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Writing the Nation

Transculturation and nationalism in Hispano-Filipino literature from the early twentieth century

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Chapter 3

Imagining a Modern, Independent Philippines: Active Transculturation in Paz Mendoza's *Notas de viaje* (1929)

La satisfacción del que viaja no es precisamente visitar los cabarets, museos y ver una ciudad después de otra, sino en ver de cerca cómo piensa, trabaja y lucha la humanidad. (Mendoza 1929: 103)

[The satisfaction of the traveler is not precisely to visit cabarets, museums and see one city after another, but to see closely how humanity thinks, works and fights.]

Introduction

Through the engagement of Filipino writers with orientalist/colonialist discourses, western models of culture and thought also became a point of reference for the imagination of their own community. Specifically, the ideal of European modernity guided the Hispano-Filipino imagination in the construction of its national identity during the puzzling period following independence from the Spanish empire and the US occupation of the Philippines (1898-1946). Right in the middle of this period, Maria Paz Mendoza Guazón, a Filipino doctor and Professor of Medicine, published *Notas de viaje* (1929), a compilation of travel notes gathered on a world trip she completed between 1926 and 1927, in which she visited over 21 countries in Europe, America and the Middle East⁷⁸ as part of an educational project supported by the Filipino government. Mendoza contributed to this project with detailed reflections on foreign customs observed during her trip. She introduces her account as follows in the preface:

Mirado desde el punto de vista externo, o sea del indumentario literario, el libro posiblemente no tenga nada de galano, y si hoy lo publico, no me anima otro propósito que el de ceder a los ruegos de algunos amigos, y sobre todo, al impulso de un deber moral y cívico de dar cuenta a mi pueblo de cuanto he visto, observado y aprendido fuera de la tierra donde he nacido. [...] el relato de mi viaje podría ser de algún provecho para los míos, presentando ante sus ojos, reflejando en su mente todo lo bueno y útil de los demás pueblos, *que su espíritu pudiera asimilar para fortalecerlo, sin perder el sello característico de su individualidad, mejorando lo poco o mucho bueno que tenemos como pueblo oriental moldeado por los ideales y la cultura de Occidente* (Mendoza iii, emphasis added)

⁷⁸ Her travel notes are organised in the form of diary entries by country visited: US (Washington, New York, Key West), Cuba, England, France (Paris, Nice, Marseille, Corsica), Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Italy (Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples), Spain, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine/Israel and Egypt.

[From an external point of view, that is of the literary form, this book possibly lacks some elegance, and if I publish it today, I am only encouraged by yielding to the entreaties of some friends, and especially, to the impulse of the civic and moral duty of giving account to my people of all I have seen, observed and learned outside the land where I was born. (...) the story of my trip could be of use for some of my people, presented in front of their eyes, reflecting in their mind all that is good and useful from other peoples, *hoping that their spirit could assimilate in order to gain strength without losing the characteristics of its individuality, improving as much or as little good we have as an oriental people moulded by the ideals and culture of the west*]

Starting by establishing the social and political dimension of her writing as a moral and civil duty, Mendoza expresses the hope that her travel notes will benefit [*“ser de algún provecho”*] her people as an educational text. Her intentions to enlighten her people are attached to ideas of assimilation and improvement that can be read as derived from a spirit of achievement or, given the colonial conditions of the Philippines, as expressing a felt necessity to become something foreign perceived as superior. For Mendoza, Filipinos “are an oriental people modeled by the ideas and cultures of the West,” for “good or bad,” who could benefit from “assimilating” to something else that will “strengthen their spirit.”

Mendoza’s rich and provocative travel notes are the departing point for my analysis of her construction of a peripheral vision of modernity as an active process of transculturation. I will build on the concept of transculturation as I have used it so far by looking at the work of Fernando Ortiz, Angel Rama and Marie Louise Pratt, where it appears as a dynamic process of intercultural connections that creates possibilities for transforming one’s own community by appropriating parts of other cultural systems. In Pratt’s words, transculturation designates “how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While subjugated people cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to various extents what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for” (1992: 6). Mendoza’s travel writings expose the active attachments to and detachments from foreign influences - especially around the idea of modernisation - that affected Filipino culture during the Spanish-American period, and allow me to map the itineraries of these attachments and detachments, which here appear not so much as outcomes of past colonial contact, as in the work of Balmori and Gurrea, but as strategic tools to compose a future vision of an independent Philippines.

Notas de viaje will help me to expand the concept of transculturation, most of all in terms of its temporality. I argue that transculturation can not only be read as a consequence of cultural mixing observable in “real life” after cultural contact has occurred, as happens, for

instance, with transcultural architecture (Hernández, Millington and Borden 2005) and “regional” literature (Rama 1997) in Latin America,⁷⁹ but can also be interpreted as a precedent to cultural transformation, an aspiration *to be like others* perceived as superior. As an impulse to imagine the possible transformations that contact with others could bring to one’s own community, transculturation produces a hypothesis about the future that incorporates past and present perspectives. In *Notas de viaje*, this hypothesis, concerned with the question of how to conceive modernity in the Philippines, is based on evocations of the past and visions of the future enabled by Mendoza’s present experience of travelling the world. The tentative condition of this hypothesis and the global reach of Mendoza’s journey are what lead me to view *Notas de viaje* as an active transcultural project.

After discussing some of the relevant literature on the genre of travel literature, including from a postcolonial perspective, I will analyse significant fragments from *Notas de viaje* to identify the elements that Mendoza considers worth “assimilating to” and the different forms of attachment to (identification) and detachment from (contestation) the places and people she encounters. What attitudes does *Notas de viaje* reveal towards foreign and local forms of modernity? How does Mendoza conceive of the idea of a Filipino national identity in the present and in the future? How can *Notas de viaje* be read as an active project of transculturation?

Travel Literature and (Post)Colonial Theory

My interest in using a piece of travel writing to explore the concepts of attachment and detachment in the context of (post)coloniality/modernity lies in the approach and themes with which travel writing is concerned: its traditional association with imperialism, its inevitable construction of otherness and the subjective gaze of the traveller/writer. Travel writing has been regarded as a by-product of imperialism that helped Europe and North America to justify and develop colonial enterprises. Two seminal works have emphasized this, albeit in different ways. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1987) and Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) both reveal the basis on which travel writing was appropriated by colonialism as it formulated discourses on difference and contributed to the politics of colonial expansion. While Said focuses on the idea of a spreading oriental

⁷⁹ Rama (1997) uses the theory of transculturation to explain Latin American literature, specifically the narratives by what he describes as “regional” writers like Márquez, Carpentier and Vargas Llosa, who applied foreign techniques and styles to re-articulate the realities of their countries. Hispanic modernism is also an example of transcultured literature, a re-expropriation of French and Spanish canons attributed to Rubén Darío, as I showed in Chapter 1.

discourse that constructed the idea of Western superiority, Pratt identifies the aesthetics of specific travel narratives, their capitalist/colonial agendas and their assumed universal knowledge production. Having already discussed some aspects of Said and Pratt's work in Chapter 1, in my analysis of Mendoza's travel writing I will expand on some of the terms that Pratt elaborates, particularly the 'contact zone' and 'transculturation,' respectively defined as the location where cultural contact takes place and the process of cultural transformation that such contact produces.

A more recent work, *Postcolonial Travel Writing Critical Explorations* (2010), edited by Justin D. Edwards and Rune Graulund, aims to differentiate imperial travel writing - seen as exoticising by most critics - from postcolonial travel writing - perceived as an attempt to decolonise knowledge. It highlights the multi-directional approach of the latter narratives in contradistinction to the uni-directionality of the former.⁸⁰ The essays contained in the collection (especially those inspired by the works of Amitav Gosh and V.S. Naipaul) demonstrate that postcolonial travel writing is a more complex and varied textual form. It is a genre that articulates the position of the travelling subject in relation to issues derived from border narratives, such as place and space, belonging, identity, nation or race. It also aims at pluralising knowledge by "articulating experiences and ontologies that are often removed from dominant European or North American productions of knowledge" (Edwards and Graulund 2). In postcolonial travel writing, peripheral narratives challenge assumed ideas of the centre(s) as a form of "writing back" (Edwards and Graulund 2).

Mendoza's *Notas de viaje* stands in a special relation to the above-mentioned theoretical frameworks in terms of the historical context of its production: it was written at a time when the Philippines was an ex-colony of the Spanish Empire (since 1898) but a neo-colony of the US. Thus, it is neither a postcolonial text nor strictly an imperialist one - despite the fact that, in places, it participates in colonial and orientalisating discourses, much like other examples of early twentieth-century Hispano-Filipino literature. As I will show, *Notas de viaje* undermines neat geographical and political distinctions such as centre/periphery and colonial/postcolonial.

The construction of otherness that earned travel writing its bad reputation is an essential part of the genre, even in postcolonial or contemporary narratives.⁸¹ Debbie Lisle

⁸⁰ I offered an example of how postcolonial writings open up new narrative routes in Chapter 1 when looking at Latin American modernist writing as a form of peripheral orientalism.

⁸¹ See Edwards and Graulund's *Postcolonial Travel Writing: Critical Explorations* (2010) and Debbie Lisle's *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (2006). The latter explores the hegemonic representation of national characters (for instance, the Mexican as inferior and the American as superior in Paul Theroux's *The*

(2006) puts it as follows: “Travel writers still need *other* places and people to visit and write about - which means that travel writers must always engage in the production of difference” (24, emphasis in original). What needs to be asked about travel writing’s inevitable *othering* is how these narratives of difference are constructed, that is “how travel writers produce, project and pass judgment on this difference” (Lisle 24). Lisle offers a productive method for examining how Mendoza’s position towards contemporary issues in her own country and in the countries she visits is represented in *Notas de viaje* in a way that is not exclusively imperial, postcolonial or cosmopolitan.

