

4 The Modern Compass Points East (1900–1949)



Fig. 11: Illustration from Juan Marín's travel book *Mesa de Mah Jong: una crónica de China* (*Mahjong Table: A Chronicle of China*) included with the caption "Nacimiento de Jesús visto por un artista chino" (The Birth of Jesus as Seen by a Chinese Artist) (1948: 59).

Introduction

Mi alma estará en la sombra, solitaria
y en la neblina viviré perdido;
quema un farol chino y la ceniza
será como una estrella en el camino¹

“Lámparas” *Recuerdos entreabiertos* - Juan Guzmán Cruchaga

In this chapter, I will address the travel narrative corresponding to the first half of the twentieth century. More precisely, I will have at the center of the analysis the chronicles and travel memoirs to China written right before the establishment of the PRC on October 1, 1949. The reason behind this delimitation is that, as I will discuss in detail in the next chapter, the triumph of the Communist Revolution was undoubtedly a watershed moment to the Latin American travel narratives of China since it unfolded a new range of common aesthetic, intellectual, and political horizons. In relation to this, and before moving further into the contextualization of the travel narrative of this period, I would like to highlight the relationship that this chapter establishes with one of its most important secondary sources. *Orientalismo en el Modernismo Hispanoamericano* (Orientalism in Hispanic American Modernism) by Araceli Tinajero is not only a pioneering text in the exploration of the literary confluences between Asia and Latin America, but also the strength of some of its questions makes it a very current and relevant source. However, on the following pages, I will try to delineate the points on which this chapter distances itself from it. Furthermore, I will also illustrate all along this chapter the ways in which it contributes to the expansion of both its points of departure and findings.

In the first place, with regard to the temporal and geographical delimitation of both studies, there are evident differences. At a temporal level, her focus is placed on the period 1888–1916 in accordance with what Tinajero, supported by other authors, defines as Hispanic American *Modernismo*. For its part, this chapter deals, from a more panoramic perspective, with the first half of the twentieth century (1900–1949), which, if strictly adjusted to when the first writer traveled to China, it begins in 1919 with Teresa de la Parra’s diary, three years after the temporal delimitation proposed by Tinajero. Besides that, these pages propose a chronology more defined by the rhythms of Chinese historiography, considering that, as I have

¹ Excerpt from the poem titled “Lámparas” (Lanterns) included in the book *Recuerdos entreabiertos (Memories Ajar)* by Juan Guzmán Cruchaga: My soul will be in the shadow, solitary, / And in the mist, I will live lost; / A Chinese lantern burns, and the ash / Will be like a star on the road.

already mentioned, the founding of the PRC in 1949 divided the Latin American travel writing of China into a before and an after. On the other hand, contrary to the temporal delimitation, the geographical demarcation that Tinajero traces for her study extends to the Far East, while the present study focuses exclusively on China. With regard to this, it is also necessary to clarify that even though in the present pages there are multiple references to Japan, the intention of those references is not, in any sense, to approach both countries as belonging to the same historical sphere. On the contrary, it is to give visibility to the implications and impacts that the historical development of Japan as an imperialist power in Asia and its mimicry of Western colonial schemes had not only in China, as a historical victim of it, but also in the imprint that it left on the perception of the Latin American travelers. The foregoing is especially relevant if one takes into account that, as stated in the first chapter, this study is also motivated by the interest in the differences that peripheral or South-South tracings can raise in relation to literary cartographies, which are alternative to the metropolitan ones.

Finally, my last point is related to the effect that *traveling* has, given the fact that the selection criteria of the sources included in Tinajero's study do not problematize the differences between the encounter with the Far East through a literary journey (Rubén Darío) and the encounter that is mediated by a geographical experience of traveling (Enrique Gómez Carrillo). By contrast, this study stems from the conviction that the experience of *traveling* should not be a neglected variable. The reason behind that is that, as I will illustrate, an important part of the discontinuities and ruptures that the contemporary Latin American travelers managed to articulate regarding the hegemonic orientalist narratives on China are inexorably defined by their immersive encounter with a *difference*. It allowed spaces for the elaboration of their distinctive and dissident imaginary tracing of this country.

One of the elements that permitted the creation of these spaces is related to the fact that the years between 1900 and 1949 were a period marked by the diversification of the travel narrative, through a deepening of the subjectivity of the travel writer and through an increasing heterogeneity of the genre and its literary potential. For this reason, I would argue that the travel writing corresponding to this period represents a very interesting prelude of experimentation with a wide array of intertwined poetics. Through very varied forms, these poetics captured the traveler's encounter with China as an encounter with alterity, creating a force that destabilized the North as the only aesthetic, social, and political direction for the Latin American compass.

Although evidently China and Latin America traveled on very different paths to modernity, there are encounters all along their very much divergent roads with similar enthusiasms, dejections, and miseries. These common encounters

will leave traces that, after the 1950–1959, will become much more profound and significant. They will serve as a guide tracing shared political struggles and common artistic and intellectual ambitions that will be transformed into spaces of peripheral solidarity.

Although for China, the Western modern model was never on the map of its aspirations, the historical events that took place during the first decades of the twentieth century and which led to the collapse of a millenary dynastic system made modernity an inevitable destiny. On the contrary, in the Latin American case, the European model of modernity was not only a dreamy aspiration since the independencies, but also its presence is deeply rooted in the Latin American nation-building narratives, a presence to which we owe the continuation of colonial structures even today (Quijano 2019: 260).

Nonetheless, China and Latin America shared throughout these decades a deep spiritual crisis as well as unique, but still similar, dilemmas between tradition and modernization. Even though they had their genesis in the nineteenth century, they became even more pressing with the events that unfolded after the turn of the century. In the face of such a spiritual crisis, both of their intellectual and artistic circles were called to devise a new secular mythology, which allowed them to understand their rather *sui generis* modern condition. This became an exercise that compelled them to think of themselves from the outside and take experimentation into several levels and spheres of their societies—ranging from artistic trends to thought currents and government models. In the Latin American context, the questioning, and doubts around modernization as a project as well as Europe as their economic, social, and even moral compass left a very fertile ground to explore alternative paths and to (re)establish communication channels with other latitudes that, like China, could differ from the old continent in order to stimulate the irrigation of new ideas and sensibilities. It was a path of exploration and self-exploration for which travel writing played an essential role as a witness, catalyst, and interpreter of that encounter with alterity.

The evident crumbling of the principles of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* and the general hesitation in relation to the European civilization as a compass for the rest of the world found their maximum expression with the outbreak of the First World War. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, this process of secularization started in the eighteenth century with the introduction of capitalist rationality, which resulted from the European invasion of America, and which made the Enlightenment project and its modernizing ambitions a financially viable enterprise (Dussel 2004: 7). This process continued during the nineteenth century with “el utilitarismo de Jeremy Bentham y se extiende con el krausismo en España y el positivismo en Latinoamérica durante la segunda mitad del siglo” [The utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham extends

with Krausism in Spain and positivism in Latin America during the second half of the century] (Gutiérrez [1988] 2004: 77). As a result, the lettered Creole elite suffered a severe fragmentation that made the travel writing of this period the result of the thinning of the line that connected the intellectual with the ruling class.

Therefore, the travel writers belonging to this first half century lived as orphans not only of the state but even of the nation because once the writers are expelled from the confines of the *polis*, they are forced to justify their own existence and earn a living by the means of their self-worth. This triggered the subsequent incorporation of the writer into the labor market. A process that Julio Ramos describes as a moment along which the *saber decir* or *knowledge—as)—said* started losing its authority; “el enciclopedismo estallara y se fragmentara en múltiples campos de immanencia, especializados, su propio tipo de autoridad perdería su lugar privilegiado en la vida pública” [The encyclopedism will explode and fragment into multiple fields of immanence, becoming specialized; its own type of authority will lose its privileged place in public life] ([1989] 2021: 94). As a consequence, literature also underwent a transformation in relation to its place in society as there was a “desprendimiento de las letras de las instituciones que hasta entonces habían garantizado su autoridad social; desprendimiento (o ‘crisis’) presupuesto por la emergencia de la literatura como discurso moderno” (Ramos [1989] 2021: 95). As a result, writing becomes a profession and is transformed into a commodified object subjected now to the dynamics and demands of their consumers and the market that controls them.

Consequently, if in the nineteenth century, “la ciudad—emblema de esa modernidad deseada—era un lugar virtual, del porvenir” [The city—emblem of that desired modernity—was a virtual place, of the future] (Ramos [1989] 2021: 93) toward the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, they grew and were diversified by the pace of the increasing complexity of its inhabitants, their ideas, and forms of social and economic participation. Thus, the artistic and political exploration also comprised the imaginary, material, and social structures that served as a base for the construction of the Latin American cities as well as for their expanding urban consciousness. In them, “se labraba un nuevo estilo de vida latinoamericana, signado, sin duda, por las influencias extranjeras pero oscuramente original, como era el proceso social y cultural que se desenvolvía en ellas” [A new Latin American way of life was being forged, marked, undoubtedly, by foreign influences but obscurely original, as was the social and cultural process unfolding within them] (Romero 2011: 250).

The *modernista*, *posmodernista*, *avant-garde*, and the social realist influences that appeared throughout this half century in the Latin American travel writing of China did not succeed one and other. In some cases, they are simultaneously presented

as different notes played at once in a single melody. In other cases, brushstrokes and tints of some or sometimes even all of them come forth not only throughout the entire work of a single travel writer but even sometimes a single work serves as a loom in which all these multiple threads are interwoven and overlapped not in a diachronic but in a synchronic way. Thus, I suggest that the geographical journey undertaken by these travel writers is also transformed into a journey toward their own travel poetics. In consequence, their texts act as spaces of affirmation and at other times, as spaces of confrontation against the current of their own writings.

Therefore, I propose to have at the center of the reading of the travel writing of this period the experience of this spiritual crisis, which is common both to China and Latin America and which has among their common bridges the search for their own imagined universality as well as an understanding and practice of modernity adjusted to their own interpretations. However, it should be clarified that this form of universality is far from the metropolitan one insofar as, following Mariano Siskind, the latter is linked to the totality of the globe and “can be represented only from the point of view of the epistemological self-certainty of hegemonic subject positions” (2014: 18). By contrast, Siskind defines the subaltern desire for universality following Ernesto Laclau’s idea according to which “the universal is the symbol of a missing fullness [...] an incomplete horizon suturing a dislocated particular identity” (Siskind 2014: 9). This coincides with the fact that we will not see throughout this chapter a single form of negotiation and participation of a Latin American identity in the same sense as we will not see a single China interpreted through the writing of some Latin American travelers. In contrast, we will read through several Chinas that were all conceived at some point along these almost fifty years as a possible future project for their nation.

In defiance of the strong initiative of the Hundred Days’ Reform advanced by Cixi in 1898 (Luo 94), the absence of structural changes did not manage to contain either the political unrest coming from abroad or the social upheaval burbling from within the empire. *Yihetuan yundong* 义和团运动 (The Rebellion of the Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fists)² was, without a doubt, not the burbling but the loudest and most forceful anti-foreign expression. At the same time, it was a resounding manifestation of the need for profound social and cultural changes within an already decadent empire. The rebellion reached its climax right at the turn of the century when, in 1900, with the support of the court (Qi 2014: 120), they tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to provide a military counterweight to the imminent siege by Western powers. Nonetheless, the end of the imperial examination system

2 Known in Western historiography as “The Boxer’s Rebellion”.

in 1905, was an event that contributed to the fall of Qing perhaps even more than the subsequent abdication of the throne in 1912 by Puyi, the last emperor of China.

As Carles Prado-Fonts suggests “a pesar de la creencia aislacionista muy arraigada hoy en día— China siempre se ha mantenido conectada con el mundo en general [...] No obstante, a las puertas del siglo XX estos contactos adquieren una forma nueva, un mayor volumen y una intensidad inaudita” [Despite the deeply rooted isolationist belief today, China has always remained connected to the world at large. However, at the threshold of the 20th century, these contacts take on a new form, greater volume, and unprecedented intensity] (2019: 10). Thus, unlike the Latin American experience, it was an unprecedented watershed for China to reflect upon itself, no longer governed by the will of the universe that held the *tianming* 天命 (Mandate of Heaven) but as a *minguo* 民国, a people’s nation (Schwarcz 1985: 34). It was certainly a turning point in Chinese history to think for the first time, the Chinese people not as subjects of their empire but as the mobilizers of their own destinies. China experimented throughout this half century with almost all the social, political, and government models ever devised by the West³. Nonetheless, the result of that experimentation was to be adapted to the circumstances and needs of the Chinese nation, and it was determined to find in it a way to be modern but at the same time fundamentally anti-Western.

As noted above, among the dilemmas and challenges that China and Latin America faced and shared during this period is the search for their own universality, a search that Mariano Siskind defines as *deseo de mundo*, desire for the world, which “established a symbolic horizon for the realization of the translocal aesthetic potential of literature and cosmopolitan forms of subjectivation” (2014: 3). This desire sharpened in both latitudes the debate between tradition and modernization. In their literary tradition, the figures that best personify this tension are Lu Xun and Rubén Darío. Both are, each in their own way and immersed in the particularities of their contexts, luminous figures who not only opened poetic paths but who have both been recognized as pioneers in the art of being modern. Their literary work is a battlefield of tensions in which a fervent enthusiasm for modernity coexists with a crude staging of its miseries and voids. They were pillars not just in their respective poetic worlds but conjurers of their historical time and the spiritual life of their social circumstances.

3 “The parliamentary republic of 1912–13, the military dictatorship of 1913–16, the attempt at constitutional monarchy in 1916 and, most enduringly, the Leninist party-state [...] China’s self-styled fascists of the 1930s had their advisers and models too, and certainly placed their stamp on the historical image of the Nanjing regime” (Kirby 1997: 449).

In both cases, the writer and the work were spiritual beacons in the midst of deep crises. They held revolutionary crosiers in the search for the meaning of the act of thinking and the role of the intellectual, as well as the position that *feeling* and *creating* had for the artist and the work. On the other hand, their lives and works are profoundly marked by the act of traveling. Not only because of the journeys they themselves embarked on but also the journeys undertaken by several of the literary and artistic works that they loved and admired to reach their hands and to determine them personally, artistically, and intellectually. Moreover, the fact that both came from peripheries within their peripheries, Shaoxing and Metapa, respectively, is as telling as their shared desire to leave it in order to partake in a more cosmopolitan way of being and creating “that forces its way into the realm of universality, denouncing both the hegemonic structures of Eurocentric forms of exclusion and nationalistic patterns of self-marginalization” (Siskind 2014: 6).

Despite the fact that Lu Xun moved to Tokyo in 1902, that was not an opportunity to oppose the Qing dynasty of Manchu origin. Thus, while in Japan “prefiere presentarse a sí mismo en japonés como *shinajin* (término despectivo para referirse a los chinos, con una gran carga racial) que con el habitual *qingguoren* («hombre del reino de Qing»)” [He prefers to refer to himself in Japanese as *shinajin* (a derogatory term for Chinese people with a strong racial connotation) rather than using the usual *qingguoren* (“man of the Qing realm”)] (Prado-Fonts 2019: 50). In 1918, Lu published “Kong Yiji”, a story set in the late nineteenth century in a bar frequented by peasants, workers, and members of the imperial intellectual class. Kong Yiji is a frustrated aspirant for that literate class who, despite expressing himself in the most classical Chinese, had failed the imperial exams. Due to his extremely impoverished condition, he received constant mockery and ended up stealing. On one of those occasions, he is caught, lynched, and severely beaten. Nonetheless, the worst punishment imposed on Kong Yiji was that at the end of the story, no one remembered him. Besides being evidently anti-dynastic and anti-Confucian, it is worth mentioning that this story was written in *baihua* 白话, which is the vernacular written form of a more spoken and colloquial Chinese used instead of the *guwen* 古文 which is the classical form characteristic of the imperial period and its intellectual class.

Despite the multiple attacks on *Modernismo* for its escapist attitude and for its alleged disengagement from the affairs of the nation, it is also interesting that an exponent of its poetics as relevant as José Martí warned in the early 1890s of the need to treat “el problema del necesario internacionalismo americano sin tener en cuenta el peso de la historia” [The problem of the necessary American internationalism without taking into account the weight of history] (Salomón 1986: 177). So as to avoid an easy adoption of European models that might derive in a form

of servility, neglecting the complexities and particularities derived from the Latin American colonial condition. This was a warning that became much more emphatic in 1900 when cosmopolitanism began to take on a negative connotation as a result of the publication of *Ariel* by Jose E. Rodó and as a response to the mimetic and Francophile attitude of some *modernistas* (Salomón 1986: 182).

According to Noel Salomón, this criticism became even more compelling after the intervention of the United States in Cuba and the triumph of the Mexican Revolution. Thus, Rubén Darío “publicó en 1905 *Cantos de vida y esperanza* donde exalta los valores espirituales de América hispánica y latina, que contrasta con los valores utilitarios y positivistas del norte” [He published *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (*Songs of Life and Hope*) in 1905, where he exalts the spiritual values of Hispanic and Latin America, contrasting them with the utilitarian and positivist values of the North] (1986: 186). The need to ratify the existence of a history, an art and a culture of its own at the Latin American level made the 1920s to witness a flourishing form of Americanismo in Mexican art and a development of art and *indigenista* narrative in the 1930s in Peru. Art as a means of visibilization of the profound social, economic, and racial inequities and injustices caused by dictatorial regimes as well as foreign interventionism played a significant role in the Latin American narrative of the 1930s and 1940s. A force that pulled, in fact, more toward the side of tradition than that of modernization.

For his part, Yuan Shikai established a military dictatorship that lasted between 1911 and 1916. A disastrous attempt after which he tried to preserve the dynastic system, appointing himself as emperor in 1915 (Kwei 1970: 1). As a result of his death, the military regime ended, and China became governed fragmentarily by different regional warlords. In parallel to the dominance of the Kuomintang⁴, which had grown substantially from the first decade of the twentieth century under the command of Sun Yat-sen, the Chinese Communist Party⁵ was founded in 1921. It had Moscow as its major mobilizer and represented the birth of an alternative future horizon for China, which had its own and simultaneous development. Between 1924 and 1927 the CCP allied with the KMT to put an end to the Warlord Era in order to unify China. Despite the fact that Stalin’s initial plan was to strategically use this alliance with the KMT so that later the CCP could take power (Kwei 1970: 19), the KMT under the command of Chiang Kai-shek attacked the CCP forces in 1927 (Wu 1969: 142).

After this attack, another possible future for China started to take shape. Regardless of the fact that the working class in China was practically nonexistent at

4 From now on KMT.

5 From now on CCP.

that moment, with respect to its peasantry, both the politburo and the CCP intellectual elites were fixated on carrying out a proletarian revolution (Yeh 1970: viii). It is therefore not gratuitous that the years between 1921 and 1927, which were the years with the greatest Stalinist influence along the process of the construction of the Chinese revolution, were also the period in which its greatest failures are inscribed. In view of such circumstances, Mao was somehow indifferent to the theoretical implications of a peasant revolution and avoided the compartmentalization of the revolutionary subject, which allowed him to surpass traditional Marxist principles (Hočevár 2019: 248–249) to rerail his revolutionary vision to one which had China at its center. Therefore, despite the fact that the communist revolution was a revolution of foreign origin, this exploration is, in a certain sense, the search for a Chineseness, a *chinidad* of its own which cost Mao, not only the distrust of the Communist International and the persecution of the KMT but also the skepticism of his own party (Womack 2010: 81–82).

The decade of the 1930s arrived in Latin America with the rise of a working class and an increasing urban consciousness that allowed the development of a Latin American left. Internationalism was emerging as a new path toward universalization driven by popular forces and as a counterweight to the favored bourgeois class privilege, which exerted cosmopolitanism as an elitist and oligarchic practice. This soothed, to a certain extent, the friction between the national and the foreign, given that, from a Marxist perspective, they could sustain a more dialogic relationship. In this sense, socialist internationalism parts from universalism as the basis of its project. Therefore, for Mariátegui, it was clear that socialism was not European despite having Europe as its origin, but it was rather a global reality.

Thus, according to Salomón, for Mariátegui “el socialismo científico (como teoría universal), le permitía rechazar a la vez el eurocentrismo (como actitud de dependencia ideológica y de sumisión a los valores del imperialismo) y el americano-centrismo (como postura anticientífica o anticultural de rechazo de los aportes de la ciencia y de la cultura-civilización)” [Scientific socialism (as a universal theory) allowed him to simultaneously reject both Eurocentrism (as an attitude of ideological dependence and submission to the values of imperialism) and Americo-centrism (as an unscientific or anticultural stance that rejects the contributions of science and culture-civilization)] (1986: 193). As a result, once socialism came into contact with Latin American or Chinese realities, it acquired a life of its own, whose paths will find, later on, very interesting points of contact. In this chapter, we will see an important part of the vertiginous and contrasting poetic and political journey through the eyes of some Latin American voyagers who saw

China not just as a traveling destination but a part of what would become their future memories and consequently, a very valuable part of themselves.

Meeting the Travelers

In 1919, **Teresa de la Parra** set off in the company of her husband on a journey toward the Asian continent, an adventure throughout which she wrote *Diario de una Caraqueña por el Lejano Oriente*, published one year after her return to Venezuela in the magazine *Actualidades* edited by Rómulo Gallegos. De la Parra's life was vastly permeated by the act of traveling from the very moment of her birth. Only two years after being born in Paris in 1889, her parents decided to return to their native Venezuela. Thus, her childhood years revolved around a sugar cane hacienda in the capital, surrounded by what she herself described as “the established colonial society of Caracas” (Mueller 2012: 1). She published memories of those years in 1929 under the title of *Memorias de Mamá Blanca*. After her father's passing, she moved with her mother to Spain for a few years until 1910, when they headed back to Caracas. Back in Venezuela, de la Parra published in 1924 her first novel, *Ifigenia: diario de una señorita que escribió porque se fastidiaba*.



Fig. 12: Teresa de la Parra. Photograph included in her travel book *Diario de una caraqueña por el Lejano Oriente* ([1920] 2011: 12).

Her travels through China and Japan resounded in her published works but especially in the short story “Flor de loto: una leyenda japonesa”, published in *El Nuevo Diario* in 1921 (Ballesteros 1997: 114). Despite stumbling from one continent to another and living through an unsettled journey from Caracas to Paris, to Madrid, to Bogota, to Havana, or to Geneva, her works left a mark in the literary

history of the continent. *Ifigenia* and the collection of texts that she delivered at conferences in the city of Bogota in 1930 and later published under the title *Tres conferencias: influencia de las mujeres en la formación del alma americana* (Mueller 2012: ix) earned her also a well-deserved place as a pioneer of the history of Latin American feminism. We will see her commitment to feminism expressed all along her travel impressions from China and Japan, as well as the multiple filters and facets that such convictions acquired, and which became evident in her writing as a result of her encounter with that part of Asia.

Another woman through whose eyes we will see the China of the first half of the twentieth century is **Elvira Santa Cruz Ossa**, better known by her pen name, Roxane, born in Chile in 1886. Her interest in literature and journalism led her to work from 1913 as an editor at *El Mercurio* in Santiago for twenty years. Only a year after that, she took on the social life section of the *Zig-Zag* magazine (Caro 2017: 92). Her literary work and her commitment to defending women's rights (Kottow 2013: 153) and the well-being of Chilean children were tasks that she always complemented and carried along. Her work in the public sector for the benefit of children encouraged her to edit for almost forty years *El Penaca*, a children's magazine (Milanich 2009: 216), which became widely recognized not only in Chile and in other Latin American countries. Apart from her work as a journalist, she also ventured into the novel genre with the publication of *Flor silvestre* in 1916. What is more, Santa Cruz also experimented with drama in plays such as *La familia Busquillas* (1918), *El voto femenino* (1920), and *La marcha funebre* (1920).



Fig. 13: Elvira Santa Cruz. Photograph included in her article “Ideales femeninos” (Feminine Ideals) (9), published in the Chilean magazine *Familia* in July 1920.

On board the *Belgenland*, Santa Cruz set sail to East Asia in 1931. After her return to Chile, she published in *El Mercurio* most of her articles related to her travel accounts of China from May to December of the same year, in the order of publication, we can mention: “Un viaje a la China,” “El templo de Confucio en Pei-Ping,” and “La Ciudad Prohibida en la capital de la China”, the latest being the only one published later in August 1937 in the same newspaper.

Although the decision to include these two women in the selection of works that make up this chapter stems from the interest in giving visibility to Latin American female travelers and Latin American travel writing produced by women, their presence is justified far beyond their gender. They opened the way not just to a very unique China but also to a very uncommon form of travel and perception. The internal tensions between class, gender, and ethnicity acquire very interesting dimensions throughout their writing. Additionally, their narrative is, among other things, the very testimony of the implications of *being a woman* at the time intertwined with *being modern*, despite the fact that both come from and inhabit quite dissimilar realities.

Juan Guzmán Cruchaga was born in Santiago in 1895. In his text *Recuerdos entreabiertos*, he tells us in a jumbled but complete and succinct way the story of his youth and his beginnings in literary, journalistic, and diplomatic life. It is from this text that we learn that he studied law for a few years but abandoned it soon to dedicate himself fully to writing.



Fig. 14: “Juan Guzmán Cruchaga a bordo de un barco japonés, hacia 1917.” Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Chile - Memoria Chilena <<https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-100038.html>>.

In one of the chapters titled “Periodismo,” Guzmán refers to his time at the *Diario Ilustrado* working as a reporter (1998: 25). In “En el ministerio,” he tells in a very anecdotal tone how after the publication of his famous poem “Canción” in *Zig-Zag*,

Ernesto Barros offered him a job at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1998: 38–41). There, he worked until his retirement, after holding various diplomatic positions throughout his life, one of which took him to China to serve as consul in Hong Kong from 1925 to 1927. His diplomatic life allowed him to have enough financial support to travel almost nonstop since 1917 and enough time to write poetry books like *Junto al brasero* (1914), *Chopin* (1919), *La mirada inmóvil* (1919), *Lejanía* (1921), *El maleficio de la luna* (1922), *La fiesta del corazón* (1922), *Agua del cielo* (1924), *Aventura* (1940), *Altasombra* (1952), *La sed* (1979), and several plays such as *La sobra* (1919), *La princesa que no tenía corazón* (1920), and *María Cenicienta* (1952). These years of work earned him the Chilean National Prize for Literature in 1962.

Guzmán's impressions after his passage through the Asian continent remained unpublished for almost two decades before the National Library of Chile committed to a very plausible outreach policy of their collections. This effort gave once again a new air to Guzmán's personal archive donated by his wife, Raquel Tapia Caballero. Among so many documents and notes, some more legible than others, written with a pencil, pen, and typewriter, were compiled and prefaced with the efforts of Pedro Pablo Zegers B. and Thomas Harris and published under the title *Recuerdos entreabierto*s in 1998 to shed new light on Guzmán's figure and work.

Eugenio Orrego Vicuña was born in 1900 in an affluent family of liberal tradition. Orrego was the grandson of Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna who was not only a traveler as accomplished as his grandson but was also the author of the introduction to the travel diary published in 1883 and written by his fellow countryman and friend Pedro del Río Zañartu. On the other hand, Eugenio Orrego's father, Luís Orrego Luco, served as a diplomat in Uruguay besides being also quite devoted to writing.

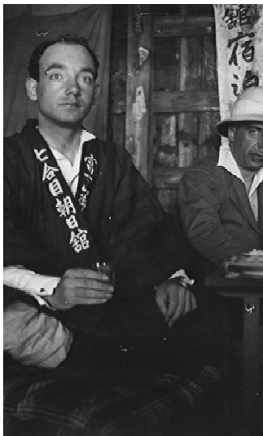


Fig. 15: “Retrato de Eugenio Orrego Vicuña” Source: SURDOC <<https://www.surdoc.cl/registro/9-221>>.

