

Chamorro WWII Romances: Combating Erasure with Tales of Survival and Vitality

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Abstract: This paper begins by briefly explaining Guam’s colonial history and present-day situation as a neocolonial limbo, then offers a succinct account of some of Guam’s most renowned literary authors, and finally focuses on the analysis of two WWII romances written by Chamorro writers: *Conquered* by Paula Quinene (2016) and *A Mansion on the Moon* by Cathy Sablan Gault (2015). Its aim is to study the ways in which those two novels depart from mainstream romances. Special attention will be given to the reconfiguration of the romance genre through the de-exoticization of the island setting, the historicizing and politicization of Guam, the inscription of Chamorro language and culture, and the vindication of cultural appropriation and syncretism. Ultimately, the paper argues that Chamorro popular literature can effectively serve as a form of literary activism against Spanish, Japanese and US imperialism, even if it does so in complex and contested ways. The paper also attempts to palliate the erasure that Chamorro literature has systematically endured in Academia, given that US Literary Studies rarely devote any attention to the literature produced in the US Pacific territories, while Post-colonial Studies often fail to focus on countries that are yet to be decolonized.

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1. “Representational theft”: The academic erasure of Chamorro/Chamoru literature

Current US literary studies often fail to pay attention to the literatures produced in the US Pacific territories (Guam/Guåhan, Northern Mariana Islands, Virgin Islands and American Samoa),[1] which results in an effective form of “academic erasure” of those literatures, the people who live in said territories, their culture and their strategies of resistance to US colonial policies. Lack of proper coverage of those literatures in university courses, conferences and journals has actually contributed to a “representational theft” (Santos Perez, “Thieves” 160) and to the colonial subjugation of those texts. Borrowing Lujan Bevacqua’s metaphors, one could say that, like the culture they emanate from, those texts are often seen as nothing but “footnotes to the American empire,” “[s]mall islands of text” at the “margins of national importance,” and “excesses” that do not really belong in the grand picture of US literature (120-121).

This paper aims to at least partially palliate that “representational theft” by focusing on two romance novels whose main plots develop during WWII: *Conquered* by Paula Quinene (2016) and *A Mansion on the Moon* by Cathy Sablan Gault (2015). Considering that both texts belong to the genre of romance, the most vituperated of all literary genres, and also that their writers are Chamorro, and thus marginal to the mainstream canon of US romance authors, those novels might have been, in principle, condemned to oblivion. However, I will argue that an in-depth analysis of both works is worthwhile for a variety of reasons. First, the study of those two novels shows a number of strategies that undermine common under- or misrepresentations of Chamorro culture. Areas of the supposed “demise” of the latter are, in fact, powerfully revitalized in said novels through means that include, apart from obviously political comments, other much more subtle tactics, such as the inscription of Chamorro myths, the use of indigenous English, the representation of interracial love, and the portrayal of syncretic cultural practices. Second, a careful study of those two novels illustrates an interesting evolution in the genre of the romance, which historically has been mostly written by white writers. The Pacific has often featured as an exotic setting in romantic novels by US and European authors, who have tended to offer stereotypical representations of minority ethnic groups. The two Chamorro romances studied in this paper, however, deviate from those conventional “Pacificist” (Lyons) depictions[2] and thus help reinvigorate the genre, as will be shown. Third, the two novels under consideration offer a departure from predictable representations of islands in popular literature, thus reconfiguring some of the tenets of Island Studies. Last but not least, shedding light upon Chamorro writers can help to combat the entrenched neglect that Guamanian literature has endured in academic circles, and to reinforce so-called “Archipelagic American Studies” (Santos Perez, “Transterritorial” 619), the ultimate goal being to inscribe Guam in the American literary imagination.[3]

2. Guam, “a neocolonial limbo”

The colonial history of Guam is a long and complex one. The first European to land on Guam was Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer who set foot on the island in 1521 and thought the natives were all “inveterate thieves” (Kinzer 101) after they carried away

“anything loose” and a skiff from his ship (Rogers, *Destiny's* 7). The Spanish and Portuguese crew interpreted this incident as theft, which is why Magellan christened the Marianas “Islas de los Ladrones,” or “Islands of the Thieves,” and harshly punished some of the indigenous Chamorros, who, for their part, saw it as fair trade for the fresh food and water they were giving to the Spanish (Rogers, *Destiny's* 8). For a number of years after this, no other Spaniard was interested in Guam. Then, in 1565, Spain took formal possession of the island, only to neglect it once again and to use it as simply a provisioning stop between New Spain (Mexico) and Manila in the Philippines (Hezel 116). In 1668, Jesuit Diego Luis de Sanvitores was officially sent to the island to start a missionary enterprise. He was accompanied by a small group of Jesuits, some Filipino lay helpers and a small garrison (Hezel 117). The Spanish colonizing mission was not a peaceful one. Sanvitores’s arrival was followed by years of hostility and bloodshed known as the Spanish-Chamorro Wars (1668-1695). In 1695, when the last native opposition to Spanish rule was crushed, Spanish missionaries’ work proceeded “unimpeded in baptizing and instructing the remainder of the population” (Hezel 131), drastically reduced after battlefield losses and epidemics (Kinzer).

The Spanish rule came to an end in 1898 with the Spanish-American War. Guam was peacefully taken by the US in 24 hours, as the Spanish garrison on the island was very poorly defended. President McKinley decreed that the island would be considered “a naval station, ruled by an officer with absolute power” (Kinzer 102). Thus Guam became a “highly valuable strategic base” that Americans have used to protect commercial and military power across the Pacific and East Asia (Kinzer 100). In the years before WWII, Guam was ruled by a succession of navy officers who banned gambling, cockfighting, interracial marriage, male nudity and even the ringing of church bells, which some found a nuisance (Kinzer 103). From the very beginning, Guamanians started to demand that they be given citizenship rights, but a 1901 Supreme Court decision known as “Insular cases” or *Downes v. Bidwell* rejected a petition to give political rights to people in Guam and Puerto Rico on the basis that those “possessions are inhabited by alien races” and that the administration of government and justice according to Anglo-Saxon principles “may for a time be impossible” (Kinzer 103). This Supreme Court ruling was in accordance with the Navy’s assessment of Chamorro people, recurrently described in the reports of the US Navy and of the island’s governors as “disease-infested,” “isolated,” “haunted by superstition,” “listless, ambitionless, unorganized,” as well as “poor,” “ignorant,” “in dire need of rescue,” and “dirty,” though “gentle and very religious” (Perez Hattori, “Navy” 13-17). All these stereotypes served several purposes. For one, the Navy could present itself as a benevolent entity that primarily acted on behalf of Chamorros, not of the US militaristic purposes. Denying the natives all political rights was not to be seen as an undemocratic practice, but rather as the direct consequence of Chamorros’ backwardness and underdevelopment.[4] “Benevolent assimilation,” in the words of President McKinley, would be the US main goal on the island (Perez Hattori, “Navy” 15).

