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# Philippine Literature in Spanish: Canon Away from Canon

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**Abstract:** Why does everyone know Claro M. Recto's name in the Philippines but almost nobody has ever read his works? Following Pascale Casanova as well as some postulates by Pierre Bourdieu and Itamar Even-Zohar, the article outlines the complex linguistic reality in the Philippines at the beginning of the 20th century and traces the origins of the current literary canon of Philippine literature, as well as its contemporary position both nationally and internationally. It also discusses how markers of literary prestige were supplanted by markers of political and patriotic prestige, thereby creating a literary canon based on an author's contribution to the creation of a suitable 'Philippine national identity'.

## The (lack of) knowledge on Philippine literature in Spanish

José Rizal. Epifanio de los Santos. Teodoro Kalaw. Claro Recto. Cecilio Apóstol. Jesús Balmori. Perhaps only a few Hispanic literature experts outside the Philippines have heard of these names. In the Philippines there are streets, statues and schools built in their honor,<sup>1</sup> as well as plaques that commemorate their patriotic deeds, but very few have read their extensive literary works. Despite having names that frequently appear in Philippine literature anthologies. Despite being presented with prestigious national, and sometimes even international, awards. Despite being canonical authors of Philippine literature in Spanish, which is,

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<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that one of the central roads in the metropolitan area of Manila is called EDSA: Epifanio de los Santos Avenue; the street where the National Library lies, Kalaw Avenue, is right beside Rizal Park; Claro Recto Avenue is between the districts of Binondo and Quiapo; Rizal Avenue goes right up the district of Sampaloc, near Cecilio Apostol Elementary School, etc.

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however, distant from the literary canon in the Spanish language. This article tackles an inherent paradox in postcolonial Philippine culture: why certain Philippine authors who write in Spanish are canonical in the Philippines despite not having readers and being marginalized by the Western and global canon, and how and why they have become 'canonical'.

In order to provide a better understanding of the situation of Philippine literature in Spanish in its own country, we shall take into account Pozuelo Yvancos' approaches to the relationship between canonicity and pedagogy (2000: 124). According to Pozuelo Yvancos, the life of a text that had been significant at some point in history depends largely on the anthologies and literary histories which are used for educative purposes, as these decide which works will be available to the general public. Wystan de la Peña (2011b) discusses in his article "Revisiting the Golden Age of Fil-Hispanic Literature (1898–1941)" the difficulties that students and readers in the Philippines have today in order to access any work originally written in Spanish. He suggests that the reasons for this were Claro M. Recto's regulations, which prioritized the study of Rizal's life and works over those of other Philippine authors,<sup>2</sup> and the Constitution of 1987, the promulgation of which ceased the obligatory teaching and study of Philippine literature in Spanish in formal education.<sup>3</sup>

Isaac Donoso and Andrea Gallo (2011: 12) explain that a very strict selection of materials to be taught is necessary because of the reality that Philippine Literature is divided into three literary traditions in three different languages, Spanish, English and Filipino. In the case of Philippine literature in Spanish, what constitutes the texts taught in schools are mainly excerpts of *Noli me tangere* and *El filibusterismo*, thereby excluding other books and authors. This is to be added to the fact that in the University of the Philippines, the only university in the country offering a specialization in the Spanish language and culture, the

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2 The Republic Act 1425, also known as the "Rizal Law" was enacted on June 12, 1954, with the heading "An Act to include in the curricula of all public and private schools, colleges and universities courses on the life, works and writings of José Rizal, particularly his novels *Noli me tangere* and *El filibusterismo*, authorizing the printing and distribution thereof, and for other purposes". Available in <http://www.gov.ph/1956/06/12/republic-act-no-1425/> (accessed on 12 March 2015).

3 Constitution of 1987, art. XIV sec. 7: "For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English. The regional languages are the auxiliary official languages in the regions and shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction therein Spanish and Arabic shall be promoted on a voluntary and optional basis". [online <http://www.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-article-xiv/>, accessed on 12 March 2015].

subject Philippine literature in Spanish is offered merely as an elective on an intermittent basis. De la Peña (2011b: 126) blames this lack of interest in Philippine literature in Spanish on the present disregard of the Spanish language.

As one may suspect, Philippine literature in Spanish is not much studied in countries with a better command of the Castilian language: in Spain, courses about the Philippines are offered by History departments like that of the Universidad Complutense, the Universidad de Córdoba or the Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, but not in Philology departments, whereas by contrast, literary works in Spanish from Argentina or Colombia, for instance, tend to be studied. Among American universities, at Georgetown University where Professor Adam Lifshy works, the subject “Asian and African Literature in Spanish” (SPAN-492) is offered, which includes a part about Philippine literature in Spanish.<sup>4</sup> At the University of Hawaii there is a Center of Philippine Studies, which houses academic resources for research on the Philippines in general, a Philippine Literature course in the Filipino program (FIL 461), and a course called Rizal’s Literary Works in Translation in the “Indo-Pacific Languages and Literature” program (IP 431).<sup>5</sup>

The University of Michigan also stands out in Philippine Studies thanks to its extensive collection of written and graphic documents that came from a donation made by Dean C. Worcester, who served as Interior Secretary of the Philippine government during the American occupation, and left his bibliographic effects on the university where he used to study. However, in the website of the institution only one course in Filipino language, and one called “The Philippines: Culture and History” (ASIAN 210) appear as being offered in the department of Asian Languages and Cultures.<sup>6</sup>

The presence of the Philippines in the study programs of teaching institutions is as scarce as its presence in handbooks and histories of literature. Beatriz Álvarez Tardío (2008) considers in “La literatura hispano-filipina en la formación del canon literario en lengua española” eleven classic histories of literature in Spanish, confirming that only one, the *Historia general de las literaturas hispánicas* by Díaz-Plaja (1958) includes a chapter devoted to the Philippines, while *Historia de la lengua y la literatura castellana* by Julio Cejador (1932) includes some names of Philippine authors who wrote during the second half of the nineteenth century. Álvarez Tardío’s article came out too early to be able to mention the literary encyclopedia by Maureen Ihrie and Salvador Oropesa, *World Litera-*

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4 [online <http://courses.georgetown.edu/index.cfm?Action=View&CourseID=SPAN-492>, accessed on 12 March 2015].

