

# AN INTRODUCTION TO PENINSULAR PROSE FICTION OF THE PHILIPPINES, 1859-1897

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## Part I: General Comments\*

ALTHOUGH HISTORIES AND CHRONICLES OF THE PAST HAVE BEEN CONSULTED by writers and scholars for information on Philippine society and culture, the prose fiction of nineteenth-century *peninsulares* has been largely neglected and overlooked. This body of literature is important not only because it contributes to a comprehensive view of Philippine literature but also because the writers were the elite of Philippine colonial society. As such, their outlook, observations, and experiences embodied in the literature they produced are potentially rich sources for cultural and social studies.

The prose fiction produced by *peninsulares* includes the full-length novel and the *novelita* or *novela corta*. Although imprecise in their use of literary terms, the *peninsulares* produced novels of adventure, *novelas de costumbres*, pietistic and instructive fiction as well as installment novels that appeared in the literary section of periodicals.<sup>1</sup> These appeared from 1859 to 1899, a period when romanticism as a dominant literary movement was elsewhere in decline. Although realism and naturalism were the literary techniques of the latter half of the nineteenth century, the bulk of Peninsular fiction were conceived along definitely romantic lines.

As writers, *peninsulares* assumed missions which, though moderate, were as varied as the individuals themselves. Their concerns centered on issues unlikely to provoke controversy. The idealized goals and the highly imaginative outpourings of the romantic are rejected for such pragmatic goals as the extirpation of the Filipino's reliance on *mediquillos*, the education of women, and the choice of a husband.

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\* The second part of this article will present an annotated bibliography of Peninsular Prose Fiction.

<sup>1</sup> An example is Felipe del Pan who refers to *Los pretendientes de Carmen ó perfiles de novios*, (Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1882) as a *cuento*, a *novelita*, and an *historia*. For a discussion of the literary form employed by *peninsulares* see my doctoral dissertation: *Peninsular Prose Fiction of the Philippines, 1859-1897: Fact in Fiction*, (Syracuse University, 1968), pp. vi, vii, 19-21.

Like their Spanish counterparts, these authors do not identify intimately with nature. The glories of nature are well described, but its influence on man or man's susceptibility is not portrayed. Themes and plot are romantic. Tragic youth, love, honor, imaginary and actual voyages, justice, the past, orphans, pirates, servants, and social outcasts are favorite themes. Specific historical events are ignored. The Christian spirit, emphasizing the Catholic faith, is pervasive; censorship would not permit otherwise. Adventure and love are interlaced with realistic descriptions of Philippine life.

The romantic style is not generally found, but where used it tends to be sentimental and pietistic rather than exuberant. Except for one attempt at experimentation (*El cofre cerrado* by Vasquez de Aldana and Entrala),<sup>2</sup> the writers seemed content with conventional forms. The narrated novel, or *novelita* in which the author assumes the role of narrator and interpolates his comments and opinions, is a favored form as is the novel written from the viewpoint of an omniscient third person. Flashbacks, digressions, cultural symbolism, and touches of local color in the form of descriptive passages about primitive Filipino tribes and indigenous customs lend variety to the plots.

The beginning of realism is found in the *costumbrista* narratives written by *peninsulares*; as a literary method, it is attempted by Felipe del Pan in *Los pretendientes de Carmen*.<sup>3</sup> Naturalism, concerned with proving or disproving a scientific theory, is represented in Cañamaque's *Novela de Filipinas: Candelario*.<sup>4</sup> Taken as a picture of the uglier aspects of life, *Clara Atkins*,<sup>5</sup> by Montojo, is a narrative in this direction.

The authors labored under conditions that were decidedly unfavorable: Censorship, a partial or total commitment to their church, their government, and the ideals of their race, tended to obscure their goals. Nonetheless, these writers offer deeper, more human implications to the tensions, problems, and questions of their times. They attempted to formulate questions and answers which their society raised and to crystallize emotional and intellectual evaluations of the anxieties of the era. As such, this body of prose fiction constitutes a legacy that speaks of a determined effort to assert the place of the writer in society. They kept alive, despite great odds, a tradition that began with the early friars who transplanted to Philippine soil the literary conventions of their times.

