

Saving the Savior: A Deconstruction of the Novel *Viajero* by F. Sionil Jose

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ABSTRACT

The study ventured to use Derridean deconstruction as a method of analyzing the novel Viajero. It aimed to identify the binary oppositions in the novel, establish the hierarchical relationship existing within each binary opposition, deconstruct the binary opposition, identify the parts of the novel showing the unstable relationship between the terms in the binary opposition, interpret the text and identify the implications of Derridean deconstruction for enhancing the critical reading skills of the learners. Deconstructing the binary oppositions in the novel Viajero by F. Sionil Jose was done primarily through content analysis. This needed a close reading of certain parts of the novel Viajero. Derridean deconstruction was then used to come up with an interpretation of the novel. Much binary opposition exists in Viajero. The interaction of the multitudinous characters and various social constructs produce hierarchical relationships. These binary oppositions privilege one term upon the other. But upon closer reading and investigation, this privileged/less privileged status reveals its inherent instability and inconsistency. Furthermore, the novel contains inherent traces that displace the hierarchical relationship existing between the terms in the binary oppositions. Finally, Derridean deconstruction can be used as a basis for analyzing literary texts.

Keywords: deconstruction, post-structuralism, literary text, identity, novel

INTRODUCTION

According to Sawyer (2000), contemporary forms of entertainment like computer games and television programs appear to be more popular than the reading of literary texts. Although this may be the case, literature remains relevant because literary texts endow the reader with universal themes and values that have remained relevant throughout the centuries. In the Philippines, college students are required to enroll in Literature subjects. The six units that the tertiary level students are required to enroll are divided into two courses: the first course is an introduction to the literatures of the Philippines and the second one is an introduction to the literatures of the world. Through the two courses, the students are introduced to representative texts that will eventually acquaint them with the world of literature. The appreciation and interpretation of these texts by the students are some of the objectives of the teacher of literature in order to develop the higher level thinking skills that were proposed by Bloom: analysis and evaluation (Bloom, 1956, in Jao, Limpingo & Tiangco, 1998).

As stated earlier, the teacher must develop the critical minds of the students of literature in order for them to synthesize their understanding of a literary text. The students must be able to expound their comprehension and critical evaluation of a given literary text in order for their interaction with the text to be an enriching experience. To develop the necessary skills for students to interpret and appreciate literary texts on their own, the teacher must familiarize students with some of the literary theories that look at texts from different points of view. It is in the study of literature where students are also taught literary theories. As a teacher of literature, the researcher has gone through many experiences of analyzing literary works together with the theories. The researcher found that literary criticism is an

important part in comprehending and evaluating literary texts. Hence, the current study is a realization of the aforementioned goals.

It is believed that deconstruction is one of the literary theories that empower the students to think critically. According to Maybin (2000), deconstruction affords the readers various interpretations of a text since its meaning may be adapted to the reader's life experiences and practices within an institution. Deconstruction liberates the meaning of a literary text from the monopoly of the teacher and distributes it to the students who eventually become more critical thinkers and not just mere clones of the teacher. The meaning of the text is liberated because the interpretation of the teacher is no longer the single correct interpretation. The students' interpretations may be as valid as those of the teacher's. In order for the students of literature to develop their critical thinking skills, and consequently, to be able to develop their capability in making their own interpretations, the teacher exposes them to the different genres of literature: poetry, short fiction (story) and the novel.

One of the most prolific Filipino novelists using historically verifiable events in his works is Francisco Sionil Jose. The diversity and transcendental qualities of his writings stimulated the researcher to focus on one of his novels. His "Rosales Saga" is about the lives of an Ilocano family whose experiences from the Spanish colonial period up to the pre-1986 EDSA People Power revolution parallel those of the Filipinos in general. Because of his achievements in fiction, he was awarded the 1980 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and Creative Communication Arts as recognition of his invaluable contributions to Philippine literature in English. The corpus of Sionil's works has been translated into 25 languages. Among the works of Sionil, it was the novel *Viajero* (1993) which the researcher chose to base his research upon because he was inspired by the explanation of the novel that the author himself delivered. He stated that the main character, Salvador dela Raza, literally means the 'savior of the race', the Filipino race that is. Unfortunately, it appears that the savior failed in his quest. Another is that the novel itself covers the history of the Philippines from the Pre-colonial Period to the Post-EDSA¹ 1986 era. The study aims to make the students familiar with the literary theory of deconstruction and with the novel *Viajero* by F. Sionil Jose, and consequently, to identify the implications of Derridean deconstruction in enhancing the critical reading skills of the learners.

METHODOLOGY

The popularity of using Derridean deconstruction is undeniable. This literary theory has become popular in the field of literary study and plays a prominent role in analyzing a text (Santos, 1995). It is applied not only in literary studies but also in architecture, fashion, music, painting and the culinary arts. The term deconstruction is becoming part of everyday vocabulary (Stephen, 1991). Deconstruction prevails as one of the most effective tools in analyzing literary texts as it satisfies the need to view texts from alternative perspectives. It is termed "poststructuralist" since it proceeds where structuralism ends. Whereas structuralism makes the meaning of a text definitive, deconstruction enables the readers to come up with their own interpretation that may be justified through the use of the organizing principles of language and signification (Hall 2001).

