

THREE STORIES FROM MANUEL GUERRERO'S PROSA LITERARIA: "THE GOLD TREE", "ANTAMOK", AND "SIANING"

Maria Elinora Peralta-Imson

ABSTRACT

The English translations presented here attempt to preserve and make more accessible three literary pieces originally written in Spanish by Filipino writer Manuel Guerrero (1877-1919): "El árbol de oro", that is, "The Gold Tree", "Antamok" and "Sianing." These three stories are considered his best. Included in the collection Prosa Literaria (1921), they are almost impossible to find and will most likely become even more so as time goes by. And yet, Manuel Guerrero, who also earned a name for himself as a medical doctor, must be made known and appreciated by more scholars throughout the world because he was one of the best writers of the "The Golden Age of Fil-Hispanic Literature" (1903-1942). A journalist early in life, he contributed to such newspapers as La Republica Filipina (1898-1899), La Independencia (1898-1900), and La Patria (1899-1900). He also penned articles and sketches on Philippine customs, folkways and legends which led to his making a mark on Philippine literature in Spanish. His writings are a significant part of our Fil-Hispanic literary heritage, and our cultural patrimony. It would be a great loss if we were to set these aside completely.

Keywords: *Literary heritage, Fil-Hispanic literature, translation, Philippine literature in Spanish, Manuel Guerrero's short fiction.*

In 1987, the teaching of Spanish in all Philippine tertiary level institutions was made optional as a Department of Education, Culture and Sports circular was issued implementing the repeal of R.A. 5182, the Cuenco Law (Recto 13) that had required the mandatory teaching of Spanish until then: the new constitution that had been crafted after the People Power Revolution of 1986 had decreed that henceforth, Spanish would no longer be an official language of the Philippines (de la Peña 9). The measure dealt a heavy blow indeed to our Philippine literature written in Spanish, whose writers had already felt the beginning of its decline when the American colonizers arrived in the country in 1898. How could they not feel alarmed as their already modest readership (some say that even at the height of the Spanish regime only 2% of Filipinos were competent in Spanish) steadily dwindled with the coming of age of the generations schooled in English and the passing away of the old, Spanish-educated generations? With only a few to write for, some stopped writing altogether. Some continued to write, despite the obvious irreversibility of the decline. R.A. 5182 was put in place in an attempt to insure that the younger generations of Filipinos could at least, somehow, keep touch with their Fil-Hispanic cultural, most especially literary, heritage. But R.A. 5182 is no more. How then can we preserve that part of our cultural heritage that resulted from our contact with the Spanish language, culture and experience? And preserve it, I believe we must, because, whether we like it or not, whether we acknowledge it or not, what we are today is the result of the many experiences and many cultures that have influenced us at one time or another. Our Fil-Hispanic literary heritage is a major part of our cultural patrimony. To lose it would be to lose a part of our Filipino-ness, for we have bits and pieces of Spanish language, culture and mores that we have made our very own, Filipinized and called ours.

Hence, we present here the translations for several reasons: (1) to preserve, in a sense, three literary pieces by the Fil-Hispanic writer Manuel Guerrero who was very much appreciated by his peers, but is little known, if at all, to our modern readers. These works were difficult to come by in the 1970s, and most likely, even more so today; (2) to make these stories accessible and thereby better appreciated by more scholars throughout the world; (3) to show that Manuel Guerrero was, according to Spanish literary critic Luis Mariñas (xxi) and Spanish to English translator of Philippine

short stories Pilar E. Mariño (xxi), among the best writers of the period; (4) to feature the three stories that are considered to be Guerrero's best (de los Santos X); (5) to help readers savor the literature of the period from 1903 to 1942, considered by many as the "Golden Period of Fil-Hispanic Literature; (6) to add to the body of translation works from Spanish to English of a Fil-Hispanic text; (7) to help enrich anthologies of Philippine literature; and finally, (8) to contribute my little bit to the discourse of Spanish to English translation of Philippine texts by sharing a few personal insights gleaned from my translation experiences.

