Enriquez' Samboangan, The Cult of War: Myth and Orality in the Novel

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ABSTRACT

The overall strategy of Samboangan, the Cult of War is to synthesize realistic narrative, fantasy, folklore, oral epic elements, and history. The resulting hybrid, the novelistic chronicle of the Zamboanga community, is a quasi-mythical work that, fortified by a sober view of history, serves to further strengthen the sense of community in realpolitik through a quasi-mythical work of the imagination.

Before the end of the sixteenth century, no more than half a century after Magellan claimed the Philippines for Spain, Spanish colonial authority had consolidated its political power over Luzon and the Visayas (Phelan 136). The island of Mindanao, however, was disputed by the Moro sultanates which had sovereignty over vast sections of the islands such as Lanao, Cotabato and Sulu (Phelan 137). The majority of inhabitants of the island were neither Christian nor Moslem, but possessed their own culture and beliefs, such as the Subanon, the dominant ethnic group of the Zamboanga Peninsula. They were not under the political sway of Jolo and Maguindanao the two most powerful Sultanates (Phelan 137).

The fact that Luzon and the Visayas had been in the main converted to Christianity, innocuous as it may appear, is one of the crucial factors that led to the so-called Moro Wars. Within the context of the European colonization of the East Indies by the Dutch and the British, it was the fuse that lit the explosive wars – wars that began in that distant era, and in a real sense continues to the present day. The recent assault on Zamboanga (occurring only seven years after the publication of Samboangan) is surely proof that the conflict continues to simmer.

But why would the Christianization of the Philippines become an explosive element in the early history of Philippine colonization? An economic interpretation of history would clarify the issue. The historical confluence of forces, drawn in by greed, created a maelstrom. There was a great demand for slave labor (mainly in the Dutch East Indies) that the pirate fleets from the Mindanao Sultanates aimed to fill. Eventually, the Christianized communities in Luzon and in the Visayas were to provide the sultanates with their human capital in the slave trade. This trade became the main source of the wealth and power of the sultanates (Non 402-403).

In a general sense the novel Samboangan is historical. It hews close to the series of events that led to the defeat in battle of the Moro Sultans by the Spanish-led colonial forces comprised of Subanons, Christianized Lutaos (former allies of the Sultans) , and conscripts from the Visayas and Luzon. The novel chronicles how this culturally diverse contingent of soldiers and their families (including the relatively small Spanish contingent) became the nucleus of the community that in time became the Zamboanga polity. Samboangan is the story of the victory of the Samboangan forces, in battles

led by Governor Sebastian Torres that ended Moro hegemony. In the novel it is Torres (the fictional Governor Corcuera) who decides to have a large stone fortress (the largest in the Far East) built in Zamboanga in 1601. The fortress of the novel, of course, has for its referent the historical one, recently refurbished. That fortress proves to be strategically important in the fight against piracy because it geographically bifurcates the two major Sultanates, Maguindanao (in the mainland) and Jolo (in the Sulu Archipelago) making it nearly impossible for the different sultanates to join their forces. Thus, while it protected the Visayas and Luzon from Moro raids, it also nurtured the growing Zamboanga community.

The novel's protagonist is Governor-General Sebastian Torres, a Spanish marquis, and former captain of the Royal Navy. Modeled after the larger than life Governor-General Corcuera, conqueror of Marawi and Jolo (Enriquez, 2006, ix), Don Sebastian Torres is the controversial leader of Samboangan and the enemy of the frailes. He is a deeply pious but also practical person, possessing an iron will and resolve. We come to an awareness of this man's qualities of character as they are realistically brought forth.

But we are soon made uneasy by the fiction. Is it quite like Corcuera? The urge to verify here is as strong as in any form of purported history. A quick check on the bare facts immediately reveals that Torres cannot be Corcuera. When Torres arrives for the first time in Samboangan, it is the year 1593, and he is twenty-four years old (Enriquez 2006 p.6). He wins the battle that will finally curtail the power of Sultan Hashim in 1603 (Enriquez 2006 p.453). On the other hand, history has it that Corcuera's campaigns all occurred nearly three decades later: the naval victory over Kudarat in the battle of Lamitan and the destruction of the citadel near Lake Lanao in 1637, and the assault and capture of Jolo the year after (Phelan 138).

Too, the two geographies, of fiction on the one hand, and fact on the other, do not match. Gornlic, the naval stronghold of Sultan Matingka (the fictional Kudarat) seems to be located in present-day Iligan, an area that in 1603 was already a Christian settlement and certainly much too distant from the Maguindanao or even the Maranao Sultanates. Lobon, the fictional Jolo, is fictionally displaced even farther, to an island that rather matches the area occupied geographically by Olutanga, an island in

Sibugay Bay, just off the central coast of the Zamboanga peninsula.

On the point of the lack of historical synchronicity, the benefit might be that an awareness of what pre-colonial Zamboanga was like would broaden our historical perspective, especially because it includes a quasi-historical account of the Subanons (the original lumad inhabitants) and their conversion to Christianity by a Dominican friar following the landing of Captain Torres and his party.

The distortion of history and geography is likely a mode of compression to create focus and facilitate narration (shortening travel time, so to speak). Whatever else may be the purpose, we must yield to the creative imagination and vision of the author, for as Aristotle wisely observes: "…poetry is more philosophical than history; poetry utters universal truths, history particular statements" (Aristotle trans. Kenny 28). Perhaps cognizant of this privilege, the author of Samboangan declares in his author's preface (Enriquez 2006) :

> … you will not find Datu Radawi … Major de Murga in history books … like ghosts haunting the past… There probably never was a hazardous trek through the mangrove swamps of Mindanao by some 3,500 Spanish soldiers and Zamboanga voluntarios, who had to fight cayumans, giant eels, carnivorous mosquitoes… thieving swamp people… Listen: this book actually came to exist by actually believing that lies… make us "see the real world."

Indeed, Sebastian Torres is a fiction, though not completely so, being a composite. Enriquez, in his preface, makes an interesting slip. He refers to Pedro Hurtado de Corcuera as "Sebastian" (the given name of Torres, the fictional Corcuera) – surely, the habit of mixing fiction and fact was hard to break. But fiction he remains to be, and without quibbling, this is precisely the reason why he deserves his place in a novel such as Samboangan. Verisimilitude is all that is required, even in a novel based on history. Indeed, Sebastian will likely be more memorable than any historical Pedro who is just a name in a history book.

