

CONFLICTS AND CONTESTS

A History of the Filipino Novel in English

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Abstract

Since its first appearance in 1921, the Filipino novel in English has always existed at a disadvantage, having to struggle with the reading public's preference for writings in the vernacular languages, a small and not entirely receptive market, and stiff competition from imported English-language novels. What made Filipino authors produce novels in English, then? And why did they continue to do so in increasing numbers throughout the years? This essay seeks to address these questions by exploring the publishing history of Filipino novels in English during the twentieth century and by determining what forces drove the production of English-language novels in the Philippines.

Keywords

bibliography, book history, literary publishing, Philippine literature, quantitative analysis, twentieth century

About the Author

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PROLOGUE

The Man Asian Literary Prize made an immediate impact on the Philippine literary scene. Launched in Hong Kong in 2006, the annual award for new unpublished novels in English was established with the aim “to recognise the work of Asian writers and to bring them to the attention of the world literary community” (“Major New Literary Prize”). Filipino authors responded to it with great energy and enthusiasm. For the contest in 2007, they submitted 21 entries out of the total 243 entries; in 2008, 25 out of the 148; and in 2009, 24 out of the 150 (Gourlay; “2007 Man Asian”; “2008 Man Asian”; Ma). In these first three years of the prize, the Philippines followed India in producing the largest single group of submissions (“2008 Man Asian”; “2009 Man Asian”).

The number of submissions from the Philippines appears phenomenal, for while Filipino authors have been producing novels in English since 1921, they have not done so in such quantities in any given year. Throughout the history of the Filipino novel in English, works have been published in the Philippines at an average of around only two titles per year. It may be surprising then that Filipino authors produced a relatively large total of novels for the Man Asian Literary Prize, but that they responded eagerly to the contest to begin with is not so. Their reaction is consistent with that of other Filipino authors to other occasions or opportunities for writing novels in English during the twentieth century.

I.

This essay explores the publishing history of Filipino novels in English during the twentieth century, with a specific focus on books issued in the Philippines.¹ It identifies the general trends and patterns in the production of the novels while paying some attention to how this relates to the publishing of the genre in Tagalog, the most prominent of the vernacular languages, and in the national language Filipino.² Ultimately, the essay seeks to establish that the production of English-language novels in the Philippines was driven less by market or commercial forces than by certain political, social, and literary events—or, one might say, by conflicts and contests in particular.

This essay is a study in book history. Of the three main questions Robert Darnton urges book historians to confront—(1) “How do books come into being?”; (2) “How do they reach readers?”; and (3) “What do readers make of them?” (“Revisited” 495)—this essay concerns itself with the first. Its examination of the publishing of the Filipino novel in English is premised on Darnton’s Communications Circuit,

the seminal model for the study of the history of books. In this model, Darnton traces the life cycle of the printed book as running from the author to the publisher, the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. Each phase of the cycle and the cycle as a whole are affected by other systems in the surrounding environments: intellectual influences and publicity, economic and social conjuncture, and political and legal sanctions (“History of Books” 11–12). This essay limits its discussion to the phases of author and publisher in the production of Filipino novels in English for the purposes of brevity and focus, as covering more phases or studying the entire circuit would likely run to a book-length project.

The treatment of authors and publishers in this essay is itself, admittedly, limited. In employing the methods of historical bibliography and quantitative analysis, or what Alexis Weedon refers to as “bibliometrics,” it keeps to a focus on the central tendency and trends in the production of the Filipino novel in English. Doing so, this essay does not pursue other tracks of critical inquiry, not to mention the textual analysis of the contents of the novels. For instance, the persistence of Filipino authors in writing novels in English for a limited market rather than in the vernaculars for a mass audience certainly invites an investigation in line with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the field of cultural production. This would be an interesting and valuable study, to be sure, but as it goes beyond the focus of this essay, it would have to be for another book history or literary criticism project to undertake. What this essay takes on is to complement, expand, and update the bibliographical data and analysis presented in the seminal studies by Majid Bin Nabi Baksh Abdul (1970), Leopoldo Y. Yabes (1975), and Joseph A. Galdon (1979) for a more accurate, current, and relevant publishing history of the Filipino novel in English.

