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### Writing the Nation

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

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## Chapter 2

### Nostalgia for the Orient: Transcultural Representations of the Philippines in the Work of Adelina Gurrea Monasterio

*Por las noches, antes de acostarnos, o en las siestas cálidas y soporíferas, mientras planchaba la blancura de las ropas tropicales, [Juana] nos contaba cuentos de reyes y princesas españoles o los terroríficos de duendes malayos*  
(Gurrea 1943: 50)

[In the evenings, before going to bed, or else during the hot and lazy siestas, while she ironed the whiteness of tropical clothing, she would tell us stories of Spanish princesses and kings or terrifying ones about Malay spirits]

#### Introduction

In this chapter I continue to use the concept of transcultural orientalism to analyse the work of Adelina Gurrea Monasterio (1896-1971), a Filipino author who lived in Spain for most of her life. Gurrea was born in a small town called La Carlota on the Island of Negros Occidental (Visayas) to a family of mixed heritage. Her grandfather was a Spanish military official who settled in the Philippines and worked in the sugarcane industry, the more established form of production in Central Philippines. Gurrea's father married a Tagalog-Mestiza and continued the family business until 1921, when the whole family with six children migrated to Spain. Despite the fact that she was not from a creole family, Gurrea's family's fortune allowed her to have the "social and economic privileges of a creole elite of Spanish origin" (Álvarez 5).

Before the family went to Spain, Gurrea completed a bachelor's degree in Humanities at Santa Escolástica School in Manila, which followed the English-language curriculum that had just been implemented as part of the American education policy. Despite the exposure she had to English and English literatures, Gurrea considered Spanish her mother tongue and preferred to use Spanish to write. As a college student in Manila, she wrote part of the literary section for women of the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, which she also edited for three years. In Madrid, she engaged in literary activities through associations such as the *Asociación de España-Filipinas* in 1934 and the *Círculo Hispano-Filipino*, which she founded in 1950.

Despite her urge to write and be part of the literary scene in Spain, Gurrea's career as an author was not very prolific. She attempted different genres, including short dramas, narrative, magazine articles and poetry. In her work, the common themes of postcolonial literature, such as nationhood, memory, heritage and politics can be found, along with other

concerns drawn from her personal experience - most notably an emphasis on the importance of education and the role of women in society. Her style, like that of most Filipino writers of her time, offers a mix of romantic lyricism and rather timid political and historical claims.

In this chapter, I look at three of her works: a satirical play entitled *Filipinas: Auto histórico-satírico* [Philippines: A Historical-Satirical Allegory] that 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)<sup>49</sup>; and a story called “El Talisay,” part of a collection of short stories that she published in Madrid in 1943 with the title *Cuentos de Juana. Narraciones malayas de las islas Filipinas* [Juana’s tales. Malayan stories from the Philippine Islands]. By looking at these works by Gurrea I want to show how, with regard to transcultural orientalism, she puts the emphasis on the *transcultural* aspect rather than on *orientalism*. Like Balmori’s poems, Gurrea’s work draws from various cultural influences in order to orientalise the Philippines. However, rather than establishing a hierarchy of cultures or following oriental modernist aesthetics like Balmori, Gurrea orientalisés the Philippines in three ways: 1) by infantilising the Philippines as a young country shaped by its colonial heritage; 2) by approaching the Philippines in a nostalgic way that puts this nostalgia in service of imagining a new future; and 3) by using a narrative method that incorporates orientalised and orientalising perspectives in order to challenge binary oppositions such as native/foreign, orient/occident and, in particular in “El Talisay,” religion/superstition.

I will first discuss Gurrea’s poem “Epaña, América, Filipinas” (1918) [Spain, America and Philippines] from the collection *En Agraz* (1968) as an example of her use of orientalism as a hegemonic discourse attached to colonialism by which the colonised perceive the colonisers as benefactors. To explain how this works, I adapt Vicente L. Rafael’s notion of “contracting colonialism” to “contracting orientalism.” Gurrea’s poem is put in dialogue with the satirical play, which, like all her work, was written in Spain during Franco’s dictatorship. At first sight, the play seems to evoke the same discourse as the poem, as it repeatedly attempts to reconcile the colonial history of the Philippines by looking at the way Spanish and American colonialism helped shape the contemporary Philippines, while dismissing any pre-Hispanic influences. Yet the satirical tone of the play also undermines this discourse to arrive at a more critical position towards Spain and its colonial influence on the

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<sup>49</sup> Both *En Agraz* and *Más Senderos* were published by the author. The editions available online from 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 is noted that the collection includes poems written between 1916 and 1926, indicating they belong to Gurrea’s early work.

Philippines. Second, I will look at how the poems “Carabao”<sup>50</sup> (1967), “Campesino de Negros” (1967) [Peasant of Negros] and “Rebeldía Nostalgia” (1967) [Nostalgic resistance] express an orientalist nostalgia towards the Philippines. I explain the emphasis on nostalgia as a strategic move that works in two ways: first, because Gurrea is living in Franco’s Spain, she cannot afford to be overly political about the Philippines, only nostalgic, with this nostalgia operating, following Svetlana Boym, in a reflective rather than a restorative mode; second, Gurrea uses nostalgia for the past and the rural Philippines as a way to question dominant notions of modernity and progress, associated with the present and the city.

In the last section of this chapter, I will focus on “El Talisay,” the final story in *Cuentos de Juana*, to show how a mix of Catholicism and Filipino spiritual beliefs shapes the relationships between coloniser and colonised in the rural Philippines of Gurrea’s childhood. The story challenges binary oppositions such as east/west, coloniser/colonised and, specifically, religion/superstition as the narrator brings to the fore multiple perspectives on the dynamic coexistence of various cultures in the colonial Philippines. In all nine stories contained in *Cuentos de Juana*, but most particularly in this one, Gurrea combines figures that are part of the Hispanic heritage (friars, princesses, kings) with elements of Filipino mythology (Malay spirits), as the opening quote of this chapter indicates.<sup>51</sup> These are presented as complementary and as interacting with each other rather than as antagonistic or irreconcilable. Ultimately, “El Talisay” stresses the transcultural dimension of transcultural orientalism by representing the rural Philippines not as undergoing a process of acculturation and deculturation (by which foreign cultures are appropriated and the “own” cultures lost), but as a dynamic space of neoculturation in which foreign and local beliefs reshape each other and new beliefs and forms of knowledge emerge.

### **Contracting Orientalism**

*Contracting Colonialism* (1988) is the title of one of Vicente L. Rafael’s seminal books on Filipino history and culture; it uses the concept of translation to analyse the transculturation of Catholicism (which Rafael calls “Christian conversion”) in the Philippines during early Spanish rule. Rafael’s metaphor suggests that contracting colonialism is an act of acquiring ideology into the body. I want to argue that a similar form of transmission also carries

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<sup>50</sup> *Carabao* is the Hispanised version of the Visayan word ‘Karabow.’ It refers to a domestic animal native to the Philippines that is used to plough the fields, fishing and other agricultural tasks. It is commonly translated in English as water buffalo.

<sup>51</sup> The critical edition of the collection that I am working with here was made by Álvarez Tardío and re-edited in 2010 with useful notes, including a two-page section with information about the ‘spirits’ that are most common in Filipino mythology from the Visayas, the islands where the stories take place and the birthplace of Gurrea.

orientalism, as a symptomatic aspect of colonialism, into the body (and, in the case of authors, the body of work) of those who are orientalised from a European perspective, as became clear from my analysis of Balmori's poems. Here, I will focus on two texts by Adelina Gurrea - "España, América, Filipinas" a poem from the collection *En agraz* (1968) believed to have been written in 1918 and the play *Filipinas: Auto histórico-satírico* [Philippines: A Historical-Satirical Allegory] (1951) - which show symptoms of having contracted the hegemonic type of orientalism that sees the oriental invigorated by contact with the occidental.

In the poem, the speaker perceives the Philippines as a trophy for the two colonisers of the sixteenth and the twentieth century, arguing that it did not have something taken away but was instead rewarded with cultural gifts - American strength and Spanish sensibility or passion - that also became part of the Filipino heritage:

"España, América, Filipinas" (1918)

[...]

Por eso, desde días muy remotos  
fuiste de los monarcas ambición,  
y de tu historia hábiles pilotos

te dieron, como premio y galardón  
como herencia y unión de lazos rotos,  
músculo America, y España corazón.  
(Gurrea in Álvarez 182-3)

[This is why since remote days / you have been the ambition of monarchs / and as skilled pilots of your history / they gave you, as a prize and honor / as an inheritance and union of broken bonds / muscle from America and from Spain, a heart] (Álvarez 36).

This part of the poem describes the Philippines as an object desired by monarchs. Earlier, Spain is described as "ELLA! La enamorada del Oriente" [She, the one in love with the orient], while the US is referred to as a "TESORO" [treasure] that [...] "abriste para el mundo las puertas de una ciencia que nació" [opened to the world the doors of a science that was being born]. The two nations, then, are seen as respectively the embodiment of emotion and of science/rationality, and as having "rewarded" the Philippines with their cultural qualities. The coming together of these qualities, kept apart by the rivalry between the two imperial powers, in the Philippines produces a united body ("unión de lazos rotos" [union of broken bonds]). The speaker in this poem thus expresses a positive attachment to the

Philippines's double colonisation and puts the US and Spain on an equal level as the providers of different but positive and complementary aspects (muscle and heart, strength and sensitivity) to the Philippines, who is the receiver (or, in line with the metaphor of contracting colonialism, the patient).

Forty years later, in 1951, Gurrea wrote a short drama dealing with the same theme from a different position. *Filipinas: Auto histórico-satírico* [Philippines: A Historical-Satirical Allegory] is a historical satire in which the personified national characters of Spain, Philippines and the US (appearing as Uncle Sam) engage with the character of History, who wants a record of their colonial history, to reflect on their evolving relationship. In a humorous manner, the three national characters discuss, prompted by History's questions, the good and bad things Spain and the US brought to the Philippines.

The play opens with Uncle Sam waiting for more than an hour for the other three characters. He is standing on the stage checking the time on four different watches he carries in various pockets and on both wrists. He becomes impatient and says: "I know Latins and Orientals are not punctual but the delay is quite long."<sup>52</sup> He also calls "Mrs. History!" repeatedly and looks for her on the stage. "I am wasting my time, my precious Yankee time," he complains (98). Tired of waiting, he starts reading a newspaper. Then Mrs. History arrives, excusing her lack of punctuality by arguing: "History must be late. It is her duty. [...] Yes, it is my duty Uncle Sam. I must arrive when everything is finished, when everything is said, when the waves have calmed down and facts are settled at the bottom of clear waters so I can see and register them" (99). Uncle Sam disagrees, arguing that "things must be noted as they transpire" and throwing the newspaper on the floor. In response, Mrs. History suggests that, with such urgency, history would also end up "thrown on the floor" (99). This opening discussion between the two characters provides a good sense of the tone of the play, which has stereotyped national characters (Uncle Sam is impatient, efficient, business-like; Spain and Philippines are always late) talk to each other contemptuously, revealing their idiosyncrasies.

