

**Metarepresentationality of History in Narrative Fiction:**  
A Cognitive Approach in the Study of Literary Characters  
in F. Sionil Jose's *Viajero* and Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War*

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By

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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis entitled METAREPRESENTATIONALITY OF HISTORY IN NARRATIVE FICTION A COGNITIVE APPROACH IN THE STUDY OF LITERARY CHARACTERS IN F. SIONIL JOSE'S VIAJERO AND NINOTCHKA ROSCA'S STATE OF WAR, prepared and submitted by MARIE ROSE B. ARONG in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION

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We die That may be the meaning of life  
But we do language That may be the measure of our lives  
-- Toni Morrison (*Nobel Prize Lecture, 1993*)

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And to God I am nothing

## ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of how two postcolonial novels, F. Sionil Jose's *Viajero* and Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War*, present a postcolonial Filipino through the cognitive states of the literary characters. The study used the cognitive approach in the analysis of the literary characters which made use of textual clues that included the literary characters' point of view, the point of view of the other characters and the relevant sociocultural context.

The cognitive character analysis of Salvador dela Raza (Buddy) in *Viajero* and Adrian Banyaga, Anna Villaverde, Eliza Hansen (the trinity) in *State of War* was a two-fold inquiry. First, the characters were analyzed using the three models of literary character: (a) literary character as an artificial construct or device, (b) literary character as a thematic or ideational element, (c) literary character as an image of a possible person. Second, the flashback narratives (imaginative flashback in *Viajero* and collective flashback in *State of War*) were analyzed.

The cognitive character map of a postcolonial Filipino in both novels can be seen as metarepresentations. Unlike the postcolonial Filipino representation, the metarepresentations do not set a solid line between the stories of the master and the *other*. Alternative history is not merely the retelling of the story from the *other* point of view, but is the repossession of lost memories and the understanding of the past in order to pave the way for the future.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	TITLE PAGE	I
	APPROVAL SHEET	II
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	III
	ABSTRACT	IV
Chapter		
1	THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE	
	INTRODUCTION	
	Rationale of the Study	1
	Theoretical Background	
	Postcolonial	5
	Cognitive Approach	13
	THE PROBLEM	
	Statement of the Problem	26
	Significance of the Study	27
	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	28
	DEFINITION OF TERMS	31
2	COGNITIVE CHARACTER ANALYSIS	
	I F Sionel Jose's <i>Viajero</i>	33
	A Buddy as Artificial Construct or Device	34
	B Buddy as Thematic Element	53
	C Buddy as Nonfactual Individual in	
	Some Fictional World	56

II	Ninotchka Rosca's <i>State of War</i>	61
A	Adrian, Anna and Eliza as Artificial Construct or Device	62
B	Adrian, Anna and Eliza as Thematic Element	65
C	Adrian, Anna and Eliza as Nonfactual Individual in Some Fictional World	67
3	CHARACTER REPRESENTATIONS IN FLASHBACK NARRATIVES	
I	F Sionil Jose's <i>Viajero</i>	76
II	Ninotchka Rosca's <i>State of War</i>	87
4	SUMMARY AND FINDINGS	
	Postcolonial Filipino Cognitive Character Map	94
5	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	104
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	108
	APPENDICES	
	Appendix A	
	<i>State of War</i> The Trinity's Family Tree	112
	Appendix B	
	Summary of F Sionil Jose's <i>Viajero</i>	113
	Appendix C	
	Summary of Ninotchka Rosca's <i>State of War</i>	120
	CURRICULUM VITAE	126

## Chapter 1

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

#### INTRODUCTION

##### Rationale of the Study

Narratives are said to “permeate virtually all aspects of our society and social experience” (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003, p. 1). Narratives exist in nearly every aspect of our society from the oral tradition of our earliest ancestors, to the accounts about the earliest European expeditions even to Rizal’s novels during the Spanish Era. The influence and power that these narratives can have on people are infamously represented by the persecution of Rizal during the Spanish Era. *Grand Narrative* is a term commonly used in postmodern studies to refer to the narrative told by a dominant ideology, that of the colonizer or imperialist. The production and dissemination of Grand Narratives as a result of colonialism and imperialism have led to postcolonial and postmodern theories to question these narratives. Said (1994) noted that nowadays, it is impossible to be “purely *one* thing,” due largely to imperialism, which has resulted in the “mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale”, however, “its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, *exclusively*, [Italics added] white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental” (p. 336). This idea that Said raised, of being *exclusively* something, plays significantly into the postcolonial binaries undeniably implanted in our minds. Talib (2002) labeled these postcolonial binaries as the “rigid division of the world into two categories: the West and the East, the North and the South, the developed and the