5 [online <http://www.hawaii.edu/cps/academics/courses/>, accessed on 13 March 2015].

6 [online [http://www.lsa.umich.edu/cg/cg\\_detail.aspx?content=1810ASIAN210001&termArray=f\\_10\\_1810](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/cg/cg_detail.aspx?content=1810ASIAN210001&termArray=f_10_1810), accessed on 8 May 2015].

ture in Spanish: An Encyclopedia, which was published in 2011 and included a chapter, written by Wytan de la Peña (2011a: 761–767), exclusively on Philippine literature in Spanish, its different movements, authors, and a number of works. Moreover, it seems that in recent years researchers and institutions are exerting effort to revive the study of the forgotten Philippine literature.<sup>7</sup> Without going any further, a few months ago a bibliography of studies about Philippine literature was compiled for the recently created website of Philippine literature in Spanish in the *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes*. Here, excluding studies from publications exclusively dedicated to the Philippine culture and literature in Spanish, like the magazines *Revista filipina* and *Perro Berde*, and studies dedicated to Rizal, which will be compiled in another website exclusively for him, 14 monographs and 60 articles on the topic written in the last thirty years can be found (Ortuño Casanova 2014a).<sup>8</sup> To this production, we should add the editions of classic books brought by the collection Oriente, Instituto Cervantes de Manila, or the publishing house Renacimiento.<sup>9</sup>

However, up to now, the most referenced works on Philippine literature in Spanish are two which were published more than thirty years ago: *Historia analítica de la literatura filipina en español* by Estanislao Alinea (1964) and *Literatura filipina en castellano* by Luis Mariñas (1974). In these books we can find a ‘canon’ of Philippine authors in Spanish grouped into two periods: the *propagandistas* who wrote during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and those who wrote during the golden age of Philippine literature in Spanish, a period of some 40 years between 1898 and 1945.

Wytan de la Peña alludes to Alinea (1964), Mariñas (1974) and Brillantes (2006) to explain the existence of the abovementioned golden age, departing from the ‘rich production’ of Philippine literature in Spanish that occurred during the American occupation of the Philippines, and citing three reasons:

- a) Better freedom of expression during the American occupation compared to the Spanish occupation

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7 For further information on institutional efforts and the restoration of the Philippines in the Spanish novel of the 21st century: Ortuño Casanova (2015b).

8 The excluded works appear under the section “estudios literarios”: [http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/literatura\\_filipina\\_en\\_espanol/estudios\\_literarios/](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/portales/literatura_filipina_en_espanol/estudios_literarios/) (accessed on 8 May 2015).

9 I mean the works *Con címbalos de caña* By Guillermo Gómez Rivera (2012), *Hexalogía teatral* by Edmundo Farolán Romero (2011), and *En la línea del horizonte* by Daisy López (2010) published in editions by Moreno Mejías; *El campeón* by Antonio Abad (2013), *Cuentos de Juana* by Adelina Gurrea (2009), *Los pájaros de fuego* by Jesús Balmori (2010) and *Relatos* by Enrique K. Laygo (2016) published by Instituto Cervantes de Manila; and *Hacia la tierra del Zar* by T. M. Kalaw, edited by Jorge Mojarro for Editorial Renacimiento (2014).

- b) The possibility of publishing literary texts in one of the many newspapers in Spanish that were present during that period, and
- c) The establishment of the *Premio Zóbel*.

However none of these reasons is conclusive: Glòria Cano (2011a) argues against the first reason, stating that the lack of freedom of expression during the Spanish period is a mythogenesis that does not correspond to the reality. Regarding point b, the literary texts that appeared in those newspapers would rarely contribute towards the canonization of their authors, as most of them are not included in the anthologies.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, the *Premio Zóbel*, given to the best Philippine literary work in Spanish, which was established in 1923, continued to be awarded after the Second World War with so little success that no awards were given between 1967 and 1973, returning in 1974 with new regulations that, given the lack of candidates who presented literary pieces, then awarded the *Premio* to anyone who contributed to the promotion of Spanish in the Philippines (Brillantes 2006: 48). Even before, during the ‘golden age’, the *Premio* was given to writers that remain completely unknown today, like Joaquín Ramírez de Arellano in 1927, Leoncio González Liqueste in 1930 or Inés Villa in 1932. None of these three names appear in any study or anthology. Inés Villa does not even have any published literary works that could be located: she was awarded the *Premio Zóbel* for her dissertation *Filipinas en el camino de la cultura* at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

For his part, Adam Lifshey questions the idea of a ‘golden age’ in the chapter “Globalized Isolations: Félix Gerardo’s *Justicia social* y otros cuentos”, claiming that in the first place the canonical authors are too far away in terms of time (there is a generation gap between José Rizal and the rest of the other canonical authors) and that it cannot be called a ‘Golden Age’ when it is the only Philippine literature in Spanish that exists (Lifshey 2012: 119). But what if it was not the only existing Philippine literature in Spanish?

