



BRILL

# An Episode in Provincial Cosmopolitanism

*Juan L. Ortiz and Chinese Poetry*

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## Abstract

This article explores the relationship of the work of the Argentine poet Juan L. Ortiz with Chinese poetry, which he not only translated into Spanish, but also read and referred to in his own writing. In the first part of this paper, I read Ortiz's oeuvre as building a position in the Argentine literary system from the margin, the "province" of Entre Ríos where the author lived and published his books. In the second part, I use the notion of *provincial cosmopolitanism* to perform a World Literature reading of two poems that may illuminate aspects of a literary formation that a national reading framework is not able to recover. Poetry can be provincial and cosmopolitan at the same time, as my approach to Ortiz's poems—as a contribution to the erosion of national hegemony in the reading of literature—intends to demonstrate.

## Keywords

Argentine poetry – Chinese poetry – translation – cosmopolitanism – province

I would like to open this article on Juan L. Ortiz and Chinese poetry by telling a story that illuminates my approach to his relationship with Chinese culture. In 1957, on his only trip to China, the poet, who liked to depict himself as "Chinese," walked up to someone who looked like a perfect double of him in a Chinese airport. They looked at each other admiringly and, unable to speak, didn't say anything and kept walking (Delgado 26). Ortiz neither spoke nor read any Mandarin and his supposed double presumably did not speak any Spanish, so communication between them was impossible. Despite his lack of Mandarin proficiency, Ortiz expressed interest in Chinese literature, politics and culture and read Chinese poetry in translation, mostly in French. He also "translated"

some Chinese poets in occasion of his trip, with help from the poet-authors themselves (Wernicke “Prologue”).

I will take Ortiz’s case in order to challenge the idea of the “province” that is defined from the point of view of the metropolis, and to advance an idea of a *provincial cosmopolitanism* where the province is configured from within and through literary sources from diverse literatures, rather than from self-referential national sources. I will focus on the poetry and the position of the Argentine poet Juan Laurentino Ortiz, also known as “Juanele” (1896–1978), in a provincial-cosmopolitan landscape such as the province of Entre Ríos that he took as one of the main topics of his writing and where he spent most of his life. Entre Ríos means literally “Between Rivers” and the poems I will read and comment on are written in close connection to that specific location saturated by the natural world, celebrated in its beauty and still difficult to apprehend. Ortiz’s poetry has hardly been translated into English and is probably not well known to those unfamiliar with Argentine literature. For that reason, I will start with a brief introduction to his writing and the main issues that I would like to address in this article. First, I will take the circulation of Ortiz’s poetry in a process of attribution of literary value in a provincial-cosmopolitan context; second, I will address his relationship to different world literary traditions from his provincial location; finally I will propose some hypotheses on the particular relationship established with Chinese poetry both in Ortiz’s own writing and in his translations.

Ortiz was born in 1896 in the province of Entre Ríos, north of Buenos Aires, and he spent most of his life there. He travelled overseas twice, to Marseille, France, when he was eighteen years old, in 1914, and to China and the Soviet Union in 1957, when he was sixty-one years old. He died in 1978 in Paraná, capital of Entre Ríos. When he passed away, two years after the 1976 coup in Argentina, many of his fellow writer friends had been either killed by the Dictatorship or were in exile. The three volumes of the only book he published while alive, *En el aura del sauce (In the Willow’s Light)*, were burned when the printing house was seized by the Argentine Army (Contardi). By then he had produced ten books of Poetry, all of them self-published editions with little distribution beyond his social circle. Contemporary with Jorge Luis Borges and the modernization of Argentine Culture, his writing, while deeply immersed in a provincial landscape, has a dialogue with the European avant-garde, particularly the works of Belgian symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck. But the scope of literary reference includes many other European, American and world literary traditions. Ortiz refers in his poetry to the writings of e.e. cummings, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Leo Tolstoy, Cesare Pavese, Stéphane Mallarmé and Rainer Maria Rilke among other authors. On the Latin American and Caribbean side he mentions Julio

