

Introduction

During the first half of the 1630s, the first Count of the Valley of Orizaba, don Rodrigo de Vivero y Aberruza, wrote a critical reflection on New Spain's pivotal position in an increasingly interconnected world. According to this creole nobleman, expanding flows of people and commodities across the Pacific were having a negative impact on life in the viceroyalty. Soldiers and friars traveling from Spain to the Philippines were deserting their companies, causing harm to Spanish and Indigenous populations alike. Transpacific trade was fueling fraud and corruption, leading to an uncontrollable hemorrhaging of wealth. Meanwhile, the exchange of valuable silver for useless vanities was excessively benefiting New Spain's merchants, enabling them to improve their social position at the cost of those whom they believed should receive the viceroyalty's benefits: the descendants of the conquistadores. These developments, Vivero warned, were having a destabilizing effect not only on New Spain but on the Spanish empire as a whole. To put an end to these threats to the colonial and imperial order, the count proposed that the monarch should "close the port of Acapulco and send aid for the Philippines from Cadiz or Lisbon."¹

¹ "Discursos de d. Rodrigo de Vivero i Velasco primer conde del Valle de Orizaba," Real Academia de la Historia, Colección Muñoz, V.10 (9/4789), f. 73v. These reflections form part of a collection of documents, also including Vivero's accounts of his travels to Japan and a selection of royal grants (*mercedes*), which was prepared by his grandson, don Nicolas de Vivero Peredo y Velasco, to be presented at the court. A somewhat altered copy of this collection is also preserved in the British Library (Add MS 18287) and has been transcribed in its entirety in Rodrigo de Vivero, "Abisoy y proyectos," *Du Japon et du bon*

Vivero's assessment of the negative impact of New Spain's proliferating transpacific connections was not unique at the time. Similar critiques had already been voiced both inside and outside the viceroyalty for almost half a century. Still, the nobleman's commentary on the current state of the empire reveals a remarkable change in his opinion about the desirability of global interconnectedness. Earlier in his life, Vivero had played a key role in establishing new relationships across the Pacific. With his visits in 1609 and 1610 to the Japanese shogun, Hidetada, and his powerful father, Ieyasu, he had made valuable contributions to the diplomatic overtures that took place between New Spain and Japan during the following decade.² Vivero's experiences in the Pacific had also emerged in the self-promoting stories he had been telling the Crown in his petitions for rewards.³ Yet, in his reflections from the 1630s, the count revised this narrative, speaking now of Japanese justice and imperial politics to reinforce his argument that New Spain would be better off acting as the empire's outer limit rather than a pivot connecting the Iberian metropolis to its Asian territories. The striking contrast between Vivero's writings from the 1610s and 1620s and those from the 1630s reveals how his ideas about the significance of the viceroyalty's connections to the world changed as his position within ongoing struggles over royal favor shifted. Having become a member of the landed nobility in 1627, he had developed a new sense of entitlement, resulting in a quite different self-image and an accordingly revised vision regarding global relationships.

This book traces the history of New Spain's gradual integration within the Pacific Basin and the impacts of this development on the narratives that Spaniards in the viceroyalty recounted about themselves and the changing world around them.⁴ Activities contributing to this integrative process commenced almost immediately after the Spaniards arrived in Mesoamerica. In 1522, only a year after the fall of Tenochtitlan, Hernán Cortés was already building ships in the port of Zacatula, in order to explore the secrets of the waters then known as the *Mar del Sur* (South Sea). During the following century, expeditions sent from New Spain's western coast established initial connections across the Pacific Basin.

gouvernement de l'Espagne et des Indes, ed. and trans. Juliette Monbeig (Paris: SEVPEN, 1972), 76–131.

² For Vivero's accounts of his time in Japan, see for example: Vivero, *Du Japon et du bon gouvernement*, 53–74.

³ See, for example, Letter from Vivero, Jun 30, 1624, AGI, Panamá, 17, R.8, N.144.

⁴ I use the term Pacific Basin to refer to the lands that border the ocean, usually called the Pacific Rim, and the islands within it.

