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The Flowering Pen: Filipino Women Writers and Publishers during the Spanish Period, 1590–1898, A Preliminary Survey

Luciano P. R. Santiago

From the beginning of colonization, native women were noted to write more than the men. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the surviving works were written by the beatas. The first known native woman writer was a nun who wrote on theology in the 1660s. The first three female authors published their works in the 1840s. The third was also a successful book and newspaper publisher. They spawned a new generation of native poets, prose writers, and publishers of a wide range of works and genres (novenas, religious devotions, corridos, pasyon, poems, musical lyrics, short novels, translations, essays, letters, historical accounts, news reports, and others) from the major regions of the archipelago in the last third of the nineteenth century. Their contribution to Philippine literature and culture was both wide and deep.

KEYWORDS: Filipino women writers and publishers, Spanish period, Philippine literature, Church history

Reading contemporary accounts of the roots of Filipino women writers, one gets the impression that they started writing and publishing only during the early-American period. This is a false impression. In fact, there were several women who wrote and published their works or served as publishers during the Spanish period. It is time these women are rescued from undeserved oblivion and restored to their rightful place in Filipino collective memory. For they have clearly contributed to

the formation not only of a national literature but also of Philippine culture in general.¹

The development and continuity of creativity of Filipino women entail a sense of tradition that includes the awareness of its beginnings. Seen through the literary window, this is an integral part of herstory in the Philippines.

Why nobody ever bothered to look for or inquire about them and their works in the past centuries is a reflection of a male-dominated society and scholarship, besides a general lack of historical perspective in local literary studies. It is hoped that, from now on, no discussion of Philippine literature, especially during the colonial period, will be deemed complete without taking into consideration the female writers.

This initial survey mostly identifies their known works, both literary and nonliterary. By no means is it complete. The next step is to search for these works and the others missed in this survey so they can be more thoroughly studied individually and collectively in the near future.

Brief Historical Background

An indication of creativity, the social prestige of the pre-Hispanic woman was high or at least equal to that of the man. However, during the colonial epoch, the status of women was scaled down by the Spaniards to conform to the western image of the woman as the "weaker sex." The white men believed that a woman's creativity was confined to reproduction and, at that, only in her passive role as the receptacle (in her womb) of the new life created in its entirety by the man.

Women in the Spanish Philippines were classified into five racial groups: *Indias* (Filipino Malay), Chinese mestizas, Spanish mestizas, *criollas* (Spaniards born and raised in the colony) who were called Filipinas, and peninsulares (Spaniards born and raised in Spain). This was an artificial system based exclusively on the direct male line, ignoring the maternal line. It manifested the neglected status of women during the colonial regime. Upon marriage, the woman followed the racial classification of her husband and, when the latter died, she reverted to her original grouping. As is the practice in Spain, however, she retained her maiden name for life regardless of her civil status.

The achievements of the women writers in the Philippines amply demonstrate that literary talent knows neither race nor gender. This article focuses on the first three “racial groups” enumerated above without excluding the last two, even if only for comparison in style, genre, and subject matter. But regardless of racial classification, creative women, in general, embodied a collective solidarity, sharing and expressing similar concerns and vision, and inspiring one another in advancing their common cause in a male-dominated world.

Cross and Quill

Since writing is an indoor activity, women wordsmiths could quietly fulfill their urge to write and at the same time satisfy the social notion that their proper place was the home or the convent. It is not surprising that many of the materials from the seventeenth to the first half of the nineteenth centuries, which are presented here, are skewed in favor of the *beatas*—native women who lived together in a religious house called *beaterio*. This is so because, aside from having more time to reflect and write, the *beatas* were required by Church rules and practices to carefully keep and preserve their papers. Duplicates were often also filed in other repositories such as the archives of the male religious order, which supervised them, or of the diocese or the colonial government. Thus, the chances of preserving the *beatas*’ records were relatively better than those of other native women (Santiago 1995; 1996a; 1996b). It did not really matter in the long run. For whether *beatas* or laywomen, most of their writings, under the pervading influence of the friars and diocesan priests, were religious in nature. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, some laywomen broke out of the pious mold and ventured first into semisecular and, finally, fully secular themes and topics.

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The Jesuit writer, Padre Pedro Chirino (1604), observed that “These islanders are so given to reading and writing that there is hardly a man, and *much less a woman*, who does not read or write in the letters of the island of Manila.” Chirino (1609) further reported enthusiastically that

(The Filipino's) love for books is so great that, not satisfied with those printed in their language written by religious men, with the sermons they hear, and with Bible histories, lives of saints, prayers, and sacred poetry composed by themselves, there is hardly any—*much less a woman*—who does not have one or more books in their language and script written by themselves, a thing unknown among neophytes in any other nations. . . . I can bear witness to this fact because I was charged with the examination of books this year, 1609, by the provisor of the metropolitan see and vicar general of the archdiocese who ordered these books to be censored in order that what was erroneous might be corrected. (Colín 1663)

This is the earliest citation of native women writers of books and “sacred poetry.” They probably created original works since only a few had learned enough Spanish at this early stage to do translations. Besides, the missionaries endeavored to teach them the new religion in the local language.

Another priest observer, the Franciscan Fray Francisco de Santa Inés (1676) wrote:

All Filipinos are very inspired in their way of reading and writing, *but the women are more inspired*, since they do not have any other diversion because they did not go to school when they were little girls as the boys did. They make use of their writing more than men do, and use them in devotional and other things.

Native women certainly would have continued to write through the centuries, even if only meager examples of their writings have survived from the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Understandably, natives rarely managed to print their works during the first two and a half centuries of colonization, when publishing seemed to be the exclusive preserve of the colonizers.

Time, the elements, natural and man-made calamities, including neglect and countless revolts and wars, have all conspired to reduce the natives' fragile writing materials to dust and ashes. Still and all, we know of particular women in the seventeenth century who, even though they were not writers per se—except one—endeavored to put down on paper something of their own ideas and feelings in letters, notebooks,

and documents. In a brief survey like this, we can only sample randomly a few of their writings, which is our best recourse in the virtual absence of surviving works of literary import. In this way, we can at least get a glimpse of how women in the seventeenth century wrote and what they wrote about.

The Capellanía Papers, 1605–1679

From 1605 until the end of the Spanish regime and even beyond, several native women founded *capellanías de misas* (pious trust funds).² Since, in the beginning they were seldom aware of the standard legal forms used in drawing up donations and last wills, they tried to express their beliefs and purposes on paper with an elegant command of language, at times approaching poetic prose. Unfortunately, when these documents were translated into Spanish by an interpreter—usually another native—(or into English as in this article), or made to fit the standard form, the nuances and grace of the original were lost. Take, for instance, the paper in which Doña Inés Dahitim, granddaughter of Rajah Solimán of Manila, deeded her Isla de Tanduay in Quiapo as a capellanía to the Recollect order in 1621. The extant document in Spanish sounds stale and lean.³

On the other hand, the original copy of the pertinent clauses in the Tagalog will of another capellanía founder, Doña Juana Guinto of Ermita, Manila, vibrates with the same fervor today as the day she wrote it on 22 August 1661. While she signed the testament in western script, she used the Tagalog alphabet in affixing her name to the deed of land sale of 1644, which she appended and referred to in her will.⁴

A third generous donor who wrote her last testament in the vernacular on 16 December 1679 (three days after her birthday) was Doña Lucía Gumamela of Candaba, Pampanga. The childless widow conferred two huge capellanías, one to the Augustinian order and the other to the parish church of San Andrés de Candaba. Her will, consisting of thirty-seven folios, was routinely translated into Spanish but, unfortunately, the original could not be located or was not preserved.⁵ It would have been a rare record of seventeenth-century Kapampangan document.

Doña María's Letters, ca. 1628

Madre Jerónima de la Asunción (1551–1630) of Toledo, Spain, founded the Royal Monastery of Sta. Clara in Manila in 1621. In its initial decade, the monastery refused entrance to native women. Nevertheless, the early *beatas* knew instinctively that they were ready and able to move on to monastic life. They began knocking at the convent gate begging for admission. In about 1628, Doña María Úray of Dapitan in distant Mindanao wrote a letter of application to the institute. She was turned down because she belonged to the brown race. Undaunted, she appealed to be admitted as a slave (the convent did possess slaves), although she was of the nobility. Úray signifies a “Lady Rajah.” Despite her title, she was rejected again. Her Jesuit counselors, affirming that she had arrived at the “genuine science of the soul,” consoled her by pointing out the greater glory she would render God by continuing her semimonastic life in Dapitan interspersed with corporal works of mercy. She died around 1630 (Combés 1665).

Doña María's letters apparently moved Madre Jerónima to propose building a separate house in Pandacan for native contemplatives. The ecclesiastical and civil officials, however, turned a deaf ear to her plans (Concepción 1778; Perez 1963; Fernández 1979). Filipino women's letters are typically full of pathos and elevated expressions, emanating as they do “straight from their heart and soul.” Sadly, Doña María's letters did not survive. The archives of Santa Clara, one of the richest in the walled city, perished during the American bombing of Intramuros in the Second World War.

