

2 On the Politics of Travel, Travel Writing and the Traveling Text

Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of the terminological foundations for this book. Through these pages, I will discuss the fundamental arguments that are part of the existing literature in relation to themes such as travel writing, Orientalism, and Latin American Orientalism as an alternative and possible opportunity to define where within the wide spectrum of Transpacific Literature this study belongs. In doing so, it will be then essential to address the complexities associated with the center-periphery paradigm and the subsequent concepts supporting this exploration, such as coloniality, decoloniality, the Global South, and its manifestations of peripheral solidarity. This is done to position this study within those discussions, clarifying its place in the intricate and diverse theoretical framework. Furthermore, the aim is to articulate how I will weigh and approach these concepts and definitions, while ensuring a steadfast focus on how this study enriches the various spheres of these debates.

However, before delving into the conceptual development of the present book, I would like to present a brief account of the existing literature. This scholarship, because of its proximity to the object of study of the present pages, has served as a theoretical guideline and an essential roadmap to approach, reflect, and propose my own standpoints for the writing of these pages. Since it was not until the 2000s that the perspective of literature started to gain notability within the academic discussions on transpacific connections, the void in the study of the transpacific literary and cultural connections and transits between Asia and Latin America still exists today in full force and effect. Nonetheless, the research carried out by Eugenio Chang-Rodríguez (1958) or Evelyn Hu-DeHart (1980) focused on its historical and cultural tracings, such as the history of the Chinese diaspora and the Chinese coolie trade in the continent, are pioneering and fundamental works. Furthermore, the historical tracing of the diplomatic relations, as well as the account of the cultural encounter between China and Latin America from the nineteenth to the late twentieth century published by Marisela Connelly and Romer Cornejo Bustamante (1992), is a founding effort to give visibility to the relevance that these trajectories have had throughout history.

From the 2000s, Ignacio López-Calvo has not only created academic spaces for researchers from different disciplines interested in the cultural encounters be-

tween Asia and Latin America, but his contribution as author and editor¹ has been remarkable in providing in-depth analysis of several transpacific interactions that orbit literature, culture, and identity. These bondages constitute an alternative source of self-understanding from the perspective of the building of colonial subjectivities and an alternative exercise of memory construction from the discursive coordinates of the Global South. Countless are, in consequence, the paths to multiply and diversify the reconstruction of these bondages for Transpacific Studies as an emerging but fast-growing field.

Regarding the construction of methodological tools to define Transpacific Studies, the contribution of Verónica Kim Junyoung (2017) is significant. On the one hand, it draws attention to the implications and challenges, such as the academic or institutional legitimacy that this category entails when it is approached from the historical and political particularity that the relation Asia-Latin America involves. Moreover, it raises the question of how the emergence of this field defies traditional disciplinary delimitations since their formation has historically responded to epistemological outlines derived from colonial structures. In the same sense, the definitions of a Hispano-American orientalism seen within the context of the intellectual and poetic networks established between Latin America and Asia as a form of a South-South dialogue would not be possible today without the contributions of Araceli Tinajero (2003) and Julia A. Kushigian (1991, 2016, 2018).

Following up on methodological perspectives, “Approaches between Asia and Latin America: A Critical Renga” by Bachner et al. (2017) served to this study as an essential and practical referent. Due to its multifaceted angle, their pages provided me with a transversal overview not only to position the research on the cultural and literary relation between these two regions within broader critical frameworks, but also on the relevance of tracing our own alternative mappings to approach it. As a contributor to this critical *renga*, Rosario Hubert’s emphasis on “how cultural products reinvent themselves in different cultural context” (2017b: 79) allowed me to understand my sources not just as transmitters of discourses about China and Chinese culture through the Latin American travel writing but as actual nodal points within a constellation of intercultural (re)creations.

¹ Among them are: *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond* (2007), *Imaging the Chinese in Cuban Literature and Culture* (2008), *One World Periphery Reads the Other: Knowing the “Oriental” in the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula* (2009), *Peripheral Transmodernities: South-to-South Intercultural Dialogues between the Luso-Hispanic World and “the Orient”* (2012), *The Affinity of the Eye: Writing Nikkei in Peru* (2013), *Dragons in the Land of the Condor: Writing Tusán in Peru* (2013), *Japanese Brazilian Saudades: Diasporic Identities and Cultural Production* (2019), *The Mexican Transpacific Nikkei Writing, Visual Arts, and Performance* (2022).

Moreover, as the following chapters will show, Hubert's research has been essential to steer the direction of this study. Her work is consistently dedicated to the reflection on the particularity of the connection between China and Latin America from various forms of literary and intellectual circulations. Besides her contribution to a theoretical rerouting to the question about "new orientalisms" (2023a), travel writing has been a major source for her analyses. The sum of her research work currently addresses the question of the Latin American travel writing on the journey to China from the broadest and therefore more comprehensive timespan. Hubert's work on the nineteenth-century travel narrative (2015, 2018), the *modernista* movement (2022), and the translations and intellectual networks derived from the period of cultural diplomacy from the 1950s (2017a) to the 1980s (2017b) has also been accompanied by the analysis of corpora belonging to a more contemporary Latin American literary production. This production knits together written memoirs that share the echoed voices of the Cultural Revolution (2020) and other dedicated to novels sharing Asia as a common setting (2012).

On the other hand, with regard to the fifth chapter, the works of both María Montt Strabucchi and Jorge J. Locane were pivotal. When delving into the complex context of the Cold War from a historical perspective of Sino-Latin American and more specifically Sino-Chilean relations, their official and unofficial diplomatic exchanges Montt's (2019) research provided me with an exceptional roadmap. Her work with Chilean travelogues, travel memoirs (2016a, 2016b) and other written productions (2020) explore their (re)production of discourses around China and the Chinese more comprehensively. From the cultural angle, Locane's joint work with Montt has also underlined the circulation of Latin American periodical publications that served as founding cultural mediators between these two regions (Locane and Montt 2021). Additionally, Locane's contribution to the discussion on the circulation of cultural products between China and Latin America from the literary perspective has been essential to approach this circulation of works and translations as part of a much more global interaction.

This research has opened the way to other theoretical approaches beyond Orientalism to consider the poetic and political ties derived from the cultural diplomacy that defined the relations between these two latitudes from the second half of the twentieth century (2020). For instance, works by Matthew Rothwell (2013b) and Julia Lovell (2020) have paved the way for the reconstruction of the ideological flows and the transnational circulation and expansion of Maoism from the perspective of political history. In this sense, Locane argues that the interaction that resulted from Maoism as a world project (2020) created a network that laid the foundations for the economic opening and the subsequent influence that China gained as a political actor in the world (2022b). This much more global ap-

proach has led him to the interesting formulation of the term *literatura comunista mundial* (2021) in order to address, from a literary perspective, the vast scope of these networks and alternative circulations.

Travel Literature and the Poetics of the Traveler as Writer

Due to the diverse nature of chronological, geographical, and even conceptual approaches in relation to travel writing, there seem to be more disagreements than agreements in regard to its definitions and delimitations. Despite the latter, John Zilcosky reminds us of something which seems obvious but, in fact, is a quite sensible to approach the very complex task of defining travel writing: “Storytelling perhaps even began with travel” (2008: 3). In the same vein, Huang Lijuan (黄丽娟) also stresses the fact that “旅行文学也是一部人类文明史，这主要因为文明的历史也是迁移的历史和书写的历史” [Travel literature is also a part of the history of human civilization, primarily because the history of civilization is also the history of migration and the history of writing] (2021: 137).

With this in mind and putting aside the difficulties for a moment, there is an agreement on the heterogeneous nature of the traveling text (Pratt 1197: 11; Kowalewski 1992: 3,7; Foulke 1992: 93; Guzmán R. 2013: 3; Sherman 2002: 20) and its subsequent difficulty to be categorized within the confines of a literary genre. What is more, it is not easy to justify its inclusion in the literary canons (Kowalewski 1992: 1) because even its belonging to the realms of literature has been, and not without reason, put into question. There are grounds for the origin of such suspicion. In terms of the definition of what texts can be distinguished as travel writing, it is difficult, if not impossible, to set boundaries that are not ambiguous due to the intertextual nature that characterizes travel writing (Zilcosky 2008: 6). If we define it as the writing account of an individual in relation to a “change of location” (Butor 1992: 57), then, in that sense, travel narrative could be identified in a vast number of forms such as official reports, letters, poems, novels, notes, stories, diaries, and even scientific observations.

Despite the lack of thoroughness with which travel writing has been addressed by the theory and literary criticism, the intertextuality that is intrinsic to travel writing derives also from the very much disregarded contributions that these texts have made to many other disciplines, sciences, and even industries beyond the traditional limits of literature. If we think about it, travel writing has served as a foundation for other fields, some closer to literature such as journalism or history, and others in the realms of the social sciences and the humanities such as sociology, anthropology, ethnography, cultural studies, human geography, or international relations and politics. It has also played an important part in the

formation of more “distant” ones—cartography, botany, or biology and even industries such as tourism certainly owe a debt to travel writing.

This tight connection between travel writing and the development of several other disciplines has also caused a discussion around both its “truthfulness” and its “falsity”. On the one hand, its closeness to the “truth” makes it either too basic or boring to be accepted as literature, given that it is expected to be “faithful” to the traveling observations and to provide “veracious” information. But, on the other hand, it is also regarded as too fanciful and imaginative to be treated as a reliable document or source. Moreover, even though it should not be categorized as fiction, it is normally narrated in the first person, and that very subjective experience makes it very private and intimate. This can lead us to think that it is so personal that travel writing is also related to the autobiography as a genre (Muggli 1992: 180).

Literature can be dubious about the literary nature of travel writing if we consider that it seems like a basic requirement for that “change of location” or “change of place” (Zilcosky 2008: 3) to be physical in order to be valid enough to be reliable. However, although Verne was a very much adventurous traveler himself, the writing of *Around the World in 80 Days* served to him more as a mental escape from his reality, in view of the impossibility of a physical one. His father had recently died, Verne was facing financial difficulties, and the tense years of the Franco-Prussian War also conscripted him into the military (Butcher 1995: xii–xiii).

Furthermore, it might sound cliché, but the circumstances require stating that the extraordinary capacity that literature has to imagine, either while writing or while reading, and to wander around all the confines of time, space, and beyond without leaving a room or not even getting up from a chair is certainly inestimable. About traveling in relation to physical geography, it is also clear that the more we travel and the more we move, the smaller the world becomes in our personal sense of distance and space. However, in terms of imagination, the more we move, the more opportunities to create imagined spaces do increase in inverse proportion to the physical ones. With this in mind, it does not come as strange that such dependency on a geographic reality or a physical displacement in order to write can be perceived as a weakness of the imagination and/or literary talent. Nonetheless, it is also clear that, as we will see in the following chapters, there are occasions in which the traveler, who has been first and foremost a reader, finds in the travel narration a much more captivating experience that leaves them full of disappointment when confronted to the reality of the physical displacement.

