



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Writing the Nation

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

Villaescusa Illán, I.

Publication date

2017

Document Version

Other version

License

Other

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Villaescusa Illán, I. (2017). *Writing the Nation: Transculturation and nationalism in Hispano-Filipino literature from the early twentieth century*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam].

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Introduction

In 2016, the Spanish TV series *El Ministerio del Tiempo* [The Ministry of Time] dedicated two episodes to the Siege of Baler (1898-1899), a battle in the Philippine Revolution (1896-1898) against the Spanish colonial empire. The two episodes, called *Tiempo de Valientes I y II* [Time to be Brave I and II], were filmed outside Madrid in November 2015, turning the cold Spanish winter into the tropical Philippines of 1898. The episodes tell the story of how a Spanish battalion fighting the Filipino independence guerrilla garrisoned the church in the village of Baler (on the eastern coast of Luzon Island) and resisted Filipino rebels for 337 days. Cut off from communication with the Spanish government, the soldiers were unaware that, during this time, the Spanish-American War had ended in Spanish surrender and the annexation of the Philippines Islands by the Americans. The Spanish soldiers could have avoided their ordeal if they had not been led by the stubborn Captain Martín Cerezo, who, rather than believe the news of the end of war brought by the (possibly conspiring) Tagalog, decided to stay in the church, where his men struggled with illnesses, hunger, deaths and internal conspiracies.¹ Since these episodes aired on public Spanish TV, the Philippines has reappeared in public conversation, prompting interest in this bit of relatively unknown history that connects Spain and the Philippines.²

Traditionally, in Spanish history textbooks, the Philippines appear only as the third element in a formulaic enunciation about the crisis of 1898 caused by the loss of the last three Spanish colonies: Puerto Rico, Cuba *and the Philippines*. Teachers of Spanish also do not tend to mention the Philippines, as it is not among the 21 official Spanish-speaking countries in the world. Spanish in the Philippines is not and never was the language of communication

¹ In 1945, film director Antonio Román made a film about the same story entitled *Los Últimos de Filipinas* [The Last of the Philippines], coining an expression that is now used by the Spanish to refer to someone who arrives fashionably late. In 2016, Salvador Caso, the scriptwriter of *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, directed a remake of this film called *1898. Los Últimos de Filipinas* [1898, The Last from the Philippines], further contributing to the resurgence of interest in the relationship between Spain and the Philippines.

² On the national Spanish television channel RTVE, about 80% of the TV programs and telenovelas are currently historical. Popular instances include *Isabel*, which recounts the biography of the catholic queen Isabel (1451-1504), *Águila Roja*, which depicts Golden Ages monarchical intrigues in Madrid, *La Señora*, about the II Republic, *Cuéntame*, about the Franco dictatorship and *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, which mixes history with science fiction. In the latter, a time travelling team composed of a 2015 young ambulance doctor, a soldier from the sixteenth century who fought against the Flemish, the first woman to enter university in Cataluña and even a member of the Inquisition attempt to maintain history the way it has been written. Sanctioned to travel through time by a state ministry and provided with smartphones, the team catches criminals who wish to change history. Even if these historical television programmes are still told from the perspective of the Spanish, they bring “forgotten” or “unknown” histories into current conversations and allow for a certain reflection on Spanish colonialism and its lingering imprint.

among the majority of the population. At most, it was the language of the metropolis, the colonial government and the creole elite.

The focus of this study is not a single “forgotten” event of colonial history in the Philippines, but the way in which Spanish-speaking authors in the early twentieth-century Philippines used the language of the former coloniser to shape and assert a new cultural and national identity for the country, which was still under American rule but aspired to independence. The study of Hispanophone literatures is mainly concerned with the peninsular and Latin American texts that constitute the canon. Literature in Spanish written by peripheral writers of the past and the present (including second-generation migrants in Spain) is still relatively unexplored and invisible in most Spanish curriculums.³ This study aims to bridge that gap by shedding light on a little-known corpus of texts written in Spanish by Filipino authors.

Three of the works I analyse in this study belong to the collection of *Clásicos Hispanofilipinos*, a project of literary revival started by the Cervantes Institute in Manila in 2009. Adelina Gurrea Monasterio (1896-1971) inaugurated the classics collection with a work entitled *Cuentos de Juana, leyendas malayas de las islas Filipinas* (1943) [Juana’s stories. Malayan Legends of the Philippine Islands] (Figure 1).⁴ The book is a collection of short stories set in the colonial Philippines, on the central islands of Los Negros, where the family of the author lived and where she grew up before moving to Spain at the age of 25, never returning to the Philippines. *Cuentos de Juana* recounts her childhood memories and the stories that her nanny, a Malay Filipina called Juana, told her and her siblings. In addition to *Cuentos de Juana*, I will also analyse some of Gurrea’s poems from the collections *En Agraz* (1968) [Before Time] and *Más Senderos* (1867) [More Paths], and a play entitled *Filipinas: Auto histórico-satírico* (1951) [Philippines: a Historical-Satirical Allegory].

The second work from the classics collection is a novel written by journalist, poet and novelist Jesús Balmori (1887-1946). Entitled *Los pájaros de fuego, una novela filipina de la guerra* [Birds of Fire, a Filipino War Novel] (Figure 2), it was written in 1945 but not published until 2009 as part of the classics collection. The novel is believed to be one of the few novels written in the Philippines during World War II. It tells the story of an aristocratic

³ See Ana Rueda’s *El retorno/el reencuentro. La inmigración en la literatura hispano-marroquí* (2010) and Critián H. Ricci’s *¡Hay moros en la costa! Literatura marroquí fronteriza en castellano y catalán* (2016) or the narratives of the Ecuatorial Guinean authors Juan Balboa Boneke (1938-2014) and Donato Ndong (1950-) (*El Metro*, 2007).

⁴ Most of the literature that constitutes the corpus has not been translated into English, with the exception of Gurrea’s *Cuentos de Juana*, the translation of which was the focus of Perla Palabrica’s doctoral dissertation (1999). All translations in this study are, therefore, my own unless otherwise indicated.

family of Spanish blood living in Manila in the years leading up to the Japanese occupation (1942-1945). Additionally, I analyse Balmori's poetry, focusing on three poems contained in the poetry collections *Rimas Malayas* (1904) [Malayan Rhymes] and *Mi casa de Nipa* (1941) [My house of Nipa].



Figure 1

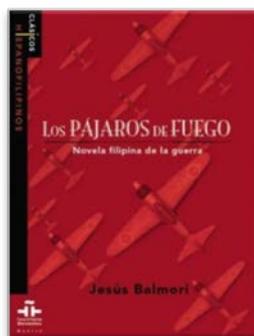


Figure 2

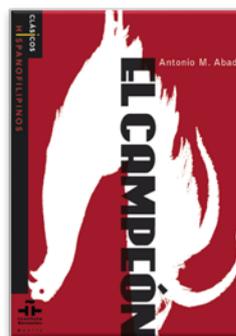


Figure 3

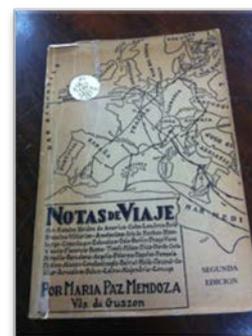


Figure 4

Figure 1: *Cuentos de Juana. Narraciones Malayas de las Islas Philippinas*. Ed. Clásicos Hispanofilipinos. Ilustración Miguel Lasa, 2009; Figure 2: *Los Pájaros de fuego. Una novela filipina de la guerra*. Ed. Clásicos Hispanofilipinos. Ilustración Miguel Lasa, 2010; Figure 3: *El Campeón*. Ed. Clásicos Hispanofilipinos. Ilustración Miguel Lasa, 2012; Figure 4: *Notas de viaje*. Ed. Benipayo Press, 1946.