The Beatification Documents, 1631–1633

When Madre Doña Jerónima de la Asunción died in 1630, her cause for beatification was started promptly because of her reputation for sanctity. A procession of witnesses of various racial backgrounds (but mostly *Indios*) from all walks of life, participated in the process that lasted for three years. There were around one hundred Indio witnesses from the Tagalog and Pampanga regions, sixty of whom were women. By this time, a decline in the literacy rate of natives, in general, and women, in particular, was evident. Only fifteen of the men and ten

of the women could sign their testimonies either in the local or western script. It partly reflected the assertion of Fray Santa Inés that the women, unlike the men in the Spanish colony, did not go to school when they were children. To facilitate the inquiry, it appeared that the literate witnesses were asked to write their testimonies first (not unlike in modern times), then translated into Spanish by the interpreters. Unfortunately again, only the Spanish versions were preserved in the archdiocesan archives. The witnesses narrated the favors and miracles they received through the intercession of the saintly nun. One can only imagine the original words and phrases they used to describe the awe and wonder of their religious experiences.⁶

As a result of the enthusiastic support for the cause of beatification of the foundress, the first native nun, Sor Martha de San Bernardo of Pampanga, was accepted, albeit to its first branch in far Macao in 1633. Three years later, the second native nun, Sor Madalena de la Concepción (ca. 1610–1685), also of Pampanga, was admitted directly to the Manila convent. It appeared that the monastery chose mostly Kapampangan women from among the native applicants because they were considered the “Castilians of the Indios” for their ardent appreciation of Spanish culture (Santiago 1995, 180–83).

Sor Juana's Notebooks, 1666–1668

The first native woman writer known by name was Sor Juana de Sanct Antonio (1600–1671), also of Santa Clara. She apparently entered the monastery at about the same time as Sor Madalena de la Concepción. Her writings were perhaps the most impressive as well as the most poignant by a native woman during the colonial period. An India Pampanga from Bataán (then part of the province of Pampanga), she was a *ladina* (Spanish-speaking) and lay nun (*monja lega*) of the monastery. A *lega*, or sister of obedience, was usually an India who performed the domestic tasks in the convent and was deprived of the right to vote and occupy positions of honor in the congregation. In an undetermined number of notebooks, Sor Juana wrote theological concepts in Spanish, which were as highly original as they were radical based on her reflections, dreams, and visions.⁷ In upholding the religious dignity of women, she pierced the boundaries of orthodox doctrine.

The titular of the monastery being the Immaculate Conception, she theorized that the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived not only immaculate but also divine. For at the moment of her conception, the Holy Trinity, the Three Divine Persons in One God, individually and jointly, composed a "beautiful mass" from and of themselves and deposited it into the womb of St. Anne, her mother.⁸

Sor Juana was then suffering from a liver disease, the main symptom of which was hemorrhage. In both the Old and New Testaments, bleeding women were considered "unclean" until, in a moving scene, Christ healed one of them who, with deep faith, touched his garment (Mark 5:24–35). Taking her cue from this, the nun felt she was the repository of Christ's blood as it continually dripped from the cross as reenacted in the Daily Mass. It was not clear if she meant it in a symbolic or a literal way.⁹ She seemed to be trying to reconcile indigenous belief with Catholic doctrine. Since ancient Filipinos believed in goddesses, including deified priestesses, how much more in the Mother of God herself as a "goddess"? Far from considering women's blood as unclean, they regarded menstrual blood in particular as a good omen, and used it for cleansing and attaining a smooth skin (Demetrio 1991, 4685–86, 5749–51).

Despite her lowly rank in the convent, Sor Juana did not hesitate to preach her ideas to the younger nuns and even began to plan a new monastery or mission in her native province. After two years of writing and preaching, she was finally denounced for heresy to the Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1668, when she was sixty-eight years old, apparently an approximation of her true age. As her notebooks could not be found when she was arrested, the "criminal case" was tried on hearsay evidence. Thanks to the Inquisition though, we have at least an abstract of her writings. The tribunal eventually ordered her to be deported to México for trial by the higher court. According to a certification by the Holy Office, the old nun died of bleeding due to her liver disorder while waiting for a ship to transport her. The Holy Office instructed she be buried in a secret place in the monastery ground with huge planks of timber to weigh down her coffin so that her forbidden ideas would never surface on this earth again.¹⁰

The Eighteenth Century

More definitive writings of native women, mostly beatas, in the eighteenth century have survived because they were sent to the Madrid court, which presided over a highly developed archival system. Because these papers were addressed to the colonial authorities, they were written mostly in Spanish.

Mother Ignacia's Historical Account, 1726

It was in reaction to the lack of religious houses accepting native women as full members that Mother Ignacia del Espíritu Santo (1663–1748), a Chinese mestiza, founded the Beaterio de la Compañía de Jesús (now the Religious of the Virgin Mary) in 1684. Forty years later, in 1726, she put in writing a brief eyewitness history of her congregation. She appended this letter, written in the third person, to the beaterio's petition for the approval of its constitution, the formulation of which Mother Ignacia also supervised.¹¹ This is the earliest extant letter by a native woman. It is also the only known writing of the saintly beata who is presently being considered for beatification by the Sacred Congregation in Rome.

In a style as simple as it was profound, she recounted:

As far back as 1685, several poor Indias started to live together and petitioned the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus to help them in their desire to serve God. Since then, the Fathers have assisted them and showed them the way to perfection. They have continued to give them the same help, so that through their efforts, the beatas received in 1725 an annual endowment of 300 pesos from the legacy of Don Juan Ignacio de Vertis, Knight of the Order of Santiago. This amount was used for the repairs and extension of their house in order to accommodate the increasing number of beatas and *recogidas*, who were bound by the rules prepared by themselves to regulate their mode of life.

I hereby present these rules for the consolation and encouragement of the beatas, that they may continue to serve and please God under the protection of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary and under the guidance of the Reverend Fathers of the Society of Jesus.¹²

The Tagalog Prayer Books, 1756

In 1756, the beatas of the different religious houses were admonished by the fastidious Governor-General Don Pedro Manuel de Arandía to refrain from speaking in Tagalog and using Tagalog prayer books in the convent. Since at this stage, religious works published in the vernacular were still very rare, we can infer that the governor was referring mostly to manuscripts written, probably anonymously, by the beatas themselves. Anonymity was a religious virtue expected especially of consecrated women (García 1954; Randa 1914; Santiago 1996a).

This observation, indeed, confirms the oral tradition in the beaterios that in the nineteenth century and earlier, and even as late as the middle of the twentieth century, manuscripts and musical pieces (words and music) composed by the beatas and their students used to abound and circulate in their communities and schools. Unfortunately, there was no concerted effort to preserve them. Some were copied before they crumbled into pieces and were discarded, but most disappeared by attrition.¹³

Hermana Ignacia's Rubrics, 1788

A beata from Tarragona, Spain, Madre María Paula de la Santísima Trinidad (1713–1782) founded the Beaterio de Santa Rosa de Lima in Manila in 1750 as a school for poor girls. In her last will, she named as her successor, Hermana Ignacia de Guzmán (ca. 1745–1812), her “first pupil,” who was probably a Spanish mestiza. It fell to the worthy Hermana Ignacia to write the rules and regulations of the beaterio, which she completed and signed in 1788. She asserted, among other precepts, that the teacher beatas of the school “should be the most advanced in spirit and conduct. They should be dedicated to a life of chastity and apostleship as should be those who teach others on the road to perfection. In order to move their students, they should possess not only intelligence but also good example.”¹⁴

The Early-Nineteenth Century

The rhythm of life of women continued essentially unchanged from the eighteenth century up to the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Sor Mariana's Oblation, 1801

A rare document dated 3 March 1801, which has survived in the archives of the parish of the Immaculate Conception in Pasig, is in the handwriting of Sor Mariana Flores of the Beaterio de Santa Rita across the street from the church. Inspired by the pastor, Fray Santos Gómez Marañón (later to become bishop of Cebú), she donated P100, a generous sum in those days, to form a *capellanía de misas* in favor of the parish church. In a moving letter, she asked the pastor to use its revenues as stipends for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every year on 20 and 24 March for the benefit of her soul. In 1810, the earnest Sor Mariana was elected prioress (*Madreng namamahala*) of the Beaterio of Pasig.¹⁵

The Lamentations of Pileñas, 1804

At the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the governor-general ordered the town of Pila, Laguna, to transfer to a higher plane because of perennial flooding in the ancient town center. The decree divided the residents into two factions, the *pros* and the *contras*, according to whether they were for or against the move. The male leaders of the town fought a raging war of words in documents they submitted to the governor's office in Manila. After nine years of litigation and delay, the exasperated governor finally decided in favor of the *pros* and sentenced the *contras* to "perpetual silence" on the case.¹⁶

But on such a heart-rending issue, total silence could not be imposed. On 12 May 1804, when the transition seemed to be in full swing, some prominent as well as ordinary womenfolk (*principalas y plebeyas*) met together and drafted a poignant plea to Manila to suffer them to tarry in their ancestral town. Though translated into Spanish, the document still retains its freshness and fullness of pathos evoking memories of the lamentations of Euripides's *Trojan Women*. They wrote of such sentiments as their "bitter confusion and desolation" and the "deprivation of their ancient love." At best, it served as an emotional catharsis for them, for their plea went unheeded. But this is easily the most profound piece in the whole set of documents on the case, breaking the cold monotony and repetitiousness of the position papers of the men on both sides.¹⁷

Madre Margarita's Precepts, 1811

Mothers Dionicia and Cecilia Rosa Talangpaz, blood sisters of Calumpit, Bulacán, founded the Beaterio de San Sebastián de Calumpang in Manila in 1719. Its constitution was written for the beatas by their benefactor, Fray Andrés de San Fulgencio, OAR, around 1731.