Following on the demanded “reliable” nature of travel writing, it can be added that “modern attempts to define travel writing have often sought to limit the genre to true accounts of actual travels” (Sherman 2002: 31). Nonetheless, it is

ironic that two of the “travel writing” ever written about China considered most influential, such as *The Travels of Marco Polo* and *China Illustrata*, were not written by actual travelers. Nonetheless, these two texts could be held largely responsible for the political and also imaginative assault of China by Western powers.

The first one was written by the Italian romance writer Rustichello da Pisa, who shared during their time in prison, not only the same cell but also the stories that Marco Polo told him about his adventures in the mysterious Orient, allowing them to escape their boredom throughout those years. Similarly, the German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, who never actually set foot in China, is still widely recognized as a pioneer in the history of Western Sinology.

The boom in traveling in the nineteenth century coincided with a boom in the printing of new periodical publications. This led to a transformation experienced by the writer in terms of their professionalization and their entry into new markets. Given that the written word was now regarded as a commodity or a commercial good, it was therefore expected to respond to the satisfaction of the demands of a reader, as I will explore more in detail in the third chapter. This has “denigrat[ed] travel writing as low-brow entertainment” (Zilcosky 2008: 7).

The case of the Guatemalan writer Enrique Gómez Carrillo, whose traveling accounts *De Marsella a Tokio: sensaciones de Egipto, la India, China y Japón* (1906) are perhaps one of the most renowned ones among the travel writings of Latin Americans to East Asia. In relation to his journeys, Joan Torres-Pou reminds us that “hay autores que dudan que lo llevara verdaderamente a cabo” (2013: 144). In a footnote Torres-Pou continues suggesting that:

Si consideramos lo costosos que eran estos viajes, esa sospecha es muy comprensible. No tiene mucho sentido que los periódicos cubrieran los gastos de los viajes cuando el tipo de crónicas que escribe Gómez Carrillo no precisa en absoluto de la experiencia directa, basando una buena biblioteca de textos orientalistas y algunas fotografías. Por otro lado, no hay en ninguna de sus crónicas de viajes elementos que permitan creer que estamos ante el relato de un hecho realmente vivido. Los personajes que aparecen en las mismas parecen imaginados, los escenarios carecen de descripciones detalladas y la ensoñación a la que tanto acude el autor junto a las menciones eruditas todavía hacen que el viaje relatado parezca más bien cosa de imaginación que de experiencia [Considering how costly these journeys were, such a suspicion is entirely understandable. It makes little sense for newspapers to cover the travel expenses when the type of chronicles Gómez Carrillo wrote did not at all require direct experience; a well-stocked library of Orientalist texts and a few photographs would have sufficed. Moreover, none of his travel chronicles contain elements that would lead one to believe they recount events truly experienced. The characters that appear in them seem imagined, the settings lack detailed descriptions, and the author's frequent reliance on reverie and erudite references further reinforces the impression that the narrated journey is more a product of imagination than of experience] (144–145).

It is a very intriguing example because Gómez Carrillo is a travel writer whose veracity of his journeys has been questioned, so there is a distrust in the fact that they actually took place. However, the source of that distrust can be explained by the absence of literary talent which gives the impression of being dreamy or fanciful.

One more element that touches upon a sore point of travel writing are the historical and political questions around the practice of traveling and its relation to the history of imperialism, exploitation, and genocide. Consequently, the most common references of these accounts tend to be the first that come to mind when talking about travel writing and the most renowned travel writers. To this, James Clifford adds that traveling has undeniable “associations with gendered, racial bodies, class privilege” (1997: 39) elements that are all fundamental mobilizing axes for the reading of the Latin American travel writing of China proposed by this study. When seen from a broader perspective, these elements are part of long-lasting claims for change and vindication since travel writing can also be put on the spot for being, as Zilcosky says, “created mainly by upper class white men” (2008: 9).

After presenting *grosso modo* the most common questions and debates in relation to travel writing, I would like to present the perspective on travel narrative from which this study will stand through the next chapters. Due to the particularity, not only of the journeys but also of the travel text produced as evidence of them, it is necessary to revisit these questions and definitions in order to assess them in accord with the theoretical and critical challenges that lie in these peripheral transpacific encounters.

For this, *Literature on the Move* by Ottmar Ette proposes a rather different angle to approach travel literature. The idea of *literatures with no fixed abode* sees in travel writing “the point of departure for the bordercrossing literature on the move” (2003: 9). Therefore, from this perspective, travel writing is addressed beyond its apparently irreconcilable nature. With it, not only is the “anxiety” produced by the fact of being “unclassifiable” overcome, but it even approaches this condition as an advantage capable of further unfolding its potential. That is the same potential that this study also sees in the peripheral transpacific travel writing, mainly due to its capacity to disrupt the conventional transatlantic narratives and the power layout and distribution that they carry along. It is also owing to its condition of *otherness* that the opening of a multiplicity of possibilities for traveling and the traveling text is possible.

From the perspective of this study, I cannot help but think that everything in history is provisional until the search for alternative answers to new questions leads us to different approaches that contribute to the reevaluation of that past. These pages see in travel writing an invaluable opportunity to rethink traveling

from a Latin American perspective. To revisit other purposes that travel writing has served, as well as to remap the traditional center-periphery scheme through a perspective of the travel text from a transpacific point of view. The quality of travel writing as *bordercrossing* includes, but is not limited to, the crossing of a geographical space but as Huang Lijuan also suggests:

旅行文学研究是关于空间移动的文学研究，是关于空间移置、语码转换、文化转换和身份流动的文学研究，具有跨学科、跨语言、跨民族、跨文化的特征，涉及到殖民、流放、移民、僭越，以及由此带来的归属与不安等文化身份问题。旅行文学研究超越了文学的民族国家视野局限，从空间移动而不是从土生土长和根深蒂固中重新审视人类关于性别、种族、宗教、文化身份的书写历史 [The study of travel literature is a literary study of spatial movement concerned with spatial displacement, code-switching, cultural transformation, and identity fluidity, including cross-disciplinary, cross-linguistic, cross-ethnic, and cross-cultural characteristics, which involve colonization, exile, immigration, arrogation, and the resulting questions around the indetermination of a cultural identity or a sense of belonging. The study of travel literature transcends the confines of the nation-state vision of literature and reevaluates the written history of humanity on matters around gender, race, religion, and cultural identity from the perspective of spatial movement rather than from the locality of home-growing] (2021: 143).

This feeling of the *buan* 不安, the “unpeaceful,” but also, in a more extended sense, the “undetermined,” the “disturbed,” and the “unstable,” is a space for the crisis that travel writing offers and that is a very fertile terrain for the studies of the transpacific connections between China and Latin America. It broadens and sees beyond the horizons of “nation,” and, in the case of this study, it expands the significances and the constraints of the strictly Peruvian, Chilean, Colombian, or Chinese. In a wider sense, it even disturbs the preconceptions and understandings of the strictly Asian or the strictly Latin American.

It is evident that the history of travel writing produced, seen, and interpreted from a Eurocentric perspective is very much traversed and in parallel with the history of colonization and invasion. This is because it has been characterized by the imposition of a singular discourse and the enforcement of the superiority of the *self* in comparison to the inferiority of the *other*. However, it is also clear that, although the transatlantic journey to Europe, and in particular the voyage to Paris, was the dominant destination among traveling Latin Americans (Fombona 2005: 11–12; Sanhueza 2013: 205). It is also certain that from the perspective of a peripheral transpacific approach, travel writing can even be a means to the disruption of such narratives or, at the very least, a call into question of such power distributions.

Following Bajtin, Ette affirms that in travel literature “dialogicity should be recognized as fundamental for all experience and all writing, since here the *Other* is related in however hierarchized reference to one’s own and therefore brought

to speak” (2003: 26). In this sense, the disturbance of fixed categories is extensive to the most intimate and abstract instances. As an example, the notion of nation or identity becomes problematic in the case of Nicolás Tanco, as I will explore in the next chapter, and, even of categories such as the *self* and the *other*, which acquire interesting twists in the writing of Eugenio Orrego, which I will refer to on the third chapter. Therefore, travel writing is definitely not exclusively limited to narrating the history of an imposed delimitation and distribution of these concepts, but it is actually a chance to destabilize them, a phenomenon that Wang Bingzhong (王炳中) defines as the one in which:

重视通过内在的苦思，发现“自我”与“他者”的差异，或者说是旅行主体藉由外在的刺激而重新定义“自我”，由此建构出不同于旅行前的自我主体性。在此情况下，旅行照见的不是异地风景，而是主体内心的世界，此时旅行中“此处”与“彼处”的界限消失，旅行成为主体确证自我存在的过程。[...] 不仅主体塑造着旅行，旅行也塑造着主体 [The stress in on identifying the difference between “self” and “other” through an internal struggle, in other words, the travel subject redefines “self” through external stimuli, thereby constructing a self-subjectivity that varies from the one previous to the journey. What traveling does, in this case, is not to observe the scenery in places far away from home, but the inner world of the subject. In such a situation, the frontier between ‘here’ and ‘there’ disappears in the journey, travel then becomes a reaffirmation process of the subject’s own existence. (...) Not only is the subject the one that shapes their travel, but the travel also shapes the subject] (2021: 155).

If traveling, and consequently, travel writing and travel reading, are able to touch upon the own limits of what distances and defines the *self* from the *other* is because they also transgress the frontier between the imagined, the imaginable, and the unimaginable, which are all instances that take place along the journey and collide permanently in order to rearticulate each other.

Other allegations over the lack of literary talent in travel writing are also associated with its palimpsestuous nature. Every single piece of travel writing is marked by the presence of previous travel accounts as well as layers of previous imaginations, prejudices, expectations, and assumptions about a certain place, which have circulated through time and space to the present day. This collision of limits bridges the apparently irreconcilable differences between travel writing and fiction, as it recognizes that no traveling would take place if it had not been imagined in the first place and, right as the Cuban writer Carlos A. Aguilera suggests in *Teoría del alma china* “Un viaje, por muy detallado que sea, también es un hecho de ficción” [A journey, no matter how detailed, is also an act of fiction] (2006: 15). This text is on its own a very illustrative example of this tension between fiction and travel as well as of the fallacy that the category of “actual” physical or geographical displacements implies as a condition to determine travel writing. Idalia Morejón, in an analysis of this work from a post-nationalist per-

spective, affirms that, even though it is traversed by an imagined trip to China, Aguilera started writing it in Cuba, finished it in Austria and published it in Mexico, Croatia, Germany, and Czech Republic (2010: 51), leaving it with a clear expression of the *insilio* and the insularity common to totalitarian regimes despite their geographical or physical distance.

In the same way, the limits of “truth” are subjected to a permanent state of *buan* 不安 or “unrest” as in the case of what we know, knew, want to know, and what we thought we knew, in the words of Ette:

The fascination of the travelogue – according to my thesis – is based fundamentally on the movements of understanding that are omnipresent in travel literature, understood as movements of understanding is space, which transfer the dynamic between human knowledge and acting, between pre-knowledge and the unknown, between places of reading, the places of writing and the places reported as spatially concrete (2003: 19).