During WWII, Guam was seized by the Japanese from December 8, 1941 to July 21, 1944. The Japanese vision of the newly occupied area did not differ from that of its former colonizers. Guam, like the other islands of the Marianas, was limited in its resources, had been severely exploited by the US and other European powers, its cultural development was “immensely arrested,” and Chamorros were incapable of political self-determination (Higuchi 21). Under the Japanese occupation, many Chamorros were put in concentration camps and were brutally treated. When the American forces arrived in Guam on “Liberation Day” (July 21, 1944) and after several weeks of heavy bombardment managed to take the

island away from the Japanese, many Chamorros expressed sincere gratefulness to the Americans. Nonetheless, soon after the renewal of US rule, a number of factors stimulated the revival of the citizenship movement. These included the Navy's setting up of two commissions whose aim was to confiscate land "in the interest of the new Guam" (Maga 68); the governor's resettlement plans, which uprooted many Guamanians from their lands and redistributed them throughout the island; the so-called off-limits policy, which placed certain villages and farming areas under naval control; and the fact that the land expropriation policies were not necessarily followed by economic compensation. Spurred by the frustration that these policies caused, the leaders of Guam's citizenship movement started to work towards the achievement of political rights and legislative power for the Guam Congress, which was simply an advisory body since its creation in 1917 (Maga). Their efforts came to a fruitful end in 1950, when the Guam Organic Act finally conferred US citizenship on the island's residents. Besides granting American citizenship, the Organic Act declared Guam an "unincorporated territory," extended the Bill of Rights to all Guamanians, gave them territorial government, and determined the relations of the island with the federal government were to be conducted through the Department of the Interior. In the 1970s Guamanians were also allowed to elect their own governors (Maga). Today some residents see US rule as positive to the economy and the protection of the island, but others resent living in "a neocolonial limbo," as historian Robert Rogers has put it ("Guam's" 50). This condition is "quite satisfactory for U.S. national security interests, but is increasingly anachronistic," as while "the other islands of Micronesia have moved toward resolution of their final political identities," Guam remains a US "unsinkable" military base in the Pacific (Rogers, "Guam's" 50-51).

That the US has pursued a policy of imperialism in Oceania has been documented by a number of scholars. Charles J. Weeks, for instance, has demonstrated that the US has "helped to increase the level of dependence throughout the area" (124), while Brandy N. McDougall has brought attention to the mechanisms through which the US reinforces its control of the region, namely a complex balance between "strategic invisibility," which keeps the area out of the popular and the scholarly imaginary (but central in military discourse), and "narrow visibility," which allows Americans to view the Pacific only as "paradise with hospitable, happy natives" (39). Similarly, Lisa K. Hall has explained America's imperialism in Oceania as being based on four different types of "erasure": conceptual, spatial, racial and political (274-276). For twenty-first-century Chamorros, this means, among other things, denial of the right to vote in US presidential elections.

3. Telling tales of demise... and of survival and vitality

The rich multiculturalism that characterizes present-day Guam and the creolized culture that has been brought on by centuries of intercultural mixing is undeniable (Misco and Lee 416). However, so are the conflicts of identity and cultural belonging that Chamorros have experienced and continue to battle with, as well as the "cultural genocide" (Rapadas et al.) caused by centuries of colonialism. In the past, said genocide materialized in a number of ways: the death of the majority of the Chamorro population after the Spanish-Chamorro Wars, the transformation of the Chamorro language, the dismantling of the matrilineal

hierarchy system, and the introduction of Christianity (which displaced the native naturalistic religion). To all those issues that have affected Chamorros in previous times one should add present-day higher rates of health problems, suicides and family violence compared to other residents of Guam (Misco and Lee). The success of Americanization policies in the second half of the twentieth century further aggravated those circumstances. Today, only 22 percent of Guam's residents speak Chamorro; and the imposition of American education, which showed total disregard for indigenous knowledge and epistemology, has established a segregated educational system. In addition, the island's main sources of income have been reduced to two, and both are highly damaging for Guam's ecosystems: tourism and the US military. The importance of the latter cannot be sufficiently stressed. On Guam "almost everyone has a connection to the military" (Misco and Lee 430). The US military continues taking over more land, and it is estimated that some thousands of troops will be moved from the island of Okinawa (Japan) to Guam, a "military buildup" (Letman) "which will result in the Chamorro becoming only 20% of the population" and, it is feared, in the subsequent demise of the decolonization movement (Misco and Lee 429).

Prophecies of doom for the Chamorros of Guam are not new. In his article "Simply Chamorro: Telling Tales of Demise and Survival in Guam," Vicente Diaz brings into question the sense of foreboding expressed by the American folklorist Mavis Van Peenen in 1945. The wife of an American naval officer stationed on Guam right before the Japanese invasion, Van Peenen had dedicated herself to collecting Chamorro tales from the island in an attempt to halt what she saw as the impending demise of native folklore. Diaz's article intends to counteract Van Peenen's catastrophic premonitions by offering stories "not of death but of troubled life and contested identities" (Diaz 58). He does so by deconstructing each of the eight reasons Van Peenen had listed back in 1945 to prove her point that Chamorro culture was headed to its grave: the disappearance of the carabao, which the Chamorros have replaced with the pickup truck; storytelling, relegated by the movies; English, which has displaced the Chamorro language; Catholicism, which has taken over Chamorro spirituality; Chamorro girls, who increasingly marry American military men; Chamorro boys, who join the American armed forces in large numbers; finally, Chamorro youth, who settle far from Guam and gradually forget the stories of their ancestors.

