

# The Indigenous in Fernando María Guerrero's Poems<sup>1</sup>

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The American Thomasite María Morilla Norton tutored Fernando María Guerrero in English, the language of the then new conqueror of the Philippines. The academic interaction between student and mentor gave birth to an interesting article about the poet and patriot that appeared in the book *Builders of a Nation* (1914). She concluded her impressions with an affirmation that:

*It is a great deal to have read Fernando Guerrero but to know him is better, to have won his friendship is one of the best things the Philippines can give any foreigners, for he combines so much that is best in his race: its sensitive highbred feelings, noble intuitions and serious fidelity to the common task which, common though they may be, can ennoble a king or a poet. (Norton 1914, 211)*

For a very different reason, I share a shade of Ms. Norton's feelings of honor and privilege of having personally known the incomparable POET OF THE REVOLUTION and PRINCE OF FILIPINO LYRIC POETRY in Spanish.

In 1973, the Filipino nation celebrated the first birth centenary of Fernando Ma. Guerrero. Working then as an educational researcher at the Institute of Spanish Language and Culture of the Department of Education and Culture, I proposed the holding of an inter-collegiate declamation contest featuring Guerrero's poems (Tiamson 1973). The Institute's head, Dr. Natividad Galian, designated me as program coordinator, which task brought me on the threshold of Nilda Guerrero's home, one of Fernando Ma. Guerrero's daughters. Together with her journalist husband, Vicente Barranco, and their two professor daughters of English and Spanish, respectively, Corinta and Majela, she welcomed me with affection and offered me her friendship.

Indeed, it was heart-warming to be considered a friend of the Guerrero-Barranco family. They sort of honored me by making me the master of ceremonies of the Annual Intercollegiate Declamation Contest organized by the Fernando María Guerrero Foundation from 1974 until its last edition in 1996.

It may be interesting to recall that before the University of the Philippines joined the cultural activities organized by the Institute of Spanish Language and Culture, students from the University of Santo Tomas and San Beda College were the favored declaimers especially those trained by Professor Marcus Faigal of the Benedictine

College. No other institutions could best them at declaiming in Spanish, so it was thought. The myth was shattered to pieces when Professor Febe Soledad Luntao became the trainer of the UP contestant.

For 22 exciting years of Spanish declamation contests, the University of the Philippines made an enviable record of several wins, with Profs. Febe Soledad Luntao, Ana Gloria Margarita Ventanilla and Daisy Lopez as able guides.

Could we assume therefore that we were given a rare privilege to help perpetuate, although in an insignificant way, the great memory of *EL MAESTRO*, as Fernando Ma. Guerrero was fondly called by the young writers whom he guided in their literary and journalistic apprenticeship. Among them were Teodoro M. Kalaw, Claro M. Recto, Jesús Balmori, Carlos Rómulo, Manuel Bernabé, Pedro Aunario, José Teotico, Sixto Rocas and Juan Reyes.

In 2006, Majela, last surviving member of the Guerrero-Barranco family, joined her sister and parents in the Great Beyond. The memory of that cordial friendship is fondly kept in a golden chest constantly guarded by Mnemosyne.

To them, I sincerely dedicate this humble work that aims to identify and establish the place and importance of indigenous elements in Fernando María Guerrero's poems collected in two anthologies, namely, *CRISÁLIDAS* and *AVES Y FLORES*.

*CRISÁLIDAS* is Guerrero's first volume of poems that first appeared in 1914 and was reprinted in 1952. It contains 70 compositions. The second anthology of his poems was published posthumously in 1971. *AVES Y FLORES* includes 143 compositions.

Considering the poet's humanistic education from the Ateneo de Manila and the University of Sto. Tomas (Villaruel 1973), it is only natural that his poems would echo the classical humanism designed by the Jesuits and the Dominicans. In that context, Greek and Roman literature and philosophy, which meant the inclusion of Greek-Roman mythology.

A glimpse, therefore, of his classical lexicon will help us appreciate better this indigenization of his poetry. In a manner of speaking, Guerrero's classical background will serve as a prism through which the poet's indigenization will be measured.

A rich and reliable provider of ideas and images to suite certain artistic and poetic interpretation of life is the Greek-Roman mythology. A rich and reliable provider of ideas and images to suit certain artistic and poetic interpretation of life is Greek-Roman mythology. Thus when Guerrero speaks, for example, of the *MUSA* or muse, what comes to mind are scenes of Mount Parnassus as depicted by European painters like Raffaello and Mengs (Carli and Dell' Acqua, 1972).

The “classic” gathering on that mountain abode of the patron of poetry and music, presided by Apollo himself, is rendered insignificant by the interpretation of a Filipino artist in his rendition of Manuel Bernabé, dressed in Barong Tagalog, crowned with laurel leaves while holding his fighting rooster. In the background are faint silhouettes of the muses with one of them closely at his ear giving him poetic inspiration. The painting is reproduced in his first collection of poem, *Perfil de Cresta*, published in 1957. The publication of the anthology prompted Claro Mayo Recto to declare Bernabé as the worthy successor of *el maestro*. (Recto 1960).

