Universal Constructs in Selected Novels of Filipino Diaspora Writers: Towards a Model for Teaching Diaspora Novels
Michael Naidas, Venancio Mendiola, Ma. Antoinette Montealegre
Philippine Normal University

Abstract

This study analyzed how five Filipino contemporary novelists depicted, recreated, interrogated, or problematized the diaspora experience in their works using cultural studies and post-colonial frameworks. It analyzed the novels of Merlinda Bobis’ Fish-Hair Woman (2012; Ninotchka Rosca’s State of War (1998); Arlene Chai’s Eating Fire, Drinking Water (1997); Cecilia Manguerra-Brainard’s When the Rainbow Goddess Wept (1995), and Jessica Hagedorn’s Dogeaters (1990). It also determined universal constructs on the diasporan experience in the selected novels and examined the representation of the diasporan and/or post-colonial experiences in the selected novels as seen through the elements of narrative technique, characterization, and signification. Then it proposed a model for teaching diasporan literature. Results show that there are three constructs emanating from the novels: social, cultural and political. Such constructs are further represented by binary opposition: for social constructs, home vs. exile and citizen (national) vs. transient (transnational); for cultural construct, pure (monocultural) vs. hybrid (multicultural); and for political construct, dominant vs. subaltern. The novels’ narrative techniques, characterizations, and significations represent the diasporan and/or postcolonial experience. Future studies may examine the same topic using different literary theories involving other representative literature of the Philippines and literatures of other colonized/diasporan communities other than the Philippines.

Keywords: Constructs, culture, criticism, diaspora, identity, hegemony, postcolonial

Because of their desire to roam the vast open spaces and brave the uncharted seas, human beings have become “vagabonds” on the run. Writers and philosophers of different schools and temperaments such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Dostoevsky have given various labels to this restlessness: search for identity, search for truth, search for freedom, search for meaning, or search for happiness. In a postmodern setting where technology makes everything seems possible, this restlessness, which manifests itself in different forms and in different degrees to different people at different times, stems from the human beings’ unconscious struggle to escape from a land of exile and regain a lost paradise, or find for themselves a new home. Many tribes of the world have travelled far and wide, voluntarily or forcibly leaving their “paradise” in search of a new home (Barayuga, 1998). Usually these tribes equate the good and ideal life with imported goods, the lost paradise with foreign shores, all in the hope of establishing a home, yet a home which turns into an exile, Barayuga described. This, with all the succeeding events that come with it, is called diaspora.
Diaspora (from Greek διασπορά, “scattering, dispersion”), according to Braziel (2008), is a group of people scattered in a smaller geographic area with a common origin. Diaspora, too, according to him, refers to the dispersion of a population from their native homeland, like historical mass dispersions of an involuntary nature. Concrete examples for this would be the Biblical diaspora of the Israelites in Egypt, the expulsion of Jews in Europe, the slave trade in African Trans-Atlantic region, the coolie slave trade in Southern China, and the Messenians one hundred-year exile under the rule of the Spartans.

Kevin (2013) argued that diaspora has different kinds and such kinds are determined by their causes such as imperialism, trade or labor migrations, or by the connections people involved in it feel within the community they have chosen to assimilate themselves. Notably, some communities which have been subjected to diaspora are still connected politically with their homeland. By this notion, unsurprisingly, there are some qualities typical to diasporas. Among them, the will to “come home”, the need to be accepted by other communities in the diaspora, and the not fully assimilating themselves with the host country.

Diaspora, in all its “ins” and “outs”, signifies a sense of displacement among or expulsion from the described population as it is always associated with detachment from a national territory (Barayuga, 1998). People who have undergone it have a hope or even a desire for a “homecoming” at some point because for them, the homeland still exists. Many authors have posited that diaspora can result to a loss of nostalgia from the memories or even images of home as people “re-root” in a number of displacements. With this said, individuals may have multiple representations of “home” their displacement with various reasons for keeping some form of connectivity to each. However diverse the reasons for going to a new land, the unconscious motivations were one and the same. It was all part of the quest for a lost paradise and the better life that it symbolized. The new land, was to be the end, or the means to the end. People flock into the new land to realize their dreams.