ON TRANSLATING

Allow me therefore, at this juncture, a few words about translation. Because of the historical, sociological, cultural and literary significance of such writers as Manuel Guerrero, I try my best to hew as closely as possible to my reading of the original, authorial meaning of the text. Fundamentally, therefore, I translate for meaning, as much as I can without disregarding the peculiar genius of the English language. "What would an English speaker say to convey the same thought, and elicit the same reaction from the reader?" However, I must also preserve, in the new English version, the Filipino meaning originally expressed by the Filipino writer in his Spanish language. The texts' *Filipino-ness* must still *be* despite the non-Filipino language in which they are now couched. As a last stage, attempts are made to reproduce the tone, the spirit, the "genius" of the writer, in this case, Manuel Guerrero, in order that the reader may still savor the flavor of Manuel Guerrero's work rather than that of the translator. The translator, to my mind, is a conduit, who should try his/her level best to relay the thoughts, the feelings and the texture of the writer of the original, and the tenor and mood of the text, without, however, disregarding the genius of the target language.

MANUEL GUERRERO

Now then, who is Manuel Guerrero (January 8, 1877-January 4, 1919)? And why should we make the effort to read, and even translate his work? He is perhaps better known to most as a medical doctor, a graduate of the University of Sto Tomás, class 1902, who distinguished himself for his cholera research and studies on

infantile beri-beri. In fact, he won a prize presented by the Colegio Médico-Farmacéutico on June 15, 1902 for his paper entitled "Profilaxia del Cólera Morbo-Asiático", and his paper on infantile beri-beri earned him admission into the Colegio in 1905.

Before we speak of his contributions to Fil-hispanic literature let us get in a few biographical details. Manuel was the fifth of the nine children of Lorenzo Guerrero (November 4, 1835-April 8, 1904), the great painter and teacher of Juan Luna (*Spoliarium*) and Fabian de la Rosa. He was also a literary critic who was thus actively able to guide his sons in their writing. Manuel's mother was Clemencia Ramirez (November 23, 1850- May 20, 1883) who died early on when Manuel was only six years old and thus the young boy grew up in the care of his two aunts, Corinta Ramirez and Clarita Guerrero, with elder brother Fernando María and sister Araceli pitching in from time to time. Although they were nine brothers and sisters, only the three had survived (Manuel 218-224). According to one of Manuel's sons, the playwright Wilfrido María, he could speak and write in Latin, Greek, French and German, in addition to Spanish. In fact, Wilfrido reveals, the Guerreros were forbidden to speak Tagalog at home from childhood. Like his parents before him, he was known for his piety and religiosity; he was a very meticulous man; so "terrified" of germs was he that he seldom opened a door without a handkerchief in his hand, and he was constantly washing his hands. "He was a model Christian, a devoted lover and faithful servant of the Immaculate Mary" (22-23, 61-69).

School was *primera enseñanza* in the Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Guía which belonged to his aunt; then the Ateneo Municipal from where he obtained his Bachiller en Artes in March 1894. He then enrolled at the University of Santo Tomás to study medicine. The Revolution against Spain interrupted his studies, however, and thus he earned his degree in medicine only in 1902. During the war, he busied himself writing for newspapers: he was a journalist with the revolutionary publications *La República Filipina* and *La Independencia*; when the war between the Americans and the Filipinos broke out in February 1899, he contributed to *La Patria* edited by Pedro A. Paterno (1857-1911) and joined the staff of *Manila* where his brother Fernando María Guerrero (1873-1929) worked together with Cecilio Apóstol (1877-1938) and José Palma (1876-1903) (Manuel 219).

On the side, he wrote articles or sketches on Philippine customs, folkways, and legends, samples of which are found in the only compilation of his works, the posthumously published *Prosa literaria* (1921).

In its “Preface,” Don Panyong, that is, literary critic Epifanio De los Santos (1871-1928) explains that the literary pieces in *Prosa literaria* were the only ones he had been able to gather from the newspapers wherein they were first published. Although they represent Manuel Guerrero’s literary output of just two decades, that is, 1898 to 1918, he avers that the said works will surely leave their mark on our country’s literature. *Prosa literaria* is a 128-page collection of 22 pieces of short fiction. Some feature Tagalog legends, such as, “El Manalmón”, “El pilapil del diablo”, “Si-Ukuy”, “La flor del baino”, “La cara del diablo”; two stories deal with Benguet legends: “El árbol de oro” and “Antamok”. Others are *artículos de costumbre* or sketches drawn from Manuel Guerrero’s personal impressions and experiences, presenting traditional practices or the lives of ordinary people such as “Una tagala puntillosa”, “Sianing”, “La nazarena”, “La loca,” “¡Pobre Fili!!”, “Las venerables púputs”, “Cuadro final”, “D. Monico”, “Los moscardones”, “El murciélago”, “Héroe también”, “¡Oh la manga!”, and “¡Fea!”. Though some *artículos de costumbres* portray admirable Filipinos, others, such as “Charla”, and “Españolismo” are about undesirable traits.