With regards to literary travel writing, Mary Baine Campbell (2002) offers a useful summary of its most discussed features:

Formal issues that have been fully explored with relation to travel writing in recent decades include the nature and function of the stereotype, lexical matters such as the hidden etymologies (...), the subjective presence of the author(s) in texts of knowledge, truth value in narrative writing, the independent or hard-wired shape of narrative itself, the rhetorical nature of ‘fact’, ‘identification’ in reading (with its consequences in social and political life), the representation of time, inter-cultural ‘translation’, and the function of metaphor and other figures. (263)

The questions of subjectivity, representation, truth, knowledge and cultural translation that Baine lists are constitutive of most artistic works, yet the interplay of these aspects in travel writing is particularly complex. Travel writing accounts - especially in the imperial narratives that constituted the basis for Western epistemologies - were ascribed objectivity and truth value. However, just like there is no *objective* narrative (as I explained in Chapter 2 using Bal’s *Narratology*), there is no truth value in travel writing but only the construction of a particular vision based on the travel writer’s subjectivity.

Locatelli (2012) describes the ability of the travel writer to mobilise certain images among his/her readership with the term ‘eloquence’:

The “author” of travel literature re-created a journey that is not simply a referential account of visited places, but is “eloquent” to the point of moving the reader’s imagination, by informing him/her about places in such a way they appear (i.e., they emerge from the obvious, i.e., from the “un-seen” which is under everybody’s eyes). (67)

Old Patagonia Express: By Train through the Americas (1979)) as proof of the colonial heritage present in the gaze of contemporary travel writers through what Lisle calls the “colonial vision.” In contradistinction, Lisle refers to the celebration of differences in positive terms, as in Bill Bryson’s *Neither Here Nor There: Travels in Europe* (1998), as the “cosmopolitan vision,” which, according to her, may simply be “a blander mutation of the colonial vision,” as it still consolidates and reproduces the privileged position of the traveller (3).

With the “obvious” or “un-seen” Locatelli refers to that which is no longer noticed by the inhabitants of a place but is perceived by the traveller, who makes them stand out. The quote suggests, moreover, that the travel writer will emphasise those particular elements that the potential reader will find meaningful.

Locatelli notes that ‘eloquence’ is particularly important in postcolonial literatures because of the way postcolonial writers appropriate another language to express their own view of the world. Rather than seeing this as a mere symptom of assimilation, I contend that using Spanish to describe the reality of the Philippines as a referential cultural code to express a particular worldview, is an act of re-appropriation that creates space for contestation. In this chapter I will look at how Mendoza’s language and her articulation of cultural stereotypes, cultural translations, facts, comparisons and metaphors acquire deeper meaning when read in the context of her own narrative ‘eloquence.’ I offer an analysis of *Notas de viaje* that traces Mendoza’s journey from beginning to end, culminating in the reception of her book in the Philippines. I show how Mendoza’s account ‘eloquently’ reveals her preoccupations and interests (in education and the modernisation of the Philippines) but I also point to certain ambiguities that challenge the consistency of her project of active transculturation.

Departure: The Question of (In)dependence

The historical context and personal circumstances in which Mendoza wrote *Notas de viaje* are key to understanding the text in terms of its content, approach and style, as well as the author’s concerns. Mendoza traveled around the world on two occasions: first in 1921 in the company of her husband (who died in 1924), and again in 1926 with one of her younger sisters. The Philippines had been independent from the Spanish Empire since 1898 and had started to see the results of modernisation policies implemented by the US, most prominently English-language education. However, the nationalist movements for independence in the Philippines had not ceased to exist. The period between 1901 until 1935, right after the independence war from the US (1898-1901) and the establishment of a ten-year Commonwealth Government (1935-1946), the Philippines became a territorial government of the US (Insular Government of the Philippine Islands) governed by US President William Howard Taft. This period was characterised by intense negotiations between the US government and Filipino nationalists such as Manuel L. Quezón, who would become the first Filipino president of the Commonwealth period, and Sergio Osmeña, who would become the fourth president of the Philippines after WWII, from 1944 to 1946. Filipinos supported the

Americans during WWI but continued with the independence campaign after. Among the agreements that were reached thanks to the push of Filipino nationalists was the Jones Bill (1912), which asked for the independence of the Philippines within 7 years. This bill was, however, renegotiated and passed again, no longer setting a timeframe for independence but insisting on ‘favorable conditions’ for independence (Wong 1982). This made not only Filipino politicians but also many well-educated Filipinos and intellectuals, such as Paz Mendoza, consider what would make a strong argument for independence, while at the same time envisioning alternative futures for their country that did not involve continued foreign management. It was in the middle of the regency of the Insular Government, between 1921 and 1929, that Mendoza took her two world trips.

At the time of her second departure in June 1926, Mendoza was Regent of the College of Medicine of the University of the Philippines, a respected academic in the field of pathology, the editor of the Spanish and English women’s magazine *La Mujer*, and one of the founders of the Filipino Women’s Association. She was, then, a prominent public figure who earned the support of the Filipino government to go overseas as a representative of her country. Mendoza was determined to collect a compendium of ideas to be implemented upon her return to the Philippines. She wrote over three hundred pages of notes that include private thoughts, historical, political and social reflections, anthropological comments, descriptions of monuments, reflections on urbanism and hygiene, rhetorical questions and hypotheses about the situation home and abroad, and occasional anecdotes that remind the reader that she was also a tourist.

At the beginning of Mendoza’s trip, she attended a conference in Williamstown, New York, on Filipino Independence, which, as noted above, was the dominant problem in American-Filipino relations. Mendoza quotes the speeches of different congressmen, amongst whom J. M. Wainwright from New York is particularly relevant as he touched directly on themes of global politics such as the world’s colonial race (in which the Philippines were an attractive trophy wanted by both England and Japan) and the question of Filipino independence. Mendoza quotes Wainwright expressing a desire to keep control over the islands, claiming that if it were not the US it would be some other nation controlling the territory:

Hay otras naciones que también desean poseer Filipinas como Inglaterra y Japón. No cree prudente el echar a las islas en el caldero de las cuestiones hirvientes del Este. Cree que no es Japón quien ambiciona Filipinas sino Inglaterra, porque Filipinas está en el camino a China, mientras Japón ambiciona Australia. Relató que había encontrado un oficial inglés en Borneo, quien le comunicó que si algún día Japón

intentara llegar a Filipinas a la hora de la cena, Inglaterra estaría en Filipinas a la hora del almuerzo. (24)⁸²

[There are other nations that wish to possess The Philippines, such as England and Japan. He does not believe that is prudent to throw the islands into the boiling pot of issues concerning the East. He thinks that it is not Japan which wants The Philippines but England, since The Philippines is on the way to China; meanwhile, Japan has its eyes on Australia. He told us that he had encountered a British official in Borneo who told him that if on any day Japan attempted to reach The Philippines by dinnertime, England would be in The Philippines by lunchtime]

Mendoza continues by quoting Wainwright's remark that the US had gained sovereignty over the Islands and that Filipinos had reacted "espléndidamente" [splendidly] to the American initiatives (Mendoza 25). On the question of Filipino independence, he explains that it was only a fair request, "puesto que así se les había hecho creer" [since they were led to believe so] (Mendoza 25). Then he suggests that the Philippines have brilliant men who could rule their nation as an independent territory, but counters that the brilliant men he met in Manila were not "los verdaderos representantes de las masas" [true representative of the masses]: "*Los Filipinos de Manila difieren mucho de los de los campos. Ahora bien, ¿están estos acaso preparados para ser independientes?*" [Filipinos in Manila are very different from those in the countryside. Therefore, are they ready to be independent?] (Mendoza 26, emphasis in original). Wainwright continues his speech by addressing religious issues, such as the division between Muslim Filipinos ("moros") and Christian Filipinos, claiming that the former were more inclined towards remaining American whereas the latter, as a result of the Spanish colonisation, favoured independence. Mendoza expresses skepticism about the meaning of the American "sympathy" for the moors, suggesting that rather than religious and cultural aspects, it was Mindanao's economic value as "the land of rubber" that provoked the sympathy of the Americans (25).

These notes reveal Mendoza's deep engagement with the political, social, religious and class tensions that affected the Philippines in the early twentieth century. Numerous conflicts divided the islands: rich vs. poor, urban vs. rural and Muslim vs. Christian. These oppositions ran parallel to other dichotomies, such as rich and educated city-dwellers (Spanish-speaking, pro-independence Filipinos who wanted to get rid of the Americans and their unfulfilled promise of liberation) versus poor, uneducated rural populations (speaking either Tagalog or other dialects), who had been led to believe that the new colonisers were benefactors. Mendoza's position within these divisions is not easy to pinpoint. She does not

⁸² The original speech was in English but Mendoza paraphrases it in Spanish in her travelogue.

regard the Filipino people through the lens of colonial dependency; ideologically, she aligns herself with the Filipino *ilustrados*, who defended the idea that Enlightenment would grant freedom and independence, while also, as *Notas de viaje* demonstrates, wanting to enlist the help of foreign powers, not so much in the form of direct intervention but as models of progress that the Philippines could then follow as an independent country.