II.

The history of the Filipino novel in English begins with the appearance of Zoilo M. Galang’s *A Child of Sorrow*, which he published himself in Manila in 1921. By this time, the novel was already a familiar genre in the Philippines. Tagalog authors had been producing such works since the turn of the century, led by Gabriel Beato Francisco’s *Cababalaghan ni P. Bravo*, which was published in the newspaper *Ang Kapatid ng Bayan* from 12 August to 8 September 1899 (Mojares 170). The early-serialized novels were so popular with readers that they bought the newspapers primarily for the fiction rather than the news (Regalado 13). It was this eager reception that evidently spurred the publication of the Tagalog novel in book form, beginning in 1905 with Valeriano Hernandez at Peña’s *Ang Kasaysayan ng Magkaibigang si Nena at Neneng*, which had been serialized in *Muling Pagsilang* in 1903. Many Tagalog novels followed the lead of Hernandez’s novel, appearing

initially in serial form, then eventually being issued in book form. So vibrant was the literary production from 1905 to 1921 that the period has been called the “Golden Age of the Tagalog Novel” in Philippine literary history.³

Even before all this activity, however, some Filipino novels in Spanish had already been produced: Pedro A. Paterno’s *Ninay: Costumbres Filipinas*, published in Madrid in 1885 and recognised today as the first Filipino novel; and Jose Rizal’s *Noli me tangere*, published in Berlin in 1887, and *El filibusterismo*, published in Ghent in 1891. The novels of Rizal, which depict nineteenth-century Philippine society, including corrupt and abusive Spanish friars, inspired the Philippine Revolution against Spain that began in 1896 and ended in 1898. They are now considered sacred national texts.

A Child of Sorrow, the first Filipino novel in English, is about a thwarted love affair that ends with the heroine dying of a broken heart, leaving the hero pining for her in utter loneliness and misery. It ushered in no resplendent age in literary production. It prompted no great event of national significance. It was met by no acclaim, much less reverence, in its time or thereafter.⁴ Nevertheless, to Galang’s credit, critics and scholars have come to recognise his work as an accomplishment, pioneering as it was and appearing just around two decades after the English language was introduced to Filipinos. The publication of the novel is remarkable, according to Majid, “for in none of the former British colonies in Asia, Africa and the West Indies was an English novel produced so shortly after the arrival of the language” (1).⁵

The English language came to the Philippines not through the British but through a former colony of Britain. The United States of America acquired the Philippines from Spain according to the terms of the Treaty of Paris, signed on 10 December 1898, which formally ended the Spanish-American War (April – August 1898). Even before the treaty was passed, however, the Americans had already begun setting up various public institutions in what would be their new territory. In August 1898, seven schools were established in Manila, with American soldiers serving as the first teachers and with English introduced as the medium of instruction (Agoncillo 372). But it was not until 1901 when the language could be said to have truly arrived in the Philippines. That year, in keeping with their colonial policy of “Benevolent Assimilation,” a key feature of which was the “civilisation” of the natives through education, the American administration began establishing a public school system throughout the country. Teachers from all over the US came to educate children all around the Philippines. As did the soldiers who came before them, the American teachers taught their Filipino students in English. From 1901 to 1903, a total of 2075 schools were founded, an astounding figure considering that only 887 private and

parochial schools were set up during the entire Spanish colonial rule of around 350 years (*Census* 677).

The American administration wasted no time in extending the scope and range of its education policy, which further developed English literacy in the Philippines. In 1903, the government began sending promising Filipino students on scholarships to the US for college degrees. The scholars, called *pensionados*, returned to the Philippines after their studies to pursue careers in education or civil service (Agoncillo 372). In 1908, the public, secular University of the Philippines was established in Manila; it became the leading institution in the teaching of English at the tertiary level.