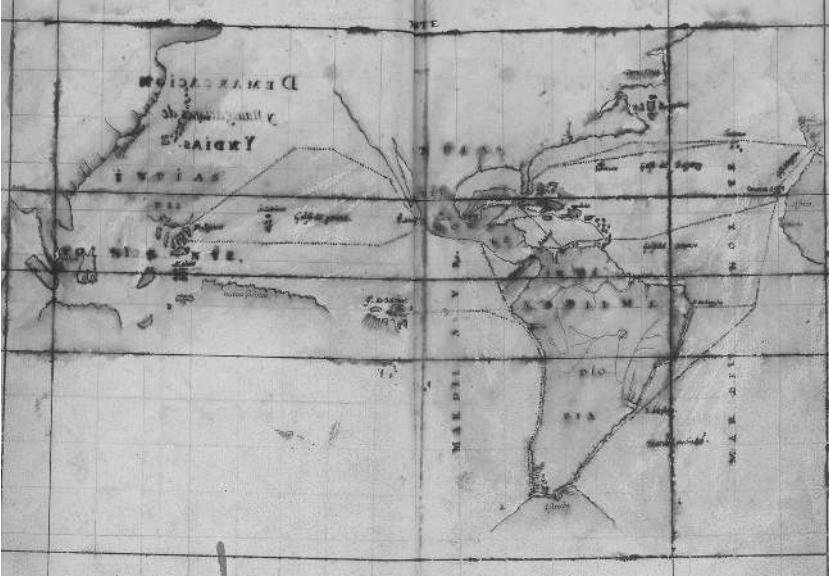


FIGURE I.1 Map of the Spanish Indies. Juan López de Velasco, *Demarcación y navegación de Indias*, Madrid (ca. 1575). Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library

Conquerors and merchants headed south, following the coast toward Panama and El Callao, in search of the treasures of the Incas and, later, the silver mined in Potosí. Others set out northward, to locate a land bridge connecting the Asian and American continents or a strait connecting the Pacific to the Atlantic. Yet others sailed west, searching for the long-desired route to Asia, especially the coveted Spice Islands. Although the Spaniards had little trouble crossing the ocean, it took them until 1565 to discover the *tornaviaje*, a sea route that allowed ships to sail east from the Philippines to California. Soon thereafter, Spanish galleons began making regular trips across the vast oceanic expanse, transporting trade goods as well as soldiers, friars, royal officials, merchants, and others from Acapulco to Manila.

With the expansion of Spanish activities in the Pacific Basin, New Spain increasingly became a point of intersection for imperial, commercial, and religious networks. Speaking to this emerging situation is a map that the royal cosmographer, Juan López de Velasco, included in his *Demarcación y división de las Indias* (Demarcation and Division of the Indies) in the mid-1570s (see Figure I.1).⁵ Plotted to underline and justify

⁵ Juan López de Velasco, *Demarcación y división de las Indias*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Mss/2825. This text has been published in CDI, 15: 409–572.

Spain's territorial claims in Asia, Velasco's image depicts the Western Hemisphere as it stretches out between the line of demarcation defined by the treaty of Tordesillas (1493) and a meridian line he drew, somewhat arbitrarily, across the Malayan Peninsula to separate the Spanish from the Portuguese spheres of influence.⁶ In Velasco's view of the Spanish empire, the metropolis appears in the east, hidden away on the right side of the map. The opposite side depicts the regions known today as East and Southeast Asia but which he strategically referred to as the "*Indias del Poniente*" (Indies of the West) – a region that he considered to be, after North and South America, the third component of the Spanish Indies.⁷ New Spain is situated at the center of the image, its pivotal position in the imperial order highlighted by the transatlantic and transpacific routes converging on it.