As Carlos Ruiz-Tagle recounts in his brief chronicle published in 1986 in the newspaper *La Tercera*, Eugenio Orrego not only dedicated a good part of his life to serving as a biographer of his grandfather but also to disseminating his work (1986: 15). This effort led him to found a museum in his name. A much more recent, despite being equally brief, journalistic chronicle about Eugenio Orrego was published by Jorge A. Flores in *El Litoral* of Concepción in 2001. In it, he recounts the publications authored by whom he describes as a forgotten figure of Chilean letters: “Escribió 6 obras dramáticas, 9 biografías, 14 estudios históricos, 9 ensayos, 3 libros de viaje, 6 recopilaciones y antologías, 4 traducciones, 2 prólogos y 2 bibliografías” [He authored six dramatic works, nine biographies, fourteen historical studies, nine essays, three travel books, six compilations and anthologies, four translations, two prologues, and two bibliographies] (2001: 9).

Regarding his travel books, Flores continues by saying that their great merit is that “no propone ni impone: expone” [it neither proposes nor imposes: it exposes] (2001: 9). As a playwright, Orrego wrote the famous play *Tragedia interior*, which was translated into Japanese.

Among the titles that I would like to highlight is the travel book *Tierra de águilas: un sudamericano en la U.R.S.S.*, published in Santiago in 1929, which corresponds to his visit to the Soviet Union. It is worth noting that it was the result of his political motivations that made Orrego decide to embark on that voyage (Alvarado 2016: 56). This personal encounter with Soviet soil allowed him to delve deeper and in greater detail into the terrains of socialism and led him to write works like *Mariátegui* (1930), *El país de Lenin: panorama general de la U.R.S.S.*, (1932) and *Perspectiva del desenvolvimiento socialista en América y el mundo* (1932), which are a clear effort to think of socialism in Latin American context.

This noticeable socialist imprint, which had taken an ample space in his writing, only strengthened after his passing through Japan and China in 1926. That is the reason why it also has an important place in his second travel book entitled *Mujeres, paisajes y templos*. This work corresponds to his travel impressions of these two countries; it was later published until 1931 in the city of Montevideo.

The reconstruction of the life and work of **Juan Marín Rojas** became a fairly easy task thanks to so far most complete study written by James O. Swain and published in 1971. Marín was born in 1900 in Talca, Chile. At the age of sixteen published his first poems and started his studies in medicine in the capital. From 1928 to 1936, he served in the Chilean Navy as a commissioned lieutenant surgeon, stationed doctor in Santiago, and then director of Naval Hospital of Magallanes. His interest in literature and writing did not fade during those years. As a doctor, Marín not only collaborated with several medicine magazines but also wrote his first novel, *Paralelo 53 Sur*.

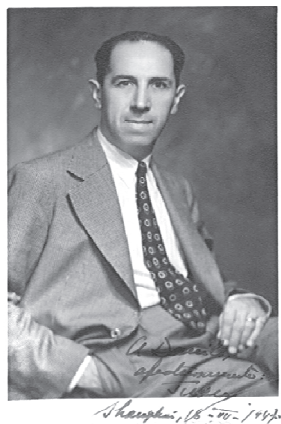


Fig. 16: “Juan Marín en Shanghai, 1947” Source: Legado Juan Marín. Colección Archivo del Escritor Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.
<<https://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-600596.html>>.

In 1939, he was appointed by Aguirre Cerda as consul general to China, a position that he occupied until 1943 when the Japanese invaded Shanghai and, due to the closure of the Chilean diplomatic offices in the country, Marín was repatriated by the Swedish ship *The Gripsholm*. Three years later, Marín was sent again to China with the mission to reestablish the diplomatic legation after the retrieval of the Japanese forces and the attempt of the Chinese government to resume its control not only over Nanjing but over the rest of their territory. Marín’s experience along this treacherous voyage across the Pacific Ocean was described in the short story titled *Viaje en el Hurricane*, which *El Mercurio* published almost two decades after Marín returned to China (Figueroa 1972: 53).

Back in Shanghai, Marín wrote a letter to Gabriela Mistral congratulating her Nobel Prize in Literature but also informing her that he had just returned from the Philippines, where he served as the delegate representative of Chile in the celebration of the independence of the archipelago. By the time of the foundation of the PRC in 1949, Marín had already left the country to serve as a diplomat mainly in Egypt but also in Lebanon, Syria, and India. In 1952, he resigned and the next year, returned to Chile to work as editor of *El Mercurio*. Only two years later, he was elected president of the Sociedad de Escritores de Chile.

Even though Juan Marín flirted with the Chilean versions of *Futurismo*, most of his work is committed to the portrayal of the most pressing Chilean realities. Several short stories published in collections like *Cuentos de viento y agua* as well

as novels such as *Paralelo 53 Sur* and *Naufragio* portrayed a very stark and somber reality of the Chilean working class. They were especially interested in presenting the struggles of the Chilean coal miners. These works situated him as a contributor to proletarian realism.



Fig. 17: “Juan Marín y Milena Luksic. Shanghai 1939” Source: Legado Juan Marín. Colección Archivo del Escritor Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.
<<https://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-600564.html>>.

In 1939, Marín took his diplomatic position in China with great earnestness and addressed his intentions to learn and immerse himself in Chinese culture and history as a very personal and serious task. The result of that commitment, hand in hand with his intellectual curiosity, are the hundreds of pages that he dedicated to this country. Besides the volume of travel chronicles titled *Mesa de Mah-Jong: una crónica de China*, published in 1948, there are several other works in which China plays a very active role, ranging from the journalistic reports to novels, poems, essays and plays: *El Emperador Kwang-Hsu* (1941), *China: Lao-Tszé, Confucio, Buda* (1944), *El alma china: su arte, su literatura, sus ideas* (1945), and *Muerte en Shanghai* (1953). In addition to these works, several other articles touching upon a wide range of topics related to Chinese history, society, and culture were published by newspapers and magazines all along the American continent, such as *La Hora* (Ecuador), *Pro Arte* (Chile), *Repertorio Americano* (Costa Rica), *La Nueva Democracia* (United States), *Saber Vivir* (Argentina), and *Revista Universidad de Antioquia* (Colombia)—just to name a few.

Mesa de Mah-Jong is traversed by the experience of the Japanese invasion of China during the so-called Second Sino-Japanese War, a rather unfortunate name for what is addressed in Chinese historiography as *Zhongguo kangri zhanzheng* 中国抗日战争 (War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression) or *Riben qinhua zhanzheng* 日本侵华战争 (Japanese Aggression against China). This has an even more evident presence in his novel *Muerte en Shanghai* and in the short story “El derrumbe del cielo”. Even some other works that do not address this event directly are marked, in one way or another, by this experience. That is the case of *El Tibet misterioso y sus lamas*, *China: Lao-Tszé, Confucio y Buda*, and *El alma de China* as these “three books were written during those months of 1943 while the Marins were confined in the Chilean legation in Shanghai” (Swain 1971: 111) due to the Japanese occupation of the city.



Fig. 18: “Juan Marín en Filipinas, 1946” Source: Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.
<<https://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-600650.html>>.

Among other Latin Americans who traveled to China in this period are the Guatemalan Enrique Gómez Carrillo who wrote *De Marsella a Tokio: sensaciones de Egipto, la India, la China y el Japón* (1906) and the Mexican Efrén Rebolledo who lived in Japan and China for eight years and wrote the novel *Hojas de bambú* (1910). Moreover, there is the Peruvian José Antonio Román, who published in Madrid his travelogue *Sensaciones de Oriente* in 1910, after traveling between September 1904 to January 1905 through several countries in Asia, including China. Further, the Salvadoran Arturo Ambrogi published in 1915 *Sensaciones del Japón y de la China*.

A contemporary of Ambrogio, the Peruvian Francisco A. Loayza served as consul to Japan in the city of Yokohama from 1912 and resided in East Asia for more than twenty years, during which he also held diplomatic positions in China and Korea. Even though he did not publish a travel book, he wrote several chronicles for the newspapers *El Comercio* and *La Prensa* between 1912 and 1914 related to Japanese history, culture, and society, as well as some of his impressions traveling across the island. Loayza had a lifelong interest in establishing historical ties between East Asia and Latin America. As I mentioned in the introduction in 1926, he published the book *Manko Kapa (El fundador del imperio de los Incas fue japonés)* and in 1948, *Chinos llegaron antes que Colón*, in which he brings together studies by Chinese, Peruvian, North American, and European archeologists and historians to support the title of his book. He also analyzes almost one hundred Peruvian toponyms that, according to him, are of Chinese origin and traces a large number of similarities between these two countries in relation to their shared ancient customs, beliefs, as well as social and governmental practices.

Moving closer to the half of the century is the Peruvian Jorge Bailey Lembcke, who published his *Recuerdos de un diplomático peruano 1917–1954* in 1959. In this book, he devoted several chapters to the recollections of his life in East Asia. They begin in 1931 when Bailey was appointed chargé d'affaires for Japan and China previously occupied by Manuel Elías Bonnemaïson (1959: 65). Although he resided mainly in Japan until 1936, he also served, during this time, as an adviser to the Peruvian delegation in China, the country to which he dedicated chapters X and XI of his book. In connection with the Colombo-Peruvian War (1931–1932), Bailey acted as an intermediary both for the purchase of Japanese armament (1959: 113) to fight against Colombian troops in the Amazon and for the hiring of “Japanese technicians to install several modern artillery systems” (De la Pedraja 2006: 410).

Moreover, Pablo Neruda visited China on three occasions (Teng 2018: 175). The first time, he visited China and Japan in 1928 traveling from Myanmar in the company of Álvaro Hinojosa (Olivares 2000: 101). In February of the same year, Neruda wrote and sent to *La Nación* the account of his first impressions of China written from the city of Shanghai. It was published on April 8th under the title *Invierno en los puertos* (Loveluck 1971: 73) and can be found in the collected prose volume titled *Para nacer he nacido* as well as his memoir *Confieso que he vivido*. Even though the latter book is from the beginning to the end sprinkled with numerous recollections and allusions to China, in the texts contained in that volume “Mi primera a visita a China”, “Segunda visita a China” and “Viaje al Oriente”, Neruda recounts in a more concrete and detailed way the events and the impressions that the three visits to China made on him.

Finally, in 1936, the Peruvian⁶ Aurelio Miró Quesada Sosa published his travel book *Vuelta al mundo*. This work was the result of the compilation of several travel chronicles that the author had previously published between July 1933 and December 1934 in the newspaper *El Comercio*, owned by his family for two generations. His journey lasted for a total of two years and included India, China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, Siam, and Myanmar. Miró Quesada Sosa shared with his cousin Alejandro Miró Quesada Garland the direction of the diary for several years, and, as I will study in detail in the next and last chapter, his nephew Francisco Miró Quesada Cantuarias not only worked in and also became director of the newspaper years later but also traveled to Communist China in 1959 and published his travel impressions that same year.

From Dynasty to Republic

One of the most remarkable novelties that this first half of the twentieth century brought to the travel writing of this period is related to the physical access that these travelers had to the vastness of the Chinese nation. The delimitation of the borders that both Tanco and Bustamante described in detail and that ultimately defined the access that foreigners had to the Chinese territories expanded exponentially during this new period. The forced entry of Western expansionist empires into China also opened the doors to a vast geography that had been hardly explored, little described, but very much imagined throughout the centuries. As a result of that, in the course of these five decades, Teresa de la Parra toured China from the fridity of the northeastern city of Harbin to the southern shores of the temperate city of Shanghai. Elvira Santa Cruz and Eugenio Orrego visited the Forbidden City in the heart of Beijing, and Juan Marín ventured through cities such as Chongqing and Nanjing. The imposed collapse of these borders gave these travelers access not only to the territorial vastness of the Chinese nation but also to

⁶ Another interesting case is that of the Peruvian journalist and political leader Eudocio Rabines Pérez, who had lived in exile in Paris since 1928 until he traveled to Moscow in 1933. On this first trip to the USSR, he established his first contacts with Soviet leaders. Although he never visited China, Rabines returned to Moscow in 1935 and 1939, an occasion on which he met Stalin and became close with Mao Zedong; the latter became an essential mentor for his later political militancy. However, after decades as a communist leader, Rabines suffered an irreparable ideological disillusionment and radically turned his political inclinations to the right, becoming a staunch defender of economic liberalism. Nevertheless, in 1951, he published in English a book of recollections of this period of his life titled *The Yenan Way*, later published in Spanish in 1953 under the title of *La gran estafa*.

its cultural boundlessness, which implied a complexity of perspective regarding the fall of the Qing empire and the end of the dynastic system.

Therefore, although the travel narrative of the nineteenth century was written in the midst of a China immersed in a deep crisis of its social and governmental principles, the twentieth century not only deepened that crisis but also drew attention to the imperative need to acknowledge the irreversibility of profound structural changes. Therefore, as might be expected, the fall of the Qing as a historical rupture with a millennial dynastic past absorbed an important part of the impressions consigned in the travel narrative of this period and unleashed the emergence of divergent perspectives.

In this regard, the debate on the consequences of Western influence in the Far East became much denser and more complex. Some of their viewpoints served as a continuation of the ideas that dominated the nineteenth-century Creole traveler narrative and which supported with enthusiasm the westernization of China hand in hand with strong criticism of the Chinese for their apparently anachronistic effort to remain isolated from the rest of the world. In fact, this historical break with a millennial dynastic past was, in general terms, widely applauded and very well received in these memoirs and chronicles. Thus, even though some of these travelers decided to show their admiration for that Chinese traditional dynastic past in their writing, it is possible to notice a tendency to describe that past as outdated, corrupt, and obsolete. Some, like Santa Cruz, judged the cult of the ancestors and its relationship with the land to be “useless” and “unproductive.” For her, there was an evident conflict that needed to be overcome between the opportunity to exploit the land and modernize the production methods and the irreconcilable bondage with that recent past.

Son los famosos cementerios chinos que ocupan más de la cuarta parte del suelo en este inmenso país. [...] El labrador debe torcer el arado, la línea férrea serpentear inutilmente los caminos bifurcarse, para que el muerto siga descansando en paz [...] El campesino ve con terror cómo disminuye la parcela de tierra que le ha de dar alimento, pero por ningún motivo hace desaparecer una tumba antigua y solo pide al nuevo surco sepulcral que le devuelva en abono lo que le quita en producción [They are the famed Chinese cemeteries, which occupy more than a quarter of the land in this vast country. (...) The plowman must steer his plow aside, the railway line needlessly meander, the roads fork, all so the dead may continue to rest in peace. (...) The farmer looks on with dread as the parcel of land that should sustain him diminishes, yet under no circumstances will he remove an ancient grave. He only asks the new furrow of burial soil to return in nourishment what it takes away in yield] (1931a: 4).

On a similar note, in the following passage by Santa Cruz subsists the very much embedded idea from the last century pointing to China as the culprit of its own destiny: “Este país no es de turismo—parece decirnos—¿Qué vienen a curiosar

aquí los banales hijos del nuevo mundo? ¿A criticar nuestra decadencia y bancarrota? ¿A vernos triturados por un drama sangriento? ¿No les basta con saber que desde siglo atrás nos hemos parapetado tras de una muralla y hemos hecho prohibidas nuestras ciudades para el extranjero?” [This is not a country for tourism—it seems to tell us—What are the trivial sons of the New World doing here prying about? To criticize our decay and bankruptcy? To witness us crushed by a bloody drama? Is it not enough for them to know that for centuries we have barricaded ourselves behind a wall and made our cities forbidden to foreigners?] (1931a: 4).

On the other hand, even though the collapse of millennia of dynastic history is not more than a decade or two away from the time these travelers recorded their impressions, their texts reveal the eruption of a republican era with which a very different China was rapidly emerging, leaving the impression that this dynastic past was very far from those first decades of the twentieth century. In this regard, by 1931, Santa Cruz condensed with great clarity the implications of this apparently abrupt transformation: “La coleta china se fue junto con el imperio” [The Chinese queue disappeared along with the empire] (1931a: 4). The cutting and prohibition of the Manchu braid became a powerful symbol of the modernization of this new China. A powerful symbol of change that acquired multiple connotations since the early years of the twentieth century. As Prado-Fonts explains, Lu Xun ended up cutting his braid in 1903, a year after arriving in Japan, a decision described as difficult since it involved “elegir entre mantener la trenza y ser víctima de burlas raciales en Japón; o cortarse la trenza y ser víctima de burlas –y amenazas– al regresar a China” [o choose between keeping the queue and becoming a target of racial mockery in Japan, or cutting it off and facing ridicule—and threats—upon returning to China] (2019: 50).



Fig. 19: “Juan Guzmán Cruchaga en Hong Kong hacia 1926” Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Chile - Memoria Chilena. <<https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-100036.html>>.

Even a few years before Santa Cruz's voyage, Juan Guzmán Cruchaga wrote after crossing Victoria Harbour from the Kowloon Peninsula that "Para trasladarnos a Hong Kong (Bahía Fragante) nos espera en la calle un *rickshaw*, pequeño carruaje de dos ruedas arrastrado por un hijo del ex-imperio" [To take us to Hong Kong (Fragrant Bay), a rickshaw awaits us in the street—a small two-wheeled carriage pulled by a son of the former empire] (1998: 72). Thus, it is interesting that in the midst of political turmoil, from the perspective of these travelers, the Chinese do not yet belong to any concrete nation project but are still current orphans of a millenary family that disintegrated and collapsed. This perception, far from being exclusive to the position of these travelers as "outsiders," must have been, to a great extent, a feeling that dominated the environment. During her visit to the Forbidden City, Elvira Santa Cruz tells us that "Los guías rabian sin respeto de sus emperadores" [The guides rant with no respect for their emperors] (1937: 7) and one of them dares to say, "Antes de la república éramos esclavos" [Before the republic, we were slaves] (1937: 7); while one American tourist protests saying to the guide that "Su deber es guiarnos y no hacer política" [Their duty is to guide us, not to engage in politics] (1937: 7).

Despite being deeply immersed in a crisis full of apprehension and a striking lack of certainty about the future, it seems to be clear to these travelers that not only the dynastic regime will not return but neither will the splendor of the millenary China, now buried in ruins. In the same way, when Orrego visited what is known today as Xicheng district, where the Jingshan Park is located, and from whose mountain Orrego contemplated the Forbidden City in all its vastness. His encounter with the devastating passage of history that had left splendid temples and magnificent sculptures reduced to absolute ruin made him affirm that: "Lo que no ha muerto agoniza en monstruoso abandono" [What has not died languishes in monstrous abandonment] (1931: 200). A past splendor that, after visiting the Temple of Heaven, makes him think that "de estos mármoles y de estas lacas ya nunca verán el paso de los antiguos cortejos" [From these marbles and these lacquers, they will never again see the passage of the ancient processions] (1931: 201).

The encounter of these travelers with alterity is the encounter with a country and a nation that is drawn beyond the margins of traditional maps and that consequently disarranges their visions of the world. However, for the travelers whose encounter with China took place during the first decades of the twentieth century, I would argue that it created a profoundly disruptive fracture in their imagination and expectation. They confronted the reality of an empire in ruins drowned in devastation and misery as an experience diametrically opposed to the dreamy embellishment of the Western imagery that had served as a reference to build a luxurious, mysterious, exotic, and sensualist China. This is evident in the fact that their desire to wander around in the style of a *flâneur* through an imagined

reality is an expectation constantly truncated since it is confronted with a shattering reality. Therefore, their most intimate and hedonistic desire to stroll around as tourists in the ruins of a nation is just too disturbing to achieve.

While visiting what today is Shenyang, the capital of the northeastern province of Liaoning, Eugenio Orrego draws attention to the abrupt and accelerated political and social upheaval that China was going through at that time. He points out that it was the capital of the Qing dynasty since its establishment in the seventeenth century, which he addresses using its Manchu name: “En Mukden. Vieja capital. Monumentos y recuerdos de la dinastía Manchú, última en empuñar el cetro celeste. Por las calles, dentro las ruinosas murallas, los viandantes de siempre: chinos con coletas, chinos a la moderna, pocas mujeres de pies martirizados” [In Mukden. Old capital. Monuments and memories of the Manchu dynasty, the last to wield the celestial scepter. In the streets, inside the crumbling walls, the usual pedestrians: Chinese with braids, Chinese in modern attire, and a few women with tortured feet] (1931: 172). Revisiting the ruins of a very recent past, a coolie drives him in his rickshaw to the tomb of the first emperor of the Qing dynasty. Orrego refers to his encounter with this mausoleum as the encounter with “Campos tocados de otoño, sol discreto, penetrante olor a miseria china [...] toscos monumentos en que la grandiosidad severa e inartística sule a la elegancia. Regreso con un poco de desencanto” [Fields touched by autumn, discreet sun, penetrating smell of Chinese misery [...] rough monuments where severe and unaesthetic grandeur substitutes elegance. I return with a bit of disenchantment] (1931: 173). On this occasion, the satisfaction of the aesthetic encounter with something artistic seems as frustrated as the encounter of a tourist visiting the limits of their own expectations.

Despite the stormy historic moment that coincides with his visit and the imminent rumble of the crushing steps of the war in China, Orrego is determined to walk through it with the distracted pace of the most regular tourist “El sol comienza a apretar y el hambre cosquillea. Mi kurumaya⁷ relincha, tan acostumbrado está el pobre a su triste profesión. Quiero penetrar la ciudad y por todas partes filas de soldados, fusil en mano, me cierran el paso [...] ¿Qué hacer? El estómago se hace presente y el tren no admite espera” [The sun begins to press, and hunger tickles. My kurumaya neighs, so accustomed is the poor creature to its sad profession. I want to enter the city, but everywhere rows of soldiers, rifle in hand, block my way [...] What to do? The stomach makes itself known, and the train does not wait] (1931: 174). Later on, we get to know that the reason for this military blockade and the state of siege in which the city finds itself is because Zhang Zuolin

7 Rickshaw man.

is having lunch at the Japanese consulate. Yuan Shikai rose to power with the establishment of the first Republic of China in 1912 as a result of the Xinhai Revolution the year before. After his death in 1916, the period known as the Warlord Era began. In this period, the country was controlled by different military elites, and Zhang Zuolin went down in history as one of those warlords who initially ruled over Manchuria. Zhang established himself, albeit very briefly, as the head of the Republic of China between 1927 and 1928, a period that ended when he was defeated by the National Revolutionary Army of the KMT led by Chiang Kai-shek.

Orrego goes on to describe the events of that day he met Zhang Zuolin and the chain of reactions that the military blockade provoked. On the one hand, Orrego was extremely outraged due to the blockade standing in his way, and his tourist itinerary seemed superior to all the circumstances of the moment. Thus, it is evident that Orrego considers himself to be a citizen of a superior category in China, and his offended foreigner ego leads him to yell at one of the soldiers, demanding to be allowed to pass and continue his path. It is interesting that just as we saw in the last chapter when Nicolás Tanco declared himself European or not depending on the needs and circumstances, Orrego used a similar resource because even though he most certainly knew that the soldier was not going to understand him, he chose to yell at him in French and not in Spanish. Therefore, using French served as his sign of Europeanness, and consequently, it acted as an instrument of self-legitimation and power. On the other hand, that feeling of superiority comes out on several other occasions and manifests itself in various ways. One example is the way in which he animalizes his rickshaw driver by comparing the driver to a horse that *relincha* or neighs. He uses a similar description once again when, after the soldier yells back at him in Chinese in an equally heated manner, he describes the yelling as a “howl” of an animal (1931: 174).

From another perspective, in the midst of so much chaos and devastation other perspectives gravitating toward the delineation of alternative horizons (which I suggest were the ones opening initial spaces of peripheral solidarity) also happened to emerge. As an example, it is possible to highlight the fact that some of these travelers witnessed the historical process that China was going through as a reflection of their own historical trajectories as Latin Americans, glimpsing common positions, struggles, and challenges in relation to the dilemmas between tradition and modernization.

I had underlined the importance that the physical delimitations between regions in relation to the borders of power and, consequently, whether the spaces were accessible or not for the traveler. In the section titled “En el barrio de las legaciones” [In the foreign legation quarter], Orrego refers to the power acquired by the foreign legations in Beijing: “En la de Estados Unidos, por ejemplo, un regimiento de cadetes

cubre guardia en terreno considerable y domina un sector de la muralla pekinesa, transformado en paseo de occidentales” [In the United States legation, for example, a regiment of cadets guards a considerable area and controls a section of the Beijing wall, which has been transformed into a promenade for Westerners] (1931: 190). It is evident that the drawing of these limits has not only changed, but it has even reversed as forms of power exercise. As a result, the thousand-year-old Great Wall, which has always had the double purpose of keeping the barbarians outside and the subjects of the empire inside, has inverted the order of its functions. Thus, despite the fact that Orrego belongs to that same class and integrates with those same social circles (being part of the diplomatic world), here he distances himself from them once again to condemn and point out the excesses and abuses of that presence. In the same way, very contrary to the common opinion, Orrego does not conceive China as the culprit of its own destiny and its current suffering but instead recognizes it as a justified victim of imperialism.

In the section titled “Estampas de Pekín”, an alternative point of view in regard to that emerges: “El kuruma corre como el viento, deslizándose entre la hostilidad o la indiferencia de los que pasan. Y nada parece más justificado que este odio a todo lo extranjero” [The kuruma runs like the wind, gliding through the hostility or indifference of those who pass by. And nothing seems more justified than this hatred toward everything foreign] (1931: 188). Thus, it is also noteworthy that these ties of solidarity are not transmitted through the same class circuit. This is supported by, as we have already seen, his encounter with the Chinese intellectual or ruling class that has not left a very good impression and has very little presence throughout his travel book. On the contrary, Orrego uses the coolie or the *kuruma* to express his empathy, opening a very different spectrum in relation to his class affinities. That will also trigger common horizons with Latin America as victims of colonialism and will open up space for new hope for the working class as a project for the future.

Ruptures and Continuities: From the Creole Oligarchy to the Emergence of a Bourgeoisie

Through the early decades of the twentieth century, Latin America experienced a postindependence tension between a continent whose nation-building projects were still in the making but which was, at the same time, trying to insert itself within the global mappings and to earn its place within the cosmopolitan narratives. As a result, the process of self-legitimation of the lettered elite as a ruling class, which took place within the national borders, was expanded during the transition between centuries and the first decades of the twentieth century. Their

processes of legitimation as an intellectual and social elite were taken to a global level and achieved through a “transnational class alliance” (Aching 1997: 5), which, to some extent, offered to the lettered Creole oligarchy a form of continuity through the bourgeois intellectual class. Nonetheless, these signs of continuity will also be counterbalanced by signs of rupture that will be part of a great crucible of possibilities manifested in very different ways throughout the travel narrative that comprise this chapter. In this sense, the desire for universalization and participation in global scenarios was taken to another dimension in the 1930s and 1940s with the internationalist ideal of the socialist commitment to the working class, giving a new significance to global class alliances. After the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) and the consolidation of socialist ideologies in the continent owing to the outcome of the Russian Revolution (1917–1923), a global alliance of the proletarian class also arose in the Latin American political and aesthetic map and its impact was also manifested in some of the travel writing selected for this chapter.

Social class is, in this sense, a very relevant factor when it comes to defining the pattern in the fabric of interactions and social relationships that these travelers weaved all along their journeys. It acted as a decisive factor that directly influenced the way they observed, interpreted, and wrote about the China they visited. Thus, even though these travelers have largely lost their ties with the political power, it is also true that, as Ángel Rama points out, there are clear signs of continuity well into the twentieth century of the Creole *lettered city* and its tight bonds between literature and establishment: “habríamos de tener altos poetas (Guillermo Valencia) que aspiraron a la presidencia y robustos novelistas que la alcanzaron: Rómulo Gallegos” [We would have to have great poets (Guillermo Valencia) who aspired to the presidency and robust novelists who achieved it: Rómulo Gallegos] ([1984] 1998: 85). On the other hand, even though there is a noticeable disengagement from the ruling class, this does not mean that they have ceased to be part of the lettered intellectual class and their privileged access to the consumption of selected knowledge and art, appreciation of places, and participation in social circles.

