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The Parvenu - A Love Story **by Florentino Daus**

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amounts ever paid for municipal office in 1803, failed to break the Spanish monopoly of the *cabildo*. Nonetheless, the perceptive historian will find much between the lines, as it were, which is valuable for the understanding of the wider history of the Philippines. Historians will welcome the continuation of this series of careful studies by Fr. Merino.

John N. Schumacher, S.J.

THE PARVENU: A LOVE STORY. By Florentino Daus. Manila: Regal Publishing Company, 1978. 118 pages.

A persistent echo in Philippine literature has been the theme of romantic escapism. In the post-war period this theme has been fused with that of the journey in search of self. The reader of Florentino Daus's first novel (he has published poetry and essays — *Caligula*, *Brodsky and Others*, *Essays of a Decade*, *The Survivor of Warsaw*, and *The Beheaded Sun*) recognizes the genre immediately. For Daus's hero is out of the Horatio Alger and Nora Aunor tradition of rags to riches: "Julian Braga was his name. He was the son of the most industrious land-owning farmer of Alicia and his misfortune was that his father, perhaps to exorcise some private demon, had taken to drink until he became too weak to work the land. The fourth among six children, Julian alone in the family was able to escape the curse of illiteracy by dint of hard work and a passion for learning." (p. 8) At the age of fourteen, "he became an expert at cards, an education he obtained from an ambulant mosquito-net peddler from Batangas who told him about the thrills of Manila, about the theaters, the neon-lights, the fun and glitter of Dewey Boulevard." (p. 9) A high school English teacher introduces Julian to the *Sermons of Edmund Burke* and, as a high school student, he reads Spencer, Thoreau, Kant (whom Daus ingenuously says he did not understand until he was twenty — but kept on reading anyway), Voltaire, Rizal, Zola, and Tolstoy. (He later reads Eliot and a host of others, as well as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *The Reader's Digest*). He transfers to a Central Luzon Agricultural College where he saves ₱10,000 in three years with which he moves to Manila to complete his education. After college he works as a proofreader and as a waiter at the Manila Hotel, where he learns the language and manners of the upper class, and finally joins an advertising agency where he becomes an assistant vice-president in a year and a half. By this time he is living in his own apartment in Ermita and owns his own car. He speculates with a hectare of land in Ayala and in one year he has made "a few million pesos." (p. 37) He enters the money market and makes \$2 million in three months. "At the age of 25, Julian earned the right to be called a business baron." (p. 38) But then Julian discovers "that the hardest thing in the world to make is not the first million but the first hundred

million." (p. 39) But he succeeds and by the age of thirty he has reached his goal — ₱100 million!

But money, of course, is not enough. The romantic fantasy and the journey theme are always clearly in search of spiritual values over materialistic ones. So Julian sets off in search of happiness? Peace? Love? The central portion of the novel is devoted to Julian's travels and a set of typed symbol characters — to Bombay, where he meets Samantha ("one of those women of India who had liberated herself from the iron cage of the caste system" [p. 45]); to Paris and Ramon Tarra (self proclaimed painter, sculptor, and philosopher); and finally to New York and Carlito (who had married a black singer). Finding no satisfaction abroad, Julian returns to Manila and plunges into business again. Frustrated and unfulfilled by success, he drifts into drugs and alcohol. At a crucial moment he meets the barrio queen who had rejected him as a young college student (her name is Valery Dupax), rescues her from poverty, sickness, and degradation, nurses her to health in a condominium and then in his palatial Zambales hide-away. The novel ends in expected fashion: "I brought my parents here so that you will meet them. I told them that I am settling down and that I will marry you . . ." That night they stayed together in Julian's room. It was already afternoon when they emerged and went down to the dining room." (p. 118) The romantic fantasy is complete and the journey is over.

The genre is an acceptable one if the reader recognizes what the author is trying to do — to say something about the harsh realities of every day life by means of the metaphor of idyllic contrast. Dauz's hero is a good representative of the type and his plot fits the pattern of the folk fantasy. He suffers, however, from a lack of discipline at times and his idiom sometimes falters. Julian and Valery for example meet under romantic but "untenable circumstances." (p. 7) Valery's first sexual encounter had been when she was "savaged" in a car, (p. 14) but they have a "Homeric respect for each other." (p. 104) Julian is surrounded by "gunslingers" (p. 95) and "bravos." (p. 113) Dauz *can* write, however. There are passages of good, competent, writing, and a couple of sections that are more than competent.

The ancients and the classical critics preached a theory of genre criticism. The literary work is to be judged on its adherence to the genre formula and the success with which it operates within the genre framework. Dauz' choice of genre, therefore, cannot be criticized. His novel is a good example of a representative Filipino genre. But his use of the genre is uneven, and his skills have not always been able to carry his vision.

Joseph A. Galdon, S.J.