The third title from the collection is *El Campeón* (1940) [The Champion] (Figure 3), written by one of the most committed *hispanistas* of the American period in the Philippines, Antonio Abad (1894-1970). Abad was a professor of Spanish at various universities, a journalist and a writer. *El Campeón* is a fable about Filipino cockfighting set on the island of Cebu, the rural birthplace of the author and the place where he spent most of the 1940s, fleeing the agitated life in Manila in the years leading up to WWII.⁵

The final work in my selected corpus has not been reedited since its first publication in 1929. It is thus not part of the classics collection but was located during my fieldwork in the Philippines. *Notas de viaje* (1929) [Travel Notes] (Figure 4) is a compilation of travel notes written by Maria Paz Mendoza Guazón (1884-1967) on a trip around the world (visiting the US, Cuba, Europe and the Middle East) that lasted for almost two years. Mendoza was one of the first women to graduate in medicine from the University of the Philippines. She was a professor in Medicine and a feminist who wrote essays and columns in Spanish-language newspapers and magazines published in Manila. She travelled the world on two occasions, writing extensive notes that she sent back to the Philippines, where they were

⁵ In the course of this research there has been new addition to the collection, a compilation of chronicles and fiction stories published in newspapers from 1919 until 1932 by journalist Enrique Laygo (1897-1932), entitled *Relatos* [Stories].

published in newspapers. Although she travelled on her own expenses, she was encouraged by the University of the Philippines and the government to collect materials for educational purposes. *Notas de viaje* gathers her travel notes and, in 1930, was awarded the Zóbel Prize, the only award recognising literary works written in Spanish by Filipinos that existed during her lifetime. All four authors I selected for this study received the Zóbel Prize.⁶

Taken together, the works in my corpus offer a variety of voices, male and female, from Spain and the Philippines, describing a variety of contexts, urban and rural, as well as, in the case of Mendoza, countries across the world. What all the texts have in common is an explicit concern with defining Filipino cultural and national identity at a moment when the Spanish language and the colonial heritage connected to it was being threatened by the presence of the US in the archipelago and the promise of impending independence (the Republic of the Philippines was established in 1946).

By engaging with the works of a fairly unknown generation of Filipino authors who wrote in Spanish I am not only retrieving and giving visibility to these texts, but analysing them as a form of peripheral literature offering an alternative cultural discourse within Hispanic studies that opens up a new perspective on the official history of the end of Spanish colonialism and its lingering imprint. Specifically, I will look at how the themes of nationalism and cultural identity, which are equally contested in today's globalized world and still controversial within the Philippines, were addressed by this generation of Hispano-Filipino authors, who, I will argue, to various degrees approached Filipino identity as transcultural, as characterised by the complex relationships between multiple cultures, indigenous and colonial.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will first outline the issues that arise when researching Hispano-Filipino literature; then I will contextualize my corpus within the study of Filipino nationalism in works written in Spanish. I continue with a brief discussion of certain anxieties about Filipino identity that persist until today, followed by an explanation of the central theoretical concept of this study, Filipino transculturation. I end with a chapter outline.

⁶ The Zóbel Prize was founded by Enrique Zobel de Ayala (1877-1923), a Spanish intellectual born in Madrid in 1842 from a marriage uniting two aristocratic families of Spanish and Danish descent. He moved to Manila in 1882 and turned his home into a centre of cultural and intellectual life that later would become the *Casino español*. Nowadays, the *Casino español* is located next to the Cervantes Institute in Manila in the poor district of Ermita where Spanish is still spoken. In 2001, Lourdes Brillantes published a book in Spanish collecting the works and biographies of all the authors who won the Zóbel prize between 1922 and 2000. In 2006, an English version was published in Manila.

Researching Hispano-Filipino Literature

Most Spanish readers and *Hispanistas* alike are surprised when they hear about the existence of a tradition of Filipino literature written in Spanish. The history of the Philippines and of the Spanish colonial presence there (1521-1898) is relatively unknown. However, Filipinos are aware that Spanish was once spoken in the archipelago. Nowadays, the language is associated with a dying generation⁷ and with a decadent colonial past of Catholic oppression that was given a particularly bad reputation by American propaganda during the US occupation (1898-1946). Notwithstanding, Spanish is also related to the earliest nationalist movements in the Philippines, led by José Rizal (1861-1896). A young medical doctor best known for being one of the first nationalist writers, Rizal used the colonial language to challenge colonialism and became a national hero after being killed by the Spanish, who considered his novels *Noli me Tangere* [Touch me Not] from 1894 and *El Filibusterismo* [Subversion] from 1896 anti-clerical and subversive. And, indeed, they were. They show the decadence and corruption of the colonial government, which had become a puppet of the clergy. While waiting for his execution in prison, Rizal wrote a poem entitled “Mi último adios” (1896) [My Last Farewell] that is still quoted in Spanish by some elderly Filipinos who were obliged to memorize it before Spanish stopped being compulsory in schools in 1986.



Figure 5: *Martyrdom of Rizal* by Carlos “Botong” V. Francisco, 1960. Mural in Rizal’s Shrine, Intramuros, Manila.

⁷ See the article in *El País* from 9 May 2016 entitled “Los últimos del español” [The last of the Spanish language].

Most Filipinos (not just the elderly) can quote the opening verse of Rizal's poem: "Adiós, patria adorada, region del sol querida" [Farewell, beloved country, land loved by the sun]. However, what they are less aware of is that 25% of the words that are part of their everyday vocabulary either come directly from Spanish - *zapatos, cuchara, platito, puede* [shoes, spoon, little plate, can, like] - or are free phonetic transcriptions of Spanish, as in the greeting *kumostá*, derived from "¿cómo está?" [how are you?] and words like "*kultura nasyonal, kargo de konsiyensiya, rebolusyon*" (Donoso 2012: 336) [national culture, guilt, revolution]. Some Filipinistas compare the role of Spanish in the Philippines to that of classic Latin in romance languages: "*El español es el latín de Filipinas: no lo habla ya nadie, pero está detrás de todo lo que decimos*" [Spanish is the Latin of the Philippines: nobody speaks it anymore, but it is behind everything we say].⁸ For the majority of Filipinos, however, a mix of Tagalog, English and Spanish is simply their way of speaking.

The Philippines, composed of approximately 7,000 scattered islands populated by different ethnic groups that speak a range of languages catalogued into 70 different linguistic groups and spoken in 200 dialects (Ortiz 2009: 12), has undergone many linguistic and cultural turns, of which Spanish colonialization, resulting in the emergence of a Hispano-Filipino literature, is only one. The arrival of the US in 1898 implied a decline in the use of Spanish by a group of writers who had undergone their education in Spanish but reached intellectual maturity when it was of little use and their own children would likely not be able to read their texts. These historical circumstance, in addition to the marginal geopolitical location of the Philippines within the Hispanophone world, the fact that Hispanic scholars rarely work in Asia and Asian scholars do not work in Spanish (Lishfey 2013), and the difficulty, up to now, in accessing primary texts - which mostly remained in library archives and private collections - have led to Filipino literature in Spanish being largely neglected. Moreover, the country's colonial past, the historical developments of the twentieth century (independence movements, WWI and WWII) and the complex geography and multiple languages of the Philippines have contributed to the peripherality of *all* Filipino literatures.

Yet, similar to what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari note in their article "What is Minor Literature?" (1983) with regards to Kafka's use of German, the Philippines in the early twentieth century present a context in which a minority (Hispano-Filipino writers) uses what can be considered a major language (on a global scale) in a minor location to counter the dominant forces of Americanisation. Deleuze and Guattari write that "a minor literature is not

⁸ Carlos Madrid, director of the Cervantes Institute in Manila, quoted in an interview published in *El País*, 9 May 2016.

the literature of a minor language but the literature a minority makes in a major language” (1983: 16). According to Daniel W. Smith (1997) what Kafka did by using German instead of Czech was “rather than writing in a minor language, he, instead, invented a minor *use* of the major language” (xlvi). The use of minor literatures in major languages is, consensually agreed by Deleuze and Guatari, a political one:

The three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of the language, the connection of the individual and the political, the collective arrangement of utterance. Which amounts to this: that "minor" no longer characterizes certain literatures, but describes the revolutionary conditions of any literature within what we call the great (or established). Everyone who has had the misfortune to be born in the country of a major literature must write in its tongue, as a Czech Jew writes in German, or as an Uzbek Jew writes in Russian. (19)

The use of Spanish by Filipino authors fits Deleuze and Guatari’s description of minor literature whose political aspirations concern the imagination of an independent nation.

