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### Writing the Nation

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

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## Chapter 4

### Translation Strategies in Jesús Balmori's *Los Pájaros de fuego. Una novela filipina de la guerra* (1945)

¡Oh, cielo azul! ¡Oh, mar azul de Ermita, la señorial y hermosa! ¿Sería posible que aquellos pájaros, semejantes a los que sobre la rama florida de un cerezo enseñaron a los dioses asiáticos el amor, se trocaran alguna vez en pájaros de odio, en pájaros de fuego que fueran a hundirnos en la ruina, en la muerte, en el dolor?  
(Balmori 1945: 22)

[Oh, blue sky! Oh, blue sea of Ermita, the noble and beautiful! Would it be possible that those birds, like those on the branch of a blooming cherry tree, taught the Asian gods about love, would ever be transformed into birds of hate, birds of fire that would sink us into ruin, into death, into pain?]

#### Introduction

Don Lino Robles, the main character of Jesús Balmori's novel only employed Japanese gardeners to work in his hacienda during the early 1940s because he considered them the most skilled.<sup>93</sup> Don Lino's admiration for Japan as an exceptional country of divine origin (Balmori 15) turns, however, into hatred when Japanese imperialism reaches Manila at the outbreak of WWII, as becomes clear at the end of the novel. The story of the Robles, a wealthy Spanish-speaking family shattered by the war, is central to *Los Pájaros de fuego*, allowing it to explore the gradual deterioration of the transcultural attachments of the Philippines in the late 1930s.<sup>94</sup> The narrative focuses on the decadence of the Hispanised Filipino elite, which resists American modernisation and idealises Japan.

Balmori's novel captures the tensions of this puzzling historical moment in which complex feelings towards a number of foreign nations, Western and Asian, fed into the imagination of an independent Filipino nation. In Chapter 3 I analysed how Paz Mendoza's *Notas de viaje* based the ideal of an independent and modern Philippines on a project of transculturation aiming at a distinct (Eurocentric) version of modernity. In this chapter I demonstrate how, at a different historical conjuncture, the idea of independence continues to be a primary preoccupation for Filipino intellectuals who perceive the previous forty years of American occupation as having produced further fragmentation within Filipino society, problematising the consolidation of a unified sense of national identity. In the face of this,

<sup>93</sup> 'Don' (and, for women, 'doña') is a polite, respectful form of address now considered old-fashioned but common in the period in which Balmori's novel is set.

<sup>94</sup> When referring to the novel in the rest of the chapter, I will shorten the title to *Pájaros*.

Balmori's novel suggests that long-standing relationships towards different, real and imagined, communities within and beyond the Philippines, in particular Japan, are rapidly being transformed, leading to a situation of impasse that can only be overcome by an apocalyptic double ending: the collapse of the Robles family and the destruction of Manila during WWII.

The Robles are an aristocratic family whose wealth springs from landownership going back to the Spanish colony. Don Lino has two children. Natalia and Fernando embody respectively an emergent pragmatic and progressive Americanisation and a residual Hispanicness: romantic, dutiful and patriotic. Ramón Robles, Don Lino's brother, is unmarried, hardworking and sturdy, and does not delight in the same pleasures as his brother, namely, Japanese gardening and poetry. Don Ramón expresses the domestic and international realities that the other characters remain oblivious to until it is too late. He is the only surviving member of the Robles family at the novel's close. Natalia is gang raped and killed in the family house by a Japanese squadron in front of her father, who loses his sanity and dies shortly after. Fernando also perishes, killed by a stray bullet while fighting with the American troops. Natalia's husband-to-be, Sandoval, a professional journalist working for an American newspaper, dies in a hospital after having been injured in the attack on Manila. Besides Don Ramón, only Marta, the peasant Filipina who was to be Fernando's wife, survives.

There are numerous works of Filipino literature that deal with the Pacific War, both in English and in Tagalog, mostly retelling the experiences of victims and survivors.<sup>95</sup> To my knowledge, however, there are only three novels dealing with WWII in the Philippines written in Spanish: Benigno del Río's *Siete días en el infierno en manos de la gestapo nipona* [Seven Days in Hell in the Hands of the Japanese Gestapo] (1950); Jesús Balmori's *Los Pájaros de fuego* (1945) and *Fíame* [Trus in me] (1946) by Mariano L. De la Rosa.<sup>96</sup> The first is an autobiographical text written in the form of a diary by Benigno del Río (1907-1969) after he was released from a Japanese concentration camp where he was secluded for seven days under false accusations. Del Río was a Filipino journalist who had already been put under surveillance in the Philippines by Franco's regime, suspected of political dissidence. His account of the war exposes the violent and inhuman conditions of a Japanese

<sup>95</sup> See, for example, Elena Polo, *The Negating Fire vs. the Affirming Flame: American and Filipino Novels in the Pacific War* (2000).

<sup>96</sup> For other literature on WWII in Spanish, see Ortuño Casanova's forthcoming article "Los sonidos de la II Guerra Mundial en Manila: ruido y autorrepresentación en 'Nuestros cinco últimos días bajo el yugo nipón' de María Paz Zamora-Masculana." I thank Ortuño for sharing her manuscript with me through private correspondence.

concentration camp, and aims to give a detailed account of both the camp guards and the Filipino prisoners.

The other novel in Spanish about the Philippines during WWII, *Fíame*, was written before, during and after the War. De la Rosa was a judge and an amateur creative writer less known in Filipino literary circles than Balmori (Lifshey 2012). His novel, which focuses on two love stories, each between a Filipino and an American living in Manila, engages more explicitly with politics, specifically the relationship between the Philippines and the US. This relationship, like the love stories, is seen to require trust. The novel's title, *Fíame*, means "Trust in me." Grammatically, it should be *Fíate de mi*, but De la Rosa cleverly uses the one-word title to symbolically link, through the first syllables of their names, *Fi-lipinas* and *Amé-rica*. The novel ends happily with a double marriage and the overcoming of racism by the Filipino characters after they move to the US. Significantly, Adam Lifshey (2013), in his critical article on *Fíame*, argues that the novel's symbolic plot (the two love relationships) "develops subtly subversive relationships between the US and the Filipinos before, during and immediately after the War" (1). This, argues Lifshey, can be connected to the American Filipino identity represented in other texts such as the National World War II Memorial in Washington DC (which includes recognition of the Filipinos who died in the service of the American forces) and Carlos Bulosan's novel *America is in the Heart: A Personal History* (1946), one of the first autobiographical fictions to talk about Filipino migrant workers in the US.

Balmori's novel, on which I focus here, barely survived the war; according to Donoso (2009), Balmori hid the manuscript in glass bottles that he buried in his garden. After the war, the manuscript was bought by the Filipino government, which kept it unpublished for decades, perhaps because of its critical nature or as a gesture towards eliminating the final remnants of cultural production in the colonial language. In addition to the appeal of the almost lost and possibly suppressed manuscript story, a more substantial reason why *Pájaros* deserves more attention than it has so far been given is the trenchant critique it offers of Manilean society, a community spatially confined within the walls of Intramuros - the area in Manila where rich *hacendados*, politicians, journalists and other intellectuals lived - but ideologically deeply engaged with other, foreign countries rather than with the rest of the Philippines. Balmori depicts this Filipino bourgeois class as decadent, frivolous and corrupted, a combination that led, in his eyes, to the collapse of Filipino ideals built on the idolatry of an orientalist Japan and a colonised vision of self.

In Chapter 1 I discussed the role that Japan played for Latin American orientalists

(Darío, Tablada and Gómez Carrillo) and equally for Balmori, who saw in the sophistication of Japanese culture a source of inspiration to write orientalist poems. Japan as a representative of the Orient in modernist literature is, in contrast to the image of the Middle East that European orientalists constructed, idealised and assigned an equal or superior position in the cultural relationships to Latin America and the Philippines that modernist works of poetry (Balmori, Rubén Darío, Tablada) and travel memoirs (Gómez Carrillo, Tablada) establish. In *Pájaros*, through the character of Don Lino, the novel incorporates the idealisation of Japan not only as an aesthetic literary tool but also in terms of the political discourse by which Filipinos saw in Japan a model of modernity worth assimilating to. The blind faith of Don Lino and his consequent disillusionment presents a trenchant critique of the Filipino elites that engaged with this discourse, including (the young) Balmori himself. The novel can thus also be read as a form of auto-criticism.

Adam Lifshey's "Allegory and Archipelago: Jesús Balmori's *Los Pájaros de fuego* and the Global Vantages of Filipino Literature in Spanish" (2011)<sup>97</sup> analyses *Pájaros* as an example of national allegory. Lifshey argues that it is only through the allegory of a family melodrama that Balmori could address the global dimensions of WWII in the Philippines. The article carefully reveals the implicit references made in the novel to the three powers battling each other, with the Philippines as one of the stakes: the US military under General McArthur (in service from 1903 to 1951); the Japanese imperial project in Asia (known as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere) carried out by Hirohito, the 124<sup>th</sup> Emperor of Japan; and the independent politics of Manuel L. Quezon, the first Filipino to be elected as president of the transitional government before independence (The Filipino Commonwealth 1935-1946). During the Japanese occupation, Quezon's government was reduced to a puppet government at the service of the Japanese.<sup>98</sup> According to Lifshey, a way to address the "hyperbolic context" (12) of such an incommensurable global event is to focus on the wartime experience of everyday people in the Philippines, even when in both novels he discusses this category is restricted to the Hispano-Filipino elite from Manila.

