REFRAMING SPANISH ADOPTION FROM CHINA: ANDREA VIGO'S PERSPECTIVE ON REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE IN *HERIDAS SIN PATRIA*

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In an interview with *20minutos*—a popular Spanish local newspaper based in Madrid—on November 11, 2020, Andrea Vigo expressed her discomfort with being labeled as an Asian: "No me identifico con lo asiático, yo he socializado como una española. No sé nada de la cultura asiática, no hablo el idioma, no sé absolutamente nada y al final consiguen que no te sientas ni de un sitio ni de otro" (quoted in Winnie). Vigo, a Spanish adoptee originally from Hubei, China, and the author of *Heridas sin patria* rejected everything Chinese, including avoiding ethnic restaurants or sitting next to an Asian person.[1] Despite growing up as a culturally white Spaniard, she is constantly racialized as an Asian woman. Her reflections on disidentifying with her racial background reveal how race is an elusive concept, which she cannot disinherit or acquiesce, further complicating her already challenging sense of belonging inherent in being an adoptee. The author interprets Vigo's rejection of her Chinese heritage not merely as an individual identity crisis but as a lens through which the Spanish racialization of Asians and its harmful impact on minority communities are unveiled. Focusing on Vigo's complex, agonizing relation to her racial identity, this study dismantles how she challenges the discourse of interracial adoption, often lauded as the epitome of colorblind love and humanitarian rescue, to mend the wounds of her experience as an Asian adoptee. Furthermore, the author posits that Vigo, in her memoirs, recontextualizes her adoption story from the standpoint of a transnational reproductive justice issue, invoking feminist writers who have resisted totalitarian control over women's bodies. Thus, her writing is both a healing method and a vehicle for political demand to reframe transnational adoption.

Published by Libros Indie in 2020, *Heridas sin patria* is a pioneering memoir by a Chinese adoptee. Vigo informed the author in an interview on June 30, 2023, that the book is a compilation of the personal notes written during her psychotherapy recommended by her therapist. Although she admitted that the notes were published with only minor revisions, the memoir reads like a well-crafted collection of thirty-seven essays, often accompanied by her poems. She shares her struggle with identity and the tormenting journey to healing in an intimate, candid, and lyrical language. Vigo sets out the narration with her identity crisis and explains that she was adopted from China. Thereafter, the reader is led to follow how she repeatedly experiences recovery and relapse despite being supported by her tight network of adoptive mother, friends, and sociology professor. Overt descriptions of her psychosomatic manifestations related to anxiety, including skin pigmentations, uncontrollable burping, bulimia, and self-injury, attest to the gravity of her identity crisis. In a memoir of eighty-three pages, more than half of the book depicts her surroundings, from the assistance she received from her family and friends in managing her anxiety attacks to the times when she faced racism experienced as an Asian woman. Her strong condemnation of racism as *murder* illustrates to what extent it causes psychological harm to interracial adoptees: "Es importante ponerle nombre al racismo, porque racismo en su máxima expresión es el *asesinato*, pero existe en lo cotidiano" (57; Author's emphasis). The memoir's second half is dominated by reflections on the unwanted breakup with Marcos, which serves as a narrative thread throughout.

She concludes the book with a letter to her past self, emphasizing the importance of self-love and expressing gratitude toward people who have supported her.

Many of the symptoms were set off by Marcos' decision to end the relationship with her. However, she knows that it is not the cause but a trigger: "Pero mi fracaso amoroso sólo empezó a descubrir la herida de la patria y el miedo absoluto al abandono y al no ser suficiente" (21). As she examines her psychic instability caused by adoption, she also identifies racist stereotyping and discrimination prevalent in Spanish society as another crucial element threatening her sense of belonging. She is constantly racialized as Asian despite identifying herself as a white Spaniard. The disparity between her self-perception and external perception strains her sense of belonging: "Nadie habla de disforia de raza ni le pone nombre a lo que las personas adoptadas racializadas podemos llegar a sufrir" (11). With this revelation, she raises a question regarding how interracial adoption affects the adoptees—a topic scarcely studied, especially concerning Chinese adoptees. Vigo's testimony as an adoptee who faced difficulties for being adopted across racial lines highlights interracial adoption as a social concern rather than a family matter. Placing the entire burden of adapting to life outside the family environment on the adoptee and their adoptive family is not a solution. Her approach to interracial adoption as an issue to be tackled by society marks a shift from the earlier representation of a smooth, trouble-free integration of adoptees, exemplified by figures like Asha Miró—a renowned TV presenter and writer, whose adoption from India to a Catalan family in the 1970s culminated in the publication of the inaugural adoptee memoir, *La hija del Ganges: la historia de una adopción*. The present study focuses on this complicated sense of belonging for the Chinese adoptees. Vigo's memoir also contributes to the adoption studies by offering personal testimonies of how interracial adoption affects the adoptees' adjustment to society, the fact highlighted in a quantitative meta-analysis carried out by a group of scholars led by Susana Corral: "Our findings note that ethnicity—being White—and less presence of international adoption are linked with better adjustment outcomes" (Corral et al. 533). The challenges experienced by interracial adoptees are no longer just statistics or faceless individuals.

To provide a better understanding of the topic, this study begins with an overview of how the Spanish adoption of Chinese babies began and their cultural representation. Drawing on adoption theories from Spain and the US, the article then discusses how race is ignored or undermined in the adoption discourse of Chinese adoptees and the negative consequences of colorblindness in adult adoptees like Vigo. The theoretical framework of "racial melancholia" proposed by David L. Eng and Shinee Han is useful in illustrating how Vigo's memoir foregrounds the racialization of Asians in Spain and transforms her narrative of self-denial into a form of social protest. While the concept was conceived in the American context, where the history of racial oppression and the idea of whiteness is deeply ingrained, many of the patterns of racialization that have been applied to Asians in America have also been absorbed into the Spanish imaginary. Joaquín Beltrán Antolín argues that the racialization of the Chinese in Spain derives from the tropes of the "Yellow Peril" that originated in English-speaking countries, associating them with the mafia, labor exploitation, prostitution, and tax evasion. As Chinese community became more visible in the second half of the 1990s in Spain, they became increasingly subjected to these racial stereotypes: "Si hasta los mediados de los años noventa del siglo pasado constituía una comunidad silenciosa, que no se dejaban oír ni causaba problemas, actualmente ya no pasa desapercibida y el imaginario español procedente del ámbito anglosajón ha acabado proyectándose sobre ellos" (2018: 21). With China's increasing influence as a global political and economic force, Spain

witnessed a different type of xenophobic discourse toward Chinese migrants. Beltrán Antolín points out that the myth of Asians as a model minority, which emerged as a form of positive discrimination against other people of color in the US in the 1960s, emphasizing Asians' academic excellence, also surfaced in Spain to highlight the Chinese migrants' hard work ethics that led to their remarkable success despite the economic crisis in 2008. However, this ill-purposed idealization was quickly overshadowed by the 2012 scandalous "Operación Emperador," a police operation that linked the criminal economy with the Chinese mafia (35). It is crucial to remember that the globally shared racial stereotypes resurface in various political contexts. The Spanish scholar explains how the Chinese association with contagious diseases, first constructed in Jack London's 1910 short story "Unparalleled Invasion," reappeared with the global spread of SARS in 2002 and 2003 (7-8). As Vigo's text exemplifies, the discriminatory discourse of the Chinese being infectious agents reemerged again with the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 (2020, 59). She mentions encountering various racial stereotypes of Asians, including the generalized perception of academic excellence and hypersexualization, alluding to Asian women's sex work. While she sarcastically comments on her mathematical abilities, which conform to the Asian stereotype, Spanish white males' frequent prying on her Asian sex appeal was distressing (58).