In this regard, Teresa de la Parra’s diary is the work in which the signs of continuity with the nineteenth-century oligarchy are most noticeable. The display of banquets, parties, receptions, comforts, and luxuries are not only a common trait within her writing but also a very contrasting one if we consider the profound political and social crisis into which the very much impoverished China plunged when these travelers visited. Thus, approaching the end of her trip in the city of Harbin, Teresa de la Parra dedicates a few of her lines to the description of her extensive retinue of servants:

Gracias al inmenso abismo que por cuestión de idiomas me separa de mis feísimos cuanto ladronísimos sirvientes, no tengo con ellos el menor contacto. Siguiendo la costumbre del país, mis fámulos pertenecen todos al sexo masculino y los designo con números en lugar de nombres. Hay uno, el principal entre ellos, que hace el papel de *Maitre d'hôtel* [...] Dicho personaje, designado con el título de *Boy N.º 1* acostumbra saber inglés o francés [...] Vienen luego ascendiendo en número y descendiendo en categoría simultánea y sucesivamente: *Boy N.º 2*, o sirviente de mesa; *Boy N.º 3*, o cocinero; *Boy N.º 4* o culí, el cual hace el humilísimo papel de fregona. *Boy N.º 1* [...] los regana, los cambia, los despide, toma otros nuevos, dispone el menú, despacha al cocinero, y en sus días de humor negro, llega hasta a pegarle al culí sin que tenga yo que intervenir ni mezclarme absolutamente en nada. Esta vida, lejos de toda prosa, sería deliciosa y encantadora. [Thanks to the immense abyss that, due to language, separates me from my very ugly yet thievish servants, I have no contact with them whatsoever. Following the country's custom, all my servants are male, and I designate them with numbers instead of names. There is one, the principal among them, who plays the role of *Maitre d'hôtel* [...] This person, designated with the title of *Boy No. 1*, is accustomed to knowing English or French [...] Then they rise in number while descending in rank, simultaneously and successively: *Boy No. 2*, or table servant; *Boy No. 3*, or cook; *Boy No. 4*, or culí, who performs the humblest role of scrubber. *Boy No. 1* [...] scolds them, changes them, fires them, takes new ones, arranges the menu, supervises the cook, and on his days of dark humor, even goes so far as to hit the culí without me having to intervene or get involved at all. This life, far from all prose, would be delightful and charming] ([1920] 2011: 82)

Nonetheless, all along de la Parra's travel diary, far from wishing to hide or disguise what she herself refers to as the "aristocratic leisure" associated with her social status, they are, on the contrary, detailed and spiritedly portrayed. Moreover, as representatives of the emerging, well-off Latin American bourgeoisie, it is worth noting that they did not only afford to travel to Asia but were also able to rub shoulders with the world's intelligentsia and its social elites. In this sense, I would argue that the relationship between social class and travel functioned as a differentiating element insofar as travel opened wide the doors to the experience of modernity and allowed, in turn, access to the selected spheres of the cosmopolitan bourgeois life. "Mis compañeros de viaje constituyen el conjunto más babilónico que darse pueda: americanos, ingleses, suecos, japoneses, belgas, chinos y sobre todo, rusos [...] hay entre ellos intelectuales y artistas de nota, y entre los rusos personas de mucha significación social" [My travel companions constitute the most Babylonian group imaginable: Americans, English, Swedes, Japanese, Belgians, Chinese, and especially Russians (...)] Among them are notable intellectuals and artists, and among the Russians, there are people of great social significance] (De la Parra [1920] 2011: 34).

Therefore, that apparently harmonious and festive coexistence between ethnicities and nationalities disguised as the idea of overcoming the nation's insecurities to embrace cosmopolitanism was also a derivative of a class privilege and its transnational alliances with other intellectual elites in the world. This overcoming of divisive borders can be better understood, as Adam Sharman

suggests, as an extension of a free trade culture and a “signo cultural del liberalismo” [Cultural sign of liberalism] (1993: 331), which disguised as cosmopolitanism is nothing more than what Mariano Siskind referred to as a “hegemonic universality” (2014: 13, 25). It proposes a much more sophisticated and much less perceptible extension of colonial models of exploitation and exclusion that smuggle racial inferiorities for class superiorities and which, as Aníbal Quijano explains it, is part of the process of “elaboración de la nueva racionalidad que funda la modernidad y se asocia con ella” [Elaboration of the new rationality that founds modernity and is associated with it] (1995: 10).

Nonetheless, there are also, despite the evident signs of continuity, fundamental ruptures as a result of the turn of the century. As I have suggested, the nineteenth-century traveler enthusiastically regarded material progress as the path of an ongoing project toward modernity. In the words of Julio Ramos, “la modernidad era una utopía proyectada” [Modernity was a projected utopia] ([1989] 2021: 93) because, despite their favored Creole status, they understood that as Latin Americans, they were writing from a marginal position and that such marginality was not a place to inhabit or build their own subjectivity from, but it was rather a condition compelled to be overcome. For their part, the traveler of this new period does not envision modernity as a potential reality but as a current and inexorable experience. This is a conviction that will give the traveler, the journey, and its writing very different connotations from those of the nineteenth-century voyager.

It is worth mentioning that this change of perspective can be understood as a consequence of the strengthening of the relationship between culture, education, and market. It led to a notable expansion of the limits of the intellectual class since the access and possession of knowledge went from being an inherited privilege to a purchasable commodity. Such expansion in the access to the *market of experiences* is bound to the emergence of a new bourgeois reality, which resulted in a reconfiguration of the uses and practices around knowledge, the broadening of spaces for reflection and self-criticism in relation to class privileges, as well as a keen interest in bringing local discussions to more global scenarios. These will be central axes around which the travel writing corresponding to this half century will revolve and from which its main motifs will be derived.

One of the derivatives of the widening of the lettered class is, as mentioned, the commoditization of the written word and the immersion of a writer within the capitalization of art and talent. Thus, the expulsion of the artist from the modern *polis* puts the subsistence of the writer at risk and subtracted from art its social value to transform it into an ornament, an eccentric pastime. This is something that by 1945, Pedro Henríquez Ureña had already pointed out and explained as

La aplicación de los principios del liberalismo económico, la prosperidad tuvo un efecto bien perceptible en la vida intelectual. Comenzó una división del trabajo. Los hombres de profesiones intelectuales trataron ahora de ceñirse a la tarea que habían elegido y abandonaron la política; nada se ganó con ello, antes al contrario. Y como la literatura no era en realidad una profesión, sino una vocación, los hombres de letras se convirtieron en periodistas o en maestros, cuando no en ambas cosas. Muchos de ellos siguieron la carrera de derecho en las universidades, pero pocos ejercieron después la profesión. Algunos obtuvieron puestos diplomáticos o consulares [The application of the principles of economic liberalism and prosperity had a noticeable effect on intellectual life. A division of labor began to take place. Intellectual professionals now aimed to focus solely on their chosen field, abandoning politics; this brought no gains, quite the opposite. And since literature was not truly a profession, but rather a vocation, literary figures turned into journalists or teachers, if not both. Many pursued law degrees at universities, but few eventually practiced the profession. Some secured diplomatic or consular positions] (1980: 207–208).

Even though it would be wrong to say that it was a generalized condition among all the Latin American travelers to China of this period, it is safe to say that financial precariousness is clearly something that will not be found in the diaries and travel memoirs that comprise this chapter. Therefore, as far as the travel writers who are part of this study are concerned, economic affluence appears certainly as a common and easily identifiable feature. That being said, it is also important to highlight that, even though their economic affluence continues to be mainly sustained by their membership in certain social circles, there was, nonetheless, an economic fracture in respect to the nineteenth-century elite.

This new generation of travel writers was keener on the idea of making their writing a way of earning a living but, although they differ from the writers I studied in the previous chapter in the fact that they are not industrialists or business owners, they are still heirs to great fortunes and renowned family names. In this sense, the intellectual class served as a bridge between both realities since, in the words of Ángel Rama, “se los ve ocupar los márgenes de la *ciudad letrada* y oscilar entre ella y la *ciudad real*, trabajando sobre lo que una y otra ofrecen, en un ejercicio ricamente ambiguo” [They are seen occupying the margins of the learned city, oscillating between it and the real city, working with what both offer, in a richly ambiguous exercise] ([1984] 1998: 80).

As I have already suggested, it is a class that inherits the remnants of the Creole oligarchic elite, but since its patronage relationship with the state has practically disappeared, it is also a class which can stand on the other side of the political scale to counterbalance the influence of its former patron. This transformation of the travel writer is a part of a broader crisis experienced by literature as a response to the arrival of modernity. Hence, for travel writing, it also “representó la condición de posibilidad de su emergencia y de su autonomización, en tanto discurso paradójicamente moderno, generado por la racionalización, aunque autorizado

como crítica de la misma” [It represented the condition of possibility for its emergence and autonomization, as a paradoxically modern discourse, generated by rationalization, yet authorized as a critique of the same] (Ramos [1989] 2021: 100).

This zigzagging between the *ciudad letrada* and the *ciudad real* acquires very interesting twists and turns in Eugenio Orrego’s travel accounts of China. The book introduction hints at him as the travel who has the strongest socialist imprint in his writing. However, this class perspective is nevertheless preserved, leaving only a tenuous characterful tone out of the strong political impetus that we will see manifested in other passages and which will give to it multiple edges and perspectives.

Había concurrencia asaz heterogénea, integrada por ostentosas burguesas, cortesanas de elevada cotización, comerciantes, ladrones de alta escuela y algunos hombres de pro. En las pecheras de los smokings lucíanse perlas y joyas, y en las sedas riquísimas de ex-mandarines y príncipes fulguraban vagos reflejos de sangre o de oro. Corrían los mozos y las fuentes. Estallaba el champagne confundiendo su música ebria con la ebria locura de los jazz bands. Las fisonomías asiáticas, africanas y occidentales armonizaban. Había rubias mujeres de Rusia y de Albión, chinas de tez amarfilada—marfil viejo de los dioses de cultos extinguidos—, japonesas de ojos de almendra, negros de África, robustos ciudadanos del norte de China, viajeros de los países inquietos de América que todavía esperan [There was a highly heterogeneous gathering, made up of ostentatious bourgeois women, highly-priced courtesans, merchants, high-class thieves, and a few seasoned professionals. Pearls and jewels adorned the fronts of tuxedos, and the rich silks of ex-mandarins and princes shimmered with faint reflections of blood or gold. The waiters rushed about, and the fountains flowed. Champagne exploded, blending its drunken music with the wild frenzy of jazz bands. The Asian, African, and Western faces harmonized. There were blonde women from Russia and Albion, Chinese with an ivory complexion—old ivory of the gods of vanished cults—Japanese with almond-shaped eyes, Africans from the continent, robust citizens from northern China, and travelers from the restless lands of America who still waited] (1931: 168).

Despite the astonishment and the festive spirit that surrounds Orrego’s description, it is remarkable that in this paragraph survives a subtle but equally scathing criticism of those around him described as distinguished “thieves” on whose lavish garments “blood shimmers”. However, the ravages of subordination and the thirst for empire is plunged into alcohol, and the deafening rumbling of jazz seems to smooth out all the rough edges between world powers, ethnicities, and nationalities. This reaches a point in which the desperate cry of war is reduced to a distant and almost unperceivable echo. Nonetheless, it is also necessary to recognize that Orrego acts as the crack that causes the collapse of the dam. He will take his reader to other spaces in which that cosmopolitanism is experienced in other ways through which that harmonized image of ethnicities and nationalities

is replaced by a space of confrontation governed by an alternative display of power dynamics:

Los barrios de diversión, invadidos por la soldadesca, tienen aspecto lamentoso. [...] El cabaret internacional, dirigido por un griego, muestra la máscara amarga de rusas que ofrecen su carne marchita y allá van, rodando por las pistas en brazos de chinos gordísimos que babean concupiscencia. ¿Cómo no sentir el dolor de los náufragos? Algunas visten trajes regionales y danzan, y danzan [The entertainment districts, overrun by soldiers, have a lamentable appearance. [...] The international cabaret, run by a Greek, shows the bitter mask of Russian women offering their withered flesh, and there they go, rolling across the floors in the arms of corpulent Chinese men who drool with lust. How can one not feel the pain of the shipwrecked? Some wear regional costumes and dance, and dance] (1931: 188).

Despite the many pages dedicated in this period to the descriptions of luxurious parties and banquets, everyone who did not belong to those selected world elites and circles was completely invisibilized in the narration. This is the reason why this is one of the few descriptions in which the focus of attention is on the submissive portion of the scene. It is evident that the idea of a harmonious coexistence among ethnicities was supported by the eradication of that social periphery of the traveling experience and its narration. This is how Orrego gives a perceptual twist to his descriptions and shows the miserable backstage of those spaces of denied interaction and unmask the exploitation, subjugation, and misery with which the portrayals of those festive and harmonious descriptions have been covered. This way, Orrego removes any celebratory spirit that rested on the idea of cosmopolitanism and shows us a world that pretends to be modern while it continues to be supported at its base by the same colonial distribution of power sustained by the same racist and oppressive discourses.

Another noteworthy aspect of this passage is that in unmasking all the circuits and connectors that keep this exercise of power going, Orrego resorts to spaces such as the above-described *Carabet Internacional* in which the oppressed and the oppressor exchange or acquire new roles. In the impressions and descriptions of Orrego's encounter with China, the country has been portrayed, in general terms, as a victim of imperialism. In the same way, the Chinese that Orrego met along his journey and who he constructed through his writing to become part of the recreation of his experiences share in their description their subjugation as a common condition. However, amid the nocturnal Beijing, the cabaret offers a space in which the description of those "very fat Chinese" taking Russian prostitutes into their arms opens the door to the reader to a space *other*.

This is a space in which multiple threads of gender, racial, social, national, and political power are tensed in defiance to the binarism that had been dominant so far throughout his narration. What he had brilliantly described as a dance of the

extremes is the result of all the tensions that accumulate but that, in turn, keep the toss coin spinning in the air: “Los rostros sonríen, los cuerpos se quiebran, las vestiduras caen... y duele el perfume de los pebeteros” [The faces smile, the bodies bend, the garments fall... and the scent of the censers aches] (1931: 188). The cabaret is the space where extreme pain dances with extreme pleasure, extreme misery with extreme luxury, and extreme power with extreme helplessness. This is a clear example of a new intellectual serving as a bridge between two contrasting realities. As Gutiérrez Girardot suggests following Hegel, the artist is an “amphibian” between two contradictory worlds: the mundane and the sublime. One “dominado y arrebatado por los instintos naturales y las pasiones; y por otra, se eleva a las ideas eternas, al reino del pensamiento y de la libertad” [Dominated and swept away by natural instincts and passions; and on the other hand, it rises to eternal ideas, to the realm of thought and freedom] ([1988] 2004: 44). The cleavage between these two worlds is “el estado en el que el individuo es al mismo tiempo medio y fin de otros individuos [que] corresponde en las *Lecciones sobre filosofía del derecho* a lo que allí [Hegel] llama la ‘sociedad burguesa’” [The state in which the individual is simultaneously a means and an end for other individuals [that] corresponds, in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Right, to what Hegel refers to as the “bourgeois society”] (Gutiérrez [1988] 2004: 45). This is an echo of Bentham’s utilitarianism if it is taken into account that the struggle to obtain pleasure is a fundamental end within the game of egoisms that is played on the bourgeois board.

Two years after arriving in China for the first time, to perform his duties as diplomat, Juan Marín wrote in the summer of 1941 in the city of Shanghai one of the most brilliant texts that the Latin American travel narrative of China produced over the course of this half century. Shanghai was the stage on which the history of modern China performed its most enthusiastic operas around the progress, a condition that gave it, as Prado-Fonts points out, the fame of being the Paris of the East in the 1930s. However, its cosmopolitan excitements deviate from the rawest dramas whose horrors permanently stained not only the stage planks but the entire theater. Thus, although the high number of foreigners who inhabited the city were partly responsible for bringing refreshing ideas and paradigms to the city, it is also a city which

Se organiza bajo un patrón semicolonial. La mitad de la ciudad es territorio chino. La otra mitad está bajo dominio—y jurisdicción—extranjera, dividida en tres zonas: la concesión francesa, el asentamiento internacional y el distrito de Hongkou bajo dominio japonés [...] Para los chinos, esta presencia extranjera es ofensiva y humillante. Su acceso a las zonas internacionales es limitado. El ejemplo más conocido es la ordenanza que, entre 1916 y 1927, prohíbe la entrada a la población china a parques y jardines, excepto si se trata de servicio doméstico que acompaña a sus amos [It is organized under a semi-colonial pattern. Half of the city is Chinese territory. The other half is under foreign control—and jurisdiction—

divided into three zones: the French concession, the international settlement, and the Hongkou district under Japanese control (...) For the Chinese, this foreign presence is offensive and humiliating. Their access to international zones is limited. The most well-known example is the ordinance that, between 1916 and 1927, prohibits the entry of the Chinese population to parks and gardens, except when they are domestic servants accompanying their masters] (Prado-Fonts 2019: 127).



Fig. 20: “Juan Marín en China. September 1941” Walking along The Bund in Shanghai with his wife Milena Luksic. Source: Legado Juan Marín. Colección Archivo del Escritor Biblioteca Nacional de Chile. <<https://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-600630.html>>.

In 1927, Shanghai served as the scene of the massacre resulting from the suppression of the CCP by the nationalist forces commanded by Chiang Kai-shek. During the next decade, Shanghai will also be the stage not only of local political forces but also the target of several attacks from Japan, whose most forceful lunge took place in 1937 with the Battle of Shanghai. Thus, it is clear that even though in “1939 Europe was still, albeit uneasily, at peace [...] some seven thousand kilometers to the east, the Second World War was already well under way” (Mitter 2013: 1). That was the convulsive city that gave birth to Marín’s text entitled “Calles de Shanghai”. A text in prose that keeps a scathing tone of ode along which the narrator’s voice appeals directly to the streets of Shanghai as a living entity, an interlocutor to whom it is trying to appeal:

Calles de Shanghai, huérfanas de toda vegetación, de toda armonía, de toda cordialidad. Kaleidoscopio del placer humano, del dolor humano y del vicio y la codicia de los hombres. Arco iris de crudo metal, moderna Torre de Babel sin ímpetu de altura, barrosa amalgama de todas las razas / Calles de Shanghai! / Yo os he visto en la ardiente luz del medio día con vuestros vagabundos muertos de hambre en medio de la calzada multitudinaria y vuestras

vidrieras consteladas de diamantes y de sedas. [Streets of Shanghai, barren of vegetation, harmony, and warmth. A kaleidoscope of human pleasure, human pain, and the vice and greed of men. A rainbow of raw metal, a modern Tower of Babel without the urge for height, a muddy amalgam of all races. / Streets of Shanghai! / I have seen you in the blazing light of midday, with your starving vagrants lying in the midst of the teeming roadways and your shop windows glittering with diamonds and silks] (1941: 441).

It is interesting that despite the abysmal difference that divides these two writers, as well as the dissimilar positions and circumstances, which traverse their travel narrative, de la Parra and Marín both appeal to the Tower of Babel to describe the Shanghai they witnessed. However, it is already clear that this harmonious coexistence of ethnicities has been unmasked by Marín, and the cosmopolitan enthusiasms have been reduced to a “muddy amalgam” making permanent allusion throughout the text to the absurdity that hides the crudeness of its contrasts. This image is achieved with subtle but powerful images, such as the “raw metal rainbow,” a space where pain coexists with pleasure, where the height of the tower coincides with the degradation of the mud, or where the value of diamonds and silks will be overshadowed by the penetrating rumble of a starving body.

Platillos y tambores de los teatros populares y de las ferias bucólicas no bastan a acallar los gritos de dolor de tanta víctima. Ni los cantos en falsete de los pintarajeados actores afeminados que cantan en tinglados sus roles de princesas heroicas o de favoritas disolutas. Ni la cháchara de vuestras concubinas y meretrices, ni el pregón de los vendedores de pájaros, ni el parloteo de vuestros vendedores de té en sus portales. No. Es más fuerte el canto profundo de vuestros esclavos. [Cymbals and drums from the popular theaters and rustic fairs are not enough to drown out the cries of pain from so many victims. Nor are the falsetto songs of the painted, effeminate actors performing their roles as heroic princesses or dissolute favorites on makeshift stages. Nor the chatter of your concubines and prostitutes, nor the cries of your bird sellers, nor the chatter of your tea vendors in their doorways. No. The profound song of your slaves is louder] (Marín 1941: 442).

Finally, if until now the deafening sound of music in the luxurious parties and receptions had been strong enough to hide the cry of the desperate and even if the excess and the abundance of their feasts and banquets had hidden the hunger of the outsiders in their own country, for Marín that is already an inescapable reality. Not only because he feels himself called to narrate it but because his experience is approached to release its poetic potential.

Technology and the Modern Travel Writer

Technology, as part of the formation of a traveler writer's consciousness is a factor that cannot be ignored in this period. In the previous chapter, I mentioned the significant influence that technological developments such as the steamship, the railroad, and even the telegraph gave to the expansion of travel and, consequently, to the popularization of travel writing. I also mentioned some of the complaints that most of the Latin Americans who traveled to China during the nineteenth century manifested in regard to the challenges of writing in the middle of a journey and the effects and influences it had on their writing. In this first half of the twentieth century, the experience of being and writing on the road will have even more protagonism.



Fig. 21: “Juan Guzmán Cruchaga en Hong Kong, 1927” Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Chile - Memoria Chilena. <<https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-100034.html>>.

Among the grievances the travelers of this period alluded to are the little time they had to record their impressions as well as the unpolished pages and the clumsy calligraphy that resulted from the hustle and bustle of writing while constantly being *on the road*. Moreover, they found it difficult to condense, through a bunch of scribbles crammed with random thoughts, the accelerated cascade of new feelings and experiences they were having. Finally, the mere physical challenge of concentrating amid so much noise and the permanent movement in boats and trains, far away from their comfortable and quiet reading room back home was also mentioned on several occasions. As part of the new focus of attention in which this new traveler is located, the portrayal of the vicissitudes of writing while traveling allowed the reader to participate in these particularities of the trip and the travel writing process and experience. This is how Teresa de la Parra describes her sea voyage across the Pacific Ocean while on her way toward Asia:

Mientras yo garabateaba palabras a toda prisa sobre el escritorio, sentía a mi alrededor todo el movimiento llegado de tierra, que me atraía de un modo irresistible: chirriar de poleas y de cadenas, personas con indumentaria de desembarco, los pasos y las voces de los vendedores ambulantes que se llegaban a bordo a ofrecer su mercancía, y para colmo de todo, los amigos y amigas que de continuo me descubrían y venían a tentarme con una insistencia desesperante. [While I hurriedly scrawled words across the desk, I felt all the commotion from the shore surrounding me, drawing me in with an irresistible force: the creak of pulleys and chains, people in disembarkation attire, the footsteps and voices of street vendors boarding to offer their wares, and, to top it all off, the friends and acquaintances who constantly spotted me and came to tempt me with a maddening persistence] ([1920] 2011: 35)

Equally relevant would be the emergence of the cinema, photographic cameras, automobiles, gramophones, radios, as well as the generalized increase in the travel speed among all transportation means. This emergence caused a very significant turn in the way how these travel writers assumed their role as travelers and wrote their impressions. The acceleration of their itineraries and the even more abrupt shortening of the routes and journeys was transformed into an economy of their language and a shortening of their descriptions and narrations. One example of this is the description that Orrego makes of his arrival in Tianjin after five days of sea journey: “Se cierran maletas, se cruzan impresiones. [...] Estamos en Tianjin. Solo unas cuantas horas de tren nos separan de la Ciudad Prohibida” [Suitcases are being closed, impressions exchanged. [...] We are in Tianjin. Only a few hours by train separate us from the Forbidden City] (1931: 176). The brevity of those sentences and the economy of their description is mediated by this new technological influx.

In a similar way, the rapid development and popularization of cinema during the first decades of this century opened a new door to perception that implied the involvement of other senses and other approaches to the human experience and sensitivity. Therefore, the intertwining of cinema and literature was not long in coming, and their presence in the diaries and travelogues during this period is no exception. I have previously discussed the superior position that the nineteenth-century travel writer occupied due to the social, racial, economic, and intellectual legitimation they enjoyed. Such legitimation also served as a way to justify their capacity to interpret the new realities that they faced throughout their journey. Thus, travel writing was during that century charged with a professorial solemnity that divided the writer from their reader in the same way that the pulpit divides the elevated priest from his quiet parishioners. In contrast, over the course of these first decades of the twentieth century that distance was drastically shortened.

A very telling example of this is the visit of Eugenio Orrego to *Cheng huangmiao* 城隍庙 (City God Temple) of Shanghai. His description begins with a suggestive question for the reader: “¿Queréis visitar con nosotros este cautivante rincón de la ciudad china de Shangay? Pues bien, sigamos a lo largo de la antigua muralla de

piedra y por una puertecilla penetremos en una suerte de patio. [...] Un corredor estrecho nos solicita. Avancemos” [Would you like to visit with us this captivating corner of the Chinese city of Shanghai? Very well, let us follow along the old stone wall and enter through a small gate into what seems to be a courtyard. [...] A narrow corridor beckons us. Let us proceed] (1931: 170). In these lines, a much more cinematographic view of the text as a space of convergence between the reader and the writer is clearly depicted. Thus, although Orrego seems to serve as the host of a documentary, his words serve as an invitation to a camera, which represents his reader-spectator, to follow him on his visit to the temple. Therefore, the writer relinquishes part of his power as a narrator while, thanks to the mediation of the camera, the readers are able to see for themselves. As a result, the reader-spectator can dispense with an exhaustive narration elaborated by the writer. That is the reason why Orrego avoids, at least in this section, detailed descriptions and rather assumes the role of a guide.

On the other hand, traveling as a form of consumption of places, sensations, and experiences accelerates and finds new purposes. To be able to see the greatest number of monuments and places in the shortest time as well as to accumulate the greatest number of experiences as a race against the clock becomes a task: “Corrimos por la ciudad y sus alrededores [...] subimos a un elevadísimo volcán; corrimos en auto los caminos” [We rushed through the city and its surroundings [...] climbed a towering volcano; drove along the roads in a car] (de la Parra [1920] 2011: 38). There are so many places, and it is so rapid the bounce from one space to another that the very memory of the trip begins to be compromised. The rapid flow of stimuli and experiences blurs the ability to remember and give account of everything. That is the reason why the traveler is exposed only to the vague impression with which they have been left, the mere handful of memories that they have been able to catch in that immense sea of novelties and oddities. An impression that gives to their memories a much more personal and unrepeatable character, so the pressure to remember and write it all down ceases to play an important role, as we can see in de la Parra’s words: “¡Desde Shanghai hemos recorrido tanto, tanto, que guardo confusas en la memoria la imagen y las emociones suscitadas por ciudades, y pueblos, y paisajes, todos diversos, todos ya olvidados y lejanos!” [From Shanghai, we have traveled so much, so far, that I hold in my memory only a blurred image and the emotions stirred by cities, towns, and landscapes—all different, all now forgotten and distant!] ([1920] 2011: 73).

Cinema and photography were initially intended to be ways to record a more reliable archive in the midst of war, becoming a powerful tool for journalistic reporting. However, the impact of their arrival went much further and touched very deep chords. They had a disruptive impact on the principles that governed the

exercises of remembering both on the individual and the collective level. Despite being still mediated by the subjectivity of the eye that presses the shutter from a given angle, interest and perspective, the photographic image involves drawing between light and shadow at an unbeatable speed, a reality that is not exempt but definitely less mediated by the imagination of both the one who sees and the one who captures the image, transforming it then into a more reliable document. They reconfigured the definitions around truth, memory, and the role that imagination and storytelling played in that construction “El día antes hemos recibido un folleto en el cual entre otras advertencias, el gobierno chino pide que no tomemos fotografías callejeras con tipos ridículos que puedan amenguar la dignidad de la raza a los ojos del mundo” [The day before, we received a pamphlet in which, among other warnings, the Chinese government requests that we refrain from taking street photographs of comical figures that might diminish the dignity of the race in the eyes of the world] (Santa Cruz 1931a: 4). As we can see from these lines, new intentions to limit, censor, reposition, and reshape the truth also arise, and the relationship between narration, power, and technology engaged in new interactions. In this regard, travel and photography gave the traveler and the travel narrative a new role within the confines of officialdom.