Among the offspring of the American colonial education system during the early decades of the twentieth century were the first authors and readers of Philippine literature in English. As Francisco Arcellana, who belonged to the second generation of English-language authors, says of the Filipino writer in English:

He began to learn [English] during the 1900's. By the teens, he had learned it well enough to teach it. By the early twenties, he had learned it well enough to use it for the purposes of reportage. By the later twenties he was beginning to use it for the purposes of literature: poetry (verse), plays, short stories, novels. ("Period of Emergence" 607)

The years from 1910 to 1930 are commonly described by scholars as "the period of apprenticeship" in Philippine literature in English, a time when Filipino authors were still trying their hand at writing fiction and poetry in English, typically producing works that were imitative of models from British and American literature. What is remarkable about the writers of this period, as Pura Santillan-Castrence observes, is "the quickness with which they produced works in a language entirely foreign to them and so different from the borrowed tongue, Spanish, to which they were already accustomed" (548).⁶ Galang seems to have been especially quick for not only turning out the first novel in 1921 but also issuing two more within the decade, *Visions of a Sower* in 1924 and *Nadia* in 1929. Most writers in English meanwhile kept to producing short stories, although some immediately followed Galang's lead, such as Fernando Castro whose *The Images of Three Stars and a Sun* appeared in 1927.

The production of Filipino novels in English would display a steady rise in the course of the twentieth century, barring the expected dip during the decade of World War II. Five novels appeared during the decade of the 1920s, 6 during the 1930s, 4 during the 1940s, 12 during the 1950s, 18 during the 1960s, 19 during the 1970s, 51 during the 1980s, and 59 during the 1990s (see figure 1). Three novels were

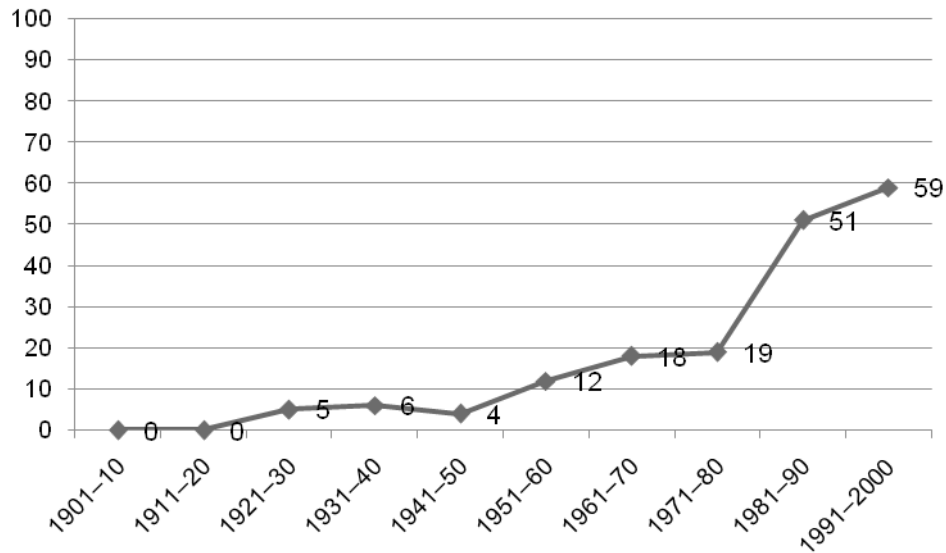


Fig. 1: Filipino novels in English published during the twentieth century, by decade, excluding undated novels (Jurilla, *Bibliography* 12).

undated. These made up a total of 177 novels in English published in the Philippines during the twentieth century.

In general, the novels were written primarily for publication in book form. A number of works appeared as serials in the local periodicals, but evidently no more than 10 of such went on to be published as books. This is in contrast to the situation of Tagalog/Filipino novels, where it was common for works to be issued initially as serials in periodicals before being published in book form. The 177 novels in English were all literary novels. Novels in the subgenres, such as chick-lit, crime, and the graphic novel, would begin to be produced only in the twenty-first century, and generally only in spurts rather than in sustained series with a variety of authors and titles.⁷ This situation also differs from that of the Tagalog/Filipino novel, with its vibrant subgenres of illustrated novels published in comic books (*komiks*) since the 1940s; romance novels published as books beginning in the 1980s; and crime novels, with a series published in the 1990s.