Manuel Guerrero’s writing stands out because of the mastery, the fluidity, the purity of his use of the Spanish language which, nevertheless, does not alienate but somehow feels very Filipino. As one reads his work, one does not feel like one is reading foreign ideas couched in a foreign tongue. The characters, the time and place, the feelings, and even the perceptions are Filipino, and his Spanish, though as pure, genuine (*castizo* as the Spaniards call it) and as elegantly handled as a native speaker can, remains deeply rooted in things Filipino.

“El árbol de oro,” or “The Gold Tree,” narrates how the gold mines came to be in Benguet: a tale of Igorots who, driven by their greed for gold, forgot all the instructions that an old mysterious man had given them about harvesting only the fruits of a gold tree that he had gifted them with. They fought each other and fell upon the tree like men possessed, and behaved so badly that the old man felt it wiser to teach them a lesson.

“Antamok” explains how the place got its name after two rivals for the affection of a lovely Igorota came to blows, with one suitor hitting the other on the head with a rock.

Finally, “Sianing,” was singled out for its consummate portrayal of a patriotic Tagala, a beautiful, charming and enterprising fruit and sweets vendor, an “enchanted temptress who could charm even the stone cold heart of an ascetic.” (de los Santos IX) Unlike the first two stories where the principal characters are motivated by self-interest — love of gold in “The Gold Tree” and love of a woman in “Antamok”— “Sianing” is a young woman who sacrifices herself for love of country.

THE GOLD TREE AN IGOROT LEGEND

There’s just no reasoning with my editor. He wields power over us, sinful writers that we are, as abusively and despotically as any tyrant making his impossible demands. He has somehow taken it into his head that from this bird feather I am holding between my fingers must flow out a tale for this Saturday . . . and there is nothing for me but to do just that . . . obey, furrowed brow and all, if I wish to pass myself off as a good trooper.

Now where can I go fishing for a story? . . . Dum, de, dum, de dum . . . yes! That’s it!

Far, far away, high up in the mountains of Benguet, among those seemingly endless, lush forests of pine trees where paths are almost unknown, live, swarm and work an antlike army of unfortunate, half-naked creatures treated like beasts of burden who can tell me a story to fill up this blank page in front of me.

Let me see . . . there was that tale I was told when, in a moment of boredom, I sought to console myself among those ravines and gorges and tried to freeze myself in those icy rivers and that air . . . that does not always freeze.

One night, as my friends and I were resting after a very difficult trip to one of the nearby gold mines, and we were drinking coffee and wolfing down mouthfuls of *camote*¹ (they have so much of it over there), an old, somewhat civilized Igorot, who would gulp down mouthfuls of coffee with milk which he used to rinse

out his mouth . . . this Igorot I repeat, asked us with a half impish, half-witted grin if we knew how the mines originated. He was actually asking *me* the question! I was debating with myself whether I would give him a silly answer or leave the question unanswered when one of my friends who had had enough sweet potato, put the question back to him and asked him if he knew the story. Good Lord! What a guffaw he let out! He may have felt flattered by our ignorance, or perhaps he was pleased to have been given the opportunity to show off his narrative talents. Whatever the reason, it was obvious that the old devil was almost suffocating with his uncouth guffaws. Mischievous Igorot!

He finally calmed down, stopped his nervous laughing, and, giving way to our prodding, he let fly into the spittoon some oxidized saliva. Wiping off his stained lips with the back of his hand, he started his narration, savoring every word through half-closed eyelids, like a wine connoisseur savoring the bouquet of his drink.

Here is the story adorned and delivered by this moldy prickly pear as God has given it for me to understand under duress from my editor's expectations.

Near the border of Lepanto and Benguet, there is, towards the north, a settlement named Suyuk.

