

**Tracing Transoceanic Intertextualities in More's *Utopia* (1516),  
González de Mendoza's *Historia de China* (1585), and  
Fernández de Lizardi's *El Periquillo Sarniento* (1816)**

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Despite never having set foot on Asian soil, Spanish clergyman Juan González de Mendoza's *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reino de la China* became one of the most widely read treatises on China and "profoundly influenced the West's understanding of East Asia" (Ellis 470). González de Mendoza's account marks the beginning of the "first great age of Western Sinology" (MacKerras 16), and "the point of departure and the basis of comparison for all subsequent European works on China written before the eighteenth century" (Lach 744). Although the Far East had generated profound interest among European thinkers during previous centuries, it was not until the first Iberian explorers began to report on their travels and experiences during the sixteenth century that a more precise and empirically attuned notion of the ancient Celestial Empire took hold. Scholars have demonstrated how González de Mendoza's text reflects important changes in the concept and practice of writing works of history, including its incorporation of "several points of view," the absence of praise for a monarch or Church official with the goal of reward, and its "movement toward the secularization of historical writing" (Vogelely 166).

Despite these more modern historiographical practices and González de Mendoza's own preoccupation with verisimilitude (44), however, several significant elements of his history appear to be his own insertions, which reflect the influence of European humanism. Carmen Hsu has demonstrated that González de Mendoza introduced "original additions" to his Portuguese and Spanish sources, which align, instead, with key social reforms to public welfare and the improvement of organized labor that Juan Luis Vives had envisioned for his hospitals (190-194). While Hsu's study serves as a point of departure, there are more elements of humanist social reform in González de Mendoza's history to consider and a deeper and broader examination of the similarities is warranted. Also necessary is a consideration of important biographical facts of González de Mendoza's life; specifically, his nine-year residence in Michoacán, México, where Spanish priest Vasco de Quiroga had established a community of *pueblo-hospitales* based on Thomas More's *Utopia*, a text which shares many similarities with Vives' *Socorro de los pobres* and, in my estimation, is a more likely source of influence for González de Mendoza's fictional additions. The aim of the first section of this article, then, is to demonstrate points of contact between More's *Utopia* and González de Mendoza's *Historia de China*, particularly regarding their treatment of poverty, mendicity and vagrancy; their approach to foreign relations; and their social structure based not on inherited privileges but rather personal merit.

In the second section of this study I turn my attention to how González de Mendoza's *Historia de China* influenced José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi's *El Periquillo Sarniento*. While it has been demonstrated that González de Mendoza's *Historia de China* was the principal source for Lizardi's imaginary island of Sauchefóú, that analysis was almost exclusively based on linguistic affinities (Knowlton 344-347).

As I demonstrate, the two works are united in theme: both portray a well-ordered and just Asian society that embodies utopian ideals while simultaneously commenting on the social, economic, and political policies and customs of their respective native countries. While González de Mendoza's history presents a subtle and indirect critique of Spanish customs and policies, Lizardi's fictional portrayal of an alternative society in the Far East openly questions the socio-economic realities of New Spain. In tracing intertextualities of books with European, Asian, and American origins, the contribution of this study is not only its demonstration of two specific cases of influence between texts, but more broadly it provides evidence of how sixteenth century European maritime exploration and colonial campaigns sparked the imaginative faculties of writers, inspiring them to reexamine the social, economic, and political realities of their native countries and to dream of a more perfect society.

## I.

In 1562, Juan González de Mendoza, a seventeen year old from Torrecilla de Cameros, near Logroño, crossed the Atlantic to begin a new life in Mexico. After becoming an Augustinian, he spent the next nine years studying grammar, arts, and theology in Michoacán. He later returned to Europe and in 1583 was commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII to compose a compendium of knowledge on the kingdom of China (Lach 743). In the fifteen years following its first publication in Rome in 1585, González de Mendoza's *History of China* quickly registered 46 editions including translations into Latin, German, Italian, French, English and Dutch.<sup>1</sup> As Donald Lach observes, its immense success reflects the "unsatisfied demand which existed everywhere in Europe for a comprehensive and authoritative survey of China in vernacular languages" (743). In preparing his work, González de Mendoza collated information from numerous primary sources of Spanish and Portuguese origin, including Martín de Rada, Jerónimo Marín, Miguel de Loarca, Bernardino de Escalante, Galeote Pereira, João de Barros, and Gaspar da Cruz.<sup>2</sup> González de Mendoza's *Historia* is divided into two parts: the first is composed of three books focused on the geographic, religious, political, architectural, social, and historical details of China. The second incorporates three books recounting the expeditions of various Spaniards throughout the Middle Kingdom. The definitive 1586 edition of the *Historia* includes the experiences of Martín Ignacio in Mexico, the Philippines, China and the East Indies as well as several chapters on New Mexico.

González de Mendoza's *History of China* depicts a rational, just, and orderly kingdom built upon a foundation that conforms to the central tenets of European humanists and their program for social and spiritual reform.<sup>3</sup> The works of Erasmus, Juan

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<sup>1</sup> On the various editions of the *Historia de China* in Spanish, and its translations, see Santiago Vela (201-37); Pérez Pastor (268-96); and Toribio Medina (38-65).