Unlike Wainwright, who focuses on the divisions within the Philippines, Mendoza insists that the Philippines are indeed ready to be independent, as she explains to an American reporter of the *Boston Transcript* in Washington:

Esta ansia y clamor de mi pueblo por la independencia demuestra claramente que mi país no es un país de salvajes, y que mi pueblo es un pueblo culto y educado. Un pueblo inculto no puede aspirar a ser independiente porque teme lo desconocido, obra según la tradición e ignora qué es ser libre. (3)

[This yearning and cry of my people for independence clearly demonstrates that my country is not a country of barbarians, and that my people are cultured and educated. An uneducated nation cannot aspire to be independent because it fears the unknown, acts upon tradition and ignores what it is to be free.]

Mendoza sets out to challenge preconceived notions of the Philippines in the US (and elsewhere) as a tribal land of barbarians at constant religious war, also in order to justify her own position as a female doctor from South East Asia travelling the world in the early 1920 - a time when most European universities did not accept women yet. Mendoza, like most of the Hispano-Filipino writers of the time, belonged to one of the ‘anomalous’ communities in the islands, existing, in the words of Henry James, as ‘Aliens at home.’⁸³ She was too Filipino to be Hispanic (or American for that matter) and too Hispanic to be Filipino, as Álvarez notes (2014).⁸⁴ Mendoza writes that she is grateful for the liberal political agenda the USA brought to the Philippines, which granted, for instance, women like herself access to education (36). But she is equally proud of the Catholic education brought by the Spanish. This reveals the tension between her attachment to her colonial heritage (in terms of language, religion and education) and her desire for national emancipation.

⁸³ In his travel book *The American Scene* (1907), James starts questioning the legitimacy of the term “American” when observing the wave of European immigrants: “Which is the American... which is *not* the alien?” (qtd. in Carr 80).

⁸⁴ Most Filipinos have a Spanish first and last name because they were purposely renamed during the Spanish colonial period for the purpose of the census. Mendoza, however, received her name by family ancestry. Her father, Isidro Mendoza, belonged to a wealthy Spanish family and her mother was the daughter of the Governor of Pandakan (Alzona 5). Alzona describes Mendoza as having a “fair complexion, wavy brown hair” and measuring “five feet and four inches” (25), which suggests that she was of mixed Spanish and Filipino heritage.

Explorations: Cultural Exchanges and Cultural Stereotyping

As a tourist, Mendoza recalls being hassled in Nazareth by groups of poor children, whom she tries to get rid of while murmuring to other tourists that they are “pordioseros prematuros” [premature beggars] (269). The aggressive behavior of her Egyptian guide, who, in challenging the unskilled tourists to ride a camel, deliberately causes trouble in order to ask for a rescue reward, provokes Mendoza to write, angrily: “¡Cuántas ganas tuve de tirarle a la cara todas las monedas que tenía, no por caridad o premio a su servicio, sino para castigar su salvajismo!” [I just felt like throwing all the coins I had into his face, not as charity or to reward him for his services, but to punish his savagery] (283). Mendoza feels irritated by the guide’s behavior and by the begging children, but her choice of words brings further connotations. Her claims that the children are “premature beggars” portrays them as having a preconceived destiny, whereas her wish to punish the guide’s “savagery” elevates herself over the locals as more civilized. This contrasts with her comments concerning multilingual, cosmopolitan travelers, whose company she enjoys, appreciating the intellectual exchanges that hours of sea and land travelling⁸⁵ bring her:

La franqueza con la que se expresan estos occidentales me encanta y subyuga. Para nada tienen en cuenta que su opinión no coincida con la de su interlocutor, ni les importa el odio de este; no se ve en su fisonomía ese esfuerzo de agradar y de demostrar que todo cuanto oye y ve le satisface, aun cuando interiormente sienta lo contrario. (41)

[I find the honesty with which western people express themselves both enchanting and threatening. They do not care if their opinion doesn’t coincide with that of their interlocutor, neither do they care about any ill feeling from him or her; it is impossible to derive from their body language a confirmation that they kindly agree and are satisfied with what they hear and see, even when inside they are feeling otherwise]

Uno de los turistas, un viejo millonario holandés, viendo a los bogadores semirecostados en sus botes y hablando tan fuerte como si estuviesen peleando, interrumpió mi meditación: “Doctora” me dijo, “este es el Oriente, donde todos hablan y pasan el tiempo discutiendo sin entenderse unos a otros”. “Tiene usted razón”, le contesté, “pero este es el Cercano Oriente, no el Lejano de donde soy. Allí no se discute mucho, los orientales sólo sabemos trabajar y obedecer. En prueba de ello usted a las posesiones holandesas en Java, Sumatra y otras”. (254)

[One of the tourists, an old Dutch millionaire, watching the rowers lying down on their boats and speaking loudly as if they were having a fight, interrupted my meditation: “Doctor,” he said, “this is the East where some speak and spend their time arguing without understanding each other.” “You are right” I replied, “but this is the

⁸⁵ Mendoza spent quite some time on steamboats from New York to Southampton and from Cairo to Niza, as well as on extravagant train rides, such as the Berlin-Baghdad Express, which she describes as “the golden dream of Germany” (259).

Middle East, not the Far East where I came from. Over there, we do not argue so much, we Asians only know how to work and obey. The Dutch possessions in Java, Sumatra and elsewhere are proof of this.”]

These passages show how much of the travelling experience is an exercise in confirming or negating pre-existing stereotypes about oneself and others (Occidentals are frank and prone to arguing intellectually with others, while Orientals are loud and non-confrontational, drawn to work and obedience). The comment made by the ‘Dutch millionaire’ is not retold in Mendoza’s notes as an attack on her own identity or place of origin; on the contrary, she makes sure that she establishes a difference between the Far and the Middle East with regards to their way of speaking - loud versus quiet - challenging her travel companion’s assumptions and placing the negative stereotype on someone else: Mendoza may be Asian but she is not *that* kind of Asian. Her following comment about East Asians being submissive and docile benefiting Dutch colonisation in Indonesia is also ambiguous. Rather than bringing up a counter-narrative about exploitation, she refers to Asian people’s (perceived) consent to colonialism. Here, she is provocatively suggesting that western domination happened not because of the strength of the West but because of the character of Asian people.

Mendoza views colonialism not as a one-directional phenomenon that exclusively brought exploitation and abuse, imposing one culture on another, but as accompanied by a civilising process that was also profitable to the colonised: [Vemos otros que al] “conquistar pueblos mucho más débiles y primitivos que ellos, vigoriza a éstos con su sangre y su espíritu, y así ejercen una influencia bienhechora y civilizadora. Por ejemplo Roma y España” (260) [Some [people], when conquering much weaker and primitive people than themselves, invigorate those with their blood and spirit, thus exercising a beneficial and civilizing influence. For instance, Rome and Spain]. This comment sounds shocking, but reveals some important characteristics of Mendoza’s thinking. First, it speaks to her scientific gaze; as a Darwinist, she distinguishes ‘primitivism’ and ‘civilisation’ as stages in a process of evolution in which the idea of ‘blood mixing’ is perceived as a way to improve humanity: the fittest (most adaptable) will survive. However, as her comment suggests, not all cultures are equally tolerant of racial and ethnic mixing. For Mendoza, the ones capable of colonising are the fittest. This idea exposes her attachment to an opposition between what she perceives as ‘civilised’ societies (mostly European) and as ‘savage’ ones (such as that of the Egyptian guide), which, in turn, justifies her search for transferable cultural models within the ‘civilised’ world. Second, this quote exposes Mendoza’s ambivalent (dis)identification with her own *Asianness*. On the one hand, she challenges the Dutch millionaire’s stereotype about

all Asians being loud, while confirming it of *some* Asians, namely those from the Middle East (who happen to be the workers on the boat that she is travelling on). On the other hand, her personal circumstances - her class, education and ethnicity - allow her to talk about Asians but also to identify as one: 'we Asians.'

Mireille Rosello (1998) explains the practice of entering and leaving stereotypes as "declining the stereotype," which means producing, on the one hand, "delicate decisions [...], potentially strident political statements" or else "apparently innocent and quite socially meaningless activity" (10), and, on the other, a variety of contextual meanings through form and grammatical function:

declining a word means acknowledging the various formal identities that one element of language must adopt depending on its position and role within a larger linguistic unit [...] it involves paying attention to the formal characteristics of the stereotype so as to control its devastating ideological power. (10-11)

Using Rosello's linguistic metaphor, Mendoza "declines" the stereotype of the Asian by playing with the fixed root 'Asian' and the variable endings 'obedient,' 'civilized' and 'wealthy.' Mendoza perceives herself as Asian, but not (quite) the type of Asian that speaks loudly (and is powerless). Rather, she likens herself to the "obedient" Indonesians (which are powerless but "civilized" by colonisation). At the same time, however, she levels up with the (educated) Dutchman by engaging in a political conversation with him, very much unlike the "non-argumentative" Asians that she claims to identify with. The fact that both the Dutch millionaire and the Filipino doctor are tourists with a similar social status brings them closer together than the distance between the geopolitical locations in which they were born.