Herrera y Reissig, Felisberto Hernández, José María Arguedas and Aimé Césaire (Aguirre), as well as his Argentine fellow poets. Beyond Europe and the Americas, he quotes the writings of the Chinese poet Li Bai, who like Ortiz wrote about his native landscape, paying tribute to the provinces and the natural scenery as one of his main topics of poetic exploration. Ortiz's poetic activity, with its peculiar cosmopolitan archive of references, has a relationship with Argentina's historical moment of pendulum swing toward immigration and openness to the world. Nationalism and cosmopolitanism go together in Argentina as in many other non-central contexts, and can be viewed either as fluctuating or, better, as complementary moments of the same movement. They can be identified in the cultural landscape at large but also in specific inscriptions such as poems that had little circulation beyond local and provincial circles when they were written and published.

Criticism on Ortiz's oeuvre in Argentina has included several assertions that I would like to quote and also to question. Critics have usually observed the marginal position of his poetry in the canon, the lack of attention his poetry received from the state and from literary circles in Argentina. Fellow writers also contributed to the myth of the ascetic poet, living away from the big cities, at a provincial location taken by choice. Life and writing got mixed in Ortiz's persona and his poetry was shadowed, sometimes even eclipsed by that persona. He was a truly provincial writer who paid little attention either to the circulation of his work or to the literary market, if such a thing may exist for poetry.<sup>1</sup>

The province had, in this sense, a valuable, productive function not just as a topic but also as a position that let him speak and express his own wor(l)ds, taking advantage of a provincial location. However, no island is an island (Appiah 219), even in the "between rivers" context chosen by the poet. Ortiz was not isolated. Early in his life, his home began to attract poets who visited him bringing books and journals from the cities and to hear him recite his poems. One of them, the writer Carlos Mastronardi, born in the same province and a close friend of Borges, used to bring books and news from Buenos Aires on his visits to the poet's home in Entre Ríos. This economy of visitors continued

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1 Nevertheless, Ortiz did care about poetry and poets. Many of his fellow writers and followers are mentioned in his poems, some of which are dedicated to authors that eventually became part of the Argentine literary canon. In this sense, he produced readers and writers who contributed to his survival in literary history, memory and criticism. At least two of Ortiz fellow "provincial" writers lived and published away from Argentina and kept loyalty to Juan L. Ortiz as a model of a literary ethics: Hugo Gola, who went to México after the coup and Juan José Saer, who settled in Paris in the late 1960s.

through his life. Although he also used to travel to Buenos Aires where he may have visited the same libraries where Borges would buy “European novelties,” more visitors came to Ortiz’s place than he would go on visits himself. In this sense, the building of a network of writers contributed to his reputation, strengthened his literary value and contributed to the survival of his work, which was published during the last years in Academic editions curated by Sergio Delgado at the Universidad Nacional del Litoral publishing house. As an islander, he traded and kept connections with different literary sources that nourished his poetry. Many of these sources are international, “cosmopolitan” and even non-European.

This process of interaction with the literary world intensified particularly after *En el aura del sauce* was published in 1971. An example is the visit that the writers Tamara Kamenszain, Héctor Libertella and César Aira paid to the poet’s home in 1976 (Kamenszain “Juan L. Ortiz” 16). Kamenszain has mentioned Ortiz’s willingness to get news from the world and to draw from the issues of the French journal *Tel Quel* that Ortiz had in his library.<sup>2</sup> The pilgrimage to Juanele’s place had become a ritual, particularly for those who, like Juan José Saer, lived just across the Paraná River in Santa Fe and visited often in Paraná when he moved there in 1959.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the period of better public recognition after the publication of his book was a short one, cut short by the coup in 1976. But even before that, his relationships with writers such as Carlos Mastronardi, Juan José Saer, Paco Urondo and Hugo Gola helped Ortiz’s poetry to build and gain weight in a literary tradition that was poor in poets: “It is surprising that in a country so deprived of great poets his work had remained ignored by anthologists and ‘scholars’ and peripheral to the prestigious riverbed of ‘high culture,’” said Hugo Gola in his introduction to the only book by Ortiz published while the author was alive (107).<sup>4</sup>