In contrast to what I presented at the beginning of this section in relation to the crossroad that apparently stands in front of the “truthfulness” and the “falsity” of travel writing, it is evident, at this point, that such categories have proven to be too rigid. In consequence, they are too breakable and frail to even deal with the very much contrasting transformative and fluid nature that travel and travel writing propose. This is an idea that Huang Lijuan also shares when proposing that “旅行文学研究不能以知识真实而要以政治意识形态去剖析，真理不过是相对暂存的真实” [The study of travel literature cannot be based on the truth of knowledge, but rather analyzed in accordance with the political ideologies. The truth is only a relatively temporary reality] (2021: 140).

Taking up the issue of the affinity between the history of colonialism and the history of travel writing, brought up before by Zilcosky and Clifford, I could not agree more on the existence of that affinity, to which I can add that, at least for the Latin American context, traveling was and still is today a gendered, classist, and racist privilege.² However, reducing the history of travel literature to the history of the Western expansion into the world is just a very clear sign of how colonized the ways in which travel writing has been compiled, selected, studied,

² Evidently, my understanding of “travel” is limited to the context of voluntary journeys. A form of travel that clearly distances itself enormously from other forms of travel, also quite current in Latin America, and which is a consequence of displacements forced upon and undertaken by refugees, asylees, or trafficked people. It is remarkable that the latter also has its roots in colonialism, considering that the European colonizer who arrived in America and the African slave forcibly brought to the continent are both “travelers,” in the most primary sense of the word, despite their abysmal differences.

and written are and how Eurocentric the perspective which has dominated over travel narrative still is.

Although the concept of *contact zone* by Mary L. Pratt will serve as a category of analysis in the following chapter, the concept of *frictional literature* by Ette gives a different dimension to this form of contact. The foregoing is because the contact zone does not behave as a neutral space, and the nature of the interactions produced within its limits is not expected to be equal among their participants. On the contrary, the center-periphery and colonizer-colonized schemes are the ones that actually help define these contacts and weigh their power asymmetries.

On the other hand, taking up Gérard Genette's distinction between *fiction* and *diction*, Ette situates travel narratives within the intersection of these two concepts. In the context of this contact, not only *fiction* and *diction* are in movement, but also the *friction*, which serves as the intersection in which this contact takes place, is also subjected to it.

Marked by a characteristic oscillating between fiction and diction, a jumping to and from, that does not permit, neither on the side of production nor reception, to make a solid assignment. Between the poles of fiction and diction, the travelogue rather leads to a friction, insofar as clear borderlines are also to be avoided as attempts to produce stable amalgams and mixed forms (2003: 31).

It is worth mentioning that even though in this *friction*, the dynamic of these interactions is neither innocent nor set free from power relations or historical or political asymmetries—instead, they are denaturalized and put in tension. In accordance with the above, it is evident that if I had not studied the travel writing of the lettered Creoles (explored in the next chapter), these pages would not have had the opportunity to cross paths with the Peruvian traveler Juan Bustamante, who was neither “lettered” nor a “Creole.” Bustamante was not lettered, at least in the sense that he did not have the privilege, despite coming from an affluent family, to receive a formal education, let alone to study in the European metropolis, which was, as we will see, a very common practice among the Latin American Creole elites. Besides, he was not a Creole, but a mestizo born to an indigenous mother who was presumably a descendant of Túpac Amaru II. Thus, he can be considered an author, who leaves us plenty to ponder in terms of the limits of traveling and the traveling text.

In the same vein, even though I did not find any female Latin American travelers to China in the nineteenth century, among the selected works that are studied in the fourth chapter, I included the diary of Teresa de la Parra, published in 1920, and the travel chronicles written by Elvira Santa Cruz Ossa in 1931. As I will explore later, their absence would derive in a projection of the image not only of

the Latin American but of the Chinese women as merely decorative objects. In turn, their presence in the narrative space would only be justified by its scenographic purposes. Thus, even though this study was not devised with a particular focus on the writing of female travelers to China³, it was certainly important to include their perspective. As we will see, their accounts act as a disruptive mechanism within the already disrupting trajectory that the narrative bondage between China and the American subcontinent already entails as a discursive alterity. Therefore, these accounts add other layers of complexity to the power dynamics that set these travel accounts in motion.

Ette takes up the concept of “truth” to analyze the “truthfulness” contained in the travel text but also to reflect on the “truth” behind the divisory line between travel literature and fiction. In order to do this, Ette distances the analysis from the idea or a construction of ‘truth’ as universal and eternal and focuses the attention of the interaction between the reader and the text, as it is in that space that the limits of ‘truth’ are negotiated. In this sense, the tracing of this line

Is dependent on his [the reader’s] collective assumptions and convictions regarding the historically true [...] Thereby we free ourselves from a focus that is oriented on production-aesthetic aspects and on a schematic questioning of the author’s intentions and get to problems of a viewpoint that includes reading functions of the travelogue and of literature in general. [...] The *effet de réel* that is achieved by a text may not be naively equated with an assumed “faithfulness” to reality; the actually attained reality effect is rather coupled to historically effective and changing forms of writing and their “credibility” in a socio-historical and epistemologic-sociological definable audience (2003: 26–27).

Additionally, it should be noted that the obligation to be “faithful” to which the travel writing is subjected, and the subsequent debate that has unfolded, thus far, as a result of that demand, is also rooted in the dominance of a Eurocentric and colonized reading of travel and travel writing. It is no accident that the history of this demand also coincides with the encounter of Europe with the New World as well as with the history of colonization, expansionism, and modernity as the underlying project for the developed West.

In the next chapter I will explore the relation and the duties of traveling, the traveler, and the travel text with science, religion, education, and the nation-building project. They demanded travel writing to be “true” and made that demand a very central issue. It is, therefore, derived from the colonialist vision of

³ Some studies dedicated to this question are the ones written by María Montt S. about the Chileans Mercedes Valdivieso (2020) and Olga Poblete (2022). In addition, Brenda Rupar has written about the Argentinian Rosa Nassif (2022) and Erik Eduardo Rodríguez B. about the Mexican Paula Gómez Alonzo (2022).

that encounter with *other* that travel literature is demanded to be reliable, since, in that context, Contrary to the medieval travelogue whose predominant aim was by no means the improvement of empirically provable knowledge [...] The usefulness of the travelogue for certain academic disciplines and subjects is ‘guaranteed’ by the institutionalization of the genre that started with the early reports and chronicles of the 16th century” (Ette 2003: 28–29). Institutions, evidently, also expected from travel literature to serve as a practical means to subject, classify, categorize, exploit, and capitalize on that *other*.

Understanding travel writing as a *traveling text*—that is to say, as an organic and autonomous organism which is in permanent movement—allows us to rerail the location of travel literature in the realm of literature as a whole. Thus, considering that “the truth” of travel writing is negotiated and constantly renegotiated with the readers, it is then important to acknowledge writing and reading as journeys on their own. For instance, as we will see in the third chapter, the changes in the position of the travel writer in society as well as the change that the literary market will prompt in the formation of a much broader and diverse reading public will also give a turn to the construction of the traveler’s subjectivity and their relationship with “the truth” since a much more intimate bondage with its own writing is established. The organicity evident in travel narrative leads me also to think that it is, in fact, when the traveler concludes their geographical journey, that the journey of the text through countries, cultures, ideologies, languages, historical periods, and regimes just begins.

Based on that idea, this study could be seen, in fact, as an articulation of several organic journeys that happen to coincide on these pages. The research journey is the most obvious one, but also there is the journey of the transformation of the traveling impressions of these Latin American voyagers while in China. Likewise, the historical and political journey that both of these latitudes traversed from the nineteenth century to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution could be defined as an odyssey in itself. Digging even deeper, it could be said that each traveler represents a peregrination on their own, not just thinking about the transformation of their impressions along their stay in this country, but even the case in which some travelers visited it again after several years to find not only that China, but their own countries, and themselves, as individuals, had experienced the inevitable adventure of change to which time throws us all into.

In this sense, the journey is to the traveler what the reading is to the reader and, in the same way, the land to be visited is equivalent to a text to be read. After publishing *Viaje de Nueva Granada a China y de China a Francia* in 1861, Nicolás Tanco returned to China in 1871. Thus, even though *Recuerdos de mis últimos viajes* (1888) is focused on his impressions of Japan, there are evident changes in

his ideas of China with respect to the ones expressed during his first visit. What is more, it is even perceptible how his experience living in China influenced profoundly the way in which Tanco saw, interpreted, and wrote about Japan.

Similarly, *the* China that the Chilean Juan Marín encounters and writes about in texts such as *Calles de Shanghai* (1941) is certainly different from *the* China that he found years later, a transformation that he himself acknowledges in a letter that he writes while in Shanghai to Gabriela Mistral in 1946. In it, he says that:

De nuevo, estamos en el Asia, en China. Pero, en una China que no es la misma aquella sobre la cual escribí tantas y tan bellas cosas. Tiene ahora un rostro y un alma diferente. Quizá sí es la misma de siempre, vista únicamente bajo otra luz. Los pueblos como los seres, tienen un alma «dual». A veces domina Ariel, otras veces Calibán [Once again, we are in Asia, in China. But this is a China unlike the one about which I wrote so many beautiful things. Now it has a different face and soul. Perhaps it is the same as always, seen only in another light. Nations, like individuals, possess a 'dual' soul. At times Ariel prevails; at others, Caliban] (Marín 1946).

Finally, I would like to refer to Yerko Moretic, who, despite not being part of the corpus, became an even closer friend of Francisco Coloane in China and therefore, an important presence in his travel writings. In a letter that Moretic wrote from Beijing to Gonzalo Drago in January 1961, the five months that he had been living there are described as:

Apasionantes desde todo punto de vista, en especial desde el punto de vista de la construcción del socialismo, que podemos observar tan directamente. Mis convicciones han encontrado una fundamentación muy sólida, maravillosa, para emplear el adjetivo que con mayor frecuencia se viene a la cabeza cuando uno quiere hablar de China y del pueblo chino. [...] Nuestras relaciones son de igual a igual con todo el mundo, en un sentido fraternal imposible de describir [Fascinating from every perspective, especially in terms of the construction of socialism, which we can observe so directly. My convictions have found a profoundly solid foundation—marvelous, to use the adjective that most often comes to mind when one speaks of China and the Chinese people. [...] Our relationships are on equal footing with everyone, in a fraternal sense that is impossible to put into words] (Moretic 1961).

However, by May 1962, a year and a few months later, *that* China of ink and paper fabricated with enthusiasm by Moretic is *a* China that has been drastically transformed in his affections, as this conversation with Francisco Coloane reveals:

Pancho, querido Pancho, estoy herido y me siento defraudado en algunas de mis idealizaciones sociales más queridas. Tú has llegado en duros momentos para los que hemos abrazado una suerte de compromiso con el pueblo. La convivencia aquí a veces se torna dolorosa, ingrata [Pancho, dear Pancho, I am wounded and feel betrayed in some of my most cherished social ideals. You have arrived during difficult times for those of us who have em-

braced a kind of commitment to the people. Living here sometimes becomes painful, unrewarding] (Coloane 2004: 35).