Cultural exchanges and cultural stereotyping are instrumental for Mendoza to reach an understanding of what she is seeing and to ultimately produce her vision of the ideal Filipino nation. Many times, she incorporates into her travel notes examples of contemporary life in other countries that enable her to confirm the national stereotypes she associates with different countries - and ultimately, the ideological power of these stereotypes that Rosello alerts us to. "Now that I know the English a bit better, I think that their commercial success is based on their honesty" (46) [...] you can take the word of an English man, those are of leather" (47, English in the original), Mendoza writes, for example, while visiting London. Her confidence that the Englishman working at the shoe store she visits is not lying about the material of the shoes leads her to think that honesty will produce commercial success. Later in *Notas de viaje*, she generalises about Norwegians, Czechs and Germans:

La solidez de las rocas negras que destilan agua constantemente, sus cascadas y fiords, (rías altas entre las rocas), sus colinas y montañas cubiertas de nieve y, sobre todo, el verde azul de los mares que se refleja en sus ojos, parecen haber modelado ese espíritu aventurero, pero firme, reflexivo y tolerante de los noruegos. (88)

[The solidity of the black rocks that constantly distill water, their waterfalls, their fjords, their mountains covered in snow and, especially, the blue-green color of the sea that is reflected in their eyes seem to have moderated the adventurous but firm spirit, reflexive and tolerant, of the Norwegians.]

El Czech es de caracer franco. Después de algunos minutos de conversación con él; dáse una cuenta de que el chech [sic] y el alemán son como el agua y el aceite. (126)

[The Czech citizen has an honest character. After a few minutes of conversation with him, one realizes that the Czech and the German are like water and oil.]

The basis for the idea of Norwegians having adventurous but firm spirits is located in their rugged environment. “¿Tiene acaso alguna relación la geografía del suelo y la lucha por la existencia con la manera de ser de los habitantes de un pueblo?” (88) [Is there indeed any relationship between the geography of a place and the fight for existence with the manner of being of its inhabitants?], she wonders. Following this question (which provides yet another example of her Darwinist approach to science and, by extension, culture), Mendoza derives the national character of the Germans (now assessed more positively than in the comparison with the honest Czechs) from the urban planning of Berlin:

Berlin me pareció al principio el reflejo de la cara adusta y severa de Bismark o del ex-Kaiser Guillermo II. Sus calles largas, anchas, asfaltadas y limpias, sus edificios solidos, sus monumentos que representan no la desnudez mórbida y coqueta, sino todo aquello que inspira amor a la ciencia, respeto a los gobernantes, veneración a los héroes nacionales, estímulo al desarrollo físico, emulación al valor y admiración por la gloria, dicen al visitante que está en una ciudad donde el orden, la disciplina, el estudio, la seriedad forman el armazón del carácter de sus habitantes. (109)

[Berlin seemed to me at first to be a reflection of the plain and severe face of Bismarck or the ex-Kaiser Willem II. Its long, wide, clean and paved streets, its solid buildings and its monuments, which do not embody a morbid and coquettish nudity, but all that inspired love for science, respect for the rulers, veneration of national heroes, stimulation of physical exercise, emulation of courage and admiration of glory, inform the visitor that he is in a city where order, discipline, study and seriousness constitute the core of its inhabitants.]

Patriotism and national pride are seen to run through Berlin's statues of 'national heroes,' which are reminders of a 'glorious past' and inspire 'respect for the rulers,' as they do through German citizens' minds. In Mendoza's eyes, Berlin's past is monumental and is monumentally inscribed in the city's aesthetics: solid, ordered, and serious. The idea of a

national consciousness emanating from the city's past and present echoes Svetlana Boym's idea of 'restorative nostalgia' (2001), discussed in Chapter 2 as an attachment to the common national past (in opposition to the individual experience of it) produced by the institutionalisation of history - visible in its commemorative monuments - that legitimates the State's official ideology.

Mendoza cannot but encounter European nationalisms as she visits countries like Germany and Italy in the period between the wars. It is perhaps understandable, given the struggle for Filipino independence, that she dedicates twenty-nine pages to Germany's history, education, industry, government laws, tax systems and transport infrastructure, and a remarkable fifty-three pages to Italy, mostly on history and architecture, as both these nations were being re-built, literally and metaphorically, upon their past:

La primera vez que vine a Europa no pude visitar este país, porque en él reinaba el caos. En cambio, ahora, cualquiera puede viajar en tren tranquilamente, y al final del viaje le presentan la cuenta incluyendo la propina. Lo mismo sucede en los hoteles y restaurantes. Creo que todo este orden se debe a Mussolini. (189)

[The first time I came to Europe I couldn't visit this country for it was chaos. Now, however, anybody can travel there by train in peace, and at the end of the trip one is handed the bill including the tip. It is the same in hotels and restaurants. I think all this order is thanks to Mussolini.]

For Mendoza, Mussolini is "bringing Italy out of chaos" through setting up safe railway systems, implementing taxes and "unifying" Italy with one language:

Entonces le hablé [a la Condesa de O, de Viena] de Italia, de Mussolini. "Un país que como el antiguo imperio austro-húngaro estaba compuesto de diferentes razas y cada una de estas con su tradición y lenguaje no es fácil de gobernar. Mussolini es una gran figura de actualidad" dijo ella. (144)

[Then she [the Countess O, of Vienna] talked about Italy, about Mussolini. 'A country that, like the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, was constituted by several races, each of them with its own tradition and language, is not easy to govern. Mussolini is a great figure nowadays', she said]

¡Ojalá que el esfuerzo del Gran Mussolini, el tribuno moderno, el hombre de hierro, de unificar a todos los de civilización latina, se vea coronado con éxito! (168)

[I wish the effort of great Mussolini, the modern magistrate, the iron man, to unify all people of Latin civilization to be successfully attained!]

Mendoza's positive comments are, on the one hand, influenced by her transitory experience of the country as a tourist: she finds it more comfortable to pay bills including taxes and tips than to haggle with interpreters and merchants as in Constantinople's Gran Bazar. On the

other hand, she identifies the historical existence of ‘several races, each of them with its own tradition and language’ and the need to improve the country’s infrastructure as issues that resemble those of her own country. Mendoza sees in Mussolini’s Italy a united and independent community, and imagines the same for her country. Her attachment to the idea of a unified nation emerges with her admiration of nationalist movements in Germany and Italy, but also of other more peripheral communities, such as, for instance, the Catalans and their struggle for independence and the Zionists in Palestine. In a brief account of four pages dedicated to Spain, Mendoza includes a conversation she had with a Catalan proponent of independence:

El catalán se considera catalán y no español, prefiere hablar el catalán que se parece al francés, simpatiza con los ideales del pueblo filipino, porque también aspira a ser independiente. “¿pero no sois españoles?” le decía a uno que era un furibundo filipinista e independentista. “No, señora, Cataluña comprendía Gerona, Barcelona, Tarragona y Lérida en España y Rousillón en Francia. Antes del siglo XV teníamos nuestro rey, pero cuando Fernando de Aragón se casó con Isabel de Castilla, la Católica, formamos parte de España y perdimos nuestra independencia. Cataluña es rica e industriosa y puede gobernarse sola.” (201)

[Catalans think of themselves as Catalan, not as Spanish; they prefer to speak Catalan, which is similar to French, they sympathise with the Filipino people because they also want to be independent. “But, are you not Spanish?” I asked a man who was a filipinista and independentist. “No ma’am, Cataluña was Gerona, Barcelona, Tarragona and Lerida in Spain and Rousillon in France. Before the fifteenth century we had our king, but when Ferdinand of Aragon married Isabel of Castilla we became part of Spain and lost our independence. Cataluña is rich and industrious and can govern itself.”]

These passages show how Mendoza attaches herself to what she perceives will be useful examples for her people in building a Filipino nation. Again, however, there is also ambiguity, as when, despite describing the admirable respect and faithfulness that Germans profess towards their nation, Mendoza recognizes the mechanisms of demagogic politics undertaken through nationalist propaganda. She notes that in German cinemas, once the film has finished, portraits of the greatest German men dead or alive are shown, as well as:

Al terminar la película se exhiben los retratos de los grandes hombres alemanes vivos o muertos con una reseña corta de sus vidas. Sus industrias, sus pueblos y puertos también, así es que el alemán cree que casi todos los inventos y descubrimientos del mundo han salido de cerebros alemanes. Esto queda tan impreso en la mente alemana que en una tertulia por poco me hicieron tragar que todos los inventos en medicina fueron hechos por alemanes. Esto explica esa fe ciega en su lema “Deutschland uber alles”, Alemania por encima de todo, Alemania, bien o mal, es lo primero en el corazón y mente alemán; después viene su compatriota, y, después, otra vez Alemania. De este amor fanático nace el “superiority complex” la idea de superioridad, del super homo de sus filósofos. (113)

[At the end of the film portraits of the great German men dead or alive are shown with a short review of their lives. [Germany's] industries, its towns and even its ports, so that the German believes that almost all inventions and world discoveries have come out of German brains. This is so well imprinted on the German mind that, during a talk, they almost made me believe that all the discoveries made in medicine were German. This explains the blind faith in their slogan "Deutschland uber alles," Germany above all. Germany, for good or bad, is the first thing in the heart and mind of the German person; followed by his compatriot and then again by Germany. From this fanatic love comes the "superiority complex," the idea of superiority, of the superman, of its philosophers.]

Mendoza's description of Nietzsche's "superman" and the German "superiority complex" as "ideas" founded on "fanatic love" and "blind faith" (all pejorative terms) demonstrates her detachment from this element of German nationalism. In addition, she is clearly alerting the reader about the dangerous extremism of the constructed German nationalist discourse when, touching on her own field of expertise, she claims that "en una tertulia por poco me hicieron tragar que todos los descubrimientos en medicina fueron hechos por alemanes" (112) [they almost made me believe that all the discoveries made in medicine were German].

