Immigration Blues Study Guide

Immigration Blues by Bienvenido Santos

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Introduction

"Immigration Blues," by Filipino American writer Bienvenido Santos, won the award for fiction from *New Letters* in 1977 (an award that includes publication of the work as part of the prize) and is available in his short-story collection *Scent of Apples* (Seattle and London, 1979). Santos writes frequently of the Filipino experience in America, which is the subject of "Immigration Blues."

The story is a poignant study in the loneliness and sense of exile that have often been a part of the Filipino experience in the United States from the end of World War II through the 1970s, when the story was written. "Immigration Blues" also reveals the fact that many Filipinos desperately wanted to come to the United States and remain there, in spite of the difficulties. As the story relates, many Filipino women were prepared to do almost anything to achieve their goal of living in America.

"Immigration Blues" is written in a simple style that belies the emotional subtlety it conveys. It was awarded the fiction award from *New Letters* and shows Santos's art at its finest.

Author Biography

Bienvenido N. Santos was born March 22, 1911, in Tondo, Manila, the Philippines, the son of Tomas and Vicenta (Nuqui) Santos. At the time, the Philippines was a colony of the United States, and the language of instruction at the school Santos attended was English.

Santos graduated from the University of the Philippines in 1932 and became an elementary and high school teacher. He began publishing his short stories in English at this time. When he left for America in September 1941 as a scholar of the Philippine Commonwealth government, Santos was an established writer in the Philippines. He enrolled at the University of Illinois in the master's program in English, graduating in 1942. Meanwhile, the United States had entered World War II, and Santos was unable to return to the Philippines, where his wife Beatriz, whom he had married in 1933, and their three daughters lived (they later had a son).

In the summer of 1942, Santos studied at Columbia University. From 1942 to 1945, Santos was a public relations officer at the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, D.C. In 1945, Santos had his first fiction published in America, the short story "Early Harvest," which appeared in the magazine Story. After studying at Harvard in 1945 and 1946, Santos returned home to the Philippines, where he became professor and vice-president at Legazpi College (now Aquinas University) in Legazpi City. It was during this period that he published two collections, *You Lovely People* (short stories, 1955) and *The Wounded Stag: Fifty-Four Poems* (1956).

Santos returned to America in 1958 as a Rockefeller Foundation fellow at the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. He remained at the University of Iowa for three years. During the 1960s, Santos divided his time between the United States and the Philippines. In 1965, his first two novels, *Villa Magdalena* and *The Volcano*, written with the help of a Rockefeller grant and a Guggenheim fellowship, were published in Manila. Also in 1965, Santos won the Philippine Republic Cultural Heritage Award for Literature.

In 1972, the Philippine government banned Santos's serialized novel *The Praying Man*, which is about government corruption. It was ultimately published in book form in 1982. Santos had intended to return permanently to the Philippines, but he now found himself again in exile. From 1973 to 1982, Santos was Distinguished Writer-In-Residence at Wichita State University. In 1976, Santos became a U.S. citizen. In 1979, *Scent of Apples*, which includes the short story "Immigration Blues," was published. It is the only book of Santos's short stories published in the United States.

Many more of Santos's writings appeared during the 1980s, including the novels *The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor* (1983) and *What the Hell for You Left Your Heart in San Francisco* (1987), as well as a collection of poetry, *Distances in Time* (1983), and a collection of stories, *Dwell in the Wilderness* (1985). Santos died January 7, 1996, at his home in Albay, the Philippines.

