highlight, her identities

as a performer and a public persona contest the stereotypes associated with the Chinese in the West, or what the author considers to be "las chinas auténticas." The photographs challenge us to consider whether Wong's celebrity is made more glamorous by her performances and socializing in Europe, or if the musicians and writers pictured dining with the actress are validated by her presence.

Figure 18: *Crónica* features photographs of Wong performing and mingling in Madrid, 1935.

While most scholars have focused on the significance of Wong's performance of shifting ethnic and national identities as a Chinese-American woman in the United States, the complexity of her multiple identifications dialogues with European notions of modernity and cosmopolitanism during the same period. Lim reads Wong's 1928 encounter with German philosopher Walter Benjamin and the interview that encounter produced as a concrete site in which European and American conceptions of modernity are set in relief. Benjamin's interview with Wong reveals that it is precisely her blending of signifiers that draws the philosopher's

attention and, as Lim describes, "baffles" him:

> Anna May Wong presents a conundrum for the possibilities of cosmopolitanism. Although her actions comply with Eurocentric definitions of cosmopolitanism—a quality that attracts Benjamin to Wong—they also cause him to stumble when he tries to reconcile them with her Chinese face and American colloquialisms. […] An eloquent man of letters, Benjamin is stymied by the paradox of Wong's cosmopolitan western modernity and racialized Chinese body. Although he invokes the national to describe the racial, he wants to merge her Chinese and western identities. In fact, the subtitle of this essay, "A Chinoiserie from the Old West," indicates his fascination with her complicated and contradictory star image. (Lim 7)

Lim notes that Benjamin is seduced by Wong's complex modernity—her Americanisms, her extensive travel and experience working in Europe—while he simultaneously tries to affirm her Chineseness in a way that alludes to an orientalist nostalgia for the ancient culture commonly associated with China in the West. These seemingly contradictory gestures on the part of Benjamin invite the question: what does Wong's Chineseness mean to Benjamin? Lim makes the bold claim that the interview with Wong marks the process of Benjamin's becoming a global intellectual. She notes that, "during this stage of 'modernity under empire,' Benjamin needs encounters with otherness in order to position himself as a cosmopolitan and modern intellectual" (4). She suggests that their meeting constitutes a kind of "becoming cosmopolitan" for both the German-Jewish writer and the Chinese-American film star.

Like Walter Benjamin's interview with Anna May Wong, the interviews with Wong published in the Spanish press serve as a tool for the authors' and their readers' self-construction as cosmopolitan. Unlike Benjamin, however, for whom Wong functioned to *affirm* his identity as

a cosmopolitan, European intellectual, access to Wong's stardom by way of Spanish film magazines represents a much more democratic tool for establishing a degree of cosmopolitanism among Spanish readers, particularly considering Spain's perceived position as marginal to European modernity. During the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries Spain was often viewed from the north with a mix of fascination and repulsion that mirrors, in some ways, the representation of the Orient in Western culture. During the nineteenth century European authors penned ethnographic accounts of their travel throughout Spain in the style of the orientalist explorers in South Asia and the Far East. Téophile Gautier's *Voyage en Espagne* (1846) is perhaps the most well known example of this kind of account. In his travel writing the French artist and author describes Spain as an exotic escape from life in France. His orientalist gaze takes pleasure in the perceived backwardness of the Spanish in comparison to the more modern lifestyles enjoyed in northern European capitals.

As scholars such as Lou Charnon-Deustch have noted, Spain has a uniquely dual relationship with the master narrative of orientalism.[13] A 1926 edition of *Popular Film* features silent film actress Vivian Vernon dressed as the exotic "tipo oriental," in an article about fashion in the cinema (fig. 19). In an image that anticipates Wong's appearance alongside Marlene Dietrich in the pages of the same magazine seven years later, Vernon is dressed in a glittering and revealing costume, her hands coming together above her head. Like the later image of Wong, Vernon is contrasted with another image in the upper right-hand corner of the page, in this case of Edith Warton, who is described as "el prototipo de las bellezas occidentales." Unlike Warton, who is dressed in a chiffon dress adorned with silk roses at the waist, Vernon's embodiment of the Orient's allure implies a degree of danger, or at least temptation. In a studio portrait taken of

[13] For more on this see Charnon-Deutsch's writing on the figure of the gypsy in Spanish culture.

Vernon in Germany in the early 1920s, the actress takes on a different exotic persona, wearing a seductive Spanish ensemble (fig.20). Vernon wears a glittering and tasseled shawl not dissimilar to the oriental costume featured in *Popular Film*. In this photograph, however, Vernon wears a *peineta* in her hair and waves a Spanish *abanico* towards the camera, marking her costume as distinctly Spanish. Her seated posture is such that the floral shawl she wears around her shoulders falls to one side leaving her legs completely bare as she stares enticingly into the camera's lens. This kind of erotic presentation of the imagined Spaniard—perhaps gypsy?—woman for a northern European audience[14] is in keeping with Joseba Gabilondo's argument that beginning in the nineteenth century "southern Europe is feminized in a way that serves to locate northern Europe as masculine and heterosexual" (21).

LA MODA EN EL CINE

Influencias que sobre la moda femenina ejercen la luz del sol, el temperamento y la raza

Oriente y Occidente, han vivido en pugna desde los tiempos más remotos, hasta nuestros días al igual que sus opuestos Norte y Sur.

Si damos un paseito por la historia, encontraremos en ella pruebas a millares, que justifiquen nuestra opinión y que demuestren a nuestras lectoras la verdad de nuestras asertos. Examinemos muy a la ligera el Oriente antiguo, cuna de la humanidad y hagamos unas pocas comparaciones con objeto de establecer puntos de vista verdaderos.

Tipico Vernon simbolizo el tipo oriental

Edna Wheaton es el prototipo de las bellezas occidentales

Uno de los pueblos más antiguos del Asia y quizá el más civilizado, allá por el siglo XIII (a de J), fué la China. Si hemos de creer a Marco Polo, la civilización de la China en aquel entonces asombraba: sus fábricas de porcelana, sus sedas, sus perfumes, sus especias, cayendo sobre Persia, Babilonia, Arabia y Grecia dieron al traste con sus energías, brindándoles a la vida fastuosa y muelle que preparaban su éxodo fatal, y que al caer en manos de las manufacturas de Sidón y Tiro fueron lanzadas a Occidente por fenicios y griegos que ya conocían cuán tentadores lazos son los de sirgo para los pueblos no acostumbrados a otras caricias que las que sobre su cuerpo ponían las pieles mal curtidas y los mal trenzados lienzos con que se adornaban.

Occidente había sufrido desde aquel entonces las inmigraciones de los pueblos del norte; pueblos amantes de la guerra y con un perfecto desconocimiento de la línea; pueblos sucios que desconocían el valor de la limpieza y venían a unir su suciedad a nuestra poca limpieza; pueblos cuya indumentaria astrosa y de apagados tonos apenas se preocupaban de otra cosa que no fuese los hierros de sus lanzas de combate.

Cuando después de ellos Occidente recibió la visita de las hijas del sol y de la luz, se regó ante el contraste y comprendió la belleza de la línea y del color y comenzó a dejarse acariciar por la seda que compraba con sus pálidos vergeles y su libertad. Pero duró poco el hechizo que no logró envenenarle del todo... Otra vez el Norte, a caballo de su frenético impulso, cambió las sedas por los cueros, y los ópalos por los bronces, y así continuaron luchando los mortales eternos, unas veces vencidos y otras vencedores.

Hoy estamos, al parecer, en el reinado de la luz. Las mujeres del siglo XX en eso de adorar a la línea, no tienen nada que envidiar ni a las damiselas de los imperios asiáticos ni a las vestales de la Grecia pagana. Sus vestes sencillas de graciosos vuelos, nos dejan percibir, tras de su débil trama, lo que un día constituyó motivo de suprema adoración.

El mundo entero civilizado sufre hoy esta influencia de la luz, claro se está que con mayor o menor intensidad según las características raciales y el temperamento, pues es muy lógico que bajo un cielo gris, no quepan las manifestaciones que son propias de los pueblos que alientan bajo los cielos turquíes. Pero esto se refiere únicamente al triunfo del color o a la mayor o menor preponderancia de los tonos del iris; con respecto a la forma, todos viven influenciados por el mismo vehemente triunfo de la línea.

Este último es fenómeno general con variaciones insignificantes según los momentos. Lo anterior, es decir, la cuestión de tonalidades depende de lo expuesto primeramente, pues es indiscutible que una sajona de rubia melena y ojos garzos habrá de sentirse arrastrada por los tonos claros, por los armiños, los rosas y los pálidos azules; en tanto que una meridional de ojos negros y cabellera bruna se sentirá presa en los rojos sangre, en los azules eléctricos y en los negros ala de cuervo. La primera bien puede tener por símbolo una rosa de té; la segunda le tiene en un clavel reventón o en una rosa de Alejandría; pero ambas se hallan influenciadas por el orientalismo que en nuestros días eleva sobre su frente la llama inmortal de la victoria.

MISS GLADYS

12

Popular Film

Figure 19: Vivian Vernon embodies the exotic "tipo oriental" in the pages of *Popular Film* (1926).

[14] This can be inferred from the fact that the photograph was taken in Germany.

Figure 20: Vivian Vernon dressed as a seductive Spaniard in a studio portrait. (Germany, 1923)

If Spain is considered marginal, both geographically and ideologically, to European modernity of the early twentieth century, then what significance does Wong's visit to Madrid in 1935 have in terms of this position? The various Spanish news outlets that reported on Wong's visit to Madrid, including *Cinegramas*, *La Voz*, and *Crónica,* emphasized that the star was stopping in Madrid before returning to London or Hollywood, and in this way situate Madrid—and Spain by extension—within a larger network of cosmopolitan capitals. *Cinegramas* cites Wong's enthusiastic praise of Madrid and her desire to return: "Volveré, sí. Espérenme ustedes cualquier día…" Wong's promise of future visits affirms Madrid's position within a larger circuit frequented by such icons of modern cosmopolitanism. What's more, Wong's hybridity offers a possible model for the female readership of Spanish film magazines, who also find themselves straddling "modern" and "non-modern" spaces and identities. This observation is in no way meant to overlook the racial prejudice Wong faced as a Chinese American during the early twentieth century in the United States, or to equate her experiences to those of Spanish women readers struggling to establish themselves as modern and European. Rather, I mean to

suggest that we consider the ways in which Wong's hybridity opens up new ways of thinking about modernity for Spanish women who found themselves on the fringes of Europe on the eve of a civil war. If Wong's meeting with Benjamin just a few years earlier can be read as initiating his process of becoming cosmopolitan, then access to Wong's celebrity in the pages of Spanish film magazines can also be considered a catalyst for readers imagining themselves as modern, European and cosmopolitan in 1930s Spain. Like the appropriation of the Chinatown myth in Barcelona during the 1920s and 1930s, Wong's celebrity in Spain underscores the ways in which representations of the Far East (and the bodies and spaces associated with it) was used to negotiate Spaniards' own complex relationship to otherness in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Hollywood Cinema and Orientalism in the Work of Juan Marsé

The construction of Chineseness in the twentieth-century Spanish imaginary was closely linked to literary and cinematic representations of the Chinese. As we have seen, tropes such as the Chinatown and Fu Manchu predated the arrival of a significant Chinese immigrant population on the peninsula and were instrumental in shaping an imagined Chinese in ways that reinforced the notion of the Far East as essentially other. Ruth Mayer's assertion that the Fu Manchu figure's numerous interpretations worldwide constitute a "serial unfolding" attests to the influence of the international circulation of this character and its capacity to be reinvented in different contexts (*Serial Fu Manchu* 6). After the translation and publication of Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu novels in Spanish in the 1920s, the figure of Fu Manchu became widespread in Spanish cultural production. Travelling via inexpensive paperbacks, films, and comics, Fu Manchu regularly crossed the Atlantic, reimagined in a myriad of ways. The ubiquity of the Fu Manchu figure in Spanish popular cultural production of the early- and mid-twentieth century is highlighted in the literary work of Juan Marsé, whose novels make frequent references to the fictional character.

Many of Marsé most celebrated novels, such as *Si te dicen que caí* (1973), *Teniente Bravo* (1986), and *El embrujo de Shanghai* (1993), are semi-autobiographical and navigate the murky waters of post-war Barcelona, negotiating questions of memory and national, regional, and individual identity. Marsé's almost ethnographic eye for the minutiae of everyday life, with special attention paid to the popular culture he consumed as a child, expresses the texture of the post-war period in Barcelona. The recurring references to Fu Manchu and related tropes have been generally overlooked by literary scholars, but a closer examination of them within the context of Marsé's writing sheds light on the ways in which these motifs are repurposed in the

Spanish (Catalán) context and to what end. This chapter proposes an analysis of the function of the Fu Manchu character within the broader themes of Marsé's work, such as identity construction and otherness.

While Marsé's work is generally framed by daily life in post-war Barcelona, critics have also noted the author's unremitting gaze towards Hollywood. Marsé himself has talked extensively about the passion he felt for Hollywood films as a young boy growing up in Barcelona during the early Franco period. In a 1997 interview with Samuel Amell, Marsé explains that:

> En mi formación cultural el cine tuvo una importancia decisiva. […] Dentro de esta formación cultural el cine fue algo así como el otro componente de los libros de aventuras, de la literatura. Yo iba muchísimo al cine desde chaval y sin duda han influido en mi obra los fantasmas de la cantidad de películas que he visto, pero también la manera de contar, cierta imaginería. (91)

The novelist cites cinema as a foundational influence the formation of his literary and aesthetic tastes.[15] The influence of American cinema in the work of Juan Marsé is two-fold: thematic and aesthetic. Reflecting Marsé's own experience, many of his characters have close ties to the cinema and Marsé's narrative style borrows frequently from classical Hollywood genres, particularly *film noir*.

Kwang-Hee Kim's monograph *El cine y la novelística de Juan Marsé* (2006) is the first book-length study dedicated to the influence of cinema on Marsé's work. Kim argues that, in general, images predominate over ideas throughout Marsé's corpus, citing an article written by Marsé in 1990 in which he claims, "Yo he partido casi siempre de imágenes y no de ideas, es

[15] Marsé's interest in cinema has been a part of his professional life as well. He has written about cinema for *El País* and worked for the cinema magazine *Arcinema* in Barcelona from 1957-8.

como si en mí la memoria visual pudiera más que el intelecto" (2). Indeed, Marsé's narrative style is greatly indebted to the visual language of Hollywood's Golden Age, a period that Marsé refers to in an interview with Kim as "*La Fábrica de Sueños*." In the words of Marsé, Hollywood cinema has offered him a scaffolding upon which he has been able to, "imaginar la vida no como es, sino como podría ser. Una forma de alimentar mitos personales y colectivos, un estímulo para la imaginación y un placer estético" (27). Indeed, fantasy is often a driving force for his protagonists, who are sometimes ambiguous in their distinction between reality and fiction. Marsé's fascination with Hollywood cinema and his frequent references to it, both narratively and stylistically, feed the sense of fantasy in his writing.

As we have seen, early twentieth-century Hollywood cinema is replete with orientalist imagery, capitalizing on the widespread Yellow Peril discourse of the late nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century to make orientalist characters, narratives, and mis-en-scene a staple of Hollywood well into the second half of the twentieth century (and arguably beyond). Fu Manchu is the fictional character that most clearly embodies the manifestation of the Yellow Peril in popular culture, although he long outlived the particular political moment that produced him, becoming a cultural icon that has been continually reimagined for decades. Fu Manchu's appearance in the writing of Marsé, for example, is more closely linked to the Chinese super villain's cinematic appearances than his original literary ones. Of the cinematic Fu Manchu phenomenon, Mayer has written that:

> Fu Manchu narratives thrive on looped and twisted structures of (self-)reference. In the case of Fu Manchu's filmic enactment, these loops create what I call fetishistic image power: the figure's capacity to establish intense and iconic moments of signification within a narrative, soaring free of narrative plausibility or diegetic framing. (61)

Writing specifically on Fu Manchu's cinematic image, Mayer claims that this "fetishistic image power" is capable of creating meaning, even outside of its original context. I will argue that Marsé makes use of this phenomenon in his novels, repurposing this "image power" as a tool in his narratives.

Figure 21: Poster for the Spanish-language version of Warner Oland's first performance as Fu Manchu in *La expiación del Dr. Fu Manchu* (1929).

Fu Manchu first appears on-screen in 1929, played by Warner Oland in *The Mysterious Fu Manchu*. Released with the Spanish title *La expiación del Dr. Fu Manchu*, the film was the first of three starring Oland as the Chinese villain (fig. 21).[16] Oland went on to play Fu Manchu the following year in *The Return of Fu Manchu* (1930) and again in *The Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), this time opposite Anna May Wong (fig. 22). In *Daughter of the Dragon*, Wong plays Fu-Lo-Suee,[17] a character who appears in a number of Rohmer's novels, and who would take on an increasingly central role in subsequent film adaptations of the 1930s and 1940s. The film was

[16] Warner Oland also famously played the Chinese detective Charlie Chan. The likeable detective has been described by a number of critics, including William Wu, as Fu Manchu's foil.

[17] The character's name is more commonly spelled Fah-Lo-Suee, but is referred to in Marsé's writing as Fu-Lo-Suee.

adapted from the novel of the same name, which was published in Spanish translation under the title *La hija de Fu Manchú* by Editorial Molino in 1935 (fig. 23). The character of Fu-Lo-Suee was later played by American actor Gloria Franklin in the enormously popular movie serial produced by Republic, *The Drums of Fu Manchu*, which debuted in 1940.

Figure 22: Warner Oland and Anna May Wong appear on the pages of *Caras y Carretas* performing in *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931).

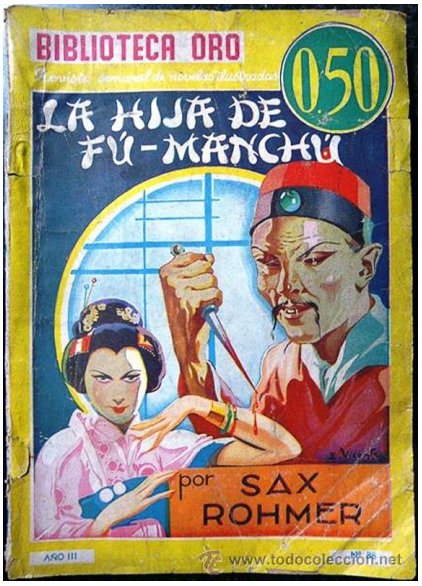


Figure 23: Editorial Molino published the Spanish-language version of Sax Rohmer's novel under the title *La hija de Fu-Manchú* (1935).

Fu-Lo-Suee is referenced specifically in Marsé's short story "Historia de detectives" included in the collection, *Teniente Bravo* (1986). The story features a band of would-be detectives in hot pursuit of a woman in their neighborhood, la señora Yordi. Mimicking the maneuvers of stylized detectives from the *film noir* or hard boiled detective genres, the group of

adolescents cautiously follow the woman who, according to the narrator, "Se parece asombrosamente a Fu-Lo-Suee, la hija de Fu-Manchú: los mismos ojos de china perversa y venérea, caliente y oriental" (12-13). Although Marsé was almost certainly familiar with the Fu Manchu character from earlier films or novels, *The Drums of Fu Manchu* was likely the inspiration for this reference to Fu-Lo-Suee in "Historia de detectives." The serial was released in Spain as *Los tambores de Fu Manchu* and later adapted as a comic book in 1943 by the Valencian comic book writer José Grua Hernández (fig. 24). Promotional material from 1944 advertises a serial screening of the series in its entirety, promising audiences "terror, amenazas, persecuciones en tres jornadas" (fig. 25). Each installment of *Los tambores de Fu Manchu* is advertised as a double feature, paired with an American or Italian adventure film. Yet the menacing image of Henry Brandon dressed in exaggerated yellow face playing Fu Manchu emphasizes *Los tambores de Fu Manchu* as the primary attraction.

Figure 24: *The Drums of Fu Manchu* was adapted as a popular comic strip in Spain (1943).

Figure 25: A program for a screening of the serial *Los tambores de Fu Manchu* (1944).

Set during the late 1940s, the protagonists of "Historia de detectives," including the semi-autobiographical character of Marés, imagine their world as it might appear in a classic Hollywood film, re-imagining their reality according to the tropes of mid-century American cinema. Channeling the voice-over of a classic *film noir*, the narrator sets the scene: "fue un mal día de estos, lloviznando y con ráfagas de viento helado, cuando nos juntamos en el automóvil para un trabajito especial" (5). Although the car in which the boys are seated is parked and the boys themselves are not detectives, but rather imaginative adolescents, the conviction with which the narrator represents this imagined scenario creates ambiguity for the reader as to which aspects of the narrative are invented by the boys and which reflect the story's realism. The young Marés is the established leader of the group, giving orders to the other "detectives:" "Juanito Marés escrutó a David y a Jaime, en los asientos de atrás, y después a mí. Al clavarme el codo en

las costillas, comprendí que me había elegido […] Entornó los ojos de gato y puso cara de viejo astuto Barry Fitzgerald ordenando al poli sabueso seguir a la chica en *La ciudad desnuda*, añadiendo con la voz ronca: 'Andando, es toda tuya.'" (6).

The short story not only references classic *film noir* in its tone, but the narrator directly also refers to the 1948 *film noir* classic, *The Naked City*. The film tells the story of two detectives investigating the murder of a young model in New York City. After the final chase scene, the murderer plummets to his death from atop the Williamsburg Bridge, falling out of the frame and leaving the New York City skyline lingering in the camera's view. A montage that shows a street cleaner sweeping up old newspapers with the murder featured in their headlines indicates that the case is closed and a voice-over highlights the relative insignificance of this story in the greater context of the city saying, "There are eight million stories in the Naked City, and this has been one of them."[18] Similarly, the young Marés and his band of would-be detectives investigate a small tragedy within the larger context of the years of hunger in Spain. They follow señora Yordi, imagining the significance of her encounters and the costumed man who follows her. The boys position themselves in the center of the story, as the protagonists, when in fact they are mere witnesses to a couple's unraveling in the aftermath of the civil war. The references to classic Hollywood cinema serve as signposts for the protagonists as they construct their own identities and worldviews, a theme that is repeated throughout Marsé's writing. By portraying señora Yordi as reminiscent of Fu Manchu's daughter, the narrator draws a connection between the neighbor's mysterious past and the orientalized indecipherability associated with Fu-Lo-Suee in her many fictional manifestations.

In his seminal book *Orientalism,* Edward Said famously describes orientalism as "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). The

[18] The iconic final words of the film went on to inspire a television series that aired from 1958-1963.

Orient as Said describes it is a dialectical construction fashioned by the West as a means to reaffirm its own self-assigned attributes: if the East is ancient, the West is modern; if the East is barbaric, the West is civilized; and, of course, if the East is feminine, the West is masculine. As Juliana Chang writes, "the 'Orient' was produced discursively and epistemologically as a feminized location, (im)penetrable by the West. The metaphorical feminization of the Orient resulted in the metonymic hyperfeminization of 'oriental women,' as if culture compounded gender" (329). By blending their observations of señora Yordi with the cinematic representation of Fu-Lo-Suee the boys succeed in using their imagination to cast the neighborhood woman in a role central to their fantasy. "Muy pálida, muy guapa y llorosa," the señora Yordi becomes the boys' oriental or orientalized damsel in distress.

Marsé's re-appopriation of Hollywood *film noir* is most evident in *El embrujo de Shanghai*. Published in 1993 to critical and popular acclaim, winning the Premio de la Crítica in 1994, the novel was later adapted as a film by Fernando Trueba in 2002. The novel consists of meta-narratives that overlap and intersect with one another. The narrator, Daniel, is an adolescent growing up in Barcelona during the post-war period. He befriends Susana, a girl bedridden with tuberculosis, and their friendship within the confines of the girl's bedroom becomes a way to find comfort amid a chaotic and often confusing social landscape. Both children are avid cinema fans, although Susana's condition prevents her from visiting the movie theater where her mother works in the ticket booth. Instead, she recreates the escapism of the cinema in her bedroom:

> Tenía Susana una disposición natural a la ensoñación, a convocar lo deseable y lo hermoso y lo conveniente. Lo mismo que al extender y ordenar alrededor suyo en la cama su colección de anuncios de películas y de programas de mano que su madre le traía cada semana del cine Mundial, y en los que Susana a veces recortaba las caras y las figuras

> para pegarlas y empajarlas caprichosamente en películas que no les correspondían, sólo porque a ella le habría gustado o le divertía ver juntos […] (55)

Susana's use of this cultural ephemera—film magazines, pamphlets, and posters—highlights the way in which the cinema's fantasy world can spill out of the theater and colonize the imagination of children like Daniel and Susana. Just as it does for the boys in "Historia de detectives," Hollywood cinema becomes a source of material for Susana and Daniel that, together with their own imaginations, provides an escape from the harsh reality of life in 1940s Barcelona.

Children of the post-war period, both Susan and Daniel are missing their fathers, who never returned from the war, and are feared to be dead. However, the arrival of Forcat, a Republican combatant and close friend of Susana's father, Kim, provides the two with some solace as he offers them an alternative narrative to the despair that surrounds them. He tells the children that Kim is on a dangerous and valiant mission to Shanghai, which has prolonged his absence after the end of the war. What the children do not know is that the elaborate story Forcat spins for them is fiction, not dissimilar to the films Susana and Daniel both love. Forcat's narration of Kim's adventures, which are then related to the reader by Daniel, is constructed in a highly visual style that self-consciously references classical *film noir*. Both the setting of Kim's dangerous mission in Shanghai and the novel's title are nods to its *film noir* and hard-boiled detective predecessors, specifically Josef von Sternberg's 1941 *The Shanghai Gesture*, starring Gene Tierney and Ona Munson as the Chinese femme fatal, "Mother" Gin Sling.

Although it is not specifically stated in the novel, *The Shanghai Gesture* is precisely the kind of film that Daniel and his peers might have seen at the Roxy cinema. Indeed, the film successfully debuted in Spain in 1946 with the title, *El embrujo de Shanghai* (fig. 26). Homay King posits the film's title as "a double abduction: an appropriation of the superficial, even

kitsch elements of oriental aesthetic by Hollywood, and a trope in which that aesthetic comes to take over the logic of the film" (51). She comments on the dual meaning of "Shanghai," used as a noun referring to the city or, alternatively, as a verb, "to shanghai" or to steal away. Marsé's *El embrujo de Shanghai* implies a similar process of disorientation, and in fact it is the cinematic narration of Kim's adventures in the imagined Shanghai that distracts the protagonists and disrupts the very real drama unfolding around them. Drawing on the aesthetic of films like *The Shanghai Gesture*, which capitalize on Western audiences' association of the Orient with threatening mystery, Marsé uses the setting of the meta-narrative in Shanghai to construct a mesmerizing fantasy for both his child protagonists and readers. King has written extensively on the use of Chinese characters, setting, and mise-en-scene in Hollywood cinema, analyzing the use of these seemingly superfluous details.

> In such films Chinese costumes and figurines sometimes appear at random or for what at first glance seem to be purely stylistic purposes. The East's presence seems gratuitous—an afterthought tacked on for no other reason that to provide visual atmosphere and aesthetic pleasure, or to conjure a vaguely paranoiac mood for a Western film market. In some of these films, however, décor becomes entangled with the film's larger meanings. Elements of mise-en-scene become overdetermined, and ultimately they bear the burden of explanation for a multitude of cryptic enigmas that the narrative cannot resolve. (46)

The same can be said of Marsé's choice to set part of the novel in Shanghai. Like the orientalized settings and mise-en-scene King describes, the city in Forcat's engrossing tale has very little to do with the real Shanghai, but is rather an imagined place.

Figure 26: A poster for the Spanish-language release of *The Shanghai Gesture*.

Forcat tells the children that as part of his mission, Kim must recover a mysterious Chinese book stored aboard a ship destined for Shanghai. Kim is told that the book will be identifiable by its "tapas amarillas y bellas ilustraciones en su interior; también lo reconocerás porque en su primera página hay una dedicatoria en caracteres chinos y escrita a mano en tinta roja, junto a una mancha de carmín…" (99) The appearance of the book signals Kim's definitive departure from Europe, the West, and his entrance into the unknowable East, characterized by the decadent and dizzying street markets of Shanghai, the city's nightclubs, and opium dens. The discovery of the lipstick-stained book marks a shift in the narrative. By means of Forcat's story, the children, along with the reader, are transported to a fictional Shanghai, which resembles the mythified Chinatowns of Hollywood films. Like the indecipherable Chinese characters that fill the book's pages, Kim's experience in Shanghai is a series of enigmas that lead the protagonist down a winding road of deception and duplicity. Back in Barcelona, Daniel and Susana's

experience of the Far East by way of Forcat's tall tale is augmented through a small collection of oriental objects: a few postcards picturing scenes of Shanghai, a fan, and a silk robe.[19]

Following King's stress on the importance of orientalist mise-en-scene, the lipstick-stained book and the souvenirs that link Susana and Daniel to Shanghai can be read as the kind of objects that become "entangled with the film's larger meaning." Other critics have noted the way in which the novel's title and cinematic references "produce en el lector la sensación de sumirse en un mundo de fascinación, un entorno atractivo y misterioso" (Kim 112). The novel's ability to produce this effect in readers and critics alike is founded on the effects of Hollywood's repeated association of orientalized characters, objects, and settings with a sense of enigma. *El embrujo de Shanghai*, like Marsé's other novels discussed here, explores the multiplicity of truth, suggesting that its construction is multi-faceted. The narrative arc of *El embrujo de Shanghai* blurs the distinction between truth and fiction for both its protagonists and the reader. In this way the novel follows Hollywood's pattern of employing orientalized objects, characters, and settings to heighten the reader's experience of disorientation; they become imbued with a sense of mystery that helps sustain and carry the narrative.

The multiplicity of truth also appeared as a central theme in Marsé's earlier novel, *Si te dicen que caí* (1973), which was originally published in Mexico where it won the Premio México de Novela.[20] Of all of Marsé's novels *Si te dicen que caí* and *El embrujo de Shangai* are perhaps the two that most thoroughly blends fantasy and reality. Like "Historia de detectives" and *El embrujo de Shanghai*, *Si te dicen que caí* centers around a group of adolescents growing up

[19] In the novel the silk robe is referred to repeatedly as a *kimono*, which traditionally refers to a formal garment worn in Japan, not China. Marsé also refers to a *kimono* when discussing the garment worn by the chinoiserie-style performer Fu-Ching in *El amante bilingüe*.

[20] The novel was not originally published in Spain due to the limitations imposed by the Franco-era censorship.

during the post-war period. Amidst the suffering and confusion of the 1940s, the boy protagonists create *aventis*—short for *aventuras*—, stories born of the rumors, suffering, and confusion of the years of hunger. The demarcation between the boys' stories and the world around them seems intentionally blurred, the narrative voice constantly shifting while providing the reader with few, if any, warnings to indicate its twists and turns. Diana Garvey signals the lack of distinction between the "frame" of the novel and the stories that the protagonists tell within that frame, noting that, "it is of no value to try to distinguish between the 'frame' story and an *aventi*. One cannot even distinguish the narrator of a given *aventi* since he may be talking about himself in third person" (378). Garvey structures her discussion of the novel's self-reflexivity around Barthes's "hermeneutic code." She describes how, unlike most novels in which the production of enigmas serves to create suspense that is later resolved, in the case of *Si te dicen que caí* the reader is deprived of the satisfaction that comes with a resolution. Instead the narrative confusion offers the possibility of multiple truths:

> We find ourselves trying to find out "what really happened," what the "real" motives were, "who" this woman "really" was. But these questions can only be answered by a variety of possibilities. There is no one closed 'truth' offered here; only a plurality of possible "truths." […] The use of enigma in the novel, instead of pointing to truth, works to suggest the infinite plurality which characterizes narrative. (Garvey 380-1).

In this way the novel's very structure highlights the instability and confusion of post-war Barcelona, particularly as seen through the eyes of the novel's adolescent narrators.

