

Forum Kritika: Philippine Literature in Spanish
**A CHRONICLE OF THE PHILIPPINES IN
THE POETRY OF ZOILO HILARIO**

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Prose) and great novels of Filipino literature in Spanish: *Los pájaros de fuego* (The Birds of Fire) by Jesús Balmori and *Nathan's Sheep* by Antonio Abad. Finally, he has edited the volumes *More Hispanic Than We Admit. Insights into Philippine Cultural History* and *Historia cultural de la lengua española en Filipinas. Ayer y hoy* (Cultural History of the Spanish Language in the Philippines. Yesterday and Today).

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Oedipus, Generations, and Antiques

THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPINE LITERATURE finds itself consistently burdened by a fundamental problem: the linguistic fragmentation that divides authors and periods and impedes the creation of an overall critical paradigm. The least interesting and most politically-minded literary criticism has employed this linguistic fragmentation to integrate a body of pre-Hispanic oral tradition and, later, North American imitation into Filipino literary production. With a population of one hundred million inhabitants and one of the world's most singular cultures, it is outrageous that criticism in the Philippines continues to view the country's literary history as a fragmented and splintered entity, incapable of uniting the entire historical development of Filipino literature into one cohesive vision.¹ This is detrimental to the cultural self-worth that the Philippines has intrinsically—according to the Filipinos themselves—and extrinsically—in the eyes of the world—since an undervalued literature, an intellectual tradition consigned to oblivion, ends up demolishing the foundation on which the present rests and nullifying any future projects. To be frank, the Philippines cannot compete culturally in Asia because it lacks the tools possessed by China, Japan, Korea, or even Malaysia: a consciousness of its own historical development. The Philippines has suffered a generational fracture so severe that its children ignore, are unfamiliar with, or disregard the works of their own parents.² No one says it better than Nick Joaquín (1917-2004), the Philippines' best English-language writer: "A people that had got as far as Baudelaire in one language was being returned to the ABC's of another language."³

¹ Reformulating the concept of "archipelagic consciousness" used by one of the primary English-language Filipino authors, Cirilo Bautista, Wystan de la Peña explained the failings of any current initiative that does not take seriously the multilingualism of Filipino literary creation: "What is necessary is an 'archipelagic' reading—to use a metaphor based on the country's geography—where the different Filipino literatures, including the one that is written in Spanish, are read as part of a great body of work connected with a common history, although articulated in different languages," in Wystan de la Peña, "¿Dónde se encuentran las Letras Fil-Hispánicas en el canon de los estudios literarios filipinos," in Perro Berde: *Revista Cultural Hispano-Filipina*, Manila, Embajada de España, 2009, num. 00, p. 79. The problematics of Filipino literary historiography has been analyzed in depth in several publications: "La formación de la historiografía literaria filipina," in Perro Berde: *Revista Cultural Hispano-Filipina*, Manila, Embajada de España, 2010, num. 1, pp. 107-111; "Intracomparatismo archipelágico: El sino de las letras en Filipinas," in Pedro Aullón de Haro (ed.), *El Comparatismo Literario*, Madrid, Verbum (currently in printing); and in the first chapters of I. Donoso & Andrea Gallo, *Literatura hispanofilipina actual*, Madrid, Verbum, 2011.

² "English displaced both Spanish and the vernaculars as the primary symbolic system through which Filipinos represented themselves, that is, constituted themselves as colonial subjects with specific positions or functions in the given social order [...] English become the wedge that separated the Filipinos from their past and later was to separate educated Filipinos from the masses of their countrymen," in E. San Juan Jr., *Writing and National Liberation: Essays on Critical Practice*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press, 1991, p. 96.

"But our distorted attitude to foreign languages is amply demonstrated in the cavalier attitude with which educators regarded and finally got rid of required Spanish learning. Part of the prejudice against Spanish is, of course, due to the great American-induced prejudice against the Spanish part of our history. But the prejudice has been counterproductive because illiteracy in Spanish has disabled millions of Filipinos from reading into the archives of their past as well as linking with Spanish-using countries at the present without American English intervention," in Rolando Tinio, *A Matter of Language: Where English Fails*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press, 1990, p. 96.

³ Nick Joaquín, *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*, Manila, Bookmark, 2005, pp. 170-171. The entire problematics of the Hispanic tradition in the Philippines is to be found in this point: the Hispanic does not refer to the Spanish, but rather the Hispanic is the foundation of Filipino nationalism. For this reason there arose a conflict of identity surrounding the

There are famous cases of contemporary and present-day Filipino writers and intellectuals who are recognized for their writing in English. What is curious is that in some cases their parents were celebrated Spanish-language writers, and their children are capable of casting them into oblivion, either simply through ignorance and the passage of time or through the violent upheaval of the generational conflict. In effect, the importance of the Oedipus complex in the history of contemporary Filipino literature (as much in the works as in the people) still remains to be seen, which Nick Joaquín so masterfully described in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels*. But beyond these illustrious names that everyone knows, our interest now is to present one specific case as an example of how Filipino literature has been abandoned, and how the thinkers who in days past built the nation are today lost in forgotten libraries and antique shops. We are going to create a "Chronicle of the Philippines" by means of the poetry of an author who passed through all of the transcendental stages of Filipino modernity and ultimately felt the weight of the passage of time on his own shoulders: Zoilo José Hilario y Sangalang (1892-1963) (Fig. 1 and 2).⁴

Posthumously, and at the late date of 1968, the Hilario family was able to give a splendid homage to the memory of Zoilo by publishing a volume with his last, unpublished poems: *Hymns and Harangues (Himnos y Arengas)* (Fig. 3), Manila, Nueva Era Press, 1968. In a note in English, the family thanked and recognized the collaboration of Joaquín P. Jaramillo as editor of the book and Francisco G. Tonogbanua for its publication. The fact that this note is in English already apprises us of the linguistic change in the family, which is confirmed in the "Foreword" written in perfect English by Zoilo's daughter, Evangelina V. Hilario-Lacson. These are her words:

As a child, I paid no special attention to father's being a poet. All that I remember in connection with his works was seeing them published in the magazine sections of the then Spanish dailies. And, of course, I heard his friends discuss his works and comment on their beauty. But I do not all remember his bragging about any of them, nor of his having mentioned anything about the superiority of his works over another poet's. Father, even acclaimed as Pampanga's poet laureate in Spanish and in Pampanga, remained a humble man.⁵

political use of the concept of "civilization," a conflict that will never be resolved but that was reformulated throughout the 20th century: "I wonder if in the debate over the Filipino's original identity there is not an unexpressed desire to return to the foetal position a desire, one might say, to de-circumcise ourselves and reassume the simpler identity of the child. The pagan tribesman would call such a desire shameful; the Christian would call it the sin against the Holy Ghost; but certain militants of today would call it nationalism when it's the exact opposite of nationalism. Nationalism is a very complex and advanced stage of political development, something that occurs late in history, and only after clan and tribe have been outgrown. So how can we say we are being nationalist when we advocate a return to our pre-1521 identity when that was a clan identity, a tribal identity? To recapture our pre-1521 identity, we would first have to abolish this nation called the Philippines," in Nick Joaquín, *Culture and History: Occasional Notes on the Process of Philippine Becoming*, Manila, Solar Publishing Corporation, 1989, p. 245.