Plot Summary

One summer day in San Francisco, two Filipino women, one fat and the other thin, call on Alipio Palma, an old Filipino widower who lives alone. He has been an American citizen since 1945, after the Japanese surrender that ended World War II. Alipio has had a recent run of misfortune. His wife died, and then he was involved in a car accident that left him bedridden for a year. He now can walk, although he limps and must take great care as he moves around. He seldom sees or talks to anyone, so it is a surprise for him when two women he does not know arrive on his doorstep. He invites them in. The fat woman does most of the talking, while the thin one is silent. The former introduces herself as Mrs. Antonieta Zafra, the wife of Carlito, and says that Carlito and Alipio had been friends in the Philippines. Alipio inquires about Carlito, and Mrs. Zafra says he is now retired and lives in Fresno. She introduces her elder sister as Monica. Monica has never been married. She looks uncomfortable. Alipio says he thought Carlito must be dead, since he never hears from him anymore. Alipio then reminisces about his dead wife, Seniang, who died of a heart attack. He addresses a remark to Monica, but she is still unable to speak.

Alipio invites the two women to stay for lunch. Mrs. Zafra offers to help him prepare it, but he says there is nothing to prepare. He likes to eat uncooked sardines with rice and onions. Mrs. Zafra tries to bring Monica into the conversation, but she is very shy. When Alipio shows them all the canned food he has in his cabinet, Mrs. Zafra says that all she needs is a cup of coffee. He shows them more food, and Monica, plucking up courage to speak, wonders why he keeps so much of it in the house. He replies that he watches for sales and then stockpiles items.

They eat a simple lunch. It is revealed through conversation that Mrs. Zafra was once a nun in a convent in California. She left the convent more than six years ago and then married Carlito. She tells Alipio her story. After leaving the convent, she could not find any work. More importantly she was then no longer entitled to stay in the United States, and the immigration office began to hound her. Many other Filipinos were in a similar position. She did not want to return to the Philippines, where she would have difficulty explaining why she left the convent. She then remembered it was possible to marry an American citizen and automatically be entitled to the status of permanent resident. At first she disliked this idea, but after an immigration officer told her she had to be out of the country within a week or face deportation, she decided she would indeed try to marry an American. She asked God how she should go about it. God told her to look for an elderly Filipino who was an American citizen and tell him the truth. She then met Carlito, and he was willing to do what she asked. They were married a day before the deadline expired. They lived simply and well, she says. Then she sent for Monica to come from the Philippines.

Alipio then explains that the woman who was to become his wife, Seniang, was in a similar situation to Mrs. Zafra. She had to find an American husband or face deportation. Alipio liked her anyway and thought it would be a good idea to get married. In those days, Seniang was slim—like Monica—he adds. This prompts Monica to start talking,

blushing as she does so. She seems more at ease now and goes unbidden to the kitchen to wash the dishes. But Alipio tells her not to; he will do them later.

Mrs. Zafra thanks Alipio for being such a good host to two strangers; he says they are not strangers because he and Carlito are friends. He recalls his youthful days with Carlito and admits he was a romantic in those days. In a moment of wistfulness, he wonders what has happened to all those friends of his youth. They are all old now, and are scattered throughout the United States and the world.

As he speaks, Monica watches him closely. Then she begins to speak, saying that she admires him because he has strength of character. She wonders whether it is hard for him, living alone all the time. Alipio loses track of the conversation and does not respond. Monica, discouraged, lets the conversation drop, which displeases her sister.

Alipio asks Monica how long she has been in the United States. Mrs. Zafra answers the question for her. Monica has been in the country for a year on a tourist visa, but now she has only two days left on her visa, and she does not want to return to the Philippines.

Alipio now realizes why the women have come to him. Mrs. Zafra admits it. They had found out all about him from other Filipinos who know him. She says Monica will accept any arrangement that suits him. Monica starts to weep and says they should leave. But Alipio invites them to stay longer. It seems he is not averse to the idea of marrying Monica. Mrs. Zafra goes out to get some groceries, leaving Alipio and Monica alone. When she returns, Monica takes some of the grocery bags and heads for the kitchen. It is clear that she and Alipio have agreed to marry.