<sup>2</sup> As Ellis points out, "The initial European chroniclers of China were traders" (2006: 472). Pereira wrote the first detailed account (1561), followed by Barros' chronicle (1563) and Cruz (1569), the first clerical author. For a discussion of González de Mendoza's sources, see Boxer, Lach, Ollé, Hsu, and Ellis. Vogeley points out that some of these sources had significant experience in Mexico. Rada, for example, wrote an *Arte de lengua otomí* (168).

<sup>3</sup> I coincide with Carmen Hsu (2010) on this interpretation, although I argue for a different source of influence for the humanist elements. Ismael Artiga views the text as contradictory and ambiguous, highlighting González de Mendoza's critiques of the Chinese elite and the bellicose impulse of the work.

Luis Vives, and Thomas More demonstrate a deep preoccupation with European social ills including poverty, idleness, crime, ubiquitous wars, exploitation of the poor, and widespread corrupted values. Despite their social critiques, humanist thinkers were hopeful for a nascent age of cultural growth and religious reconstruction, convinced, in line with Pico's conception, that man was a perfectable creature whose natural gift of reason would lead to a rational and unified social order (Adams 136). In what follows, I aim to analyze these humanist social preoccupations, primarily as they manifest in Thomas More's *Utopia*, and compare them to various passages of González de Mendoza's *Historia de China*.

### Poverty, Mendicity, and Vagrancy

One of the most important social problems that occupied the attention of humanist thinkers was solving the interrelated issues of poverty, crime, public begging and widespread idleness that plagued European cities during the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> In his colloquy *Πτωχολογία* ("Beggar Talk") (1524), Erasmus critiques the multitude of professional beggars that adroitly swindle the naïve with their tricks. One beggar praises the freedom and good life that begging affords him—including freedom from taxation or scrutiny from authorities—which he asserts is better than a king's lot, since "neither in peace nor war may kings enjoy themselves, and the mightier they are the more men they fear" (253). Furthermore, alluding to the traditional concept of the poor as *pauperes Christi*, he observes, "the common people have a superstitious dread of harming us, as though we are under God's protection" (253). The other beggar in the colloquy, however, is not so sure that this idyllic existence will continue since he has heard that "citizens are already muttering that beggars shouldn't be allowed to roam about at will, but that each city should support its own beggars and all the able-bodied ones forced to work" (254).

Indeed, within Spain between 1518 and 1539 there were various official attempts to constrict public begging to one's place of birth, culminating in Carlos V's promulgation in 1540, which prohibited public begging and obligated anyone physically capable of work to be gainfully employed (Cruz 24; Maravall 46). By the middle of the sixteenth century in Spain public debate had formed along two ideological lines: on the one hand were the traditionalists who viewed poverty in a positive light, as an opportunity for the impoverished to imitate Christ ("la dignidad de la condición mendicante") and for the wealthy to practice Christian charity;<sup>5</sup> on the other hand were those that considered poverty to be anti-social and dangerous and felt driven to eliminate or at the very least reduce it (Maravall 27). From the latter camp was Juan de Robles who argued in his treatise on poverty (1545) that it was selfish for Christians to utilize the poor as a means for their salvation via charity and that it would be better to relieve their poverty and cure their illness than to toss them a daily coin in the street (Cruz 26). By 1565 Philip II gave up hope for the prohibition on public begging and various proposals

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<sup>4</sup> In *Socorro de los pobres*, Juan Luis Vives observes that for Christians, of whom charity is expected, "es cosa torpe y vergonzosa [...] hallar a cada paso en nuestras ciudades tantos necesitados y mendigos; a cualquier parte que te vuelvas verás pobreza, necesidades, y muchos que se ven obligados a alargar la mano para que les des" (280).

<sup>5</sup> On the traditional belief and its medieval origins throughout Europe, see Lindberg.

for change emerged, including the classification of beggars as either capable or incapable of work and the organization and institutionalization of the incapacitated (Maravall 46).<sup>6</sup>

One of the qualities that demonstrate China's superior social structure in González de Mendoza's *History* is precisely the kingdom's policy on begging and poor relief. The very title of Chapter 10 indicates González de Mendoza's profound admiration for the Chinese approach to the problem: "De cómo en todo este reino no andan pobres por las calles ni templos, y del orden que el rey tiene dado para sustentar los que no pueden trabajar" (66). He also underlines the importance of public welfare, stating that it is a program that denotes a "gran gobierno" (66). As Carmen Hsu has convincingly demonstrated, the portrait of Chinese society that González de Mendoza creates is consistent with his Portuguese sources, which similarly note the absence of beggars and the general disdain for idleness among the Chinese.<sup>7</sup> However, Mendoza introduces his own significant addition; a feature that is not mentioned in the Lusitanian documents, but one that is a key component of humanist social reform. Mendoza explains that in order to combat vagrancy in his kingdom,

tiene el rey dado orden, y mandado so graves penas a los mismos pobres que no anden públicamente pidiendo limosna; y con mayores a los de las ciudades y pueblos, que aunque la pidan no se la den, sino que lo denuncien luego a la Justicia; que es uno a quien llaman juez de los pobres para que el quebrantador de la ley sea luego castigado. (66)

Mendoza specifies that this *juez de pobres* is "uno de los principales de la ciudad" and that he is devoted solely to this position ("no tiene otro cuidado sino éste") (66). One of his principal responsibilities is to interview families with handicapped or injured children in order to inspect the nature of the injury:

si fuere de manera que él pueda ejercitar algún oficio, se da término a los padres, dentro del cual le pongan al oficio que el tal juez juzgare puede usar con aquella lesión y manquedad, lo cual ellos cumplen infaliblemente. (67)