On the broader, politico-historical plane of narrative of the fiction which is Samboangan, the conflict is massive—that between the Samboangan forces on the one hand, and the Moro sultanates on the

other. But there is an inner, "existential" core woven into and essential to the narrative—the conflict between the evil Bishop Laureano Salvador and Governor Sebastian Torres. Played out to the end, this is the most realistic plane of narrative. Of course their mutual animosity that results in the Bishop's exile and leads him to avenge himself by legal machination against the governor is more than personal. It represents the larger struggle of which it is a part, the conflict between church and state, a theme dear to the heart of Jose Rizal, whose close ties to the Jesuits and abhorrence of the friars finds its historical parallel in the career of Pedro Hurtado de Corcuera (Phelan 138-139). Sebastian Torres, too, being the fictional Corcuera, is portrayed as having strong bonds with the Jesuits, and no love for the friars. Thus the novel's realistic, "existential" core, as vivid portrayal, serves to endow historical incidents and characters with verisimilitude—it makes them more real, more appealing to the imagination.

The conflict between Governor and Bishop begins almost as soon as the story starts, even before the galleon that takes them to old Samboangan makes landfall in1593 (Enriquez 6). Invoking the royal decree that gives the right to own land to the Catholic Church as soon as conversions are made, the friar and future bishop scours the area for natives until they are found and baptized.

But the governor consolidates his power over the newly established community eventually. When a decade later the Bishop, invoking the law on sanctuary, shelters a murderer in the church, Torres gives orders for his arrest. He is taken out by soldiers, is tried quickly, and executed. The bishop himself is arrested and sent to exile on a remote island.

Meanwhile, the governor moves to consolidate his power over the peninsula. He fashions his first triumph in the naval battle of Punta Pana (in western Sibugay). There the combined Samboangan forces destroy the fleet of Jainal the Pirate, younger brother of Sultan Matingka (the fictional Kudarat) of Gornlic (Marawi? Cotabato?). Jainal, protected by his amulet (anting-anting), is invulnerable. (Here the novel invokes folk tradition as his authority). As the folks would have it (as though through an intercultural flow or exchange between the Maranaos and the Greeks), Jainal, like Achilles, has a single vulnerable spot—not in his heel, however, but in a less visible (though somewhat risible) spot: his

armpit. It is there that he sustains a fatal wound from a former ally, now chief of the native forces, Subanon hero Epfel the Elder, son of Sigbe The Most Beautiful Subana Princess , the legal Sultana of Sultan Hashim of Lobon (the fictional Jolo) but deposed through the machinations of his former sandile (concubine) Soriada, called "The Witch", but now the Virtual Sultana. (In the novel, following the mode of the Greek epics, as, for example, "Hector, tamer of horses" or "Achilles, scion of Peleus", the names of royals are frequently accompanied by identifying epithets). The family of Sultana Sigbe have allied themselves with the Spaniards and are already residents of the Samboangan community when Jainal the Pirate is vanquished off Punta Pana (meaning "Cape Arrow"). Her sons Erfel the Elder Tabunaway and Tongab Tabunaway the Handsomest, both sons of Sultan Hashim, are the leaders of the native Samboangan forces at the battle of Punta Pana and are immortalized as heroes of folklore in the Zamboanga peninsula.

But the governor makes a mortal enemy of Bishop Salvador, whom he has exiled. But before the Bishop steps into the boat that takes him to a remote island, the irate Dominican picks up pebbles and hurls them at the governor and his relatives as they stand on the shore to watch the boat leave. He utters a curse under his breath, and as he does this, managing to hit with a pebble each, two of the governor's relatives: a favorite nephew and a cousin who is Torres' aide-de-camp. Further on in the novel, at the siege of Lobon, the curse is fulfilled. The nephew is severely injured and the cousin is slain. The governor himself, although uninjured and victorious, soon becomes a victim of the friars, the bishop's agents. They trump up charges against him, and by a technicality, gain a court ruling that sends him to jail. Thankfully, like a god in a Euripedean chariot, King Phillip of Spain comes to his rescue with a royal pardon.

Soon after, fate visits the Bishop, too, in his exile: he dies from an unknown cause under suspicious circumstances. The friars see red--and excoriate the governor from the pulpit, accusing him this time of homosexuality. And their evidence? Merely rumors that have grown around the governor's being a confirmed bachelor. They say he is a celibate, "through the fault of nature rather than virtue." But he survives this attack, too, and goes into retirement in the community he had helped bring into being: Zamboanga.

It is on this realistic plane—or strand—of narrative that Torres' role as agonist is foregrounded. He escapes the furies, but not before going through the wringer. And his release from the curse could very well be called a deus ex machina. There is no obligation to follow Aristotle, of course, but the Greek parallels are too infectious to pass without comment. The genre called the novel is not without cultural context. Greek literature (despite Aristotle) is full of omens and furies and agonies, and the novel has learned from that available corpus, consciously or not. This is why we see, even on the realistic plane—or strand—superstitious elements such as curses and seeming black magic, invade and imbed themselves into the realistic plane—or strand—and make them essential to the realistic plane of narrative. The two strands, or streams, join and become one: the fantastical and the realistic. But to this we will return later.

Let us view meanwhile the historical plane of narrative as it aligns—or does not—with history, particularly on the subject of the defeat of the Sultans in the novel. It seems the brassy note of victory should be somewhat muted. As a historian points out, although Corcuera's campaigns momentarily relieved the pressure from Moro raids, his victories…turned out to be more spectacular than solid. They were not consolidated by territorial occupation of large areas (Phelan 138).

Of course, the novel in effect confirms this. Gornlic is never occupied. Soriada the Virtual Sultana dupes Torres into giving Hashim time to escape with his diminished forces to Mt. Datu, the inaccessible ancestral sanctuary of the tribe:

> Because of her guile…and you have to admit her ravishing wild beauty, Sultan Saliganya Hashim, already in his grasp, had slipped away as an eel does from a basket trap: laughing all the way up to the ancient sanctuary of his ancestors, Mt. Datu (Enriquez 453).