Summary

"Immigration Blues" is a short story about the lives of Filipino people living in America. Alipio is an aging widower living in San Francisco whose life dramatically changes one day with the arrival of two women with a special request. Alipio looks out his window and sees two women at his door; one woman is very large and the other diminutive one reminds him of his late wife's sister. Alipio remembers all the attempts to bring the sister to this country but she could never make the trip even after Alipio wrote to tell of his wife, Seniang's death.

Finally there is a small knock on the door and Alipio limps toward it thinking it had been only a month ago he still needed crutches to walk. Alipio had been hospitalized almost a year with injuries sustained in an automobile accident and he laments that everything went wrong after Seniang died. The resulting court case has left Alipio with a little bit of money and he lives comfortably but he misses his wife who died from heart problems before she was sixty-years-old.

Alipio focuses back on the present and greets the two women who seem to know him and Alipio invites them in as if they are old friends. The heavyset woman apologizes for the intrusion but Alipio is cordial and they talk of the weather and discover that they are from the same area in the Philippines. The heavyset woman introduces herself as Mrs. Zafra the wife of Carlito Zafra. Alipio knew Carlito when they were both young men. They had achieved their U.S. citizenship together after the end of World War II.

The conversation continues for a short while and Alipio shares his loneliness after the death of his wife and how he relies on the sound of the Pacific Ocean to lull him to sleep at night. Monica is becoming more and more nervous although she does not join in the conversation. Finally Alipio asks Mrs. Zafra if Monica is well because she is so fidgety and so pale.

Alipio offers lunch to the two ladies who follow him to the kitchen where they are amazed to see the stockpile of canned goods containing everything from corned beef to Vienna sausages. Drawers contain more bags of rice and pasta and Alipio decides on sardines, tomato juice, and rice and prepares it in his own way. Mrs. Zafra opts only for coffee but Alipio and Monica share the plate of food and she cleans the table where a few grains of rice had escaped Alipio's mouth as he laughed at one of his own jokes.

Mrs. Zafra talks again about her husband, Carlito and Alipio is surprised that Carlito ever married but Mrs. Zafra reveals that it is she who pursued Carlito. Mrs. Zafra had been in the convent but discovered that religious life was not for her and decided to enter social work but because of her alien status she could not find employment. The immigration officer repeatedly warned Mrs. Zafra of her precarious situation and that she would soon be deported.

In her desperation Mrs. Zafra remembered other Filipino women in similar circumstances who married American men in order to stay in the United States.

Although the thought of this was incredibly humiliating Mrs. Zafra reconsidered when the immigration officer told her she had one week before being deported. Mrs. Zafra prayed devoutly in the way she was taught in the convent and finally toward the end of the week Mrs. Zafra understood that God had given her permission to marry in order to stay in this country.

Finding Carlito is a story that is longer than Alipio has time to listen to and Mrs. Zafra declares that she and Carlito were married on the day before she would have been deported. The marriage has been a happy one and neither Carlito nor his wife regrets the decision. Eventually Mrs. Zafra sends for Monica and also sends gifts home to her family still living in the Philippines.

Alipio's marriage to Seniang had been very similar. Seniang had shown up at Alipio's apartment one day offering to take care of him in exchange for marriage. At first Alipio had not been interested but Seniang's tenacity won out and the couple was married and lived happily until Seniang's death.

Monica begins to feel more at ease in the home now and clears the table in preparation of washing the dishes but Alipio stops her by saying he will do the chores after the women have gone. After lunch the trio returns to the living room and Alipio lapses into rambling thoughts about aging and the friends he has known and lost over the years both in the U.S. and in the Philippines. Mrs. Zafra chides Alipio that he must still have some of his youthful zest and Monica chimes in that it is clear that Alipio has many fine qualities and shouldn't be alone in the house.

Finally Alipio asks Monica how long she has been in the United States and Mrs. Zafra quickly responds that it has been one year. Finally it is revealed that Monica is in the U.S. as a temporary visitor and has only two days before she will be deported back to the Philippines. Alipio realizes now that the women have been here for several hours and it has taken them all afternoon to get to the point of their visit.