If the child's condition is so severe as to impede employment, the judge orders the father or a surrogate relative to support him/her financially; if the family's poverty makes such an arrangement impossible, the king takes on the responsibility. Hsu contends that Mendoza's creative invention of a government authority, the *juez de los pobres*, "no tiene precedente en las obras historiográficas [...], aunque sí se acerca a los regidores civiles a quienes [Juan Luis] Vives encarga la inspección de los hospitales" (191).<sup>8</sup>

A similar figure appears in More's *Utopia*, a work that, to my estimation, is more likely to have influenced González de Mendoza's creative addition, since he almost certainly had access to the copy that father Quiroga bequeathed to the Colegio San

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<sup>6</sup> For an overview of recent historical scholarship devoted to poverty and poor relief in early modern Europe, see Bolufer Peruga.

<sup>7</sup> Hsu cites Gaspar da Cruz's *Tractado das cousas da China* (1569) and Galiote Pereira's *Algumas cousas sabidas da China* (1553-1563) as Mendoza's Lusitanian sources. Interestingly, this absence of poverty contrasts with the image presented in Martín Rada and Alessandro Valignano's accounts, both of which note the abundant poverty that they witnessed in China (Hsu 2010, 190).

<sup>8</sup> In Vives' *Socorro de los pobres*, he appoints two "censores [...] gravísimos y recomendables por su bondad, que se informen de la vida y costumbre de los pobres, sean niños, jóvenes, o viejos" (284).

Nicolás in Michoacán.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, he likely would have witnessed the real life application of More's imagined society in Vasco de Quiroga's *Pueblo-Hospital Santa Fe de la Laguna*.<sup>10</sup> Similar to González de Mendoza's representation of Chinese society, Father Quiroga highlighted the absence of greed, corruption, idleness and malice among the indigenous peoples of Michoacán.<sup>11</sup>

Among More's Utopians an elected magistrate called a *syphogrant* holds a position similar to González de Mendoza's *juez de pobres*: "The chief and practically only function of the syphogrants is to take care and see to it that no one lounges around in idleness but rather that everyone practices his trade diligently" (61). It is worth noting the similar language applied to More's syphogrants ("chief and practically only function") and González de Mendoza's *juez de pobres* ("no tiene otro cuidado sino éste") (66).

Additionally, there is a distinct resemblance in the manner in which the two societies are structured so as to avoid the culture of idleness that afflicted Europe at the time. González de Mendoza attributes the success of the Chinese kingdom to various factors, among them, "el no consentir en todo el Reino vagabundos ni gente ociosa, sino que los tales, además de ser gravemente castigados, son tenidos por infames" (24). Even the blind are expected to work, "los hacen trabajar en moler en tahonas el trigo y arroz, o en soplar unos fuelles de un herrero, o en otras cosas para que no sean menester ojos" (68).<sup>12</sup> More's Raphael Hythloday explains the Utopians' regimented work schedule, in which men and women alike devote six hours a day to farming or a trade.<sup>13</sup> Despite the brevity of the workday, Utopians' production of goods far exceeds their needs; for one, they are less wasteful and therefore need less, but more importantly they do not permit idle parasites that drain the resources of most European countries, including priests, the rich, and

especially the landlords of estates who are commonly called gentlemen and nobles. Include with them their retainers, that rank cesspool of worthless swashbucklers. Add, finally, the strong and sturdy beggars who feign some disease as a pretext for their idleness. You will certainly find that it takes far fewer than you thought to produce everything that mortals use. (63)<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Silvio Zavala confirms that "en su testamento, otorgado en el año de 1565, lega al Colegio de San Nicolás de Michoacán 626 volúmenes," almost certainly including More's *Utopia*, from which he cited at length in his *Información en Derecho* of 1535 (1965: 13).

<sup>10</sup> Quiroga established Santa Fe de la Laguna, a community of Tarascan Indians, in 1534 and presided over it until his death on March 14, 1565. Various successors maintained the pueblo after Father Quiroga's passing; Fintan Warren states "The Pueblos of Santa Fe have continued to exist as pueblos down to the present day" (1963: 119).

<sup>11</sup> Quiroga interpreted the humility and simplicity of the indigenous in line with the golden age of man, conducive to a utopian society and in stark contrast to Europeans whom he viewed as part of the Iron Age due to "nuestra y casi natural soberbia, codicia, ambición y malicia desenfrenadas" (cited from Zavala 34). In Stelio Cro's classification of types of Golden Age myths found among New World chroniclers, Quiroga is grouped, along with Bartolomé de las Casas, as an anti-European.

<sup>12</sup> Vives also orders the blind to work: "Ni á los ciegos se les ha de permitir ó estar ó andar ociosos; hay muchas cosas en que pueden ejercitarse" (282).

<sup>13</sup> Zavala notes that Quiroga's pueblo-hospitales followed More's occupational schedule and structure faithfully, "la jornada de seis horas en los oficios y la agricultura [...] El rector y los regidores del hospital dispondrán de los trabajos" (23).