Once the two other characters arrive, a "young" Philippines and her "mother" Spain, the meeting that they were called to attend begins with Mrs. History saying: "It is time for me to start collecting data from all of you. Tell me what I have to register in my pages" (100). Philippines starts recounting facts about the country's pre-colonial history, producing dates, dropping famous names and carefully explaining the internal struggles that occurred between

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<sup>52</sup> For the quotes from the play, I am using the English translation that appears in Álvarez-Tardío's edition.

indigenous peoples of the archipelago and neighboring countries (Malaysia, China, Formosa).<sup>53</sup> “What a lot of history,” exclaims Uncle Sam, impatiently asking for his turn to speak. After both Spain and Uncle Sam have talked, Mrs. History explicitly asks them to explain what they have left to the Philippines:

HISTORIA: Y además de la Religión, ¿Qué más dejaste en ella?

ESPAÑA: Dejé mis apellidos y nombres preclaros para que los usasen los filipinos, dejé mi cultura que es un compendio de las culturas griega, romana y árabe fundidas en la mía propia.

TIO SAM: ¿Cuántas escuelas abriste en Filipinas?

ESPAÑA: Abrí una escuela en cada parroquia y algunos colegios en Manila. Además de la muy Antigua Universidad de Santo Tomás...

TIO SAM: Números, números... ¿cuántas escuelas y cuántos maestros?

ESPAÑA: No he medido nunca el saber y la virtud en cifras.

TIO SAM: Muy bonita respuesta, pero muy poco práctica. Y ¿qué enseñaste en esas escuelas de parroquia?

ESPAÑA: Enseñé al hombre a conocer a Dios, le enseñé a considerar al individuo como obra especial del cielo y no como un instrumento de vida o de poder. Le enseñé lo que era la dignidad, el honor y el sentido de la libertad en el ser humano.

TIO SAM: Bueno, no nos entendemos... Dime si les enseñaste Geografía, Aritmética, Cálculo mercantil, Física, Química, modos de hacer dinero, forma de conquistar amigos y manera de ser felices en el matrimonio.

ESPAÑA: No, esas últimas asignaturas no las he enseñado nunca.

[...]

TIO SAM: ¡No os comprendo! ¡No os comprendo! Pero a fin de cuentas, España no puso casi escuelas, no os dejó carreteras, puentes, fábricas; no combatió las epidemias, no os enseñó higiene, y por no enseñaros ni siquiera os enseñó su lengua.

ESPAÑA: Estaba mandado en la ley 18, título 1, libro 6 de las “Leyes de las Indias”, que se abriesen escuelas para enseñar castellano a los naturales, pero efectivamente, esta ley no se cumplió en Filipinas y solo unos pocos aprendieron el castellano.

TIO SAM (a Filipinas): ¿Por qué no aprendisteis el castellano?

FILIPINAS: Talagá, Talagá.<sup>54</sup> Era más fácil hablar nuestros dialectos y...ya lo aprendieron los filipinos estudiosos para entenderse con España, en nuestro nombre. Y ya lo aprendieron los frailes para enseñarnos el catecismo. (Gurrea in Álvarez 250-252)

[HISTORY: And besides religion what else did you leave here?

SPAIN: I left my surnames and my illustrious names for the Filipinos for their own use; I left my culture that is a compendium of Greek, Roman and Arabian culture melted with my own.

UNCLE SAM: How many schools did you open in the Philippines?

SPAIN: I opened one in every parish. There were several in Manila, most notable of all, the Universidad de Santo Tomas.

<sup>53</sup> The character of the Philippines describes how the “Negritos” (the indigenous people that were named this by the Spanish because of their physical appearance) were marginalised and displaced to the mountains in the fourteenth century by the Sri-vishayam, a Buddhist Empire of Malay origin. After two centuries, the Malay empire was overthrown by Muslims from Malacca, who governed until Magellans reached Cebu in 1521.

<sup>54</sup> Talagá, talagá, explains Álvarez, is an expression used to add emphasis to a sentence denoting surprise, as a synonym of “really?” or, in this case, to agree with what has been said, something like “true, true!” (252).

UNCLE SAM: Figures, figures... How many schools and how many teachers?

SPAIN: I have never measured knowledge and virtue in numerical terms.

UNCLE SAM: Very pretty answer but not very practical. And what did you teach in those parochial schools?

SPAIN: I taught the students to know God. I taught them to consider the individual as a special work of Heaven and not as a tool for life nor for power. I taught them what dignity and honour were, as well as the meaning of freedom for human beings.

UNCLE SAM: Well, I don't think we are going to understand each other... Tell me, did you teach them Geography, Arithmetic, Commercial Calculus, Physics, Chemistry, means of making money, ways of conquering friends and the manner of living a happy marriage?

SPAIN: No, I have never taught those last subjects.

[...]

UNCLE SAM: I can not understand you, I really can not understand you! But in the last analysis, Spain hardly put up any schools. She didn't leave you with roads, bridges, factories... She didn't fight epidemics, didn't teach you hygiene. And speaking of teaching, she didn't even teach you her language.

SPAIN: It was ordered under law number 18, 1<sup>st</sup> section, 6<sup>th</sup> book of the "Laws for the Indies" that schools should be opened in order to teach Castilian to the natives. Unfortunately, that law was not followed in the Philippines, so, few learned Castilian.

UNCLE SAM (to Philippines): Why didn't you learn Castilian?

PHILIPPINES: Talagá, talagá. It was easier to speak in our languages and dialects, and so it was the Filipino scholars who learned Castilian on our behalf so as to understand and be understood by Mother Spain. And the priest learned to teach us the catechism in our native tongue.] (Álvarez 106-107)

In this fragment, Uncle Sam is extremely precise; he insists on quoting numbers, discussing practical matters and emphasising productivity. "How many schools? and how many teachers?" he asks Spain repeatedly. The character of Spain, on the other hand, does not talk about education in terms of numbers but in terms of its content, stressing the value of religious education and proudly proclaiming that she taught the meaning of honour, freedom and respect for all divine creatures. The benign impression of colonisation given in her speech clashes with the Black Legend<sup>55</sup> of Spanish colonialism mentioned earlier in the play.<sup>56</sup> By evoking this contrast, the play illustrates the gap between colonial rhetoric and practice.

However, the play also attempts to understand this gap through the type of historicism it produces. The satire contextualises the events of history through the characters'

<sup>55</sup> The "Black Legend" refers to the anti-Spanish discourse that emerged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on the basis of the abuses of the colonisation of Latin America and the violent Inquisition.

<sup>56</sup> In the play, Spain says that there were "bad men" as well as "good men" who respectively abused and defended the interests of the colonised. As examples of reformed men (colonisers that sided with the colonised), she names Bartolome de las Casas in Latin America and Antonio de Morga (1559- 1636) in the Philippines. The latter wrote one of the first critical works about colonisation in the Philippines entitled *Sucesos de las islas Filipinas* (1609).

explanations about what happened and about how the respective colonial programs shaped the present, allowing Mrs. History to pass judgment. This way of narrating from different perspectives is recurrent in Gurrea's work and particularly prominent in the stories contained in *Cuentos de Juana*. It marks her writing as originating from a transcultural perspective that is simultaneously orientalising and orientalised, even though the texts do end up taking a specific position towards the perspectives they present. An example of this is the characterisation of Philippines as "young" and the emphasis put on education in the characters' dialogues. The play's presentation of the Philippines as a child in need of being educated or, in other words, as a project of civilisation remains unquestioned.

Towards the end of the play, Mrs. History asks Philippines to draw a conclusion about who has had a "better" influence on her upbringing. This reveals the perspective on colonialism as an educative process that, moreover, is carried out by family members - Uncle Sam and Mother Spain:

HISTORIA: ¿Tienes algo más que decir, Filipinas?

FILIPINAS: Pues para final - y esto va muy en serio - debo decir noblemente que *no tengo más que motivos de agradecimiento hacia mi madre España y mi Tío Sam. Yo perdono y olvido todas las debilidades, todos los defectos de su comportamiento conmigo*. En el otro platillo de la balanza ¡es tanto y tan bueno lo que he recibido de los dos! Sobre los conocimientos cristianos y de nobleza humana que me legó España - su cultura, sus costumbres, su sangre, sus nombres, amalgamados con todo lo mío que quedó intacto en su valor bueno, *borrando lo vicioso* - sobre esta formación completa que es también armazón, además de base; colocó, América, su dinamismo y su músculo y me dotó de lo material para hacerme fuerte y moderna y me hizo libre después de enseñarme normas de democracia que garantizaran mi libertad. Y a ambas les estoy intensamente agradecida y a ambas las quiero. (*España y América la rodean con sus brazos*) (255, emphasis added)

[HISTORY: I think we should wrap this up. Have you anything else to say, Philippines?

PHILIPPINES: Well, to put an end to this... Seriously, there is no reason for me not to thank my Mother Spain and Uncle Sam. I forgive and forget all their weaknesses, all the wrongs they have done against me. On another scale, there are indeed so many good things that I have received from both of them! Aside from our Christian foundations and the thoughts on human nobility, Spain bequeathed me her culture, habits, blood and names amalgamated with those things of mine. These ways of living whose better aspects we continue to celebrate but whose vicious possibilities we have tried to erase. On top of these, America offered its dynamism and strength towards endowing me with those material things to make me strong and modern. It gave me freedom after teaching me the rules of democracy that have truly guaranteed my freedom. And to both, I'm immensely thankful. Both I love (*Spain and America embrace her*) (Álvarez 110)

The play thus concludes by asserting that neither of the colonisers was better or worse; they are both equally part of the history that has made the Philippines what it is now: an exemplary young, strong, dynamic and modern nation that knows mathematics and calculus as well as the meaning of freedom and democracy, that is aware of her history and has been provided with the spiritual guidance of Catholicism. Consequently, the young Philippines is not resentful but, on the contrary, “intensamente agradecida” [immensely grateful] for the colonial heritage given to her. This conclusion places the Filipino people in a submissive position, as they accept and acknowledge “the better aspects” of the foreign cultures and magnanimously profess to “forgive and forget all their weaknesses, all the wrongs they have done against me.”