Other contemporaries made similar observations about the effects of New Spain's integration into the Pacific world. Already in 1566, an anonymous account of the discovery of the return route from the Philippines concluded that "those of Mexico are mighty proud of their discovery, which gives them to believe that they will be the heart of the world."⁸ Such expectations about the viceroyalty's changing position in a globalizing world became more and more a reality during the final decades of the sixteenth and first decades of the seventeenth centuries.⁹ Through its western ports, New Spain extended Spain's imperial reach, providing access to the empires, kingdoms, and markets of East and Southeast Asia. The arrival of Asian migrants, objects, and plants further complicated processes of biological and cultural hybridization that had already been initiated by the transatlantic encounters between the Old World and the New.¹⁰ Meanwhile, New Spain's capital developed into a

⁶ For a discussion of López de Velasco's map and its relation to the imperial struggles between Spain and Portugal, see Ricardo Padrón, *The Indies of the Setting Sun: How Early Modern Spain Mapped the Far East as the Transpacific West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 161–65.

⁷ CDI, 15: 410.

⁸ This account has been published in Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands, 1493–1803* (Cleveland, OH: A. H. Clark Co., 1903), 2: 230.

⁹ Serge Gruzinski, *Las cuatro partes del mundo: historia de una mundialización* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010), 124–26.

¹⁰ During the past few decades, the role of Asian peoples and objects in these processes of hybridization and transculturation has drawn considerable attention, resulting in studies of New Spanish ceramics, *biombos*, and other types of furniture, as well as the consumption of Asian spices and beverages, such as coconut wine. See, for example, George Kuwayama, *Chinese Ceramics in Colonial Mexico* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997); Donna Pierce and Ronald Y. Otsuka, eds., *Asia & Spanish*

hub for the incipient world market, where local and regional merchandise was traded next to luxury and bulk goods coming from Europe and Asia. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, New Spain's pivotal position in this incipient world of trade inspired Spanish poet Bernardo de Balbuena to exclaim in his typical hyperbolic style: "Mexico you divide the world in half, the earth bending toward it as if toward a sun, appearing to all the world as to preside over it all."¹¹

Increasing connectivity and mobility in the Pacific Basin not only affected perceptions of New Spain's place in the world but also the self-perceptions of its residents and others traveling through the viceroyalty. Various projects of exploration and conquest had been influencing these notions since the early 1520s, and explorers and conquistadores spotlighted their activities in and knowledge of the Pacific Basin in the life stories they produced to obtain privileges and rewards from the Crown. Residents of New Spain continued to do so after 1565, but their narratives began to reflect another emerging reality. Movement of imperial agents, soldiers, and friars in and across the Pacific, while in many ways enriching life in the viceroyalty, led to social tensions with locals, prompting new senses of self and other.

This book studies these little-explored identity transformations by examining how the increasing mobility of people, goods, and ideas in the Pacific world converged with struggles over the distribution of New Spain's wealth, privileges, and honors to shape new concepts of the self. Discussions about the establishment and desirability of transpacific links interacted with more general debates over why some individuals or segments of the population deserved certain benefits more than others. By investigating the notions of self that were fashioned within the interstices of these disputes, I reassess existing interpretations of the emancipatory significance of the Pacific for its emerging creole population, demonstrating how the viceroyalty's place at the "heart of the world" became the

America: Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1850. Papers from the 2006 Mayer Center Symposium at the Denver Art Museum (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2009); Thomas Calvo and Paulina Machuca, eds., *México y Filipinas: culturas y memorias sobre el Pacífico* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán; Quezon City: Aleneo de Manila University Press, 2016); Paulina Machuca, *El vino de cocos en la Nueva España. Historia de una transculturación en el siglo XVII* (Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2018); Meha Priyadarshini, *Chinese Porcelain in Colonial Mexico: The Material Worlds of an Early Modern Trade* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

¹¹ Bernardo de Balbuena, *Grandeza mexicana*, ed. Asima F.X. Saad Maura (Madrid: Cátedra, 2011), 189.

subject of contention between actors moved by diverging ideas about the distribution of its wealth and benefits.