I see *Fíame* as a depiction of transculturation that places the emphasis on the assimilation of the Philippines to the US (confirmed by Lifshey's comparison of De la Rosa's

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<sup>97</sup> The article appeared in *Kritika Kultura*, a journal published by the Ateneo University in Manila. In the same journal, Lifshey has another article on De la Rosa's *Fíame* (1945), which locates the novel in the American literary tradition and strongly emphasises that, unlike Balmori, De la Rosa recognises the attachment of the Philippines to the US (Lifshey 2012).

<sup>98</sup> In this regard Agoncillo (1965) talks about how the use of English between the Filipinos in government and the Japanese became an empty code repeating the rhetoric of Japanese imperialism was repeated and affirmed. As a result, Spanish became more emphatically a language of nationalism shared by the Filipino elites.

novel to other Filipino-American texts), whereas in this chapter I will consider *Pájaros* as a comment on the failure of transculturation in the Philippines in the run-up to WWII, attributed to the persistent attempt on behalf of Hispano-Filipino elites to emulate other nations, most prominently Japan. In the three previous chapters I have argued that the transculturation of the Philippines is represented in Hispano-Filipino literature of the early twentieth century in two ways: on the one hand, through my analysis of Balmori's poetry and Gurrea's work, as a legacy of the colonial past; on the other hand, through my reading of Mendoza's travel notes, as actively producing a future image of a transcultured Philippines. In this chapter I examine how Balmori's novel addresses the potential negative effects of uncritically taking other culture(s) as a model for the future of the Philippines or, in other words, his novel's concern with the limits of active transculturation. Its violent ending suggests that there is no future for the country, at least not until the Philippines detaches itself from other countries and its elite stops aspiring to be like Japan, fighting for/with the US in the War and clinging onto the Hispanic colonial legacy.

In order to analyse how past history (the Hispanic colonial legacy) and the events of the 1930s and early 1940s (the rise of fascism in Europe, the emergence of Japan as a panasian power and the continuing American rule of the Philippines) are interwoven in the novel, I use the concept of translation, which, because of its potential to create new meaning by departing from an existing one, I understand as a technique of transculturation. This approach to translation implies a rejection of translation as the linguistic process of rendering words in one language intelligible in another. Instead, it views translation as a much more complex process of reinterpretation, appropriation, expansion and exchange between cultures or within different temporalities in the same culture. My use of translation in this chapter will draw on the concepts of cultural translation elaborated from two different perspectives by Rey Chow (1995; 2008) and Vicente L. Rafael (1999; 2000). The various cultures coexisting in the Philippines during the Japanese occupation stand as the 'original' text and Balmori's depiction of the Filipino nation in the novel as the translation.

Chow understands cultural translation as a simultaneous act of betrayal and mourning (2008) with the translator functioning as a cultural mediator. What is lost in the translation and what is new in it is respectively mourned for or perceived as betraying the supposed 'original.' From a different perspective specific to the Philippines, Rafael sees translation in two ways: as a strategy of survival for the colonised masses that created their own transcultured practices by creatively extracting meaning from the colonising languages and as a practice of nationalism designed to spread a new ideology in Spanish among the Filipino

elites during the American period. Both authors emphasise that there is no equivalence to be achieved through cultural translation, which is either a process of mourning/betrayal or one of re-appropriation, reinterpretation and transculturation.

In my reading of Balmori's novel, I look at what type of strategies of mourning and betrayal appear in its specific translation of the transcultural attachments and detachments of the Hispano-Filipino elite before and during WWII. I will show how, by having the characters appear as embodiments of the various political discourses circulating at the time, *Pájaros* suggests a mournful vision of the nation as overly attached to both the Hispanic past and the naïve idealisation of other nations, thus betraying the Filipino people.

### **Translating to Betray, Mourn and Survive**

Chow's conceptualisation of translation in her essay "Translator, Traitor, Translator, Mourner (Or Dreaming of Intercultural Difference)" (2008) does not adhere to the restricted idea of carrying meaning from one language to another but considers translation as an approximate signification, as a process of rendering an object into another system of meaning without dismissing the role of the translator. The act of translation is, as Chow explains, a creative process through which intellectuals attempt to render an aspect of culture embedded in a particular context legible to another culture or within the same culture. Legibility does not allude to the literal translation of meaning but to the possibility of establishing equivalence at the level of language, but most importantly, at the level of culture. This implies gaining something and losing something, hence the metaphors of mourning and betrayal. In an earlier article, "Film as Ethnography: or, Translation between Cultures in the Postcolonial World" (1995), Chow argues that, regardless of the type of translation made, traditions always need to be translated (reinterpreted, reshaped, reconstructed) in order to survive: "How is tradition to be transmitted, to be passed on, if not through translation?" (1995: 183). Hence, she asserts that there is no such thing as a single 'original,' only an ongoing process of transmission enabled by cultural translation.

With a view to my analysis of *Pájaros*, Chow's most illuminating idea is her elaboration of cultural translation as the reinterpretation of aspects of one's own culture into modern time, that is, the attention she pays to the temporality of translations within a culture. She perceives translations as creative and critical re/visions of the customs and traditions of the past scrutinised by the translator, whom she perceives as a creator - an artist - rather than simply as the medium that conveys equivalence or reproduces a faithful version of an original. In her view, any piece of art analysed as a translated cultural object cannot dismiss

or obscure the translator's mediation. Thus, Balmori's decision to write in Spanish must be perceived in the light of his desire to remain attached to his Hispanic heritage. This attachment on the part of Spanish-speaking and - writing Filipinos has been described by some as an "anachronistic" phenomenon, a clinging on in the face of the inevitable demise of Spanish after half a century of American presence (Lifshey 2011).

To illustrate the pitfalls of the ideal of intercultural translation, Chow analyses two representations of China and Chinese traditions. First, she refers to the aesthetic eye of the filmmaker Zhang Yimou, criticised in China for producing art objects adapted to the taste of western audiences and thus betraying the "authentic" China with a foreign vision of it. Second, she retrieves a scene from the film adaptation of the novel *The Family* (1931) by Ba Jin,<sup>99</sup> which depicts China's mourning tradition in a caricatured way as backwards and incomprehensible. In one scene in the movie, a group of women mourn the death of the family patriarch; orchestrated by signals that point to the arrival of guests, the women's exaggerated shrieks - not accompanied by any tears - compose, according to Chow, an absurd scene that remains simply noise or spectacle. The translated object in these two examples rejects the 'original,' betraying it and simultaneously mourning its loss.

Chow adopts the term "traitor" because of the shared linguistic root in Italian: *traduttore* meaning translator and *traditore* meaning traitor. She believes that the translator as traitor is seen to betray his or her culture by translating it as out of time or as unfamiliar, foreign and other:

Understood in these terms [translator/traitor], the figure of the translator foreshadows the predicament faced by the native intellectual in a postcolonized situation, in which to be a mediator between cultures is, as the idiomatic expression *traduttore, traditore* would have it, to be a traitor—in particular, a traitor to one's native culture. That is to say, if the agency of the postcolonial intellectual (native speaker, writer, thinker, educated person, professional, culture worker) is defined as the capacity to act among and across languages/ literacies, such agency also places such an intellectual in the position of a cultural translator/arbiter. The task of this cultural translator/arbiter is not faithfulness to the original (the colonized native culture) but rather that of an explicit betrayal: the disavowal and intercepting of the original as out of sync and out of place is now deemed a sine qua non for the native culture's survival. (2008: 570)

Here, Chow points to the particular condition of the 'original' culture of the postcolonial subject, whose native culture is a colonised one.

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<sup>99</sup> Ba Jin belongs to the May Fourth generation, a term referring to the movement engendered by the protests of Beijing students against the Chinese government on 4 May 1919. This movement is considered the beginning of a Chinese nationalism positioned against imperial power and in favour of western ideals such as democracy. Its demands included breaking with the old feudal China and its patriarchal traditions.

Returning to the example of Ba Jin's perceived position of betrayal in relation to his own culture, it is opportune to refer to a temporal anxiety, an anxiety about being left behind that leads Chow to describe the translator as a mourner "whose betrayal of the native culture is an inevitable by-product of inequitable cultural contacts" (571). The translator as mourner is the one who, observing the inequity between cultures (and the impossibility of ever catching up with the west, positioned as superior), laments the loss of the traditions affected through a certain melancholia.<sup>100</sup> Contrary to the translator-traitor, this side of the translator mourns the observable loss rather than dismissing it as other, unfamiliar, old-fashioned or ridiculous.

To sum up, Chow's perspective on translation illustrates the contrasting approaches that can be adopted by artistic representations of transcultural contexts like the Philippines: the translator as traitor betrays the 'native' traditions by depicting them as out-of-synch, backwards and foolish in relation to the modern time-space in which he lives (whether the time lapse derives from colonialism, capitalism or globalisation); meanwhile and sometimes simultaneously, the translator as mourner provides a melancholic view of the past and its traditions to compensate for the lack of prestige his culture is granted in the present. Both types of translations are seemingly unavoidable forms of othering that encourage Chow to advocate for an alternative type of intercultural translation that focuses on attaining intercultural equivalence based on the idea of the coevalness of cultures - the fact that cultures coexist *in* the same time:

In this regard, equivalence brings to mind Johannes Fabian's well-known concept of coevalness, a sharing of time that is "not given but must be accomplished [and can be denied]," (27) and that is predicated less on a presumed contemporaneity of all cultures than on an ever-renewable and ongoing project of constructing such contemporaneity. Like coevalness, equivalence in this instance is not a mere assertion of temporal or spatial coexistence but a vision, one that, predictably, will be met with obstruction and sabotage at regular intervals, but that will always retain within its operating premises the fundamentals of exchange and reciprocity that underlie intercultural transactions. (Chow 2008: 575)

Intercultural translation (or the task of finding intercultural equivalence) thus represents for Chow a challenge that will face obstacles, but should nevertheless be pursued in order to increase recognition of the fact that transculturation is always a bi-directional process in which cultures mutually influence each other.