As illustrated above, common racializing mechanisms affecting Asians are present in both Spain and the US. Thus, Eng and Han's study of the effects of racism on mental health among Asian American and Asian adoptees to white families in the US is relevant to my analysis of Vigo's confession. In their study, they discover a common psychological undercurrent that leads their interviewees to deny or distance themselves from their racial identity. They call this struggle with identity "racial melancholia" and define it as "the inability to 'get over' the lost ideal of whiteness" (671). As Asians continually negotiate between the idealized whiteness and the negatively or reductively constructed Asianness, Eng and Han propose that the psychic tendencies to attach to an unattainable whiteness among those studied as a "depathologized structure of everyday experience" be considered (667). Their emphasis on this psychic condition as a group identification rather than individual damage opens the possibility of constructing a political position around it. Furthermore, their reading of racial melancholia as a "fluid negotiation between mourning and melancholia" (693) clarifies Vigo's fragmented narration of her search for identity amidst suffering and resistance. Informed by these ideas, this study views Vigo's self-denial as a social conflict that requires political and intellectual interventions. After establishing her confession as a political grievance, this analysis examines how Vigo's writing encourages readers to reconsider transnational adoption.

Representation of Chinese Adoptees in Spanish Culture

Vigo was among the many female Chinese babies adopted by Spanish families in the 1990s. The interest in adopting Chinese children was sparked by the Spanish Public Television's airing of Kate Blewett and Brian Woods' 1995 television documentary "The Dying Rooms," which exposed the horrific conditions of Chinese state orphanages. According to Susana Ye's article, "Generación Mei Ming: 18.000 niñas chinas adoptadas en España desde 1995," published in *El País*, approximately 18,000 children have been adopted from China to Spain since intercountry adoption was ratified in 1995. The number represents 24% of the state's international adoption (Ye). The Chinese Communist Party implemented the one-child policy in 1979 to control the population. This, coupled with the country's cultural preference for a male heir over a female who might

eventually marry into another family, has made many orphaned girls available for adoption by couples from Western countries, including Spain. David E. Mungello, who has researched the history of female infanticide in China since 1650, explains that the Chinese preference for males is influenced by material and cultural factors: "From the beginning, more girls than boys were destroyed, probably as a form of birth control to reduce the number of potential mothers (and the number of the mouths to feed), as well as for cultural reasons, such as eliminating the cost of a dowry" (2). He further indicates that the one-child policy intensified male-preference culture and revived the drowning practice of female babies: "The one-child birth control program beginning in 1979 introduced policies and technology that intensified the traditional Chinese preference for male children and revived drowning and other forms of female infanticide" (118). Although Mungello never mentions adoption as a form of female infanticide, it can be inferred from his study that female babies were given away more often than male heirs. Writing twenty-four years after the Spanish adoption of Chinese babies began, Zigor Aldama reported in his article "China ya no abandona a sus hijos," published in *El País* on July 1, 2019, that the number of adoptions approved by the Chinese government dropped from 34, 529 in 2010 to 18,820 in 2017. Among these, only 2,300 were international cases (Aldama). The decline in the number of adoptees reflects China's shift toward a pronatalist approach. After authorizing two children per household in 2016, the Chinese government remodified its demographic policy on May 31, 2021, allowing married couples to have up to three offspring to palliate the plummeting natality rate amid a rapidly aging population. This serves as a reminder that the state always controls women's reproductive rights.

Significant narratives emerged in Spain by those adopted in the 1990s and the early 2000s. They began to articulate their experiences of growing up as adoptees. These narratives provide a critical lens through which transnational adoption can be reconsidered. Among these voices, Xiaomei Espiro Roselló, a filmmaker from Mallorca and an adoptee herself, published a short fictional film named *El hijo rojo* in 2017. In it, a Chinese adoptee explores her cultural heritage by meeting friends of Chinese origin raised in Barcelona. Ningra—a Chinese adoptee to a Basque family—released her debut rap music, "Hazia" (Seed), in the Basque language on YouTube in 2020 ("*Hazia*" 00:00-3:14). She also composed other songs, which were exclusively performed live. Alicia Martínez Simancas, who studied art therapy in the US, engaged in digital activism on transracial adoption via TikTok and Instagram, defying the myths and stereotypes surrounding adoption. Based in Madrid, this Chinese adoptee recently reclaimed her Chinese name, Cao Sheng, which she now predominantly features on her Instagram account. The Instagram account of Inés Herrero González—another Chinese adoptee and digital activist from Cantabria—*Antiracismoasiático*, highlighted the presence of anti-Asian sentiments in daily life and the ways to resist them until it was closed by the creator in 2022. Yun Ping, a transgender Chinese adoptee in a Basque family and photographer, inaugurated their first exposition titled *回家 (huí jiā): Volver a casa* in Madrid in 2024. Through photography, Ping explored their transitioning journey from an Asian woman to a racialized man. The exhibition featured a series of self-portraits, juxtaposing pictures of their nude body with images in the mirror. This group of artists and activists express their challenging journey into adulthood as adoptees through different types of media. They do this either figuratively or by commenting on the experiences and viewpoints of others regarding adoption. In contrast, Vigo's memoir provides a detailed and personal account of the life of a Chinese adoptee, explicitly challenging the romanticized notion that international adoption always signifies salvation and that unconditional love can conquer any difficulties, regardless of race.

Before these adoptees became artists and activists, adoptive families, adoption coordinators, and journalists shared their testimonies, produced films, and published literary works on adoption from China. In non-fiction genre, Sara Barrena's *Venida de la lluvia: historia de una adopción internacional* (2005), J. Vicente Castelló's *Muñecas de porcelana: adopción en China: el inicio de una nueva vida* (2007), J. Marcos's *Rasgados: un viaje a la adopción internacional España – China* (2011), and Cristina Palacios's *En busca de Clara: diario de adopción* (2016) have documented the emotionally charged, lengthy process of adoption. From filing paperwork, awaiting baby assignments, to finally traveling to China to bring the children to Spain, these works provide poignant insights into the journey of an adoptive family. They depict transnational adoption as a gift of borderless love, making adoptive parents the ultimate champions of human values. For instance, Barrena perceives her decision to adopt her daughter from China as a personal mission to contribute to a better world and to embrace global citizenship: "Pienso que [mi hija adoptiva] es mi mejor aliada en esta cruzada en que mi vida se ha convertido, en la lucha por cambiar un poco el mundo, por ampliar la visión de la gente, por hacerles ver cómo el amor es poderoso y cómo puede formar familias de distintas maneras, en distintos lugares, por caminos mágicos y misteriosos" (57). She is blinded by her progressive idealism and ignores the potential challenges her adopted daughter may face in San Sebastian, Spain, a racially homogenous society with a predominantly Basque culture.