Even though pre-colonial history was referenced by Philippines at the beginning of the play, no elements of this history are accounted for as making up who she is now. Drawing on the metaphor that I used to open this section, young Philippines has indeed contracted (the ideology of) colonialism and, in the process, given up what she had before. Gurrea’s play does not seem to contend or resist colonial history in any sustained way, refuses to establish a hierarchy of colonisers (the US is no better or worse than Spain) and dismisses pre-colonial attachments. In silencing this heritage, the play can be said to espouse a hegemonic discourse of orientalism in which the exotic is only there to be contrasted with and infected by the civilised cultures of the west.

Yet both the play and the poem (“España, América, Filipinas”) also evoke transculturation in producing an image of the Philippines as a body that harmoniously contains and unites different colonial attachments (linking to Spain through its heart and to the US through its muscles). The play lists the qualities inherited from both colonisers, presenting them as complementary rather than as in conflict. In both examples, however, Filipinos seem to engage only passively in the process of transculturation, submitting to it rather than participating in it.<sup>57</sup>

While Spain is heralded as having given the Philippines a heart, a closer look at its role in the play reveals elements of a critique of Spanish colonialism, specifically focusing on the role of Catholic friars on the islands. The “vicious possibilities” that are to be forgotten by young Philippines point to the system of “*frailocracia*,” a term coined to describe the abusive power of the clergy in the colonial Philippines, which was fiercely attacked in José

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<sup>57</sup> In Chapter 3 I look at how Paz Mendoza’s travelogue displays a form of *active transculturation*. While Mendoza looks at the future possibilities Filipino transculturation offers, Gurrea presents it as a process completed in the past.

Rizal's incendiary novels *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891).<sup>58</sup> One of the main issues in the Philippines under Spanish rule was that Spanish was not taught in the systematic way that English would be taught under American regulation. The Spanish colonial system lacked the infrastructure to implement a national education system, leaving basic education to priests, who, according to Philippines in the play, "learned to teach us the catechism in our native tongue." In answer to Uncle Sam's question about why Filipinos did not learn Spanish, she notes: "It was easier to speak our own dialects and [Spanish] was learnt by scholarly Filipinos to communicate with Spain in our name." Only the Filipino elite (creoles and some mestizos) and the priests spoke Spanish so that the commoners would remain in obscurantism and be kept from calling for emancipation and independence. The idea was to ensure that the masses would *contract colonialism* without being able to question what exactly was being transmitted to them.

While the critique of the clergy contained in Gurrea's play would likely pass unnoticed by audiences in 1950s Spain unfamiliar with the details of colonial rule, the text itself, because of its satirical mode, is also very ambivalent. The harmony that appears to be propagated at the play's surface could be regarded as an early variation of what Simon During refers to as 'reconciliatory post-colonialism,' a perspective that attempts to disregard the residual negative effects of colonial processes on colonised societies by focusing, instead, on the unifying cultural transformations that are derived from global exchange:

In the end, reconciliatory post-colonialism figures colonialism as a kind of tragedy with a happy ending - tragic because it was partly based on destruction and ethnocide; happy in the sense that the world historical outcome - which we now name globalisation - unifies and de-spatializes the world in ways which supposedly render colonial repression obsolete. (392)

However, while the play ostensibly has a happy ending - a tripartite embrace initiated by Spain and America - it is difficult to see it, in During's terms, as rendering victimising and repressing colonial discourses obsolete. Instead, the play needs to be read in the historical context of 1950s Spain and with a keen eye to its sarcastic and playful tone, which renders the statements of the allegorical characters ambivalent.

The apparent passive reconciliation with history that repeats the colonial discourse (hence merely 'sounding' orientalist) is better explained according to Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry, discussed in the introduction to this study. For Bhabha, mimicry expresses the

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<sup>58</sup> Early Filipino scholars who studied in Europe and returned to the Philippines had to fight the power of the clergy and the decadent creole elites to defend the need for political and social reforms (Thomas 2012). Such is the case in both *Noli Me Tangere* (1887) and *El Filibusterismo* (1891).

ambivalence of a colonial discourse that turns into a form of resistance when it is voiced by the colonised. In order to explain how it operates in Gurrea's play, I need to call attention to two important aspects. First, the fact that Gurrea explicitly calls the play a 'historical satire.' Satire is defined as "the use of humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices."<sup>59</sup> It uses mockery, often by mimicking the very object that is being critiqued, and is therefore entertaining but also profoundly critical. Second, staging a satire in front of a Spanish audience during Franco's dictatorship, when any piece of art, and specifically theatre, had to commit to the laws of censorship,<sup>60</sup> leading most writers to use strategies of self-censorship and discreet resistance, was a daring act.<sup>61</sup> Together, these aspects make it possible to see the interaction between a *pretend* Uncle Sam, a *pretend* Spain and a *pretend* Philippines as staging a mocking of official colonial history, cleverly and ambiguously conveyed through an accepted form of patriotic propaganda in fascist Spain.

It may be argued that one of the reasons that propelled Gurrea to opt for a 'happy ending' was a cautionary self-censorship exercised in order to protect her precarious position as a Filipino female writer in fascist Spain. From that perspective, Gurrea's work reflects the 'baroque discourse of the three "p's": Purity, Poetry and Patriotism' propagated by the Franco regime, described by Carbayo (1998) as follows:

The patriarchal family formed the microcosm version of the state apparatus. The women were considered, not only the basis of the biological reproductive system, since they were responsible for the future heroes of the fatherland, but also for the ideological reproduction. Thus, they were at the same time victims of the system. We speak about the official discourse, which was monolithic and autarchic, and stood on what we have called the baroque discourse of the three 'p's': Purity, Poetry and Patriotism (...). The poetry is a direct reference to the Baroque style, as the medium for discerning the myths of the common culture, and for the expression of the historical memory, of the symbols and traditions. (qtd. in Álvarez 26)

<sup>59</sup> *Literary Terms*. 1 June 2015. Web. 3 Nov. 2016. <<https://literaryterms.net/>>.

<sup>60</sup> There were several institutions in charge of carrying out censorship in the media and arts, among them the *Ley de Prensa de 1938* and later the *Junta Nacional de Teatros y Conciertos (Orden 5-XI-38)*. A key figure in the censorship system was Minister of Education and Tourism Gabriel Arias-Salgado, whose book *Textos de doctrina y política de la información* (1955) is a key text for studying government policies of censorship. For specific information about theatre censorship, see Garcia Ruiz's article "Los mecanismos de censura teatral en el primer franquismo y Los pájaros ciegos de V. Ruiz Iriarte (1948)" (1996).

<sup>61</sup> During the late 1940s and 1950s there appeared a subgenre in theatre called "la comedia de la felicidad" [the comedy of happiness], which avoided dealing with any controversial themes. A notable exception to this was Antonio Buero Vallejo's social realism or "teatro de la esperanza" [theatre of hope], which was very successful. Vallejo's *Historia de una escalera* [History of a staircase] was staged in 1949 and opened a new road in how to deal with social problems under Franco. Gurrea is likely to have seen Vallejo's play in Madrid and was aware of both the official and underground tendencies of theatre in post-war fascist Spain. Still, it could be argued that Gurrea's play is in fact more daring than Vallejo's in the sense that it explicitly deals with the history of Spanish colonialism in the Philippines, mobilising global attachments, while Vallejo addresses the stagnation and immobility of postwar Spain through the individual lives of the neighbouring families that share the building's staircase.

Instances of the three “p’s” can easily be found in Gurrea’s work. *Poetry* in the baroque lyricism of some of her poems (as I will show in the next section); *Purity* in her notion of poetic creation as method of self-expression: “a válvula de escape a los vapores comprimidos del corazón, pero nunca con miras a obtener gloria ni renombre, ni si quiera con intención de ser publicados” [an exhausting valve for the vapors held within my heart; but never with the ambition of glory and renown, not even with the intention of being published] (1954: 2); and *Patriotism* as revealed in the preface to her poetry collection *A lo largo del camino* [Along the way] (1954: 2), where Gurrea declares that writing is for her a form of payment of a patriotic debt incurred by the Philippines as a result of everything Spain gave to it, particularly the language to write in:

If, finally, I do it [publishing her work], after a meticulous selection and a few retouches, it is only for my homeland, the Philippines, to count with another representative of its Spanish speaking poets. (...) The book has just one intention: to be a volume of verses written in Castilian and published by a Filipino, thinking of Spain and the Philippines. I believe this end has been achieved. Because, by singing in Spanish I return to Spain the debt for that glorious heritage that is Cervantes’s language. So, I render the service of helping to draw back the oblivion of the seed on the sown field. (qtd. in Álvarez 9)

The expression of gratitude towards Spanish for the “gifts” of colonialism returns in many Hispano-Filipino literary works; it is, for example, a central theme in Balmori’s poem “Blasón,” discussed in Chapter 1. Although this gratitude can be interpreted as a sign of an assimilationist attitude, which, in Gurrea’s case, can be explained by her situation in Franco’s Spain, I argue that linguistic appropriation can also be a form of resistance, especially when it reveals a new vision of colonial history.

The poem and the play discussed in this section show how Gurrea uses specific literary forms and the Spanish language to engage with the historical processes that contributed to the transculturation of the Philippines. Despite observing that her work manifests symptoms of a contracted orientalism (in presenting the Philippines as a dependent and infantile nation that ignores her oriental heritage), some resistance is expressed in it through the satirical use of mimicry to make fun of Spain and the US, exposing, for example, their pomposity, which contrasts with Philippines’ modesty. The analysis of these two works has brought to the fore a recurring theme in Gurrea’s oeuvre: a reflection on Filipino history attempting to capture the various cultures that shaped it and the complex relations between them. This theme is sometimes also personalised, in Gurrea’s nostalgic reflections on her own memories of the Philippines, as I will show in the next section.

### Nostalgia for the Orient

One reason for authors to seek out orientalism was a felt need to escape the disillusionment of modernity. In the case of the Philippines, the sensation of waiting for a never arriving modernity (which many Hispano-Filipino writers saw in operation elsewhere) was reinforced by the denial of independence and democracy under US control, and by the maintenance of a residual colonial structure that prevented social and economic progress. Many Hispano-Filipino writers also shared in a global disenchantment with the historical events that occurred in the first part of the twentieth century: the rise of fascist regimes leading to two world wars and a civil war in Spain, as well as the shortcomings of an idealised modernity. Gurrea's writings about the Philippines respond to both circumstances; on the one hand, the Philippines as presented in these writings functions as a counterpart to social disillusionment in post-war Spain and the instability of global politics,<sup>62</sup> while, on the other hand, Gurrea's texts allow her to express her personal nostalgia for the Philippines as a homeland that provides her with a fertile ground for orientalist modernist writing.