To all these alleged disasters, Diaz offers a counter-story that is based on the idea that Chamorro culture should not be understood as a "neatly contained thing that was once upon a time characterized by essential qualities, pure and untainted" (31). Instead, history and culture should be viewed "as contested sites on which identities and communities are built and destroyed, rebuilt and destroyed, in highly charged ways" (Diaz 31). It is because of this that, as opposed to Van Peenen, he fails to recognize "death" in Guam, but, instead, sees "survival and vitality" (32) and states that "Chamorro history and culture are not about the tragic historical death of a collection of quaint native customs" (52). Rather than lamenting a bygone era, Diaz insists that scholars must "scrutinize the historical processes by which the natives have learned to work within and against the grain of such outsider attempts to colonize the Chamorro" and "look at the ways that the Chamorro have localized nonlocal ideas and practices" (53). Similarly, Lisa Hall has argued that scholars should endeavor to combat "erasure" of indigenous cultures by recognizing their specificity and particular circumstances and emphasizing "the need to bring the past forward into our consciousness" in an attempt to reconstruct tradition and memory, while bearing in mind that in the process of reconstruction "there is nothing simple or one-dimensional" (279).

Political organizations like Chamoru Nation, the Organization of People for Indigenous Rights, the Republic of Guåhan, Taotao Guam, I Tao Tao Tano or the Chamorro Land Trust Commission have all brought up questions of self-determination, indigenous rights, cultural maintenance, and land issues such as indigenous land rights, government land acquisition, selling of land to capitalist investors, environmental degradation, and so on (Perez). Their activism is obviously a direct way of confronting the impact of colonialism and bringing indigeneity to the forefront. More relevant to my point here, and as noted by Brandy Nālani McDougall, since the 1960s, literature has also played a vital role in the process of reconstruction. For one thing, Pacific Islander authors have often written their texts in what Samoan writer and artist Albert Wendt has called “indigenized Englishes” (McDougall 39), which should not be seen as a case of colonial assimilation, but rather of cultural revitalization. Besides, many works have thematized ways of countering colonial hegemony, the impact and legacy of colonization, the effects of tourism and of living in the diaspora, the return to ancestral knowledge, issues related to nationalism and sovereignty, or the bond with land and ocean, among others (McDougall 39-40). In so doing, Chamorro writers have clearly worked “within and against the grain of such outsider attempts to colonize” them (Diaz 53).

Tragic tales of demise and of erasure should therefore not be taken as proof that Chamorro culture is being depleted of its vitality and strength. In fact, Chamorro writers offer ample evidence that colonialism, war, even massive destruction after WWII heavy bombardment, have been faced with resilience and followed by rebuilding. The works of writers such as Craig Santos Perez, Cecilia “Lee” Perez, Michael Lujan Bevacqua, or Anne Perez Hattori, to cite only a few of those listed by McDougall, testify to the transformation of the topography and cartography of the Chamorro land and culture, and to the latter’s reinvigoration. Their highly charged political literature has contributed to the reconstruction of tradition and memory, which, as pointed out by Hall, constitute essential elements for indigenous survival. For example, Anne Perez Hattori’s poem “Thieves” refers to Magellan’s christening the Marianas “Islands of the Thieves,” but in her text, Perez Hattori argues that Westerners were the real thieves, as they stole everything from Chamorros and now accuse them of not having the appropriate degree of Chamorro-ness, of being “Over-Americanized” and “Under-Chamoricized.” Hence, her poem unmasks Western misrepresentations and strives to inscribe a counter-memory that sets the record straight.

For its part, Lujan Bevacqua’s poem “My Island Is One Big American Footnote” denounces another example of “representational theft” (Santos Perez, “Thieves” 160), one that has attempted to reduce Chamorros to “footnotes” to the American empire that “no one bothers to read or quote,” “[s]mall islands of text” that are found “[o]ff the margins,” “[c]olonial *dis-ease*” that “cannot be incorporated for insane and inconsistent reasons,” “excesses that don’t really belong in this / ‘glorious’ document of democracy and freedom” (Lujan Bevacqua 120-121; emphasis in original). In his poem, denunciations of America’s imperialistic discourse and practices are accompanied by loud demands that Chamorros be allowed to choose their status (“Leave us to determine self-fully!”), so that they can stop being a footnote to the empire and can become, instead, the main body of a text: “A text of our own!” (122).

That Perez Hattori’s and Lujan Bevacqua’s poems play a vital role in debunking Western discourses and in reinvigorating Chamorros’ culture should not obscure the fact that both writers enjoy a high status that is conferred to them thanks to a number of factors:

they both produce overtly political poems, publish them in prestigious journals and work as university professors. One might rightfully question whether or not Chamorro culture can also be successfully revitalized through the work of lesser-known writers and literary genres with little critical approval, such as the romance novel. My point is that, in fact, so-called “lowbrow” literature can enhance Chamorro culture and activism just as much as “highbrow” texts. It is therefore my intention to analyze two romance novels in order to see the extent to which they participate in the telling of tales not of demise, but of survival, resistance and rebuilding on their own terms. As will be shown, those two romances deliberately “integrate the love ethic into a vision of political decolonization” (hooks 245), thus heeding bell hooks’ warning that “[w]ithout love, our efforts to liberate ourselves and our world community from oppression and exploitation are doomed” (hooks 243). Indeed, they put sentiment and affect center stage, and fully address the place of love in Chamorro struggles for liberation in the belief that “having love as the ethical foundation for politics [...] we are best positioned to transform society in ways that enhance the collective good” (hooks 247). On top of that, the romances under analysis will prove Emily S. Davis’s claim that the romance is “an especially malleable tool for representing fluid political, sexual, and racial identities and coalitions” (2). In fact, as they harness “desires for bodies to desires for social change” (Davis 9), they are challenging their readers “to engage with tensions that *cannot* be resolved and that demand social change” (Davis 9; emphasis in original), and they demonstrate that romantic relationships, regardless of their inherent intimate and personal nature, bear the imprint of the global and the traces of a political history that is gendered and transnationally mediated.

4. Chamorro romance as literary activism

Paula Quinene was born and raised on Guam, though she currently lives in North Carolina. In her own words, she was driven to write *Conquered*, her first novel, out of homesickness for Guam, or “mahålangness” (*Conquered* 325),[5] but also to “share and preserve Guam’s history in WWII, and to give thanks to the military” (April 3, 2017, personal email), with whom her family has close ties. *Conquered* is an erotic romance which tells the story of Jesi, a 19-year-old Chamorro woman whom readers meet on July 20, 1944, at the end of the Japanese occupation of Guam. She is hiding in a cave, away from the rest of her family, who have sought refuge in other caves. Four days later, worried that neither her father nor her brother, who often visit her, have come along for some time, she ventures outside the cave and is met by a group of Japanese soldiers who try to rape her. The Americans have already landed on Guam, and one officer in particular, Johan Landon, despite being wounded, manages to rescue her from the heinous Japanese soldiers. Jesi takes him to her cave and, thanks to her knowledge of medicinal herbs, cures his wounds. Soon after this, the Americans effectively liberate the island, Johan returns to his military post and Jesi’s family reunites.