<sup>14</sup> Vives similarly critiques young and healthy beggars who refuse to work: "que cada uno coma el pan adquirido con su sudor y trabajo [...] A ningún pobre que por su edad y salud pueda trabajar, se le ha de permitir estar ocioso" (281)

While both societies display a disdain for idleness and assertively root out potential vagabonds, they also share an empathetic approach to dealing with members of society who truly cannot be productive and are deserving of public welfare. González de Mendoza observes that “todos los hombres viejos y necesitados que gastaron su mocedad en las guerras” are meticulously and thoroughly cared for in the “hospitales reales,” which he describes as “muy suntuosos” and “muy bien proveídos” (67). Furthermore, the severely infirm and war veterans “crían [...] allí dentro sus gallinas y puercos, y otras cosas con que tienen recreación y provecho y mucho regalo” (67). Raphael Hythloday similarly points to a society’s obligation to care for the “many soldiers who come home crippled from foreign or domestic wars” since they have “sacrificed their limbs for the commonwealth of the king;” and furthermore, “their disability does not allow them to practice their former trades and they are too old to learn a new one” (19). With burgeoning populations in urban centers across Catholic Europe, the social problems associated with mendicity, vagrancy and poverty were at the forefront of public debate and were an important component of humanist social reforms.<sup>15</sup> González de Mendoza’s addition to his primary texts, then, presents his reader with a vision of well governed society that dissuades idleness and yet takes care of those who are truly in need.

### Foreign relations

Another topic of deep concern to European humanists that manifests in González de Mendoza’s representation of Chinese society is war and the expansion of territory. Robert P. Adams contextualizes the topic within the Humanists’ program in stating, “More and Erasmus speculated on the life ruled by pure, uncorrupted reason and in which they applied generally neo-Stoic criticism to what seemed the least rational and most brutish of all widespread human activities, namely war” (139). Throughout his works, Erasmus consistently attacked war as essentially contrary to both natural reason and Christian ethics. In one notable essay he developed the theme “sweet is war to those who know it not,” the famous topos *Dulce bellum inexpertis*, which, as Adams notes, “in many vital respects [it] anticipated and paralleled More’s thought in *Utopia*” (140). Indeed, More devotes a substantial portion of *Utopia* to his imagined society’s unique approach to warfare; most importantly, he notes that the Utopians “loathe war as positively bestial (though no sort of beast engages in it as constantly as mankind), and unlike almost all nations they consider nothing more inglorious than glory won in warfare” (105).

Chapter seven of the third book of part one of González de Mendoza’s *History* contains the following epigraph: “De la ley que tienen los chinos de no poder hacer guerras fuera de su reino, ni salir de él ni entrar extranjeros sin licencia del Rey” (86). Similar to his chapter on poor relief, he clearly underlines the importance of this topic with his effusive praise of Chinese society:

Aunque en muchas cosas que se han visto en este Reino se muestra y declara la agudeza de los ingenios de los hombres de él y la prudencia con que se gobiernan,

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<sup>15</sup> As Diana de Armas Wilson points out, one need not look any further than Cervantes, “el manco de Lepanto,” for a real life illustration of how European societies treated their crippled war veterans. (140-160).

en lo que más claro se echa de ver, a mi parecer, es en lo que en este capítulo se dirá, que sin ninguna duda parece exceder al que tuvieron los griegos, cartagineses, y romanos, de quien tanta y tan larga noticia nos han dado las historias antiguas y nos dan las modernas. Los cuales, por conquistar tierras ajenas, se desviaron tanto de las suyas propias que las vinieron a perder. (86)

Glaringly absent from this list of Western civilizations that were imprudently obsessed with conquering foreign territories instead of focusing attention and resources internally is the Spanish Empire. The omission is even more salient when considered within the Spanish-Chinese political context.<sup>16</sup> On the heels of its successful American project, some Spaniards thirsted for continued expansion westward into Asia. As Henry Kamen has observed,

by the 1570s the Spaniards considered that they were masters of the Philippines, and their optimistic spokesmen began to send to Spain serious suggestions that Philip II should consider a conquest of the rest of the Pacific. It was a glaring example of the inability of Europeans to understand the complexity of Asia. (206)

In 1576 Second governor of the Philippines Francisco Sande wrote a letter to Philip II in which he traces an ambitious plan to launch an attack on China from Manila, assuring him the project is “cosa llana y será de poca costa” (Vega y de Luque 36). Sande estimated that with four to six thousand armed men they would successfully conquer the Celestial Empire (38).<sup>17</sup> González de Mendoza, himself, was affected by the passionate debate concerning the China project. He was to be a part of a mission whose objective was to deliver a letter and gifts from Philip II to King Wanli of China, but the viceroy of Mexico ultimately impeded it.<sup>18</sup>

In a democratic and rational manner that parallels More’s Utopians, González de Mendoza explains the wise Chinese approach to foreign relations. Representatives from the 15 provinces of the kingdom came together and arrived at the following agreement:

Viendo por experiencia que salir de su Reino a conquistar otros ajenos les consumía mucha gente y grandes riquezas del suyo propio, además del trabajo y cuidado ordinario de sustentar lo ganado con temor de perderlo... considerando, además de esto, que tenían uno de lo mayores y mejores Reinos del mundo, así por riqueza [...] como por fertilidad [...] [decidieron que] para su quietud convenía dejar todo lo que tenían ganado fuera del Reino [...] y no hacer guerra de allí en adelante en parte alguna. (87)

Throughout *Utopia*, More attacks the policies and practices of war-torn European leaders, sharing several points in common with González de Mendoza’s representation of China. In book one Raphael Hythloday offers an extended explanation to More, the fictional character, as to why he refuses to utilize his wisdom and learning by serving as a counselor to a king. A deeply entrenched difference of opinion on war is one of the most important reasons. He notes, for example, that European princes are more devoted to

<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of the significance of Spain becoming the “first oceanic power in world history,” see Headley (624).