Pascale Casanova, in *The World Republic of Letters* (2004), offers another theoretical framework to look at the position of Hispano-Filipino literature in the context of World Literature. Together with David Damrosch and Franco Moretti, Casanova has taken up the discussion of World Literature that started with the classic texts by Goethe and Marx.⁹ Damrosch, in *What is World Literature?* (2003), defines World Literature as the circulation, production, reception and translation of literary works that travel outside their national borders. Moretti approaches it from a more socio-economic point of view. Following Immanuel Wallerstein’s “world systems theory,” Moretti understands World Literature like international capitalism “as a system that is simultaneously *one* and *unequal*: with a core and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality.” (2000: 56). Moretti agrees on the existence of one literature (in the singular sense of Goethe’s *Weltliteratur*) but one that “is profoundly unequal” (56) and the relationship between centres and peripheries is tied to an uneven value of literary works. Casanova also draws on Wallerstein but suggests a global literary space that is partly autonomous from economic and political power structures, organised according to its own literary logic:

Let us say that a mediating space exists between literature and the world: a parallel territory, relatively autonomous from the political domain, and dedicated as a result to questions, debates, inventions of a specifically literary nature. Here, struggles of all sorts - political, social, national, gender, ethnic - come to be refracted, diluted,

⁹ Goethe coins the term *Weltliteratur* in his *Conversations with Eckermann* (1827); Marx and Engels address the question of a world literature, prompted by their ideas of culture as a global property, in their *Communist Manifesto* (1847).

deformed or transformed according to a literary logic, and in literary forms.
(Casanova 71-72)

Casanova's literary world is characterised by an uneven circulation of works of literature according to their perceived literary value (what she calls 'literariness'), which functions as a form of cultural capital in Pierre Bourdieu's (1977) sense. According to Casanova, because different literatures have historically been assigned different degrees of cultural capital, the World Republic of Letters manifests as a system of centers and peripheries, with Paris as the most central metropolis:

The world of letters is a relatively unified space characterized by the opposition between the great national literary spaces, which are also the oldest—and, accordingly, the best endowed—and those literary spaces that have more recently appeared and that are poor by comparison. (83)

At the risk of reproducing a Eurocentric rhetoric, Casanova maps out the World Republic of Letters according to the ongoing tension between centres and peripheries. Since peripheral literatures have little currency of their own, they have to rely on the power of the centre to grant them the status of 'literariness.' Peripheral literatures can be centralised, but only by engaging with central models in modes of assimilation or differentiation, and only if the centre's prominent authors or publishers endorse these modes.

Keeping in mind the debate about World Literature and Casanova's theory of the dependent relationship between the periphery and the centre, which I will discuss further in Chapter 1, I set out to discover what strategies (assimilation and differentiation, but also transculturation) are employed in my corpus of Hispano-Filipino literature in order to position this literature in relation to the European centre (Spain but also France) and the other Spanish-language periphery of Latin America. I will show how concerns about language, translation and circulation are crucial in the Hispano-Filipino texts I discuss. The texts in the Hispano-Filipino classics collection, for example, have been re-published in Spanish without a translation into Tagalog or English, which means that most Filipinos are unable to read them. At the same time, the collection has very little visibility in the main Spanish-speaking markets, mostly because it is not a commercial endeavour and because readers will not look for titles they do not know exist. Whether Internet access, academic research and translation can make Hispano-Filipino literature more central in the world republic of letters that Casanova conceptualises remains to be seen.

The collection of Hispano-Filipino classics is sponsored by the Ministries of Education and Culture of Spain, and by other institutions, including the AECID (Agencia

Española de Cooperación Internacional) and the Colegio San Carlos from Mexico. However, it was only made possible in the first place because of the efforts and passion of a small number of researchers¹⁰ who have retrieved the texts from library archives, contacted the estates of the authors, dealt with the editing process, copyright issues and other legal difficulties, and obtained (limited) funding to publish the texts in annotated editions with critical essays. The books in the collection are (cheaply) available in some (university) bookstores in Manila and in art galleries and cultural centres. In the wider Spanish-speaking world, as noted, the collection has had a very limited circulation. However, since 2014, the texts used in this study and many other Hispano-Filipino texts that survived the humidity of tropical libraries have been digitalized and made available through open access via the Cervantes Library hosted at the University of Alicante.¹¹ This initiative (which began shortly after I carried out my archival research in the summer of 2013 in Manila) is giving a new virtual life to Hispano-Filipino literature, enabling interested readers from across the world to download and read the available texts, and will hopefully foster further interest in Hispano-Filipino literature.

Research on Hispano-Filipino literature has traditionally attempted to offer a panoramic view, tracing it from its beginnings to the present day. *Letras en Filipinas* (1999) by Ortiz Armengol is a chronological account of the relationship between literatures from Spain and the Philippines from the first travel chronicles to modern authors such as Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) and Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936). *Historia cultural de la lengua española en Filipinas: ayer y hoy* (2012) and *Literatura Hispano Filipina actual* (2010), two volumes edited by Isaac Donoso, offer a collection of essays and literary criticism describing the history, genres and works of the most relevant Hispano-Filipino authors from the sixteenth century onwards. Both volumes include excerpts from novels and full poems. Álvarez Tardío (2010) explains that, traditionally, most anthologies of Hispanic literatures have included very few works by Filipino authors (other than the seminal works of Rizal, which tend to be studied as propaganda manifestos rather than as literary works) due to the small volume these works represent compared to the prolific Hispanophone literatures coming from Spain and Latin America. Significantly, Spanish was just one of the many languages spoken in the Philippine Islands (Donoso & Gallo 2010), whereas Spanish represents almost the whole literary tradition in Latin America.

¹⁰ Isaac Donoso, Andrea Gallo, Beatriz Álvarez Tardío, Louisa Young, Salvador García and, outside the classics project, Filipinistas such as Jorge Mojarro, Rocío Ortuño Casanova, Fernando Zialcita, Wytan de la Peña and the cultural attaché of the Cervantes Institute in Manila, José Maria Fons y David Sentado.

¹¹ http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/literatura_filipina_en_espanol/.

In addition to these anthologies there are some contemporary online magazines focusing on Hispano-Filipino literature. *Revista Filipina. Revista trimestral de Lengua y Literatura Hispano Filipina* (<http://revista.carayanpress.com/>) is an online magazine launched in 1997 by Edmundo Farolán Romero, probably the most active Hispano-Filipino writer in the diaspora (he lives in Canada). The online magazine *Kritica Kultura*, published by Ateneo University in Manila, features research in comparative literature, including, sporadically, works from the Hispanic period.¹²

It was precisely the lack of visibility of Hispano-Filipino literature that inspired David Sentado in 2012 to coin the term *zombie literature* to describe this literary tradition in the Filipino cultural magazine *Perro Berde*, published in Manila.¹³ My interest in this project started when I read Sentado's article during a visit to Manila in August 2013. The article, titled "Literatura zombie" [Zombie literature], opens with the following fragment in Spanish, English and Tagalog:

Las lenguas, como las religiones, se alimentan de sus herejías, crecen y se desarrollan a partir de sus errores. Una lengua muerta, en la que nadie tiene derecho a hacer faltas, está cerrada asimismo a la evolución que suponen las innovaciones que tensan y amplían a los idiomas en uso. Ésa es la tragedia de la variedad filipina del castellano.

Ésa es también la tragedia de la literatura filipina en español. Sin hablantes nativos, sin lectores, sin tribunas públicas, los escasos escritores que en ella resisten se debaten entre la deslocalización alientante de la Red o el nutrirse de una tradición cadavérica. El resultado es lo que algún escritor hispanofilipino ha calificado de literatura zombie. (50)

Languages, like religions, live on heresies, they grow and develop from their mistakes. A dead language, where no one has the right to make mistakes, is also closed to changes involving innovations that strengthen and extend the language in use. That is the tragedy of the Philippine variety of Spanish language. This is also the tragedy of Philippine literature in Spanish. Without native speakers, with no readers or public platforms, the few writers in Spanish that persist are torn between embracing the internet and continue living off a ghastly tradition. The result is what some Philippine-Spanish writer called zombie literature. (50)

Whereas heresies bring change and evolution, silence brings death to a language, argues Sentado, who furthermore suggests that Spanish in the Philippines is in a state of decomposition that can only feed some vultures not interested in eating living (new) things. Even though some *Filipinistas* such as Isaac Donoso and Andrea Gallo insist on negating the

¹² <http://journals.ateneo.edu/ojs/index.php/kk/issue/view/KK2013.020>.