Despite his initial reluctance to lead a happy and fulfilling life, as he is still mourning the death of his first wife, Johan cannot help falling in love with Jesi, so he courts her and eventually manages to secure her family’s approval to marry her. Like many other romance male protagonists, Johan is a “sentimental hero” (Regis, *A Natural* 113) that needs to be

emotionally healed by the novel's heroine before he can successfully overcome the main barrier to their relationship, i.e. his pessimistic outlook on life. Added to that, Quinene's characters face the challenges of belonging to different races and social classes: he is a rich Anglo American; she a Chamorro young woman whose family and island are devastated after years of Japanese occupation. As the genre demands, all these obstacles are properly overcome in due time, as are the various scenes of "ritual death" (Frye 179; Regis, "Complicating"; Regis, *A Natural*) that preclude the novel's resolution. Yet, the novel finishes in a way that differs from many other romances, i.e. not with the marriage proposal or the wedding ceremony, but a few months after the marriage and with an unconventional family unit: an American officer married to a Chamorro woman and their two biracial babies.

A Mansion on the Moon, also a first novel, has a more complex storyline, as it actually recounts the lives of three generations of Chamorro women from the last days of the Spanish rule to the aftermath of WWII. Its author, Cathy Sablan Gault, is a Chamorro journalist and public affairs professional. In her words, she wanted to insert pieces of her own life into the novel, stories she had heard while growing up, and different aspects of Chamorro culture: "What's the sense of writing it if we couldn't share who we were. And that was part of the point too. I wanted to share titiyas, and Piti, and Tan Chai as we spoke it" ("Cathy Sablan Gault writes first novel"). Her romance begins in 1899 with the story of Amanda de Leon, a 16-year-old Chamorro woman with some Castilian blood. However, the novel's last and most substantial part focuses on Amanda's granddaughter, Vivian, born in 1920 to Tino, a Chamorro engineer, and a mother who dies in 1925.

In 1940, when Vivian is 20 years old, she meets 25-year-old Philip Avery, an American US civil engineer and navy officer who rents a room at Tino's house in Agaña, Guam's capital city. Philip's family is a rich one. Unencumbered by money, up until now Philip has conducted himself as a careless playboy: that is, as an "alpha male" (Regis, *A Natural* 112) who will have to be tamed by the heroine. In fact, on meeting Vivian, he is shocked at discovering a burgeoning feeling of love in his heart, and for a large part of the story he is troubled by the differences of class, education and race between Vivian and himself, as well as by the fact that he aspires to have a successful military career but is certain that marrying Vivian will ruin his prospects of success. This is one of the challenges that this couple need to overcome, but by no means the smallest of their troubles. When Philip finally decides to choose Vivian over his career, he suffers a fatal accident that leaves him in a coma for months. By the time he has fully overcome this "ritual death,"[6] he is on the mainland and the Japanese have occupied Guam, so he cannot get through to Vivian to tell her his desire to marry her. Meanwhile, Vivian and her father hide themselves from the Japanese in the jungle, but are finally caught and taken to a concentration camp where Vivian herself painfully recovers from a brutal beating she received from a Japanese soldier who had tried to rape her. After the US liberation of Guam, Philip returns to the island in search of Vivian, carrying an engagement ring he had been willing to give her since before his car accident. He finds her on one of the makeshift campsites the Americans built for the displaced Chamorros who had lost their homes during the Japanese occupation and the American bombardment, and, after securing her father's consent, asks her to marry him. She happily accepts, and both hug each other tightly in the novel's final scene, feeling that love will conquer all the problems they will surely encounter, as Philip intends to leave Guam if his military career so decrees it.

These summaries of the two romances under study prove that to some extent both follow many of the staple characteristics of the genre: the main characters meet early on in

the story and feel irresistibly and irrationally attracted to each other; soon after their encounter, they are forced to overcome one or several barriers, and just when everything seems to be looking better they are badly hit by destiny and forced to undergo a “ritual death” from which they finally emerge victorious, if scarred, and ready to embrace marriage, the genre’s compulsory happy ending. This being true, it is no less certain that these two novels also show three features that make them stand out from other insular romances: in both of them the island setting fails to appear as an exotic paradise, cultural appropriation and syncretism are crucial elements, and political denunciations of imperialism crop up even in the middle of romantic scenes. Thus, they are a perfect example of how a non-indigenous genre, the romance, can be indigenized; or, in Vicente Diaz’s words, of how their writers “have localized nonlocal ideas and practices” (53).

4.1. De-exoticizing the island setting through the historicizing of Guam

Many romances take place on real or imaginary islands because the latter present themselves as a perfect background for the novels’ main characters, who are often on-the-run, in hiding, or searching for a respite from their daily pressures (Crane and Fletcher). Besides, Island Studies scholars have shown that, in the ever-growing archipelago of romantic islands, there are several representational conventions of the island setting that writers rarely fail to ignore. Crane and Fletcher, in particular, mention all these: first, scenes of arrival in the island typically introduce the protagonist as an avatar for the reader entering the story world; second, the island presents a “sea-locked” geography, thus offering isolation and insulation as an indissoluble pair; third, the island is anthropomorphized and attributed a consciousness that can influence the mindsets and actions of characters; fourth, the novels often include a “literary map” of the island, a map which works as visual paratext that foregrounds the verisimilitude of the story and contributes to the generation of “performative geographies” (Fletcher) by inviting readers to follow the movements of the characters within the island; fifth, islands tend to allow characters to evolve from a strong sense of displacement or exile to feelings of belonging as they fall in love, find their place in the world and share the decision to make the island their home; finally, contemporary insular romances typically center on seasonal tourist islands, perfectly idealized as natural paradises that function as safe havens for the temporary resident who, in the end, will become engaged with a permanent resident.

Neither *Conquered* nor *A Mansion on the Moon* fully follow these representational conventions. There are scenes of arrival that show how the US soldiers approach Guam and are “alerted as Mount Sasalaguan came into view” (Quinene, *Conquered* 5), thus allowing non-Chamorro readers to vicariously descend upon Guam just as the US soldiers do. One might also argue that both novels anthropomorphize Guam to some extent, in so much as the island is peopled with the *taotaomona*, “spirits of the dead who continue to dwell on the island” (Soker 156). *Conquered* does indeed offer its readers a literary map of Guam that features the places the characters stay in or travel to. The heroes’ sense of displacement is certainly transformed into feelings of belonging in both novels. Johan, for his part, arrived in Guam in a very pessimistic mood, but his falling in love with Jesi eventually allows him to realize he has found his place in the world, among the Chamorros. Philip, the inveterate playboy, is in his own way an unsatisfied man, as he has no capacity to engage in meaningful sentimental relationships, but the experiences of falling in love with Vivian and progressively

learning more things about her Chamorro culture fully transform him into a sensible man who grows roots in Guamanian land.