Thus, despite being the same traveler, in the same country, in the same city, they are all different because: “not only the places described, but also the places of writing and the places of reading are in reciprocal as well as in independent movement” (Ette 2003: 10).

Travel Writing in Latin America: Contexts and Meanings

As I have already suggested, traveling has served as a means to territorial and political invasion, and, as a result, travel writing has acted as a form of colonization of the territories of the mind and the imagination. Ironically, the critical resentments against travel writing that I discussed in the above section are also drawn from a rather Eurocentric perspective of the history of travel and the traveling text. This, if we consider that one of the greatest achievements of Western colonization over the world’s imagination has been to make us believe, or assume, that traveling has been an exclusive practice of Europeans, or at the very least, that the greatest travelers in history and, consequently, the best travel writing ever written must indisputably have the signature of the Global North.

The reality is that not only the developed West has traveled or experienced either the curiosity or the need to go beyond the territories of *the known*. Fortunately, as I said earlier, history is just provisional. A little before the 2000s, the archeologist Betty Meggers provided enough evidence to argue that the Olmec civilization, which was known until then as the most ancient one ever discovered in the American continent, had contacts, and shared common grounds in social, linguistic, and cultural aspects with the Shang dynasty of China (Meggers 1998). Later in the early 2000s, the Peruvian archeologist Ruth Shady presented groundbreaking results in relation to her studies on the Caral civilization, which, according to her:

Se formó en el área norcentral del Perú antes que en cualquier otro lugar de los Andes Centrales. El desarrollo civilizatorio de Caral-Supe ha sido precoz en comparación con el de otras poblaciones de América, hasta ahora investigadas, a las que se adelantó en, por lo menos 1500 años. [...] Caral cambia la historia del Perú y del mundo al mostrar que en los Andes Centrales se creó una civilización con una antigüedad comparable con las del Viejo Continente, Egipto, Mesopotamia, India y China [It emerged in the north-central region of Peru before anywhere else in the Central Andes. The civilizational development of Caral-Supe was precocious compared to other populations in the Americas studied thus far, predating them by at least 1,500 years. [...] Caral reshapes the history of Peru and the world by demonstrat-

ing that a civilization in the Central Andes was established with an antiquity comparable to that of the Old World—Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China] (2005: 5–6).

Despite not having evidence to support his claims, in the wake of these findings, the researcher Fernando de Trazegnies⁴ has suggested that the iconography of the Moche and Nazca represented individuals of Manchu origin in some of their huacos (Muñoz-Nájjar 2017: 2–3). Regardless of the accuracy of such claims, it is evident that there is a lot to revisit in terms of the history of the Latin American connections with the world beyond the metropolis-periphery scheme.

As is customary, in view of the absence of scientific evidence, the literary text, as a testimony of what was once imagined, is a source capable of shedding light on connections whose existence is validated beyond the materiality of their ideas. It was imagining the Orient in search of a passage to the Indies that Columbus stumbled onto America (Nagy-Zekmi 2018: 18) and with it, into a reality that escaped all the limits of the imagination. Nonetheless, the journeys of the imagined had already coincided at some point in the routes of these three continents long before setting sail. A crossroad forged by the intertwined destinies of Columbus as reader, as traveler, and as narrator since

Es sabido que Cristóbal Colón llevaba a Marco Polo en su memoria y en su imaginación, a tal punto que perfiló las imágenes que surgieron de su pluma [...] Las narraciones de la conquista tienen una pequeña dosis de maravilla deudora del imaginario oriental [It is well known that Christopher Columbus carried Marco Polo in his memory and imagination, to such an extent that he shaped the images that emerged from his pen. (...) The narratives of the conquest contain a subtle trace of wonder indebted to the Oriental imaginary] (Colombi 2016: 10).

It is, therefore, evident that the rooted connection that the cartographies of imagination, travel, and writing have in the definition of the Latin American identity. However, the extent of that influence has been limited to the conception of it as a destination rather than as a point of departure.

Although it seems that the ancient world was in fact more “globalized” and “cosmopolitan” than what we claim to be today, that does not necessarily mean that we have all had, either the intention or the capacity, in terms of the means and the channels, to colonize and to leave a testimony of such enterprise. Even from a more recent and immediate perspective, we do not all have the means and

4 Trazegnies is the author of *En el País de las Colinas de Arena*, an extensive research on the history of the Chinese diaspora in nineteenth-century Peru, first published in two volumes by Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in 1994, then reedited and published in 2016 by Fondo Editorial Universidad Ricardo Palma.

the channels that the Global North has to dig deep into the histories of traveling and travel writing that could potentially act as a counterweight to the very much Eurocentric histories of traveling available to us today.

Temperamental Journeys Essays on the Modern Literature of Travel (1992) edited by Michael Kowalewski, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002) edited by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, *Travel Writing* (2011) by Carl Thompson and *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing* (2019) edited by Nandini Das and Tim Youngs were relevant works for the writing of these pages. They served as a first approximation to the fundamental topics and the most debatable issues associated with the theory of travel and travel writing. All of them are, however, devised and structured with Europe and the United States as the point of departure, while the rest of the world serves, for the most part, as their destinations. In other words, they maintain the metropolis-periphery scheme and the colonizer-colonized layout as the unspoken tracings of their selection criteria and analysis.

For instance, in the collection edited by Das and Youngs, half of the text sectioned as “Part I: Travel Writing by Period” intends to offer a chronological account of travel writing from the “Ancient World” until “after 1900.” However, it is, in fact, a chronological account of the history of Western travel writing because when referring to “ancient,” the editors mean “ancient Greece.” This is a very clear expression of what Enrique Dussel refers to when saying that: “El helenocentrismo es el padre del eurocentrismo, escritos como los de Giovanni Semerano, [...] prueban el origen semita de las grandes categorías griegas [o los de] Martín Bernal, que indica las relaciones con Egipto” [Hellenocentrism is the precursor to Eurocentrism. Writings such as those by Giovanni Semerano (...) demonstrate the Semitic origins of major Greek categories, [or those by] Martin Bernal, who highlights connections with Egypt] (2004: 6).

Similarly, when referring to “medieval,” they mean French, Italian, and German travel writing of the time. This distribution disregards the flourishing empires of the Mughal in India, the Yuan in China, or even the Mongol Empire, which by the thirteenth and fourteenth century, were the largest empire on earth. However, these thriving empires are only mentioned because they served as destinations for European monks and clergy, but the editors never addressed or recognized the masterful travelers from outside Europe.

“Part II: Travel Writing in a Global Context,” the essay dedicated to Latin America’s “Hispanic Travel Writing” written by Claire Lindsay, follows the pattern of the New World *discovered* by Europeans. The central axis of her analysis is the chronicles of Christopher Columbus, Bartolomé de las Casas, Hernán Cortés, Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, Charles-Marie de la Condamine, and Alexander Von Humboldt. Later on, among the “domestic travel writers” Lindsay mentions Latin

American voyagers, such as Faustino Sarmiento, Manuel Payno, Guillermo Prieto, Ignacio Manuel Altamirano, and Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, but only as travelers within their national boundaries despite they were all, without exception, assiduous globetrotters. Therefore, it is clear that the Latin American, as a traveler and as a writer of the impressions of their own journeys overseas, does not fit into any special category, neither in this nor in any other of the above-mentioned collections. Evidently, their label of “colonized” seems not only to contradict their achievements as travelers, but it perpetuates the idea according to which the narrative destiny of the Latin American is *to be narrated* not *narrator*.

I am fully aware of the fact that, as Edward Said argues in the essay “Traveling Theory” part of his book *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, theory is certainly needed, but “what we also need over and above theory, however, is the critical recognition that there is no theory capable of covering closing off, predicting all the situations in which it might be useful [...] no social or intellectual system can be so dominant as to be unlimited in its strength (1983: 241).

And perhaps, even more importantly, the fact that elements so tightly related to travel writing as representation, identity, and culture are all organic entities whose past, present, and future exist in perpetual movement and, therefore, any attempt or intention to embrace final words about them is unavoidably doomed to failure.

Nonetheless, despite efforts such as those of Beatriz Colombi (2010, 2016) or Daniar Chávez and Marco Urdapilleta (2015) a breakthrough toward the construction of a comprehensive history of Latin American travel writing, there is still much to be achieved at the critical and theoretical level. By “comprehensive” and “history,” I do not mean a “finished” and/or “exhausted” ambition but a thoughtful exercise to reflect on the act of traveling from a Latin American perspective. This would point to a revision of the effects that colonialism, exile, violence, and forced displacement have as categories that intersect with “traveling” and which are, sadly, still so defining of the realities of most Latin American societies today. In the same vein, if in the developed West, colonialism-modernity is the actual backbone of the history of travel and travel writing, it would be interesting to think of a Latin American theory of traveling that considers categories such as “colonialism” and “westernization” or even what Fernando Coronil (1999) and Walter D. Mignolo (1998) have referred to as “post-occidentalism.” I would then add that in transpacific travel writing, there are countless opportunities that could enable us to reformulate the baselines and the points of reference to think and historicize traveling and travel writing from counter-hegemonic stances and more global viewpoints as an account of these connections and interactions.

The Center-Periphery Paradigm

The development and the transformation of the center-periphery paradigm has played a fundamental role in the history of Latin American thought. From the encounter of Europe with the New World surged a dichotomous form of understanding of that difference. It was greatly influenced by the binarism that characterized the strategy of setting apart rational-irrational, civilized-barbarian, written-oral, urban-rural as part of a systematization of those apparent disparities. All of these had a protagonist presence in the formation of foundational national narratives in nineteenth-century Latin America.

However, the influence of the center-periphery paradigm only gained a special prominence in Latin American critical scene from the second half of the twentieth century. Back then, other regions of the world, such as Asia and Africa, found in their colonial past and their struggle for the construction of the present of their postcolonial realities (Fanon 1963: 81) a common ground shared with Latin America. By that time, the end of the Second World War laid bare the already disproportionate economic and political differences between the center and the world peripheries and reaffirmed the crisis in which the European hegemony had already entered. This made the debates on the place and influence of Europe in the world even more profound, acting as a trigger for the decolonization processes in Africa and Asia as well as the ratification of the United States as a new imperial power.

However, the very beginning of the discussions around such symbolic and practical power imbalances can be traced to several decades before reaching this turning point in the mid-twentieth century. From the Latin American perspective, the emergence of José Carlos Mariátegui, as one of the most vigorous Marxist voices on the continent, laid the foundations for the reflections on the colonial and subordinated condition of Latin American societies. This was only possible due to the publication in 1928 of *Siete Ensayos de Interpretación de la Realidad Peruana*, which based on the principles of the historical materialism, claimed that the imposition of the colonial feudal and slave system in Peru destroyed and interrupted the development of the “collectivist” and “socialist” economic system already devised by the Incas. A condition that was not overcome with the independence, as it represented more a “romantic adventure” than a “revolution of liberation” ([1928] 2009: 17).