In her article on novels written under Franco era censorship, Susan Mooney argues that for the protagonists of *Si te dicen que caí* their personal experiences are inextricably intertwined with the politics of the post-war period. Moreover, the *aventis* told by Sarnita, Java, and the other

neighborhood boys, often violent and erotic in nature, are highly influenced by their role as witnesses to the atrocities of the civil war and early dictatorship. Mooney specifically mentions the torture chambers established by the Communist secret police and then taken over by the Falange after the war, as well as the predatory behavior of Conrado Galán, a military official whose taste for juvenile prostitutes is a major narrative line in the novel. These experiences and observations are reflected not only in the *aventis* they tell one another, but also in the way they perform the experiences they have internalized as part of their childhood games (Mooney 124). It is certainly true that the fantastical *aventis* are closely linked to the very real atrocities of the early Franco period and the reader's inability to distinguish between the two is one of the novel's defining characteristics. However, neither Garvey nor Mooney mentions the additional influence of Hollywood cinema on the construction of the *aventis*.

The movie theater is a space central to the novel's overlapping narrative lines, and Fu Manchu is one of the protagonists' primary cinematic references. The movie theater is also the site of a number of the neighborhood's *aventis*: an adolescent's hurried first sexual encounter with a prostitute, or a hideout for members of the remaining Republican resistance as they escape the fallout of a bomb thrown through the front window of the Delegación de Falange in the Plaza Lesseps. The line between the *aventis* and the images that dance across the silver screen is intentionally blurred:

> Esos primeros tanteos con las pajilleras del Roxy, esa visita como espía al bar Continental, entrando con el saco de tela de colchón al hombro y la romana colgada al cinto, cantando: papeles, botellas, con ronca voz de adulto; ese primer encuentro con el tuerto que resultó que también buscaba a la furcia, esas primeras chispas de la Fueguiña que habían de acabar en incendio, legañoso, ¿de verdad nos divertían? ¿De verdad podían

parecernos tan emocionantes como las pelis del cine Rovira o del Delicias o del Roxy? (66)

Here the narrator links the stories the protagonists passively receive while seated in the movie theater to those they actively construct outside the theater. The *aventis* are fueled by and compared to the cinematic narratives screened at the cine Roxy—a Barcelona theater that appears repeatedly throughout Marsé's writing—,[21] just as they are inspired by the sometimes cinematic goings-on in the protagonists' own city.

The novel's frame centers around Java's *trapería* where Java and his grandmother sell the second-hand items they collect off the street. In a similar way the boys collect bits and pieces of their own experiences, and those they witness, in order to construct the *aventis*. The lack of a clear distinction between the two worlds reinforces the fact that during the post-war period reality seemed, at times, stranger than fiction. While performing an autopsy on the recently recovered body of Java, the adult Ñito[22] reflects on the nature of the *aventis*:

> Las mejores eran aquellas que no tenían ni pies ni cabeza pero que, a pesar de ello resultaban creíbles, nada por aquel entonces tenía sentido, Hermana, ¿se acuerda?, todo estaba patas arriba, cada hogar era un drama y había un misterio en cada esquina y la vida no valía un pito, por menos de nada Fu-Manchú te arrojaba al foso de los cocodrilos. En realidad, pensó Ñito, aquellas fantásticas aventis se nutrían de un mundo mucho más fantástico que el que unos chavales siempre callejeando podían siquiera llegar a imaginar: historias verdaderas con cocodrilos verdaderos, historias de delación y de muerte

[21] The movie theater appears frequently as a narrative space in Marsé's writing. The Roxy theater appears again in *El embujo de Shanghai*, for example.

[22] Ñito is short for Antoñito Faneca, an autobiographical name that refers to Juan Marsé's birthname, Juan Faneca Roca. Marsé often names characters after himself, including Marés and the narrator Roca in "Historia de detectives" both of whom reappear in *El amante bilingüe* as Marés and his alter-ego Faneca.

escuchadas fragmentariamente y de soslayo en las amargas sobremesas de nuestros padres […] 165)

As Ñito explains, the world around the boys seems to them as fantastical as the Fu Manchu films they might have seen at the Roxy. The exoticism of the Fu Manchu narrative in particular stresses that during the chaotic years of his childhood even the impossible seemed possible. As an adult, Ñito realizes that their vivid imaginations fed off of what he calls "cocodrilos verdaderos," the very real threats that surrounded them, perceptible even if, as children, they were incapable of understanding them completely. From his adult perspective Ñito sees more clearly how their stories were the fruit of fragmented conversations overheard at the dinner table, of encounters observed on the street from a distance, and of the Hollywood adventures they viewed on screen.

References to Fu Manchu also appear on a number of others occasions throughout the novel. For example, the boys enact one *aventi* in the church basement under Java's direction. María, better known as la Fueguiña, plays Aurora, a mysterious school director:

– Hoy no vamos a ensayar Los Pastorcillos –dijo Java corrigiendo la posición de los candelabros –. Es una función nueva que se ha inventado Sarnita. Verás, queremos darle una sorpresa al señorito Conrado. ¿Has entendido, niña? Función nueva.

– ¿Cómo se titula?

– Aurora, la otra hija de Fu-Manchú -dijo Sarnita. (71)

The boys cast the mysterious Aurora as the "other" daughter of Fu Manchu. Like in "Historia de detectives," the reference to Fu Manchu's daughter reinforces the indecipherability of the woman sought after by the male protagonists. By orientalizing the female character, her otherness is enhanced, thereby making her a more seductive and valuable prize. The boys tie María's ankles

and wrists, interrogating her as they threaten her with the flames of a candelabrum. The scene walks a fine line between a child's game and serious harassment, and it is clear that the boys are modeling their behavior on that which they have witnessed elsewhere. At another point in the novel Ñito rehearses a possible defense if asked about their playacting in the church basement, "¿Torturas, la Gota de Agua, la Campana Infernal, la Bota Malaya, el Péndulo de la Muerte...? Usted ha visto Los Tambores de Fu-Manchú, camarada, esto sólo se ve en el cine y aun así es mentira, son dobles, le diré, nosotros somos de verdad" (128). He distinguishes between himself and the actors who play Fu Manchu and his victims on screen. And yet the *aventis* do precisely the opposite, blending fictional and fantastical characters with their everyday reality.

The boy's fixation on Fu Manchu's torture methods is not surprising considering their centrality to the super villain's cinematic persona. *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932), an earlier feature-length film on which *The Drums of Fu Manchu* serial was modeled, features a number of torture scenes, including the use of spiders, a spiked trap, and Fu Manchu's quintessential crocodile pit (fig. 27). The film was released in Spain as *La máscara de Fu Manchu* (fig. 28). Produced just before the widespread enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code (more commonly referred to as the Hays Code), *The Mask* constitutes what Ruth Mayer has called "an almost hysterical defiance of the tenets of the Code" by over-indulging in the bizarre excess that characterizes the Fu Manchu character (*Serial Fu Manchu* 65). Mayer argues that *The Mask* is the most iconic of all the Fu Manchu films, and that this performance of the character effectively transforms Fu Manchu into a visual icon.[23] What she terms the "openly fetishistic" arrangements of people and objects in *The Mask* "rely on bizarre physical features, such as Fu Manchu's grotesque fingernail-turned-conductor, or on the intricate arrangement of bodies and objects in

[23] Ruth Mayer also notes how Boris Karloff's performance as Fu Manchu codified the image of the character in the American (and global) imagination (*Serial Fu Manchu* 60, 77). It is also interesting to note that Karloff played the monster in a number of Frankenstein films, another icon of the horror genre.

the machinic torture scenes. Time and again, these scenes are predicated on long-standing clichés of Chinese perversion, impassivity, and aloofness" (*Serial Fu Manchu* 73).

Figure 27: A pre-code film, *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932) feature many examples of Fu Manchu's trademark torture techniques.

Figure 28: Announcements of screenings of *La máscara de Fu Manchu* from the 1930s.

Most useful in understanding Marsé's use of Fu Manchu is Mayer's theory that iconic screen figures such as Fu Manchu "function like masks that draw our attention to the practice of acting and the spectacle of enactment (*Serial Fu Manchu* 81). Indeed, the appearance of Fu Manchu (and the cinema more broadly) in Marsé's writing is always closely linked with the protagonist's experiences of performativity. The re-imagining of Fu Manchu in the context of

post-war Barcelona serves as a counterpoint for the (mostly boy) protagonists as they attempt to establish a degree of normalcy in their lives. In the case of *Si te dicen que caí* it is by performing the excess of Fu Manchu as represented on screen that they can work through the violence in their everyday lives.

Fu Manchu and the theme of performativity most clearly intersect in Marsé's 1990 novel, *El amante bilingüe.* Unlike the other novels discussed here, *El amante bilingüe* does not take place during the post-war period, but rather in the late 1970s. A familiar character, Marés, the young protagonist from "Historia de detectives" appears as an adult in the novel. Set during the early transition to democracy, *El amante bilingüe* negotiates the changing landscape of language and identity politics in Cataluña. As Marés (unsuccessfully?) attempts to recover from a painful divorce from his wife, a member of the Catalan bourgeoisie, the polemical struggle over Catalan language policy becomes entangled with his own search for a sense of self after his marriage ends. In this way, Barcelona's cultural and political evolution is mirrored by Marés's very complete, and perhaps even violent transformation. The novel's first scene coincides with the end of the dictatorship in 1975. Marés discovers his wife, Norma, having an affair in their bedroom on the very day of Franco's death:

> Una tarde lluviosa del mes de noviembre de 1975, al regresar a casa de forma imprevista, encontré a mi mujer en la cama con otro hombre. Recuerdo que al abrir la puerta del dormitorio, lo primero que vi fue a mí mismo abriendo la puerta del dormitorio; todavía hoy, diez años después de lo ocurrido, cuando ya no soy más que una sombra del que fui, cada vez que entro desprevenido en ese dormitorio, el espejo del armario me devuelve puntualmente aquella trémula imagen de la desolación, aquel viejo fantasma que labró mi ruina. (9)

Amidst these intersecting personal and national watershed moments, Marés's world spins out of control, eventually leading him to construct an absurd plot to seduce his ex-wife while impersonating a *xarnego*[24], which in turn sets in motion a profound identity crisis. The novel's first scene serves as a model of the novel's structure in miniature. Marés's own reflection becomes the scene's centerpiece, just as the (de)construction of his identity is at the center of the novel's narrative structure. The discovery of his wife's infidelity marks the dissolution of his marriage and the beginning of a personal unraveling that continues over the course of the novel until Marés is merely a shadow of his former self.

Juan Ramón Resina's Lacanian reading of *El amante bilingüe* also focuses on the novel's pivotal first scene. For Resina:

> If Marés's self-recognition in the mirror precedes conjugal catastrophe and his own alienation, it is because the mirror, in offering up the subject to its own view, projects it as an imaginary unity beyond the reflecting surface. The mirror thus intervenes as a mask between the subject and its imaginary totality. On its far side, the self becomes the Other, a permanent source of fascination and unfulfilled longing. (96)

As Resina argues, upon witnessing one's self in the mirror's reflection the self becomes Other. Resina describes the mirror as a mask, emphasizing the performative nature of encountering oneself by embodying the Other. For Marés, this mask takes the form of his childhood friend, Faneca, who he decides to impersonate in an attempt to win back his wife's affection. The alienation that Marés first experiences as he gazes upon his own image in the mirror eventually leads to his total abandonment of Marés in favor of his alter-ego, Faneca. The novel's treatment

[24] *Xarnego* or *charnego* is a pejorative term used in Catalan to refer to "foreigners" who had emigrated to Cataluña from other parts of Spain. This term was particularly relevant beginning in the 1950s when large numbers of migrants began to arrive in more industrialized northern regions, such as Cataluña and the Basque Country, from struggling agricultural regions in the south of Spain.

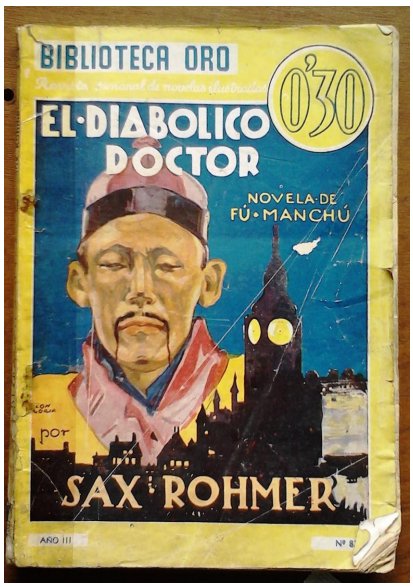
of shifting identities is reminiscent of Marsé's own biography. Orphaned during the war, the novelist was adopted by the Marsé family, abandoning the family name given to him at birth, Faneca Roca. Marsé's former identity becomes Marés's foil in the novel. Like the fictional protagonist of *El amante bilingüe*, the author himself occupies a liminal space between Catalan and *xarnego* identities.[25] What is of particular interest here, however, is the way Marés's transformation into Faneca—this performance behind "the mask"—references Fu Manchu, tying Marsé's allusions to Hollywood orientalism into the novel's central themes of identity and identification.

Marés first disguises himself as Faneca in order to get closer to his ex-wife, whose affair with a dark and accented southerner provoked the end of their marriage. Marés visits his ex-wife in disguise and under the pretext of recovering an album of Fu Manchu *cromos*, or trading cards. Speaking with an exaggerated accent, he tells her over the phone, "se trata de un álbum de cromos de *Los tambores de Fu-Manchú* que guardaba desde niño, y que para él tiene mucho valor sentimental. ¿S'acuerda uzté de ese álbum?" Although the album may appear to be an incidental detail peripheral to the central narrative, it is an object imbued with great importance that functions as a link between that adult Marés and his childhood memories. Recalling King's theorization of orientalist mis-en-scene as containing "a multitude of cryptic enigmas that the narrative cannot resolve," and the fact that Marsé repeatedly returns to these related objects throughout many of his novels, the significance of the trading cards should not be overlooked.

The Fu Manchu *cromos* first appear earlier in the novel, in the chapter titled "Cuaderno 2: Fu-Ching, el gran ilusionista." The chapter is an excerpt from Marés's journal, in which he pens

[25] Although Marsé's novels are set in the author's native Barcelona, Marsé has published exclusively in Castilian. Even after Franco's death in 1975 and the end of the dictatorship that had enforced national monolingualism for nearly four decades, Marsé has continued to publish in Castilian despite polemic language politics that have encouraged many writers from Barcelona to publish in Catalan.

memories and reflections: “dejo escritos aquí estos recuerdos para que se salven del olvido. Mi vida ha sido una mierda, pero no tengo otra” (37). As an adult, Marés looks back on his childhood and sees himself from an exterior perspective: “me veo tumbado de espaldas en mi camastro arrimado a la pared, las manos cruzadas bajo la nuca y los ojos en el techo. Junto a la torcida lámpara de flexo de la mesilla de noche, mis novelas de la colección Biblioteca Oro, y mi álbum de cromos de *Los tambores de Fu-Manchú*.” (42) Marés remembers the scene, describing in detail the objects inhabiting the space. Aside from the Fu Manchu trading cards Marés also remembers his collection of Biblioteca Oro novels, published by Editorial Molino. Editorial Molino was founded in 1933 and achieved enormous success with its series of popular novels called Biblioteca Oro. The series published popular genre novels, including many Fu Manchu novels in Spanish translation (fig. 29).



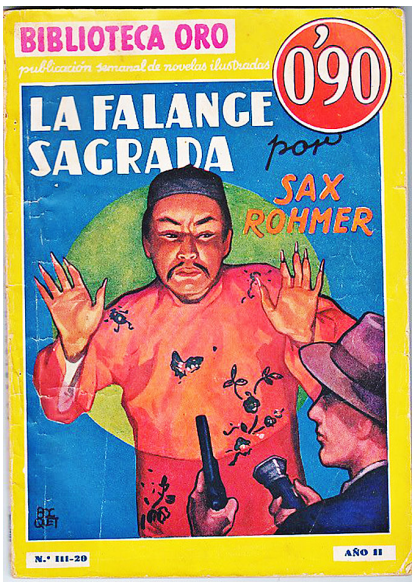


Figure 29: Editorial Molino, best known for producing low-cost popular novels, or *literatura de quiosco*, published many of Sax Rohmer’s Fu Manchu titles.

For Marés, however, the orientalized fantasy embodied by Fu Manchu was not limited to novels, films, and trading cards. The memory Marés has of himself lying on the bed, surrounded by his collection of popular fiction and ephemera is interrupted by the appearance of a shadowy

figure in the doorway: "desde el umbral, manteniendo la puerta abierta, el Mago Fu-Ching me está mirando" (43). Marés's father is El Mago Fu-Ching. However, he is not Chinese, but rather a Catalan performer who dresses in stylized oriental clothing and replaces his 'r's with 'l's as part of an elaborate stage act. In Marés's memory, the distinction between the stage performer and his father is hazy:

> El Mago Fu-Ching se llama en realidad Rafael Amat, ahora me acuerdo. Indiferente a la tiernas miradas de mi madre, ahora está de pie ante mí, tambaleándose un poco. El kimono y el gorro chino le sientan bien. […] Sonriente y refinado, con una gestualidad elegante y todavía llena de precisión, Fu-Ching mueve los largos dedos con endiablada rapidez y exhibe unos dientes podridos ofreciendo a mi consideración diversos números de ilusionismo y prestidigitación. El final de la canción *Perfidia* coincide con el final de los juegos de manos y los aplausos de los invitados se mezclan con las referencias del Mago.
>
> -Fu-Ching agladece los aplausos de distinguido público—dice inclinándose ante mí con las manos ocultas en las mangas del kimono—. Señolas y señoles, glacias. Glacias. (42)

Marés, who only ever refers to his father as "El Mago Fu-Ching" seems to have momentarily forgotten his father's other name as he recollects scenes from his childhood. Marés's father is frequently absent from the home and even when he is present remains distant, hidden behind his elaborate costume. Considering Marsé's repeated references to Fu Manchu and his evident familiarity with the character's cinematic iterations, such as *The Drums of Fu Manchu*, the similarities between Marsé's description of Fu-Ching and Fu Manchu's literary description should not be overlooked. The characterization of the performer as "elegante" and moving with "precisión" and "endiablada rapidez" brings to mind Rohmer's description of Fu Manchu as

"lean and feline" with "magnetic eyes" (25). Similarly, Boris Karloff's iconic performance as Fu Manchu and Henry Brandon's similarly styled characterization reflect the magnetic gestures attributed to Fu-Ching in the novel (fig. 30).

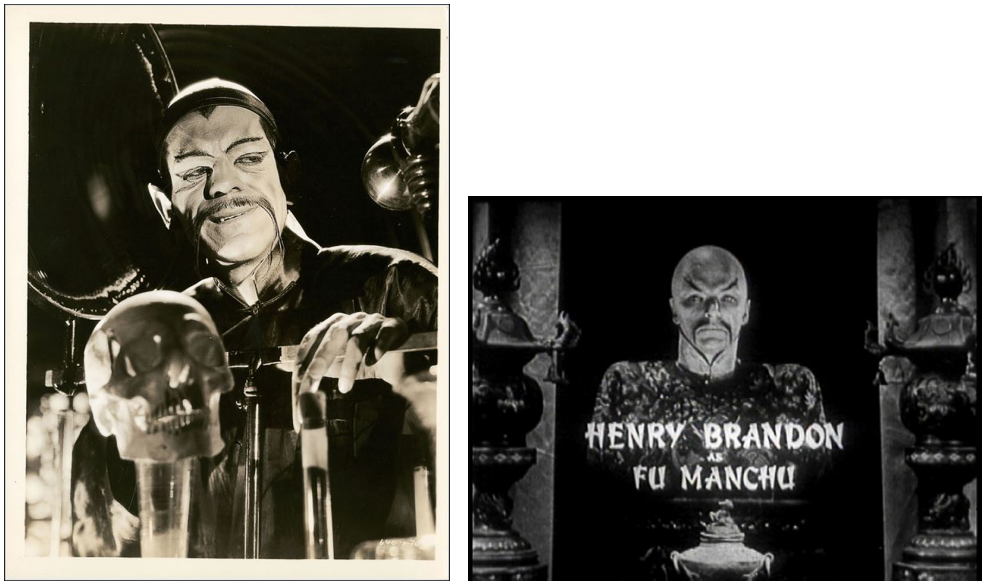


Figure 30: Marsé's description of Fu-Ching brings to mind Boris Karloff's iconic performance as Fu Manchu in *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932) and Henry Brandon's performance in *The Drums of Fu Manchu* (1940).

Considering that Marsé's writing is so frequently inspired by the popular culture of his childhood, it is also likely that El Mago Fu-Ching is modeled after El Mago Li-Chang, an illusionist from Badalona who performed as a Chinese magician for decades.[26] He became well known throughout Spain and especially in Cataluña beginning in the 1940s, often performing under the name "El demonio amarillo," a nod to the Fu Manchu novel of the same name (fig. 31). Like this borrowed moniker, Li-Chang's on-stage persona also alludes to Fu Manchu specifically. His long robe, small cap, and make-up—particularly the severely angled brows—

[26] Li-Chang is not the only example of a Westerner performing as a Chinese magician; there were precedents in both the United States and Latin America. One of the earliest known examples was William Ellsworth Robinson, who performed as Chung Ling Soo. Robinson famously maintained his act both on and off stage. Legend has it that he broke character only once, when a gun trick malfunctioned on stage causing him to receive a fatal bullet wound. For more on Robinson see Jim Steinmeyer's *The Glorious Deception.*

borrow directly from Fu Manchu's iconic on-screen image (fig. 32). In this way, the performer appears to make use of the fascination with the Fu Manchu figure exhibited by Marsé and many of his literary protagonists to develop a stage performance in keeping with the tastes of popular audience of the 1940s.

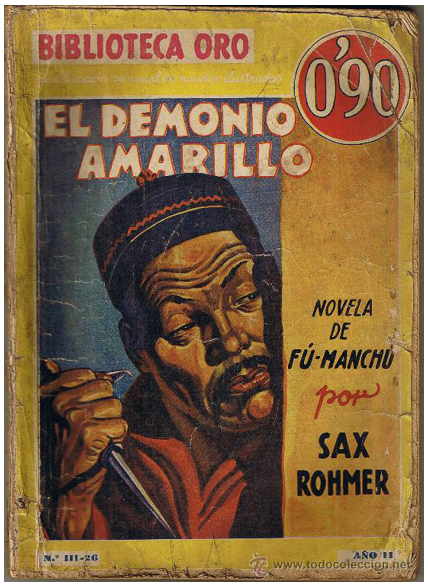


Figure 31: El Mago Li-Chang borrowed the phrase "el demonio amarillo" from a translation of the Sax Rohmer novel *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu*, published by Editorial Molino as part of the Biblioteca Oro series.

Figure 32: Li-Chang's costume is reminiscent of Fu Manchu's on-screen persona.

The appearance of Fu-Ching—whose name even mimics that of Li-Chang—in *El amante bilingüe* may seem like an example of literary flourish that merely enhances the backstory of an already unusual protagonist. But, in fact, the character of Fu-Ching highlights the novel's central themes of identity and disguise. Like his father, Marés adopts an elaborate alter ego adorned with an exaggerated accent and stereotyped costume. Both men initially adopt these guises for the benefit of a performance—Marés for Norma and his father onstage—, but eventually these secondary personas begin to take over their previous identities.

Marés, like Marsé to some degree, is established as an outsider to his own culture. He feels alienated from a city that he perceives as striving to identify itself more unequivocally as Catalan. In response, Marés embodies the memory of Faneca, the exotic *xarnego* who is simultaneously fascinating and threatening to him. Marés's discovery of the anonymous *xarnego* in bed with his wife marks the beginning of his dual process of exotization of and identification with the *xarnego*. Particularly interesting is the way in which these processes are mirrored by his father's complete adoption of the Fu-Ching persona. Other critics have read the figure of Marés's father, Rafael Amat, as the absentee father who played a minimal role in Marés's upbringing (Connor 6). Resina reads Amat's character as a tool to contrast Marsé's depiction of the working class under Franco in *El amante* to some of the author's previous novels. He notes that while many of those novels represent the working class more realistically, *El amante* "carnivalizes their pretense to retain the external trappings of dignity. His view of this (his own) class is represented by the shoddy magician Fu-Ching, Marsés's utterly incompetent father, whose see-through tricks fail to arouse the child's admiration" (97). While Marés may appear unimpressed by his father's illusions, referring to him in retrospect as an "ilusionista alcohólico," these

readings simplify the figure of Amat in the novel, overlooking the similarities between Marés's transformation into Faneca and Amat's conversion into Fu-Ching.

In a footnote to her article "Bilingualism, Desdoblamiento, and Dissociative Identity in Juan Marsé's *El amante bilingüe*" Laura F. Connor suggests that Norma's undeniable attraction to and occasional disparaging remarks about southerners in Cataluña can be read as "a kind of Catalan orientalism" (13). Because Cataluña has historically considered itself a modern nation in relation to the southern backwardness of regions like Andalucía and Extremadura, this power dynamic can be compared to that which exists between the West, which self-identifies as modern, with the East, constructed by the West as pre-modern. Marés's choice to embody the marginalized, exoticized, and even eroticized figure of the Andalusian as a way of negotiating his own history as a *xarnego* is mirrored by his father's incarnation of the similarly exoticized figure of the Chinese magician. The Fu Manchu trope, so present in Marés's (and Marsé's) childhood memories, is in reality a fiction, behind which there is a white, Western actor dressed in yellowface. This complex layering of reality, mask, and icon finds new meaning in Marsé's writing where it is employed in the negotiation of identities during and after the Franco dictatorship.

If the construction of truth in Marsé's novel is a multiple and interactive process, then so is the construction of identity. The negotiation of otherness in particular is a thematic constant that links Marsé's novels to one another. This sense of otherness draws largely on the author's own experience as a member of the *vencidos* during the post-war period and his ambivalent relationship to Spanish and Catalan definitions of national identity. Like Marsé, his protagonists attempt to construct their own identities amidst a landscape of constantly shifting signifiers. Marsé's fascination with Golden Age Hollywood cinema is reflected in his borrowing its tropes

(particularly Fu Manchu) and narrative styles (such as *film noir*) to explore this sense of otherness. In particular, the repeated use of costuming, disguises, and performativity alludes to the cinematic excess that defines the filmic representations of Fu Manchu during the 1930s and 1940s. The serial iterations of Fu Manchu are one important example of how the transnational circulation of these kind of images rooted in the logic of the Yellow Peril have been instrumental in constructing a notion of Chineseness in the Spanish imaginary. Marsé's appropriation of the Fu Manchu trope is also an indication of how these visual icons have been re-purposed in the Spanish cultural production in ways that address concerns particular to the twentieth-century Spanish and Catalan contexts.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHINESE MIGRANT

"Se ríen de la crisis"
Exconomic Anxieties and Chinese Immigration

In December of 2014 Spain's Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social reported over 191,000 documented Chinese immigrants living in Spain. The Chinese diaspora in Spain has grown nearly 450 percent since 1998, when its reported population was only 35,000 (Latham and Wu, *Chinese Immigration Trends, Dynamics and Implications*). These numbers do not include either Spanish citizens of Chinese descent or undocumented immigrants, which suggests that the total count of Chinese in the country could be considerably larger than the statistics reported by the state. As of 2014, the Chinese are the second largest non-EU immigrant population in Spain, outnumbered only by Moroccan immigrants. In contrast to other immigrant populations that have decreased since the onset of the financial crisis, the Chinese diaspora continues to grow steadily each year. Yet the Chinese, unlike other immigrant groups, have barely registered as a presence in Spanish literature and film.

Spanish films that represent immigrants in Spain reveal an emphasis on those of Latin American and African origin. This focus is not unwarranted, considering that these groups constituted a dominant share of the wave of immigration that began in the late 1980s and 1990s, and continue to make up a large percentage of the immigrant population in Spain. The cultural discourse surrounding the initial reception of immigrant populations in Spain is reflected in a number of well-known films including *Las cartas de Alou* (1990), *Bwana* (1996), *Flores de otro mundo* (1999) and *Poniente* (2002). Although problematic in varying ways, these films represent immigrant protagonists whose presence forces their Spanish co-protagonists to confront their own prejudices, and in doing so gesture towards an increasingly heterogeneous sense of national identity in post-Franco Spain. Representations of the Chinese immigrant, on the other hand, are much more scarce and have tended to be less socially self-aware, often relying on stereotypes

and divisive generalizations. Despite the growing Chinese population, there remains a dearth of representations that engage with the lived reality of the Chinese community in Spain. In contrast to representations of other immigrant groups, the Chinese are largely identified with their economic role in Spain, which is often represented as the primary avenue through which the Chinese community interacts with Spaniards and Spanish culture. By looking at cinematic representations of the Chinese immigrant in concert with news media coverage of the Chinese community I analyze the construction of the Chinese immigrant in the Spanish imaginary and deconstruct the cultural anxieties associated with the continued success of Chinese-owned businesses, particularly in the context of the recent crisis where they are seen as both an economic competitor and a threat to a distinctly Spanish way of life.

While Spain's growing Chinese diaspora is a contemporary phenomenon, the first Chinese immigrants arrived in Spain during the 1920s and 1930s. Many of these migrants were travelling merchants, for whom Spain was likely one stop among a series of European destinations. European hubs such as Paris and Marseilles hosted warehouses where goods would be available to merchants at wholesale prices and could then be sold throughout neighboring European countries (Beltrán Antolín, "Comunidades asiáticas" 22). As Joaquín Beltrán Antolín has noted in his research on Chinese migration to Spain, a large majority of these travelling merchants hailed from Zhejiang, a province in northeastern China that is also home to a large majority of Spain's contemporary Chinese community. In fact, Beltrán Antolín notes that "España es el único país donde la mayor parte de los miembros de la comunidad china establecida (70% aproximadamente) procede de Qingtian-Wenzhou (sur de la provincia de Zhejiang), ya que en otros países los chinos originarios de esta región no alcanzan una proporción tan elevada." ("Comunidades asiáticas" 22). This suggests a specific migration

pattern in which subsequent groups from the same region continued to migrate to Spain in growing numbers.

Following World War II, the popularity of Chinese restaurants in the United States and northern Europe created what researchers have referred to as an "ethnic economic niche" that extended to Spain as well. Beginning in the 1960s Chinese immigrants in Spain began to open Chinese restaurants in major cities and along the Spanish coast, catering to the growing number of tourists flocking to Spain's shores. By the 1980s the Chinese restaurant became a staple in Spain, where changing social and dietary habits meant that Spaniards were eating out more frequently and more open to "exotic" cuisines (Beltrán Antolín, "Comunidades asiáticas" 22, Saiz López 153). In order to make the most of a growing market and to avoid unnecessary competition Chinese migrants began to extend beyond Spain's urban and coastal regions, opening restaurants throughout the country's interior and in more rural areas. However, despite their dispersion over a large geographic area, the Chinese community in Spain has remained remarkably cohesive. As Beltrán Antolín notes, the Chinese are more likely to be self-employed than other immigrants in Spain, and are primarily organized around family-run businesses (Beltrán Antolín, "El transnacionalismo" 15).

With the Chinese restaurant market becoming saturated at the turn of the twenty-first century, the Chinese in Spain began to branch out into other sectors, primarily manufacturing and inexpensive bazaars (*todo a cien)* as well as import-export businesses, textiles, footwear and, later, services targeting the growing Chinese community itself. Like most Chinese restaurants in Spain, which are Chinese-owned and generally employ other Chinese migrants, most of these newer businesses follow a similar model, contributing to the rapid growth of Chinese-owned businesses in Spain during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The success of these

businesses reinforces established migration patterns by employing the more recently arrived, many of whom hope to open their own businesses after securing a degree of financial stability in Spain; their businesses employ recently arrived immigrants in turn, creating the possibility for Chinese migration to Spain to expand exponentially. The family-run business that employs compatriots from the same region is an economic model directly linked to the strong familial and community ties established and maintained by the Chinese in Spain, bonds that have contributed significantly to the Chinese community's economic success in Spain and are prized by the community for their cultural *and* economic value. Paradoxically, the same qualities that have served as a source of strength have led to Spanish perceptions of the Chinese community as insular and resistant to assimilation. Unlike Latin America, parts of Africa and the Philippines, China does not share a colonial history with Spain and so is constructed as even more alien than these already "othered" immigrant populations.[27] [28]

The public discourse surrounding the Chinese in Spain is plagued by hyperbolic stereotypes and urban legends that link the Chinese immigrant to Western fantasies of Chinese organized crime and corruption. *La fuente amarilla* (1999), the first Spanish feature film to directly address the question of Chinese immigration to Spain, marketed itself on the familiarity and intrigue of rumors about the Chinese community. The film's protagonist, Lola, is the daughter of a Spanish man and a Chinese woman who embarks on a tireless search to track down those responsible for the murder of her parents a decade earlier. Unlike many of the other

[27] There is an excellent and extensive body of work dedicated to the representation of African and Latin American immigrants and the link between these representations and Spain's cultural and historical anxieties. See Daniela Fleser's *The Return of the Moor*, Susan Martin-Márquez's *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity*, Isabel Santaolalla's *Los otros: etnicidad y raza en el cine español contemporánea*, as well as the work of Parvati Nair, Tabea Alexa Linhard and Luis Martin-Cabrera, among others.