¹³ In Spanish, the saying "*ser más raro que un perro verde*," which literally means "to be stranger than a green dog," speaks of something highly unusual and extraordinary. Note how the magazine uses the Tagalog spelling of "verde" (green) with a "b."

total death of Hispano-Filipino literature, the sporadic publications that see the light thanks to their efforts are perhaps not enough to claim a *living* tradition.¹⁴ At the peak of production in the 1910s, “there were three million speakers of Spanish in the archipelago but with each successive generation this number was quickly decreasing” (Teodoro M. Kalaw qtd. in García and Young 23).

“Zombie literature” thus seems to be an appropriate term for Hispano-Filipino literature as a tradition that is more dead than alive. One of the aims of this study is to give it a new (academic) life as something more than a zombie or a corpse for vultures to live off. Less metaphorically, the present study is a step towards highlighting the contribution Hispano-Filipino literature can make to thinking about the intersection of literature and nationalism, particularly in a complex colonial context.

Filipino Nationalism in Hispano-Filipino Literature

The majority of works in Spanish by Filipinos dates from the last decades of the nineteenth century. The first part of the twentieth century coincided with the end of Spanish colonialism (1521-1898) and the American period (1898-1946). The first generation of Filipino scholars, which included Pedro Paterno (1857-1911), TH. Pardo de Tavera (1857-1925), Isabelo de los Reyes (1864-1938) and Rizal (1861-1896), addressed the question of independence and Filipino nationalism on the basis of European ideas. Having received a Western education from the Jesuits and the Dominicans in Manila, and having travelled extensively to study and work in Europe, these educated Filipinos adopted similar methodologies to European scholars to conceptualize nationalism in the Philippines. Megan C. Thomas (2012) calls this first generation of Filipino scholars who wrote in Spanish “Orientalists, Propagandists and *Ilustrados*.”¹⁵ She argues that they not only appropriated knowledge and methodological tools coming from the colonial metropolis (such as orientalism and nineteenth-century social sciences such as anthropology, folklore, philology and history) to configure their nationalist

¹⁴ Andrea Gallo is publishing a series entitled *Oriente* containing works of Filipino authors in Spanish with various publishers (Ediciones Moreno Mejías, Arcibel Editores). I bought a collection of poetry by Daisy López, a Spanish and Italian professor at the University of the Philippines, published in 2009, while Guillermo Gómez Rivera’s *Con Címbalos de Caña* (2011), a collection of poems, is available from Amazon.

¹⁵ Thomas calls this generation of orientalist scholars as they engaged with orientalist discourses, especially with regards to people’s classification, hierarchically as well as horizontally: “some beliefs are more advanced than others, more modern than others, better than others” (2012: 5). *Ilustrados* and *propagandists* are common terms to refer to this early generation of the Filipino intelligentsia, treated as proto-nationalists. While the *ilustrados* wanted a reform that would grant Filipinos full rights as Spanish citizens, the *propagandists* aimed at a revolution. In both cases, their efforts have been perceived by later historians such as Teodoro Agoncillo (1912-1985) and Renato Constantino (1919-1999) as politically weak: “the *ilustrados* were self-interested elites, and the *propagandists* were at best tragically incomplete prefigurative voices of the collective will” (Thomas 2012: 13).

thought, but also used these for liberatory projects that delineated alternative political paths to Filipino nationalism. For instance, in rethinking the possibility of articulating nationalist thought beyond the word “nation” and alternatively “expressed in terms of people’, ‘culture’ or ‘race’” (Thomas 2012: 8).

Thomas’ work highlights the complexity of conceiving a nation in the context of the Philippines at a time when it was not yet independent. The absence of a nation-state means that we should understand Filipino nationalism as a primarily cultural phenomenon, as I will show in my analysis of my corpus. The scholarly work of the *ilustrados* in the 1880s and 1890s was among the first Spanish-language writings seeking to study the Philippines and to surpass the discourses of the colonisers: “In the case of the Philippines, these ‘European’ knowledges [Orientalism and the emerging human sciences] were largely absent from the coloniser’s repertoire and travelled to ‘the colony’ on the colonized’s terms” (Thomas 2014: 4).¹⁶ Unlike in other contexts, in which the colonial metropolis would be the preferred destination for the few colonised who were allowed to travel, study and work abroad, Filipinos not only went to Madrid but also and often to “Paris, London, Berlin, Leiden and elsewhere where modern sciences were advanced” (Thomas 2014: 15).

The epistemological transference of European thought to the Philippines frequently overlooked Spain, as Thomas explains: “young colonial subjects positioned themselves as modern scholars and intellectuals in a broader field in which their colonizers, the Spanish, often lagged behind” (4). Indeed, at the end of the nineteenth century, while in France, England and Germany a bourgeoisie had established itself, in Spain a weak upper class had just emerged in an almost illiterate and reactionary country that was barely industrialised, immersed in economic and social decadence, and still boasting of an empire that was already in decline.¹⁷

Early Filipino *ilustrados* did, nonetheless, nurture their thoughts with the work of Spanish scholars and authors,¹⁸ whose perspective on nationalism was quite different from that of the majority of the impoverished Spanish (and non-urban European) population and

¹⁶ The term *ilustrados* comes from the Spanish name for the Enlightenment, *Ilustración*. Sometimes, *ilustrado* just means educated; at other times, it is used pejoratively as a variation of *afrancesado* or bourgeois.

¹⁷ According to Viñao (2009), in 1860 the literacy rate in Spain was only 19.9%.

¹⁸ Rizal went to the University Complutense of Madrid between 1882 and 1884, coinciding with Miguel de Unamuno, with whom he shared a sense of nostalgia and national pride towards their oppressed lands, the Philippines and the Basque Country: “Debí de haber visto más de una vez al tagalo en los vulgarísimos claustros de la Universidad Central, debí de haberme cruzado más de una vez con él mientras soñábamos Rizal en sus Filipinas y yo en mi Vasconia. (Unamuno qtd. in Viñas-Valle, 2013) [I must have seen the tagalog more than once in the exemplary vulgar patios of the Central University, I must have run into him more than once when we dreamed, Rizal with his Philippines and I with my Basque Country].

the clergy that controlled their country. With their influences coming from various parts of Europe and also from Latin America, the label “worldly colonials” (Thomas 2014) is apt. The title of Resil B. Mojares’s book *The Brains of the Nation: Pedro Paterno, T.H. de Tavera, Isabelo de los Reyes and the Production of Modern Knowledge* (2006) summarises the historical context and the mood in which this early generation of Filipino intellectuals grew up, as well as outlining their concern with finding a place for the Philippines within European ideologies of nationalism and modernity. Mojares establishes their status as cosmopolitan *ilustrados* through their biographies and so does Benedict Anderson. The latter demonstrates the influence of the global connections shared by José Rizal and Isabelo de los Reyes as early as during the Philippine Revolution (which started in 1896 against the Spanish colonizers and ended with a war lost to the US in 1898). The life and work of Isabelo de los Reyes opens Anderson’s book *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (2005), illustrating how these embryonic (Anderson entitles the prologue “The Rooster’s Egg [...]”) scholarly Filipinos engaged with emerging European academic disciplines, among which folklore was considered a “new science” (12), an early modern way of thinking about the Humanities and, therefore, of studying the Philippines. Making their country of birth an object of study (or of the literary imagination) through Western sciences in a Western language would be a way to construct it as a nation with specific features - of “saber popular” [local knowledge] (Anderson 2005: 12) - that all Filipinos would recognise as their own.¹⁹ While Spanish served their ambition to place the Philippines on the global map, they ignored, however, that most Filipinos could not understand this language.

Anderson not only highlights the exchanges between Rizal, his countrymen and others in the Philippines and Europe, but also links the Philippine Revolution to developments in other Spanish colonies, specifically Cuba:

The near-simultaneity of the last nationalist insurrection in the New World (Cuba, 1895) and the first in Asia (the Philippines, 1896) was no serendipity. Natives of the last important remnants of the Spanish empire, Cubans ... and Filipinos did not merely read about each other, but had crucial personal connections and, up to a point, co-ordinated their actions - the first time in world history that such trans global co-ordination became possible. (2005: 2)

¹⁹ One of the earliest works of Filipino ethnology, following Western methodologies but focusing on the Philippine regions of Ilocos and Malabón, was Isabelo de los Reyes’ *El Folk-lore Filipino* (1889).