In contrast, fictional representations of Spanish adoptions from China focus on concerns about the adoptees' identity crisis at different stages of their lives. Susi Gonzalvo's *Zhao* (2008) narrates the story of Zhao, a Chinese adoptee writer in her twenties, who overcomes her troubled sense of belonging by joining a transnational feminist struggle against the exploitation of Chinese women whose babies were "sold" for adoption. The emphasis is on Zhao's triumph over her doubts about her identity. In Nuria Barrios's novel *El alfabeto de los pájaros* (2011), the adoptee's identity crisis is at the forefront as the story revolves around the trauma surrounding the origin of Nix, a six-year-old Chinese adoptee, and her Spanish adoptive mother's creation of a literary language to alleviate her daughter's agonizing search for an origin. The adoptive mother's unconditional love, subtly echoed in Gonzalvo's film, proves pivotal in children's trauma management. Neither Gonzalvo nor Barrios consider the adoptive mother's racial identity and the impact it may have on the adoptees' upbringing. The identity crisis depicted in the works of Gonzalvo and Barrios is endemic to adoptees who have been abandoned by their biological mothers. Their pain does not stem from their integration into Spanish society.

David Gómez-Rollán's documentary, *Generación Mei Ming: miradas desde la adolescencia* (2015), is the first cultural production to address the racism suffered by adoptees as they attend schools and befriend white Spaniards outside kinship. Intercalating interviews with six Chinese adoptees and their parents, this documentarian, photographer, radio host, and brother to a Chinese adoptee investigates their "growing pains" as Spaniards with a distinct appearance in a racially hierarchized society. Although the film shows how adoptees endure the psychic harm of racial stereotyping as Asians, it primarily suggests that adoptive families' support, in alliance with other adoptive families, can somehow alleviate adoptees' emotional turmoil. Despite the empathy displayed toward adoptees above mentioned, the fallacy of love as the solution often overshadows adoptees' voices.[2]

Race and Transnational Adoption

Race matters in transnational adoption. According to Diana Marre, it is a determining factor in choosing the child's country of origin. Spanish parents prefer adopting children from Russia and Eastern European countries due to their ethnic affinities (Marre, 232–233). In the case of Chinese babies, racial differences are often undermined in the adoption discourse through depictions, such as lightening their skin color or highlighting their passive and ornamental qualities. For example, "muñecas de porcelana," the metaphor used to refer to Chinese female babies in the title of J. Vicente Castelló's *Muñecas de porcelana: adopción en China: el inicio de una nueva vida* (2007), is a case in point. While this expression is well-intended, conveying that adoptees should be treated with care, it carries several implications. Porcelain dolls, also known as "muñecas chinas" due to China's historical reputation for ceramic craftsmanship catering to the European market, boast faces crafted from white enameled porcelain, characterized by an unalterable, adorable appearance. They are displayed in a glass-top Curio cabinet or on the walls. Porcelain dolls, when used to refer to Chinese adoptees, can erase their nonwhite phenotypes, making whiteness a universal norm. Furthermore, the metaphor perpetuates the objectification and ornamentalization frequently involved in the racialized femininity of Asian women, as Anne Anlin Cheng has discussed. Cheng argues that Western modernism aesthetically constructed Asian females as "nonsubjects who endure as ornamental appendages," resulting in "a peculiar state of being produced out of the fusion between 'thingliness' and 'personness'" (17, 18). Thus, referring to Chinese adoptees as porcelain dolls—ornaments that are neither things nor persons—racializes the adoptees as those existing only in their exteriority and as non-essential objects while erasing racial differences from their skin or appearance.

The effacement of skin color in the adoption discourse becomes colorblind once Chinese adoptees are integrated into new white Spanish families. In her study analyzing a poll conducted to assess tolerance levels toward immigration, racism, and xenophobia among Spanish citizens, María José Rodríguez Jaume observes a surge of a new type of racism, which she denominates "racism without race or racists" (5). This attitude was more pronounced among Spanish families that had adopted interracial children. Among the adoptive families who participated in the poll, 54% had adopted children from China, making this case more relevant to the current study. Interracial families exhibit a lower level of awareness of race as a problem than other Spanish citizens, with only 7.4% considering phenotype a determining cause of prejudice and discrimination in Spanish society. While adoptive families attribute economic factors as the primary reason for bigotry and inequality, more than two-thirds of the interviewed ethnic groups, including adoptees, consider race to be a vital issue affecting how they are treated (Rodríguez Jaume, 18). Marre explains this colorblind perspective among adoptive families as a confusion between race and ethnicity. She notes the tendency among adoptive parents to substitute the term "race" with "culture" or "ethnicity," emphatically distinguishing their adoptees from immigrant children (228). Whether it is their confusion or desire to reassure the adoptee's Spanish identity, race has been dismissed in the Spanish adoption of Chinese babies. Vigo foregrounds her trouble with racial identity in this context of racial effacement and disinterest in race in the representation of Chinese adoptees, which is deserving of critical attention.

Spanish adoption theorists are increasingly centering their debates on race, as evidenced by Marre's and Jaume Rodríguez's studies. However, a limited amount of research is available on the experiences of Chinese adoptees in Spain. Júlia Vich Bertran's doctoral dissertation, published in 2012, anticipates challenges for the identity of Chinese adoptees in Spain based on previous

cases of Korean and Vietnamese adoption in the US and Northern Europe (32). Nine years after Vich Bertran's publication, David Doncel-Abad and Pablo Cabrera-Álvarez published the data collected from adopted adolescents of Chinese origin between the ages of 9 and 19 to measure their sense of well-being in their school settings. The scholars indicate the adoptees' racial and ethnic differences as a factor for bullying (2021). Similarly, Ana Lin Juárez Turégano, a Chinese adoptee and the only racialized scholar quoted here wrote her undergraduate thesis on the academic experiences of Chinese adoptees in Spain. According to her interviews with adolescents, improving the teaching of inclusion and diversity in the classroom could help adolescents counteract negative factors affecting their academic performance and school experience (Juárez Turégano, 44). While these studies attest to the increasing interest in the topic, Beatriz San Román's article on interracial adoption is more relevant to this analysis because she examines adult adoptees' experience of negotiation with their racialized bodies beyond the school setting and having a better understanding of their identity. Although she draws on interviews with four adoptees of African or Indian descent adopted to white families, she was initially motivated to explore the topic by a letter written by a Chinese female adoptee, forwarded by her friend who works for *¡Hola!* Magazine as a beauty consultant. In it, the adoptee expressed her wish to learn the make-up tricks to disguise her Asian eyes to look like "a Spanish woman" (2013, 230). This letter made her aware of the transracial adoptees' tormenting relationship with their corporeality. Chinese adoptees were excluded at the time of research because they were still in their adolescence. Nonetheless, her observations on the challenges faced by other interracial adoptees in identifying with their racial groups provided valuable insights on this topic.