Under the leadership of Madre Margarita de Santa Limbania, the fourth and longest serving prioress (1793–1833), the community decided to update and supplement the constitution by writing a new set of rules entitled “Ordenaciones é Instrucciones para el Buén Gobierno y Dirección del Beaterio” (Rules and Instructions for the Good Government and Direction of the Beaterio) in 1811. It was written in both Spanish and Tagalog “so that nobody would feign ignorance of the regulations” but, as usual, only the Spanish version was retained. The rules were a considerate, straightforward, and practical guide to religious life in the nineteenth century, which contributed to the renewal, stability, and continuity of the beaterio. An India from Naujan, Mindoro, Madre Margarita started with herself by pointing out that “the prioress should look with zeal after the spiritual and temporal well-being of the beatas and she should be the first in example and observance of the rules.” On the other hand, she exhorted the beatas “to observe and live in conformity with the new regulations and live as well in recollection and detachment as required by the laws, which govern all in the community.”¹⁸

The old beaterio is now the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters and its foundresses, like Mother Ignacia del Espíritu Santo, are also under consideration for beatification by the Sacred Congregation.

Señorita Vicentica's Field, 1827

In a departure from the beatas' works, Srta. Doña Vicentica de Reyes y Tuason developed proficiency in writing in a field where women rarely trod. She wrote legal documents, some of which, like engagement contracts, dowry grants, and last wills—despite their prescribed forms—still allowed some originality in style and expressions of feelings

especially for women. Belonging to the third generation of prominent notaries in her family, she learned her craft by apprenticeship with her father, Licenciado Don Francisco Castro de Reyes and grandfather, Don Fermín Joseph de Reyes, both Mexican lawyers and *notarios de las Indias* in Manila for many years. Her mother, Doña Mauricia Tuason was a Chinese mestiza who pertained to a distinguished family of Binondo, which was elevated to the nobility by the Spanish king.¹⁹

Holding a royal appointment, a notary of the Indies, as indicated by the title, could practice his profession in any of the Spanish colonies. Upon his retirement, he was expected to recommend to the king's council a list of possible successors in order of his preference and their competence. When, in 1827, Don Francisco retired from his position, he formally recommended that he be replaced by his own daughter, Doña Vicentica. Not unexpectedly, his rare recommendation was shelved.²⁰

Widening Horizons: The Emergence of Filipino Women Authors and Publishers

As the nineteenth century progressed, so did the economy of the Philippines as marked by the official opening of the port of Manila to international commerce in 1834. It spurred the development and growth of the sugar, tobacco, and rice industries in both Luzon and the Visayas. A new elite class, composed primarily of Chinese mestizos, emerged to join or replace those of Spanish and Malay blood. More than ever before, the leisure class now had ample resources and time to reflect, create, or write and publish the products of their minds and hearts (de la Costa 2002). Creative women from the *principalía*, in particular, could hire more help to lighten the tasks of housework and childcare without relinquishing their duties and responsibilities altogether.

The progress in the cultural sphere is clearly reflected in the sharp increase in the number of petitions for license to publish books in the archdiocese of Manila, which then encompassed most of Central Luzon. Manila, then and now, is the literary center of the archipelago. The new phenomenon was recorded in the administrative books of Archbishop José Aranguren, OAR (1846–1861), as compared with

those of his predecessor, Archbishop José Seguí, OSA (1830–1845), who issued only a few of these coveted permits.²¹

To be able to print a book, whether religious or secular, it was a requirement then for the author to obtain permission from the prelate. After passing censorship by a competent authority, the work was approved by the archbishop who granted the license on behalf of both the Church and the State, which were united in the Spanish realm. The book was usually printed within the year, and both the petition and permission to publish were appended in the first few pages of the work just before the preface (*prólogo*). Depending on the degree of his or her modesty, the author's name or initials almost always appeared on the title page together with that of the printing press and the phrase "with the necessary licenses" or simply "with license" (Retana 1906).

The creativity of the Filipino women, which had been welling up and, by degrees, shaping up in the past centuries, reached definitive and various forms and genre toward the mid-nineteenth century.

First Woman Author in the Philippines, ca. 1838

By the late 1830s, Doña María Varela de Brodet became the first woman in the Philippines to publish a book, *Novena de Santa María Magdalena*, an original work in Spanish. She was apparently a criolla. In 1844, she enlarged and reprinted her obra. It was most probably printed by the University of Santo Tomás Press, the most active printing press in the nineteenth century, especially with regard to novenas. There are no extant copies of Varela's works and nothing is known about her life. She was possibly a descendant of another writer, Don Luís Rodríguez Varela, named *El Conde Filipino* (1795). True to his title, he championed the cause of natives for which he was persecuted by his fellow Spaniards.²²

Varela's novena would have further inflamed the devotion to the penitent saint who was also the first apostolic witness of the Risen Christ. The Magdalene was, in fact, one of the most popular women saints in the Philippines. Many a town or parish in the archipelago was dedicated to her and several native nuns and beatas took her name upon investiture. The second native nun, Sor Madalena de la Concepción

of the Monastery of Santa Clara professed in 1637. A probable offshoot of Varela's novena was the Beaterio de La Magdalena founded in 1887 by Sor Fidela Pineda in La Paz, Iloilo (Santiago 1995; 1996b).

First Filipino Woman Author, ca. 1844

Doña Luisa Gonzaga de León (1805–1843) was the first Filipino woman author, who wrote the book *Ejercicio Cotidiano. Iti amannyang Castila bildug ne quing amanung Capampangan nang Doña Luisa Gonzaga de Leon, India quing balayang Baculud* (*Daily Devotion. Translated from the Spanish language to the Kapampangan language by Doña Luisa Gonzaga de León, India of the town of Bacolor*). Consisting of more than three hundred and eight pages, it served mainly as a missal with a collection of daily prayers and other forms of religious devotion translated from Spanish obras into her native tongue.²³ Although she regarded herself as an India, she was officially classified as a Chinese mestiza. She apparently rejected the classification because it was artificial and male oriented since it did not take into consideration the maternal line of descent. Her mother and paternal grandmother were both Indias.

A woman of means and erudition, Doña Luisa probably acquired a copy of Varela's book, which partly prompted her to publish her own work. She and Varela apparently shared the same publisher, the University of Santo Tomás Press. She had completed the manuscript before her death in 1843, but the book was printed posthumously in 1844 or 1845 from internal evidence in its 1854 reprint. It was reissued in 1867, 1910, and 1965 (Henson 1965).

Doña Luisa was also the first Kapampangan to publish a book. A devout woman, she was not content only with personal devotions but endeavored to provide and share with her fellow Kapampangan a wide range of prayers and forms of worship and veneration. Well ahead of her time, she sought in particular to bring the liturgy of the mass closer to the people by putting it in the vernacular, which was to be an innovation of the Second Vatican Council more than a century later. In fact, she was the first Filipino to put together a missal in a local language. In the process, she also contributed to the enrichment, flexibility, and general development of her native tongue and its literature. Further, she showed that native women could and should publish

their own obras, like their Spanish counterparts in Manila, instead of keeping these works in manuscript form to themselves and a small circle of friends and relatives, as was the prevailing practice then.

Since hers was a work of translation, the most original part of it was the author's preface, which was essentially a spiritual essay rising, in the end, to poetry of mystic inspiration. It was the first essay by a native woman to see print. Among other concerns, she seemed to be lamenting here the burgeoning materialism and decadence in her country, including her province, in the face of an unprecedented economic prosperity. On this note she concluded her preface with sacred verses. Later, in the *Trisagium* (three-day devotion) part of the book, she also penned or translated other spiritual poems in adoration of the Holy Trinity. Clearly, she was also a poet, albeit a minor one.

In a larger sense, almost all native women and men of letters in the Spanish era, including the translators and prose writers, were essentially poets like their pre-Hispanic counterparts. Many wrote both prose and poetry. The prose of the creative writers was typically poetic and was interspersed with verses along the way. Translators of plain works frequently poeticized significant parts of the original. *Gozos*, or brief verses of joy and praise, formed a regular part of the novenas, a nine-day set of prayers for the intercession of a saint. Even translators of poetic romances, such as the corridos, took the liberty of rendering the ideas and plots more than the words into the vernacular to allow them to express their own literary artistry and imagination (Eugenio 1987; Del Castillo and Medina 1966, *passim*).

