

**GRADUATE SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN CARLOS  
CEBU CITY**

**EXILE AND ALIENATION IN BIENVENIDO SANTOS'  
PROSE WORKS**

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School  
University of San Carlos

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in English Literature

**GRADUATE SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN CARLOS  
CEBU CITY**

by

**BELINDA G. NADELA**

March, 1969

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EXILE AND ALIENATION IN BIENVENIDO SANTOS' PROSE  
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in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of  
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## CHAPTER I

### I. INTRODUCTION

Exile and alienation have become two of the most popular themes in literature. The theme of exile goes back to Biblical times when the earliest exiles in history, Adam and Eve, were expelled from Paradise. But this is not the only instance in the Bible in which the theme appears. We find it in the account of the Jews enslaved in Egypt and held captive in Babylon for a long time.

Among the ancient Greeks, exile was chiefly known as a punishment for those who committed or broke one of the tribal laws. In fact such exile was known to both the ancient Greeks and Romans.

Then came the outlawing of offenders according to Saxon law and the practice of many European countries of removing criminals to penal settlements like the notorious Devil's Island and Siberia. In modern times, revolutions overthrowing dictatorships have added to the number of history's exiles.

The psychological history of man's effort to realize himself, to comprehend the fact of, and finally to accept his own ego, is one explanation of the modern writer's emphasis on alienation, on loneliness, as it

was during Shakespeare's time. Loneliness is the theme of such soliloquies as those of Othello, King Lear, Hamlet, and Lady Macbeth.

Contemporary literature uses these two themes more often. Writers like Herman Melville, Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, and Graham Greene employ them in many, if not all, of their literary works. We also sense them in the works of the French writer Albert Camus and in the Russian short story writer, Anton Chekhov.

The Philippines has its share of writers who utilize these two themes in their writings. Perhaps one reason why this country has inspired her writers to work on these subjects is her former colonial status. She produced her share of exiles both during the Spanish regime which lasted for more than three centuries and later during the period under the other foreign powers that came to the Islands, the Americans and the Japanese.

Bienvenido Santos is one local writer who uses these themes. He writes of a group of exiles who were forced to leave their native land because of poverty or whose exile in the United States had been brought about by the war. He writes of those Filipinos whom he met in different American cities, ready to tell their sad and painful stories. These were pensionados and university students, bright young men, "conceited, brilliant, and

self-sufficient". There were older men, too, timeservers of the "hell that is a Pinoy's life in America" washing dishes, being servant boys, working in the fields, picking fruits, chopping wood, hobbing, driving taxicabs, serving as Pullman boys or bellhops; attired in baggy trousers, ill-fitting coats, and faded shirts. But both groups were not really different for the same brown face could be seen everywhere, the same shortcomings, the same pitfalls.<sup>1</sup>

Santos, writes, too, of the Filipinos at home. This time he explores another kind of estrangement, perhaps, a more complex one. He writes of the alienation that exists among our people: social, spiritual, geographic. The men and women portrayed in these stories are ordinary characters drawn largely from life. They are of a varied sort - the poor farmer, the exiled priest, the beautiful but unhappy wife, the estranged husband, the unwanted neighbor. All of them suffer a kind of alienation brought about by their own conduct, by their neighbors, or by circumstances which have turned into misfortunes for them.

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<sup>1</sup>Leticia Vicente, "Santos' You Lovely People", Philippine Writing I, (Manila: Bookmark, 1962), p. 71.

Santos usually employs both themes in one story. The exiles in America no doubt feel alienated, estranged from their neighbors because of unfortunate circumstances like being segregated racially and culturally. The picture of the Filipinos there is a picture of dislocation, of emotional and cultural starvation, compensated for by reckless poker games or visits to unwholesome nightclubs. It is best summarized in this passage taken from the story, "The Hurt Men".

Most of us boys kept a smarting hurt beneath our brown skin, a personal tragedy of the war zealously kept, as we walked the streets of the big cities of America, seemingly gay and uncaring, eager for friendship, grateful for the kind word, the understanding look, the touch of love.<sup>2</sup>

## II. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem: This thesis is an attempt to show that the themes of exile and alienation are identifiable characteristics in Bienvenido Santos' prose works. It also endeavors to show how effective and successful he is in projecting the image of the exiled and alienated Filipino, an important element in our literature since one of the principal literary concerns of our century is

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<sup>2</sup> Bienvenido Santos, "The Hurt Men", You Lovely People, (Manila: Benipayo Press, 1955), pp. 36-37.