On the other hand, their emergence ended up lightening the burden of painting and literature to account for what was seen, which allowed to the creative process a higher level of experimentation with new resources and purposes for art. In this sense, if the first decades of the twentieth century imposed on painting a much lighter, subjective, and abstract stroke; in the writing of these travelers, the commitment to reality will also be renegotiated. The extensive number of pages that the travelers of the last century used to describe, in the most subtle detail, weights, measurements, and endless technical specifications of objects, machines, and places seem to be a past effort to put into words what was not known or what had not been seen or described before. Naturally, this became a decision for the writer to make, but it is clear that at least in the case of de la Parra, naming the places was more than enough: “Visitamos el palacio imperial y el palacio del mikado; conocimos el más grande buda del Japón, a los pies del cual hicimos fotografías, y luego entramos en los restaurantes y tiendas de la ciudad” [We visited the imperial palace and the Mikado’s palace; we saw the largest Buddha in Japan, at whose feet we took photographs, and then wandered into the city’s restaurants and shops] ([1920] 2011: 52). As for the individual exercise of the traveler’s memory, the photograph also had its own effects in the construction of the travel narrative. It intervened in the selection of what is described and what is left out of the narrative and also altered the resources where the traveler has to store their memories and impressions.

The Exoticization of *the Other* and Similar Bourgeois Entertainments

Some of the questions that serve as a point of departure for *Orientalismo en el modernismo hispanoamericano* (Orientalism in Hispanic American Modernism) by Tinajero are: “¿cómo analizar y conciliar la representación de un sujeto ‘exótico’ por otro ‘exótico’ en la escritura modernista? Es decir, en los textos ¿qué y quién es el exótico? ¿Acaso se le podría llamar ‘exótico’ a un objeto o sujeto oriental a partir de una perspectiva modernista? ¿O es que el exotismo es únicamente una perspectiva cultural de producción europea?” [How can we analyze and reconcile the representation of an ‘exotic’ subject by another ‘exotic’ subject in modernist writing? In these texts, what and who is considered ‘exotic’? Could an Oriental object or subject be labeled ‘exotic’ from a modernist perspective? Or is exoticism exclusively a cultural construct of European production?] (2003: 9). Although the analysis proposed by this study does not have *modernista* writing as its object, despite recognizing characteristic features of its poetics in a significant part of the writing that integrates his primary sources, it is clear that the question posed by Tinajero is still relevant.

Considering that it is only from the encounter with America that the concept of race arises and with it “quedó fijada, igualmente, la idea de desigualdad, concretamente inferioridad cultural, si se quiere ‘étnica’” [The idea of inequality was similarly established, specifically cultural inferiority, or if you will, ‘ethnic’ inferiority] (Quijano 1995: 3). I understand, therefore, that the definition of an exotic object or subject necessarily starts from that same imposition and epistemic domination that legitimizes the existence of that distribution. On the other hand, as I explained in the first chapter, the legitimation of that colonial distribution was continued by the Latin American Creole elites, and, consequently, exoticism was also a practice that they largely reproduced. However, I would argue that traveling acts as a differentiating factor. Even from the writing of the nineteenth-century travelers, we saw how the forms of this exoticization acquired much more complex nuances in their encounters with China. In the present section, I will explore some of the forms that the exoticization of *the other* acquired in this period.

There is a continuous and very interesting presence of windows that constantly divide these travel writers from an external reality that is highly contrasting from theirs. They are presented to the reader in various locations such as restaurants, trains, cafés, or hotels, and they are always a thin but, at the same time, abysmal division between an outside and an inside of overwhelmingly dissimilar realities. The interior that the traveler inhabits is always a comfortable and safe place that,

because it is divided by a window, allows them to observe without any further contemplations. We could compare them to a thoughtful train passenger who observes the apparently immobile landscape or a distracted tourist taking a break in a café while observing the supplicant beggar through the window. It is thus always an observed reality that is wild but domesticated and almost always a victim of the so-called progress but now transformed into a form of entertainment.

Upon finishing reading Teresa de la Parra's travel diary to Asia, it is very likely that the reader will be left with the feeling that in reality she never set foot on Chinese soil. The memories of her trip seem, in fact, as the memories of an eternal party, of an unfinished banquet that could have taken place almost anywhere in the world. Between so many waltzes and so much champagne, there was actually minimal contact with the reality that existed on the other side of the window of her car, the restaurant, or the party hall she attended. This resulted in an absolute silencing of the local voice throughout her lines.

Life on the other side of the window is too terrifying and simply deplorable on an aesthetic level, to the point that the artistically unstimulating words that would make up its description are definitely not worth a drop of ink or a corner of paper. From the few descriptions of her experience inhabiting that exteriority, it is quite clear that it has failed to captivate her: "Durante el trayecto visitamos aldeas y ciudades absolutamente chinas donde resultábamos nosotros elementos del todo exóticos. Las vimos grandes y pobladísimas, donde pululaban a millares aquellas cabezas uniformes, de un parecido desesperante. Las vimos silenciosas y dormidas; todas iguales y monótonas, todas eternamente chinas" [During the journey, we visited villages and cities that were completely Chinese, where we, in turn, seemed utterly exotic. We saw them large and densely populated, where thousands of those uniform heads swarmed, all bearing a maddening resemblance. We saw them silent and asleep; all the same and monotonous, all eternally Chinese] ([1920] 2011: 78). The encounter of Teresa de la Parra with this form of alterity that China represents has dislocated the measure of her perception. It has altered her traditional position as the observer of that exotic otherness to which she does not belong. Therefore, this encounter with China has been the trigger for the reversal of this distribution since it has forced her to take the place of the exoticized.

This characterization of China and its inhabitants as a uniform and monotonous mass was very likely one of those that topped the list of travel impressions also expressed by travelers that in the 1950s and 1960s when visiting Communist China. de la Parra's comment will be followed by Elvira Santa Cruz's, who also refers to the monotony of the Chinese landscape, very austere delineated by its endless steppes, and complemented by the unvarying appearance of its inhabitants: "¡Qué desolada se ve la inmensa llanura! [...] Lo único que corta

la gama amarilla del cielo y de la tierra es el azul de los blusones que uniforman a todos los habitantes de este suelo” [How desolate the immense plain appears! [...] The only thing that breaks the yellow hue of the sky and the earth is the blue of the tunics that uniform all the inhabitants of this land] (1931a: 4). Similarly, the internalized variety of products, shapes, textures, and places resulting from the saturated experience of the bourgeois sensibility chiseled by material modernization has challenged the overstimulated perception of the world by being exposed to an apparently monotonous reality. It also defies the orientalist perception reduced to the materialistic admiration embellished by screens, jades, silks, and vases as the only alternative to inscribe China within a map of a hegemonic sensibility.

The fear of breaking the fragile glass that divides her from that reality so adverse to her comfort is the reason why de la Parra decides to keep her reader in a shielded place: “Desde Shanghai, ciudad china, donde tuve el placer de permanecer algunos días entre ingleses y franceses asistiendo a comidas y representaciones teatrales, oyendo devotamente la misa del domingo” [From Shanghai, the Chinese city, where I had the pleasure of staying for a few days among the English and the French, attending meals and theatrical performances, and devoutly listening to Sunday Mass] ([1920] 2011: 73). This is the other side of the window in which she and her readers can enjoy a safe and homelike atmosphere away from the challenges of the incomprehensible.

De codos en la ventanilla no cesábamos de dar gritos de admiración ante los personajes que poblaban tan desolados parajes. Eran indios tan clásicos y primitivos como no creo que se encuentren en la misma Guajira de Venezuela. ¡Qué pintorescos con sus escasos vestidos de todos colores, llenos de abalorios y pendientes! ¡Parecían estampas! Los niños sobre todo estaban graciosísimos [With our elbows on the window sill, we couldn't stop shouting in admiration at the characters who populated such desolate landscapes. They were Indians as classic and primitive as I don't think can be found even in the Guajira of Venezuela. How picturesque they looked with their scant clothes in all colors, adorned with trinkets and earrings! They seemed like illustrations! The children, above all, were absolutely charming] (de la Parra [1920] 2011: 25).

Nonetheless, even though the limits of that perception are challenged same as in the two previous examples, it is also evident that the exoticization of the other as a form of entertainment, as well as the staging of cultural stereotypes that can be easily capitalized and of which the audience demands consumption, operate as a rather common trait within this period. An example of this takes place during a costume party that de la Parra attended two days before her ship arrived in China:

El número uno de la sorpresa, lo que produjo un ¡¡oh!! General, y una carcajada interminable, fue un personaje del sexo masculino, el cual se llevó el premio de los *shoking* disfrazándose

de salvaje. Para ello decidió ponerse la menos ropa posible, es decir, un minúsculo pantalón de baño y un fleco de cuentas que de la cintura le caía hasta las rodillas; los pies descalzos, una peluca desgredada y todo el cuerpo hecho un laberinto de arabescos imitando tatuajes. Estaba horrible [The number one surprise, which caused a general “oh!” and an endless burst of laughter, was a male character who took the prize for the most shocking costume by dressing as a savage. To achieve this, he decided to wear as little clothing as possible—namely, a tiny pair of swim trunks and a fringe of beads that hung from his waist to his knees. His bare feet, a messy wig, and his entire body covered in a maze of arabesques imitating tattoos completed the look. He looked awful] ([1920] 2011: 41)

As described by Santa Cruz in the following lines, dressing up as that *other* regarded as inferior and savage in order to ridicule and to reduce it to be the entertainment and pastime of the members of their own class was also a very common practice among the travelers to Asia during this period: “Por la noche, hasta Iris, que vive protestando contra el insoportable shopping de las americanas, se ve obligada a aplaudir el desfile de geishas, musmés, samurais, daymios, arroceros, rikishas que llenaban el vasto comedor. No falta un detalle a la indumentaria oriental de estos hijos del nuevo mundo de Colón” [At night, even Iris, who constantly protests against the unbearable shopping of the Americans, is forced to applaud the parade of geishas, musmés, samurais, daymios, rice farmers, and rickshaw pullers filling the vast dining room. Not a detail is missing from the oriental attire of these children of the New World of Columbus] (1931a: 4).

The almost buffoonish and parodic theatricalization of those cultural stereotypes taken from the confines of the Western imagination to entertain their sophisticated dinners in large and exclusive party halls is part of that transformation of *the other* and of their culture into a product for the market and into a profitable tourist attraction. On the other hand, the destruction, the precariousness, and the unsettled atmosphere of crisis have stripped the streets and places of the sumptuousness characteristic of that oriental luxury described and imagined for decades through the Western travel narrative. Thus, the witness and traveler of this China in crisis is forced to perform the script of the expectations of their own imagination as well as to stage and interpret a cultural framework that is alien to them and that belongs to that observed *other*. This demonstration of power is driven by a class privilege that has allowed them to read, write, and, therefore, define, characterize, and set limits according to their own demands and desires.

In contrast, each one of the travelers whose travel narrative to China forms part of this chapter relates in very different ways and establishes very different limits between that *inside* and that *outside*. In this regard, it is important not to disregard that within the dynamics to which the travel writer of this period is

subjected, as a consequence of the insertion of their work in the market, is the fact that they have to write in accordance with the demands imposed by it.

To this effect, as Gutiérrez Girardot argues, it is, in fact, “lo circunstancial, la moda, adquiere una función concreta, esto es, la de llegar a un público que el artista desprecia” [The circumstantial, the fashion, acquires a concrete function, that is, to reach an audience that the artist despises] ([1988] 2004: 60). Consequently, even though an important part of the travel writing of this period is, in fact, a concession to that reading market, it is important to point out the forms in which some like Guzmán, Orrego, or Marín achieved a form of provocation to their own class through their travel writing. To this effect, the strength and the resistance of that lens will be put to the test.

One of Guzmán Cruchaga’s texts entitled “Rickshaw” becomes a space in which the travel writer breaks for a moment the glass that has seemed to divide these travelers from the local life and its inhabitants drawn by the privileges of their class and their status as foreigners. This time, the text has the rickshaw driver as the protagonist. Guzmán Cruchaga dedicates this space to the portrait of their lives and work:

Algunos duermen la noche entera en el pequeño carruaje. Otros se retiran a descansar, a las dos de la mañana, en unas sórdidas covachas de la calle Cantón. En ellas han colocado largos lechos de madera que soportan el sueño de veinte o veinticinco chinos. En un solo cuarto hay, a veces, dos o tres lechos superpuestos. Por lo tanto en el mismo asqueroso bodegón duermen, a menudo, cincuenta o sesenta personas. A las cuatro de la mañana se levantan y comienzan a recorrer la ciudad con su cochecito. Son hombres de una extraordinaria resistencia. Se cuenta de algunos que han corrido dos o tres horas sin detenerse. Pero su vida es demasiado corta. Los llaman “los hombres que viven diez años.” [Some sleep the entire night in the small carriage. Others retreat to rest, at two in the morning, in squalid hovels on Canton Street. In these, they have placed long wooden beds that bear the sleep of twenty or twenty-five Chinese. Sometimes, there are two or three beds stacked on top of each other in a single room. Therefore, in the same filthy tavern, fifty or sixty people often sleep. At four in the morning, they rise and begin to roam the city with their little carts. These men have extraordinary endurance. It’s said that some have run for two or three hours without stopping. But their lives are too short. They are called “the men who live ten years”] (1998: 78)

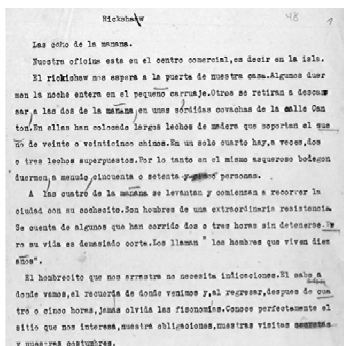


Fig. 22: “Rickshaw. Manuscrito” Source: Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.
<https://www.bibliotecanacionaldigital.gob.cl/bnd/623/w3-article-346309.html>.

Through the eyes of Guzmán, China takes on a new dimension in travel writing. It ceases to be the inert museum that keeps the glories of past millennia in which the daily life of its inhabitants seems nonexistent, to acquire a more realistic facet of their circumstances. In the case of Teresa de la Parra, we noticed how she referred to her Chinese servants by numbers and not by names. Furthermore, she felt no frustration caused by the linguistic barrier that was imposed between them and herself—instead, she was very grateful because it meant that she did not need to establish any direct connection with them.

On the contrary, Guzmán opens another focus of attention in which the most daily realities of those who inhabit that mythical East acquire a space in the travel narration. Through it, the harshness of war, scarcity, and poverty interfere with the desire of providing the reader with an idyllic and essentialized travel account. In this account, the opulence and luxury of the passerby are not bothered by the local anxieties and struggles, which are not worth observing, experiencing, or writing. On the other hand, it would be wrong to affirm that class differences are resolved or that the privileged position from which the traveler writes is resignified. Thus, despite shedding light on this traditionally shadowed facet of the travel experience, the bourgeois perspective of life, time, pleasure, and work continues to largely define the exercise of travel and its writing: “Los observo cerca de un año y nunca los veo besar a una mujer. Trabajan, trabajan, duermen dos o tres horas, juegan y pierden lo que ganan durante el día y viven y mueren como perros de conventillo o de burdel” [I observe them for almost a year and never see them kiss a woman. They work, work, sleep two or three hours, play and lose what they earn during the day, and live and die like dogs in a tenement or brothel] (Guzmán 1998: 78).

However, while a traveler like Teresa de la Parra insists on staying safe in that inner world, Eugenio Orrego is the traveler whose relationship with that *inside* and that *outside* is, as I have already described, following Gutiérrez Girardot, the most amphibious one. Marcelo Alvarado describes Orrego's life as a zigzagging between the socialist ideals that captivated him and the oligarchic Santiaguino environment in which he was born and educated. An environment to which Alvarado argues that Orrego returned after abandoning the socialist cause (2016: 55–56). This zigzagging is not only reflected over the course of his life, but even evident throughout *Mujeres, paisajes y templos*.

In contrast to his reinforced socialist vision during his time in Tokyo as well as several regions in China, a significant part of that enthusiasm seems to fade after his arrival in Shanghai. As part of the celebration of New Year's Eve "cenamos en cierto hotel que ocupaba el palacio de una dama millonaria, ya extinta. Nunca habíamos visto en materia de hospederías nada más suntuoso" [We dined at a certain hotel that occupied the palace of a now-deceased wealthy lady. We had never seen anything more sumptuous in terms of accommodations] (1931: 167). Among fountains, marble, and inexhaustible rushing rivers of champagne, abundance and luxury seem to dazzle and bend his very recent critical impetus to the realms of this "fiesta de los ojos y del estómago" [A feast for the eyes and the stomach] (1931: 167). Once the alcohol started to dwindle:

Alguien propuso cambiar de ambiente. Shangay sabe divertirse bien en las noches de sus grandes orgías oficiales y cabarets y espectáculos refinados nos aguardan aún. Cuando salimos, espectros famélicos y trágicos se deslizaban en la calle sombría, clavando en los felices y en los hartos las saetas de su ira imponente. El auto se detuvo. Lacayos solícitos abrían y cerraban las portezuelas. ¿Qué decir a los espectros de la noche y del dolor cuando se está en la gentil compañía de Katy y de Myla? [Someone suggested changing the setting. Shanghai knows how to entertain itself well on nights of grand official orgies, and refined cabarets and shows still await us. When we left, famine-stricken and tragic specters glided through the dark street, piercing the happy and the full with the arrows of their imposing wrath. The car stopped. Attentive lackeys opened and closed the doors. What is there to say to the specters of the night and suffering when one is in the gentle company of Katy and Myla?] (1931: 169)

Involuntarily thrown into that exteriority, despite recognizing in the midst of the euphoria of the celebration, and consciously choosing not to disregard it, Orrego concludes his description of the night with a perspective that, rather than expressing indignation, seems to be assumed as the fulfillment of an inevitable mandate. Consequently, he opts to conclude with an almost sardonic question full of a complying resignedness.

Nevertheless, at other times, his determination to defy that limit will be much less timid than that of the previous passage. For instance, during his visit to the

Temple of Heaven in the city of Beijing, in which the unscrupulous touristic entertainment had no regard for reducing an imperial throne to a jocular touristic attraction: “En mitad de la sala vése el trono de laca de oro renegrido, maravilla de arte y de ejecución. Allí, el emperador recibía el homenaje reverencial de sus súbditos, y hoy, en la mutación de los tiempos, los viajeros van a sentarse, buscando, siquiera sea por un instante, la sensación de estar por encima de todo” [In the middle of the room stands the throne of lacquered, blackened gold, a marvel of art and craftsmanship. There, the emperor received the reverential homage of his subjects, and today, with the changing times, travelers sit there, seeking, even if only for a moment, the sensation of being above everything] (1931: 203). This gesture of caricaturing and transforming the history of that *other* into a banal bourgeois entertainment is an exercise of power before which Orrego takes the time to reflect and react disapprovingly.

Likewise, on the train from Tianjin to Beijing, Orrego brings to light both the existence of this division as well as the contrasting nature of its differences: “Comienzan a sucederse campos y aldeas, tierras con amarillo de oros vegetales y pueblucos que son hacinamiento de hombres, de miseria y de humo. El vagón es confortable. Poltronas fijadas vis a vis nos permite, sin esfuerzo, el dominio del paisaje” [Fields and villages begin to follow one another, lands with the yellow of vegetal gold and little towns that are a crowded mix of men, misery, and smoke. The carriage is comfortable. Armchairs fixed face to face allow us, effortlessly, to dominate the landscape] (1931: 177). Despite the fact that Eugenio Orrego belongs to and is part of the same bourgeois and elitist circles, he will be, among other things, the first to problematize the comforts of his privilege as well as the window that divides order from chaos, hunger from gluttony, and the cry of desperation from the smiley indifference.

As I mentioned earlier in relation to what Gutiérrez defines as the *amphibian* condition of modern bourgeois man, it is clear that “esta dualidad crea una tensión en el semidiós que lleva una máscara de burgués, pues lo que no puede expresar en el mundo burgués, sus deseos, sus pasiones, sus afectos, sus esperanzas, sus ilusiones, lo expresa libremente en la obra literaria. Y allí crea su otra existencia antiburguesa” [This duality creates a tension in the demigod who wears the mask of a bourgeois, for what he cannot express in the bourgeois world—his desires, his passions, his affections, his hopes, his illusions—he expresses freely in his literary work. And there, he creates his other anti-bourgeois existence] ([1988] 2004: 60). This splitting of both his *traveling self* divided between that *inside* and that *outside* as well as of his *writer self* divided between his market, his reader, and his writing is a circumstance that forces them to inhabit a double nature. That can be clearly seen in the following passage:

“En invierno os brindarán los fuegos las chimeneas de los halls. Afuera nieva y los kurumayas, alineados en la plazuela externa, tiemblan de frío. Vosotros sentís la blanda caricia de los privilegiados y pensando en Occidente no sabéis ya si lamentar todo lo perdido o gozar la perspectiva de todo lo ganado, que no es poco” [In winter, the fires in the chimneys of the halls will offer you warmth. Outside, snow falls, and the kurumayas, lined up in the outer square, shiver from the cold. You feel the soft caress of the privileged, and as you think of the West, you no longer know whether to mourn all that has been lost or to savor the perspective of all that has been gained, which is not little] (1931: 50). It is interesting to highlight the ways in which interiority and exteriority are inhabited and uninhabited by Orrego. Although he physically inhabits and writes from the comfortable warmth offered by the party hall while observing the rickshaw drivers outside, the use of “vosotros” and “os” instead of “nosotros” or “nos” makes Orrego dislodge himself from that side of the glass and removes himself, at least within limits allowed by his writing, from the borders of his closest social circle. However, the fact that Orrego appeals through that “vosotros” to those who, like him, inhabit the space of that inner world is evidence of the side of the glass from which he writes as well as the side in which the reader to whom Orrego directs his writing is located.

On the other hand, Orrego demonstrates that he is not only capable of questioning himself and his own class by writing from the comfort of that *interior* but made clear that he is also capable of abandoning it to write from the perspective of the *outside*. For instance, the street, as a space for staging and confronting historical and social realities, is, nonetheless, a space that has little prominence in most of the travel books of this period compared to the obvious protagonism that the interior side of the window has. However, Orrego relocates his place of enunciation, his consciousness as a traveler, and the place and the purpose of his writing. Part of this necessity to narrate from that exteriority is reflected in the following passage titled “La calle de las Ágatas,” in which Orrego dislodges himself from that comfortable interior to narrate from that other perspective, which is the one of the street:

Pekín está en venta. Las almas y las cosas están en venta. Podríais comprar un esclavo de doce años por un puñado de monedas y las bendiciones del padre atormentarían vuestro oído largo rato. Un ciudadano me siguió alguna vez tirándome del abrigo y suplicándome, a gritos, que me llevase a su hija. [...] China entera agoniza. En el Hotel des Wagon-Lits sentiréis, como sorda amenaza, rugir el dolor de China. [Beijing is for sale. Souls and things are for sale. You could buy a twelve-year-old slave for a handful of coins, and the blessings of the father would torment your ears for a long while. A citizen once followed me, tugging at my coat and shouting at me, pleading for me to take his daughter. [...] All of China is in agony. In the Hotel des Wagon-Lits, you will feel, as a muffled threat, the roar of China's pain] (1931: 186)

The reality crafted by the sparkling champagne and deafened by the jazz and the laughs, as well as that Orient lost among opiate daydreams and idyllic fantasies, collapses due to the crudeness of that external reality. The wonderful allure of Asia for the shopping-loving tourist that other travelers highlighted is slapped in the face by these few lines. In this sense, the two sides of the window, as the two sides of a coin, belong, from the perspective of the one who gives it and from the one who receives, to very disparate dimensions. Its value is on the coin toss and spinning in the air as a space of tension and interaction as the one experienced on the Agata's street: "lo más abyecto y lo más alto, el lujo y la miseria extremas se dan la mano para bailar esta zarabanda de fin de tiempos" [The most abject and the highest, the extremes of luxury and misery, join hands to dance this sarabande of the end times] (1931: 187).

Claiming European Culture as Own, Displacing Europe as Model

Despite the fact that Spanish American *Modernismo* emerged as an expression of cultural emancipation through a distinctive form of *americanidad* in the literature and the arts, as Gerard Aching suggests, there is also an apparent contradiction between that uniqueness and the simultaneous realignment with Europe in the form of claim of European heritage (1997: 5). However, in this regard, I coincide with Tinajero's idea according to which: "El escritor latinoamericano estaba consciente y al día de lo que producían los discursos europeos pero eso no quiere decir que copiara de su 'archivo' sino que más bien trataba de darle sentido a su propia experiencia partiendo de su propia historia, su propio pasado, desde su contexto" [The Latin American writer was aware of and up-to-date with what European discourses produced, but that does not mean that they copied from their 'archive'; rather, they sought to give meaning to their own experience, drawing from their own history, their own past, and from their context] (2003: 22). Additionally, I would argue that throughout these almost five decades of travel writing to China, there is a progressive fading of the need to claim European heritage as their own for the construction of their poetic and political project. Thus, although there was a bumpy road ahead, we will see that there is an abysmal difference in this regard between the work of Teresa de la Parra and the work of Orrego (1931) or Juan Marín (1948). A distancing that, in general terms, is also evident in the literary transits between the *modernistas* and subsequent literary expressions that emerged between the 1930s and 1940s. Among them are the indigenist narrative, regionalism, the *novela de la tierra*, and Social Realism. They all share as a common trait an intended return to the local realities, which are also transformed into political commitments with the continent, the adherence to

popular causes, and the emergence and consolidation of an anti-imperialist consciousness.

As I have suggested, these almost five decades witnessed a progressive distancing from the figure of the old continent as a social, political, and artistic model for Latin America. They also witnessed the emergence of ideas, poetics, and literary movements interested in reflecting on Latin America from its most immediate realities, its most local issues, and its most urgent debates. However, even from diaries such as that of Teresa de la Parra, whose narrative self and forms of positioning reveal a subjectivity strongly defined by its alignment with Europe, it is possible to glimpse a growing mistrust in the old continent as the only model. Such mistrust stems from the acknowledgment—consequence of her encounter with the Far East—of the growing potential that models emerging from these alternative latitudes may have when it comes to disturbing the orders and patterns of global influence. Thus, as de la Parra points out in the following passage, the absolute supremacy of the Europeans as a markedly superior race, at least economically, is notably called into question:

Los japoneses nos admiran y nos odian a nosotros, la raza blanca, y saben contener su odio y superarnos las más de las veces. Es la raza más heroica que existe por lo paciente y por lo sufrida. Después de trabajar y observar durante años el progreso europeo, mostraron al mundo en la guerra contra Rusia todo su poder y toda la grandeza de su civilización hecha a fuerza de detalles. [The Japanese admire and hate us, the white race, and they know how to contain their hatred and surpass us most of the time. It is the most heroic race that exists because of its patience and suffering. After working and observing European progress for years, they showed the world, in the war against Russia, all their power and the greatness of their civilization, made through attention to details] ([1920] 2011: 46–47)

Maintaining its proximity with the nineteenth century, the strategic alliance between race and class seems, nevertheless, very far from being dissolved. Without intending to question the reasons why de la Parra identifies herself as white and European, that *we* with which she refers to herself and to her readers works as a reaffirmation of who she assumes and expects to be reading her diary. Beyond the obvious requirement of being literate, which was already considered a luxury within the Latin American context of the time, she also expected a reader with enough free time and little financial hardship to afford the luxury of reading. This is how that reader whom de la Parra considers equal to her and whom she includes in an *us* characterized by being white is not exempt, in any sense, from the same class privilege.

Apart from that, this admiration for Japan, which was already beginning to become evident in the previous century, is accentuated in this period not only because of Japan's rapid march toward industrialization and material progress

but also by its intention to open up culturally to the world and end its policy of cultural and commercial isolation that characterized the Edo Era. In the previous chapter, I argued that for the Latin American travelers I studied, Asia as a continent and the Orient as an imaginary were perceived as the vestiges of a past splendor. However, in the case of Japan, in the travelogues that were getting closer to the end of the century, it was already possible to glimpse a different place for this island. The signs of industrialization and material progress that rapidly emerged in the midst of the general backwardness with which Asia was labeled conferred them a distinction which is pointed out by de la Parra as soon as she arrived in Yokohama in May 1919: “Los japoneses no se dejan quitar la delantera en lo de vivir por las nubes y como hasta la fecha baten ellos el record de las alturas” [The Japanese do not allow anyone to surpass them in living among the clouds, and to this day, they hold the record for the greatest heights] ([1920] 2011: 43). Similarly, later, Santa Cruz begins her travel chronicle “Un viaje a la China,” expressing the melancholic feelings that not only her but also the rest of her travel companions are experiencing toward the idea of leaving Japan and heading to China: “nos hallamos tan a gusto en la tierra del Sol Naciente; por momentos crecía nuestra admiración a la vez que sufríamos su hechicera influencia” [We felt so comfortable in the land of the Rising Sun; at times, our admiration grew while we simultaneously suffered its enchanting influence] (1931a: 4).