[28] Although China was not a Spanish colony, there was a long history of Spanish missionaries in China.

cinematic representations of the immigrant produced in Spain during the 1990s, *La fuente amarilla* relies entirely on negative and exaggerated stereotypes that vilify the immigrant community it represents on screen.[29] The film's premise exploits Spanish curiosity about the insular Chinese community, offering a xenophobic response to the question: what *really* goes on behind the scenes in Madrid's Chinese restaurants?

While *La fuente amarilla* focuses on an earlier stage in immigrant economic development in Spain, the expansion of Chinese entrepreneurs into other markets beyond the "nicho económico" has been met with resistance from Spaniards, who view this kind of rapid success as a threat to local businesses in their communities. In September of 2004 nearly 500 people rallied against the perceived invasion of Chinese-owned businesses in Elche, a small city in Valencia. Posters encouraging protesters to "volcar y quemar contenedores de zapatos asiáticos que entran en nuestra ciudad" incited the rally that led to a warehouse fire, drawing national attention. According to the report in *El País*, some protesters screamed racial insults while others took the opportunity to loot Chinese-owned footwear businesses.

These economic concerns are translated into cultural terms when the establishment of Chinese-owned businesses is understood as a threat not only to the economic viability of the surrounding Spanish-owned businesses, but also to the fabric of a community self-defined as "authentically Spanish." Surveying Spanish attitudes towards the Chinese, J.A. Merino Sancho analyses 75 news articles related to China published between March and May of 2006. His results reveal that only ten of the dozens of articles studied portrayed China in a positive light. Of the articles representing China in a negative way, the majority were primarily concerned with China's increasing economic competitiveness. According to Merino Sancho, the Spanish media's

[29] The production of *La fuente amarilla* was briefly delayed by protests organized by Spain's Chinese associations, which viewed the film as detrimental to the Chinese community's reputation in Spain and encouraged Chinese actors working on the film to boycott its production.

representation of these issues fosters a negative image not only of China as an increasingly powerful—and therefore threatening—figure in the global economy, but also of the Chinese community's growing economic influence in Spain more specifically. Merino Sancho cites the reactions of residents in Barcelona's Eixample neighborhood who refer to "una invasión" of Chinese-owned businesses "que a su juico ha roto la estructura tradicional del barrio y amenaza a la misma identidad del barrio. The resident cited here conflates the establishment of Chinese-owned businesses with a threat to the very identity of the neighborhood, and in doing so exposes how the anxiety surrounding Chinese entreprenuership in Spain expands beyond merely economic concerns to encompass questions of local, regional, and national identity. Testimonies of this kind reflect the way in which the economic success of the increasing number of Chinese-owned businesses is perceived as an economic *and* cultural threat.

Just months after the violent protests in Elche another feature film representing a Chinese immigrant was released. *Tapas* (2005), a comedy-drama directed by José Corbacho and Juan Cruz, offers a more light-hearted take on the theme of the Chinese immigrant entering a public space marked as culturally Spanish. Set in Barcelona's working-class neighborhood L'Hospitalet, the film follows the lives and personal struggles of a diverse group of neighbors whose circumstances intersect in unexpected ways. Bar Lolo, owned by the eponymous Lolo (Manolo), is the social center of the neighborhood and serves as the focal point of the film's narrative. When Lolo's wife, and regular cook, leaves him after years of being underappreciated and mistreated by her misogynist husband, Lolo is in desperate need of a replacement. It is only in his wife's absence that Lolo begins to realize how much both he and the bar relied on her efficiency and dedication. With August just a few days away and most Spaniards preparing for a month-long vacation, Lolo has no choice but to give Mao, a Chinese immigrant referred by an

acquaintance, a chance when he appears at Bar Lolo looking for work as a chef. It is clear that Mao ends up working for Lolo precisely because there are no Spanish chefs willing to give up the customary August vacation. What's more, instead of closing on the first of August, as he would most summers, Lolo decides to stay open for a couple of additional weeks. And so begins a comedy of errors as Lolo attempts to run the bar without the help of his wife and negotiate the discomfort he experiences while working with a foreigner.

Mao appears in L'Hospitalet rather suddenly and the film gives little explanation as to the circumstances of his arrival. Had he been living and working in Barcelona prior to his employment at Bar Lolo? Is he part of a larger Chinese community in the city? The film expresses little interest in this kind of realist social context, instead constructing Mao as a compilation of orientalist tropes. After Mao is hired Lolo leaves him alone in the bar. A subsequent scene opens onto a close up shot of the *foosball* table in Bar Lolo and the camera slowly pans up to reveal Mao standing alone in the shuttered bar, arms spread, poised. He is no longer wearing the tidy button down shirt he wore during his interview with Lolo. Instead he has donned a white tank top, black sweatpants and black slippers. The outfit is nearly identical to the iconic costume worn by Bruce Lee in the 1972 cult classic, *Way of the Dragon*. The film was written, produced and directed by the martial arts star and its success at the box office propelled Bruce Lee to international stardom, making the poster image of him wearing a white tank top, nun chuck in hand, internationally recognizable. After panning up to frame Mao's entire figure, the camera pauses and Mao breaks into an elaborate martial arts routine (figs. 33 and 34). Much like his outfit, the routine itself is reminiscent of Bruce Lee's impressive persona.

The scene is set to the song "Quiero ser libre" performed by Los Chichos, a popular rumba flamenco group. Mao completes the sequence and the camera cuts to a close up of his

face, dripping with beads of sweat, as he bows to the camera, which then cuts to a close up of a crucifix hanging on the wall facing Mao (figs. 35 and 36). The editing suggests that Mao is bowing to the crucifix across from him after completing the martial arts sequence, all of which is accompanied by the quintessentially Spanish sound of flamenco pop. This scene can be read as a kind of wordless encounter between Mao, an ambassador of Chinese culture, and Spanish tradition. This is a problematic suggestion, however, considering that Mao is represented as little more than a Bruce Lee facsimile. While Bruce Lee may be a widely recognizable cultural figure, he is hardly a suitable representative of Chinese culture, particularly considering that he was born in California to Chinese American parents. And yet the film reinforces this link between Mao and Bruce Lee, who seems to be the film's primary reference to a supposedly Chinese cultural tradition.

Figures 33-36: Mao performs a martial arts routine before a crucifix hanging in Bar Lolo in *Tapas* (2005).

This association of Mao with Bruce Lee is anticipated in an earlier scene in which the martial arts star comes up in conversation between two adolescents, Opo and César, who

frequent Lolo's bar. Opo is a bonafide party animal and pill-popper who brags to César about the wide-ranging nationalities of the women he sleeps with each summer at Spain's popular music festivals. His apparent open-mindedness is a contrast to Lolo's tired prejudice and xenophobia. Opo is also, incidentally, a die-hard Bruce Lee fan, and wears a Bruce Lee t-shirt in almost every scene. While stocking shelves at their supermarket job, Opo mentions to César the nun chucks he has recently ordered, which leads to a conversation about Bruce Lee's death. "¿A Bruce Lee se lo cargaron de un golpe de nunchaku, no?" César asks him, to which Opo replies with shock and offense. He insists that Bruce Lee died at the hands of a Hollywood producer who "no podía soportar que un chino fuera el héroe," adding, "hay mucho chinofobia por allí." Opo is positioned as a kind of ambassador for popular culture in the neighborhood; he is more worldly than César, and offers nuggets of wisdom about foreign women, drug use and martial arts. And yet, he seems far less sensitive to the prejudices around him than he is to Hollywood's history of "chinofobia." The extent of Opo's interest in Chinese culture is Bruce Lee fandom, which is reinforced by the discovery that Mao is a clandestine martial arts master who practices in the bar after hours and bears a tattoo of Bruce Lee on his chest. Mao, on the other hand, is represented with little depth or complexity in comparison to the film's other characters, all of whom are struggling with a diverse array of personal challenges. Mao is essentially represented as a Bruce Lee caricature, and is therefore not a realistic representation of a Chinese immigrant; he glides through the kitchen with ease as he incorporates martial arts moves and postures into his daily work in the kitchen.

In the bar, Lolo gives Mao detailed and extensive instructions before putting him to work. From their first meeting, Lolo emphasizes the terms of their agreement: "Te contrato fundamentalmente por dos cosas," Lolo explains to Mao, "para que me des dinero y para que me

quites trabajo. O sea que si no me des dinero o no me alivies el trabajo, allí está la puerta te vas a la puta calle." There might be a *chino* working in the kitchen, but Lolo wants to make sure that everything runs exactly as it would if his wife Rosalía were still in the kitchen instead of on the run from his narrow-minded misogyny. "Aquí se cocina todo con aceite de oliva. Eh? O sea que si veo un puto bote de soja te vas a tu casa como hay dios." In other words, Lolo makes it very clear that the bar will continue to serve traditional and authentically Spanish tapas; Lolo is in no way interested in exploring Mao's culinary heritage. For Lolo, the bar's economic success is not only his livelihood, but also a manner of reaffirming his manhood after being abandoned by his wife. The conditions of Mao's employment leave little room for the possibility of collaboration; Mao is there to serve Lolo's personal and economic interests.

Moreover, Lolo insists that Mao must enter first thing in the morning and under no circumstances is he to leave before the bar closes. Above all else, Lolo doesn't want his clients to know that Rosalía has abandoned him or that he has hired a Chinese immigrant to replace her. According to Lolo, "en este país todo el mundo dice que no es racista, pero cuando esto se ha llenado de moros, de negros, o de sudacas a todo el mundo le ha dado por culo. O sea que mejor que no se enteren que tengo un chino en la cocina." Meanwhile, Mao appears to be the ideal pupil, he listens closely and by the end of their conversation he is finishing Lolo's sentences for him. While Lolo is willing to take advantage of Mao's work ethic and adaptability he does not display the same characteristics, instead appearing close-minded, overbearing and lazy. He demands that Mao remain a nameless, faceless figure relegated to the background and insists that he answer to Rosalía, the name of Lolo's wife, so as to disguise his presence in the bar. Lolo calls orders to "Rosalía" in the kitchen as Mao prepares typical Spanish dishes including a

tortilla española that earns compliments from the bar's regular clientele, "está buenísima la tortilla hoy, eh."

While likely intended for comic effect, the continuous references to Mao as "Rosalía" underline his position as a subaltern and feminized subject that reinforces Lolo's domineering masculinity. Jachinson Chan's *Chinese American Masculinities* explores the relationship between representations of Chinese American men in popular American culture and the construction of Chinese American masculine identity. Chan traces the feminized representation of Chinese American men back to the arrival of Chinese immigrants to the west coast of the United States in the mid-nineteenth century. Exclusionist and discriminatory legislation limited the rights of Chinese immigrants and prohibited miscegenation. Chan argues that these policies effectively emasculated the Chinese immigrant and relegated him to those jobs deemed "feminine work" (9).

The feminization of the people, spaces and objects associated with the East extend far beyond the context of American history. In his seminal text, *Orientalism*, Edward Said comments that nearly all representations of the Orient by nineteenth-century writers and artists in the West reinforce "the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability" (206). The West represents the Orient in a way that constructs and affirms its own dominance. A similar dynamic supports hegemonic notions of masculinity, generally defined in the West as white and heterosexual. Chan argues that:

> Representations of Chinese men are excluded from being a part of this elite group simply because a hegemonic masculinity seeks to define itself against men of color, fueling its need to constantly re-invent o re-imagine a homogenous patriarchal identity to protect its

> own networks of power. […] Those who do not measure up to hegemonic masculinity are subordinated by the dominant group. (9)

Chan reads the Bruce Lee cultural phenomenon as emerging from the need for Chinese American representations of hyper-masculinity to combat the repeated emasculation of Chinese American men in North American cultural production. However, Chan questions the effectiveness of what he identifies as the "Kung Fu Master" stereotype in effectively breaking down the systematic marginalization of Chinese American identities.

Chan's study is specific to the representation of Chinese-American masculinities within North American popular culture. However, his theorization of Chinese masculinity in relationship to Anglo-American (read European) hegemony is also useful for framing this reading of *Tapas*. Lolo is a caricature of dominant Spanish masculinity and the exaggerated representation of the flaws commonly associated with this masculinity—*machismo*, entitlement, prejudice—can be read as the film's critique of traditional masculinity's backwardness. Mao is represented as Lolo's foil; he is patient, hard-working, dedicated and subservient. In one scene, Lolo explains the preparation plan for an upcoming birthday party to be hosted at the bar. He repeatedly goes over vague details under his breath muttering phrases like: "para que lo entiendas"; "no sé si me sigues"; "a ver cómo te lo explico yo para que me entiendas." Mao finally interrupts him, "Mao entiende perfectamente," he clarifies and proceeds to relay a detailed menu, including a complete budget, which he then converts into pesetas, "para que lo entienda." This scene in particular demonstrates the film's intended critique of Lolo's hyperbolic masculinity. Mao embodies the "Kung Fu Master" model Chan lays out in his book; he compensates for the feminization of Chinese masculinity not only by demonstrating his mastery

of the hypermasculine martial arts, but also by proving that he is more competent at running Bar Lolo than Lolo himself.

For Lolo, the bar embodies interlocking aspects of his identity, including his masculinity, his "Spanishness" and his membership in the local community. The economic success of the bar shores up his sense of self and therefore must be carefully protected against the influence of an outsider like Mao. However, as Mao's presence proves to benefit instead of endanger the bar's stability, Lolo's opinion of Mao begins to change. He recognizes that Mao represents a new kind of potential for the bar, which he expresses by tipping Mao after the successful birthday party. The film's closing sequence shows Lolo passing through a tollbooth in a silver Mercedes with the sunroof open, presumably hitting the road for his August holiday, and perhaps to track down his wife and win back her affection. It seems that things are turning around for Lolo, who appears to have a new outlook on life—and perhaps, as the gleaming Mercedes suggests, a new economic status—thanks to his serendipitous encounter with Mao.

Lolo and Mao's narrative line is one of a handful that overlap in the film. Each of the stories question societal stereotypes and normative morality and ethics: an older woman sells pills to neighborhood youths in order to supplement her pension; a dying man considers suicide as an alternative to facing death by cancer; a divorcee finds solace in the arms of an adolescent neighbor; and, of course, Lolo reconsiders the advantages of immigrant labor. The only character that doesn't demonstrate any real growth is Mao. He does defy stereotypes about Chinese immigrants, but in a way that quells Spanish fears of a Chinese invasion that will prove detrimental to Spanish businesses or impose cultural hybridity through fusion cuisine. Mao assures viewers that foreigners, and foreignness, can be incorporated seamlessly into Spanish society without affecting its existing structure. Thanks to Mao's hard work Lolo can take his

August vacation, one that he feels entitled to, while Mao keeps the bar up and running as a traditional Spanish *tasca* after less than a week of employment there.

Mao's experience is not reflective of the material reality of life for the Chinese immigrant. The large majority of those who emigrate from China are received in Spain by a large Chinese community that helps to provide the individual with housing and employment upon arrival. Mao has a girlfriend who waits for him after his shift at Bar Lolo and for whom he apparently emigrated to be with. Other than this nameless and voiceless individual viewed by the spectator only from afar, the film reveals no larger Chinese community. The spectator never sees Mao's residence and knows little about his private life; he seems to appear and disappear from the bar, the hours beyond his shift a mystery. Mao represents the ideal foreign subject, not a realistic one. Unlike Mao, who assimilates into the Spanish-owned economy in the film, most Chinese immigrants in Spain are self-employed or employed by other Chinese business owners. Lolo benefits from Mao's stereotypically diligent work ethic. Meanwhile, Mao remains subservient to Lolo's position as both business owner and native Spaniard, and the film thereby avoids the kinds of conflicts that comprise most news reporting on the Chinese community in Spain. While the film does not directly address the tensions that have arisen between Chinese business owners and their Spanish neighbors as the Chinese community in Spain continues to grow, Mao's employment at Bar Lolo does anticipate the emergence of the Chinese immigrant from the ethnic niche of the Chinese restaurant and into the larger economic arena.

Mao's fictional character seems to find his real-life double on the front page of *20 Minutos* in a 2010 article with headline, "El 'boom' de los comercios chinos llega incluso a los bares de tapas" (Fraile). The article refers specifically to entrepreneurs who, unlike Mao who remains an employee at Bar Lolo, are opening Chinese-owned bars serving Spanish-style food

and drink. "Empezaron con los restaurantes chinos. Después, continuaron con las tiendas de ultramarinos. Ahora ya tienen grandes distribuidoras, peluquerías y hasta las típicas tascas de toda la vida. Los chinos, el colectivo de inmigrantes más silencioso, es también la más dinámica a la hora de montar empresas." The tone of the article suggests that by opening typically Spanish-style bars the entrepreneurial expansion of the Chinese community crosses a line into more culturally sensitive territory.[30] The role of these kinds of culturally identifiable spaces—"las típicas tascas de toda la vida"—and the food and drink served in them foment a particular sense of local and national belonging. While the article traces the growth of the Chinese community into sectors generally neglected by other migrant groups, the Chinese-owned *bares de tapas* are met with more serious reservation than their expansion into less culturally specific economic sectors. It seems that the tapas bar holds a particular cultural significance, and might therefore be considered "off limits" to foreign investors and entrepreneurs. Also noteworthy is the author's assertion that the Chinese, despite their entrepreneurial spirit, are Spain's most "silent" immigrant group. This description suggests a certain inscrutability that, perhaps inadvertently, borrows from orientalist notions closely tied to nineteenth- and twentieth-century fears of the Yellow Peril. The article goes on to explain that "este aparente éxito demográfico tiene una cara B," which the author describes as the Chinese community's lack of integration, and the alleged failure of Chinese-owned businesses to comply with standards governing working hours and hygiene, adding that "incluso han conseguido levantar varios Chinatowns."

[30] The economic presence and influence of the Chinese in Spain continues to grow in ways that complicate the distinction between 'foreign' and 'Spanish.' For example, in early 2015 the Chinese billionaire Wang Jianlin finalized his purchase of 20% of the soccer team Atlético de Madrid. Spanish *fútbol* is a matter of national pride for many fans, a decidedly national and in the case of el Atlético, local pastime. The injection of this foreign capital, part of which Wang Jianlin plans to dedicate to soccer camps in China, complicates the question of the team's "national identity." Wang Jianlin's investments in Spanish public and cultural life, which also include the recent purchase (and subsequent sale) of Madrid's iconic Edificio España, represent the influence of globalized capital on what, traditionally, has been considered "national culture."

Such views reflect an understanding of the Spanish economy as a zero sum game, with the success of Chinese entrepreneurs viewed as a direct attack on Spanish businesses: "por cada dos comercios españoles que cierran, abre uno de chinos." This claim, however, is immediately qualified by a direct quote from the president of CECOMA (Confederación de Empresarios de Comercio Minorista de Madrid) explaining that "la cifra puede andar cerca, aunque no hay datos oficiales." In spite of a glaring lack of substantial evidence, the article leaves its reader with a clear sense that the number of Chinese-owned businesses is growing at a disconcerting rate, particularly in sectors generally immune to competition from foreign-owned business, and to the detriment of their Spanish-owned competitors. It is important to remember that the article, which appeared in the print version of *20 minutos* in the fall of 2010, was published at a moment when Spain found itself in the midst of a devastating financial crisis. Six months later the 15-M movement would make international headlines with its radical protests against austerity cuts and the country's staggering unemployment rate. The article engages in a familiar discourse of pitting the immigrant against the nation's citizenry, particularly in times of financial crisis.

Lisa Lowe's *Immigrant Acts* outlines the ways in which the citizen is defined against the immigrant economically, legally, and culturally. While she is particularly interested in the ramifications of legislation aimed at the Asian immigrant throughout the course of North American history, some of her conclusions about the role of the Asian immigrant in Western society can be applied to the Spanish case. According to Lowe, the Asian subject is understood to be both physically *and* intellectually different from the Anglo-European citizen. This distinction has important implications for the perception of the Chinese immigrant in economic terms. Regarding the stereotyping of the Asian-American community, Lowe writes that:

> Throughout the twentieth century, the figure of the Asian immigrant has served as a "screen," a phantasmatic site, on which the nation projects a series of condensed, complicated anxieties regarding external and internal threats to the mutable coherence of the national body: the invading multitudes, the lascivious seductress, the servile yet treacherous domestic, the automaton whose inhuman efficiency will supersede American ingenuity. Indeed, it is precisely the unfixed liminality of the Asian immigrant – geographically, linguistically and racially at odds with the context of the "national" – that has given rise to the necessity of endlessly fixing and repeating such stereotypes. (18)

Lowe draws a clear link between anxieties surrounding the integrity of the "national body"—defined against the racially and socially othered immigrant—and the repetition of racialized stereotypes. Anxieties related to national identity have been projected onto various immigrant groups throughout Spanish history, perhaps most notably North African and Latin American immigrants; it is noteworthy that as the economic crisis in Spain worsened public discourse has shifted to also include a focus on the Chinese immigrant community in Spain.

A 2011 *ABC* headline "Comercio tradicional versus 'chinos'" explicitly constructs Chinese-owned businesses as a threat to a mythical notion of traditional "Spanishness" (García). The article frames the success of these businesses as not just economic competition, but an attack on their way of life, citing one small business owner who complains that, "abren cuando quieren, no respeten nada, van a acabar con todo. Esto parece Chinatown." While Spanish businesses traditionally open from ten in the morning to two in the afternoon, close for lunch and then re-open at four until about eight in the evening, the typical Chinese-owned convenience store will remain open until 11pm or midnight without closing for a lunch break. For Spanish business owners, the economic success of Chinese entrepreneurs can seem like an ultimatum to which one

must respond with radical changes or risk losing business to the competition. In noting that "algunos creen que la única forma de luchar contra esta competencia es hacerlo con sus propias armas, vendiendo el mismo tipo de productos," the author frames the negotiation of an increasingly diverse commercial landscape as a kind of "war" against an authentically Spanish way of life. The anxiety produced by the perceived threat of Chinese entrepreneurs on a traditional Spanish lifestyle exposes the contradictions inherent within this kind of logic. On the one hand the Chinese are too Spanish, opening tapas bars that threaten to replace the "authentic" Spanish ones. On the other hand, the Chinese community is alarmingly unfamiliar, exhibiting a work ethic that opposes the quintessentially Spanish balance between work and leisure time.

The Chinese immigrant community functions in the Spanish imaginary as the "economic other" against which the Spanish public can negotiate its identity amidst a crisis that has the power to relegate the country once again to the margins of Western Europe. Headlines such as "El impasible comerciante chino," "El poder chino en España," "¿Cómo sortean la crisis los chinos?" and "Los chinos que viven en España se ríen de la crisis" can be read as a defensive construction of the Chinese immigrant that attributes his or her seemingly impossible economic success during the recession to an essential otherness that might be understood as racial difference. This otherness is repeatedly highlighted, functioning to dehumanize the figure of the Chinese immigrant by suggesting that he or she is immune to the equalizing forces of the economic crisis.

The image of the inhumanly efficient automaton evoked by Lowe is threaded through these reports on the productivity of Chinese entrepreneurs in Spain. In fact, since the onset of the economic crisis, nearly all of the Spanish news media commentary on the phenomenon of Chinese immigration emphasizes the allegedly inhuman work habits of the Chinese. A 2012 *ABC*

article titled "¿Cómo viven los chinos en España?" claims to reveal the reality of the Chinese community: "Viven para trabajar y se quedan al margen de la sociedad española en todo lo que puedan" (M., A.) In general, the Spanish media constructs a racialized Chinese subject in the Spanish imaginary by portraying the Chinese community as impenetrable, intentionally aloof, and essentially other, naturalizing the difference between Chinese and Spanish, and thereby explaining away the economic success of some Chinese business-owners in the face of a crisis many Spaniards seem unable to overcome. Despite the increasingly significant presence of the Chinese community in Spain, the Chinese immigrant remains essentially "unknowable." Mao in *Tapas* remains largely a mystery to the film's audience. Unlike the film's other protagonists, Mao's motivations and inner life are not expressed. This "unknowability" translates into a kind of invisibility for the Chinese migrant. The imagined notion of "Chineseness" exists as a phantasmatic site, to borrow Lowe's term, that screens out any awareness of the individual.

Ming (2008), a short film directed by María Giráldez and Miguel Provencio, directly addresses the question of the Chinese immigrant's (in)visibility in Spanish society. The film opens with a shot of two older men walking together on a narrow street in Madrid's city center. One asks the other, "Has leído alguna vez las esquelas de los periódicos?" His companion replies that he isn't sure, to which the first responds, "Porque te puedes pasar un año entero leyéndolos sin que nunca veas publicada la esquela de un chino." In this brief introductory scene the film touches on one of the more sensationalist urban legends regarding the Chinese, which holds that no Chinese die in Spain. Despite their topic of conversation the two men don't seem to notice the film's Chinese protagonist, Ming, as he passes them on the sidewalk. This first scene alludes to the invisibility of the Chinese migrant who, though a popular topic of rumor and gossip, is not recognized as an individual. The camera follows Ming briefly as he heads to work before cutting

to the opening credits, which are accompanied by Martín Buscaglia's "Vagabundo". Buscaglia sings "¿Qué importa quién soy? Ni de dónde vengo ni a dónde voy." The opening credits are intercut with shots of Ming preparing to open the convenience store where he works. The song's lyrics seems to foreshadow the short's central question about the Chinese immigrant's (in)visibility while also evoking Mao's status in *Tapas*, a character with no distinct origin or identity beyond that which the film and its other characters project onto him.


Figs 37 and 38: Ming anticipates the arrival of customers in the *tienda de alimentación* in *Ming* (2008).

The opening credits of *Ming* come to an end and the music abruptly stops as the camera cuts to a medium shot of Ming sitting behind the counter, slumped over, his elbow resting on the counter, chin in hand. He seems tired, bored, and to be waiting for nothing in particular to happen. He yawns deeply and aimlessly glances around the shop before he looks up at the clock and realizes that it's nearly 9:30 am. A voiceover in Chinese relays his inner monologue; the Spanish subtitles convey his thoughts to the spectator, "las 9 y media… la mujer del bocata." Already, with less than two minutes of footage, *Ming* establishes a radically different representation of the Chinese immigrant. The shop where Ming works communicates a realism lacking in earlier representations of the Chinese in Spanish film. But even more significant is the way in which the film encourages the viewer to identify with Ming. The voiceover in Chinese establishes Ming as the protagonist with a distinct inner life. The spectator sits with him in the shop, alone, prior to the arrival of the Spanish customers who will come later (fig. 37). This

encourages the spectator to view the film from Ming's perspective. Instead of being introduced to Ming through the eyes of his Spanish clientele, we enter the shop with Ming, we see his daily routine and the moments in between his interactions with customers. By way of the voiceover Ming's inner life becomes the film's narrator, highlighting the primacy of his experience.

Ming anticipates his first customer, "la mujer del bocata" (fig. 38). She orders three cans of tuna, a jar of light mayonnaise and a baguette. A close-up shot shows Ming's hand slicing the baguette. Although she doesn't explicitly ask him to slice the bread, the scene suggests that they have had similar interactions before and that Ming knows she's buying the makings for a sandwich. "Bueno, ¿qué tal todo?" the woman asks as Ming prepares her order; "como siempre," he answers and shrugs. He packs up her order, she pays and tells him to keep the change. Their interaction is affable and smooth; it has an air of familiarity that tells the audience she is a regular customer and suggests that Ming is a reliable part of her routine as well. The film traces the minutiae of Ming's daily life in the shop. He munches on sunflower seeds outside, reorganizes bottles on a shelf, argues with a vendor about a late delivery, and daydreams about a woman named Lihn, presumably his girlfriend or wife. At one point he speaks with Lihn on the phone, his conversation translated for the audience in subtitles, "¿Me vas a esperar desnuda? Yo también tengo ganas de follarte." He foresees a special night and ruminates over what kind of gift to bring her. Ming is not the asexual or desexualized Chinese male commonly represented throughout Western European and American film. This small insight into Ming's intimate life further humanizes him for a Spanish, and by extension Western, audience. The Spanish customers who peer over the counter, eavesdropping on a conversation they don't understand, could be read as stand-ins for the off-screen spectators (fig. 39). Without the benefit of the film's

subtitles, the Spanish customers lean in, bewildered and likely a little fascinated, as they try to gather the gist of Ming's conversation.

Fig 39: Customers eavesdrop on Ming's conversation. *Ming* (2008).

As the afternoon draws to a close Ming prepares for the onslaught of evening customers. They are mostly revelers looking to purchase alcohol and cigarettes, a seemingly endless blitz of demanding clients. The sequence is edited with rapid cuts to emphasize the chaotic nature of the interactions, all of which are filmed from Ming's point of view. Once again the spectator experiences the scene through Ming's eyes; instead of peering into the life of this Chinese immigrant from the outside, the film invites us to learn more about him by seeing Spaniards from his position behind the counter of the *tienda de alimentación.* After the chaos finally subsides Ming smokes a cigarette slumped in a chair behind the counter, exhausted. He makes a few final notes, gathers his things and closes up shop, anxious to make his way to Lihn. On the way he realizes he has forgotten to buy her a gift, and so he stops to purchase an entire bouquet of flowers from a man selling single roses on the street. As he crosses a major thoroughfare a group of young Spanish men, clearly intoxicated, stop him to buy a rose, presuming he is a street vendor. Ming tries to explain that he has bought the bouquet as a gift, but is unable to communicate effectively with the man due in part to the language barrier, but mostly because the man is intoxicated and aggressive. "Me das una, joder" insists the young man as he shoves Ming,

who then stumbles and falls into oncoming traffic. Blinding headlights flood the camera's lens before it cuts to a close-up of the roses spilled in the street, sirens blaring in the distance. The young man looks around, panics, and runs off as the screen fades to black. The chaotic and claustrophobic camera movements create confusion for the spectator who is uncertain of Ming's death at the end of the scene, although the roses scattered in the street allude to Ming's demise.

This confusion is compounded when the scene ends without any explanation of Ming's fate. The screen remains black for a moment before opening onto Ming's shop in the morning, and the film seems to continue without any explanation of the accident the night before. "La mujer del bocata" arrives at her usual hour, this time ordering a package of ham, two tomatoes and a baguette. She makes the same small talk, "¿Y qué tal todo?" but looks disappointed when she is handed her purchase. "Te has olvidado de cortarme el pan," she says, and then reiterates, "para el bocadillo." She seems disappointed by the interruption to her regular routine, offended even. The camera cuts to the store attendant and the spectator discovers that it is not Ming at all who has forgotten to slice the baguette for her, but another Chinese man who is now working in the shop after Ming's presumed death in the accident the night before. The woman seems entirely unaware that the man attending her is not Ming. The film's meaning hinges on this moment as the spectator realizes that she never *really saw* Ming at all. The film concludes just as it began; the neighborhood's daily routine sutures over Ming's violent death, which remains unacknowledged onscreen. There are thousands of these Chinese-run convenience stores in Spain and even more Chinese immigrants working in them. The film suggests that to many of their Spanish customers one *chino* is hardly distinguishable from another; these immigrants are not seen as individuals, but rather as small parts of a much larger and unintelligible mass. Because the short film is so successful at encouraging the spectator to identify with Ming the

realization that even his most regular clients are unable to distinguish between him and another, anonymous Chinese man makes a very strong point about the (in)visibility of the Chinese immigrant and his labor.