In his book *Ignorance* (2002) Milan Kundera describes the concept of nostalgia as the "pain that the unfulfilled crave of return causes to someone" (14). He arrives at this definition by dissecting the Greek etymology of the word: *nostos* meaning return and *algos* meaning pain. *Nostos*, however, specifically refers to a non-completed return (in the sense of Odysseus' stalled journey back to Ithaca). Thus, etymologically, nostalgia is the feeling of pain caused by the (impossible) return home, which, in English, is called *homesickness*. As Svetlana Boym outlines in her seminal study *The Future of Nostalgia* (2005), the Swiss doctor Johannes Hofer, in his medical dissertation from 1688, affirmed nostalgia as an illness, a melancholic condition defined as a 'hypochondria of the heart' first diagnosed in displaced peoples.<sup>63</sup> To be cured of nostalgia, one must return home or to the object that causes the pain. The unfulfilled return to that object is what causes one to be nostalgic. In this section, I will argue that Gurrea's orientalised view of the Philippines can be considered as a form of nostalgia for her birthplace.

In the collection *Mas Senderos* (1967) [More paths] Gurrea includes several poems dedicated to elements of the Filipino rural landscape that she orientalises and uses symbolically. The poem, "Mi Isla de Negros" [My Island of Negros], for example, is

<sup>62</sup> This is clear, for example, in the poem "El Nido" [The Nest] from the collection *En Agraz* (1968), which is about the Spanish King Alphonse XIII's reaction to the events of the First World War.

<sup>63</sup> "Among the first victims of the newly diagnosed disease were various displaced people of the seventeenth century, freedom-loving students from the Republic of Berne studying in Basel, domestic help and servants working in France and Germany and Swiss soldiers fighting abroad" (Hofer, qtd. in Boym, 2005: 19).

dedicated to the volcano Canlaón, which is a famous landmark on the island. In the poem, the speaker compares her heart to the volcanic shape.<sup>64</sup> In the poems “El Carabao” (78-81) and “Campesio de Negros” [peasant of Negros] (86-89), the speaker finds in the figure of the Carabao (a domestic animal native of the Philippines used for agriculture and fishing)<sup>65</sup> and in the image of the Filipino peasant working in the rice fields and living in a nipa hut symbols of hospitality, noblesse, humility and a capacity to endure considered unique to the Filipino people.<sup>66</sup> *A lo largo del Camino* contains a poem about a Filipino beach (“Playa Filipina” 39) containing lines that describe it as a ‘song of palm trees’ and a ‘kiss of light from the tropics.’<sup>67</sup> Just a page before “Playa Filipina” is a poem called “Nostalgia” expressing the speaker’s desire to return to the mountains and the beach on which she can listen to the “caracolas malayas” [Malayan seashells] and watch out (“atalayar”) for her ‘cradle over Filipino sand.’<sup>68</sup> The *sampaguita* flower, considered a national symbol in the Philippines is also described according to an orientalist poetics. In a poem called “Sampaguita,” the speaker addresses the flower directly in a composition of nine stanzas enumerating the reasons why the *sampaguita* is worth writing a poem about. Each stanza starts with the word *because* followed by metaphors of what a *sampaguita* *is* and *is not*. Thus, the *sampaguita* is worthy of the verses because she is ‘the star that lightens the fields of her homeland’ (“patria”), ‘like a kiss’ or like ‘the wind that caresses the faces of the “dagalas” [young women].’ In addition, the *sampaguita* is defined as ‘nostalgia,’ as a ‘cry’ and as a ‘childhood dream’ that the

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<sup>64</sup> ¡A Y mi Isla de Negros, mi Isla de Negros! /Se me ha hecho el corazón / de la forma volcánica / del Canlaón. (75). [Oh, my island of Negros, my Island of Negros! / My heart has become / the volcanic shape / of the Canlaón]

<sup>65</sup> Cigno cabalístico del suelo malayo, / Nigromancia clara de la sementera, / estampa grabada sobre el arrozal, / en la paz del campo eres el soslayo / de la angustia urbana, / la paz placentera/ a la sombra ingenua del cañaveral. [...] Encierras los sueños de toda una raza / que labra la tierra mirando hacia el cielo / y lleva una estrella posada en la frente, / la hospitalidad abierta que abraza / y ofrece sus / flores, sus frutos del suelo, / con un corazón sentido y caliente. Y eres para el hombre testimonio austero / de la Oceania misteriosa, arcana, / conciencia serena con auras marinas, / glebas soleadas, luces de sendero, / susurro en las cañas... gama soberana / que ennoblece el alma fiel de FILIPINAS (78-81). [Kabbalistic sign of the Malay soil, / clear necromancy of the sown field, / engraved print on the rice field, / in the peace of the countryside you are the sideline / of the urban anguish, / the pleasant peace / in the innocent shade of the cane-field. [...] You enclose the dreams of a whole race / that labors the earth looking towards the sky / carrying a star on the forehead, / grand hospitality that embraces / and offers its flowers, its fruits of the earth, / with a warm and sincere heart. And you are for manhood the austere testimony of the mysterious Oceania, hidden, / serene conscience with marine auras, sunny crops, light in the path, whisper in the reeds ... sovereign range / that honors the faithful soul of the PHILIPPINES]

<sup>66</sup> En su casita de nipa / vive soñando pobrezas / el labrador de la Isla. / Su corazón de gacela / lleva el paisaje del mar / verde del cañadulzal (86).

<sup>67</sup> Dice su amor la espuma/una canción de palmeras / el beso de luz del trópico / incandeece las arenas. (36).

<sup>68</sup> Me voy, me voy a las playas / a escuchar las resonancias / de las caracolas malayas. [...] Y atalayar, de muy lejos / tras fulgores o neblinas / las espumas de mi cuna / sobre arenas filipinas (37-38).

speaker treasures and carries deep in her heart.<sup>69</sup> These examples illustrate how the nostalgic wish to return is aimed at an orientalised version of the landscape of the Philippines.

Boym distinguishes two types of nostalgia, which she calls ‘reflective’ and ‘restorative.’ ‘Reflective’ nostalgia is a type of nostalgia grounded in longing, contemplating and remembering, “a positive force that helps us explore our experience, and can offer an alternative to an uncritical acceptance of the present” (41). In addition, Boym notes that it is an “imperfect process of remembrance,” proceeding through the imagination (41). As much as we can be nostalgic about our schooldays, thinking of them as idyllic, we forget that sometimes we hated going to school, she claims. In accordance with the mode of reflective nostalgia, the speaker of Gurrea’s poems fills the gaps in her selective memory with only positive images of the absent object, creating a picture postcard collection of idealised images of the Filipino landscape and its oriental landmarks (carabaos, sampaguitas, beaches, vulcanos and peasants laboring in rice fields).

In contrast, ‘restorative’ nostalgia, according to Boym, is not about memory and the imagination, but about heritage and tradition. It is an imposed, official discourse that provides people with a coherent vision of the past:

Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to build the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance [...] Restorative nostalgia manifest itself in total reconstruction of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, the dreams of another place and another time. (41)

Boym sees a danger in restorative nostalgia, as it constitutes an attempt to (re)construct a common past that brings communities a sense of group (be)longing. Far from an individual experience, restorative nostalgia is a sort of planned nostalgia from which commercial profit and exclusive nationalism can be derived. To illustrate this, Boym refers to official monuments built to commemorate past events and create an authoritative national history. The sample poems discussed here are not examples of restorative nostalgia since they do not dwell on traditions or political symbols. Neither do they convey, at least not explicitly, an official national discourse. At the same time, however, Gurrea’s poetry collections do constitute attempts to “build the lost home” and to restore a sense of national belonging, especially when the Philippines is identified as “la patria” [the fatherland].

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<sup>69</sup> Porque eres todo eso; / penumbra y llamarada,/ nostalgia, llanto y vuelo, / “ahora”, “ayer”, “mañana”.../ porque eres un ensueño, / de mi niñez dorada, / te llevo muy adentro, / muy adentro del alma (36).

As I noted at the beginning of this section, Gurrea's nostalgia for the Philippines is linked to her rejection and resistance of modernity. This is most obvious in the poem "Rebeldía Nostálgica" [Nostalgic Resistance], contained in *Más Senderos* (1967) [More paths], which radically rejects modernity for being artificial, pompous and flighty. According to the poem's speaker, the masses in modern societies have lost their uniqueness and simplicity to the reign of the universal, which governs, manages and reduces them to a single thing, a homogeneity represented in the poem by the ugly sound of a frog's croak. Individuality has been replaced by a "madness of quivering puppets":

*"Rebeldía Nostálgica"*

*Ya nada suena a entonces, nada suena...  
 Todo chirría ahora su estridencia,  
 La música es bramido de tambores  
 Ahogando suavidades de cadencia.  
 Solo aguijón contiene la colmena,  
 La miel no se hizo o se secó en las flores.*

*El cerebro encabrita su pirueta  
 Con rebrincos hacia lo original  
 Y ambicionan la gracia del poeta  
 Agrias caricaturas de verso existencial.*

*Ya nada suena a entonces, nada suena.  
 La charca tiene ranas, ranas, ranas.  
 Y todo es charca... sin lagos y sin mar;  
 Mar con su luna llena  
 O rocío en la luz de las mañanas.  
 Sólo charcas...  
 Charcas con su croar, croar, croar.*

*Ya nada suena a entonces,  
 hasta el ultramoderno genial predicador  
 Exhorta con cornetas y con bronces,  
 Sin esquilas que llamen al amor.  
 Se pretende rezar y no se reza  
 Pues la oración reclama aquel acento  
 Sencillo de la paz y de la pobreza,  
 Lejos del tono agrio y del resentimiento.*

*Ya nada es como antes  
 La humanidad se entorbellina el corazón  
 Con locuras de títeres tremantes,  
 Los unos se hacen cientos, los cientos se hacen miles,  
 Para un solo rebaño en frustración.*

*Todos somos iguales,  
 Se extinguió la ordenada variedad.  
 Todos queremos molicies, carnavales...  
 Todos somos iguales...  
 ¡Ruines payasos de la Humanidad!  
 (Álvarez 194-5)*

[Now nothing sounds like before, nothing... / Now everything squeaks its shrillness, / Music is beaten out by drumming, / Stifling the rhythm's sweetness. / The beehive holds nothing but the sting

Honey is not made; it dries up in the flower / The brain leaps pirouetting / Aspiring to originality, / And the bitter caricatures of existential verses / Crave for the grace of the poet.

Now nothing sounds like before, nothing. / Frogs, frogs, frogs croaking everywhere in the pond / And everywhere is pond... no lake, no sea; / No sea lit by a full moon rising / No dew in the morning light, only ponds / Ponds filled with croaking, croaking, croaking.

Now nothing sounds like before, / Even the brilliant prophet of fashionable modernity / Preaches out sounding brass and clanging cymbals / Without the bells which summon love. / He pretends to pray, yet is unable to, / For prayer demands the quiet simplicity / Of the poor and humble / So different from his bitter tone.