Traditional scholarship on distributional conflicts in New Spain and the Spanish identities that emerged during these disputes has hardly considered what transpired in the terraqueous spaces west of New Spain. Studies on the distribution of land, *encomiendas*, and offices have revolved around narratives concerning European expansion in the Atlantic world and the emergence of a discourse of creole patriotism resulting from the Crown's refusal to reward the conquistadores and their descendants.¹² In turn, historians of the Spanish Pacific have contributed little to debates about colonial identities, as their studies have focused mainly on exploration and colonization in Asia, the economic dynamics of the galleon trade, as well as transcultural exchanges between New Spain and the Philippines.¹³ Yet, in recent years, growing interest in the Pacific has led to new attempts to bring these distinct strands of scholarship into dialogue. On the one hand, some studies have questioned the previous tendency to separate the conquest of the American mainland from Iberian interests in Asia by demonstrating the enduring impacts that the desire to reach Asia had on the Spanish conquerors and their perceptions of American territories and Native populations.¹⁴ On the other

¹² Marvyn Helen Bacigalupo, *A Changing Perspective: Attitudes towards Creole Society in New Spain (1521–1610)* (London: Tamesis, 1981); Anthony Pagden, "Identity Formation in Spanish America," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, eds. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, 51–93 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); David A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492–1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Bernard Lavallé, *Las promesas ambiguas: ensayos sobre el criollismo colonial en los Andes* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1993).

¹³ William Lytle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1939); Pierre Chaunu, *Les Philippines et le Pacifique des Ibériques (XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe, Siècles): Introduction méthodologique et indices d'activité* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1960); Rafael Bernal, *México en Filipinas: estudio de un transculturación* (Mexico City: UNAM: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1965); O. H. K. Spate, *The Pacific since Magellan, Vol. 1: The Spanish Lake* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979); Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, "Born with a 'Silver Spoon': The Origin of World Trade in 1571," *Journal of World History* 6, no. 2 (1995): 201–21; Marina Alfonso Mola and Carlos Martínez Shaw, eds., *El Galeón de Manila* (Madrid: Aldeasa, 2000).

¹⁴ Richard Flint, "When East Was West: The Oriental Aim of the Coronado Expedition," in *The Latest Word from 1540: Peoples, Places, and Portrayals of the Coronado Expedition*, eds. Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, 105–16 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011); Serge Gruzinski, *L'aigle et le dragon: démesure européenne et mondialisation au XVIe Siècle* (Paris: Editions Fayard, 2012); Ricardo Padrón, "(Un)Inventing America: The Transpacific Indies in Oviedo and Gómara," *Colonial Latin American Review* 25, no. 1 (2016): 16–34.

hand, historians have begun to relate mobilities in the Pacific to the formation of new identities for the Spanish residents of the viceroyalty as well as the “chino slaves” who sought to find their place as *Indios* in the colonial order.¹⁵

This book expands on such studies by revealing how military, religious, and trading activities in the Pacific Basin impacted the social and political negotiations that shaped the identities of those who resided in New Spain or passed through it on their way to Asia. Drawing together approaches from the fields of Mexican and Iberian social history, colonial identity studies, cosmopolitan studies, and global history, I offer an alternative framework for understanding how connectivity affected various notions of what I will refer to as the “deserving self.” By applying a lens on this specific regime of self, I will demonstrate that narratives about the Pacific and New Spain’s place at the heart of the world that were deployed within the context of distributional disputes can neither simply be classified as anti-metropolitan nor merely as expressions of a specific creole cultural worldview. Instead, I argue, they rather reflected the stances of actors involved in complex distributional struggles and debates over the role of global interactions in the making of colonial Mexican society and the Spanish empire as a whole.

IDENTITY AND MOBILITY IN THE EARLY MODERN SPANISH EMPIRE

The question of the relationship between identity and mobility with which this book deals has been a subject of much debate among historians and social scientists during the past three decades. Historians of the early modern period have argued over the role of migration and empire-building in the formation of (proto-)national identities, while others discussed the significance of regional, ethnic, and religious identities in the making of long-distance mercantile and information networks.¹⁶

¹⁵ Tatiana Seijas, *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico: From Chinos to Indians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Also compare Edward R. Slack, “The Chinos in New Spain: A Corrective Lens for a Distorted Image,” *Journal of World History* 20, no. 1 (2009): 35–67.