Searle (1983, in Madison, 1993) presents the strategies used in using Derridean deconstruction as a method of analyzing a text. Primarily, a deconstructionist should identify the binary oppositions that have been established as a construct in Western intellectual history. Binary oppositions are pairs of opposites (e.g. light/darkness) in which the left-hand term is considered superior to the right-hand term. After identifying the binary opposition, the

deconstructionist reverses the hierarchy inherent in the binary opposition by proving that the right-hand term is superior and prior to the left-hand term (Searle, 1983, in Madison, 1993). In this step, the superior-inferior relationship between the two terms is disrupted, thus, considering this social construct as unstable.

Another strategy is to identify the key words in a text that would open the binary opposition to destabilization (Searle 1983, in Madison, 1993). These words are necessary parts of the texts, but they themselves reveal the instability of the text dependent on them. Searle gives as his examples *parergon* in Kant, *pharmakon* in Plato, supplement in Rosseau, and hymen in Mallarmé.

A third strategy is identifying the features found at the margins of the text (Searle, 1983, in Madison, 1993). For example, if this strategy is used in a Derridean analysis of a novel, the minor characters should be given as much importance as the major characters because the minor characters may be considered as representatives of a whole.

The previous discussion show how Derridean deconstruction may be used in analyzing a text. In Derrida's 1992 analysis of *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, he identifies the binary opposition between Romeo and Juliet. He claims that Juliet is the cause of Romeo's death and vice versa. In the binary opposition of life and death, life is given a privileged status. The lovers live because of their desire to see each other. But it is this desire that causes their death. By applying the second strategy expounded by Searle, the key words in the play are Romeo and Juliet's names, both of which are aphorisms in counter time, names existing in an inopportune time. Their given names are totally arbitrary, but it is their family names, the families in which they were born to, that they tried to defy through their love (Derrida, 1992). This contretemps is further heightened by unfortunate events. These inopportune events are in counter time. Some of the inopportune events are the main characters meeting at a ball in which Romeo should not have been present, the letter of the priest regarding Juliet's death-like sleep not being received by Romeo, and Romeo taking his life before the sleeping Juliet awoke in the chamber. If these events happened as they were supposed to be, the eventual suicide of the two characters would not have happened (Derrida, 1992).

Therefore, the reading done by Derrida can be outlined as follows:

1. Identifying the binary opposition
2. Identifying the hierarchical relationship inherent in the binary opposition
3. Deconstructing the binary opposition by identifying its instability
4. Citing parts of the text that deconstruct the binary opposition

The outline above can be used to analyze *Viajero* using Derridean deconstruction.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The study ventured to use deconstruction as a method of analyzing the novel *Viajero*. Specifically, objectives of the research are to:

1. Use Derridean deconstruction as a method of analyzing "Viajero."
2. Establish the hierarchical relationship existing within each binary opposition.
3. Deconstruct each binary opposition.
4. Identify the parts of the novel showing the unstable relationship between the terms in the binary opposition.
5. Produce interpretations of some parts of the text.

RESULTS

Viajero is Salvador dela Raza's search for identity. In his search he tries to define the meaning of his existence by narrating his experiences and ultimately recording his life in a memoir. Initially, he was called Badong by the man who found him in a church. Afterwards, this man died and Badong was adopted by a GI who gave him the name Salvador dela Raza. His adoptive family in the United States affectionately called him Buddy.

At the beginning of the novel, Salvador dela Raza establishes the remembering/forgetting binary opposition, *Memory, help me* (p. 8). Through this exclamation, he, the protagonist of the novel, begins his narrative. He invokes the muse of remembering to help him recall his childhood. The two paragraphs following this invocation present a hazy picture of his earliest memories. He recalls images of light, blurred representations of his father and mother, his father and him escaping from Japanese soldiers, his being hidden in the Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, and Japanese soldiers shooting at the people. These fleeting images are his earliest memories. According to him, *Towards the light visions of the past recurred in flashes again and again* (p. 8). These are the only childhood memories from his hazy past that he is able to preserve. After his father leaves him inside the basilica, Salvador cannot remember him anymore. He cannot even remember the concept of a father. As he states, *Itay! Itay! What did it mean? He remembered the word only too well, but it was meaningless now* (p. 9). The passage shows that he knew what the concept of father was, but now, the term is meaningless. In the act of invoking the memory of his father, it is the opposite that happens. Thus, the binary opposition of remembering/forgetting may be considered. In this binary opposition, remembering is the privileged term and forgetting is the less privileged one. But based on the passages from the novel cited above, it may be concluded that Salvador dela Raza's recalling does not produce the expected outcome. Rather it results in an unexpected one, forgetting. It may be said that the remembering/forgetting binary opposition is displaced. What is a comprehensible concept (the concept of father) is displaced by an incomprehensible, meaningless one. Remembering results in forgetting.