To explain why some of them distance themselves or reject their own cultural and racial backgrounds, San Román emphasizes the fact that the interracial adoptees in Spain grow up in affluent white families at a time when migrants from the Global South, who may be from the same ethnic groups as the adoptees themselves, occupy lower echelons of the society: "Most of those families adopting transnationally belong to the upper middle or upper class. Their children are raised and socialised *in* and *by* the dominant 'white' culture and have little opportunities to engage in horizontal relationships with non-white people" (San Román, 231). In other words, the adoptees, who were the only non-white family members, were raised within the hegemonic culture, internalizing its prejudices.

Focusing on cases where an interracial adoptee with a dark phenotype identified himself as white like his adoptive parents and another interviewee who did not show empathy toward racialized migrants, San Román argues that they often confuse their racial identity with something inherent to their ethnic upbringing as white: "they regard racial prejudices as something alien to themselves, that is related to those 'others' with whom they find resemblances only when looking at the mirror" (237). By contrast, she notes that an interracial adoptee who grew up with migrant parents from Eastern Europe developed a sense of affinity with racialized migrants. Therefore, experiencing horizontal relationships with their racial groups or minoritized communities helps interracial adoptees embrace their racial identity. San Román closes her article by citing the research of Tobias Hübinette, an adoptee scholar, which argues that transracial adoptees tend to develop self-loathing due to their white subjectivization, and adds, "I cannot infer from my research that this is the case in Spain. Future research may reaffirm this thesis" (241). Seven years later, Vigo's publication of *Heridas sin patria* answers San Román's lingering question.

Racial Melancholia as a Social Issue

Vigo expresses self-hatred because she does not identify with her physical appearance: "sentir que tu cuerpo es ajeno, sentir que tu mente y tu cuerpo actúan por separado, sentir que esos rasgos no te pertenecen. Llegar a odiarlos" (11). The incongruence between her cultural and racial identity, and the detachment between mind and corporeality, has resulted in her rejection of her Asian heritage: "Desde pequeña siento un rechazo extraño hacia todo lo asiático: no me gusta que me sientan junto con la otra compañera asiática del colegio, no me gustar ir a un restaurante de comida china, ni entrar a un bazar, ni que me saluden en chino, ni sentarme al lado de otra persona asiática al lado del metro" (15). Even after her sociology professor explained that many people define their identity based on ethnicity rather than race, her angst persists: "Ya tengo identificado el malestar, pero no sé qué hacer con él y sigue existiendo y sigue haciendo daño" (16). She describes the pain as unexplainable; it has no apparent cause, like grieving the death of a loved one: "Pero hay otras tristezas que no tienen razón tangible de ser, y eso las hace invisibles a los ojos del mundo excepto para quien las porta. No encontrar los motivos que te hacen sentirte triste, ansiosa y vacía sólo aumenta la culpabilidad" (20). Her search for the source of her anguish continues well into the middle of the memoir. Vigo tries to understand her aversion to being associated with Chinese, which she sees as a common trait among adoptees, by stating that "Mi historia allí terminó siendo un bebé y me siento tan rechazada por mis raíces que sólo sé rechazarlas de vuelta. Es visceral, le pasa a más gente adoptada racializada. Una chica de origen indio no soporta comer comida india" (53).

Adoption scholars argue that self-loathing and dissociation from their racial identity among adoptees stem from their unpreparedness to confront racial discrimination in a racially stratified society. San Román, as mentioned above, considers the adoptees' lack of horizontal relationships with their own race in their upbringing a crucial factor in disidentification with their racial group (237). In addition, Eng and Han stress the importance of having family members who adequately understand their children's affliction as the adoptees grapple with the fear and anxiety of potential racial stigmatization. They elucidate that the personal development of adoptees as racialized individuals is significantly more complicated than that of second-generation minority youths:

> Problems of racial melancholia between first-generation Asian immigrant parents and their second-generation American-born children entail intergenerational processes influenced and configured by the social forces of history. Hence, the conflicts they present are *intersubjective* and external rather than just *intrasubjective* and internal. However, transnational adoptees often struggle with such predicaments in isolation (67).

Vigo laments her solitary struggle without the possibility of having intergenerational or intersubjective interactions: "Por favor, por favor, QUE VENGA ALGUIEN A QUITARME ESTA SENSACIÓN DE LA PIEL QUE YO NO SÉ. Y nadie escucha. Siento la soledad apoderándose de cada recoveco de mi cuerpo y de mi mente, que no me da ni un segundo de tregua" (18–19). No matter how supportive her adoptive parents are, Vigo cannot avoid suffering in solitude. In the essay titled "Lo siento," she confesses to feeling guilty for distancing herself from her parents: "Cada vez me aíslo más y me siento más sola, y no soporto el peso de la soledad

pero tampoco soporto la incomprensión de la compañía, ni la propia" (54–55). The inability to confide in someone who has undergone a similar experience adds to the burden.

Vigo grew up with the idea that she is as Spanish as her adoptive parents, allowing her to construct an identity as white. However, she is often reminded that she is not white because of her Asian features, which makes it difficult to embrace her own racial identity. Racialization in Spain, as San Román elaborates, occurs along the binary divide between whites and non-whites, even though Spanish identity is founded on ethnic and linguistic diversities rather than a phenotype:

> In Spain, there is a large variability in phenotype, which has its roots in a history of invasions and migration. The Spanish population, however, considers itself white, even if they would not be labeled as such in other cultural contexts. From self-perception, the non-white phenotypical diversity of the Spanish society is new and comes as a result of the immigration that took place at the dawn of the millennium (232).

Spanish whiteness is, then, defined only in opposition to non-whites associated with migrants, who are perceived to be outside the national boundary. Vigo expresses her frustration at being repeatedly questioned about her non-Spaniard status due to her physical appearance in "Soy 'de aquí': por mucho que quiera etiquetarme como 'de allí' y otros racismos": *"¿De dónde eres? ¿Por qué hablas tan bien español? ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas aquí? ¿Conoces tu país? ¿Tienes ganas de volver? ¿Tienes curiosidad por conocer a tus padres biológicos?*" (13). Later in the memoir, she reiterates that people inquire about her nationality until she responds to them that she is from Colombia, asserting their perception of her as a foreigner is correct:

> Tengo nacionalidad española, he respondido muchas veces a personas que desde su incomprensión e impertinencia, me cuestionan abiertamente este vínculo jurídico con España. *¿Y tus padres?* Españoles. *¿Y tus abuelos?* Españoles. ¿Vas a preguntarme si soy inmigrante de cuarta, quinta o sexta generación, en serio? (56)

The labeling of her as a migrant or a foreigner based on her appearance has followed her everywhere. When she went to a driving school for a motorcycle license, she was singled out for the Spanish National Identity Document (Documento Nacional de Identidad). Suspiciously, she was recommended to change driving school for being too short. At a job interview requiring math skills, she only received a question about how she acquired impeccable Spanish. She lamented: "La entrevista más corta de mi vida. Qué impotencia que mis competencias, profesionalidad, capacidades y aptitudes se resuman en eso" (58). Instead of using her actual name, some refer to her as "chinita," reducing her to a racial otherness (59).