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<sup>100</sup> With regard to the idea of melancholia, Chow refers to Freud, who "attributes this interminable pathological affect to the melancholic subject's essentially unfinished relationship with the lost/death ones" (571).

I use Chow's notions of translation as betrayal, mourning and equivalence as tools to understand what kind of translation Balmori provides of late 1930s and early 1940s Manila society in *Los Pájaros de fuego*. How does the narrative betray its native culture(s) or mourns for its loss of values in a fast changing society? How is tradition codified and transmitted in the novel, and whose tradition is this? What are Balmori's translation strategies in terms of the novel's formal characteristics, the language used (Spanish as opposed to Tagalog or English), the invoked social and political context, and the intended audience? In addition, I will explore what transcultural attachments are at play in Balmori's novel and how such attachments - to Hispanic, American and Japanese culture, as well as others - are translated by the novel's characters as parts of their individual identities and as feeding into a vision of national identity for the Philippines.

Like Chow, Rafael focuses on translation as an inevitable mode of transmission and survival in transcultural contexts. In *Contracting Colonialism* (1988), he presents translation as an ongoing effort aimed at the survival of native culture by referring to the attempts made by Filipino natives, to understand the religious sermons in Latin and Spanish they were exposed to during the Hispanic colonial period. Rafael explains that listening to the Catholic sermons presented them with the challenge to "fish out discrete words from the stream of the sermon arbitrarily attaching them to their imaginings" (1988: 2). He further explains:

the response of the natives was not a matter of boredom, indifference, or rejection. In fact, they anxiously attend to Damaso's voice [a priest from Rizal's novel *Noli Me Tangere* (1886)] hoping to catch some words that are thrown their way. It is as if they saw other possibilities in those words, possibilities that served to mitigate the interminable verbal assaults being hurled from the pulpit. (1988: 3)

This process of creative oral translation, consisting of catching scattered words and articulating new meanings that would then be connected, haphazardly, to the listener's existing belief system, is referred to as the "Tagalog strategy of de-contextualization" (Rafael 1988: 3). Words taken out of the original (con)text acquire new meanings through random associations. This indicates yet another sense of translation, different from translation as treachery or mourning. Here, translation appears as a spontaneous and arbitrary interpretation that necessarily betrays the 'original' because it does not understand it. What is relevant for me in Rafael's work is the idea of de-contextualization as a translation strategy that allows one to imagine alternative meanings for words and the realities they signify. In my analysis of Balmori's novel I will show how de-contextualized translation, rather than functioning as a creative strategy leading to a transcultured Tagalog Catholicism, is seen to lead to

miscommunication.

The second significant aspect of Rafael's work on translation has to do with his account of the emergence of Filipino nationalism. He claims that translation played a major role in the early Filipino nationalist movement (1898-1903) as the process by which emerging political ideas were codified into a new cultural system that attempted to recognise the multicultural aspects of Filipino society:

[nationalism as a practice of translation is] understood first as the coming into contact with the foreign and subsequently its reformulation into an element of oneself, is about the discovery of an alien aspect residing within colonial society and its translation into a basis for future history. (1999: 88-89)

Here, nationalism is defined as a process of estrangement, of discovering an alien aspect residing within, and, at the same time, of an identification through which the 'foreign' becomes the 'self' and the new (translated) self comes to serve as the basis for a (decolonised?) future. Rafael's conceptualisation of nationalism as a form of creative, future-oriented translation dismisses the type of nationalism that, in a mode resembling that of translation as mourning, remains fixated on the claim to an essential indigenous identity and a vision of a glorified, stolen, authentic pre-colonial 'original' past that is considered recoverable. Instead, nationalism as a transformative practice of translation strategically uses the plurality of the community and the self as comprising the foreign and the familiar in order to create a new identity.

The texts I have examined for this project, including Balmori's, present examples of such future-oriented Filipino nationalism that fail, however, to incorporate the full plurality of Filipino identities, instead remaining unsettled by the estrangement of self and other, and, as a result, ending up betraying and mourning inherited selves rather than, as Rafael suggests, successfully translating them into a new national identity. As I will show in the remainder of this chapter, Balmori mournfully holds on to the Spanish inheritance even as he accuses those who adopt the American and the Japanese model of betraying Filipino culture.

### **Translating Conflict: Global and Local Affects**

Balmori's novel translates the global dimensions of WWII into the local by having the characters in the family melodrama embody political discourses, national and international. Specific examples of this include two characters that befriend the Robles family: Dr. Fritz Kauffman, the family doctor, a German immigrant who spent most of his life in the Philippines, and Professor Bruno Anselmi, an Italian music teacher who embodies the figure

of the *Filipón*: a western man from a low class background who presents himself as of noble ancestry (in the novel Anselmi says he is a relative of Mussolini) in order to move up in society and, with a bit of luck, marrying into a wealthy family. Additionally, *Filipones* were also suspected of making their livelihoods (while waiting for a good marriage) by living of “rentas de negocios turbios” [profit from dubious business] (Donoso 2009: 36). Anselmi is a melodramatic, hyperbolic character who speaks a mix of Italian and Spanish; his “Santas Madonnas” and “Porcas Miserias” legitimise his authority over the “medianamente civilizados” (*Pájaros* 33) [moderately civilized] Filipino people, as Anselmi describes them. Kauffman’s increasingly threatening citation “Deutschland Uber Alles” (Balmori 71, German in the original) and Anselmi’s nationalistic claims about the supremacy of Italy gain importance as the novel progresses, eventually overwriting their friendly links with the Robles’ family. “El individuo debe desaparecer en aras de la nación. Y el amor propio “individuale”, debe sacrificarse por amor a la patria. Los Anselmi de allá estaban al lado de los Kauffman” (98) [The individual must disappear in favour of the nation. And personal honour must be sacrificed by love to the motherland. The Anselmis were next to the Kauffmans over there [in Europe]], explains the narrator in a chapter in which the story of the progress of fascism in Europe coincides with both characters turning against the Robles family - especially Anselmi, whose mask of benevolence as a piano teacher is removed as he attempts to seduce Natalia. Their European ancestry and alignment with fascist regimes does not help Anselmi and Kauffman, as they had expected, when the Japanese attack Ermita in February 1945. Both characters are killed in a bloody scene towards the end of the novel.

Juxtaposed to the frivolity of Anselmi and Kauffman, Natalia and Fernando, Don Lino’s children, appear as the embodiment of the ideal Filipino youth in which the colonial past and present come together. Fernando has inherited the passion for adventure and romanticism of his father, but mostly his love of reading:

Odiaba los estudios. Al diablo con la Física y el Griego. Únicamente la retórica le merecía algún respeto. Todo lo demás fueron lecturas de “Las mil y una noches”, los libros de aventuras de Salgari y las fantásticas narraciones de Julio Verne. (24)

[He hated to study. To hell with Physics and Greek. He only felt some respect for rhetorics. The rest of his education came from reading *One thousand and one nights*, Salgari’s adventure books and the fantastic stories of Jules Verne.]

The three literary references here are examples of European orientalist literature, either translated from the oral Middle Eastern tradition into European languages like the *1001 Nights* or written by Europeans and set in other parts of the world, like the works of Jules

Verne (1828-1905) and Emilio Salgari (1862-1911). Salgari's most famous character, Sandokan, is a Malaysian pirate from Borneo, famously called "The Tiger of Malasya" (Marrone et al. 2007: 464). That Fernando's ideals are a translation of orientalist adventure literature demonstrates how the Hispano-Filipino class he represents is holding onto a colonial imaginary.

Natalia, on the contrary, "era una muchachita muy moderna, práctica, muy a la americana, devota de los deportes y las cosas útiles. Nada de sueños ni romanticismos." (17) [was a young modern girl, practical, very much in the American way, she devoted herself to sports and useful things. No dreaming and no romanticism]. She prefers cinema to literature and dancing to taking piano and singing lessons - which she only does to please her father. The representation of Fernando and Natalia powerfully depicts a society in transformation where people's identities, at the heart of one family, are being challenged by the conflicting aspects of its past colonisation and present modernisation. The novel's critique of the present American influence on the Philippines pertains to its morals; this is made explicit through descriptions of the evenings held at the Manila hotel where young, rich, Americanised Filipinos enjoy themselves dancing, drinking and smoking instead of worrying about defending the country as the rumours of an immanent conflict become more serious. In contrast, Fernando, representing the ideal of the Filipino man as engaged and courageous, joins the combined American-Filipino Army established by the Government of the Commonwealth under the name USAFFE<sup>101</sup> to fight against the Japanese. His old-fashioned behavior (romantic and patriotic) is, however, ridiculed by the new type of Filipino youth, who translate it as an act of vanity.

Fernando meets "the bohemian" Carlos Andrade, a journalist and chief editor of the Spanish paper "La Linterna" [The Lantern] (84) in the "Club Nocturno" [Night Club], where a new generation of young (professional) bourgeois are drinking champagne and smoking cigarettes:

Andrade conocía a todo el mundo. Era el editor social de "La Linterna". Ésas eran las de Pérez, las de Santos y la de Claraval. Ellos, la flor y nata profesional del país, todos doctores. Gutiérrez, médico; De la Cruz, abogado; Martínez, óptico; Peláez, dentista;

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<sup>101</sup> The developments of the international conflict in Europe and its consequences in the Pacific as Japan negotiated with the Dutch, the British and the Americans over the control of Malaya (Indonesia), Singapore, Hong Kong, Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines increased the fear of the American government, which decided to ask the Philippines to join the US Army. General McArthur initiated this idea, eventually producing an army of forty-five to fifty thousand men named the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) (Agoncillo 1965: 61). Once the fear of war became a reality, the combined army called for further help, opening a voluntary listing, which is most likely what Fernando joins.