The plot of the novel starts in the mid-1940s at the height of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. At the beginning of the novel, Salvador's lack of identity is undoubtedly obvious. Though he is referred to as Badong, his real name is unknown. The name Salvador dela Raza is assigned by his adoptive father later in the novel. During the Japanese siege, his unnamed father leaves him inside the Basilica of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo. His father fails to return, and this character does not make any tangible reappearance in the novel. His mother is already absent at the beginning of the novel. Thus, Badong is not a presence, but actually an absence. His presence effaces his identity. His being Badong erases who he is and what he is. Therefore, his lack of name and identity destabilizes the binary opposition presence/absence.

After his being orphaned in the basilica, he is found by Apo Tale who takes him to the mountains. There Badong meets Mayang, Apo Tale's blind, deaf and mute daughter. The able Badong is in direct opposition with the disabled Mayang. The character of Mayang foreshadows Badong's struggle to establish his identity. He will try to see everything that will tell him who he is, *Inay (Mayang), I am your eyes and your ears as well* (p. 39). Badong's attempt to try to see and to say what is an absence is a transcendental disability rather than a physical disability unlike that of Mayang. Badong's inability to see and to speak is more real than that of Mayang because his disability borders on that of the transcendent compared with that of hers which is tangible, and consequently, a manifestation of transcendent blindness and muteness. Badong is more blind and mute than Mayang.

Badong's life with Apo Tale and Mayang is short-lived. Japanese soldiers find them and kill Tale and Mayang. Badong escapes and is found by Capt. James Wack, an American soldier. Wack takes him to San Francisco, and there, the obliteration of Badong's identity is complete. Wack gives him his name, Salvador dela Raza. He gives him this name because Badong is the pet-name of Salvador, and Raza is the place where he finds Badong. Badong is also given a new pet-name, Buddy which is also derived from Salvador. Filipino Badong becomes American Salvador dela Raza, a native Filipino with a Spanish name and an American identity. Wack's adoption of Buddy inherently makes the term identity a privileged one. The binary opposite of identity is non-identity - the lack of identity. But even though Buddy (Badong, Salvador dela Raza) is given an identity by James Wack, he still does not know himself. He states in the novel, *And so I ask again, and still again, who am I and where do I come from?* The passage seems to indicate Salvador's cultural identity crisis. He is a Filipino exile in America, without an identity, without a history. Thus, the identity/non-identity binary opposition is displaced. Though Salvador was assigned an identity, this assignment does not seem to clarify who he really is. On the contrary, it may have made him more confused about who he really is.

One point of consideration is James Wack himself. He originally appears to be the embodiment of the presence of an identity, the binary opposite of Badong who lacks identity. He is an Afro-American whose father became rich because of the discovery of oil in his land and his invention of a cream that lightens dark skin and one that straightens curly hair, two features that are signs of a person with African blood. It appears ironic that he tries to efface the features that seem to be part of his own identity. Because Wack becomes conscious of his non-Caucasian features, he travels to Africa in search of his roots, and eventually his identity. But instead of appreciating what he finds there, the opposite happens, *He was very disappointed at what he saw and he returned fully conscious that he was not African at all. He was thoroughly American* (p. 20). Wack does not stay in the land where his race naturally comes from. Instead he returns to the place where he was born. Unfortunately, he experiences discrimination and prejudice in the land of his birth. He travels to France where he finds the acceptance he is looking for. Wack's travel to Africa and his return to America show his inability to accept a part of his identity, his African identity. The discrimination he experiences shows that the land where he was born cannot accept him because of the color of his skin. He departs for a while and erases his presence in America. His presence in France is also an absence. He is there and not there. Wack also continues to use the products that make his father amass wealth to give his family an affluent lifestyle. His use of his father's products once again proves how he tries to efface his identity as an Afro-American. The irony between Wack and Salvador is that both of them do not have identities, but the former assigns an assumed identity to the latter. Considering Wack and Salvador as binary opposites, then displaces a hierarchy because neither of them is superior to the other. Wack tries to erase his identity as an Afro-American; Salvador's identity is erased from him. Their lack of identity shows that neither of them is privileged over the other.