The hasty level of modernization and material progression that Japan reached during the first decades of the twentieth century caught the world’s attention, even more notably after the victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Thus, as an example of the success of the modernization project in Asia, Japan became the most visible icon in the imagined Orient. That imagination became a massively reproduced stereotype that grabbed most of the attention and interest. It is within that framework that the vast territorial and cultural extension of Asia seems to be narrowed down in de la Parra’s imaginary construction of the Orient, to a very commodified idea of the Japanese culture: “el viaje divino al oriente, al país de las leyendas, a la tierra pintoresca de los mikados y de las *geishas*” [The divine journey to the East, to the land of legends, to the picturesque land of mikados and *geishas*] ([1920] 2011: 14). Japan was, in this sense, for Latin American travelers who visited it at the end of the nineteenth century and even more so for those who visited it during the first decades of the twentieth century, an alternative model of rapid modernization. Still, despite being driven by Western demands and models, it was a geography that, within the geopolitical dynamics of the time, was considered peripheral. In this sense, Japan stood before Latin American eyes as a referent of

accelerated progress outside the traditional mappings, advancing at a staggering speed in the race to outstrip the achievements of other global powers.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the exercise of imperialism is also mediated by a racial preference. Among the world powers that claimed benefits from China during the nineteenth century, following the example of the British after the Second Opium War, Germany joined them as one of the latecomers to secure its interests in the Far East. Interested in limiting the influence of Japan in China, Germany decided to participate in 1895, together with Russia and France, in the Triple Intervention aimed at gaining Chinese territory from the Japanese. Under the pretext of the murder of two German missionaries by a group of Chinese peasants in the province of Shandong (Esherick 1987: 123), the port of Qingdao was sieged in 1897. It was an attack to which the very much hampered Beijing court could not respond, forcing it to sign the lease of Jiaozhou Bay to the Germans the following year.

After the outbreak of the First World War and with the world powers attention focused on the Old Continent, Japan launched an attack on Qingdao in 1914 and reaffirmed its determination to compete as equals with the rest of the imperial powers (Xu 2016: 21–29). This attack also triggered a question on the role of race and white supremacy in participating in imperialist practices, considering that “the Japanese victory also challenged the common prewar beliefs in German superiority over Japan, or more generally the belief in the superiority of the ‘white’ over the ‘yellow’ race. Therefore, many Qingdao Germans were dealing with a form of cultural-racial displacement that was hardly encountered elsewhere during the Great War” (Barkhof 2007: 152).

Thus, the evident favoritism that de la Parra has shown throughout her diary for the white race is not only related to the fact that she considers it an important part of her own identity but also because of her belief in its almost indisputable moral and cultural superiority. It is again expressed through her vision of the Japanese attack to Qingdao:

Era Tsingtao antes de 1914 una floreciente ciudad alemana, limpia y sonriente, poblada de quintas que se extendían a uno y otro lado de largas y hermosísimas avenidas. Vivían felices y patriarcales los habitantes de Tsingtao hasta que estalló la guerra en la lejana y belicosa Europa y los japoneses pusieron sitio a la ciudad conocida y célebre por sus fortificaciones [Before 1914, Tsingtao was a flourishing German city, clean and smiling, populated with villas that stretched on either side of long and beautiful avenues. The inhabitants of Tsingtao lived happily and patriarchally until war erupted in faraway and belligerent Europe, and the Japanese laid siege to the city, known and famous for its fortifications] ([1920] 2011: 74–75).

This romanticized and idyllic vision of European expansionism concludes, after de la Parra’s excursion through the abandoned and dark fortifications of Qingdao,

questioning the existence of so much hatred and so much destruction when life only teach us about love and joy ([1920] 2011: 77).

On the other hand, it is also necessary to note that during these fifty years of Latin American travel writing, the perception of the travelers of Japan varied immensely, especially during the 1930s and 1940s. Because of the *Riben qinhua zhanzheng* 日本侵华战争 (Japanese aggression against China), Japan ceased to be perceived as a possible alternative model for Latin America, instead to be strongly criticized for its imperialist advance in China. An aggression that authors such as Orrego, but particularly Juan Marín, were able to personally witness. Such imperialist advance not only ended up tightening the ties of peripheral solidarity with China but also ended up widening the distancing with Europe and its models of colonial expansion. These travelers saw with horror the consequences of what can happen when a nation like Japan, whom, as Latin Americans, they initially considered as an equal in their shared strive for modernity (Tinajero 14), follow and imitate the Western patterns and the models of imperialist advance against a peripheral other.

As I have suggested, this criticism will become more emphatic in the work of Marín since he had the opportunity to travel and stay in China on several occasions over the course of the 1930s and 1940s⁸. However, for Orrego, who arrived in China in the mid-1920s and who published his travel memoirs in 1931, this was an injustice he was not only able to directly observe but whose apparent impunity he was not willing to ignore. This can be explained by the fact that even though Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, and Manchukuo as a puppet state was established in 1932, “its roots went back to 1905, when Japan acquired a sphere of influence in the southern half of Manchuria as a result of victory in the Russo-Japanese War” (Young 1999: 3). Subsequently, although the beginning of the Japanese aggression against China is usually marked by the Battle of Nanking in 1937, historians such as Rana Mitter and even some before, Huang Meizhen referenced by Mitter, see with justice that “the War of Resistance against Japan would officially be dated as lasting for fourteen instead of eight years—from 1931 to 1945” (2020: 90).

Orrego is faced with the historical responsibility that his position as a traveler and witness of China has given him to let his reader know the atrocious barbarities to which China is being subjected. For this, his decision to dedicate a postscript entitled “China martirizada y explotada” is not only interesting but very telling. In less than seven pages, there is a clear change of register and intention, given the

8 Among periodical publications, Rodolfo Hernández O. provides a relevant example of this: “Entre 1937 y 1939 el PPC [Partido Comunista de Colombia] denunció la invasión de Japón a China y manifestó su solidaridad con el pueblo chino en el periodico *Tierra* (1938)” (2020: 281).

fact that it is designed for purposes much more journalistic than literary, as well as with intentions much more informative than aesthetic. It is the first time throughout the entire book that Orrego is forced to provide his reader with explanatory footnotes, bibliographical references, as well as figures and statistics that seemed so far to have been buried in the nineteenth-century travel narrative. However, the historical imperative that Orrego believes he is facing makes it impossible for him to disregard the need to call on the world to pay attention to the terrible circumstances that afflicted China. Thus, from the first paragraph of this postscript Orrego hastens to say:

Dolor e indignación hondísimas causan el martirio y explotamiento de esta China de civilización antiquísima, cuyo arte alcanza en altitud a la ciencia de sus grandes filósofos. Cuna de sabidurías, tierra de Confucio, laboratorio de humanidades futuras, esta China se estremece bajo el yugo de las más infames extorsiones. El capitalismo europeo, norteamericano y japonés, han clavado en ella sus garras y para sostenerse desencadenaron el más odioso despotismo militar que recuerda la historia del mundo. Yo no sé de otro más trágico, más sanguinario y más ultrajante para el concepto de la dignidad mínima del hombre... El occidente ha explotado a China como en los tiempos del esclavismo a las colonias africanas; pero ha ido más lejos aún [Profound pain and indignation arise from the martyrdom and exploitation of this China, with its ancient civilization, whose art reaches the heights of the science of its great philosophers. Cradle of wisdoms, land of Confucius, laboratory of future humanities—this China trembles under the yoke of the most infamous extortions. European, American, and Japanese capitalism have sunk their claws into her, unleashing the most odious military despotism recorded in the history of the world to sustain themselves. I know of none more tragic, bloodthirsty, or degrading to the very concept of human dignity... The West has exploited China as African colonies were during the age of slavery; but it has gone even further still] (1931: 239).

Considering that Europe and the United States are the prime focus of his criticism, it is evident that this call for attention is not directed to them but rather seems to be targeting the world margins. The distributions of power in Orrego's geopolitical mapping are already far from the Manichaeian distributions between center and periphery, West and East, and, even, in more recent terminology, between the North and the Global South. For Orrego, it is already clear that a geographical West does not exist as such, but that the extension of its scope can be measured by the reproduction of its colonial models, including capitalism as the economic one, which is the reason why he puts Japan under the "West" category.

Instead of characterizing China as savage, exotic, and self-absorbed nation, he gives it all his recognition not only because of its thousands of years of history but also because of the potential he sees in it when calling it "laboratory of future humanities." This means that Orrego sees China as the place where the failed

projects of humanity designed by the West can have a second chance not only for the Chinese but for the rest of the world. This idea is certainly driven by the force of the expansion of the socialist project in Asia on which Orrego manifest his enthusiasm by saying: “‘Asia para el mundo’ gritan los hombres rojos en el Kremlin y acaso este alarido humano, que subrayan los cañones del más poderoso ejército de Europa, venga, a la postre, a imponer el hondo sentido civilizador que lo anima. [...] ¿Puede calcularse ya, en todo su valor, la fuerza de expansión y penetramiento que posee el mensaje de Lenin?” [‘Asia for the world,’ cry the red men in the Kremlin, and perhaps this human outcry, underscored by the cannons of the most powerful army in Europe, may ultimately impose the profound civilizing sense that animates it. [...] Can the expansive and penetrating force of Lenin’s message already be fully calculated?] (1931: 241).

Lastly, it is remarkable that Orrego is not only able to place China and Africa in parallel as victims of the same imperialist outpost, but his travel text is also capable of building bridges of solidarity with China. He can see in it the reflection of the Latin American history and as part of similar experiences as colonial subjects: “Japón pensó que razones de vecindad le daban a ella mejor derecho. Y fue descubierto el pan asiatismo del mismo modo que los yankees, un siglo antes, habían descubierto el pan americanismo” [apan believed that reasons of proximity gave it a better claim. And thus, Pan-Asianism was discovered in the same way that the Yankees, a century earlier, had discovered Pan-Americanism] (1931: 241). Thus, although these bonds of solidarity with China reached a new dimension over the course of the 1950s, it is already clear how throughout this first half of the twentieth century the forces of history have progressively displaced Euro-America as the center. These forces also demonstrate how Asia, and for our particular interest how China, represents not only a spiritual and aesthetic shelter for the intellectual and the artist but also becomes a hope for the construction of an alternative political and social future.

The Modern Compass Points East

Unlike the travelers of the last century who, for the most part, agreed that the only promising future for the Asian continent would be viable as long as it was led by the West, the industrialization of their economies, and the Christianization of their societies, the journey to the East became throughout these decades a voyage toward the nascent. This encounter with China as an *alterity* is not limited to a sensorial and aesthetic experience but also involves an alternative experience of history, morality, and thought drifting away from the patterns of Christian morality and Western positivist rationality. This is how Elvira Santa Cruz expresses it in her

travel dedicated to her visit to the temple of Confucius in Beijing: “religión sin misterios ni terrores, no promete recompensas ni castigos” [A religion without mysteries or terrors, offering neither rewards nor punishments] (1931b: 6).

Similarly, after a visit that Juan Marín made to a temple in Beijing where the bodies of dead lamas were preserved before being sent to Lhasa, Marín cannot help but think that: “hay más lógica en la costumbre lamaística de encerrar sus muertos flectados sobre sí mismos en cajas cuadradas que el método nuestro, nos decimos...Porque así, en la muerte se repite la misma actitud que antes del alumbramiento, es decir, se cierra el ciclo de una vida en idéntica postura” [There is more logic in the Lamaist custom of enclosing their dead, folded upon themselves, in square boxes than in our own methods, we tell ourselves... For in this way, death mirrors the same posture as before birth, thus completing the cycle of life in an identical position] (1948: 153–154). This encounter with China is the encounter that distances itself from any learned and internalized pattern or truth. Once the absolute legitimacy of these truths is questioned, a space to other modes and other interpretations that were until that moment outside the range of possibilities is therefore opened.

Nonetheless, this cultural encounter with China serves as a facilitator to rethink the moral and religious formulas most rooted in the Western tradition. It also serves as a drive to remove ancient Chinese history and thought from the inert and isolationist encyclopedism typical of the last century. The desire to make that information more accessible to other readers is clear, and there is a special interest in putting that information not only in the context of contemporary China but also to see it from a more global approach. Part of that desire is expressed in the following lines written by Marín:

China ha sido la madre o abuela de muchísimas cosas de aquellas de que se ufana nuestra civilización occidental. No es ya sólo el compás magnético, la imprenta, la pólvora (que los chinos usaron para cohetes y fuegos artificiales), etc. La alquimia, que los griegos robaron a los egipcios, que los árabes robaron a su vez a los griegos y que los moros finalmente introdujeron en Europa medioeval, tuvo su cuna en China, por lo menos trescientos años antes de la era Cristiana [China has been the mother or grandmother of countless elements that our Western civilization proudly claims as its own. It is not just the magnetic compass, printing, or gunpowder (which the Chinese used for rockets and fireworks), among others. Alchemy, which the Greeks borrowed from the Egyptians, which the Arabs then borrowed from the Greeks, and which the Moors ultimately brought to medieval Europe, had its origins in China at least three hundred years before the Christian era] (1948: 211).

War has a leading presence in Marín’s work, and there seems to be no rationality capable of explaining the absurdity of it. Therefore, this contextualization is not limited to a revaluation of that past for the past itself, but it is extended to a

reevaluation of that past in order to establish new ways toward the understanding of his present. An access route opened to him as part of his encounter with China. In the same line, it is also interesting that in a section that Marín dedicated to the city of Beijing, despite the devastating and brutal presence that the war was having in the city as well as the material and spiritual cost that Beijing was paying for it, Marín puts its millenary history in a broader context in order to dethrone the alleged dominance of the West or its methods over China:

Hoy conserva su misma belleza, velada y enlutada, como es lógico, pero belleza al fin. Ha sobrevivido a la dura prueba y sobrevivirá. Porque la capital de Kublai-Khan y de Jung Lo, de Chen Lung y de la Dowager Tzū-Hsi es imperecedera, no puede morir. [...] Los grandes muros milenarios con sus puertas monumentales que vieron pasar a Genghis Khan en su caballo blanco y a las largas caravanas de dromedarios que venían de los cuatro puntos cardinales del compás (por algo ellos se llamaban el “Reino Medio”), verán ahora pasar carros de guerra, tanques y batallones, pero por eso no han de cambiar. [Today, it retains its same beauty—veiled and shrouded in mourning, as is fitting—but beauty nonetheless. It has endured the harshest trials and will endure still. For the capital of Kublai Khan and Yongle, of Qianlong and the Dowager Empress Cixi, is imperishable; it cannot die. [...] The ancient millennial walls with their monumental gates, which once witnessed Genghis Khan on his white horse and the long caravans of dromedaries arriving from the four cardinal directions (for they called themselves the “Middle Kingdom” for a reason), will now see war vehicles, tanks, and battalions pass through. Yet, for all this, they shall not change] (1948: 142).

Evidently, it would be wrong to say that China did not change in the slightest after its belligerent encounter with the world powers. It is clear that this forced opening was nothing less than a turning point both for China and for its relationship with the rest of the world. Nevertheless, this exercise proposed by Marín can be read as a way of understanding how minor this interference was when compared to the countless battles the city has fought over the course of its lengthy history. To this effect, the journey to China and the writing of this experience work as an amplifier of the visual field, both temporal and geographical, repositioning the weights on a scale that, despite being global, seemed disproportionately tilted toward the Global North from the Latin American perspective.

This disproportionality can be explained since its degrees of influence exceed the limits of time and space and are transformed into other forces that are much more symbolic but no less powerful. One of the most revealing examples of this change in perspective is part of an interesting conversation that Marín had with a Chinese friend and that he included in a section entitled “¿Existió el ‘dragón’ en China?”: “¿Cómo explicar que haya hoy una población de más de trescientos cincuenta millones de seres humanos que creen firmemente en un animal que no figura en nuestros textos de Zoología y al cual ningún occidental ha visto jamás?” [Did the ‘dragon’ exist in China?]: “How can we explain that there exists today a

population of over three hundred and fifty million human beings who firmly believe in an animal that does not appear in our zoology texts and which no Westerner has ever seen?] (1948: 114). His friend answered this question as follows:

¿Ha visto usted todos los animales o insectos que figuran en los libros de Zoología y Parasitología? [...] No. Y, sin embargo, usted cree en ellos, ¿verdad?—Sí—le respondí—, creo en ellos, haciendo fe al testimonio de otros.—Pues igual pasa en China—contrarreplicó mi amigo sin pérdida de tiempo—; todos estos millones de hombres que creen en el dragón prestan fe al testimonio de muchos otros que dicen haber visto de cerca o de lejos al errabundo animal [Have you seen all the animals or insects listed in Zoology and Parasitology books? [...] No. And yet, you believe in them, don't you?"—"Yes," I replied, "I believe in them, trusting the testimony of others."—"Well, it's the same in China," my friend countered without hesitation; all these millions of people who believe in the dragon trust the testimony of many others who claim to have seen the wandering creature, whether up close or from afar] (1948: 114–115).

The conversation becomes even more interesting when Marín's friend asks if he has ever seen with his own eyes a condor and a huemul since they are part of the coat of arms of Chile. After confessing that he had never seen a huemul and that he had only seen a condor in the distance, his friend concludes by saying: "No menos razón que ustedes los chilenos para tener al 'cóndor' y al 'huemul' en su escudo, han tenido los emperadores de la China para tener al dragón en su bandera" [Just as you Chileans have every reason to feature the 'condor' and the 'huemul' on your coat of arms, the emperors of China have had just as much reason to have the dragon on their flag] (1948: 115).

A fundamental element that these lines reveal is the epistemic subjugation that the West exercises over the rest of the world and that functions as an apparent legitimizer of its truths as absolute and irrefutable despite being significantly minority and relatively recent when placed in a global perspective. Marín offers to his readers a point of view based on an effort to see China from the perspective of its own logic and principles. The goal is not to demonstrate how different they are from the Western rationality. It is instead to defy the status of that rationality as superior and make evident that even the most scientific postulate resulting from the exercise of that rationality is also a very human act of faith. Consequently, it does not differ radically from other postulates produced by different cultural frameworks.

Similarly, when Santa Cruz visited the Confucius Temple while staying in Beijing, she wrote: "Confucio o Kung-Tze (Kung, significa filósofo) vivió entre el año 552 y 478 antes de J.C.; casi al mismo tiempo que los filósofos griegos y también en la misma época en que los hebreos escribían el viejo testamento" [Confucius, or Kung-Tze (Kung means philosopher), lived between the years 552 and 478 B.C., almost at the same time as the Greek philosophers and also during the same period

when the Hebrews were writing the Old Testament] (1931b: 5). In the same vein, Santa Cruz also warns about the need to approach China from other codes that go beyond the limits of Western schemes: “El confucianismo, estrictamente hablando es un código moral y político más que una religión [...] vemos lo que los sentidos pueden ver, pero el enigma de esa raza persiste” [Confucianism, strictly speaking, is more of a moral and political code than a religion [...] we see what the senses can see, but the enigma of that race persists] (1931b: 5). Guzmán Cruchaga makes the same call but this time in relation to the geopolitical strategies of domination exercised by the imperial powers:

¿Políticos de Europa y de América, comprendéis que esta ley absurda de la poligamia tiene alguna importancia? Fabricad acorazados y cañones. Es necesario defenderse porque el futuro amo del mundo es amarillo. Son quinientos millones de hombres, desorganizados y dormilones que un día despertarán. Mientras el extranjero cree prepararse para la defensa con rifles y bayonetas, ellos lanzan al mundo toneladas de niños y quintales de biberones y no está lejano el día de la entrega de New York al fiero comandante de una escuadra de papel [Politicians of Europe and America, do you understand that this absurd law of polygamy has any importance? Build battleships and cannons. It is necessary to defend yourselves because the future master of the world is yellow. There are five hundred million men, disorganized and sleepy, who will one day wake up. While the foreigner believes they are preparing for defense with rifles and bayonets, they are sending the world tons of children and loads of baby bottles, and the day when New York is handed over to the fierce commander of a paper fleet is not far off] (1998: 84–85).

This passage underlines the ineffectiveness of Western codes and schemes to interpret and even fight against China. Moreover, it emphasizes on the tactical advantage that this impossibility represents for China as it rises and stands as the misconceived and underestimated rival. Furthermore, this is how the rationalist and positivist models that dominated travel writing and determined the way of seeing, interpreting, and describing that space of cultural encounter are declared inoperative and question the power relationship established between the subject that studies and the object studied.

This questioning creates an encounter space in which not only knowledge is extracted from that *other*, but it is rather a process of approximation, through which one also learns about oneself, and the door is opened to the need to rethink what was assumed to be unique, true, or irrefutable. Additionally, regarding the *modernista* travel writing of the Far East, Araceli Tinajero had already highlighted the fact that, unlike the European orientalist discourse that, according to Edward Said, distinguished itself by silencing that *other*, the modernist travel discourse “revela el acercamiento de estos intérpretes culturales y su afán de querer cederle la voz al Otro a través de varios procedimientos” [It reveals the approach of these

cultural interpreters and their desire to give voice to the Other through various procedures] (2003: 35).

Thus, I agree with Tinajero on this point and also argue that these procedures and mechanisms designed to “cede the voice” are also evident in the selection of the writing studied in this chapter. In addition, it is clear that greater awareness about them, as rhetorical resources, has been acquired as well as a greater refinement of their means and methods. Therefore, there is a greater willingness to open spaces in their texts to transcribe and report the ideas and opinions of the Chinese who they met throughout their journey without the need to question or subject them to judgment, as it is evident in the following lines:

Un joven universitario chino que tuvo la gentileza de traducirnos varias sentencias de Confucio, nos aseguró que la civilización de la China, además de ser la más antigua del mundo, era muy superior a la del Occidente—Desde más de dos mil años,—dijo nuestro informante—, la inteligencia ha dominado. Ya ve usted que Sun-Yat-Sen fue el primer revolucionario y se le escuchó porque era el más alto exponente de la intelectualidad china [A Chinese university student, who kindly translated several of Confucius’ sayings for us, assured us that China’s civilization, in addition to being the oldest in the world, was far superior to that of the West. “For over two thousand years,” said our informant, “intelligence has been in control. As you can see, Sun Yat-sen was the first revolutionary, and he was listened to because he was the highest exponent of Chinese intellectualism] (1931b: 5).

Although, in this particular case, the newspaper as a means of publication requires a less subjective impression of the information, it is still very interesting that Santa Cruz’s travel chronicle finds that balance between sharing personal travel impressions with her readers and being at the same time a mediator, an informant, and a reporter: “Que una raza formada por la cuarta parte de la humanidad, haya escogido durante veinticinco siglos la doctrina de Confucio como regla de vida, es algo portentoso” [That a race, comprising a quarter of humanity, has chosen Confucius’ doctrine as a way of life for twenty-five centuries is something remarkable] (1931b: 5). The chronicle is therefore transformed into a unique space that opens its own path as a genre and that is born from the interesting convergences and divergences between travel, journalism and literature and that, like Beatriz Colombi affirms it is a genre able to “escamotear la racionalidad de la prensa, formando un espacio autónomo” [To obscure the rationality of the press, creating an autonomous space] (2010: 16).

Thus, the journey to the East is imagined and read as a vast horizon full of exciting alternatives in contrast to the schematic and industrialized West: “Madame de E., pintora premiada en varias exposiciones; viaja [a Oriente] en busca de emociones artísticas” [Madame de E., an artist awarded in several exhibitions, travels [to the East] in search of artistic emotions] (de la Parra [1920] 2011: 56–57). It

was similarly expressed by Hugo L. Ricaldoni, whose critical appreciation of *Mujeres, paisajes y templos* by Eugenio Orrego V. is cited as part of its preface: “Este libro es un magnífico itinerario de emociones, sentidas en el kaleidoscopio maravilloso de mundos perdidos en la niebla dorada de nuestra imaginación, y que el Oriente encierra aún, desesperadamente, amparado por la lejanía, contra el monocorde compás civilizador de Occidente, dios de hierro con pies de cemento grisáceo” [This book is a magnificent journey of emotions, felt in the marvelous kaleidoscope of lost worlds shrouded in the golden mist of our imagination, which the East still encloses, desperately protected by its remoteness, against the monotonous civilizing beat of the West, a god of iron with feet of gray cement] (1931: 7).

As for the artistic element, a clear shift in the criteria to approach Chinese art is also recognizable. Thus, although, as it is clear in the following passage from Eugenio Orrego’s travel book in which he makes a written account of his impressions after attending a play in Beijing, it is under the light of European art and criticism that this approach to traditional Chinese art is established. Furthermore, it is under its schemes and criteria that it is appreciated and interpreted. This approach leads Orrego to define it as a: “Juego simplista y caricatural de las actrices. Ausencia de gesto y de la emoción dramáticas; pintura gruesa que hace imposible la expresión de sutilezas, de gradaciones espirituales e igualmente imposible la interpretación de grandes sentimientos colectivos, como en el teatro bolchevique. Es un primitivismo huérfano de grandeza, pues no se advierte en él lo enorme ni lo delicado” [Simplistic and caricatural performance by the actresses. A lack of gesture and dramatic emotion; a coarse style that makes the expression of subtleties and spiritual gradations impossible, as well as the interpretation of great collective feelings, as in Bolshevik theater. It is a primitivism devoid of grandeur, as it lacks both the immense and the delicate] (1931: 193)

Despite this, the political displacement of the failed European models also extends to a displacement of the criteria for interacting and critically approaching art. Socialism as a project also provincializes the traditional European schemes as the only reference to expand the limits of criticism. Thus, at least in what corresponds to Orrego’s impressions, this is not limited to the fact that socialist art has simply come to enthrone itself as the new aesthetic and artistic criterion to follow. On the contrary, it has been due to its emergence that the imposition and inoperability of schemes and criteria to approach art has been put on trial.

It is then understood that art in other contexts has other purposes, circumstances, and dynamics, which are organic and independent and consequently incompatible with European schemes. Orrego recognizes and questions it in the following: “no sería justo aplicar el rasero de nuestra sensibilidad

revolucionaria y occidentalista a las emociones y experiencias escénicas de un pueblo, supercivilizado en achaques de arte, que vive, todavía, determinado estadio de su evolución” [It would not be fair to apply the yardstick of our revolutionary and Western sensibility to the emotions and theatrical experiences of a people, overcivilized in their artistic ailments, who still live in a certain stage of their evolution] (1931: 193). It is a consequence of the reevaluation of these approach criteria that allows Orrego to recognize after his visit to the Temple of Heaven in Beijing that: “En materia de escultura oriental y aún de escultura mística nunca ví nada más hermoso” [In terms of oriental sculpture and even mystical sculpture, I have never seen anything more beautiful] (1931: 201) with which the possibility of perceiving China as a possible political, social, artistic, and aesthetic compass is opened.

Nevertheless, it is also important to highlight that this new perspective and turn toward the East has also transformed it into an oasis. In consequence, it has been loaded with a host of essentialisms, stereotypes and imaginaries that have ended up bringing it closer to its cultural and aesthetic commodification. That is the reason why the modernization and industrialization of that essentialized Orient was judged by most of these travelers as a corruption of that oasis. This process occurred not because of the oasis itself but because of the destruction of the idyllic imaginary that the West had built around it:

En Tokio, como en Yokohama, la civilización occidental, intrusa y soberbia, se ha metido por todas partes. Se apropió barrios enteros; tendió hilos y plantó postes en la calle, levantó las casas de varios metros; y hasta se atrevió a morder en un costado al histórico palacio del Imperio. Los tranvías eléctricos se han cogido para ellos toda la calle, y los automóviles acorralan a los pobres *rishkas* que, asustados y tímidos, les van cediendo el puesto. Ante tanta insolencia dan ganas de detenerse, de subirse muy en alto, y con los brazos extendidos como los *policemen* neoyorkinos hacer señas de que todo movimiento cese para gritar a los de abajo:—¡Atrás los automóviles! ¡Fuera los tranvías eléctricos! ¡Abajo los invasores! ¡Qué circulen los *rishkas*, que pasen los de a pie, que corran las diminutas sombrillas, sin temor de ser ahogadas, y alto, alto, a quien vuelva a turbar el buen orden y concierto de las tres veces santa y sagrada capital del Imperio! [In Tokyo, as in Yokohama, Western civilization, intrusive and arrogant, has infiltrated everywhere. It took over entire neighborhoods; laid wires and planted poles in the streets, raised houses by several meters; and even dared to bite into the side of the historic Imperial Palace. Electric trams have taken over the whole street, and automobiles corner the poor rickshaws, which, frightened and shy, are reluctantly giving way. In the face of such insolence, one feels like stopping, climbing high up, and with arms extended like New York policemen, signaling for all movement to cease to shout to those below: “Back with the automobiles! Away with the electric trams! Down with the invaders! Let the rickshaws pass, let the pedestrians go, let the tiny umbrellas run, without fear of being drowned, and high, high, to anyone who disturbs the good order and harmony of the three times holy and sacred capital of the Empire!”] (De la Parra [1920] 2011: 53).