In the Philippines, diaspora came as a result of unstable economy, unequal job opportunities and political upheavals during the Marcos regime. Thousands of Filipinos in their hope to find greener pastures, to better not only their lives but their families as well flock in foreign lands with different cultures to venture for some opportunities (Laguatan, 2011). Laguatan stated that although “Filipino diaspora” was greatly felt during the 1970s, Filipinos have subjected themselves to it prior to this. He further recounted that many Filipinos had already emigrated to the US before the 1970s, mostly in Hawaii and California, working as sacadas in Hawaii (sugarcane field workers recruited from the Ilocos regions in the early 1900s) or as navy personnel who eventually became naturalized US citizens. In the late 1960s, some Filipina nurses and doctors opted to work in the United States on Exchange Visitor visas (not as immigrants), who because of good pay and better opportunities, stayed and eventually became permanent residents of the United States, Laguatan narrated further. Consequently, in some parts of Middle East and in some Asian countries (Hongkong on top of them), Filipinos were already extending out their services, working, mostly as domestic workers or musicians even before the martial law years.

By and large, Filipinos, who have undergone diaspora themselves, feel a sense of “divided loyalty”, and become mestizos, hybrids, products of cross-breeding, so designed for preservation under a variety of conditions, i.e., multiculturalism. As Anzaldua, the Mexican critic puts it, as quoted by Leitch (1987): “Like an ear of corn, the vagabond is tenacious, tightly wrapped in the husks of her culture. Like kernels, she clings to the cob; with thick stalks and strong brace root, she holds tight to the earth—she will survive the crossroads” (p.2215).

How do Filipinos then, who have undergone diaspora, chronicle their experiences? Do they totally exclude themselves from their “home” and write only about the land of their “exiles” or do they write about both? How do they confront their diasporic experiences? Do they desire to go home or to just stay in the land of exile and totally cut all connections from their native land? How about their identities? Do they maintain the “native traits” they were born with or is there any...
change in the way they present and view themselves?

It is in this light the study has been conceived. The research, hoping to find the similarities and differences faced by Filipinos around the globe who migrate to other lands, attempted to understand how Filipino writers, particularly novelists, essay the diaspora experience in their works. The study also aimed to present apart from how the construct of “home” and “exile” and other universal constructs found in the selected novels under study thereby discovering a common thought or pattern in the body of diaspora novels or even literature.

This study utilized cultural studies and postcolonial theories to evaluate and analyze the novels under study. The study used cultural studies to discover models for restructuring relationships among dominant (in this case, the “land of exile” of the novelists) and minority or subaltern discourses (the “home” or “native land” of the novelists) among others, which is also a key concept in postcolonial studies. With these two theories, the investigation aimed to evaluate how “dominant” and “subaltern” discourses are represented in the novels.

For Culler (1997), literature is analyzed and interpreted side by side with culture. He goes on to say that culture is characterized by some factors such as language, knowledge, belief, morality, custom and art which human beings acquire and as a result, supply ample materials and techniques for literary criticism. Culture, too, takes into consideration both the elements and practices of elite and popular or mass arts. Similarly, Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, & Willingham (2005), posit that the field of cultural studies, which is made up of elements of Marxism, poststructuralism and postmodernism, feminism, gender studies, anthropology, sociology, race and ethnic studies, film theory, urban studies, public policy, popular culture studies, and postcolonial studies, came out as a result of the 1960s’ political and social upheavals. Cultural studies then are those areas that focus on the forces (either social or cultural) that may either build a community or cause division and alienation.

For Hebdige (1979), there are generally four goals which cultural studies approaches share. On top of these notions is the idea that cultural studies go beyond the limitation of a given discipline such as literary criticism or history. Next to these notions is the idea that cultural studies remain connected to politics. Third, cultural studies refuses the division between “high” versus “low” art. Finally, cultural studies “analyze not only the cultural work, but also the means of production” (p.109).

