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## **“Poetas Filipinos”: Peotica**

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word use, reiteration at need, rhythm of language," says the foreword.

Useful as models, these homilies will hardly ever be preached as they are written here. They were preached on weekdays, and hence the greater number are based on ferial and Saint's-day Gospels. They are moreover addressed to a well-educated audience (university students). The pastor who dares to preach this way to his parish may well lose half his audience after the first two sentences.

EDUARDO P. HONTIVEROS, S.J.

### "POETAS FILIPINOS"

POÉTICA: Antología de poetas filipinos. By Alfredo S. Veloso. With a parallel text in English. Quezon City: Asvel Publications, Inc., 1966. xlv, 238 pp.

It is difficult to come across any work these days on Filipino literature in Spanish, and the volume under review is by no means a new one. While its copyright date is 1966, the author confesses with candor that "*Poetica es una edicion revisada de 'Anguish, Fulness, Nirvana'*," which first saw print in 1960.

The present work is not as comprehensive as the title might suggest: "*poetas filipinos*," for one thing, excludes those other brown bards who have chosen to write in any language other than Spanish; for another, even from among those who did write in Spanish, the anthology ignores such writers as, say, Pedro Alejandro Paterno whose *Sampaguitas* was probably among the first individual collections, at least in point of time, of Filipino verse in the language.

After a series of short congratulatory notes and testimonials from a handful of "*camaradas en letras*," the book divides itself into three parts. The first is a six-chapter dissertation on poetic composition; the second, a selection of works by seventeen "*Bardos idos*" from Jose Rizal to Evangelina E. Guerrero-Zacarias; and the third, a similar selection from the poetry of seven "*Trovadores de hogaño*." The difference in number between the poets of a by-gone day and the lyre-pluckers of the present is in some way sad: it seems that here is eloquent evidence that, the Spanish Instruction laws notwithstanding, fewer and fewer Filipinos seem to be able to versify in Spanish. After all, the collection begins with Rizal whose birth is only 43 years removed from that of the youngest poets in the book (Francisco Zaragoza y Cas-

tillo) who has himself crossed the half-century mark. The implication is that no significant Filipino poem in Spanish has come flowing out of a younger man's pen. But then, perhaps, this is to state what has long been obvious. Spanish as a language of literary expression in the Philippines is very like "Mistah Kurtz"—or very nearly like him, anyway.

That the book has its uses is not to be denied. The chapters on poetic composition are rather more than a primer on prosody; they give the reader who has been accustomed to measuring lines according to English metrics a concise guide to Spanish versification. A profusion of examples after each rule, definition, or disjunction proves quite helpful to the student—and perhaps, this is where the true purpose of the book is betrayed: it is primarily intended for use as a text-book for Filipinos who no longer have as intimate a knowledge of Spanish traditions as one might well imagine they once had. Furthermore, this fact is underscored by the employment of a parallel English text for every line in Spanish, and while the English is clear enough in the translation of the prose, the poetry is saddled with all the features of the secret Latin pony that some of our undergraduate friends once used for trotting out their fifty lines a day of Catullus or Cicero. Consider this rendering into English of the first stanza of *Canto de María Clara*:

*¡Dulces las horas en la propia patria,  
donde es amigo cuanto alumbra el sol;  
vida es la brisa que sus campos vuela,  
grata la muerte y más tierno el amor!*

Sweet are the hours in one's motherland,  
where all is friendly on which shines the sun;  
life is the breeze that flies on her fields  
death is pleasant and love more tender!

Something, one supposes, has been lost in translation. The quality of this particular endeavour is moreover uniform throughout the book. When Enrique Fernandez Lumba writes an apostrophe to Manuel Bernabe ("*En el día de su entierro*"), and says:

*La Musa hispana con tu muerte enviuda  
y se está lamentando entre las ruinas...*

the English text takes on a slightly strange and unaccustomed air:

The Spanish Muse with your death widows  
and is lamenting amongst the ruins...

Still, for the reader who can dispense with the translations because of his familiarity with the *ambiente castellano*, the volume can be a rare addition to his precious little collection of literary Filipiniana (Spanish section). It is not very easy to find the works of Guerrero,

Palma, Apostol, Balmori, Recto, Bernabe, Valdes Pica, Zaragoza Cano, Hernandez Gavira, Perez Tuells, Barcelon, Lauchengco, Fernandez Lumba, *et al.*, all in one repository; but here, one will find, in addition, brief and sometimes rhapsodic bio-sketches of all these eminent men. One will miss however, what is perhaps the finest poem written by a Filipino in Spanish: Rizal's *Mi Retiro*.

ANTONIO G. MANUUD