⁴ For a detailed biography, see his entry in E. Arsenio Manuel, *Dictionary of Philippine Biography*, Quezon City, Filipiniana Publications, 1955-70, vol. III, pp. 327-328.

⁵ Zoilo Hilario, *Himnos y Arengas*, Manila, Nueva Era Press, 1968, p. 2.

Praiseworthy and born from indisputable filial love, Evangelina Hilario's text shows us a child's affection for her father's literature and her determination and hard work to ensure that it stood the test of time through the publication of this book. However, it also demonstrates a failure to understand her father's work, which is written in a language unknown or barely known to her and, above all, whose function—the function of literary creation as an instrument of nation-building—she is unable to comprehend. That is to say, the lofty, erudite poetry written by Zoilo Hilario (and so many other poets) in the first half of the 20th century, which helped shape the nation, has become domesticated: a family keepsake, a small treasure that came to be because “our father was a poet.” While in his time Zoilo's poetry had influenced thousands of Filipinos, *Hymns and Harangues* is presented with a “Foreword” in English as a family project.

This point bears further mention: the book was published not as an initiative by a literary critic or institution but rather as a family undertaking in memory of their father. Thus, it is the families themselves who, with the best of intentions, end up taking the initiative to publish the works that remain unpublished and gathering dust. The argument is a convincing one: literature written in Spanish, which had been the Filipino national literature, within a generation became a family heirloom. To restate, within a generation, the linguistic fracture in the Philippines has turned works previously of national importance into family keepsakes. And what happens to the unpublished works? The answer seems clear: they are stored as family treasures, or they are sold. This is why many of the unpublished works of great Filipino authors in Spanish are only to be found in forgotten libraries, private collections, or simply, antique shops.

This is the manner in which we find the volume of Zoilo Hilario's unpublished poetry that, upon publishing, would constitute *Hymns and Harangues*. It is a 17 by 22 centimeter volume with 134 pages numbered by hand in green ink, typewritten with corrections (by the author, we may suppose) made in the same ink, with the title *Poetry Collection* (*Colección de Poesías*) and the headword “Nectar” (“Néctar”) on the cover, while on the title page, over the crossed-out title *Little Wings* (*Alitas*) there is written by hand another title, *Little Flowers* (*Floreccitas*) (Fig. 4 and 5). It is obviously a volume that was submitted to a literary competition that somehow ended up in an antique shop. What is surprising is that had it not been for the family's decision to publish *Hymns and Harangues*, this volume would have remained unpublished, and the works would have been lost forever to Filipino literary history. In this case, as luck would have it, the texts have been given eternal life through publishing, but how many works have been lost already? Therefore, while literary criticism looks away and avoids its responsibilities, and the families do not publish the works that lie stored away and forgotten, a fundamental part of Filipino literature—the literature written in Spanish—is succumbing to starvation, the worst of cultural infirmities.

However, not all is tragedy, and the splendid initiative taken by the Hilario family, along with the intrinsic value of Zoilo's poetry, provides us with some answers to the dilemma. Thus, we will embark on a journey through contemporary Filipino history by means of his poetry, and in recovering the text of his work we will restore the value of an extraordinarily original literary world in Asia.

Modernism as a Nationalist Instrument

In the manuals of Filipino literature, Zoilo Hilario is found in second place, after the catalogue of great poets of the first half of the 20th century: Apóstol, Guerrero, Recto, Balmori, and Bernabé. From there onward, a long list of "secondary" authors typically fills the pages, Zoilo Hilario among them. If there is little written about those considered "great authors," there is even less about the rest. Who is this poet, and what is his real literary importance?

The information found in the manuals is terse and often erroneous. Luis Mariñas points out that "in his younger era he was a distinguished lyric poet, uniting lyricism with patriotism in his second volume."⁶ He is cited as an author of secondary importance in Estanislao B. Alínea's hierarchical list.⁷ Finally, Teófilo del Castillo and Buenaventura S. Medina, Jr. opine about his books of poems, "the first one (*Adelfas*) is made up of patriotic verses and love lyrics [...] Hilario was principally a lyricist."⁸ For some his first book is more patriotic than the second, while for others the reverse is the case. Everyone seems to be in agreement, however, that Zoilo was a "lyric poet." And what is a "lyric poet"? Perhaps what is meant is that he was a "modernist poet," and a modernist poet in the Philippines, which is another matter altogether. It is different because Modernism in the Philippines possesses a complex problematics that began with the devastating criticism made by W.E. Retana:

This inequality in the production of Filipino poets must be attributed to the jumbled mess that they have made of the models, wanting to share all at once in the traditions of poets as disparate as Rueda, Rubén Darío, Andrade, Santos Chocano, Espronceda, Núñez de Arce, and naturally, the unavoidable Verlaine (absinthe and all). Verlaine most of all has provoked and disturbed them, and deeply—so much so that they do not choose to savor Verlaine in the original French but rather to search for him in the sediment that the celebrated symbolist poet precipitated among a certain segment of degenerated Hispanic-American literature in Paris, which is what the *adelfos* of the Manilan 'Euterpe Club' so enjoyed.⁹

⁶ Luis Mariñas, *La literatura filipina en castellano*, Madrid, Editora Nacional, 1974, p. 67.

⁷ *Historia Analítica de la Literatura Filipinohispana* (desde 1566 hasta mediados de 1964), Quezon City, Imprenta Los Filipinos, 1964, p. 86.

⁸ *Philippine Literature: From Ancient Times to the Present*, Quezon City, Philippine Graphic Arts, 1974, p. 217.

⁹ W. E. Retana, *De la evolución de la literatura castellana en Filipinas: los poetas, apuntes críticos*, Madrid, Lib. General de Victoriano Suárez, 1909, p. 28. The impact of this text is such that when Julio Cejador y Frauca described Modernism in the Philippines, he used it exclusively. *Historia de la Lengua y Literatura Castellana*, Madrid, Tipografía

In this text there are three facts of utmost importance: 1) Filipino authors, if they used to imitate the Romantic Spanish classics, now imitate the Hispano-American modernists; 2) there exists a “Euterpe Club” in Manila in the style of the modernist literary cafés; and 3) the poets in this club employ a modernist language represented by the word “*adelfa*.”