¹⁶ Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations: Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003). Antonio Feros, *Speaking of Spain: The Evolution of Race and Nation in the Hispanic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press); Bernd Hausberger, “La guerra de los vicuñas contra los vasco-gadgos en Potosí y la etnización de los vascos a principios de la

More recent discussions have also focused on the role of global mobility in the formation of cosmopolitan identities among imperial and religious agents.¹⁷ These debates have deepened our understanding of early modern processes of identity-making and the various roles that connectivity played in them. Still, historians continue to wrestle with the question of how personal identity can be adequately subsumed under general categories and what impacts movement had on both processes of self-making and identification.¹⁸

Illustrative of this struggle is the way in which scholars in recent years have understood the effects of transpacific connections on the development of new senses of self within the viceroyalty. Much of this scholarship has been defined by a tendency to interpret these interactions through the lens of a historiographic narrative about creolization, a process initiated by the movement of a community to a new geographic setting.¹⁹ *Criollismo*, a well-known narrative tells us, arose in the wake of the conquest as a result of the Crown's efforts to limit the influence of an emerging local elite of *encomenderos*.²⁰ Growing resentment among the conquistadores and their descendants over their unequal treatment and loss of political autonomy shaped a discourse that attests, in the words of David Brading, to “a collective consciousness that separated Spaniards

edad moderna,” in *Excluir para ser: Procesos identitarios y fronteras sociales en la América hispánica (XVII-XVIII)*, eds. Christian Büschges and Frédérique Langué, 23–57 (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2005); Eberhard Crailsheim, *The Spanish Connection: French and Flemish Merchant Networks in Seville (1570–1650)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2016).

¹⁷ Gruzinski, *Les quatre parties du monde*; Luis Miguel Córdoba Ochoa, “Movilidad geográfica, capital cosmopolita y relaciones de méritos. Las élites del imperio entre Castilla, América y el Pacífico,” in *Las redes del imperio: Élités sociales en la articulación de la monarquía hispánica, 1492–1714*, ed. Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, 359–78 (Marcial Pons historia. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2009); José Carlos de la Puente, *Andean Cosmopolitans: Seeking Justice and Reward at the Spanish Royal Court* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018).

¹⁸ Also compare John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Moving Stories and What They Tell Us: Early Modern Mobility between Microhistory and Global History,” *Past & Present* 242, Issue Supplement 14 (2019): 245–50. For a general critique of unspecified usage of “identity” as a category in the social sciences, see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, “Beyond Identity,” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 1–47.

¹⁹ Ralph Bauer and José A. Mazzotti, “Introduction,” in *Creole Subjects in the Colonial Americas*, ed. Ralph Bauer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

²⁰ Lavallé, *Las promesas ambiguas*; Pagden, “Identity Formation in Spanish America”; José Antonio Mazzotti, “Introducción,” in *Agencias criollas: la ambigüedad “colonial” en las letras hispanoamericanas*, ed. José A. Mazzotti (Pittsburgh, PA: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2000), 12–13.

born in the New World from their European ancestors and cousins.”²¹ These American-born criollos began to shape new cultural formations that were not only rooted in European traditions but, due to various cultural influences and a newly emerging worldview, were also distinctively American.²²

In their studies of New Spain’s interactions with the Pacific world, historians, literary scholars, and art historians have interacted with this narrative in varying ways. The discovery of the viceroyalty’s global connections and the sense of centrality voiced by people residing there have, for example, dovetailed nicely with efforts made during the past three decades to question traditional Eurocentric historiography.²³ In conventional scholarship, Latin America has generally appeared as being peripheral to the processes of global integration, its peoples presented as victims of global history rather than active participants in it.²⁴ The recent focus on New Spain’s Pacific connections, however, has allowed scholars to overhaul this narrative, showing that in many ways the viceroyalty was much more globally connected than early modern Spain was.

Attempts to rewrite Eurocentric histories have also cohered with an idea voiced by pioneers of Pacific history, namely, that the establishment of the Manila Galleon route meant, in the words of Oscar Spate, “enhanced importance and self-esteem for New Spain” and its inhabitants.²⁵ Recent studies of the viceroyalty’s connections to the Pacific world are inclined toward a similar idea. Economic historians have contended that transpacific commerce enriched Mexico City’s creole elite, providing its members leverage to challenge restrictions forced on them by the Spanish metropolis.²⁶ Some have also presented the city’s powerful merchant guild, the *consulado*, as the defender of creole interests against

²¹ Brading, *The First America*, 293.