This account, of course, is either fictional or drawn from the oral tradition into the fiction. There can be no geographical corroboration. There are no mountains in Jolo (Lobon in the novel) inaccessible to Corcuera who, in history, had surely reached higher ground: the mountains that nestle Lake Lanao and Marawi. He even set fire to the citadel he found there in 1637 (Phelan 138). But to do justice to the novel's reliability as history,

it never claims complete victory for the Samboangan forces. In truth, one important point the novel makes is that the incomplete victory has engendered a semi-stalemate that keeps the outbreak of violence imminent, and the war mentality becomes an enduring cult. Nevertheless, peace, a Pax Zamboanga, no matter how uneasy, does reign—as it has reigned for centuries—and this is certainly sufficient time for a community to grow. This novel is the legend of its origin. Conversely, that the community has survived to the present day is earthly and political proof of the substantial cogency of the fiction.

Then, again, it appears that these days we all have to be fictionists even if only to claim a sense of who we are. Membership in a community gives us our identity—but no community is really an objective fact. Although composed of real human beings, a community—even entities that we take for fact requires imagining. Benedict Anderson, in what he calls an "anthropological spirit," famously defines the word "nation" as

> …an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign…it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each of them lives the image of their communion (Anderson 6).

It was surely easier to achieve a sense of community in Samboangan—easier to consolidate in the mind than the idea of nationhood for the Philippines which would not be achieved until much later. It would only be in the nineteenth century that a patria adorada would be conceived--in the mind. But as though it were a microcosm of that future nation, Samboangan had similar barriers to consolidation. Multiculturalism, for instance. There were Subanons, Lutaos, other Muslim groups, Kapampangans, Cebuanos, Ilonggos, Ilocanos,Tagalogs, Bikolanos, and Spaniards, too, lest we forget. The last mentioned provided a linguistic sense of identity, Chabacano, the Spanish-based lingua franca that orally evolved to provide a solution to the problem of communication—of what would have been Babel otherwise.

But let us not forget the other consolidating factors. The fort provided security and peace from Moro depredations. There was a history behind

the community, arguably a glorious one that imbued a sense of esprit de corps. Conversion to Catholicism, perhaps, was the strongest uniting force. Given all these factors, could a sense of destiny come far behind?

The strategic geographical position of a fortified Zamboanga is a motif that is sounded for the first time in the third chapter of the novel where Fr. Serra, an astute Jesuit (and Torres' strongest supporter) using maps of Mindanao and Sulu, points out the imperative of constructing a fortress on the southwestern tip of the peninsula:

> …there are three strong and basic reasons: one, it would split the realms of the Sultanates of Gornlic and Lobon...for the fort will be right in the middle; two, it would deny Sultan Hasim the Basilan Strait passage to come and go from as he wished and cut off military aid from the Yakans of Basilan Island; and three, it would take the Sulu Sea passage away from Sultan Matingka and his allies from Jolo and Borneo (Enriquez, 2006, 245).

According to the novel's narrator, after the construction of the fortress was completed, it had no equal in the Far East. Commanding us to listen, the narrator gives us a brief lecture on geography:

> Listen.
>
> Because from the thumb-like tip of the peninsula, southernmost, the coastline, which extended on opposite ends, took a sharp curve going that direction; the southeast coastline also did the same so that they both met at this point where the coast makes the sharpest, narrowest arch. So waters from both the Sulu Sea and the Moro Gulf rushed madly into that most angular point and roared like thunder against it (Enriquez 2006, 49).

This was what met any assault by sea. Behind the fort extended the great mangrove swamp. No army could march through it. The community that grew within the fort's environs, protected by its guns, was, according to the loquacious narrator, "a creation of the fort… an admixture of the tribal genetic lines of Lutao, Subanon, Chinese, Visayan, and Pampangueño—you name the tribe and they have his blood in their veins—the Samboangans, indeed, were a miscegenated brew" (Enriquez 2006 48-49).

Here we see emerging a third narrative level: the making of the Zamboanga community. All while the war against the Sultanates is being fought, Samboangan is coming to birth as a community. In both history and its fictional version by Enriquez, this community is the offspring of inadvertence. But when the smoke clears, it makes its indubitable presence felt. But even an unplanned being needs—and deserves—its own song, and so the narrator (this time, with Governor Torres for his mouthpiece) declaims:

> …a new tribe of people, different from his own closest kin, a miscegenated brew, shall rise from…a corner piece of Spain. The Samboangan will be raised with privileges, like no taxes or forced labor so long as he serves us in our army. He will be raised different and above the others, with our culture and traditions imbedded in him. This new breed of mixed tribes, ay. Listen to me…for this will come true! (Enriquez 2006 66)

This bit of oratory is fiction, surely, and yet there is grain of truth in it, for evidence of which is the community that has grown to its presents dimensions. The story of Zamboanga in the novel is a compendium of history, fiction, and as we have seen, folklore. The story of the evolution of Chabacano is an underplot, and makes its presence felt now and again, by small indications and tokens until it manifests itself in a more "sophisticated" (because written) form: the diary of a former Lutao pirate Don Pedro (mispronounced as "Drupe" by his fellow Lutaos) Libot. A portion of this diary which lists the composition of the Samboangan expeditionary force against Matingka is quoted (but translated into English) directly from the diary which is written in Chabacano. Below is this list:

> Land forces exactly 13,320 men, of them 3,800 were Samboangan Voluntarios; 3,700 Visayans and Pintados …1,500 from the North Region (Luzon), over 750 corsairs of Datu Ugbo; and 250 newly recruited Lutaos and Subanons from the Samboangan peninsula; regular Lutao and Subanon soldiers, 2,400; and Spanish marines, sailors, musketeers, 920. Some 2,500 reinforcements…sailors would remain on board the twenty warships and hundreds of native vessels, with shallow or deep bottoms—salisipans, praus, garays and outrigger sailing

canoes (Enriquez 223).

Originally from Tandapit (acronym for Dapitan), Libot, now addressed as “Don” in Samboangan, aside from his writing skills (his penmanship is elegant) is also a builder (likely a mason) who has been assigned by the authorities to supervise the construction of the roads and bridges in New Samboangan. It is for this reason that he does not join the forces of which he made a list (Enriquez 224). This portion of the novel is probably the most explicit, and perhaps the highest point in the subplot on language development that underlies the third narrative plane—the political—on the development of the community.