Second Filipino Woman Author, 1848, and First Filipino Woman Book and Newspaper Publisher, 1846–1859

In the Spanish Philippines, a publisher was the financier of a book publication. The publisher was frequently the owner of a printing press or, occasionally, a wealthy benefactor or the author himself or his family. A printer was employed by the owner of a press to supervise the printing process. In well-established presses like that of the University of Santo Tomás, the printer was called *regente* (director). The author or, on his behalf, the publisher, would apply for the initial license to print his or her work. However, the subsequent permit to reprint books was

usually petitioned for by the publisher. The author seemed more eager to see his work in print than make a living from his efforts. Creativity spelled genteel poverty in the nineteenth century. The standard practice was to give the author a fifth of the printed copies of his book or pamphlet, which he apparently distributed among his relatives and friends. Perhaps, this is the origin of the Filipino tendency to ask for free copies of books from authors or expect them to write without remuneration. Less often, the publisher might buy the author's manuscript outright or pay him with a combination of cash and an agreed number of copies of his printed work.²⁴ Because of their unique collaboration, publisher, printer, and above all, the author, formed a prestigious triumvirate of professions in the colonial period. But, in the economic order, they presided over a minor industry only.

The printer of Doña Luisa's book and probably also of Varela's novena was Don Cándido López, director of the University of Santo Tomás Press since 1837. The publication of Doña Luisa's obra was one of Lopez's last undertaking for he died in 1845. His widow, Doña Remigia Salazar (ca. 1805–1860), bravely continued her husband's work by starting her own printing concern the following year, 1846, under the banner "Imprenta de la viuda de López." She became the first and only successful woman publisher and owner of a printing press in Manila in the nineteenth century. Her shop was first located on Calle de Recogidas (now Anda) no. 8, but later moved to Calle de la Bomba (now Solana) in the walled city. There were at least two other widows of printers who tried to accomplish the same feat in Manila but, unfortunately, they failed to make the mark. The Imprenta de la viuda de Antonio Llanos (1838) and the Imprenta de la viuda de Ramírez (1887) managed to come up with only one known imprint each before they closed shop. The late Don Manuel Ramírez succeeded Don Cándido López as the regente of the University of Santo Tomás Press. Don Manuel was responsible for the reprint of Doña Luisa's missal in 1854 (Retana 1906, *passim*).

Part of Doña Remigia's success as a publisher owed to her being a writer-translator like Doña Luisa from whom she probably derived the inspiration. She was intimately familiar with the process and vicissitudes

of writing as well as publishing. In 1848, she was given permission to print her *Novena de Santo Tomás de Villanueva en Idioma Panayano*. There is no known copy of this work. She might have been a long-time resident of Miag-ao, Iloilo, whose titular was the Augustinian saint, the subject matter of her novena. She was the first Filipino to publish a book in Panayano, or Hiligaynon. Before her, only two Spanish Augustinians, Fray Alonso de Mentrída (1818, 1841) and an anonymous pastor (1846) had published works in it. In contrast to her husband, she specialized in printing obras written in this language. Next to Tagalog, Panayano books were the most numerous publications in the vernacular during the Spanish regime.²⁵

On the other hand, it is almost certain that Doña Remigia's family came from the Tagalog region. When Governor-General Don Narciso Clavería, conde de Manila, issued the decree on the systematization of surnames in 1849, her independent-minded family of origin dropped their Spanish patronymic and adopted or reverted to a Tagalog surname—Talusán, which means "to fathom or understand." This was a rare move in the history of Filipino consciousness, for the majority of families at the time did just the opposite: They chose Spanish surnames with enthusiasm. Thus, after 1850, to clarify the identity of the woman author/publisher, the official records specifically stated she was "Doña Remigia Talusan viuda del impresor Don Cándido López."²⁶

In the first year of her printing venture, she at once secured the license to reprint three booklets whose titles were not cited in the document. But one of them was obviously *Novena de la Expectación de Nuestra Señora en Lengua Panayana. Compendio de los trabajos de Ntra. Sra. en compañía de su Esposo San José, desde Nasaret a Belén*. Traducido del Castellano por un cura de Panay (Manila: Imprenta de la viuda de Lopez, 1846). Later in the same year, she also published *Trisagio de la Santísima Trinidad*, a book in Tagalog by Don Rufino Fermín. Neither a copy of this book nor its reprint survives.²⁷

There are two other extant obras that came off Doña Remigia's press: *Pangadyeón cang latur nga tocsoan, nga casoyoran sang pagtalonan sa manga Christianos*. Guinsulat sa Binisaya nga polong sang R.P. Fr. Juan Sánchez, Prior sa Convento sa Tigbauan (Manila: Imprenta de la viuda de

López, 1847), a book on catechism; and *Ejercicios de preparación para la hora de la muerte . . .* Compuesto por el Dr. Don Manuel M. de Arjona . . . y trasuntada a la lengua Panayana por un religioso Cura que ha sido de aquella Isla (Manila: Imprenta de la viuda de López, a cargo de D. Pedro García, 1849), another reprint (Retana 1906, 753, 767). Thus, in the first three years of her venture, she was known to have published or reprinted at least seven books.

The remarkable Doña Remigia did not only print books. From 1846 to 1850, she simultaneously published the first daily newspaper in the Philippines, *La Esperanza, Diario de Manila*, which kept her very busy indeed. She was the first Filipino woman newspaper publisher. This venture made her the most influential woman writer/publisher of her day. For the daily newspaper, she hired the Spanish printer, Don Miguel Sanchez, the most respected name in Philippine printing in the nineteenth century. The editors were Don Felipe de Lacorte and Don Evaristo Romero. In 1848, its desperate rival *La Estrella: Diario de Avisos y Noticias* (1847–1849) disparaged Doña Remigia's press as *mala imprenta*. The editors and other writers of *La Esperanza* rushed to the widow's defense. They contended that it was inappropriate for a newspaper to criticize another, especially for reasons that were biased and petty. In retrospect, Retana, the bibliographer, agreed that her printing work was no worse than that of the other publications at the time. The rival daily folded up early the next year. Doña Remigia apparently retired after 1850. In 1859, another printer, Don Tomas Nufable, director of the Imprenta de los Amigos del País, reprinted Fermín's Trisagio, mentioned above, under Doña Remigia's 1846 license.

The Pen in Bloom: Women Authors of Corridos, ca. 1860

The pioneering efforts of Varela, de León, and Talusan surely inspired and cleared the way for other native women to come out and publish their literary works. Around 1860, two Tagalog señoritas penned corridos, or verse narratives, in their language. The exact year of publication of their works could not be ascertained because the title page had fallen off and been lost from frequent use. In 1865, one of them

produced another corrido, presumably a later work because it was better preserved and still held on to its title page. These obras formed part of the collection of Don Vicente Barrantes, a Spanish writer who exhibited them in the Philippine General Exposition in Madrid in 1887. Unfortunately, the collector underestimated this literary genre, for which Rizal took him to task. Recent scholarly studies by Dr. Damiana L. Eugenio demonstrate that “far from being a body of literature that Filipinos should be ashamed of or be apologetic about, awits and corridos constitute a rich treasury of fascinating stories belonging to the world’s tradition of popular narrative literature” (*Catálogo* 1887, 723, 762; Rizal 1888; Eugenio 1987, xxxviii).

Srta. Doña Ana Romero y Llamas wrote *Corrido at Buhay na pinagdaanan nang Príncipe Orandis at nang Reina Talestris sa caharian nang Temesita* (The Song and Life of Prince Orandis and Queen Talestris in the Realm of Temesita). Her brainchild had the distinction of being the longest corrido in Philippine literature with more than 5,300 lines in more than 300 pages. No wonder she seemed to have written only one opus. It was reprinted, without the author’s name, by Praxedes Sayo viuda de Soriano, a female printer of corridos in Manila in the early 1900 (*Catálogo* 1887, 723; Eugenio 1987, 346).

Srta. Doña Caridad Jareño y Escudero authored *Salita at Buhay na pinagdaanan ni Manrique sa condadong nasasacupan nang reino nang Francia, na anac ni D. Guillermo de Luna at si Leonor capatid ni Guillén* (The Declaration of and the Life Experienced by Manrique in the Countship in the Kingdom of France, son of Don Guillermo de Luna and Leonor, sister of Guillén). It was also reprinted by Dr. Modesto Reyes y Compañía of Manila in 1902, without the author’s name, and translated into Bikol and Hiligaynon, without date but probably also in the early 1900 (*Catálogo* 1887, 731; Eugenio 1987, 342).

Possessing a vigorous pen, Doña Caridad was the first native woman to publish more than one work, both of which have survived. She manifested anew her poetic skill in a second corrido published in 1865, entitled *Salita at Buhay nang marilag na pastora na si Jacobina, tubo sa Villa Moncado. Naguing asaua nang Policarpio de Villar sa caharian nang Damacia nagcaroon nang isang supling na anac, ang pangalai si Villardo* (The Declaration and Life of Jacobina, the Pretty Shepherdess, native of

Villa Moncado. She was the wife of Policarpio de Villar in the Kingdom of Damacia and they had an only child whose name was Villardo). It was printed by the Imprenta de Sanchez. It was translated into Kapampangan in 1903 and into Bikol, with year of publication unknown (*Catálogo* 1887, 731; Eugenio 1987, 335). The two women poets apparently were from the provinces of Laguna and Tayabas (now Quezon), where their maternal surnames remain quite prominent to this day.