Now nothing is like before. / For the madness of quivering puppets / Mankind has thrown its soul into the whirlwind, / Ones have become hundreds, the hundreds thousands / Becoming a single herd of discontent.

We are all the same / We have extinguished ordered diversity / We all desire delight and pageantry / We are all the same... / Petty clowns of Humanity!] (Álvarez 46-48)

The first two verses of the poem make a negative comparison between the present and the past. Nothing sounds *now* (“*ahora*”) like *then* (“*entonces*”). Music has become noise, a cacophony that “chirria” [scrapes] our ears. Poetry, love and humanity have lost their substance to become false imitation, pretence, caricature. The present has transformed the necessary and noble conditions of ‘poverty’ and ‘peace’ into ‘resentment’ and ‘bitterness,’ erasing the possibility of keeping faith in humanity and God. The present, moreover, offers a frantic carnival of maddened puppets that preach to and resent each other. Life has become a carnival in which humans are only “ruines payasos de la Humanidad” [despicable clowns of humanity]. The speaker of the poem is the singular observer of the masses’ contemptible behavior, making her nostalgia an act of resistance, as the title also indicates.

Significantly, the (French) poets that led literary modernism, including Baudelaire, were also inspired by the textures of the masses and the urban, but instead of being nostalgic for the past, they were passionate about the fleeting present. For the first generation of modern poets, the city was vibrant and crowded, and full of poetic inspiration. Baudelaire expresses the urgency and beauty of the fleeting moment in a poem about falling in love with a passer-by (“À une passante,” in *Fleurs du mal* 1868). Boym (2005) calls the poetics of the

fleeting possibility of falling in love with a stranger ‘love at last sight,’ reinventing the idiom in the light of a nostalgia for the moment that has just evaporated as the object of love is dissolved into the crowd.

Against these early modernists, who disapproved of nostalgia for the past in favour of capturing the fleeting present and its provocations, Boym claims that a new generation emerged, which she calls *off-modernists*, a nomenclature that matches the sentiment of “Rebeldia nostalgica.” The poem is *off-modern* because it rejects (instead of happily dwelling in) its very source of inspiration: modernity and progress. According to Boym, *off-modernist* nostalgia consists of a felt necessity to look to the past in a reflective manner, especially following the painful history of the first half of the twentieth century, in search of ways to (re)construct the present and the future:

The *off-modernists* mediate between modernists and postmodernists, frustrating the scholars. The eccentric adverb *off* relieves the pressure of being fashionable and the burden of defining oneself as either pre- or postmodern. If at the beginning of the twentieth century modernists and avant-gardists defined themselves by disavowing nostalgia for the past, at the end of the twentieth century reflection on nostalgia might bring us to redefine critical modernity and its temporal ambivalence and cultural contradictions. (31)

The position of the narrator in “Rebeldia Nostalgica” is that of an *off-modernist* because it is critical of modernity but also inspired by it. In the poem, the speaker bitterly concludes that individuals have lost a sense of diversity and originality - ‘we are all the same’ - and have become incapable of paying attention to the simple pleasures of life. Against this, the poem expresses a longing for the specific rather than the universal. For Boym, a longing for the particular is what characterises the nostalgic individual:

What is crucial is that nostalgia was not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into “local” and “universal” possible. The nostalgic creature has internalised this division, but instead of aspiring for the universal and the progressive he looks backward and yearns for the particular. (11)

Yearning for the particular is precisely what Gurrea’s orientalist poems do. Instead of focusing on the impossibility of capturing the present or being inspired by modern technologies (such as trains, cars or typewriters, as is the case in much Spanish modernist poetry),<sup>70</sup> they channel Gurrea’s *off-modernist* nostalgia into praise for the particular Filipino symbols invoked by her memory.

<sup>70</sup> The Spanish modernist poet Pedro Salinas (1891-1951) wrote a poem called “Underwood Girls” in 1931 (the original title is in English) inspired by the most popular brand of typewriters in the late 1920s, Underwood. In the poem, the 26 letters of the alphabet (plus other graphs such as the Spanish letter ñ and punctuation signs) are

Having established how in Gurrea's poems the orientalisation of the Philippines is an effect and tool of a nostalgia that, in its reflective form or as it appears in *off-modernism*, can also have a critical dimension, in the next section I explore how *Cuentos de Juana* puts the emphasis on the transculturation of the Philippines rather than on its orientalisation by means of nostalgia. The *Cuentos*, I argue, focus on the dynamic interaction between colonising and indigenous cultures, especially with regard to spiritual and religious beliefs.

### Transcultural Faiths

*Cuentos de Juana. Narraciones malayas de las islas Filipinas* was written in Spain and published for the first time in 1943. In 1951, it received a literary award (Premio de Literatura de la Unión Latina) and it was reedited in 1955. The most recent edition of the book is from 2009, leading the collection of *Clásicos Hispanofilipinos* from the Cervantes Institute. For this study, I used a copy of the 2009 edition with the critical preface and annotations by Beatriz Álvarez Tardío.

The core of *Cuentos de Juana* consists of nine stories: "Juana," "El Tamao," "La doncella que vivió tres vidas," "El Tic-Tic," "El Vaquero del Calatcat," "La leyenda del Carná-Camá," "El Bagat," "Mala Suerte," "El lunuk del remanso verde" and "El Talisay."<sup>71</sup> Each story deals with the misfortunes suffered by people at the hands of malevolent spirits called *asuangs*, mythical figures belong to the tradition of Malay and Filipino storytelling.<sup>72</sup> *Asuang* is the general Filipino term to refer to an abstract evil that can manifest itself in various ways. *Asuangs* can adopt the shape of different creatures, human, animal or both (for instance as a woman with bat wings or as a goat-man). Depending on their shape, they are called different names: *Tamao*, *Tic-Tic*, *Cama-Cama* or *Bagat*. The *tamao* appears in both the first and the last story, leading Cruz-Lucero (2013) to declare that this figure frames the whole collection and stands as the boundary where various worlds of significations come together.

Most of the stories featured in *Cuentos* start with an introduction by the

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described as 30 uniformed girls "redondas, blancas" [round and white] whose rhythmic tapping is described as "fantasías de metal" [metal fantasies]. In his early years, Salinas, like the other poets from the 1927 generation, was fascinated by technologies that inspired surrealist images such as the one described in "Underwood Girls". See Arturo Ramoneda's *Antología de Literatura Española del S.XX* (1988, 2001).

<sup>71</sup> Juana, The Tamao, The Maiden who Lived Three Lives, The Tic-Tic, The Cowherd of Calatcat, The Legend of the Carná-Camá, The Bagat, Bad Luck, The Lunuk of the Green Pool, The Talisay.

<sup>72</sup> For more information on the use of Filipino mythology in *Cuentos*, see Cruz-Lucero's "Gods, Monsters, Heroes, and Tricksters in Adelina Gurrea's *Cuentos de Juana*." For more general information on Filipino mythology, see Filomeno Aguilar Jr.'s *Clash of Spirits: The History of Power and Sugar Planter Hegemony on a Visayan Island* and Francisco Demetrio's "The Engkanto Belief: An Essay in Interpretation."

autobiographical narrator (supposedly Gurrea), who contextualises the events and gives information about the characters. Then a second narrator takes over, allegedly Juana, the nanny who worked in the hacienda owned by Gurrea's family in the village of La Carlota (province of Negros) and took care of the children. *Cuentos de Juana* is, thus, a frame narrative presented as a compilation of the stories that Juana, the indigenous Filipina, used to tell the children of the Spanish coloniser.

“Juana me contó estos cuentos” (Gurrea 41) [Juana told me these stories] is the first sentence of the collection, followed by: “Todos ellos son de Filipinas: de la isla de Negros. Juana era una criada nativa que conocí en mi hogar desde que comencé a darme cuenta de las cosas de este mundo” (47) [They are all from the Philippines, from the island of Negros. Juana was a native maid that I've known in my home since I started to understand things from this world]. This voice is that of Gurrea as the autobiographical narrator, speaking as an adult in Spain writing down the stories in the mid 1940s.

The framing narrator continues with a description of Juana, who is said to have a big body, dark skin, thick lips and reddish teeth from chewing *buyo* (tobacco). Regardless of this unflattering description, it is noted that “fea, como era, tenía un atractivo especial para los hombres malayos y europeos” (48) [as much as she was ugly, she had a special appeal to both Malay and European men]. In addition to her voluptuous and unconventional beauty, Juana is said to have a strong personality; the narrator affirms that she was not a common servant but an “institution” in the house:

En mi hogar era una institución. Resultaba mucho menos ignorante que el resto de las mujeres del rancho, por su trato con los españoles en casa de mi abuela y en la de mis padres. Hablaba el castellano, pero se olvidaba de él tan pronto como se la reprochaba alguna mala acción o falta en el cumplimiento de su deber. Entonces no se encontraba modo de evitar que diese sus pródigas explicaciones en el dialecto bisayo. Como todo filipino escuchaba las órdenes e instrucciones que se le daban con un gesto de complacencia, cual si fuese a cumplirlas al pie de la letra, y luego hacía lo que mejor le venía en gana. En el momento de las explicaciones, largaba su discursito en visaya; pero a veces se encontraba con réplicas que eran más que palabras. Cosas de la colonización. Para Juana no era denigrante el golpe en la mejilla o el cachete. Si era el ama quien se los daba, el ama podía hacerlo. (Gurrea 50)

[She was an institution in my house. She was much less ignorant than the rest of women in the ranch due to her exchanges with the Spanish in my grandmother's and my parents' house. She spoke castellano, although she would forget it as soon as she is reproached for some bad deed or failure to do her duty. Then there was no way to prevent her from giving his lavish explanations in the bisayan dialect. Like every Filipino, she listened to the orders and instructions that were given to her with a gesture of complacency, as if she was going to follow them to the letter, and then she did what she pleased. Sometimes she found herself with a response that was more

than words. Those were colonial times. For Juana, a slap in the face was nothing denigrating. If it was the master who gave it, the master could do it].

This description indicates that Juana was seen by the colonisers (the parents and the young Gurrea) as both removed from and elevated above the other native servants by her command of the Spanish language and customs. At the same time, “like every Filipino” (a group the narrator explicitly does not identify with), Juana is perceived as discreetly - and vexingly - rebellious. Cruz-Lucero (2013) explains that this description of Juana’s personality conveys a common depiction of the ‘natives’ as tricksters:

All the indio, or native, characters in Juana’s stories are trickster characters, because their roles—big or small—are precisely to show up the Spaniards, if not actually turn the tables on them. Juana’s very personality is quintessential trickster. (118).