The first printed work by Zoilo Hilario was *Adelfas (Of the Filipino Lyre)* (Fig. 6). *With Lyrical Courtesy of Don Antonio Clímaco, Poet of The Revolution [(De La Lira Filipina) Con Cortesía Lirica de Don Antonio Clímaco, Poeta de La Revolución]*, 1913.¹⁰ Given the date, it was published after Retana’s criticism, which did not cite Hilario. To entitle the book *Adelfas* after Retana’s work seems audacious, except that Retana’s text was not widely known. It is possible that it was a coincidence, and it is possible that many Filipino authors did not pay heed to the critiques of this text. Was Retana mistaken, and Modernism in the Philippines was something more than the escapism of Bohemians and dilettantes that undermined the nationalist interests of the youth under “the North American yoke,”¹¹ or was Modernism rather employed by poets to create a nationalist, politically committed poetry? Reading Dalmacio Balagtás’s notes on the book *Adelfas*, the first option seems to be the answer:

And meanwhile, with the golden key I will open the doors of its mystic garden, where the Eucharistic *sampaguitas* [jasmine flowers native to the Philippines], timid violets, and prudish *champakas* [flowers of a native tree] that open their petals to the kiss of the dawn triumph.¹²

Retana himself criticizes this empty verbal exercise—useless, “art for art’s sake” in a moment when the Philippines needed not Parnassian intellectuals but rather politically committed men who would use the pen as a sword. But was Hilario an escapist poet, or did Dalmacio Balagtás overstate his Parnassian enthusiasm? Let us consider:

de la Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1919, tomo X, pp. 68-69. Thus, beginning with Retana’s text, Hispanicist criticism initiated a negative vision of Filipino Modernism. The primary texts of Retana’s controversy are these: “Retana y la crítica al Modernismo: De la evolución de la literatura castellana en Filipinas [1909],” in *Revista Filipina*, tomo XII, núm. 1, primavera 2008, <http://revista.carayanpress.com/retana.html>; and “Wenceslao Emilio Retana: Del porvenir del castellano en Filipinas (arranged and readied for printing by Isaac Donoso Jiménez),” in *Analecta Malacitana: Revista de la sección de Filología de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras*, Málaga, Universidad de Málaga, vol. XXX, núm. 1, 2007, pp. 219-230. For an analysis of this controversy and the true function of Modernism in the Philippines, see the article “El Islam en las Letras Filipinas,” en *Studi Ispanici*, Roma & Pisa, Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, vol. XXXII, 2007, pp. 291-313.

¹⁰ Bacolor, printing by Cornelio A. Pabalán Byron.

¹¹ Using Isidro Marfori’s concept, *Bajo el yugo del dólar*, Manila, printing by L. R. Morales, 1933.

¹² Dalmacio Balagtás, “Al margen de un libro, ‘Adelfas.’ Líneas breves,” in Zoilo Hilario, *Patria y Redención: Poesías*, Manila, printing and lithography by Juan Fajardo, 1914, p. 58.

In the Fashion of a Portico of the Small Garden¹³
 PRAYER OF THE DAY
To Mrs. North America on Her Glorious Fourth of July

Allow to sing at the foot of your Throne of gold and flowers
 The plea of these brown-skinned people who do not like masters.
 It is sublime and amorous
 And they send it to you full of smiling hopes
 Dreaming of prosperity
 And of a beautiful future.
 It is a heartfelt request encapsulated in these phrases:
 Take off from us that which you hated under the control of England!¹⁴

Adelfas is a book of poems organized as a journey through a garden, with each poem introduced by some general ideas written in prose. "Prayer of the Day" ("Oración del día") marks the entryway to the garden, and although its aesthetic is indeed modernist, its content is not Parnassian. It is followed by the sections "Vacation in the Garden of the Chimeras" ("Vacación en el jardín de las quimeras"), as an invocation of the muses, and "Triumphant Parade of the Great Figures of Our History" ("Desfile triunfal de grandes figuras de nuestra historia"), which begins with an equally enlightening poem, "Commanders of the race. Don Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy" ("Caudillos de la raza. Don Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy"):

Commander of those warring revolutionary armies
 August shadow you who surged forth in our night without light
 Preaching combats and doctrines of liberation
 To raise the albescent, red and blue flag;
 [...]
 You are the incarnation of the warrior spirit
 Of the brave Solimans of the times of the rajah!
 You are the legitimate proof, the eternal hallmark,
 The shining symbol of national courage!¹⁵

In the last verse we see an indication of the poem's purpose: Aguinaldo as a national "symbol." And if the historical figure of Aguinaldo is already a nationalist symbol, what are the "Sulaymans" and the "rajahs," and the "colors albescent, red, and blue"? The poem does not make use of the words for the words themselves; rather, the chosen words are loaded with meaning. It is not escapist, flowery Parnassian art, but instead the creation of an aesthetic that symbolizes the Filipino

¹³ The poetry cited in this essay has been translated from the Spanish by Adam Lifshy. These translations do not attempt to retain the meter and rhyme of the original verses.

¹⁴ *Adelfas*, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

ideology. As was proved by the work of Jesús Balmori, Filipino Modernism is not an exercise of “orientalism from the Orient,” but rather the creation of a catalogue of symbols that will define the Filipino national aesthetic, an aesthetic characterized by aestheticist form and nationalist content.¹⁶ Can this be called “lyric poetry”? It would seem that it cannot. In effect, it seems that there were Parnassian poets who wrote solely of sampaguitas and dalagas [virgins], and other poets who employed Modernism to create politically committed works. Thus continues Adelfas, with “Book of Verses—The Passage of the Three Silhouettes of the Day—The Tyrant, The Slave, and The Queen Without a Throne” (“Libro de versos Paso de tres siluetas del día El Tirano, el Esclavo y la Reina sin Trono”):

The Slave

The Tyrant is deaf. In vain the poor serf claims
His stolen independence, from the high Throne to his feet . . .
His voice dies in the emptiness, his heart no longer calls for
Imperial compassion. The Tyrant is deaf! . . .
Instead in his mind the dream of vengeance is adorned with flowers
As are his intense desires to be able to vindicate his honor,
Already via the war in which shine a Filipino-style knife and lance,
Rising up like a Tiger and roaring like a sea!

Queen Without Throne

See her in her grief. See her in her silent
Dungeon. Poor Queen of the Orient!
Great is her affliction!
Standing, sad like the pale fairies,
She raises her enchained hands
To the Throne of God! . . .¹⁷

If the symbolism of these two poems is completely transparent, they are followed by “Lost Paradise” (“Paraíso perdido”) and “Social Harmony. The Dreamed Century. Equality and Brotherhood. Universal Peace” (“Armonía social. El siglo soñado. Igualdad y fraternidad. La paz universal”). “Social Harmony” ceases to mask its words with the symbolism and beauty of Modernism; it is truly a poem of social realism. If any lingering suspicion of a “lyrical” style remained in Zoilo Hilario’s poetry, this poem puts an end to it by definitively demonstrating his poetry’s role in the formation of a symbolic aesthetic that tends toward social realism and political denunciation:

¹⁶ See “Los pájaros de fuego. Japón y el holocausto filipino en la obra de Jesús Balmori,” in *Studi Ispanici*, Roma & Pisa, Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, vol. XXXIII, 2008, pp. 217-235, and especially the introduction to the Instituto Cervantes’ critical edition, *Los pájaros de fuego*, Manila, Instituto Cervantes, 2010.