Vigo realizes that the racialization of Asians is rooted in a deep-seated anxiety, often symbolized by contagious diseases. Lok Siu and Clair Chun argue in their 2020 study that the global surge of anti-Asian aggressions during the Coronavirus pandemic is rooted in a long history of Western anxiety against Asians through racialized contagion, known as the yellow peril. They emphasize that the recent anti-Asian rhetoric is not an isolated or new case. During the smallpox epidemic in San Francisco from 1868 through the 1880s, American health officials depicted Chinatown as unhygienic and the Chinese as disease carriers (427). They contend that the

xenophobic portrayal of the Chinese as a contagion contributed to the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, protecting white labor unions from conflicts over wage competition with Chinese workers: "Together, these yellow peril discourses molded perceptions of ethnic Chinese as both economic and biological threats, fueling the anti-Chinese movement that eventually led to the successful legislation of the Chinese Exclusion Act" (428). Similarly, the anti-Chinese accusations of a biological threat during the Coronavirus pandemic reflect Western concerns about China's increasing global power driven by technological advancements (424). Vigo states that she, too, experienced racial profiling during the pandemic while working as a nursing intern at a hospital. She remembers how people made seemingly sympathetic yet offensive comments: "Desde *qué mal están las cosas por tus tierras* (señora, estas son mis tierras), *tu familia debe estar pasándolo fatal* (no sé, la suya qué tal lleva su hipertensión) hasta un *dile a tu familia que no venga a verte que trae el virus* de parte de una médica" (59). These informal comments, grounded in the assumption that race and national identity are seamlessly aligned, invalidate her professional and national identities. Of note, she resists ostracization in this quote by adding her responses in parentheses as an afterthought. These unverbalized rebukes constitute a silent protest, indicating her determination to confront future offenders. Simultaneously, the racist comments remind her that the Chinese represent a danger that needs to be kept out because they are the bearers of diseases that could make the national subjects ill. The idea that the Chinese are bad for the national health can also be interpreted metaphorically as a social threat to Spanish cultural values, as exemplified in other comments Vigo has heard: "Los chinos os lo vais a llevar todo. Los chinos no sois de fiar" (58). The pandemic reinforced the underlying sentiment of Chinese being untrustworthy migrants.

The instances of microaggressions Vigo recounts illustrate that she is aware of being perceived as a non-Spaniard and that the racialization of Asians depends on the narcissistic racial fantasies built to sustain white supremacy. Racial fantasies, whether fetishistic, idealizing, or utterly hostile, are essentially narcissistic because they only serve to uphold hegemonic whiteness, irrespective of the feelings and emotions of those who are ostracized. Vigo becomes increasingly aware of this mechanism but not wholly unaffected by the ideals of whiteness. Therefore, her deconstruction of racist comments is not an indication of the end but a snapshot of the process of identity negotiation as a racialized subject. She oscillates between the description of symptoms she experienced and the identification of the ideals governing the feelings of being unfit and rejected. This narrative dynamic resonates with Eng and Han's theorization of racial melancholia as a "fluid negotiation between mourning and melancholia" (693). For example, Vigo confesses her eating disorder and the impossibility to meet the white beauty ideals: "la belleza que nos lanzan es la belleza blanca, a la que estamos condenados no poder alcanzar. Qué frustración. Que mi color de piel no es así, que mis ojos no venden, que el pelo afro no nos gusta pero las trenzas nos las apropiamos" (41). She enumerates her physical "defects" according to the white European beauty standards, such as her size, skin color, eyes, and hair, to show that the white racial ideals she was expected to incorporate are unattainable. Therefore, a more diverse and inclusive understanding of beauty is necessary to protect racialized subjects from committing self-harm. By defining racial melancholia as a continual sway between the two psychological processes, between identification of what causes her harm and the pain itself she undergoes, Eng and Han never suggest that minority subjects' successful grief of racial affliction has a proper closure when society becomes colorblind or when an individual completely overcomes the effects of racism. Instead, they conceive of it as an ongoing history affecting both racialized individuals and society.

The ideals of whiteness are not only unachievable but also hold sway over the racialization of Asian women in an ambivalent manner. Vigo lays bare the self-contradicting dynamic of the racialization of Asian women's bodies by commenting on their association with women dedicated to the sex industry. While both male and female Asians contend with racial stereotypes, women, in particular, are fetishized as sexual objects. She was often harassed by white men with racial flirtations, which she understands as a shared experience among many Asian women: "Eres muy guapa para ser china/no ser blanca," "Eres muy morena para ser china," "No besas como una china," "No follas como una china," "Las chinas dais morbo," and "¿Eres una asiática sumisa? (El daño del porno es un tema muy largo que daría para mucho)" (58). Asian women's bodies are not just a sign of otherness but an object onto which white sexual fantasies of domination, obedience, and servitude are projected. They become a desired otherness when complying with these fantasies. Paradoxically, the fetishization of Asian women as a sexual object is at odds with the white beauty ideals that marginalize them. They are deemed unattractive for failing to conform to white beauty ideals but are simultaneously sexually desired for being different from Western women. Therefore, Asian women are subjected to ambivalent, self-contradicting racialization. In this sense, Vigo's experience resonates with Anne Anlin Cheng's theorization of racialization, which she characterizes as fundamentally ambivalent because it dwells on the projection of self-contradicting fantasies: "…the dominant culture's relation to the raced other displays an entangled network of repulsion and sympathy, fear and desire, repudiation and identification" (2001, 12). Delving into the ambiguous representations of Asian women in her later study, she observes that this minority group is uniquely racialized as both human and ornamental objects. She further argues that due to this particular racialization, Asian feminism should be theorized differently from the conventional feminist discourse surrounding agency or the feminist and racial discourse centered on the "injured flesh": "Instead of being pure capture or representing fugitive flight from the nominative biological or anatomical raced body, the yellow woman emerges as a 'body ornament' whose perihumanity demands that we approach ontology, fleshliness, and aliveness differently" (2019, 2). For her, it is imperative to tease out what is still residual in the representation of Asian women as a form of resistance and denominates this critical act "ornamentalism": "In lieu of traditional notions of agency, ornamentalism helps us address the unexpected, perhaps even unspeakable, forms and residues of ontology and survival" (19). Although Vigo is more focused on understanding the pain caused by her misaligned racial identity by analyzing the paradoxical construction of Asiatic femininity, it should be noted that the comments of hypersexualization Vigo reproduced exemplify what Cheng describes as a "perihuman" quality. Vigo is stereotyped through her body parts and their exclusively focused sexual functions that should be put into service to satisfy others' fantasies, configuring her as a mere sexual ornament and canceling her autonomy.