A very long time ago, there lived in that settlement, a family of Igorots who were quite well off and beloved by all, for they feared the god *Kabunyan*² in whose honor they often held feasts and made offerings of *tapey*³ in prayer and adoration.

The head of this family was on his way through the mountain to check on his *camote* farm one day, when he saw a crow standing in the middle of his path: it gazed at him with worried eyes for some time, let out a squawk, and then finally flew off.

The traveler started shaking in fear at such an ill omen and did not take one step further. He returned the way he had come, and, upon getting back to his small hut, he called out to his wife. He narrated what had happened, then told her that they would have to begin a *kanyaw*⁴ the very next day. She was to prepare everything that was needed, while he fixed and cleaned the *bankelay*, that is, the cane altar that would be used for the sacrificial pig that he hoped would

placate the anger of *Kabunyan* and thereby ward off the danger that threatened him.

On the first day of the *kanyan*, that is, a two to three day celebration during which work was strictly forbidden so that sacrifices could be offered up to their god, all the neighbors gathered together, clothed in their filthy *ules*⁵, ready to partake of the feasting which served the dual purpose of honoring their god and delighting their hungry stomachs. Since the pigs destined for the sacrifice were still freely roaming around the settlement unaware of the fatal but sacred destiny that awaited them, some of the men decided to go off in search of a pig appropriate to the purpose and catch it.

While they were thus occupied, there appeared in their midst a weak, old man who was almost doubled over with age. Limping, he went towards a rice mortar, or *desong*, upon which they urged him to sit down to catch his breath and rest his tired legs.

Meanwhile, some of the men continued running after the hapless animal that grunted and trotted about the best it could, bent on eluding those who were hot in its pursuit. Others stood by guffawing and noisily taunting them as they made fun of those who, instead of grabbing the pig they were chasing, ended up hugging thin air or falling face first to get a good whiff of the ground.

On one such careless attempt they ran into the mortar on which the old man was seated, tipping over not only the mortar but also the unlucky old fogey.

They all rushed forward to help him up. The old man only smiled, however, and shooing them away with a wave of his hand, he said to them: "No, don't touch me. Leave me here as I am. Just give me a plate, and cover me with a *palyok*.⁶ Leave it alone for three days; on the third day a tree will grow from the *palyok*. Pick only its fruits, my dear children, and you will be happy."

The old man said no more. They brought him the pot (*palyok* as the Igorots call it) that he had asked for, and put it over his head covering him completely.

They followed his instructions, leaving him hidden under that "armor plating." He may have been talking to the gods or maybe he was a god himself in human form. The villagers continued

celebrating their *kanyam*, a three-day *kanyam*. At the end of the third day, they all gathered together once again to lift up the heavy pot. To their great surprise, it broke and a tall, lush tree sprang out from its depths. It was a tree of the purest gold that grew and grew, sprouting forth leaves and branch upon branch of pure gold: brilliant, blinding, pulverizing the sun's rays into fine atoms that were scattered into the air, dazzling the eyes of those simple Igorots who looked upon the tree with awe, silenced in wonderment at that marvelous magic that was happening right before their very eyes.

That moment of inaction before such a marvelous sight lasted but a second. In the next instant, their muscles were galvanized into action and their brains, feelings and ideas suddenly clicked into focus as they realized the enormous wealth displayed before their eyes. They forgot the old man's warning. Jumping with joy and jubilation, they let out savage, guttural shouts that thundered through the air in one confused ululating din which was made even more terrible still by the dogs that were howling and running about, excited by the frenzied jumping about and violent contortions of that noisy gang of men who appeared to have solved the problem of continuous motion. Someone got a knife, another a steel bar, still a third a basket, that one a sack, this one a bowl, the dizzy one over there, a stick. Everyone fought to get at the gold tree trunk, each wanting to cut out a piece for himself. They all got into one another's way. No one could work undisturbed. Those who lost their balance and fell on their faces were flattened. Another broke his neighbor's back with a kick because he tried to rob him of his place with a jabbing elbow as he was scraping at the already thinning gold trunk. Using their heads or their shoulders, biting or boxing, tearing that one's shirt, pulling this one's hair or the other's feet, that mob of shouting, scraping, running, pushing, people rushed in, out, and around the tree like a tremendous mass of maggots, twisting and wiggling to devour the putrefied flesh, the nauseating piece that gives them food and pleasure.