Arguably, many who work in jobs similar to Ming's, particularly immigrants, are viewed by their clients as interchangeable. However, the particular otherness of the Chinese in Spanish society, considering their physiognomy and certain behavioral codes, presents a noteworthy case. In a study of stereotyping and cross-ethnic representation, Rey Chow calls the familiar stereotype of the inscrutable Chinese as, perhaps, "the cross-ethnic stereotype par excellence" (66). Chow writes:

> The failure of such outsiders to comprehend Chinese (facial) expressions – themselves a kind of corporeal writing – is being retroactively projected onto the other as the other's essential quality: inscrutability. As Jameson would put it, at the moment of cultural encounter, the other is thus brushed against on the outer edge, as a mere exterior. This exterior, […] in this case, is literally expressed as in impenetrable (sur)face […]. (64)

In one scene from the film Ming practices a series of smile and eye-contact techniques he has seen on a Spanish self-help television program, which guarantees that the method will "ayudar en todos los aspectos de la vida." However, when Ming applies these techniques to his interactions with customers his efforts go unnoticed. As Chow eloquently explains, the European observer's lack of understanding is projected back onto the observed Chinese as an essential unknowability. Western perceptions of the Chinese have historically see-sawed between admiration and condescension, however the Chinese have persisted as the "other" *par excellence* for Western cultural production. As Zhang Longxi notes, China has long represented "a country whose unfamiliar outline could be filled with all sorts of fantasies, philosophical speculation and

utopian idealization" (118). In this way, the unknowability of China and the Chinese represents a perpetually blank canvas onto which one can project innumerable fantasies and fears.

A similar impulse has produced a number of would-be exposés of the Chinese community in Spain. These television programs seek to expose "the secret" to Chinese success in Spain, perhaps hoping to uncover a juicy scandal, but instead end up highlighting the same points: the work ethic of the Chinese immigrants, their familial support networks, a tendency to borrow money from friends and family instead of Spanish banks, their lack of cultural and linguistic assimilation, etc. For example, the television documentary series, *Crónicas,* which airs on Channel 2, produced an episode entitled *Chinos en España*. Originally broadcast in 2010, and available for streaming on RTVE's website, the episode description promises that, "Un equipo del programa ha conseguido penetrar en el hermético mundo de los chinos en nuestro país." This orientalist characterization of the Chinese immigrant community as hermetic permeates both news media and fictional representations. By failing to achieve more than a "brush against the surface," such efforts serve instead to reinforce divisive stereotypes, such as that of the unscrupulous Chinese businessman, which provides a convenient explanation as to why Chinese businesses succeed as so many Spanish ones have collapsed under the pressure of the economic crisis. Though this kind of sensationalist reporting would look to disqualify the achievements of the Chinese community in Spain, what they often uncover does quite the opposite.

Racialized stereotypes draw a clear division between the "other" and a monolithic notion of Spanish identity, thereby protecting the integrity of the national body. Of course, the boundaries between national and foreign are much more fluid that this sort of binary suggests. The globalization of the world's financial markets has opened new pathways for the international flow of capital. Similarly, the transnational migration patterns of human bodies in the late

twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have complicated the very notion of national identity. The reality is that the children of Chinese immigrants, both those who emigrate to and those who are born in Spain, are attending Spanish schools and growing up Spanish society. The image of the recently arrived Chinese immigrant resistant to assimilation and isolated from Spanish society is slowly becoming an outdated model. As the Chinese community in Spain becomes more established, and its second and third generations come of age in Spanish towns and cities, the answers to the question of what Spanishness "looks like" become increasingly diverse. The country's growing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity offers an opportunity to critically engage with the representation of diversity in Spain and to participate in a conversation about the construction of the Chinese community in the Spanish imaginary and its role in Spanish society at large.

The Chinese in Spanish Detective Fiction

Between 2012 and 2014 the investigation of the scandalous "Operación Emperador," a alleged criminal web of money laundering, fiscal fraud and tax evasion carried out by the Chinese mafia, generated substantial attention from various Spanish media outlets. As presented in the news media, the scandal's narrative arc incorporated the most common urban legends about the Chinese community in Spain, particularly those related to the dominance of mafia organizations within Chinese-owned businesses. Since the late 1970s and 1980s when Chinese nationals first began establishing businesses—primarily restaurants and later variety stores—in Spain, sensational rumors about the Chinese community have circulated throughout the country. These urban legends run the gamut from suggestions that the Chinese cook domesticated animals (and even people) in their restaurants, to allegations that all Chinese migrants are indentured servants indebted to the Chinese mafia.[31] While it is easy to dismiss many of these rumors as sensationalizing, if not farcical, the shared public consciousness regarding the Chinese community in Spain nonetheless is built upon this web of tall tales and half-truths.

The media coverage of Operación Emperador, in particular, appealed to popular fantasies about the Chinese *triadas*, or the Chinese mafia. Gao Ping, the wealthy Chinese entrepreneur and Spanish resident at the center of Operación Emperador, was repeatedly depicted by the news media as an unscrupulous businessman with links to the Chinese mafia whose success allegedly relied on illegal trade and the exploitation of underprivileged workers. In this sense he represents a certain kind of villainous Chinese mastermind that harkens back to early representations of the fictional character Fu Manchu and similar models based on the logic of Yellow Peril. Within the Spanish news media, Gao Ping has often been portrayed as representative of the entire Chinese

[31] Ángel Villarino discusses these urban legends in greater detail in his book *¿Ádonde van los chinos cuando mueren?*

community in Spain and in this way affirms some of the most widely held, if outlandish, preconceptions about the Chinese in Spain. While references to the Chinese mafia have accompanied representations of the Chinese since the onset of large scale Chinese migration to Spain, in recent years the Chinese mafia has appeared in Spanish detective fiction. By examining the figure of the *triadas* and the mafia boss in contemporary Spanish literature and film, this section will explore the ways in which these narratives about the Chinese mafia reflect on the socio-economic reality of contemporary Spain as well. These representations build on a long history of representations of the Chinese in the genres of *film noir* and hard-boiled detective fiction that associate the Chinese diaspora in the West with dangerous urban spaces and as inherently bound to an insidious international crime network. I will argue that these representations of the Chinese, following in the tradition of the politically conscious *novela negra*, reveal broader concerns about the current political and economic landscape in contemporary Spain.

As the investigation into Gao Ping's businesses and alleged criminal organization unfolded in late 2012, major Spanish news outlets closely followed the case. Headlines such as "El 'emperador' Gao se alió con el 'dragón' Wan para crear una gran mafia," "Los tentáculos del 'emperador' de la mafia china en Madrid," and "Gao Ping advirtió que no dejaría 'a nadie en paz' si le traicionaba" repeatedly reiterate Gao's "gangster" status by drawing on easily recognizable allusions to filmic gangsters who threaten anyone willing to take the stand against them. *El País* included a graphic illustrating the organizational structure of the parties involved in the alleged money-laundering scheme. As the graphic notes, a number of the individuals higher up within Gao Ping's organization were Spaniards such as the businessman's primary counsel, Pedro Guzmán Hernández (fig. 40). Despite the involvement of numerous Spanish

businesspeople and politicians (infamous Spanish porn actor Nacho Vidal was also alleged to have been involved, although both Vidal and Gao Ping denied the accusation), the news media coverage of the case continually emphasized the involvement of Chinese nationals at all levels of the operation and the overall "Chineseness" of the case with the repeated used of the titles "Caso Emperador" and "Operación Emperador." In this way the article reinforce the notion that Gao Ping's operation is a synecdoche for the larger Chinese community in Madrid, or Spain more generally.

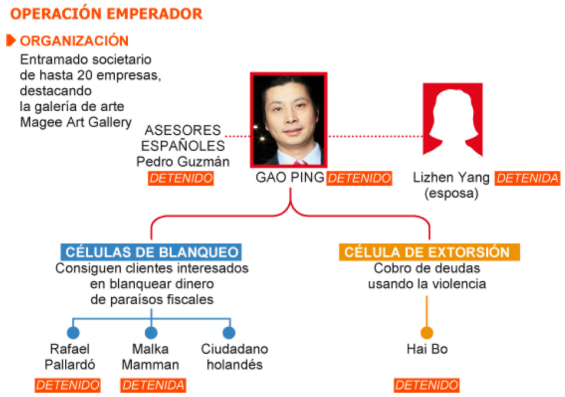


Figure 40: Graphic illustrating the organization of Gao Ping's money-laundering scheme published in *El País* in 2012.

The media storm surrounding Operación Emperador capitalized on the appeal of the case's sensationalism, blurring the line between fiction and reality by using pop culture references in supposedly fact-based reporting. For example, a 2012 article published in the Spanish newspapers *ABC* suggested that "la operación policial desarrollada el martes en el polígono madrileño de Cobo Calleja contra las mafias chinas ha recordado a más que uno, sobre todo los *tuiteros*, a la primera película de Santiago Segura, *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley*," suggesting that "la realidad suele superar la ficción" (Muñoz n.p.). The article refers to the plot of the first of the wildly popular *Torrente* films in which the eponymous detective, a rude, unhygienic, misogynistic, and xenophobic ex-cop who patrols Madrid as extra-official law

enforcement, accidentally uncovers a network of organized crime run out of a Chinese restaurant in Madrid.[32]

In the film Torrente is barred from his habitual lunch spot due to a large debt he refuses to pay and, left with no other choice, dines at the Chinese restaurant down the street instead. The scene inside the Chinese restaurant is one of the cult classic's most frequently referenced, in which Torrente repeatedly demeans the server, referring to her as "Chinita" and demands to speak to her manager because she didn't serve his meal with bread, as Spanish custom dictates. Amidst Torrente's culturally insensitive demands, the audience begins to notice a number of details that suggest the restaurant functions as more than a mere Chinese eatery. It is only after being kicked out by muscled security guards that Torrente becomes suspicious of the restaurant. Outside he runs into an acquaintance who sells lottery tickets on the corner and has observed that in the alley behind the restaurant "no paran de salir y entrar motos toda la noche." And so Torrente takes it upon himself to solve the mystery of the neighborhood Chinese restaurant. A parody of the hard-boiled detective genre, *Torrente* uses the space of the Chinese restaurant, and in particular the alley that runs alongside it, to create an approximation of the American Chinatown within Madrid (fig. 41).

Figure 41: The alley behind the Chinese restaurant reflects other cinematic Chinatowns. (*Torrente*, 1998.)

[32] The box office success of the first film, *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley* (1998), led to four sequels and two video games, all of which capitalize on Torrente's characteristically offensive brand of humor.

As Sheng-Mei Ma explores in *East-West Montage*, the classic Hollywood genres of *film noir* and hard-boiled detective fiction represent Asian spaces, such as the Chinatown or opium dens, as "holes in cities of the West that open up to reveal nightmarish hallucinations otherwise unavailable" (7). *Torrente* follows this trend in that inside the Chinese restaurant Torrente stumbles upon a world of organized crime, apparently invisible from any other vantage point in the neighborhood. The Chinese restaurant subplot in *Torrente* exhibits the intersection of several cultural forces that are essential to understanding this section's central argument. On the one hand, the parodic format of the film assumes a general familiarity with the conventions of the detective genre among its Spanish audience. Additionally, the Chinese restaurant subplot references a long tradition of detective fiction scenarios that uses the Chinatown as a symbol for that which is unknowable or inaccessible. Moreover, the film's humor relies upon, and thereby affirms, a general awareness among its audience of the rumors associated with the Chinese community at the time of the film's release in 1998.[33]

Homay King has written aboute the use of orientalist mise-en-scene in Hollywood film, and particularly in genres such as *film noir* and hard-boiled detective films, to transmit a sense of otherness:

> These films […] feature small orientalist objects—silk curtain, Chinese coins, bowls in incense—that at first glance seem insignificant or meant only to evoke a vague sense of dark exoticism. Through a sleight of hand, however, these Eastern objects and touches of décor become symbols of the irresolvable enigmatic and unintelligible—or specifically what falls outside the rational comprehension of the Western private detective. (13)

[33] In *Torrente* the Chinese drug smuggling ring run out of the Chinese restaurant is headed by a Latin American mob boss, which deviates somewhat from the pattern of the other texts studies in this dissertation.

In her analysis of Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974)—a classic of the genre—King explains how "Chinatown signifies the unknown: it is a site of indecipherability and secrets from the past, and it is a place, both literal and metaphorical, where deductive inquiry reaches its limits" (77).

Although *Torrente* was one of the first mainstream representations of the Chinese immigrant community in Spain, *La fuente amarilla* (1999), which debuted the following year, is widely considered to be the first Spanish film focusing on the Chinese immigrant community in Spain. A murder mystery that borrows from the *film noir* genre, *La fuente amarilla* marketed itself on the familiarity and intrigue of rumors about the Chinese community in Spain. The film centers on the protagonist Lola, the daughter of a Spanish man and a Chinese woman who embarks on a tireless search to track down those responsible for the murder of her parents a decade earlier. Unlike many of the other cinematic representations of immigrants produced in Spain during the 1990s, *La fuente amarilla* relies primarily on negative and exaggerated stereotypes that vilify the immigrant community it represents on screen. The film's premise exploits Spanish curiosity about the insular Chinese community, offering another xenophobic response to the question: what *really* goes on behind the scenes in Madrid's Chinese restaurants?

Lola, played by Spanish actress Silvia Abascal,[34] investigates the inner workings of Madrid's Chinese community in order to discover the truth behind her parents' tragic disappearance. Her hybrid identity as both Spanish and Chinese allows access to the hermetic world of the Chinese in Madrid, off-limits to other Spaniards. Her mission is aided by Sergio, a young man she meets in a chance encounter and who has an obsessive fascination with the Chinese community. He scours newspapers for articles about the Chinese, clipping notices about

[34] The representation of Lola by Spanish actress Silvia Abascal is problematic because the actress is not mixed-race like the character, and as such her casting alludes to a long history of yellowface in Western film. Similarly, the casting of Catalan actress Ariadna Gil as the Chinese femme fatale in the film adaptation of Juan Marsé's *El embrujo de Shanghai* (2002) by Fernando Trueba is another example of yellowface in contemporary Spanish cinema.

lost passports, which he claims are stolen from recently arrived immigrants who are then disposed of by the Chinese mafia, their passports reused in order to protect the anonymity of the mafia's leadership. Sergio's compulsive cataloging of these newspapers clippings provides Lola with the information she needs to begin an investigation that will eventually unveil the Chinese mafia's corrupt hierarchy and its violent exploitation of Chinese immigrants.

Similar to their representation in *Torrente*, Chinese spaces in the film are represented as the city's seedy underbelly (fig. 42).[35] The Chinese immigrants in the film seem to move exclusively within a world of illegality and crime, their lives conducted exclusively in back alleys, overcrowded flats and warehouse basements (fig. 43). While searching for the truth behind her parents' death, Lola encounters her maternal cousin, Wayne, who has recently arrived from China. When she visits his apartment she is surprised to learn that he shares a bedroom with twelve other Chinese immigrants, among a total of thirty or forty individuals living in the flat. There, Lola meets another housemate, Sung, who tells her that he paid $15,000 for the Chinese mafia's assistance in travelling to Spain. After two and a half years of hard work and poor living condition Sung still owes the mafia $10,000, although he remains hopeful about bringing his family from China and opening his own business in the future. Speaking in Spanish so that Sung cannot understand, Wayne comments on his naïveté, telling Lola, "les traen aquí engañados, como al paraíso, luego retienen pasaporte y esclavicen." Wayne is very matter of fact about the cycle of crime and exploitation in which he is also implicated. "Así son los chinos," he tells Lola, "gente trabajadora y noble. Periódicos hablan de traiadas y del Gran Tío, pero no de pobres trabajadores." Wayne is astute in his observation that the Spanish news media is far more

[35] At the time of the film's debut in 1999 Madrid did not have an identifiable "Chinatown." However, Cobo Calleja, an industrial park located to the south of Madrid's center in suburban Fuenlabrada is home to many of Spain's Chinese-owned businesses and warehouses. In recent years the area has been dubbed in some reports in the Spanish press as "Madrid's Chinatown."

interested in sensational reports about Chinese mafia bosses than the reality of the "pobres trabajadores," a comment which suggests that the film is aware, to some degree, of the distance between the daily reality of the Chinese immigrant in Madrid and the urban legends commonly associated with the Chinese.

Figure 42: The alley behind the Chinese restaurants alludes to other cinematic Chinatowns.

Figure 43: Lola infiltrates the mafia's upper echelon at a banquet dinner in the mafia's basement headquarters.

Yet, the film itself shares the same appetite for the sensational over the depiction of social and economic reality, and instead centers on figure of the mafia boss, ultimately reinforcing the most sensationalist negative stereotypes about the Chinese in Spain. Framed by the conventions of the crime thriller, Lola's investigation leads her down the proverbial rabbit hole to the head of the Chinese mafia's corrupt hierarchy, "el Gran Tío." In keeping with Ma's observation that Chinese spaces are often represented as "holes in cities of the West," Lola's finds herself in the

mafia's boss underground headquarters, literally hidden beneath the visible city. There she witnesses human trafficking, gang violence, bizarre rituals and a clandestine torture chamber. The portrayal of the Chinese in Madrid as a community at once impenetrable and alluring escalates as the film's denouement approaches, and in the final scene a Chinese New Year celebration replete with elaborate dancing dragon costumes devolves into a shoot out between el Gran Tío and Lola, who is aided by Sergio and Wayne (fig. 44). In her analysis of the film, Isabel Santaolalla cites an interview with the director, Miguel Santesmasas, in which he describes the film as dealing with "un mundo de leyenda," in that "los chinos forman una comunidad cerrada que despierta la fantasía de cualquiera." However, he seems unable to distinguish between legend and the film's attempt at realism, adding that "quería que lo que sucede en la cinta fuera creíble" (cited in Santaolalla, *Los otros*, 148). Santasmasas' film benefits not only from rumors about the Chinese circulating in Spain, but also from a long history of orientalist representations of the Chinese in American and European film. *La fuente amarilla* is credible only in that it reinforces and reaffirms stereotypes that construct the Chinese as essentially opposed to Western values and lifestyles.

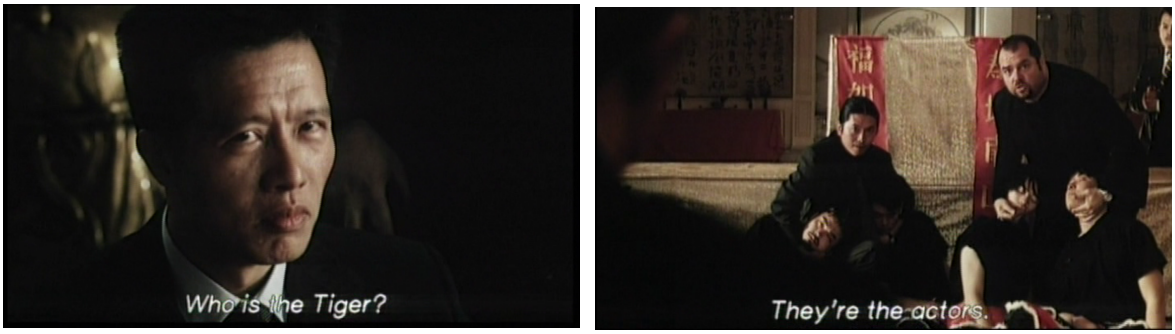


Figure 44: The elaborate performance devolves into a standoff between Lola and el Gran Tío.

The film's production was briefly delayed by protests organized by Spain's Chinese associations, which claimed the film was detrimental to the community's reputation in Spain and encouraged Chinese actors working on the film to boycott its production. Santaolalla describes

how many of the Chinese actors were given only a portion of the script, and were not privy to the film's full storyline and the negative implications of the film's representation of the Chinese (148). The effectiveness of the boycott, supported by the Chinese embassy, meant that many of the film's Chinese extras were replaced with actors of Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese descent.

ABC reported on the boycott, announcing that the police would be protecting the production and investigating "amenazas" from the Chinese community. The *ABC* article frames the Chinese association's boycott as an attack on freedom of speech, and cites the film's director, who defends the project in the name of freedom of expression: "Reconozco que me molesta que haya personas en el mundo que puedan decir a los demás lo que pueden o no pueden hacer, decir o pensar, usando como argumento ideologías autoritarias o métodos autoritarios. […] Tengo la suerte de vivir en un país libre y sólo reclamo mi derecho a hacer la película." Santasmases' accusation that the Chinese boycott of the film conforms to an authoritarian ideology that inhibits freedom discredits the Chinese associations' protests by associating their objections with Western conceptions of Asian populations, and the Chinese in particular, as the slavish subjects of backward regimes. In addition, his comments fail to recognize how his film's representation of the Chinese as mysterious criminals adheres to the dominant discourse surrounding Chinese immigration to Spain and supports the unequal power dynamic inherent in these kinds of representations. In an article about the boycott, *El País* cites Juan Carlos Xu, who was secretary of the Asociación China de España at the time. Xu contests the producer's defense that much more violent films, such as those starring Bruce Lee, have been produced in China and Hong Kong with no pushback from the Chinese:

> Esta película no es comparable a una de Bruce Lee, porque esta última la hacen en Hong Kong y la juzgan los de allí. Pero en este caso es como si unos chinos hablasen en China

> de España como si todos fuesen de ETA. Aquí somos pocos y hemos sufrido mucho por culpa de las mentiras de los medios de comunicación. Y la película recoge esas mentiras. Eso no es libertad de expresión, sino libertinaje.

Xu's comment highlights the Spanish media's power in constructing a recognizable and widely accepted image of the Chinese in Spain, regardless of the ways in which the lived reality of the Chinese immigrants contradicts it. It is important to note how even the Chinese community's protest against this kind of stereotyped representation is framed by the media in such a way that reinforces the alienation and otherness of the Chinese in Spanish society. The discourse used by the news media constructs the Chinese as a threat, in this case to Western freedom of expression.

Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley and *La fuente amarilla* are two of very few examples of representations of the Chinese community in late twentieth-century Spanish cinema. Both of these films reinforce the association of the Chinese in Spain with organized crime, as victim and perpetrator. Since the release of these films in the late 1990s, the Chinese community has continued to grow and has become more visible in the Spanish press and other cultural texts. Nevertheless, as evidenced by the media storm surrounding Operación Emperador, the idea of the Chinese mafia continues to figure prominently in contemporary representations of the Chinese in Spain. In recent years the fictional Chinese mafia has appeared in Spanish literature as well as cinema and visual culture. The genre of the crime novel or *novela negra* in particular has focused its attention on the Chinese mafia in Spain. *Sociedad negra* (2013) by Andreu Martín and *Laberinto de mentiras* (2014) by Rafael Escuredo Rodriguez are two detective novels that center on the Chinese mafia in Madrid and Barcelona, respectively. Set against the backdrop of Spain's financial crisis, the novels build upon the common trope of the Chinese mafia in

Spain, with the added element of a political subtext that subtly links Spain's Chinese diaspora with the fallout from a corrupt political system and the recent economic crisis.

Detective novels have claimed an influential place in late twentieth-century Spanish fiction, and the particular relationship between detective fiction and the national canon is closely linked to the country's political history. As various scholars have argued, the popularity of detective fiction in Spain during the late 1970s and 1980s reflected a need to engage with the legacy of the Franco dictatorship and the uneven processes of the Transition (Briones García, Gosland and King, Santana, Song). José Colmeiro has argued that Spanish detective fiction developed as a response to the socio-political changes that came about as a result of Franco's death and the end of the dictatorship in 1975.

> With these changes, new realities immediately emerged: urban violence, crime, drugs and terrorism appeared to be the price Spanish society had to pay for modernization. The establishment of democracy allowed Spanish writers a freer approach to these new social problems, as well as older ones like corruption, extortion and police brutality, formerly off limits to writers under Franco. It is not surprising, given these coordinates, that detective fiction, particularly its American hard-boiled type, appealed to writers with a penchant for social criticism as an attractive new prospect for exploring these issues. (152)

Colmeiro argues that the detective novel emerged as a method for negotiating these social and political changes. Similarly, Shelley Gosland and Stewart King have noted that while the Spanish detective novel can be read as a way of negotiating the problematic legacy of Francoism, "during the late 1970s and the 1980s, the *novela negra*—the Spanish version of the American hard-boiled genre—was, in fact, often more preoccupied with the present, seeking answers to the

question, 'Who are we and where are we going?' as the nation emerged from the lethargy of a totalitarian regime" (33). In other words, the historical moment in which detective fiction established itself in the Spanish literary canon was a period "characterized by a sustained state of crisis at all levels [that] provided the necessary political and social conditions for the development of detective fiction" (Colmeiro 152). *Sociedad negra* and *Laberinto de mentiras* can be read as the product of a similar "sustained state of crisis at all levels," in this case characterized by Spain's current economic and political crises. Both novels are, to varying degrees, the descendants of this tradition of politically charged detective fiction. As such, when considering the representation of the Chinese therein, it is important to consider to what degree the representation of the Chinese mafia is a product or symptom of Spain's current "state of crisis."

Laberinto de mentiras marks the return of Juan Sobrado, the protagonist of a previous novel by Escuredo Rodriguez. Despite the author's claim in an interview with *ABC* that Sobrado "es el clásico policía español y no tiene nada que ver con los detectives de las novelas anglosajonas," the cynical detective struggling to uncover an organized crime network while at odds with a corrupt justice system proves to be the centerpiece of a rather formulaic hard boiled detective novel (González-Barba n.p.). Inspector Sobrado is a chain-smoker and borderline alcoholic who subsists on cognac, bar food, and strong coffee. His deteriorating relationship with his wife, who has grown tired of his long work hours and emotional unavailability, serves as the backdrop against which the crime drama unfolds. When his son's classmate is discovered murdered with three other members of her family, Sobrado becomes involved in an investigation that uncovers a serial killer within Madrid's Chinese community.

The adolescent girl, her parents, and sibling are found hanged to death, a crime that puts the investigative team on the trail of a serial murderer targeting the Chinese immigrant community through a series of ritualized killings that involve hanging the victims after mailing cryptic notes to their residences. The investigation takes Sobrado and his team into Fuenlabrada, a municipality to the south of Madrid and the location of Cobo Calleja, an industrial park referred to at various moments in the novel as "nuestro Chinatown madrileño" (Escuredo 29, 195). Cobo Calleja was also the location of a number of businesses owned by Gao Ping and a central site in the "Operación Emperador" investigation. By framing the space in which a large part of the novel takes place as the Madrid's Chinatown, Escuredo situates the novel in a long tradition of American and European detective fiction in which the Chinatown—or in this case the "Chinatown madrileño" in Fuenlabrada—becomes, as we have seen, a stand in for that which is essentially unknowable.

Laberinto de mentiras capitalizes on public fascination with allegations of Chinese organized crime in Spain, which has arguable grown considerably since the Operación Emperador. As the investigation unfolds, Sobrado's knowledge about and familiarity with the Chinese community in Madrid develops. In this way the novel adopts an ethnographic gaze, thereby encouraging the reader to consume the novel as a source of information about the Chinese in Spain. For example, Benítez, one of Sobrado's colleagues, provides the inspector with a brief history of Chinese migration to Spain, adding that "todo esto lo puedes encontrar en Internet" (51). In the ABC article previously cited, the interviewer assures readers that "para que la historia que se narra fuera creíble, Escuredo ha realizado un profundo trabajo de documentación y se ha informado hasta el mínimo detalle de todo lo que concierne a estas mafias chinas," going on to quote Escuredo himself who claims to have "investigado a través de libros y

internet" (González-Barba n.p.). Considering this, one might take Sobrado's online investigation of Madrid's Chinese community as a fictional reflection of Escuredo's own research. However, the internet can be a dubious resource—a kind of "laberinto de mentiras" of its own. In the novel it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine which details reflect reality, as Escuredo claims they do, and which are the product of the author's creative license.

One such piece of information is described in the novel as the Chinese community's law of silence. Sobrado's investigation into the ritualized serial murder is continually stymied by the hermetic nature of the Chinese community, which, according to the novel, is governed by a law of silence. This code of silence is a trope that appears frequently among representations of the Chinese in Spain (and elsewhere) and often serves to exacerbate the perceived isolation of the Chinese community and its essential difference from Western society and culture. Indeed, the press coverage of the novel continued to draw links between the novel's Chinese mafia and the lived reality of the Chinese in Spain with headlines like "Rafael Escuredo retrata la ley del silencio de las tríadas chinas" (González-Barba n.p.) and "Uno de cada cien chinos en Europea es de la mafia" (Correal n.p.).

This inability to access the "truth" is portrayed as the case's distinguishing quality. The investigative team seems to be look in from the outside, unable to penetrate the "inscrutable" Chinese community. At a turning point in the case, Guijarro, a member of the investigative team and a supposed expert on the Chinese in Spain, explains to the rest of the group that they have to change their way of thinking in order to catch the killer.

> No sé por qué tenemos que darle más vueltas a un asunto que está más claro que el agua. Bastaría con que os dierais un garbeo por Cobo Calleja y le preguntarais a cualquier empresario sobre el asunto, para saber lo que pasa. Estamos ante una lucha a muerte entre

> mafiosos para hacerse con el negocio de la extorsión y de otros igualmente ilícitos. Es cierto que en España no estamos acostumbrados a ese tipo de criminalidad, y ... utilizan un ritual que no es propio de nuestra cultura. ¿Pero quién dice que no está en línea con la suya? Ellos piensan de otra manera. Y para cogerlos, lo que tenemos que hacer es adaptarnos a su forma de pensar y no al contrario, que es lo que estamos haciendo. (117)

Guijarro suggests that the team adopt the mindset of the Chinese killer, which he defines as essentially different from that of the investigators and, by extension, Spaniards in general.[36] And what he identifies as the killer's distinguishing characteristic is not his history as a hardened criminal or serial murderer, but rather his *Chineseness*: "ellos piensan de otra manera." This notion of an essential otherness reappears a number times throughout the novel, driving home the idea that "esa gente no funciona como nosotros" (54).

Eventually the murderer is revealed to be Lin Paio, a Chinese entrepreneur with a network of successful businesses working out of Cobo Calleja. In this sense the possible comparison between Gao Ping and the protagonist of Escuredo's novel seems intentional, particularly considering that the novel was published shortly after the infamous Caso Emperador. In a related article *CanalSur* reported that in the Escuredo's opinion, "la detención de Gao Ping, considerado el cabecilla de una trama china de blanqueo de capitales, supuso 'un aldabonazo' respecto a este tipo de mafias frente a las que existía una especial de 'silencio sepulcral' en la sociedad española" ("Una novela de expresidente Rafael Escureda"). However, unlike the audience for press coverage of "Operación Emperador," the reader of *Laberinto de mentiras* is able to gain insight into Lin Piao's personal history and motivations through a series of chapters narrated by the criminal in the first person. These chapters outline Lin Paio's history as a Huy

[36] The suggestion that the kind of money laundering operation taking place among the Chinese is completely foreign to Spaniards might result comical to some readers given the continuous stream of headlines about corruption in Spanish government that have been flooding the press in recent years.

Ling, an orphan of the Cultural Revolution who later rose through the ranks of the Chinese civil service before leaving China for Europe after experiencing firsthand corruption within the Communist Party. Through these chapters the reader learns that Lin Piao's murders within the Chinese community in Spain serve as retribution for the death of his parents decades earlier, attacking families that were associated with the forces that murdered his parents for counter-revolutionary behavior.

These chapters also provide the ideal venue for Lin Piao to express his disdain for Western society, and Spain in particular. He describes how his profitable empire in Spain is founded on a disdain for the foreign businessmen with whom he had interacted while in China. His economic success represents the inversion of a power dynamic between China and the West in which Europe has long dominated.

> Pero eso iba a cambiar, se repetía a sí mismo. China no necesitaba especuladores que vinieron de fuera a explotarlos. Para eso ya estaban ellos. Lo que necesitaban era aprender de su experiencia en los negocios y, aprovechando que la crisis económica no había echo más que empezar, devolverlos su propia medicina. […] En resumen, había llegado la hora de ganar dinero de lo grande y repatriar las ganancias a su país natal, al gran Imperio que empezaba a renacer de sus cenizas y que terminaría, de eso estaba seguro, por dominar el mundo (191-2).

The novel suggests that recent economic crisis has made Spain vulnerable to a serial killer like Lin Piao. What's more, it frames Chinese-owned businesses in Spain as a vengeance scheme in which profits are repatriated to China, thereby further driving down the Spanish economy. It is important to note that this claim comes not from Sobrado or any of the other members of the investigative team, but rather from Lin Piao himself, the only character whose perspective is

narrated in the first person. This ceding of narrative authority and inclusion of the villain's personal history and motives complicates the stereotypical representation of the Chinese. Nevertheless, this framing of the villain in more human terms also serves to reinforce his ruthlessness by revealing an elaborate revenge scheme. Lin Piao confesses that his network of Chinese restaurants and small businesses is part of a long-term plan to secure world-domination for the Chinese "Empire." This plot twist links Chinese migration and entrepreneurship in Spain to the financial crisis by recurring to the logic of the Yellow Peril and pitting the Far East against Western civilization.