Understanding the mechanisms of racialization and the ideology of white supremacy that sustains them is a crucial part of overcoming Vigo's racial melancholia—her self-denial resulting from the plight between her self-identification as white and her impugned Spanish identity for being racially non-white. Toward the end of the memoir, Vigo signals that she is gradually moving toward embracing her racial identity to find peace within her: "Miro mi cuerpo, como una cáscara vacía de otro fruto confundido, y pienso que lo tendría que hacer mío" (79). Although it is undoubtedly a positive sign, the critical potentiality of racial melancholia is not so much in cure and recovery as in unraveling and denouncing the harmful effects of racism on racialized subjects

in a colorblind environment. In fact, the two are intertwined. Writing for Vigo is, thus, a step forward in alleviating her pain and accepting her racial identity, as well as an outcry to reconsider the racialized hierarchies and inequalities that materialize around the interracial adoptees. It is a space where her unusual personal story that challenges the conventional alignment of race and ethnicity can give rise to new social possibilities.

Reframing Interracial Adoption as Transnational Reproductive Justice

Vigo illustrates how her experience with racialization while growing up in a colorblind familial upbringing leads to the repudiation of Asian identity. In doing so, she challenges the notion of interracial adoption as colorblind love deemed to erase any psychological conflict in the process. Her pain and suffering highlight the imperative of resisting racism and revising the current hegemonic adoption discourse. Vigo's writing makes social grievances possible. In underscoring the memoir's political meaning, this study focuses on her use of literary quotes because they provide a glimpse into her reframing of transnational adoption and what it means to write about it.[3] Vigo includes celebrated sentences and poetic verses from prominent writers like Virginia Woolf, Margaret Atwood, Albert Camus, and Carmen Martín Gaite in epigraphs within essays, poems, or epilogues. While the sentences from Woolf and Martín Gaite appear in the epigraph and epilogue, Atwood and Camus's verses are placed at the end of her essays in which she reflects on death and life while experiencing the lowest moments of her crisis. The connections between the quotes and her narration are allusive at times and vague at others, without any explicit relation to her experience as an Asian adoptee. They seem to be the books she read and found solace in, or a way to find inspiration for transforming herself into an active voice. Despite being irrelevant to any topics related to transnational adoption, the literary quotes seem to serve as a pedagogical tool for Vigo to break out of the self-perpetuating cycle of self-denial, open herself to new ways of thinking, and approximate the spirit of struggle and resistance embodied by these authors. She does not analyze the quotes or rationalize how these authors appeal to her. Instead, she recalls their ideas at different moments of her crisis as a way of dialoguing with herself creatively, as with the quotes from Atwood and Camus, to reflect on why she needs to choose to live despite the pain of not knowing where she belongs. Thus, the literary quotes in her memoir insinuate that she read literature to liberate herself from her psychological impasse and see herself anew.

Vigo uses intertextuality to shape how her memoir should be read. As Julia Kristeva indicates, intertextuality foregrounds the fluid relationality between texts and contexts: "an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context" (Kristeva, 65). Thus, the interplay between the context in which the literary quotes were written and that in which Vigo reads them produces a meaning that needs to be interpreted. One forceful common contextual thread that unites the four authors is that they formed part of anti-totalitarian and feminist traditions in diverse countries and at different times. This political background prepares her to create the political textuality necessary to build her position regarding transnational adoption. Against the backdrop of this political insight, the argument that Vigo's identity crisis is part of a larger systemic inequality that must be resisted becomes more compelling. In particular, intertextuality—created with quotes from Woolf, Atwood, and Martín Gaite—provides a clue as to the ideas that have shaped Vigo's perspective on interracial adoption as a transnational feminist issue. These three authors are iconic feminist writers and activists from

the UK, Canada, and Spain who published during or in opposition to totalitarian regimes.[4] Their shared struggle against patriarchy and fascist oppression signals the political framework in which Vigo situates her life story, one molded by transnational adoption. Vigo's textual encounter with these authors signals that as an adoptee at the crossroads of nations, cultures, and races, she draws on resources from worldly women who challenged the hegemonic axes of power. Furthermore, it is not a coincidence that Woolf and Martín Gaite stressed the importance of writing in constructing female subjectivity. Like these feminist writers, Vigo uses writing to ask fundamental questions about self-inquiry and agency.

The memoir opens with a dedication to those who supported her during difficult times, and her seven-line poem depicts an agitated inner dialogue with herself, anticipating the book's content. Immediately after the poem, Vigo adds the first epigraph featuring an extract from Woolf's text *Three Guineas* that reads as follows: "Como mujer no tengo patria, como mujer no quiero patria, como mujer, mi patria es el mundo" (Vigo, 7). This sets the tone for how Vigo's memoirs should be read. Considering that the collection of essays containing the quote is a dialogue and debate on politically charged issues— specifically, a reply to an educated man asking how women can contribute to the fight against war—Vigo may have conceived her book as an intimate conversation with the readership of interracial adoption. Furthermore, Woolf's remarks on women's social duties not being bound by the state for its failure to extend the social contract to them can be connected to Vigo's memoirs at several levels. The idea that political entities, such as cities and nations, do not protect women's rights, which is implicit in Woolf's quote, runs parallel to Vigo's move to reconsider interracial adoption as a tragic consequence of imbalanced power relations between nations, genders, and races. This view defies the idealistic conception of transnational adoption as the culmination of Western colorblind love, used to rescue the children of non-Western nations. In particular, the modifier of the wounds in the title, "sin patria," hints at her political reframing. The plausible meaning of this expression is that her sense of belonging cannot be rooted in a unified racial, ethnic, and national identity: "Porque no soy ni de aquí ni de allí, vivo en tierra de nadie, el lugar que habita mi ser me resulta despersonalizado" (79). Vigo's Spanish identity casts doubt on her racial physiognomy, and she cannot define herself as an adequately Asian Spaniard. However, when reading broadly, claiming that her wounds have no country implies more than asserting her complex identity as unanchorable. The identity of adoptees can only be defined transnationally, similar to the women in Woolf's quote because they have experienced psychological wounds during the transnational process of adoptive migration. In this manner, Vigo widens the scope of its responsibilities. The pain and hardship that adoptees undergo should be addressed beyond the confines of a nation-state supporting the ideology of the family.