¹⁷ Adelfas, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

Social Harmony.
The Dreamed Century. Equality and Fraternity. Universal Peace.

I dream in this militant epoch of ideas
that they spoke of embers of fire or red torches,
a century of prosperity, peace and harmony,
with holy Justice not in disharmony;
a viable century when like gods of mud
the conquerors fall from the high carriage;
when crowns and thrones are toppled,
and Caesars and laborers are equals.¹⁸

This is followed by a series of poems that, although unknown, are surprising. It is surprising that Zoilo Hilario's poetry is largely unknown and that it is considered by the manuals (those that mention him at all, which many do not) as a "lyricist." It is also surprising that the significance of Filipino Modernism has never been studied exhaustively, and even now Retana's hundred-year-old criticism endures. Retana was right regarding the few Parnassian poets who enthusiastically imitated that style, but not about those whose creation went beyond the Parisian archetypes—nor about Zoilo Hilario's symbolism that began in 1904 with *Malay Rhymes (Rimas Malayas)* and culminated masterfully in 1941 with *My House of Nipa [a palm tree native to the Philippines] (Mi casa de nipa)*, both by Jesús Balmori. The following are reproductions of the most significant parts of the poems:

Meeting on a Terrace Roof

Affectionate virgin, sad is your claim,
aching your accent, sublime your pain...
I too love another like I love you, I love you...
My Patria, the brown-skinned woman prisoner!

The Liberated Birds

She has a cage with bars all of gold,
that the nighttime breezes that I so, so adore
move in the window with softness and love.
Enclosed in that beautiful and precious cage
are three blue birds that my beautiful bride has,
birds that always versify a sad song.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 35.

"Like Romeo and Juliet"

Both die!, Sweet death! A nest of loves
 we will make in a single tomb with flowers,
 like that Romeo and his bewitching Juliet,
 together, together, wrapped in our flag.

Nationalist Love

I feel that in the bottom of my soul there pierces
 the sharp dart of an immense pain
 upon seeing that, like our Patria, she is a slave,
 she is not happy, she is not free, my beloved brown-skinned girl.
 Therefore, I dream to see realized the holy desire
 of my Patria, before she rolls into the abyss:
 (imperialist, restrain your fright)
 her desired Liberty...but...right now!¹⁹

At the beginning of our investigation we saw that Zoilo Hilario's own daughter classified him as a humble man. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that he tends to be left off of the list of great Filipino poets. While other authors lived active lives of public functions and publishing, Zoilo withdrew to the judicial life. He himself apologizes for his compositions, and at the end of the book he explains his fundamental shift from the idealism of nationalist poetry to public function:

The poems contained in this book are, then, like those timid virgins who—finding themselves the subject of a curious, penetrating gaze—seem to grow ashamed! I will not put my thoughts into verses any longer. It has been a year since the divine muses drove me out of paradise for enjoying, like Adam, the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Truth and of Positivism.²⁰

It seems, therefore, that the state of affairs prevailed on him, and after the country's defeat in the Philippine-American War (1899-1906), Zoilo had to become part of the new colonial system of administration. What else was there to do after the military defeat? Fight with the pen, exalt liberty, and denounce oppression:

In general, a current of patriotism is evident throughout the book, a faithful echo of the voice of the people. This is precisely the value that the works of this period hold for future generations, and this is the value that we find in *Adelfas*.²¹

19 Ibid., p. 67.

20 Ibid., p. 70.

21 Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, "Notas Bibliográficas," in Zoilo Hilario, *Patria y Redención*, op. cit., p. 63.

The Unrepentant Queen of the Orient

Taking into account what we have learned, Zoilo Hilario is not a lyric poet at all; rather, he employs elements of Modernism to create an aesthetic that exalts nationalism. The title of his next book of poems could not be more explicit: *Patria and Redemption. Poems* (*Patria y Redención. Poesías*), 1914 (Fig. 7).²² Although the first work came into being in his birthplace of Pampanga, he then began to publish in Manila, and his next work was entirely an apologia for the Philippines—published in the very seat of colonial power, with one of the most singular covers in the history of Filipino literature. On it, the shackled Philippines begs the United States, depicted on a throne, to liberate her from her slavery, while in the background a rising sun (in the Japanese style) asks for redemption. The image immediately calls to mind Luna's painting "Spain and the Philippines" ("España y Filipinas") (Fig. 8), in which Spain shows the Philippines the path to emancipation. The symbolism could not be greater. The famous Manuel Bernabé wrote the prelude to the book. In light of these facts, it seems inexplicable that *Patria and Redemption* is not considered one of the great Filipino poetry books and that Zoilo Hilario's poetry is basically unknown. Perhaps the Parnassian enthusiasm, including Bernabé's own, has had the unfortunate effect of obscuring the book's purpose as expressed in its title:

Prelude

Poet: in your song of spring
flutters a morning breeze,
the birds marry the flowers,

and in the middle of the rural scene,
you come out with, troubador, your sonatina,
with the blue prelude of loves . . .²³

The work is divided into four sections: "Heroes and Laurels" ("Héroes y Lauros"), "Slave Songs" ("Cantos del esclavo"), "Delights of the Homeland" ("Glorias del terruño), and "Lover's Dreams" ("Sueños del amante"). The content is thus an exaltation of a list of heroes that will shape the nationalist ideology, a denouncement of political subjugation, an apologia of the patria, and finally, dreams of redemption. It all begins with the first of the heroes, Rajah Sulayman, whom the poets call "Solimán":

²² Manila, printing and lithiography by Juan Fajardo.

²³ Poem by Manuel Bernabé in *Patria y Redención*, op. cit., p. 57. If we consider the political commitment of Hilario's book of poems, it is clear that Bernabé was mistaken in his approach to this Prelude and its empty words. In this case, one must acknowledge that Retana is correct: Bernabé's Prelude is dilettantish when the book called for a politically committed, denunciatory piece.

Solimán

And being you that warrior who to save our Race
 made himself into a famous hero by warding off a threat
 I swear by your high memory in this humble song:
 that today when the patria cries for its misfortune
 under the strange tutelage of an enormous and strong country
 there abound Filipino lips that curse Oppression!²⁴

If in *Adelfas* we find the definition of nationalist sentiment, the title of Zoilo's second book of poems perfectly describes its objective: patriotism as an exacerbated feeling and the imploration of the ideal. Beyond the reason of the colonizer, the colonized begs for redemption, redemption that becomes more irrational as it becomes more justified:

Dream

I.

Last night I saw you in my dreams, beloved Philippines,
 Enchanting sultana of the Far Orient;
 You were found in the forest of divine fragrances
 In the resplendence of the stars of the nighttime mantle.
 [...]

VII.