When Guerrero cries:

*Podrá tener sus horas de tristeza  
mi musa pensativa y solitaria,  
pero brilla en su pálida cabeza  
el yelmo de la musa libertaria.*  
 (“Mi Musa” v:29-32)

In an undated composition “*Mi Musa*,” the poet patriot talks about the *yelmo* or helmet of the *musa libertaria* or the libertarian muse who is none other than the war goddess *Pallas Athena* or *Minerva* who “*fights for the defense of just causes*” (Hall 1974, 209), which in this case is the liberty or independence of the Philippines.

A swift reconnaissance of Guerrero’s classical world will help determine the great extent of the poet’s familiarity with Olympian occupants, as the following list of specific compositions will show:

1. “*Titans*” (titans) in *MI PATRIA* v:8; *PATRIA* v:47; *LAS DOS HOCES* v:18;
2. “*Saturno*” (Saturn) in *A MI QUERIDO AMIGO JAIME DE VEYRA* v:18;
3. “*Atlante*” (Atlanta) or “Atlas” in *QUEZON* v:20; *LABOR OMNIA VINCIT* v:44;
4. “*Prometeo*” (Prometheus) in *FLOR VIRGEN* v:9, *ETERNA HERIDA* v:28;
5. “*Júpiter*” in *MANOJITO DE ROSAS* v:18;
6. “*Minerva*” or “*Palas Atena*” (*Pallas Athena*) in *MUSA NUEVA* v:12; *LA MUJER NUEVA* v:44; *ALMA JOVEN* v:31; *ROSAS Y LAURELES* v:8; *RAMO DE OLIVO* v:9;
7. “*Apolo*” (*Apollo*) or “*Helios*” in *FILIPINAS* v: 22, 27; *MANOJITO DE ROSAS* v:57; *ANTIFONARIO* v:66; *CANCIÓN A LA NOCHE* v:1; *EPITAFIO* v:24, 42; *RAMO DE OLIVO* v: 5, 7; *PAX VOBISCUM* v:14;
8. “*Diana*” in *NOCTURNA* v: 14;
9. “*Marte*” (*Mars*) in *ALMA JOVEN* v:24; *VIAJE FANTÁSTICO* v:16; *QUEZON* v:50;

10. “*Aurora*” in *AVES Y FLORES* v:2; *MEDITACIÓN* v:31; *EL 30 DE DICIEMBRE* v:95; *AYER Y HOY* v:51; *RESURRECCIÓN* v:12; *LLAMA DE AMOR* v:6; ¡*HALIKA!* v:47;
11. “*Véspero*” (Vesper, star) in *ANTIFONARIO* v:93; *EPITAFIO* v:67;
12. “*Amor*” (Amor, Eros, Cupid) in *RISAS TRISTES* v:6; *FÉMINA* v:5;
13. “*Psiquis*” (Psyche) in *RISAS TRISTES* v:6; ¡*DESPIÉRTATE!* ¡*ES TUYO EL MAÑANA!* v:39;
14. “*Eros*” in *LOS ESPEJOS MUERTOS* v:18; *EL BESO SANTO* v:29;
15. “*Pan*” in *YO TE DIGO GRACIAS* v:33;
16. “*Errato*” in *VIAJE FANTÁSTICO* v:16;
17. “*Morfeo*” (Morpheus) in *SÓLO DE TI ME ACUERDO* v:43;
18. “*Heracles*” (Hercules) in *ROSAS Y LAURELES* v:9;
19. “*Teseo*” (Theseus) in *ROSAS y LAURELES* v: 14;
20. “*Aquiles*” (Achilles) in *ROSAS y LAURELES* v:13;
21. “*Parca*” (Fate, Death) in *ANTE LA TUMBA DE MI MADRE* v:31;
22. “*Caronte*” (Charon) *EPITAFIO* v:70’
23. “*Tántalo*” (Tantalus) in *TU PANUELO* v:12;
24. “*Sirena*” (Siren) in *A FILIPINAS* v:19; *TÚ ERES LA GLORIA* v:30; *A MAGAT-SALAMAT* v:37; *BORJA ANTE EL CADÁVER DE LA EMPERATRIZ DA. ISABEL* v:123; *JUVENTUD* v:23;
25. “*Dafnis*” (Daphne) in *FANTASÍA CARNAVALESCA* v:75;
26. “*Cloes*” (Chloe) in *FANTASÍA CARNAVALESCA* v:75;
27. “*Ícaro*” (Icarus) in *ETERNA HERIDA* v:27;
28. “*Bacantes*” (Bacchantes or Maenads) in *LÁZAROS y EPULONES* v:82; *LA ORGÍA* v: 4; ¡*MADRE, PERDÓN!* v:15;
29. “*Sagitarios*” (Sagittarius, Archer) in *GRITO DE ALERTA* v:31; *PAX VOBISCUM* v:6, v:14;
30. “*Pegaso*” (Pegasus) in *VIAJE FANTÁSTICO* v:8; *RAMO DE OLIVO* v:8, *PAX VOBISCUM* v:1.

In the foregoing list only three are poetically related. They are Pegasus, Apollo and Erato. Erato is one of the nine muses who attend to the patron of music and poetry. They are the daughters of Jupiter and Mnemosyne or Memory, issues from nine consecutive nights of intimacy. Originally they presided over fountains and springs on Mount Helicon and later on Mount Parnassus. The waters of the Hippocrene and the Castalian springs have the power to give inspiration. The muses are, therefore, the goddesses of poetic inspiration (Hall 1974, 27, 247; Grimal 1982, 368). ( I wonder what happened to the springs after the heart-rending destruction of miles and miles of forest in Greece. Where were the gods during the raging fire? Why did they allow such destruction? Where have all of them gone? Did some find refuge in Mt. Banahaw, Mt. Apo, Mt. Arayat or elsewhere?)