Cruz-Lucero’s affirmation that all ‘native’ characters are portrayed as subversive suggests that, in *Cuentos de Juana*, Gurrea, despite being one of the colonisers (Cruz-Lucero often refers to her as the daughter of the coloniser), wants to destabilise the coloniser’s perspective through the trickster’s ability to mock and challenge the coloniser.

The above passage also suggests that native servants in the Philippines could not get away with certain things and could be easily silenced by their masters “with more than words.” Significantly, the reference to Juana’s physical abuse is made very casually and matter-of-fact, suggesting that this was just what “colonial times” were like. This remark and the suggestion that Juana would not find a slap in the face denigrating constitute a justification on the part of the framing narrator of the everyday violence of colonialism that contradicts the critique Juana’s stories mount of the colonisers. In the end, various perspectives on colonialism can be found in *Cuentos*, seeking to dominate each other while also, in their interaction, emphasising the dynamic, mutual process of transculturation that colonialism provoked in the Philippines.

The framing narrator concludes her introduction to the stories by explaining that she will be retelling Juana’s stories faithfully, only to immediately impose her own ideas on the first story by giving it a title:

Yo lo relato como Juana me lo narró, sin poner ni quitar nada y sin obligar a nadie que crea las explicaciones de aquellas personas que lo comentaron. Juana no me dio título para esta historia, pero como los cuentos con título son más bonitos, vamos a llamarla “La doncella que vivió tres vidas.” (Gurrea 55)

[I relate this as Juana narrated it to me, without adding or leaving anything out and without compelling anybody to believe in other people’s interpretations. Juana did not

give me a title for this story, but since a story is nicer with a title let's call it "The Maiden that Lived Three Lives"]

The framing narrator makes the reader part of the decision about the title by using the plural "vamos a llamarla..." [we shall call it], indicating that the intended audience of the story collection is expected to identify with the framing perspective rather than with Juana's.

Significantly, however, the two perspectives are not always kept distinct. Throughout the collection, there are multiple slippages - in the form of clarifications, justifications and identifications with the characters - that blur the voices of the two narrators, emphasising that neither one of their perspectives is objective. In her classic study *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (1985; 2009), Mieke Bal says the following about the attempt to be objective in narration:

It is possible to try and give an "objective" picture of the facts. But what does that involve? 'Objectivity' is an attempt to present only what is seen or is perceived in some other way. All comment is shunned and implicit interpretation is also avoided. Perception, however, is a psychosomatic process, strongly dependent on the position of the perceiving body; [...] Perception depends on so many factors that striving for objectivity is pointless. To mention only a few factors: one's position with respect to the perceived object, the fall of the light, the distance, previous knowledge, psychological attitude towards the object; all this and more affects the picture one forms and passes on to others. (142)

According to Bal, perspective is inherent to our perceiving bodies and therefore "striving for objectivity is pointless." Declaring oneself objective thus points to something else, namely to "present only what is seen or is perceived *in some other way*." The initial declaration of objectivity by the framing narrator of *Cuentos de Juana* affirms her desire not to be held responsible for the narrated facts. This desire responds to a felt need to distance herself from what is "seen." Two reasons for this may be discerned. First, Gurrea is both the narrator who "sees" and the object "seen" (she was the child that used to listen to Juana's stories and occasionally appears as a character in them). This means that her perspective as a child and her perspective as an adult sometimes diverge. More specifically, the framing narrator writing about her childhood memories in the Philippines claims a preference to stay, objectively, out of them because she does not always agree or identify with what was then part of her everyday life: uneven colonial power relations and the conflicts between the cultures put in contact by colonialism. Second, by attributing the narration to Juana *Cuentos* incorporates and privileges a 'native' narrative perspective, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the conflicts the stories represent.

However, neither the claim to objectivity nor the clear separation between narrative voices is maintained in the stories. A blurring of voices occurs in two ways. First, the use of first- or third-person pronouns allows the narrator to identify with some characters (“nosotros/yo” [we/I]) and to separate herself from others (“ellos” [they]). Second, explanations are frequently inserted into the story that interrupt the narration attributed to Juana to address a readership unfamiliar with certain cultural aspects of the colonial Philippines.

In the introduction to the story called “El *lunuk*<sup>73</sup> del remanso verde” [The Lunuk of the Green Pool], for example, the framing narrator marks a difference between *us, the children of the hacienda* (her and her siblings) and *they, the natives*:

*Los indígenas [ellos] sabían que el lunuk era la morada de un tamao [an malign spirit]. De un tamao poderoso y vengativo. [...] Los chiquillos de la hacienda íbamos [nosotros] a bañarnos junto a la poza [...] pero si alguna vez el torrente nos llevaba a la poza del lunuk, nadábamos deprisa para salir de ella, repelidos por el miedo. (Gurrea, 196-7, my emphasis)*

*[The natives knew that the lunuk was the dwelling of a tamao, a powerful and vengeful tamao. [...] We, children of the hacienda, used to go swimming near the pool [...] but if the current would take us to the pool next to the lunuk, we would hurriedly swim away, repelled by fear.]*

Here, the “indígenas” or ‘natives’ are said to know of the existence of a *tamao* that lives in the tree, keeping them from swimming nearby. The children of the hacienda, in contrast, have been led to fear the *tamao* by their parents and caretakers in order to make them avoid dangerous situations such as drowning. The “indígenas” possess a knowledge of and belief in the *tamao* that the children of the hacienda, as non-natives, lack, but they still fear and avoid the *lunuk*, showing the effects of transculturation.

The “natives” feel it is their duty to teach the children of the coloniser about the existence of the various spirits to avoid catastrophes. The following fragment belongs to the same story and is purportedly narrated by Juana. The Spanish house owner has passed away and the servant of the house, Cadio, is convinced he died because he disturbed the *tamao* that inhabited the *lunuk* by cutting the tree to extend his plantation. Cadio wants the son of the deceased Spaniard to grow up believing in the power of the spirit, fearing and respecting it, and therefore staying safe:

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<sup>73</sup> *Lunuk* is the Visayan name of the otherwise known as *Ficus Elastica* or banyan tree. In the Philippines, these trees are believed to be inhabited by spirits and therefore never cut or cropped (Gurrea 195).

Y en las horas más medrosas de las noches más oscuras, en las fechas fantasmales religiosas, como el día de las Ánimas, durante los comentarios en torno a crímenes o sucesos misteriosos, en los epílogos luctuosos que sucedían a grandes catástrofes sísmicas o meteorológicas, tifones, riadas, terremotos, Cadio aprovechaba el fenómeno psicológico del miedo para hablar al muchacho del tamao y el lunuk e inculcar en él un terror desmesurado hacia el lugar y el duende. (Gurrea 205)

[And in the most fearful hours of the darkest nights, the ghostly religious dates, such as the Day of the Souls, during the commentaries on crimes or mysterious events, in the mournful epilogues that followed major syismic or meteorological disasters, typhoons, floods, earthquakes, Cadio took advantage of the psychological phenomenon of fear to talk to the boy about the tamao and the lunuk and instill in him a disproportionate terror towards the place and the goblin]

Significantly, this excerpt refers to supernatural entities inhabiting both cultures - the Catholic nights of the Animas and Filipino meteorological catastrophes often explained by the agency of *asuangs*. Juana's narrative thus establishes a parallel between the Catholic faith and local myths, presenting them as feeding into each other rather than being hierarchically arranged. It is implied that only the locals (including the children of the coloniser) are capable of appropriating the world of significations from both cultures and transform it into a new one, part of a transcultural system of meaning. Since this is Juana's voice, the framing narrator can distance herself from what is being recounted; within Juana's story, she is one of the children of the *hacienda*, assimilating this transcultural system of beliefs unreflectively, while, as the framing narrator who has made it clear that she will not intervene in Juana's stories, she can avoid the question of whether she believes in *asuangs*.

As noted earlier, the framing narrator at times cannot help but enter into Juana's narration with a clarification that reinforces an us/them opposition between the Spanish colonisers (and readers) and indigenous Filipinos. In the following fragment, for example, it is supposedly Juana who is telling the story of "El Vaquero del Calatcat" [The Cowherd of Calatcat], whose protagonist is competing with a richer man for the love of a woman:

Era un rival demasiado poderoso para Blas, porque los padres de Doric eran pobres y llevaban mucho tiempo soñando con el precio de la hija. *Digo esto sin ánimo de escandalizar a nadie. Los hijos suelen tener siempre un precio, más o menos disimulada la venta, según las pretensiones de civilización que-tenga cada país. Las fortunas de los pretendientes, en los países europeos se cotizan siempre, y las dotes sirven para la compra de un marido. También se ha instituido que las almas den dinero, en algunos casos, para ser esposas del Señor. Pero no es culpa de las almas ni del Amor, sino de los mercaderes del templo.* Los padres de Doric eran buenos mercaderes. (Gurrea 96-97, my emphasis)

[He was too powerful a rival for Blas, because Doric's parents were poor and had long dreamed of the daughter's price. *I say this without scandalizing anyone. Children*

*usually have a price, more or less concealed in the sale, according to the pretensions of civilization that each country has. The fortunes of the suitors in European countries are more in demand, and the dowries serve for the purchase of a husband. It has also been instituted that souls give money, in some cases, to be the Lord's wives. But it is not the fault of souls or love, but of the merchants of the temple. Doric's parents were good merchants.]*

The italicised sentences do not seem to convey the words of Juana, who is unlikely to have possessed detailed knowledge of European courtship customs. It is the framing narrator who feels the need to address readers' sensibility about the idea of children having a price in the eyes of their parents and society at large - apparently less taboo in Asian cultures than in the West. She warns the Spanish readership by acknowledging what she considers to be an unspoken truth. The fragment continues with a poignant criticism of a global (gendered) class system, followed by a bitter remark against the clergy - said to set a price for saving people's souls. Again, it seems improbable that this would come from Juana, who, as a servant, would be reluctant to openly criticise the customs of the Spanish colonisers or point to the economic abuses of the Church.

The following example from the same story is also ambivalent as to who is saying what. Three pages in, we find the following comments with respect to the character of "the natives":

Llegada la hora de comenzar [Blas] había pasado un rato de angustia indefinida. Los de Caiñamán no venían. Ningún grupo comentaba el motivo. *El carácter oriental de los nativos les baña en una pusilanimidad fatalista que les aleja de las extrañezas y de las alusiones ante hechos que no revistan demasiada gravedad.* Pero Blas había esperado la llegada del grupo con un deseo abstracto y se impacientó al no verles venir. (Gurrea 92, my emphasis)

[When it was time to begin [Blas] had been for a while affected by indefinite anguish. Those of Caiñamán did not come. No-one commented on why. *The oriental character of the natives bathes them in a fatalistic pusillanimity that distances them from the strangeness and allusions to facts that do not show too much gravity.* But Blas had expected the arrival of the group with an abstract desire and became impatient not to see them coming.]