In the following passage, Mendoza describes a similar experience in an Italian cinema that ends, however, differently:

Antes de dejar Roma, entramos una tarde en un cinematógrafo para ver en la pantalla la vida de Garibaldi y encontramos que la mayoría del público se componía de niños de seis a doce años. Cuando terminó la función todos se levantaron para cantar el himno nacional italiano y dieron vivas a Italia y a Mussolini. ¡Viva! Gritamos nosotras también con la esperanza de que estos se unirán algún día cuando cantemos nuestro himno nacional y gitemos ¡Viva la independencia de nuestra amada Filipinas! (191)

[Before leaving Rome, we entered a cinemascope to see on the big screen the life of Garibaldi and found that most of the audience were children between six and twelve years old. When the show finished they all stood up and sang the Italian national anthem and praised Italy and Mussolini. ¡Viva! We also screamed, hoping that one day they will join us when we sing our national anthem and claim, ¡Long live the Independence of our beloved Philippines!]

The image of Mendoza and her sister standing amongst the Italian children and joining their nationalist chant while dreaming of an independent Philippines is less an expression of support for Italian fascism than a vision of future solidarity between two independent nations. It is also an implicit act of insurgency against the US government that Mendoza allows herself to commit on foreign ground, safe from retaliations. The transitory experience of reality in the traveller's shifting contact-zones enables such acts of resistance and

imagination. In the end, the affirmation, contestation and declining of cultural stereotypes, especially when accumulated, as in *Notas de viaje*, make it possible to challenge assumptions about both the other and the self. The distance from home and the juxtaposition of the familiar with the foreign prompt an active process of cultural translation - or transculturation - from which new meanings and possibilities can emerge.

Equivalence and Difference in the Philippines of the Future

Travelling and travel writing involve constant exercises of translation, of finding equivalences and establishing differences. Mendoza's 'eloquence' - the narrative power of her subjective gaze - conjures surprising equivalences: a comparison between Hong Kong and Oslo with regards to the "scale-like arrangement of their home lights" (Mendoza 87); a remark on the business opportunities that industrial borrowings between Holland and the region of Laguna in the Philippines could accomplish in the cheese making industry (66); and a comment on the architectural style of Milan's cathedral resembling, in terms of its length and the accumulation of columns, a coconut forest. Bhabha's idea of "mimicry" reminds us that imitation always entails both similarity and difference, that it creates a "partial" reality that results in a game of *trompe l'oeil* (126). Imagination, deception and nostalgia are all at play in the exercise of cultural translation enabled by travelling:

A primera vista, los rascacielos y las casas apiñadas de la Habana con sus arcos y sus verandas, me recordaron Port Said y Hong Kong; pero luego, a medida que los ojos contemplan más de cerca tan lindo conjunto, el viajero se da cuenta de que se trata de verdaderas obras de arte donde campea por su estilo la arquitectura latina e hispana. (8)

[At first sight, the skyscrapers and the crowded houses of Havana with their arches and their verandas reminded me of Port Said and Hong Kong; but then, as the eyes contemplate such a lovely ensemble closely, the traveler realizes that they are truly art works championed by Latin and Hispanic style architecture.]

In this quote, Mendoza compares instances of modern and colonial architecture from Havana, Port Said and Hong Kong. Perhaps at first sight these cities are indeed similar, also to other harbour cities, such as Shanghai or Mumbai, where colonial architecture prevailed. Regardless of what empire they belonged to, colonial buildings were adapted to the warm climate of most colonies with high ceilings, fans, arches and verandas. However, a closer look at "such a lovely ensemble" reveals the different imprints of Latin, Hispanic or British architecture. In Bhabha's terms, they are the same but not quite. Through her narrative eloquence, Mendoza allows her readers to see the world, outside their ordinary perspective,

as similarly haunted in different places by colonialism, as manifested in its architecture, which lingers even after independence.

Sometimes while travelling, juxtapositions of familiar and unfamiliar images disturb the imagination confusing the traveller who has the feeling of being home:

Al llegar a Kantara [...] el panorama que se desenvolvió en nuestra vista se parece mucho al de Filipinas: campos cubiertos de verde, el arado y la noria, y este parecido tomó cuerpo de realidad por la presencia del carabao. Lo considerábamos tan nuestro que no esperamos encontrarlo en otra [sic] panorama fuera de Filipinas. Pero bien pronto la ilusión se disipó, porque al lado del carabo estaba el ubicuo camello con su giba sepiterna, cuello largo, y carita chata y deforme. (279)

[When we arrived in Kantara, the panorama that was unveiled in front of our eyes was very much like The Philippines: green fields, the plough and the waterwheel; and this resemblance became a reality through the presence of the carabao. We thought it belonged to us, so we did not expect to see it in another landscape outside the Philippines. However, the illusion was soon dissipated, as next to the carabao there was the ubiquitous camel with its perpetual hump, long neck and flattened and deformed face.]

In this fragment, Mendoza pairs rural Egypt with the rural Philippines; seeing the Egyptian countryside makes the Filipino travellers believe that they are back home, as the landscape presents them with familiar references: the instruments of rural farming and the presence of a carabao. Mendoza and her sister had always thought the carabao belonged to “them,” as if the animal was exclusively Filipino. At the view of the Egyptian rural landscape, including the perceived national symbol, Mendoza confesses: “el espectáculo evocó en mi mente el paisaje filipino, poéticamente descrito por Cecilio Apostol en los siguientes versos” [the spectacle brought to my mind the Filipino landscape, poetically described by Cecilio Apostol]” (280).⁸⁶ She proceeds to quote four stanzas from Apostol’s poem describing, in a pastoral manner, the landscape of the rural Philippines. Echoing the nostalgia of Gurrea’s poems that I analysed in the previous chapter, the poem is sprinkled with images and words referring to local animals, sun-kissed fields and the occasional sight of a nipa house (the most common Filipino house on stilts, made with bamboo canes and a roof of woven nipa leaves, nipa being a type of palm found in the South Pacific). The contemplation of the Egyptian landscape and its agricultural practices, in conjunction with the memory of Apostol’s poem, transports Mendoza and her sister, mentally, to the Philippines. However, the “illusion” that Egypt and the Philippines are

⁸⁶ Cecilio Apostol (1877-1938) was a journalist, lawyer, writer and active independentist who joined the Filipino Revolution in 1896. He was also one of the most respected poets of the Hispanic period. A collection of his poems entitled *Pentélicas* was published posthumously in 1941 and was used as a compulsory reading in Spanish lessons. His style inspired later poets such as Balmori and Gurrea, especially its vivid descriptions of the Filipino landscape (*Revista Filipina*, see: <http://vcn.bc.ca/~edfar/revista/yankee.htm>).

exactly the same is dispelled by the figure of the camel, which causes an immediate feeling of detachment.

Michel de Certeau claims that the familiarity and routine practices of the everyday prevent us from actually seeing how things really are and that the traveller/voyeur should therefore “disentangle himself from the murky intertwining daily behaviors and make himself alien to them” (93). In the cited passage from *Notas de viaje*, Mendoza is looking for the familiar, which stops her from seeing what Egypt is really like. Only the alien sight of the camel jolts her into acknowledging that the illusion of being back in the Philippines was precisely that, an illusion. This does not mean that travel cannot reflect on the homeland. Referring to Levi-Straus and Heidegger, de Certeau argues that travelling is in fact like taking a detour to one’s own roots by reading a different code:

Travel (like walking) is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different. What does travel ultimately produce if it is not, by sort of reversal, “an exploration of the deserted places of memory”, the return to nearby exoticism by way of a detour through distant places, and the recovery or relics and legends (...) in short, something like and “uprooting in one’s own origins (Heidegger)?” (de Certeau 107)

The idea is that travel allows one to see one’s home and one’s past in a different light. Thus, it should not be about equating Kantara and the Philippines, but about allowing the view of Kantara to change how one sees the Philippines. In accordance with this, Mendoza constantly refers to the Philippines, imagining what applications could be given there to her findings in other countries. The passage about Kantara, then, is an exception; a rare moment in *Notas de viaje* in which Mendoza seems to feel slightly homesick, but a moment that she also quickly dismisses herself as unproductive.⁸⁷

Following these reflections, Mendoza is asked by a fellow tourist, Mr. Vogel from the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, for her opinion on European colonialism (281). Mendoza, hesitant, writes that, having been “educada en un ambiente oriental que me obligue, a pesar mío, a oír antes de expresar mi opinion ante extraños [educated in an oriental manner that obliges me, despite myself, to listen before giving my own opinion in front of strangers] (281), she feels compelled to return the question to her interlocutor for him to answer first. Mr. Vogel claims that the Philippines are in a much better position than the other countries he has visited from the Pacific to the Mediterranean, since in those countries “se ve ensguida las

⁸⁷ Another moment of homesickness occurs upon arrival at Key West in Cuba, where the plants “have the perfume of the tropics” and Mendoza writes: “¡Con qué deleitación recordábamos sus nombres haciéndonos la ilusión de que estábamos en nuestra propia tierra! (6) [We remember with great delight their names [of the plants] wishfully thinking that we were in our own land!].

fuertes huellas de la dolorosa explotación” [the painful traces of exploitation are quickly perceived] (281). For Mr. Vogel, it seems, American colonialism is less exploitative than its European counterpart. Mendoza agrees that “better” colonial conditions persist in the Philippines, but also reminds Mr. Vogel to not forget the early civilising task of Spanish colonialism, without which, she argues, Filipinos would be in the same unfortunate situation as their neighbours in “Borneo, Java, Sumatra and Formosa” (281).