## Other Philippine authors in Spanish

Jorge Mojarro and Cayetano Sánchez Fuertes published two articles about Philippine literature in Spanish that existed before Rizal in a monograph about Philippine literature in Spanish in the journal *Transmodernity*, in Autumn 2014 (Mojarro

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**10** A good example is the writer Félix Gerardo, given by Adam Lifshey in his book *Magellan Fallacy* (Lifshey 2012: 112–153).

2014; Sánchez Fuertes 2014).<sup>11</sup> In those they discuss prior existing literature in the form of chronicles and travel books, among other genres, and claim that these are abundant, diverse and worthy to be studied. Returning the discussion to the so-called ‘golden age’ of Philippine literature in Spanish, Lifshy (2012: 122–124) himself also refers to the existence of several writers in Spanish whose works were never published in the form of books, but were distributed as novels in parts and poems and short stories in between pages of Philippine newspaper publications. In recently published articles about authors not on the frontline of the Philippine ‘canon’, Isaac Donoso’s article “A Chronicle of the Philippines in the Poetry of Zoilo Hilario” describes the existence of a number of canonical writers of Philippine literature in Spanish:

In the manuals of Philippine literature, Zoilo Hilario is found in second place, after the catalogue of great poets of the first half of the 20th century: Apostol, Guerrero, Recto, Balmori, and Bernabé. From there onward, a long list of ‘secondary’ authors typically fills the pages, Zoilo Hilario among them (Donoso 2013: 236).

This affirmation raises the questions: what made the abovementioned authors ‘great poets’ and the rest ‘secondary’? And why is it that only Rizal and some others from the first half of the 20th century are included?<sup>12</sup>

## The process of canonization

We have delayed until now the explanation of another paradox established in the introduction of this paper, a paradox which is intimately related to the questions concerning the criteria for what is considered as canon in Philippine literature: the fact that the so-called ‘golden age’ of Philippine literature in Spanish occurred after the occupation, when Spanish was on the verge of decline in the face of the hegemony of English. Countless explanations for this occurrence have been offered. Wystan de la Peña (2011a: 123–24) affirms that at the time, what was Spanish was already considered to be Philippine cultural heritage, denying that it had anything to do with postcolonial nostalgia. I will try to explain this, as well as

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<sup>11</sup> Mojarro also studies in his dissertation the first volume of a projected History of Philippine literature in Spanish that focuses on the 16th century which has an abundance of materials from the period.

<sup>12</sup> Similar questions are stated in the article “Dime a quién incluyes y te diré quién eres: antologías de literatura filipina en español en el régimen de Ferdinand Marcos”. Here, the political circumstances that called for the reconstruction of a canon which began to be noticeable from the 20s and 30s are explained (Ortuño Casanova 2015a).

provide some answers to the previous questions by referencing extra-textual criteria that would allow us to determine the causes for the rather strange situation presented to us: the use of some canonized writers who do not have any readers and who are writing in the imperial language after its withdrawal. We will look at the social and economic elements that have made such situation possible because, as the Israeli critic Itamar Even-Zohar (1990: 18) has opined, “there is nothing in the repertoire itself that is capable of determining which section of it can be (or become) canonized or not”.

Lifshey proposes in the already-quoted chapter “Globalized Isolations...” of *The Magellan Fallacy* two criteria that explain why some writers from the first half of the 20th century are among the most recognized in the Philippines, in spite of the idea that, in writing in the language of the fallen empire, they could have easily been forgotten (Lifshey 2012).

The first reason is geography. This is because Manila is the central area in which a huge portion of writers in the 20s and 40s met and became recognized, while Cebú would be considered as a peripheral region. The second reason is race. This is based on the fact that José Sedano, a writer born to Spanish parents in Mindanao who, for plenty of reasons would be considered as a canonical author according to Lifshey’s criterion, is marginalized for not being considered sufficiently “Filipino”, despite being born and having lived in the Philippines for 40 years (Lifshey 2012: 125). Nevertheless, these suggestions do not totally explain the process of canonization because in this period there are canonical authors from outside Manila (starting with José Rizal, as it is shown in Figure 1) and creole writers who received the *Premio Zóbel* and are included in anthologies, such as Adelina Gurrea Monasterio, winner of the *Premio Zóbel* in 1955 for her collection of poems *A lo largo del camino*.<sup>13</sup>

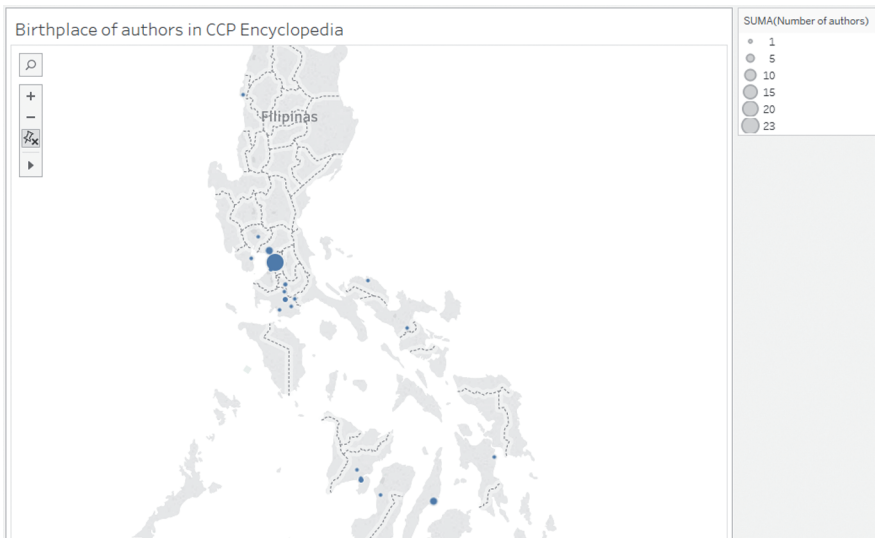
I will try to provide an alternative response by referencing the operational criteria of the literary field as defined by Pierre Bourdieu. In applying these criteria we will be able to identify the common characteristics of canonical authors. The list of authors whom we will consider as ‘canonical’ will be taken from a work that puts together a general list of Philippine authors, and not just those who appear in compilations of Philippine literature exclusively in Spanish. This assures us that the popularity of these texts is not influenced or manipulated by Hispanophile anthologists, but is rather agreed upon within Philippine literature as a whole.