I believe it is necessary to include a fourth: the folkloric, or folk-epic, magical mythical plane. It would also be best for us to think of these parallel narratives as flowing together, and even joining or interspersing at certain points.

But why should such a fourth strand of narrative be so significant? Of course it would be nearly impossible to plot out the course of phenomena that are by their “very nature” characterized by elusiveness, and even caprice. Some magical episodes come and go, like Jainal the Pirate’s and Epfel the Elder’s combat of amulets. But we must never downplay such episodes of magic (and there are a few notable ones) because cumulatively, their contribution to plot and atmosphere possibly helps in creating the effect of myth.

Of what we termed the realistic plane of narrative earlier, we had made the observation that plot in this novel is not driven merely by realistic depiction or historical fact but also by the mysterious element of fate, effected by a mode of black magic (a curse followed by the act of hurling pebbles) that causes serious injury on Torres’ favorite nephew and the death of his favorite cousin. If the agonist is placed on the tragic stage, this is Greek, too, even if Aristotle would disqualify it. And Torres is in the realm of folklore, as well, just as much as the folk-heroTongab Tabunaway the Handsome, Jainal the Armpit and Achilles the Heel.

A black-magic spell cast by the furious bishop imbeds itself in the realistic plane of narrative and in a sense determines the fate of the two relatives the governor is fondest of, causes him grief and casts a dark pall

over his military success, and even sends him to prison. Only an act of royal pardon saves him from a truly miserable fate—but this is a deus ex machina, in the modern sense of it. But clearly we are still with the Greeks—whether we are invoking rules or following the example of Greek playwrights who are accused of violating such rules. Aristotle, the founder of logic, insisted on the plausible and logical, and his influence on literature has been great. But Euripides is going on strong, too, and the Medea that Aristotle made such a negative example of still plays the stages. And cinema, that upstart, could help make Medea fly out of danger anytime it wants to. But Aristotle wanted fantasy out, though he seemed to demand only logical consistency, or what theorists have called "organic form":

> Clearly, the explication of a story should issue from the story itself, and not from a deus ex machina as in the Medea. A deus ex machina may be used for events outside the play—for past events beyond human ken, or subsequent events that can only be described in prophecy—since we believe the gods are all-seeing. But there should not be anything implausible in the events themselves; or if there is, it should be outside the play, as with Sophocles' Oedipus. (Aristotle 35)

There is, in any case, in Aristotle an aversion to the "irrational," and a preference for the empirical or realistic that has proven so influential in literature and criticism. When Aristotle writes about "what should be outside the play," he clearly refers to the Sphinx episode in the mythical tale, where by giving the correct answer, "Man", Oedipus causes the monster that blocks the Theban gates to self-immolate. Typical of myth, this tale includes magical acts and spells. Though apparently rational, the "correct answer" to the riddle, "Man", is also a magic word, a spell, and ushers us instantaneously into the world of folklore, if we weren't in it already. The Homeric world, too, based as it is on folk myth and legend, swarms with dei ex machinae, gods and goddesses flitting about to save their favorite Greeks or Trojans from certain death. Aristotle lived in a world when the folk imagination was the subject of Classic drama. Much as he tried, keeping the "irrational" out was difficult. What was even more difficult to keep out was that belief essential to Greek thought then, the belief in Fate. The notion of fate runs through all the Greek plays and epics. It is a core belief; to take it out as Aristotle suggests, on the ground that it is "irrational," would be to relegate Greek literature to the dustbin.

The latter end of the previous century has seen the waning of the realistic hegemony in literature. Magic-realism, such as that exemplified by Gabriel Garcia Marquez or Salman Rushdie, has become the favorite of critics and reviewers. And on our own national front, this phenomenon was not too unfamiliar. Long before magic realism became a fad, there was Connie Escobar, a Filipina, who had two navels.

In Samboangan , the bishop's black-magic spell, followed by the act of throwing pebbles, activates Fate, and sets the fortunes of the governor on a downward trajectory. Folk lore, here, as in Sophocles and Homer, has invaded and imbedded itself to become one with the realistic narrative thread. Magic and Fate become essential to the "realistic" strand of narrative. They are not mere tokens from the folk. Surely, this plane of narrative, elusive or ephemeral as it may seem, is a narrative in its own right, the fourth, as of last count.

Enriquez is certainly no token magic-realist in Samboangan. In the very first few pages of the novel, incredibly gigantic creatures emerged from the bay just off the coast of Samboangan:

Everyone at starboard was now looking, including the ship's captain and the Dominican friar, and there chinga su nana indeed were the giant green turtles, perhaps over a dozen of the primordial creatures, while the sea behind them broke and swelled. So big were they that the smallest among them could carry two men on their backs (Enriquez 3).

Then just a few moments later, a school of gargantuan swordfish soar into the air from underwater, creating a deafening roar: "From time to time the monstrous swordfishes oscillated above the waters…and gyrated like wee submarines" (Enriquez 5).

Incredible, indeed, and so right from the beginning (with Capt. Torres and Fray Salvador watching from on board) the author declares an open season for fantasy. It surely announces welcome to any visitor from the folk, from mythical tale to epic. Earlier, we have the parallel between Jainal and Achilles, their invulnerability, their having each a single weak spot, and their death from a wound sustained in that weak spot. Of course there may seem to be a major dissimilarity: Jainal is historical—but mythified by the folk. We have no way of knowing the origins of Achilles. However,

the Homeric character could very well have developed from a historical personage, just as the story of the Iliad developed from a historical Trojan war.

Whether such symmetries of character or plot are the result of cross-cultural exchange or borrowing is a scholar's puzzle. Nevertheless, such similarities are not rare at all, suggesting a common source. The epic as form, in a basic sense, is widely shared, transcending geography and ethnicity, without benefit of global communication. Homer never conferred with Pedro Bukaneg, and yet both tell us of a hero who battles powerful beings, and who, ultimately faces the serious subject of human mortality. Both inheritors of the oral tradition, they are not the sole authors, if they were, at all. Perhaps they were merely the last in the long line of chanters or rhapsodists before the epics were put into writing (Ong 17-19). The world of oral tradition is larger than the epic, which derives its narratives from the entire corpus coming from forms of folklore such as legends and mythical tales. The Iliad, for example, does not depict Achilles' death, which is found only in the body of Greek myth, and which includes tales not found in the epics, such as the story of Oedipus.