These concepts set the basis for the so-called intellectual group of the “dependentistas” from which several publications came to light from the perspective of different social sciences and disciplines within the decade of the mid-1960s to the

mid-1970s⁵. A special focus was given to examining the Latin American condition of economic dependency on the world powers, which deepened the dichotomy of the center-periphery relation as a basis of its dynamics.

The development of the dependency theory emerged as a critical response to the initial theoretical approaches that started to gain momentum in the 1940s and whose strengthening was manifested with the foundation of the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) in 1947. This approach was mostly led by Raul Prebisch and was later recognized as Latin American structuralism. Even though the “dependentistas” acknowledged that the existing center-periphery relation with the developed West constrained the way to progress for Latin American economic and social progression, they were still relatively optimistic about the impact that specific political actions might have to counteract the effects of its peripheral condition (Prebisch 1949: 347).

The response of the “dependentistas” was to point out capitalism as the core problem of the gap in the center-periphery paradigm. The reasoning behind it is that, as long as it continues being the economic system of reference, the unevennesses will not experience any changes other than becoming more radical and profound. This is possible because the relations of dominations between center and periphery are defined by the dependency of the underdeveloped condition of the periphery to guarantee the continuation of the centers of power (Cardoso y Faletto [1969] 1998: 487).

This recognition of the peripheral condition of Latin America was strengthened and diversified thanks to the consolidation of global peripheral thought. For this, the Bandung Conference held in 1955 served as the prelude to the Non-Aligned Movement formed in the 1960s. It arose from the integration of Asia and Africa as other peripheries of the world that shared similar realities with Latin America. Furthermore, the increasing importance that different disciplines gave to the reflection and understanding of globalization as a phenomenon, as well as the tendency toward broadening the vision to achieve a more global perspective, served as a basis for the theory of the world system devised by Immanuel Wallerstein⁶. From his approach, it is also clear that capitalism requires a certain plane-

5 Examples of this textual production are the articles by Fernando Cardoso *El Proceso de Desarrollo en América Latina: Hipótesis para una Interpretación Sociológica* (1965) and *Dependencia y Desarrollo en América Latina. Ensayo de Interpretación Sociológica* (1967) by Cardoso and Enzo Faletto; *Teoría y Política del Desarrollo Latinoamericano* (1967) by Alonso Aguilar and *Dialéctica de la Dependencia* (1973) by Ruy Mauro Marini.

6 Comprised in *The Modern World-System* and presented as a panoramic reassessment of the history of the emergence and development of the modern world from the 16th century up to the beginning of the 20th century.

tary organization in order to operate. Furthermore, it places the core principles of the modernization theory at the center of the debate.

It was also intended to defy the traditional and dominant definitions of development, especially when there was no alternative for a form of the expected sense of development out of the expectations of growth and progress devised by the Westerner interpretation of “the modern.” Regarding this, the approach that Andre G. Frank offers in his book *ReOrient Global Economy in the Asian Age* is quite compelling. Frank questions the fact that when the world economic system is analyzed, what is really addressed is the European economic system. Therefore, the book is an attempt to approach Europe just as one additional part within the entire whole that the global economic system really entails. What makes this approach so interesting is that it even allows reassessing *modernity* and *the modern* since it can lead to the identification of “possible earlier roots of the ‘modern’ world system” (1998: xix) considering that

There already was an ongoing *world* economy before the Europeans had much to do and say in it. There are two naturally derivative points: One is to show that Asia, and especially China and India, but also Southeast Asia and West Asia, were more active and the first three also more important to this world economy than Europe was until about 1800. The other derivative point is that therefore it is completely counterfactual and antihistorical to claim that “historians already knew that Europe built a world around itself”. It did not; it used its American money to buy itself a ticket on the Asian train (1998: xxiv–xxv).

The outburst of social movements, especially during the 1970s, claimed for the vindication of civil rights denied on the basis of race and gender. It was also fueled by the awareness of colonialism as the apparatus that sustained modernity as the ultimate project and the actual origin of such inequalities. Thus, with a more global vision of the center-periphery paradigm, the discussion around the peripheral condition was rerouted to a more politically aware stance. It was devised and expected to be systematized from and for the perspective of that subordinated or subaltern consciousness, which has been also known as the *from-below*. In this sense, these pages also stem from the conviction that, like world economic history, the world history of travel and travel writing also seems to have at its base the naturalized assumption that Europe is at the center of these discourses and narratives. Therefore, the present study is a testimony of the invalidity of that presupposition insofar as it suggests other routes and other meeting points that displace Europe as a reference.

Travel as a mobilizing axis adds a very distinctive nuance to the center-periphery distribution since, following Ette’s idea of the *movable*, traveling is an element that sets in motion a third force in that scale, given the fact that movement is its ultimate essence. As I have already suggested, travel and travel writing,

but especially the effects and consequences derived from its reading throughout history, have served as channels for the construction of imaginary geographies. Therefore, they have acted, directly or indirectly, as enablers, which, far from acting as mobilizing elements, have, on the contrary, contributed to the radicalization and even the extension of the scope of this binary distribution to new territories, both physical and imaginary.

Despite this, I would argue that travel and its writing are materials particularly sensitive to react when they are put in contact with structures that are either too stable or defined by too rigid distributions. An interesting example of this is described by Carles Prado-Fonts in relation to the traumatic experience that the return to China represented for thousands of young intellectuals who left the country to study abroad between the end of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century “deberán contribuir a reformar una sociedad de la cual se sienten al margen. Al regresar a China se les cae el mundo encima justo cuando tienen un mundo por construir” [They must contribute to reforming a society from which they feel alienated. Upon returning to China, their world collapses just as they have a world to build] (2019: 39). If we consider travel and travel writing as a puzzle piece, traveling ends up modifying the sizes and shapes of a piece, which will make it impossible for it to fit with the previous precision and naturalness when trying to relocate it in its puzzle. This is not only because the piece has changed, but the puzzle has also been subjected to its own metamorphoses. In a similar way, the reading of the diaries and travel memories written by some of the Latin Americans who visited China has allowed me to see what a powerful and disruptive force that travel and travel writing also have. This is especially relevant when the journey to China is first understood and approached as a voyage toward *alterity*. Furthermore, when we do not lose sight of the fact that, as has already been pointed out, it is a journey undertaken from one periphery to another, and the writing of one periphery by another. This constitutes a viable correlation, at least when they are approached from the temporary delimitations proposed for the present study.

As we will see in the following chapters, these disruptive elements of the stability of this binarism will be present even in nineteenth-century travel writing, but they will acquire more depth and multiple layers of complexity with the passage of time until reaching a sort of climactic point during the 1950s. In the first chapter, we will see how Juan Bustamante’s encounter with China and the writing of his impressions act as a destabilizer of the *centralities* and *peripherality* that support the scaffolding of racial distributions insofar as he is a mestizo and not a lettered Creole writing about nineteenth century China. In a similar manner, the challenges imposed by Eugenio Orrego’s writing on the binary distribution pre-

sent in the class factor will be highly relevant in the third chapter. As a bourgeois with a marked socialist impetus, Orrego sometimes also resorts to his travel writing as a boycott that claims for the destruction of his own figure and his own social class. Nonetheless, he also finds in it the space in which he can rearrange the weights and distributions of that power, thereby opening a wide range of possibilities that only became accessible as part of the encounter with China. In the last chapter, we will also see how, together with the tensions caused by the Cold War, the consolidation of the unity of a global anti-imperialist and anti-colonial left will further put the East-West and center-periphery categories into question.

I would therefore argue that in this travel writing, it is possible to identify sparks that flare up as a result of an accumulated tension and that emerge as disruptors of the center-periphery orders. In this sense, I propose that these sparks act as what Michel Foucault defined as *heterotopias* since they represent “the linking together of things that are inappropriate; I mean the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry” ([1966] 2002: xix). All these moments in which these travelers challenge the center-periphery paradigm, as a consequence of their encounter with China, are the expression of what is “inappropriate” insofar as they deviate from the traditional routes of the peripheries as destinations and not as points of departure. Nonetheless, this grants them the particular quality of losing a common ground within these mappings and to make of themselves, following Foucault, atopic and aphasic connections.

Coloniality and Decoloniality from the Latin American Stance

In the Latin American context, the growing interest in the subaltern consciousness and the peripheral condition was visible not only in the traditional social sciences, which laid the foundations for the understanding of the center-periphery paradigm from the viewpoint of the economic and political sciences. It was also visible in other disciplines—some of them “new” such as Cultural Studies or Critical Geography. With respect to the latter, the work of Milton Santos offers in texts such as *Toward an Other Globalization: From the Single Thought to Universal Conscience* (2017) a multidisciplinary approach to an alternative way to think of globalization from the world peripheries. Understanding that prevailing dominance of money and information as capital controlled by a very reduced portion of global stakeholders coming from Europe and the United States and the subsequent impossibility of peripheral subjects to ever access or control such capitals, Santos

sees, however, the potential in Latin America, Africa, and Asia as an opportunity to rethink globalization and to strive for a new form of universalism.

The environmental, social, and political ravages caused by capitalism worldwide put development as the ontological goal for Latin America in the eye of the storm. This is important, considering that this could be understood as a very strategic myth orchestrated by the developed West in order to maintain the world peripheries in poverty. Thus, in the process of envisioning a Latin America beyond that aspiration, the recognition of the local designs and the possibility to think about autonomous projects started to take shape. As I demonstrate in the third chapter, during the 1930s, the first foundations were laid; and, from there, they began to take a clearer and more defined shape during the 1950s, as I discuss throughout the fourth chapter.

In this sense, the reflections on the meaning and the implications of categories such as first and third world were essential in the development of the M/C project (Grupo Modernidad-Colonialidad). Arturo Escobar has written extensively on the framing of that autonomy, as well as on the idea of a *post-development* approach. Evidently, this approach does not conceive development as a finished state but also stresses the urge to overcome it as a goal. Post-development is then intended as a path to rethink the relation of humankind with its surroundings, which could lead us to overcome the capitalistic vision of life and territory from a dominant and exploitative relation (1991: 136).

In the same vein, the M/C project synthesized, at least initially, the principles of the world system proposed by Wallerstein but reoriented its approach in order to structure it from a more postcolonial stance (Mignolo 2003: 57). The philosophy of liberation introduced by Enrique Dussel in the early 1970s also offered an important baseline. With these premises, Walter Mignolo stressed in his works the importance of thinking of the center-periphery dichotomy as a dialectical matrix that should also be observed from the need to decolonize power, knowledge, and being.

This is based on the idea that colonialism has been able to prevail owing to deep-rooted Eurocentric narratives present and effective in the way we think and are. They can be defined as forms or expressions of *coloniality*, which are associated with all practices and discourses that, in one way or another, presuppose the superiority of the industrialized West at all levels. However, it is worth noting that the idea of “West” has been also semantically reevaluated and problematized by Dussel in texts like “Europa, Modernidad y Eurocentrismo” (2003).