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**13** It should also be considered that in spite of the *Premio Zóbel* being given to Philippine writers in Spanish, it would be incomprehensible to consider only the ‘indios’ and not the creoles as Philippines as per Lifshey’s suggestion, when the Zóbel-Padilla family is eminently creole.

In 1996 the *Encyclopedia of the Cultural Center of the Philippines* (CCP) was published. According to the webpage of the institution founded by Imelda Marcos during the Martial Law era, it is supposedly the definitive reference on Philippine art and culture.<sup>14</sup> The ninth volume, dedicated exclusively to literature, includes works written in the different languages of the country, with special emphasis on Filipino, Spanish, and English. Out of the 681 authors in all the languages included, 53 have written some works in Spanish.<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, in the works section, there are 30 written works in Spanish by 18 different authors.

As we can see in figure 1, from the 53 mentioned, only 19 come from Manila, four from Cebú, four from Iloilo, five from Batangas and four from Bulacan, which would nuance what Lifshy proposed that writers who come from the peripheral regions are omitted from the canon.



**Figure 1:** Map of coincidences in place of birth of the authors with works in Spanish included in the CCP Encyclopedia (1996) showing a certain dispersion from center, Manila.

It is certain though, that 45 out of the 53 writers studied in Manila at some point. To be specific, 35 of these 53 studied at the College of San Juan de Letrán, the Ateneo de Manila University, the University of Santo Tomas, or some combination

<sup>14</sup> <http://culturalcenter.gov.ph/shop/ccp-encyclopedia/> (accessed on 8 May 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Out of the 54, 4 do not have any writings (or literary writings) in Spanish which are preserved.



of these three. We should also bear in mind that all of the writers who were born in Cebú studied at the San Carlos Seminary College, and that all these institutions were exclusively for men. Therefore, the four women on the list would not have been able to study there. The University of Santo Tomas was the first university in Southeast Asia, founded by the Dominicans in the 17th century and with a strong Hispanicizing tendency. The College of San Juan de Letrán, the Ateneo de Manila University of the Jesuits, and the University of Santo Tomas, which educated students in Spanish, served as issuing institutions of “cultural bourgeoisie titles”, which, Pierre Bourdieu (1984: 25) says, “guarantee, without any other guarantee, a competence extending far beyond what they are supposed to guarantee”. The academic titles from these schools serve as cultural nobility titles that legitimize the works of certain authors, or, again according to Bourdieu, these authors “only have to be what they are, because all their practices derive their value from their authors”; these titles “make what [the authors] do the manifestation of an essence earlier and greater than its manifestations” (23–24).

In this case, cultural nobility is linked to postcolonial patterns: during the Spanish colonization period, Spaniards and creoles occupied the upper class with the mestizos; the Manila elite spoke in Spanish, which gave the language a certain mark of exclusivity. On the other hand, the North American culture, which seemingly exerted greater effort in making itself available to all social classes in the entire Philippine territory, lacks the elite credentials in order to seem ‘distinguished’.<sup>16</sup>

The credentials of the bourgeois cultural elite are reaffirmed by the observation that 31 of the writers had white-collar careers: 12 lawyers, 2 judges, 6 doctors, 3 pharmacists and 8 made a living primarily in journalism. Among the 13 who taught at established universities, 6 were full-time professors. On the other hand, 4 were secondary school teachers. These professions, according to Bourdieu, possess a higher level of cultural capital and thus, have more credibility and distinction (1984). The cultural capital socially attributed to them would then be a product of a *habitus*, and of the construction of *taste* in these social classes.

But there is even more: perhaps the most surprising statistic appertains to politics. Out of the 53 writers considered in this study, 43 were born between 1850 and 1900, and 21 had political positions. Those who did not hold political positions were military men. The politicians of that period were considered national heroes. They were known for being the makers of the nation and for being part of the

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**16** The idea of the said effort, defended by Americans and Philippine citizens as ‘common knowledge’, is questioned among others, by Carlos Valmaseda (2014), who refers to traveller statements like Red Hill, or speeches by Philippine presidents during the American period like Luis Quezón (Valmaseda 2014: 92).

founding myth,<sup>17</sup> and had inclinations that countered the trends at the time. Among the actions that challenged the status quo was writing in Castilian Spanish instead of in English.

However, the canonized writers in the *Encyclopedia of the Cultural Center of the Philippines* were also contributors to some newspapers at the time. One of the newspapers was published in Spain near the end of the 19th century, which was a time when the older members of the group were studying there. This newspaper was called *La Solidaridad*, in which 6 of them had articles and works published (Cano 2011). In regard to the newspapers published in the Philippines, 14 wrote for *La Vanguardia* and 10 for *Renacimiento*, which are at the center of the graph shown in figure 2 (and figures 2.1 and 2.2).<sup>18</sup>

Other publications for which they wrote are the newspapers *La Opinión* and *Philippine Free Press* (in the Spanish section of this bilingual daily), and the magazine *Excelsior*.<sup>19</sup> In the figure below we can see that writers tended to gravitate around and patronize certain periodicals. These publications were considered as ‘nationalist’ for they criticized not the Spanish but the American regime, and advocated the independence of the Philippines from American rule and the renewal of its cultural connections with Spain (Cano 2011b).