However, Spanish corruption is implicit in the success of Lin Piao's empire, made possible by a network of corrupt police officers, including some of Sobrado's former colleagues, who work with the Chinese mafia to import illegal substances into Spain. The novel frames this corruption as the direct product of the financial crisis, which has affected members of Madrid's law enforcement to such a degree that they have "crossed over to the dark side." At one point point Lin Piao tries to corrupt Sobrado as well but his efforts prove fruitless in the face of Sobrado's stubborn principles. "¿Cuántas veces no habría utilizado esa táctica para atrapar a sus víctimas en la tela de araña de sus espurios intereses?" Sobrado asks himself, once again recurring to a popular motif of the Yellow Peril, which pictures the Chinese as a tentacled menace set on world dominance (187).[37]

As is the case with many examples of detective fiction, the investigation ultimately serves as a conduit for Sobrado's self reflection; as the case advances so does his understanding of

[37] The Yellow Peril was often visualized via images of tentacles creatures such as a squid or arachnid. This is evident in the collection of images about the Yellow Peril featured in the anthology edited by John Kuo Wei Tchen and Dylan Yeats, *Yellow Peril: An Archive of Anti-Asian Fear*. As we have seen, similar tropes appear throughout the Fu Manchu novels and films in which the Chinese villain is compared to and also used arachnids, such as spiders, as part of his torture methods.

himself and his role as a detective and (aspiring) family man. Towards the end of the novel Sobrado reflects on the investigation: "A veces me pregunto si los crímenes cometidos por Lin Piao y su mundo de corrupción y muerte no fueron el repulsivo que necesitaba para reencontrarme conmigo mismo, y el que me hizo descubrir el lado más complejo y oscuro de mi personalidad: el espejo en el que mirarme y reconocerme tal como soy" (289). As I discussed earlier in this chapter, Rey Chow has written about cross-ethnic stereotyping and the cliché of the "inscrutable Chinese" as a process that serves to affirm White knowledge (*The Protestant Ethic* 65). According to Chow, the more inscrutable the oriental Other, the more fascinating for the Western subject (*The Rey Chow Reader* 130). Both of these processes are evident in *Laberinto de mentiras.* The unreadability of Cobo Calleja and the culture of the Chinese community in Madrid heighten its appeal, therefore making it the ideal subject of the *novel negra*. The investigation into a community that is initially intriguing precisely because of its inscrutability becomes increasingly more readable to the European outsider and, in turn, serves as a vehicle for his own journey of self-discovery.

A similar argument can be made about the relationship between the character of Lin Piao and the novel's underlying theme of corruption and the financial crisis in Spain. The bureaucratic maneuvering of the government and the judicial system is familiar territory for Escuredo, who served as the first president of the recently establish Junta de Andalucía in the early years of Spanish democracy.[38] *Laberinto de mentiras* seems to draw on Escuredo's personal experience

[38] According to some, Escuredo's 1984 resignation was the result of the growing "política felipista de Madrid," referring to the popularity of Prime Minister Felipe González, who was then serving the first of what would become four consecutive terms (Machuca n.p.). In fact, Esucredo's career as a politician and public figure is much more extensive than his work as a fiction writer. More recently, Escuredo has spoken publically about the scandalous "Caso ERE," which has implicated various members of Andalusia's government in allegations of bribery and fraud associated with the legislation knows as ERE (Expediente de Regulación de Empleo). In the fall of 2016, for example, *El Confidencial* cited Escuredo in an interview about the ERE saying, "si un consejero lo sabía, sin piedad con él."

with corruption within the ranks of Spanish government and law enforcement. Although it identifies Chinese entrepreneurship as the primary catalyst for crime and corruption in post-crisis Spain, this narrative arc can be seen as a vehicle for exploring the fallout of the economic crisis in a government system already plagued with allegations of corruption and nepotism. As Lin Piao himself describes, his transformation from the civil servant Huy Ling into the serial killer Lin Piao was the direct result of spending years embroiled in a corrupt political system that rewarded nepotism over hard work and dedication. Coming from an author who has been outspoken against similar evils within the Spanish bureaucracy, the character of Lin Piao can also be read as a warning against an increasingly corrupt political system in Spain.

Like *Laberinto de mentiras*, Andreu Martín's 2013 detective novel *Sociedad negra* is a story about the Chinese mafia in Spain that examines the corruption and inefficiency of the Spanish political and justice systems. Unlike Escuredo, however, Martín is a seasoned author of detective fiction and a major figure in the Spanish crime novel canon. Martín is also credited with making *la novela negra* genre accessible to younger readers through his series of youth detective fiction. Although many of his adult crime fiction novels are set in Barcelona, *Sociedad negra* is the only one to feature the Chinese mafia. In *Socidad negra* Inspector Diego Cañas, a hardened Barcelona detective, finds himself trapped between the demands of his professional life and his familial responsibilities to his wife and rebellious teenage daughter. Another central character is Juan Fernández Liang. Born to a Chinese mother and Spanish father, due to the absence of a relationship with his estranged father, he prefers to go by the Chinese name Liang Huan. Liang is one of Caña's informants who, over the course of the investigation finds himself in over his head with Barcelona's Chinese mafia. The novel begins with a murder scene in which a woman's severed head is discovered on the carrer Joan Güell. Despite assurances from

Barcelona's police department that the murder is associated with Latin American gangs, Cañas suspects that the Chinese mafia is involved, and so he begins an investigation with the help of Liang that will put him at odds with Catalan bureaucracy and will eventually lead him to the center of Barcelona's powerful Chinese *triadas*.

The press coverage of both *Sociedad negra* and *Laberinto de mentiras*, which have been written about in the press but not by literary scholars, emphasizes the authors' research into Spain's Chinese community as an objective foundation on which the novels are built. In this way the line between fact and fiction is further blurred, particular for a reading public already steeped in urban legend and with little access to reliable sources about the lived experiences of the Chinese in Spain. Interestingly, while both novels are narrated from a number of different perspectives, the Chinese characters, Lin Piao and Liang, tell their stories in first-person. This choice on the part of both authors is noteworthy, particularly considering that the Chinese characters are the *only* ones to narrate in the first person, the perspectives of the Spaniards in the novels left to a third-person narrator. In addition to giving insight into their characters and motivations, I argue that this choice to narrate the Chinese experience in first-person amplifies their ethnographic quality, suggesting a greater degree of verisimilitude for the reader who gets the information "from the source," so to speak.

A major difference between the two novels is Liang's hybrid identity. As the son of a Spaniard and a Chinese woman, Liang's character gestures towards a kind of liminal space occupied by those in Spanish society who are neither entirely "Spanish" that is becoming increasingly common with the growth of a second generation of racially marked migrant groups. Liang's backstory adds a degree of complexity to *Sociedad negra* that is lacking in *Laberinto de mentiras.* Like Lola in *La fuente amarilla*, Liang offers privileged access to Spain's Chinese

community, which is characterized in the novel as extremely hermetic and impenetrable by Westerners.

The novel begins with a decapitated body that sets in motion an extended investigation involving Liang and Cañas that unfolds in reverse order, taking the reader back in time and slowly unveiling the complex circumstances that led to the murder. The Chinese mafia is at the end of the spiral and its leader, Lei Ya, is the novel's villain. Most of the information about the Chinese community comes from Liang himself. Although he works as an informant for Cañas, Liang feels a strong sense of loyalty to the Chinese community, and is selective about the information he provides to the detective. Information on Lei Ya's clandestine sweatshops, for example, is one piece of knowledge that he is hesitant to share.

> No se lo había mencionado nunca a Cañas, pero lo conocía. Nunca me habría chivado de un lugar donde trabajaban unas sesenta personas que habían pagado veinte mil euros para viajar a Europa desde su tierra, y lo hacían duramente sin salir nunca de aquel encierro, comiendo y durmiendo en su mismo puesto de trabajo, en el sucio jergón que tenían a sus pies, con la esperanza de pagar su deuda al Cabeza de Serpiente para librarse al fin y poder prosperar en libertad. Ellos no veían aquella situación como esclavitud sino como una oportunidad para mejorar sus vidas. (Martín 265)

Here Liang shares information with the novel's presumably white, Western reader that he chose not to give to Cañas. This information offers a denunciation of the exploitation of Chinese migrants that echoes representations seen in other representations of the Chinese, including *La fuente amarilla* and the more recent *Biutiful* (Iñarrítu, 2010); that the Chinese arrive in Spain via human trafficking networks run by other Chinese nationals who take advantage of their compatriots; and that they live and work in squalid conditions in order to pay back the

astronomical debt they incur migrating to Spain. It also echoes the comments made by Wayne, Lola's cousin in *La fuente amarilla*, that these migrants don't view their situation as akin to modern-day slavery. On the one hand this reframing gives the Chinese migrant agency and recasts her as something other than a helpless victim. On the other hand, this narrative also reinforces a divide between the Western reader who is attuned to the atrociousness of this kind of human rights abuse and the Chinese who, due to their insatiable ambition, tireless work ethic, and submissive nature, remain indifferent to their own suffering.

Liang's ambiguous alliances that shift between the Chinese and Spanish "worlds" is underlined when he unwittingly becomes involved with Lei Ya's attractive daughter and takes this opportunity to partner with some Catalan acquaintances involved in petty crime and rob the flagship of Lei Ya's network of extra-official Chinese banks, housed in his underground warehouse. The novel posits these illegal banks as the ideal target for a robbery: "Pues atracaban a los chinos porque los chinos no confían su dinero a los bancos occidentales. Los usan lo imprescindible, para pagar facturas o hipotecas, o alquileres, o impuestos, o lo que sea, pero el noventa por ciento de los que ganan se lo quedan en casa. O bien lo confían a un banco clandestino, regido por chinos de confianza." (117) As scholars such as Joaquín Beltrán Antolín have noted, Spain's Chinese community generally invests in small, family-owned business with capital earned from working other jobs, or with loans from family or community members (21). This tendency to develop strong communities and support networks has bolstered allegations of Chinese organized crime networks veiled by small shops, restaurants and import-export businesses.

Liang's well-planned robbery involves making a stealth entrance into Lei Ya's heavily guarded headquarters, represented in the novel as a rhetorical descent into the belly of the beast.

There, Liang closely escapes death and incites a double man-hunt involving both the Chinese mafia and the police. In keeping with Martín's characteristic style, which Colmeiro has described as "some of the most violent and crude contemporary Spanish fiction written," *Sociedad negra* contains unflinchingly graphic accounts of violence, torture, and sex (157). Nevertheless, according to Colmeiro, "for Martín, violence is never an end in itself; it functions as a powerful graphic metaphor for the violent organization of society" (157). *La Vanguardia* notes that, according to the author, the novel is an expression of his indignation with Spain's current political and economic situation—"su intención era crear un libro fácil de protesta contra la élite política por sus responsabilidades en la crisis, una idea que acabó transformándose en un relato situado en la calle Trafalgar de Barcelona y protagonizado por chinos" ("Andreu Martín recrea" n.p.). In a blog post announcing the novel's release, *El País* cited Martín as describing the novel as a text born of his own indignation.

> Aunque hable de las mafias chinas o de la Mara Salvatrucha *Sociedad negra* nace de la indignación. Soy un indignado que quizá no tiene derecho a indignarse porque las cosas no me van mal. Pero estoy indignado con los políticos, con la corrupción, con el montaje social que ya no controlamos. […] Uno hace una tropelía y le dan un cargo en Telefónica. Los grandes chorizos marcan el territorio. A Bárcenas no le pasará nada. A ver si lo aprendemos de una vez. En 2008 nos declararon la guerra y la hemos perdido. (Mora n.p.)

Martín begins his statement about the gangs and mafia in his novel with "aunque," a qualifier that suggest that the real focus of his frustration and ire are not the foreign criminal, but rather

Spain's native born crooks, and he notes the Bárcenas case specifically.[39] In other words, the Chinese serve as a narrative vehicle for exploring broader questions of politics and corruption in contemporary Spain. What's more, by self-identifying specifically as an "indignado" he aligns himself with Spain's contemporary popular protest movement that began with 15-M.[40] Despite the repeated clarification that, although it focuses on the Chinese, the novel is actually a denunciation of Spanish corruption, neither article clearly explains the leap from political indignation to an account of Barcelona's fictional Chinese mafia.

The image of the BMW sedans that Lie Ya's organization uses to shuttle hundreds of thousands of euros between brothels, fraudulent storefronts, and a clandestine bank brings to mind the excesses committed by "los grandes chorizos" that Martín accuses of perpetuating Spain's financial and political crises. *Sociedad negra* represents precisely the kind of wide scale corruption and fraud that Martín denounces in the interview, with the difference that the very real Partido Popular politicians and Telefónica executives that he cites as sources of his indignation in the interview have been replaced in the novel with a fictional Chinese mafia. In many ways, the Chinese mafia is a simpler villain to represent than the complex network of career politicians, private interests, and historical alliances implicit in the current unraveling of the Spanish economic and political systems. As noted earlier in this chapter, Lisa Lowe describes the Asian immigrant as a "'phantasmatic site' onto which the nation can project a series of anxieties related

[39] Luis Bárcenas is the former Treasurer of the Partido Popular (PP) who was accused in 2013 of syphoning money from illegal donation to the PP into private accounts. As of late 2016 Bárcenas was still awaiting trial. The Bárcenas case became a symbol of the corruption and fiscal fraud that some consider characteristic of the PP and its politicians. Particularly since the onset of the financial crisis the kind of corruption has been met with strong protest from groups on the left advocating for serious reform of the Spanish political system, such as those involved in the 15-M movement and the new left-wing political party Podemos.

[40] The degree to which the *indignados* movement has been inclusive of ethnic and cultural diversity—or not—is a much broader topic that cannot be addressed here.

to real or perceived threats" (18). Faced with a sense of indignation and impotence due to the inability to resolve the complex social, economic, and political challenges facing the country, the scapegoating of a foreign crime syndicate, who is identified and brought to justice, is one way of working through these issues. In the absence of a more transparent system for rooting out corruption in Spain, detective fiction like *Laberinto de mentiras* and *Sociedad negra* projects national fears related to the ongoing financial crisis and numerous cases of political corruption onto the image of the Chinese mafia boss, who is reinvented as the twenty-first century Fu Manchu. While these texts build on stereotypical representations of the Chinese mafia, like the one depicted in *La fuente amarilla*, by giving the Chinese characters narrative authority they also allow for readings of these characters as exhibiting more agency and and complexity than their predecessors in Spanish film. Ultimately, as is often the case with representations of ethnic or racial minorities, the construction of the Chinese mafia in these texts is a better reflection of the Spanish society that produced them than they are an accurate depiction of the country's growing Chinese diaspora.

The New Spanish Family

The family has long been utilized as a metaphor to understand the nation. Doris Sommers famously coined the term "foundational fictions" to describe the nineteenth-century Latin American novels that used family structures to fortify a sense of nationhood in countries recently liberated from Spanish colonialism. In twentieth-century Spain the model of the patriarchal family was employed by Spanish cultural production to both challenge and reinforce the validity of Franco's dictatorship. In short, the metaphor of the family has proven to be an effective tool for defining the nation's imagined limits. Catherine Lee writes that:

> Stories of relatedness or connection and claims about who among us is indeed 'like one of the family' all help to confer both privileges and responsibilities. […] This seeming interchangeability among family, race or ethnicity, and nation suggests that the three constructs are conceptually quite similar. It also explains why family's narrative structure can be so powerful in generating emotions around immigration control. (10)

Spain's transition to democracy ushered in a period of unprecedented migration to Spain during the 1980s and 1990s, and with it a degree of racial and ethnic diversity previously unprecedented in Spain's largely homogenous society. Following Lee's suggestion that family, race or ethnicity, and nation can function as interchangeable terms, the arrival of racialized Others into the Spanish nation state during the late twentieth century represented an opportunity to redefine the "national family" as well.

In her monograph on immigration cinema in Europe, Isolina Ballesteros dedicates one chapter to the allegorical use of the family structure to negotiate otherness in Europe's increasingly multicultural society, largely the product of contemporary immigration. Among the films she discusses are the Spanish feature-length productions *Flores de otro mundo* (1999) and

Poniente (2002), both of which belong to a sub- category of socially aware cinema made at the turn of the twenty-first century in Spain. She argues that these films, and the others included in the chapter, "convey the message that tolerance has to be cultivated within the family's structure as a first step to achieving a broader communal and supranational acceptance of Otherness" (169-70). These films use the family structure within their narrative to encourage viewers to identify with, and therefore become more tolerant of the other in Spanish society while also working to assuage the more liberal viewer's "white guilt" by showing white European protagonists who challenge a prejudiced status quo.

As we have seen earlier in chapter two, Chinese migrants have not been included in this trend of socially liberal representations of racialized migrants—primarily Latin American and Africa migrants—on the Spanish screen. Instead, films like *La fuente amarilla* and *Tapas* serve to reinforce stereotypes and produce two-dimensional Chinese characters that, unlike the migrant characters in *Flores de otro mundo* and *Poniente*, don't challenge viewers to reflect on their own prejudices. This section looks specifically at two films—*Amigo no gima* (2004) and *Biutiful* (2010)—in which the family functions as an allegory for a multicultural Spain in the twenty-first century and in which the Chinese migrant is present, but excluded from the family metaphor.

This notion of the "new Spanish family" is at center of Iñaki Peñafiel's 2004 short film, *Amigo no gima*. Produced with support from the Ministerio de Cultura and nominated for a Goya, the film is set in Madrid's most diverse neighborhood, Lavapiés, and sends a very clear, didactic message in support of multiculturalism. The film opens on the celebration of the Chinese New Year in Lavapiés, which functions as the backdrop for this tale of unity featuring Spanish, Moroccan, Sub-Saharan, and Caribbean characters. Firecrackers sound off as a hand-held camera films the festivities from the perspective of a bystander walking through the streets.

Intercut are medium shots of the neighborhood's diverse community watching the parade: women wearing headscarves look on from the sidewalk; an elderly woman in a house coat peers into the street from her balcony; a Caribbean waitress smiles from inside a neighborhood bar; an African man balances a small child on his shoulders (fig. 45). The viewer is immediately introduced to the diversity that distinguishes Lavapiés from other neighborhoods—particularly in 2003 when the film was made and heavy migration to Spain was still a relatively recent phenomenon. The hand-held camera emphasizes the sensation of being amidst the crowd, placing the viewer on the ground, so to speak. Meanwhile, two simultaneous narratives begin and eventually coincide, posing questions about the influence of immigration on national identity.

Figure 45: Lavapiés' diverse community enjoys the Chinese New Year celebrations

Focusing in on an older man watching the parade from inside a barbershop, the viewer is introduced to two of the film's protagonists: Clement, a neighborhood barber and Miguel, one of his regular clients. Clement tells Miguel that he's leaving Lavapiés after selling his barbershop to

Chinese buyers. “No aguanto más. Esto ya no es lo que era. Primero los sudacas, y ahora los negros, todos me dan asco. Están cargando el barrio.” In response to this xenophobic remark, Miguel reminds Clement that “Entre ellos y ustedes que venden. No lo olvides.” The two men represent opposing views on immigration to Spain. Miguel is open to change and is adapting with the evolving neighborhood. Clement, on the other hand, is much more closed-minded and perceives his immigrant neighbors as eroding the quality of the neighborhood.

Outside a young Moroccan man named Rachid expresses his frustration with the prejudices he has encountered in Spanish society: “estoy harto de que nos traten como a delincuentes,” adding, “Debería cortarme el pelo. Quitarme esta imagen de ‘moro de mierda.’” Yet, when he tries to enter Clement’s barbershop he is turned away. He waves twenty euros at the window, but Clement gestures that the shop is closed, despite the shop hours posted on the door stating otherwise. Frustrated and offended, Rachid storms off with his friend, who reminds the young man that “la rabia solo te hace daño a ti.”

The two seemingly incompatible characters unexpectedly encounter one another again moments later in a neighborhood bar. As Clement and Miguel are having a drink at the bar an African women dressed in traditional clothing pushes past them into the bathroom. A few moments later Clement goes to wash his hands and discovers the woman giving birth in the small washroom. This scene is intercut with shots of the Chinese New Year celebration outside, bringing to mind the use of a similar celebration in *La fuente amarilla* in order to build suspense for the viewer (fig. 46). The soundtrack intensifies—music in a minor key swells—as do the camera angles, the images of the celebration outside become more abstract and, even, menacing. The image of one Chinese reveler in particular stands out, a woman dancing in celebratory garb in front of a red flag (fig. 47). She seems to embody the Chinese-accented voiceover that narrates

a proverb as Rachid enters the same bathroom and encounters Clement, the African woman, and her newborn infant. The voiceover tells the story of a world "formado a partir del caos," reinforcing the scene as a kind of creation narrative for a new, multicultural word. Shocked, the two men look at one another. Clement hands Rachid a pair of scissors and the young man cuts the umbilical chord, thus incorporating himself into this "new Spanish family" made manifest on the bathroom floor of a bar in Lavapiés (fig. 48).

Figure 46: The Chinese New Year celebration takes place in Lavapiés as a woman gives birth in a neighborhood bar.

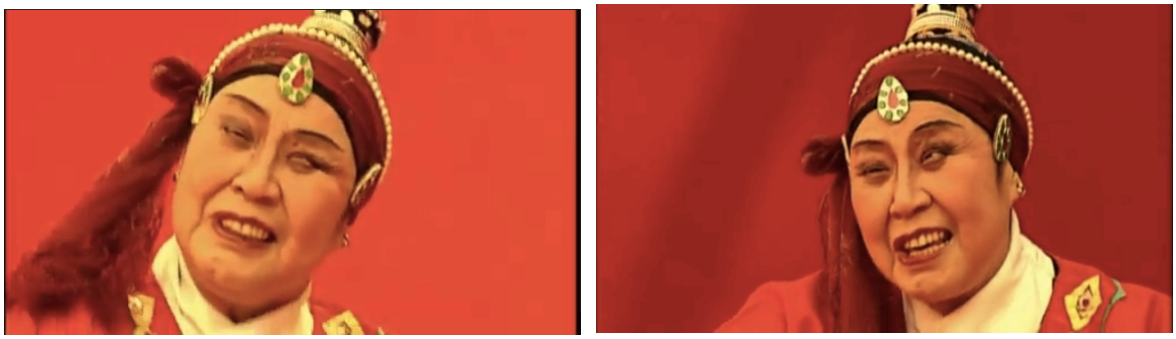


Figure 47: A Chinese woman dances in the street.

Figure 48: Clement and Rachid overlook their differences to help a woman give birth.

Even more so than other Spanish films about immigration that, as Ballesteros notes, stage the family as an important site for building tolerance on a national level, *Amigo no gima* uses the family structure as an allegory for the multicultural nation. Moreover, the film reimagines the national family as a multiethnic union with the immigrant mother at its center. By setting the events amidst Madrid's Chinese New Year celebration, the film suggests that not only are immigrant communities establishing themselves in Spain's capital city, but that their customs are becoming part of everyday life there as well. However, the role of the Chinese is limited to the background and voiceover. As I discussed more thoroughly in chapter one, Western cinema has a long history of adopting orientalized mise-en-scene in order to signal to the viewer the presence of the unknown or the unknowable. The Spanish and Moroccan men form the central "family unit" together with the African woman who gives birth in the bar. Miguel's friendship with a Caribbean woman represents another relationship that incorporates the racially marked immigrant into the national fold. It is only the Chinese that remain peripheral to these relationships; they are anonymous and voiceless figures (save the prophetic voiceover) that serve instead to offer the neighborhood ethnic flair with their New Year celebration.

A similar model for a potentially multiethnic Spain represented through the metaphor of a non-traditional nuclear family appears in the more well known and widely distributed feature film *Biutiful* (2010). A Mexican-Spanish co-production directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, *Biutiful* offers a depiction of immigration in twenty-first century Spain that is more nuanced and complex than many of its predecessors. It is, for example, one of the only films to date that represents the Chinese migrant with a degree of realism. The film positions the Chinese immigrant within the larger context of an increasingly globalized Barcelona, as the pristine

Ramblas and other tourist attractions contrast with the suffering of immigrants who toil just below the surface of the city's shiny exterior.

Like Iñárritu's previous films, such as *Amores perros* (2000), *21 grams* (2003), and *Babel* (2006), *Biutiful* offers a critical vision of the human costs associated with globalized capitalism. Nevetheless, *Biutiful* represents a departure from the network narrative model used in the director's previous films, instead focusing on a primary protagonist, Uxbal, and a series of secondary characters. Javier Bardem plays the terminally ill Uxbal, who is the linchpin of an underground economy linking illicit manufacturing and distribution networks, as well as negotiating with the local authorities on their behalf. This role as extra-official liason is echoed by Uxbal's second job as a professional medium, where he connects the living with the dead, just as he links the "legal" and "illegal" residents of Barcelona.

The film represents Uxbal as struggling to maintain an ethical approach to working with irregular migrants on the black market while also collecting enough money to ensure that his children will be provided for after his imminent passing. Uxbal is burdened by these feelings of responsibility, both to his family and the families of the migrants he works with. His desire to live ethically while still providing for his children seems an impossible goal. Ultimately, Uxbal's primary allegiance is to his family and, as I will argue, the film suggests that the only way Uxbal can ensure that his children survive is by extending their familial bonds beyond the traditional nuclear family. It is in this way that the film proposes a more inclusive model of Spanish nationhood through a family allegory. However, like *Amigo no gima*, *Biutiful* excludes the Chinese from this model of transcultural and trans-ethnic kinship, thereby reinforcing the otherness of the Chinese in contemporary Spanish society.

Diagnosed with terminal cancer, Uxbal's impending death is the motor that drives the narrative as he attempts to settle accounts and assure a secure future for his children. Uxabl's world is defined by precarity. Through his work as a medium and a middleman, Uxbal reveals to the viewer a Barcelona demarcated by borders invisible to the tourist. Iñárritu's use of a dark palette, flat light, and chaotic, often claustrophobic camera movements contributes to an aesthetic that is closely linked to the protagonist's conflicted experiences of moral responsibility, guilt, and redemption. Benjamin Fraser has written about the city as a primary protagonist in the film, insofar as "the Catalan capital presented in Iñárritu's film calls attention to the distance between self-congratulatory discourses of Barcelona as the modern city *por antonomasia* on one side, and the injustices faced by so many of its urbanites on the other" (20). The film takes the spectator away from Barcelona's tourist-ridden city center and into more marginalized spaces on the city's periphery, such as Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramanet, where immigrants and Spaniards alike live in states of precarity.

The city's iconic architecture is replaced primarily by cramped interior shots that emphasize the distance that exists between the triumphant Barcelona of the post-Olypmic era and the Barcelona lived by Uxbal and his colleagues. The Sagrada Familia, for example, is glimpsed only at a distance from the hospital window where Uxbal receives chemotherapy. The unfinished cathedral appears to sit atop a knot of crowded, grey buildings, its striking profile blending with those of the towering construction cranes, plastered against the grey and overcast sky like a giant arachnid on Barcelona's horizon (fig. 49). Fraser notes how the camera's slow pan from the Sagrada Familia in the distance to Uxbal as he receives treatments for his cancer "functions as a cinematic redirection allowing the viewer to contrast the city's monumental architecture and

triumphalist tourist skyline with the quotidian human stories of marginality and illness that form the basis of Iñárritu's film" (24).

Figure 49: One of the film's few shots of Barcelona's skyline reflects Uxbal's view of the hospital room where he receives chemotherapy.

Uxbal shares this subaltern Barcelona with the city's large and diverse immigrant population, including the Chinese. Early on in the film Uxbal stops for a drink at a Chinese bar in the peripheral neighborhood of Santa Coloma de Gramanet. Two adolescents sing karaoke on a small stage and a Chinese game show plays on a television over the bar. The scenes in the Chinese bar, and most of the other spaces inhabited by migrants, are represented through close camera angles and shots in which the audience's view is obstructed (fig. 50). The bar is run by Chinese owners and caters to Chinese clientele, yet Uxbal appears very much at home there, finally relaxing after a long day of navigating more mainstream Spanish and Catalan spaces, such as a doctor's office, a wake, and Barcelona's public transportation system. The Chinese bartender tells Uxbal that Hai is looking for him, and it is in this way that the audience is first introduced to the character, a Chinese businessman who runs a sweatshop producing counterfeit goods sold by African street vendors. It is implied that Hai is also the owner of the Chinese bar

and a number of other businesses in the neighborhood, which has been named by some news media outlets in recent years as Barcelona's "nuevo 'China Town'" (Garrido).[41]

Figure 50: Close camera angles and obstructed shot create a sense of claustrophobia inside Hai's bar and instead the sweatshop the camera's view is often obstructed.

Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong notes that "the dominant spaces of Chinese in *Biutiful* […] are spaces of production: the factory and the workers' living quarters, emphasizing the convergence of class, space and 'race'/Chineseness" (14). As Wong observes, *Bitutiful* frames the Chinese immigrant experience in a way that highlights their productivity, particularly in comparison to the film's other immigrant and Spanish populations. She also notes how the association of the Chinese migrant with spaces of production is common throughout European cinema, which further emphasizes the link between Chinese migration and the black market.[42] Like the spaces occupied by other immigrant groups represented in the film, such as the Senegalese, Chinese spaces are marked by their marginality. However, as Paul Begin has noted, "the problem here is that the main three nationalities that are represented in *Biutiful*—Senegalese, Chinese, Spanish—are given very different narrative arcs and cinematographic treatment throughout the film,

[41] This citation implies a comparison with Barcelona's "original" Chinatown, el Barrio Chino; the history of this space and its relationship to Chinatowns in the Americas is discussed in greater detail in the first chapter of the dissertation.

[42] In her article "'The Chinese Who Never Die': Spectral Chinese and Contemporary European Cinema" Wong focuses on the representation of the Chinese in three European films: *Mauvais Jouers* (2006), *Gomorra* (2008), and *Biutiful* (2010).

treatments which all too often correspond to preconceived ideas about various immigrant groups" (8). As I have argued earlier in this chapter, the Chinese are often represented in Spanish literature, film, and popular media in ways that frame them as an economic threat that displaces Spanish workers and, more specifically, Spanish small business owners.

The characters of Hai and his business partner and clandestine lover, Liwei, reaffirm many of the most commonly held stereotypes about the Chinese in Spain, in a way similar to what would happen two years later in the media's coverage of the Operación Emperador and the investigation of Chinese entrepreneur Gao Ping.[43] While most of the immigrants in the film are represented as victims of globalized neoliberal capitalism (perhaps most tragically the Chinese laborers themselves), Hai and Liwei are the film's most clearly defined villains. The workers employed in their sweatshops and contracted out for manual labor are arguably the most desperate of the immigrants represented in the film. Unlike the Senegalese, who also live in poor conditions and are in constant danger of deportation, the Chinese sleep crammed together on mats on the floor of single room, locked in the basement of the sweatshop. The conditions of the dormitory are inhumane. Each morning one of Hai's employees unlocks the door to the basement dormitory and awakens them before dawn to start the workday. The laborers file out and are loaded into a van that drops them off at their assigned work stations within Hai's network of businesses, including the bar, the hardware store, and a construction site, part of a venture he has established through an industry contact provided by Uxbal's brother. At the construction site Uxbal and his brother try to negotiate with the foreman who refuses to pay upfront for the Chinese labor, arguing that "la mitad de ellos están enfermos o resfriados. Muchos otros no han

[43] The media coverage of Gao Ping's case and the Operación Emperador is explored in more detail in the section of chapter two titled "The Chinese in Spanish Detective Fiction."

visto un taladro en su puta vida."[44] Their poor living conditions and lack of experience visibly affect the health and productivity of the Chinese workers. The foreman views the Chinese laborers as a damaged commodity for which he is unwilling to pay.