Anderson points out how global interconnectedness allowed for an exchange of ideas available in circulating printed texts that prompted nationalist ideologies to arise simultaneously, in this case connecting the last remnants of the Spanish Empire.²⁰

The focus of this study is on a later generation of Filipino intellectuals, born at the end of the nineteenth century and educated in the American Philippines but using Spanish as their mother tongue. They belong to the period known as the “Edad de Oro” [Golden Age] of Filipino literature in Spanish (Armengol 1999). Spanish for them was also the medium to convey their nationalist aspirations. After all, the worst colonial oppressors in the eyes of Spanish-speaking Filipinos, the clergy (which Rizal called the “*cancer* of the country” in the subtitle of *Noli Me Tangere*), had gone. Even though the colonial structure on which the Church had a strong hand was still very much there, the Hispano-Filipino writers of the ‘golden age’ could, in their nationalist writing, be nostalgic about *mother* Spain rather than angry at her.

This new generation differs from the earlier one and shares with Tagalog writers of the same period a feeling of mistrust and rejection towards the Americanisation of the Philippines.²¹ They feared that a new forced transculturation would erase their ‘native’ culture, which, for Spanish-speaking Filipinos, was predominantly Hispanic. According to literary critic Bienvenido Lumbera, the second generation of Tagalog writers was still too young during the Philippine Revolution to be “deeply imbued with the militant temper of their elders” (1984: 34). Consequently, in their literary works they toyed with the themes of “Country” (nationalism) and “Love” (frivolous topics), showing a “definite preference for the theme of Love” (1984: 34). Lumbera focuses on poets writing in Tagalog and makes no reference to Spanish-language authors, who, I will show in this study, occupied a different position. For Filipino authors writing in Spanish in the first half of the twentieth century, the topic of ‘Love’ does not overshadow that of ‘Country’ but the two become fused in expressing a desire to love one’s country in whatever shape they can imagine it, but most insistently as an independent, transcultural realm that nevertheless (and somewhat paradoxically) remains Spanish-speaking, Catholic and ‘modern’ in the hegemonic western sense of the term.

²⁰ Connections between the Philippines and Latin America had existed for more than 300 years, as part of the commercial route that brought Asian goods to Spain via Mexico was the Galeon Manila route between Acapulco and Manila.

²¹ For a historic review of Filipino literature that includes a synchronic perspective of works in Tagalog, Spanish and English, see Bienvenido Lumbera’s *Revaluation Essays on Philippine Literature, Cinema & Popular Culture* (1984).

In the works of Balmori, Abad, Gurrea and Mendoza that I study here, Filipino nationalism, specifically the necessity of defining a shared identity capable of serving as a ground for a sense of belonging and a vision of the future, occupies a prominent position, which is not surprising given the fact that independence seemed on the horizon. The question of conceding independence to the Philippines already arose in 1902, just after the Filipino-American War (1898-1902), but was abandoned with the establishment of the Insular Government of the Philippine Islands (1902-1935), followed by a Filipino Commonwealth (1935-1946) interrupted by the Japanese occupation during WWII (1942-1945). The archipelago finally became the Republic of the Philippines in 1946 with Manuel Roxas (1892-1948) as the president.²²

I argue that the writers I discuss express their concerns about the past, present and future of the Philippines not by means of militant political nationalism but through a form of cultural nationalism. I follow the definition of cultural nationalism provided by Eric Woods (2014) collecting the key ideas about cultural nationalism to which I return to in Chapter 5 in relation to Abad's novel *El Campeón*:

Cultural nationalism generally refers to ideas and practices that relate to the intended revival of a purported national community's culture. If political nationalism is focused on the achievement of political autonomy, cultural nationalism is focused on the cultivation of a nation. Here the vision of the nation is not a political organisation, but a moral community. As such, cultural nationalism sets out to provide a vision of the nation's identity, history and destiny. The key agents of cultural nationalism are intellectuals and artists, who seek to convey their vision of the nation to the wider community. The need to articulate and express this vision tends to be felt most acutely during times of social, cultural and political upheaval resulting from an encounter with modernity. (Woods 2014: 1)

In line with this definition, I see literature as a tool by which Filipino intellectuals articulate their vision of the Philippines' identity, history and destiny in the convoluted historical moment they live in. These writers are caught between empires, ruled by a neo-colonial government and aspire to become part of the global modernity they feel is emerging elsewhere. Their vision of the nation is, however, limited by the concerns of their own community of Spanish-speaking, upper-class Filipinos. As cultural nationalists, these authors convey a strong attachment to the Hispanic heritage (mostly in terms of religion and language), which they believe should underpin the future independent nation. At the same time, as I will show, they are critical of their own tendency to look to other (modern) nations,

²² On 4 July 1946, the US government and the government of the Republic of the Philippines signed the Treaty of Manila, by which the US conceded and recognised the full independence of the Philippines (United Nations Treaties 1947). See: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%207/v7.pdf>.

most notably Japan and the US, for models to emulate instead of engaging with the Filipino people. The form of Filipino cultural nationalism articulated in the selected literary texts from the early twentieth century projects the imagination of the nation onto the future, asking how the Philippines can become modern. The different texts come up with different answers as to whether it should achieve nationhood on its own terms as a transcultural realm with a double history of colonialism or by following the model of already established nation-states, based on creating a homogeneous identity. It is the complex cultural entanglements implied by the doubly colonised context of the Philippines, acknowledged by all the authors I discuss, that prompt me to use the notion of *transculturation* to trace and analyse the variety of sometimes conflicting and sometimes harmonious cultural attachments manifested in the literary texts.

The Question of Filipino Identity

The impact of a double colonisation and the existence of various pre-Hispanic cultures in the archipelago²³ has made Filipino society one in which many cultures intermingle and in which past influences, such as those of the Malay, the Hispanic, the American and also the Chinese and the Japanese, retain a certain presence until today. This is noticeable in many aspects of Filipino culture: in language and religion - but also in food, folklore and ethnicity. These influences, it can be argued, are simultaneously present and absent, haunting Filipino cultural and national identity, and causing it to be perceived negatively as non-authentic. Whereas it can be said that notions of cultural and national identity are always rather unsettled and unsettling, formulating an answer to what it meant to be Filipino in the early twentieth century was particularly complicated, necessitating a continuous negotiation of various attachments to and detachments from native, colonial and other cultures.

Fernando Zialcita, in his book *Authentic Although Not Exotic* (2005), explains this anxiety about Filipino identity as an ongoing crisis of recognition. He argues that even in the twenty-first century Filipinos tend to negatively describe their cultural mix with the word 'bastard' - "lo que tenemos es una cultura 'bastarda' o 'imitativa'" (qtd. in Donoso 2012: 513) [what we have is a 'bastard' or 'imitative' culture] - instead of using, for instance, the word 'mestiza/o,' broadly and positively employed in Latin America to denote a hybrid

²³ These cultures include the Malays, the tagalog, the barangay and panpamgo, the Chinese traders that came to Manila Bay, and the 'Negritos' living in remote areas in the north of the Philippines. See Nick Joaquín's *Manila, My Manila* (1990) for a short history of Manila from the early pilgrims until independence.

identity.²⁴ Zialcita claims that the negative view of Filipino identity among Filipinos is due to several reasons:

Filipinos love their way of life. However, problems appear when they reflect on their identity and try to explain this to themselves, to fellow Filipinos, or to outsiders. This is not helped by the readiness of biased Anglo-Americans and fellow Asians who scorn the Filipino for not being truly Asian. These problems and biases stem from (1) a demonization of Spanish influence, (2) a limited menu of binaries for interpreting culture, and (3) reductionist interpretations. (11)

According to Zialcita, then, the crisis of recognition emerges from the need to explain oneself to the ‘self’ and to ‘other(s)’ while lacking a language to grasp a reality that escapes existing classifications. The notion of being ‘Asian’, for example, is not adequate for all those who live in Asia or even South-East Asia, and is particularly restrictive when it comes to describing the Philippines, which, because its specific history of double colonisation, tends to be regarded as an ‘anomaly’ within Asia. The baroque churches that are part of Filipino heritage, for example, are seen as an “aberration in Asia” when compared with Buddhist stupas, Hindi temples or mosques (Zialcita 11). For Zialcita, these architectural examples demonstrate that there is no cultural unity in Asia²⁵ and, furthermore, that the Philippines does not conform to the idea of the ‘authentically Asian’ that other countries have attached their national identity to, which also implies being exotic, presumably to the orientalisering eyes of the West.