<sup>2</sup> Antonio Vasquez de Aldana y Francisco de Paula Entrala, "El cofre cerrado," *Trastos viejos* (Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1884).

<sup>3</sup> José Felipe del Pan, *Los pretendientes de Carmen ó perfiles de novios*, 2d ed. (Manila: La Oceania Española, 1882).

<sup>4</sup> Francisco Cañamaque y Jimenez, "La novela de Filipinas: Candelario," *Las Islas Filipinas* (Madrid: M. G. Hernandez, 1880), pp. 69-118.

<sup>5</sup> Patricio Montojo, Leon Aldao, Tomo II: *Clara Atkins* (Manila: Chofre y Cia., 1897).

These narratives are also most valuable to the cultural historian. Many facets and insights into Philippine life are presented, often in detail. They contain ethnographic data unavailable in other non-literary sources. As an illustration of the outlook of a segment of Philippine society, Peninsular fiction can contribute to studies of social consciousness. Furthermore, these narratives are also excellent orientation material for preliminary studies of Philippine culture and can suggest areas for study to the sociologist or anthropologist. Peninsular writers based much of their descriptions and characters on what they actually saw and experienced. Since tradition plays an important role in Philippine society, the prose fiction of these nineteenth-century authors provides new insights into backgrounds of present-day customs and furnishes additional data.

Among significant portrayals in this body of literature are the following: Philippine society in general and Manila society in particular, the *mestizo* psychology, the Filipino character as understood by different Peninsular authors, and customs relevant to the diverse social classes. Philippine society in these narratives is characterized by fragmentation and class stratification based on race rather than money or education. The various groups described are the Spanish, the *mestizo*, the urbanized Filipino, the Moros, the Negritos (Zamboanga and Luzon) and other primitive tribes. These portrayals are honest representations of the legal and social realities of the period.

The composite picture of Manila society consists of Spaniards, *hijos del pais*, and wealthy *mestizos*. Within the narratives, this society has an appetite for the pleasures and foibles of the *beau monde* and a concern for love, money, and gossip. These people are cliquish, unconcerned with politics, and generally enervated. Behind this facade are the concepts of *prestigio de la raza*, vanity, and superficial values.

The *mestizo*, as symbolized by Peninsular authors, wears many faces. He is shown in his humbler state—uneducated and poor—as well as in his ascendancy. His roles range from that of a servant to a leader outside the pale of both law and church. His physical attributes are always described in flattering terms; his aspirations are purely social. Without implying political overtones, the *mestizo* is so depicted that his discontent is readily felt or sensed by the reader. Furthermore, the authors' attitude toward him, whether expressed in comic, grudging, or objective terms, generally admits his latent power. In fictional terms, this power is partly symbolized in the *mestizo's* wealth and wiliness and in the *mestiza's* seductive beauty and charm. As a group, the *mestizos* seem more concerned with social acceptance rather than with political or social theories. They are concerned with asserting themselves individually, for group consciousness or solidarity

is not evident. They consider themselves above the typical Filipino and are concerned with amassing wealth and with social position.

The Filipino, as a distinct personality with a definite psychology and expressed aspirations does not appear in these narratives. He is constantly examined, his personality often dissected and his customs scrutinized; yet, he never occupies center stage long enough to reveal himself. He is the inscrutable servant, an enigma despite the theories fashioned by those around him. However, Filipino culture and society receive adequate attention.

Philippine society, the urban and the elite, comes through with immediacy and honesty, for Peninsular prose fiction is replete with customs and attitudes described with consistent accuracy and often in meticulous detail. The nuances of the *peninsulares*, *hijos del país*, and Filipinos are there for the scholar to study as well as for the reader to enjoy.

As previously implied, the Peninsular writer was generally an observer rather than a participant of his society. In no way was this detrimental to his work. Actually, his determination to avoid the controversies of the era was his salvation, for this determination freed him for valuable observations and reflections on the culture he confronted.