Apparently, the texts analyzed for this study are leaning more on postmodern underpinnings, because cultural studies and postcolonial theories are key components of postmodern texts. Added to this is the fact that these theories are all geared towards the theoretical investment in the question of “otherness”, certain tendencies within Euro-American structuralism and post structuralism operating in the same way as the Western historicizing consciousness, to appropriate and control the other (Ashcroft, Griffith, & Tiffin, 1989). Gandhi (1998) further explains that postcolonial and postmodernism cover a wide range of overlapping literary and cultural studies.

Further, cultural studies’ resignification of received commodities (like language, practices, institutions, and values), apart from its focus on the “dominant” and “subaltern” discourses, makes it possible to tie up with postcolonialism. Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin (1989) in their work, The Empire Writes Back to the Center, argue that “postcolonial covers all cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (p. 2). They go on to say that postcolonial literatures are those that emerged in their present form out of the experiences of the colonization. These literatures have asserted themselves by “foregrounding the tensions with the imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center” (p.4). Postcolonial writing thus focuses on the “significance of language and writing in the construction of experience; and the use of subversive strategies, mimicry, parody and irony” (p.27).

Postcolonialism, either with or without hyphen, means only one thing—the revisiting and the reconsideration of previous, recent, and cur-
rent historical materials in the countries that have been colonized and/or are still experiencing the “aftermaths” of colonization in all modes of existence (culture, society, politics, and economics). Postcolonial writings then, emerge in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by “foregrounding the tension with the imperial power and by emphasizing their differences from assumptions of the imperial center” (p. 5).

Objectives of the Study

This research work attempted to analyze how five Filipino contemporary novelists depicted, recreated, interrogated, or problematized the diaspora experience in their works using cultural studies and postcolonial frameworks. The study also aimed to determine apart from the construct of “home” and “exile”, other universal constructs borne out of the diasporan experience in the selected novels. More specifically, it aimed to address the following objectives:

1. Identify universal constructs of ‘diaspora’ or ‘exilic’ literatures reflected in the novels;
2. Examine the representation of the diasporan and/or post-colonial experiences in the selected novels as seen through the following:
   a. narrative technique;
   b. characterization;
   c. signification
3. Develop a model for teaching diasporan literature.

Methodology

From the 1950s to the 90s, a formalistic treatment of prose and poetry was the standard in Philippine literary criticism. At present, with the emergence of postmodernism, using literary theories and approaches lends themselves to criticism. As such, this study utilized the cultural studies approaches in literature particularly that of Jonathan Culler’s Literature and Cultural Studies, Dick Hebdige’s From Culture to Hegemony and the post-colonial critic of Aschroft, Graffith and Tiffin’s in The Empire Writes Back to the Center.

The researcher used the descriptive-analytical approach defined by Mcmillan and Schumacher (1993) as “primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories” in interpreting the five novels under study.

The instruments used in this study were based on Hirsch’s theory that “makes it possible to speak of the validity of interpretation (Hoy, 1982, p.12). The interpreter’s primary task is to reproduce himself the author’s “logic”, his attitudes, his cultural givens, or in short his world (Hirsch, 1967). The study then sought to unravel how the novelists represented universal constructs and the postcolonial conditions in their novels.

The five novelists and their respective works served as the primary sources of data for the study. Selection of the novels was done according to the following processes:

1. Selecting Filipino Novelists/Novels on Diaspora. The researcher sought the help of experts to identify novels to be considered in the study. Further, insights from lists of contemporary novelists/novels in English from books and the Internet were considered, too.

2. Drafting the Criteria for Selection. The following criteria were derived from the suggestions and recommendations of preexisting studies on diaspora and postcolonialism in literature in the country, and were also the result of readings gleaned from articles dealing on the theme of diaspora and postcolonialism. More importantly, a blog published at https://lit102.blogspot.com/contemporary-novel-in-english.html posted on August 12, 2007 proved to be helpful in choosing which novels are too be included in the study. The following criteria then were formulated to choose novels for the study:

A. The Novel

The novels are part of the canon of Philippine Literature in English; written by Filipino exiles (Filipinos who have undergone diaspora either by choice or by force); written in English; written or published from 1990-2012; must reflect, in one way or the other, the diaspora experience and/or postcolonial experience

B. The Novelist

The novelist is natural born Filipino; forced or voluntarily went into “exile”; tackles the
theme of Filipino diaspora; has in one way or the other experienced diaspora themselves; may or may not be alive.