<sup>17</sup> Ellis highlights an interesting element of the prospect of a Spanish attack on China: Jesuit clergyman Alonso Sánchez attempted to justify conquest based on “the exemplary nature of the Chinese people, who differ in every way from those heretofore conquered by the Spanish” (2012: 3).

<sup>18</sup> Hsu summarizes the central points of this debate in her article “Writing on Behalf of a Christian Empire” (324-329). On the connections between the creation of González de Mendoza’s history and the political intrigue surrounding Spain’s endeavors in the Pacific, see Artiga (167-171).

military pursuits than to the “beneficent pursuits of peacetime; and they are far more interested in how to acquire new kingdoms by hook or crook than in how to govern well those they have already acquired” (16). He later relates an anecdote of the Anchorians, a neighboring nation to the Utopians, who, similar to González de Mendoza’s Chinese representatives, formed a counsel to advise their king on matters of foreign relations. After observing the extreme cost of war, including loss of life, resources, and the general degeneracy of morals, they advised him to retain just one kingdom “because the king was so distracted by trying to take care of two kingdoms that he couldn’t concentrate on either one” (38). Hythloday concludes that a king ought to “love his own and be loved by them; he should live with them, govern them kindly and leave other kingdoms alone, since the kingdom that has fallen to his lot is enough, and more than enough, for him” (39).

### Education and meritocracy

The just and well-administered Chinese society that González de Mendoza portrays owes its success to the importance it places on education and the universal custom of appointing civil servants based on personal merit instead of lineage or social status. Literacy is common among all people, even the poor, since “el no saberlo se tiene entre ellos por infamia” (108). Likewise, as González de Mendoza repeatedly observes, the highest reverence and esteem is given to well-educated individuals.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, important political positions such as ministers, judges, and other government functionaries are awarded to those individuals who have excelled in their studies and have proven to be virtuous. In order to obtain the title of *Loytia*,<sup>20</sup> or doctor, students are subjected to an “examen con mucho rigor” focused on ensuring “que sepan bien las leyes del Reino [...] y en que sean hombres virtuosos” (110). Thus, González de Mendoza’s portrait of Chinese society is once again harmonious with European humanists whose vision of the successful scholar entailed a combination of training in “good letters” with behavior centered on *caritas*, *benevolentia*, and deep civic engagement.<sup>21</sup> Like Cervantes, who succinctly summarized the humanist educational philosophy in stating, “letras sin virtud son perlas en el muladar,” (2008: 648) the Chinese educational program views the ultimate aim of education as preparing civically minded individuals.<sup>22</sup>

Among the most honorable positions in the kingdom of China, responsible for maintaining the king informed about each province, is the magistrate of the royal council. González de Mendoza explains that obtaining this position, “es la suprema dignidad a que un hombre puede subir, porque [...] en todo este reino no hay Príncipe, Duque, Marqués, ni Conde, ni Señor de vasallos” (90). Unlike the inherited nobility of Spain, these individuals are chosen for their educational and ethical merit. Furthermore, far from the

<sup>19</sup> In the dedication to Philip II of his *Beng Sim Po Cam*, Fray Miguel de Benavides similarly observed: “Juzgan los chinos por sus grandes y verdaderas riquezas no el oro ni la plata ni las sedas sino los libros y la sabiduría y las virtudes y el gobierno justo de su república” (cited from Knauth 12)

<sup>20</sup> González de Mendoza notes that *Loytia* was a general term applied to “todos los oficiales del Rey y justicias, de cualquier manera de administración que sean” (93).

<sup>21</sup> On the importance of civic engagement for the humanist scholar, as opposed to the solitary ascetic devoted to the contemplation of the divine, see Eugenio Garin.

<sup>22</sup> Diego de Miranda expresses this opinion in his conversation with Don Quixote. For an analysis of Cervantes’s portrait of a scholar who is misguided in his social isolation and the type of intellectual training discordant with humanist tenets, see Alban Forcione’s chapter “*El Licenciado Vidriera* as a Satirical Parable: The Mystery of Knowledge” (1982: 225-316)



*otium cum dignitate* associated with European nobility,<sup>23</sup> if idleness is discovered among those students aspiring to such a prestigious political or judicial position, it is met with severe punishment. The secret visitors dispatched to maintain surveillance over the performance of provincial judges and magistrates are also charged with the task of rewarding excellent students and punishing those that have not reached their potential: “Ponen en prisión a los que conocen tener habilidad y no se aprovechan de ella, y otros castigos [para que...] desocupen el lugar para quien lo aprovecha mejor” (108).