The sense that Egypt is exactly like the Philippines is quickly dissipated in *Notas de viaje* by other elements entering Mendoza’s narrative gaze, such as the camel and the conversation with Mr. Vogel. In the end, what is important to Mendoza is not what the Philippines already is, but what the Philippines could become if it were to adopt and adapt certain elements of foreign cultures, just as it did with the education offered by the Spanish. Thus, when visiting the Netherlands, she reflects on what the Philippines could learn from the Dutch struggle against the North Sea:

La lucha formidable que mantiene Holanda contra el Mar del Norte me sugiere muchas cosas [...] Si los once millones de Filipinos dragáramos los ríos y abriésemos canales por los distintos pueblos que baña el Pasig y la Laguna de Bay, en Aparri que siempre está amenazado por el Mar de China y en los pueblos rivereños en el valle de Cagayán, indudablemente que evitaríamos muchas desgracias en la época de grandes avenidas; protegeríamos los sembrados, las carreteras y los pueblos contra las inundaciones; ahorraríamos muchos millones de pesos en reparaciones; evitaríamos muchas enfermedades y la salud pública mejoraría. Filipinas, la perla de Oriente, con su eterno verdor y sus tesoros escondidos en su suelo y en sus mares, sería un verdadero Edén.

Hotel Victoria, Amsterdam, Holanda

Octubre, 1926

(70)

[The formidable fight that Holland wages against the North Sea evokes many things to me [...] If the eleven million Filipinos dredged our rivers and dug canals across the different towns along the Pasig river and the Laguna Bay in Aparri, which is always threatened by the China Sea, as well as in the riverside villages in the valley of Cagayan, undoubtedly we would avoid many catastrophes in the time of the big rains; we would protect the crops, the roads and the villages against flooding; we would save many millions of pesos in repairs; we would avoid many illnesses and public health would be improved. The Philippines, the pearl of the Orient, with its eternal greenness and its treasures hidden in the soil and seas would be a true Garden of Eden.

Victoria Hotel, Amsterdam, Holland

October, 1926]

Mendoza’s future hypothesis (expressed through the word “if”) constitutes the core of her active transcultural project of bringing the best parts of the different locations she visits back to the Philippines and implementing them there in a way that would suit the specific

circumstances of the country. The Filipinos might also become professionals capable of fulfilling the demands of the new nation if they were trained as “academic citizens” like in Germany and Denmark:

Si nuestra juventud optara por otras profesiones mucho más útiles que las de farmacéutico, abogado o ministro de alguna religión, ganaríamos mucho económicamente. Pero para ello importa que nuestro sistema de enseñanza se reforme, esto es, que estimule las escuelas vocacionales y también que la gente de dinero invierta su capital, no en lujo, sino en crear industrias para fomentar tales profesiones útiles. (66)

[If our youth opted for professions much more useful than pharmacist, lawyer or minister of some religion, we would gain a lot economically. For that to happen, it is important that our system of education be reformed, that is, that vocational schools be stimulated and also that people with money would invest their capital in creating industries to foment such useful jobs, instead of investing it in luxuries.]

These visions of a future Philippines, crafted on the basis of a selective repertoire of possibilities gleaned while visiting different countries, are at the core of Mendoza’s project of active transculturation, which, as the next section will show, is intimately tied to ideas of modernity.

Visions of Modernity

Mendoza’s travelogue has a very specific objective beyond the literary; as a woman of action, her agenda is to learn about practical things; hence, she is fascinated by technology, urbanization and hygiene for instance as elements that demonstrate urban modernity. However, Mendoza’s visions of modernity are not restricted to European countries but also take in Cuba, which at the time of Mendoza’s visit had already become an independent republic. After the Cuban War of Independence against the Spanish (1895-1898), the Cuban government was handed to the US temporarily until 1902 when the Cuban Republic was established. Early nationalists from both Cuba and the Philippines shared a transpacific relationship, being similarly caught between empires. As Anderson points out (2005), it was not an accident that the movements for independence reached their peak at a similar time in both islands. The Cuban writer, journalist and leader of the independence movement José Martí (1853-1895) was very aware of the work of José Rizal and vice versa.⁸⁸ In fact, Rizal was apprehended by the Spanish prior to his assassination on the charge of *filibusterismo*

⁸⁸ See Maria Theresa Valenzuela’s 2014 article “Constructing National Heroes: Postcolonial Philippine and Cuban Biographies of José Rizal and José Martí.”

(political dissidence) when he was traveling by boat to join the Cubans as a doctor in their own independence war from the Spanish.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Latin American writers saw in Asian countries a cultural counterpart with whom they shared a history of colonialism and (an idealized) national model that supported their resistance against westernisation. However, the Philippines were Hispanic enough to disappoint their orientalist imaginaries. If, for some Latin Americans, the Philippines was not ‘typically oriental,’ for some progressive Filipinos like Mendoza the signs of modernisation observed in Cuba, which she calls “la republica hermana” (7) [the sister republic] provide positive input for her project of transculturation, because the proximity of Cuban and Filipino realities made it more likely that these modernisations could be reproduced in her homeland.⁸⁹

In Cuba, Mendoza mostly gathers information regarding urbanism and hygiene, to be put to use under the hypothetical condition of independence from the US, which Cuba, having already been granted it, leads her to feel more hopeful about:

He pensado que si Estados Unidos nos concediera la independencia y consignase en dicha concesión, como garantía, la cláusula sobre sanidad como en Cuba, ¡qué haríamos los filipinos para cumplir esa condición! (103)

[I have been thinking that if the United States gave us independence and included in such a concession as a guarantee the same health clause as in Cuba, what would we, Filipinos, do in order to fulfill such condition!]

El tráfico en las calles constituye uno de los puntos que absorben mi atención en los viajes. Todas mis observaciones sobre este particular pongo a disposición de las autoridades municipales de Manila, porque la regulación del tráfico moderno es una ciudad es, para mí, un signo de eficiencia en este siglo de las máquinas. (10)

[Street traffic constitutes one of the points that absorb my attention when travelling. All my observations on this topic I make available to the municipal authorities in Manila because the regulation of modern traffic in a city is, in my opinion, a sign of efficiency in this, the century of machines.]

As Mendoza mentions in this quote, the regulation of traffic is one of her main concerns, not simply as a sign of efficiency but, as she writes elsewhere, because it prevents accidents and would serve to educate Filipino citizens, who have the bad habit of “cruzar y zigzaguear las calles por donde les dé la gana” [crossing and zigzagging the roads in any way

⁸⁹ Mendoza also writes that, upon arriving to Havana’s harbour, she told the other Cuban travellers on the boat from the US that “se sentía como si llegase a la casa de una hermana a quien no había visto desde el día de su boda, que estaba ansiosa por conocer sus alegrías y sus penas, sus luchas y sus triunfos” (7) [she felt as if she was coming to the home of a sister she had not seen since her wedding day, who was eager to know her joys and sorrows, her struggles and her triumphs].

they want] (11). The discipline with which drivers and pedestrians in Havana obey “la combinación de luces de varios colores” [the color-coded combination lights] (10) fascinates her. As a tourist, she admires prominent feats of architecture (monuments, churches, temples), but she remains most concerned with housing and urban planning. Being a doctor, she knows that hygiene issues are related to housing construction: “Teniendo en cuenta que las viviendas son la base principal de la labor sanitaria tropical, voy a intentar describir el estado de nuestros pueblos en este respecto, que más vivo se le presenta al viajero cuanto más lejos está de su país” (103) [Keeping in mind that housing is the principal sanitary task in the tropics, I will describe the state of our towns in this regard, which comes more clearly to the mind of the traveler the further he is from his country]. Mendoza also observes that the materials, the climate and the organisation of urban developments (following systems like “zonificación,” a separation of institutional, commercial, residential and working areas of the city common in Europe) are essential to lowering the high mortality rate in the Philippines, which, she argues, is wrongly attributed to the climate instead of to the “estado insano, casi primitivo que existe en muchos pueblos, salvo quizás en las grandes ciudades” [unhealthy, almost primitive state of a lot of villages, with the exception of big cities] (104).

Mendoza’s reflections on hygiene and urbanism, even though presented as based on common sense and scientific fact, nevertheless echo the orientalist and colonial discourses that used hygiene as a justification for carrying out a civilising task that masked economic exploitation. Mendoza disparages the conditions in the Philippines (the prevalence of slums, irregular housing, and overcrowding), which she wishes to transform so that Manila could hypothetically resemble the villas of London and Paris, perfectly aligned “con su jardín delante y su huerto atrás” (105) [with a front garden and a vegetable yard]. Nowadays, only some colonial houses in the Philippines have remained as majestic as Paris and London villas, while most of the countryside only has a basic infrastructure and slums prevail on the outskirts of main cities. New developments such as Fort Bonifacio in Manila do not resemble Paris, London or Berlin but the ‘global cities’ that are so prolific in fast-developing countries in Asia.⁹⁰ In addition, urban and rural areas in Europe in the 1920s were not composed exclusively of the ordered, functional and aesthetically pleasant villas that Mendoza selectively describes in *Notas de viaje*; by neglecting to comment on the poverty and scarcity

⁹⁰ See the classic work on global cities by Saskia Sassen (2001) and, more specifically about the Asian context, Tsung-yi Michelle Huang’s *Walking between Slums and Skyscrapers: Illusions of Open Space in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai* (2009).

that the First World War had brought to Europe, she is showing her attachment to a colonial vision that idealizes the western metropolis.