Meanwhile, the tree continued to grow and flourish as the trunk got thinner at its base because of the greed of those gathered there who clawed at pieces of the precious metal. Nobody remembered the old man, nobody waited for the tree to bear fruit.

In the end, the tree, left almost without a base, swayed, lost its support and fell, suddenly disappearing from the view of those who were scraping at it.

Petrified by the magical disappearance, they looked at one another, not knowing what to say or do, eyes wide open with fright. They looked for the *palyok* and the old man; both had completely vanished, swallowed by the earth together with the tree.

When it fell, a voice was heard saying: "Because you disregarded my advice, the gods now punish you. You want gold? Then work, dig for it . . ."

"From that time on," said our Igorot story-teller, who was hunched over with his feet on his chair, "because the tree was very tall, there have been gold mines even up to this area. You will thus notice that from Suyuk through Buneng, Basil and other places until Sapid, the mines run in an almost straight line: they came from the trunk. The branches fell into the rivers: that is where the gold dragged by the blue waters of the rivers comes from."

Translator's Notes:

- 1 Camote: Sweet potato (*Opomea batatas*) (Vicassan's)
- 2 Kabunyan: God
- 3 Tapey: Rice wine
- 4 Kanyaw: Feast
- 5 Ule: G-string
- 6 Palyok: An earthen pot

ANTAMOK

At last I had reached the naked flank of the mountain, astride a perspiring pony familiar with those out-of-the-way parts and with a picture still etched in my memory of the imposing solitude of that vast expanse of pine trees and the dangerous, slippery gullies that we had just negotiated. I rested my gaze upon the endless strip of land to the right with its jagged peaks and rugged terrain that had been dropped like a cloth left to fall full length to the ground. Looking to the left, I shuddered in fear at the sight of a foamy river rushing through the cracks at the bottom of a ravine; its waters were not clear nor transparent like those of other rivers in this region, but whitish with shades of mother of pearl. Its source, according to our Igorot footman, slept at the top of the other

mountain that, together with one we were climbing, formed the dark babbling ravine that we still had to cross to get to the gold mine that was the reason for that morning's adventure.

We pushed on, happy at the thought that we could soon rest and relax our tired humanity and numbing joints with the fast clip of our nags. For the solace and consolation of our body and soul, however, our guide instructed us to get down from our horses because "we were about to make a somewhat difficult descent that they had prepared for us."

Good Lord! What a descent that was! It took us all of half an hour to do it and it was only, according to our guide, just "a little difficult", something they "had arranged for us." Soft, sticky earth covered with clay shifting under our feet, a very steep slope, and a path that snaked around the mountainside. What if it had been *a proper* road? The poor animals we were leading had to stop out of tiredness when they were not dragging us with them whenever they slipped, putting us within inches of so handsomely breaking our necks upon the rocky bed of the river below us that was relentlessly carving out that ravine where our wicked path ended.

We were finally able to catch our breath. After a brief rest, we crossed the opaque waters and headed for an Igorot hut where we spent the night in the sweet comforting warmth and brilliant glow of *salem* twigs, that resinous pine tree of Benguet, that burned continuously on a mound of earth, smoking up the ceiling and walls of the abode and filling the nostrils and lungs of the hut's occupants.

Dawn came by the grace of God, and we got ready to climb up to the mine.

A narrow serpentine path led up the mountainside until it reached a kind of tiny platform overlooking the river that we had crossed the day before. We stayed there for a while because the "lowlanders" that we were refused to go exploring any further.

The platform of dry spongy rocks creaked beneath our feet. At one end of the platform rose the sheer face of the mountain into which had been carved the path that would take us to the mine. At the other end was a deep gorge over which the platform protruded just enough to allow us a peek into the dark mouth of

the monster where the river parted and shook the tangled vegetation as it grumbled between the ashen boulders in its path.