III.

A total of 177 novels published in the course of a hundred years is, admittedly, not an impressive sum. Perhaps it would seem all the more modest, and bafflingly so, when regarded in relation to population and English literacy figures. In 1941, the population was at around 17 million, 27 percent of which claimed the ability to speak English (“NSCB–Statistics”; Bolton and Bautista 4). Two novels were published that year. In 1993, the population was at around 65 million; 56 percent claimed the ability to speak English and 73 percent, the ability to read English (“NSCB–Statistics”; Thompson 73). Six novels were published that year.

When compared with the production of Tagalog/Filipino novels, the total number of novels in English might well appear as measly. During the twentieth century, 365 original titles and 95 translations of foreign titles were published, which come to a total of 460 novels in Tagalog/Filipino. This figure would actually be significantly larger if it included the novels that appeared only in periodicals in serial form, the serialised novels in illustrated form that were featured in comic books (*komiks*), and the romance novel series publications. For instance, one romance novel publisher’s output alone in two decades spectacularly surpasses the total number of all literary novels in Tagalog/Filipino, English, and other vernacular languages published during the entire century: Books for Pleasure, which pioneered the romance novel series, produced over a thousand titles from 1986 to 2003 (Ocampo).

There is no mystery to the disproportional relationships of the production of novels in English with the population and literacy rates, and with that of Tagalog/Filipino novels, as they might be explained by a fundamental feature of the Filipino novel in English. Unlike the writings in the vernacular languages, it did not cater to mass audiences. That Filipino novels in English appeared primarily in book form is indicative of this given that books were more expensive than periodicals, the preferred medium of vernacular fiction. “Throughout most of the twentieth century, a local literary book typically cost more than the minimum daily wage, or what the average Filipino earned in a day” (Jurilla, *Tagalog Bestsellers* 72). Books were less accessible, too, as they were usually available only in bookstores and libraries. Periodicals, on the other hand, could be acquired from a variety of retail outlets more accessible to the masses, such as *sari-sari* stores and itinerant vendors. But perhaps the ultimate factor that would explain why there were so few Filipino novels in English produced when there was a large literate population that could receive them is language.

Filipino novels in English appealed only to a limited market—generally from the high-middle and upper classes who had a genuine command of the English language, which they were able to acquire because they had access to better and

higher education. This elite emerged in the 1930s, when the American colonial policy had taken effect on the social fabric of the Philippine nation. They were fluent primarily in English, Western-orientated, and alienated from the native heritage. But, as such, they generally preferred reading foreign novels over local ones. In fact, imported books (fiction and other trade titles) dominated the Philippine market throughout the twentieth century. In the 1980s, for instance, the ratio of imported titles to local books was estimated at around 100 to one (Maranan 39). This stiff competition from foreign novels has persisted, prompting Jose Y. Dalisay, Jr. to remark that for Filipino literary authors, “our rivals on the bookshelves are not each other, but Tom Clancy, Danielle Steele, John Grisham, and yes, J. K. Rowling” (“Literature” 9). From its limited market, then, Filipino novels in English really could count only on an even smaller audience, one that included mainly students, teachers, and the writers in English themselves.

In spite of a market that appeared unfriendly to their efforts, Filipino authors and publishers produced novels in English—in modest numbers indeed and with low print-runs. During the 1920s to the 1970s, print-runs were typically at 1,000–3,000 copies per edition; during 1980s and the 1990s, usually 500–1,000 copies (*Tagalog Bestsellers* 67). Sales, too, were generally low and slow. Editions took at least around two years to sell out—that is, if they did at all, for many novels never did see their first editions entirely sold (*Tagalog Bestsellers* 70–71). Few titles went on to be re-issued. Of the 177 novels published, only 21 appeared in second edition or impression, and only 18 in multiple editions or impressions.