Jainal the Pirate, Epfel the Elder, Santiago "Tongab" the Handsome, Soriada the Witch and Virtual Sultana are historical figures that have gained a mythical stature, apparently, among the folk of the Zamboanga. The sources for such historical personalities with mythical accretions are not given in the novel. Nonetheless, they are bodily taken into the narrative, with their more magical feats given "proof" by allusions to folk belief prefaced by the narrator with a phrase such as "so the folks say" or "it is believed that…." History and myth are incorporated in the fiction.

At the battle of Punta Pana (Span. Punta Flecha), it is not only Jainal who is protected by his anting-anting. The Subanon Epfel the Elder Tabunaway, who slays him, has his own amulet that makes him invisible. Epfel the Elder is the captain of the native Samboangan forces. He earlier learns about Jainal's vulnerable spot from his mother, Sigbe the Most Beautiful, the deposed True Sultana of Lobon's Sultan Hashim. Sigbe the Most Beautiful and her two sons by Hashim, Epfel and Tongab are now permanent residents of Samboangan under Spanish protection. These figures of history and legend have allied themselves

with the Samboangans against Hashim , the fictional counterpart of the historical Sultan Saliganya Bungsu of Jolo (Enriquez ix). But it is not just the natives of the peninsula who are apt to be mythicized. Even the governor's favorite nephew Don Pedro Torres, before he is seriously wounded in the siege of Lobon, has his own mythifying moment when he seems to have become magically invulnerable: "And before the astonished eyes of both the Moros and his own cavalrymen, Don Pedro Torres remained unscathed, unharmed, without a spear or a bullet through his heart…" (Enriquez 395).

The younger brother of Epfel, Santiago Tabunaway, also called Tongab the Handsome enters the novel (320) already a full-blown figure of folk elaboration, recalling such picaresque sex symbols as Bantugan of the Darangen or Fielding's Tom Jones. After the siege of Lobon where he plays a heroic part,

…a myth grew around Subano Santiago Tongab the Handsomest. All over the peninsula, not just in Samboangan, Lobon, or Gornlic, but in the entire region, the storytellers told and the chanters sang of how brave and strong he was, indeed a master swordsman; how he was saved from ambush and certain death by another ambush. Truly, no Datu had achieved the distinction of being so lucky and charmed. Not even in the royal houses of Sultans Hashim and Matingka (320).

In the third Chapter of the fourth section of the novel, it is Tongab's infant son who takes his turn on the mythical stage:

In the shawl-hammock, the baby began to cry, such a wail from his tiny throat you'd think the child was a full-grown boy. Was it not just as if the child was saying to the father: Listen to Mama and quit the boasting and overconfidence!

Old and young folk in the community loved to tell this story: that when this baby came to this world, to the New Samboangan, ho, o, so loudly the new-born had wailed the Subanon and Lutao settlers heard, as it were, two dozens of newborns instead of one mere child. And not just that; while being baptized in the chapel of the fort, such a wail again rose from his tiny throat that his godfather Sergeant Major Claro Contreras of the artillery unit joked: "With your pardon, Father Cochea, but we'll all become deaf if you don't speed a little the baptism." (216).

Such a Christian child prodigy is surely made in the mold of our very own Santo Niño. In Philippine epics (a few still being chanted by our local rhapsodists), the hero as infant prodigy with supernatural powers is a common motif. To realize that this figure is cross-cultural and global—indeed, an archetype—one only has to recall the figure of the child Jesus disputing with the high priests matters of doctrine. Lam-ang gave the loudest birth yell, and could walk and talk right after birth (Guillermo 51). The Subanon epic hero Sandayo learned to walk in just a few weeks, and forthwith asked for his battle sword (Guillermo 73-74).

Of course, the line of narrative that the characters from the oral tradition take in the novel is still that of the historical struggle against the power of the Sultanates. But history has merged with the mythical--we can hardly draw a definite line between the two, what with the author's penchant for suddenly springing on us fantastic episodes full of mud-people or carnivorous mosquitoes. History and folklore have been incorporated in the fiction. In the campaign against Sultan Matingka (the fictional Kudarat), the Samboangan forces, to catch Matingka's forces, come from behind the lines. But to do this, they have to take a long trek through swamps full of crocodiles, and a kleptomaniac tribe that lives in the mud and emerge to spirit away anything they can lay their hands on. We know from the author himself that this episode has no historical basis (Enriquez ix). Fiction here has itself taken on the fantastical character of myth with the aim of merging with it.

Of course, not everyone in history is appropriated and aggrandized by folklore. A day before the battle of Lobon, anxious to ensure that her eldest son lives on to succeed Sultan Hashim on the throne, Soriada the Witch sends the young man—a weakling—to a secret refuge in the island of Siasi:

> Soriada's eldest son, whom storytellers fail to mention, and who remained an indescribable and uncelebrated datu…She had urged the Sultan to send her eldest son away. Her eldest son was too soft and weak; unlike his staunch warrior sons by the Princess Sigbe (276).

History does make mention of even this nondescript Datu, but not myth. He has slipped through the dragnet of myth because he is small fry, myth takes in only those larger than life—and often further magnifies them.

By taking in the figures of oral tradition, and by taking on, now and again, a fantastical shape that resembles mythical tales (thereby transforming history into myth) the fiction of Samboangan becomes a simulacrum of myth that uses history for anchorage, for "proof"—of the fictional kind, of course. It would be good to remind ourselves, too, at this juncture, that political realities are also a product of the imagination.