Of course Hugo Gola’s point echoes Juanele’s strong connection with the river, but the margin could be a position from which to build a solid and consistent oeuvre, furnished with an “ethics” of the edge, away from large cities and literary centers. In this sense, the value attributed to his poetry cannot

2 Personal conversation with Tamara Kamenszain in Buenos Aires, 2015.

3 Juan José Saer’s novel *Glosa* focuses on a conversation about the birthday party of Washington Noriega, a poet living in Entre Ríos, across the river, presumably in Paraná. The birthday party is attended by several friends of the main characters, Ángel Leto and El matemático, who were not invited to the celebration.

4 My translation. In the original: “Sorprende que en un país desvalido de grandes poetas su obra haya permanecido ignorada por antólogos y ‘entendidos’ y marginada del cauce prestigioso de la ‘alta cultura.’”

be separated from his tenacious provincial affiliation and from the network of poets that slowly but consistently read and referred to his poetry. Three Literary Journals may serve as examples of Ortiz's growing literary value and readership. *El lagrimal trifurca*, the journal edited by Elvio Gandolfo in Rosario, dedicated its second issue of 1968 to his poetry, and included a picture of the poet on the cover. *Diario de Poesía*, a large-circulation, international poetry journal directed by Daniel Samoilovich (Buenos Aires/Rosario/Monteideo) published its first issue in July 1986 (7,000 copies) and included in it a dossier on Juan L. Ortiz's poetry. The third example is the journal *Xul*, directed by Jorge Santiago Perednik and published in Buenos Aires between 1980 and 1997. *Xul's* twelfth—and last—issue was dedicated to Ortiz; his translations of Chinese poetry were published there for the first time and included poems by Mao Tse Tung, Emi Siao, Ai Tchín, Quo Mo Jo, Sa Chin, Sa Ou, Die Chen, Chuan Chan, Chu Te and Quo Ing. There is a note written by Ortiz with some biographical information on the poets, most of them members of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party.

As we can see, Ortiz's position in the Argentine literary system has been firm and solid, as firm and solid as poetry can be in a country where, in contrast with other Latin American literary landscapes such as Chile or Perú (Kristal), poetry never occupied the center of the canon.

### Chinese Poetics

As we have seen, despite his living in a provincial location, the appetite for world cultures, including literature, art, politics and philosophy, is present in Ortiz's writing along the different periods of his poetic production. I will continue reading two poems which contain references to China and are connected with the province of Entre Ríos, and that may illustrate his two connections with Chinese literature, classic and contemporary.

In a poem titled "Entre Ríos," included in *El junco y la corriente*, written after his trip to China in 1957 and published in 1971, we read:

Cómo podría decirte, oh tú, el que no puede decirse  
 alma, ahora, del sauce:  
 el sauce que Michaux hubo de comprender, al parecer,  
 recién en Pekín?  
 (...)  
 Pero es mi 'país' únicamente, el sauce  
 Que sobrenadaría, hoy, sobre las direcciones de un limbo?

No es, asimismo,  
 el 'laúd' de líneas de ave  
 y de líneas que apenas se miran:  
 el Uruguay 'de plumas' y el Paraná 'de mar',  
 en la revelación del indio?

ORTIZ *El junco* 40

How can I tell you, you, the one that cannot be spoken of  
 soul, now, of the willow:  
 the willow Michaux, apparently, was given to understand  
 just now in Peking?

(...)