On the other hand, we cannot afford to ignore that the Western imagery built around the Orient has also undergone an important change in this new period. Although this poetic ideal with respect to Asia tends to become more established and idealized throughout the pages written over the course of these decades, there is also a clear distancing that these travelers have taken with respect to the Western imagery, creating, as Siskind argues, a “counterpunctual space of cosmopolitan contestation” (2014: 28). As part of this effort, there is a relativization of the truth contained in this imaginary construction in relation to the limits of the East according to the European experience. For these travelers, unlike the travel writers I studied in the previous chapter, pursuing the truth is an outmoded task, and it is evident how much the weight of “what is true” has been lightened in their travel texts.

According to Gutiérrez Girardot, this rupture or distancing from the truth occurs as a consequence of the arrival of modernity and the desecration of art as: “el arte ha dejado de ser la forma en la que se manifiesta la verdad y que constituye el más alto menester del espíritu” [The art has ceased to be the form in which truth is manifested and which constitutes the highest task of the spirit] ([1988] 2004: 43). This desecration allowed art to loosen its ties with the state and the rationalization of writing to release its deepest artistic potential. Thus, although this imagery continues to play a fundamental role, the truth becomes of secondary importance even for the readers and critics of the travel writing of this period. That is the case of Hugo L. Ricaldoni, who expressed with regard to Orrego’s travel book that: “Es casi irresistible la tentación de lo irreal, en esas comarcas en que todo induce a soñar con lo ilusorio [...] y que embriagan con la recordación antaño de pasados esplendores y riquezas, y con el espejismo de su renombre encantan al que llega, con viñetas que ya no son, que posiblemente nunca fueron” [The temptation of the unreal is almost irresistible in those regions where everything leads one to dream of the illusory [...] and which intoxicate with the remembrance of past splendors and riches, and with the mirage of their renown, enchanting the newcomer with scenes that no longer exist, that perhaps never existed] (1931: 8). The invitation extended by this construction around the Orient to inhabit that irreality—product of the Western imagery—ceases to acquire value in relation to its facticity, considering that proving whether something about it is true or whether it was in a certain way becomes of secondary importance.

Consequently, there is a clear effort to approach China as a culture and as a nation through a lens that offers a more global perspective of its developments and does not exclusively dwell on its historical and social transfigurations from an isolationist perspective. Rather, there is an interest in incorporating it and recognizing it as a millennial mobilizer of world history. This effort also challenges

the vision, which was predominant in the travel writing that I studied in the previous chapter, of seeing Asia and particularly China as a civilization that is in ruins, only part of the past, and that is anachronistic with respect to the allegedly forward Western dynamics.

Thus, at least through the eyes of some of these travelers of the first half of the twentieth century, China is repositioned on the global scene as a relevant and current player in global courses and processes whose millenarianism could potentially give a new face to the future of modernity as a project. As part of that endeavor, Eugenio Orrego not only recognizes its significance in history but also in the writing of the history to come:

El mundo debe a China descubrimientos extraordinarios, considerables esfuerzos por el progreso de la Humanidad. Le debe la filosofía de uno de los espíritus más excelsos que encarnara en envoltura de hombre y un arte de maravilla [...] Por lo que ha dado en valores positivos, por lo que en gérmenes fecundos encierra, por la esperanza y la realidad —la realidad de la lucha contra el capitalismo— merece China, como ningún otro país, exceptuando a la Rusia de Lenin —laboratorio y pórtico—, el adjetivo de eterna [The world owes China extraordinary discoveries, considerable efforts for the progress of humanity. It owes it the philosophy of one of the most exalted spirits embodied in human form, and a wondrous art [...] For what it has contributed in positive values, for what it holds in fertile seeds, for the hope and the reality—the reality of the struggle against capitalism—China deserves, like no other country, except for Lenin's Russia—a laboratory and gateway—the adjective of eternal] (1931: 194).

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, China questioned the viability of Confucianism as the torchbearer to interpret its reality and guide their nation toward a possible future. Several were occasions in which it was perceived as part of that obsolete and impractical past that did not allow the country to move forward in the building of a response to the demands imposed by its time and pressing circumstances. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Eugenio Orrego resorts to the tradition of Confucian thought to draw attention to the urgent need to resignify and reorganize the pieces on the current global board: “Durante el reinado de los grandes principios, todo lo existente bajo el cielo era de todos” [During the reign of the great principles, everything that existed under heaven belonged to all] (1930: 195). Orrego's hope in the development of the socialist project in China is not based only on a future projection but on a return to the most traditional bases of the Chinese Confucian social apparatus, which, not coincidentally, are closely linked to the socialist wager.

Orrego's gesture, quoting Confucius and, subsequently, citing Confucian principles such, as the rejection of the egoistic exercise of private property or the practice of filial and fraternal love as a social and political bond tighter and sturdier than blood ties, sets a precedent. This action also marks a route to interpret the present. This precedent that undoubtedly responds not only to the attempt to write

China from China itself but to see China as a compass on the road to the future. This leads Orrego to think about all those principles: “era lo que se llamaba la Universalidad... ¿No están en esencia, en tales doctrinas, algunos de los principios básicos del socialismo de hoy?” [It was what was called Universality... Are not some of the basic principles of today’s socialism essentially found in such doctrines?] (1931: 197). The question that Orrego asks about Confucian universality becomes a new way to resignify what the classist bourgeois effort insists on calling *cosmopolitan*.

Trading Culture in Times of War: Essentialisms and Self-Orientalization

Although the presence of women in the diaries written during the nineteenth century is comparatively lower than the presence acquired in the first half of the twentieth century, from those first diaries and travel memories, it was possible to observe a woman whose functions were expected to be merely ornamental. This function seems to have developed hand in hand with the tourism and entertainment industries as it is tailored to the expected bourgeois experience of traveling to the Far East. This concern around keeping the Orient within the confines of the pristine and idealized oasis seems to apply also to gender roles. It is evident in the positions and functions that women in this particular cultural environment are expected to perform and fulfill. Despite the fact that de la Parra openly expressed that she did not have a feminist agenda (Mueller 2012: 86) and described herself as a moderate feminist (Mueller 2012: 117), her novels and essay work are exalted even today as a great contributor to the feminist ideas in Latin America.

Even in her travel diary, published earlier than the novels and essays that have earned her such recognition, it is already evident the curiosity that she felt and her attraction to events, situations, and people that allowed her to rethink and to question not only the limits of the female gender but the very concept of gender from a broader perspective. In the same sense, there was a young Russian woman who was part of her group of traveling companions through Japan and China who deeply captivated her attention and to whom she dedicated, as the following, many words of admiration:

Es de tan interesante especie que no puedo dejarla pasar en silencio sin hacer mención de ella: pertenece a la juventud feminista de Rusia. Viaja sola. Siendo muy joven y de aspecto muy femenino es una conferencista notabilísima. Tiene gran erudición y un conocimiento muy sólido de la política rusa y en general de todos los asuntos europeos, y esto todo, aderezado naturalmente con una cantidad de idiomas increíble [It is of such an interesting

kind that I cannot let it pass in silence without mentioning it: it belongs to the feminist youth of Russia. She travels alone. Despite being very young and of a very feminine appearance, she is an outstanding lecturer. She possesses great scholarship and a solid knowledge of Russian politics and, in general, of all European affairs, all of which is naturally seasoned with an incredible number of languages] ([1920] 2011: 54)

However, that enthusiasm for female independence and erudition also seems to be traversed by a racial factor. It is evident, in this order of ideas, that for de la Parra female emancipation is not only possible but rather plausible when it comes to Western women. Conversely, the image that she builds of the Japanese woman is different. For her, the Japanese woman is called to preserve submission, obedience, and silence so that the idealized and infantilized imaginary that has been constructed over them can remain alive. Thus, the wooden sandals, the headdresses, the kimonos, and the rice paper umbrellas manage to subsist as part of that Western imaginary, which is now put at risk due to the modernizing influence of the West.

La mujer japonesa es la más fiel y honrada de cuantas existen [...] bien pueden a su antojo los hombres divertirse impunemente entre geishas y artistas de todos los géneros, sus mujeres no tomarán jamás la revancha por considerarlo innoble [...] A la más acrisolada virtud unen las japonesas la más exquisita delicadeza, el más refinado amor a la estética y una abnegación resignada y constante [The Japanese woman is the most faithful and honorable of all who exist [...] Men may freely indulge themselves among geishas and artists of all kinds, but their wives will never seek revenge, considering it dishonorable [...] The Japanese women combine the most refined virtue with exquisite delicacy, a refined love for aesthetics, and a constant, resigned selflessness.] ([1920] 2011: 48–49).

From the title of Orrego Vicuña's travel book *Mujeres, paisajes y templos*, it is possible to anticipate the embellishing character that the Japanese and Chinese women were going to acquire throughout his travel chronicle. This intuition is not only easy to corroborate once the reading begins, but the impetus of his descriptions become even more patronizing and subduing than the ones written by de la Parra two decades earlier:

El paisaje japonés es esencialmente femenino. Pero para que la mujer pueda identificársele es menester que sea absolutamente japonesa, que vista el traje nacional, que lleve el peinado criollo [...] que calce la gheeta de madera, que lleve en su rostro una capa de polvos blancos y rosados, que sus ojos sonrían, que su boca sonría, que aún al inclinarse su cuerpo todo sonría [The Japanese landscape is essentially feminine. But for the woman to be identified with it, she must be absolutely Japanese, wearing the national dress, sporting the traditional hairstyle [...] wearing wooden clogs, with a layer of white and pink powder on her face, her eyes smiling, her mouth smiling, and even when she bows, her whole body smiles] (1931: 41).

His first sentence accurately condenses not only the fact that women perform decorative functions within the Japanese cultural tapestry, but also that Japan as a nation is feminized to resignify its inferiority with respect to the masculine and dominant character that the West exercises. This exercise is manifested through their political and economic imposition and through the definition of the *ought-to-be* of Japan that satisfies the Western demands and its orientalizing fantasies.

Continuing with the presence and representation of femininity in the travel diaries of this period, Elvira Santa Cruz offers new nuances to the discussion about feminism and gender roles in Chinese women. She writes: “Las damas nobles pasan en berlinas suntuosas y vestidas a la europea generalmente. Llevan preciosos abrigos de pieles y hay viveza en la mirada de sus ojos oblicuos. El feminismo chino ha dado un avance sorprendente” [The noble ladies travel in luxurious sedan chairs, generally dressed in European fashion. They wear precious fur coats, and there is liveliness in the look of their slanted eyes. Chinese feminism has made a surprising advance] (1937: 7). If, in the case of de la Parra, feminism was conditioned by the racial factor, in the case of Santa Cruz, it is conditioned by belonging to a social class that allows her to secure a place in those same world elites and participate in their transnational alliance. That resounding phrase with which she closes that paragraph by saying that Chinese feminism has made a surprising advance is directly conditioned by the fact that these “noble” ladies move through the city in “sumptuous sedans” and “dressed in the European style” with “fur coats.” Therefore, their participation in the feminist movement is subject to their degree of assimilation to the forms and manners of the Western elites because “modernity has been constructed as a result of a Western socio-cultural system, Westernization has come to be perceived as the pre-condition for accomplishing modernity” (Yan and Almeida 2009: 295).

Santa Cruz finds remarkable that Chinese feminist organizations, such as *Tianjin nujie aiguo tongzhihui* 天津女界爱国同志会 (Tianjin Women’s Patriotic Association), are concerned with abolishing polygamy and women trafficking and that, in a broader sense, the Chinese feminist movement seeks to suppress the deformation of women’s feet, curbing female infanticide and domestic slavery. Still, it is also clear that the said organization: “representa a miles de mujeres de la alta clase” [It represents thousands of women from the upper class] (1937: 7). Further, it was also important for her to mention that the woman with whom she discussed these issues: “venía cada noche a nuestro hotel, vestía como una parisiense y bailaba shimmy como una americana” [She came to our hotel every night, dressed like a Parisian and danced the shimmy like an American] (1931: 7). Thus, very similar to the description of the Japanese woman made by Teresa de la Parra, the

Chinese woman in the eyes of Juan Guzmán shares very similar features when he described them after he visited a teahouse:

Las cortinas se mueven y aparece una graciosa chinita vestida de seda [...] Las chinas son ceremoniosas y suaves. Nos miran, sin hablar largo rato, y sus gestos son unos dulces gestos de muñecas. [...] Se acercan tímidas. Recuestan la cabeza en nuestras rodillas. Nos toman las manos y las acarician. Se ve en las lindas caras de porcelana un gesto de inquietud y ruego. Pero no tienen carácter y ceden. Abandonan sus trajes y nos contemplan de nuevo temerosas como si aguardaran un castigo del Fan Quai Lo (Diablo blanco extranjero) [...] Son las mujeres más admirables de la tierra: buenas, cordiales, cariñosas, tímidas y silenciosas. Oh. ¡Cómo adoramos el silencio de las mujeres! [...] Ellas saben que su conversación no tiene objeto y nos alegran con sus caricias. [...] Danzan lentamente y es cada una de sus actitudes signa de eternizarse en el bordado del mantón, en el vaso de bronce y en la taza delgada y transparente [The curtains move and a graceful Chinese girl dressed in silk appears... The Chinese women are ceremonious and gentle. They look at us, without speaking for a long while, and their gestures are sweet, doll-like gestures. They approach timidly. They rest their heads on our knees. They take our hands and caress them. In the lovely porcelain faces, there is a look of unease and pleading. But they have no character and yield. They abandon their clothes and look at us again, fearful as if awaiting a punishment from the Fan Quai Lo (White Devil foreigner)... They are the most admirable women on earth: good, cordial, affectionate, shy, and silent. Oh, how we adore the silence of women!... They know their conversation has no purpose, and they delight us with their caresses... They dance slowly, and each of their gestures seems to be eternally embroidered on the shawl, the bronze cup, and the delicate, transparent teacup] (1998: 80–81).

Guzmán's effort to describe and compare Chinese women with inert objects, such as dolls and porcelains, culminates with the desire to encapsulate women in chinoiseries like embroideries, vases, and teacups. The female body as an object of consumption is also transformed into a sign of prestige and power, both of a dominant class and a dominant gender. In the same sense, the tea house undergoes a transformation into a place for theatrical performances. There, silence operates as the boundary separating the spectator from the performer. Still, despite the silence, the script is followed rigorously. The quiet, obedient, and submissive Chinese woman is staged as an entertainment product designed by a form of self-Orientalism. This design is guided by the expectations that the tourist-spectator had been building even before traveling. It takes as a reference the common places that they have visited and revisited through the reading of other travel texts.

This staging of marketable essentialisms of gender and cultural identities is an example of the deployment of a strategy of self-Orientalism. Through this strategy, the limits of power exercised by that cultural capital are subverted. As Julia A. Kushigian suggests, it is a strategy to challenge meaning "because, in effect, one elects to self-Orientalize through critical self-reflection [...] is a reflection of the self in the light of the Other" (2016: 99–100). The fascinating idea of the *ought-be* and

ought-act built and imposed over the Chinese woman from the confluence of Western experience and imagination has served as a form of subjugation and as a form of epistemic imposition on the limits of another cultural identity. However, it is now those Chinese women in that teahouse who are appropriating that product to exert another type of power and influence that is exerted as a mechanism of resistance, and which is contesting through their silence.

Another similar expression of self-Orientalism as a strategy is also described by Guzmán Cruchaga in relation to the visit he received from merchants of traditional chinoiserie coming from Beijing, Shanghai, and what was then called Indochina:

Colocan luego sobre los muebles, preciosos tallados de madera negra, jarrones de *cloisonne* o de porcelana, lindos bordados de seda y oro, trajes fastuosos de la antigua China, tazas de té y vasos de laca, de bronce o de plata. [...] Tienen el firme propósito de estafar. Mienten. Hacen fabulosas historias acerca de los objetos. Un collar de jade perteneció a la última emperatriz, un jarrón de porcelana sostuvo flores que alegraron el alma del emperador poeta Kian Lung. Un anillo da la felicidad al que lo posee [They then place on the furniture, finely carved black wood, cloisonné or porcelain vases, beautiful silk and gold embroidery, luxurious garments from ancient China, teacups and lacquered or silver glasses... They have the firm intention to deceive. They lie. They weave fabulous stories about the objects. A jade necklace belonged to the last empress, a porcelain vase held flowers that brightened the soul of the poet emperor Kian Lung. A ring brings happiness to its possessor] (1998: 82).

This strategy of self-Orientalization is exemplified by Arif Dirlik with the myth of the Great Wall. According to Dirlik, the Great Wall was reclaimed by China as a national symbol only after centuries of European travel writing had established it as an emblematic representation of Chinese history and culture. That form of reappropriation of symbolic capital through the strategy of self-Orientalization is practicable because “It is in the twentieth century, however, that Euro-American orientalist perceptions and methods become a visible component in the formulation of the Chinese self-image, and Chinese perceptions of the past” (1996: 106). Thus, in this case, craftsmanship is not limited to the manufacture of a tangible product, but it is the work with the words and the imagination the component that enables the tailoring of a narrative product. It is, in fact, that narrative tailoring the dimension of the product that acquires an even higher value. Thus, in this particular period, the interweaving of a far-reaching history of Orientalism and a contrastingly recent presence of discourses around modernity and the modern bring into play elements that make the results of these interactions much more intricate.

The product offered is the display of that unchangeable, mythical, and dynastic China that appeals to the nostalgia of a non-modern Chinese cultural identity. Paradoxically, such identity is yearned by the same West that forced it to open up

to the world. Thus, the true initiative on which this product is manufactured is an expression of the Chinese strategy to open China's own path toward modernity, which, despite being inevitably crossed by Western ideology, is built as a resignified and reinvented form of modernity. Its success lies in its ability to be justified in the eyes of the West as it is a representation that sells to the West the idea that China remains unchanged. This is, among other things, the reason why, despite calling this staging offered by Chinese merchants "a lie," Guzmán Cruchaga openly admits how much he enjoys this performance:

Y es interesante escucharlos en silencio y es hermoso oírlos mentir y volver inocente y crédulo el espíritu para tener un vago retorno de la infancia lejana. Yo los miro y los oigo y los creo, y todos los días espero que, al lado de un lindo Buda de marfil, coloquen los vendedores de maravilla el pájaro que habla, la manzana de la vida y la lámpara maravillosa [It is interesting to listen to them in silence, and it is beautiful to hear them lie, making the spirit innocent and gullible again, evoking a vague return to distant childhood. I watch them, I listen to them, and I believe them, and every day I hope that, beside a beautiful ivory Buddha, the wonder sellers will place the talking bird, the apple of life, and the marvelous lamp] (1998: 82).

The Intersection of Travel, Writing, and the Self

The new place that literature occupied in social life emerged as a result of a deep crisis derived from the disapproval of the *saber decir* of the intellectual class. During this half century, this crisis also caused an important loss of the strength of the academicist tone, which I pointed out as a common trait in the previous chapter and which is part of the European inheritance of the scientific model of the Enlightenment. To a certain extent, these travelers freed their writing from the burden of being emissaries of their nations and untied it from the responsibility of guaranteeing a pedagogical role. That is the reason why their writing is not necessarily tuned to the rhythms of the nation-building duties, and some may even seem deliberately unconcerned about the geopolitical tensions that accumulated around them. This paradigm shift opened a much more interactive space between the known and the unknown and between the far and the near.

As a result, each traveler developed a unique purpose and significance for their writing around their traveling experience. There is no doubt that, in comparison with the rather homogeneous aims of the precedent writers, these travelers have made their writing a purpose in itself with ambitions and significances of their own. This diversification of purposes was only possible by the displacement of academicism as the central axis of the travel narrative. This is evident in de la Parra's description of preparations before setting sail for Asia from the city of New York show:

Es, pues, asombrosa la facilidad con que paso de baúles y maletas al origen del Yedo y a las costumbres de los mikados. Cuando no estoy extasiada ante algún maniquí de los almacenes de Broadway, estoy de codos encima de una mesa describiendo zigzags sobre el mapa de Japón y la China; cuando no me sorprende la noche en algún museo de arte nipón, me sorprende la madrugada haciendo una interminable lista de compras, y hasta en los subways mientras me dirijo a los almacenes, a fin de aprovechar más tiempo, voy leyendo con la ansiedad del caso, como ocurrió todo aquello de Puerto Arturo y la guerra ruso-japonesa que allá, entre sueños, recuerdo [It is, therefore, astonishing how easily I move from trunks and suitcases to the origins of Yedo and the customs of the mikados. When I'm not mesmerized by some mannequin in a Broadway store, I'm elbows on the table, tracing zigzags over the map of Japan and China; when I'm not surprised by the night in some Japanese art museum, I'm startled by the dawn, making an endless shopping list, and even in the subways, while heading to the stores to make the most of my time, I read with the urgency of the situation, as I recall all that about Port Arthur and the Russo-Japanese war, which I remember in dreams] ([1920] 2011: 18–19).

Far from being an isolated case, it is, by contrast, safe to affirm that for these travelers, it was a generalized gesture to exempt themselves from the responsibility of studying in depth and getting to know the China they witnessed or at least they do not necessarily feel obliged to write about it. Thereby, even though we can refer to Juan Marín as an exception among them, due to the informative and pedagogical purpose that his extensive work still retains, the methods and resources to bring his reader closer to China are, nonetheless, based on less rigid principles. The information passes through a coarse sieve of personal reflections, criticisms, and alternative perspectives.

Therefore, leaving behind the scientific and educational responsibility that travel writing had, it became a choice and, at the same time, a blank canvas to rethink what travel and travel writing entailed within the traveler's context, even when this involves, as in the following lines, choosing not to write, or even to write about not writing: "Me di por vencida. Mandé al diablo el papel y la pluma [...] habiendo profetizado el destino de mi carta, muerta antes de nacer me lancé llena de curiosidad a conocer nuevas tierras" [I gave up. I threw the paper and pen to the devil (...) having already predicted the fate of my letter, dead before it was born, I threw myself, full of curiosity, into discovering new lands] (de la Parra [1920] 2011: 36). With the endless list of dates, statistics, names, and encyclopedic notes left behind, the way is now given to a more experiential journey. The focus was shifted to the sensations and the emotions experienced by the traveler as part of a search for a different *self* and a different way of interpreting and inhabiting their reality. In relation to this, Enrique Gómez Carrillo affirmed in the essay "La psicología del viajero" part of his book *Pequeñas cuestiones palpitantes* that "Por mi parte, yo no busco nunca en los libros de viaje el alma de los países que me interesan. Lo que busco es algo más frívolo, más sutil, más pintoresco, más poético y más positivo: la

sensación. Todo viajero artista, en efecto, podría titular su libro: Sensaciones” [For my part, I never seek in travel books the soul of the countries that interest me. What I seek is something more frivolous, more subtle, more picturesque, more poetic, and more tangible: the sensation. Every artistic traveler, indeed, could title their book: Sensations] (1910: 125).

The fine line that seems to divide the poetic from the frivolous makes that the origin of this search for a different subjective self cannot be separated from the rationalization of life brought by capitalism and the simultaneous process of secularization. They, according to Gutiérrez Girardot, did not mean that “se le ofreciera al hombre un más acá diverso, sino que más bien, fue lanzado del más allá y del más acá a sí mismo” [Rather than offering man a diverse “here and now,” he was instead cast from both the beyond and the here-and-now into himself] ([1988] 2004: 83). In the particular case of the travelers of this period, such search is intrinsically associated with the experience of being bourgeois because, as suggested by Girardot, “‘Sociedad burguesa’ o ‘sociedad civil’: este nombre designa principalmente un sistema de valores, los de los intereses privados, los de la utilidad, los del hedonismo, los del lujo, los de la riqueza, los de la ‘democracia’” [‘Bourgeois society’ or ‘civil society’: this term primarily designates a system of values—the values of private interests, utility, hedonism, luxury, wealth, and ‘democracy’] ([1988] 2004: 48), while it is also the reflection of the many expressions of privatization of personal and social life visible through multiple layers of society, infiltrated in artistic, economic, or intellectual activity.

Nevertheless, it is also undeniable that the consolidation of this new form of expression of an emerging bourgeoisie also made traveling a way of self-definition and self-narration since this bourgeois society “por paradójico que parezca, le deparó no solamente la libertad artística, sino también la posibilidad de nuevas y complejas experiencias” [Though paradoxical it may seem, it afforded him not only artistic freedom, but also the possibility of new and complex experiences] (Gutiérrez [1988] 2004: 54). Consequently, the simultaneous experience of, on one hand, a new society dominated by material values and by the urge to socially ascend and amass wealth, and, on the other, the marginalization of art from society made the literary and artistic creation to become a space, sometimes of celebration, as in the case of Teresa de la Parra. Other times, it serves as a space for the expression of its most ambivalent positionings in relation to this society, as in the case of Guzmán, Orrego⁹, and even Marín. Whether it is the experience of the most sublime or the most frivolous, both are crossed by similar experiences.

9 It is also quite compelling that Eugenio Orrego's father, Luís Orrego Luco, had warned of the dominance of this new system of values in the second volume of his novel *Casa Grande* published

As a result, the spectacle brought by modern life and its apparent taste for the superficial turned out to dominate this new scene and became an important element for the travel writing of this period. This puts the travel narrative of China in an apparent paradox since the mechanism that serves as a shelter from a modernization project whose voracity and inclemency ended up morally failing humanity is, at the same time, a by-product derived from it.

An example of the development of that subjective voice and its relationship with paradigm shift is evident through the very first lines of Teresa de la Parra's diary since they open a space hitherto little explored—that is, the narration of the journey before the journey. There, all the emotions provoked by the anticipation of traveling crowded together and revealed a perspective that had remained hidden—the nervous expectation and the jittery preparations: “Al fin nuestro viaje a Japón y a la China es cosa ya decidida [...] ¡Pero qué días de ansiedad, de espera nerviosa, de desesperación, en fin!” [Finally, our trip to Japan and China is already decided... But what days of anxiety, nervous waiting, and, in the end, despair!] ([1920] 2011: 13). Therefore, the journey does not begin with the physical or geographical displacement of the traveler but with a tour around the traveler's imagination in a more introspective experience of being *on the road*.

The opportunity to temporarily inhabit a new space goes beyond the place in itself, but it is also accompanied by the opportunity to try out another way of *self* while immersed in another place. “Dedico ahora todo mi tiempo y mis energías a prepararme con gran entusiasmo para mi anhelado viaje al Oriente. [...] a la vez que deseo enterarme de los asuntos asiáticos, me esmero al mismo tiempo en tener bonitas *toilettes* para asistir a las comidas y recepciones con que seremos obsequiados en Yokohama, Shanghai y Harbin” [I now dedicate all my time and energy to preparing with great enthusiasm for my longed-for trip to the East. [...] While I wish to learn about Asian matters, I also make sure to have beautiful outfits for the meals and receptions with which we will be honored in Yokohama, Shanghai, and Harbin] (de la Parra [1920] 2011: 18).