As a significant consequence of the “loable virtud moral” (94) of the magistrates of the Royal Council, Chinese society is free from the practice of bribery that severely plagued Spanish society of the period.<sup>24</sup> In numerous instances González de Mendoza insists on the absence of corruption in the just Chinese political structure. He explains, for example, “paga a todos ellos el Rey bastantes salarios, porque es prohibido a todos ellos, so gravísimas penas, el llevar derechos o cohechos” (97). As ordered by the king’s mandate, magistrates are forbidden from visiting the homes of those involved in a legal hearing; gift giving or other methods of bribery, such as the sharing of food or drink, are preempted by explicit laws that are described as “inviolable” (97).

As Donald Lach observes, in preparing the *Historia de China*, González de Mendoza culled from a wide range of materials at his disposal and though he cites his primary sources, he does not cite his indebtedness to the many secondary sources that he utilized (747). Given his absence of first hand experience in Asia, his account of China appears to incorporate numerous components of the humanists’ vision for a more perfect society, free from the ills that plagued Catholic Europe in the early modern period. Despite the questionable veracity of these features in Chinese society, his history influenced a wide range of readers, and, as in the instance of José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, the utopian components became incorporated and recast into a new social and literary milieu.

## II. Lizardi’s Appropriation of González de Mendoza

Among the many readers of González de Mendoza’s *Historia de China*, it is likely that José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi is the most significant. As the author of what is often considered the first novel published in Latin America, *El Periquillo Sarniento*, Fernández de Lizardi advocated ideas of the European Enlightenment and forcefully criticized the Spanish colonial system.<sup>25</sup> He left an indelible mark on Mexican literary and political history since his work was “appropriated by nation builders who read his criticism of the colonial regime as a call for independence” (Alba-Koch, 2000: 296). Fernández de Lizardi was one of the most active and influential journalists of New

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<sup>23</sup> On the idle nobility of Europe, More observes “Now there is a multitude of noblemen who not only live like drones on the labor of others—namely the tenants of their estates whom they bleed white by raising their rents (for this is the only kind of frugality they recognize, and otherwise they are so prodigal as to reduce themselves to beggary) –but they also travel with a huge crowd of retainers, none of whom has ever learned how to make a living” (2001: 20)

<sup>24</sup> Writing on the political intrigue, the scandals, and the trials during Philip III’s reign, Julián Juderías concludes, “the administration of the government had turned into one gigantic auction where everything was sold to the highest bidder” (Alban Forcione’s translation, 1982: 210).

<sup>25</sup> On considerations of *Periquillo Sarniento* as the first Latin American novel, see Antonio Benítez-Rojo; see also Samuel Steinberg.

Spain in the decade before the creation of the Mexican state in 1821.<sup>26</sup> Although he was critical of the independence movement's violence, chaos, and interracial hatred,<sup>27</sup> he simultaneously condemned the Spanish regime and was imprisoned for his reformist proposals in 1812 (Benítez-Rojo 330-32).

While many critics have focused on *El Periquillo Sarniento* in relation to European-based picaresque literature, several recent scholars have emphasized the importance of the six chapters that narrate Periquillo's transformative experiences in the Philippines and the imaginary island of Sauchefú in the Pacific.<sup>28</sup> The importance of the Asian episodes in the novel are threefold: they are the locus of Periquillo's metamorphosis from petty thief mired in debauchery and corruption into a productive member of society with a work ethic; for Fernández de Lizardi, the Asian episodes include an alternative utopian society that highlight numerous vices of the Spanish colonial regime;<sup>29</sup> and, as I will argue in this second part of this essay, these six chapters were profoundly influenced by González de Mendoza's *Historia de China*.

Through a careful tracing of Fernández de Lizardi's use of Filipinisms (such as *sangley*, *Parián*, *payo*, and the technical terms *permiso* and *situado*), as well as a number of significant toponyms, names, and terms for Chinese government positions (for example, *chaen*, *tután* and *loitia*), Edgar C. Knowlton concludes that "the history of China of Father Juan González de Mendoza must be considered an important source for the Chinese elements of *El Periquillo Sarniento*" (344). Knowlton's analysis, however, remains almost exclusively focused on linguistic features that connect the two works,<sup>30</sup> leaving unstated the various ways in which the two works coincide thematically. In my estimation, Fernández de Lizardi amplifies and makes more explicit the critiques of Spanish society that appear in González de Mendoza's *Historia de China*. More specifically, both authors underline the utopian society's socio-political structure based on personal merit instead of lineage and its mechanisms of social control, which encourage universal productivity and prevent poverty, idleness, and corruption. The subtle critiques of Spanish society's imperfections that appear in González de Mendoza's *Historia de China* are more explicitly present in *El Periquillo Sarniento*.

The first lesson that Periquillo learns about Sauchefú is that privileges of birth do not exist; rather, every citizen must contribute to society through the practice of some skill. This compulsory work ethic becomes clear when the Tután, or viceroy,<sup>31</sup> asks Periquillo:

<sup>26</sup> On Fernández de Lizardi's style and language, shaped by his journalistic experience and the unique qualities of his colonial audience, see Nancey Vogeley (1987). Aníbal González argues, "Spanish America's first self-proclaimed novel was actually a covert form of journalism" (40).

<sup>27</sup> On the insurgents, Fernández de Lizardi wrote: "Behold our famous generals and our subordinate and beleaguered troops, made up for the most part by poor outlaws and deluded and imprudent men without discipline, order, arms..." (Qtd. From Benítez-Rojo 330).

<sup>28</sup> In addition to Knowlton, see Hagimoto (2012) and Alba-Koch (2000) for such readings.