Mrs. Zafra admits to the reason for their visit this afternoon because she had heard that Alipio is widowed and is a nice man. Monica is overcome with humiliation and wants to leave but Alipio stops her and invites the women to dinner but first they must have some afternoon refreshments. The sisters realize their good fortune at this moment and Mrs. Zafra leaves to find a grocery store. Mrs. Zafra shops leisurely and when she returns to Alipio's house it is apparent he and Monica have become friendly and have agreed to marry. Alipio is in a good mood and watches Monica's legs as she carries a sack of groceries ahead of him into the house.

Analysis

The significance of the story's title "Immigration Blues" encompasses all the good things about living in America and clearly people are willing to take drastic measures to stay but ultimately there is a longing for their native country, which never completely goes

away. The old timers like Alipio feel it more poignantly and even lapse into the native tongue occasionally.

The author lends more authenticity to the story by introducing Filipino words, cities, and cultural references such as the city of Baguio, a city known to both Alipio and the sisters. Mrs. Zafra's husband, Carlito likes to go to cock fights a sport typically associated with the Filipino culture. The lunch that Alipio prepares of sardines and rice is a staple of the culture and when Alipio later offers an afternoon merienda, "not like the American snacks," the women know that they will be having a typical Filipino afternoon picnic.

Although the idea of marriage to avoid deportation seems offensive the men who marry the vulnerable women do so out of strength of character and the promise of delivering better lives which is a noble act. People who are deported back to the homeland suffer the social stigma of not being able to succeed in a foreign country and end up living lonely lives. The marriages are not completely selfless acts, however, as the men, especially the aging or the widowed like Alipio, find the arrangements a convenient way to assuage the loneliness they suffer in their self-imposed exile.

The author leaves the story on a hopeful note in that Monica will be able to care for the aging Alipio at a time in his life when he had become resigned to his solitary life. The mention of Alipio watching Monica's legs as she carries groceries ahead of him implies a new familiarity and hope for love for Alipio. This is the second time in his life that God has provided for Alipio when he did not know he needed anything so Alipio is happy again and confident that God watches over him.

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Characters

Monica

Monica is Mrs. Zafra's sister. Mrs. Zafra says she is her elder sister, but Alipio thinks she looks younger. Monica is thin and very shy. She has never been married. In the Philippines, she works as a teacher. She is in the United States on a tourist visa and is desperate to find a way of permanently staying in the country. She and her sister therefore approach Alipio with the intention of convincing Alipio to marry Monica. Since he is an American citizen, marriage to him will entitle her to permanent resident status in the United States. At first when she meets Alipio she is too shy to speak, but she later finds her tongue and makes sure he knows how admiring and how helpful she will be to him.

Alipio Palma

Alipio Palma is an old Filipino man who has lived most of his life in California. He has been an American citizen since the end of World War II. Since the death of his wife Seniang, he has been lonely. He is also still suffering from the ill-effects of a car accident that happened shortly after his wife died. He was bedridden for a long time as a result, and now can walk only with some difficulty. Few of his friends are left to visit him, and sometimes he does not have enough to do to keep him busy. He watches television and sits out on the porch and observes the passersby. He reminisces about the friends of his youth and wonders where they all are now. The marriage he had to Seniang was a happy one, even though it was undertaken only so that Seniang could stay in the country. He has no real desire to marry again, but when he realizes what Monica and her sister have in mind, he seems ready to accede to it.

Seniang Palma

Seniang is the deceased wife of Alipio. They had a happy marriage, and he recalls her with fondness. He calls her his good luck. When they first met, it was she who approached him, because she already had marriage in mind. She needed to marry an American citizen to avoid deportation.