Outside Mount Olympus, the *muse* is generally understood as *inspiration*. The word *musa* and its synonym *numen* appear in the following 13 compositions:

1. **MI MUSA** (*Crisálidas*, p. 7)
  - Verse: 4 *el yelmo de las musas libertarias.*
  - 9 *Mi musa es soberana: no se pliega*
  - 21 *Mi musa, como indígena, es morena*
  - 30 *Mi musa pensativa y solitaria*
  - 32 *el yelmo de la musa libertaria...*
2. **MIS IDEAS** (*Crisálidas*, p. 9)
  - Verse: 30 *de la musa de mis penas*
3. **CORONA TRIUNFAL** (*Crisálidas*, p.103)
  - Verse: 26 *con la musa del Mártir filipino.*
4. **EPITAFIO** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 261)
  - Verse: 49 *Ya sabe el coro olímpico del lauro de tus sienes*
  - 64 *alcen su voz las Piérides loando tu memoria*
5. **TUPAÑUELO** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 261)
  - Verse: 11 *Tú lo sabes muy bien, Musa elegida;*
  - 47 *la musa que se acerca hasta mi lecho*
6. **TUS CAPRICHOS** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 263)
  - Verse: 124 *esa Musa simpática a quien amo*
7. **NOSTÁLGICA** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 287)
  - Verse: 47 *Yo soy tu novia, tu musa*
8. **CANTA EN MIS NOCHES** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 293)
  - Verse 61 *¡Pobre musa!..., pobre novia*
9. **TRÍPTICO REAL** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 307)
  - Verse: 86 *fue gentil Lakambini de la homérica gesta;*
  - 89 *Fue la musa divina del más grande poeta*
10. **AYER Y HOY** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 200)
  - Verse: 3 *dio su risa primer; Lakambini,*
  - 4 *la diosa tagala*
  - 20 *de la indígena diosa sin mancha*
11. **RAMO DE OLIVO** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 345)
  - Verse: 11 *por el coro divino de las musas gloriosas*
12. **PAX VOBISCUM** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 225)
  - Verse: 12 *Las nueve hermanas huyen de las rabiosas diestras*
13. **GO TO HELL** (*Aves y Flores*, p. 347)
  - Verse: 14 *La musa se cansó de mascar ajos*
14. **MANOJITO DE ROSAS** (*Crisálidas*, p. 94)
  - Verse: 2 *se va berrumbrando. Mi numen*
  - 62 *del numen ceniza sola.*

In the 14 titles just enumerated, direct reference is made to the classic muses of Greek

and Roman mythology in the following manner:

1. *las Piérides* (Pierian muses) in *EPITAFIO*;
2. *las nueve hermanas* (the nine sisters) in *PAX VOBISCUM*,
3. *el coro divino de la musas* (the divine choir of Muses) in *RAMO DE OLIVO*;
4. *el coro olímpico* (the Olympian choir) in *EPITAFIO*; and
5. *la musa* (the muse) in *GO TO HELL*.

*Las Piérides* (the Pierian muses) are the Muses who resided on Mt. Olympus according to the Thracians of ancient Macedonia (Grimal 1982, 368).

*Las nueve hermanas* are the nine goddesses: Clio (history), Euterpe (music and lyric poetry), Thalia (comedy, pastoral poetry), Melpomene (tragedy), Terpsichore (dancing and song), Erato (lyric poetry) Urania (astronomy), Calliope (epic poetry) and Polyhymnia (heroic hymns) who reside on Mount Parnassus. (Hall 1974, 217)

*El Coro divino* or *Coro Olímpico* (the divine choir or Olympian choir) refers to the nine Muses, “the goddesses of poetic inspiration and the creative arts who were originally nymphs who presided over springs that had the power to give inspiration, especially Aganippe and Hippocrene on Mount Helicon and the Castalian spring on Mount Parnassus...the traditional abode of poetry and music.” (Hall 1974, 217, 234)

*Las Piérides*, *las nueve hermanas*, *el coro divino de las musas* and *el coro olímpico* are therefore the same as the *Muses* or *Muse* which is generally understood as *Inspiration*. In *Crisálidas* and *Aves y Flores*, *Inspiration* personified is found in the poems “*Mis Ideas*,” “*Tu Pañuelo*,” “*Tus Caprichos*,” “*Nostálgica*”, and “*Canta en Mis Noches*.”

In these five poems Guerrero’s *Muse* was not a figurative being nor a creation of his imagination. She had a name and the face of a mortal. She was Carmen Entrala, an eighteen-year-old lass from Tondo, fleeing then from the imminent troubles in Manila, whom he met in Meycauayan, Bulacan. Guerrero was then working for the Aguinaldo Government and the newspaper *La Independencia*. (Nilda Guerrero et al. 1973; Palma 1930).

There was no hint whatsoever of a love-at-first-sight incident but the unmistakably love-struck poet, then 24 years of age, had embarked on a kind of whirlwind courtship. Rafael Palma, friend and co-worker at the roving staff of *La Independencia*, religiously accompanied the serious suitor from San Fernando, Pampanga, temporary headquarters then of the Aguinaldo government, to Meycauayan, Bulacan on Saturdays; then to Angeles where they had an extended stay of two weeks before proceeding to Tarlac, the new seat of government; and later to Bautista, Pangasinan.