<sup>29</sup> Hagimoto argues that there are "two elements that create such utopianism on this imaginary island: the ideal system of productivity and the highly controlled mechanism of law and order" (395).

<sup>30</sup> Beyond linguistic connections, Knowlton analyzes "chief incidents of the episode of Periquillo on the 'island' of Sauchefú as a duplication of the treatment accorded an ambassador as set forth in González de Mendoza's history" and the "description of criminal punishment" (344-5).

<sup>31</sup> The viceroy's brother, Limahotón, accompanies Periquillo on his return to Mexico. Knowlton notes that the name Limahotón is likely based on a Chinese corsair whom González de Mendoza mentions throughout his history as "Lymahon" (343). Historian William L. Schurz notes that in 1574 "a large Chinese fleet

¿Y tú, que sabes hacer? Porque aunque en esta provincia se usa la hospitalidad con todos los extranjeros pobres, o no pobres, que aportan a nuestras playas, sin embargo, con los que tratan de detenerse en nuestras ciudades no somos muy indulgentes, pasado cierto tiempo, sino que nos informamos de sus habilidades y oficios para ocuparlos en lo que saben hacer [...] el caso es que aquí nadie come nuestro arroz ni la sabrosa carne de nuestras vacas y peces sin ganarlo con el trabajo de las manos. (360)

Periquillo's response entails a much more direct attack on Spanish social and economic customs than the implied critique found in *Historia de China*. He answers that he is a nobleman in New Spain and therefore he has no mechanical skills or profession, since "es bajeza en los caballeros trabajar corporalmente" (361). The viceroy erupts in hysterical and uncontrollable laughter and bitingly observes, "en tu tierra todos son locos caballerescos [...] ¿de qué sirve en tu tierra un noble o rico [...] ¿De qué sirve uno de éstos, digo, al resto de sus conciudadanos? Seguramente un rico o noble será una carga pesadísima a la república" (361). Thus, similar to the Chinese society described by González de Mendoza, where "en todo este reino no hay Príncipe, Duque, Marqués, ni Conde" (90), Sauchefú is not burdened by an unproductive leisure class.

The absence of vagrancy and mendicity as well as the social mechanisms preventing them is another significant element that Lizardi appears to have extracted from González de Mendoza's representation of China. When the lack of beggars in Sauchefú surprises Periquillo,<sup>32</sup> Limahotón explains that every member of society is forced to learn a trade or skill to earn a living. Unlike González de Mendoza's "juez de pobres," occupations are assigned "por el gobierno" (373), a non-individualized authority; nevertheless, the central preoccupation with universal productivity is apparent in both works. In Sauchefú, authorities can quickly discern the profession of any individual because everyone wears a ribbon on their head with a particular color or decoration indicating their line of work. Due to this prudent policy, Limahotón asserts, "es muy difícil que haya en nuestra tierra uno que sea del todo vago o inútil" (374). Similar to the encomiastic tone that scholars have noted in González de Mendoza's portrait of China,<sup>33</sup> Periquillo praises the efficient economy of Sauchefú, "si todas las providencias que aquí rigen son tan buenas y recomendables como las que me has hecho conocer, tu tierra será la más feliz, y aquí se habrán realizado las ideas imaginarias de Aristóteles, Platón y otros políticos" (374). González de Mendoza is similarly effusive in his praise, calling the kingdom of China "de los bien gobernados y regidos que sabemos en el mundo," (103).

The impressive social control that both Western authors admire in their Asian host society is a result not only of effective policies to maximize labor, but also a combination of profound surveillance and strict and ostentatious punishment of crime. In González de Mendoza's China, the king dispatches *Leachis* ("visitadores")--clandestine magistrates who vigilantly ensure just practices throughout the kingdom, "con todo secreto a cada

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under the filibuster Li Ma Hong, or Limahon, and with over four thousand men on board, attacked the newly-founded town on Manila Bay" (26).

<sup>32</sup> Hsu notes that Portuguese travelers to China, Galiote Pereira and Gaspar da Cruz highlight the same lack of vagrancy and mendicity in China (2010: 190).

<sup>33</sup> See Vogeley (169) and Hsu (2010: 187-201). While he does not deny the overall laudatory tone of *Historia de China*, Ismael Artiga points out other aspects of Chinese society of which González de Mendoza is critical.

provincia otros jueces... Estos andan inquiriendo, de ciudad en ciudad y de pueblo en pueblo, sin ser conocidos e informándose de los agravios de las Justicias” (102). Fernández de Lizardi uses the same term “visitador” in the figure of Limahotón, although his responsibilities as a secret informer are not explicitly stated (373). He explains to Periquillo the overarching philosophy of maintaining social control on Sauchefú: “Se procuran evitar los delitos con las leyes y se castigan con rigor los delincuentes” (374). Similarly, González de Mendoza states that Chinese judges and magistrates are “cruels y severos en el castigar” (104).