The need to choose Filipino novelists writing and residing from another country (not only the United States) was also suggested by one of the advisers. Upon evaluation of contemporary Filipino writers, the researcher chose to include Merlinda Bobis, a Filipino-Australian writer and performer. After consultation with the advisers and after setting the criteria, the researcher was able to choose the novels as the basis of the study. Table 1 shows the novels, their authors, and the year of their publication.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>TITLE OF NOVEL</th>
<th>YEAR OF PUBLICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Merlinda Bobis</td>
<td>Fish Hair Woman</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninotchka Rosca</td>
<td>State of War</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlene Chai</td>
<td>Eating Fire; Drinking Water</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia Manguera-Brainard</td>
<td>When the Rainbow Goddess Wept</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Hagedorn</td>
<td>Dogeaters</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Noticeably, all the novelists chosen were women as the majority of the novelists referred to in the blog used as the basis for novel selection were women. The researcher also banked on the notion that women, generally, are more emotional and detailed in their works, hence they essay the diaspora experience better than their men counterparts. Besides, when the researcher surveyed the availability of novels in the bookstores, the works of the novelists included in the study were readily picked up.

Procedures

To address the objectives of the study, the novels were analyzed using the tenets of Jonathan Culler’s “What is Cultural Studies?”, Dick Hebdige’s “From Culture to Hegemony” and Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin’s The Empire Writes Back to the Center. The study aimed to present how diasporan writers depict the diasporan and/or postcolonial experience.

While analyzing the novels, the researcher particularly focused on how the novels represented the subaltern and dominant discourses as the main objective of the study was to identify universal constructs in the novels. Identification of constructs which are seemingly present in the novels was guided by the researcher’s readings and review of related literature. The constructs come in the form of binary oppositions, a concept borrowed from the French structuralist, Jacques Derrida, and is therefore with the study being foregrounded on the subaltern and dominant discourses. The binary oppositions then (which initially, were the “contructs” of the study) were further subdivided into three groups of constructs, the social, cultural and political constructs, which in turn are the “universal constructs” as far as this study is concerned. The study also sought to present its implications to the study of literature and other branches of knowledge so as to foster not only cross-cultural understanding, but more importantly, national pride and identity amidst multiculturalism, hybridism and transnationalism. Further, such implications may not be directly stated within the analyses themselves. Readers, therefore, are enjoined to think about how such implications are seemingly shown as they go on reading. Ultimately, the study sought to propose a model for teaching (reading and analysis) diasporan literature not only amongst Filipino novels, but also other novels in the world dealing with diaspora. The model serves as the ultimate contribution of the study to knowledge.
Results and Discussion

After careful analysis and evaluation of the novels under study using Cultural Studies and Post-colonial frameworks, the following are the major findings of the study:

Universal Constructs Found in the Novels Under Study

Table 2 presents the universal constructs found in the study. Such constructs were drawn out from the analysis done by the researcher on the novels under study. Further, the identification of these constructs was backed up by the researcher’s readings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Social Constructs</th>
<th>Cultural Constructs</th>
<th>Political Constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home vs Exile</td>
<td>Citizen (National) vs Transient (Transnational)</td>
<td>Pure (Monocultural) vs Hybrid (Multicultural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish-Hair Woman</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sate of War</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Fire, Drinking Water</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the Rainbow Goddess Wept</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogeaters</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows that there are at least three constructs that emanate from the analysis of the novels under study: social, cultural, and political constructs. These constructs are further represented by binary oppositions; they always paired with one another, thus, a dichotomy of constructs present in the novels.