In the introduction to his volume on New York's Chinatown, Jan Lin writes that "Chinatown has traditionally occupied a chimerical position in the American popular imagination" (1); As I have explored in chapter one, the same can be said of the Chinatown in the Spanish imagination. As evidenced by the adoption of the Chinatown myth in Barcelona during the early decades of the twentieth century, the popular image of the Chinatown as a bastion of exotic vice was well established in the Spanish imaginary. The flipside of this motif is the vision of Chinatown that Lin describes as "a congested warren of tenements and squalid sweatshops in which deprived illegal immigrants labor in slavelike conditions under the watchful grip of organized crime smuggling rackets" (1). The Chinese spaces represented in *Biutiful* coincide with this second motif described by Lin, and *Biutiful*'s cool colors and constricted camera angels emphasize this impression. In less than a century, the imagined Chinatown of the bohemian Barrio Chino has been replaced by a Chinatown—or series of Chinese spaces—more in keeping the squalid conditions of American Chinatowns at the turn of the twentieth century. If the naming of el Raval as el Barrio Chino functioned to affirm the city's cosmopolitanism during the 1920s and 1930s, then the Chinatown represented in *Biutiful* qualifies Barcelona as belonging to a network of global centers of capital that produce—and are produced by—this kind of exploitative labor. Hai's clandestine sweatshops and his laborers' living conditions call to mind not only the Chinatown Lin describes in his research on the American Chinatown, but also the

[44] This insistence of the Chinese as weaker and meeker than other immigrant labor, particularly African labor, alludes to similar claims made by *criollo* and Spanish writers of the coolie laborers in Latin America and the Caribbean during the 19th century, as I discuss in more detail in chapter one.

history of the coolie trade in the Spanish colonies in the Americas.[45]

The human cost of the globalized economy represented in the film is underlined by the work site foreman's comments about the Chinese workers' poor health and its influence on their productivity. Uxbal's decision to provide portable heaters for the basement dormitory in an attempt to improve the living conditions there reveals the nature of Uxbal's relationship with the city's most marginalized populations throughout the film; on the one hand he is concerned about the migrants' health, but on the other hand he is interested in protecting his own financial interests by ensuring that they are capable of working long, underpaid hours at the construction site. Negotiating between his need to provide for his own family and his desire to behave ethically in terms of the lives implicated in his business ventures, Uxbal uses a portion of the money he has saved for his children in anticipation of his own death to buy deeply discounted kerosene heaters at an electronics outlet and has them delivered to Hai's warehouse. The heaters prove to be a lethal miscalculation and, perhaps because they are faulty or due to lack of ventilation, all the Chinese laborers sleeping in the basement die of carbon monoxide poisoning.[46] In what is one of the film's most haunting scenes, Hai's employee unlocks the dormitory door to discover lifeless bodies strewn across the floor (fig. 51). It is immediately clear that the heaters have caused the deaths and the disturbing scene encourages the spectator to read Uxbal's selection and purchase of the heaters as the failure of his attempt to both provide

[45] As I discussed in chapter one, the coolie trade consisted of large numbers of Chinese laborers that were brought to the Americas forcibly or through coercion to work in slave-like conditions there. While the living conditions of Hai's employees allude to Lin's description of American Chinatowns they also allude to the trafficking of Chinese laborers in the West that dates back to the nineteenth century coolie trade.

[46] The death of the Chinese laborers due to carbon monoxide poisoning brings to mind the tragic death of an undocumented Senegalese migrant in the first Spanish film about immigration, *Las cartas de Alou*, after the film's protagonist repurposes a propane heater found in a trash dump. See Burkhart's "The Disposable Immigrant: The Aesthetics of Waste in *Las Cartas de Alou.*"

for his family and to protect the welfare of the marginalized immigrant populations with whom he works.

Figure 51: The mass death of the Chinese migrants in Hai's sweatshop is one of the film's most powerful and disturbing scenes.

The death of the Chinese immigrants is one of the film's major plot points and underlines the film's larger questions about the human victims of an increasingly globalized and unequal world economy. Wong calls the representation of the Chinese in *Biutiful* and other European films "representations in flux, where Chinese prove potentially sympathetic, even as victims of illegal activities. Such images prove fluid, even contradictory, like Chinese in contemporary European cities themselves" (8). This representation in flux is presented in *Biutiful* as vacillating between the "potentially sympathetic" victims of exploitative labor practices and Hai's ruthless capitalism. While most of the laborers remain anonymous, two of those who perish in the accident have a close relationship with Uxbal and his family.

Early in the film the audience is introduced to Lili, a young Chinese migrant and her infant daughter Li. Lili, a single mother, occasionally cares for Uxbal's children while he is

working, given that their biological mother, Maramba, is unable to do so because of her struggles with bi-polar disorder. Lili takes care of the three children in the cramped back room of a hardware store owned by Hai's. In one scene Uxbal stops by the store to pick up his children and as he passes through to the back of the shop the camera cuts to Lili's family photographs and then quickly to a close-up of a filthy kitchen area littered with dirty pots, plastic dishes and takeout food containers (fig. 52). Once again, the lack of space and resources available to migrants like Lili is conveyed not only through the images of unsanitary living conditions and scant personal objects, but also through the tight framing of the scene. Uxbal hands Lili a twenty-euro bill and his daughter, Ana, shares a complex secret handshake with Lili. The two share a complicit smile as Ana leaves with her family. The entire interaction contains very little spoken dialogue; however, the familiarity of the subjects with one another is conveyed through their body language and precisely the lack of conversation needed to realize the exchange.

Figure 52: The back room of the hardware shop where Lili cares for Uxbal's children.

The relationship between Uxbal and Lili is further emphasized in the moment when Uxbal learns of the tragic deaths in the warehouse basement. Having come to confront Hai, Uxbal discovers the dead bodies in the basement. Shocked, Uxbal immediately rushes to Lili's side, touching her face and saying a prayer over her. As Uxbal carries Lili out to his car in an irrational attempt to remedy the situation, the sounds of his heavy breathing and muttered dialogue become muted behind a wall of white noise that takes over the scene's soundtrack. The

entire scene is terribly tragic and intended to impact the viewer. However, the way in which Uxbal reacts to Lili's death in particular suggests that their relationship was especially close, further humanizing her for the audience. Uxbal's emotional reaction, which is displayed through the visual and auditory qualities of the scene, is contrasted with Hai's response. Although Hai and Liwei are also visibly upset, they seem more concerned about determining who is to blame and what to do with the one living witness. Hai confesses that there were two survivors, but that because they were hesitant to inform the authorities "uno ya murió." He pleads with Uxbal not to report the incident, claiming that, "Entregarlos sería un suicidio. Prométeme que esto no va a salir de aquí. Te daré el dinero que necesites. Sólo dime cuánto."

Uxbal's culpability is mitigated in part by the profound remorse he expresses because of his implication in the death of the Chinese immigrants. Hai and Liwei, on the other hand, are further vilified by their lack of remorse and focus on the economic fallout of the accident. While Uxbal's affectionate and mutually supportive relationship with Lili humanizes, to some degree, the Chinese immigrant, Hai's representation as an unscrupulous and corrupt businessman driven by nothing other than a capitalist avarice for profit at all costs reinforces that image of the Chinese entrepreneur as fundamentally at odds with Spanish (i.e. Western) values.[47] While Uxbal is represented as flawed, Hai lacks any humanity at all. When the victims' bodies wash up on Barcelona's coastline—the result of Liwei's ill-conceived plan to cover up the crime—Hai's empire crumbles. A frenzied sequence of hand-held shots depicts the police raiding Hai's family home is accompanied by minimal, monophonic, extradiagetic tones and the muted sounds of the family's protest. The members of Hai's multi-generational family, who appear only one other time in the film, are taken away, their destinies unknown to the audience. The unraveling of

[47] In the first section of chapter one I go into more detail about the ways in which the Spanish press has framed the entrepreneurial spirit exhibited by the Chinese migrant community in Spain as anti-Spanish and anti-Western, particularly since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis.

Hai's personal life culminates with a scene in the bloody hotel room in which Hai has murdered Liwei in retribution. The camera watches Hai as he calmly puts on his jacket and leaves the room before panning right across Liwei's naked and bloodied body, half-covered by a sheet, and coming to rest on the room's exterior window through which the spectator can see Hai retreat down the damp Barcelona street into the night. The conclusion of Hai's narrative arc in particular cements his characterization as a barbaric villain, his ruthless revenge transforming him into something of a twenty-first Fu-Manchu for the viewer.

Hai serves as Uxbal's foil. Ana Casa Aguilar argues that the central theme of the film is fatherhood, noting that the first and last scenes of repeat the same father-daughter exchange and give the film its circular structure. The scene shows Uxbal at the very end of his life; he and and his daughter lie together in bed and he gifts Ana a ring that he had inherited from his parents, a symbol that, according to Casas Aguilar, positions "la herencia como posibilidad de supervivencia de la memoria" (179). The wedding band links Ana not only to her father, but also to her grandfather who died in Mexico shortly after being exiled during the Spanish civil war. His body was repatriated and was recently disinterred in order to make space for a new development project in Barcelona. It is implied that Uxbal and his brother benefited financially from this dealing, which is a source of conflict for Uxbal. The disturbance of the dead produces ghosts, and as Uxbal nears the end of his own life his primary concern is to be a good father for his children. This notion of fatherhood is also reflected in his interactions with those outside his family, such as Lili and a Senegalese woman named Ige, for whom he also feels a degree of responsibility.

Hai, on the other hand, embodies the antithesis of the "good father" Uxbal models. He is represented as narcissistic and power (money) hungry. He abuses his employees and his activity

on the black market endangers the well being of his nuclear family as well. His closest relationship is with Liwei, who he eventually murders in cold blood. Moreover, his clandestine homosexuality is (very problematically) represented as another dirty secret that he hides from his wife and children. Hai's shortcomings are not mitigated by good intentions as in Uxbal's case. Instead, the character appears as a one-dimensional villain who portrayal is in keeping with other on-screen representations of the Chinese in Spain.

More depth is extended to Ige, who becomes an important secondary character during the film's final half hour. The wife of a Senegalese immigrant and colleague of Uxbal's who is deported (or killed[48]) after a police raid on street vendors in Plaça de Catalunya, Ige develops a relationship with Uxbal after her husband's disappearance. Alone in Barcelona, Ige and her son are evicted from their home and eventually come to live with Uxbal. This arrangement is mutually beneficial, as Ige becomes the primary caregiver for Uxbal and his children during the final days of his life. I argue that it is through the character of Ige that a proposal for a "new Spanish family" is most fully articulated. In one particularly effective scene, Ige and Uxbal's son Mateo surprise Ana with a birthday cake. With their mother hospitalized for bi-polar disorder, Ige stands in as the mother figure. Illuminated by the light of the birthday candle, the family scene represents one of the final "happy moments" towards the end of the film (fig. 53). Moreover, the visual composition of the scene represents a nuclear family portrait that on the one hand reinforces the idea of the traditional nuclear (heteronormative) family as a model for happiness while also suggesting that familial bonds must be expanded to include those who might otherwise be excluded.

[48] Benjamin Fraser argues that it is possible to read a shot of Ekweme's (Ige's husband) limp body being taken away by the police after a raid on Senegalese street vendors as representing the man's death due to excessive police force (24).

Figure 53: Ige takes on a motherly role, caring for Uxbal and his children.

Uxbal offers Ige a large sum of money and an apartment pre-paid for various months in exchange for a promise to care for his children after his death. Although the film is ambiguous as to whether or not Ige accepts Uxbal's offer, she is nevertheless represented as a mother-savior figure and Uxbal's only hope to save his family. As Kathleen Connolly notes, "the fates of Uxbal and Ige's families establish a connection between current migrants and the victims of the Spanish civil war, linking Spaniards with immigrants *via* their own recent migration history" (558). In other words, it is by extending familial bonds beyond blood ties that Uxbal is able not only to secure a safe future for his children in his absence, but also to make peace with the absence of his own father due to forced exile. By bringing Spain's history of migration and exile into contact with contemporary migration to Spain the ghosts of the past may finally find peace.

What this reading overlooks, however, is the way in which this construction of a "new Spanish family" to include Ige and her son erases Lili and her daughter. A victim of globalized capitalism, embodied by the neo-Yellow Peril of the contemporary Chinese transnational entrepreneur, Lili dies before she can take on the mother-savior role later modeled by Ige. Despite having cared for Uxbal's children while, like Ige, caring for a child of her own, Lili is never welcomed into the family's private spaces. The difference in the representation of the two mother figures raises questions about the ways in which their femininity is racialized according

to their ethnicities. While Ige is incorporated into the fold, Lili and the other Chinese characters disappear completely from the screen. The erasure of the Chinese from the film's message of cross-ethnic solidarity is problematic, and in keeping with most other representations of the Chinese in Spain.

In both *Biutiful* and *Amigo no gima* we see the family repurposed in the service of national allegory. Responding to prejudice in Spanish society, both films suggest that those who have been historically marginalized can be incorporated into the nation by re-conceptualizing the family. It is important to note that a superficial reading of these films offers a liberal, progressive proposal for inclusion and a critique of xenophobia; in such a context, the exclusion (erasure) of the Chinese migrant from this imaginary cross-ethnic family is even more significant. Not only do the Chinese in Spain remain marginalized by widespread prejudices that recycle tired tropes of the Yellow Peril, but they are also excluded from seemingly progressive calls for social unity.

Zhang Longxi has called the Far East "the image of the ultimate Other" for the West. In other words, East Asia represents the *most* other among a cast of racialized and marginalized non-Europeans. The Chinese body has long been appropriated by Western narrative as a site for the construction of fantasy, but has yet to be fully incorporated into Western conceptions of citizenship and community. In the Spanish context, in particular, the Chinese remain on the periphery despite the contemporary (sometimes self-congratulatory) dialogue about multiculturalism in Spain. *Biutiful* evidences the degree to which the narrative tropes of sinophobia in the West are so insidious that they often go un(der)noticed in narratives that might otherwise be read as liberal and progressive.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHINESE SPANIARD

"Yo también soy español"
Negotiating Cultural and Ethnic Identities in Twenty-First Century Spain

In September of 2016 the Sunday edition of *El País* published a front page headline that read, "Yo también soy español: hijos de inmigrantes nacidos en España forman la llamada segunda generación, bien integrada y que aporta diversidad a un país históricamente homogéneo." The headline was accompanied by a striking photomontage of the subjects interviewed in the article, who represent the country's evolving ethnic and cultural diversity (fig. 54). The author, Nacho Carretero, claims that, "ser español ya no es lo que era. La respuesta estereotipada—blanco, católico y bajito—es cada vez menos realista. […] En la mayoría de los países de nuestro entorno, existen ya terceras y cuartas generaciones de inmigrantes. En España el fenómeno comienza a dejarse ver" adding that these new generations "están poniendo patas arriba el concepto de ser español." Considering Carretero's claim that the country's second generation of migrants is redefining long-held notions of Spanishness, here I focus specifically on representations of the second generation[49] of Chinese Spaniards in Spanish cultural production. Through the analysis of three primary texts of different genres—a novel, a television series, and a graphic novel—this chapter raises questions about the ways in which these protagonists define themselves in the liminal space between Chineseness and Spanishness: What are the pre-requisites for a Spanish identity? Is it possible to construct a hybrid identity in contemporary Spain? And, finally, how does the authorship and intended readership of these texts influence our reading of them?

[49] In reality, only *Gazpacho agridulce* represents the second generation in the truest sense. *La ciudad feliz* and *Física o química* both feature protagonists that could be categorized more easily as members of a 1.5-generation. Nevertheless, they also struggle with questions of cultural belonging and ethnic identity, finding themselves in the space between Chineseness and Spanishness.

Figure 54: Individuals born to migrant parents are interviewed in a 2016 article in *El País*.

The Chinese community is currently one of Spain's largest non-European immigrant populations. In 2014 the Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social reported that the Chinese are also one of the country's youngest migrant populations, representing 11% of immigrant minors. The report does not, however, incorporate information about Spanish nationals of Chinese descent, which means that the total number of young Spaniards of Chinese descent in Spain is likely significantly higher than the numbers reported by the Ministerio.[50] Despite the consistent growth of a generation of Chinese Spaniards in recent decades, it remains a population underrepresented in Spanish cultural production. Moreover, as evidenced by the high profile *El País* article, the broader discourse surrounding hybrid identities and Spanishness is relatively new, the very notion of the second generation constituting "front page news." A common thread running through the testimonies of the individuals interviewed is the divide between how they identify and how they are perceived by Spanish society.

One of the young people profiled in Carreto's *El País* article is Quan Zhou Wu, the daughter of Chinese migrants born in Andalucía and the author and illustrator of the graphic

[50] Unlike nationality law in the United States, Spain does not grant citizenship based on unconditional *jus soli*, although many children born to Chinese residents in Spain would likely be eligible for Spanish citizenship after a particular duration in Spain. This means that some children of Chinese immigrants may be registered as Spanish citizens, and others as Chinese citizens.

novel *Gazpacho agridulce*, and a blog of the same name that preceded the book's publication. Her illustrations are largely autobiographical and explore what it means to be Spanish without "looking Spanish." In a follow up post on the *El País* blog *Migrados*—a forum dedicated to questions of migration and assimilation and to which Zhou Wu is a regular contributor—she reflects on the firestorm that took place in the comments section of the September 2016 article in *El País*. Various commenters hurled xenophobic vitriol, prompting Zhou Wu to reflect on the ways in which Spanishness continues to be defined by a strict set of cultural norms. She writes that "leyendo dichos comentarios (más de 2000 entre el artículo y redes), uno puede llegar a las siguientes conclusiones," the first of which is that Spanishness has various "levels" and if, as Carretero noted, one doesn't qualify as white, Catholic and of "pure" Spanish race her or his claim to Spanishness is dubious. She reminds her readers that, "Si has nacido en el seno de una familia inmigrante, aunque compartas valores, ideas, te sepas la geografía española de pe a pa, te guste la forma de vivir de España, tengas DNI y hasta cantes coplas rocieras, no te esfuerces, porque NO vas a ser español, te pongas como te pongas." Her facetious observations call attention to the ways in which conservative definitions of Spanishness erase the Iberian Peninsula's history of plurality and ethnic diversity in order to shore up a definition of national identity that continues to marginalize new generations of culturally and ethnically diverse Spaniards. The accompanying illustration reinforces a sentiment expressed by the individuals interviewed in *El País*; that their self-identification as Spanish is always conditioned by others' perceptions of their difference (fig. 55).

Figure 55: Zhou Wu responds to xenophobia with an illustration that represents her struggles to identify as Spanish when others insist on reading her body as Chinese (2016).

Zhou Wu's work has gained significant coverage in recent years precisely because it addresses the emerging, but still relatively unexplored question of Chinese-Spanish identities in Spain. Following the successful publication of her graphic novel, Zhou Wu appeared on the M80 radio show hosted by Spanish comedian Juan Luis Cano. Cano begins the interview by noting that their names, Juan and Quan, are very similar. Zhou Qu explains that her name is, in fact, pronounced "Chüen." Zhou Wu adds, "Qué en China tenemos la pronunciación…" and Cano interrupts her to finish her sentence "un poco rara." "No," Zhou Wu clarifies, now with a more serious tone, "pronunciación china." Cano makes a brief attempt to pronounce her name properly and Zhou Wu finally acquiesces and tells him its fine to call her "Juan." Cano continues with the introduction, explaining to the listeners that she is the author of the autobiography *Gazpacho agridulce*, the daughter of Chinese parents and that she was born in Málaga. At the end of this scripted introduction Cano adds, "ahora, eres china china china," as if to emphasize to his listeners, who cannot see her but only hear her, that despite her Andalusian accent she *looks really Chinese.* As the interview continues Cano repeatedly returns to her Chineseness, asking questions that draw the conversation back to the apparent paradox she embodies. Throughout the interview Cano seems unable to make sense of Quan's hybridity, in fact it even seems to make

him uncomfortable.

Homi Bhabha has written of cultural hybridities as emerging "in moments of historical transformation" (2). In the case of twenty-first century Spain, the transformation is a demographic one that is redefining the very notion of Spanishness. Cultural hybridity is at the heart of *Gazpacho agridulce*. The novel's title, which translates to English as "sweet and sour gazpacho," is a play on emblematic aspects of Spanish and Chinese culinary traditions; the cultural hybridity of this imaginary dish reflecting the author's own sense of existing in the interstice between two cultures without fully belonging to either. In addition to Quan, the novel's other protagonists are her two sisters, Fu and Qing, their baby brother, and their parents, with periodic appearances by other family members and friends. In broad terms, the narrative consists of Quan's struggles—and those of her sisters—to establish her Spanishness despite society's insistence to view her otherwise and her parents' (and particularly her mother's) desire that she conform to a series of strict cultural norms that are represented in the novel as quintessentially Chinese.

In a prologue signed by Qing and Fu, the sisters authorize Quan to represent their childhood on their behalf, assuring the reader that *Gazpacho agridulce* "es una historia divertida, soñadora e inspiradora, pero sobre todo verdadera." By affirming that the stories narrated by Zhou Wu coincide with their memories they corroborate the novel's authenticity. In the prologue the sisters self-identify as members of the "primera generación de chino-españoles" and claim that because of this unique subject position, "intentar romper el plan de vida impuesta por la sociedad china (restaurante/bazar chino) fue muy difícil." It is noteworthy that the sisters identify their primary struggle as breaking with Chinese tradition, as opposed to the challenges of assimilating into a relatively ethnically homogenous society. In other words, this prologue serves

interlocking purposes: it assures the reader that the forthcoming text is truthful while building upon preconceived ideas about the Chinese immigrant in Spain as hermetic and resistant to assimilation, and yet it also suggests that the second generation breaks with many of these stereotypes. The prologue, as well as the novel's front and back covers, which feature illustrations showing Quan and her sister playing a prank in their parents' restaurant, reinforce the conflict between their Spanishness and their parents' Chineseness as the primary source of the text's humor.

The text hinges on the cultural dissonance between Mamá Zhou and her daughters. Some of these anecdotes are relatively light-hearted and play on the familiarity of the novel's Spanish readership with common cultural references. For example, one such vignette depicts Mamá Zhou's refusal to indulge her daughters' belief in *el Ratoncito Pérez*, the Spanish equivalent of the Tooth Fairy. Much to her daughter's chagrin, she informs the primary-school-aged Quan that *el Ratoncito Pérez* "es mentira, un cuento para niños españoles." In the morning Quan is devastated to find that her tooth is still lying beneath her pillow, and she cries out in desperation "¡Buaa! ¿No vendrá el ratoncito a la casa de los chinos?" (fig. 56). This particular incident highlights her struggle to negotiate between their very Chinese home life and the wider Spanish society in which she is growing up. Immediately following this incident, Quan's older sister discovers that she has a loose tooth as well, to which Mamá Zhou presents the pragmatic option of pulling the tooth out with a string. The episode is illustrated against an abstract, dark backdrop—a style typical of manga comics—the family home dissipating into a nightmare-ish dream state as the younger sisters look on in horror. Mamá Zhou wears a grimace that suggests she takes a certain degree of pleasure in (relatively innocently) torturing the girls—or at least that's how Quan remembers it (fig. 57).

Figure 56: Quan and her sisters are disappointed to learn that *Ratoncito Pérez* is only for Spanish children. (*Gazpacho agridulce*, 2015).

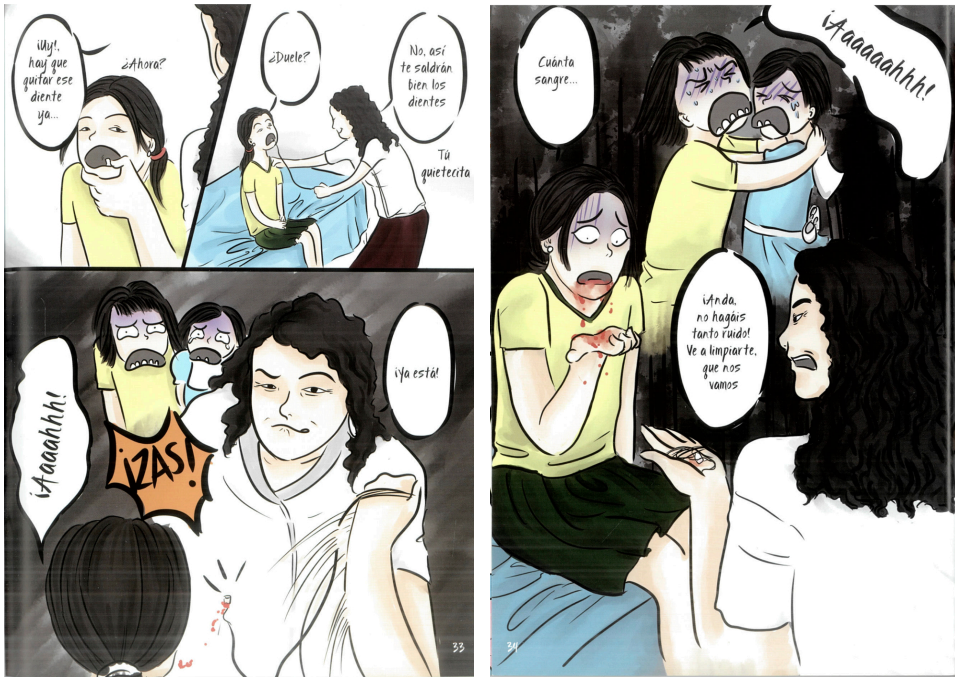


Figure 57: Quan and her sister are startled by their mother's approach to removing a loose tooth. (*Gazpacho agridulce*, 2015).

A similar episode occurs later in the novel in which the sisters present their mother with letters addressed to *los Reyes Magos*. "¿Reyes? ¿Qué Reyes?" their mother asks them, perplexed

(46). When the girls explain that they are referring to the three wise men who bring children gifts after Christmas, their mother responds, once again, that, "¡Eso es para los niños españoles! ¡Un cuento! Los chinos no tenemos Reyes Magos" (46). The sisters are crushed, as any child might be, to discover too early that their childhood fantasies are make-believe. Once again the same black backdrop appears behind the sisters as they gasp in desperation, tears seeping from their eyes "¿¡No hay Reyes Magos!?" (46). The illustration on the facing page depicts the *Barba* dolls their Spanish babysitter, Dolores, gives them in an attempt to compensate for the disappointing news delivered by their mother (fig. 58). In response to Quan's demand to know, if *los Reyes Magos* are a lie, "¿Por qué nos engañáis?," Dolores tries to explain to the girls the difference between and lie and a tradition, but the young girls aren't able to comprehend the difference.

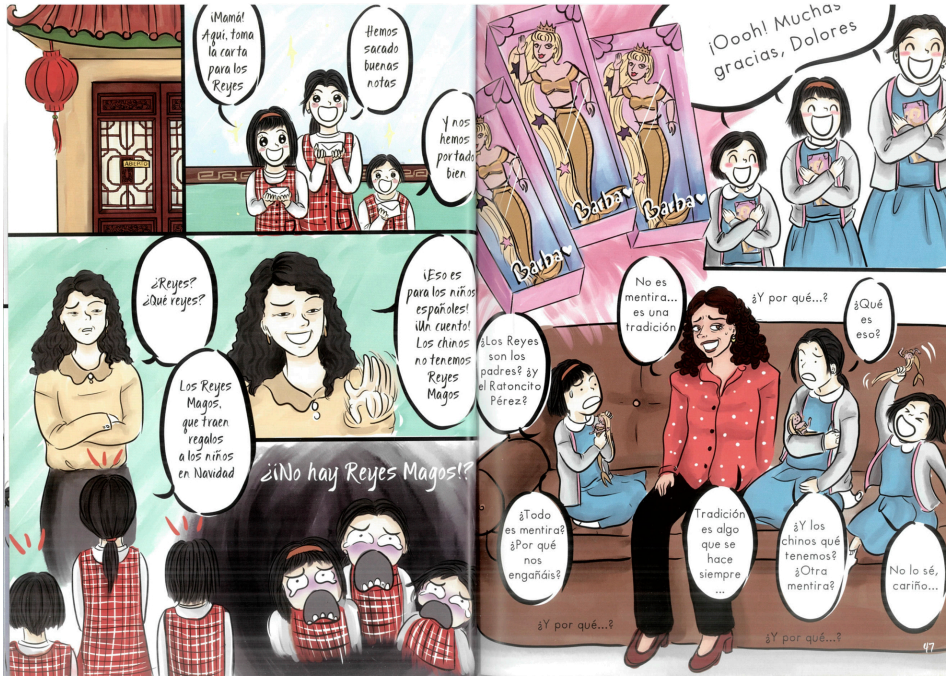


Figure 58: *Los Reyes Magos* prove to be a challenging example of cultural conflict for Quan and her sisters. (*Gazpacho agridulce*, 2015).

What these two anecdotes share is the way in which Mamá Zhou's unfamiliarity with, or perhaps disinterest in, Spanish cultural tradition serves to emphasize her daughters' Chineseness as otherness. *Ratoncito Pérez* doesn't come to Chinese houses; the Chinese don't have *Reyes*

Magos—while the novel also contains anecdotes that refer to the ways in which Quan and her sisters are identified as racial and cultural others by their peers, the primary battleground is one they share with their mother and her insistence on emphasizing their Chineseness. The young Quan represented in the novel strives to establish a sense of Spanishness despite her Chinese upbringing and the dissension between Quan and her mother represents the author's struggle to define an identity in the largely unexplored interstice between Spanishness and Chinesess.

In his volume on ethnic humor in North America, David Gillota draws on the theory of humor developed by Hobbes and later expanded on by Freud, which claims that: "[…] humor requires at least three people: a teller, an object, and a receiver. The joke-teller and the receiver produce a community that excludes the object of the joke itself. Hence, a boundary is formed." He goes on to suggest that, "Ethnic humor, then, is about including and excluding. This is true of ethnic humor created by and for the dominant culture and at the expense of marginalized groups, but it is equally true of ethnic humor that is created by the marginalized groups themselves" (6). *Gazpacho Agridulce*'s implied audience is very clearly Spanish. The back cover blurb addresses the reader in the second person and markets itself on common urban legends about the Chinese in Spain: "¿Qué estará pensando el camarero chino ese que te mira tan fijamente? ¿Será verdad que no entienden español? ¿Estarán hablando de nosotros? ¿De veras nos quieren invadir? Estas y seguro que otras muchas preguntas más se formula uno cada vez que entra en algún negocio chino, cuestiones que no van a ser respondidas…nunca." This dynamic positions Quan as teller, a Spanish public as reader, and Mamá Zhou as object, and produces a community that includes Quan and the Spanish, thereby affirming Quan's Spanishness, and excludes her mother who is further othered as excessively resistant to assimilation.

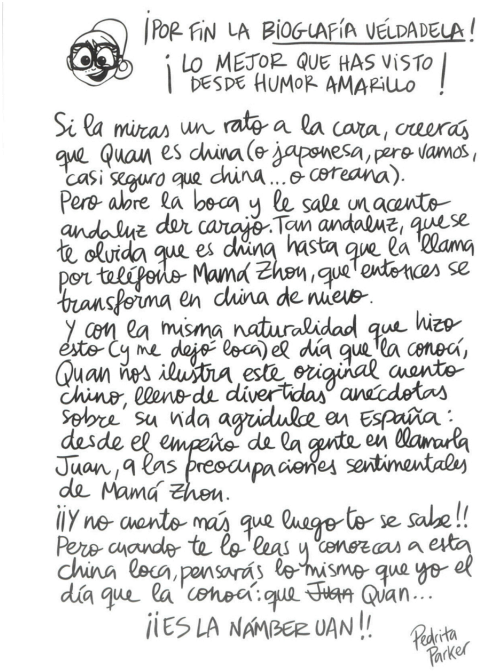


Figure 59: The letter by Spanish illustrator Estefi Martínez, better known as Pedrita Parker. *Gazpacho agridulce*, 2015).

The novel's implied Spanish readership is further emphasized by a second prologue, an open letter from Spanish illustrator Estefi Martínez endorsing Zhou Wu's work (fig. 59). Martínez, who publishes her work under the pseudonym Pedrita Parker, is also a native of southern Spain (Málaga, specifically), and Martínez's endorsement of Zhou Wu as an up-and-coming female illustrator lends the text a degree of legitimacy in the industry. Despite being very complimentary of Zhou Wu's work, Martínez's exploits a series of stereotypes about the Chinese in a very problematic ways. The letter to the reader opens with two statements written in capital letters and accompanied by exclamations marks: "¡Por fin llega la bioglafía veladela! ¡Lo mejor que has visto desde Humor amarillo!" (emphasis in the original). Martínez replaces to 'r' with 'l', transforming "biografía verdadera" to "bioglafía veladela," in an attempt to imitate a stereotypical Chinese accent in Spanish, in which the 'r' is replaced with the sound of 'l.'. Martínez's suggestion of a Chinese accent alludes to a foreignness that contradicts Zhao Wu's claim to a distinctly Spanish (although hybrid) identity throughout the text. Martínez's second

comment suggests that *Gazpacho agridulce* is as funny, if not funnier than the Japanese television game show known in Spain as *Humor amarillo*. The program became a cult-favorite worldwide, its comedic effect coming from its intentional absurdity. Martínez's statement compares *Gazpacho agridulce* to *Humor amarillo,* conflating very distinct Asian cultures (Chinese and Japanese) and problematically suggesting that *Gazpacho agridulce*, like *Humor amarillo*, is buffoonish and comedic in its absurdity.