Awit and corridos were the whirlpools of a literary movement in the nineteenth century. They were essentially secular works of epic poetry with the obligatory generous sprinkling of Christian precepts at strategic parts of the narratives to conform to the temper of the times and to pass censorship. Sprawling tales of duplicity and true love, they present the eternal struggle between good and evil: the Christian representing the good and the moro standing for evil. The majority was based on Spanish metrical romances and ballads. As noted earlier, it was more the story lines and their deviations rather than the wordings that were freely translated into the vernacular. The native writers adapted the plot and subplots to make room for originality of expression, literary imagination, stylistic innovations, and local color (Eugenio 1987, xiii–xxxviii). Since many of these works were anonymous, at least a few of those without the authors' names were probably written by women who concealed their identity out of modesty.

Of the three corridos by the women cited above, the most popular was Doña Ana's "Principe Orandis." It tells the story of a prince valiant who falls in love with the oil portrait of an Amazon queen. To live near her, he disguises himself as a woman soldier and fights wars under the queen's command. Before long, his fierce courage wins the admiration of the queen who promotes him to *generalá* (woman general). So near and yet so far, he reveals his identity in a soliloquy in a garden that the queen overhears. She summarily banishes him from her territory although, at this point, she has secretly returned his affection. Nevertheless, behind the scenes, he continues to fight for and protect his ladylove in countless other battles. At last, when she rediscovers his loyalty and concern for her, she relents and marries him, raising him to the king of her realm (Eugenio 1987, 267–72).

At the subconscious level—which seems to account for part of its appeal to a woman author, a woman publisher, and their readers—the story seems to refer to a crucial aspect of female psychology. It projects the emotional transition of females from same-sex grouping at the latency or “tomboyish” period into a heterosexual relationship at adolescence and later stages in life.

Literary Vigan: Ilokano Women Authors and Publishers, 1870–1898

The women writers of the Ilocos also forged ahead in the realm of letters. Next to Tagalog and Panayano, the third most numerous publications in the vernacular during the Spanish Period were written in Ilokano. Although the archives of the see of Nueva Segovia (Vigan) had perished in past catastrophes, several works written or published by Ilokano women had survived at least before the Second World War. All these books were published in Manila because there was no printing press in the northern diocese in the nineteenth century. Tragically, almost all of them, stored in the National Library, were destroyed in the last war. A few still remain in private collections (Retana 1906, *passim*; Yabes 1936, *passim*).

In 1870, Doña Sofía C. Claudio became the first known Ilokano authoress when she had her religious piece *Historia Sagrada: Patriarcas quen Profetas* (*Sacred History, Patriarchs and Prophets*), apparently a work of translation, printed at the Pequeña Imprenta del Asilo de Huérfanos in Tambobong (now Malabon) in the old province of Tondo. She belonged to a clan of writers and was the sister or cousin of a prolific priest-author Presbítero Don Justo Claudio. Doña Sofía also produced three corridos in her native tongue probably before the turn of the century though these were printed only in the early nineteenth century: *Biag ni Enrique nga anac da Conde Lupoldo* (*Life of Enrique, son of Count Leopoldo*) published by the priest in 1908; *Biag ni Princesa Estela* (*Life of Princess Estela*) published by her in 1908 and reprinted in 1911; and *Siete Infantes de Lara* (*Seven Princes of Lara*) put out again by the priest in 1911 (Yabes 1936, 84, 113).

She had a cousin, Doña Rufina Pobres y Claudio who also wrote a corrido, *Biag ni José Vendido* (Life of Joseph, the one who was sold). The second edition was printed by Padre Justo Claudio in 1911. The first edition probably came out in the 1890s (Yabes 1936, 117).

The famous contemporary of Doña Sofía was the poet Doña Leona Florentino y Florentino (1849–1884), mother of the patriot-writer Isabelo de los Reyes (1864–1938) of Vigan. At the age of fourteen, she married Don Elías de los Reyes. Seven years later, the couple parted ways. Her husband apparently had an eye for women but she acknowledged immaturity on her part. This was in an era when marital separation was a rare occurrence. Perhaps, her separated status allowed her more time to write. She poured out all of herself into her poems and plays in both Ilokano and Spanish. These were exhibited posthumously at the Philippine General Exposition in Madrid in 1887 and at the International Exposition in Paris in 1889. In conjunction with the latter, her poems were published by Madame Andsia Wolkska in her *Encyclopedie Internationale des Oeuvres des Femmes* (International Encyclopedia of Women's Works) in 1889. Her son also included several of her obras, both religious and romantic verses, in his book *El Folk-lore Filipino* (1889–1890) (Bragado 2002, 50–75; de los Reyes 1889, 275–406; Zaide 1970, 184–86).

Doña Leona was virtually the only known nineteenth-century Filipino woman writer and, as such, she is the only one who has a monument erected in her honor in her native Vigan. She is shown sitting on her easy chair while writing with her quill pen. She is usually referred to as “The First Poetess of the Philippines” (Zaide 1970, 184–86). However, this is not accurate because, as we have seen, the first Filipino woman author was partly a poet, too. Besides, there were two other published Filipino poets before her whose corridos were likewise exhibited in the Philippine Exposition in 1887. Nevertheless, Leona’s precious distinction was that she and her contemporary, Dolores Paterno of Manila, who we shall meet shortly, were the first two Filipinas to write unabashedly secular works. In their verses of love and praise, Leona and Dolores project how men see or should see and treasure women.

The first Ilokano woman publisher was Doña Pateria de Villanueva who issued a popular work *Novena de la Nuestra Señora de la Salvación*

que se venera en el pueblo de Tiuy, translated from the Spanish by an anonymous pastor of Tayum in the province of Abra. It saw print three times, in 1879 at the University of Santo Tomás, in 1880 at Amigos del País, and in 1889 again at Santo Tomás. She also published Don Adriano Encarnación's *Novena del Milagroso San Nicolás de Tolentino* in 1884 at the Imprenta de C. Valdezco in Manila. Doña Pateria was the daughter of Don Esteban de Villanueva (1798–1878), a prosperous businessman of Vigan who in his youth painted the *Basi Revolt of 1807*, now regarded a national treasure. Doña Pateria's husband, Don Petronilo Florentino was a brother of the poet, Doña Leona (Retana 1906, 2103; 3:2761; Santiago 1992b; de los Reyes and Scharpf 1983, 117).

A namesake of the above, who was likewise a publisher in her own right, was Doña Pateria Ferre Donato, also of Vigan, who published *Novena ni San Ramón Nonato cardinal ti Santa Iglesia* in 1882 with Amigos del País in Manila. Since she was the one who applied for and received the license to print it and the title page bears no author's name, she was most likely its author, too. It was reprinted by the University of Santo Tomás Press in 1902 (Retana 1906; 1930).

In 1881, also through the same university press, Doña Anselma Foz Prudencio put out *Novena ni Santa Bárbara, Virgen quen Martir*, translated by Fray Santiago Muñiz, parish priest of Laoag. It had a picture of the valiant woman saint who shields the faithful from lightning and thunder. Doña Anselma was probably the daughter of Don Damaso Foz Prudencio who served as mayor of Vigan several terms in the mid-nineteenth century (Retana 1906; 1826; Manuel 1955, 175–76).

To a wealthy Viganense family of women publishers and writers belonged the Florendo sisters or cousins. Doña Agripina Florendo started the trend in 1883 by publishing *Novena a pagdaydayao iti pinnagna ni apotayo a Santa Maria idinapan sadi Belén (Novena to St. Mary in Bethlehem)*, printed at the Amigos del País. Although the title page claimed that it was translated by Padre Vicente F. Bonifacio, the license, according to Retana, stated that the translator was Doña Agripina herself. Padre Vicente, on the other hand, was the translator of *Novena ni apotayo a Santa Maria a Virgen ti Dolores*, which was published by Doña Pilar Florendo in 1884 through the University of Santo Tomás. The

next year, it was the turn of Doña Matea Florendo to issue *Novena iti Santisima Trinidad a pagdaydayao quen pagdaot cadaguiti paraborna*. Printed at the Amigos del País, it was presumably translated by Doña Matea as the title page did not name an author. A fourth Florendo devotee was Doña Juliana who put out *Pagdevoción cadaguiti pito a domingo a pangdayawan cadaguiti ledaang quen ragsac ni San José* (Devotion of Seven Sundays to St. Joseph) also by Padre Vicente F. Bonifacio who signed the preface. It was printed at Santo Tomás in 1887. Doña Juliana married Don Leonardo Villanueva, a brother of Doña Pateria, the publisher. The couple begot Úrsula Villanueva (1883–1975), an award-winning poet of Vigan who began writing in adolescence (Retana 1906, 2015, 2087, 2242, 2474; Yabes 1936, 83, 89, 96; Ramirez 1973).

Passion of the Soul: A Cebuana Poet (1887)

The archives of the diocese of Cebu were also burned during the last war. But the 1887 work of a Cebuana writer—the oldest manuscript of the *pasyon* in Cebuano—survives. Doña Lutera de los Reyes versified *La Pasión de Jesucristo* in her native tongue. It is also one of the rare original *pasyon* in a vernacular other than Tagalog. Most of the other *pasyon* in other local languages were based on the Tagalog *Casaysayan nang Pasióng Mahal* (1814), an anonymous work mistakenly attributed to Dr. Mariano Pilapil (1758–1820). Doña Lutera's rare manuscript is now preserved in the Cebuano Studies Center of the University of San Carlos in Cebu City. Nothing is written about her (Mojares 1975, 132; Javellana 1983, 451–67).