undeveloped, the First and the Third Worlds, the English and the non-English" (p 18), them and us, them and the *other*. What makes these labels divisive is that most of the times our exclusivity in being part of the *other* is connected to the negativity of being part of that *other*. East, South, undeveloped, Third World, non-English. For nearly four hundred years, Filipinos were made to believe that they were the *other* – the other of the Spaniards, the other of the Americans. The aftermath of World War II not only saw the end of fighting but also the liberation of colonized nations. The formerly colonized nations sought to redefine themselves as peoples through decolonization. Said (1994) mentioned that three main ideas in the decolonizing cultural resistance emerged, and these are: first, resistance and the "concept of national language", second, "resistance as an alternative way of conceiving human history", and third, "a noticeable pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation" (p. 215-216). The first two – language and alternative history – being the *first* two that emerged, have been mostly used by nationalist proponents. Roxas-Tope (1998) pointed out that the proponents of nationalism in the Philippines during the 1960s thought that it was necessary to require the writing of Philippine history by a Filipino and from the point of view of the Filipino, but when these works were published "they became textbooks, the repository of historical truths and canonical interpretations of the past" (p. 24), an act that can be considered as walking the fine line of the concept of Grand Narrative that both postcolonial and postmodern schools of thought question. Said's third idea – an integrative view of human community and human liberation – seems to draw



strength from the two other main ideas of decolonizing cultural resistance the recognition of what is *our* side without excluding theirs, the new order *other*

Emmott (2003) stated in her book that "narratologists generally define narrative as events in sequence, often with a causal link between them" She notes that since events are vital to storytelling, the text frequently talks about these events, so in order for the reader to identify fully with a story, he or she must make inferences about what is important For Emmott, the reader's inferences account for much of the cognitive effort needed in understanding the stories (p 105) However, the idea of using cognitive science on literary narratives sounds farfetched First of all, "the flow of research findings across disciplinary boundaries is still minimal The upsurge of the interdisciplinary method in recent literary studies has been limited to similar 'human science' fields with which literary scholars are more familiar with philosophy, history, sociology, film studies anthropology, and ethnography" This shows that "scientific interdisciplinarity is [also] typically limited to fields within the sciences" Moreover, important advances in different scholarly traditions do not always inform each other, and research findings often remain isolated and largely unintegrated" (Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003, p 2)

The coupling of cognitive science with literary studies is gaining ground, however Recent studies by either literary scholars or cognitive psychologists or by both – Bortolussi and Dixon (2003), Culpeper (2001), Emmott (2004), Herman (2003), Margolin (1990, 2003), Ryan (2003), Semino (2002), Zunshine (2006) – are slowly transforming this great fixed wall between the two disciplines into a

movable wall. This study is an attempt to follow in the footsteps of the abovementioned studies by using an integrative cognitive approach in the study of literary characters from two selected postcolonial novels: *Viajero* by F. Sionil Jose and *State of War* by Ninotchka Rosca. In the conclusion to his study, Schneider (2006) wrote

Character, and the way readers engage with character, ought to take a more prominent place in narrative theory. For a cognitive approach suggests that in the production as well as the reception of stories, human beings think of *human beings* first, these are, of course, human beings engaged in activities and plots, presenting or hiding the contents of their minds, moving through fictional space, being analysed [sic] and explained by narrators and other characters. (p. 21)

In a similar strain, Emmott (2003) emphasized in her study that in reading narrative texts, the reader imagines a world occupied “by individuals who can be assumed to behave, physically and psychologically, in ways which reflect our real-life experiences of being situated in the real world” (Emmott, 2003, p. 58). In the infant stages of this study, the researcher started to examine Said’s concepts on decolonization and to conduct a strictly *literary* research on postcolonial narrative in the usual way, that is, without involving cognitive studies. However, the sources on narrative led the researcher to character study which in turn paved the way to cognitive science. This study’s focus on literary character is thus conceived to be a way to open gates of different scholarly traditions: the literary and the cognitive, as well as pave new roads for a literary character theory that has been “somewhat thwarted by the apparent lack of a unified approach” (Schneider, 2006, p. 1).