Palma tells us:

*Aunque la distancia era grande, no se interrumpieron las visitas, pues,*

*todos los sábados después de las tareas del periódico, cogíamos los dos el tren, y él iba a buscar solaz y consuelo a las desdichas de la guerra, en aquellas horas interminables de la charla, que pasaba al lado de la amada. Nada interrumpió aquel idilio, ni aun cuando los americanos se apoderaron de Ángeles, pues, Guerrero continuó visitándola en un pequeño rincón llamado Tibo, que formaba una de las estribaciones de la montaña al lado de oeste de Ángeles.*

Palma remarks that since that first encounter, the poet “*arrancó notas sentidas y amorosas, delicadas a la hermosura que así despertaba su alma a las primeras tibias caricias del amor.*”

Guerrero proudly proclaims to the four winds that: *mi musa, como indígena, es morena*. Guerrero has indigenized or filipinized his *Muse*. By the power of love, the poet had elevated a young native of Tondo into a resident of Mt. Parnassus.

In 1918 he felt that his pen was getting rusty and his fountain of inspiration was drying up. He thus cried: “.....*Mi numen / es fuente casi agotada.*” (“*Manojito de rosas,*” in *CRISÁLIDAS*, 1914, 94).

Guerrero found disturbing the rat race and political bootlicking creeping in his world of journalism. He had the impression that Mount Parnassus was being filled by giddy acts and Apollo’s laurel now looked more like a funeral wreath. That was in 1914. (See “*Manojito de Rosas,*” v. 11-20, 46-58).

Earlier in 1908 he had to referee in a literary feud. He composed successively “*Ramo de Olivo*” and “*Pax Vobiscum,*” where he called for a cease-fire between Jesús Balmori (1887-1948) and Cecilio Apóstol (1877-1938), winner and loser, respectively, in the 1908 National Poetry Contest in commemoration of Jose Rizal’s 10<sup>th</sup> death anniversary. The winning piece was to be set to music and made into a school hymn.

Apóstol could not accept having lost to the younger Balmori who garnered the third, the second and the first prizes. The sour grapes in the form of a sonnet were prominently displayed on a daily newspaper. Rebutted by Balmori, the polemic turned uglier each passing day, and thus well-meaning anonymous friends tried to pacify the rival poets and put an end to an embarrassing situation.

The ever humble, polite and soft-spoken *Maestro* was telling them in “*Ramo de Olivo*” that, among other things, it would do them good to visit together the sacred forest on Mount Parnassus, beneath which Rizal recited his verses. The message was unequivocal and clearly simple—stop the ugly, useless and unbecoming exchange of barbs. With the last line in the sonnet “*Ramo de Olivo*” —*donde, bajo laureles, dijo versos Rizal*—Guerrero placed the national hero among the immortals, that is to say, the

gods and the goddesses of Mt. Olympus and the mortals who achieved immortality through their writings, like Homer, Virgil, Dante, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Goethe and others.

According to Jaime C. De Veyra in *Hispanidad en Filipinas* (1962), Cecilio Apóstol, reputed to be the Prince of Filipino Epic Poetry in Spanish, acknowledged the genius of Guerrero, calling him *el perfecto*. Apóstol was referring to Guerrero's "*capacidad gramatical y poética*."

In fact, the Spanish historian, critic and Filipinologist Wenceslao Emilio Retana opined that Guerrero was "*the most inspired, the most prolific, the most versatile, consummate and consistently correct*" of all Filipino poets in Spanish".

Guerrero's homage to Rizal brings to mind the one rendered by Rizal to Miguel de Cervantes (1549–1616) in his award winning piece "*El Consejo de los Dioses*," where the Spanish writer who belonged to modern times was adjudged equally great as the two authors of Ancient times: Homer (9<sup>th</sup> B.C.), the Greek poet and author of the Iliad, and Virgil (70-19 B.C.), the Latin poet and author of the Aeneid. In this melodrama, Rizal made Jupiter award the trumpet to Homer, the lyre to Virgil, and the laurel crown to Cervantes (Rizal 1961).

*El Consejo de los Dioses* was Rizal's entry in the prose section of the 1880 Literary Contest organized by the Liceo Artístico Literario de Manila. He had just then completed his second year in Medicine at the University of Sto. Tomas. The nineteen-year old winner won over a professional Peninsular journalist, a certain Nazario Del Puzo.

While *La Oceanía Española* carried the news about Rizal's winning the contest on its 25 April 1880 issue, the Diploma of Honor and Merit awarded to the melodrama *El Consejo de los Dioses* was for second place. The diploma was dated 23 April 1880. According to historian Fr. Fidel Villaruel, O.P., no one up to the present can explain the inconsistency (Villaruel 1984). However, the great historian Retana also claimed that Rizal was awarded first prize (*Aparato Bibliográfico*, III, 1581).

Before Carmen Entrala, Guerrero's mystical MUSE was *Filipinas*, the *patria irredenta*. Besides his personal, human and literary *Muses*, he also identified those of Rizal's and Baltazar's, calling them "*diosa tagala*," "*indigena diosa*," or "*Lakambini*."