A careful comparative reading of the descriptions of public punishment in the *Historia de China* and *El Periquillo Sarniento* provides substantial evidence for my argument: Fernández de Lizardi’s novel demonstrates reliance on González de Mendoza’s text for the climactic and memorable scene of public execution on the imaginary island of Sauchefú. Fernández de Lizardi appropriates several specific details from González de Mendoza’s narration. The latter relates the particular procedures that lead to the criminals’ final breath, including the auditory announcement of the endeavor: “Mandan tirar tres piezas de artillería, que es la señal que hacen para que saquen los que han der ajusticiados” (105). Fernández de Lizardi’s protagonist reports, “hicieron seña con tres cañonazos de que era tiempo de que se juntaran los jueces” (374). Additionally, just as Chinese commerce comes to a halt due to the important public spectacle—“cierran todas las tiendas y ninguno trabaja hasta puesto el sol” (106)—Periquillo is informed that the city’s gates were closed on execution days and “ni era permitido abrir ninguna tienda de comercio, ni trabajar en ningún oficio hasta después de concluida la ejecución” (374).

Other significant details and key expressions, even word for word reproductions in some instances, further demonstrate the unequivocal influence of González de Mendoza’s history on Fernández de Lizardi’s novel. For example, González de Mendoza notes “hay gran ruido en la ciudad, porque esta justicia se hace muy *de tarde en tarde*” (my emphasis, 106). A servant explains to Periquillo the exceptional commotion outside his room thus, “aquel día había ejecución, y como eso se veía *de tarde en tarde*, concurría a la capital de la provincial innumerable gente” (my emphasis, 374). Fernández de Lizardi explains the careful verification that the judges carry out, seeking possible reprieves: “Los jueces volvieron a registrar los procesos para ver si alguno de aquellos infelices tenía alguna leve disculpa con que escapar” (375). González de Mendoza’s text mentions no less than three such revisions; before carrying out the sentence that cannot be undone, the magistrates “tornan a ver sumariamente los delitos de los que quedan señalados para morir, para ver si por ventura hallan algún remedio” (105). In describing the horror that the rigor of the punishments provoked in the group of foreign observers of which Periquillo is a part, he mentions “a unos los empalaban, a otros los ahorcaban, a otros los azotaban cruelísimamente en las pantorrillas con bejucos mojados” (375). The source text describes the Chinese spectacle thus: “Azotan en las pantorrillas cruelmente [...] con cañas anchas como cuatro dedos, y gruesas como un dedo” (106). Fernández de Lizardi also borrows, and poetically expands, the description of the judges’ efforts to remain indifferent to the criminals’ screams of suffering: “Los jueces en el tablado se entretenían en fumar, hablar, refrescar y jugar a las damas, distrayéndose cuanto podían para no escuchar los gemidos de aquellas víctimas miserables” (375). González de Mendoza narrates this point more simply, “en semejantes justicias están siempre los jueces presentes, y por no moverse a compasión, entre tanto que se hace, se ocupan ellos

en regocijarse, o hacer colación u otras cosas semejantes” (106). Knowlton’s conclusion that González de Mendoza’s history was the principal source for *El Periquillo Sarniento* is corroborated and strengthened by these numerous examples of specific details from the punishment episodes of each work, as well as the shared themes of humanist social reform.

### Conclusion

The fact that Cervantes, in his *dedicatoria* to the Conde of Lemos in the *Quijote* of 1615, chose to make humorous and ludic reference to “el grande emperador de la China”,<sup>34</sup> illustrates China’s prominent place in the consciousness of Spanish thinkers of the period (533-34). Faced with the literary task of narrating an imaginary anecdote involving a remote and mysterious land, Cervantes, not unlike the writers of chivalric romance in previous centuries, selected China. Although Chinese-Iberian contact of the sixteenth century and the chronicles of those experiences significantly reduced the mystery associated with the Far East, it still hovered at the fringe of what constituted the known world to a European individual of the time, and it continued to provide the imaginative writer with the ability to evoke exotic otherness. In their unique manners and with distinct motives, both González de Mendoza and Fernández de Lizardi imbued the Asian society that appears in their respective texts with idealized features of a well-ordered society that suggested potential alternatives to policies and practices of their native countries.

The two specific cases of textual influence for which I have argued in this essay illustrate the impressive spatial and temporal mobility of ideas. The central tenets of humanist social, economic, and political reform left an indelible mark that spans, in these cases, three continents and three centuries. Important elements of More’s vision for a more perfectly governed society, including mechanisms of social control such as surveillance<sup>35</sup> and the very structure of important institutions, provided both González de Mendoza and Fernández de Lizardi with important pieces that would form the foundation of the ideal society they portrayed in a distant Asian land.

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<sup>34</sup> “Y el que más ha mostrado desearle [la segunda parte del Quijote] ha sido el grande emperador de China, pues en lengua chinesca habrá un mes que me escribió una carta con un propio, pidiéndome, o, por mejor decir, suplicándome se le enviase, porque quería fundar un colegio donde se leyese la lengua castellana, y quería que el libro que se leyese fuese el de la historia de don Quijote, juntamente con esto me decía que fuese yo a ser el rector de tal colegio” (533-34).

<sup>35</sup> A pervasive sense of surveillance is prominent in the “utopian” society of all three texts analyzed here, at times recalling a Foucauldian level of social control. More writes, “nowhere is there any chance to be idle; ... *With the eyes of everyone upon them*, they have no choice but to do their customary work or to enjoy pastimes which are not dishonorable. Such behavior on the part of the people is bound to produce an abundance of everything. And when it is distributed equitably to everyone, it follows that no one can be reduced to poverty or forced to beg” (my emphasis, 73). In González de Mendoza’s China, the clandestine magistrates (“visitadores”) function as the emperor’s vigilant eye over his vast provinces.

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