Market forces thus do not appear to have served as the principal impetus for the production of Filipino novels in English. Evidently, authors and publishers were driven by interests other than making a profit out of selling books. It is telling, for example, that there were no full-time novelists in the Philippines during the twentieth century (as there is none today). The authors who did write novels held day jobs in the academe, journalism, government, media, or business. Even F. Sionil Jose, the most prolific of Filipino novelists in English who produced ten novels from 1962 to 1994 and who is one of the very few commercially successful literary authors in the country, had a career as a journalist and then had his bookshop and publishing house Solidaridad to assure him of a regular income. It is also significant that self-publishing was a common practice among authors, as in the case of Galang and his first 3 novels or of Agustin T. Misola and 7 of or possibly all his 9 novels. Jose himself published his own works beginning in 1965. Just as revealing is the fact that the most productive publisher of novels in English, New Day Publishers, which issued 44 titles during the twentieth century, is a non-profit firm. Finally, one might consider the declaration of Dalisay on the writing of Filipino novels in English:

[I]t doesn't pay, whether financially or psychically. While we may sleep, eat, defecate, and fornicate with our novels perched on our shoulders, the labor of many years won't even be enough to buy you an iPhone, if and when all your royalties come in. No one will stop you on the street, or throw their room keys and underwear at you, because you wrote a 500-page saga. For [Cristina Pantoja] Hidalgo (*Recuerdo* and *Book of Dreams*), the worst part of writing a novel is finding the time to write it; the second worst part, she says, "is knowing that after all that effort, hardly anyone was going to read it, including some of my own friends." (Novelists in Progress 3)

What drove Filipino authors and publishers to produce novels in English then, aside from artistic and personal motivations? A survey of the publishing history of the Filipino novel in English suggests that this drive generally had to do with political, social, and literary conditions.

IV.

In the 1930s, English emerged as the medium of high culture while the vernacular languages were relegated to matters low or popular. Philippine literature in English is said to have come of age during this period as writers produced works of significance both in quantity and quality (Schneider 575). Among those who produced fiction, most concentrated on the short story, with their works appearing in the English-language periodicals of the day. But, as Arcellana recalls, "Something happened in 1935 . . . we began to write novels which were going to be not just novels but the great Filipino novel" ("Towards the Great Filipino Novel" 37). This aspiration was doubtless drawn from the Great American Novel concept, but it might just as well have been inspired by Rizal's example. In 1935, the Commonwealth government was established, and preparations began for the transition of the American colony into the Philippine republic. It was an opportune time for a new historical, national, canonical novel. But it appears that the great plans, or plans of greatness, of the writers did not come to any fruition. Only six novels were published in book form during the 1930s, none of them very great evidently as they have long been out of print and most of their authors have slipped into obscurity. Nevertheless, this output was a slight improvement on the figure of the previous decade. Also, it is notable that the six titles of the 1930s were produced by six different authors—Maximo M. Kalaw, Luis Serrano, Felipe S. Cortez, Vicente Salumbides, León Ma. Guerrero, Jr., and Jose J. Reyes—whereas three of the five novels of the 1920s were written by just one person, Galang.

The 1940s began auspiciously for the novel in English, with two titles released in 1941—N.V.M. Gonzalez's *The Winds of April* and Juan Cabrerros Laya's *His Native*

Soil. Both were winning entries in the Commonwealth Literary Awards of 1940, organised by the Philippine Writers' League in line with its mission of promoting nationalism and social consciousness in Philippine literature. Gonzalez was granted an Honourable Mention while Laya received the First Prize, which came with an award of PhP 2,000, a "princely sum" at the time (Torres 56). The progress of the novel in English was put to a sudden halt by the invasion of the Japanese and by World War II. All writing in English suffered this fate as the Japanese Military Administration not only imposed strict censorship but also discouraged the use of English and instituted Tagalog as the national language. After the war, it took a few years for the novel in English to get back on track, and it did so slowly: one novel appeared in 1948, another in 1950. Yet the Japanese Occupation and World War II did have another effect, one more positive, on the Filipino novel in English: it gave authors something monumental to write about. Many novels, for many years to come, took on the war as subject matter, from Edilberto K. Tiempo's *Watch in the Night* (1953) to Jose P. Leveriza's *Ragay* (1995).