The soaring manufacturing of products, both in variety and in volume, spiked the fascination for objects in terms of their colors, textures, and shapes, which provided a much more micro and sensorial view of the travel experience: “Las

in 1908. There, he refers to the Chilean society of his time as “arrastrada por el vértigo del dinero, por la ansiedad de ser ricos pronto, al día siguiente. Las preocupaciones sentimentales, el amor, el deseo, el ensueño, desaparecían barridos por el viento positivo y frío de la voracidad y del sensualismo” [Dragged by the vertigo of money, by the anxiety to be rich soon, the next day. Sentimental concerns, love, desire, and daydreams disappeared, swept away by the cold, positive wind of greed and sensualism] (1908: 18–19).

calles presentan una actividad comercial curiosa, interesante y nueva. Aparecen en las vitrinas mantones, aves del paraíso, objetos de carey y marfil, pebeteros de agata, anillos de jade, antiguos trajes de los mandarines y es cada tienda una fiesta de gracia y de color” [The streets present a curious, interesting, and new commercial activity. In the shop windows, there are shawls, birds of paradise, objects made of tortoiseshell and ivory, agate incense burners, jade rings, ancient mandarin costumes, and each store is a celebration of grace and color] (Guzmán 1998: 70). Bringing the vision closer to the details and particularities of personal impression to distance itself from the replicable generalities.

Then again, it would be a mistake to affirm that these travelers have limited the exercise of their writing to the empire of the senses. On the contrary, the entrenchment of the writer in the barricade of their senses and emotions can rather be read and interpreted as José Miguel Oviedo suggests: “no como meros juegos retóricos, sino como modos de agotar la complejidad del mundo moderno” [Not as mere rhetorical games, but as ways of exhausting the complexity of the modern world] (1997, 2: 279). As Julio Ramos argues, it is a political reaction to the expulsion of the writer from the realms of power. A position that urges the writer to transform their sensitivity into a new power capable of swimming countercurrent in relation to the rationality of the state.

El “desinterés”, la autonomía del arte de la “razón práctica”, digamos, es lo que garantiza su autoridad como nuevo recinto de la moral que ha sido desplazada de la educación, entonces orientada a la realización de “fines” “prácticos”. Así la belleza, precisamente por no ser un “utensilio”, compensa el flujo desestabilizador (amoral) del dinero y de la vida “vacía” del “materialismo” reinante. La belleza, experimentada por una “minoría” selecta, compensa la “masificación” capitalista. [The ‘disinterest,’ the autonomy of art from ‘practical reason,’ so to speak, is what guarantees its authority as the new domain of morality that has been displaced from education, which was then oriented toward the achievement of ‘practical’ ‘ends.’ Thus, beauty, precisely because it is not a ‘tool,’ compensates for the destabilizing (amoral) flow of money and the ‘empty’ life of the prevailing ‘materialism.’ Beauty, experienced by a ‘select minority,’ compensates for capitalist ‘massification’] ([1989] 2021: 106).

Consequently, as I have proposed earlier, the protagonism of this sensibility should not be immediately associated with a political disinterest or a resulting disengagement from the reflection on Latin America or an automatic disconnection from the national level reflections. On the contrary, this can be interpreted as a markedly political act insofar as they “represent their cosmopolitan subjectivity on equal terms with the metropolitan cultures whose hegemony their discourses try to undermine” (Siskind 2014: 6). Therefore, spaces for criticism and self-reflection survived in relation to the limits of nationality both in the context of their own

nations and other national identities. In fact, this sensorial approach serves as the facilitator not just for the experience but for the reflection:

¡*Laichia!*¹⁰, ¡*laichia!* Es un vendedor de fruta, de la sabrosa fruta china. [...] Tenemos sed, la sed furiosa del Oriente y recibimos como una bendición la fruta sabrosa y fresca. Bajo la piel anaranjada encontramos la carne blanca y sabrosa y nos parece que el otoño, el buen otoño de nuestra tierra, se nos deshace en la boca [*Laichia! laichia!* It is a fruit seller, offering the delicious fruits of China. [...] We are thirsty, with the fierce thirst of the East, and we receive the sweet, fresh fruit as a blessing. Beneath the orange skin, we find the tender, white flesh, and it feels as if autumn—the good autumn of our homeland—is melting in our mouths] (Guzmán 1998: 83).

This is how, without too direct and elaborate evocations of the homeland, the sensory experience that he obtains through the lychee, despite being endemic to this distant China, still serves as a conduit to draw that extensive bridge between the experience of the national and the Chinese, the *known* and the *unknown*, the *far* and the *near*.

In this sense, the travel writer is capable of spinning and weaving an absolutely distinctive path resulting from a cosmopolitan force of its own. This force does not have an aspiration to equal or follow in the footsteps of the metropolitan travel narratives. Instead, it proposes an alternative exploration legitimated and endorsed by itself. Siskind describes this as a “voluntaristic fantasy that is nonetheless very effective in opening a cosmopolitan discursive space where it is possible to imagine a non-nationalistic, nonanthropocentric path to a modernization that is set against the horizon of abstract universality” (2014: 7).

In a similar way and continuing with the idea of this more sensitive approach to the travel narrative, but which is not absent from criticism, we also see it in the portrait of Orrego’s impressions during his visit to the city of Beijing: “Los mendigos os sitian, los comerciantes os asaltan, el interés os esclaviza. Olores nauseabundos guerrear con vuestro olfato y las fritangas con salsa de polvo se prenden de las narices. Y como si ello fuera poco, estrépito infernal de millones de gongs, tambores, pitos y campanas castiga vuestro oído” [Los mendigos os sitian, los comerciantes os asaltan, el interés os esclaviza. Olores nauseabundos guerrear con vuestro olfato y las fritangas con salsa de polvo se prenden de las narices. Y como si ello fuera poco, estrépito infernal de millones de gongs, tambores, pitos y campanas castiga vuestro oído] (1931: 189). The alleged escapist *preciosismo* with which this sensory intensification is normally associated is not only invalidated, but it is, in fact, this intensification the channel through which a counterweight to the

10 Referring to *lizhi* 荔枝 (lychee).

notable numbing of consciousness in the face of the social reality of the moment is achieved. The above lines written by Orrego make use of this augmented sensitivity not to escape but to fill with meaning the naturalized and unseen misery. This reality, which has been adversarially made invisible by means of that glass that, as I mentioned earlier, is abysmal despite being very thin, is the division through which Orrego appeals directly to the bourgeois elites and petty nobility that inhabit the world in the inner side on the glass to ask them: “La atmósfera que adentro reina os lleva al engaño. China os rodea, más ¿a cuántos millones de kilómetros está de vuestro espíritu o de vuestra piedad?” [The atmosphere that reigns within deceives you. China surrounds you, yet how many millions of miles is it from your spirit, or from your compassion?] (1931: 190). An effect that Juan Marín also manages to achieve through the following lines:

Entre los mil y un sonidos que nos abruman cuando salimos a dar un paseo (pregón de vendedores, jaleo de coolies, llanto o risa de niños, interjecciones de las amah, estridencia de platillos o tamboreo del llamado pescado de madera de los templos budistas, altoparlantes de radio, canto en falsete de actrices de teatrillos o “casas de té”, chirriantes orquestas de violines bicordes, etc.), hay uno muy peculiar que quien haya visitado el Florido Reino Medio no podrá olvidar jamás: ese ruido es una especie de tableteo de ametralladora [Among the thousand and one sounds that overwhelm us when we go for a walk (the cries of street vendors, the panting of coolies, the laughter or crying of children, the exclamations of the amah, the clanging of cymbals or the drumming of the wooden fish at Buddhist temples, radio loudspeakers, the falsetto singing of actresses in small theaters or “tea houses,” the screeching orchestras of two-string violins, etc.), there is one very peculiar noise that anyone who has visited the Flowery Middle Kingdom will never forget: this sound is a kind of machine-gun rat-a-tat] (1948: 7–8).

Writing as a means to exhaust the complexities of the modern world opens an alternative path to sensitivity, while it is not reduced to the traditional limits of *the beauty* nor to the moral limits of *the good*. This makes Orrego and Marín’s descriptions truly fascinating since they incorporate war, misery, and horror as part of the sensitivity of their historic moment and as part of the sensory journey through which they guide the reader’s imagination through their experiences in China. In this sense, there is not only a space for the enveloping aroma of the rich essences and the richest spices but also a space for the most nauseating smells. Likewise, the vibrant sound of the *erhu* strings or the traditional performances in teahouses are comparable to a firing machine gun. The search for new narrative subjectivities is a search that occurs not only in parallel with the search for alternative models and references, but they are closely interconnected.



Fig. 23: “Don Eugenio Orrego Vicuña” Taken at the Great Buddha of Kamakura in Kanagawa, Japan.
Source: SURDOC. <<https://fotografia.surdoc.cl/index.php/registro/9-384>>.

The journey to China is also a journey toward *alterity*, and its encounter with it demands, as a consequence, the design of new subjectivities and new narrative expressions capable of giving an account of that experience through an equally alternative channel. Therefore, both the act of writing and the act of traveling are situated throughout this period as end points in themselves and not as mere derivatives of diplomatic or commercial purposes. Hence, this interdependence between traveling and writing is reflected in the fact that in order to define travel as a practice, writing served as the best channel, and to this effect, travel writing was not achievable without being mediated by the travel experience. Thus, they became channels for exploration and interpretation of each other.

Consequently, travel narrative experienced a notable diversification in terms of genre over these decades, which made the travel writers explore multiple alternatives, such as the travel diary, the journalistic article, the travel chronicle. If the travelers of the previous century openly emphasized the fact that they were not writers or artists, this process of professionalization of the different literary genres became an opportunity for the travel writers of the first half of the twentieth century to deepen their literary practice and to elevate their travel writing to the level of the word made art.

With this, they reaffirmed not only their ability to write but also their capacity to make art out of their writing. It is therefore safe to say that if writing was in the nineteenth century a mere consequence of the exercise of public office, in the twentieth century, holding a public office was, in fact, an excuse to be able to write. That was the case of three of the five travelers that are part of this chapter: Guzmán,

Orrego, and Marín. On the other hand, this exploration also became the leading path toward the configuration of multiple forms of subjectivity as well as different levels of presence of the most personal *self* in their writing. Thus, the influence of a more developed and proponent sensibility is undoubtedly a factor common to all the travel narratives that constitute this chapter and whose presence only differs in their levels of influence and protagonism. “Desde nuestra terraza podemos ver el crepúsculo sobre el mar. Es un crepúsculo apacible y adormecedor. Las nubes tienen colores suaves y débiles, azul violeta y rosa. Posee la tarde oriental una fuerza de languidez extraña. Ella ordena el silencio, ella exige la oración budista, ella pone en los labios callados la pipa de opio” [From our terrace, we can see the twilight over the sea. It is a peaceful and drowsy twilight. The clouds wear soft, faint hues of violet blue and pink. The Eastern evening has a strange force of languor. It commands silence, it demands the Buddhist prayer, it places the opium pipe on silent lips] (Guzmán 1998: 72)

Therefore, the plasticity of Guzmán Cruchaga’s sentences (above) becomes the result of a much more thoughtful choice of words. They reflect a desire to share with the reader not a detailed description of his observations but a watercolor of words that paint. This approach paints the depths of an impression and of the most fortuitous capture of an instant which they transformed into written word. In this order of ideas, the commitment of the traveler with the truth, as part of the distance that is taken from Europe, is a marginal matter. That is the reason why Guzmán’s travel writing has shaken off the pressure to become a reference manual or a rationalized guide to Hong Kong as a city, or to China as a nation, or to the Chinese as a culture and society. Conversely, Guzmán’s artistic bet is to channel through another medium that is not that of anthropological or ethnographic observation transmitted to the reader through information or knowledge but of an alternative channel through which his journey can be transmitted to his readers, and that is the dimension of art.

La música china, débil, indolente y monótona, tiene a veces rebeliones de gong. Suena a lo lejos una gaita escocesa que repite incansable un motivo vulgar y, aunque viene de Escocia, tiene el carácter oriental y es la noche de China quien le ordena sufrir y llorar con el mismo llanto de la flauta, del gong y del violín unicorde [Chinese music, weak, indolent, and monotonous, sometimes erupts with rebellions of gongs. In the distance, a Scottish bagpipe plays tirelessly, repeating a vulgar tune, and although it comes from Scotland, it bears the Eastern character, for it is the night of China that commands it to suffer and weep with the same lament of the flute, the gong, and the single-stringed violin] (Guzmán 1998: 72).

These few lines condense, through that sound imagined by the reader and combined with the literary word, not only decades of history of imperialism woven from the encounters between China and the British Empire. In Guzmán’s words

Hong Kong is recognized as a very different and unique cultural and identity framework that has emerged through the cracks of history.

To illustrate this, Guzmán dispenses with the mention of dates, names, treaties, and historical events, but his lines are an inexorable testimony of the clash between cultures because even though the gong sounds different from the bagpipe, the bagpipe cannot get rid of its “oriental character.” It is in this same sense that Guzmán does not intend to draw a marked and defining line that divides nationalities and geographies but rather creates a flexible space for coexistence. Therefore, Guzmán represents that interesting breaking point that travel writing reaches and that Beatriz Colombi defines according to their circulation circuits: “el periódico que los somete a la deriva de un soporte pasajero, y la literatura, que se caracteriza por inscribirlos en una tradición perdurable” [The newspaper, which subjects them to the drift of a fleeting medium, and literature, which is characterized by inscribing them in a lasting tradition] (2010: 14). Additionally, Guzmán Cruchaga manages to capture the sociopolitical circumstances that China was facing during the first decades of the twentieth century. He also condenses his political reading of this situation and his accurate forecast of the years to come as well as the international geopolitical tensions that we are still witnessing presently:

Barcos de la guerra de Gran Bretaña, de Estados Unidos y del Japón descansan anclados en la bahía. Temen seguramente algún estornudo del Dragón. El *Hermes* lanza todas las mañanas su escuadrilla de aeroplanos que espían la frontera y toman el pulso de la «rebeldía» de Cantón. Los chinos sonríen. ¿Por qué nos parece iluminada de futuro la sonrisa de los ojos oblicuos? [Warships from Great Britain, the United States, and Japan rest anchored in the bay. They surely fear some sneeze from the Dragon. Every morning, the *Hermes* sends out its squadron of airplanes to spy on the border and take the pulse of Canton's “rebellion.” The Chinese smile. Why does the smile of those oblique eyes seem illuminated by the future?] (1998: 73)

Similarly, in the prologue of his travel book, Eugenio Orrego says in relation to this new dimension that traveling acquires in this period that: “Ante el Buda de Kamakura, sumido en la inefable dulzura del Nirvana, meditaría sobre la inutilidad de los libros [...] Pasearía, más tarde, mi emoción por los palacios y los templos prodigiosos de China y clavaría mis tristezas en el alma de cada paisaje” [Before the Buddha of Kamakura, immersed in the ineffable sweetness of Nirvana, I would meditate on the futility of books [...] Later, I would stroll, my emotions wandering through the marvelous palaces and temples of China, and I would embed my sorrows in the soul of each landscape] (1931: 17–18). His words also underscore the inoperativeness of traditional Western methods to condense the unattainable experience that represents the encounter with the *alterity* through travel. Among these profound limitations is the written word as a way of channeling that experience

“¿Qué descripción valedera podríamos hacer? China es menester vivirla” [What valid description could we make? China must be lived] (1931: 184) a fundamental point of convergence with the ideas of Gómez Carrillo and, in turn, a deeply political position insofar as it questions and defies the limits that the rationalization of the experience has placed on our perception, sensitivity, thought as well as the construction and legitimation of their expression channels.

Thus, although Orrego evidently uses the written word to account for his travel impressions, there are noticeable alternative resources used in his way of writing to bring the reader closer to his travel experience. This achieves a shortening of the barrier that separates the writer from their readers, as the following words that close the preface and welcome his travel impressions demonstrate: “comencé así a decir a mi auditorio familiar: el séptimo día de la cuarta luna, cuando por primera vez transpuse los umbrales de la Ciudad Prohibida, en Pekín” [I began to say to my familiar audience: on the seventh day of the fourth moon, when I first crossed the thresholds of the Forbidden City in Beijing] (1931: 18). This invitation extended to the reader to attend the staging of his travel adventures promises more of a performative nature and a collective experience rather than an individual reading. It also proposes a rather oral and interpretative approach to the travel text as a means of partaking in the experience of traveling.

Similarly, as can be noted in the following passage that Orrego writes during his train trip between Tianjin and Beijing, the writer establishes a more casual and spontaneous interaction with the reader, which gives reading a more familiar and informal insight: “Dejo caer el libro que tengo en las manos, pues me viene a las mientes aquella sabrosa historia referida por el filósofo chino Dchuang Dsi, discípulo del gran Laôtsé. ¿No la conocéis? Es tan popular en el país amarillo que bien vale la pena os la refiera” [I drop the book I have in my hands, for that delightful story comes to mind, recounted by the Chinese philosopher Dchuang Dsi, a disciple of the great Laôtsé. Don’t you know it? It is so popular in the Yellow Country that it’s certainly worth sharing with you] (1931: 178). There are several remarkable points along this passage. First, it is interesting and probably also very symbolic that he drops his book before he begins to tell the story. It is through this gesture that he refuses to use a written version of it and rather chooses to give the impression of constructing an oral story. On the other hand, despite referring to a traditional and millenary story of Chinese philosophy and thought, he does so without any air of erudition. Finally, Orrego resorts again to addressing his readers more directly, asking them a question to create the illusion of a more active interaction, which gives the text a more dialogical impression.

On the other hand, as mentioned, the ties between the traveler and the nation have also loosened as a consequence of this search and exploration of alternative

ways of *being* and narrating. The constraints derived from a strict delimitation of a uniform sense of nation or national identity are called into question. Such querying of nation and nationality is not exclusively limited to one's own nationality but rather to the idea of what is national in itself seen from a broader perspective. Thus, the solemn character with which it was approached over the course of the nineteenth-century travel narrative becomes much more flexible in the travel writing of the first half of the twentieth century. Similarly, the scientific seriousness with which it was sought to condense or apprehend the ultimate essence of a nationality, or a culture, is lightened. The lines that Guzmán Cruchaga dedicated to his first impressions after his arrival in Hong Kong in 1925 are an example of this:

Al desembarcar en Hong Kong nos sorprende la variedad de trajes y de razas: el indio que oprime la cabeza noble con el turbante pintoresco, la japonesa graciosamente envuelta en su kimono de seda, la china con sus senos diminutos y sus lindos pantalones de muñeca, el inglés que luce las piernas peludas de animal prehistórico y que marcha con sus rodillas al aire y sus gruesos calcetines de niño bobo [Upon disembarking in Hong Kong, we are surprised by the variety of costumes and races: the Indian, pressing his noble head with a picturesque turban, the Japanese gracefully wrapped in her silk kimono, the Chinese with her tiny breasts and cute doll-like pants, the Englishman flaunting his hairy legs like some prehistoric animal, marching with his knees exposed and his thick socks of a foolish child] (1998: 70).

These humorous lines are a caricature of the national types. In them, there is no attempt to evade stereotypes or essentialisms but rather to transform them into something laughable. Still, in this new form of travel writing, there is plenty of room for a much more personal, pleasurable, and anecdotic dimension of the traveling experience. For instance, the relation with a form of national identity or a sense of belonging will be addressed on a more personal scale and not only limited to the interior social and historical processes within the realms of a nation. In contrast, they will be subjected to more global dynamics and interactions: “En los pocos días pasados en Venezuela, me habría llevado conmigo la visión de la tierra querida como un perfume evocador que me acompañase luego allá, en las tierras desconocidas y lejanas” [In the few days spent in Venezuela, I would have carried with me the vision of the beloved land, like an evocative perfume that would accompany me later, in the unknown and distant lands] (de la Parra [1920] 2011: 14).

Thus, despite the presence of a sense of national belonging within these lines, the attachment to that beloved nation seems to be as accessorial to the individual as a perfume. It is depicted as abstract and imagined, akin to an evocation. Similarly, it is also evident in this passage that throughout the course of that journey not only the perception of that national identity would be disrupted by the influence of that encounter with the unknown, but those distant lands would also be seen from a particular light by reason of that bond with the nation.

This important shift in the focus of the journey, from a more panoramic and impersonal view to a much more detailed and subjective voyage, also caused a shift in the focal points of the travel narration. Thus, these new travel writers turn to their interiority to portray their own experience. Not only have they stared at themselves and their *traveling self*, but the lens has ceased to focus exclusively on the stage and has turned to face the audience. The figure of the tourist in these travel texts has come out of the darkness of the auditorium to become an actor and a much more active participant to play a role as a character in these travel impressions, in the words of Guzmán Cruchaga: “Es, por lo tanto, el turista un personaje interesante del Oriente. A cada paso encontramos al inglés millonario o al rey del acero o de la pimienta con su señora, dos niños, dos globos, uno para cada niño y dos *nurses*, una para cada globo” [The tourist is, therefore, an interesting character in the East. At every step, we encounter the millionaire Englishman or the king of steel or pepper with his wife, two children, two balloons, one for each child, and two nurses, one for each balloon] (1998: 71). Clearly, the tourists have come to occupy a place in the landscape. They have become an observant element and sparked enough interest to be worth watching and describing. In the same vein, the visited place loses relevance as a place in itself and acquires significance in relation to how it is described, the thoughts and sensations which it happened to provoke, as well as the cultural, social, political, and aesthetic interactions that were propitiated in it. As a result, the visited space has changed the traveler, and they have changed forever the space that, even though they inhabited temporarily, is a space that also became an indelible part of them.

Re-Writing China for the Latin American Reader

As one of the consequences of the commodification of the written word, the production of this lettered class faces a public that is not exclusively part of their elite but is a rather broader audience, which “empieza a albergar a la sociedad de masas, la cultura y su divulgación comienzan a cubrir zonas decisivas de la experiencia común (desde la ocupación del tiempo libre hasta la posibilidad de ascender socialmente) [...] el intelectual como el que escribe sobre lo que le interesa a ‘todo el mundo’” [It begins to accommodate mass society, with culture and its dissemination starting to cover decisive areas of common experience (from the occupation of leisure time to the possibility of social advancement) [...] the intellectual as one who writes about what interests ‘everyone’] (Montaldo 2013: 15). Unlike the travelers of the nineteenth century, journalists like Santa Cruz made a living writing or, most

commonly, held diplomatic positions like in the case of Guzmán, Orrego, or Marín allowing them to write.



Fig. 24: Illustration included in Elvira Santa Cruz's travel chronicle "Un viaje a la China" (1931a: 4).

According to Ángel Rama, to the intellectual activities related to "la administración, las instituciones públicas y la política, se agregaron las provenientes del rápido crecimiento de tres sectores que absorbieron numerosos intelectuales, estableciendo una demanda constante de nuevos reclutas: la educación, el periodismo y la diplomacia. Solo la segunda pareció disponer de un espacio ajeno al contralor de estado" [Administration, public institutions, and politics were joined by those arising from the rapid growth of three sectors that absorbed numerous intellectuals, establishing a constant demand for new recruits: education, journalism, and diplomacy. Only the second seemed to have a space free from state control] ([1984] 1998: 63). This independence from the state allowed an important level of specialization that goes through the writing of these Latin American travelers to China. It brought a deepening in the definition of the limits of each genre and each one of its derivatives. Additionally, it initiated a very interesting process of experimentation, which allowed room to challenge the stability of those limits.

In these decades, there is a combination of very personal traveling impressions and journalistic reports that, rather than going back millennia in the history of China and making endless recounts of its dynasties and the names of its emperors, seek to inform the new Latin American reader of the current political situation of those countries and the geopolitical framework in which they found themselves. Thus, despite Juan Marín being the traveler through whom the academicist role of the traveler-ethnographer is best preserved given that his work prioritizes and displays extensive sections dedicated to the history of Chinese philosophy, theater, and

literature as well as the history of architecture, religion, pottery, and medicine. The way of approaching this information to his reader is, nonetheless, very different.

Rather than observing China as an isolated object of study, his interest is focused on establishing ties between China and the world, identifying points in common that go beyond the limits of traditional parallelisms. The following juncture that Marín establishes between China and Latin America in connection with the history of their pottery illustrates this point: “las semejanzas con la alfarería china son sorprendentes y que objetos como el trípode ‘Li’ se encuentran en las excavaciones mayas, iguales a los de la Alfarería Negra de Hangchow o de Hsinan-Fú” [The similarities with Chinese pottery are striking, and objects such as the “Li” tripod can be found in Maya excavations, identical to those of the Black Pottery of Hangchow or Hsinan-Fú] (1948: 22). This gesture can be interpreted as a way of taking distance from writing of China focused on the identification of unfathomable divergences and irreconcilable differences, to come closer to an understanding of those differences simply as alternative developments of similar ideas, concepts or processes.

Even on occasions in which historical events, dates, or names are mentioned, that historical account undergoes a transformation. Ultimately, the desire to reproduce that information without being intervened has vanished, so much so that it is through the subjective intervention of that historical account seen and experienced from a personal perspective that such information acquires a new significance.

Por esas puertas que millones de hombres han cruzado, siento circular la vida de Pekín. Chinos, tártaros, mongoles, interminables caravanas de camellos con fatiga de desiertos, palanquines, carretas tiradas por bueyes o por mulos, kurumas, cortejos... Y por sobre esto la sensación de que vuestra vida se ha detenido hace miles de años. Es como si aún viviésemos en los días de Confucio [Through those gates that millions of men have crossed, I feel the life of Beijing circulating. Chinese, Tartars, Mongols, endless caravans of camels weary from deserts, palanquins, carts drawn by oxen or mules, kurumas, processions... And above all, the sensation that your life has stopped thousands of years ago. It is as if we are still living in the days of Confucius] (1931: 184).

It is for this reason that in the case of Orrego, history acquires a much more relevant dimension in the *sensing* than in the *knowing*. It is then through the subjectivation of the experience of history and the particularization of its events that history, as a collective narrative, manages not only to continue to be valid but to make that very distant historical reality—an accessible space for the sensibility of the Latin American reader. An attribute of this new way of narrating the travel experience was also, at least in the case of Eugenio Orrego’s travel book, well received by critics, such as Hugo Ricaldoni, and coined as a remarkable feature: “es uno de los pocos viajeros que han sabido ver con sus propios ojos,



Fig. 25: Photograph included in Marín's travel book in a section titled "De la medicina" with the caption "...en posesión de los atributos de un curandero budista..." [...in possession of the attributes of a Buddhist healer...] (1948: 210).

sentir con su propia alma, y luego hablar con sus pensamientos íntimos" [He is one of the few travelers who have known how to see with their own eyes, feel with their own soul, and then speak with their innermost thoughts] (1931: 7). Although reflection, education, and analysis were still highly valued as components of the travel narration as Ricaldoni still describes Orrego as a "cronista verídico," it is, in fact, the ability to express the intimacy of the poetic feeling what will endorse the traveler of this new period. That past encyclopedism is even perceived as a restraint and an undesirable coercion of the experience, as Ricaldoni continues saying about the figure of Orrego as a travel writer: "En su ánimo no han hecho coacción las lecturas anteriores" [In his mind, previous readings have not exerted any coercion] (7). In the same sense, the travel writer is neither responsible for a tradition nor are they condemned to the continuation of a form of conceiving and crafting travel writing. It is, in fact, the fidelity that they keep to their own impressions that distinguishes it from other travelers, and it is also a way of giving the reader an inimitable poetic experience regarding the most personal encounter of a traveler with China:

Orrego Vicuña no ha escrito para prolongar una tradición de Claude Farrere, de Pierre Loti o de Gómez Carrillo. Los que antes que él por allí pasaron, no le interesan. De guiarse solamente por la sensibilidad ajena, le hubiera bastado con encerrarse en su gabinete, entornar las ventanas, quemar hierbas y releer *Temporeras*, acariciando distraídamente la trama metálica de un kimono, con flores de fuego sobre lienzo de oro [Orrego Vicuña has not written to extend a tradition of Claude Farrère, Pierre Loti, or Gómez Carrillo. Those

who passed through there before him do not interest him. If he had only followed the sensitivity of others, he could have confined himself to his study, closed the windows, burned incense, and reread *Temporeras*, absentmindedly caressing the metallic weave of a kimono with fire flowers on a gold canvas] (1931: 8).