This study aims to show that the tension Zialcita perceives in relation to contemporary Filipino identity is also present in the Hispano-Filipino literature of the early twentieth century, expressing itself in the way the texts I analyse attach and detach themselves from the various cultures that could be considered part of Filipino identity while never reaching full identification. For example, Paz Mendoza’s initial admiration of the overt nationalism prompted by Italian fascism is due to the fact that she wants to envision a similarly inspiring sense of national unity for the Philippines. Yet, she is also aware of what dictatorial policies mean and how propaganda coerces national identification in undesirable, exclusive ways.

²⁴ Mestizaje describes the hybridity of Latin American culture and is perceived as a productive sign of identity rather than as just an invented category. See, for instance, Mexican scholar Gloria Anzaldúa’s *From Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), in particular “Chapter 7: La consciencia de la mestiza: towards a new consciousness,” where she elaborates an empowering image of the mestiza woman.

²⁵ “En el campo arquitectural no hay nada común entre un templo confucionista, una estupa budista, un templo hindú y una mezquita. Entonces, ¿cómo se puede declarar que la iglesia barroca de Filipinas es una aberración en Asia, si ‘Asia’, como unidad cultural no existe?” (Zialcita qtd. in Donoso, 2012: 522) [In the architectural field there is nothing in common between a Confucian temple, a Buddhist stupa, a Hindu temple and a mosque. So how can one declare that the baroque church of the Philippines is an aberration in Asia, if “Asia” as a cultural unit does not exist?].

Similarly, Jesús Balmori's fascination with the strong Japanese national identity and the devotion to Japanese culture demonstrated by the heroic acts of the samurais shows a similar type of attachment to the idea of a united, homogeneous national community. In both cases, these imaginations are torn apart by the realities of Italian fascism and Japanese imperialism. Because of the presence of this tension between identification and disidentification, I suggest that notions of attachment and detachment are more useful to understanding the formation of Filipino national identity in early twentieth-century Hispano-Filipino literature than rigid dichotomies such as Asian/Hispanic, central/peripheral, modern/postcolonial.

Filipino Transculturation

Over 300 years of Spanish colonial rule (1521-1898) and another 50 of American occupation (1898-1946) produced complex processes of transculturation in the Philippines that Magellan could not have foreseen when he landed on Cebu in 1521, opening a new global trade route. The Cuban anthropologist and philosopher Fernando Ortiz coined the term 'transculturation' to describe the cultural transformations that took place amongst the indigenous, the European and the African populations in Cuba. Transculturation for Ortiz emphasizes the agency of all cultures in contact; unlike acculturation, often used to denote the effect of colonisation on the colonised culture, it includes a sense of both what is lost (through deculturation) and what is created in the process of transformation (through neoculturation):

I am of the idea that the word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the process of transformation from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as *deculturation*. In addition, it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called *neoculturation*. (Ortiz 1995: 102-3, my emphasis)

In this study, I consider the idea of attachment as pointing to either acculturation (the acquisition of some aspects of another culture) or neoculturation (the creation of something new from the combination of cultures in contact), whereas detachment is linked to deculturation (the loss or abandonment of aspects of one's own or other cultures).

Part of Ortiz's interest in conceptualising transculturation is to avoid downplaying the actions of the marginalised, in which case he talks of a failed transculturation. Following this affirmation of agency on the part of the non-dominant, Mary Louise Pratt (2010) describes transculturation as expressing a method of cultural reinvention. It indicates

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. (6)

The interplay that occurs between cultures in contact results in an appropriation and reinvention of dominant practices by the subordinated. Pratt raises the question of how metropolitan modes of representation are received and adapted on the periphery. She indicates that one can speak of a transculturation that proceeds from the colonies to the metropolis. The argument that European/Western development has never been ‘detached’ from the world, and particularly not from its colonies, has also been put forward by other scholars, who have stressed “the reciprocal condition of two geographical ‘entities’ such as ‘Asia’ and ‘Europe’” (Brosious and Wenzlhuemer 2011: 4). suggest using the idea of transculturation as a methodology because its heuristic nature opens individual disciplines and regional competences up to new approaches, “spurring fresh discussions about globalization, colonization and modernity” (10). Using transculturation as a lens through which to analyse cultural phenomena implies leaving the firm ground of clearly defined concepts - particularly those associated with ‘origin’, ‘indigeneity’ and ‘authenticity,’ which, as Brosious and Wenzlhuemer explain, “carry with them highly problematic elements of essentialism and reduction, and have always done so” (9) - in favour of a form of research that uses Georges Marcus’ concept of “multi-sited ethnography,” which underlines the existence of multi-centred modernities (Brosious and Wenzlhuemer 2011: 8).

The most important aspect of transculturation in these definitions is the role it assigns to the cultures perceived as weaker, insisting that the subjects of those cultures have agency in the ways they receive and appropriate the dominant culture. An example of transculturation in the context of the Philippines can be found in the syncretism between Spanish Catholicism and local Filipino religious practices, which produced a vernacular Filipino Catholicism. The best-known practice of this syncretism is that of *Pasyon*, the crucifixions that take place during Easter parades, but it also exists on a more everyday level, for instance in the combination of religious faith with gambling activities like cockfighting, as I will discuss in Chapter 5 in relation to Abad’s novel.

Vicente Rafael (1988) explains the process by which Catholic transculturation happened in the Philippines by using the metaphor of fishing. According to him, the act of catching fish is comparable to catching the meaning of a word carried out by actively listening to the Catholic preachers as they spoke to the indigenous audiences from the pulpit.

Filipinos thus appropriated Catholicism by attaching their own imaginings to those words that they could not fully understand, filling the semiotic vacuum with new meanings.

Pratt further expands the term transculturation with regards to the cultural transformations that are enabled by travel writing in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (2010), revealing the basis on which travel writing was appropriated by colonialism as it formulated discourses on difference and contributed to the politics of colonial expansion. She locates transculturation in what she coins as ‘contact zones,’ that is, the spaces, real or imaginary, where cultural contact takes place. In her own words: “I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures, meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt 1991: 34). In this study, I show how the Philippines appears in the literary works that I analyse as a contact zone where the outcome of the transformative contact is determined by the specific cultures involved and the relationships specific (groups of) people are able to develop to these cultures. For instance, in Gurrea’s *Cuentos de Juana*, Filipino-Malayan mythology meets the Catholic faith. In the eyes of the Spanish, the former is considered a form of superstition, but in the experience of the mestizo children growing up with both cultures (in a differently shaped and experienced contact zone) it becomes entangled with Catholicism and, as such, causes new meanings and forms of knowledge to emerge.

Since Ortiz developed the idea of transculturation in the 1940s (although he first mentioned it in his 1923 essay “Contrapunteo cubano del Tabaco y del Azúcar” [Cuban Counterpoint of Tobacco and Sugar]) it has been widely appropriated by other scholars. Angel Rama, in his book *Tranculturación narrativa en America Latina* (1984), focuses on the work of ‘escritores transculturados’ [transcultured writers], who, in the fashion of the Peruvian writer Juan José Arguedas, used European narrative techniques with vernacular languages and themes, creating the genre known as *indigenismo*. According to Rama, Arguedas’ *indigenismo* is best illustrated by his novel *Yawar Fiesta* (1941), in which he attempts to reveal the transcultural fabric of Hispanic-Andean Peru by juxtaposing the ‘local’ and the ‘foreign’ voices that enter into conflict around the practice of Andean-style bullfighting.²⁶ For Rama, another form of literary transculturation that also draws from ‘indigenismo’ is magic realism in the manner of Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa. In Chapter 1, I will explain how Hispanic Modernism, as transported to the Philippines

²⁶ Yawar Fiesta (Blood Fiesta) is a practice among the Andean people that is even bloodier than the already bloody corrida, which is why the authorities attempt to eradicate it.

from Latin America, can also be read as a form of transculturation, re-appropriating the orientalist, exoticising aesthetics of French modernism.