Social constructs are a social mechanism, phenomenon, or category created and developed by society; a perception of an individual group, or idea that is “constructed” through cultural or social practice (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011). They also pertain to a shared understanding of some aspect of the world that exists because the people of a specific culture understand that thing to exist. The binary oppositions of a) home vs. exile; and b) citizen vs. transient, which belong to this construct, are reflected in the novels. Cultural constructs came next, which pertain to the idea that the characteristics people attribute to such social categories as gender, illness, death, status of women, and status of men are culturally-defined (Oxford Dictionaries, 2011). Under this construct is the binary opposition of c) pure vs. hybrid which is mirrored in the novels. The last construct is political construct, or those mental abstractions which are political in nature; they in one way or the other, reflect political tendencies, the clash between the ruler and the ruled, or the clash of two opposing forces, like the powerful and the powerless in Marxist perspectives. In the novels under evaluation, the binary opposition of d) dominant vs. subaltern which are all seen in the novel’s characters, setting and signification among other elements. This does not mean, however, that it is only these constructs which are present in all diasporan novels. There may be other constructs present but only these constructs surfaced or emanated from the novels under study.
The Novels’ Postcoloniality as Shown by Their Narrative Techniques, Characterizations, and Significations

Table 3 presents the postcoloniality of the novels under evaluation as mirrored in their narrative techniques, characterizations and significations. Such underpinnings were also the product of the researcher’s analysis and interpretation of the novels.

Table 3
Summary of the Novels’ Postcoloniality as Shown in Their Narrative Techniques, Characterizations and Significations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fish-Hair Woman</th>
<th>State of War</th>
<th>Eating Fire, Drinking Water</th>
<th>When the Rainbow Goddess Wept</th>
<th>Dogeaters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Technique</td>
<td>- postmodern text</td>
<td>- linear plot</td>
<td>- linear plot</td>
<td>- linear plot</td>
<td>- postmodern text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- metanarrative</td>
<td>- retardation of narrative in Chapter 2</td>
<td>- slow paced plot</td>
<td>- use of epics to help develop the plot</td>
<td>- metanarratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- set within a political upheaval (Oplan Lambat Bitag of 1987)</td>
<td>- set within the years before Martial Law (First Quarter Storm) and the first two years of Martial Law years</td>
<td>- set within the years before Martial Law (First Quarter Storm) and the first two years of Martial Law years</td>
<td>- set during the World War II</td>
<td>- absence of a single narrator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Characterization      | -lost/ ambivalent characters | -lost/ ambivalent characters | -lost/ ambivalent characters | -lost/ ambivalent characters | -lost/ ambivalent characters |
|                       | -characters longing for home | -characters longing for home | -characters longing for home | -characters longing for home | -characters longing for home |
|                       | -characters who have come home either physically or emotionally/mentally | -characters who have come home either physically or emotionally/mentally | -characters who have come home either physically or emotionally/mentally | -characters who have come home either physically or emotionally/mentally | -characters who have come home either physically or emotionally/mentally |

| Signification         | -the longest love letter | -the Island of K | -the Pellicer trademark | - inclusion of epics within the plot | - kundiman |
|                       | -12-meter hair | -the Festival (“masks” the impending danger/ sugar-coats the “real” scene) | -the convent | - the title | - the inclusion of soap operas within the plot |
|                       | -the river | -the title | - Yvonne’s menarche | - Yvonne’s parents’ intimacy after the war | - Pucha’s subversion of the text |
|                       |                       |                       | - Yvonne’s title |                       | - the title |
The novels analyzed represent the diasporan and/or post-colonial experience as seen under the dimensions of narrative technique, characterization, and signification. This diasporan and/or postcolonial experience is shown in the characters’ leaving (home) for the new land, place of exile. It does not, however, mean that the new land or the place of exile is always a place abroad; it can be anywhere within the Philippines, but not obviously home or the origin of all actions.

The novels’ characters feel a sense of ambivalence; of divided loyalty. They are always haunted by the memories of home, the will to go back to their point of origin which is realized yet, in different forms. To illustrate, Bobis’ characters are able to come back to Iraya although their homecoming is marked by tragedy. Such homecoming is also seen in Rosca’s novel, yet the end hints that the homecoming of Ana gets rather symbolic than literal. For Chai, homecoming for her characters means coming to terms with themselves and rebuilding the “past” that once was lost. For her part, Manguerra-Brainard, allowed her characters to come home to start anew, to reconstruct what can be salvaged from the war actually becoming stronger and metamorphosed characters. Hagedorn, by contrast, creates characters who want to go home, but once home, feel a sense of ambivalence, not knowing what to call home, with thoughts always hanging in the air the idea of belongingness, vague, even shallow.