Mrs. Antonieta Zafra

Mrs. Antonieta Zafra is the Filipino wife of Carlito and sister of Monica. She and Monica visit Alipio, whom they have never met, in order to arrange for Monica to marry him. The idea is Mrs. Zafra's, and it is she who eggs on Monica. Mrs. Zafra is a big woman who does most of the talking. Before she met Carlito, she was a nun at a convent in California. But about six years before the story takes place, she left the convent. The religious lifestyle no longer suited her. But this meant that she was no longer entitled to

remain in the United States. Threatened with deportation, she persuaded Carlito to marry her in the nick of time.

Carlito Zafra

Carlito is the husband of Mrs. Zafra. He does not appear directly in the story, but he is described by his wife and is also recalled by Alipio, who is his old friend. Alipio and Carlito came to America at the same time as young men. Carlito never had much interest in women, being more interested in cultivating his fighting cocks. But when Mrs. Zafra approached him, wanting marriage to secure her own status in the United States, Carlito agreed to the marriage, which turned out to be a reasonably happy one. They are now retired and live in Fresno, California, raising chickens and hogs.

Themes

Exile

Even though he has lived in the United States since he was a young man and is now a U.S. citizen, Alipio still thinks of his homeland in the Philippines. He gives the impression that he is not fully at home in America, in a culture so different from the one in which he grew up. His memories of the Philippines remain powerful. In the second sentence of the story, when he first sees his two female visitors, they remind him of the country girls in the Philippines "who went around peddling rice cakes." The sound of the waves outside also reminds him of his home in the Philippines, where he lived in a coastal town. He used to tell his wife, "across that ocean is the Philippines, we're not far from home." Even though he lives in the United States, he still thinks of himself as Filipino, not American. When he invites the women to take *merienda* ("picnic, afternoon tea"), he says, "And I don't mean snacks like the Americans." Alipio is one of many such "pinoys," as Filipino immigrants in America are known, who feel they are living in exile, even though they may have lived in America for many decades. There is a tone of wistful regret in Alipio's voice as he says, "We all gonna be buried here."

Loneliness and Aging

As an old man who lives alone following the recent death of his wife, Alipio is lonely. He is childless. He often thinks of his wife, and few friends come to visit him. On the day the two women visit, he has not talked to anyone all week, nor has his telephone rung. He spends a lot of his time listening to the radio or watching television. He admits his house is a mess, since he has no reason to keep it tidy. Often he has nothing to do. Sometimes he just sits on the porch for hours, nodding to passersby. He looks back fondly on the days of his youth and wonders where all his friends from the past are. In his reflections there is a poignant sense of the passing of time. Alipio also has his share of the infirmities of age. He is hard of hearing; he cannot walk well. This portrayal of Alipio's loneliness makes him a sympathetic figure to the reader.

Immigration

The story highlights the precariousness of the temporary immigrant (especially the female immigrant) to America, who must keep on the "right" side of immigration authorities. Although the story often hints at the difficulty of life in America as a Filipino immigrant, it also emphasizes the unwillingness of the immigrants to return home. Mrs. Zafra explains the plight of many Filipinos in a situation similar to the one that she faced and Monica now faces. They are forced to hide like criminals from the immigration agents. Those who are caught and forced to return to the Philippines have to cope with the "stigma of failure in a foreign land." Many become depressed and antisocial; some even go mad or become criminals. So whatever the difficulty of living in a land and

culture not their own, the Filipino immigrants still feel this feat is preferable to returning home.

Hope

Although the story is a study in loneliness and a kind of cultural alienation, it ends on a note of hope. Alipio will marry Monica. She will look after him and see to his needs. He did nothing to bring this situation about; it just happened to him. Alipio appears to be a religious man, and several times he suggests that life is in the hands of God ("God dictates"). God has been merciful to him in sending him a young wife. This suggests that even in unpromising circumstances, life may always take a turn for the better.

Style

Structure and Style

"Immigration Blues" is notable for the simplicity of its style and structure. The diction is simple, and there is little use of figurative language. The story unfolds in one scene only, in the same place, over the course of only a few hours.