In the graphs, we can also see that some writers who did not produce significant literary works, as Pedro Aunario or Vicente Padriga, are included and have in fact contributed to several pro-independence newspapers. This fact supports the idea that, while it is an encyclopedia of literature, political achievements prevail over literary achievements.

To understand this, we must keep in mind that the Philippines, during the first three decades of the 20th century, was the object of rivalry between two influential powers –the United States and Spain– with two important cultural languages, English and Spanish, even as it was trying to create its own national identity. Pascale Casanova explains how national literature is created precisely in the heart of these inter-literary and international fights and how they side with nationalism: “Literatures are not a pure emanation of national identity; they are constructed through literary rivalries, which are always denied, and struggles, which are always international” (Casanova 2004: 35). As for the Hispano-American rivalry in maintaining their influence on the Philippines, we take into account what Casanova suggests: that “each state is constituted by its relations with other states, by its rivalry and competition with them” (Casanova 2004: 35).

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17 This topic is further explained in the abovementioned article (Ortuño Casanova 2015a).

18 Some wrote for both newspapers.

19 Only data obtained from the Encyclopedia of the CCP is used.

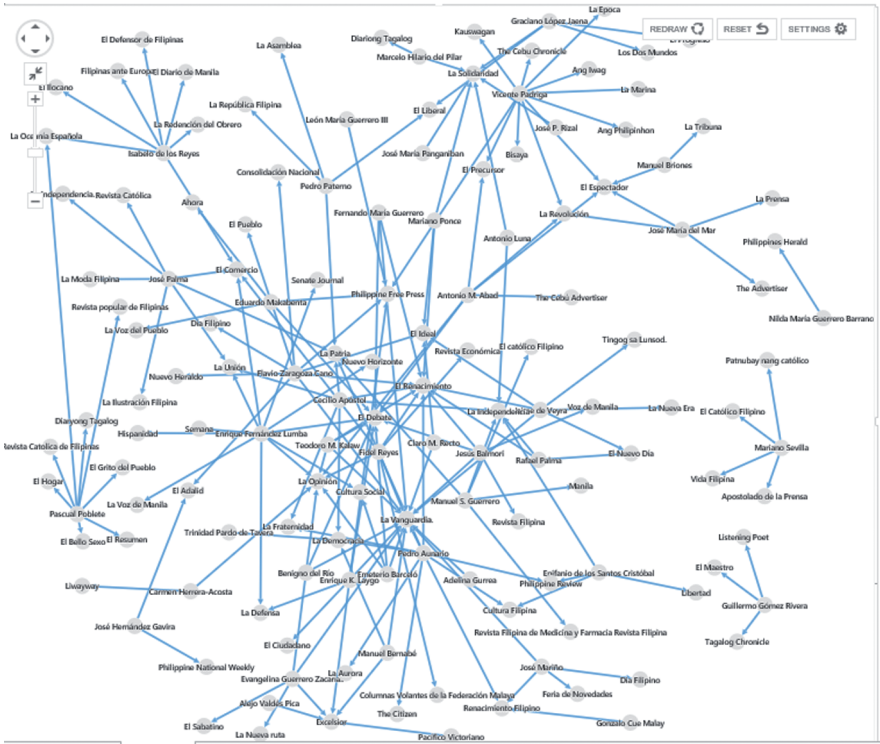


Figure 2: Graph with the relations between authors and newspapers according to the CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art

Spanish had certainly been the dominant language for three centuries during the colonization period, if not the most spoken one. It might seem that writing in Spanish meant coinciding with the value system of the invaders, being part of their literature, as well as making concessions against the country’s own identity. However, we must highlight that, as Vicente Rafael states, the first stirrings of Philippine nationalism were in the Spanish language, and this is for two reasons: firstly the diversity of origins of the heterogeneous group, which was constituted by individuals of different geographical and linguistic backgrounds, and secondly, the fact that those *propagandistas* sought being recognized by Spain and having Philippine representation in the Spanish Parliament. Therefore, according to Rafael, “This wish brought with it the imperative to communicate in a language that could be heard and understood by those in authority” (Rafael 2006: 19). With these reasons for the predominance of Philippine nationalist literature written in Spanish, Bienvenido Lumbera, Vicente Rafael and Epifanio San Juan highlight the previous imposition of Western culture in Spanish