The 1950s, a relatively stable and progressive period, saw a leap in the publishing of novels in English, from four titles in the previous decade to twelve. An increase was further achieved in the 1960s and, curiously, in the 1970s, a period of political and economic strife under the dictatorial rule of Ferdinand E. Marcos. The improved output during the 1970s might suggest that production was unaffected by martial law, which was declared in 1972, and the repressive policies of the Marcos government. But the increment in publication, up at 19 titles from the 18 of the previous decade, might be described as artificial, for 3 of the novels had previously seen publication overseas and were just issued in local editions: Stevan Javellana's *Without Seeing the Dawn* (originally published in Boston in 1947) in 1976; Mig Alvarez Enriquez's *The Devil Flower* (New York, 1959) in 1977; and Misola's *Angels in Bataan* (New York, 1968) in 1979. There was also a limited variety to the output in terms of authorship: one author, Misola, released four titles; two authors, Lina Espina Moore and Jose, two each. Furthermore, most of the novels kept to safe subjects and themes, such as love stories and historical narratives set in the Spanish colonial period or in World War II.

In the 1980s, the publishing of novels in English made an astonishing upturn, from the nineteen titles of the previous decade to fifty-one. This spike clearly had to do with the EDSA Revolution of 1986, the peaceful public uprising that overthrew the Marcos dictatorship. Of the 51 novels published during the decade, 29 were issued in the 1986–1990 period. This burst of activity was doubtless due to the renewed sense of possibility, inspiration, and nationalism as well as the regained freedom of expression that authors felt following the fall of the Marcos regime. As earlier writers drew material for their novels from the World War II experience, so did the new generation of authors from the Marcos dictatorship and the EDSA

Revolution. Martial law and the people power uprising became the new favourite topics and settings for the Great Filipino Novel that had yet to be written. Among the works that featured such were Linda Ty-Casper's *Awaiting Trespass (A Pasión)* (1989), Azucena Grajo Uranza's *Bamboo in the Wind* (1990), Dalisay's *Killing Time in a Warm Place* (1992), Gina Apostol's *Bibliolepsy* (1997), and Renato E. Madrid's *Mass for the Death of an Enemy* (2000).

One might note, however, that the number of novels published in the 1980s before the EDSA Revolution, during the 1981 to 1985 period, was itself significant: a total of 22 titles, which is larger than the entire output of the previous decade. This increase in production beginning in the 1980s, moving up further to the 59 titles of the 1990s, may be due to the fact that, unlike in previous decades, there were publishers who began committing themselves to regularly producing novels in English. New Day is most notable among these, issuing 25 titles in the 1980s and 15 in the 1990s. Significant contributions were made, too, by the trade publishing firms Anvil Publishing and Giraffe Books, both established in the 1990s, and by the presses of the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines (UP). In the 1990s, Anvil published eight novels; Giraffe, twelve; Ateneo Press, three; and UP Press, four. The improving national economy along with rising urbanization and globalization, particularly during the last decade of the century, may have made it more conducive for these firms to invest in literature or, more specifically, in the Filipino novel in English.

One other factor that had an effect on the production of novels in English during the last two decades of the century was an innovation in the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, the most prestigious literary contest in the Philippines. In 1980, for the first time in its thirty years of existence, the Palanca Awards introduced the category of the novel in their annual contest. This served as a new incentive for authors to produce full-length fiction. Indeed, Philippine literary writing in general is known to peak a few months before the deadline of the Palanca Awards and then "dry up" after the awards night until the next deadline (Florentino 9). The novel category of the awards, however, ran yearly only until 1984, reportedly due to the low number of entries; it was open once every three years thereafter. It seems significant nonetheless that four of the novels published during the 1980s and four in the 1990s were winners of the Palanca Awards. Aside from the prestige that the Palanca Awards offered authors, they also granted generous cash prizes for the novel category. In 1987, for instance, the winner of the grand prize for the novel in English Alfred A. Yuson received PhP 75,000 for his work *Great Philippine Jungle Energy Café* (Paculan 5).⁸