Drunk with happiness, with love you told me:
 I am no longer unredeemed! Already my ideal has triumphed!
 Afterwards, always affectionate, in my face you imprinted
 A very sweet kiss, a maternal kiss...²⁵

The next poem was submitted to the poetry contest of the Spanish Day celebrated in Manila in 1913. The text was included in *Patria and Redemption*, and it reveals that Zoilo Hilario was active in literary contests. Let us remember the volume *Poetry Collection*, an entire unpublished volume that only saw the light of day posthumously in the form of *Hymns and Harangues*. "Song to My Patria" ("Canto a mi Patria"), then, contains one of the primary themes of Filipino literature in the first half of the 20th century: the exaltation of Hispanic culture. The reason for this theme is clear: if the United States aborted the Republic of the Philippines and imposed a colonial regimen modeled after its own image and likeness, the Filipino intellectual rebelled, invoking his civilization and the origin of his nationality. Spain, the Spanish language, and the Hispanic culture are constant themes that exalt a Filipino identity in opposition to the Anglo-Saxon imposition.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

If the United States can restrain itself from crushing the spirit of the Philippines, it will come to understand this complex national identity. The poem brings together all of the modernist symbols in modified ottava rima, demonstrating the richness of a Modernism in Asia with its own personality:

Song to my Patria

Cradle of the primitive warrior rajah,
 sweet spouse of the archer Prince Sun,
 sultana of the Orient, friend of the Moon,
 patria of the heart, patria without fortune;
 dream of heroes, suffering mother of mine
 you who awaits the dawn of your new day,
 orchard of roses, glory of Magellan,
 dethroned empress, flower of desires,
 oriental senate of white jasmine flowers,
 nymph whose feet the Pacific bathes,
 emancipated daughter of old Spain:
 [. . .]

And when this day arrives, drawing a veil over
 the sad past, facing your sky,
 and with love, nothing more than profound love
 which will be the base of peace in the World,
 send from your summit, and beneath
 your Sun, for its examples of Work,
 to America, unfading memory,
 if it does not ruin your faith and beautiful hope,
 and for the idiom that she gave you, and like a verse
 flows, or as from the crystal smooth Amazon
 cast too, oh my Patria, which the Sun bathes!
 infinite gaze of love to Spain.²⁶

This is followed by poems whose titles show an interest in creating an autochthonous style: "Sinukuan," "The Dalaga of the Homeland" ("La dalaga del terruño"), "Anahaw," "Sampaguitas," and "Ilang-Ilang..." And thus we arrive at an episode that has gone completely unnoticed in the literary history of the Philippines: the existence of literary meetings styled after the cafés of Paris. Nothing reflects the modernist spirit more than the literary café, the Bohemian club where young artists look for inspiration from the muses. Here we must return to Retana's text in which he mentions a "Euterpe Club" where the Manilan adelfos meet. Of this "Euterpe Club" we know nothing, but perhaps it refers to the "Garden of Epicurus"

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 20-23.

("Jardín de Epicuro"), a literary group founded by Fernando M. Guerrero. In effect, this organization has gone practically unnoticed, but its importance seems fundamental to the invigoration of the modernist style under Guerrero, the Filipino poet who most influenced the young provincials who arrived in Manila. In the life of the city between the two World Wars, the literary circle was found in the outskirts of Ermita, a Bohemian district par excellence in the Filipino capital and the birthplace of the Guerrero, Balmori, and other important families in the literary panorama of the period. Because of his insistence on the concept of "adelfas" and the tone of his poetry, Zoilo Hilario would play a prominent role in the group. This can be inferred from the poem "Tristan and Isolde" ("Tristán e Isolda"), included in his second book of poems, where it is written: "Poem recited by the author at the first dinner of the revived 'Garden of Epicurus,' celebrated in the Hotel Metropole de Manila":

What will the fury matter to you, what will the jealousy matter to you
Of the husband who already begins to see clouded his skies
Of the monarch of Cornwall, of the old and poor king?
Their undaunted love passes among spellbound sweets,
Among caresses adulterous, among kisses delinquent,
Because overflowing love has no law.²⁷

We will conclude this analysis of *Patria and Redemption* with a poem that provides a perfect coda. After a series of poems more romantic than modernist ("Tribute" ("Ofrenda"), "Absence" ("Ausencia"), "The Troubadour" ("El Trovador"), "Intimate" ("Íntima"), "Romantic" ("Romántica"), the poet turns to an oneiric state to appeal to the dream of redemption through a symbolist invocation. "Dream of Love" ("Sueño del Amor") is a short poem in Italian octave, showing that Modernism (in the case of the Philippines) does not break radically with the classic meter but rather explores, innovates, and enriches it with new possibilities. This is another matter that has yet to be discussed: changes in the meter of Filipino poetry. "Dream of Love" expresses with words what the cover of the book reflects with the image of Luna's painting of the Philippines redeemed:

²⁷ Ibid., p. 47.

Heaven! You symbolized
 to the Queen of the Orient,
 —I still kiss the sacred dust
 of your luminous traces
 and you told me of hopes
 of an independent life,
 shining oriental dress
 of a sun and three stars! ²⁸

The Structure of the Filipino Epic Poem

As we have mentioned, Zoilo Hilario's third book of poems in Spanish did not see the light of day until his family decided to publish *Hymns and Harangues* in 1968, edited by Joaquín P. Jaramillo. Several of the poems do appear, however, in a volume without a publication date or editor entitled *Illustrious Filipinos: Poetry Collection (Ilustres Varones Filipinos: Colección de Poesías)*²⁹ (Fig. 9). Likewise, almost the same text that appeared in *Hymns and Harangues* was already available for printing in the volume that we found in the antique shop under the headword "Nectar."

Hymns and Harangues contains numerous important compositions, and it is the culmination of the Filipino chronicle of the 20th century that began in the Garden of Epicurus among *adelfas*, leading to the demands of political redemption and ending with a military conflict on a worldwide scale. But before that, Zoilo Hilario dealt a first blow that incited an oratory war. In addition to the well-known *balagtasán* [debate in poetic verse] between Jesús Balmori and Manuel Bernabé, there has been word of other disputes in verse, and not only in Manila.³⁰ In this case, *Hymns and Harangues* comprises Zoilo Hilario's side of the debate with Manuel Bernabé, "Defense of Love" ("Defensa del Amor"), "spoken by the author in the poetic joust between him and the Honorable Manuel Bernabé, called the panegyrist of 'Hatred,' in the Excelsior Cinema in the capital of Pampanga, the night of the 27th of April 1932" ("hecha por el autor en la justa poética habida entre él y el Hon. Manuel Bernabé, designado como panegirista del 'Odio,' en el Cine Excelsior de la capital de Pampanga, el 27 de Abril de 1932, por la noche").³¹ We will cite as an example the last replies given by Hilario, who seems to be the winner of the debate between Love and Hatred. Once again our author insists on liberty as the most valuable thing, and love as its path to redemption:

²⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

²⁹ A copy may be found in the Main Library of the University of the Philippines [call number: PQ 8897 H64 I48].