The novel’s setting always involves two opposing yet equally important vicinities: that of the “home” (the origin of all actions) and the place of “exile” (the new land). For Bobis, it is Iraya vs. Australia; for Rosca, the unnamed city vs. the Island of K; for Chai, the Convent of Sta. Clara vs. the outside world; for Manguerra-Brainard, Ubec vs Taytayan and later Mindanao; and finally, for Hagedorn, Manila vs the USA.

The novel’s significations (symbolisms), in one way or the other, stand for the factors affecting the Filipino’s diasporan and/or postcolonial experience. These symbolisms come in the form of the river and the 12-meter long hair (Bobis); the mansion, the festival, the Island of K and the novel’s shattering, if not cathartic ending (Rosca); the convent, the river and the Pelllicer trademark (Chai); the epic, Ubec itself (Manguerra-Brainard); and the text or the novel itself for Hagedorn. Notably the metaphors of the river figures out of the five works under study, better yet, the Filipinos rootedness in the land of their birth.

The representations in the novel, in one way or the other, relate to the woman novelists’ diasporan and/or postcolonial condition. They assumed characters who idealize the diasporan and/or postcolonial condition, even accept or negate such condition or are always haunted by the memories of home and the place of exile. Bobis is Estrella or Stella; Rosca is Mayang, Maya, or Ana; Chai is Clara; Manguerra-Brainard is Yvonne; and Hagedorn is either Rio or Pucha.

The novelists, too, incorporate native traditions and languages in their texts to further make the novels retain their *Filipinoness*. As one reads the novels, s/he may encounter native Filipino expressions, food, flora and fauna, traditions, superstitious beliefs among others. With these, it is safe to assume that the novelists then “de-hegemonized” the English language, hence, they are “writing back”. Seemingly, the novelists are one in saying that a Filipino may leave the Philippines and yet s/he is forever connected to it, no matter where s/he goes, almost akin to the universal construct that one may leave the country but s/he never leaves him/her. The novelists also seem to tell that with the coming of the colonizers, the pure Filipino identity has become mythic, if not non-existent. It is, therefore, an identity in the making.

**Proposed Model for Teaching Diasporan Literature**

Ultimately, this study sought to formulate a model for reading and analysis of diasporan literature. Such model attempts to help readers, learners and teachers grasp more the essence of literatures tackling the diasporan and/or postcolonial experience. Moreover, with a model at hand, it is no longer difficult to dig deeper into the novel’s meaning and core.
Figure 1. *Proposed model for teaching diaspora and/or postcolonial literature*

The proposed model offers more of a process than an end-product made up of four steps; the first step consists of identifying theories related to diasporan/exilic literature. For this study, cultural studies and postcolonial theories were utilized as they are directly connected to diasporan/exilic literatures. Next in the process is the close-textual reading of diasporan and/or exilic literature to reach the core of the texts on how they represent the diasporan or postcolonial experience. The third step involves analyzing how the author’s postcolonial and/or diasporan experience and the novel’s narrative technique, characterization, setting and signification affect and/or portray the diasporan and/or postcolonial experience. Here, readers try to establish the link between the author and the text and the text’s elements and diasporan experience.

Next in the process is drawing out the constructs (apart from “home” and “exile”) typical to diasporan literatures. Given that diasporan novels tackle the theme of home and exile within its pages, it is recommended that readers try to look for other constructs, without of course, disregarding such themes.