From the Tricontinental to the Global South (2018) by Anne Garland Mahler is a text that has offered a historical outline of these transnational solidarities to the writing of these pages. It has also been a fundamental tool to interpret the scope

of the intellectual, poetic, and political connections addressed in the fifth chapter, dedicated to the journeys of some of the Latin Americans who visited China between 1950 and 1966. Within the theoretical perspectives that delineate and analyze the points of contact that are part of this extensive South-South network, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* is quite remarkable. In it, De Sousa Santos calls for a revolution of theory more than a theory of revolution and sees with high hopes the Bandung Conference as “a first attempt at a concerted strategy for the world’s peripheral social system and heralded both a distinct globalism and an alternative network of solidarity that constituted the first version of South-South solidarity” (2018: 69).

Thus, the epistemologies of the South are proposed as the valorization of knowledge that is not recognized as such by the categories and delimitations of the dominant knowledge. However, the epistemologies of the south are not necessarily expressed as symmetrically opposite to the ones devised by the North. Although De Sousa Santos is aware of the “persistence of Western-centric colonialism” (2018: 1), the North-South dichotomy is fractured and pluralized in the form of many epistemologies of the South that are not dependent on a determined geographical space. This is because the struggles against coloniality can also take place in the geographical North, in the same way as the epistemologies of the North clearly have a dominant presence in the geographical South. Betting on a transpacific perspective serves as an alternative and a form of renegotiation of the dichotomous center-periphery distributions and orders. In this sense, travel literature, with all its complexities, opens the way to challenge the geographic, discursive, epistemic, and aesthetic frontiers between the center-periphery dynamics.

In the following chapters, I will explore through the reading of the travel diaries and travelogues an increasing displacement in the distribution of that center-periphery scheme from the mid-nineteenth century up until the mid-1960s. I argue that, as early as in the nineteenth-century travel writing, national identities are dislodged and even raising suspicions over the project of modernity as the only possible future for Latin America can already be glimpsed. This is a sign of a developed West, which is gradually dislocated as the center of the Latin American social, aesthetic, and economic aspirations and projects. Considering that traveling to another periphery, such as China, it served as a space for self-questioning and self-understanding that would see alternative futures as possible.

In view of the escalated influence that from the 1980s China has been exerting in an increasingly resounding way in the economic and the political global sphere, it is only natural that questions on the belonging of China into the realms of the global peripheries and the narratives of the Global South arise. Thus, even though

this is clearly a debate that we must continue having from all the possible fronts and perspectives, I will present in the following text the arguments on which I base the categorization of China as a world periphery throughout this study.

Prior to that, I would like to stress that these pages share the position of Enrique Dussel (2004: 9) in relation to the evident dominance that China has had for thousands of years as an empire and a civilization in comparison to the relatively “recent” predominance of the developed West. The Western predominance was, if we see it in perspective, not significantly outstanding before the fifteenth century, and it coincided, in fact, with the European colonization of America. That is a point of view that coincides, despite doing it from another angle, with Andre G. Frank’s approach to the role of China within the history of the world economic system.

Thereby, despite agreeing on this, I also find of high importance the fact that, first, the period between 1839 and 1949, two dates which correspond respectively with the beginning of the First Opium War and the foundation of the People’s Republic of China⁷ after the War of Liberation. This period is known in Chinese historiography as *Bainian guochi* 百年国耻 (Century of Humiliation). Therefore, the magnitude of the subjugation to which China was subjected by the Western imperial powers during that period should not be overlooked or considered as “minor.” Despite being just a century within its millennia-long history, it was certainly a century that altered its course and marked a watershed for the most recent history of the Chinese as a republic. In addition to how this period has been categorized in their historiography, the period corresponding to the Century of humiliations is also aligned, for the most part, with the chronological delimitations of this research (1843–1966).

Secondly, it is also relevant to note that, as Marisela Connelly and Romer Cornejo affirm, right after the foundation of the PRC in 1949, it was a priority for their leaders to rebuild their country and, in order to do that, it was necessary to create a counterweight to the siege imposed by the United States. That was only possible through the process of letting the world know about the new political and historical phase that they had just started and establishing new diplomatic relations and alliances with all the possible countries that would be willing to accept their new political system. Thus, following the alliance with the USSR and continuing with the strategy of seeking partnerships with countries ruled by communist parties, “La Unión Soviética dio la pauta para que el resto de países del bloque socialista estableciera relaciones con China. Algunos países no comunistas también reconocieron como legítimo al gobierno de la República Popular: Birmania, India, Gran Bretaña, países

⁷ From now on the PRC.

escandinavos, Pakistán, Ceilán, Afganistán [The Soviet Union set the precedent for the rest of the socialist bloc countries to establish relations with China. Some non-communist countries also recognized the government of the People's Republic as legitimate: Burma, India, Great Britain, Scandinavian countries, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Afghanistan] (Connelly and Cornejo 1992: 50).

In the fifth chapter, I will explore in more detail the different strategies that China implemented during this decade. However, it is already evident, at this point, that China positioned itself among the world peripheries during this time and played, henceforth, an important role in the consolidation of peripheral solidarity. This is clearly demonstrated by the main speech given by Zhou Enlai at the Bandung Conference:

It is the first time in history that so many countries of Asia and Africa have gathered together to hold a conference. On these two continents live more than half of the world population. The peoples of Asia and Africa created brilliant ancient civilizations and made tremendous contributions to mankind. But, ever since modern times most of the countries of Asia and Africa in varying degrees have been subjected to colonial plunder and oppression, and have thus been forced to remain in a stagnant state of poverty and backwardness. Our voices have been suppressed, our aspirations shattered, and our destiny placed in the hands of others. Thus, we have no choice but to rise against colonialism. Suffering from the same cause and struggling for the same aim, we the Asian and African peoples have found it easier to understand each other and have long had deep sympathy and concern for one another. Now the face of the Asian-African region has undergone a radical change. More and more countries have cast off or are casting off the shackles of colonialism. The colonial powers can no longer use the methods of the past to continue their plunder and oppression. The Asia and Africa of today are no longer the Asia and Africa of yesterday (China and the Asian-African Conference 1955: 9–10).

Several initiatives, such as the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (1966), established as a result of the celebration of the first Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Conference that same year, is an example of that and reaffirm the belonging of China within the Global South and its shared colonial past. In addition, the reaction of the United States and its allies to strengthen the siege around China as well as the hindering and delaying of its accession to the United Nations in 1971 is a clear sign that the Global North also made substantial efforts in view of pushing China to the geopolitical sidelines of the world.

Lastly, several other scholars interested in the South-South connections between China and Latin America have also addressed these dynamics as expressions of peripheral exchanges and have, in consequence, positioned China as a periphery in the geopolitical map (Ahumada 2020: 10; Pérez 2004: 55; Vidal 2020: 163–164). However, it should be made clear that, unlike the present study, which intends to stand by this position for the entire period that will be examined (1843–1966), their

views are focused on more abridged time scopes, text selections, and even geographical delimitations.

The great majority of these studies are focused on the cultural and artistic exchanges between the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. However, the study of Araceli Tinajero on the travel writing of some Latin American *modernistas* to Asia served as a precursor to most of the following academic interest on this connection. In her analysis, these transpacific exchanges locate Asia as peripheral and stress on the fact that “este género, [la crónica] quizás más que ningún otro, se presta a la valoración e interpretación de la mirada de un sujeto ‘periférico’ hacia otro ‘periférico’” [This genre, (the chronicle), perhaps more than any other, lends itself to the evaluation and interpretation of the gaze of a ‘peripheral’ subject towards another ‘peripheral’ one] (2003: 4).

In a theoretical analysis of the program of cultural diplomacy between China and Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s, Jorge J. Locane highlights in his article “Del orientalismo a la provincialización de Europa. A propósito del viaje a los albores de la República Popular China” the importance of distinguishing Japan as an imperial force in relation to China⁸ because

En mis argumentos interesa China, precisamente, por la posición subordinada que ocupa(ba) en el orden geopolítico mundial y regional. Una posición que, a la vista de los intelectuales latinoamericanos que entraron en contacto con ella desde los años 50 en adelante, daba lugar a una empatía particular y permitía suponer que tanto China, no así Japón, como los países latinoamericanos se encontraban en un mismo frente amalgamado por la condición de víctimas de la opresión [In my arguments, China is of particular interest due to the subordinate position it occupies (or occupied) in the global and regional geopolitical order. A position that, in the eyes of Latin American intellectuals who came into contact with it from the 1950s onward, fostered a particular empathy and suggested that both China, unlike Japan, and Latin American countries were united in a shared front, bound together by their condition as victims of oppression] (2020: 66).

Even though Locane leaves the question concerning the justification of the current belonging of China within the global peripheries open, it is at least clear that, as far as the period between the 1950s and 1960s is concerned, his argument is also positive on that positioning. It is, in fact, grounded on the Bandung Conference as a political phenomenon, as well as on the emergence of the concept of *tercermundismo* from an international stance.

8 I will touch upon this topic again in the upcoming section *Latin American Orientalism*.

Orientalism

For Edward Said, Orientalism is a discursive construction of the Orient weaved as an alliance between scholarship and imperialism. The creation of that fictional but convenient Orient emphasized the definition of its differences in relation to the unquestionably superior West and set the basis of a very vertical and Eurocentric narrative. That “scholarship,” whose validity only started to be questioned from the 1980s onwards, was the result of the travel impressions written by European travelers during their journeys across the wild East. Their travel writing played, in consequence, an essential role in assembling those differences in order to construct an epistemological and ontological set of distinctions full of stereotypes and essentialisms. Moreover, the construction of that scholarship is associated with the relation between knowledge and power proposed by Foucault since that body of knowledge serves as a means to achieve power and dominion. Unsurprisingly, that is the reason why the upsurge of the academic attention and interest in the Orient coincides perfectly with the rise of the colonial expansion in Asia.

As I mentioned in the above section dedicated to the politics of travel and travel writing, it is clear that travel writing has also served the colonialist project. Not for nothing when the Brussels Geographic Conference was held in 1876 or when the Berlin Conference took place 1884–1885, several travelers regarded as “experts” played a key role as facilitators to open paths for civilization through the dark depths of the African continent. Travel writing served, by extension, as a written proof that acted as a base to justify the urge of that barbaric continent to be intervened, a means to obtain popular approval to subject it and also as a source that provided “firsthand” information that served as a mediator to tailor the strategy.

In the distribution of Edward Said’s center-periphery, there is a rather clear-cut division between the center as “Occident/West” and the periphery as the “Orient/East.” In the next section, I will elaborate on the critical discussion around Latin America fitting into that equation and the possibility to talk about Latin American Orientalism or Latin American Orientalisms. However, first, I would like to highlight the unique opportunity that literature, and even more specifically, travel literature and travel writing, give us to recalibrate the traditional weights in the scales of history.