However, both *Conquered* and *A Mansion on the Moon* refrain from representing Guam as a “sea-locked” geography. In fact, the island appears as a crossroads that, for centuries, has harbored Spanish missionaries and settlers, European whalers and merchant ships,[7] American navy men, Japanese soldiers, Filipino entrepreneurs, and Chamorros from the Northern Mariana Islands, among many other peoples. The Chamorros of Guam, though certain of their cultural identity, speak a variety of languages, have studied abroad, and are racially and culturally mixed. The fact that both novels take place at the time of WWII further contributes to the idea that Guam is not an isolated island, but a central site in the Pacific which is much coveted by the main contenders. Not being isolated, it also fails to be a safe haven, and though it is suggested that it has features of the natural paradise, there abound descriptions that point out the horrors that WWII triggered – the concentration camps, the bombarded villages, the ruinous houses, the destroyed *lanchos* (ranches), the famished Chamorros, the scattered families, and the dead – all of which highlight that Guam is not a tourist paradise. This, for once, is a historically accurate representation of the island, which did not become a tourist destination until the 1960s, but it can also be interpreted as the authors’ refusal to offer their readers an easily digestible and highly escapist setting, with hardly any history, ready for Westerners’ unquestioning and guilty-free consumption. In fact, Quinene and Sablan Gault inscribe the presence of Japanese and Euro-American colonizers and their abuses, thus portraying a war-torn and colonialism-shaped island that will need to rebuild its geographical and cultural topography for the n^{th} time. Though they justify US participation in WWII and, to a great extent, the presence of US liberating forces on the island, they nonetheless question the imperialist drive of those same forces. Indeed, as Kamblé has put it, their romances highlight the genre’s ambivalence towards the capitalist system (and the military that sustains it) by relying on two conflicting narratives: on the one hand, the belief in “America’s mission to protect democracy, freedom, human rights, and so on” (85), and, on the other, the concern that the enforcement of said mission “means using good men as cannon fodder and punishing innocents” (85). Those two contradictory impulses thus simultaneously justify US intervention in Guam while voicing deep reservations about the very same system that is being endorsed.

4.2 Reconfiguring the romance genre through cultural appropriation and syncretism

There are other ways in which these two romances stand out in the genre they belong to. For starters, both present interracial relationships that are frowned upon in the societies the novels describe and that, even today, are not all that common in mainstream romance. It is true, as Erin Young has noted, that one notable change in recent romances consists in “the gradual increase of romance featuring nonwhite protagonists and interracial relationships” (205). Among the genre’s strategies for success, Olivia Tapper has similarly identified that there exists “a new generation of convention-busting romances” that are “effectively adapting to the conditions of an era in which multiculturalism and difference are facts of everyday life for most people” (255). For their part, William A. Gleason and Eric M. Selinger have examined the ways in which “American romance has been used to resist rather than perpetuate oppression, while also [...] interrogating the specific forms and histories such liberation, through love, might take” (4). Both Gleason and Selinger put emphasis on

romances that avoid the American “hegemonic rule of desire” according to which romantic attachment can only be predicated of couples whose members belong to the same race and have different genders. Their specific interest, one may surmise, might derive from the fact that, in the twenty-first century, interracial relationships are still “not common in the romance genre” (Jagodzinski 1), even though they are “exceptional in regard to their portrayal” (Jagodzinski 1), insofar as romance novels that feature interracial relationships present the latter “as triumphs, not tragedies,” and “envision the possibility of a future that promises racial justice through romantic love” (Jagodzinski 1). This is precisely what both *Conquered* and *A Mansion on the Moon* manage to do: trouble the dominance of America’s hegemonic rule of desire by inscribing Anglo-Chamorro love as a triumph over imperialist discourses that invariably rely on notions of indigenous people’s inferiority and blatant racism. They show that the affective is “simultaneously constrained by ideology” (Davis 11) – that is, the hero’s ideology of white supremacy – “and resistant to it” (Davis 11), as seen in the heroines’ ability to show themselves worthy of their American lovers and in the latter’s reevaluation of their principles, all of which ultimately points towards alternative plots for Anglo-Chamorro relations, as well as towards new forms of subjectivity and collectivity.

Besides having interracial relationships center stage, the two romances under analysis disassociate themselves from the so-called “F and S stigma” (Cadogan 304) of mainstream romance: that is, the idea that true love can only be proved through gorgeous “fucking” and extravagant “shopping,” two aspects that have made some critics and readers envision contemporary romances as (soft) porn for women (Castleman) and promoters of capitalist fantasies (Darbyshire; Dubino; Illouz). *Conquered* does feature several highly charged sexual scenes, but *A Mansion on the Moon* can be accurately described as prudish in sexual terms. As regards consumerism, however, both radically abstain from promoting it. Jesi refuses to buy a wedding dress or shoes, but makes them herself from an old sheet and a sack, respectively (Quinene, *Conquered* 165-166); Johan, for his part, is in charge of making the wedding rings (Quinene, *Conquered* 169). In *A Mansion on the Moon*, Philip does buy a locket for Vivian, with a diamond and all, as well as an engagement ring, but, other than this, there are virtually no references to consumerism. In fact, the Chamorro characters are proud of their self-sufficiency, which they achieve thanks to their *lanchos*, the land they own and effectively use to grow vegetables and raise some animals, and also to the fact that they recycle all the things the wasteful Americans discard when they are only minimally dented or barely used (Sablan Gault, location 2360-2361).