Melendres, profesor de la “Yu Pi”; y Rocha, veterinario. Lo más granado de la sociedad. (84)

[Andrade knew everyone. He was the social editor of “The Lantern.” [The girls] were those of Perez, those of Santos and of Claraval. They were the best professionals of the country, all doctors. Gutiérrez, doctor; De la Cruz, lawyer; Martinez, optician; Peláez, dentist; Melendres, professor at the “Yu Pi” [University of the Philippines]; and Rocha, veterinarian. The cream of the crop]

The Pérez sisters and the rest of the group had just been laughing at Fernando’s attire:

¡Miren ustedes que ingresar en el Ejército, podrido de dinero como está! ¿para qué habrá ingresado ese hombre en el Ejército?

-¡Para lucir el uniforme, chica. Están más guapos de uniforme! (85)

[- It is unbelievable that he joined the Army, buried in money as he is! Why on earth has this man joined the army?

- To show off his uniform! He looks more handsome in his uniform!]

The novel’s omniscient narrator claims that the new educated youth are only worth “varios miles de pesos en deudas y trampas” (85) [various thousands of pesos in debts and gimmicks] and, therefore, are even less likely to represent hope for the nation than the rustic peasant girls and the ignorant labourers from the hacienda. Mimicking Don Lino’s words at the sight of a sad Fernando sitting at the “Club Nocturno” looking resentful at the young people who were laughing at his uniform minutes before, the narrator says: “¡Vaya una esperanza de la patria! ¡Vaya una juventud! ¡Valiente primavera de vida! ¡Cuánto más dignos aquellas rústicas campesinas y aquellos ignorantes gañanes de la hacienda!” (86) [What hope for the nation! What youth! The spring of a life! How much worthier are those rustic peasants and those ignorant laborers in the hacienda!].

The novel portrays the degree of attachment to American culture as differing between the generations. For the older generations, enjoying a modern American lifestyle is seen as negative, whereas joining the American-Filipino army, especially as a young rich man, represents an admirable patriotic gesture. In contrast, for the young generations, the American lifestyle is liberating, freeing them from the old Catholic morals, while fighting in a war seems not only old-fashioned but altogether pointless, especially for someone living a comfortable life. Fernando is the only young Filipino in the novel who sides with the older generations. The uniform he wears, which Natalia considers a costume, is for him a way of recognising himself as a Filipino national, a patriot and a hero, even though he is fighting for the Philippines as an American:

[Habla Natalia a su hermano] Pareces un príncipe...Pareces un general de Hollywood.

Otro hombre sí, completamente nuevo y diferente al Fernando de los juegos de corbata modernistas y la rosa amarilla y el clavel encendido en el ojal de la chaqueta blanca. Otro en cuerpo y sobre todo en espíritu desde que se sintió ceñido por la coraza kaki que parecía aprisionarle en una nueva dignidad y un nuevo honor. Ahora podía llamarse filipino plenamente. Ahora podía sentirse verdadero patriota. Y hasta cuadrarse marcial ante el Héroe de la raza, ante todos los héroes nacionales. (80)

[[Natalia speaking to her brother] You look like a prince ... You look like a Hollywood general. Another man, yes, completely new and different from the Ferdinand of modernist tie suits and the yellow rose and the burning carnation in the buttonhole of the white jacket. Another in body and especially in spirit since he was girded by the khaki cuirass that seemed to imprison him in a new dignity and a new honour. Now he could be called Filipino fully. Now he could feel like a true patriot. And even stand martial before the Hero of the race, before all national heroes.]

Fernando's self-reflection projects the image of a new man, a 'real Filipino.' He likes the idea of fighting as a Filipino and, spiritually, feels elevated to the Parnassus of other national heroes<sup>102</sup>; physically, however, the khaki cuirass seems to trap or imprison him (*pareciera aprisionarle*). Fighting alongside and under the command of the US is perceived as paying off a debt contracted at the moment of liberation from the Spanish - hence the feeling of oppression - but, in Fernando's mind, it also becomes an imagined patriotic act. The novel does not make clear what Fernando's uniform looks like exactly, whether it was the Commonwealth Filipino uniform<sup>103</sup> (which would make him feel patriotic) or the American one (which would be more likely to prompt Natalia to compare him to a Hollywood actor), but whatever nation it symbolises, the uniform is presented as both oppressive and liberating.

The narrator's negative descriptions of the Americanised aspect of Filipino society in *Pájaros* invoke Chow's notion of translation as betrayal. The same goes for Fernando's identification as part of the army: it is prompted by his personal desire to be a patriot but the narrator suggests that he can only ever be a pseudo-American, ridiculed by his fellow Filipinos. The narrator himself also occupies an ambivalent position. In rejecting the American identities adopted by Natalia and Fernando as inauthentic and longing instead for

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<sup>102</sup> The national heroes that Fernando is referring to here are named in an earlier scene in the novel. As he announces that he has enlisted in the army, Don Lino's initial disapproval prompts a discussion about Filipino patriotism in which Fernando remembers the deeds of other Filipinos who died fighting against invaders. He lists the early Malay chiefs Kalipulako, Lakandula, Sikatuna and Solimán, and the modern heroes José Rizal, Andrés Bonifacio, Mabini and Antonio Luna (Balmori 56).

<sup>103</sup> Louis Morton (1995) explains that "Commonwealth forces coming under United States control would retain their national integrity; they would have their own uniforms, rations, military law, scale of pay, and promotion list" (25). The Philippines was at the time under the rule of the US, which had promised to accelerate the process of independence as a payback for Filipinos joining the US to fight against the Japanese. In this case, therefore, there was no "national integrity" to be retained.

certain aspects of Spanish colonialism, he fits the mould of translation as mourning, but he also praises the Americans for having freed the Philippines from the Spanish:

España no debería ser extraña a nuestra suerte. [...] España puso los cimientos formidables de nuestra estructura nacional y América coronó más tarde el edificio con sus modernas galas y sus adornos prácticos. A las dos les debía Filipinas su orgulloso pasado y su triunfal presente. Las dos tenían derecho a mirar por su historia y su mañana. Sobre todo América, a la que aún nos unían lazos de gobierno y la gratitud eterna y enorme de una libertad que solo nos costó pedir y sólo nos costó querer, a diferencia de otros pueblos, de todos los pueblos, de los propios americanos, que tuvieron que conquistar su libertad a tiros. (27)

[Spain should not be foreign to our luck [...] She put the formidable foundation of our national structure and America crowned the work with its modern attire and its practical accessories. The Philippines owes to both countries its proud past and its triumphal present. Both had the right to look after its history and its future. Especially America, to which we were united by government as well as the eternal and great gratitude for our freedom, which we only had to ask for, unlike other countries, most countries, even the Americans themselves, who had to conquer their freedom with gunpowder.]

This quote clearly shows the persistence of colonial attachments in the narrator. Using the metaphor of a building under construction, he praises the “foundation” constructed by the Spanish and their civilising mission, which America then further enhanced. America is also effusively praised for liberating the Philippines, at their request, from Spain through the Hispano-American war of 1898. The resolution of this conflict is presented by the narrator as a non-violent transition towards freedom. However, the US occupation of the Philippines was not without violence at all, as the resistance of the Philippines to the US led to the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), with flares of conflict until 1913 (Agoncillo 1965). The narrator’s comment “we only had to ask for it” could also be a reference to the contemporary situation of the early 1940s, when negotiations towards independence were at the center of the relationship between the Philippines and the US. The promise to grant independence was used as a negotiating chip by the Americans as they tried to persuade the Filipino army to join them in WWII. President Manuel L. Quezon makes this clear in a speech he gave in June 1941:

Should the United States enter the war, the Philippines should follow her and fight by her side, placing at her disposal all our man power and material to help her in achieving victory, for the cause for which America would fight is our cause... Our stake in this war is more than the continued existence of democracy and individual freedom in the world... our stake is our own future independence and the assurance that that independence may endure... (qtd. in Agoncillo 1965: 59)

Here, the destiny of the Philippines is tied to its close attachment to the US in WWII, which is thus a strategic attachment motivated by the desire for independence and by a dedication to ideals of democracy and freedom that would themselves challenge the idea of a continued colonial relationship.

About twenty pages later, an anti-colonial stance against the Spanish is voiced in the novel:

aquellos caballeros de la Iberia que vestidos de hierro arribaron en sus naos soberbias a las playas de Luzón y Bisayas.

De muy lejos, del Destino y los designios del cielo, llegaron a nosotros por los verdes caminos del océano. Y poderosos como eran, disimulando el oro de las cadenas con guirnaldas de flores, nos ataron las manos. Cadenas de oro, pero al fin ¡cadenas! Entonces perdimos lo mejor que nos había dado Dios ¡la libertad! Y desde entonces velamos en la noche y el día expiando el momento de poder romper los grillos. (56)

[those knights from Iberia, with their iron dresses arrived on their proud ships to the beaches of Luzon and Bisayas.

From far away, from Destiny and the intentions of heaven, they reached us by the green paths of the ocean. Powerful as they were, concealing the golden chains with flower garlands, they tied our hands. Gold chains, but chains nonetheless! Then we lost the best God had given us, freedom! Since then, we watch over day and night, awaiting the moment to break the irons.]

