PHILIPPINE fiction in English is one of the many consequences of Spain’s cession of the islands to the United States after the war of 1898. The coming of the Americans introduced a new language and a new culture to the people. During the early part of the twentieth century Spanish continued to dominate as the literary idiom, but works were also written in the vernacular languages such as Tagalog (Pilipino), Ilokano and Cebuano. Writers of this period who deserve mention are the pioneering novelist L. K. Santos, Fanny A. Garcia, a noted writer of short stories and fiction in Pilipino, Jose F. Lacaba, who was a poet and a journalist in both English and Pilipino, and Bienvenido L. Lumbera, a literary critic and authority on Philippine vernacular literature. However, 1908 saw the establishment of the University of the Philippines which, as the first English university in the country, became deeply involved in the rise of Filipino literature in English. English became the medium of communication and of instruction in schools and by the 1930s was also increasingly popular as the language of literature.

Fiction, particularly the short story, proved to be the most popular form of literary expression for Filipinos. It found an outlet in periodicals, in newspapers, and in literary magazines such as the College Folio, produced by the University of the Philippines. Other titles worth recording include The Philippine Review, The Philippine Free Press, The Philippine Magazine (P.P.8006.cg) and The Literary Apprentice (Ac.1923.ba), the oldest and most famous college publication in the country. Many Filipino novels were first published in serialized form in these magazines.

New professional bodies were another factor in the promotion of Filipino literature. The Philippine Writers’ Association was founded in 1953, as was the National Organization of Writers. In 1955 the Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Literature was established and in 1960 both the Republic Cultural Awards and the Republic Award for Merit for literature. In 1961 the Government of the Philippines started sponsoring the Rizal Centennial Awards, and the Barangay Writers’ Project was also organized. These grants and awards proved an important stimulus to writers. B. N. Santos wrote The Volcano, 1965 (X.958/26528), on a grant awarded by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation of America, and a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation allowed Nick Joaquin to complete The Woman Who Had Two Navels, 1972 (X.909/35338). As a
result, the Philippines have produced more novels in English than many other countries where English is the second language.

After the Second World War the main problems confronting the Philippines were the economy and the need for reconstruction and rehabilitation. In 1946 the Republic of the Philippines was born amid social, political and economic confusion and great poverty. These factors are reflected in the short stories and novels of the time.

Writers during the post-war years were inspired by American school and college teachers, and were able to borrow their techniques, achieving a greater mastery of the English language. The years between 1945 and 1960, therefore, were a productive period for Philippine authors. They also saw the beginning of the teaching of Philippine literature as a subject at college level. Writers were concerned with the idea of the Filipino as a pilgrim in search of his identity, and contemporary fiction emphasized the courageous deeds, sacrifices and suffering that made up the people’s lives. However, there are a variety of themes in Philippine fiction in English: these explore religious faith, legends, superstitions, and fantasy; social problems, poverty and class conflict; political manoeuvrings, nationalism and foreign domination; and adultery, morality and sex. Other popular subjects include the experiences of the Filipinos under American and Spanish domination, and wartime stories about the Japanese occupation and liberation.

As a result of growing political unrest and the bombing of the Plaza Miranda, Martial Law was instituted by President Marcos in 1972. These events and socio-economic changes in the country inspired writers to confront the harsh social realities of their time. Concern at corruption, rising unemployment and the depressed economy is mirrored in contemporary novels. Significant among these is Fernando Castro’s *Let There be Light*, 1954 (YA.1987.a.7290), which reflects the poverty that prevailed. A. T. Misola wrote about the causes of peasant unrest and the activities of the Hiks, whose rebellion had been organized by the Communist Party as a guerrilla movement against the Japanese, in *Cries from the Furrow*. D. V. Santos’s *Filipino Valor*, 1963 (YA.1987.a.14928), is devoted to the campaign for democracy and the military operation against a Russian Huk commander who impersonated an American GI called ‘Williamson’. Continuing the social theme, many of these novels deal with the exploitation of the urban masses, corruption and prostitution. N. V. M. Gonzalez’s *A Season of Grace*, 1967 (X.989/20525), expresses the highest form of social concern: the welfare of others regardless of their socio-economic status. The novel reflects the busy life of the people, their struggle against a harsh environment, their habits, their customs, their beliefs, their joys and sorrows. His *The Bamboo Dancers*, 1959 (011313.r.20), deals with Filipino culture and traditional values, while *Mindoro and Beyond*, 1979 (YA.1989.b.1230), *Children of Ash Covered Loam and Other Stories*, 1977 (YA.1989.a.5401), and *Look Stranger, on This Island Now*, 1963 (X.908/30403), bring to the fore the exploitation of the urban masses.