From that rocky perch - it really looked quite tiny from below - one could make out, on the sheer face of the mountain, the entrance to a less than inviting cat-hole that appeared to lead into the very heart of the mountain. It was sheltered by some planks that the simple Igorots did not dare remove because, according to them, the cat-hole belonged to "someone" who became as prosperous as he wished because of the abundance of gold dust. If one should look a little further still, one would see the mountainside as it curved, moved and plummeted from the summit until the very last foothills as if some giant cats had fought there and gouged out the land, scratching and clawing at the huge boulders that fell one on top of the other in scattered piles of pulverized rocks that embedded themselves into the ground or were left perched upon an outcrop, transforming the mine into the steps of an extraordinary amphitheater open to the torrents of light piercing that ever overcast Benguet sky, patched in blue scraps, where the tropical sun does not shine.

One cannot look upon such a monstrous rock-fall without feeling dizzy and faint, or feeling miserably dwarfed by such savage grandeur that can only be likened to the aftermath of a battle between Cyclops for whom one boulder would only be a pebble.

There, on the ridge of that amphitheater, and between a grove of rachitic pine trees was born the thread of milky-white water that slid down crazily muttering through those sharp, protruding rocks to become a mighty river at the foot of the mine. Indeed, that mountain was the gold mine, and the disarray was perhaps, the work of generations of Igorots who had patiently exploited it, tearing away, scratching with a metal pickaxe the lumps of quartz that, after being reduced to a powder between two huge flat rocks from the river, were washed in its current, separating the sand from the yellow grains later destined to fill the dog bladders where such a sought-after, precious metal was kept.

With our eyes tired and our spirit wearied by that gnarled landscape, that vast expanse through which the men clambered and ran after the stones in search of gold - they were like tiny grasshoppers - we started back towards the hut with greater care

and fear after the day's adventure had brought home to us the danger that we had put ourselves in.

Back at the hut, between sips of coffee and mouthfuls of *camote*, our gregarious guide narrated the origin of the name of the mine that we had just visited.

An *apolakay*¹, a descendant of venerable Manno whose incorrupt body is still preserved in a cave near Loo — that means that he has been there for close to two centuries now — had a daughter for whom two young Igorots had been pining. They had turned yellow and had lost a lot of weight for they had not been able to awaken said maiden's interest. They had pleaded and asked for their elders' help. . . to no avail. This Helen of Benguet would not be moved.

Such was the state of affairs when one day, as several people were gathered together at the house of *apolakay*, among them the two unlucky suitors who were intoning melancholy *badiens*,² *apolakay*'s daughter intimated that she wished to have some of the white bark of a tree to make a *kubal* or g-string for her father.

The two suitors promised themselves, under their breath, to satisfy the Igorota's wish.

One of them, after asking around and looking for information, learned that in the place where the mine is located today (it was unknown at that time) was a very beautiful tree from which the desired bark could be had.

The bronzed young man wasted no time and went to the place. While he was deeply absorbed in cutting the tree down, who should appear among the bushes but the other suitor, perhaps with the same purpose of getting hold of the white bark for the *kubal*. He saw the other who was there before him, and as is usually the case in such circumstances, he wanted to get rid of him in the simplest way possible. To avoid alerting the other to his presence, and because the revolver had as yet not been invented (goodness gracious!), he picked up a stone and with a twist of his arm and his body doubled over, "whack!", he hit his rival on the forehead.

From that time onwards, that place has been called *Antamok*, from *antám okán*, which means "wounded on the forehead with a stone."

Translator's Notes:

1. Apolakay: An elder
2. Badiew: A chant usually sung during a wake or a kanyaw

SIANING AN EPISODE OF THE REVOLUTION

Her modest house stood at a bend in the road from Kuli-Kuli to Parañaque, nestled under a gnarled and scrawny *kamatsile*¹ much like a bird that, tired of fluttering about, had stopped to rest in the shade of a tree trunk to groom its dusty feathers with its beak.

At the entrance to her shabby little house, was her tiny store. It was very modest indeed: a *lankape*² shiny with age from which towered some wooden shelves in stair-like fashion. At the very top were three small bottles of native wine and a couple of water glasses masquerading as wine goblets. In front stood several packs of all the well-known brands and qualities of cigarettes, in a very straight and proper line. On the next lower shelf were some six porcelain plates from China: some had tomatoes in them, others had *santol*,³ and one was filled with *sienosas*, dry bread slices that aspired to be pastries, but looked more like *maya maya*⁴ nests covered with flies as they were. On the lankape sat a *bilaw*⁵ containing different fruits and a *bakul* (a little basket) covered with a moist cloth to prevent the bundles of *buyo*⁶ that was in it from drying out. The mistress of the store had hung a *dinampol tapis*⁷ from the gutter to shield the charming Sianing and her enterprise from the annoying heat of the sun or a sudden downpour.