My use of transculturation in this project combines elements from Ortiz, Pratt and Rama's conceptualizations, allowing me to understand Filipino transculturation not only as the outcome of colonial exchanges (Ortiz 1923; Pratt 1992) and global modernity-coloniality (a pair that for Walter Mignolo is inseparable),²⁷ but also in terms of an active desire for transformation. That transculturation exists in more passive and more active forms is conveyed by the difference between the adjectives *transcultured* and *transcultural*. The Hispano-Filipino writers I discuss in this study, I will suggest, are not only *transcultured* writers (Rama) but also, to different degrees, *transcultural* or even *transculturating* ones.

Arianna Dagnino (2012; 2013) uses the term 'transcultural literature' to refer to literature written while living across various cultures, languages and even national territories as a consequence of contemporary global mobility. The transcultural writers Dagnino refers to are established writers, mostly part of a global elite that is 'on the move' by choice.²⁸ If Ortiz and Pratt understood transculturation as the result of forced cultural contact brought about by colonialism, Dagnino sees it as an effect of the increased mobility that globalisation and late capitalism engendered. It is not my intention to equate colonialism with globalisation as that would mean neglecting the violence of colonialism. However, what is relevant for my project is the position Dagnino assigns to the transcultural writer as particularly capable of discerning complex processes of cultural transformation and making them accessible to others through their writing:

Transcultural writers seem to be tuned into a different wavelength and thus are able to capture the first still embryonic, still incoherent, still mostly unexpressed or intercepted symptoms (signals) of a different emerging cultural mood/mode. In other words, these writers are developing an alternative discourse that in any case is perceived by both mainstream parts (let us call them the assimilationist and the multiculturalist stances) as destabilising the perceived *status quo*. (2012: 4)

²⁷ For Mignolo and other scholars of decolonial thinking, colonialism and modernity cannot be thought separately. The parasitic relationship between the two explains coloniality (not colonialism) as the power of modernity's logic, that is, any modern project is carried out at the expense of a colonising enterprise. See *The Idea of Latin America* (2005) and *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011).

²⁸ The transcultural writers Dagnino refers to are Pico Iyer, Alberto Manguel, Amin Maalouf, Michael Ondaatje, Ilija Trojanow and Brian Castro. To this list Amitav Ghosh, Zadie Smith, David Mitchell, Haruki Murakami and Salman Rushdie could be added, as well as a filmmaker like González Iñárritu. All have been seen as examples of world or global literature (see Barnard 2009; Cheah 2016).

Dagnino emphasizes these writers' transcultural sensibility (at the risk, however, of undervaluing the sensibility of other 'types' of writers), which she links to their capacity to recognise cultural patterns and quickly apprehend cultural moods.

The Hispano-Filipino writers selected for this study reveal certain aspects of this type of transcultural writing conditions. First, as part of a creole elite, Hispano-Filipino writers from the first and second generation are cosmopolitans (educated, multilingual, multi-ethnic, well-travelled and economically independent), and second, being caught in a position of outsider/insider in most of the cultures they inhabit enables them, like the writers cited by Dagnino, to infuse their writing with a new "cultural mood/mode," in this case one of (trans)cultural nationalism that challenges the colonial powers of Spain and the US to various extents.

The nationalist discourse of this second generation of Hispano-Filipino writers offers an alternative to that of the earlier generation by introducing a more nuanced engagement with their complex historical context, one in which various external powers (such as the US and Japan) were imposing their cultures in the Philippines, producing, in these writers, a fear of deculturation and a simultaneous disgust at the Filipino intelligentsia, which continued to reproduce the (Spanish) colonial system. The way the writers counter these developments is through active transculturation: by attaching and detaching themselves from the different cultural influences affecting them and by desperately trying to establish, in their literary works, a truly Filipino perspective and national identity.

This is captured in the title of Balmori's play *Filipinizar a los Filipinos* (1940) [Filipinize the Filipino people], which calls for an homogeneous identification on what it is to be Filipino. Similarly, Abad's indignation at the obsession some Filipinos have with emulating American culture instead of the more desirable Mexican culture (which he feels to be closer to the Filipino culture) demonstrates his cultural attachments and detachments: "No nos atrevemos a copiar a Mejiico y Colombia porque estamos empeñados en copiar a los Estados Unidos. Y nuestras copias se parecen demasiado a las caricaturas" (Abad qtd. in Young and García xxix) [We do not dare to copy Mexico and Colombia because we insist on copying the United States. And our copies look too much like caricatures]. For Abad, imitating the US is inauthentic while copying Mexico would be genuine. Moreover, in this quote Abad can be said to be looking through a transcultural lens in which "all cultures look decentered in relation to other cultures including one's own" (Dagnino 2012: 2). There is a sense of *out-of-placeness* in his comments: both the US and Mexico are geographically far from the Philippines, yet being part of the US officially makes the Philippines part of the

(Western) centre. Conversely, Abad's attachment to Mexico by means of the Spanish language de-centres Filipino identity from its geographical location in Asia. This transcultural sensitivity, the ability to forge attachments to what is far away and to detach from what is closest, emerges from the sense of "dislocation" produced by moving "physically, virtually and imaginatively outside one's cultural and homeland borders" (Dagnino 2012: 2).

Transcultural writing thus incorporates foreign and familiar voices from different cultures that are alternatively centred and decentred in relation to the self. The proliferation of selves and others - and the way certain cultures shift from being accepted as part of the self to being rejected as foreign to it - is at the core of transcultural writing and appears in all the works of Hispano-Filipino literature I look at in this study. Reading Hispano-Filipino literature as efforts of transculturation emphasizes how this literary tradition moves, consciously and unconsciously, literally and metaphorically, in-between and across national, linguistic, ethnic and cultural boundaries in order to inspire new imaginaries of nationalism.

To sum up, the aim of this study is to explore the intersection between literature and nationalism in the complex context of the early twentieth-century Philippines. Through close readings of the selected texts, I will, on the one hand, shed light on a largely neglected literary tradition and, on the other hand, trace the struggle of Hispano-Filipino writers to formulate a notion of Filipino identity able to serve as the basis for their imagined nation, adequate to its status as a transcultured and transcultural realm.

Before providing an outline of the five chapters that compose this study I want to explain my approach, which is that of cultural analysis, as developed by Mieke Bal. Cultural analysis is an "interdisciplinary research practice" (Aydemir 2008:38) attending to the dynamic relationships between cultural objects and conceptual theories. One of the most important aspects of doing cultural analysis is the emphasis it places on close reading. Jonathan Culler defines close reading as the detailed examination of a text in all its dimensions, which in literature means unfolding the multilayered structure of a literary work attending to the text's tendency to "resist easy comprehension or description in terms of expected themes and motifs" (2010: 3). Accordingly, I look at the ways my corpus engages and, most crucially, disengages from "expected" literary themes and motifs, and other restricting conceptual classifications. For example, I show the extent to which Balmori's poems can be read within and beyond the paradigm of Latin American modernist writing and the innovative ways in which orientalism and nostalgia appear in Gurrea's poems.

Cultural analysis is preoccupied with generating new meanings produced by the critic's situatedness in the social and cultural present (Bal 1991: 1), which allows the object

to speak: “no text yields meaning outside of the social world and cultural make up of the reader. [...] A text does not speak for itself. We surround it, or *frame* it, before we let it speak at all” (Bal 2002: 8). It is the encounter between the object and the researcher that yields the conditions for them to become co-creators of new cultural meanings in the present. Concretely, by bringing the framework of transculturation into dialogue with the selected Filipino texts in a series of close readings, I show how these texts expand concepts such as orientalism, translation and (cultural) nationalism in new ways by developing forms of transcultural orientalism, working towards intercultural translation and putting transculturation as an active, future-oriented process in the service of nation-building. I am, therefore, most concerned with how my objects destabilise the theories I read them through. Cultural analysis’ focus on the present is particularly relevant for my attempt to ‘bring back to life’ a literary tradition that has been diagnosed as ‘dead’ by some. My aim is not to produce a genealogy of Hispano-Filipino literature to be studied in its historical and social context but to reveal how Hispano-Filipino literature from the early twentieth century interacts with contemporary debates and theories.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 1 I focus on the poetry of Hispano-Filipino author Jesús Balmori (1886-1946), which expresses transcultural attachments to the Philippines (as a meeting place of indigenous and Spanish culture) and to Japan in an orientalist mode. Balmori’s poetry is considered as an example of Filipino modernism that clearly follows Hispanic modernist aesthetics in terms of its orientalist themes and style. Consequently, it provides a fertile ground to look at the role orientalism played in the attempt by Hispano-Filipino authors of the early twentieth century to imagine and present the Filipino nation. Given the geopolitical circumstances of the Philippines as a Hispanized culture located in Asia, it is not surprising that the modernist orientalism found in its literature is shaped in two ways: as a form of self-representation and as the idealisation of other locations in the Far East, specifically Japan. This demonstrates a significant change in terms of what and who is being orientalised and by whom. In the chapter, I identify and analyse the various types of orientalism articulated in Balmori’s poetry, focusing on three poems contained in the poetry collections *Rimas Malayas* (1904) [Malayan Rhymes] and *Mi casa de Nipa* (1941) [My house of Nipa]. My argument is that Balmori’s poems engage with the two models of orientalism conceptualised respectively by Edward Said and Araceli Tinajero: as a hegemonic discourse promoting assimilation to Spanish colonisation and Western modernity, and as an expression of literary modernism that