Orrego's efforts to consolidate his own travel narrative are varied. In general, his travel book configures, between sections, a compilation of experiments, some more successful than others, in achieving a traveling consciousness that is unified with both his poetic and journalistic consciousness. As part of these efforts, his intention is to re-narrate some key episodes of Chinese history but give each one of them his literary touch. It is through this practice that Orrego transforms historical characters into his own characters and strips away a stiff and impersonal way of narrating history. This literary narrative not only approaches the reader from an alternative point of view, as it is more playful and dynamic. It also uses the aesthetic conjuncture of its time and its place of creation to reexplore and resignify the most intricate historical and social tensions that hover over China as a nation and as a society. Thus, in the following passage, Orrego intends to retell what he himself calls "the tragedy" at the interior of the convent of Cheng Huangmiao:

Los Hay Chin Fou iniciaron vida de derroche y opulencia. Los festines, las jornadas de placer, los espectáculos más variados se sucedían sin tregua. Y los años volaban bajo la mirada burlona de los dioses. Más un día el emperador supo que la señorial familia conspiraba en contra de la dinastía reinante, fraternizando con los enemigos del trono, y para castigarla envió una expedición militar que puso cerco a Ching Wong Meu [The Hay Chin Fou began a life of excess and opulence. Feasts, days of pleasure, and the most varied spectacles followed one another without pause. And the years flew by under the mocking gaze of the gods. But one day, the emperor learned that the noble family was conspiring against the reigning dynasty, fraternizing with the enemies of the throne. To punish them, he sent a military expedition that laid siege to Ching Wong Meu] (1931: 172)

In this sense, the great milestones of Chinese history of the nineteenth century are not told through a historical panorama that offers an official, impersonal, and generalized version of history as an irrefutable document. In contrast, Orrego challenges and resignifies them by resorting to another narrative point of view that could be compared to a zooming-in from the perspective of a cinematographic narrative. Through a family, a place, and a very particular moment within the vastness of Chinese history, Orrego synthesizes the pressing events and consequences of this century, dispensing them with dates and historical events.

This is not only evident in his capacity to establish that sort of relationship with history and the past but also his ability to put the past and the tradition in dialogue with both the adverse present of the China that he visited as well as the hopeful socialism as its future project. The impersonalization of the report is invalidated

and, more than an analysis of the country's current affairs, is replaced with a form of *sensing* that community in its current circumstances. An example of this can be found in the section titled “Estampas de Pekín,” in which he describes the popularity that the processions have in the city. Death, as an element that is common to all, serves in this passage as the connecting and unifying thread.

Todo en Pekín marcha en cortejo. Desde los muertos que ocupan carrozas adornadas de plumones, sedas, cintajos y papeles, precedidos por los dolientes con túnica blanca y acompañamiento de acólitos, estandartes, tambores y campanillas [...] Los hay que viven imaginando las pompas de su muerte [...] La estrechez de la vida, su bajísimo standard y la miseria extrema que reina, ¿no explican este homenaje a lo que está más allá de la existencia humana y de la justicia de los hombres? Cuando las gentes ponen su esperanza en la otra orilla es porque en esta la explotación y el privilegio, naturalizados, han muerto aún en la esperanza [Everything in Beijing moves in procession. From the dead who occupy carriages adorned with feathers, silks, ribbons, and papers, preceded by mourners in white tunics and accompanied by acolytes, banners, drums, and bells... There are those who live imagining the pomp of their own death... Does not the narrowness of life, its very low standard, and the extreme misery that reigns, explain this tribute to what lies beyond human existence and the justice of men? When people place their hope in the other shore, it is because in this one, exploitation and privilege, once naturalized, have even died in hope] (1931: 185).

In the same way, Orrego recognizes that when it comes to remembering, art casts its anchors much further away than history, and its roots sprout much deeper in the terrains of collective memory than the encyclopedic and official versions.



Fig. 26: “Juan Guzmán Cruchaga entre los pasajeros de un barco hacia 1917” Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Chile Memoria Chilena <<https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-100040.html>>.

For this very reason Orrego reminds his readers that: “De esta tragedia hace quinientos años. Pasaron los sabios, pasaron los grandes señores y solo permanecen los dioses, los dioses creados por loca imaginación de artistas” [This tragedy took place five hundred years ago. The wise men passed, the great lords passed, and only the gods remain, the gods created by the wild imagination of artists] (1931: 172). We will see this gesture repeated on multiple occasions throughout his travel narration. Among them are, for instance, the unfortunate encounter he had with Zhang Zoulin as well as the description of his sea journey toward the port city of Tianjin. On the third day of this journey, descriptions such as the following become very telling: “En las veladas de a bordo se perfila el tedio con sus alas grises que baten infinitamente. En la cámara algunos jóvenes chinos, envueltos en túnicas de seda, juegan mayong. Tres o cuatro japoneses cantan aires de su tierra con voz gangosa” [On the evening aboard, boredom takes shape with its gray wings that beat endlessly. In the cabin, some young Chinese, wrapped in silk robes, play mahjong. Three or four Japanese sing tunes from their land in a nasal voice] (1931: 175).

In this way, Orrego paints portraits that resemble several histories in miniature—small portraits of manners that say a lot without having to be explained. Apart from that, Orrego provides his readers with various and diverse portraits like these—almost like small bits that are part of an immense piece that he never reveals in its entirety to his readers, as they are invited to assemble their own version of it. Similarly, but this time on the train from Tianjin to Beijing, Orrego shows no interest in making a meticulous description of the train and its passengers, but as in the sketch of a caricature, he cunningly chooses aspects that are not only distinctive but also very propounding historically and politically. The following is another passage that adds to what could be described as a collection of impressions. A philatelic album full of stamps that have been constructed by an agile and light hand in the manner of a sketch renouncing any defining strokes or marked lines:

Abigarrado conjunto de viajeros: algunos chinos con coleta, a la vieja usanza; varios, macizos y bien tenidos, que llevan túnicas gris y calzón negro de seda, coronado su indumento por el sombrero nacional que es a modo de birrete eclesiástico. Una dama de calidad asoma, bajo su túnica en seda bordada de flores, dos pies inverosímilmente pequeños, deformados por el uso de aquel monstruoso zapato de hierro que prescribía la tradición. Frente a mí, un señor gordísimo cruza con beatitud sobre el vientre sus manos cubiertas de anillos. Estaciones. Nuevos pueblucos. Asistentes que ofrecen té perfumado [A motley group of travelers: some Chinese with a queue, in the old-fashioned style; several, solid and well-kept, wearing gray tunics and black silk trousers, their attire topped with the national hat resembling an ecclesiastical biretta. A lady of quality appears, under her silk robe embroidered with flowers,

two incredibly small feet, deformed by the use of that monstrous iron shoe prescribed by tradition. In front of me, a very fat man crosses his ring-covered hands over his belly with a beatific expression. Stations. New villages. Attendants offering perfumed tea] (1931: 177)

On the other hand, Orrego is one of the travel writers who manage to break with his pen that glass that divides the comfortable bourgeois interiority from the desperate historical reality that is experienced outside. Thus, a large part of the portraits of manners that Orrego had presented so far correspond to his recreation of that interiority. However, his encounter with the city of Beijing made him leave his tranquil atelier to go out into the street with a canvas to observe and give a narrative place to that shadowed space: “el barbero ambulante que sienta al cliente en una silleta, le embadurna el rostro y hace brillar las hojas de sus navajas; los vendedores chillando nombres de comestibles, el cirujano que trabaja a pleno aire y lleva al hombro su instrumental, los maestros de remiendo, los juglares; los mendigos, ciudadanos por antonomasia” [The traveling barber who seats the client on a small chair, smears his face, and polishes the blades of his razors; the vendors shouting the names of foodstuffs, the surgeon working in the open air with his instruments slung over his shoulder, the cobblers, the minstrels; the beggars, the quintessential citizens] (1931: 188).

Although in the next and last section of this chapter, I will address in more detail the socialist imprint in Orrego’s work, I can go ahead by saying that the figure of the worker as a universalizing and unifying element of intercontinental struggles of social and power asymmetries acquires fundamental importance. In the above passage, the worker is placed as the protagonist and the travel writer does not describe them through a glass. By contrast, they are integrated into the street as a space of social and political confluence and merged with his work as a writer into the rest of the labor force that inhabits and sustains that exteriority.

Another manifestation of narrative mechanisms through which an attempt was made to, if not to tear down, at least to crack, the glass set between the observer and the observed is the firm intention of narrating China from China. By this, I do not mean to physically inhabit it but to try to see it through its own eyes. One of the most telling examples of this new narrative approach is the section entitled “Li Chi” written by Guzmán. Guzmán tells us the story of a woman named Li Chi whose greatest wish is to give birth to a male child to alleviate the pain suffered by her rich husband who, despite having many wives, has no heir yet. Thus, despite the fact that as a character, Li Chi does not narrate her story in the first person, but it is Guzmán who serves as the narrator-mediator between Li Chi and the readers. The incorporation of this narrative resource shortens the distance not only geographically but also culturally between China and the readers. Furthermore, it dispenses with elaborate explanations to condense and account for the multiple

layers of social and cultural tensions in which forms and distributions of power accumulate in the Chinese context.

Socialism and the First Common Horizons

The political commitment that several of these travel writers manifested in their literary and journalistic work is far from being an isolated event. The ferocious entry of capitalism and the processes of industrialization and liberalization of the economy brought with it not only the incorporation into the labor force but also the integration into systematic chains of exploitation. This gave rise to the emergence of a working class in the American subcontinent, whose broadening brought a strong social pressure to expand the limits of politics and power, succeeding in the emergence of multiple popular movements. Thus, despite the contradictions and multiple complexities that the social and political commitment expressed by these travelers imply, the interest in recognizing the historical and cultural place of women in Latin American history expressed by de la Parra or the forceful fight of Elvira Santa Cruz for the rights of women and children are commitments that cannot be separated from their role as travelers and even more specifically of their role as travel writers within their circumstances.

Bridges between social elites were manifested through a transcontinental class alliance covered and justified by a form of cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, the unleashing of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1917) in the continent, as well as the project of transiting from an empire to a socialist state triggered by the Russian Revolution (1917–1923) in the subsequent decade, marked very significant milestones in the geopolitics of the time. They gave a new air to the diaries of Latin Americans who visited China and recorded their impressions from the 1930s.

According to Marcelo Alvarado M., even though between 1890 and 1930 there was a certain level of diffusion and debate around Marx's works in Latin America, it will be necessary to wait until the 1930s to see a rather elaborated vernacular theory around it. With the exception of the efforts of José Carlos Mariátegui in Peru and the translations of *The Capital* by the Argentinians Juan B. Justo and Aníbal Ponce, it is not possible to argue that before that “se desarrollara un ‘marxismo vernáculo’ con el dominio crítico de las fuentes y carácter creador para interpretar nuestra realidad” [A ‘vernacular Marxism’ will develop, characterized by a critical mastery of sources and a creative approach to interpreting our reality] (Alvarado 2016: 54).

Following Ángel Rama the Great Depression of 1929 brought to light “lo avanzado de la incorporación latinoamericana a la economía-mundo; por el otro la debilidad de su integración dependiente, al crecer la distancia entre centro y periferia en la

economía del capitalismo” [On one hand, the progress of Latin America’s integration into the world economy; on the other, the weakness of its dependent integration, as the gap between the center and the periphery grows within the capitalist economy] ([1984] 1998: 83). In the development of the vernacular Marxist theory for Latin American realities, Chile played an important role as its emergence was linked to a unique historical conjunction. Alvarado lists some of its most important aspects. In the first place, the forced and sudden stop of guano or saltpeter production as a consequence of the Great Depression¹¹ caused a tremendous increase in poverty levels in the main cities. As a result, a rise of social unrest appeared swiftly and prompted the fall of the dictatorship of Carlos Ibáñez. It was under these circumstances that the urge to open ways to consider different economic structures alternative to capitalism appeared, as it had amply demonstrated its unviability. Therefore, “la efímera República Socialista encabezada por Eugenio Matte y Marmaduke Grove en junio de 1932 que intentó por primera vez sustituir el capitalismo en el continente” [The ephemeral Socialist Republic led by Eugenio Matte and Marmaduke Grove in June 1932, which attempted for the first time to replace capitalism on the continent] (Alvarado 2016: 55) emerged.

In the case of Colombia, a couple more decades will pass before the imprint of the Latin American left manifests itself and aligns with an interest in China that could be strong enough to pursue a journey toward a personal encounter with it. For instance, Guillermo Valencia, who was one of the most representative figures of Colombian *modernismo* after José Asunción Silva, manifested his literary interest in China through the publication of *Catay* in 1929—a selection of poems that he translated from the French edition of Franz Toussaint. Nonetheless, his interest in China was clearly more poetic than political. Paradoxically, in his particular case, it was his poetic ability that allowed him to earn a place within the most traditional Colombian political powers (Builes 2012: 3). This became evident not only due to his early adherence to the conservative cause but also due to the influence he gained within the party, which led him to be chosen as their presidential candidate in the 1918 and 1929 elections (Ardila 2014: 119). Thus, he made clear in the prologue of *Catay* to whom that work was dedicated: “Inútil sugerir que este trabajo no va

¹¹ In his book *Vuelta al Mundo*, initially published as travel chronicles by *El Comercio* between 1933 and 1934, Aurelio Miró Quesada Sosa notes the decline of traveling as a consequence of the crisis: “La crisis económica, que es ya un lugar común en la terminología universal, añadida a la depreciación de las monedas sudamericanas, ha reducido sensiblemente el número de los viajeros que en otras ocasiones en esta misma época del año, asaltaban los barcos de las diversas compañías” [The economic crisis, which is already a commonplace in universal terminology, added to the depreciation of South American currencies, has significantly reduced the number of travelers who, at other times during this same season, would swarm the ships of various companies] (1936: 7).

destinado a cubistas, ultraístas, dadaístas y futuristas, como que los más antiguos autores de estos versos vieron entre los siglos VIII y XIII antes de nuestra Era” [It is futile to suggest that this little work is meant for cubists, ultraists, dadaists, and futurists, just as the earliest authors of these verses were from between the 8th and 13th centuries before our Era] (Valencia 1955: 253–254).

Among the most popular newspapers that served as platform for the intellectual elites of the country to give rise to their most heated debates, both politically and aesthetically, the following stand out: “El periódico liberal *El Tiempo* (1931) propiedad entonces de la familia Santos, el periódico *El siglo* (1936) de la familia Gómez, la revista *Semana*, (fundada en 1946 por Alberto Lleras Camargo, presidente entre 1958–1962 e integrante del grupo poético *Los Nuevos*) y el periódico liberal *El Espectador* (1887) de la influyente familia Cano” [The liberal newspaper *El Tiempo* (1931), then owned by the Santos family, the newspaper *El Siglo* (1936) of the Gómez family, the magazine *Semana* (founded in 1946 by Alberto Lleras Camargo, president between 1958–1962 and member of the poetic group *Los Nuevos*), and the liberal newspaper *El Espectador* (1887) of the influential Cano family] (Builes 2012: 4). Nonetheless, in a study on the formation of the communist press in Colombia, Maryluz Vallejo Mejía highlights the contribution of the poet Luis Tejada Cano, who “Ya desde el periódico *El Luchador*, de Medellín (1919), Tejada asombro con sus tempranos escritos de corte revolucionario donde abogaba por los derechos de los trabajadores” [Already in the newspaper *El Luchador* from Medellín (1919), Tejada amazed with his early revolutionary writings, where he advocated for workers’ rights] (2001: 36).

Vallejo highlights the journal *El Sol*, of which the poet Luis Vidales was a cofounder, as well as the publication of the degree thesis by the leftist leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1924 entitled *Las ideas socialistas en Colombia*. This text was an important referent for the debate that unfolded during the First Workers’ Congress celebrated that same year in the city of Bogota, whose attendees included the poet León de Greiff (Vallejo 2001: 37). In 1925, de Greiff and Rafael Maya founded the literary movement and magazine *Los Nuevos* (Malatesta 2003: 62). Poet Jorge Zalamea who visited China during the 1950s was among its members. Far from being a coincidence, the group emerged from a student movement as a political response to the generation of *Los Centenaristas*. According to James D. Henderson, the first group sought to achieve a change in the face of the insensitivity regarding social inequalities, while the latter one had plunged the country because of their blind faith in material progress. It was a gesture of social indifference that condemned both the exercise of reflection and creation to an exercise of capitalist superficiality. As a result, Alfonso López Pumarejo accused *Los Nuevos* of being “nuestros socialistas radicales” [Our radical socialists] (2006: 250).

Chile traces a distinct social and political circulation that leaves conspicuous examples in the travel books of Orrego during the 1930s and Juan Marín in both the 1930s and 1940s. As Orrego expressed it in his text “Ensayo sobre la realidad chilena”, in relation to Domingo Melfi’s work *Sin brújula*: “el mundo marcha a la izquierda [...] es fácil advertir que por doquiera triunfan corrientes que se dirigen hacia el socialismo como los ríos hacia el mar [...] rumbos socialistas definidos deben ser los intérpretes de la magna revolución espiritual que se opera ya en nuestra América” [The world is moving to the left [...] it is easy to notice that currents leading toward socialism are triumphing everywhere, like rivers flowing toward the sea [...] socialist directions must be the interpreters of the great spiritual revolution that is already taking place in our America] (1933: 345–346).

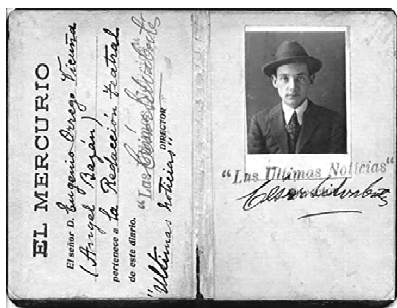


Fig. 27: Identification card of Eugenio Orrego Vicuña during his time working as editor at *El Mercurio*. Source: SURDOC <<https://www.surdoc.cl/registro/9-1053>>.

Thus, it is from this decade that socialism will become a new bridge of universalization and transcontinental voice. It drew for the first time a common horizon long enough to unify the political and social destinies of Latin America and China along that tracing: “Todos cantan. Una voz unánime puebla el espacio y hace vibrar los edificios y las almas. Es la marcha de los trabajadores, es el canto de guerra de los trabajadores, es la voz de esperanza de los trabajadores” [Everyone sings. A unanimous voice fills the space, making buildings and souls tremble. It is the march of the workers, it is the war song of the workers, it is the voice of hope of the workers] (Orrego E.: 1931: 40) As a consequence, the worker becomes a universalizing figure who, at least when seen through Orrego’s eyes, defines a common intercontinental purpose—a glimmer of hope amid the outrages of war:

Más allá del horizonte nuestro, preñado de tragedias, de cobardías, de incomprensiones; más allá del tiempo actual, más allá de la vida esclavizada, más allá de la explotación... Y esa mirada avanza, sin duda, a través de los tiempos heroicos de la lucha, a través de los días

épicos, y se adentra por los serenos horizontes de los tiempos que vendrán [Beyond our horizon, pregnant with tragedies, cowardices, and misunderstandings; beyond the present time, beyond the enslaved life, beyond exploitation... And that gaze moves forward, undoubtedly, through the heroic times of struggle, through the epic days, and ventures into the serene horizons of the times to come] (1931: 39).

Orrego writes these words on the banks of the Sumida River in the city of Tokyo. Thus, even though the level of industrialization that he had already seen in Japan, as well as the resilient and disciplined nature of the cultural soul of the Japanese, made Orrego have a special faith in the development of socialism in Japan. It also seems that for him it was just a matter of time before the strong revolutionary winds coming from the north blew over the vastness of the entire Asian continent: “La tierra de Lenin está próxima, y los que saben oír, con el corazón pegado a la tierra, escuchan ya un gran ruido que avanza” [The land of Lenin is near, and those who know how to listen, with their hearts pressed to the earth, already hear a great noise approaching] (1931: 51) but also over the rest of the world: “La sociedad socialista dominará en las tierras del mundo y llenará de una belleza inaudita el alma de los hombres ... ¡Los tiempos son venidos!” [The socialist society will dominate the lands of the world and fill the souls of men with an unprecedented beauty... The times have come!] (1931: 197).

Despite finding China mired in a devastating crisis and going through a moment of profound social and political upheaval, very contrasting with the case of Japan, there is no doubt in Orrego’s words that no other project could be more suitable for China than the socialist one and that, again, it was only a matter of time before that ideal materialized. However, it is also necessary to underline that despite the enthusiasm and hope that Orrego sees in Japan for the future of socialism in the rest of Asia and the world, this does not imply that he is less critical of the Japanese invasion of China or less aware of Japan’s imperialist deployment on the continent: “Las aduanas están en poder de Inglaterra. Cañoneros yanques o japoneses vigilan los puertos. ¿Y China? Asomad vuestras narices a los barrios populares y os entretendrá el espectáculo de todo un pueblo que aulla de hambre” [The customs are in the hands of England. Yankee or Japanese gunboats guard the ports. And China? Stick your noses into the working-class neighborhoods, and you’ll be entertained by the sight of an entire people howling from hunger] (1931: 191).

Wandering around the streets of Beijing, Orrego witnesses innumerable traditional processions, both funeral and nuptial, and it is in relation to this experience that he says: “¡Never more. Nitchevo. Nunca más! ...¡En la China socialista de mañana no se verán, por las calles, estos cortejos ruidosos del Pekín que yo he vivido” [Never again. Nitchevo. Never again! ... In tomorrow’s socialist China, these noisy processions of the Peking I have lived will no longer be seen in

the streets] (1931: 185). For this, as Orrego and other travelers have pointed out in their diaries of this period, there is a detachment of China from its dynastic past and, in this passage from Orrego's travel book, the detachment is consequently predicted not only from the forms of government anchored in that past but also a disengagement of its cultural and social ties with that past.

Additionally, that short phrase put in three languages between exclamation marks is, despite its brevity, a forceful sample of a perspective of the historical situation that China is going through. It is not seen as an isolated experience but rather as a broader pattern, replicated and experienced by others who have, as China, suffered the excesses of economic liberalization fueled by the voracious imperialist ambition of the West. Thereby, it is also noticeable that his travel writing also traces unifying political ties between nations and between continents through the powerful symbolism of the working force that seems to bet on ties narrowed beyond the limits imposed by geographical borders, cultural limits, or the particularities of national foundations:

En medio del ruido que acompaña la actividad febril del trabajo dominan los pregones callejeros, voces humildes que escapan del alma de las masas [...] son los mismos que escuché en mi infancia, en un rincón amado; los mismos que aproximan las almas de todas las razas... Los he oído en París, en Santiago, en el corazón de la India, y ahora los siento animar esta brava y tenaz tierra nipona [Amid the noise that accompanies the feverish activity of labor, the street vendors' cries dominate, humble voices that escape from the soul of the masses [...] they are the same ones I heard in my childhood, in a beloved corner; the same ones that bring the souls of all races together... I have heard them in Paris, in Santiago, in the heart of India, and now I feel them animating this brave and tenacious Japanese land] (1931: 49)

In this same sense, in the diaries and travel memories of the travelers studied in the previous chapter, there is an evident tendency to reconstruct their encounter with Asia from the perspective of the particularities of their country as a republic. The fact that several of them ensured a strong national imprint to be distinguished in the titles of their travel books, such as Pedro del Río's *Viaje entorno al mundo por un chileno* or even Juan Bustamante, who even added a regional nuance and openly dedicated his work *Viaje al antiguo mundo por el peruano Juan Bustamante, natural del departamento de Puno* to his fellow compatriots. In contrast, in the first half of the twentieth century, Latin America, as a unified political and cultural project, began to see its first sprouts. Orrego extends the limits of his Chileanness to the realms of a shared Latin American identity as it reveals the choice of the title of his first travel book, *Tierra de águilas: un sudamericano en la U.R.S.S.*

Regarding his vision of Asia as the architect of political and social models to the world, it is also evident that for Orrego, although the new political winds are blowing from Asia and not from Europe, the Soviet Union is the mast that directs the impetus

contained in all its sails. It is from this moment that Asia seems to offer a refreshing oasis of adventurous artistic inspiration and a new opportunity for modernity as a project and for industrialization to regain its social sense, providing the world a new canvas to sketch a future. The European models seemed to be deeply mired in the failures of their rationalist, exploitative, and colonial approach, exposed through the absurdity and insanity left by the Great War. As a result of that, Orrego's criticism over the voracious jaws of Western imperialism in China are openly expressed during his stay in Tianjin "Parte el tren de la ciudad europea, esto es de las concesiones arrancadas por el imperialismo occidental a la debilidad de un gran pueblo" [The train departs from the European city, this is from the concessions torn by Western imperialism from the weakness of a great people] (1931: 177).

Thus, while his passage through the Soviet Union gave way to works based on the promise of a new social and political model for Latin America that would distance himself from the failed European models, his passage through China and Japan still lacks the narrowed bond established with the USSR. This can be seen from the difference in the titles: *Mujeres, paisajes y templos* demonstrates a much more mythicized and idyllic vision of this part of the Asian continent. In contrast, his impression of the Soviet Union were condensed in titles such as *Tierra de águilas: un sudamericano en la U.R.S.S.* and *El país de Lenin: panorama general de la U.R.S.S.*

Nonetheless, it is clear that for Orrego, the only possible future for both Latin America and Asia, at least with regard to China and Japan, is a socialist one. Thus, his writing hints at the recognition not only of sufferings but also of common struggles as world peripheries—an acknowledgment that seems to have been possible thanks to his personal encounter with that part of the Asian continent and through his journey across it. Orrego highlights not only the obvious economic disparities between the North and Global South but also the disparities in the value of life:

En la buena ciudad de París o Lisboa, se leen periódicos. Noticias extranjeras anuncian un cambio del río Pey Ho y la muerte de doscientos mil chinos. Todos mueven los hombros. ¡China está muy lejos y sería menester averiguar si los amarillos pertenecen a la misma especie humana! ... Choque de trenes en Berlín. ¡Ah! Un estremecimiento recorre a los comensales... Notas de vida social: Lulú se ha roto un brazo. Y de ahí todo el mundo en agitación [In the fine cities of Paris or Lisbon, newspapers are read. Foreign news announces a shift in the Pey Ho river and the death of two hundred thousand Chinese. Everyone shrugs. China is very far away, and it would be necessary to check if the yellows belong to the same human species! ... A train collision in Berlin. Ah! A shiver runs through the diners... Social life notes: Lulú has broken an arm. And from there, everyone is in a frenzy] (1931: 190–191)

Despite belonging to and frequenting the same places and social circles, Orrego will be the first to critically caricature the ties established between these bourgeoisie and petty nobility of the world. His criticism is especially directed at the

consequences of their self-absorption and radical isolation from the latent historical and social realities that the thick walls of their distinguished bubble have hushed:

Es ciudad en miniatura. Allí se hospedan los visitantes ilustres y los ilustres burgueses enriquecidos. Hay tiendas subterráneas en donde se explota amablemente a los turistas americanos, un auditorium-cine que exhibe detestables producciones de Holliwood y ciento cincuenta mil salones en donde la alta burguesía y la pequeña nobleza, amén de personajes y funcionarios significados, ofrecen recepciones y hacen vida social [...] en este país en que agoniza una gran cultura y avanza el capitalismo con sus lacras y durezas de máquina implacable [It is a miniature city. There, distinguished visitors and wealthy bourgeois hosts reside. There are underground shops where American tourists are kindly exploited, an auditorium-cinema that screens detestable Hollywood productions, and one hundred and fifty thousand salons where the upper bourgeoisie and minor nobility, along with notable characters and officials, host receptions and engage in social life... in this country where a great culture is dying and capitalism advances with its blemishes and the harshness of an unyielding machine] (1931: 50–51).

In conclusion, it is worth emphasizing how the independence gained by the travel writer and by their travel writing in this period is also closely related to the search for their own subjectivity. It allowed the creation of new connections and new definitions for the dynamics of their interactions with the world, which go beyond the traditional transatlantic limits and mappings. With it, the hegemonic metropolitan narrative built around China from the European perception is challenged, and the creation of counterpoints is marked by shared experiences of colonialism. The multitude of journeys made by these travel writers and their travel narratives form a wide network of common historical experiences. This weaves a fabric of memories of a marginal and subaltern cosmopolitanism that together configure an alternative story.

In the next chapter, I will examine the implications of the triumph of the Communist Revolution in China and the establishment of the PRC on the transformation of the travelers and their subjectivities. I will also explore the influences that these new historical and geopolitical developments had on the forms of representation of their travel impressions in New China between 1949 and the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.