²² Solange Alberro, *Del gachupín al criollo o de cómo los españoles de México dejaron de serlo* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1992), 17.

²³ Ryan Dominic Crewe, “Connecting the Indies: The Hispano-Asian Pacific World in Early Modern Global History,” *Estudios Históricos* 30, no. 60 (2017): 19.

²⁴ Matthew Brown, “The Global History of Latin America,” *Journal of Global History* 10, no. 3 (2015): 368–69.

²⁵ Spate, *The Spanish Lake*, 106. Already in 1943, Mariano Cuevas considered the term *mexicanos*, as used in the 1566 account of Legazpi, Salcedo, and Urdaneta’s activities in the Pacific, to reference a collective feat of Spaniards, creoles, and mestizos coming together to constitute the Mexican nation. Mariano P. Cuevas, S. J., *Monje y marino: la vida y los tiempos de Fray Andrés de Urdaneta* (México: Galatea, 1943), 202–3.

²⁶ Katharine Bjork, “The Link That Kept the Philippines Spanish: Mexican Merchant Interests and the Manila Trade, 1571–1815,” *Journal of World History* 9, no. 1 (1998): 25–50. Concerning the importance of transpacific trade for Mexico’s merchants,

royal interventions meant to protect Spanish traders.²⁷ Meanwhile, cultural historians have characterized celebrations of Mexico City's trade connections to the world, like the ones voiced by Balbuena, as efforts to replace Spain with the colonial metropolis as the center of the imperial order.²⁸

Other scholars have even more explicitly blended a focus on global connectedness with narratives of the emergence of a creole self-consciousness. Such a tendency is particularly pronounced in studies of New Spanish material culture. Chinese-inspired Pueblan *talavera* pottery and majolica, Asian-style furniture, and popular attire, such as the China *poblana* dress, have all been interpreted as expressions of a particular creole taste.²⁹ According to Gustavo Curiel, components of Asian artistic traditions merged with European and Amerindian ones into distinctive creative expressions, serving “as constitutive essences of considerable weight in the discourse of creole self-affirmation.”³⁰ Historians and art historians have especially found such self-conscious declarations of creole identity in the New Spanish *biombo*, a type of folding screen that, according to some scholars, was used by members of the creole

see also María del Carmen Yuste López, *El comercio de la Nueva España con Filipinas, 1590–1785* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1984) and *Emporios transpacíficos. Comerciantes mexicanos en Manila, 1710–1815* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007); Mariano Ardash Bonialian, *El Pacífico hispanoamericano: política y comercio asiático en el Imperio Español (1680–1784)* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2012). Yuste López and Bonialian both consider the Pacific or “Indian lake,” as the latter has it, to be a space controlled by the Mexican consulado or Hispanoamerican elites.

²⁷ Ostwald Sales Colín, *El movimiento portuario de Acapulco: el protagonismo de Nueva España en la relación con Filipinas, 1587–1648* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés Editores, 2000), 18.

²⁸ Barbara Fuchs and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, “La grandeza mexicana de Balbuena y el imaginario de una ‘metropolis colonial,’” *Revista Iberoamericana* 75, no. 228 (2009): 675–95; Stephanie Merrim, *The Spectacular City, Mexico, and Colonial Hispanic Literary Culture* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 121–22.

²⁹ Dana Leibsohn, “Made in China, Made in Mexico,” in *At the Crossroads: The Arts of Spanish American and Early Global Trade, 1492–1850*, eds. Donna Pierce and Ronald Otsuka (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2012), 11–41; José L. Gasch-Tómas, “Asian Silk, Porcelain, and Material Culture in the Definition of Mexican and Andalusian Elites, c. 1565–1630,” in *Global Goods and the Spanish Empire, 1492–1824: Circulation, Resistance and Diversity*, eds. Bethany Aram and Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 167.

³⁰ Gustavo Curiel, “Perception of the Other and the Language of ‘Chinese Mimicry’ in the Decorative Arts of New Spain,” in *Asia & Spanish America: Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1850*, eds. Donna Pierce and Ronald Y. Otsuka (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2009), 19.