It is James Wack who inspires Salvador to study history. Salvador writes a master's thesis on the effects of Japanese industrialization on the Philippines and Indonesia. For his Ph.D., Salvador decides to focus on revolutionary nationalism in Mexico and the Philippines. While Salvador is still a student at Berkeley, he finds a document from the pre-colonial era in the Philippines. This is the beginning of his lifelong involvement with documents written about Filipinos or written by them. The documents he finds relate to the experiences of Filipinos who are exiles or voyagers by circumstance or by choice. What Salvador does to these papers is that he interprets them in the matrix of his absence. He tries to form a mold which will give meaning and identity to his life. But the certainty of his interpretation and the validity of the way he tried to form this interpretation is questionable. What he has done is

certainly a form of signification, the assigning of meaning, but the meaning of the documents remains elusive to his intellectual grasp. Salvador also tries to communicate his own view of the meaning of his life by speaking what is on his mind. Thus, by talking to his readers through his memoir, he raises speech on a more privileged status than that of writing. The novel is a speech in the first person point of view, masked as a written discourse. The other documents he rewrites are not the written discourses of the original authors, but instead they are Buddy's own speeches that he molds to conform to his need of establishing his identity. The authenticity of the records which Buddy presents as testimonies of people from various time periods is questionable. Once again presence is erased. Buddy's signification of these documents obliterates their authenticity, and they are more of an absence rather than a presence. The documents are an absence because their real authors are not present. They were brought into existence through the interpretation of another reader.

The novel evidently shows how it depends on truth. In the novel, Salvador tries to create a structure with him at the very center and evidently, it is through him that definition will happen. He tries to recreate his identity by shaping narratives based on his needs. He discovers and collects texts from different sources not only for his study, but more importantly for himself. The texts, both written and spoken discourses, come from different people from different eras in Philippine history. He uses these texts to gradually fill in his lack of identity. He does this by restructuring each discourse into a narrative that will suffice whatever is lacking in him.

The very first document Salvador discovers is the Newberry document. The document contains an account of a pre-colonial native Filipino named Parbangon. Salvador recreates this document into a narrative. In the narrative, Parbangon rescues his daughter from the Chinese merchants and finds out that she is pregnant with an alien's child. Dela Raza uses Parbangon's character to fill in for his absent father. Parbangon saves Rang-ay from the Chinese merchants, but he is also the one who gives her the cup of poison that caused her death. Dela Raza's biological father tries to save him from the Japanese soldiers by hiding him inside the basilica, but he does not return, and he is orphaned. The absence of his father is a gap that has never been filled in his life. Not even the fatherly love of James Wack was enough to satisfy his need for a father. Hence, dela Raza molds Parbangon in the matrix of the ideal father that he wants to have.

In Parbangon's narrative, the Son of Old Scarred Face and Rang-ay represent the captor/captive binary opposition. In this binary opposition, captor is privileged over captive. The captor dominates over the captive. In the same way, Parbangon assumes that Rang-ay is forcefully abducted by the Son of Old Scarred Face and is taken to the boat against her will. This establishes the captor/captive binary opposition in which the son of Old Scarred Face is the captor, and Parbangon's daughter Rang-ay is the captive. As a result, Parbangon commands a fleet of warriors to travel to China in order to save the captive Rang-ay from her captor, the Son of Old Scarred Face. Parbangon's men successfully rescues Rang-ay from her assumed captor/s, and they return to their tribe. It seems all will be all right, but this does not happen. Parbangon finds out that Rang-ay is pregnant with the child of the Son of Old Scarred Face. Rang-ay tells her mother everything about her assumed abduction, *She was not taken forcefully against her will by the Narrow Eyes — she had gone on her own free will, not so much because she did not want to marry Tured...but because she and the son of Old Scarred Face had had a meeting of mind and soul* (p. 47). As it turns out, the Son of Old Scarred Face is not the captor of Rang-ay, nor is it the other way round. Both of them are captives of this emotion that may be called love. They are in love with each other, and both of them are willing to defy the practices that delineate them from each other. Consequently, Rang-ay runs away with the Son of Old Scarred Face to pursue this emotion called love. Neither of them are captors; both of them are captives of love. The story of the son of Old

Scarred Face and Rang-ay is a metaphor for Salvador's attempt to conquer Philippine history and eventually, his identity. Towards the end of the novel, it is Salvador who is captured by Philippine history.

Another narrative Salvador creates is about another pre-colonial native Filipino who claims to be the very first person to have circumnavigated the world. Salvador creates this narrative while he is in Spain. He travels to Spain to pursue his Ph.D. in Revolutionary Nationalism: The Philippines and Mexico. This is a confirmation of his dependence on reason, a western hegemony and consequently, a manifestation of the dominance of the West. When he goes to Seville, he discovers a document in the Archivo General de Indias. From this document, he creates a new narrative. The document was written by Maisog, a native of Sugbu (Cebu). According to the narrative, he and his beloved are abducted by six men and are sold as slaves. Maisog ends up serving in the house of Muhammad Saleh, a rich merchant from Pasai. Eventually, Maisog is resold to a Portuguese sailor, Fernao de Magalhaes, who takes him to Spain. From then on, Maisog considers him as his Lord. When Magalhaes presents to the Spanish King an audacious plan of finding a new route to the East, Maisog becomes part of his crew. Maisog admires Magalhaes. According to him, he is, *a man of stupendous learning and skill, courageous, and all of us held him in awe and respect* (p. 85). Incidentally, Magellan's ships reach Cebu, Maisog's place of origin. Maisog narrates the Battle of Maktan (Mactan) between Fernao de Magalhaes (Ferdinand Magellan) and the Datu Lapu-Lapu of Maktan. Magalhaes and Lapu-Lapu represent the binary opposition conqueror/conquered. In this binary opposition, it is the conqueror that dominates the conquered. Prior to Magalhaes' battle with Lapu-Lapu, the Datu of Sugbu becomes an ally of Magalhaes, *But our Beloved Commander was certainly flattered by Sugbu hospitality, the readiness with which the Hari and his family and so many subjects had willingly prostrated themselves before the Spanish king's envoys, before the Cross* (p. 85). Because of this, it may be assumed that Magalhaes becomes confident of his role as conqueror and that it is relatively easy to subdue the other tribes surrounding Sugbu. *One of these tribes is Maktan headed by Datu Lapu-Lapu. With arrogance and confidence Magalhaes decided to teach the Maktans a lesson* (p. 85). And as what is recorded in history, Magalhaes was defeated. Other parts of the chapter clearly prove the assumed superiority of Magalhaes and his men. According to Maisog,