Speeding up the industrialisation process of the Philippines is, for Mendoza, imperative in order to be competitive on the global market, which some Asian countries had already entered. Technology, expertise and capital are considered necessary to extract and commercialise Filipino resources, and attract tourism. To learn about industrialisation, Mendoza visits cheese factories in Holland, Murano glass and marble factories in Florence, and import and export businesses in Havana. She notes that most products in Havana are foreign and writes:

Ya que nuestra industria de tejidos de algodón se encuentra en un estado primitivo de desarrollo, ¿por qué nuestros ricos no forman una sociedad que se encargue de dar el necesario impulso a esta industria para poder competir con los tejidos extranjeros, importando máquinas modernas y hasta expertos o técnicos, y así poder obtener productos baratos y en cantidad comercial? Este es el procedimiento que empleó el Japón para desarrollar sus empresas industriales y la manera como formó sus propios expertos. (20)

[Since our industry of cotton textile is in a primitive state of development, why don't our rich people form an association that provides the necessary impulse to our industry in order to compete with foreign textiles, by means of importing modern machinery and even technical expertise that will allow the production of cheap products in commercial quantities? This is the process that Japan employed to develop their industrial enterprises and the way it trained its own experts.]

Advanced capitalism could be brought to the Philippines, Mendoza feels, as it had become the main economic model not just in Europe, but also in Cuba (under the protectorate of the US) and Japan.

Japan also provides a model of internationalisation, another marker of modernity. During a stroll through Florence on a sunny day, prompted by the sight of tourists carrying umbrellas to protect themselves from the sun, Mendoza conjectures that on the rare occasions when young girls in the Philippines are seen carrying sun umbrellas, the label "Made in Japan" could probably "con pena" [sadly] be read on them (166). The presence of Japanese products in the Philippines leads her to wish for the internationalisation of Filipino manufacturing: "¿Cuándo tendríamos y usaríamos con orgullo los 'Made in the Philippines?'" (166) [When would we have and proudly use the "Made in the Philippines?"].

Signs of modern globalisation are perceived in the presence of Japanese products in Asia, but also in the presence of other Asians in the West. Mendoza cannot help but admire the Chinese restaurants in London for imposing their dishes on Europeans: "El chino con su

‘pansit, gulay’, la morisqueta tostada compite con el europeo, imponiéndole su arte culinario, sin tener que devanarse los sesos para preparar manjares al estilo occidental” [The Chinese with their “pansit [noodles], gulay [vegetables]”, and morisqueta tostada [fried rice] are imposing their culinary art on the European instead of thinking hard about ways to prepare western-style delicacies] (52). Filipinos should be able to do the same, she claims, “una vez educados a comer lo nuestro” [once we are educated in eating our own food] (52). Initially, Mendoza proudly suggests that Filipino food could also be consumed abroad, but further reflection makes her realise that Filipino food is in fact constituted by many different foods (American, Mexican, Chinese), which problematises its identity and the attachment Filipino people have to it.⁹¹ Mendoza recognises that most Filipinos are fans of the Chinese noodle shops, but perceives the assimilation of Chinese food in the Philippines as “esa invasion silenciosa, pero decisiva, de nuestros primos del otro lado del mar de la China” [the silent but decisive invasion of our cousins on the other side of the China Sea]. Consequently, she encourages her Filipino “compatriotas” not to allow others “competencia en una cosa tan sencilla” [competence on such a simple thing] (52). Filipino food culture is thus presented as resulting from a process of transculturation, which Mendoza perceives negatively as yet another form of colonialism, “a silent but decisive invasion” that disrupts any national project based on establishing a uniform modernist identity for The Philippines.

Returning Home

The first edition of *Notas de viaje* contains a preface by the author and letters from three fellow Filipino intellectuals: Teodoro M. Kalaw, the director of the National Library of the Philippines (February 1930); Pedro Aunario, editor of the newspaper *La Patria* (October 1929); and Hugo Salazar, a contributor to other Spanish-language newspapers (October 1929). According to Kalaw, *Notas de viaje*’s main achievement is its excellent and intense educational tendency, as well as its being, by virtue of the various fields and numerous countries that Mendoza includes, “un interesante manual del saber cosmopolita” [an interesting manual of cosmopolitan knowledge] (viii). In addition, he notes that *Notas de viaje* represents a step forward in the Filipino feminist movement, in which Mendoza was a recognised figure:

⁹¹ In his book *Authentic Though Not Exotic: Essays on Filipino Identity* (2005) Fernando Zialcita claims that Filipinos struggle to recognise and identify with their own food, often claiming that “there really is no Filipino cooking” (2). He further notes that “some Filipinos’ tendency to denigrate, without basis, their major cultural symbols show in other realms, and work against us” (2).

La Dra. Mendoza debe ser felicitada. Este es un trabajo que no tiene desperdicio, el libro de viajes más concienzudo escrito por un filipino hasta hoy, y, viniendo de la pluma de una mujer, constituye un fuerte alegato en favor del feminismo que - ¡Gracias a Dios! - se está abriendo paso en nuestro país debido a sus propios merecimientos. (viii)

[Dr. Mendoza must be congratulated. This is a valuable work, the most thorough travel book written by a Filipino up until now, and, coming from the pen of a woman, it constitutes a strong defense in favor of Feminism, which - thanks to God! - is making its way in our country due to its own merits.]

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, Mendoza was the editor and a columnist of the English and Spanish magazine for women *La Mujer* and founded, in 1922, the *Liga Nacional de Damas Filipinas* [National League of Filipino Women], with which she championed women's suffrage. She also edited a collection of essays written in English and Tagalog entitled *My Ideal Filipino Girl* (1931) and wrote *The Development and Progress of the Filipino Woman* (1951), discussed by Denise Cruz (2011) as an example of 'transpacific Filipina feminism.' As a feminist, Mendoza argues that "the Filipino woman of the modern type cares less for flattery, but demands more respect; she prefers to be considered a human being, capable of helping in the progress of humanity, rather than to be looked upon as a doll, of muscles and bones" (qtd. in Cruz 21). Her works underscore the advancements of Filipinas in fields of "medicine, nursing, social science, and the humanities and repeatedly emphasize the transpacific Filipina's rightful place as a leader in the new Philippines" (Cruz 21). This detaches Mendoza from the recurrent orientalisating and exoticising images of women - literally presented as dolls - found in some of the works studied in this project, especially Balmori's poems. Mendoza's feminine ideal is, moreover, based on the claim that Filipina women were independent and considered equal to men in the Malay past: the woman "we are told, was her brother's equal in the home, in society, in government, she could hold positions of honor and prestige like him" (Mendoza qtd. in Cruz 23). According to Cruz, the works of transpacific Filipina feminists like Mendoza "feature precolonial, indigenous women as models of feminism with triumphant rhetoric that valorizes *indias*" (Cruz 24), rather than puritan Catholic or liberal Americans.

Cruz explains that part of the US government (colonial) policy of "benevolent assimilation" was the creation of transpacific fellowships "centered on the education of proper Filipino subjects and in reproducing examples of the benefits of American democracy" (20). The aim of these programs, which brought educated Filipinos such as Mendoza to the US (Cruz refers to an earlier visit of Mendoza than the one transcribed in

Notas de viaje), was for Filipino men and women to earn “graduate-level degrees, and [...] to return as Americanized triumphs” (20).

Mendoza records the gratitude she feels towards US initiatives towards women’s education to a journalist during her visit to Buck Hill Falls. He inquires about the way Filipinos perceived the influence of the US in their country and Mendoza responds:

Creo que ningún Filipino puede odiar los ideales que nos habéis enseñado y esto lo digo por mí, porque jamás hubiese llegado a ser doctora en medicina si hubiésemos continuado bajo la soberanía española. (36)

[I do not believe that any Filipino hates the ideals that you have taught us and I say this based on my own experience. I would have never been able to become a doctor of medicine if we had remained under Spanish sovereignty.]

This comment brings out Mendoza’s ambiguous attachments to and detachments from the Philippines’ complex colonial history, this time praising the US and implicitly critiquing the Spanish education system for keeping women from fully participating in society. Her comments on Filipino independence discussed earlier reveal a much more critical view on the US role in the Philippines. A factor that may explain Mendoza’s double articulation of respect for and exasperation with the Americans is that she is writing the travelogue in Spanish and sending fragments of it to the various ministries that could make use of her notes.

Notas de viaje was received with great ambivalence by the Filipino (Spanish-speaking) government and other intellectuals. While her travelogue, seen as carried out with “la devoción de misionera del saber de las letras” [missionary devotion towards knowledge and letters] (Aunario ix), received much praise, it also received serious criticism, mostly directed at the impracticability of her proposed modernisation project. In his letter, Salazar questions the usefulness of Mendoza’s book:

¿Qué se puede esperar de un simple relato que usted hace de los procedimientos políticos o sociales, agrícolas o industriales, sanitarios o educacionales que usted expone a la consideración de su pueblo para que los imite y los asimile? (xv)

[What can we expect from the simple account that you give of the political or social, agricultural or industrial, sanitary or educational matters that you suggest for the consideration of your people in order for them to imitate or assimilate them?]

Salazar’s skepticism towards the potential of Mendoza’s travel diary to transform Filipino society brings back the paradox governing the genre of travel writing discussed earlier in this chapter between its supposed truth or practical value and the subjectivity of its narrative gaze.