After setting her memoir with Woolf's feminist voice, Vigo introduces the second literary reference in "Las sirenas de mi mar no saben afinar." This essay appears immediately after she stresses mental health. She describes her thoughts manifested through a fast-racing heart that reminds her, "un no soy suficiente que se me atraganta y no me deja respirar" (25). Then, she plunges into a conversation with her own inner self and confesses: "Estalla mi tormenta interior, pero no necesito salvavidas: en el fondo sé que puedo encontrar mi calma" (25). Despite her self-conviction to find peace, she writes a poem enunciating the ongoing strife between the self as a physical entity and the self in pain, between body and mind. The poem is headed by Margaret Atwood's quote from "Corpse Song," the last song of her ten-poem sequence titled "Songs of the Transformed" included in *You Are Happy* (1974). It reads as follows: "Yo existo en dos lugares:

aquí y donde tú estés" (Vigo, 25). These lines represent the detached voice of the corpse, experiencing a disconnection between corporeality and the psychic dimension and body and soul. Atwood's poem depicts a situation parallel to Vigo's but adds a warning of the inevitable mortality that the voice of the corpse offers to the unknown addressee. Echoing Atwood's poetic reflection on death, the lyrical voice in Vigo is torn between life and death, harboring resentment for still being reluctant to choose life: "Ahí está la vida, aquí la tristeza" (26). Vigo's reference to Atwood succinctly encapsulates her psychological dilemma and continuing self-interrogations to find a path to healing. The fact that Vigo's inner turmoil is reflected in the verses written by feminist activist Atwood gains added significance because she condemned the totalitarian regime's control of women's reproductive rights in her famous novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Ironically, Vigo, as an adoptee, is a product of the totalitarian control of the birth rate under the Chinese Communist Party's one-child policy. Similar to the children born to handmaids in Atwood's novel, who were forcibly separated from their birth mothers, Vigo was adopted to avoid being penalized by the state. Thus, her use of Atwood's verses is not a coincidence but reflects her intention to view her life from that political framework.

Vigo's use of Woolf and Atwood in her memoir signals her political leanings toward transnational reproductive justice. Kimberly McKee, in an essay written for the Harvard Law Research Center Blog, *Bill of Health*, argues that adoption is a reproductive justice issue because racial and economic hierarchies determine parenting rights. Therefore, adoption should not be viewed as a gift, nor should it be considered a positive alternative to abortion (McKee 2022). In Vigo's text, many crucial interrogations posed by scholars of transnational reproductive justice remain only tangentially addressed. Her memoir does not allow for a detailed discussion regarding how women's reproductive rights in China were conditioned by socio-political forces when she was adopted or how interracial adoption perpetuated hierarchical power relations between the West and the rest of the world. Nor did she demonstrate emotional stability and financial independence at the time of writing, which might have allowed her to understand better the inevitable circumstances in which she was given away—a crucial step in decolonizing the adoption narrative, according to Yook and Kim (2018, 2). However, Vigo provides clues about how she views her own adoption story within the framework of transnational reproductive justice. One of Vigo's essays, "Orígenes," indicates that she gradually sees her case as the byproduct of oppressive systems limiting women's rights. Gaining such insight helps her reconstruct herself as a more self-assured woman: "Porque sólo era mi imaginación intentando justificar una injusticia impuesta por una ley: que de un día para otro cambiaron los olores de seguridad y protección, los rasgos de la gente, el timbre de las voces, los sabores" (2020, 53). Vigo reconsiders the adoption narrative from the perspective of the voiceless adoptee who is abruptly and entirely uprooted by an unfair policy that disrespects women's reproductive rights, challenging the idealization of transnational adoption as a humanitarian rescue for abandoned children.

Spanish adoption from China initially gained momentum due to the stirring narrative of rescue depicted in Kate Blewett and Brian Woods' 1995 documentary, *The Dying Rooms*, aired on Televisión Española. The film denounces the horrid conditions of Chinese orphanages where abandoned babies were housed because of the government's strict implementation of the one-child policy. A year after the documentary was aired, Antonio Gómez Rufo published a novel titled *Lágrimas de Henan* (1996), in which he recounts the story of Wong Feng, who goes at length to secure a male inheritor against Chinese governmental policy. While the novel attempts to show

the painful reality of ordinary people in rural China under the totalitarian policy, its back cover blurb markets the book as a guide for prospective Spanish parents considering adoption from Asia. The promotional pitch hints at transnational adoption as a means of liberating the Chinese women and female babies from persecution, penalization, and forced abortion: "Una novela sobre la discriminación de la mujer en China, el desprecio a las niñas y la política del hijo único. Una novela que se ha convertido en una referencia para los padres que quieren adoptar un niño en el gigante asiático" (Rufo). In 2013, Verónica Anzil examined how intercountry adoption was depicted in media in Catalonia beyond cultural products made immediately after adoption from China became possible. Similar to American adoption scholars like Arissa L. Oh and Laura Briggs, who revealed the salvation rhetoric underlying adoption practice in the US, Anzil found the continuing humanitarian framework in the Spanish case.[5] She indicates that the adoptees are described as "victims without families" and the adoptive parents as "saviors" of the children who must be "rescued" (77). Additionally, Chinese adoption is almost always represented by "the one-child policy and the orphanage filled with girls, whose living conditions are described as 'subhuman'" (80).

Considering that transnational adoption is rooted in the structural inequalities of race and gender, challenging the adoption narrative of salvation is a critical step. Vigo prompts this shift by posing the question of who is accountable for her pain caused by a lack of a sense of belonging. She deems it unfair that the adoptees are expected to be grateful for being granted a better life: "No ser desagradecido es el eterno peso con el que temenos que lidiar las personas adoptadas. Y no es justo que un niño tenga que cargar con esa norma interna, si es que se pueden aplicar los términos de *justicia* aquí" (18, Author's emphasis). Her use of the word "justicia" for fairness and justice is notable here. This implies a broad chain of people, institutions, and policies shaping her destiny. Further, the adoptive parents, who are incapable of fully understanding their adopted children's ordeal, should not be the sole party responsible for her? care, as Vigo asserts how supportive and caring they have been throughout her identity crisis. She was aware of the complex and excruciating stories that all adoptive families carry within themselves (14). By demanding justice for the psychological wounds triggered by cross-border adoption and denominating them as "*heridas sin patria*," Vigo breaks from the unproblematic idealization of adoption as mutually beneficial both for European adopting parents and abandoned Asian children. Final

Vigo's first two literary quotes help her challenge the idealization of transnational adoption and question who is accountable for the children's well-being. The final literary reference sheds light on Vigo's approach to writing. After expressing gratitude to the publisher and to the reader who has put faith in "Infinitas gracias," she concludes her memoir with a celebrated phrase written by the Spanish feminist author of *El cuarto de atrás* (2018) and translator of Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* [*Al faro*] (1978): "Mientras dure la vida, sigamos con el cuento" (Vigo, 92). The quote is from Martín Gaite's essay collection *El cuento de nunca acabar: apuntes sobre la narración, el amor y la mentira* (1983). In this less-studied essay collection, Martín Gaite shares her ideas about writing and the process of creation. Catherin O'Leary and Alison Ribeiro de Menezes link Martín Gaite's storytelling with a continual process of renewal: "For her, *contar*, like life itself, an activity which is provisional, never-ending and constantly changing as new directions emerge and then fall from sight to be replaced by others in a never-ending cycle of change and renewal" (206). In this schema, literature is not about lofty ideas communicated only by intellectuals or professional writers, but rather stories of flesh and blood humans fictionalized through characters that invite

continuous modifications and proliferation. For Vigo, sharing her story marks a fresh start, transitioning from a suffering soul to a woman who has found a way to cope with her pain and confront racial discrimination. Potentially, her story generates an endless chain of narratives that showcase underrepresented experiences, expanding the sense of reality. The use of Martín Gaite's catchphrase that includes the verb "seguir" in the first-person plural as the epilogue opens the possibility of reading Vigo's story as a form of political activism. By denouncing anti-Asian racism as the factor triggering and intensifying her identity crisis in the writing, Vigo inscribes her desire to play a part in building a community of diverse and infinite narratives that can combat racial and other forms of injustice. Her personal story, which remains largely unknown to society, contributes to amplifying voices that resist the structural and political oppression of racialized women.