³⁰ J. Balmori & M. Bernabé, *Balagtasán (Justa poética)*, Manila, Gráfica, 1927. The *balagtasán* in Tagalog was extremely prevalent, as demonstrated in Galileo S. Zafra, *Balagtasán: Kasaysayan at Antolohiya*, Quezon City, Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999. The *balagtasán* in Spanish, however, has yet to be studied intensively. Cf. María Dolores Pita, *Balagtasán: La Poesía de Jesús Balmori y Manuel Bernabé y Otras Cosas Más. Siendo lo mejor de lo escrito por Filipinos de Rizal a Nick Joaquín*, Manila, Historical Conservation Society, 1992.

³¹ *Himnos y Arengas*, Manila, Nueva Era Press, 1968, p. 6.

XVII
Final replies

Our martyrs triumphed, brother;
they did not go to spill their blood in vein,
for, in exchange for their immortal deed,
without dams is patriotic sentiment,
without chains is noble thought
and the word without iron muzzle!...

Singing rancor against Tyrants,
so gave the very verses of Bernabé
an argument in favor of holy Love!
Shake the vile yoke of despotism
all people who esteem themselves
and love their Libery, their History and Honor!...³²

Along with the literary competitions and contests, circles, chats, and cafés, and newspapers and magazines, the *balagtasan* can be added to the long list of literary events that invigorated the Philippines during the first half of the 20th century. With French Modernism, Parnassianism, and Symbolism arriving from the Hispanic influence, and the *Belle Époque* and the North American literary influence, the Philippines exhibits an originality unprecedented on the Asian stage that has been consciously undervalued by both natives and foreigners.

But there was no time left for righting past errors; Asia asserted itself on behalf of the true “Asians” (that is to say, the Japanese), and the war cast into oblivion all of the literary exercises that the Filipino cultural world had so extraordinarily created. Faced with war, only tragedy remained. And like so many other Filipino authors, the World War dramatically marked the life of Zoilo Hilario. If we imagine him in his youth, holding court in the Garden of Epicurus, talking about adelfas and dalagas, his daughter later describes the personality of a sensitive man who sees himself as destined for the cruelty of the world:

It is my sincere belief that Father's love of country was more sacred than his love of woman [. . .] Father's burning ambition was to raise the social, economic, and, more specially, the civic and cultural standards of the common man [. . .] Father was not demonstrative in his affections. He seldom kissed us children [. . .] But though undemonstrative, he felt deeply. Read “Una tragedia” and be convinced of his deep human emotions.³³

³² Ibid., p. 18-19.

³³ Ibid., p. 2.

Zoilo Hilario had five children: Rafaelita, Evangelina, Tiburcio, Ulises and Efraín. His youngest son joined the guerrilla movement that fought against the Japanese invasion in Pampanga. In an ambush, the guerrilla fighters themselves attacked Zoilo and Efraín by mistake, and Efraín died six days later. Not the Japanese but rather the very Filipinos perpetrated this tragedy in a wartime maelstrom with neither victors nor vanquished. The generational tragedy reached its worst consequences, the death of a child before his father:

The fifth son of the author of this work. He was born in San Fernando, Pampanga, January 28th, 1925. July 6th, 1943, after helping, as a guerrilla fighter, an old woman and a young boy who were bringing munitions to a guerrilla group in Zambales, Efraín accompanied his father on a planned trip to Magalang. In a wagon in a deserted spot near Sapac Mainsac, he, his father, and Mr. José Morales were victims of an ambush—by mistake, according to the miscreants who shot at them with pistols when the wagoner did not want to stop his vehicle. Mr. Morales died in the act. The bandits brought Efraín and his father, along with the body, to a thicket. After being abandoned by the delinquents, Efraín and his father, although hurt, walked to the provincial road, where they came upon a kind-hearted man that drove them to the town hall in Ángeles, where Dr. Gregorio Valdés gave them their first medical attention. Efraín died in the Provincial Hospital of Pampanga, whose director is the good Dr. Rafael Teopaco, on July 12, 1943, in spite of medical efforts to save his life.³⁴

Now we will consider the most expressive stanzas of the poem in memory of Efraín Hilario y Velásquez (1925-1943), killed at the age of eighteen, whose tombstone must be somewhere in the cemetery of San Fernando Pampanga:

The memory of a tragedy

Efraín, deceased enchantment
of my paternal love:

I dedicate to you this my song
made with teardrops
and heart blood.

[...]

I have returned to plucking my lyre,
to forget my grief,
but in vain, for it is inspired
in my pain, and sighs
equal to my heart.

[...]

³⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

In my tormented whiles,
to ease my grief,
I think that, in painful times
of war, fortunate
so are the dead!³⁵

Given that *Hymns and Harangues* gathers together Zoilo Hilario's poetry that was left unpublished, above all from his second period after the books of poetry of the 1910s, there are numerous sections that contain: "Patriotic Harangues" ("Arregas patrióticas"), "Of the Christian Helicon" ("Del helicón cristiano"), "In the Garden of Idealism" ("En el jardín del idealismo"), "Song to Two Provinces" ("Canto a dos provincias"), "Eulogy of a City" ("Elogio de una ciudad"), "Verses in Admiration of Manuel A. Roxas" ("Versos de admiración a Manuel A. Roxas"), "A Daring Insect" ("Un insecto audaz"), and "To the Memory of Four Good Friends" ("A la memoria de cuatro buenos amigos"). In fact, on page 52 of the volume called "Nectar," there is a bit of paper that covers the first paragraph of the poem "Poetic Arch in Honor of H. E. Manuel A. Roxas" ("Arco poético en honor de S. E. Manuel A. Roxas"). The text is not reproduced on the corresponding page, page 62, of *Hymns and Harangues*. Held up to the light, the covered text reads: "Inspired poetry dedicated to H. E. the President Manuel A. Roxas by one of our laureates and most distinguished bards—JUSTO FIEL—for the birthday of our first magistrate of the nation that he celebrated the 1st of February, 1948" ("Inspirada poesía dedicada a S. E. el Presidente Manuel A. Roxas por uno de nuestros laureados y más distinguidos bardos JUSTO FIEL con motivo del cumpleaños de nuestro primer magistrado de la nación que celebró el 1º de Enero de 1948"). The author's name was obviously exposed, which we may suppose was against the rules of the literary contest for which the volume "Nectar" was destined. But what this reveals is that Zoilo Hilario's pseudonym was "Justo Fiel" ("Just" and "Faithful"). Considering that much of the poetry of the time appeared in periodical publications under pseudonyms, it is possible that poems of his are still scattered to the winds (as occurs with so many authors).

The most important part of the volume, and the one that concludes Hilario's work, is the section "Illustrious Filipinos." This section does not allow for an argument of lyricism; it constitutes epic poetry in the most classic Filipino style: the *loa*.³⁶ Its series of authors and poems gives us a precise idea of how nationalist symbolism has brought Modernism to the epic and the most classicist poetry:³⁷ "José Rizal," "Manuel L. Quezon," "Manuel A. Roxas," "Ramón Magsaysay," "Elpidio

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 78–81.