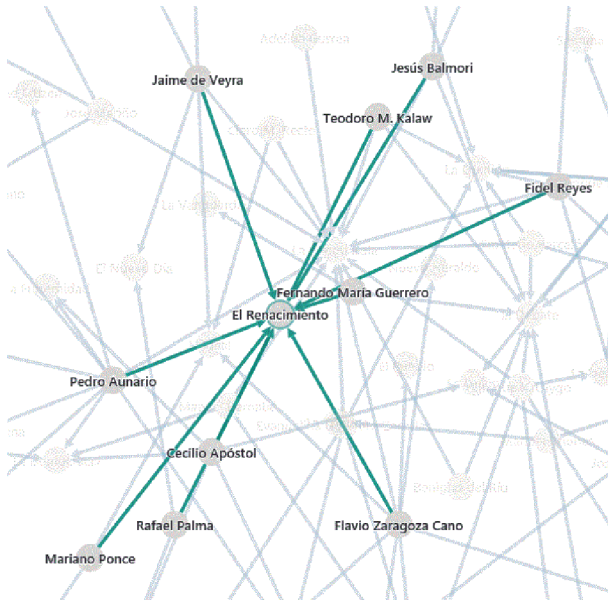
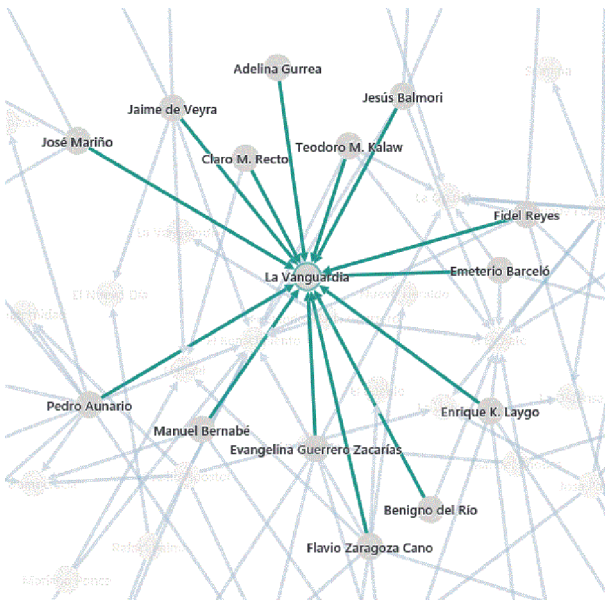


Figure 2.1: Foregrounding authors related to *El Renacimiento*

over the native languages in the archipelago for centuries. Lumbera explains how with art-making in the Philippines, which had already been existing prior to the arrival of Western art and civilization, “the people did not see these items as art, and neither could the colonial masters whose concept of art did not extend to such forms of expression by a populace considered to be uncivilized” (Lumbera 2000: 8). The Western concept of beauty derived from the Renaissance and from a mercantilist society heavily influenced the native bourgeoisie and intellectuals who saw local genres such as *comedias* as “obstructions to ‘literary progress’” (Rafael 2006: 123). Therefore, what we have here are two facts: first, that Spanish was the *lingua franca* of the Philippine *propagandistas* and second, that there was a historical deactivation of local languages in social and literary enterprises, borne of Western contempt inherited by the Philippine elite.

After the first generation of nationalist writers in Spanish, the trend continued in the same language. Nationalist literature was, therefore, an activist literature by and for the Philippine bourgeoisie elites, as the language had never really been spoken by the majority of the country’s people. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the question of what literary language should be used became more complicated with the arrival of the American invader. American efforts in education allowed English to be more widespread. Epifanio San Juan reports, however,



**Figure 2.2:** Foregrounding of authors who wrote for *La Vanguardia*

that during the years of American colonialism, the Philippine bourgeoisie and *ilustrado* class collaborated with the present colonial power, and propaganda against the former Spanish regime, as well as the institutionalization of liberalism consequently made “subjective idealism and egocentric withdrawal from public life characterize the writings of the first generation of English-speaking writers aspiring to communicate to their American ‘superiors’” (San Juan 2005 [1984]: 75). Literature in English entailed initially an acceptance of the American regime.

Now, writing in Spanish implied an apparent breakaway from the established order consisting of the ideas of independence of the time. Apparent, because what was considered as breakaway in those circumstances was, in reality, a continuation of the previous order, whose prestige sprang for being the minority discourse. Nevertheless, during the second wave of the “golden age”, writing in Spanish did not anymore have a revolutionary intention, but rather was characterized by a patriotic conservatism and nostalgia for the past.

In the formation of the Philippine nation, the Spanish-speaking and English-speaking generations engaged in a face off to define their own national identity in relation to the two colonizing powers, that is, in trying to form a model of the state. The Spanish-speaking generation is composed of the cultural and political elite and referred to Spanish as a universal language, as ‘denationalized capital’

for their national project (Casanova 2004: 34). While the people rejected Spain as colonizer, they embraced the Hispanic as a macrocommunity in which to take shelter and which could be considered as a moral model towards the construction of identity. This is what Bourdieu would call *Imperialism of the universal* and what Pascale Casanova would explain as “the use of denationalized capital for national purposes” (Casanova 2004: 34). Spain would try to take advantage of this sympathy to what is Spanish and would send cultural ambassadors to the Philippines. Such were the cases of Salvador Rueda, Blasco Ibáñez, Gerardo Diego and Julio Palacios, as well as some other renowned intellectuals and scientists, who went to the Philippines as goodwill ambassadors in cultural missions between 1915 and 1935 (Luque Talaván 2013; Díaz-Trechuelo 2000: 677–678). All of this makes us think that the creation of a Philippine literature in Spanish is indeed connected to the necessity of forming a model of ennobled patriotism that strengthens the newly-built national identity.