Accented speech does appear in Zhou Wu's characterization of her own family, particularly that of her mother. Interestingly, Gillota notes that many Asian American comedians also include frequent impersonations of their immigrant parents, who tend to come across as "quaint and slightly clueless ethnic others" (166). He argues that in the case of stand-up comedians like the well-known Chinese American comedian Margaret Cho:

> The accented impersonations all contrast with the unaccented voice of the comedians themselves. […] these routines serve to de-ethnicize the second-generation Asian American comics […]. By highlighting their ethnic parents, Asian American comedians claim ethnic difference but also distance themselves from it. (166)

In *Gazpacho Agridulce* this accented impersonation is conveyed through Spanish dialogue written to express Mamá Zhou's accent. For example, in one scene the Spanish babysitter Dolores confronts Mamá Zhou after discovering puncture wounds on Quan's back. Holding Quan slumped over in her arms and with "Xs" in the place of her eyes, she accuses Mamá Zhou of child abuse and threatens to report her. In Spanish written to reflect a Chinese accent, Mamá Zhou emphatically explains that the marks are the result of a Chinese medicinal practice involving needles. In an aside at the bottom of the page an adult Quan tells the reader that she is still terribly afraid of needles and prefers Western medicine "sin lugar a dudas." (fig. 60).

Perhaps even more than the episodes involving *el Ratoncito Pérez* and *los Reyes Magos*, this scene positions Quan's Chineseness—embodied in Mamá Zhou—as a cultural backwardness at odds with Spanish society and the primary hurdle separating her from an "authentic" Spanish identity. Particularly given Western "discovery" of Chinese medicine such as acupuncture and cupping, Quan's rejection of non-Western methods seems exaggerated, and can be read as an overcompensation to affirm her Spanishness.

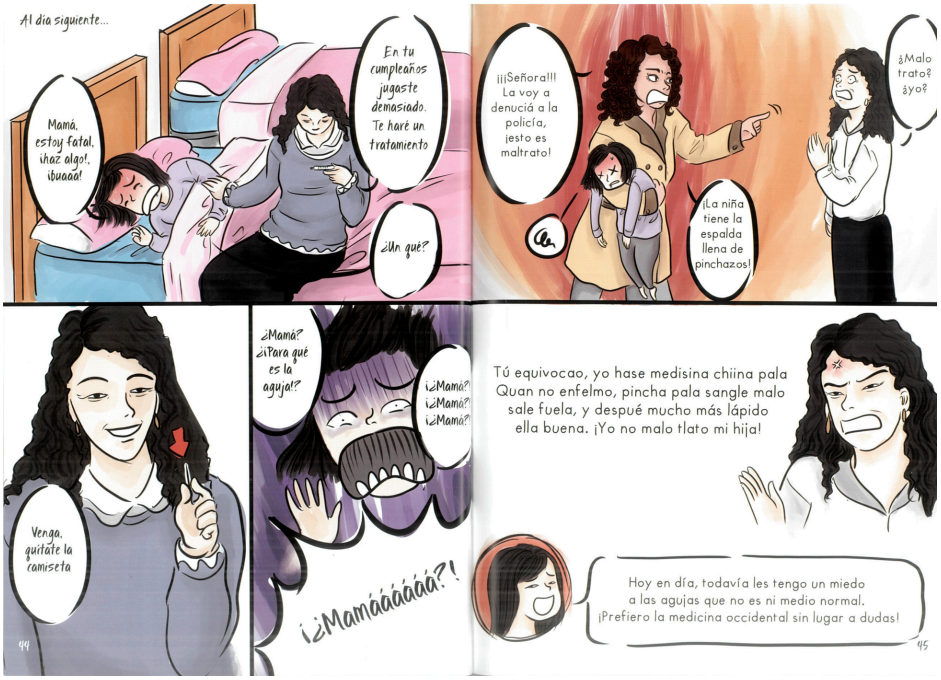


Figure 60: Quan recalls a traumatic childhood experience with traditional Chinese medicine. *Gazpacho agridulce*, 2015).

As evidenced by the prologue signed by Fu and Qing, Zhou Wu frames the novel as a story about cultural hybridity. Indeed, Quan's subject-position as Chinese-Spanish signals a hybrid Spanish identity that is still relatively uncommon in contemporary Spain. What is particularly interesting about the way this identity is articulated in the novel is how Quan positions herself in opposition to her mother's definition of Chinesness as a way to reaffirm her Spanishness, and is less inclined to reinforce her Chinese heritage. Perhaps this is precisely because her Chineseness is what is more readable about her in Spanish society, and for her

readers. This kind of generational conflict as a narrative tool to explore questions of hybridity and identity for Spain's emerging population of Chinese Spaniards appears not only in texts by Chinese Spaniards themselves, but also in Spanish cultural production about Chinese Spaniards. Elvira Navarro's 2009 novel *La ciudad feliz* and the first two seasons of the prime-time television drama *Física o química*, which aired in 2008, also represent Chinese-Spanish adolescents at odds with their Chinese immigrant parents.

La ciudad feliz portrays a Chinese immigrant family by way of the novel's adolescent male protagonist, Chi-Huei. *La ciudad feliz* is comprised of two short novellas: *Historia del restaurante chino Ciudad Feliz*, which narrates Chi-Huei's migration to Spain from China and the experiences of his family in their new home, and *La orilla*, which centers on the encounter of an adolescent girl, Sara, with a neighborhood vagabond. The two stories overlap via their protagonists, Sara and Chi-Huei, who are neighborhood friends and appear in both of the novellas. Both narratives are coming-of-age stories that focus on the role of urban space and familial expectations on the development of their adolescent protagonists. Navarro's use of a Chinese protagonist in the novel is significant because it is one of few representations of the Chinese in Spain in written fiction, but also because of the way in which the novel frames Chi-Heui's experiences as both specific to a child of immigrant parents and also more universally accessible as a coming-of-age story.

Historia del restaurante chino Ciudad Feliz is narrated in the third person and follows Chi-Huei as he arrives in Spain and comes of age there. Having lived with a caretaker in China for a number of years as his family established a small business in Spain, the young Chi-Huei is reunited with them after an extended period of separation. Only alluded to at the beginning of the novel, the trauma induced by this separation produces an estrangement between Chi-Huei and his

family that develops throughout the novel. In the novel's first chapter, Chi-Huei's father arrives in China to collect his son and bring him back to Spain. There, Chi-Huei witnesses an interaction between his father and his caretaker, a mother figure for whom Chi-Huei feels a special affection and who is referred to only as *la vieja*: "Después de cenar su padre habló con la vieja en la cocina mientras Chi-Huei les espiaba desde el jardín. Su padre le entregó un sobre a la tía y Chi-Huei sintió un escalofrío similar al de la pesadilla que la acometía con frecuencia, mezcla de tifones, hojas con cuentas y uñas largas y rugosas clavándose en la piel de alguien que parecía ser su madre" (15). While Chi-Huei is still too young to understand the nature of this interaction—*La vieja* is being monetarily compensated for the care and affection she provides him—this scene, narrated opaquely from a child's perspective, proves to be the source of much distress for the adolescent Chi-Huei later on. Particularly pertinent is the link the narrator draws between the scene Chi-Huei witnesses, as if in a dream state, and another oneiric experience that he associates with violence against his mother. Although it is his father that comes to accompany him on his journey from China to Spain, it seems that his emotional experience of the events is more closely linked to his understanding of his mother, or the mother figure more generally.

This kind of intuitive experience of the world characterizes the first part of the novel in which the reader, like Chi-Huei, remains uncertain as to the exact circumstances surrounding his move to Spain. This perspective lends an air of innocence to Navarro's text and allows the reader to experience Chi-Huei's coming of age as a coming to consciousness with him. Upon his arrival to Spain, Chi-Huei is greeted by the rest of his family, who are effectively strangers to him. Even though Chi-Huei had long anticipated this reunion, wondering as the months passed when his parents would send for him, the actual experience of re-encountering them is extremely alienating. Riding home from the airport with his parents, brother, and grandfather, "Chi-Huei

permanecía callado, acechando a aquellos extraños. A ratos tenía la sensación de haber vivido con ellos, aunque no le quedara, en su memoria consciente, un solo recuerdo" (22). The distance between Chi-Huei's experience and the unconscious of his memory highlights the strange sensation of this encounter. The disorientation of feeling estranged while experiencing a long-awaited family reunion is mirrored by the descriptions of the urban space as alienating and sterile.

> Dejaron atrás todas la avenidas, todos los espacios abiertos. Ahora su madre, su padre, su hermano y el abuelo aparecían oscurecidos en el interior del coche. Chi-Huei encajó la cabeza entre los asientos delanteros y miró desde el parabrisas la nueva configuración de las calles, más estrecha, gris, con las aceras sucias, los portales deteriorados—muchos de ellos de madera—, los edificios decrépitos en contraste con otros rehabilitados, que producían en el aire un breve resplandor por efecto de la pintura. (23)

Chi-Huei's family seems to fade into the background as the city demands Chi-Huei's attention. The dirty, run-down, and decrepit cityscape produces a contradictory radiance that briefly distracts Chi-Huei from the confusing family dynamic inside the vehicle.

The pointed descriptions Navarro offers of the city spaces Chi-Huei encounters are indicative of her use of urban space as a protagonist in her novels. In an interview with *El País* Navarro elaborates on the formative influence of her native city, Valencia, on her growth as a person and a writer, noting that, "Desde muy niña estaba muy atenta a mi entorno. Me estimula. Tal vez seguir pateando la ciudad sea la manera de acudir a la raíz de lo que escribo. La propia ciudad me lleva a escribir" (Rodríguez Marcos n.p.). Like Navarro, the adolescent protagonists of both *Historia del restaurante chino La Ciudad Feliz* and *La orilla* are highly attentive to, and stimulated by, their surroundings. For Sara and Chi-Huei the city becomes a space of both

alienation and self-realization as they come of age and gain a new perspective on themselves and, more specifically, their relationship to their families.

The duality of the city and the complex experiences of alienation and belonging it produces create the particular urban texture Navarro brings to her literary cityscapes. Indeed, Navarro has spoken specifically about her interest in spaces outside the city center as a metaphor for identity in the twenty-first century city:

> Las afueras son territorios indefinidos. Eso da una sensación de mayor libertad, sobre todo para un creador. [Las afueras] son como plastilina. Las puedes moldear. Además creo que ahora nos definen mejor. Las identidades están ahora mucho más diluidas. A pesar de que todos queremos vivir en el centro, nuestra manera de ser tiene que ver con esa fealdad, y con esa precariedad. (Rodríguez Marcos n.p.)

Navarro's adolescent protagonists experience a similar kind of plasticity to the one Navarro describes in her interview, a plasticity largely conditioned by the urban setting in which they find themselves. Navarro's focus on the city's perihpery has a broader literary and cultural context. The classical nineteenth century *bildungsroman*, for example, is often structured around the young protagonist's journey from the provincial countryside to the more cosmopolitan city. Navarro's emphasis on the exurban also brings to mind Pedro Almodóvar's use of the *extraradio madrileño* in films such as *Qué he hecho ya para merecer esto* (1984) to explore the alienation and contradictions of the postmodern city.

For Chi-Huei, the process of defining himself in a contemporary European metropolis is further complicated by his subject position as the son of recently arrived Chinese immigrants; and this position certainly underscores his location on the periphery of any kind of "center,"

cultural, social or political. Upon arriving in Spain Chi-Huei is struck by the difference of those around him:

> Desde que llegaron al aeropuerto de Hong Kong había estado escuchando lenguas extrañas hasta que la suya, en Barajas, desapareció por completo. No era sin embargo la lengua extrañas lo que más le había llamado la atención, sino los ojos redondos, grandes, desorbitados o al revés, pequeños y muy hundidos en las cuencas, así como la angulosidad de los rostros, el tamaño desmesurado de los cuerpos, la calvicie prematura y la tez meridional. (25)

By assuming Chi-Huei's perspective, the narrator inverts the logic of otherness in the Spanish city, in which Chi-Huei's phyisognomy—not that of the European passersby in Barajas—would more commonly be the marker of racial difference for Western readers. In prioritizing Chi-Huei's perspective, Navarro offers a fresh representation of the Chinese immigrant in Spain, a figure who, as I have previously argued is more commonly represented in news media coverage of staggering immigration statistics and the unprecedented success of Chinese entrepreneurs amidst the struggling Spanish economy.

As the son of Chinese immigrants Chi-Huei is ostracized by his peers. When he first arrives at school some older boys called him *chino*, and he felt "chino, chino, chino. Más chino conforme pasaban los meses y los años, y China se alejaba de su memoria" (51). Interestingly, it is his distance from China that makes Chi-Huei feel more Chinese, or rather, the identification of his Chineseness as otherness by his Spanish peers constructs this identity as tangible and measureable. Yet, despite these experiences, the narrative arc of *Historia del restaurante chino La Ciudad Feliz* focuses more clearly on the changing relationship between Chi-Huei and his family. Although the transition to Spain represents a culture shock for Chi-Huei, is it in fact his

familial ties that ultimately cause him more inner conflict as he comes of age in the Spanish city. At the center of family life in Chi-Huei's household is the family business, an *asador de pollos* that the family eventually expands into a full-service restaurant named La Ciudad Feliz. Every member of the family is involved in the daily management of the business: "Vivían al ritmo del negocio, que no cerraba nunca, y cuya actividad era siempre desbordante, ilimitada" (47). Chi-Huei quickly learns that the pace of business determines the rhythm and tone of life in the household:

> Por la mañana la crispación de su madre admitía el humor; a mediodía, cuando estaba todo a rebosar de clientes, no había espacio para la broma, y ahí era cuando más daba la sensación de que el asador estuviera al borde de un gran incendio, o de estar atravesando una gran crisis, aunque ese sólo lo sabían su hermano, su padre, el abuelo, la abuelastra y él, pues antes los clientes aquella barbaridad de expectativas trágicas y de energía se resolvía en una eficiencia exagerada que a la mayor parte de la gente le agradaba. (35)

For Chi-Huei the *asador* represents a private claustrophobia that only the members of his immediate family can perceive. From the outside, the family embodies the stereotypical efficiency associated with the Chinese immigrant. This "eficiencia exagerada" is the product of what Chi-Huei considers the "barbaridad de expectativas trágicas;" and the victim of the tragedy will prove to be Chi-Hui's relationship with his family.

Chi-Huei experiences feelings of estrangement as he struggles to adapt not only to a life in a new country, but also to living with a family he barely knows. He repeatedly suffers what are described as "cortocircuitos" in the novel, a sensation of disconnect between the world around him and his interior life. Much of Chi-Huei's experience is defined by his condition as a recently arrived son of immigrants. Ultimately, though, the chasm that will distance Chi-Huei

from his family is produced by his family's emotional and economic investment in the restaurant. His family's tireless commitment to expanding their restaurant business as any cost produces chronic conflicts between Chi-Huei and his mother, in particular. Like in *Gazpacho agridulce*, it is Chi-Huei's mother who most clearly embodies the anachronic worldview of the first generation of migrants. In the last pages of the novel, Chi-Huei and his mother engage in a particularly heated argument in which the scaffolding around their degrading relationship is stripped away. What is most hurtful to Chi-Huei is his mother's insistence that the woman who took care of him in China during his family's absence years earlier "solo [le] cuidó por el dinero." This is a line of argument that comes up frequently during Chi-Huei's conflicts with his mother, and is particularly potent for him because of the way it underlines his overarching complaint about his family:

> Era lo que no podía tolerar; que su madre pusiera dinero donde no hubo dinero, es decir, interés donde sólo había amor desinteresado, mientras que, desde el preciso instante en que llegó, hacía ya diez años, todo se había basado en el interés. […] Por supuesto que la vieja se había hecho cargo de él por dinero, o que en cualquier caso había decidido por supuesto al principio que sí, que le venía bien el dinero, pero luego su relación no había tenido nada que ver con él, y lo habría seguido cuidando igualmente. Sin embargo, sí había sido por dinero por lo que su familia lo había dejado en China; había sido exactamente, tal y como decía su madre, porque necesitaban manos en el negocio, las manos de su madre para no contratar a nadie, y no pensaba en ello con inquina. (87-88)

Intellectually, Chi-Huei understands that his parents' tireless dedication to the restaurant is a way of expressing love for him and his brother in that it represents their desire to provide their children with a better life. And yet, in the absence of the kind of parental affection he desires,

Chi-Huei comes to resent the business and, perhaps above all else, the "pasión dineraria" that it embodies. More than anything else, what irritates Chi-Huei about the way his mother defends her position is "la vuelta de aquel argumento" about money and motive.

Unlike the other times they have argued, this final encounter between Chi-Huei and his mother produces irrevocable damage: "y de nuevo Chi-Huei quiso abrazarla para sentir la absoluta fragilidad de sus huesos y de su carne, pero ya habían llegado demasiado lejos en la incomprensión mutua, y era amargo y también triste saberse despreciado" (92). This "incomprensión mutua" between parents and children is the overarching theme of the two novellas that constitute *La ciudad feliz*. For Sara of *La orilla* this lack of understanding is directly related to her coming of age and emerging sexuality. For Chi-Huei the same is true, but his story has the added dimension of generations distanced by the processes of assimilation into a new language, country and culture. In many ways the story of Chi-Huei and his family is a small and private one, but it also speaks to larger themes about migration, growth, and change. In the interview with Navarro published in *El País* the interviewer, Javier Rodríguez Marcos, suggests that Chi-Huei's story "podría ser la historia de unos españoles de otra generación," to which Navarro responds with an anecdote about one of the editors at Mondadori, the book's publisher, who commented after his first reading the novel that "esto lo has puesto en chino, pero podrías estar hablando de gallegos."

These reactions to the novel point to the universality of Chi-Huei's story, and this is significant because for the most part Chinese migrants and their families in Spain have been portrayed in ways that do not lead readers/spectators to identify themselves with them. In the same interview, Navarro explains that Chi-Huei and his family are not based on specific research about the Chinese community in Spain, but rather are meant to be read as symbols for themes

that the author has drawn from her childhood:

> Cuando escribí la historia del niño chino, no pensaba en los inmigrantes como categoría, solo dejé que ese personaje hablara, no investigué. En el fondo, lo que quería era vehicular cosas que yo viví en mi infancia aunque no fuera de forma tan bestia. […] Yo tenía un amigo chino. Su familia tenía un restaurante y me recordaba esa furia por conseguir algo. En muchos inmigrantes se da de forma extrema porque su precariedad es total. Quería hablar de la autoexploración siguiendo un marco solo aparentemente chino. (Rodríguez Marcos n.p.)

From Navarro's comments, one might surmise that her intention was to construct the character of Chi-Huei in such a way that he would point to broader themes related to coming-of-age, and to the economic and social precarity of immigrant families and Spaniards alike in the early twenty-first century.[51] She claims that the novel has "un marco solo aparentemente chino" and indeed the characters are not based on sociological research. Yet, other aspects of the narrative suggest that Chi-Huei and his family reinforce—perhaps unwittingly—commonly held beliefs about the Chinese in Spain.

At one point in the story, for example, Chi-Huei accompanies his father to a warehouse where they purchase supplies from a Chinese vendor, which reinforces the idea that the Chinese community in Spain is especially insular and that its members prefer to conduct business negotiations exclusively within the community instead of with Spaniards (64-5). In another instance the narrator reflects on the fact that Chi-Huei's family is the exception among a community in which most members allegedly arrive in Spain with debts to the Chinese mafia:

> El abuelo era el artífice de que estuvieron allí. Habían podido establecerse solos, sin

[51] The theme of economic and social precarity appears prominently throughout Navarro's work. Her more recent novel, *La trabajadora* (2014), is an example.

> organizaciones mafiosas que les consiguieran papeles y trabajo a cambio de esclavizarlos, gracias a su dinero. El abuelo les bombardeaba con historias de chinos que llegaban a España y eran encerrados por otros chinos en zulos, donde dormían apilados. Los chinos sólo podían salir de los zulos para trabajar en las cocinas, limpiar y servir mesas. (40)

This brief reference to the Chinese mafia coincides with the large majority of representations of the Chinese in Spain. As we have seen, films like *La fuente amarilla* (1999), *Tapas* (2005) and *Biutiful* (2010), as well as recent detective fiction such as *La sociedad negra* (2013) and *Laberinto de mentiras* (2014) allude to the idea—or in some cases are entirely based on the premise—that the Chinese community in Spain is closely linked to a widespread and very powerful Chinese mafia that controls most aspects of Chinese life in major Spanish cities. While the representation of Chi-Huei in the novel is progressive in the sense that it encourages the reader to identify with the Chinese adolescent, the filling in of narrative gaps with reference to popular, and largely misconceived, urban legends about the Chinese in Spain contradicts the notion that the novel has "un marco solo aparentemente chino." Instead, Chi-Huei's character is defined by a degree of otherness that is specific to his Chineseness, and is not necessarily shared by other figures on the periphery of Spanish society.

Navarro's collapsing of the specificity of the Chinese migrant experience raises problematic questions of authorship and representation. On the one hand it can be argued that the author minimizes the specificities of the Chinese experience by suggesting that it replicates that of other migrant groups from previous historical periods; but on the other hand the inclusion of common stereotypes about the Chinese serve to differentiate them. Characters like Chi-Huei and his family are not merely interchangeable with Spanish migrants from another era, particularly because their experiences are necessarily racialized in a way that was largely unprecedented in

modern Spanish society before the late twentieth century. Navarro's comment that "no pensaba en los inmigrantes como categoría, solo dejé que ese personaje hablara, no investigué" may have been intended to emphasize the universality of Chi-Huei's *bildungsroman*, but instead portrays a problematic approach to writing the other. When Gayatri Spivak asks "can the subaltern speak?" she demands that we consider the ethical implications of writing (and thinking) about the other from the West. Particularly because the Chinese in Spain are such an underrepresented, yet increasingly visible, racial and ethnic minority in Spain, the few representations of the Chinese that do exist are more likely to be read as ethnographic texts, even if they are far from it. As such, the degree to which *La ciudad feliz* can be read as an accurate representation of the Chinese in Spain, despite its humanizing portrayal of Chi-Huei, is questionable. Like *Gazpacho agridulce*, the text suggests that it is only though a break with family tradition—and his Chinese heritage, one could argue—that Chi-Huei makes space to construct a modern, Spanish identity.

Another character who, like Chi-Huei, struggles to adapt to Spanish society while navigating the expectations of his traditional Chinese family is the character of Jan Taeming on the primetime television drama *Física o química* (2008-2011). The appearance of this character on primetime Spanish television is an indication that the phenomenon of Chinese immigration to Spain had entered the Spanish consciousness at the time of the series' debut. *Física o química* (*FOQ*) first aired in February 2008 on Canal 3. The series follows a group of teachers, students and administrators at Colegio Zurbarán, a high school set in an unspecified location in Spain.[52] The series traces their romantic relationships, family lives, and professional and academic challenges. Jan, played by Andrés Cheung, was among the original characters in the show's highly successful first season. The show became an instant hit with viewers, enjoying 18.7

[52] Although the series does not have a specified location, it was filmed in studio and on site locations primarily in the outskirts of Madrid and some of the locations are identifiable as such.

percent of viewership during that time slot by the end of its first season ("'Fago' y 'Física y química'). In particular, the series' willingness to take on taboo topics, such as teen sex, drug use, sexual assault, suicide, and homosexuality, stimulated the show's popularity among viewers, creating, in the words of one of the original cast members, "el último gran fenómeno de la ficción juvenil española" (Primo n.p.).[53]

Racism and racial diversity were also among the polemical topics that the series tackles and Jan's story line is central to this discussion. The series alludes to Spain's increasing racial diversity and latent racism in the first episodes and I argue that the show attempts to position itself as politically progressive in its treatment of these themes. Indeed, this self-proclaimed open-mindedness extends to other issues throughout the series, such as homosexuality and political activism. The issue of migration to Spain appears early on in the show with the introduction of a recently arrived Argentine instructor at the school. During an orientation for new teachers the others seem caught of guard by his accent, to which the director of studies responds with an accusatory tone, "Os molesta su acento?" This particular Argentine instructor is quickly written off the show but, curiously, is replaced by another attractive male Argentine character, which suggests that the degree of otherness that this kind of character represents is a winning formula for primetime Spanish television.

The second episode of *FOQ* includes a more contentious incident in which a group of students find a pile of *fichas* (student record cards) belonging to Olimpia, one of the teachers and a main character on the show, and discover that the *ficha* of an afro-Caribbean student includes a note that reads, "qué se puede esperar de una caribeña." The students, enraged, confront the

[53] In fact, the series was so risqué that its syndication on the Italian television network Rai 4 was cancelled and resulted in the temporary suspension of one of the network's directors for allegedly neglecting "la obligación de corrección y buena fe" by allowing the emission of a supposedly "pornographic" sequence during a time slot designated as "protected" for minors ("Polémica en Italia" n.p.).

school's administration about the issue, which then divides the faculty between those who hold Olimpia responsible for the remark and those who contend that the writing must be a student prank intended to damage Olimpia's reputation. The truth of the matter is never resolved and while the incident serves to set the tone for the kind of controversial and politically relevant subject matter for which the series would later become recognized, the Afro-Caribbean student who was the victim of the racist comment does not emerge as one of the main characters of the show and eventually fades from view; indeed Jan is the only person of color who appears as a series regular.

The series' first episode coincides with Jan's arrival at Colegio Zurbarán. A chaotic hallway scene early in the episode depicts the excitement and anticipation of the first day of a new school year—and a promising new series. Teachers and students greet one another as the audience gets a sense of who among the crowd will become central characters. Jan walks through the front door of the school and approaches a group of female students, asking if they know where he can find *primero B*, presumably his homeroom. One of the girls, Paula, points out the classroom and with a jovial tone adds, "y es nuestra clase también así que te presento. Mira, ella es la Yoli, ella es Cova y yo soy Paula. Y bienvenido." This interaction serves to introduce the audience to these characters, all of whom will become an integral part of the series over the course of subsequent seasons. What's more, Paula and Jan will become a couple later on and this relationship will help to bring Jan into the fold of social life at Zurbarán.

After learning the location of the *primero B* Jan leaves the girls in the hallway. The girls exchange looks and shrug their shoulders, commenting, "Un chino… mola, ¿no?" Like their Spanish viewers, the girls are surprised at the appearance of a Chinese student in their school, although they seem to welcome this new degree of diversity, quickly moving on to another

conversation topic. Some of their male classmates, however, are far less welcoming. Later that day, their literature teacher Blanca, who is also new to the school, introduces herself and asks if any of the students are new as well. Jan raises his hand and introduces himself as Jan Taeming; the Chinese pronunciation of his name elicits scoffing laughter from some of the other students, particularly Gorka, the class clown and school "rebel." "Perdona," he responds, commanding the attention of the class, "¿Jan-Tae-Jan-Ling? ¿Jan-celvesa flesca?" his comments alluding the phrase "cerveza fresca," which is repeated by Chinese street vendors who sell cold beers to revelers leaving bars and night clubs in Madrid and Barcelona. "En esta clase no se permiten actitudes racistas," announces Blanca, demanding that the class stop laughing, but to no avail. These displays of racist ignorance—and the attempt to combat it by some people at Zurbarán—set the tone for a show that will attempt to tackle some of Spain's most controversial issues.

Throughout the series, Gorka's character is largely portrayed as unsophisticated, infantile, and insecure, and this encourages viewers to identify more closely with Blanca's staunch defense of racial tolerance in the classroom. Paula, the student who initially greets Jan on his arrival, quickly becomes the object of Jan's affection and he courts her with his artistic talent, sketching portraits of her in his notebook. Eventually they become a couple and their relationship one of the show's central narrative lines. This mixed-race romance in a school setting where the only other display of ethnic or cultural diversity is the single Argentine teacher becomes a vehicle for addressing prejudice and intolerance.

Aside from periodic expressions of intolerance, like Gorka's racist jokes from the beginning of the first season, Jan adapts relatively easily to social life at Zurbarán. As Paul Julian Smith has noted, Jan acts and dresses much like his peers, "the show thus works to unsettle stereotypes" (12). Rather than coming from their peers, the strongest resistance Jan and Paula's

relationship receives comes from their parents. Both sets of parents are unnerved by the interracial romance, but it is Jan's family that has a more extreme reaction and is more difficult to sway. Jan's father[54] first becomes aware of his son's relationship with Paula when Gorka and another classmate, Cabano, inform him in an attempt to break up their romance because of Cabano's crush on Paula. The two boys visit Jan's father at his shop, a typical Chinese-run convenience store or *chino*. Jan's father speaks broken Spanish and the boys try to explain to him that they are classmates of Jan's by repeating "Jan" and "amigo." Finally, Gorka takes out his mobile phone and shows Jan's father a video he had taken of Jan and Paula sitting together and flirting on the school steps. Aghast at the video, Jan's father reacts with panic and demands that the boys leave his store immediately. Later, Jan's father confronts him while he is stocking shelves in the family store after school. The camera pans through the low-cost, open, metal shelving typical of most *chinos* filled with a variety of canned goods and cleaning supplies. Jan's father approaches him with accusatory remarks which are subtitled for the audience in Spanish: "Vas al colegio a trabajar, no a hacer el tonto. ¿Me estás oyendo?" Jan tries to protest, insisting that he does study and work hard in school, but his father is not interested in hearing this defense: "Se acabó hacer el idiota con esa española. Tu madre y yo estamos aquí trabajando todo el día para que tú estudies […] No olvides quien eres, Jan." The remarks made by Jan's father are reminiscent of the "barbaridad de expectativas trágicas" imposed on Chi-Huei by his parents. Although Jan appears to assimilate fairly easily into life as a student at Zurbarán—he is actively involved in the academic and social life as the school—his assimilation is curtailed by his family's desire to remain separate from mainstream Spanish society, a condition embodied in the warning, "No olvides quien eres."

[54] Unlike other parents of students who are series regulars, Jan's father is never given a first name; he appears in the credits as "padre de Jan."

The character of Jan on *FOQ* is the first Chinese-Spanish character to appear on primetime Spanish television. His presence at Zurbarán, and particularly his relationship with Paula and his other classmates, one that recognizes and incorporates Spaniards of non-European descent, is in keeping with Manuel Palacios' claim that Spanish television under the democracy has adopted a "pedagogical" vocation. Jan's relationship with Paula is particularly significant because it challenges a widespread resistance in the West (Europe and the United States) to casting Asian males as heroic or romantic leads in film and television.[55] Jan is not cast as the stereotypical Asian math genius, but instead faces social and academic challenges similar to those of his classmates. Jan's family, however, conforms to the stereotype of the recently arrived Chinese immigrant resistant to assimilation and suspicious of the influences of Spanish society. Similar to the narrative arc of *La ciudad feliz*, *FOQ* frames Jan's assimilation into Spanish youth culture as at odds with his family's expectations of him as the son of a Chinese immigrant family. More so than the prejudices of Chinese society, it is the Chinese family and that poses a potentially insurmountable challenge to a Chinese-Spanish identity.

During the second season of *FOQ* the plot thickens for Jan, so to speak, when he is pressured into a marriage of convenience with his first cousin in order to secure her residence in Spain. One afternoon while Jan and Paula are hanging out with friends at Zubarán, Jan's father appears in the school hallway, flanked by two other Chinese men. All three are dressed in suits, a stark contrast to the extremely casual dress code for students, teachers, and administrators alike

[55] There is a large body of research on both Asian American and Asian masculinities. For more on Chinese-American masculinities in particular see Jachison Chan's *Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee.* Recently, the character of Glenn Ree on the popular American television drama *The Walking Dead* has gained attention for his role as a romantic lead. Aziz Ansari's 2015 sitcom, *Master of None*, also addresses the historical lack of Asian male leads, particularly romantic leads. The American sitcom *Fresh off the Boat* follows a Chinese-American family and is one of the only television programs starring an Asian-American family to be aired on a major U.S. television network.

at Zurbarán. A low-angle shot framing the three men as they approach the students, walking shoulder to shoulder, brings to mind images from classic gangster films, the mafia boss flanked by his "enforcers." (fig. 61 and 62). Using these visual cues, the *FOQ* scene implies that the men accompanying Jan's father are members of the Chinese mafia and, consequently, that Jan's family is involved in mafia business. It is later explained that these men helped finance Jan's and his family's immigration to Spain and that this debt must be repaid by Jan's marriage to his cousin. It is important to note that this apparently outrageous plotline is consistent with the tone of a series that generally prioritizes melodrama over realism—a teacher's affair with an underage student is par for the course, as is a love triangle between three faculty members who are also roommates. However, even if the hyperbole of Jan's predicament is in keeping with the show's overall tenor, the character of this particular scandal alludes to near-incest, human trafficking, a retrograde code of honor and other elements of "backwardness" almost always reserved for the racially othered.