These pages, dedicated to the study of the travel writing of Latin Americans to China, intend to contribute to a more complex and multifaceted view of such a layout. I find in travel writing a genre with a distinct potential to defy the frontiers of the Occident/West-Orient/East dichotomies, and countless examples could be provided to illustrate this point. It is, for instance, quite intriguing that due to the rapid

modernization experienced in China during the Tang dynasty, a sort of spiritual decadence became palpable and, therefore, an urge to restore the old values that were still preserved in “the West” emerged. Thus, a written testimony of this urge is one of the all-time classics of Chinese literature: *Xiyouji* 《西游记》 (*Journey to the West*). It is an extensive travel account of the Buddhist monk Tang Sanzang to the “West,” a “West” that does not correspond, nonetheless, to the “West” that most likely comes first to our minds. It refers, by contrast, to India and Central Asia (Galambos 2014: 164), a region that, if seen from China’s angle, belongs, in fact, to its perception of “West.” Similarly, even the geographical “West” is also relativized as a center in the German novel *Soll und Haben* (*Credit and Debt*) written by Gustav Freytag, in which Poland is depicted as uncivilized, primitive, and therefore, part of a reality *other*.

There are also traveling texts that challenge the “Orient/East” structure as a homogeneous periphery or even the “Oriental/Eastern” categories as part of a given global geography. For instance, the Uruguayan writer Pablo Rovetta Dubinsky highlights with humor the reason behind the title of his memoirs living in China: *Los años setenta en China: recuerdos de un oriental en Oriente*, saying that:

Lo que hoy es la República Oriental del Uruguay era conocida en la época de la colonia como la «Banda Oriental» del Virreinato del Río de la Plata, por encontrarse al este del río Uruguay, y por eso «oriental» ha sido y es también sinónimo de uruguayo o relacionado con Uruguay. De ahí que estos sean recuerdos doblemente orientales: de un «oriental» uruguayo, y sobre este nunca mejor llamado lejano Oriente [What is now the Eastern Republic of Uruguay was known during the colonial period as the ‘Banda Oriental’ of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, due to its location east of the Uruguay River. Thus, ‘oriental’ has also become synonymous with Uruguayan or something related to Uruguay. Hence, these are memories doubly ‘eastern’: of an ‘eastern’ Uruguayan, and of what could hardly be more fittingly called the Far East] (2020: 16–17).

Finally, the travel accounts published in 1892 by the Japanese writer Andō Fujio, *True Records of Wanderings in China*, portray a China, which was once wise but whose recent decadence was turning it into a wild and primitive empire (Chang 2014: 55). This position corresponds to the commitments of the geopolitical agenda of Japan at that time and focuses on changing its peripheral condition to negotiate a more central place in the global mappings of power.

In the light of the above examples, I would like to place special emphasis on the fact that, as Carles Prado-Fonts reminds us, the

East-West scholarship has mostly remained in a comfort zone that easily equates the West with Anglophone and Francophone contexts and that, while often paying attention to the unbalanced politics between East and West, forgets that the interaction with the East rein-

forced unequal power relations within the West too. It is just as inaccurate to homogenize “the Rest” as it is to think about “the West” in such a homogeneous way (2022: 15–16).

There will be many occasions and mechanisms through which the travel writing analyzed in the following chapters not only destabilizes the binarisms between West and East or between center and periphery but also calls into question the illusion of both the West and the East as defined and homogeneous spaces.

Latin American Orientalism

To think through the implications of the concept of Orientalism seen from the perspective of Latin America, it is necessary to trace back the origins of this debate and to remap the geography of the Orient in its imaginary and historical delimitations to position this research. Orientalism is part of a cultural and epistemic violence specifically originated in the developed West. Thus, one of the first questions that arises when reflecting on Latin American Orientalism has to do with the actual mediation of that West in the Latin American production or even reproduction of the Orient and, for these pages in particular, in the travel impressions and narratives of the journey to China. In this regard Jorge J. Locane formulates a question which I will revisit all along the following chapters: “cómo se reproduce, si es que lo hace, la mirada imperial en las representaciones latinoamericanas” [How the imperial gaze is reproduced, if indeed it is, in Latin American representations] (2020: 60). Hence, although it is rather clear that Latin America is definitely not part of that developed West, it is not that obvious where Western Latin America is located in this context. This is especially relevant when we part from the fact that not only the “East” but also the “West” as geographic, historical, or cultural delimitations are equally problematic in their definition. Nonetheless, there is, against all odds, an undeniable colonial influx that acted as an essential part in the very birth of Latin America, from the independencies up until today. Therefore, as Locane continues, the natural response would be that “las representaciones latinoamericanas del mundo están mediadas por Europa y su discursividad imperial” [Latin American representations of the world are mediated by Europe and its imperial discourse] (2020: 60).

During the 1990s, such mediation was also interpreted by others as mimicking exercises of the travel writing of Europeans in the Orient. For instance, Hernán Taboada refers to Latin American Orientalism as a “peripheral orientalism” that “desde sus inicios, fue subsidiario del europeo” [From its beginnings, it was subsidiary to the European one] (1998: 286). It is, therefore, dependent on the European sources and occupies a marginal position since it only borrows from the Euro-

pean categories. In consequence, this form of Orientalism is only capable of reproducing mainly because

En culturas donde la misma imagen americana derivaba de las elaboradas por Europa, debía necesariamente darse una dependencia todavía mayor de los estudios orientalistas: el resultado fue un fárrago reiterativo y superficial, cubierto por la típica verborrea criolla [In cultures where the very image of the Americas derived from those crafted by Europe, there was necessarily an even greater dependence on Orientalist studies. The result was a repetitive and superficial mishmash, veiled by typical creole verbiage] (Taboada 1998: 287).

A few years earlier, Jacinto Fombona Iribarren had already pointed this out when, referring to the Hispanic American modernista traveler, he asserted that: “el lugar visitado ha sido hecho espacio textual con anterioridad por un texto europeo, traducido y consumido por la cultura hispanoamericana de modo que todo viaje resulta la exhibición y reescritura de textos europeos, la repetición de un texto original” [The place visited has been textualized previously by a European text, translated and consumed by Hispanic American culture in such a way that every journey becomes the exhibition and rewriting of European texts, the repetition of an original text] (1993: 9).

Taboada’s argument states that the Latin American is unable to produce an Orient mainly because it cannot produce an image of itself. However, it is interesting to observe how it is actually through its encounter and representation of the Orient that the Latin American experiences an alternative image of itself and that, while inevitably mediated by the European colonial influx, the elaboration of images of its own finds points of deviation that allow it to follow trajectories that do not converge in the Western metropolis as the center.

Thus, Locane proposes that the 1950s represent in this context an inflection point in the Latin American travel writing of China since “al mismo tiempo que cierto eurocentrismo se conserva, se abre esta línea de fuga que lleva hacia China, hacia una realidad hasta el momento insospechada que, incluso, puede ser percibida como una modernidad alternativa” [While a certain Eurocentrism is preserved, a line of escape opens up that leads toward China, toward a reality hitherto unsuspected, which can even be perceived as an alternative modernity] (2020: 60). As I will explore in the last chapter, I do second Locane in his idea that a certain Eurocentrism is preserved. Nevertheless, I will also offer in the following and fourth chapters some arguments as to why I do propose that while it is true that the writing from the 1950s and 1960s represent the period in which this vanishing point is most markedly present, from the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, there are indications of a Latin American way of interpreting and representing China that already deviates from the cartographies that traditionally place Europe at the center.

In the early 2000s, Araceli Tinajero's *Orientalismo en el Modernismo latinoamericano* further advanced on the question about Latin American Orientalism. This work set an initial and very important distinction between the concept of Orientalism addressed by Edward Said in 1978 since it proposed a shift in the very place of the periphery. This distinction is based on the fact that Said's Orientalism focuses on the representations of the Anglo-French narratives about the Middle East. By contrast, Tinajero's work is interested neither in the Anglo-French perspective nor in the representations of the Middle East, but in the Latin American perspective and in what she calls the Far East, a category and an approach on which I will elaborate more at the start of the third chapter.

Tinajero extends this distinction to a more political ground as the questioning of the domination of the European narrative over the discursive invention of both the Orient and the New World is at the center of her approach. Special emphasis is then placed on the fact that, in contrast to Said's approach, Tinajero is not referring to a metropolis that visits and writes about the periphery, but it is, in the case of Latin America and China, a periphery visiting another periphery or as she puts it: "de un 'sujeto exótico' hacia otro sujeto 'exótico'" [From one 'exotic' subject to another 'exotic' subject] (2003: 3). This is an essential distinction, on which it would be worthwhile to specify: 'from an *exoticized* subject to another *exoticized* subject.' This is a significant variation given that the entire argumentative structure of *Orientalism* (1978) is designed on the basis of the existence of the colonialist domination of the developed West over the cultures that integrate the region of the so-called Orient. Furthermore, despite the differences, they extend on many levels to several other regions of the Global South that share colonialism as a historical experience.

Since the publication of this text, a great deal of ideas, approaches, questions, and perspectives have surfaced over the past two decades. They have certainly deepened the discussion and even questioned "Orientalism" as the best critical point of departure for the analysis of the cultural exchanges between these two latitudes. One of the studies that has most decidedly intended to transcend not only the notion of "Orientalism" for its analysis but also the characterization of the cultural-historical flows between Latin America and Asia as "marginal" or "peripheral" connections is the book *Orientaciones transpacificas: la modernidad mexicana y el espectro de Asia* by Laura J. Torres-Rodríguez. Within the transpacific Acapulco-Manila route, Mexico serves as the main point of departure of this study to explore cultural ties with diverse actors within Asia. Mexico sets itself apart from the rest of the region since it was the heart of the Viceroyalty of New

Spain, the main Spanish enclave in the continent⁹. Thus, Torres-Rodríguez explains that:

En la imaginación criolla, el Pacífico representó una oportunidad de expansión económica poco regulada por el monopolio imperial de Sevilla. Por lo tanto, la inclusión del océano Pacífico en la representación criolla reconstituyó un mapa del mundo donde el Virreinato de la Nueva España *quedaba ubicado en el centro* mismo de las incipientes cartografías globales, como fuerza metropolitana, cuestionando así su lugar como territorio periférico del sistema intercolonial [In the creole imagination, the Pacific represented an opportunity for economic expansion largely unregulated by the imperial monopoly of Seville. Therefore, the inclusion of the Pacific Ocean in creole representations reconstituted a world map where the Viceroyalty of New Spain was placed at the very center of emerging global cartographies, as a metropolitan force, thus questioning its status as a peripheral territory within the intercolonial system] (2019: 20–21).

Torres-Rodríguez revisits the concept of Orientalism coined by Said while emphasizing the “orientational” component of the term: rerouting Mexico’s relationship with its oceans from a historically privileged bond with the Atlantic that marginalizes Mexico’s connection to modernity to a connection with the Pacific that dispenses with the colonial tie to Europe and places Mexico at the very center of the notion of modernity. The Mexican transpacific ambition builds, as a result, its own directionality, its own geopolitical consciousness and therefore, “produce su propio ‘Oriente’” [It produces its own ‘Orient’] (Torres-Rodríguez 2019: 25) through its own imperial and orientalist aspiration. Thus, even though this ambition has its origins with the white Creole, it is extended and repurposed, as Torres-Rodríguez demonstrates, into several historical events that marked the Mexican twentieth and twenty-first centuries. My study, like that of Torres-Rodríguez, also seeks to contribute to the de-provincialization of the Latin American connection with the Pacific Ocean through the visibilization and systematization of a material archive that has been deliberately kept hidden insofar as it marginalizes the relationship with the Atlantic, and with this, the presence and influence of Europe in the historical and cultural formation of Latin America and the Latin American.