They who came from Iberia (Portugal and Spain, Magalhaes was a Portuguese sailing under the Spanish flag) looked down on us, so-called infidels, people who are civilized, uncouth...because they were arrogant, because they always assumed their arms, their armors were superior. What could these naked natives possibly do to harm their precious white skins, and with what (p. 86).

The passage reveals the incompleteness of the Spaniards' reasoning and logic. Magalhaes and his men's false assumption caused their defeat. With the defeat of Magalhaes by Lapu-Lapu, the binary opposition of conqueror/conquered is displaced.

At the end of the narrative, Salvador creates Maisog's testimony containing the binary opposition loyalty/disloyalty. In the binary opposition loyalty/disloyalty, the privileged term is loyalty. Maisog represents the binary opposition loyalty/disloyalty. Maisog's loyalty is with his Lord and Beloved Commander, Magalhaes. This may be proven by the way he deals with Magalhaes involvement in the quarrel between the people of Sugbu and Maktan. He felt that it was, *...an exercise I objected to with great shaking of the head for they had never really faced the Maktans in battle before* (p. 85). Magalhaes and his council did not listen to him. When they decided to attack the Maktans, Maisog *...had no choice but be with my Lord, Fernao de Magalhaes. Hastily arming myself, I joined them* (p. 86). To show his loyalty to Magalhaes, he aligns himself with Magalhaes and his men to fight with them against the Maktans. After the battle, Maisog returns to the Spanish fleet to join them in their journey.

His loyalty to Magalhaes may seem unquestionable, but he himself is not sure. He questions the loyalty he accords to his fallen Beloved Commander. According to him,

I was, therefore, torn between my loyalty to my Commander and my secret feelings of pride that I came from this place. I found kinship with the people of Maktan and wished myself an ever-loyal subject of their king. I recalled my own pitiable condition, a chattel, a man not free, living apart from those of fairer skin. I should not be here on this alien vessel but out there amongst my kin; they had fought not just for their honor, but also for mine (p. 87).

With that passage, Maisog displaces the loyalty/disloyalty binary opposition. Maisog is a metaphor for Salvador because the native of Sugbu represents Salvador's questions of loyalty. Both of them experience being wrenched away from their native lands, living with westerners and learning a totally different language. Inculcated in their minds are cultural manifestations from a race different from theirs. Maisog imbibes Spanish ideas and Salvador learns American concepts. Maisog's loyalty/disloyalty to Spain is the same as that of dela Raza to America.

The certainty of what Maisog does upon returning to the Spanish fleet in Cebu is unknown, *Did Maisog or Enrique of Sugbu return to Europe to be the old man he described himself in the beginning of his memoir? Or did he stay behind as Pigafetta had indicated in his writing* (p. 88). Buddy assumes that Maisog returns to Europe because he has seen everything he needed to see and experienced everything he needed to experience. Salvador's own interpretation of Maisog's account satisfies his need to be considered part of a people from whom he is apart. Maisog is separated from his people just like dela Raza, who is taken away from his own people.

While he continues his study in Spain, Salvador becomes interested in the galleon trade between the Philippines and Mexico. After studying materials related to the said colonial enterprise, he creates the narrative of Segundo. Segundo works for Don Carlos Paz, a Spanish businessman investing in the galleon trade by building the ships, also known as El Tigre. Upon the request of Primero, Segundo's father, El Tigre employs Segundo in the building of the galleon Trinidad. When the construction of the Trinidad is finished, Segundo joins El Tigre and his fleet on the maiden voyage of the galleon to Acapulco, Mexico. After disposing the goods of the Orient in the markets of Acapulco, the galleon returns to Manila. While the Trinidad was returning to Manila, there was an outbreak of chicken pox. Segundo and six other people survived the disease. When Segundo travels to Acapulco, which was then a Spanish colony, he leaves behind his father, Primero, in Manila. In the same way, when Buddy travels to Spain, he leaves behind his foster father, James Wack, in San Francisco. Segundo is another supplement for Salvador's identity. And since Segundo is a character created by Salvador, there exists the binary opposition between Buddy and Segundo. Salvador represents reason and learning while Segundo represents instinct. But this binary opposition between Salvador and Segundo falls apart towards the end of Segundo's narrative and Salvador's memoir. Segundo returns to Manila successfully, possessing the fact that the Indios are as capable as Spanish seafarers. *But he knew — all five Spanish survivors knew — the full story and none of them can ever take away from the seven of us Indios this knowledge of how we persevered and triumphed* (p. 109). At the end of the Trinidad's journey, Segundo is able to preserve himself from the rigors of traveling and the attack of a disease. This is in complete contrast with what happens to Salvador at the end of his memoir. Salvador does not survive his paresthesia and dies alone. The meaning of his journeys is recorded in his memoir that is subjected to the interpretations of his possible readers. The meaning of Segundo's journey is indubitable. That of Salvador's is otherwise.