Late in the century, another literary contest appears to have made an impact on the production of Filipino novels. The Centennial Literary Prize of 1998 caused

quite a stir among authors. Held in commemoration of the independence of the Philippines, the contest offered the winners an honour of national significance and a tremendous monetary award: PhP 1,000,000 for the first prize, PhP 750,000 for the second, and PhP 500,000 for the third. According to Cristina Pantoja-Hidalgo, one of the judges of the novel in English category, around 40 titles were accepted as qualified entries, although many more were actually submitted. Of the four winning novels, one was published in 1998, Yuson's *Voyeurs & Savages*; two in 2000, Eric Gamalinda's *My Sad Republic* and Charlson Ong's *An Embarrassment of Riches*; and the other in 2002, Uranza's *A Passing Season*.

The cash prizes offered by the Palanca and Centennial awards, and even that of the Commonwealth contest in 1940, are certainly significant, for most authors were unlikely to earn that much from the royalties of their published novels. While those who join literary contests generally do not claim, or at least admit, that they do so for the money, it seems undeniable that financial gain served as a motivation for them to produce and submit entries. Yet earning from an award was a reality only a few authors enjoyed; for the many others, it was a mere possibility that served as just one among other incentives for writing novels.

V.

Each author certainly has his/her own personal if not unique reasons for writing in a specific genre, using a particular language. But as no author exists in isolation, he/she does share a surrounding environment with other authors of his/her time and place, as well as the other figures involved in the life cycle of the printed book, from publishers to readers. This environment—with its cultural, economic, political, and social systems—naturally affects the author, influencing in one way or another the production of his/her work.

Of the elements in the surrounding environment that drove Filipino authors to produce novels in English in the Philippines during the twentieth century, economic considerations appear to be the least influential. Commercial success evidently was not an impelling factor for authors given that the novels were typically issued in small print-runs and their sales were generally low and slow. What appears to have mattered more as a motivation were political and social circumstances on a national scale—the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth government, the harrowing experience of the Japanese Occupation and World War II, the oppressive period of martial law under Marcos, and the EDSA Revolution with its attendant spirit of renewal—which gave authors something to write about. No less significant in encouraging the production of novels in English were literary

contests—the Commonwealth Literary Awards, the Palanca Awards, and the Centennial Literary Prize—which gave authors something to write for and, in the case of the winners, earn from as well. That generations of Filipino authors found inspiration and occasion through the years to produce novels in English brought about the development of the genre in the Philippines and sustained its growth in small but nevertheless steady and sure measures.

EPILOGUE

In the early twenty-first century, when nothing particularly extraordinary or revolutionary was shaking up Philippine politics and society, it seems that the primary event that drove Filipino authors to write novels in English was the Man Asian Literary Prize. The successful efforts of some contestants provided added stimulus. In the 2007 award, Dalisay's *Soledad's Sister* made it to the shortlist. In 2008, Yuson's *The Music Child* was short-listed, and Miguel Syjuco's *Ilustrado* won the grand prize. In 2009, Gamalinda's *The Descartes Highlands* was also short-listed. But Dalisay suggests that the large number of Filipino submissions to the contest "could be deceptive, because the Man Asian accepts excerpts from novels yet to be completed" ("Novelists in Progress" 2).

Indeed, as recent developments in the award reveal, the figures were not all that they seemed. In 2010, the organisers announced a new format. The prize was made open only to published novels, with publishers responsible for submitting up to two entries only ("Man Asian Literary Prize"). This affected not only the Philippine submissions but also the others from the rest of the region. For the 2010 award, only 54 entries were received, a drastic decrease from the 150 in the previous year's contest (Ma). Filipino entries dropped to four from the twenty-four submitted for 2009; one entry made it to the longlist, Criselda Yabes's *Below the Crying Mountain*, and advanced no further (Ma). The number of submissions for the 2010 award presents a more realistic picture of English-novel publishing in the Philippines, aligning with the outputs of the late 1990s (1995–2000), which saw 5 to 7 novels released per year.