Guerrero celebrates the exterior and interior qualities of an indigenous princess. She appears as María Clara, Crisóstomo Ibarra's muse in *Noli Me Tángere*, or as Celia, the divine muse of the greatest Tagalog poet.

Guerrero calls María Clara the "*gentil Lakambini / de la homérica gesta*" ("the elegant,



charming Tagalog goddess or muse of the Homeric gest”). Very significant indeed is the choice of the word *lakambini*. It is beyond the indigenization of the muse whom Rizal, the novelist, calls “*el hada, el espíritu, la encarnación poética de mi Patria, hermosa, sencilla, amable, candorosa, hija de Filipinas, de ese hermoso país que une a las grandes virtudes de la Madre España las bellas cualidades de un pueblo joven, como se unen en todo tu ser todo lo hermoso y bello que adornan ambas razas*” (Rizal 1978, 37).

It is the enthronization of the brown goddess on Mount Parnassus. Thus Guerrero made María Clara and Celia residents of Mt. Parnassus, to accompany perhaps Rizal, beneath the laurel grove while reciting his poems.

Laurel is one of the attributes of Apollo. Victors in artistic competitions receive crowns made from the branches and leaves of the *laurus nobilis* (Hall 1974). Laurel as used in Guerrero’s poetry verses suggests victory, triumph or just the presence of the god of poetry, Apollo.

His other attributes are certain musical instruments, but Guerrero also used Hebrew, Egyptian and Filipino instruments. They are the following:

1. “*Arpa*” (harp, ancient Egypt and Assyria. An attribute of Terpsichore [Hall 1974, 144-145; 217] -- in *FRONTIS* v: 4, 18; *A FILIPINAS* v:15; *SUEÑO ROSADO* v: 8, 31; *SALMO DE AMOR* v:23, 48; *DEL SUEÑO Y DE LA IDEA* v:14; *AVES y FLORES* v: 37, 90; *EL ARBOL MUERTO* v:8; *CANCIÓN A LA NOCHE* v:106; *MUSA NUEVA* v: 15, 16; *EN LA PASCUA* v:18, *AYER y HOY* v:12, *A CECILIO AOSTOL* v:11; *LO MEJOR* v:19; *HACIA EL MISTERIO* v:18; *TUS CAPRICHOS* v:4, 37, 118; *LAZAROS y EPULONES* v:108; *A MI QUERIDO AMIGO JAIME C. DE VEYRA* v:26;
2. “*Lira*” (lyre, ancient Greece) in *ROSAS Y LAURELES* v:16, 35; *MANOJITO DE ROSAS*, v:18; *DEL ENSUEÑO y DE LA IDEA* v:30; *FRONTIS* v: 49; *AVES Y FLORES* v:66; *LO QUE DICEN LAS AVES* v:1, 35; *LO QUE DICEN LAS FLORES* v:101; *JUVENTUD* v:34; *CELESTES ENSUEÑOS* v:14, 48; *TUS CAPRICHOS* v:21; *A MI QUERIDO AMIGO JAIME C. DE VEYRA* v:102; *PAX VOBISCUM* v:8;
3. “*Flauta*” (pipe, ancient Greece, an attribute of Euterpe [Hall 1974, 248] in *FLORECER DE RECUERDOS* v:39, 41; *FATUM* v:33; *LO QUE NO LLEGA* v:20; *MINOVIA NEGRA* v:5, 8, 62, 65; *TRÍPTICO REAL* v:36; *A MI QUERIDO AMIGO JAIME C. DE VEYRA* v:101;
4. “*Laud*” (lute, Arabia, an attribute of Polyhymnia [Hall 1974, 196-197, 217] in *MEDITACIÓN* v:55; *HOMENAJE* v:22; *UNA LAGRIMA* v:75; *QUEZON* v:84;
5. “*Cítara*” (Kithara, cithara, larger type of lyre, resembled the lute [Hall 1974, 197] in *MANOJITO DE ROSAS* v:54; *LLAMA DE AMOR* v:7; *A*

- MI QUERIDO AMIGO JAIME C. DE VEYRA* v:83;
6. “*Pífano*” (fife, piccolo, a small shrill flute, used in military bands) in *MI ANTEMA* v:12;
  7. “*Vibuela*” ( a kind of small guitar, similar to a lute) in *CANCIÓN A LA NOCHE*, v:78;
  8. “*Violín*” (Evolved from the viol which descended from the fiddle [Hall 1974, 322) in *SOLA SUB NOCTE* v:50; *EL VIOLÍN SILENTE* v:3, 4, 12, 21, 31; *EL JARDÍN REDIVIVO* v54; *CUENTO DE LÁGRIMAS* v:32, 40, 73;
  9. “*Salterio*” (psaltery, Near East and Egypt, played by the Muses [Hall 1974, 255) in *CAPRICHINOCTURNO* v:23;
  10. “*Pandero*” (tambourine, ancient Greece, played by Erato [Hall 1974, 296) in *ELEGÍA PASCUAL* v:15; *LLAMA DE AMOR* v:20;
  11. “*Sistro*” (systrum, round, flat thin metals threaded on like a necklace or bracelet by a metal rod and played by shaking it) in *MUSA NUEVA* v:48; *EN LA PASCUA* v:5;
  12. “*Trompa*” (trumpet, attribute of Calliope, Euterpe, Clio, goddess Fame [Hall 1974, 313) in *KALIPULACO* v:20; *EL 30 DE DICIEMBRE* v:96;
  13. “*Clarín*” (bugle, horn of buffalo or cow) in *ROSAS y LAURELES* v:3, 35; *DEL ENSUEÑO y DE LA IDEA* v:13, 30; *A MAGAT-SALAMAT* v:30; *ALÓPEZ JAENA* v:77; *LA MUJER NUEVA* v:1; *VIAJE FANTÁSTICO* v:3; *GLADIO HERÓICO* v:9;
  14. “*Címbalos*” (cymbals, tinier than the modern version) in *MIANATEMA* v:11;
  15. “*Piano*” in *FLORECER DE RECUERDOS* v:57;
  16. “*Tambuli*” (bugle made of carabao horn) in *MAGAT-SALAMAT* v. 17.