Significantly, here (as well as in the passage about the Americans freeing the Philippines from the Spanish cited above) the narrator's third-person voice becomes entangled with the collective "we" of the Filipino people during and before colonisation. The slippages between presenting the Philippines as an oppressed colonised space (the narrator speaks of invasion, enchainment, deprivation of freedom and the desire to break the irons) and presenting it as owing gratitude to the colonisers (with regard to the Spanish civilising task and the American liberation without violence) reflect the conflicting views held by different parts of the Filipino population, with the narrator sometimes speaking for one group and at other times for another. As in Gurrea's *Cuentos de Juana*, analysed in Chapter 2, Balmori's text introduces ambivalence regarding who is speaking and on whose behalf. The narration, then, is *out of focus* or, more precisely, itself a site of ongoing translations between the different perspectives that make up the transcultural realm of the Philippines, which has no single (nationalist) voice.

The following passage starts with the omniscient third-person narrator describing Don Lino's thoughts but eventually the focus shifts to the voice of Don Lino (in the form of an inner monologue), who adopts the first-person plural to refer to a collective "we"

(presumably comprising Filipinos of his class) that he presents in opposition to another collective of Filipinos - “they, the masses, the people”:

Don Lino, al igual que muchos ricachones filipinos, no simpatizaba con los americanos ni estaba conforme con la política de independizar el país. [...] La independencia suponía la ruina del pueblo filipino. Solo podían desearla los cuatro encumbrados títeres a quienes pudiera beneficiar. Al pueblo, no. *El pueblo no estaba, ni estaría en mucho tiempo preparado* para tan grande responsabilidad. Las masas solo sabían invocar a cada paso sus derechos, ignorando por completo sus deberes. *Abusaban de las libertades* concedidas con una impunidad procaz. Y andaban por sus tierras desunidos, divididos en partidos políticos y fracciones religiosas, enemistándose a cada instante, riñendo, y esgrimiendo como argumento contundente el puñal fratricida. América creyendo *hacernos* un gran bien, *nos estaba* haciendo un mal muy grande. *Darnos* la libertad completa y absoluta en el año 46. Poner en manos de un chiquillo travieso una bomba de dinamita.

Si venía en Japón, vendría a ser la salvación de Filipinas. Las lecciones amargas que *nos pudiera dar*, acabarían siempre con el libertinaje de las costumbres, con *la irresponsabilidad de nuestra vida*. El país necesitaba un dómine austero, una política dictatorial, una mano dura para conducirlo a los más altos destinos y las más dignas empresas. Hasta ahora el gobierno de Filipinas venía resultando un gobierno de opereta. Y la nación que al otro lado de los mares se lo imaginaba creado a su imagen y semejanza, una víctima voluntaria del más grande espejismo...Que venía el Japón. Por Don Lino, mejor; que llegara en buena hora. Que viniera cuanto antes! (134, my emphasis)

[Don Lino, like many other rich Filipinos, did not sympathise with the Americans, nor was he content with the policy of giving the country its independence. [...] Independence would mean the ruin of the Filipino people. Only a few privileged puppets benefiting from it would want it. Not *the masses*. *The people* were not and would not be ready for a long time for such great responsibility. With every step they took, the masses only knew how to evoke their rights, ignoring their duties. *They* abused their granted freedom with obscene impunity. *They* wandered on their lands segregated, divided into political parties and religious fractions, disputing each other at any given moment, arguing and using as a forceful argument the fratricidal dagger. America, believing that she was doing *us* a great good, was, on the contrary doing *us* a greater evil. And if God did not remediate this on time, she [America] was getting ready to do a worse evil. Giving us complete and absolute freedom in 1946 was like putting a dynamite bomb in the hands of a mischievous little boy.

If Japan came, it would be the salvation of the Philippines. The bitter lessons that it could give *us* would end the debauchery of manners, the irresponsibility of *our* life. The country needed an austere commander, a dictatorial policy, a hard hand to lead it to the highest destinations and the most dignified enterprises. Up to now the Philippine government has been turning into an operetta government. And the nation [the US] that on the other side of the seas imagined it and created it in its image and likeness was a voluntary victim of the greatest mirage. If Japan was to come, much better, according to Don Lino, it would be welcomed, the sooner, the better.]

This quote highlights the ambivalent discourse concerning the idea of independence in the Philippines, which led some people to favour the arrival of Japan as a better alternative. The

unpredictable consequences of becoming independent are compared with putting a dynamite bomb in the hands of ‘a mischievous boy.’ The infantilisation of the Philippines here contrasts with the one Gurrea depicts in the 1951 play *Filipinas: auto histórico satírico* [Philippines: A Historical-Satirical allegory]. Far from being a child with a bomb in her hands, Gurrea depicts young Philippines as well-educated and well-equipped nation thanks to her assimilation of the better aspects of her colonial heritage. The major difference between the texts, of course, is that in 1951 the Philippines was actually an independent country.

What is also suggested in the quote from Balmori’s novel is that an authoritarian regime facilitates civilisation/modernisation by imposing a totalising ideology that erases differences that may lead, otherwise, to internal conflict. This idea echoes Paz Mendoza’s empathy with Mussolini’s Italy as a model for a postcolonial state that would enforce Filipino national unity. The analysis of Filipino society offered in this fragment shows Don Lino’s attachment to the discourse of western cultural imperialism, which constructs the eastern other as uncivilised, unable to understand itself, fratricidal and whimsical. From Don Lino’s elite perspective, America is projecting an image of herself onto the Philippines that privileged Filipinos like Don Lino do not think the Filipino population as a whole is adequate to, leading him to reject it as a mirage, a delusion. With becoming like the Americans not an option for the Philippines, becoming independent under the leadership of the Filipino people would ruin the country. To prevent this catastrophe, Don Lino suggests allowing Japan, as the new cultural superior, to provide “bitter lessons” and even a “dictatorial policy” to lead the Philippines to “the highest destinations,” which, in time, might include independence. This passage exemplifies the difficulty of attaining intercultural equivalence through translation, as delineated by Chow. Instead of incorporating the principle of coevalness (which insists that all cultures exist *in* the same time, with none running ahead or behind a constructed standard), Don Lino translates Filipino culture as unequal to other cultures, positing the country as not ready yet to rule itself or to become modern on its own terms. Don Lino’s is not the only perspective represented in the novel but it is the one that is most critically scrutinised by showing him to have been wrong about Japan, which, in the end, did not seek to lead the Philippines to greatness but to violate it.

### **Lovable Japan: Literary Orientalism and the Pleasure of Misrecognition**

There are inescapable similarities between Balmori’s and Don Lino’s niponiphilia that turn the novel into a form of autobiographical self-criticism. Don Lino develops his fascination with Japan after a trip to the country, just like Balmori did after travelling to Yokohama in

1902 (Donoso 2009: xxxiii). In 1932, Balmori gave a full conference in verse entitled *Nippón* at the Japanese Association of the Philippines, presenting a justification of Japan and Japanese civilisation carried out with an “exquisite modernist exoticism” (Donoso 2009: xxxiv). Partly based on experience and partly imagined, the exoticisation of Japan that characterises Balmori’s poetry, as I showed in Chapter 1, is also present in *Pájaros*.

In the novel, Don Lino’s admiration for Japan is given ample space, with full paragraphs charting his praise for the sophistication of Japanese culture. In the opening two pages, for example, Don Lino wanders around his garden and notes of his Japanese gardeners: “¡Gente asombrosa! ¡Nadie como ellos para convertir en frondosos árboles y maravillosas flores los troncos más raquíuticos y las raíces más ingratas” (13) [Amazing people! No one like them to turn into leafy trees and wonderful flowers the stunted trunks and the most ungrateful roots]. It is the return of these gardeners to Japan in order to attend to “importantes asuntos domésticos” [Important domestic business] (Balmori 51) that announces the beginning of the end of Don Lino’s adoration of the country. By having Don Lino use the same modernist rhetoric Balmori used in his conference, the novel unmasks its inconsistencies and deceptiveness - its basis in fantasy rather than reality. The way in which Don Lino translates Japan into a model for his own country is one of betrayal: by idealising Japan and wanting to translate Filipino culture into Japanese culture, he is betraying his own culture.

Don Lino’s admiration for Japan exemplifies orientalism as I defined it in Chapter 1, attached to colonialism and establishing a hegemony of cultures, in this case placing Japanese above Filipino culture. The superiority of Japan is conveyed by political idolatry and also frequently through exoticisation. Affectively the idealisation of Japan hinges on a sense of love. Sara Ahmed’s 2004 study *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* understands identification and idealisation as forms of *love for the nation*. She writes that “identification is a form of love; it is an active kind of loving that moves subjects towards another. Identification involves the desire to get closer to others by becoming like them” (126). In the 1930s, some Filipinos saw in the prosperous Asian country of Japan a model of progress rooted in a (perceived) strong and homogenous sense of nationhood that, if adopted by the Philippines, would erase that country’s ambivalent attachments to Spain and the US. In the novel, this loving admiration of and desire to become like Japan is seen to ignore the realities both of Filipino society, which is presented as heterogeneous and indolent, and of Japanese imperialism, which makes Japan not a model to follow but a threat. Still, Don Lino’s love for Japan, albeit ultimately exposed as misguided, is not presented as a personal folly. Rather, the

novel portrays it as a prevalent affective attachment among Filipino intellectuals prompted by various stimuli: literary orientalism, the contemporary political discourse circulating among Filipino *ilustrados* and what Rafael has called “the pleasure of misrecognition” (2000), which occurs when one is mistaken for another national perceived as superior.