³⁶ For more about the *loa* in Filipino literature, see the introduction of the book of poems by Guillermo Gómez Rivera, *Con címbalos de caña*, Sevilla, Moreno Mejías, 2011.

³⁷ In this post-World War II context, works like that of Gómez Rivera were totally justified as a return to a more restrained and apologetic poetry. In a postwar context in which the generational fracture is already irreparable and the Spanish language is relegated to the domestic sphere, there is no longer any possibility of a nationwide poetry that follows international aesthetic examples; the only means of escape is simple, classic poetry. On the current aesthetic of Filipino literature in Spanish, see *Literatura hispanofilipina actual*, op. cit.

Quirino," "Sergio Osmeña," "José Laurel," "Emilio Aguinaldo," "General Maximino Hizon," "General Pantaleón García," "General José Alejandrino," "General Carlos P. Rómulo," "José Abad Santos," "Illmo. Santiago Sancho," "Rufino J. Santos," "Teodoro M. Kalaw," "Jesús Balmori," "Manuel Bernabé," "Claro M. Recto," "José Corazón de Jesús," "Patricio Mariano," "Senador José Clarín," "Hon. Marcelo Boncán," "Honorio Ventura," "Macario Arnedo," "Mariano Lim," and "Román Ozaeta" As its coda, "Two Great North American Figures" ("Dos grandes figuras norte-americanas"): "Franklin D. Roosevelt," "General Douglas MacArthur."

This last poem is relevant, seeing as it testifies to the consummation of a clear fact: the United States has passed from being a "tyrant" to a "liberator." If in Zoilo Hilario's first two books of poems he explicitly and implicitly denounces North American colonialism for putting an end to the Republic of the Philippines and forcing the Filipino people to beg for their independence, the poem "General Douglas MacArthur," a loa in sextain form, destroys the idealism. Said another way: the long-awaited redemption has not come to pass, notwithstanding a bloody war in which thousands of Filipino civilians lost their lives. However, the United States still deserves thanks. The death of Efraín symbolically represents the Filipino generational fracture, the death of the past, while a new generation of Filipinos raise their eyes with admiration toward General Douglas MacArthur. The United States has triumphed:

For you Manila returns
to tranquil existence,
radiant with gratitude.
To see anew your figure,
swarms through the street
the multicolored multitude.

"Lift me up more, mother of mine,
(a little one said
among the spectator public)
for upon the invincible warrior
General MacArthur I want
To be able to gaze better!"³⁸

However, and in spite of the fact that Zoilo Hilario's poetry is revealed to be enormously pragmatic and capable of adapting itself to the reality of its environment, it also remains constant in its idealistic desire for redemption—not in Christian terms, but rather cultural redemption: the liberation of an oppressed nation. Thus, unlike other authors who have already started the eulogy for the Spanish language and have an inkling of the generational tragedy that approaches, Zoilo

³⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

Hilario is one of the few who seems to remain optimistic. The section "Spanishness" ("Españolismo") in his last work includes a number of poems: "Spanish Soul" ("Alma Española") (which won First Place in the Literary Contest held by the Iloilo Social Club in 1917), "Hispanist Muse" ("Musa Hispanista"), "To the Intellectual Emissary of Spain" ("Al emisario intelectual de España") (which Zoilo recited at the home of the national poet, Jesús Balmori), "Spanish Heart" ("Corazón español"), and "Hymn to the Cervantine Language" ("Himno al idioma cervantino"). We will conclude with a quotation from this last composition, a truly visionary poem written about the Spanish language in the Philippines, in which two themes stand out: 1) to invoke Spanish is to invoke the patriots who fought for the nation, and 2) the more the Philippines progresses, the more necessary the Spanish language will be as a foundational language of the nation:

The indigenous troubador who today sings,
upon using you, his honored Spanishness
no precept—in his judgment—breaks
from the eternal code of patriotim,
for here you are of such roots.

With centuries-old ties united
she has you to her culture, faith and history
this recently emancipated country.
How, then, without diminishing her own glory
could she bury you in forgetfulness!

Whoever created you like a perishing swan
in this country that fights and advances
will have to be surprised when, to the exigent
demands of Progress, more strength
you gain in the Republic of the Orient.³⁹

Zoilo Hilario composed several works in the Pampangan language, both poetry and theater, and he was crowned one of the most important authors in Pampanga. The study of his complete works, his impact in the judicial sphere, and his memory as a Pampangan intellectual should be conducted in future investigations. Like many of the forgotten Filipino authors, their work was so important that each one deserves his own volume. In this brief article we only attempt to exhibit the richness of his Spanish language poetry and the necessity of valuing Zoilo Hilario as one of the most significant Filipino poets of the 20th century.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

Image Appendix

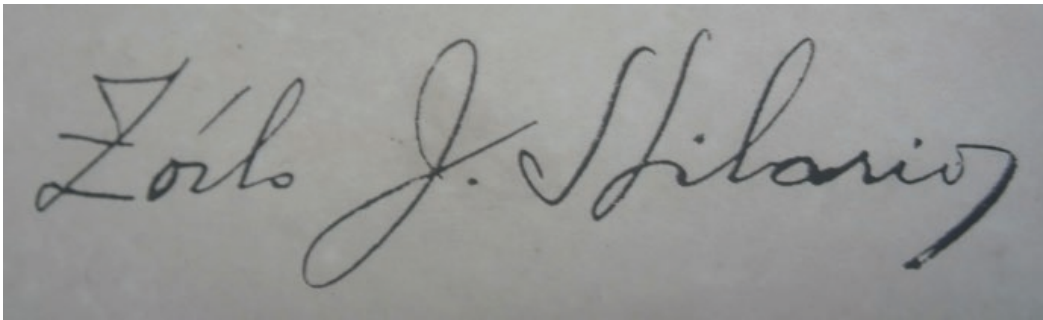
A black and white photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature reads "Zolt J. Hilario". The ink is dark on a light-colored, slightly textured paper.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2