New Voices: The Bikolana Writers, 1898–1899

The “least studied” among the regional literature in the Philippines during the Spanish period were the Bikolano writings, according to Retana. This is aggravated by the fact that the old archives of the diocese of Nueva Cáceres (Naga) were also razed in past conflicts.

One of the first Bikolanas whose works saw print was the sixteen-year-old (?) Srta. Patrocinio Lerma. She was the daughter of Don Florencio Lerma, one of the fifteen martyrs of Bikol who were ex-

ecuted in Bagumbayan (Luneta) in Manila on 4 January 1897, five days after Rizal. Florencio was a playwright and theater owner in Naga. To help her and her family mourn the patriarch's tragic death as well as expose the atrocities of the desperate colonialists, the eldest daughter Patrocinio wrote a poignant account of his arrest, imprisonment, and execution for the revolutionary papers *La Independencia* (1898–1899) and *República Filipina* (1898–1899). "Relato Fiel de la Srta. Patrocinio Lerma," together with the martyr's testament, was published almost simultaneously in the above periodicals on 12 and 13 November 1898, respectively. The first newspaper was edited by Antonio Luna and the second by Pedro A. Paterno. Patrocinio later married Dr. Manuel Xérez Burgos, a physician playwright and nephew of another patriot martyr, Padre José Burgos (Manuel 1955, 246–48).

Another woman writer from the region who also apparently started writing in the late-nineteenth century but only published in the early-twentieth century was Doña Nicolasa Ponte de Perfecto. She was a sister-in-law of Don Mariano Perfecto (1858–1913), "Father of Bikol Literature" and first Bikolano printer. Don Mariano wrote in both Bikolano, his native tongue, and Hiligaynon; so did Doña Nicolasa. Her earliest extant work was *Matalum nga vida ni José Vendido nga anac ni Patriarca Jacob* (The Searing Life of Joseph, son of the Patriarch Jacob), which came out in three parts in 1910. It was followed the next year by *Masadia nga vida ni Esopo nga solagoon sang filosofo nga si Janto* (The Happy Life of Aesop, Servant of Janto, the Philosopher). Both were printed by the Imprenta Panayana in Mandurriao, Iloilo. She also wrote short stories, corridos, and a zarzuela (Eugenio 1987, 322, 336, 337, 340; Realubit 1983, 177, 284, 285, 392).

Damas de la Pluma, 1862–1898

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the Spanish ladies of the pen in the Philippines were mostly peninsulars. Apart from being Spanish speaking, they had the advantage of a relatively more liberal education abroad as well as better resources and connections to publish their works in Manila. Although Spain was one of the most conservative realms in Europe, where women writers were also rare before the

nineteenth century, the winds of change from its neighboring countries inevitably reached the plains of Iberia to rouse her women to push the pen in earnest. They included the female writers who came to Manila with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and introduced new ideas for the women in the “distant” colony.

The first woman to put out a secular work in the Philippines was Doña María Mendoza de Vives. She had her obra, *Hijo por Hijo* (Son by Son) printed in 1862 by the Amigos del País. Her topic was apparently sibling rivalry. Srta. Doña Joaquina García Balmaceda, on the other hand, translated a series of five French secular oeuvres by Ponson du Terrail, a pseudonym, and Elías Berthet. She published them over a two-year period (1875–1876) through the press El Porvenir Filipino. In 1878, Doña Ángela Grassi came up with *Marina*, a historical narrative, printed jointly by Ramírez y Giraudier and *Diario de Manila*. Almost a decade later, in 1887, Doña Ana García del Espinar, wife of Army Gen. Sebastián de la Torre issued *Amor y Vanidad* (Love and Vanity), a novel of customs (*novela de costumbres*) through La Industrial Press (Retana 1906, 1012, 1474, 1492, 1500, 1539, 1540, 1637, 2477).

In the Philippine Regional Exposition of 1895 in Manila, unlike the Philippine Exposition of 1887 in Madrid, no native female writers were featured. But the editors of *El Comercio* exhibited eight short obras and a novel by a prolific criolla, Doña Enriqueta Lozano de Vilches. A printed story by Doña Ida Vegerri Ruscalla entitled “Florica y Daina” was also presented by the newspaper (*Catálogo* 1895, 483).

Piano and Pen: Filipino Women Composers and Lyricists, 1880–1898

In his travelogue *De Manila a Tayabas* (1878), Don Juan Álvarez Guerra noted that “Almost all (the elite women of Luchán) have been to school. They know how to read, write, and embroider, a bit of music, and on some occasions, they compose a *kundiman* dedicated to a friend on her birthday.” In this sense, Luchán was a microcosm of the woman’s world in the Philippines in the nineteenth century (Álvarez 1878, 51).

The first Filipino woman composer and lyricist to publish her obra was Srta. Doña Dolores Paterno y Devera Ignacio (1854–1881) of a wealthy and prominent Chinese mestizo family of Santa Cruz, Manila. Her musical piece was a *danza* for voice and piano, the unfading *La Flor de Manila* (The Flower of Manila) or *Sampaguíta*. Composed in 1879, it was printed the following year by DCP Press in Quiapo. The lyrics were attributed to “H,” supposedly her penname. Because her father married three times, she belonged to a big brood and she dedicated her work to her several siblings, of whom the most famous was Don Pedro A. Paterno, writer and statesman (Girón 1970).

In the 1890s, the masterpiece was reissued posthumously by Carmelo and Bauermann. The cover featured a portrait of the pretty composer painted by her uncle, the master, Justiniano Asunción. She was the first woman writer with extant portraits. She also has a surviving photograph and her name was illustrated in the style called Letras y Figuras (1878). The second edition contained another set of lyrics, which was presumably written by Dolores, too.

Before she died in 1881, at the young age of twenty-seven, she had just published another original composition “El Recuerdo” (The Remembrance) dedicated to her late father, Don Maximo Paterno whom she affectionately called “Dada.” The patriarch had been exiled to the Marianas as a coconspirator in the Cavite Mutiny of 1872. She left another poem, “La Ninfa del Pásig” (The Nymph of the Pásig), possibly the lyrics to an unfinished song (Girón 1970).

It is interesting to note that none of her compositions bore religious themes. As noted earlier, she and her contemporary, the Ilokana poet Leona Florentino, were the first two native women to write purely secular works, the former in Spanish and the latter, in both Ilokano and Spanish. In the creative solitude of their *bahay na bato*, despite the lack of a writing room of their own, they started a quiet revolution in Philippine literature.

In contrast, anonymous beatas and their pupils, as mentioned earlier, were known to have composed and supplied words to sacred music in the nineteenth century and earlier. Most of their works, however, have been lost, misplaced, or remained unidentified.²⁹

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw native women writers adopting the language of Cervantes without forsaking the local languages. Instead of merely translating Spanish obras—a legitimate literary pursuit—they were creating original works in Spanish or the vernacular. Female writers had come full circle, since their predecessors in the seventeenth century were already involved in creative writing, either in Tagalog or Spanish.

The Daughters of Urbana and Feliza: Letter Writers in the Late-Nineteenth Century, 1872–1892

Padre Modesto de Castro's epistolary novel (1864), *Pagsusulatan nang Dalawang Binibini na si Urbana at ni Feliza* (Correspondence between the Two Young Women, Urbana and Feliza) brings to the fore the creativity of native women as reflected and expressed in the art of letter writing—virtually the only writing outlet available to most of them in the past centuries. Urbana and Feliza were sisters; the former studied in a private school in Manila while the latter, the younger of the two, remained in the province. The novel became the “bible” of model behavior and communication for the fair sex in the second half of the nineteenth century, when women brought the art of letter writing to its apogee (Santiago 1985).

The Exile's Wife

Despite the significance of Padre Modesto's work, actual letters of Filipino women have scarcely been collected, let alone studied. One of the few that have seen print is the epistle of Doña Dorotea de los Reyes (1826–1888), wife of the patriot Crisanto de los Reyes (1828–1895). In it, she pleaded to His Majesty, as a husband and father, for clemency and pardon for her own husband who was implicated in the Cavite Mutiny of 1872. She spoke of the excruciating plight of a wife and mother (Santiago and Boncon 1994). It appeared that the letter did not even reach the “ever-busy” king. It died a natural death in the bureaucratic shuffling of official papers until the archives claimed it for posterity.

The Women of Malolos

The most famous women letter writers in the late-nineteenth century were the *dalaga* (maidens) of Malolos who, on 12 December 1888, petitioned the Governor-General Don Valeriano Weyler for the opening of a night school in their town where they could learn Spanish.

Written in a simple and straightforward manner, the letter was signed by the following: Alberta Uitangcoy, Merced Tiongson, Feliciano Tiongson, María Tantoco, Basilia Tantoco, Emilia Tiongson, Agapita Tiongson, Paz Tiongson, Leoncia Reyes, Áurea Tanchangco, Eugenia Tanchangco, and Cecilia, Aleja, Filomena, Anastacia, Rufina, and Juana (who did not affix their family names) (Rizal 1889; Villalón 2001). From the given surnames, it is clear that most of them came from the Chinese mestizo class. At least a few of them were probably potential writers who wanted to be able to write, not only in Tagalog, but also in Spanish.