Conclusion

Heridas sin patria challenges any naïve idealization of transnational, interracial adoption rooted in colorblind love and humanitarian rescue. Through an intimate testimony of her experiences of racialization, Vigo unravels the difficulty of integrating into Spanish society, which does not question its white supremacy. Finding inspiration from feminist writers who oppose totalitarian powers, she reframes the overseas adoption of Chinese female babies as a violation of the protection of children carried out in an imbalanced structure of women's reproductive rights and turns her story into a tool for resistance. The emotional support she received from families and female friends, together with the lessons she learned from feminist writers about women's opposition to oppressive politics over female bodies, enabled her to gain agency and embrace the Asian identity that she had long rejected. Her writing constitutes an entry into an ongoing dialogue with her readers and others who may tell their own stories to combat racism and discrimination.

NOTES

[1]Although the term "Asians" encompasses many countries and ethnicities beyond one single racial category of East Asians, it is used interchangeably with Chinese to avoid repetition in this article. This usage recognizes that Asians are often misunderstood as a racial category referring to those with slanted eyes in the Spanish imaginary.

[2]The article does not comment on Arantxa Echevarría's *Chinas* (2023), a film about an adopted Chinese girl who befriends a second-generation Chinese girl, because it was unavailable in the US at the time of writing.

[3]Due to space constraints, the article centers on Vigo's use of intertextuality, omitting an analysis of her poetry. In her poetry, Vigo sublimates her pain and renegotiates her sense of identity.

[4]Camus' quote, "Al final, uno necesita más coraje para vivir que para quitarse la vida" (Vigo, 55), serves as an epilogue in the essay titled "Lo siento." The citation comes from the French author's first novel, posthumously published as *A Happy Death* (1971), wherein he reflects on happiness as a feeling arising from the acceptance of one's world rather than the attainment of desired privileges. The book finds frequent application in psychology, particularly for patients suffering from depression. In Vigo's memoir, the quote serves as an aphorism, compelling her to value her life and distance herself from suicidal ideation, especially following her confession of intense guilt for causing trouble to her supportive adoptive mother.

[5]Arissa L. Oh argues that Christian Americanism embraced adoption as a means of "proving its racial liberalism and winning the allegiance of newly independent countries around the world" (Oh, 8). Laura Briggs indicates that many American families adopted Guatemalan "orphans" in the aftermath of the country's prolonged Civil War, with many children believed to be kidnapped or disappeared from families and communities of supposed leftists (Briggs, 24).

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El emplazamiento de Cíbola se sitúa en la encrucijada de tres culturas (la india, la mestiza y la anglosajona) en una región que corresponde a las actuales Arizona y Nuevo México y que Sender ha asimilado al detalle durante su exilio, el *Southwest* estadounidense. Esta región de fuerte sustrato hispano se evoca en la ficción literaria en Cíbola, lugar de ensoñación y de leyenda que motivó las primeras expediciones españolas, el mítico enclave de siete ciudades objeto de codicia durante la fiebre del oro.

Novelas ejemplares de Cíbola retiene siete de los nueve relatos de *Mexicayotl* y su inclusión responde a nuevos propósitos de coherencia textual.[1] Han sido sometidos a una reelaboración a partir de un proceso escritural que culmina con la añadidura de los cinco relatos restantes, constatando la transferencia cervantina en el cómputo y en el paratexto y "donde lo que se busca no es ya lo 'mexicano universal' sino la integración del trasfondo primitivo e irracional del hombre en el mundo moderno de la civilización y el raciocinio" (Collard 113). Los cuentos de *Mexicayotl* protagonizados por personajes totémicos que remiten a un accidente geográfico o por animales están basados en la mitología azteca, maya y tolteca de la época precolombina. Sin embargo, han perdido el hálito épico y la minuciosa descripción de los espacios de fondo ancestral en la nueva colección de 1961 a favor de una diégesis más simple, pasando de leyendas a relatos de ficción, en los que la cuentística está al servicio a ilustrar las complejidades del sudoeste estadounidense.

Para simplificar la actividad más intensa que se le presupone al lector no familiarizado con los nuevos ribetes de estas autorreescrituras y la añadidura de los nuevos relatos, la nueva colección se divide en novelas pares (donde se ubicarán los cuentos procedentes de *Mexicayotl*) e impares (las cinco restantes); en las primeras, el mundo de Cíbola será apreciado únicamente por su atmósfera, mientras que en el caso de las impares habrá una mención directa, para dar relieve al mundo interior de los personajes contrapuesto al gregarismo del hombre social contemporáneo.[2]

Atendiendo a las ideas de "encuentro y de contraste" (Collard 113) el mundo de las novelas impares está emplazada en el mundo contemporáneo narrado entreverado con en el mundo de fantasía y magia que evoca Cíbola. La pregnancia de la cultura india en los relatos impares se debe a una asimilación de Sender de sus distintas costumbres y tradiciones de modo que la mitología y la convivencia de Nuevo México ya han sido asimiladas por completo en el momento de su redacción (Vásquez 195). En la mayoría de ellas el protagonista individual o colectivo, de ascendencia europea y anglosajona, experimenta una interacción colateral con una civilización contrapuesta como es la india, esta última en ocasiones subsumida dentro de un contingente mestizo.[3] Según Mainer, la mezcla de lo real con lo legendario sirve de fondo para atestiguar la disgregación moral norteamericana frente a la naturalidad de la población india. Frente al contingente indios que afronta lo instintivo automáticamente y en toda su sublimación el hombre europeo, en cambio, muestra a un ser instintivo que por sus acciones adultera esta dimensión, percibida como no controlable ni modificable.

La tesis implícita en lo tocante a este conjunto de novelas cortas y que es extrapolable al resto de la obra de Sender que reflejan directamente la experiencia americana es, como asegura Espadas "que la gente en la sociedad moderna se ha apartado de la naturaleza en sus diversos aspectos y en su lugar ha creado una sociedad basada en jerarquías o clases sociales o diferencias culturales que resulta esencialmente falsa y dañina" (121). El impulso subyacente desde la Modernidad ha sido, por utilizar la terminología weberiana, el de la desacralización, el desencantamiento y "la eliminación de la magia del mundo" sustituida por un tejido mental estricto de control, estructura y rutinización de la vida cotidiana y sobre todo lo que no se considera parte de los aspectos racionales de la mente. Este proceso es el núcleo abstracto de la visión empirista y