But it is only my country, the willow  
 that might swim over today, over from limbo's shore?  
 It's not, all the same,  
 the "lute" of bird lines  
 and of those lines blind to each other:  
 the Uruguay 'of feathers' and the Parana 'of sea'  
 as was revealed to the Indian?<sup>5</sup>

The Henri Michaux allusion comes from the edition of *Un barbare en Asie* (1932) that Ortiz read in Borges' translation published in 1941 in Buenos Aires by Sur Publishing House.<sup>6</sup> As Francisco Bitar observes, "país" in Ortiz poetry means both nation and country but mostly region in a broad sense (Bitar 197–9). The poem provides a reflection on "country" and literature that takes distance from but also vindicates local color (Delgado), in a movement where "province" (Entre Ríos) is also a lute ("laúd," musical instrument), referring to the province as a source of poetic inspiration, played by the poet. The poet himself is conceived as a bard who uses "the province" (its lute-shape as a musical instrument) as a device with which to sing to and about the land.

5 Poems translated into English by Bill Piper.

6 Sur is a literary journal founded by Victoria Ocampo in Buenos Aires in 1931 that had significant influence in Latin America; also, Borges published some of his best-known texts in this journal. Sur was also a publishing house that published universal literature and theory, including the first translations of Walter Benjamin in Spanish. On Sur and cosmopolitanism, see Aguilar and Gramuglio. Sergio Delgado refers to Michaux's book in Ortiz's library (915). Invited by the PEN Club first congress, Michaux visited Buenos Aires in 1936. Ortiz was probably aware of that and Michaux's visit contributed to the translation of *Un barbare en Asie* into Spanish and the reading and circulation of Michaux in Argentina.

The province is a physical, material, even mapping platform, as the map of Entre Ríos, surrounded by rivers—the Paraná and the Uruguay, that “hardly look at each other”—shows. Entre Ríos’ shape is also similar to a lute and its shape is given by the rivers, so the poem reads not just the nature but also its geographical representation, the code used to design the territory. The province may be used to play the music of the landscape: as a device played by the poet to compose his music, nurtured by the natural landscape of rivers. The quotation finishes with the “Indian” as a figure that, along with French, American, Russian and Chinese literary references, inhabits Ortiz’s poetry in Guaraní wording. The words “Paraná” and “Uruguay,” both have a Guaraní etymological origin. Paraná means in the Indian language “para rehe onáva,” meaning, “relative of the sea” and Uruguay comes from uru (bird) and guay (river), that is “river of birds,” a Guaraní poetic figure itself (Bitar 198; García Helder 137).

Understanding *En el aura del sauce* is an enterprise of uncertain outcome, in a vacillation typical of Ortiz’s poetry. Solid and liquid, tree and river, willow and light join in the uneven duos frequent in the poet’s book titles (Rowe; García Helder). Titles of his books such as *The Poplar and the Wind* (1947) or *The Roots and the Heaven* (1968) may illustrate this structure. In this sense, every connection (Entre Ríos-China) shows that Michaux could only achieve the “saying” (*decirte*) far away from home (in Belgium), once in Beijing. It is of course an itinerary and position that resembles Ortiz’s own trajectory and site of recitation.

His “country,” however, could be just the willow, even the willow’s (changing) light: “Pero es mi ‘país’ únicamente, el sauce / que sobrenadaría, hoy, sobre las direcciones del limbo?” As in Ortiz’s poetry, nothing is for certain (he uses the closing question mark—in Spanish the opening question mark is mandatory, but Ortiz rarely used it—as a characteristic of ambiguous certainty or music of his wording). On the contrary, the willow as “country” means an evanescent figure, almost ethereal, the opposite of the heavy rhetoric of national belonging or patriotic roots, usual in nationalist assertions.

The willow is a species that belongs more to the literary tradition than to a specific landscape, as Borges observed in relation to the nightingale (Borges 173). The willow pattern has also a consistent presence in Classic Chinese Poetry. But the willow is, still, a tree of the region or zone, as Saer designated it, depicted with its leaves that resemble little fishes and usually living (or swimming) along riverbanks. River and willow are then signs of a province but a province connected with a Chinese ambiance and so emptied of substance and firmness, even deprived of geographical belonging. As Bitar noted, the book was written after his trip to China and keeps traces of a movement (travel) always present in Ortiz’s fondness for the river and its never-ending stream.