re-inscribes the poet's assimilation of Hispanic and French aesthetics. Crucially, in some of his poems Balmori also moves beyond these models by giving voice to what I call *Filipino transcultural orientalism*. This form of orientalism articulates Filipino identity as both orientalised and orientalising, with texts variously attaching to and detaching from the various cultures that have historically constituted it, as well as the forms of representing the orient specific to these cultures and their literary expressions.

In Chapter 2 I expand on the concept of transcultural orientalism by arguing that Adelina Gurrea's work emphasises its *transcultural* dimension over its *orientalist* one. I look at three of her texts: a satirical play entitled *Filipinas: Auto histórico-satírico* [Philippines: A Historical-Satirical Allegory], which was staged in Valladolid, Spain, in 1951; a selection of poems from the collections *En agraz* [Before Time] (1968) and *Más senderos* [More Paths] (1967)²⁹; and a story called "El Talisay," part of the collection of short stories *Cuentos de Juana. Narraciones malayas de las islas Filipinas* [Juana's tales. Malayan stories from the Philippine Islands]. I will show how, like Balmori's poems, these texts draw on various cultural influences in order to orientalise the Philippines. However, rather than establishing a hierarchy of cultures or following modernist aesthetics, Gurrea orientalises the Philippines in three different ways that represent a move towards a more transcultural position. First, the satirical play revisits Filipino colonial history by having allegorical characters - The Philippines, Mother Spain, Uncle Sam and Mrs. History - discuss their role in the transculturation of the Philippines, and orientalises the country by infantilising it and presenting it as grateful to both Spain and the US for shaping it through their colonial rule, while also, through its satirical bent, including mild critiques of the colonisers. The historical perspective of the play shows transculturation as a colonial heritage in which various cultural traits are visible but not entangled (for example, young Philippines has inherited, on the one hand, the industrious and pragmatic mentality of American culture and, on the other, a spiritualist view on the world derived from a Catholic education). Second, Gurrea's poems, written in Spain during Franco's regime, approach the Philippines through what Svetlana Boym (2005) calls reflective nostalgia, a nostalgia that is used to imagine a new transcultural future. Third, the short story "El Talisay" uses a narrative structure that supplements the orientalising perspective with that of the orientalised in order to challenge binary oppositions

²⁹ Both *En Agraz* and *Más Senderos* were published by the author and the editions available online in the Cervantes Virtual Library at the University of Alicante date from 1968 and 1967 respectively. Gurrea died in 1971, so those editions are probably not the first ones, but I have been unable to find other publication dates. In *En Agraz*, it says that the collection includes poems written between 1916 and 1926, indicating that these poems belong to Gurrea's early work.

such as native/foreign, orient/occident and religion/superstition. The terms of these oppositions are instead presented as deeply intertwined in everyday cultural practices in the rural Philippines.

In Chapter 3 I elaborate the concept of *active transculturation* on the basis of the imagination of a future, modern, independent Philippines based on the comparison with other countries around the world that Paz Mendoza conducts in her *Notas de viaje* (1929). 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 build on the work of Fernando Ortiz, Angel Rama and Marie Louise Pratt, in which transculturation appears as a dynamic process of intercultural connections that creates possibilities for transforming one's own community by appropriating parts of other cultural systems. Mendoza's text exposes the active attachments to and detachments from foreign influences - especially around the idea of modernisation - that affected Filipino culture during the Spanish-American period. I argue that, in the travel notes, transculturation does not appear as an outcome of past colonial contact, as in Balmori's poem and Gurrea's play, but as a strategic tool to compose a future vision of an independent Philippines. At the same time, her text and its ambivalent reception (it was criticised for making unrealistic proposals) shows the tension between the imagined transculturated future of the Philippines and its cultural and political realities: as long as it is not yet an independent country, no decisions can be made and, more crucially, it continues to be perceived, both in other countries and within the Philippines itself, as incapable of governing itself.

In the fourth chapter I examine how Balmori's novel *Los pájaros de fuego. Una novela filipina de la guerra* (1945) [Birds of Fire, a Filipino War Novel], a family melodrama set in Manila, instead of imagining a hypothetical future for the Philippines on the basis of the positively conceived models of other countries, uses the historical developments of the early 1940s, leading up to the Japanese invasion, to address the potential negative effects of uncritically seeking to emulate other countries. This chapter, then, is about the limits of active transculturation. The bleak ending of Balmori's novel, which sees the main protagonist, a former Niponophile, and most of his family killed, suggests that there is no future for the country, at least not unless the Philippines stops aspiring to be like Japan, fighting for/with the US and refusing to let go of the Hispanic colonial legacy. To analyse how past and present events (the rise of fascism in Europe, the emergence of Japan as a pan-Asian power, the American rule of the Philippines and the Hispanic colonial legacy) are woven together in the novel, I use the concept of translation, which I understand as a technique of

transculturation capable of creating new meaning from a pre-existing one. This approach to translation, inspired by the work of Rey Chow (1995; 2008) and Vicente L. Rafael (1999; 2000) entails a rejection of translation as merely a linguistic process that renders words in one language intelligible in another; instead, it conceives of translation as a complex process of reinterpretation, appropriation, expansion and exchange between cultures, across national borders or within them. I use Chow's conceptualisation of translation as an exercise of simultaneous betrayal and mourning towards the 'original' to investigate how Balmori's novel translates various cultural influences into a conception of the Filipino nation. In addition, I look at how the novel takes up Rafael's notion that Filipino nationalism was translated into Spanish and circulated among the Hispanic elite.

In Chapter 5, finally, I analyse Antonio Abad's *El Campeón* (1940) [The Champion], an animal fable about a cockfighting rooster that presents an allegory of the Filipino nation as it tries to define itself in the wake of a double colonialisation. *El Campeón* tells the life story of Banogón, a champion fighting cock who, after a successful career in the urban arenas, returns to a chicken coop in the village where he was born. Upon his return, he struggles to fit into the local community. The struggles of Banogón and the other poultry characters with the transformations that are taken place on the farm (most notably the arrival of American leghorns) metaphorically illuminate Abad's vision of Filipino society - as affected by political, cultural and identity-related crises - and his concerns with reconfiguring Filipino national identity. Where Mendoza's *Notas de viaje* (1929) and Balmori's *Los Pájaros de fuego* (1945) sought to develop Philippine nationalism primarily by comparing their country to other European nations, Japan and the US, Abad's novel, in contrast, locates a basis for nationalism in Filipino rural culture, using the long-standing Filipino tradition of cockfighting - which is at the same time presented as a transcultural practice - to propose an alternative view on Filipino national identity. Ultimately, the novel argues for the impossibility of smoothly translating the prevailing European ideologies of the nation-state, based on cultural homogeneity, racial supremacy and masculinity, to the doubly colonised, deeply transcultural context of the Philippines. By presenting cockfighting, from the perspective of the human characters in the novel, as a traditional Filipino practice that survived the various colonial attempts, on the part of both the Spanish and the Americans, to eradicate it, Abad transforms the practice of cockfighting into an anti-colonial metaphor. In my analysis of the novel, I also reflect on the relationship between masculinity and cockfighting by reading the classic article by anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1972) on Balinese cockfighting in dialogue with Jerry García's (2007) interpretation of the importance of the cockfight for Chicano (masculine)

identity in the US. I argue that the novel, despite its complacent ending, presents a different type of masculine hero that also allows for a different, transcultural mode of national identity.