In conclusion, Philippine prose fiction, as produced by Peninsular writers, presents a world that is both well defined and broadly outlined. It includes all sectors of Philippine population and describes important aspects relating to their way of life. The narratives are reliable and valuable sources for students of Philippine culture. To the scholar of Philippine literature, they present a vital part of the country's literary past. Indirectly, these narratives helped to bring the literary currents of the world to Philippine shores. They also kept the writer before the public eye until the era conducive to the cultivation of literary arts finally arrived.

## Part II: An Annotated Bibliography\*

The lack of adequate bibliographies made the task of studying Peninsular prose fiction difficult. The following bibliography makes no claim to completeness; it is, however, the result of a careful investigation of general and specialized Spanish, Philippine and Oriental bibliographies as well as Filipiniana materials which the author thought might lead to the discovery of novels and *novelitas*.

Cañamaque y Jimenez, Francisco. "La novela de Filipinas: Candelario," *Las Islas Filipinas*. Madrid: M. G. Hernandez, 1880, pp. 70-118. The *bata*, Can-

\* This bibliography appears as Appendix B in my unpublished doctoral dissertation: *Peninsular Prose Fiction of the Philippines, 1859-1897; Fact in Fiction* (Syracuse University, 1968).

- delario, is Hispanized for a few years by a kindly friar of a Filipino village. At the friar's death, however, Candelario returns to the forests to live.
- Chápoli Navarro, Antonio. *Pepín*. Madrid: Fernando Fe, 1892. A novel on a Peninsular slowly corrupted by Manila society.
- Clemente, Manuel. "La venganza de Fajardo," in *Archivo del Bibliófilo Filipino* by Wenceslao Emilio Retana. Madrid: M. Minuesa de los Ríos, 1898, IV, 367-446. Alonso Fajardo de Tenza, governor-general of the Philippines (1618-1624), kills his adulterous wife after ordering a friar to hear her confession.
- Del Pan, José Felipe. *Cinco horas en el limbo ó nuestras tataranietas*. 2<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1883. Don Roque is finally convinced of the merits of a sound education for women after a blow on the head causes him to imagine himself in limbo where he meets his distinguished great-grandchildren. The setting of this novelita is Manila.
- . *Dies millones de pesos ó El tesoro de la Marianas*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1886. In this novelita, the author attempts to persuade his Manila public that he holds the key to a treasure. The adventures of Robertson, who buried the treasure, begin in Peru and end in the Marianas.
- . *Dos meses de licencia ó Bocetos de novias*. 2<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1882. A Spanish officer stationed in Bajadoz, Spain, first courts a captivating city girl then a sensible country girl. Unable to decide whom to marry, he goes off to the wars instead.
- . *El aderezo de Paquita*. 3<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1887. Paquita, an *hija del país*, reaps nothing but unhappiness from the possession of fabled jewels. The novelita is also a commentary on nineteenth-century Manila society.
- . *El caballo de copas*. 2<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1887. A young Spaniard in Manila rejects traditional means of restoring honor—a duel—and demands instead a sum of money or a public apology for an affront.
- . *El médico de su honra; ¿La leyenda Filipina ó el drama de Calderon?* Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1888. Another fictionalization of Governor-General Alonso Fajardo de Tenza's vengeance. See Clemente, Manuel.
- . "Hay muerte de amor," *Cinco horas en el limbo ó mis tataranietas*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1884. In a Spanish village, the youth and inexperience of three young men bring anguish and death to lovers whom they intended to help.
- . *¡Hay que vivir! ó Quien la enredó que la desenrede*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1884. An *hijo del país*, confused by pietistic articles and his own desires for wealth, mismanages his properties. His wife, seeing his financial distress, takes over their management and sends her husband to enjoy the curative waters of Mariquina.
- . *Idilio entre sampaguitas ó ¿Ni canto ni aroma ni amor?* 2<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1886. A young Spaniard suffers business reverses, retires to the Philippine countryside where he lives in idyllic surroundings, and enjoys the platonic friendship of Placida, a *crianza*, who shares his self-imposed exile.
- . "Irene, ó Un punto de educación," *El aderezo de Paquita*. 3<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1887. Variouslly paged. A precocious *hija del país* follows the career of a Peninsular army officer through newspapers from Madrid and eventually marries him.