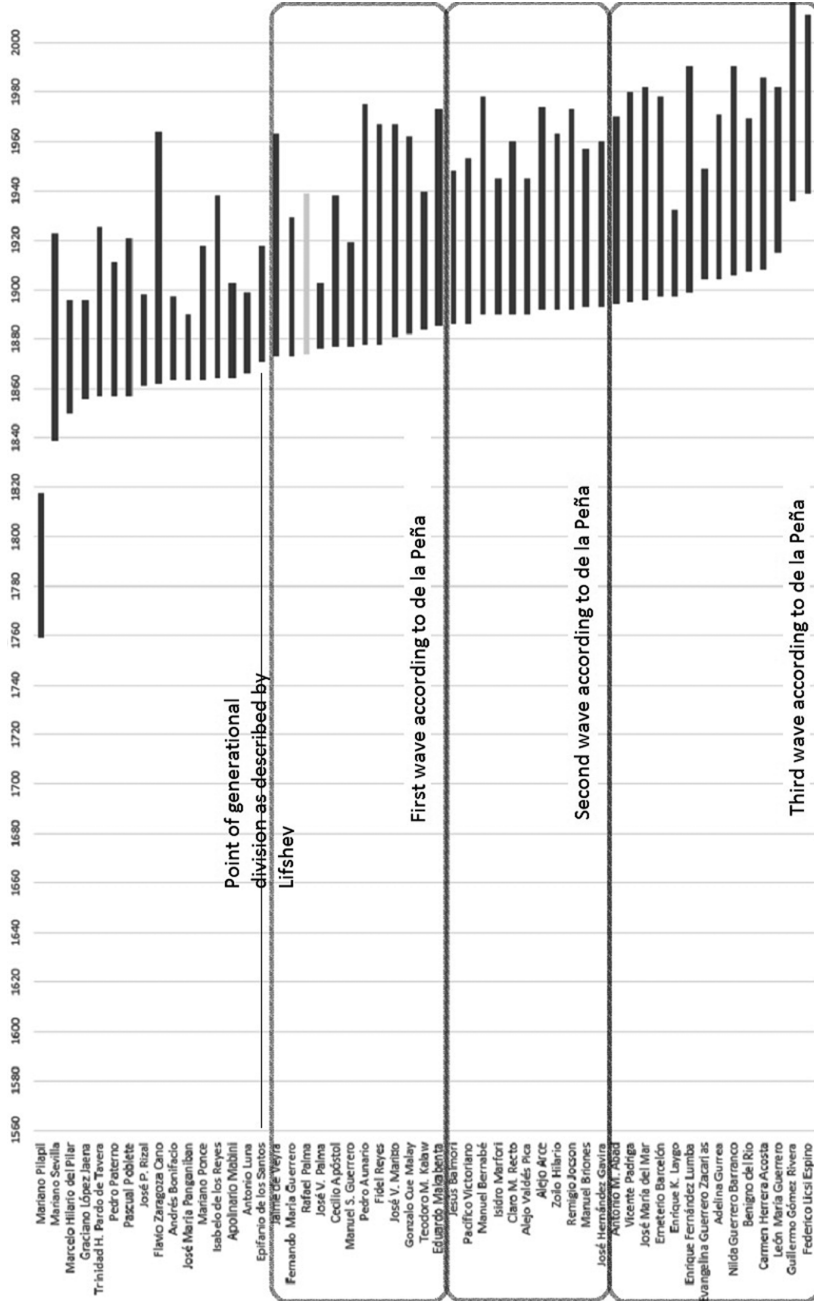
However, the relevance of the social and nationalistic roles of those writers, which earned them an entry in the *Encyclopedia of the CCP*, contradicts the lack of success that their works had in their time and their scarce public reception, as we have seen in the beginning. The failure of their literary endeavors is seen in the fact that some works were left unpublished (for example, *Los pájaros de fuego* by Jesús Balmori) and that works that were published in newspapers or in Spain were never compiled in volumes. Such was the case despite the fact that many of the writers at the time received the *Premio Zobel*, which started to be granted in 1923 when the writers of *La Solidaridad* and other ‘heroes of the revolution’ had already stopped writing. The reasons for the real failure of the project, despite being headed by the most prominent people of the country, holders of a great part of the cultural, as well as the economic capitals, remain to be explained.

## The generational immobility

Going back to Even-Zohar, the Israeli scholar also highlights, as we have said, the role of the elites in the canonization of a repertoire of works and the cultural limitation that their behavior imposes (Even-Zohar 1990: 17–22). That is to say, in the theory of polysystems – moving systems in which many interrelated factors affect one another, as it happens in a literary system, and in which there are continuous conflicts and changes from the center to the periphery – the group considered to be elite at the time is the one that decides literary preferences. If we concede that the social and cultural elites also change (reformists against conservatives, for example), there should have been a change in the canonical

repertoire of every period. However, upon looking closer at the ‘canonical’ Philippine literature, we find that according to de la Peña and Lifshy, there may be two or three different groups of writers but their works have so much in common. Lifshy (2012: 118) proposed two waves: that of the *propagandistas* around the time of Rizal, and that of the ‘golden age’ around the time of Recto, Bernabé, Apóstol y Balmori. De la Peña was more accurate when he proposed three waves within the ‘golden age’. The first wave is composed of those writers connected to the revolution such as Fernando María Guerrero (1878–1929), Cecilio Apóstol (1877–1938), José Palma (1876–1903), and the journalist Rafael Palma (1874–1939). The second wave is constituted by Jesús Balmori (1887–1948), Manuel Bernabé (1890–1960), and Claro Recto (1890–1960). Finally, he included those born during the American occupation in the third wave (although he also includes some born before, without ample justification), Antonio Abad (1899–1970), Enrique Fernandez Lumba (1899–1990), Evangelina Guerrero Zacarias (1904–1949), Enrique Laygo (1897–1932), Flavio Zaragoza Cano (1892–1994), Teodoro Kalaw (1884–1940) and Jaime de Veyra (1873–1963) (De la Peña 2011b: 119).