Since the local friar had vetoed their request earlier, the governor, who was supposed to be a “liberal,” also withheld his approval so as not to embarrass the Spanish priest. But, conscious of their basic rights, the brave women refused to take no for an answer. For the first time in Philippine history, a group of women defied the official ban and continued to campaign for a school until, finally, the chief executive relented (Rizal 1889).

Their province mate, Marcelo H. del Pilar, as well as Rizal and López Jaena, wrote articles and letters of praise and encouragement to the women, which were published in *La Solidaridad* the following year. “No longer does the Filipina stand with her head bowed,” Rizal (1889) observed, “nor does she spend time on her knees, because she is inspired by hope in the future.”

Rizal's Sister

In general, Filipino families do not preserve their letters. But the voluminous correspondence between Rizal and his family, including his mother and sisters (1876–1896), has not only been preserved but has been printed though it remains largely untouched by scholars. Perhaps

the most sensitive yet light-hearted letter writer among Rizal's sisters was his namesake, Josefa (1865–1945), who suffered from epilepsy. She later learned English well enough to be able to write a few letters in it to her brother. She wrote from Hong Kong on 21 November 1892 (Comisión 1961, 408–9):

My Dearest Brother,

We received your letters and I am very glad to know you are well, and although I did rejoice in its perusal, nevertheless I feel very sad because none of them is addressed to me. I acknowledge my fault [for not having written to you] but you must know that I have been sick and so you will excuse me for it, and sometimes everything that I learned I forget. . . .

We are continually making fun of [Rósica, our Macao maid] when we feel sad, and she allows it so that mother might laugh a little.

Hoping that we may embrace soon and with love I remain

Your ever affectionate sister.

Plaridel's Daughters

The letters sent by Marcelo H. del Pilar from Spain to his family in Bulacan (1889–1895) have also been published. These adequately described the messages from his wife and two daughters, messages which unfortunately no longer exist. But the latter's letters are clearly mirrored in the profound feelings they evoked in the hero that formed a veritable thesaurus of synonyms for sadness in Tagalog (Oficina 1958).

Clio in the Convent

The religious front always endured. The female religious congregation was an inexhaustible source of literary women. The Spanish Augustinian beatas founded an autonomous community in Manila in 1883. Seven years later, the first ten native Augustinian sisters professed their vows. One of the pioneers was Sor Catalina de Jesús, OSA (1867–1953), the former Isidora del Rosario y Tanchanco of Barasoain, Malolos,

Bulacan. Had she not decided to enter the convent, she would have surely joined the women of Malolos, who wrote the famous letter cited earlier. Two of the valiant Maloleñas, Áurea and Eugenia Tanchangco were her maternal cousins.³⁰

Sor Catalina earned a teacher's diploma from the Colegio de la Concordia. A diligent writer, she took pen in hand to draft most of the *Crónicas* of the congregation as the events unfolded before the beatas' eyes. In particular, she vividly described their harrowing experiences during the Revolution and the Filipino-American War. Less than forty years later, she witnessed another horrible conflict—the Second World War. In 1948, during her retirement, she revised, updated, and integrated her manuscripts as the *Reseña de la Congregación de Religiosas Agustinas Terciarias de Filipinas* (Review of the History of the Congregation of the Augustinian Tertiary Sisters of the Philippines). It was published in time for the Holy Year of 1950. She died three years later.³¹

The Confident Years: Filipina Journalists, 1891–1898

By the late-nineteenth century, the creativity of Filipina writers could no longer be denied or ignored in the male-controlled republic of letters. There was a clear clamor by both female writers and readers, albeit from the elite class, for regular publications partly or wholly edited by and for them.

On 7 January 1891, *El Bello Sexo* (The Fair Sex), the first women's periodical in the Philippines was born. "An illustrated weekly dedicated to the woman" was how another newspaper heralded the new publication. The editor was Doña Matilde Martín, probably a criolla, who wrote many articles with her own by-line or under various pseudonyms. Several women writers contributed poetry and prose on a wide range of topics, mostly secular in character. Salient among the essays that resonated with the just pride of women were "La Creación al Alcance de la Mujer" (Creation—Within the Power of the Woman), a series by Pepay (14 January 1891); "La Mujer Periodista" (The Woman Journalist), by Tantarbredes (7 August 1891); and "La Poesía

de la Mujer" (The Poetry of the Woman), by Cecilia G. de Ibáñez (14 August 1891). A few men also sent brief obras.³²

The cover was almost always a portrait of a young woman, either an "India or mestiza" drawn by the young artists Teodoro Buenaventura and M. Ramírez. However, there was at least one female illustrator who signed her pictures as Charing, or Rosario R. de P.³³

Mourning becomes a Poet

Poesías was a regular section, and one of the first poems to be featured (7 February 1891) was composed by Doña Esperanza de San Agustín of Cavite, Cavite. Her work, "Al poeta laureado de Granada, José Zorilla" (To the Poet Laureate of Granada, José Zorilla), had been written in September 1889, antedating the magazine itself. Zorilla (1817–1893) was a celebrated poet and dramatist not only in Spain but also in Latin America and the Philippines. The famous Teatro Zorilla of Manila was put up in his memory when he died in 1893. Esperanza's portrait by Buenaventura later graced the cover for 7 March 1891.

Her case showed that the women of her time read not only local authors but also Spanish writers and poets abroad. In fact, her uncle, Don Antonio de San Agustín (1860–1896), owned a bookstore in Cavite that sold foreign and nonreligious books, marking him as an adversary of the colonial establishment. Her husband, Don Victoriano Luciano (1863–1896), was also a poet like her besides being a composer and a pharmacist. Tragically, both her husband and uncle were numbered among the thirteen martyrs of Cavite who were executed on 12 September 1896 for their part in the outbreak of the Revolution. The childless widow later married her husband's younger brother, Joaquín Jr. (Bañas 1970, 214–15; Manuel 1955, 261–64, 401–2).

Another brown beauty who made the cover was Srta. Inés Pagtachán whose likeness was also limned by Buenaventura (7 February 1891). Though she may not have written for *El Bello Sexo* (at least in the surviving copies), she loomed later as one of the active contributors to *Filipinas, Revista Semanal Ilustrada*, a bilingual women's magazine, which appeared in 1909. *El Bello Sexo* flourished for almost two years until November 1892.

No sooner had *El Bello Sexo* folded up than another women's publication, *El Hogar* (The Home), was inaugurated in January 1893. Its editor was Doña Amparo Gómez de la Serna, a Spanish Filipina assisted by Doña Toribia Sierra as the *administradora*, or managing editor. It was described as a "weekly of sciences, literature, fine arts and practical knowledge dedicated exclusively to the woman." In its maiden issue, the editors declared: "Our principal objective is to dedicate ourselves in particular to whatever relates to the education and instruction of the woman, striving to share with our readers pleasant and healthy readings. Great are the difficulties we shall encounter in order to achieve our purposes with success. But without omitting any sacrifice and by combining other good intentions, we believe we can surmount these difficulties if the public, for their part, to whom we dedicate our works, accord us a benevolent reception." The hopes of the editors were apparently not realized and the magazine faltered after a few months (Retana 1906, 1698–1699).

According to Retana, almost all the articles in *El Hogar* were written by women and, as a feminine publication, it was "far superior" to its predecessor. However, he did not have the benefit of any copy of the latter to compare it with (Retana 1906, 3:1680). Unfortunately, all the issues of *El Hogar* in the National Library perished in the last war thus preventing us from studying them and ferreting out from oblivion more names of women writers.

There were three other illustrated weeklies for general readers, which catered in part to female readers. *La Ilustración Filipina* (1891–1895) presented several articles on women in various fields of endeavor though none on native writers. However, it numbered three ladies among its provincial correspondents: Doña María Álvarez of Echague, Isabela de Luzón, Doña Venturada Trinidad of Cabagan, also in Isabela, and Doña Vicenta Pilar de Etruiste of Pitogo, Tayabas (now Quezon).³⁴

Polichinela (Punch) was founded by Don Juan Atayde in 1892. It became a biweekly in 1893 with a new name, *La Moda Filipina* (The Philippine Fashion/Style). Most of the writers (who probably included at least a few women) used pseudonyms. In 1895, it absorbed *La Ilustración Filipina* when the latter's publisher, Don José Zaragoza, died.

Besides maintaining the three women correspondents mentioned above, it also hired a woman artist among its staff, María Infante del Rosario. She exhibited three obras in the Philippine Regional Exposition of 1895, one of which was entitled *Distracciones Literarias* (Literary Distractions). *La Moda* breathed its last as the Revolution sparked to life in 1896 (Retana 1906, 1696, 1699).