As I noted in Chapter 1, numerous works of Hispano-Filipino literature, including Balmori’s early poetry, are influenced by European orientalism and Hispanic modernism, producing a form of transcultural orientalism that engages with western narratives in terms of genre and form while using oriental motifs. In *Pájaros*, Don Lino uses a romantic and orientalist tone to praise the beauty of Japan, as in the scene I already discussed in Chapter 1, where he describes his beloved Haruko San as supremely beautiful and offering eternal devotion. In other passages, he refers to Japan’s imagined pure, divine origins, the Japanese sense of honor and the spirit that has caused Japan to be called to the position of “el soberano de una nueva Asia” (42) [sovereign of a new Asia]:

No se trababa de un pueblo de mercaderes ni mestizos de otras razas nacionalizados ingleses o americanos. Japón era el espíritu de dioses encarnados en fibras de “shogunes”, “samuráis” y “daimios”. (43)

[[Japan] was not a nation of merchants or of mixed-race people naturalised as English or American. Japan was the spirit of Gods embodied in the fibers of ‘shoguns’ ‘samurais’ and ‘daimios.’]

De ahí viene mi gran afecto por Japón y todo lo que sea japonés. Las mejores horas de mi vida las he vivido allí. Japón es un pueblo que ama a los niños, a las flores, a los ciervos, a las aguas y a los pájaros; que tiene por única y verdadera religión el honor, y por único y verdadero altar, la patria; que no le importa sacrificar la vida y la gloria de su imperio; que está llamado por su fuerza terrible y su espíritu indomable, a ser el dueño del Pacífico, el amo del Oriente, el soberano de la nueva Asia. (42)

[My great affection for Japan comes from Japan and everything that is Japanese. The best hours of my life I spent there. Japan is a nation that loves children, flowers, deer, water and birds; its only and true religion is honour and its only and true altar is the nation; it does not care about sacrificing its life and the glory of its empire; by virtue of its overwhelming strength and its indomitable spirit it is called to be the owner of the Pacific, the master of the Orient, the sovereign of a new Asia.]

The first quote mobilises an image of Japan that is ‘pure’ and divine, in contrast to the mixture of races found in the Philippines, whose people do not have their own nationality but have to adopt that of their colonisers. Don Lino perceives hybridity, brought about by miscegenation or through trade, as effecting a dissolution of the divine purity retained by the

Japanese and their military and political traditions (represented by the *samurai*, *shogun* and the *daimios*). The second quote proposes Japanese nationalism, expressed as a fervent, exclusive love for one's own country, as the *raison d'être* of the Japanese and as spurring their domination of Asia, which is conceived in terms of a calling that cannot be refused rather than as aggressive imperial expansion.

Through Don Lino's affirmations of Japanese culture runs a deep identification with those who are perceived as the same - com-patriots. Defending the nation "in the name of love" for ourselves (Ahmed 2004: 122) produces hatred towards the other, in this case towards the non-Japanese. In light of this, a question arises that Don Lino seemingly never asks: how could Japan be the ruler of a new Asia that would also include non-Japanese? How could it become the ruler of others in the name of love exclusively for its own?

Through Don Lino's character, *Pájaros* incorporates a political discourse that circulated among parts of Filipino society before WWII. Japan's escape from colonialism is perceived as what makes its people equal and united. The perceived homogeneity of Japanese nationalism and its valorisation of the collective over the individual are taken as reasons for its supreme power in Asia. Additionally, Donoso (2010) explains that, between 1898 and 1945, for many Filipino intellectuals Japan emerged as a model of an Asian nation that the Philippines could aspire to as a way to counteract American colonialism. The populist aspects of the discourses used to justify Japanese expansionism, such as those concerning the fight against "western materialism," the recuperation of "lost oriental values" or the "courage, endurance, thrift, diligence and industry" (B. Vargas qtd. in Rafael 2000: 105), were undoubtedly attractive to a society attempting to assert its own Asianness and sense of nationhood. Rafael summarises the political imagination of Japan as a model nation as follows:

Herein lies a fundamental element in Filipino attitudes toward Japan prior to the Pacific War: Japan was seen as another *nation*, that is, a place free from colonial control and sovereign in its capacity to determine its own history. It symbolized what the Philippines sought to become. It is this aspiration for nationhood that animates, I think, Filipino remarks such as "affinities of race," "common interests," and "same destiny" between Japan and the Philippines. The future tie they envisaged with Japan was not one of subordination to a superior race but one characterized by relations of mutual deference and reciprocal obligations. In other words, it was Japan's ability to re-mark its difference from other countries—an ability that constituted its nationhood—that Filipinos emulated. (2000: 105)

What Filipinos envisioned when looking to Japan, in other words, was not a relationship of oppression but one of love, not in the mode of idealisation but identification. As Ahmed outlines, love as idealisation is based on “loving what is not me” (127) and therefore on wanting to have the loved object because of its difference from the self (127). This is the form of love typical of literary orientalism, where “loving-as-having” (Ahmed 126) appears in the desire to possess the exotic other. Thus, Don Lino wants to have Haruko San because she is different from and therefore more desirable than Filipino women. Love as identification, in contrast, is a form of “loving-as-being” or love for sameness (Ahmed 126). The political discourse described by Rafael, which highlights the similarities between the Filipino and the Japanese ‘race,’ ‘history’ and ‘destiny’ can be read as an example of “loving-as-being”: I love what I am or, in this case, what I, too, could be (as a form of aspiration). Significantly, Ahmed emphasises that love as identification does not mean wanting to be other but wanting to be in the other’s place: “it is the desire to take a place where one is not yet,” a “love towards” the object (126). This is crucial to understanding the pro-Japanese discourse prevalent in the Philippines before WWII; the Filipino subject moves towards the Japanese love-object in an anticipatory, future-oriented temporality, perhaps realizing that true mutuality and reciprocity with Japan will never be possible, but seeking to derive hope from the example of an Asian nation “free from colonial control and sovereign in its capacity to determine its own history” (Rafael 2000: 105).

The idea of identification as a form of love aligns with Rafael’s notion of the “pleasure of misrecognition,” which refers to the fantasy of being mistaken for a national of a country perceived as superior. To illustrate this phenomenon, Rafael recounts an anecdote about José Rizal, who, while visiting an exhibition of Japanese paintings in Paris in 1883 was mistaken “as one of Japan” by a group of French people (Rizal qtd. in Rafael 2000: 106). This misrecognition can be described as a “pleasure” because Rizal perceives it as positive; in his account, the idea of being Japanese opens up a fantasy that takes him away from his received (colonial) identity. However, this momentary identification does not last forever; the love spell ends when he is asked by a French lady to read the Japanese ideograms written on the artwork. Instead of confessing that he is not Japanese, he makes up an excuse, stating that he does not read Japanese because he was sent overseas while very young to learn the culture of the West. As Rafael notes,

“Japan” affords Rizal the opportunity to realize the arbitrariness of colonial boundaries and the prospect of slipping away from received identities. With “Japan” comes the exhilarating possibility of reimagining a different history, however fanciful, for the indio self. (Rafael 2000: 107)

For Rizal, the “indio self” is a performative identity that grants him the pleasure of being (mis)recognised as a Japanese man for *looking like* one to the French. The image of Rizal that the French tourists project back to him (in their orientalist inability to distinguish between different Asian peoples) ignites in him the possibility of exorcizing the colonial attachments that haunt the indio self and of performing, through translation, a new identity free of a contested past history. This leads him to happily betray his actual identity as a Filipino.

The “pleasure of misrecognition” opens up a new perspective on transcultural attachments: Rizal does not fancy himself a Spaniard or an American but a Japanese, challenging the relationship between coloniser and colonised by a desire to not be like one or the other but to forge another translation of the self, one based on love as identification. Additionally, I see in this “pleasure of misrecognition” an example of translation that can only be understood in its context. To the French, Rizal can translate himself into a Japanese, so the “pleasure of misrecognition” is situated away from the place of origin.

Having shown that Don Lino’s adoration of Japan is not a personal quirk but a widespread strategy among Filipino intellectuals, including Rizal, propelled by the desire to escape the fact that the Philippines, unlike Japan, was colonised, I will now discuss how Balmori’s novel portrays the demise of this strategy. The collapse of the mythical image of Japan occurs through war and through heartbreak. As the novel advances, we learn that Haruko San did not keep her promise to wait for Don Lino’s return and instead married a Japanese official. Don Lino, devastated by the news, starts to feel the consequences of the blind love that had prevented him from seeing clearly, confessing to his brother: “Te confieso que he sido un candido. Ahora me estoy temiendo todo del Japón” (94) [I must confess I have been naïve. Now I fear everything from Japan]. He continues:

Se había acabado todo, quimera y esperanza, paloma y nido, ídolo y fe. Sólo tenía por delante el panorama triste de una solitaria vejez y un abandono de afecciones, encerrado en este moderno palacete de Manila, o en el vetusto caserón de la hacienda, sin más regalo, ni más consuelo, que este jardín que aquí se estaba marchitando y los campos de allá llenos de pájaros y espigas... (100)

[Everything was over, chimera and hope, dove and nest, idol and faith. All he had ahead of him was the sad perspective of a lonely old age and deprivation of affection, locked in this modern palace in Manila or in the ancient house of the hacienda, with no other present, no more comfort than the withering garden and the faraway fields full of birds and thorns.]

Don Lino conflates his story of unrequited love ('dove and nest') with that of political disillusionment ('idol and faith'). All his love for Japan is lost when, first, the Japanese gardeners return home under the family's suspicion that they were spies and, second, Don Lino loses his children when the war breaks out. As a result, both the garden of the house and Lino himself start to wither.

