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*Scripted Geographies: Travel Writings by Nineteenth-Century
Spanish Authors* (review)

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as a figure of accommodation and DuBois as standing for more militant resistance in questions of racial inequality. Picking up on the subtitle of DuBois's publication, there is some discussion of the notion of "an autobiography of a race concept," and this might have proved an interesting phrase with which to return to the texts explored earlier, each one of which navigates not just a personal life but African American identity in its own distinct way.

Race and Form provides a helpful starting point in thinking through a narratological approach to autobiography, and to African American publications too often read merely in terms of their social commentary. It also offers a series of observant practical analyses and stimulating comparisons. Despite the range of its selection of primary texts, the study is somewhat narrowed and impoverished, however, by a lack of engagement with how the autobiographies in question might be a part of or respond to an African American (or American) literary tradition. For example, it surely would have been productive to have examined how some of the twentieth century publications draw upon the tropes, devices, and modes of the earlier slave narrative genre. Indeed, the volume declines to "probe into the historical development of narrative strategies," although this is the very activity that would have strengthened the claim to a contextualized narratology. Unfortunately, the volume also suffers from a succession of errors of the kind that one might expect to have been picked up at the editorial stages: there are countless infelicities of expression, an article by Elizabeth Schultz published in 1975 is wrongly attributed a publication date of 1915 and then celebrated as "one of the earliest . . . critical essays on modern African American autobiography," material is repeated, the theorist Michel Foucault is referred to as Michael Foucault, and so on. This kind of inaccuracy does detract, but if set aside, *Race and Form* offers us promising ways of reconfiguring and combining critical frameworks, and elucidates neglected aspects of important African American prose texts.

Jennifer Terry

Gayle R. Nunley. *Scripted Geographies: Travel Writings by Nineteenth-Century Spanish Authors*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2007. 272 pp. ISBN 0-8387-5633-1, \$49.50.

In *Scripted Geographies*, Gayle R. Nunley analyzes four travel chronicles by four Spanish authors. The journeys represent major destinations of Spanish and European travelers during the nineteenth-century. Although the authors might not easily be recognized as writers of travel narratives, their personal insights inspired by displacement to new lands and cultures reveal both the perceptions the travelers had of themselves, and more importantly, views

about Spain during a period of important national and historical transitions. The book also analyzes the Spanish cultural paradigms of the time, which served to construct and represent the “Other.”

These particular countries visited also provoke in the writers an attempt to come to terms with the issues and concerns of defining a Spanish identity. Nunley makes a case for reading Mesonero Romano’s journey as his personal search for modernity in Paris. She sees Benito Pérez Galdós’s trip to Italy as a call for national unity, *unidad*, and also points to its relationship to an erudite appreciation of art. Finally, in the last two works she considers Spain’s imperial ambitions during the closing years of the nineteenth-century: Pedro Antonio de Alarcón’s chimerical search for the Orient in North Africa, and José Alcalá Galiano’s looking for the Distant Other in his journey to the Far East.

While the destinations of these four authors differed from each other in time and space, the works all share a deep desire to profit from foreign travel by responding to, and even more, shaping through their writings, the cultural values of their time. In every chapter of the book, Nunley addresses a unique example of a travel text. Thus, for Nunley, Mesonero Romano’s journey to Paris takes a semi-religious approach, as he equates the act of travel with a pilgrimage to Mecca. For Mesonero, the trip is similar to a mystical quest in which he strives to understand that powerful force that can transform reality. His stay in Paris allows him to witness first-hand the advances and improvements brought about by a state sponsored modernization that resulted in a higher standard of living.

Mesonero, an ever-perspicacious social observer, recognized these events as the process that could radically change in the same manner the political and economic status of Spain. According to him, these developments that eventually changed the cultural outlook of a nation like France could lead to a stronger economy that would support colonial adventures. Thus, a modernized Spain could regain its political leadership and influence in its former American colonies, or establish a stronger foothold in North Africa. This new-gained power would permit Spain to proudly join the developed nations of Europe, and break away from the North-South dichotomy that separated modern countries from those struggling with underdevelopment. However, Mesonero also warns that the price to pay for modernization could run contrary to deeply imbued Spanish national and cultural characteristics. The writer observes the loss of religious fervor and apparent breakdown of family relations among those who live in more developed states. Mesonero is thus declaring that modernization along the French lines is possible as long as the nation accepts a certain degree of loss, which would imply a new national character or identity.

When analyzing Galdós's trip to Italy, Nunley correctly observes that his journey reflects this novelist's desire to contribute to the formation of a new Spanish mentality. She examines his work that is based upon a comparison between a newly unified Italy and a Spain in a process of political and social decay that would culminate with the disaster of 1898. Galdós was truly impressed by the Italians' sense of unity in forming a cohesive nation, which, like France, was embarking on a process of institutionalization and modernity. He notices the spirit of solidarity among the Italians who take part in the project of national unification, as envisioned by Garibaldi. However, Nunley does not emphasize the fact that Galdós's *mirada hacia atras* is also an appreciative journey in search of the aesthetic treasures of Italy, and a revalorization of its classical inheritance. In fact, most of what Galdós narrates about his trip is related to references and observations about his visits to the famous Italian museums.

Galdós also writes about the powerful forces of nature, and in a similar way to how Goethe and Tischbein had done it in 1787, he and Alcalá Galiano risk personal safety for the chance to look into Vesuvius's caldera. It is interesting to note that on the way to the top, the Spanish writer employs a vocabulary similar to Goethe's while describing the effects of volcanic activity on the surrounding environment: "everything had a Plutonic appearance," he observes. Later, he stops at Pompeii, where he witnesses the devastation brought about by the volcano's eruption. Galdós relates highly didactic experiences, which provide a perspective to revalue the classical as a guidepost and a set of eternal values. A third concern of Galdós is the appreciation for the historical influence Spain had on Italian affairs, most notably in Naples, a city that in spite of historical changes has managed to retain a distinctly Spanish character.