The Man Asian Literary Prize came to its demise in 2012 when financial support was withdrawn by its sponsor the Man Group, the same corporate entity behind the Man Booker Prize. The contest was renamed the Asian Literary Prize, but it seems that it has remained stagnant as it awaits new corporate sponsorship. In the meantime, what of the Filipino novel in English? One might well assume that it is ploughing on, perhaps to pick up its speed when the next or a new contest comes around, perhaps to get a boost when some national or social conflict plays out, giving authors something great to write for or something great to write about.

Notes

1. The figures on the production of Filipino novels in English as well as in Tagalog and Filipino cited in this study were taken from the author's *Bibliography of Filipino Novels, 1901–2000* (Quezon City: U of the Philippines P, 2010). Some elements of the discussion were adapted as well from the same work.
2. In succeeding references to the national language, the phrase *Tagalog/Filipino* is used to acknowledge its nominal changes. The national language was known as *Tagalog* before 1959, when it was renamed *Pilipino*. The name was changed again in 1973 to *Filipino*, which was retained in 1986 and remains current.
3. One might note, however, as Resil B. Mojares does, that this so-called “Golden Age” of the Tagalog novel was “perhaps less golden for the artistic and social illuminations it offered than the phenomenal quantity of the novels produced” (194–95).
4. In a recent study on Southeast Asian writing in English, Rajeev S. Patke and Philip Holden do acknowledge that, “While [*A Child of Sorrow*] has been criticized for its sentimentalism, the novel does contain sharp social criticism of the corruption of government officials, and show the influence of a romantic literary tradition from Galang’s native language, Pampangan [sic], in which he had also published widely” (66).
5. As Majid’s study itself is pioneering, this point is often cited by scholars. However, in making special mention of India as “the first of the British colonies to issue an English novel,” he erroneously identifies the earliest Indian novel in English as Torru Dutt’s *Bianca or The Young Spanish Maid*, published in 1879 (1). But this was actually preceded fifteen years earlier, in 1864, by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s *Rajmohan’s Wife* (Joshi 147).
6. Not very many Filipinos were accustomed to Spanish, in fact, as the Spanish government did not seek to propagate the language during most of the colonial period. It was only in the middle of the nineteenth century when the teaching of Spanish in schools was instituted. Vicente L. Rafael maintains that, “Less than 1 percent of the population has ever been fluent in Spanish at any given moment in Spain’s 350 years of colonial rule” (168). Andrew Gonzalez, on the other hand, places the Philippine population who spoke Spanish at the end of the colonial period at two percent (cited in Bolton and Bautista 4).
7. Filipino chick-lit novels in English enjoyed some popularity during the first decade of the twenty-first century. The subgenre emerged with the publication of Tara F.T. Sering’s *Getting Better*, which was issued in 2002 by Summit Books, an affiliate of the high-end magazine publisher Summit Publishing. Summit Books was the main player in chick-lit publishing, producing several other titles by Sering and by other authors as well. The subgenre of crime hardly developed, with only one title released so far, F. H. Batacan’s *Smaller and Smaller Circles*, published by the University of the Philippines Press in 2002. The activity in the production of graphic novels was livelier, with works such as *Mars Ravelo’s Darna* by Boboy

Yonzon, Ryan Orosco, and Gilbert Monsanto, published by Mango Comics in 2003 and the *Trese* series by Budjette Tan and KaJo Baldisimo published by Visual Print Enterprises, which started in 2008 with *Murder on Balete Drive*.

8. The Palanca Awards have since scaled down their cash prizes. At present, the grand prize for the novel is awarded only PhP 40,000, which remains a considerable amount nevertheless and the largest offered by the literary contest. The novel category has also been revised to being open every two years.

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