- . "Íntimos amigos," *Maldiciencia y Expiación*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1888. Variouslly paged. A cynic describes rogues, former intimate friends, who victimized him.
- . "Las medias naranjas," *¡Hay que vivir! o Quien la enredó que la desenrede*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1884. A *novelita* which reads like an exemplar on the choice of a compatible marital partner.
- . *Los pretendientes de Carmen ó pérfiles de novios*. 2<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1882. An astute aunt guides her niece toward the choice of a proper husband. Mores and customs of the *hijos del país* in the Philippines are also revealed.
- . *Maldiciencia y expiación*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1888. Manila society buzzes with excitement over an "indiscretion" of a widow and her daughter. Their respectable status is regained through marriage to the gossipers.
- . *Otre especie de Fausto*. 2<sup>a</sup> ed. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1887. A married man, beset by financial problems caused by his charming but uneducated wife, is reborn. In his second life he courts an educated English girl whom he meets as he pursues an education in England. His choice ends in unhappiness. The hero, Don Segismundo, wonders what female type was destined to bring him happiness.
- . "Reyerta increíble entre un santo prelado y el sobrino del Alcalde Ronquillo," *Diez millones de pesos ó el tesoro de la Marianas*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1886. A clash between a governor-general of the Philippines and a church dignitary is amicably settled through an appeal to *hidalguía*.
- . "Se Parecían," *El aderezo de Paquita*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1887. A fictionalization of a popular belief that people who look alike tend to fall in love with each other. The principal characters are a Spanish officer stationed in a little town in Spain and a widow old enough to be his mother.
- . *Un naufragio del brickbarca Genoveva en la Isla de la Cruz Blanca*. Manila: La Oceanía Española, 1879. A novel on the adventures of a group from the Philippines who create a Utopia in a tropical island.
- Entrala, Francisco de Paula. *El tapis azul*. Manila: Jimenez, Botella y Comp., 1875. This *novelita* describes the courtship of a haughty *mestiza* by two Spaniards who deeply love her.
- . "La chinela verde," *El tapis azul*. Manila: Jimenez, Botella y Comp., 1875, pp. 286-335. A pretty native slipper fascinates a young Spaniard. He traces it to its owner, a *mestiza*, and eventually marries her. This *novelita* is essentially Cinderella in a gothic setting.
- . *Las bienaventuranzas*. Manila: El Porvenir Filipino, 1875. A novel whose principal protagonists are wealthy Spaniards of Manila at odds over a fortune of a deceased relative. The saintly characters of this novel illustrate the lessons of the Beattitudes.
- . *Sin título*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1881. This novel presents the *mediquillo* problem of the Philippines. The heroine Charin, a *mestiza*, married to a Spanish doctor, is the victim of a Chinese herbalist.
- Escamilla, Pedro. *La atalaya de las ánimas*. Manila: El Comercio de Manila, 1899. A complicated novel of guilt-driven lovers who perpetuate the legend of a peak where once an adulterous pair hurled themselves to death.
- García del Canto, Antonio. *Las piratas de Filipinas*. Salamanca: Jacinto Hidalgo, 1888. A Christian *mestizo* turns his back on Catholicism, becomes a Moro

pirate, and steadfastly pursues vengeance on the Spaniards who wronged him. Descriptions of Muslim Filipino life are found in this novel.