By such means as mentioned above, one of the main aims of the novel's narrative is achieved: establishing the notion of a common history, arguably glorious, even epical, and thus imbuing a sense of destiny. As for its contribution to the "national cause," the story can serve as a positive example showing the feasibility of unifying multi-ethnic, multi-racial societies with conflicting systems of belief. But we are not speaking of the novel's theme, yet (which transcends all parochialisms), of the evil composite of greed, hatred and ignorance that leads to that hell on earth we call war:

> Both protagonists faced each other like a pair of wild carabaos in the savannah: they pawed the black earth and screwed their heads, ancient black horns upturned, tails stretched out straight as a rod. Flinging themselves at each other and, with all their muscles and tons of sinewy and rippling flesh, the Christians and Moros crashed head-on, mercilessly, more savage than the antediluvian creatures of the marshland and the mangrove swamp…these humans turned to savagery and rapaciousness, flung steel, metal, projectiles and mortars, pinioned and quartered each other with ancient barbaric weapons…spears and swords and axes…so great was the savagery of the forces of two civilizations, nurtured and suckled by Islam and Christian bigotry and arrogance (189-90).

Samboangan is still a cautionary tale, for only virtue and mutual respect can bring peace, and only peace can make a community endure. The narrator's voice can barely contain its moral outrage—he seems ready to go to war against war. Even more significantly—and quite characteristic of him—he confronts the reader with his view of the issues involved. Often he directly addresses the reader. This type of narrator is not quite in the mode acceptable in modern and contemporary fiction. Indeed, it is unusual even in Enriquez' other works of fiction. Samboangan's narrator

makes his presence felt—he is a presence.

This type of narrator is generally frowned upon by critics as intrusive, but this used to be in fashion during the time when novels began to develop as a genre, as in the novels of Miguel de Cervantes and Henry Fielding (Scholes 265-67). Scholes and Kellog in The Nature of Narrative coin a term derived from antiquity for this type of narrator. They call it the histor:

> The histor is the narrator as inquirer, constructing a narrative on the basis of such evidence as he has been able to accumulate. The histor is not a character in narrative, but he is not exactly the author himself, either. He is a persona, a projection of the author's empirical virtues. Since Herodotus and Thucydides, the histor has been concerned to establish himself with the reader… as a man of authority, who is entitled [not only] to present the facts as he has established them, but to comment on them, to draw parallels, to moralize, to generalize, to tell the reader what to think and even to suggest what he should do…the narrator as histor is a primary narrative ingredient of such novels such as Tom Jones, The Red and the Black, Vanity Fair, War and Peace, and Nostromo (266).

One with even a passing acquaintance with Samboangan would know how intrusive the novel's narrator can be. He is probably all that a histor can be—and more. He is sometimes even boisterously obscene. If anything, he is even far more intrusive than any type of narrator—and doesn't care if you think so. If sometimes he does play coy, it's when he allows unedited folk belief to slip into the narrative. On such instances he holds back rational judgment, deferring to "what folks say." Notice, for instance the historically based account of what happened to the severed head of Jainal the Pirate: "And the rest of the week, folks said, slowly, slowly, the carnivorous birds of the marshland nitpicked piece by piece, morsel by morsel, the rotting head of Jainal the Pirate" (79).

Often as not, such allusions to folk-history or folk-belief are preceded by phrases such as "folks said" or "they said." Of Epfel the Elder's amulet, the narrator is not coy at all, asserting the authenticity of the folk belief:

Though a Christian already, he had an anting-anting tied around his

waist still. Maybe it also protected him in a different way than Pirate Jainal, for was he not invisible until he was close enough to throw his long-handled axe, ha? There were many things in the old days you couldn't explain. But what does one lose if he believed, sabes tu what I'm saying.

Even Governor Torres, who is in the main realistically rendered is not left alone by the folks with their penchant for imaginative elaboration:

Folks said how Governor Torres' voice boomed: through the cavern of his mouth spurted words like missiles from a fort's cannon. Again and again the dome reverberated; the window panels shook as if they were about to break, and the stone walls chinga echoed sonorously (45).

Here you, the "dear reader" of yore are again directly addressed. And not only that, he gives you a clue to his identity, and the type of persona he plays. He utters a word in Chabacano that, translated into English, would be easily the most popular four-letter word in that language. In Chabacano, the word is longer by just two letters: chinga. People have observed with amusement not unmixed with distaste, that a Chabacano cannot speak at any appreciable length without uttering this favorite word—and nearly as an exclamation point—especially when animatedly and excitedly relating an incident.

A Zamboangueño narrator with Chabacano for his mother tongue and English as his second (and literary) language is what we have here for narrator. Clearly the author has orality in mind—we have an oral narrator as essential ingredient of the written corpus. But we're getting ahead of our story.

In the main, the narrator fits the bill as histor. As the chronicler of Zamboanga, he is eminently qualified. "He" is a member of the community, imagined and actualized. Like any licensed histor, of course, he is a know-it-all, and flits from oral lore to written annals (though as he does he always sounds as though he were talking, not to a reader but a listener.) The list of troops that we quoted in full above (from the author's English translation of the Chabacano text) is the result of the histor exercising his right to omniscience. But there's a note of contempt in his voice when he dismissively calls the diary entry as a "grocery list": "On the pamphlet, or diary, Don Libot jotted the details like a grocery list" (224). The narrator is impatient with the lack of eloquence in the written word; he would perhaps rather have it sung, as the list of ships and warriors in the Iliad (Homer 57-

67) was once sung by the rhapsodists!

The narrator of Samboangan is not just an oral import, he is definitely literate, even if he lives in two worlds and shuttles between them. Take as an instance the description of Jainal's pirate ship making for the galleon to ram it. No one who hasn't read Melville's Moby Dick could have written it:

Incessant cannonade sent wooden splinters off the shell of the pirate's two-tiered garay, and yet rayo the vessel continued charging toward the Spanish flagship like a big whale which had gone loco with the wounds [from] many arrows and barbed projectiles, not a few sticking out from its bleeding body (71).

Here we have Captain Torres-Corcuera-Ahab and his motley crew being attacked by the mysterious Other. And the narrator has read Homer, too; the comparison between whale and ship looks to us too much like a Homeric simile. A know-it-all, truly, is this latter-day histor (or is it chanter?). Well, he has his supporters, who even cite precedents:

> It is his business to be present whenever and wherever he wants to be, and to guide the reader's response to the events narrated. The histor has an ancient and natural affinity with his narrative predecessor, the inspired bard of the Homeric epic. Because of the license afforded the bard was omniscient and could recount Hector's private thoughts before going into battle or private conversations between Helen and Paris (Scholes, Phelan, Kellog 266).