The everyday life of the ordinary people has proved a fertile source for writers. *Brother, my Brother*, 1976 (X.950/43273), by B. N. Santos, reflects the author’s own background, especially his childhood years in the district of Manila where he grew up. Francisco Sionil José’s five ‘Rosales’ novels are set in a small town of that name in

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Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, 1972 (X.909/35338), symbolizes the dual Filipino heritage: its Spanish past and its American way of life. In 1963 Joaquin also published a collection of short stories, *Prose and Poems* (X.981/9922). Joaquin's fiction is socio-political and particularly concerned with issues such as the exploitation of tenants by greedy landlords, the conflict between rich and poor, and the relationship between the individual and society. As a result, his creative works have a special place in Filipino literature.


Novels about sex, violence, mystery and suspense, such as Nick Joaquin's *Cave and Shadows*, 1983 (YA.1987.a.323), have also been published. Set in Manila, it is one of his best novels. B. N. Santos's *Villa Magdalena*, 1986 (YA.1988.a.13572), is a novel of intense power marked by its understanding of the sensual aspects of the human emotions. F. Sionil José wrote about rape and prostitution in *Ermita*, 1988 (YA.1990.a.15435), the story of a girl living in an orphanage who becomes a prostitute. On the same theme, E. A. Enriquez produced *The Devil Flower*, 1963 (WPB.29/1535), a story of sexual misadventure and other contemporary social issues. Similarly, Antonio E. Sta Elena's *A Voyage of Love* is a narration of sexual adventure.

Much post-war fiction reflects the lives of expatriates and their sense of isolation in foreign lands. Carlos Bulosan (1913–1956) lived in America and was the first Filipino writer in English to take as a subject the struggle of his working class countrymen to survive in a foreign country. He portrayed the harsh economic realities of Filipino life in America, the working conditions of the Filipino peasants, their humiliation and suffering. *America is in the Heart*, 1977 (Mic.A.17451), is written in autobiographical form, and is not only his story but that of every Filipino who went to America in the expectation of easy living and sudden wealth. It gives a moving account of his own grim struggle for existence there, his loneliness, his hardships and sufferings. Despite this, he will also be remembered as a teller of comic stories. In his *Laughter of my Father*, 1945 (12729.a.16), he satirizes the economic system and the Filipino weaknesses for gambling,
wealth and the admiration of foreign things. His The Power of Money and Other Stories was published posthumously as late as 1990 (YA.1992.a.4032).

The best stories of B. N. Santos are also about Filipinos in America. He portrays their loneliness, alienation and homesickness and reminds his countrymen of their miseries and the cultural riches they have lost. His You Lovely People, 1976 (X.908/43003), The Man who (Thought he) Looked like Robert Taylor, 1983 (X.950/46133), What the Hell for You Left your Heart in San Francisco, 1987 (YA.1989.a.12681), Brother, my Brother, 1976 (X.950/43273), Dwell in the Wilderness, 1985 (YA.1987.a.968) and Scent of Apples, 1979 (X.909/87374), are some of his finest works.

Many historical novels have also been published, notably those of Linda Ty-Casper, the most famous and successful novelist and short story writer the Philippines have produced. Her The Peninsulars, 1964 (X.981/5040), set in the Philippines of the 1750s, recounts the British capture of Manila in 1762. The Three-cornered Sun, 1979 (YA.1988.a.19597), is set in the Spanish period, particularly the Revolution of 1896, and is a remarkable work. The Ten Thousand Seeds, 1987 (YA.1989.a.995), portrays the injustice and suffering that resulted from President Marcos’s abuse of power following the imposition of Martial Law. Awaiting Trespass, 1985 (NOV.1987/2937), shows the effects of Marcos’s rule on the people, while, in Fortress in the Plaza, 1985 (YA.1987.a.494), Ty-Casper describes the events leading up to the throwing of the grenade at Plaza Miranda in 1971.

While post-war Philippine fiction is predominantly narrative, simple in style and easy to read and understand, it abounds in vivid descriptions. Filipino writers have shown a remarkable degree of skill in expressing their ideas in a foreign tongue and most of them provide striking insights into the lives and struggles of the Filipinos, whose main aim has been to free themselves from political and economic bondage.

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