Mendoza's narrative 'eloquence' fails to capture the imagination of critics such as Salazar, who perceive her work merely as a series of "felices observaciones" [happy observations] and see the notion that the ideas presented could be imitated and assimilated by Filipinos as wishful thinking. The way Salazar refers to the concepts of "imitation" and "assimilation" contrasts with Mendoza's own use: while she affirms the possibility of assimilating, in a process not of identical replication but of adaptation, elements from multiple other cultures, Salazar questions the malleability of Filipino culture on the basis of the example he gives of three foreign enterprises that failed to be successful in the Philippines.⁹²

Thus, where Salazar sees cultures - or at least Filipino culture - as rigid and unable to mix, Mendoza's project of transculturation is founded on the idea of 'cultural plasticity' (Rama 2009). For Rama, transculturation between Latin American urban and regional spaces was possible thanks to the cultural plasticity of the latter: "modernizing impulses mediated through the cities were able to be integrated within the regions' own rearticulated structures" (159). Mendoza's rearticulation of Filipino future modernity similarly integrates the impressions gathered in the European, American, but also Cuban and other urban centres she visited into the Filipino culture (which occupies the place of the regions in Rama's account), which she considers to be sufficiently adaptable, given that it has already integrated elements of different cultures in being twice colonised.

With respect to the notion of cultural adaptability or plasticity, Hernández, Millington and Borden (2005) offer a valuable re-examination of the idea of transculturation using Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome. The rhizome is a figure appropriated from biology but used in philosophy to oppose traditional tree-like thought structures represented as foundational, linear and hierarchical in favour of "a dynamic structure that has no point of origin and is capable of establishing multiple connections with any other kind of system while at the same time avoiding stratification" (Hernández, Millington and Borden xv-i). The most important qualities of the rhizome are *connectivity*, *heterogeneity* and *multiplicity*, as well as resistance to traceability: "the dynamism of the rhizome prevents it from being traceable, [rhizomes] are anti-genealogical and cannot be traced but mapped" (Hernández, Millington and Borden xvi).

⁹² The three examples cited by Salazar as demonstrating the difficulty of copying foreign industrial models are Japanese-style fishing in the Bay of Ragay, the local production of castor oil and the attempt to develop the piña textile industry by the Pacific Commercial Company, led by a US businessman (xiv). The failure of these attempts, according to Salazar, was ultimately caused by: (1) the hospitable living conditions of the Philippines, which "make life easy so that it is barely necessary to struggle in order to survive" (xvi); and (2) the alleged indolence Filipinos have irreparably inherited from the colonial system.

The many complex attachments to and detachments from other cultures that can be traced in *Notas de viaje* can be seen to demonstrate a rhizomatic capacity on Mendoza's part to think across cultural boundaries. Organic and unpredictable variation, interconnectedness and multiplicity are seen to apply not only to larger structures such as society and economy, but also to the individuals operating within them. As a rhizomatic map - "detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification" (Deleuze and Guattari qtd. in Hernández, Millington and Bord xvi) - *Notas de viaje* reflects the connections, always in flux, between places and people, and reveals the multiplicity that characterises each culture (showing obedient and loud Asians, poor and rich Europeans, Muslim and Christian Middle Eastern people, and the concurrence of modern and traditional elements within a single country). Mendoza's emphasis on the plasticity of cultures configures the constant becomings of culture as a rhizomatic system as processes of transculturation. Travel writing, itself grounded in continuous movement, is particularly suitable for showing these processes and for channeling them in a particular direction, in this case in the direction of a vision of a modern future for the Philippines.

However, as Hernández, Millington and Borden emphasise, rhizomatic structures are not unrestricted but bound by power relations:

cultures have rhizomatic characteristics, they are assemblages of multiplicities that are always in the middle, always in the process of becoming. In their process of becoming, cultures establish simultaneous multiple connections with other cultural formations. As a result, cultures regenerate, change in nature, and recreate themselves constantly. However, these processes are conditioned by institutions of power. Such institutions have a great impact on the way connections are established, and the very notion of unrestricted connectability can be jeopardized by power formations that tend to construct a model of order by stratifying everything. *This is what occurs in the majority of transcultural relations: a power takeover disrupts the rhizomatic nature of processes of cultural becoming by stratifying everything within foundational totalizing systems.* (xvii-xviii, emphasis added)

Stratification and totalisation, effected by institutions of power, limit the otherwise endless process of cultural interconnection. In *Notas de viaje*, too, transculturation does not appear as an endless or boundless becoming; for Mendoza, the predetermined end of the processes of transculturation she seeks to set into motion is the particular version of modernity measured against European modernity that Pratt describes (2002). The goal of cultural exchange, for Mendoza, is to (learn to) become like the mostly western cultures that she perceives as already modern. This underlines my argument that transculturation in *Notas de viaje* constitutes a deliberate, active project, meant to be finalised. Mendoza's imagined future for

the Philippines, based on cultural assimilation, will ultimately interrupt the dynamics of rhizomatic cultural transformation by imposing European modernity as a totalising social structure of power supported by a united, well-defined Filipino identity.

In his book *The Future as a Cultural Fact* (2013) Arjun Appadurai articulates a difference between an *ethics of probability* and *the ethics of possibility*. The ethics of probability comprise a dominant discourse of calculations based on rationality, management, costs and benefits according to which “a genuinely democratic politics cannot be based on the avalanche of numbers—about population, poverty, profit, and predation—that threaten to kill all street-level optimism about life and the world” (299). Salazar’s critique of Mendoza’s project is based on how it does not follow the ethics of probability: Mendoza’s facts are not presented in a quantifiable way. On the other hand, Appadurai defines the ethics of possibility as:

those ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that increase the horizons of hope, that expand the field of the imagination, that produce greater equity in what I have called the capacity to aspire, and that widen the field of informed, creative, and critical citizenship. (295)

This, I want to suggest, captures the spirit of Mendoza’s active transculturation as an attempt to imagine, anticipate and aspire to a different future for her community.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have read Paz Mendoza’s travel notes as an example of active transculturation. *Notas de viaje* has allowed me to present transculturation not only as a form of hybridisation resulting from past colonial contact, but also as an active attempt to imagine cultural transformation for the future by (post)colonial subjects. The experience of travel, Mendoza’s work shows, facilitates new contact-zones in which arbitrary and ephemeral interactions with the other can produce new meanings, capable of challenging entrenched stereotypes. Mendoza’s own hybrid cultural identity and social status, for example, allows her to “decline” cultural stereotypes about Asians, as I showed in my analysis of her conversation with the Dutch millionaire. I have located the narrative ‘eloquence’ of Mendoza’s travel writing in her ability to establish multiple, flexible connections between the Philippines and other cultures across the world, including non-western ones.

Unlike Balmori and Gurrea, who diagnose the Philippines’ transculturation mainly as an effect of colonialism, for Mendoza transculturation is a future-oriented project. As such, it is based on the question of what the Philippines *could or should be like* as a modern,

independent nation. Mendoza measures the modernity to be achieved in the Philippines against Western modernity and selects what she perceives as signs of progress that could be assimilated in her country, including German and Danish education, Italian manufacturing, Dutch farming and cheese industries, and Parisian and English urban design. In contrast, she rejects what she believes to be signs of backwardness, most notably in the accounts of her visits to Egypt and Turkey. A notable exception to the way Mendoza questions the superiority of the West over the rest are her positive comments on Cuba. These comments can be explained not only by the historical ties and shared nationalist sentiments in Cuba and the Philippines, but also by the fact that adopting the (peripheral) modernity Mendoza perceives in Havana's traffic control system, urban management and hygiene regulations in the Philippines seems feasible given the similarities between the countries, including their shared double colonisation by Spain and the US.

Notas de viaje shows how the unpredictable nature of travelling may also trigger nostalgic and nationalist emotions, such as Mendoza's illusion in Egypt of being transported back to the rural Philippines or her enthusiasm for the Italian nationalism displayed in the cinema. Comparing the Philippines to other countries also leads Mendoza to attribute certain shortcomings to it. Examples of this are her negative reflections on Filipino food and cultural identity as not sufficiently distinctive and homogenous, and her positioning of the Philippines as lagging behind other Asian countries such as Japan (which is selling its manufactured goods internationally) or China (which is bringing Chinese food to the world) in the global marketplace. Even though, in the end, Mendoza remains attached to the idea of achieving - as a teleological project - the hegemonic form of modernity that propagates Europe as its centre and is intimately linked to coloniality and the global spread of capitalism, at the same time *Notas de viaje* consistently envisions the Philippine as a site of cultural plasticity, opening it up to ongoing processes of transculturation.

Unlike Salazar, Mendoza believes in the plasticity of cultures which can not only be transformed by external influences such as colonisation but internally by envisioning possible ways to transform it according to one's own criteria. However, Mendoza is trying to enter the realm of central modernity from her periphery by picking and choosing idealised models and sometimes ignoring the problematic aspects of the cultures taken as models (such as fascism in Italy and Germany). A text like Mendoza's, then, is significant in demonstrating the possibilities of thinking transculturally while, at the same time, showing that transculturation cannot be made into a global project but requires an engagement with the given conditions at a local level.

In the next chapter I show how Balmori's war novel *Los Pájaros de fuego* points to the limits of active transculturation, suggesting that taking another culture as a model should not mean ignoring less attractive aspects of that culture, in this case Japan's imperialism.