According to Scholes and other scholars of narrative, the early historians who came after Homer, such as Herodotus and Thucydides had for their esthetic model the form of the Greek epic, even as they took care to make their narratives adhere to facts. But when the historic style evolved towards greater objectivity,

> …they had to part with the bardic privilege of omniscience. The novelists were quick to occupy the vacated narrative territory… Henry Fielding in both Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones made it particularly plain that his narrator was modeling his authority on that of the epic bard and that of the histor. This combination was of great importance for the history of the novel as a form.

> Fielding was not doing in these novels much more than Cervantes had in Don Quijote, in conflating a fictional and an empirical form of narration, but his theoretical justifications of his practice have become major documents in the critical literature dealing with the novel (266-67).

For these scholars of narrative, both historical writing and the romance narrative evolved from the epic form, and not only from the highly sophisticated epics of Homer but also from the "primitive" epics such as Gilgamesh (the earliest Western epic) or Beowulf: "In these three works (which represent three sequential stages of the evolutionary process though they were not composed in chronological sequence) we can trace a major development in narrative plotting" (208).

We can conclude from these observations that the novel is, indeed, a hybrid form conflated from both epic and historical writing, from fact and from the authorial imagination. It is the author's breadth of knowledge, as well as depth of understanding, that determines the range and richness of his work. But the predecessors include the "primitive" epic, too, which we must emend in the interest of cultural fairness to read "folk" or "oral" epic. Too, we must include in our observations the findings in the field of oral art forms that most definitely lead to the conclusion that the Greek epics were an oral product, and put into writing only when general literacy had been achieved (Ong 58). Milman Parry's discoveries of formulaic patterns, of narratives within the narrative (e.g., the ring pattern, the council, the gathering of the army, the challenge) of phrasal repetitions (repeated epithets such as "Hector tamer of horses" or "Agamemnon scion of Atreus") and of the metrical pattern of verse itself (e.g., the hexameter line of verse) led him to conclude that these patterns together formed an intricate system of mnemonics essential to an oral culture (Ong 23). These patterns which he discovered in "Homeric" verse, were conclusive linguistic proof that the Greeks epics were an oral product (Ong 20-25). The oral epic poet had to have a way to facilitate recall, and it showed, even in the printed version of what was originally sung by a gifted rhapsodist.

We must bear in mind therefore, that Homer's epics are a product, too, of the folk mind and imagination. Accordingly, we must be ready to learn from him as from the chanters of Sandayo or Agyu. Of course, that we

can, and that writers can learn from myth is a proven thing, although not always remembered, perhaps due to our preference for realistic literature. For poetry we shall select examples from two of the world's greatest poets: Yeats who wrote Leda and the Swan, and Rilke who wrote the Sonnets to Orpheus. For fiction, one example is sufficient: James Joyce's Ulysses. Obviously, these poets and this poet in prose knew what they were doing in returning, each in his own fashion, to folklore. But since our subject is the novel, let us limit our observations to the novelist among them. We shall limit such observations further to the certainty that great profit to the novel can be gained from lessons learned from the epic form. Theme-wise (that of the human quest for meaning), that is a given. On form we are told that Leopold Bloom's day-in-his-life in Dublin has the entire story of Odysseus for a parallel, and that they are made to intricately correspond (Wilson 191-224). That is certainly a marvelous way of gaining profit from the ancient form, for what he has achieved surpasses Homer: in a sense, he has written a figure of comparison longer than any Homeric simile, perhaps the longest ever made in the history of literary forms!

But there is one feature of the oral epic that he has left out of the novel, and that is the narrator. Of course Joyce employs many narrators, as Edmund Wilson has observed: "But Joyce has undertaken in "Ulysses" not merely to render…the actual sights and sounds among which his people move, but, showing us the world as his characters perceive it, to find the unique vocabulary and rhythm which will represent the thoughts of each" (203). The stream of consciousness technique requires nearly as many narrators as there are characters. But none of these is the chanter of old, the one who would tell you the story live, just as the Greek rhapsodist of the Homeric age would have. Epics in their written form on a page are deceptive. There is no narrator. He or she has been left out of the written document—and even if the name of the chanter is indicated on the page, he or she has lost his voice. And this voice of the rhapsodist is what the written word cannot completely replicate. Enriquez, by employing an in-your-face, boisterous narrator, has smuggled back in the epic chanter from exile. Sabes tu?

In the Subanon communities of the Zamboanga Peninsula, the epic of the folk-hero Sandayo is still being sung, and by a living, breathing chanter with no written script for a guide. He or she sings from memory—

the memory of the tribe. It was in such far-flung communities that the author of Samboangan, and his wife, Joy, a musicologist, ventured into in their prime and for most of the years after. They both did research, and developed strong ties with Subanon families (Enriquez Interview). Tony's novel Subanons won the second of his two Palanca grand prizes for the novel. It chronicles the tragic plight of the Subanon community under martial law.

But there were chanters in the communities he visited--none in the novels he had read or written. He surely wanted the human voice of the narrator to ring aloud in the novel. So the very first word he uses to introduce the naval battle of Punta Pana, standing alone at the topmost part of the page, unaccompanied by any punctuation and printed in capital letters is one single, solitary word: LISTEN. This will not be the only time he will use the word to call your attention. The epic narrator, incorporated into the text, accosts you—and not as a "dear reader" but as a LISTENER. In fact, even in the author's note prefacing the novel, Enriquez still tells us to "Listen." It must have been truly hard for him to get out of character.

Perusing his work now, it seems clear to me that he rued the loss of some elements of epic in the popular written forms such as the novel (which as we have seen, derives from the epic). We have seen how he incorporates from the folk, and even takes advantage of certain folk privileges, as that of exaggeration and elaboration. Clearly, too, he has taken some tips of myth-making from Melville, and even more heavily, from Homer. From Homer and from the folk he derived the mode of stylization by the use of epithets: Tongab the Handsome, Sigbe the Most Beautiful Subana Princess, Soriada the Witch, Jackfruit-Head Iklali, etc. He surely realized its mnemonic advantage (i.e., the fact that the Ivan most remembered is not just any Ivan but Ivan the Terrible himself). He also surely knew the advantage of the poetic phrase—and their mnemonic nature as "visual aids." So, despite the fact that his reputation is based not on poetry but fiction, he has strategically placed similes in many places in the novel. When you invade epic country—as Joyce knew only too well—you have to become a poet.