The aerial, inapprehensible reference of a countryside so thin and difficult to capture, or only able to be portrayed from a distance (with a “Chinese” perspective, as pointed in Michaux’s reference), is the central issue in this poetic articulation. It will be this very intangible attribute that makes the province—it could be Entre Ríos, or any other province—analogue to the Chinese landscape, both literary and physical, as Ortiz felt on his trip. Willow and river are at the same time local and universal, provincial and cosmopolitan, contingent and ever present.

### Margins and Literary Value (Cosmopolitan Counterpoint)

I have been studying dialogues between South American and East Asian Literatures and Juan L. Ortiz, as did many of his contemporaries in the twentieth century who expressed interest and read Chinese literature, traveled to Asia and wrote about his experience. María Rosa Oliver, Bernardo Kordon, Juan José Sebreli and Ricardo Piglia, just to name some Argentine writers, visited China and published books on their travels in the same period. Latin American writers have quite an extended relationship with and interest in East Asia, and just the names of Rubén Darío, Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz, Haroldo de Campos, José Watanabe, Bernardo Carvalho or Mario Bellatin may show this connection. As Mariano Siskind notes, Orientalism flourished at the *fin-de-siècle* among Latin American modernist poets but the interest in China grew again after the Second World War, when a new group of writers, partly due to Mao’s reputation, began to travel to and write on China (Fernández Bravo; Siskind). Ricardo Piglia’s references to his trip to China in 1973 are partially included in the second volume of his diaries, *Los diarios de Emilio Renzi. Los años felices* (Piglia), and many other Argentine writers traveled to and wrote about China in the 1950s and the 1960s, when Chinese Communism presented a political experiment with which many intellectuals were willing to interact. There are no significant allusions to the violence of the Cultural Revolution, neither in Latin American nor in European literature of the time, where the Chinese political model also enjoyed a positive reputation, particularly among intellectuals.

Ortiz did not travel much in his life, but he visited China and Russia in 1957 on a trip organized by the Argentine Communist Party (Bitar xv). The time of Ortiz’s visit preceded the Cultural Revolution that would start in the 1960s. Some of the poets he met and translated, like Emi Siao (pseudonym of Xiao San) were eventually detained to spend several years in prison. But there are no references to this fact in the poet’s writing. Despite the State



violence implemented over artists and writers, a network of cosmopolitan communist intellectuals flourished at that time, and facilitated Juan L. Ortiz's travels and dialogues with world literature. His relationship with the Soviet (or Communist) Century may help to understand this articulation.<sup>7</sup> He wrote poetry and translated Chinese poems as a result of that trip. As Sergio Delgado, editor of Ortiz's *Obra Completa*, has observed, his poems on China can be read as a travel narrative of his time in Asia (22). They could be approached as poetry written in a journal format. The poems refer for example to many things the Yang-Tse River shares with the Paraná, not the least the landscape of willow trees that so frequently appear in Chinese poetry as well as in Ortiz's provincial-cosmopolitan lyric.<sup>8</sup>

But Ortiz's interest in Chinese poetry preceded his trip. He mentions Li Bai (Li Po) and Tu-Fu (referred as *Tou Fou*, probably due to his reading of Chinese poetry in French translations; Ortiz *El junco* 23) before and after visiting China and he even responds to his poems in his own. Chinese Poetry has two types of presence in Ortiz's lyrics. First, references to Chinese Poetry of the Tang Dynasty that he read mostly in French translations and probably in some Spanish versions. Second, the poets he met on his trip and translated with help from the poets themselves. We have seen an example of the second type; I will finish with an example of the first type, written before his trip and personal contact with Chinese poets. A poem entitled "Sí, sobre la tierra" (Yes, on the Earth), published in 1947, reads:

Sí, sobre la tierra siguen flotando las imágenes  
o los sentimientos a veces nostálgicos  
de aquéllos que la amaron o vivieron en su resplandor,  
de aquellos a quienes este resplandor

7 On this topic, see Apter (65f.); see also Bosteels (586). The term "cosmopolitan" had negative (bourgeois, decadent) connotations in the Communist ideological framework and "internationalism" was preferred. However, as recent theoretical approaches to cosmopolitanism demonstrate (Appiah; Gramuglio; Santiago; Siskind), the concept deserves closer attention. From a literary perspective, Leonardo Padura's novel, *The Man Who Loved Dogs* (2014), presents an interesting historical reconstruction of the internationalist-cosmopolitan tensions and relations in Latin America and Europe before and after the Second World War.