Mainstream romances are also often characterized, like many fairy tales, by either the absence of positive maternal figures (the mother is dead) or the presence of distant, promiscuous, unstable, unreliable and incompetent mothers; one way or another, the female protagonist is led to deal with “maternal inadequacy” (Juhasz 250). According to a number of psychoanalytic studies (Radway; Juhasz), the point of all this would be to show that the novel’s heroine aspires to have a lover who cares for her and treats her in a maternal way; in other words, she would be trying to establish a connection with her sexual and sentimental partner that emulates the relationship she once had with the pre-oedipal mother. If this were the case, *A Mansion on the Moon* would then seem to fall into the general trend, as, of the three female protagonists it has, two have lost their mothers. *Conquered*, on the other hand, radically departs from this specific issue, as both Jesi and Mrs. T, her mother, maintain a loving and caring relationship throughout the novel. Not only that, but Jesi is also strongly influenced by her grandmother, Tan Chai, a medicine woman who has taught her everything

she knows about medicinal herbs, and from whom she has inherited special spiritual powers that will eventually transform her into both a *suruhãna* (medicine woman) and a *le'an* (clairvoyant). Thus, this Chamorro romance renounces the convention that presents mothers as powerless, if dead, or, when alive, ostensibly incompetent and a barrier to the heroine's development. One might see here a trace of the matrilineal system that once characterized ancient Chamorros and that Spanish colonizers tried to uproot, though, as Quinene's fictional family suggests, unsuccessfully.

At the conclusion of all mainstream romances there exists a compulsory feature, namely the HEA (Happy Ever After) ending, which necessarily implies the presence of a marriage proposal, wedding ceremony or strong commitment between the lovers as the only possible denouement to the story. *A Mansion on the Moon* finishes after Philip's marriage proposal to Vivian, but *Conquered* does not. Once the wedding ceremony is over in the latter novel, readers are allowed to see how the just-married couple deals with separation, as Johan is stationed somewhere in the Pacific and Jesi, pregnant with twins, remains on Guam; later on, readers learn about their reencounter and the further challenges they need to face, namely Johan's PTSD[8] and Jesi's complicated pregnancy and labor.

The emphasis on women's health and reproductive issues in the context of a romance novel might arise from Chamorros' different attitudes about motherhood: as Laura Souder has pointed out, while a large number of Western feminists have seen motherhood as a source of female subordination, for many Chamorro women it is a traditional source of power and prestige. Not surprisingly, then, conventional Western romances conclude after the marriage proposal, while Quinene's novel makes a point of incorporating Jesi's pregnancy and labor. Apart from being a novelty, this also permits the author to subtly introduce a highly charged political issue, i.e. the different ways in which Chamorros and Americans handle women's health issues, and the Americans' impositions that Chamorros give up their own ways and hand reproductive issues over to the Navy health installations, which represent the alleged superiority of Western science.

History professor Anne Perez Hattori has challenged the notion that the US naval medical presence on Guam brought steady progress in the health of the island's people; on the contrary, her studies (*US Navy*; "Re-memembering") have proved that Navy medicine was an instrument of colonial control which profoundly altered Chamorros' life. Her analyses of the mistreatment of leprosy are highly revealing of such malpractices, as are those of the Navy's management of maternity. Naval administrators regulated and monitored the activities of Chamorro women caregivers, namely the *pattera* (midwife), the *suruhãna* (female herbal healer), and the *si Nana* (mother). In its interventions, the Navy assumed the role of "masculine progenitor" and endeavored to increase the fertility of Chamorro women through a variety of health measures supposedly intended for the benefit of mothers, though, in fact, the Navy's health policies made women suffer "more intrusive forms of control and surveillance" (Perez Hattori, *US Navy* 93).

Quinene's novel does not question these measures in an upfront way. It does, however, record the impact of the Navy on Chamorro ways of handling women's health issues. Jesi, for instance, marries a US sergeant, gets pregnant and successfully bears twins at the Navy hospital. At first sight, this might be interpreted as the author's way of highlighting Americans' power to reinvigorate native women's fertility both through Western science and Anglo sperm. However, things are not so clearly cut, as in the end, and despite her initial reticence to embrace the roles she has inherited from her grandmother,

Jesi does accept to become a *suruhãna* and a *le'an* (278), which proves that marrying an American or accepting some American ways does not fully curtail her identity. Jesi's *pattera* is another case of contested negotiations between Chamorro and Anglo ways. Even though she has acquired her knowledge through traditional means, she has also been trained in the Navy hospital before the war (270), a fact which is historically grounded, as various governors issued norms that made it compulsory for *patteras* to get Navy diplomas (Perez Hattori, *US Navy* 94). When Jesi's labor becomes dangerous and both her Anglo husband and her *pattera* order her to seek the help of Navy doctors, what some might see as surrender to US imperialism could perhaps be more adequately analyzed as another example of contested hybridization. In fact, it should be noted that the whole handling of Jesi's pregnancy and labor is dually carried out by the *pattera*, during nine months, and, only in the very final phase, by the Navy.

The use of indigenized English in *Conquered* offers another instance of hybridism. Chamorro words and expressions color both the narrative voice and some of the characters' speech; they are often translated within the main text, but the book includes a glossary too. Spanish terms, though in smaller numbers, also crop up here and there, as the narrator refers to specific places on the island whose names were imposed by the Spanish colonizers (Plaza de España [60], Puntan Dos Amantes [96]), or to garments (*mestisas* [70]), food specialties (*pan tosta* [118]) and Chamorro characters' names (e.g. Vicente, Rosa, Antonio), all of which still bear the imprint of the years of Spanish rule. The islanders' religious practices are similarly a blend of cultures: they are intensely marked by the Catholicism brought by the Jesuits in the seventeenth century, but not fully detached from Chamorro spirituality, as proved by the constant references to Jesi's and her grandmother's spiritual powers (Jesi, for example, can speak to and is addressed by Mames, an island spirit), and by the recurrent mentions, in both novels, of the *taotaomona*. *Conquered* offers another telling example of that syncretism: when Johan goes back to the front, Jesi gives him a pin of Saint Joseph and assures him that both the saint and the *taotaomona* will protect him, which he firmly believes (251).

In both romances, Chamorro ways of indigenizing Western religion and languages are forms of subversive appropriation. For their part, Chamorro retellings of WWII within the frame, if somehow distorted, of the romance genre offer interesting ways of indigenous reconceptualization, as WWII becomes mingled with Anglo-Chamorro love stories and Chamorro legends and creation myths in audacious ways. It is likely that the most outstanding case is presented in *Conquered*, where the story of Jesi and Johan is set against the creation myth of the goddess Fo'na and the god Pontan (125), who equitably used their powers to create the world and human beings. Like them, at the end of the novel, which coincides with the end of WWII, Jesi and Johan seem about to start a new race and a new world in which diversity is welcomed and respected. It is this task, perhaps, that leads Johan to think that "[t]here will always be those who believe that their way is the only way, that there exists only their God, that their race is the pure race," and for that reason "there must always be those ready to defend and protect America, and the freedom and opportunities she offers" (277-278). In other words, the America he is advocating and willing to fight for is one that rejects the alleged superiority of racial and cultural purity, a notion which both Quinene's and Sablan Gault's heroes have learnt to give up. They admire the heroines' skills, their knowledge of medicinal herbs and native remedies, their physical strength and determination, their resilience in the face of natural disasters (like typhoons) and human-

caused tragedies, and their religiosity. And that admiration leads them to make an effort to grasp a number of aspects of Chamorro culture, including many words and expressions. Philip, in *A Mansion on the Moon*, is said to have “gone native” (location 2744-2745); Johan, too, is deeply transformed by his experiences among Guam’s Chamorros.