What a very likeable young woman she was! . . . simply irresistible when she smiled: those two dimples in her cheeks were just so enchanting! And when she talked about her shop's offerings or when she made fun of the tightfisted and gossipy *bagon-tao*⁸ who dared haggle with her for some *naranghita*⁹. . . what a torrent of words she would let fly! How she would flick her *pañuelo*¹⁰ over her face as if to cover it, then leave half an eye uncovered! How she wiggled her hips, throw back her head and bend slightly forward, wink at a nearby friend and slap another with her shawl, lift this plate or that, and re-arrange the fruits! . . . In short, she was an

enchanting she-devil who could charm even the stone-cold heart of an ascetic.

And we must remember, of course, that a lot of honey attracts a lot of flies.

Thus did the little store sell God's blessings as she could always be seen surrounded by a swarm of young men who, under the pretext of buying cigarettes, clung like *lapas*¹¹ to Sianing's *lankape*. More cunning than her admirers, she artfully entertained them into emptying their pockets to buy her fruits and sweets.

II

When the '96 revolution broke out, Sianing was afraid, very much so. Her fiancé lived in Bakoor, and she was sad at the thought of her beloved being beaten by the Spaniards, or being killed in battle. But she kept her little store open. She continued to sit at one end of her *lankape* although she was no longer quite as happy nor as charmingly gregarious as before. She was worried about the future of her Motherland which she loved deeply with a love that became even greater as she read some books in secret.

Tagalog integrity and courage triumphed in Bakoor, and other places in Cavite. The Spaniards could not go beyond the right bank of the terribly ominous Zapote.

At that time, many of Sianing's co-parishioners were native soldiers who were loyal to Spain. Attracted by the sweet chatter of the impish young girl, they would head for Sianing's store every day wishing to smell the watercress flower, unaware of the possibility that, at the very least, they could meet up with monk heads. For some unknown reason, Sianing woke up one morning in a very happy and cheerful mood. The huge storm clouds of sadness that had overcast her smiling face had dissipated and from that time onwards, the old Sianing was back . . . lively, witty and happy to be so. Curiously enough, the transformation coincided with the arrival of a battalion of native soldiers.

"Oh! Is that you, Pedro? Why do you come only now? It's so dark out tonight!"

"What did you want me to do, Sianing? This is the only time I can leave my post and go through the fields without being noticed."

"You don't know how much I've suffered since the last time that you came to . . ."

"Oh? Is here something wrong? Were you able to do what you wanted? . . ."

"Yes. Look! I have here 200 improved Remington caps. Uncle Juan carried the gun in a coconut-frond sleeping mat."

"And for you to get all of this, did you, Sianing, have to sacrifice your love?"

"Yes, Pedro, I always had to remember our beloved people and the abuse my parents suffered at the hands of that priest so that I could forget you and let myself fall in love with those bastard soldiers, and entice them with my chatter and my naughtiness to trust and confide in me."

"I love you even more now, Sianing, if it is at all possible for me to love you more. I think I love you more now than before, because in you I see not only the woman who captivated my heart with her charms, but also a loyal daughter of our Motherland sacrificing her love to contribute her own little part to the great task of saving her brothers."

"Thank you, Pedro. But cheer up! There is still more; the sergeant who comes here everyday has promised me that he will join the battle if I agree to marry him. And . . . I said yes. You won't be jealous, will you, Pedro? If your Sianing has done that, it is to lessen the enemy forces. Besides, you told me . . ."

"Sianing, now I see that I don't deserve you because you are greater, more patriotic than I."

"Come on, don't say that. All I know is that I love you; and the only thing that I would feel sorry about is if I were to lose your love and if you were to doubt mine. But let's stop talking about that; the sergeant promised to go off with six others that he will take along with him. Are you happy with what I have done?"

"Not happy, Sianing; proud to have a love, a fiancée so full of love of country . . ." They continued talking, sprinkling their conversation with words full of tenderness and love. The time to leave came, and when he said goodbye . . . Pedro took with him the sweetest and most beautiful memory one could have of the woman one loves.