Meanwhile, the Escuela Superior Normal de Maestras (Superior Normal School for Women Teachers) was established in Manila in 1893 by the Religious of the Assumption in compliance with a Royal Order. Two of its first graduates became avid writers: Srtas. Rosa Sevilla y Tolentino (1879–1854) and Florentina Arellano y Santos (1879–1928). When the revolutionary newspaper *La Independencia* was founded by Gen. Antonio Luna in 1898 in the second phase of the Revolution and the Filipino-American War, the two maestras joined its editorial staff. The distinguished group of writers even managed to pose for posterity with their two muses at the center of the photograph. Mention has already been made of another budding female writer from Naga, Srta. Patrocinio Lerma (born 1882), who also published an article in both *La Independencia* and *República Filipina* in 1898. The three women continued to write into the next century. In 1900, Sevilla and Arellano founded the Instituto de Mujeres, the first secular women's college in the Philippines, which would produce more writers (San Andrés 1948).

Conclusion: The Sociocultural Impact

Although they are unknown and neglected, native women writers and publishers, especially in the nineteenth century, exerted a social influence that was both wide and deep. The women made an indelible mark in Philippine thought and society and thus contributed immensely to the forging not only of national literature but also of Philippine culture in general.

Before the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the surviving works were written by beatas. Their spiritual sway spanned the community at large, since they were not contemplatives, their religious communities, affiliates or branches, schools and groups of alumnae came from or dispersed into different parts of the Islands.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the general awareness and recognition of the writing ability and talent of native women began to expand. In a ripple effect, the women writers influenced and inspired one another to write and publish. For instance, the printer of the works of the first two female authors, Doña María Varela de Brodet (ca. 1838; 1844), a criolla, and Doña Luisa Gonzaga de León (ca. 1844), a Chinese mestiza who preferred the appellation India, was Don Cándido López of the University of Santo Tomás. He was the late husband of Doña Remigia Salazar Talusan, who was to be the third female author (1848) and the only successful woman book and newspaper publisher in Manila. Doña Remigia put out the first daily newspaper in the Philippines, *La Esperanza, Diario de Manila*, which circulated for nearly five years (1846–1850). Because of this venture, it was she, of all the women writers and publishers in the Spanish Philippines, who evidently influenced colonial society the most.

It can be said that the three women pioneers spawned a new generation of Filipina poets and prose writers of a wide range of works and genres (novenas, religious devotions, corridos, pasyon, poems, musical lyrics, short novels, translations, essays, letters, historical accounts, news reports, and others) from the major regions of the archipelago in the last third of the nineteenth century. They contributed to the refinement, enrichment, and general development of their respective language and its literature; literature being the splendor of language and language, the carrier of culture. The popularity of their works can be gleaned from the fact that most of these were reprinted at least once or twice in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Many of the Tagalog booklets were also translated into other local languages like Kapampangan, Bikolano, and Hiligaynon.

The obras of Ilokano poet Doña Leona Florentino and the corridos of Srtas. Caridad Jareño y Escudero and Ana Romero y Llamas from Southern Tagalog were displayed in the Philippine General Exposition in Madrid in 1887. Leona's poems even made it to the *International Encyclopedia of Women's Works*, published in conjunction with the Universal Exposition of Paris in 1889. The musical composition and lyrics of her contemporary Srta. Dolores Paterno, *La Flor de Manila or Sampaguita* (1879), are a popularly acclaimed classic in Philippine music.

The high degree of social consciousness and confidence of women writers and readers was further reflected in the emergence of two women's periodicals in the last decade of the nineteenth century, *El Bello Sexo* (1891–1892) followed by *El Hogar* (1893). And two women writers joined the editorial staff of the revolutionary newspaper, *La Independencia* (1898–1899), while a third published in it a riveting account (1898) of her father's execution a few days after Rizal's. The latter article was simultaneously printed in the other patriotic organ, *República Filipina* (1898–1899), helping ignite the sentiments of the people in the time of revolution and, later, of war against the new colonizer.

Notes

This is a shortened version of the original article. Samples of writings have been omitted due to space constraints.

1. The basic sources of this article are (1) Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila (AAM), *Libros de Gobierno Eclesiástico (LGE)* (eighteenth to nineteenth centuries) especially those of Abp. José Seguí (1830–1845) and sede vacante (1845–1846), and of Abp. José Aranguren (1846–1861) and sede vacante (1861–1862), *passim*; (2) Retana, *Aparato Bibliográfico*, 1906.

2. Santiago 1987; Archivo de los PP Agustinos Filipinos (Valladolid), Año de 1697, *Libro de Capellanías*, Manila.

3. Sinupang Pambansa (SP), "Escritura de venta del dominio directo de los solares de la Isla de Tanduay," Año de 1865, Protocolo del Esc.no D. Francisco Rogent, *Protocolos de Manila*, leg. 407.

4. Santiago 1987; AAM, *Libro de Capellanías*, tomo 1, folios 122–124.

5. Santiago 1987; AAM, Juzgado Ectco, "El Devoto Cura Párroco de Candaba, demandante, contra La Corporación Agustiniiana, demandado," Manila, typewritten MS 1904–ca. 1915, pp. 5–8; *Capellanías de Candaba* (1848–1898; 1910–1915), folder D.

6. AAM, "Año de 1631–1633, Informaciones hechas sobre la maravillosa vida y muerte de la V.e Madre Sor Jerónima de la Asunción," 10 cuadernos.

7. Archivo General de la Nación, México (AGNM), "Proceso y Causa Criminal contra la Madre Sor Juana de Sanct Antonio, Religiosa de Santa Clara en las Islas Filipinas," *Secretaría de Virreinato, Inquisición*, expediente 3, folios 122–157, cited in Guerrero 2000.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. AGNM, "Proceso y Causa Criminal."

11. Archives of the Religious of the Virgin Mary, *Año de 1726, Constituciones y Reglas de las Beatias Indias Doncellas que sirven Diós Nuestro Señor en este Beaterio de*

Manila. Typescript, n.d.; *Rules and Constitution of the Beaterio de Manila, 1726* (Manila: RVM, 1974).

12. Ibid.

13. Personal Interviews with Mothers Ma. Emilia Gaspillo, AR, and Ma. Eufemia Lauzon, AR, and Sor Inés Dalisay, O.S.A. (2000–2002).

14. Archivo General de Indias (AGI), “Expediente de la Hna. Ignacia de Guzmán de la Ssma. Trinidad y Maestra de la Cassa de Enseñanza . . .” (1788–1789), *Filipinas*, 659; Santiago 1996a.

15. Archives of ICP, Pasig, “Año de 1801, Capellanía de Sor Mariana Flores,” *Capellanías de Misas*, Santiago 1992a.

16. SP, *Erección de los Pueblos de la Provincia de La Laguna* (Pila 1794–1811), Legajo 48 (now Tomos I y IV); Santiago 1983.

17. Ibid.

18. Archives of the Congregation of the Augustinian Recollect Sisters, *Libro de Cosas Notables del Beaterio de San Sebastián. Año de 1894*; Santiago 2001.

19. AGI, “Año de 1827. Título de Notario de las Indias á D. Juan Cecilio,” *Ultramar* 545. (This is the dossier of Cecilio who was chosen by the Consejo de Indias to succeed Don Francisco Castro de Reyes. It also includes the prior documents of Don Francisco.) SP, “Año de 1823, Testamento de D. Theodoro Tuason,” Protocolo del Esc.no D. Clemente Cobarrubias, folios 14v–20, *Protocolos de Manila*, Leg. 100 (Don Theodoro was the maternal grandfather of Doña Vicentica.) Santiago 1998. This article contains a history of the Tuason Family.

20. AGI, “Título de Notario.”

21. AAM, *Libro de Gobierno Eclesiástico* (Abpo. Seguí: 1830–1845; Sede vacante: 1845–1846; Abpo. Aranguren: 1846–1861; Sede vacante: 1861–1862), passim.

22. AAM, “Licencia concedida a D.a María Varela de Brodet,” 23 Agto. 1844; *LGE (1843–1845)*; Santiago 1991.

23. De León 1854 (1st reprint; only known copy at Aklatang Pambansa [The National Library]; Santiago 2002; 2004; AAM, *Libro de Gobierno Eclesiástico (LGE)* (18th–19th century), passim; Pardo de Tavera 1903, 1195; Retana 1906, 2: 855.

24. AAM, *LGE (1830–1862)*, passim; Retana 1906, passim; Manuel 1955, 275–78 (“Juan Martínez 1859–1934”).

25. Retana 1906, passim; AAM, *LGE (1846–1862)* doc. 398.

26. Ibid, doc. 1427.

27. Ibid., docs. 43, 66, 68, 1427; Retana 1906, 2:748.

28. Retana 1906, 3:4468; AAM, *LGE (1846–1862)*, doc. 1427.

29. Personal interviews with Mothers Ma. Emilia Gaspillo, A.R., and Ma. Eufemia Lauzon, A.R. (2000–2002).

30. Santiago 1996b, 239; Archives of the Augustinian Sisters of Our Lady of Consolation, *Catálogo Biográfico de las Religiosas Agustinas Terciarias de Filipinas*, Libro 1.o. MSS.

31. Ibid; De Jesús, O.S.A., 1950.

32. Retana 1906, 3:1680; *El Bello Sexo*, Manila, 14 Jan. 1891–7 Oct. 1891, passim (Ronquillo Collection at Aklatang Pambansa.)
33. Ibid.
34. *La Ilustración Filipina*, Manila, 1891–1895, passim (Aklatang Pambansa).

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