But on arriving in Guam, like all other Americans, they know virtually nothing about the island’s flora and fauna or about its people’s culture. Their closest idea to the island’s geography is that it is full of coconut trees, thus following in the footsteps of countless of Westerners for whom the palm tree alone works as “the only signifier” of the tropics (Perez Hattori, “Re-remembering” 301). Their mental representation of Guam and Chamorros is absolutely stereotyped. When Johan and his mates are first confronted with the carabao, for example, they marvel at what they assume can only be a cow with horns and tremendous strength, but are unable to name it for what it is. They also ignore the importance that *lanchos* have for Chamorros, and, as shown in *A Mansion on the Moon*, are initially incapable of seeing them as nothing but derelict places which are full of mosquito larvae and objects discarded by the Americans and ingeniously recuperated by the poverty-stricken Chamorros. Perez Hattori (“Navy” 23) has explained the Navy’s myopic understanding of *lanchos*, pointing out that, when Americans took control of the island in 1898, they were unable to ascertain the true reasons why there were few Chamorros in dire need: namely, strong family relationships and the fact that most natives obtained the food they needed on their *lanchos*. In due time, however, Philip, who does make an effort to learn from Chamorros, discovers the wonders of *lancho* life, overcomes his repulsion for mosquito larvae and adopts Chamorros’ recycling practices.

Further proof of the extent to which both Johan and Philip end up being deeply influenced by Chamorro culture and that, therefore, cultural hybridization is not unidirectional is the fact that they take Chamorros’ belief in the *taotaomona* very seriously, and follow the natives’ pieces of advice on how to respect the ancient spirits, especially when walking in the jungle. These two heroes actually come to esteem the land they are now living in, and their deference comes in the form of respectful behavior with regard to the natives’ customs and beliefs. For many present-day Chamorros, the *taotaomona* are “a survival of the ancient Chamorro religious belief in ancestor worship” (Soker 155). For them, the stories of the *taotaomona* retain “great vitality” (Soker 161) and go on serving a cultural need, especially as there is a tendency now “to combine *taotaomona* story themes with those of other types of stories and thereby increase their application” (Soker 161). This revitalization of Chamorro culture is precisely what both Quinene and Sablan Gault have achieved by combining ancient Chamorro stories with some of the formulaic features of mainstream romances.

Interestingly, both authors use photography as another arena open for hybridism. Like medicine, photography can play an important role as a colonizing tool. The camera may be misinterpreted as “a bearer of neutrality and objectivity” whose supposed ability is “to convey the truth” (Perez Hattori, “Re-remembering” 304-305). But, in fact, in colonial contexts the camera has been often used as “an instrument of surveillance” (Perez Hattori, “Re-remembering” 310) that has “enabled the West to objectify and dominate” (Perez Hattori, “Re-remembering” 305), or, following Susan Sontag’s thesis, to exercise Western “predatory” instincts onto the colonized Other, as “[t]o photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed” (4). In *Conquered*, when Johan and Jesi are about to marry, the American bridegroom asks a Navy photographer to take pictures of the wedding. The camera man

readily accepts this job offer, as it will imply “not just extra cash, but an opportunity to record a native wedding” (164). The relish with which the American photographer takes up the role of official recorder matches Western attraction to the unknown and exoticized experience of the colonized Other. As Sontag has put it, “the camera record justifies,” “it is incontrovertible proof” (5). In the case of the Navy photographer, his photographic work could indeed be proof that Chamorros’ wedding ceremonies are quaint, superstitious, weird, exotic, etc. However, in *Conquered* Chamorros are not so easily robbed of their right to self-representation. Indeed, apart from hiring a photographer, Johan gives Jesi a camera as a wedding present, and she soon starts capturing shots of her reality from her own perspective. She herself determines from then on what she photographs and which of these images she sends to Johan while he is stationed elsewhere in the Pacific, thus offering another example of how Chamorros’ culture is not merely the passive victim of American imperialism, but can reinvent itself in countless ways. In 1945, Van Peenen lamented that young girls would all end up marrying American soldiers, living away from Guam and forgetting their folk stories. In 1995, Diaz contested her apocalyptic vision, arguing that they would find alternative means to transmit their stories. By appropriating a camera, Quinene’s Jesi seems to have been able to do just that. The same is true of Sablan Gault’s Vivian, who at one point surreptitiously changes the photograph of her Philip is carrying in his wallet for another one she likes better. In time, both heroines learn to use photography to the advantage of their own needs.

4.3 Politicizing the romance through Chamorro denunciations

All the previously analyzed examples of how the novels under study allow Chamorro culture to reassert itself in various contested ways may be viewed by some as significant, but not necessarily effective in combating the devastating effects of colonialism. Indeed, many will think that imperial practices call for more determinedly confrontational methods on the part of the colonized. As a matter of fact, both Quinene and Sablan Gault offer numerous excerpts that harshly criticize Spanish, Japanese and American imperialism. Thus, the Spanish imposition of a patriarchal social order comes under criticism in *A Mansion on the Moon*, though the narrator stresses that “many aspects of the inherent matriarchal/matrilineal order remained” despite Spaniards’ efforts to the contrary (location 195-198). Similarly, that novel’s narrator revels in the Spaniards’ inability to eradicate the Chamorro language (location 169-170), and becomes highly critical of Americans, who forbade Chamorros to speak their own language in government offices (location 2210-2211) and elsewhere thought it impolite if natives spoke their own language in the presence of Americans (location 2256-2259). Japanese concentration camps and general brutality, it goes without saying, are also the target of many critical comments (see, for instance, Quinene, *Conquered* 221).