This done, readers are hoped to grasp the very core of the novels which in turn will help them understand the psyche of Filipino expatriates. In so doing, readers will also understand the Filipino psyche more and ultimately reaffirm, if not re-establish national pride and patriotism which ultimately will pave the way for the reaffirmation of an emerging Filipino identity since the constructs themselves encapsulate such identity. Moreover, such identity does not only limit itself to Filipinos living abroad, but also encompasses all Filipinos because by and large, they have been subjected to diaspora and postcolonial experience themselves. Hopefully, the proposed model may shed light not only amongst Filipino diaspora novels but other world novels tackling the same theme, like the novels of Africa, Latin-America, and some Asian countries, which like the Philippines, have been subjected to colonialism.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

In the light of the above findings, it is concluded that people who have gone abroad, either by choice or by force, become “exiles” or are always connected to their homeland no matter what they do. Inextricably, they feel a sense of isolation and alienation at worst, neither accepted in equal footing with the native and rejected by their own people. Consequently, literature, for the Filipino artist elsewhere outside the Philippines, becomes a strategy for survival. Buffeted by the winds of indifference and/or prejudice in a strange land and among strange people, the writer gropes for “salvation through nostalgia” which can take different guises, like folklore and language among others.
Moreover, home is different things to different people. For some, home is a building: a well-appointed mansion for one and a squatter’s dwelling for another. For others, home is a place: a prominent city on the map for one and some dismal, God-forsaken corner of a city slum for another. For some, home is a period in time to which there can be no going back; for others, a place in the past that is no longer present. Still for some, home is people near and dear; for others, an attitude one carried in the heart. In short, home can be anywhere or nowhere. As a result, as people leave their place of origin, they consciously or unconsciously imbibe the ways and language(s) of the new land. Such changes in their character either destroy or improve their native identities. In like manner, the coming of outside forces also negatively contributes to the destruction, but positively reconstruct the identities of the people originally living in these places.

The study further concludes that the intertextuality of the novels under investigation could be read as postcolonial underpinnings, or the reality of the woman novelists’ imaginations. The novels then become multiple texts in continuous conversation with themselves and others; almost an affirmation-argumentation. The inclusion, too, of native Filipino traditions, beliefs, myths, languages (sometimes nonsensical vocabulary), “practices (i.e., tsismis, listening to radio soap opera) into the novels, split open the closure of standard American English; hence, they “breathe” the very hybridism and confused complexity of the characters whose tales the novels tell, thus de-hegemonizing the English language.

With regard to how the women novelists essayed the postcolonial experience, it is Hagedorn who treats the diasporan and/or postcolonial condition more acutely and more pointedly, as like her text which is a “no-easy” reading, so is the clamor for a native, if not pure Filipino identity. Consequently, of the significations used in the novels analyzed, it is the river that emerges too metaphorical because it figures out in two of the five novels under study.

Seemingly, all the novelists are one in saying that the “Filipino exile” must come home, be it physical or just a mental one, to affirm his/her roots and heritage, thereby coming to terms with herself/himself. It must be noted, too, that all the novelists are one in saying that the condition of being exilic bears no difference whether the place of exile is within the country or outside the country (home).

With the above conditions that the novels portray, it is therefore safe to assume that the literature of a particular group of people mirrors the changes that come with time. Yet, such literatures accept, negate, or confront the ideas presented to its subject. Literature, then, is a tool for confronting a nation’s identity.

On the basis of the findings and the conclusions of the study, it is recommended that a similar study can be made on Filipino man novelists to determine other constructs present in their works. A study can also be made on Filipino literature in English to determine the extent of their Filipinoess, to find out whether or not there is in these works the ring of a “Filipino voice” and the feel of “Filipino texture.” Such study may focus on the following points: a comparison on the degree of Filipinoess present in Filipino literature in English and Filipino literature in the vernacular, or in Filipino literature in English and Filipino-American literature; and a study on Filipino literature to find out how much of the author’s regional identity is incorporated into the work.

It is also recommended that a comparative study can be done on Filipino literature in English and on Filipino American literature to determine the extent of the author’s American orientation by taking into consideration the following: a study on Filipino literature to determine the extent of foreign influences other than American or the Filipino way of life; a study on Filipino-American literature to delineate the portrait of the modern Filipino woman or child or the modern Filipino home and family; a study on the same subject involving literatures of other Filipinos who live abroad, but not necessarily America and Australia; a study comparing American literature and second-generation Filipino-American literature to find out significant differences and/or similarities, if any; and a study of selected world contemporary novels on the effect of diaspora on certain nationalities. The study also recommends that a
research be done on how representative Filipino fictionists revisit/ reinterpret Philippine history in their works.

References