Eight of the 16 instruments above—the *arpa*, *lira*, *flauta*, *laúd*, *cítara*, *salterio*, *pandero*, and *trompa*--are related either to the Muses or to Apollo.

And then Guerrero surprises us in “*Magat-Salamat*” with his lexical choice of “*tambuli*” instead of the “traditional” *trompa*, used in an earlier composition (“*Kalipulako*”), that depicts a similar situation. In both compositions, the former, composed in April 1910, and the latter, in October 1908, native warriors were being incited to release their arrows at the sound of the *tambuli* by Magat-Salamat, and at the sound of the *trompa* by Kalipulaco, or, as we know him, by Lapu-lapu.

The peculiar hoarse sound of the carabao horn was an unmistakable touch of complete artistry. The historical period, protagonists and situation being depicted in *MAGAT-SALAMAT* were “authenticated”, so to speak, by the appropriate use of an indigenous arm.

*cuando sonó el “tambuli” en la espesura  
y se agrupó la tribu antes esclava,*

*para ganar la gloria de la altura  
agotando las flechas de la aljaba.”*

(“*Magat-Salamat*” v:16-20)

Unmistakably we have here a case of an indigenized poetic expression, picturesque, historically authentic and autochthonous.

The inclusion of indigenous muses of brown complexion, is another palpable proof of the indigenization of Guerrero’s poetry. In fact he has converted into a badge of honor the brown complexion of the Filipino race. Perhaps, the patriotic pitch in Guerrero’s “*Altivez*,” that arrogant pride in one’s brown skin, won’t have the slightest effect on the present members of the Papaya Soap Users Club.

Guerrero’s indigenization of his poetry was not skin deep, so to speak. As he took pride in his *musa morena* or *mi novia negra*, Guerrero rediscovered native roots, beginning with the supreme native god in these islands:

Respectively, in “*Manila*” and “*Ayer y Hoy*” he claims:

*¡Oh, flor abierta en la región tagala  
al soplo creativo de Bathala,  
en las edades pristinas dichas!*

(“*Manila*,” v: 52-54)

*¿Dónde están los sagrados versículos,  
la rima sagrada  
que formaban la antigua liturgia  
del culto a Bathala?*

(“*Ayer y Hoy*,” v:15-18)

Presiding over the native pantheon erected by Guerrero is *Bathala*, the native creator, assuming the power of creation of the God of the Hebrews. And with him the spirits of Kalipulako, *Magat-Salamat*, Rizal, Bonifacio, and Lopez Jaena, and even those of Elías, Ibarra, Simoun, María Clara, and Celia.

They have been transformed into the *lares nativos*, the household gods who helped fan the patriotic embers under the new dispensation.

Teodoro M. Kalaw gave us a description of what he called the *Days of Empire* (1900-1902): *Although those were quite depressive days, the young people kept up a semblance of lightheartedness by organizing social functions, mainly programs, where poems by Rizal, Guerrero, Apóstol, Baltazar were recited, native songs were sung, and contemporary dances were featured.* (Kalaw 1965).

Rizal's "Último Adios" and Guerrero's "Filipinas" and "Mi Bandera" were then the most popular pieces among declaimers, particularly "La Bandera" when in 1907 the public display of the Filipino flag was declared unlawful by the American authorities.

Reading and hearing Guerrero's poems, one could not help but feel carried away by the surge of patriotic and nationalistic fervor that seemed to flow unceasingly from his pen dipped in the fresh blood of our martyrs. The resonance of their verses sounded like bugles calling the people to arms, like rolling drums and resonating cymbals that kept the Filipino bellicose spirit alive and strong. His verses were divinely inspired by Mars (Kalaw 1965). The patriotic flame was alive, was being kept burning, warming the native hearth and kindling the libertarian spirit innate to man, regardless of color and creed.