With regard to the story of the gardeners, Donoso (2009) explains that, before the war, many Japanese spies infiltrated the Philippines. Agoncillo (1965) provides a more nuanced explanation of this phenomenon, referring to the political and historical reasons for the Japanese presence in the Philippines and the changing attitude of the American government and the Filipino people towards them. The Japanese had established a sort of "Japanese colony" (47) in the region of Davao, where, since 1910, the American government had encouraged investment and migration from Japan in order to develop the economy. At the time, the Japanese were considered better workers than the Filipinos and the Chinese. However, as they gained control over the land in Davao, exploiting primary sources and managing their businesses through Japanese companies, the Filipino Commonwealth government (1935-1946) started issuing bills that controlled the arrival of foreigners on the islands and required the migrant population to be registered and have their fingerprints taken. Agoncillo explains:

The law was obviously intended to prevent the commission of sabotage by aliens, notably by the Japanese, who were almost everywhere in the capital as "fishermen", "shopkeepers", "owners of refreshment parlours", and "gardeners". The law, did not, for obvious reasons, finger out the Japanese, but the situation and the context in which it was passed showed that the assembly intended it to be more against the Japanese than, say, the Chinese. As a result, some 53,000 aliens in Manila alone were reported to have been accounted for the end of July. (52)

The attitude towards the Japanese, thus, quickly changed from welcoming their investments and manpower to suspecting them of conducting a new economic colonisation. In the public discourse, this suspicion turned into fear of an actual Japanese occupation as WWII approached. Balmori introduces this social circumstance in the novel, suggesting that the gardeners working in the Robles' hacienda were either spies (as the rumour went) or deported for political reasons when they became illegal immigrants under the new laws.

Through its portrayal of Don Lino, *Pájaros* criticizes the tendency of elite Hispano-Filipinos to look for outside answers to solve internal problems, criticising the way in which this elite disrespected the Filipino people, who are recurrently silenced and referred to as indolent masses. For most of the novel, the voice of the Filipino people also remains lost in

Balmori's own translation of Filipino society, but it does appear for a brief intervention towards the end.

### Lost and Betrayed in Translation

At the beginning of my reading of *Pájaros*, I emphasised the novel's cosmopolitan focus on international characters and the transcultural elite. This is not surprising given Balmori's own social background. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that non-elite Filipinos mostly appear in the novel only in their collectiveness to illustrate particular political views held by the elite, as in Don Lino's monologue referring to "the masses" of peasants incapable of governing themselves (and thus better ruled by Japan) and in the narrator's anti-American speech that idealises the "workers of the hacienda" and the "rustic peasant girls" (85) as better national figures than young unpatriotic professionals like Natalia's boyfriend Sandoval or Carlos Andrade, the opportunistic editor of the social section of a popular newspaper. The next passage, told from the perspective of Don Lino, is also typical:

Habían partido los magos floricultores, y ya nadie sabría arrancar a la tierra el secreto de su pompa vegetal. [Don Lino] *Pensó en los nuestros*, en los jardineros del país, pero enseguida desechó la idea. Eran unos ignorantes, *unos bárbaros sin noción de arte*, ni delicadezas de artista. Estaban bien para plantar sembrar lechugas y cultivar tomates. Ninguno entendía nada de jardinería. (53, emphasis added)

[The flower-wizards had departed, and no one would know how to wrest the secret of their vegetable pomp from the earth. [Don Lino] *thought of ours*, the gardeners of the country, but he immediately dismissed the idea. They were ignorant, barbarians with no notion of art, no artistic delicacy. They were good at planting lettuce and growing tomatoes. None of them understood anything about gardening.]

To Don Lino, the "the gardeners of our country" are barbarous and unsophisticated next to the Japanese, who can extract the best qualities from the earth.

Once the gardeners are gone and the myth about Japan starts collapsing, however, there is a scene describing Father Elías storming into the hacienda to warn Don Lino that the Japanese have taken the village and are on their way to his house. Don Lino, skeptical of the possibility that the Japanese would use violence, invites the priest to have breakfast. Even as the Japanese soldiers are entering his house, he tells Father Elías that he shall have a word with them because "estos no son los brutos que son los blancos... Éstos están supercivilizados..." (173) [these are not as brute as the whites... They are supercivilised]. The omniscient narrator picks up on his naïve words to start describing the most horrific scene of the book: "A los pocos minutos los "supercivilizados" tomaban por asalto la mesa del

desayuno” (173) [Within a few minutes, “the supercivilised” were storming the breakfast table]. They plunder the house and, most terribly, gang rape a pregnant Natalia in a locked room with Don Lino able to hear her screams. They leave her dead body in a puddle of blood the sight of which maddens Don Lino. Shocked and delirious, he runs from the house and gets lost in the forest to be found dead on his farmland two days later.

Immediately after the assault on the house, Pablo, the foreman of the hacienda workers, enters the property to ask Don Lino and Father Elías to join them in forming a guerrilla force to kill the Japanese, but he only finds Father Elías running from the scene:

-Con nosotros, con toda la gente de la hacienda, que somos cientos y seremos miles. Vamos a los montes, a formar guerrillas, a matar, a morir. Estos bandidos han destruido nuestros hogares, han violado a nuestras mujeres, han torturado a nuestros hombres, han asesinado en masa poblaciones enteras. ¡Se han figurado que les tenemos miedo! ¡Se creyeron al vernos postrados que estábamos ante ellos de rodillas! ¡Canallas ...! ¡Ya verán, cuando llegue el momento, quiénes son los filipinos! (179)

[Come with the people of the hacienda, we are hundreds but we will be thousands. We are running to the hills, to form guerrillas, to kill and to die. Those bandits have destroyed our homes, have raped our women, have tortured our men, have murdered complete populations. Do they think that we are scared? They may have thought that we kneeled in front of them as they saw us bowing. Bastards! They will see, when the moment comes, who are the Filipinos!]

Although this moment comes too late for Don Lino, it signals the novel’s turn towards the Filipino commoners, who, as the ones willing to fight the Japanese, are vindicated against Don Lino’s portrayal of them as unworthy of independence. The novel also envisions the commoners and the elites joining forces, as Fernando abandons the American army and joins Pablo, to become a captain in the guerrilla. Fernando’s patriotism has finally found a clear direction now that he can fight with and for the Philippines. In contrast, Andrade betrays Filipino nationalism by voluntarily becoming a puppet of the Japanese occupying government:

Elevaron al pobre diablo de Andrade al puesto de director de “La Linterna”. Y Andrade, sintiéndose más japonés que Tokio, se dedicó desde el primer instante a loar en todos los estilos y por todos los medios las fantásticas glorias del Asia oriental más grande. Empezó públicamente a comer en cuclillas, renunciando a los cubiertos por los asiáticos palillos, aprendió a chapurrar el “nipongo” con una vieja hetaira japonesa; y sin perjuicio de lamer las zancajas a los nuevos gobernantes filipinos, erigió en lo más destacado de su hogar un altar shintoísta para adorar al Mikado y demás accesorios. No se satisfacía con publicar libelos en el periódico. Deambulaba por toda la ciudad predicando con la palabra y el ejemplo el amor, el fervor y la gratitud que el pueblo filipino debía a sus estevados conquistadores. (183-4)

[They elevated the poor devil of Andrade to the post of director of “La Linterna”. Andrade, feeling more Japanese than Tokyo, dedicated his efforts from the first moment to praise in all styles and by all means the fantastic glories of the largest East Asia. He publicly began to eat squatting [instead of sitting], renouncing all cutlery but the Asian chopsticks, learned to patter the “nipongo” with an old Japanese hetaera [prostitute]; And without prejudice he started to suck up to the new Philippine rulers, erecting as the highlight of his home a shintoist altar to worship the Mikado and other accessories. He was not satisfied with publishing libels in the newspaper but wandered all over the city preaching with word and example the love, fervour and gratitude that the Filipino people owed to their steadfast conquerors.]

With this description of Andrade’s complicity, the novel’s denouncement of the Filipino assimilation to the Japanese, perceived as the highest treason to Filipino nationalism, comes to a climax.

However, the narrative in *Pájaros* takes another turn denying revenge to the Filipinos as victims of war and portraying the Filipino national resistance as short-lived. Fernando is convinced by Father Elías to abandon his post as captain of the Filipino guerrilla with the argument that he is being blinded by a desire for revenge rather than doing justice to his people as he believes. According to Father Elías, Fernando is simply leading a gang of rebels seeding terror against the law. Most crucially, Father Elías makes Fernando believe that only a good Catholic seeking peace rather than revenge can be a good patriot:

Usted fue siempre un buen cristiano y una gran patriota. Infortunadamente, ha dejado usted de serlo. Porque vivir como usted vive, consagrando el alma y vida a una venganza, por muy nobles, por muy altos, por muy santos que sean los motivos, es volver a levantar la cruz de Aquél que en el Gólgota [Monte donde crucificaron a Jesucristo] perdonó a sus verdugos. (197)

[You were always a good Christian and a great patriot. Unfortunately, you have ceased to be one. Living as you do now, consecrating your soul and life to vengeance, however noble, however high, however holy the motives, is to raise the cross of The One who on Golgotha [mount where they crucified Jesús Christ] forgave his executioners.]

Father Elías stirs Fernando’s conscience by suggesting that he is only seeking revenge, a weakness in the eyes of a good Christian. He asks Fernando to forgive the Japanese and let “The Lord” decide the destiny of the Filipino people (197). Patriotism here is linked back to Catholicism and therefore to the Hispanic heritage that the novel never truly betrays but insistently mourns. Even though the episode of Fernando and father Elías questions this

affirmation because Fernando is killed when he returns to Manila after leaving the guerrilla behind. It is rather the ending with Ramón than confirms the mourning of Catholicism.