But surely the two issues that receive the harshest pieces of criticism are Americans’ racism and land takings. The “segregated school within the government compound” that only allows enrollment of “the children of navy personnel,” with its teachers “imported from the States, as are their books and supplies” (Sablan Gault, location 1658-1659) are a painful source of concern for the narrator of *A Mansion on the Moon*. Americans’ racism is likewise clear in other Navy and government facilities, where Chamorro employees remind Anglos of “zoo monkeys” (Sablan Gault, location 1804-1806), and are therefore only allowed to have

menial jobs (Sablan Gault, location 2714). Sablan Gault denounces that “racial and cultural prejudices” rage everywhere on Guam (location 2070-2071); Philip himself, like his colleagues, “thought of nonwhites as lesser beings, inferior to themselves” (location 2208-2209), and, shockingly, when he first starts to feel attracted by Vivian, he relates himself to pre-Civil War Southern plantation owners who “took slave girls as lovers” (location 1906-1908). This overt racism – which not even Sablan Gault’s hero can avoid – is responsible for the intermittent banning of interracial marriages on Guam. Even when not banned, they are nonetheless frowned upon and made administratively difficult – see, for instance, all the paperwork that Philip is obliged to do in order to get a license to marry a native woman (location 3360-3363). Only flagrant bigotry explains why the Navy had begun sending its families away when it became clear that there might be a Japanese invasion, but did nothing to protect the natives (Sablan Gault, location 3996-4000; Quinene, *Conquered* 35).

Land takings, for their part, are even more ostensibly the butt of many of Sablan Gault’s critical comments. Vivian’s father, Tino, like many other Chamorros, finds out soon after American “liberation” that Chamorro “properties throughout the island were being taken and occupied for military use” (location 4483); that the Navy might be trying “to relegate the Chamorros to the southern end of the island in what was tantamount to a reservation” (location 4488-4489); that a “gigantic new Naval Station Guam” is being built (location 4490-4491); that the US military is a “ruthless” entity that “had rescued them from enemy enslavement and taken their lands in payment” (location 4773-4774); that even “Fena Lake, Guam’s only freshwater body,” has been taken by the Americans (location 4496-4497), and compensation for land occupation will take long years to come, never to be satisfactory. Justifiably, Tino’s gratitude soon turns into “apprehension” and this into “resentment”: “You bring your war here. You bomb my city and burn it down. You destroy my house, take my lands and leave me with nothing,” he fumes (location 4716-4718). Tino sees Philip as part of that ruthless entity that has caused all his misfortunes, so when the American comes to ask permission to marry Vivian, it seems to Tino that he is definitely being robbed of everything he ever had and cherished. He nonetheless grants the officer permission, though only as proof of fatherly love.

5. Chamorro romances, footnotes to no one

Sablan Gault’s narrator does not let Tino dwell long on his troubles, but soon allows him to find comfort in the belief that “the people of Guam would triumph over it all, as they always had” (location 4778). Similarly, in Quinene’s novel, one may hear Jesi confidently tell her brother that Chamorros will rise from the ashes: “we will rebuild Peter, just like the Chamorros always have” (60). Thus, both *Conquered* and *A Mansion on the Moon* powerfully express the certainty that Chamorros are “culturally resilient and adaptively responsive to adverse social and cultural change in spite of the legacy of colonization and acculturation pressures” (Perez 588). Moreover, these novels present themselves as testimonies to Chamorros’ ability to reinvigorate their culture through countless amalgamations and indigenous appropriations that are carried out “to the advantage of their own culturally nationalist interests” (Perez 588). They likewise show that Chamorros are capable of altering Western perceptions of indigenous cultures, historical accounts of WWII, and literary genres

like the romance. They do so in subtle ways that imply hybridization, and through more confrontational approaches, like direct denunciation. All in all, both novels are proof that Chamorro popular literature, like its “highbrow” counterpart, is a footnote to no Western tradition, and that Chamorro romances, in particular, are no “small islands of text” at the margins of US literature, but effective forms of activism in their own right. Their familiar and popular narrative frameworks, as Davis has put it, “can make questions of global politics meaningful in new ways for readers inside and outside of the West” (21). At a time when the pro-independence movement is gaining momentum on Guam, “romances’ ability to generate affects is too powerful to ignore” (Davis 25). Thoughtful intellectuals and activists alike should engage rigorously with such affects, yoke geopolitical forces to popular modes, individual lives to the trajectories of the collective, and evaluate the power of the intimate in their discussions of the global and the transnational. Literary critics, for their part, should never fail to acknowledge the potential of the romance genre to unsettle all sorts of political ideas.

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[1] Lanny Thompson has referred to these islands (and to others like Cuba and Puerto Rico) as “the U.S. imperial archipelago” (1).

[2] Lyons’s term “American Pacificism” refers to “a wide variety of colonial forms of representation over time” (Hanlon 98).

[3] David Hanlon has pointed out the irony that Oceania “so profoundly affected by American colonialism is largely absent from the American literary imagination” (98).

[4] With regards to the US imperial archipelago, Thompson has argued that “representations of inferior alterity were a means to conceive, mobilize, and justify imperial rule” (11). Referring specifically to Guam, he has further asserted that the Navy “largely ignored the inhabitants’ language, culture and history,” and that “Guam was not afforded a narrative, only a static simile: under control of the navy, the island was like a ship under the command of a captain” (253).

[5] In “A Chat with... Paula Quinene,” the author similarly explains that she was driven to write *Conquered* because she felt “so mahålang, or homesick, that it seemed like the

natural progress in my string of Guam books.” She has further dwelled on this feeling in “Through my eyes: ‘Mahålangness’—the fuel that fed my writing fire” (Quinene, “Through”).

[6] These “ritual deaths” that leave Johan and Philip scarred and psychologically wounded have the capacity to rebalance the power asymmetry that existed between them and the Chamorro women they have fallen in love with, just as Rochester’s injuries bring Brontë’s hero closer to Jane Eyre on a symbolic power scale.

[7] In *A Mansion on the Moon*, for example, there is a female character whose four brothers “sailed away as deckhands on British, German, and American merchant vessels” (location 337).

[8] As previously noted, the romance genre tends to rely on two conflicting narratives. In fact, the endorsement of America’s right to defend “(capitalist) democracy by means of war” (Kamblé 61), which would explain the high number of romance novels that feature a hero wearing the mask of the warrior, contains “an undercurrent of doubt and despair at the seemingly endless conflict that this engenders” (Kamblé 85); in other words, the genre subtly inscribes a humanist critique of war by making the hero as warrior suffer from PTSD (Kamblé 64) and showing that, ultimately, war, regardless of its justification, seriously threatens the romantic bond.

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