Another narrative that Salvador assembles is one about Marcelo H. del Pilar. Buddy discovers the hero's letters, and out of these letters he creates the story of del Pilar's self-

imposed exile in Spain. Del Pilar was a member of the Propaganda Movement and among the members of the movement; it is he whom Buddy admires the most and identifies with,

He could imagine himself easily as Marcelo H. del Pilar, take on the great man's persona, live the excruciating pain, the vicious loneliness and disappointment as only del Pilar could feel; indeed, of all the exiles in Europe at the time, he was the most tragic figure and with him and him alone, Salvador dela identified completely (p. 114).

With the way he compares himself with del Pilar, Salvador creates the binary opposition identification/non-identification. It is important for him to find a persona who will concretize his struggles as an exile. He finds that persona in del Pilar, but his identification with del Pilar is problematic because they have a big difference. Del Pilar's life as an exile in Spain is marked with poverty. In contrast, Salvador's life is always a life of privilege. He has money wherever he goes, and he buys whatever he wants. Salvador tries to exile himself from his affluent lifestyle, but he continuously returns to it. He knows that he will never find it comfortable to live the life of the underprivileged. He is the type of bourgeois exile who tries to identify with the masses,

Or such an exile can, on occasion, with patronizing reluctance, leave his sanctuary and go down to feel the outside, to experience vicariously its varied tastes, and having done so, hurries back to the comfort of his old habitat. Such an exile does exist, a voyeur in the turmoil of the world, and excursionist—and thinking thus, Buddy was shocked that this very person, this very creature whom he detested, was actually himself (p.114).

The passage proves that no matter how much Salvador tries to identify himself with del Pilar, he will never succeed because he never experiences what del Pilar has undergone. Salvador may have an idea how del Pilar lived, but living in the way that del Pilar did is entirely impossible. Thus the binary opposition identification/non-identification is displaced.

After his study in Spain, Salvador returns to San Francisco, and hears about the death of Telesforo San Agustin, a Filipino he meets in San Francisco. Telesforo San Agustin is also known as Old Tele. He is an Ilocano who migrated to America during the 1930's. Old Tele is a metaphor for Buddy's desire to identify with his native countrymen, Filipinos. Tele goes to America when he was sixteen years old and works in Hawaii and California as a laborer. For many years, he stays in what he calls his second country, but he always has this desire to return to his native land, to his town in Pangasinan. And he does this after thirty years of living in America. But he does not stay long in Pangasinan. After two months, he returns to America because he discovers that there is nothing for him to return to in his hometown. His parents are dead, and his siblings have their own lives. Tele's experiences create the binary opposition identification/non-identification. He always has the desire to return to the place where he was born and to the people who inhabit his childhood memories. Before he returns to Pangasinan, the American immigration official tells him that his tenure in America makes him qualified to apply US citizenship. But Tele deferred his intention of becoming a citizen, hoping that there is something for him to return to in the Philippines. But this does not happen. On the contrary he is unable to identify with his kinsfolk. He tries to explain to his relatives how difficult life in America is, but they do not accept it,

I had several nieces and nephews—they were all grasping, greedy, believing that in America, money could be picked up from the streets. I had to tell them how hard I had to work, how I was beaten up for setting up unions. They did not believe me. I was Americanized, they said. I doubted that very much (p. 136).

Even though Tele stays in America for more than three decades, he does not change. The ones who change are the people he leaves behind. The people in his hometown no longer recognize him as one of their own but as someone different. Tele's desire to identify with his people causes his misidentification with them. This is the same with Salvador who also returns to his country to also reconnect with his people. Tele is another character that foreshadows Buddy's imminent failure to identify with his own people.