Figure 61: Jan's father visits him at school, accompanied by two other Chinese men. (*Física o química*, 2009)

Figure 62: *Little Caesar* (1931) and *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938).

As is to be expected, the news of Jan's upcoming nuptials throws his relationship with Paula into a tailspin. Even as Jan continually assures Paula that his marriage to his cousin, Xiaomei, is simply a matter of paperwork in order to qualify her for residence in Spain, Paula remains wary of the situation. Jan's sense of duty to his family—despite what seems like an outrageous demand to most Spanish viewers—is a point of contention in his relationship with Paula and signals a cultural difference that the two may not be able to overcome. Xiaomei's arrival in Spain and her frequent visits to Zurbarán put further pressure on Jan's relationship with Paula and this sequence of events is represented as a test of Paula's patience and trust in Jan; eventually Paula even agrees to help Xiaomei plan the wedding as a favor to Jan. Ultimately, though, Jan and Paula's relationship cannot survive when Xiaomei successfully seduces Jan.

Xiaomaei's first appearance at Zurbarán catches Paula and her friends off guard, not only because the visit is unannounced, but also because Xiaomei is beautiful and immediately catches the male students' attention. Despite Xiaomei's beauty, Jan assures Paula that he is not interested in her. In addition to pressure from their parents, the ultimate undoing of Jan and Paula's relationship hinges on a list that ranks Zurbarán's male students according to their "hotness." The list is compiled by polling the school's female students and is then posted on one of the school's central bulletin boards after class for the students to read. Much to his dismay, Jan ranks last on the list and Paula admits to having voted for Cabano. Hurt and emasculated, Jan succumbs to Xiaomei's advances, later bragging about the conquest to his male classmates in an attempt to improve his self-esteem and re-establish his masculinity among his peers. Paula eventually discovers the affair and is furious. Despite Jan's numerous attempts to mend the situation, Paula refuses to take him back after the transgression. To add insult to injury, once Xiaomei receives her Spanish residence she also discontinues her relationship with Jan,

admitting she feigned interest in him only to ensure that he would follow through with the marriage. Distraught and ashamed, Jan makes an impulsive decision to return to China in the wake of this tumultuous love triangle. Jan's final appearance in the last episode of the second season of *FOQ* is overshadowed by the tragic death of another main character (and incidentally Paula's brother), and Jan leaves the series unceremoniously.

The narrative arc of Jan's character is in keeping with Martin Baker's theory of new racism, in which cultural otherness is represented as insurmountable difference. In her chapter "Impossible Love: The Presumed Incompatibility of Islam and (European) Spain," Daniela Flesler reads the failed romantic relationships between Muslim foreigners and Catholic Spaniards in Spanish film as a manifestation of Baker's new racism and a disavowal of the country's Muslim heritage (132). The relationship between Jan and Paula can be read in a similar way; it was destined to fail because of Jan's cultural otherness, which thereby reaffirms his position as an outsider. However, the series clearly attributes this position to the backwardness of Jan's cultural heritage and his inability to liberate himself from his family's unreasonable expectations, rather than to his racial difference. Afterall, the demise of Jan and Paula's romantic relationship is a direct result of the pressure Jan receives from his parents and his sexual encounter with Xiomaei, not Paula's outright rejection of him.

Jan's sudden departure from the series suggests that, ultimately, his character was impossible to assimilate into the fictional world of Zurbarán. While Jan's initial arrival in the first episode of the first season set up a potential defense of ethnic diversity and condemnation of racial prejudice, in subsequent episodes the show resorted to the same kind of stereotyping that it had previously denounced. Like Chi-Huei and Quan, Jan is able to assimilate into Spanish society more easily than his parents, for whom the cultural gap remained insurmountable. For

Chi-Huei and Jan—and Quan to a lesser degree—, the choice to embrace a Spanish identity comes at the expense of the parent-child relationship. Unlike Chi-Huei, however, Jan ultimately meets his parents' expectations by marrying his cousin and later returning to China. Unlike *Gazpacho Agridulce*, which proposes a model for a hybrid Chinese-Spanish identity, *La ciudad feliz* and *FOQ* suggest that the categories of Chinese and Spanish are mutually exclusive and that one must be renounced in favor of the other.

All three texts problematically represent Chineseness as mired in a tired code of honor and tradition, often representing this cultural difference as an insurmountable hurdle. In *Física o química* Jan is forced into a marriage of convenience because of his father's debts to the Chinese mafia and is eventually written off the show via his relocation to China. In *La ciudad feliz* this insurmoubtability comes in the form of a final argument between the protagonist and his mother, which suggests that assimilation comes only with a definite break from the "old world," in this case represented by the first generation of Chinese migrants.

Despite the narrative similarities shared by all three texts, *Gazpacho agridulce* distinguishes itself in the first place because it represents one of very few voices that have emerged to represent experiences from within the Chinese-Spanish community. But in addition to that, Zhou Wu's work also expresses a more nuanced and dynamic approach to identity formation through cultural production. Her work is autobiographical, highly personal, and continues to evolve. *Gazpacho agridulce* is one text among a larger body of work that includes the illustrated vignettes on her blog, her social media accounts, as well as a growing corpus of textual contributions to blogs like *Migrados*. It is interesting to note that the use of this kind of digital media lends itself to a body of work that is constantly evolving. In February 2016 Zhou Wu published an illustration on her blog titled "cuando la gente a tu alrededor (voluntariamente)

quiere tener hijos" (fig. 63). The illustration features three young Chinese-Spanish women speaking in Spanish about the imaginary future of their multi-cultural children. Although, as the caption notes, they bemoaned the Chinese language classes they were forced to take by their parents, they want to instill in their own children a sense of Chinese identity.

Figure 63: Zhou Wu illustrates the experience of contemplating the reality of cultural hybridity when imagining raising one's own children as Chinese Spaniards. (gazpachoagridulce.tumblr.com, 2016)

As Lisa Lowe has noted in her seminal study of Asian immigration to the United States,

> Asian American discussions of ethnic culture and racial group formations are far from uniform or consistent. Rather, these discussions contain a spectrum of positions that include, at one end, the desire for a cultural identity represented by a fixed profile of traits and, at the other, challenges to the notion of singularity and conceptions of *race* as the material *locus* of differences, intersections, and incommensurabilities. (64)

Gazpacho agridulce signals the emergence of a similar spectrum in terms of conceptualizing Chinese-Spanish identity. Moreover, if we consider the novel within the broader scope of Zhou Wu's work, its rejection of the author's Chineseness in an attempt to affirm a Spanish identity can be read as one chapter in a greater exploration of identity and ethnicity. This most recent vignette and its tongue-in-cheek celebration of the author's Chinese heritage suggests that her relationship to her own ethnicity is not a fixed one, but is rather in a constant process of renovation. Instead of reading Zhou Wu's work as a monolithic statement about what is means to be Chinese-Spanish, we can understand it as an early contribution to a much larger conversation that will continue to grow as more voices join in.

Identity, Race, and Adoption in Spain

Contemporary Chinese migration to Spain has played, and continues to play, an important role in the country's increasing ethnic diversity. The growth of Spain's Chinese diaspora has coincided with another movement of people between China and Spain: the adoption of thousands of children, mostly girls, from China. Spain has adopted more children from China than any other country aside from the Unites States, an especially striking statistic given the fact that Spain's total population is only a fraction of that of the United States. The arrival of thousands of adopted children from China coincided with the peak of Spain's unprecedented wave of immigration during the 1990s and early 2000s. However, these children's circumstances differ notably from those of children born to immigrants in Spain, and as such they are faced with a set of unique challenges. Despite the significant numbers of Chinese adoptees, there has been relatively little attention paid to the issue on a societal level, through cultural representation or scholarly production. One noteworthy exception is the 2014 documentary *Generación Mei Ming*, which depicts the lives of young women adopted from China as they come of age in Spanish society. In this next section I will explore the film's representation of these adolescents and how their particular circumstances as adopted daughters frames their construction of identity in ways that differ from what we have seen in (self)representations of Chinese Spaniards born to Chinese migrants, such as *Gazpacho agridulce.*

International adoption from China to Spain, like to other Western countries, was spurred in large part by the 1995 British documentary *The Dying Rooms* (fig. 64), in which undercover investigators reported the alleged existence of so-called "dying rooms" in state-run Chinese orphanages where sick and abandoned baby girls were left to die. This investigation responded to reports that, as a result of the 1978 law that restricted families in China to only one child per

couple, many of China's state orphanages were overrun with abandoned baby girls, many of whom died as a result of poor conditions and under-staffing. Traditionally, Chinese society has favored male heirs—a topic that is also referenced in *Gazpacho agridulce*—and the one-child policy resulted in some families choosing to abandon a daughter in hopes of a future son. The British film was shown in over two-dozen countries and caused international outcry, and helped spur the adoption of thousands of infants and young girls from China. Its impact was especially significant in Spain.

Figure 64: A film still from *The Dying Rooms* (1995), the British documentary about China's state-run orphanages that motivated an increase in transitional adoptions from China.

In the introduction to *Transnational Adoption: A Cutural Economy of Race, Gender and Kinship* Sara Dorow describes U.S./China adoption as "a process inflected by the movement of children through and across uneven racial, national, class, and gender spaces. […] While it is a distinct form of transnational migration, China/U.S. adoption nonetheless speaks insistently to the raced and gendered relations by which individual, family, and national identities are produced and negotiated" (2). Although her research is specific to the U.S. context, Dorow's claim that international adoption from China "demands attention to how the domestic family/nation is constructed through racialized imaginaries of transnational migration" is also useful in studying the case of Spain, particularly because it is a far more racially homogenous nation than the United States. As was explored in the second chapter, the family has often been

used as an allegory for the nation and in ways that systematically exclude the Chinese. In other words, there are few examples of Spanish cultural production in which interracial families like the ones represented in *Generación Mei Ming* are modeled. Often unsure of how they fit into Spanish society because they don't "look Spanish," the process of negotiating their racial difference for these adoptees is further complicated by their tenuous relationship to Chinese cultural heritage.[56]

Generación Mei Ming profiles six girls between the ages of twelve and seventeen, all of whom were adopted from China when they were infants or toddlers by Spanish families. The film was directed by David Gómez Rollán and aired on Radiotelevisión Española, where it reached a broad Spanish audience. The first family to appear on screen consists of Estela and her mother. Estela is the youngest of the six teenagers featured in the film and perhaps for this reason she is also one of the more conflicted in terms of her identity. The film's opening sequence shifts among images of the Castilian plain at sunrise, scenes in which Estela bickers with her mother over typical points of conflict between teenagers and their parents—bedtimes, homework, etc.—, and footage from a one-on-one interview with Estela (fig. 65). This early sequence succeeds in establishing the documentary's sense of place by grounding Estela's life in Castilla, the very heart of Spain. This, and the emphasis on everyday moments shared with her mother emphasize that Estela is an average Spanish teenager in many senses. Estela's confession in the first part of her interview that she struggles with her Chineseness contradicts the normalcy represented in the surrounding scenes: "He tenido este año la época de no quiero ser china, quiero ser española, no quiero ser diferente, quiero ser como todos los demás. Supongo que sí, debería estar orgullosa de ser como soy, pero no lo estoy." This sequence anticipates the format of the documentary:

[56] The documentary's title, which includes Spanish and Chinese words and translates to "generation without a name," echoes its protagonists' stuggles with questions of identity and belonging.

unscripted scenes from the girls' daily lives are edited together with individual interviews with each of the girls and their parents. Estela's comment that she is not proud of her Chinese heritage and would rather "ser española" highlights the struggle each of them is facing in negotiating the disjunction between feeling very Spanish and often being perceived as very Chinese.

Figure 65: The film uses a combination of establishing shots, interviews, and candid footage of the families. (*Generación Mei Ming*, *2014*).

Irene is probably the most mature and well adjusted of the girls who appear in the film; she is also the oldest. In one of her interviews she recalls being the first Chinese adoptee in

Salamanca, an occurrence that brought her and her family a lot of unsolicited attention. Her parents explain that after having a biological child, Irene's sister, they decided to adopt, reflecting on the fact that this choice was unconceivable to many of their peers at the time. Irene has also experienced harassment from her classmates, who bullied her online and insulted her by calling her *china*: "bueno 'insultan' entre comillas, porque para mi no es un insulto que me llamen china, yo la soy y me siento orgullosa de serlo." A friend of hers, also adopted from China, comments that "Yo, no es que me avergüence, pero es como si me pongo yo a gritar por la calle, 'americana! rusa!' Eso no lo habrías oído nunca, solo nos lo dicen a los que tenemos los ojos rasgados." The girls laugh together at the ridiculousness of a nationality being used as an insult, but the reality is that their Chineseness is a category that is difficult to square with the rest of their experiences. One of the girls adds that many of her Spanish friends claim she is more Spanish than they are, "por el carácter y lo que pienso. Tengo los ojos rasgados, y soy de China, pero por lo demás creo que soy español y tengo la sangre española." Although her use of the term "Spanish blood" clearly isn't meant to be taken literally—she invokes it and reminds us of her Chinese heritage in the same breath—, it does point to the sticky nature of racial otherness and national belonging in Spain. In a particularly powerful moment, Estela laments her difference, "¿Por qué soy así? No quiero ser así, pero así soy y es lo que hay." Estela's comments are indicative of a society that is still experiencing the symptoms of long-held prejudices about racially marked Others and a relatively short history of striving for a more inclusive notion of national identity.

In *International Adoption: Global Inequalities and the Circulation of Children,* edited by Laura Briggs and Diana Marre, Marre writes about international adoption in Spain, specifically. She recalls an anecdote from her fieldwork in which an adoptive mother in Barcelona, in an

effort to dissuade her daughter from dressing in a style she deems inappropriate, warns her, "one day you'll fall off the Ramblas and people will take you for an immigrant" (226). Marre points to this anecdote as an illustration of the "blurring of 'race' with 'culture' and 'ethnicity'" that comes up as adoptive parents in Spain try to make sense of their children's racial difference. She notes that "today, culture and/or ethnicity often stand in as euphemisms for race, since that term is hardly ever used in Spain. Significantly, this conflation means that culture appears to be heritable, not simply the result of socialization" (226). What this comment also reveals is a desire to distinguish between the adopted children of Spanish families and immigrants. The disdain implicit in the mother's comments highlights the degree to which "the immigrant" remains a category distinct from "the Spaniard." The adopted daughter, because of her proximity to an "authentic Spanishness" via her adopted family, is rescued from such a categorization; however her racial otherness means that her (adopted?) Spanishness is always contingent on her context and any misstep (off Las Ramblas, so to speak) could have her mistaken for something other than Spanish.

The anecdote appears in a chapter of the volume edited by Briggs and Marre titled "We Do Not Have Immigrant Children at This School, We Just Have Children Adopted From Abroad," which refers to a comment made by a primary school teacher in an upper-class neighborhood in Barcelona. The implication is that the adopted students' racial difference—that which would make them stand out in a school that is mostly white—is mitigated by their social class (upper or upper middle class), thereby making them "less different." Marre notes that while many adoptive parents encourage their children to maintain links to the cultures they were born into "paradoxically, they are among those who tend to deny any possible similarities between immigrants and their international adopted children" (228). This is a problematic distinction

because, despite their parents' best intentions, individuals like the ones profiled in *Generación Mei Ming* inevitably have to confront the social prejudices associated with their physiological differences.

Another issue that is addressed in the film is the girls' need to make sense of their relationship with their own adoption narrative. This is something that distinguishes their experience from those of the second-generation Chinese characters from texts like *Gazpacho agridulce* and *Física o química*. For the most part the girls describe having an ambiguous relationship with China—or the idea of China, as most have not returned since being adopted by Spanish families. Each of the girls is asked how they might feel to meet their biological parents and if they have would have interest in doing so. Most answer that they have no interest in meeting their biological families, with one girl adding the caveat that she would like to have a biological sibling. Many of the girls say that they don't feel any need to meet their biological parents; they feel completely Spanish and don't have a need to "find their roots," so to speak, in order to find more clarity about their identities. According to scholars, these insistent dismissals reveal a relationship fraught with feelings of abandonment and rejection. Karen Miller-Loessi and Zeynep Kilic argue that, for children adopted from China "The idea of a homeland will truly be *imagined* (Anderson) for these girls. What is really interesting about this feature is that the memory, myth, and idealization are being artificially constructed by the adoptive parents, who, at least in the United States, seem to be trying to do this very seriously" (255). They further suggest that this desire is exhibited by some adoptive parents to provide for their Chinese-born children an "authentic" heritage is provoked, at least in part, by the child's racial otherness. In other words, it is more pressing to provide a racially marked (and potentially marginalized) child a narrative to explain this experience of otherness than it would be for a European-looking child

adopted from another country. The experience of abandonment and need for reassurance is arguably the same, but what is entirely different is society's ability, or willingness, to accept that child as one of its own.

Of the girls interviewed in *Generación Mei Ming*, the only one with parents that strongly encourage her to maintain a connection with her Chinese heritage is Marina. Marina is upbeat and has a biting sense of humor, her strong southern accent adding to her charm. Her parents hired her a tutor to teach her Mandarin and she has visited China twice, once with her family and again to stay with her tutor's family over the summer. Like the other girls, Marina was also uncertain about reconnecting with her past, and although she is conversant in Mandarin and has visited major Chinese cities she still hasn't travelled to the region where she was born and doesn't plan to. Of her time in China she notes the sensation of not standing out in the street, "a la vez me siento extranjera, y a la vez me siento de allí. Extranjera porque no entiendo, no puedo hablar con ellos […] pero me siento de allí porque cuando, por ejemplo, allí cuando pasas por la calle no te quedan mirando […] eres como una más." Marina's comment emphasizes how for many of these adopted girls their greatest challenges are closely linked to their physiognomy. In another interview she tells the camera, "De china tengo los ojos pero no el idioma. Y de España tengo el idioma, pero no tengo los rasgos. Así que soy rara en todas partes." Here Marina seems to summarize the way each of the girls in *Generación Mei Ming* feels. While Spanish society continues to evolve as increasingly multicultural, the young women profiled in the documentary remain in many ways pioneers on the forefront of diversity in Spain.

In May of 2014 the illustrator and author Quan Zhou Wu published an open letter to the girls of *Generación Mei Ming* in *El País*. The piece appeared nearly a year before her graphic novel *Gazpacho agridulce* was published, when Zhou Wu's work still existed primarily in the

digital realm. The title of the letter, "No sois extrañas en todas partes" is a direct response to Marina's comment that she feels "rara en todas partes." She commiserates with the girls, assuring them that daily insults and hateful looks are par for the course. An illustration accompanies the letter and features a young Zhou Wu enduring harassment from a classmate wearing a t-shirt with a Chinese caricature on the front (fig. 66). She assures the intended readers of her letter that as the daughter of Chinese migrants she has faced the same struggles:

> Estáis viviendo un caos por el que yo también pasé, solo que en mi caso estaban mis padres biológicos que no entendían mi crisis de identidad, querían endiñarme un marido chino nada más cumplir los dieciocho y un restaurante chino. En mi caso, yo quería ser como vosotras: adoptada por una familia española (o española directamente), poder salir con mis amigos en vez de ayudar en el restaurante chino día tras día, y tener un novio español sin ser la apestada de la familia. (n.p.)

Zhou Wu sympathizes with the challenges that come with looking different in a society that is relatively unaccustomed to racial and ethnic diversity, but the implication is that the girls in *Generación Mei Ming* are fortunate to grow up in a family setting that supports, rather than challenges, their claim to Spanish identity. Much of Zhou Wu's work focuses on her need to defend her sense of Spanishness when faced with her family's desire for her to exhibit more evidence of her Chinese heritage in her lifestyle.

Figure 66: An illustration accompanies Zhou Wu's open letter in *El País* in 2014.

Zhou Wu's comment (perhaps inadvertently) highlights the dissonance at the very heart of these adopted girls' experiences: the world around them, and to a certain degree even their own families, perceive them as having an innate connection to China even though they might not experience it for themselves. The confusion surrounding identity and selfhood that is typical of any adolescent experience is compounded for them by the perceived expectation that they *should* have a relationship to their Chinese heritage.

Marre's observation that the categories of "ethnicity" and "race" are often used interchangeably is useful in understanding the way in which these societal pressures on racially othered adoptees is constructed. Reflecting on her study of adoptive families in Cataluña, Marre notes:

> References to the tastes, rhythmic and musical skills, and abundant energy of children adopted in Africa or Haiti are constructed as 'natural' while references to the meekness, intelligence, and serenity of girls adopted from China are understood as related to their ancient culture. Traits and behaviours are regarded as inherited from the children's place of origin in both cases. (237)

Marre's observation highlights a tendency to conflate cultural heritage and birthplace in the case of adopted children in Spain. Zhou Wu gestures in a similar direction when she encourages her readers to consider that being a Chinese Spaniard "tiene sus ventajas. Seguro que tenéis unas habilidades para las matemáticas increíbles (entre otras muchas cosas, porque los genes chinos están ahí), o ser constantes en los estudios no os cuesta nada." One can infer that Zhou Wu's intention is to encourage the young women she is addressing to be proud of their "Chineseness," a trait that might otherwise cause them strife during adolescence. However, the suggestion that the Chinese are "naturally" bright and diligent students reinforces the notion that this is a genetic

trait and not the product of certain cultural norms that promote these qualities. Here Zhou Wu is attempting to highlight the "advantages" of being Chinese and, probably unwittingly, shores up a particular discourse regarding ethnicity that she also challenges through her work.

The film acknowledges this reality, but only indirectly. One of the girls comments that, because of the recent wave of immigration from China, strangers are more likely to assume that she is the child of Chinese migrants. Above all, the film serves as a platform to give voice to the challenges faced by a specific population. However, despite their struggles, the overriding message of the film is that each of the girls feels loved and deeply connected to their adopted families and that they identify as Spanish despite experiencing prejudice within Spanish society. The individual interviews are edited in such a way that the girls repeatedly reinforce their sense of a Spanish identity directly to the camera, and by extension to the audience. Their parents, siblings, and friends reaffirm their Spanishness as well. But what is most effective in legitimizing their claims to Spanish identity is the candid footage of the girls in their everyday settings (fig. 67). Scenes like the ones included below in which the girls eat lunch with friends in the school cafeteria, visit the town fair, or take selfies with friends show the viewer that they are more like other Spanish adolescents than they are different from them. The film is very didactic in this sense, striving to challenge preconceived notions about those who have an Asian physiognomy but who are culturally Spanish. They are a population that isn't often included in public discourse about ethnic diversity in Spain, such as the 2016 *El País* article "Yo también soy español," discussed earlier in chapter three.

Figure 67: Candid footage of the girls spending time with friends legitimizes their claims to Spanish identity for the audience. (*Generación Mei Ming*, *2014*).

At one point the film show portions of a conference for families with adopted children in which Irene participates as a panelist. When an audience member asks if being aware of her difference from a young age has made the process of coming to terms with it easier, Irene responds that "lo bueno que tiene—yo creo que es bueno—es que tú vas evolucionando a medida que va evolucionando la sociedad. ¿Sabes?" It is a rather powerful statement that positions these adolescents at the forefront of a seismic social shift. This documentary intends to promote that

shift by raising awareness among an audience that would likely be unfamiliar with this specific population and their challenges. Irene's exchange during the panel also underlines the film's optimistic vision of Spain's multiracial future. The film's final sequence is upbeat and shows Irene watching a firework displays (fig. 68). On the soundtrack a keyboard and guitar play the same optimistic, if simple melody that accompanied the opening credits, giving the film a sense of closure.

Figure 68: Irene watches a fireworks display. (*Generación Mei Ming*, *2014*).

Overall the film's tone is very hopeful, and doesn't include the kind of intergenerational conflict that we see in *Gazpacho agridulce*, *Física o química*, or *La ciudad feliz*. In contrast, the film represents the girls' families as entirely supportive and largely unencumbered by preconceived notions or expectations. Unlike in the other texts, in which the adolescent's strife and struggle to assimilate is largely attributed to causes in the protagonist's home life, in *Generación Mei Ming* the family is represented as a safe haven away from the prejudices of

Spanish society. Perhaps this is due, at least in part, to the fact that the film's director is also the older brother of a girl adopted from China. As we saw in chapter two with the films *Biutiful* and *Amigo no gima*, models for interracial families that include the Chinese are largely absent from Spanish media. *Generación Mei Ming* offers a representation of precisely this kind of family and presents adoption as an effective model for assimilation. However, unlike immigrants who bring their diverse cultures with them as they attempt to integrate (or not) into Spanish society, children adopted from China, like the protagonists of *Generación Mei Ming*, bring only their racial diversity, which the film affirms can and should be incorporated into Spanish cultural identity.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have demonstrated how representations of the Chinese in modern Spanish culture intersect with and reimagine a long tradition of orientalism in Western literary and visual culture. The first chapter explored this phenomenon in detail, outlining the ways in which specific tropes such as the Chinatown, Fu Manchu, and the exotic, Oriental beauty have been repurposed in the service of Spain's uncertain relationship with modernity in the first half of the twentieth century. The second chapter demonstrated how some of these tropes have carried through to the turn of the twenty-first century and conditioned the representation of Chinese migrants who have arrived in Spain in recent decades. Particularly since the onset of the 2008 financial crisis, the success of Chinese entrepreneurs in Spain has often been represented as an economic and cultural threat; and despite a liberal discourse that campaigns in favor of multiculturalism, the Chinese are often erased from projections of Spain's multicultural future. Finally, the third chapter considers how emerging generations of Chinese Spaniards are challenging established notions of Spanish national identity, asking us to consider how their representation in Spain offers new ways of conceptualizing racial, ethnic, and cultural identities.

My interest in researching representations of the Chinese began while writing a master's thesis on the representation of immigrants in Spanish cinema. While riding the bus in Madrid one morning I was struck by an article in the daily newspaper *20 minutos*. The headline, which I discussed in more detail in chapter two, read: "El 'boom' de los comercios chinos llega incluso a los bares de tapas." The absence of the Chinese from the films I was studying and the related scholarship contrasted with the visibility of the Chinese community in everyday life in Madrid and, as evidenced by this article, in more popular forms of cultural production. I was curious about this discrepancy and set off on a path to address this gap in current scholarship.

The genesis of this dissertation emerges from questions regarding contemporary migration from China and its representation in Spanish cultural production and a concern for this topic remains at the center of my work. However, in researching the phenomenon it became clear to me that the roots of the images and attitudes shaping the depiction of Spain's contemporary Chinese diaspora were to be found in earlier periods when, paradoxically, there were virtually no Chinese in Spain. Thus, the project's scope expanded to include the ways in which contemporary representations of the Chinese in Spain dialogue with similar discourses in other geographic locations and historical moments. As we have seen, the presence of orientalized mise-en-scene and the particular ways in which Chinese characters are constructed in Spanish literary and visual culture reveal the inheritance of a much longer and widespread tradition stemming from the Yellow Peril and similar discourses. Just as they borrow motifs like the Chinatown, they also exhibit how this kind of transnational discourse finds new meaning in a different context. Despite the continued growth and increasing assimilation of the Chinese community into mainstream Spanish society, many of the most divisive stereotypes about the Chinese in Spain remain entrenched.

Nevertheless, efforts to combat the negative stereotyping of the Chinese in Spain are slowly becoming more commonplace. *Migrados*, a blog published by *El País*, hosts a column dedicated to deconstructing common myths about migrant groups in Spain with the end goal of promoting tolerance. A 2015 entry, authored by the organization Red Stop Rumores, tackled the notion that the Chinese are exempt from paying taxes and, for that reason, tend to run successful small businesses (fig. 69). The article debunks this myth by providing statistics from the Spanish government on Chinese nationals enrolled in the country's Social Security program, assuring readers that Chinese business owners are held to the same standards as their Spanish

counterparts. The blog links to the Red Stop Rumores website, a publically funded initiative that campaigns for tolerance towards Spain's immigrant communities. The website provides more detailed information about the Chinese in Spain and the businesses they own, displayed on a modern website with engaging graphics. An initiative like the *Migrados* blog, which features articles by Spaniards of diverse ethnic backgrounds (including Quan Zhou Wu, the author of *Gazpacho agridulce*), represents the possibility of new forums for dialoguing about Spain's increasing ethnic and racial diversity.

Figure 69: The blog *Migrados* unpacks the widespread belief that Chinese business owners in Spain are exempt from paying taxes. (*El País*, 2015)

Challenges to this way of thinking are also emerging from within the growing Chinese-Spanish community in less traditional formats. A few years ago I started noticing graffiti in the Lavapiés and Malasaña neighborhoods of Madrid that depicted an Asian caricature and, oftentimes, the initials Y.P. (fig. 70). As I would later learn, the initials stand for "Yellow Power," the graffiti artist's pseudonym, and the graffiti is often accompanied by other descriptors as well, like "Yellow Sister," "Yellow Punk," or "Yellow Hipster" (fig. 71). The graffiti artist known as Yellow Power is a Chinese Spaniard from Madrid whose public art references the same kind of orientalized visual language studied throughout this dissertation. The conical hat, buck teeth, and slanted eyes of his graffiti figures clearly reference derogatory caricatures that

date back to the nineteenth century and other more recent examples, such as a 2010 illustration that appeared in an edition of the satirical magazines *El Jueves* (fig. 72). His graffiti name inverts the logic of the Yellow Peril by replacing Peril with Power (perhaps a nod to the Black Power movement of the 1960s as well). Graffiti has a long tradition of being a tool used to make visible the presence of people otherwise erased from the official discourse regarding public space, particularly in the urban settings; and the work of Yellow Power is no exception.

Figure 70: Yellow Power graffiti in Madrid. (Photographs by author.)

Figure 71: "Yellow Sister" in Madrid. (Photograph by author.)

Figure 72: Illustration by Asier y Javier (*El Jueves*, 2010).

In a 2014 interview with the digital culture and lifestyle magazine *Yorokobu*, the artist behind the Yellow Power graffiti (who remains anonymous) described the project as a kind of protest:

> Esto es reivindicativo, la gente tiene la imagen del chino en la tienda, en el restaurante, el chino latero, el chino poco sociable. Hay una especie de oscurantismo en torno a la comunidad china en España. Yellow Power pretende sacarla del estereotipo devoto y dócil y darle un espíritu sinvergüenza. Yo busco reírme de la sociedad, reírme de la

> temida invasión china. Le doy una vuelta al asunto. El chino no solo vende bolsas de chuches, ahora hay un Yellow Pope, un Yellow Punki, un Yellow hípster… El chino no es solo el chino. El chino es cualquiera, es uno más en nuestra sociedad. (Panés n.p.)

According to the artist, the Yellow Power graffiti challenges the two-dimensional representations of the Chinese that, as we have seen, are so common in Spanish cultural production. His graffiti reclaims the same visual language that has been used to marginalize the Chinese diaspora in the West for almost two centuries and repurposes it in a way that makes its presence more visible in Madrid's public spaces.

When my research on this project began nearly seven years ago, the *20 minutos* article about a Chinese-owned tapas bar struck me because at the time there were few references in Spanish literature, film, and popular media that addressed the growing Chinese population so directly. Since then, the public discourse regarding Spain's Chinese diaspora has grown immensely and continues to evolve. The texts included in this dissertation, particularly those discussed in the second and third chapters, evidence the expanding discourse that includes not only Spain's Chinese migrant community, but also the country's Chinese-Spanish population. The reception and representation of the Chinese in Spain has been plagued by a visual language founded on the marginalization of the Chinese diaspora in the West. However, as challenges to this tradition from both within and outside Spain's Chinese community continue to redefine Spanish cultural, racial, and ethnic identities, there is hope that the legacy of orientalism can be dismantled and open up new possibilities for Spanish society in the twenty-first century.

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