Consulting a Baedeker guide to maximize his time in Italy, Galdós visits the main cultural sites of the country. The country becomes a living museum, where he can still see glorious evidence of the Roman Empire that in the course of history had yielded its political and social power to the Catholic Church. Galdós marvels at the overwhelming variety of artistic works this religious institution has collected over the years, even though it ultimately had to concede political power, though not moral influence, to the new secular state. He criticizes the Papal power, and supports its subordination to the rule of a unified secular country.

The Canarian writer admires and comments about all the forms of artistic expression Italy has inspired throughout the generations. The account of his journey, beginning with astute political observations about national unity, soon evolves into something more profound than the political status of Italy, to become a narrative about an important aesthetic and sentimental experience. The commentaries about national unity recorded at the beginning of

his journey are overshadowed by the lengthy and highly informative account of the great Italian masters. He admires the many treasures in the Vatican, most notably the Sistine Chapel. This is an experience that elicits awe and wonder at the timeless art and beauty of Michelangelo's works; unlike the other travelers included in the book, Galdós is keenly aware of the transcendence of art. Later, Emilio Castelar and Blasco-Ibañez, two other Spanish visitors, would follow his footsteps in Italy, commenting and expanding on some of Galdós' observations.

While analyzing the chronicles of Alarcón, Nunley is most convincing when demystifying the accepted version of *Diario de un testigo de la Guerra de Africa* as a work that reflects the truthful depiction of his experiences as an enlisted soldier in Spain's imperial war against Morocco. As a member of Spanish society, the author of this autobiographical travel narrative shared widely held, but commonly erroneous, conceptions about the Orient. He saw the intervention of Spain in Morocco as justified. We learn that Alarcón, in the Moroccan Campaign, enjoyed special treatment and privileges not extended to the rank and file of Spanish troops. His point of view regarding the Orient is expressed from a privileged stance that contradicts the realities and causes of war.

Alarcón goes to Morocco as an enlisted soldier because it is the most expedient way to fulfill his desire to experience the "Orient" as something exotic and different to Europe. However, that idea is a construction defined and promulgated by Alarcón's cultural milieu. The actual conditions he encounters in the field do not match the intellectual vision he held about the Orient. His narrative reinterprets the difference between fantasy and reality to justify the superiority of the Spanish army, and by association, the supremacy of Spanish cultural values over those of the inhabitants of Morocco. From this point of view, he accepts the dichotomy between the North and the South that was deeply ingrained in the European mentality, a belief that served to justify colonial expansionism. Indeed, Alarcón's travel chronicle serves to reinforce this cultural perspective. His literary approach is to denigrate the character and customs of those Arabs he comes in contact with, and to enhance the values of Spain's culture and traditions—an assertion that would be in agreement with the European rationale in favor of colonialism.

A subtler and more complicated attempt to understand the "Orient" and the "Other" is the travel narrative of José Alcalá Galiano. He travels to the Far East in search of that set of contrasts that renders the "Other" a foreign threat to European homogeneity. What sets apart Alcalá Galiano's journey from other travelers to the Far East is a peculiar conglomeration of anecdotes, and his ideas about the important role that literature, the written word, has in the construction of a cultural identity. Nunley incisively points out Alcalá Galiano's

composite experience of travel as a “Yodisea,” a journey of personal discovery. However, the most salient aspect of his narrative is the preservation of the East-West dichotomies, a difference that tends to cast non-European cultures as inferior and therefore subject to political and economic exploitation, “just wars,” and religious intolerance. This is precisely what Spain had done in the Americas, with disastrous results. After reading Nunley’s analysis of *Panoramas Orientales*, one is left to wonder about the lessons Alcalá Galiano learned about democracy, rule of law, and political economy during his exile in Great Britain.

Nunley succeeds in putting in perspective the motives these four Spanish travelers of the nineteenth century had for undertaking their various journeys. Despite the many differences in style, subject matter, and interpretative strategies, their commonality lies in the desire to bring about a change in Spanish mentality. Their goal was to reverse or slow down its historical and cultural downfall, brought about by a lack of national unity, its persistent mystification of other cultures associated with underdevelopment, and a refusal to bring about institutional changes that would move the country forward. As the author states, “They all utilized the spaces of foreign travel to respond to and shape the literary and cultural perceptions of their time.”

This is an extremely interesting and useful study that stimulates research about travel and travelers. It is a book well researched and clearly written. The author’s many insightful observations about the journeys, and about those who wrote them, result in an excellent work for serious students on the subject. The book is complemented with a useful bibliography and a corpus of footnotes that broaden the subject and inform the reader.

Jorge L. Bacelis

Jeffrey Ruoff, ed. *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. xiv + 298 pp. ISBN 0-8223-3713-4, \$22.95.

Billed as “the first book of travelogues,” *Virtual Voyages* examines an underappreciated body of films representing “an intrinsic form of cinema.” Usually associated with the silent film era, when they illustrated live travel lectures (replacing nineteenth-century lantern slide shows), travelogues belong to the road less taken—and less recognized—in a medium dominated by fiction and narration rather than non-fiction and documentation. This anthology suggests that early travelogues evolved into various types of “travel films,” ranging from expeditionary and ethnographic films to tourist promotions and home movies. Even directors of fiction films such as Jim Jarmusch in *Mystery Train* and Wim Wenders in *Until the End of the World* are said to have “returned to a ground-zero travelogue aesthetic as a means of reinventing the cinema,” and