However, there are interests and delimitations particular to this study that make the peripherality of both China and Latin America a point of enunciation

⁹ It is worth noting that it was the first viceroyalty to be established in 1535, followed by the Viceroyalty of Lima (1542), the Viceroyalty of New Granada (1717), and the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata (1776). In addition, it was also the most extensive territorially since it came to encompass territories of modern-day Guatemala, Belize, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica in Central America; parts of the southwestern United States, including areas in present-day California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Florida; as well as Caribbean islands such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the Spanish-held parts of Jamaica.

not only still valid but necessary. On the one hand, my interest is focused on the travel writing of present-day Peru, Chile, and Colombia. They are territories that in the context of the exchange routes of the Manila galleon could be considered, albeit to varying degrees, marginal in comparison to Mexico. In the same vein, the fact that Mexico constitutes the central point of Torres-Rodríguez's analysis allows the Mexican construction of its own Orient to include actors as culturally and historically diverse as Japan and India in Asia. In contrast, the exclusive focus of the present study on China and the main interest in addressing the dialogue that it, as a colonial subject of both Euro-America and Japan, can establish with Latin America makes this differentiation a key distinction.

Another work that proposes an alternative route to that of Orientalism to address, on a more specific level, the cultural-historical relation between China and Latin America is the earlier cited article by Jorge J. Locane. Even though its focus is the cultural and literary exchanges between these two latitudes in the 1950s and 1960s, it converges with that of Torres-Rodríguez in proposing these exchanges as a

Dislocación perturbadora y una insólita ampliación de la experiencia del mundo, por lo pronto, con un eje geopolítico que – visto en perspectiva latinoamericana – se va a desplazar del Océano Mediterráneo o el Atlántico al Pacífico como una alternativa para reorganizar las dinámicas intercontinentales y multilaterales [A disturbing dislocation and an unusual expansion of the experience of the world, for now, with a geopolitical axis that – when viewed from a Latin American perspective – will shift from the Mediterranean or the Atlantic to the Pacific as an alternative for reorganizing intercontinental and multilateral dynamics] (2020: 56–57).

This way of approaching this connection allows his arguments to demonstrate that all the texts that conform his corpus “coinciden en relativizar la posición hegemónica de Europa y en promover un diálogo *directo* entre locaciones periféricas de la cartografía colonial” [They agree in relativizing Europe's hegemonic position and in promoting a *direct* dialogue between peripheral locations on the colonial map] (2020: 64).

Therefore, while pointing to a provincialized Europe, Locane prefers, as the present pages also intend, to emphasize the South-South conjuncture that brings them together. His argumentative operation draws attention precisely to the fact that studies such as the one of Tinajero present a homogenizing vision of the “Far East” pointing out that first, most of the texts that are part of the corpus are focused on Japan and second and most importantly, that China and Japan “no pueden ser considerados como equivalentes desde el punto de vista geopolítico [ya que] Por lo menos desde la perspectiva China, Japón vale como un país imperial” [They cannot be considered equivalent from a geopolitical standpoint (since) at least from the Chinese perspective, Japan is seen as an imperial country] (2020: 66). By the same

token, in relation to the work of Axel Gasquet *El Llamado del Oriente Historia cultural del orientalismo argentino (1900–1950)*, Locane points out the fact that the “Orient” to which Gasquet refers to “cabe deducir que es, simplemente, ese territorio que se despliega al sureste de Europa y que, para ser justos, en realidad es la expresión territorial de un sinfín de culturas diferentes y, en casos, incluso rivales entre sí” [It can be deduced that it is simply that territory that stretches southeast of Europe and that, to be fair, is actually the territorial expression of countless different cultures, and in some cases, even rivals with one another] (2020: 58). An assertion is certainly also relevant not only to the part of the Orient about which the traveler writes but also to the specificity of the place within Latin America from which that Orient is written, which exemplifies the emergence and the continuous interaction between Souths in the North and Norths in the South.

Even when the very first Latin American travelers visited China in the nineteenth century, there was already a very clear distinction between China and Japan and therefore, a much more diversified image of the Orient than “un fárrago reiterativo y superficial” [A repetitive and superficial mishmash] (Taboada 1998: 287) is supposed to promise. The travel diary *Recuerdos de mis últimos viajes: Japón* is the result of the visit of Nicolás Tanco Armero to the island in the 1870s. In it, Tanco comments on the frustrated intention of the Japanese to invade China in the sixteenth century (1888: 93)¹⁰, and far from being critical about it, Tanco underlines it as a way to stress the imperialist tendency of Japan. Furthermore, there are uncountable references that the traveler brings up in his diary to highlight the differences between the two nations. The most interesting ones are the theories about the ethnic origin of the Japanese, among which, the one that Tanco finds the most convincing is the one proposed by the German naturalist and explorer Egelbert Keampfer, according to whom Japanese do have neither Chinese nor Mongolian origin but are descendants of the Babylonians (1888: 71).

Despite this, it would not be possible to affirm that for Tanco, Japan is necessarily superior to China. By contrast, he considers that Japan owes to China and Korea all the elements of its civilization (1888: 79). Additionally, even though he says about the Japanese that “carece completamente de lo que se llama iniciativa y de esa facultad creadora” [It is entirely devoid of what is known as initiative and that creative faculty] (1888: 83), Tanco also observes that Japan “está animado del deseo de conocer todo lo de sus vecinos [por lo que] ha logrado alcanzar una posición importante y un estado social relativamente adelantado” [It is driven by the desire to know all about its neighbors, (and as a result,) it has managed to

¹⁰ It refers to the Imjin War that broke out with the Japanese invasion of Korea as an unsuccessful attempt to invade China. See (Hawley 2005)

attain an important position and a relatively advanced social state] (1888: 85). Thus, it is clear at this point that the perception of this distinction between China and Japan was already evident among the narrations of the Latin American travelers in the nineteenth century and it became even clearer along the twentieth century as also the influx of the Western metropolises took very different directions in both nations.

Finally, I would like to refer to “The Orient, the Rim and the World” by Rosario Hubert. This most current theoretical exercise reassesses in a more comprehensive and articulated way the critical redirection that new mappings in the Asian-Latin America scholarship have traced to articulate perspectives that transcend “the foundational framework of the Orient” (2023a: 175). Thus, while acknowledging the important role that the decolonial theory has played in the critical assembling of the question of the Asia-Latin America connection, Hubert argues that this approach has “perpetuated a static world-systems framework that inevitably cornered Latin America in an asymmetrical relation of cultural exchange” (2023a: 176). Hence, her interest revolves around the academic production, which has broken with this fixed asymmetry and the center-periphery paradigm to rather “identify disparate centers and peripheries” (2023a: 176). On the artistic and literary level, Hubert highlights not only the work of Torres-Rodríguez but also of Ignacio López-Calvo. López-Calvo demonstrated how in Cuba, Peru, and Brazil, the representation of Chinese and Japanese has transcended marginal narratives to occupy central discursive locations “as an integral part of national identity, even if this occurred despite the attempts of the lettered elite to silence and erase their ethnic mark” (2023a: 176).

On the historiographical level, Hubert refers to Lisa Yun’s *The Coolie Speaks: Chinese Indentured Laborers and African Slaves in Cuba* (2008) as an archive “counterpart to the established archive of slave narratives” (2023a: 177) and, among others, the work of Ana Paulina Lee, *Mandarin Brazil: Race, Representation and Memory* (2018), which coined of the term “circumoceanic memory,” representing a clear “attempt to de-provincialize the study of national identities and instead postulate a global idea of race” (2023a: 177). In this sense, in what Hubert refers to as the transpacific shift, the hemispheric dialogue is privileged “over the traditional transatlantic studies scheme, ruled by the logic of colonial affiliation” (2023a: 178) since it is able to (re)formulate the broader question in relation to more global cultural interactions. This is a neuralgic point in her argument because “rather than tracing connections between putative peripheries in a world-system, such as the Orient of the Pacific Rim” the studies quoted in her pages prioritize the cultural production over “the exceptionality of cultural identities” (2023a: 179). Therefore, localist approaches are

proposed to be cast aside in order to place a new focus on the *transformation* of “cultural artifacts when they cross cultural boundaries, regardless of the points of exit, arrival, or direction” (2023a: 179).

Evidently, there are several points on which this study seeks to contribute to this shift in perspective. The present pages have a special interest in unearthing an archive that reveals alternative circulations to the hegemonic ones and that bears witness to the (co)existence of other interactions and connections, which, in their attempt to respond to the existence of a broader world, expand and complexify the question not only about Latin America, but also about Latin America in the world. More specifically, I believe that the present study stirs up the dormant questions about Latin American travel writing on its own, visibilizing other actors, other trajectories, and other motivations for the Latin American voyager and their literary production. Moreover, it also intends to claim other positions that from a more global perspective, it, in fact, occupies in the realms of travel literature at large.

Thus, I agree with the high relevance that the question of the *transformation* that the travel writing that I examine has undergone as a cultural artifact. Even so, I also believe that, considering the specificity of the place in which the present study is situated—that is to say, the production of representations about China and the Chinese through the writing of traveling impressions, the questions for the “points of exit,” “points of arrival,” and “direction” of this trajectory—is still essential. It is through them that, as I will show, certain essentialized notions, preconceived positions, and enunciation places are proven obsolete while other political, aesthetic, or class orders form new alignments. In this sense, the powerful virtue of *bordercrossing* possessed by travel literature is an aspect that has been privileged along the analysis of my corpus precisely because it is able to raise its own structures and propose its own layouts in contradiction to the binarisms Orient-Occident, East-West, North-South, or center/periphery.

All in all, the delimitations that have been proposed for the approach of this study could be regarded as “particularistic” in that they are based on fixed national, regional, or even temporary notions. However, a great deal of effort has actually been placed on providing evidence of how every one of these categories is relativized as epistemological construct throughout more than one hundred years that the present pages cover and how, from the very writing of their journey to China by the nineteenth-century lettered Creole, the conventional limits of their definitions are tampered.

As I have anticipated in the introduction, the following chapter is devoted to the Latin American travel writing published during the nineteenth century, more specifically from 1843 to 1899. Revisiting the concept of *ciudad letrada* proposed by

Angel Rama, I propose a characterization of the subjectivity of the lettered Creole particularly focused on its relationship with traveling. Therefore, I dedicate a space to reflect on the role that both the journey and its writing played both inside and outside the borders of Latin America in this century. In addition, the motivations for the journey to Asia, as well as the particularities that this subjectivity faces once it comes into contact with China, are issues that represent a central interest for the next chapter.