Memory

Embedded within a simple frame are many stories, including that of Mrs. Zafra and her marriage of convenience to escape deportation, as well as the reminiscences of Alipio about his youthful adventures with his friend Carlito and his obviously happy marriage to his wife. It is largely through this technique of using memories related by the characters, rather than through anything Alipio does or says in the present, that the story creates empathy in the reader for its main character. Alipio's conversation is ordinary, but his memories have power to charm—memories of how he and Carlito were young gallants who wowed the girls with their cooking or how Seniang used to wear his jacket and his slippers when he was at work because "you keep me warm all day." These memories add richness and depth to the story and the characterization.

Historical Context

Filipino Literature in English

The first Filipino literature published in English in the United States was in the early 1930s, a decade before Santos's arrival in the country. The writer who made this breakthrough was José Garcia Villa (1914-1997), whose poems and stories were published by Scribner's in 1933 as *Footnote to Youth: Tales of the Philippines and Others*. Villa lived in the United States, and his short stories, which were highly praised by critics, were included in *Best American Short Stories of 1932* and *Best American Short Stories of 1933*. Despite the success of his fiction, however, during the 1930s Villa decided to write only lyric poetry. His *Selected Poems and New* was published in 1958. Although scholars acknowledge the merits of his pioneering work, Villa is little read today.

In the 1940s, poet and short-story writer Carlos Bulosan (1913-1956) came to the forefront of Filipino writers. Like Santos, Bulosan chronicled the lives of Filipino immigrants in the United States. His stories appeared mainly in magazines such as the *New Yorker*. His book of satirical, humorous poems, *The Laughter of My Father*, was published in 1944 by Harcourt, Brace and was warmly received by readers. It was followed by the autobiographical *America Is in the Heart* (1946), which remains an influential work today.

Also in the 1940s, Filipino immigrant N. V. M. Gonzalez (1915-1999) began publishing short stories, some of which appear in book form in *Children of the Ash-Covered Loam* (1954) and *Selected Stories* (1964). Gonzalez also wrote novels, including *The Winds of April* (1940), *Seven Hills Away* (1947), and *A Season of Grace* (1956). Like Santos, Gonzalez portrays the lives of Filipinos in the United States, although Gonzalez writes mainly of graduate students and other young or middle-aged people who visit but do not remain in the United States.

In the late 1950s, Linda Ty-Casper (1931-) began publishing. Her novel *The Peninsulars* (1964) is about the influence of Spanish colonization on the Philippines in the mid-eighteenth century. Ty-Casper has since published a total of ten novels and three short-story collections.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Santos wrote some of his best work, but it was published mainly in the Philippines. It was not until 1979 that Santos's collection *Scent of Apples* was published in the United States.

Much Filipino work published in the United States deals with the problem of Filipino identity. Filipinos are a people with a colonial past, having been ruled by Spain for 300 years, followed by half a century of American rule. Filipinos who immigrated to the United States had to face issues of exile, isolation, and racism. They had to forge an identity for themselves that could bridge the gap between their cultural and racial

heritage as Filipinos and their new status as Filipino Americans, living in a culture very different from their own.

The Filipino Experience in America

The first wave of Filipino immigration to the United States occurred between 1906 and 1934, when Filipinos were recruited to California as agricultural workers. Alipio and his friend Carlito in "Immigration Blues" probably arrived in California during this period, although no details are given of their occupations. Filipinos also immigrated to Hawaii, where they worked on sugarcane plantations, and in the 1920s many immigrated to the Pacific Northwest. Beginning in 1934, however, the Tydings-McDuffie Act severely limited Filipino immigration to the United States.

Many Filipino Americans served in the American armed forces during World War II. Although "Immigration Blues" does not mention it, the fact that Alipio received his U.S. citizenship after the end of World War II suggests that he may have fought in the U.S. Army, although it is possible he would have been too old to serve.