8 Guadalupe Wernicke has studied the translation of Chinese poets and the traces of Ortiz's poetry in his versions of the poems. Several critics observed changes in Ortiz's writing after his trip and contact with Chinese culture. The changes are more evident in the spatial disposition of the poem, as in the second part of *El junco y la corriente* and can be recognized in his last book, *La orilla que se abisma* (1971).

los tocó en su hora, en una hora lejanísima,  
—oh, los del “Libro de la poesía”, oh, Li Po—  
con una gracia eterna.

*El álamo y el viento*; ORTIZ *Obra Completa* 343

Yes, over the earth there are images floating  
or sentiments often nostalgic  
of those who loved her or lived in the splendor  
of those same and whom this splendor  
touches in its hour, in one far distant hour  
—oh, those of the “Book of Poetry”, oh, Li Po—  
with this eternal grace.

The Chinese poet Li Bai (705–62) appears here connected to “the earth,” a planetary reference that provides a way to take distance from locality and province and support a reading in dialogue with a world-literature (or planetary, to use Gayatri Spivak’s wording) theoretical frame. The glow on the Earth shows something beyond time and history, a light that stays in a suspended, non-chronological time as the willow’s aura. The image has even a cosmological resonance as a light glowing in the dark, surrounding cosmos. The poetic experience of reading (and writing) “images” goes beyond time and space in a relationship that equals not just poets from distant (“far away”) contexts, but also from a remote period. The will to recover a distant feeling and capture the relationship of the poem with its own time and landscape, but also with contemporaneity, can be read as a translation poetics.<sup>9</sup> This effort in translation puts in contact different times that may share “a glow,” probably the earth’s glow common to all inhabitants and all temporalities of the world.

My last point, therefore, has to do with Ortiz’s position in regard to World Literature. As I said before, Ortiz has been read by critical readers as a lonely voice, with no significant predecessors, a founder of a poetic system and genealogy that includes Juan José Saer, Hugo Padeletti and Alfredo Veiravé, as well as Hugo Gola in Argentine literature, but with no literary precursors. Martín Prieto synthesized Ortiz’s position as follows: “hacia atrás, nada” (Behind him, nothing) (Prieto 115).

Ortiz’s poetry shows, in contrast with Borges’ *dictum*, “Argentines are Europeans in exile,” another view that not only takes Indian wording but also Chi-

<sup>9</sup> I will not go into Ortiz’s translations of Chinese poetry. Wernicke has approached this topic with significant eloquence.

nese poetry as a source of writing. Despite this difference, both Ortiz and Borges shared respect and curiosity for Chinese literature. This interest may come from their youth, the decades of 1920s and 1930s when, partly due to the prestige of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1923), and to the First World War, Oriental cultures received in Argentina an unusual attention during a moment when both authors were young and making their first interventions in the literary world (Bergel). One last issue I would like to mention to close my hypothesis on Ortiz's provincial cosmopolitanism is that Entre Ríos province received the colonies of Jewish immigrants who had been coming to Argentina in significant numbers since the end of the nineteenth century. Ortiz's contact with Russian literature comes from that source.<sup>10</sup> The relationship of the poet with other Argentine poets of Jewish background, like César Tiempo, may also say something about the early dialogue of Ortiz with world literature and the acquisition of a cosmopolitan sensibility that he cultivated all his life. Along with his appetite for the French literary journals that he used to buy on his trips to Buenos Aires (or brought to Entre Ríos by friends), Juanele was able to read and write, and also (mis-)translate Chinese lyrics that enhance his own poetry with the river landscape but also with more distant glows, still shining their light over the Earth.