While he is in San Francisco, Salvador receives a fellowship from the Southeast Asian Institute in Kyoto. The institute recognizes his achievement because of his master's thesis on the impact of Japanese industrialization on the Philippines and Indonesia. His fellowship in the institute requires him to deliver a one day seminar. While preparing for his seminar, he finds a master's thesis and dissertation on Artemio Ricarte, the Filipino general who returned to Japan after the Americans liberated the Philippines from the Japanese in 1945. Ricarte is a metaphor for Buddy's future disdain for the Philippine oligarchy. In his narrative created by Buddy, Ricarte clearly tells his readers why he dislikes the oligarchy. For him, the oligarchy's collaboration with the Spanish, the Americans and the Japanese is the root cause of every trouble that has happened or is happening in the country. Ricarte is the representation of someone who is a non-oligarch, the less privileged term in the binary opposition oligarch/non-oligarch. An oligarch embodies wealth, power and prestige. In contrast, a non-oligarch represents poverty, helplessness and indistinctness. But even though Ricarte identifies himself as a non-oligarch, what he says shows that he has some of the qualities of an oligarch. When the Japanese invades the Philippines, and Ricarte returns to the country after thirty years of exile in Japan, he says, *I was not expecting to be treated like a returning hero, but just the same, I got a very warm reception everywhere* (p. 159). From this passage, the reader can glean that Ricarte is a known figure among the people. His prestige is equal to that of an oligarch. Furthermore, he states, *I had expected to be given a very high position. I was very disappointed when it did not come* (p.159). The passage shows that Ricarte expects to have political power in his hands, a characteristic of an oligarch. This is even furthered by what he says towards the end of his life, *I ask myself, should I have succumbed to the blandishments of allegiance to America? To the wealthy ilustrados* (p. 163). Ricarte, this time, questions his own motives. These inconsistencies in Ricarte's testimony show that he is not a non-oligarch. He is actually a member of the oligarch. He is one of them, although he has been ostracized by this group. His testimony shows his scorn for the oligarchs, but he is also one of them. In connection with this, Salvador also disdains the oligarch at the end of the novel. But he also uses wealth and prestige, the main weapons of the oligarch, to continue his personal journey of knowing himself.

Another narrative that Salvador creates while he is still in Japan is that of Vladimir Ilyich Acosta. Vladimir is a native of Camiling, Tarlac. Before working for Chika in her restaurant in Japan, Vladimir works as a cook in ships going to other countries like Singapore and Germany, and in restaurants in Saudi Arabia and Dubai. Vladimir's employment record is as incomprehensible as the question he tries to answer, *Why am I here, or what is the purpose of my life?* (p.189). Vladimir's question establishes the dominance of reason/instinct. Reason is exclusive to humanity. Humans are a combination of instinct and reason, but since humans occupy a higher place than animals acting on instinct for survival in the hierarchy of living things, they are expected to use reason to control their instinct. Vladimir shows how he values reason over instinct through the many instances that he denies himself the pleasure of having sex, an animal instinct and a human pleasure, with the women he meets. But no matter how much Vladimir tries, his instinct gets the better of him, *I have been very busy trying to make a decent living, working hard to make money for my parents and myself, I have no time to think about such high and profound matters* (p. 189). As he continues, he says, *There is nothing more shameful for a human being than to be hungry* (p. 189). Vladimir's instinct for survival will always supersede his reason. If he had depended on his reason alone and not on his instincts, he would not have survived in the deserts of Saudi Arabia and the streets of Japan. Vladimir's story is in contrast with that of Buddy's. Although Vladimir puts a premium on reason over instinct, it is his survival instinct that helps him in the face of life-threatening situations. For example, when he stabs a Pakistani crew on a ship they are in, his instinct determined that Vladimir jumps of the boat and wander in the streets of Kobe where a

group of Filipinas find him. They help him and he stays to work in Kobe. The story of his life is heard and presumably understood completely in the context of the Filipino diaspora by Salvador himself. On the other hand, Salvador acts through reason. He believes that his reasoning will save him from obscurity and that it will help the future readers of his memoir to understand him. Salvador dies and leaves his memoir to be read and interpreted by readers; the complete understanding of the meaning of his memoir is quite unlikely. The binary opposition of reason/instinct represented by Salvador/Vladimir is then destabilized.

After Salvador's study in Japan, he returns to San Francisco. There, he receives another fellowship. This time, it is from the East-West Center in Hawaii. While he is in Hawaii, he meets Ninoy. Ninoy encourages Buddy to go to the Philippines and see what it is really like in the country. When Salvador learns about Ninoy's assassination, he decides to go to the Philippines. In the Philippines, one of the most important persons in his life is Leo Mercado Sr. who is a former member of the Hukbalahap. In the movement, he is known as Commander Lapis (pencil). The pencil is a writing implement. It inscribes in words thoughts, deeds and sounds attributed to a person. And this is what Leo Mercado does in his narrative. He recalls his recollections of his wife and in turn tells Salvador who writes this narrative. Leo Mercado's telling of his wife's biography is final proof for Salvador that it is possible for him to relate the meaning of his life to his readers. This belief creates the binary opposition meaning/meaninglessness. Everything that happens to a person's life has meaning or is meaningful. But like all interpretations, the validity of the way a person interprets another person's life is questionable. For Leo Mercado Sr., his wife's life had been meaningful. But the meaning he attaches to her life and its implications are unstable. Salvador enunciates this instability, *What can I possibly say to this tired, old rebel who gave up his wife then his son to a cause that, for him, was already lost?* (p. 280). The life of Leo Mercado's wife is meaningful to him. But the meaning he attaches to it is not what it really means. The death of his wife is repeated in the death of their son, Leo Mercado Jr., for a revolutionary movement born during the Marcos regime. These two deaths, the death of Leo Mercado's wife and the death of Leo Jr., prove the uncertainty of how a person interprets life. This is what Salvador will try to disprove by writing his memoir.