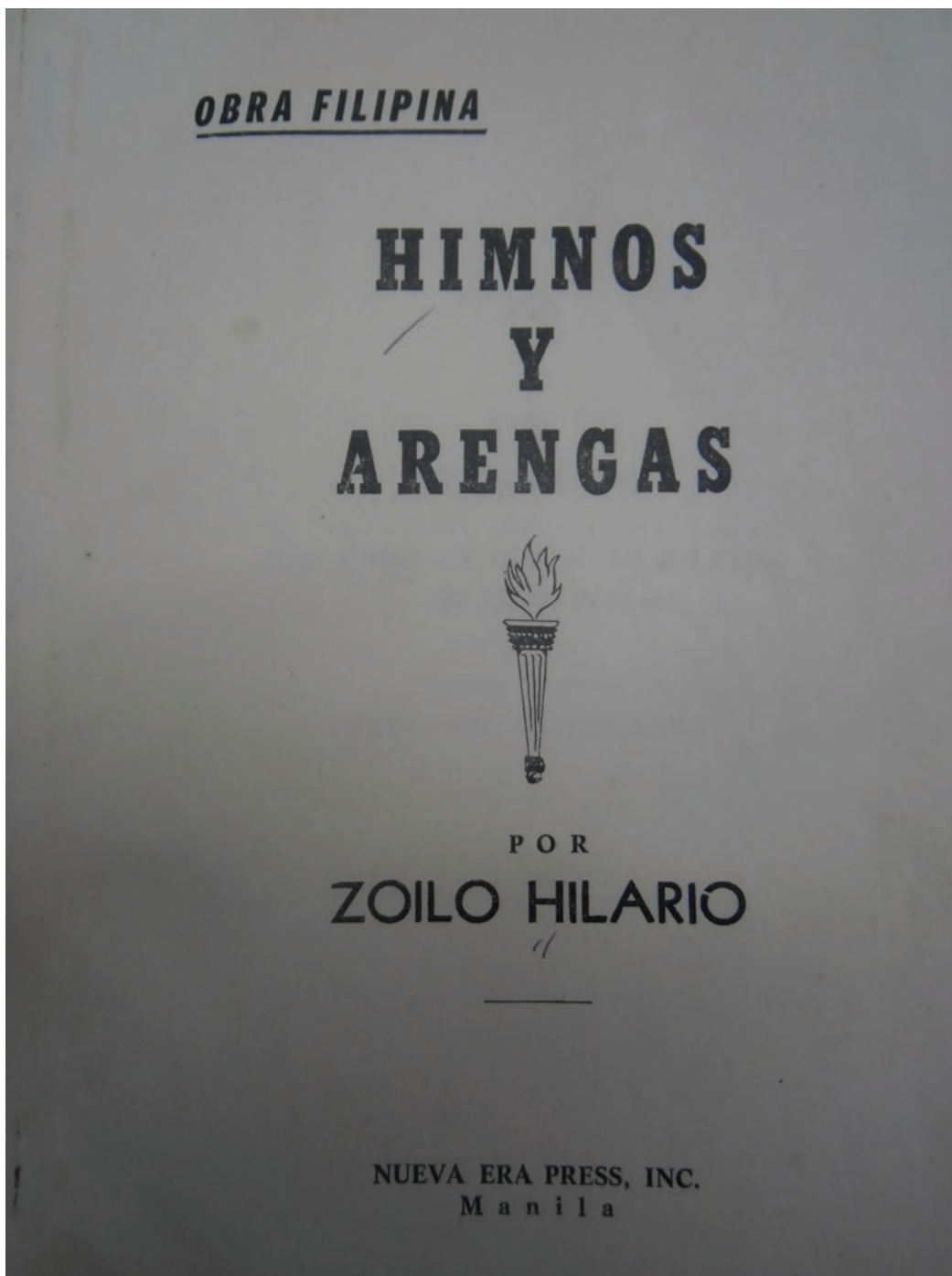


Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

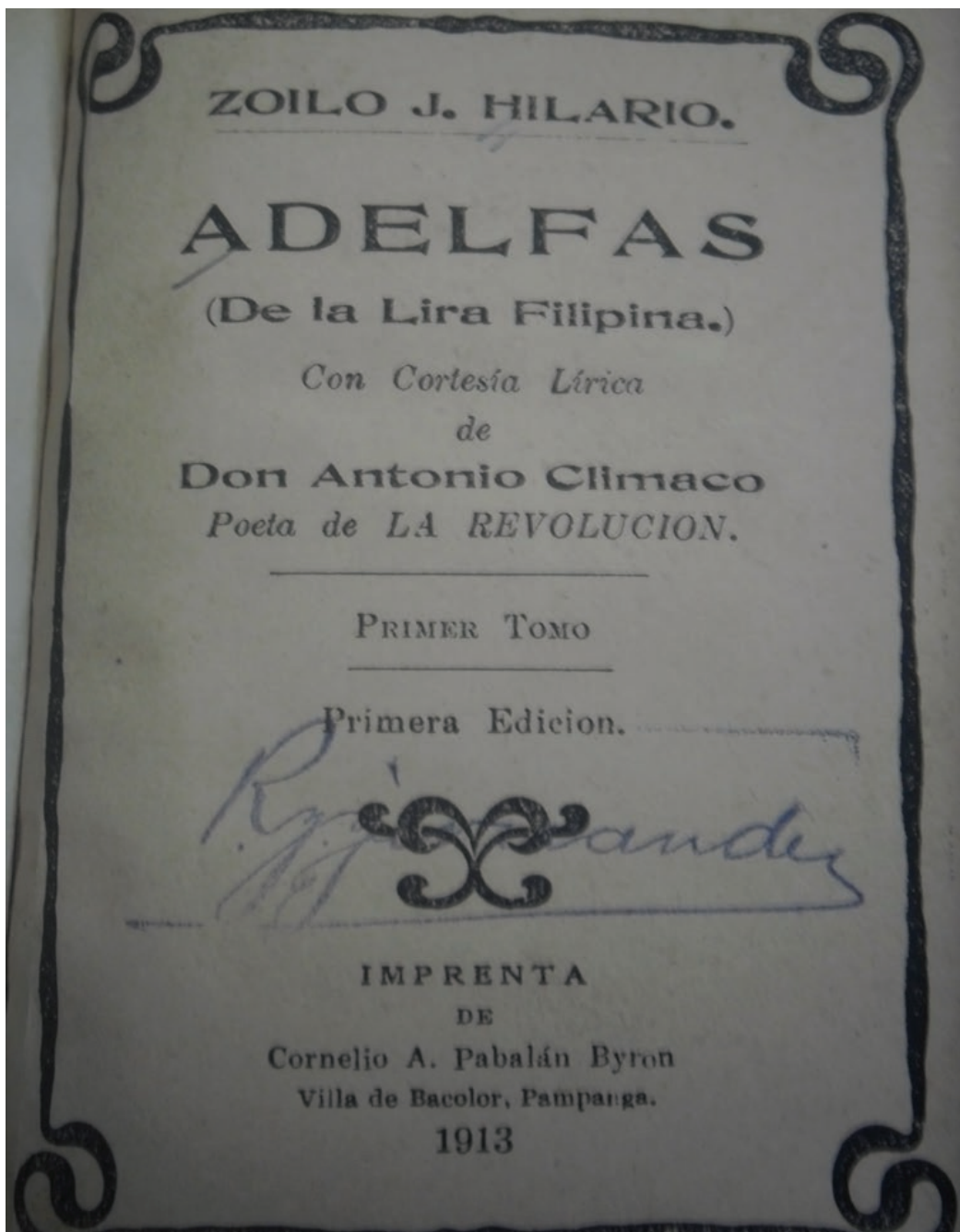


Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8: Juan Luna, "España y Filipinas." Lopez Museum, Manila.