

Herstory and Rememory: Reinscribing the Woman in History in the Fiction of Rosario Cruz Lucero ¹

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The years between 1972 and EDSA '86 were a series of little notes between us, folded into an inch square, taped securely at the edge with adhesive. Perhaps I should have kept them all, instead of burning them as they came, for they tell the story of a period of Philippine history, of the development of a political movement, of a personal journey, and most especially, of two women who could walk the globe together, holding hands and telling stories, in the little space they were given. But those years were times of caution, not of history or sentiment, and the notes were tell-tale evidence of the one indiscretion in my life – my faithfulness to a martial law fugitive.

- 1967-'87:

That night, Estrella sat on the floor of her hut, placed an herb-smoothened hand on one knee and a claw on the other, and then commenced her magical incantation. Her Time stood still as her voice painted pictures: of the three Buyungs of royal birth, of their hunt for wives who ruled the different levels of the Hiligaina cosmos, of the great battle between them and their common enemy Yawa, the god of darkness, whose wife they wanted to capture

for the eldest prince, Buyung Labaw Donggon. Estrella's song traveled beyond the huts clustered around the church, toward the isolated ones standing on mountain slopes that not even the tolling of the church bells could reach, for her chanting was the kind of music that the great god Makagagahum had shaped the indios' voices for. It was strong and powerful so it could stir the diwatas from their hiding places—the earth mounds where they had hurled themselves in foetus positions, the depths of caves where they had sulked at the people's neglect, the tree trunks where they had gotten themselves entangled in the vines for the past hundred years.

- *The Death of Fray Salvador Montano,
Conquistador of Negros*

More than just a clever reworking of 'history' and its implication of male dominance (as His Story), Herstory is already gaining ground "as an evolving methodology [that] can ... guarantee women's place, not only in the past but also for the future" (Reyes 28). It is also "the feminist reconstruction of history that can serve to transform gender relations from domination/subordination to equality/equity and empowerment" (28). The excerpts above, quoted from stories included in Rosario Cruz Lucero's two collections of short stories, illustrate the two main contentions involved in the concept of 'herstory' that I wish to put forward in this paper. The first one, seen in the first excerpt from the collection *Herstory*, shows the tenuous quality of memory and the desire to preserve women's stories that could not, and have seldom been included in history, and that such women's stories show the confluence of the personal with the political. The second excerpt, this time from *Feast and Famine: Stories of Negros*, depicts the woman as a storyteller, who, in her incantation of her