The explanatory section emphasized in the quote suggests, first, that the "natives" behave in specific ways, different from non-natives, and, second, that this behavior derives from their "oriental" character. In this case, it is suggested that "native" Filipinos do not easily make a drama of a setback because they are fatalists, accepting whatever must happen without worrying unnecessarily. Yet, this fatalistic attitude towards life appears in the text next to pusillanimity, suggesting that the acceptance of one's fate might be also an act of cowardice and lack of will. This is a common stereotype of orientalism as a colonial discourse that some

Latin American used to posit shared roots between Amerindians and Asian peoples. Argentine sociologist Carlos Octavio Bunge (1875-1918) wrote that the foremost psychological trait of the Asian empires in contrast to the European was “without a doubt it is the passivity of the large masses of men, the resignation to their fate... Indeed, Oriental fatalism constitutes the characteristic trait of Mexicans and Peruvians” (Bunge qtd. in Camayd-Freixas 2013: 7).

In the story, Blas is waiting for the arrival of a family from another village, Caiñamán, to celebrate the *fiestas*. The Caiñamán family has a daughter whom Blas is in love with. Given that Blas is an “oriental native,” it is implied that he will not have worried too much about the late arrival of the family. However, the fragment indicates that Blas did in fact become a little impatient, suggesting that he is not reacting as a stereotypical oriental character. The story, thus, both presents the orientalist stereotype and counters it by portraying the “native” characters as not always acting according to expectations.

The explanatory note is sandwiched in the middle of the paragraph, increasing the difficulty of knowing which of the narrators is speaking. What is clear, though, is that the speaker is thinking transculturally. If Juana is making this comment (and Gurrea, as the autobiographical narrator, simply remembers it as part of the story), she would have been trying to explain the behavior of the “natives” to the children of the coloniser who are listening to her story. This would put the children in the “non-native” category and also distance Juana herself from the “oriental natives.” While, given the use of words like “pusillanimity,” it is unlikely that the quoted fragment conveys Juana’s direct speech, if it did, it would show her as able to see things, like the autobiographical narrator, from both an “orientalist” and a “native” perspective.

The last story contained in *Cuentos*, “El Talisay”, remained unpublished until Álvarez’s edition in 2009. It was not included in the 1943 and 1955 publications of the collection. The main characters in “El Talisay” are Gurrea, Juana and the cooks of their house (Epifanio) and the convent (Ticong). Unlike the other stories, this one is not preceded by an introduction by the framing narrator. Rather, it has Gurrea, as the autobiographical narrator, retelling her own story as a flashback: first reflecting on events that happened when she was nine years old and later on events that took place when she was sixteen.

The story told by the narrator concerns Father Javier, a Jesuit priest who came to the Philippines to escape his past. As a young man, living in Spain, he had fallen in love with a woman, Rosario, with whom he never managed to have a relationship. Eventually, she got married to another man and Javier decided to become a priest and left for the Philippines.

Years later, he begins receiving letters from Rosario and they maintain a correspondence for many years. One day, her letters start to make him “sick”, according to Ticong, the cook of the convent where Father Javier lived, who tells the story to Juana.<sup>74</sup> Father Javier starts to feel unstable because as a Catholic priest he is breaking his vows by maintaining a romantic relationship with a woman. At some point, Rosario informs him that she has convinced her husband, a military diplomat, to take a position in the same post as Father Javier, and that she will be arriving in the Philippines shortly. News of a shipwreck reaches the convent, confirming that Rosario and all the other travelers were swallowed by the sea. The news devastates Father Javier, who becomes sick, insane and eventually dies. According to Tinong, his death might have been due to a spell from an *asuang*: “¡El pari Javier era tan bueno! luego se trastornó, o se enfermó o algún asuang le echó mal de ojo” (255) [Father Javier was so good! Then he became deranged and got sick, or an *asuang* cast the evil eye on him].

Years later, Epifanio, the cook at Gurrea’s house is repeatedly frightened by the vision of two spirits, a man and a woman who ask him to do them a favor as he passes an enormous talisay tree in the sugar cane plantation Gurrea’s family runs. The man who appears to Epifanio is the spirit of Father Javier, inhabiting the talisay. The woman (“una mujer palida con una cabellera de oro que flotaba tambien sobre las aguas” (245) [a pale woman with golden hair that also floated on the water]) is Rosario’s spirit, who dwells in an “imbornal,” a simple sewage system that uses a stream of water to carry waste. When Juana has had enough of Epifanio’s stories and hallucinations, which she believes at first to be part of his devotion to *tuba* - an alcohol made from palm leaves, she decides to go and see for herself. Before the story goes on with Juana’s visit to the talisay, the autobiographical narrator writes:

Esto sucedía cuando yo tenía nueve años<sup>75</sup> y vivía en la casa nueva de la hacienda azucarera. Los amos eran mis padres, y éramos seis hermanos. A mi curiosidad infantil le intrigaban mucho los cuentos de Epifanio, pero como Juana no los confirmaba, poniéndolos siempre en duda, la curiosidad se hacía débil y se difuminaba en los juegos y en el interés por otras cosas. (Gurrea 244)

[This happened when I was nine years old and lived in the new house on the sugar estate. The masters were my parents, and there were six of us children. I was very intrigued by Epifanio's stories, but as Juana did not confirm them, and always put them in doubt, curiosity grew dim and faded into games and interest in other things.]

<sup>74</sup> In “El Talisay,” Ticong takes the place of Juana as the “native” and framed narrative voice, whereas Juana is a character in the story.

<sup>75</sup> According to Álvarez’s calculations, this sets the story in 1905.

The narrator confesses then that she was too young to find this mystery interesting but the text also says that Juana judged her too young to understand what was happening. It is also suggested that Ticong is weary of interfering in the affairs of the colonisers: “Yo no me atreví a ayudarlo, porque los *castilas* se enfurecen cuando nosotros los nativos nos damos cuenta de que también tienen debilidades” (255) [I did not dare to help him, because the *castilas* (the Spanish) are enraged when we natives realize that they also have weaknesses].

On Juana’s visit to the talisay, the spirits do appear and ask her to burn the mysterious letters (the correspondence between Father Javier and Rosario), which she does not yet know about. After this encounter, Juana promises Gurrea that when she turns sixteen she will reveal what she saw at the talisay and what she was requested to do. In the meantime, Juana manages to convince Ticong to tell her the story of the love affair and the spirits’ purgatory in the tree. Afterwards, she persuades him to help her liberate them from their imprisonment. Ticong, however, feels torn between doing what Father Javier wants and obeying the *asuang*:

—Juana, hay dos fuerzas dentro de mí que luchan y me empujan para un lado y otro. Dos voces que me mandan. Una viene del *pari* Javier la otra del *asuang*. El *pari* quiere que entierre las cartas; el otro me impide que lo haga. Y yo sufro. (266)

[Juana, there are two forces inside me that fight and push me one way and then the other. Two voices that give me orders. One comes from Father Javier and the other from the *asuang*. The father wants me to bury the letters and the other prevents me from doing it. I am suffering.]

This shows how the locals, as well as people who grew up in the colony, are directly affected by the two (or more) cultures to which they are attached - here, the *asuang* and the souls of the Spaniards dwelling in the tree. Ticong’s words illustrate why transculturation is an apt term to understand the process of cultural interaction and transformation produced by colonial coexistence. His predicament makes clear that he has not fully given one culture up, fully assimilated to another or created a whole new culture, but, rather, is living them transculturally.

Since Ticong will not help her, Juana needs the help of a ‘castila,’ a Spaniard with access to the convent where Father Javier hid the letters. Gurrea fulfils these criteria: “Juana sabía que sólo con la ayuda de un blanco podría llevarlo a cabo. Y el único gran amigo blanco que tenía era yo. Por eso tuvo que esperar a que cumpliese dieciséis años” (250) [Juana knew that only with the help of a White person she could carry out her plan. And the only good white friend she had was me. That is why she had to wait for me to turn sixteen.] Juana and Gurrea need each other to solve the problem, suggesting that their worlds are entangled and that they are in a position of mutual dependency.

But there is more to the story. Father Javier has taken the place of an *asuang* in the talisay, making the evil spirit furious. The talisay, like the *lunuk*, are believed to be inhabited by spirits as well as being animated. Animism is the belief that inanimate objects, including plants and other natural elements, have a spirit of their own. The word “animism” comes from the Latin “anima,” which, in Spanish, evolved into “alma,” translated in English as “ghost,” “spirit” or “life.” Cruz-Lucero explains that animism in the context of Juana’s tales has its origin in pre-Hispanic mythology:

The Malay population of pre-Christian Negros and Panay had a highly complex and elaborate belief system, revolving around the concept of *dungan*, the closest Western equivalent of which is the “soul.” The *dungan* was the root of “origin myths, explanations of illness, the antagonism of spirits to humans, the contests of *dungan*, the tribal *datu*’s leadership, and the *babaylan* priest’s centrality” (Magos 50 qtd. in Cruz-Lucero 113).

According to Cruz-Lucero, the ‘natives’ believe in a primal respect for anything’s or anyone’s *dungan* (soul), acting thus in a less confrontational way than other cultures do, out of respect for everyone and everything’s soul. The character of Gurrea has appropriated this belief as it is shown in her description of the talisay tree as having *dungan*. “El Talisay” starts with an animist description of the tree. The narrator talks about the tree as if he acted like a person: “Soleaba su follaje en los días de sol ardiente o cabeceaba humillado bajo el zarandeo de los tifones” (241) [He used to sun its foliage in the days of burning sun or nodded humiliated under the shaking of typhoons]. The narrator also assigns feelings to the talisay, noting that he had felt happier in other times, before she met him: “no habia estado siempre tan solitario como cuando le conocí” (241) [has not always been as lonely as when I met him].

In the story, while the love affair remains a secret, the illness, insanity and death of Father Javier, as well as the decadence of the talisay are attributed to the agency of the *asuang* and its supernatural powers. In this case, however, there has been an unusual turn of events, since people’s spirits do not normally inhabit the trees, and certainly not white people’s spirits. Consequently, the *asuang* has been angered and is damaging the tree, as well as, in the shape of a *bagat*,<sup>76</sup> bringing evil to the humans that pass by it:

—Sus, María, Usep —volvió a invocar Juana—, tú estás loco, las almas de los castilas se van al cielo o al infierno pero no a los talisays.

<sup>76</sup> The *bagat* operates by standing on roads and misdirecting travellers. Álvarez explains that the name *bagat* was used to refer to the messengers that pre-Hispanic kings would use to connect with their territories. The Spanish began using the name to speak of the devil and to stigmatise the messenger as a misleading one (Álvarez 26).