A scholar of the Greek epics has acutely pointed out the function of the lengthy simile called Homeric:

At the simplest level the simile marks its context as worthy of special

attention. Whenever Homer wants to say something important, he slows down the pace of the narrative…slowing down is its major tool of emphasis… the similes arrest the reader's attention and by their mere presence can make him recognize a momentous point in the narrative (Mueller 109).

Enriquez' similes are never so long as Homer's, but they perform a similar function. We have seen, for instance, how even an incident that in actuality would happen fast (Jainal the Pirate's ship attacking the Spanish flagship like an injured Moby Dick) leads us to a state of complex thought involving not just Melville but the destiny of civilization led by the West threatened by the wild, inscrutable Other. We have already cited other similes earlier, the longest of which, foregrounding the bestiality of war (and as well the novel's theme: war as a cult) likens the Moro and Christian forces to two dueling carabaos. After Lobon town is put to the torch and twilight deepens into evening, night is likened to a serpentine "great angry beast [that] flicked its tongue at the last flickering blinks, and with pronged tongue tip abruptly whipped them into its dark gullet" (190).

A few of the similes are descriptive of character, and underscore their significant traits. On page forty-four of the novel, the sycophantic friars "incredibly wore a child's devilish face: si,si, the sort of face a seven-year-old child wears when stealing another child's favorite toy." Sultan Matingka's flight(186)—dressed as a woman--from the victorious Samboangan forces reveals the kind of relationship he maintains—they are as subservient as he is selfish—with his own community: "As the Sultan dashed through the human mass, everyone melted or swayed like jelly to show him a path; synchronizing with his movements, from left to right, in an eerie, macabre dance." With mocking irony, the narrator comments, "Here he would show them…that the Sultan of Gornlic was fearless and a great warrior!"

Most of the similes are curt, even "vulgar", as fine folks would say, (148): "The striking force no longer held their fire, as a man who held himself up from pissing suddenly no longer can help himself and empties his bladder in one great stream." On the very next page we find: "The massive fire pouring upon the advancing Christian troops created a phalanx of volleys, a wall of death that halted the Christian troops fast, as a stray dog is stopped when he bumps blindly against a concrete wall." Here, fine writing culminates in a homely bathetic simile (but quite acceptable to the folk!). The narrator

makes it a point to show us that despite occasional bookishness (which is part of his persona as knowledgeable histor) psychologically, he cannot leave behind the folk milieu that lends the narrative its aura of myth. Oral cultures of peoples that have survived the onslaught of literacy can be said to possess an authenticity that we have lost when we learned to read and write, as Walter Ong enunciates with authority:

> Because in its physical constitution as sound, the spoken word proceeds from the human interior and manifests human beings to one another as conscious interiors, as persons, the spoken word forms human beings into close-knit groups. When a speaker is addressing an audience, the members of the audience normally become a unity, with themselves and with the speaker (Ong 74).

Of course, the narrator of Samboangan, imported from the folk-form of epic is foul-mouthed, rambunctious, and fond of raillery, but this is because he wants to connect with his fellow Zamboangueños, including those in the lower classes. Like Joyce who wanted to show Dublin, warts and all, to his readers, Enriquez aims to create rapport, in the way he thinks best in the relatively cold precincts of the novel—a written form of narrative. But he is not alone—among writers--in his nostalgia for the lost orality. Rade Petrovic, Montenegro's greatest poet, who in 1830 became prince-bishop of Montenegro, is only one of the Balkan poets who incorporated oral forms into their written epics, in a region of the world where as discussed by the classical scholar Albert Lord (19-64), oral epics are still sung and continue to influence written literature with their vitality. The acknowledged authority on orality, Walter J Ong also points out a similar phenomenon occurring among contemporary novelists who live surrounded by a living oral tradition:

> …fictional works such as Chinua Achebe's novel No Longer at Ease (1961), which draws directly on Ibo oral tradition in West Africa…provide abundant instances of thought patterns of orally educated characters who move in these oral, mnemonically tooled grooves, as the speakers reflect, with high intelligence and sophistication, on the situations they find themselves involved (35).

No doubt, the modern and contemporary writers of the third world, working as they do in cultural contexts much of which are still oral and mythical, must, to be true to their experience and their art, reflect their society and learn from it. Magic-realism, when used to exoticise becomes a mere, perhaps even touristic token--from that world. Myth is essential to any vibrant literature. The work of Carl Jung and Northrop Frye should convince us—if, unfortunately—they haven't done so yet. The modern literature of Ireland—we should remind ourselves—would never have been so great were it not for the Irish and Greek mythology that inspired and guided Yeats and Joyce. (In truth, the Irish are our fellows in their affinity with the realm of the folk.) Like Enriquez, we are in good—if tough—company.

It seems then that the roads we have taken with Antonio Enriquez all lead us back to the folk. They become a guide to our search for our roots and for our identity. The novel has become our source of legend and myth. Zamboanga, we begin to realize, was a community formed by and from many streams of ethnic, racial, and cultural identity, a microcosm of the nation as a whole, a nation even more plural, that slowly evolved and emerged into modern history as the first democracy in Asia, an authentic community because fervently desired by a creative, communal imagination. If only there were an end to the cult of war!

All narrative, as Aristotle sagely and simply puts it, has a beginning, middle, and end. Lest we underestimate the profundity of this observation, we only have to remind ourselves of the marvelous capacity of narrative to structure experience, real or imagined. This is its most basic function, as a mode of apprehension. But its corollary function, thereby, is also mnemonic, for what can be remembered must first be apprehended. By its very narrative structure, therefore, the novel is a record, and by its very nature mnemonic, despite its other obvious limitations such as the absence of the human voice, or of a live audience.

In *Samboangan, The Cult of War*, four threads or streams of narrative—historical, realistic-fictional, mythical, and political have merged into one body of fiction that emerges as a contemporary myth, the creation of a memory for the political imagination. By incorporating folklore and oral

forms, including, most significantly, a quasi-oral narrator, the novel has recouped certain advantages germane to pre-literate orality and given it form and permanence—in our literate sense of the words.

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