What would happen if we read Ortiz not in the national, Argentine, provincial context, in which his poetry has been read and inscribed, but in a wider, world-literature framework? What would happen if, avoiding Eurocentric approaches, we were to explore his poetry's mirroring American, European and Chinese—or even Asian, as he also (mis-)quotes Junichiro Tanizaki, “Ianisaki,” “Estas tipas” (*Obra Completa* 755)—as well as “Indian” (aboriginal, Guaraní) literatures and languages? How does one understand the cosmopolitan, “earthly” reference in which Chinese and South American Poetry, and provincial and cosmopolitan writers share a place in the Earth's glow? The poetics of lightness and the affinity with a Chinese ideogrammatic writing noted by many of Ortiz's readers and critics (Gola; Wernicke) call for a broader approach, able to liberate a poetry that while in debt to its provincial tropes and topics, never

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10 The poem “El doctor Larcho” in *El junco y la corriente* pays homage to the Ortiz family doctor in Gualeguay (87), who was actually named Dr. Noe Yarcho (Minsk, 1860-Villa Domínguez, Entre Ríos, 1912) (Bitar 203). Ortiz frequently misspelled names, as in Tanizaki, or, as Haroldo de Campos observes, rather than misspelling he preserved the word's sound. Dr. Yarcho belonged to the Jewish community of Entre Ríos, otherwise known as “the Jewish gauchos,” the theme of *Los gauchos judíos*, the book by Alberto Gerchunoff, where a story is dedicated to this character. Eise Osman's testimony in *Xul* refers to the contact of Ortiz with the Jewish community of Entre Ríos in his youth (43).

endorsed patriotic tones. Ortiz's ancestors may not be just in Argentina or even in European modernism, but among the Chinese poets of the Tang dynasty.<sup>11</sup>

Province as a symbolic position occupies an undervalued place in contemporary theory, associated with backwardness, conservatism, and lack of openness to the world. However, to provincialize Europe meant, according to Chakrabarty, demystifying a centrality that, as we know, was acquired in a long historical process with immense costs to peripheral societies. It meant also to dispute European historicist hegemony in favor of alternative temporalities with which to compare one's own time. It is important to note the productivity of the province as a concept in modern literature. From Gustave Flaubert to J.M. Coetzee, from Sarmiento to Silviano Santiago, the province has provided some of the most interesting platforms to explore the relationship between place and identity, literature and location. "Provincial cosmopolitanism" would be the symmetric opposite complement of "cosmopolitan provincialism": the view that away from the metropolis or center no worldly, complex, earthly perspective can be achieved. Away from the center nobody creates new models; they just copy or adopt forms invented there. As Borges noted, it is only from the periphery that a broad, comprehensive view can be achieved.

With metropolitan universalism under suspicion, provincialism may now acquire a different meaning. Juan L. Ortiz shows the province as a position from which to look at the world, and interact with it, looking to the other shore of the river with eagerness and reverence. In this perspective, the province would be considered not as a minor, isolated perspective, but as a self-conscious margin able to enrich and supplement a cosmopolitan vision. This vision is often affected by the provincialism of the center, unable to recognize the complexity and diversity of the lesser-known margins and provinces away from the metropolis (Kristal; Montaldo). Ortiz's case may serve as an example to reconsider the position of the "province" as perspective to read the world in its literature.

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11 Haroldo de Campos in his article "A retórica seca de um poeta fluvial" noted the potential inscription of Ortiz's poetry in a *Weltliteratur* framework. The relationship of Western lyric avant-garde, particularly of Ezra Pound poetry with Chinese ideogram has gone a long way that clearly exceeds the space of this article, but it is still interesting to recognize the parallel roads walked by Ortiz and Pound, almost contemporaneously. A recent contribution on the topic of ideogram and poetics by a Chilean scholar shows an unfinished discussion on this topic (Pérez Villalón).

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