These characters fill up some of Salvador's needs. Parbangon's character fills up his need for a father; Maisog, del Pilar and Tele satisfy his need for belongingness; Ricarte represents his hopelessness among the oligarchs; Vladimir symbolizes his dependence on reason; and Leo Mercado Sr. signifies his belief that to communicate the meaning of his life is possible. As such, Salvador creates them in such a way that he is at the center and they are in the margins. Thus Salvador's narratives set up the binary opposition center/margin. But without the margin/s the center will cease to exist. In the same way, without the narratives of the characters he tries to surround himself with, Salvador is incomplete. It is not the characters who depend on him but it is the other way around. It is he who depends on them. Thus, he does not occupy the center because there is no center at all. Parbangon and the other characters are not centers. Neither is Salvador a center.

But perhaps the most evident binary opposition is found in Salvador himself based on his names and the context in which they exist. As Buddy Salvador's representing affluence, reason and western hegemony is in direct opposition with his initial character as Badong symbolizing poverty, emotion and eastern submissiveness. Buddy represents reason and western hegemony because he defines his existence through his pursuit of the certainty of knowledge, which he does by utilizing the riches his adoptive father left. In contrast, Badong symbolizes poverty, emotion and eastern submissiveness because he is an orphan crying for the loss of his father and allowing himself to be taken to an unknown land. Buddy must suppress Badong, the child in him who is naïve and full of uncertainty, in order for him to continue his academic endeavors. Through his constant development of his intellect and the

use of his inherited fortune, he erases the conscious manifestations of Badong. In doing so, it once again shows that Buddy is not a manifestation of a presence, but rather a manifestation of an absence, the absence of Badong. This absence resurfaces towards the end of his life when he recalls the first time he meets James Wack, *Here I am, a waif in tatters, barefoot, hungry and sick, and this gentleman with curly hair, this tall American officer in khaki, two silver bars on his collar, picks me up* (p. 307). All throughout his life, Buddy buries Badong deep in his subconscious. But at the very last minute of his existence Badong resurfaces and fills up his absence. The manifestation of Buddy stripped of his intellect, western structures and opulence reveals his transcendental signified, Badong.

Viajero is Salvador dela Raza's attempt to define his existence and to give meaning to his life. In the end, his life is reduced to his memoir, a text that is subjected to interpretations. But the meaning of the text, and consequently, the meaning of his life is forever elusive like the crystals that Col. Verdad finds on his charred remains, *I was so excited knowing that these crystals were the man, the essence of his manhood, the meaning of his life. In death, his apotheosis* (p. 6). The ultimate meaning of his life and his identity is unknowable. His memoir is simply a manifestation of the absence of a cohesive structure that he attempts to construct to define his existence using logocentrism and Western hegemony. As a result of his attempt, the meaning of his life and the identity he tries to convey to his audience will always be beyond the readers' grasp.

CONCLUSION

In order for students to become more critical readers and thinkers, they should be taught different methods of analyzing a literary text aside from the usual identification of the characters, plot, setting and theme approach that was used in the basic education level. With this in mind, the researcher came up with this study and attempted to demonstrate how critical thinking and analysis can be done using a literary theory. By using this theory, students will be more engaged with the text, and consequently, they will be more empowered in interpreting a literary work. The research has shown that in order for students to develop their comprehension, synthesis and evaluation of literary text, they have to do a close reading of the material and analyze it using a literary theory. This theory will help them come up with their own interpretations and eventually improve their critical thinking and reading skills.

Much binary opposition exists in the novel *Viajero*. These binary oppositions are present in the novel because of the grandness of its scope. It is an account of Philippine history and society from the time before the arrival of the Spaniards up to the late 20th century. The interaction of the multitudinous characters and various social constructs produce hierarchical relationships that may have been created by society itself. Furthermore, the parts of the novel contain inherent traces in themselves that displace the hierarchical relationship existing between the terms in the binary oppositions.

Finally, using Derridean deconstruction may be used as a basis for analyzing literary texts. The interpretation produced by the interaction of the literary text and Derridean deconstruction goes beyond the usual character, setting, and plot, theme analysis approach proverbially used in teaching Literature in the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

ENDNOTES

¹ EDSA refers to Epifanio delos Santos Avenue, a major thoroughfare in Metro Manila. This highway served as the venue of the first bloodless revolution staged by Filipinos to oust

President Marcos in February, 1986. A shrine now stands at the exact place where millions gathered to demand his resignation.

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