January 22, 1890

Translator's Notes

1. Kamatsile: A variant is kamatsili; guamachil tree (*Pithecolobium dulce* Benth.) and its fruit. (Vicassan's and De Padua 26)
2. Lankape: A bed made out of bamboo
3. Santol: *Sandoricum koetjape* (Bum.f.) Merr. A tree about 15 meters high and its fruit. (De Padua, Lugod, Pancho 42)
4. Maya maya: (*Ornith.*) A general name for all species of sparrow (Vicassan's)
5. Bilaw: A circular, flat basket made out of split bamboo used for winnowing grains (Vicassan's)
6. Buyo: betel nut and /or plant. The betel leaf (*Piperaceae*, *Piper betel* L.) was traditionally chewed with a little lime, a piece of betel nut. (Vicassan's and De Padua 40)
7. Dinampol tapis: a native wrap-around skirt dyed with a locally made dye from the sapang tree (Vicassan's)
8. Bagon tao: a young man; a bachelor
9. Pañuelo: shawl
10. Naranghita: a species of orange tree (*citrus nobilis* Lour.) and / or its fruit (Vicassan's)
11. Lapas: (*Ichth.*) caesio fish (*Caesio* sp.) also known as dalagang bukid (*UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino*)

WORKS CONSULTED

- Carranza, Emmanuel John. "Geologically-constrained probabilistic mapping of gold potential, Baguio." November 7, 2007. <<http://www.geovista.psu.edu/sites/geocomp99/Gc99/13/gc013.htm>>.
- De la Peña, Wytan. "The University of the Philippines in Defense of Spanish." *Linguae et Litterae*. Quezon City: Department of European Languages, College of Arts and Letters, University of the Philippines Diliman, 2008.

Three Stories from Manuel Guerrero's Prosa Literaria

- De Padua, Ludivina, Gregorio C. Lugod, Juan V. Pancho. *Handbook on Philippine Medicinal Plants*. Vol. 1. Los Baños: University of the Philippines at Los Baños, 1977.
- De los Santos, Epifanio. "Prólogo." *Prosa Literaria*. By Manuel Guerrero. Manila: Tip. Pont. Del Col. De Sto. Tomás, 1921. I-XIX.
- Guerrero, Manuel S.R. *Prosa Literaria*. Manila: Tip. Pont. Del Col. De Sto. Tomás, 1921.
- Guerrero, Wilfrido María. *The Guerreros of Ermita*. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1988.
- Manuel, E. Arsenio. "Manuel S. Guerrero: Scientist and Man of Letters." July 29, 2008. <http://www.geocities.com/scientists_phil/guerreromanuel_fulltext.htm>
- Manuel, E. Arsenio. *Dictionary of Philippine Biography*. Vol. 2. Quezon City: Filipiniana Publications, 1970. 2 vols.
- Mariñas, Luis. *La literatura filipina en castellano*. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1974.
- Mariño, Pilar E. *Philippine Short Stories in Spanish 1900-1941*. Quezon City: Office of Research Coordination, 1989.
- Recto, Claro M. *The Recto Valedictory and the Recto Day Program 1985*. Manila: Claro M. Recto Memorial Foundation, Inc., 1985.
- Santos, Vito C. *Vicassan's Pilipino-English Dictionary*. Metro Manila: National Bookstore, 1978.
- Tindaan, Ruth. Personal interview. July 10, 2008.
- "The Origin of the Gold Mines of Benguet." *Legends from Far Away Places — Children's Page*. November 29, 2007
< <http://maxpages.com/fables/LEGENDS>>
- UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, 2001.

Maria Elinora Peralta-Imson, Ph.D. taught Spanish and French for some 21 years with the Department of European Languages, College of Arts and Letters at the University of the Philippines Diliman, before relocating to Baguio City. She now teaches at the University of the Philippines Baguio. Some of her past works are the Spanish to English translation (chapter 3 until the end) of the first volume of Isabelo de los Reyes' *El folk-lore Filipino* (U.P. Press, 1994) and *El Tinguian* (Cordillera Studies Center, 2007). Her other translations (*Volume 2 of De los Reyes' El Folklore Filipino and Historia de Ilocos, Volume 1, among others*) are still awaiting publication.