### **Found and Mourned in Translation**

After abandoning the guerrilla force, Fernando returns to the city in search of Marta and his uncle Ramón, only to be killed by a stray bullet during the terrible events of February 1945 in Manila.<sup>104</sup> In the novel, the climax of WWII in the Philippines thus overlaps with the demise of the Hispano-Filipino bourgeois family represented as oblivious to geopolitical changes and still romantically glorifying the Hispanic past. According to Lifshey, the novel erases all three alternative future paths for the Filipino elite allegorically envisioned in the three marriages rendered impossible by the war: joining the Americans, joining the Japanese or becoming independent. Natalia's boyfriend Sandoval, representing an Americanised future, dies; Don Lino's Japanese lover Haruko San marries a Japanese man; and Fernando does not survive to marry his beloved Marta, the indigenous Filipina that would symbolise the independence of the archipelago. This apocalyptic pessimism makes *Pájaros*, according to Lifshey, an "escathological text," "a processing through fiction of the wrenching social end of a useless Spanish speaking elite nearly half a century after Spain itself had been ejected from the islands" (13).

Indeed, Balmori's translation of the convoluted social and political background of the Philippines before and during WWII is a pessimistic one that forges transcultural attachments only to break them: it abandons the dominant discourses of American patriotism, Japanese Imperialism and, most crucially, the emerging discourse of Filipino nationalism. In contrast, and perhaps this is what Lifshey does not stop to consider in his analysis, the betrayal of these possible alternative 'happier endings' is carried out at the expense of a mourning of the Hispanic colonial heritage in the novel's enigmatic final scene.

With all the main characters of the novel dead, *Pájaros* closes with the only survivor from the Robles family after the Manila attack, Don Ramón, stranded on a beach in a semiconscious state. There, he has a vision of Christopher Columbus setting foot on the beach in the Caribbean - in what is now the Dominican Republic. The novel describes Don Ramón's vision in detail: Columbus kneels and admires the virginal beauty of the untouched beach, while Ramón praises Columbus for bringing "redención para los pueblos sin libertad,

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<sup>104</sup> The American air force and Japanese troops, who after three years of occupation realised they were losing the war, engaged in one of the bloodiest fights in the Pacific, leaving Manila with 100,000 deceased and making it the second most devastated city after Warsaw in World War II (Gruhl 2010: 97).

firme sostén para la humanidad caída, pan y vino de amor para los que han hambre y sed de justicia, lecho herido” (210-11) [Redemption for peoples without freedom, firm support for fallen humanity, bread and wine of love for those who have hunger and thirst for justice, [from their] wounded bed]. Columbus is thus perceived as the savior, the one bringing redemption through faith (bread and wine) instead of quenching a thirst for revenge to alleviate pain. This vision translates Catholicism, brought by (a recommencement of) Hispanic colonisation, into the only salvation for the Filipino people. Thus, the novel’s ending culminates in translation as mourning for what shall not be lost: the Catholic faith and the behaviour it prescribes. Rather than imagining a new future in which the Filipino people - with the non-elite in the vanguard - defend their country and define themselves as a nation, Balmori’s novel sides with the remnant of the Hispanised elite and suggests that the only future for the Filipino nation is through keeping its Catholic faith.

As an example of cultural translation, therefore, *Pájaros* simultaneously betrays and mourns different cultures, fully engaging with Chow’s conception because what is betrayed is not the same as what is mourned. Following Rafael, Filipino nationalism in Spanish as depicted in the novel translates a nationalist ideology that expresses a desire to be independent and break from the control of the colonising forces of the US and Japan, while maintaining a strong cultural attachment to its Hispanic heritage, in particular Catholicism. The various transcultural attachments in the novel, however, do not come together in a transcultural vision of Filipino nationalism, which leads me to conclude that *Pájaros* rejects the possibilities of active transculturation, except perhaps in the way some everyday customs and traditions are depicted.

Tradition appears in the novel as the best example of translation as simultaneous betrayal and mourning. *Pájaros* puts under scrutiny the arbitrary acquired tastes of the elites, suggesting that the ‘local’ is rejected in favor of the ‘foreign’:

En Filipinas, tierra de flores, los petimetres se florojalaban con claveles de trapo; las mujeres buscaban el perfume de los frascos de París, despreciando el collar de sampaguitas que embalsamaba el pecho de la abuela. (53-54)

[In the Philippines, land of flowers, dandies adorned their buttonholes with paper carnations; women searched for Parisian perfumes, despising the necklace of sampaguitas that embalmed the chest of their grandmother.]

Here, the traditional is betrayed by rejecting it in favour of a more modern and global fashion (Parisian perfumes), while also mourning the Filipino flowers that have been replaced. It is significant, however, that the allusion to the traditional is made through an image in which

live flowers lie on the chest of an embalmed (dead) grandmother. Another example of how the way traditions are perceived through notions of translation as mourning and betrayal in the novel is with regards to music and dancing. During Natalia and Sandoval's wedding party, Don Lino complains about how the frenetic and sensual dances of the present have erased the traditional ones:

Se iban multiplicando las parejas en una mareadora y sugestiva sucesión de tangos, rumbas y danzas exóticas. [...]Era un espectáculo grotesco, sin ninguna elegancia, ni ritmo, ni arte. ¿En dónde estaban nuestros bailes? ¿Nuestros hermosos bailes propios, aquellos que bailó la abuela meciéndose como una flor apenas sostenida, mostrando apenas bajo la fimbria de la saya la breve punta de su chapín dorado? ¿El elegante vals, la dulce mazorca, la lánguida polca, toda aquella melodía acompasada como un poema, que más que un carnal deleite fue elevación del alma al arte, en dónde estaba? (113)

[Dancing couples were multiplying in a provocative and head-spinning succession of tangos, rumbas and exotic dances. [...] It was a grotesque spectacle, with no elegance, rhythm or art. Where were our dances? Our own wonderful dances, those danced by our grandmother swaying like a suspended flower, barely showing the tip of her golden shoes under the hem of her petticoat? The elegant waltz, the sweet mazurka, the languid polka, all those melodies rhythmic like a poem rather than a pleasure of the flesh, an elevation of the soul to the category of art, where were they?]

What is remarkable here is that none of the dances mentioned are 'originally' Filipino. The modern tangos and rumbas are rooted in Argentina and the Caribbean as a mixture of European, African and American traditions, while the waltz, mazurka and polka are of German and Polish origin. Yet the latter dances are associated by Don Lino with a traditional Filipino past, one that only the upper educated classes, mostly descending from Europeans, can consider their own. The analogy of the dances points not only to a generational gap, but also highlights Don Lino's refusal to consider any non-Hispanic Filipino tradition worthwhile. With his mournful claim to bring back something that was once familiar (to him and the rest of the elite) comes the realisation that this, too, like the modern dances, was a translation of a tradition coming from somewhere else.

The novel heartbrokenly laughs at Don Lino's (and by extension the Hispanised elite's) decadent attachment to a vanishing past and dismissive attitude towards everything not Hispanic-Filipino and elite. In doing so, *Pájaros* distances itself clearly from the elitist way of thinking embodied by Don Lino (and later on Andrade) that promotes assimilation, a form of acculturation, to Japan and also (through Fernando's uniform and the critique of the American lifestyle) to the US. Notwithstanding, through its ending, Balmori's novel

demonstrates a lingering attachment to Hispanic Catholicism rather than a truly transcultural nationalist vision of the Philippines' future.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how Balmori's novel *Los Pájaros de fuego* enacts Chow's notion of cultural translation as a simultaneous act of betrayal (towards an 'original' culture) and mourning (towards the loss of that 'original'). Having taken as the 'original' the cultural heterogeneity that constituted Filipino society in the years leading up to the Japanese occupation, what Balmori's translation shows is that Filipino nationalism, in part, is based on a recurrent mourning of Catholic values, embodied in the characters of Father Elías, Fernando and Don Ramón. Simultaneously, translation as betrayal appears in the novel's criticism of Filipino nationalists' uncritical assimilation of Japanese, American and European, as portrayed in the characters of Don Lino and Andrade, Natalia and Sandoval, and Don Anselmi and Dr. Kauffman. By having the characters appear as embodiments of the various political discourses circulating at the time, *Pájaros* suggests a mournful vision of the Hispanic-Filipino elite, in their imagination of the nation to come, as overly attached to both the Hispanic past and the naïve idealisation of other nations, thereby betraying the Filipino people.

The novel also shows the potential dangers of the way early Filipino nationalism manifested as a practice of translation that re-defined and appropriated other forms of nationalism into Spanish (as most intellectuals could communicate, secretly, in Spanish during the American and Japanese periods). In *Pájaros*, the outcome of what Rafael calls 'translation as a practice of nationalism' is not a homogeneous manifesto of national ideology but rather an ambivalent expression of political and social disillusionment as the last remnants of a Spanish-speaking Filipino elite disappear. Filipino nationalism in Spanish as depicted in *Pájaros* is thus a translation failure.

In the end, Balmori's novel is a critical and pessimistic comment on transculturation, which is perhaps why it finishes by endorsing, in the scene of Don Ramón's vision, a return to Spanish colonialism. Its focus, crucially, lies with the process of transculturation in the present - what happens in the translation between different cultures as these cultures also contest each other on the geopolitical stage - rather than in the past or as a project for the future. In the next chapter, I analyse Antonio Abad's novel *El Campeón*, which I argue is more hopeful and more positive about the potential of transculturation as a ground for Filipino nationalism, even though its ending is also ambivalent.