When Guerrero talks of the *nativos lares* or *lar--* in "Fons Sancta" v:30, "Epitafio" v:28, "A Andres Bonifacio" v:53, "Tríptico Real" v. 65, "Oración de la Paz" v:35--he was referring to the individual spirit of the Filipino—a fighting spirit, a spirit that recognizes the value of liberty, justice and freedom. Guerrero thus saturates the atmosphere with an unmistakable sound of *native Filipino* in one and a thousand ways in 31 compositions, namely:

- |                             |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. ADULTERADA               | 17. KAMUNING                |
| 2. TÚ ERES LA GLORIA        | 18. EL 30 DE DICIEMBRE      |
| 3. A HISPANIA               | 19. GLADIATOR               |
| 4. FANTASÍA                 | 20. AYER Y HOY              |
| 5. HORA CÁLIDA              | 21. PERLA ORIENTAL          |
| 6. KALIPULAKO               | 22. LLAMA DE AMOR           |
| 7. A MAGAT-SALAMAT          | 23. FONTS SANCTA            |
| 8. A ANDRÉS BONIFACIO       | 24. EPITAFIO                |
| 9. MIS IDEAS                | 25. A CECILIO APÓSTOL       |
| 10. CANCION A LA NOCHE      | 26. A JOSÉ MA. ROMERO SALAS |
| 11. ¡VIEJO HOGAR, CASA MÍA! | 27. ¡HALIKA!                |
| 12. IRIS DE PAZ             | 28. TAGALA                  |
| 13. FLOR DE AMORES          | 29. RELIQUA                 |
| 14. FLOR DE LA SAMPAGUITA   | 30. TRÍPTICO REAL           |
| 15. ORACIÓN DE LA RAZA      | 31. RAMO DE OLIVO           |
| 16. FLORES DE MI TIERRA     |                             |

In these compositions, the poet tries to awaken the Filipino soul to action or just simply to nudge it to taking pride in being a Filipino. In 69 verses, words like *indígena*, *nativo*, *filipino*, *trópico*, *oriente*, *malayo*, *tagalo*, *oceanía*, *aborigen*, *autóctona* and their derivatives are used to describe the people, their land, their customs and traditions, their dreams, their aspirations.

The mention of the *tamaraw* ("Kalipulako" v:15), or *siesta filipina* ("Hora Cálida" v:1)

or *kris* (“*Mis Ideas*” v:48) may not surprise the reader, but the nostalgia of the poet for the *banguera* is quite unexpected: “¿En dónde está tu típica “banguera” / que, por sus dulces pasionarias, / era lugar de cita de áureas mariposas?” (¡*Viejo hogar, casa mía!*: v:37-39)

It looks more like the poet is using the native structure for drying newly washed dishes to express his love for nature awakened by fluttering butterflies on the passionflowers creeping on the now outmoded and forgotten *banguera*.

He remembers the flower laden *kamuning* shrub and its tiny white petals that carpet the ground (¡*Viejo hogar, casa mía!* v:42–44). The white flowers appear like snowflakes to the poet (“*Kamuning*” v:11-12). In some instances he uses the whiteness of the lily, and in others that of the snow. The paradigm around *nieve* (snow) is quite considerable. The words refer to either the color white or the degree of coldness—*níveo, nivoso, nevado, copos de nieve, copos de algodón, escarcha, helado, glacial, glido, congela, hiela*.

Readers may experience a sensation of beauty, vicariously generated by the description of snowy surroundings lighted by a snowy-white moon:

1. ***Kamuning de nevadas flores*** (“¡*Viejo hogar, casa mía!*” v:22)
2. ***la nívea luna*** (“*Lo que dicen las flores*” v:22)
3. ***nívea estrella*** (“*Cuento de lágrimas*” v:51)
4. ***nevada espuma*** (“*Iris de paz*” v:60)
5. ***nívea sampaga*** (“*Ayer y hoy*” v:6)
6. ***níveo pañuelo*** (“*Tu pañuelo*” v:58)
7. ***níveos lirios*** (“*Jardín muerto*” v:10)
8. ***níveo lirio*** (“*Apoteosis*” v:40)

It may not be long when we’ll physically experience the climatic phenomenon, which a number of Filipinos wish to have during Christmas. Certainly, with the wanton manner our ecosystem is being destroyed, consciously or unconsciously, the fake snowflakes on our Christmas trees may not be too remote to become real, by the power of an angry Mother Nature.

I hope and pray that the absence of an indigenous physical substitute for *nieve* or snow in the Philippines will be forever and ever and ever, till the end of time.

Meanwhile, I’ll just enjoy the mental image suggested by: “¿Dónde el “*kamuning*” de *nevadas flores* /que me anunciaba amores /y tapizaba de blancor el suelo?” (¡*Viejo hogar, casa mía!*” v: 42-44)

Under the moonbeams, I’ll settle for the poetic locally-colored image rather than the inconvenient real chilly Christmas with a chimney warmed by burning logs and

roasting chestnuts. After all it's almost like my favorite *camote* or what others call sweet potato.

Besides the native *kamuning*, perhaps less familiar to many young Filipinos, the poetic garden of Guerrero is planted with *ilang-ilang*, *champaca*, *mirto* (myrtle), *gumamela*, *adelfa*, *sampaguita*, *jazmin*, (jasmine), *camia*, *azucenas* (Madonna lilies), *lirios* (lilies), and *rosas* (roses).

Spain enriched the local flora with azucenas, adelfas, lilies, jasmine and roses. In Guerrero's lyrical garden, there is an abundance of roses found in 47 compositions and blooming in 71 verses.

Guerrero employs "rose" to refer to the *flower* rose, the *color* rose or pink, or its figurative meanings ranging from the delicate qualities of a woman, her modesty, innocence and fragrance or what is beautiful in life (Hall 1974, 268).

Roses are sacred to Venus and became one of her attributes. However, when used as "*rosa sin espinas*" or "rose without thorns" ("*Iris de Paz*", v: 79), it refers to the immaculate Virgin Mary.