—Rayo de mujer —gritó exasperado Ticong— no estoy loco y te diré otra cosa. Si alguien pudiera enterrar al pie del talisay una caja que contiene las cartas de aquella mujer, el pari se vería libre de su cárcel dentro del árbol y además el bagat no podría ya nunca tomar posesión de él. (258-9)

[- Jesús Christ! - invoked Juana again - you are crazy, the souls of the *castilas* go to heaven or hell but not to the talisays!  
- Damned woman! - cried Ticong with exasperation - I am not crazy and I'll tell you something else. If someone could bury at the feet of the Talisay a box that contains the letters from that woman, Father Javier would be freed from his prison inside the tree and also, the bagat will no longer take possession of him.]

“The souls of castilas go to heaven, not to the talisays,” Juana insists to Ticong, who is utterly convinced that the bagat (the shape adopted by the *asuang*) in the tree has possessed the soul of “pari” Javier. “Pari” is the Filipinisation of the Spanish word “padre,” here meaning priest. Together with the transformation of the exclamation “*Jesús, María y José*” into Juana’s “Sus, Maria, Usep” this can be read as an example of linguistic transculturation. Additionally, the word “cristo” used by Juana as a charm against the spirits reflects the cultural syncretism of the context in which the stories are set: “anulada por el terror [Juana musitaba] su letanía profane-religiosa: ‘Cristo’, ‘Cristo’, ‘Cristo’” (274) [consumed by terror, Juana murmured her profane-religious litany: “Cristo”, “Cristo”, “Cristo”]. In “El Talisay,” then, the syncretism produced by processes of transculturation as people from different cultures live together affects the way in which the characters make sense of their spiritual worlds and the Catholic and indigenous dogmas belonging to them.

As the quote suggests, Ticong is certain that only by burning the letters at the foot of the tree the curse can be undone. In the end, Gurrea and Juana manage to burn the letters (on a stormy night when all natural and supernatural forces seem to be agitated) and liberate the spirits from their sufferings. The bagat, Father Javier and Rosario are set free, Juana and Ticong are no longer presented with visions of the wandering souls, and even the talisay becomes happier. “El *talisay*, por esa o por otra causa, parecía feliz, muy feliz.” (277) [For that or some other reason the talisay seemed happy, very happy]. Crucially, this last comment is ambiguous, leaving open the possibility that the tree recovers its vigor due to something else than the burying of the letters. The narrator continues by saying that the tree has overcome this ordeal because he is blessed with innocence and purity of heart. The tree is capable of loving because it is a creature of God: “[el cura] se había merecido aquel amor extraordinario y sobrenatural del árbol de Dios” (277) [the friar had deserved that extraordinary and supernatural love from the tree of God]. This shows the narrator working within a transcultural network of significations in a way that allows her to believe that the

wrongdoings come from the *asuang*, while the beneficial elements can be ascribed to the God of Catholicism.

However, the narrator cannot find an explanation to how the supposed bagat appeared in front of her and Juana in the shape of a male goat that literally disappeared in front of her eyes: “El bicho no huyó ni se ocultó bajo la vegetación de los lados del camino, no, se esfumó y se borró luego repentinamente y esto es lo que ponía esa palpitación de miedo también en mi corazón.” (276) [The animal did not flee or hide under the vegetation on the sides of the road, no, it vanished, it was suddenly erased and this is what put that palpitation of fear in my heart too]. No explanation that would be fully rational or that would fit completely within a Catholic framework is available.

The narrator, referring to herself at sixteen years old, explains that, by then, she had become aware of the differences between religion and superstition, between children’s fairy tales and adult realities (Gurrea 248), but that she was nonetheless unable to forget or dismiss what she learned from Juana. “Ya no era una curiosidad infantil la que me intrigaba y me hacía partícipe del misterio del *talisay*” (248) [it wasn’t anymore my curiosity as a child that intrigued me and made me a participant in the mystery of the *talisay*]. At sixteen, Gurrea was no longer the child fascinated with enigmas but wanted to find a complementary rather than conflicting explanation for the world she was living in:

Mis padres habían negado siempre rotundamente la existencia de *asuangs*, aunque muchas veces reconociesen que ocurrían cosas muy extrañas. Yo tenía mi fe flotante entre dos aguas, la exterior, la cristalina de las creencias de mis padres y la otra, oscura y misteriosa de los indígenas, pero por enigmática y ultraterrenal quizás más obsesionante, y me debatía en esos momentos zarandeada por su oleaje. (276)

[My parents had consistently denied the existence of *Asuangs*, although they often recognised that very strange things happened. I had one foot on each side, the outside, the crystalline of my parents’ beliefs and the other, dark and mysterious of the natives but because I could not figure out its ultra-terrestrial characteristics, the latter was perhaps more haunting. I struggled in moments of doubt shaken between the two.]

To put a stop to the tension she feels, the narrator (from the point of view of her sixteen-year-old self) draws a parallel between the two systems of beliefs according to their dogmatic nature: Catholic dogmas such as the necessity to believe in heaven and hell (and the devil) are a question of faith, just as believing in the Filipino *asuangs* is. Neither of them can be apprehended through the bodily senses, only through one’s soul:

Yo sabía que había un Dios, una Madre suya, muchos ángeles y muchos santos, pero todo esto pertenecía a lo invisible, a ese mundo que los sentidos no captan pero que pone una sed escocida en esa otra cosa impalpable que se llama el alma. Pues si nos

habían enseñado en el regazo maternal y en las aulas del colegio, que existía este mundo así poblado, también podían alentar en el mismo otras cosas y otros seres que acompañasen la existencia material de los hombres, con mandatos, con susurros, con bendiciones y también, ¿por qué no? con influencias maléficas, maldiciones y venganzas. También existía el diablo y el diablo había de tener asimismo su cortejo infernal. (248)

[I knew that there was a God, his Mother, many angels and many saints, but all this belonged to the invisible, to that world that the senses do not capture but that makes that other impalpable thing that is called the soul burn with thirst. If we had been taught in the maternal lap and in the classrooms of the school that the world was inhabited, we could also encourage other things and other beings to accompany the material existence of men, with commands, with whispers, with blessings and also, why not, with evil influences, curses and revenges. The devil also existed, and the devil was to have his infernal entourage.]

If God exists, the existence of his opposite is also possible. If the devil exists, then he would need an infernal entourage that could include *asuangs*. Only through such reasoning is the narrator capable of merging both worlds of signification, incorporating the indigenous supernatural system of thought into the western Catholic one.

“El Talisay,” through its different narrators, brings to the fore the way the characters, Spanish and indigenous, are affected by processes of transculturation. While the narrator incorporates the ‘native’ beliefs into her own Catholic faith, Juana and Ticong translate elements of Catholicism into theirs, for example by appropriating the word *Cristo* as a charm to get rid of the *asuang* or by explaining the story of the friar through the agency of an *asuang*. The talisay tree is the space where all narratives come together, constituting the line where the two worlds touch. It stood there before the colonisers arrived and was not removed by them despite the transformations of the land to establish the sugar plantations.<sup>77</sup> In the story, the arrival of the “gentes blancas” (243) [white people] did, however, lead to the destruction of the family house that had stood under the shelter of the talisay tree.

The transformation of the island’s geographical map meant, according to Cruz-Lucero, “a restructuring of its people’s cognitive map” that, however, “did not so much mean the loss of the people’s teleological world view as its dispersion into the Spanish world of

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<sup>77</sup> In a process called *reduccion*, people living on the newly bought land were relocated to form small villages within which a church was also erected; the labourers would live on the plantation in specially built housing: “The *reduccion* was a process in which the conquered natives were brought into settlements, also called ‘*reducciones*,’ which eventually became *pueblos*” (Corpus 161 qtd. in Cruz-Lucero). In “El Talisay” there is an allusion to the fact that the ‘natives’ (labourers) could not go to church every Sunday since they had to walk four kilometres to the village church. This also explains the popularity of the cockfight as a form of (cheap) entertainment very popular among the ‘natives,’ as I will discuss in Chapter 5 in relation to Antonio Abad’s novel *El Campeón* [The Champion] (1941).

significations” (112). This process of dispersion, appropriation, entanglement and re-signification is what I see as the basis of transculturation. In my view, Spanish colonialism as represented in *Cuentos de Juana* (specifically the Spanish plantation economy and Catholicism as its spiritual dimension) does not so much *overwrite* the previous indigenous world, as Cruz-Lucero suggests through the metaphor of the palimpsest, as *rewrite* or translate it, with the indigenous cultures also, simultaneously, transforming aspects of the Spanish belief system.

### Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to show how the work of Adelina Gurrea presents an example of transcultural orientalism that, in comparison to Balmori’s poetry discussed in Chapter 1, places a greater emphasis on the transcultural than on the orientalist, with the latter, however, still present.

My analysis of Gurrea’s poem “Epaña, América, Filipinas” (1918) [Spain, America and Philippines] in conjunction with the play *Filipinas: Auto histórico-satírico* (1951) [Philippines: A Historical-Satirical Allegory] showed that, whereas the poem reflects the hegemonic type of orientalism attached to a colonial discourse in having the colonised consent to and valorise the civilising colonial mission, the play engages with the same idea of the Philippines as the grateful recipient of Spanish (and American) culture, but also mocks it through its satirical tone. The play mimics colonial history to reveal its arrogance and absurdity (for example through the fight over who was a better coloniser), and also critiques some specific aspects of Spanish colonialism, such as the role of the clergy. On the basis of an analysis of some of her poems I argued that, for Gurrea, orientalising the Philippines is not so much an exercise of literary modernism as an effort of transcultural orientalism by which the Philippines is imagined and remembered as the oriental homeland in a mode of reflective nostalgia. Symbols of the Philippines, especially its landscape, are nostalgically evoked to act as a catalyst for Gurrea’s poetic expression and to express her (rebellious) disillusionment with modernity. Based on her childhood memories of growing up on the island of Negros, Gurrea’s *Cuentos de Juana* presents, as I have shown, a critical account of the processes of transculturation that occurred in the Philippines under Spanish colonialism, told from the perspective of both Spanish colonisers and indigenous Filipinos. The framed narratives question the borders between these perspectives and reveal both as ultimately transcultural and deeply intertwined. As Cruz-Lucero notes: “Over and over again, the Spanish colonizer’s daughter tells us that she and the native storyteller are one and the same” (112).

While Gurrea and Balmori use their work to diagnose transculturation as the condition of the Philippines, induced by its colonial past, and are concerned with how people - of Spanish and indigenous descent - negotiate the different cultural attachments it has produced, Paz Mendoza, whose work I discuss in the next chapter, proposes an *active project of transculturation* for the Philippines, designed to make it fully modern in its future as an independent nation.