There is a gap of 30 years between the birth of the first writers and the last ones. If we include the *propagandistas* like Rizal (1861–1896) and Pedro Alejandro Paterno (1857–1911), the gap would be more than 40 years. Moreover, the generational events which became the factor that brought them together are different: while the first group spent their youth during the Spanish period and fought in both uprisings, against Spain and against the American occupation, members of the latter group were born during the American occupation and experienced the reeducation which took place at that time, which makes their main generational event the Second World War. This is why parts of their works tackle different topics: *propagandistas* would write to publicize the Philippines in Spain, where most of them lived. Such was Paterno's objective with *Ninay* (Lifshy 2012: 33). Another of these writers' objectives was to reveal the abuses of the Spanish authority in the Philippines as Rizal did in *Noli me tangere*. On the other hand, those who lived during the Philippine revolution wrote poems against the United States, such as “Al yankee” by Cecilio Apóstol (1950: 71–73) (see Jolipa 1996). The younger ones focused more on the Japanese occupation and the war, as Balmori did in his novel *Los pájaros de fuego*. But they also have a common gravitational center, a series of topics that are often repeated: glorifying Spain, the praise of what is typically Philippine like the *sampaguita*, rural life and national heroes, and the mestizo origin of the country (Ortuño Casanova 2015a). In most cases, and before a more rigorous quantitative study is done, I would suggest that the style of the poems follow some kind of nationalist *modernista* style, instead of giving in to the anticipated generational conflict, that



**Figure 3:** Chronograma of Philippine authors with works in Spanish included in the *CCP Encyclopedia of Philippine Art*, vol.IX (1996).



is, rejecting the aesthetics of the preceding group, as Bloom observes about generational breeches.<sup>20</sup>

It seems that the absence of peripheral groups that put pressure on the central system fossilized the Philippine literary system, filling it with followers of the predecessors. Even-Zohar explains it as such:

The canonized repertoires of any system would very likely stagnate after a certain time if not for competition from non-canonized challengers, which often threaten to replace them. (...) On the other hand, when no pressures are allowed release, we often witness either the gradual abandonment of a system and movement to another (...) or its total collapse by means of a revolution (...). It seems that when there is no 'sub-culture' (popular literature, popular art, 'low culture' in whatever sense, etc.), or when exerting real pressures on canonized culture is not permitted, there is little chance of there being a vital canonized culture. Without the stimulation of a strong 'sub-culture,' any canonized activity tends to gradually become petrified. The first steps towards petrification manifest themselves in a high degree of boundness and growing stereotypization of the various repertoires (Even-Zohar 1990: 16–17).

The absence of a subculture in the case of the Philippines is caused by the gradual replacement of Spanish by the native languages and English. This displacement heavily impeded the cultural progress in Spanish. There was indeed a conflict with the previous generation, but it was more of a linguistic conflict rather than of literary styles: members of the elite born from 1920 onwards would mainly use English as the carrier of culture and education, ignoring and setting aside Spanish, which is from the time of their parents. This is the case of Gémino Abad, son of Antonio M. Abad who was one of the last novelists who continued to write and publish in Spanish until the 60s (*La vida secreta de Daniel Espeña* was published in 1960). He won the *Premio Zóbel* in 1929 and was a professor of Spanish at the Far Eastern University and at the University of the Philippines, where he co-founded the department of Spanish. He created the Federation of Spanish professors in 1938 and became secretary of the Philippine academy of the Spanish language. His son, Gémino Abad, is an important Philippine writer and critic in English (only), professor emeritus of the Department of English and Comparative Literature at the University of the Philippines. This is the most evident face of a generational conflict that passes through the literary level to reach the linguistic.

Since then, cultural production in Spanish halted. Few were able to move past the styles of late romanticism and modernism, which were imbued with grandiloquence. The followers adhered to an already existent style for two

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**20** Isaac Donoso considers modernism as a movement relevant to Philippine nationalism and its origins, exemplified by the poetry of Zoilo Hilarario (Donoso 2013: 209–213).

reasons. Firstly, because as we have seen, the prestige of the predecessors was marked not only by literary, but also by social, economic and principally, political reasons. Secondly, because in truth, as seen by Even-Zohar, they ended up modifying the repertoire to keep themselves in the center of the system and make it their own (Even-Zohar 1990: 17).

I said that there is a second reason for the followers' attachment to the first generation which made them preserve the previous generation's poetic style rather than change it. Even-Zohar affirms it in the following:

As a rule, the center of the whole polysystem is identical with the most prestigious canonized repertoire. Thus, it is the group which governs the polysystem that ultimately determines the canonicity of a certain repertoire. Once canonicity has been determined, such a group either adheres to the properties canonized by it (which subsequently gives them control of the polysystem) or, if necessary, alters the repertoire of canonized properties in order to maintain control (Even-Zohar 1990: 17).

Thus, the repertoire was modified beginning during the American period, in order to adjust to the new circumstances. This meant preserving the works of a previous generation in supposed decadence, so that new writers still were attached to themes written about by their predecessors. A disturbance to this existing state of affairs took place when the next batch of writers steered clear of criticizing the American regime, and considered their Spanish-speaking forerunners as victims of nostalgic agony. These writers opened their arms to the influence of American inculturation by writing in English and by breaking out of the enclosure of Philippine literature at the time to consider new schools of thought coming from the new continent.

To sum up, we can say that the canon of Philippine literature in Spanish is formed with regard to social and political reasons related to nationalism, politics and a Westernized and elitist sense of what is 'intellectual', rather than to literary reasons. This sense of intellectuality and therefore prestige, is imbued by colonial language policies and cultural imposition, much to the detriment of native languages and cultures, and, initially, of the English language, as nationalist literature was at the outset written in Spanish. The prestige of certain characters of Philippine culture has been built upon this base, while their writings remain unknown and ignored by a majority of the public. This conclusion leaves open two remaining tasks: first, a cataloging and recuperation of literary works of Philippine authors in Spanish published as books and in newspapers and preserved in different libraries, to give a real idea of the volume of literature written before World War II in comparison to what has been 'canonized'. And second, taking on an integrative study of Philippine literature which should include peripheral works in Spanish as well as Philippine literatures in other languages.

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