Lilies are in 10 compositions blooming fragrantly in 11 verses. As a symbol of purity, it is associated with the Virgin Mary. It is an attribute of the Archangel Gabriel and other saints (Hall 1974, 192). Besides its religious significance, it was also used to simply describe the color white. But when an object is depicted as *lily-white*, it becomes clean white not dirty white, figuratively and chemically, rather, physically and spiritually, speaking.

While traditional western symbols of purity or beauty like the rose, lily, myrtle, and jasmine dot the lyric landscape of Guerrero, he also introduces flowers endemic to the Philippines. Most prominent among them is the sampaguita, which symbolizes the purity of the Filipino soul. It is found in 13 compositions perfuming the surroundings with 18 verses. The beauty of the sampaguita flower is in its simplicity, in its delicate soporific fragrance.

(Maybe rehabilitation centers for drug addicts could be built on an island planted to sampaguita, and tending the plants and gathering their flowers are made part of the rehabilitation program. The flowers can be compacted into rosary beads thus creating a viable industry that will support the program and the institution. Sampaguita essence can also be extracted. Sampaguita tea bags can be prepared. And other profitable endeavors. And above all, the possibility of diminishing or totally erasing the stigma attached to drug addicts who strive to be once again spotless, free from the shackles of addictive substances.

Maybe before embarking on this project a case-study can be made on the effect of the Ilang-ilang aroma on the residents of a town in Central Luzon planted to Ilang-ilang and is engaged in an industry based on its essence.)

As a symbol of purity, it is used to highlight the purity of the Filipino soul and to underscore the treachery of the American imperialists. Perhaps, the message, while subtle, is crystal clear in:

*Mi tierra noble y bendita  
no cría en sus bosques fieras,  
sino palomas ligeras  
y flores de sampaguita.*

(“*Mi Patria*,” v: 51-54)

And the prayer for the continued supply of patriotic oxygen is ardent and urgent: “*Danos siempre con tu olor de primavera / un anhelo de ser libre como el viento.*” (“*Ilang-ilang*” v: 41-42)

The combination of the sampaguita and the ilang-ilang seems to be an ideal one. What follows is very comforting: “*por tu sombra donde es buena la existencia /y pensamos que no es toda fuerza bruta.*” (“*Ilang-ilang*” v: 39-40). The Ilang-ilang’s aroma has the cathartic effect of restoring one’s faith in the innate goodness of man.

Meanwhile the traditional red rose of martyrdom (Hall 1974, 268) is substituted by the Poet of the Revolution with the red gumamela, which he uses to symbolize the blood of the Filipinos, willingly and generously shed for the Philippines.

Undoubtedly the use of local sceneries fans the patriotic flame. What can beat the resilient and utilitarian CAÑAS or bamboos which appear in some of the 13 verses in 12 compositions. Can anyone refute the patriotic affirmation of the poet that: “*¡Oh, refugio de amor de los cañales! / Tan solo allí las almas filipinas / consiguen olvidar todos sus males.*” (“*Bajo las Cañas*” v: 30-32)

We conclude this study with an indigenous item that Guerrero incorporated in his corpus of poetic lexicon.

An item traditionally employed to mean or represent *food*, objectively or figuratively, is bread, or in Spanish, *pan*. Among Christians it symbolizes Christ’s body. Christ is, to his believers, “the bread of life”. *Pan* appears in eight compositions, used in 25 verses to mean nourishment for the body or for the soul.

In “*Oración de la Raza*,” (in *Aves y Flores*, pp. 170-172), a poem-prayer, Guerrero implores Jose Rizal’s guidance and inspiration for the unfinished fight for independence. Towards the end of the poem, the poet asks Rizal to bless the native

staple food of the Filipinos:

*Bendice el arroz cándido de nuestras pobres mesas  
y acompaña a tu gesto piadoso la enseñanza  
de cuál son más sabrosas las frutas de esta tierra  
que las frutas exóticas de la heredad extraña,  
y di cómo es más bello que vivir en cadenas  
morir por la inviolable libertad de la Patria...*

(“Oración de la Raza,” v: 79-84)

How can we in conscience say AMEN to Guerrero’s prayer when the rice we now consume may have been from unfamiliar rice paddies?

It is an unassailable reiteration of an earlier cry of protest against the treacherous Americanization of the newly-born Philippines, expressed in his most famous “*Mi Patria*” published on 3 September 1898. He swears, thus:

*pero te juro que fuera  
para mi suerte afrentosa  
ver nacidas en mi fosa  
hierbas de savia extranjera.*

(“*Mi Patria*,” v: 77-80)

Even alien grass on his grave would be offensive, disgraceful, humiliating, insulting, outrageous, dishonorable. He would rather have, perhaps, on his grave, the so-called *carabao grass* than the *bermuda grass*.

Guerrero’s employ of indigenous elements in his poems is not just plain nativism but pure and brilliant patriotism for he was a patriot, through and through. As a politician, he was a patriot. As a poet, he was a patriot.

As he proclaimed his love of country, he was not holding a mirror and looking at himself. Instead his eyes were searching for anything native in order to point out its beautiful qualities. Guerrero invites us to discover and celebrate the beautiful and the useful in our native land.

## Endnotes

1. Valedictory lecture delivered during Edgardo Tiamson’s retirement program, September 2007, at the Audio-visual Room of the National Institute for Science and Mathematics Education (NISMED), U.P. Diliman.

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