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- . *Misterios de Filipinas*. Madrid: La Balear, 1859. With the aid of a Spanish officer, a Filipino with some Spanish blood exposes a hypocritical *quarтерon* who victimizes Filipinos and Spaniards alike.
- García de Latore, Ana. *Amor y vanidad*. Manila: La Industrial, 1887. A novel which illustrates the ways of life of two Spanish families: The Buridels who make their home in Paris and adopt Parisian customs and values, and the De Lasans whose values and traditions are those of a conservative Spanish family.
- López, Ventura Fernández. *El filibustero*. Madrid: M. Minuesa de los Ríos, 1893. Filipino village life as well as the complex of authority which governs the village is well depicted in this novel. It focuses on the affairs of a young Chinese-Filipino lawyer, anxious to win a measure of recognition from his fellow-villagers.
- Lozano de Vilchez Enriqueta. *¡Hay mas Alla!* Manila: Revista Mercantil, 1890. A *novelita* on the transiency of life on earth.
- Lucio y Bustamante, Miguel. *Benito y Rosalia*. Manila: M. Perez, 1882. A pietistic novel on the beauty of gratitude. The characters, though Spaniards who never saw the Philippines, have names of Philippine fruits as surnames.
- Montejo, Patricio. *León Aldao*. Tomo I: *El Vapor Jorge Juan*. Manila: Riva-deneira, 1886. A Spanish naval officer finds adventure in China. He falls in love with a Chinese girl but is rejected by the family.
- . *León Aldao*. Tomo II: *Clara Atkins*. Manila: Chofre y Cia., 1897. The adventures of Aldao in Hongkong and the Philippines. In the Philippines he participates in a duel, finds a mistress, has an encounter with Moros in Zamboanga and observes a few Filipino customs.
- Nombela, Julio. *Dos casos de amor*. Manila: Revista Mercantil, 1889. Two approaches to marriage are illustrated in the love affairs of Arturo and Carlos. The emotional approach results in unhappiness. The setting and characters of this novel are Spanish.
- Rodríguez de Ureta, Antonia. *Pacita, la virtuosa Filipina*. Barcelona: J. Jepús, 1885. This novel presents a contrary picture to a supposedly popular belief that women born in the Philippines tended to be immoral. Pacita, an *hija del país*, bears all sorts of misfortune with exemplary Christian piety and fortitude.
- Sinues de Marco, María del Pilar. *Volver bien por mal*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1872. In a village of Spain, Maria is horribly disfigured by Roque, a rejected suitor who later kidnaps her son. Despite everything, Maria forgives Roque who is touched by her generosity and repents.
- Vasquez de Aldana, Antonio. "Adventures de un cazador de agachonas," *Trastos viejos*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1883, I, 47-103. To satisfy his pregnant wife's craving for wild fowl, Melquiades Calamocha, a minor Spanish official in the Philippines, goes hunting. A series of misadventures befall the inept hunter who finally returns home empty-handed.
- . "Diez, veinte y treinta," *Trastos viejos*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1883, I, 105-146. A *novelita* which traces the life history of a beautiful *mestiza* addicted to gambling.
- . "El niño Zanglotino," *Trastos viejos*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1883, II, 1-181. A *novelita* patterned on Cervantes' *Don Quijote*. The object of the

principal protagonist, however, is not the accomplishment of deeds of chivalry but earning the reputation of a Don Juan. The setting is Spain.

———. "La educación de Ninay," *Trastos viejos*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1883, II, 245-261. A Spaniard in the Philippines meets a convent-bred *mestiza* and dreams of marrying her. His dream reveals the deficiencies of the curricula for women in Manila convent schools.

———. *Maria, la vivandera*. Manila: Porvenir Filipino, 1874. A novel with a European setting. Maria, an orphan, is victimized by an army captain who murders her mother.

———. "Viaje pintoresco al rededor de un *tapis*," *Trastos viejos*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1883, I, 1-34. In this *novelita*, a wily *mestiza* is pursued through the streets of Manila and its suburbs by a determined but hapless and unsuccessful Spaniard.

———, y Entrala, Francisco de Paula. "El cofre cerrado," *Trastos viejos*. Manila: Ramirez y Giraudier, 1883, I, 147-194. An enigmatic note from an eccentric Englishman triggers a series of adventures for Putin, a Filipina factory worker.

Zumel, Enrique. *El primer Borbon*. Manila: Amigos del País, 1890. Against a background of the struggles of Philip of Borbon and Charles of Austria for the Spanish throne, the fortunes of two Spanish couples unfold.