A new wave of Filipino immigration to the United States began after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which loosened restrictions on immigration from Asia. Between 1965 and 1984, 664,938 Filipinos entered the country (in "Immigration Blues," this is the period during which both Mrs. Zafra and Monica secure their immigration status by marrying American citizens). The rate of immigration increased in part because of political and economic uncertainty in the Philippines. This wave of immigration is sometimes called the "brain drain," because it consisted mainly of professionals, including doctors and lawyers.

Filipino Americans have at all periods faced discrimination because of their national origins. Many have been confined to low-status, low-income jobs. In Santos's story "The Day the Dancers Came," which is published in *Scent of Apples*, a Filipino immigrant becomes an American citizen in 1945 and joins the workforce. This is his experience:

To a new citizen, work meant many places and many ways: factories and hotels, waiter and cook. A timeless drifting; once he tended a rose garden and took care of a hundred-year-old veteran of a border war. As a menial in a hospital in Cook County, all day he handled filth and gore.

In the early days of Filipino immigration to California, Filipinos were sometimes banned from hotels, restaurants, and swimming pools. In 1926 antimiscegenation laws were passed in California that banned Filipinos from marrying white women. This kind of prejudice is apparent in some of Santos's stories. In "Ash Wednesday," for example (published in *You Lovely People*), a Boston family turns their daughter Muriel out of the house when she decides to marry a Filipino.

Santos refers to the early Filipino experience in America in his essay, "Pilipino Old Timers: Fact and Fiction":

Prior to World War II and as late as the 1950s, the Pilipino immigrant was unwanted wherever he went, in the big and the small cities of the United States. As Pilipinos came in increasing numbers, they caused mounting resentment, particularly on the Pacific Coast where riots against them flared, which gave rise to violence and accusations.

Critical Overview

"Immigration Blues" won the *New Letters* award for fiction from the University of Missouri at Kansas City in 1977. In 1978 it was listed as an honorable mention in *Best American Short Stories*. In 1981 the second edition of *Scent of Apples*, the book in which the story appears, received an American Book Award from New York's Pre-Columbus Federation.

Anthony Tan, writing in *Silliman Journal*, calls the stories in *Scent of Apples* "emotionally poignant" and says "Immigration Blues" is "a story of understated pathos and the very human and selfish motive of marriage for convenience." He also notes that all the stories in *Scent of Apples* share the common themes of "exile, loneliness, and isolation."

Tan argues that the stories fall short of greatness because the characters are left groping in states of isolation, denied a moment of illumination that would enable them to make sense of their lives. However, Maxine Hong Kingston, writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, takes the view that Santos "places . . . rare incidents of joy at the center of his stories." She also praises Santos's "very delicate, very fine" writing that "gently" portrays the difficult experience of being a Filipino man in America.

"Immigration Blues" exhibits the simplicity of style that some critics in the Philippines have seen as a fault in Santos's work. But Miguel A. Bernad, writing in *Bamboo and the Greenwood Tree: Essays on Filipino Literature in English*, views this simplicity as a virtue. He writes of Santos's short stories:

The language is simple but weighted with emotion. It is pitched in low key, but the emotion is implicit in the tone, atmosphere, narrative tempo, length or brevity of sentence, the rhythm that sometimes approaches musicality, and the sparing but carefully chosen imagery.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century literature. In this essay, Aubrey discusses "Immigration Blues" as a study in old age and assesses the degree to which the story embodies or rejects the negative stereotypes of the old that are common in American culture.

Santos is known in the United States as a writer who chronicled the difficult lives of Filipino immigrants, especially those "old timers" (as they became known) who came to the country from the 1920s through the 1940s. The old timers remained in the United States for the rest of their lives, but they never lost their sense of exile from the Philippines, and they were often lonely and isolated.

"Immigration Blues" is one such story. The protagonist Alipio is an old timer who lives alone in California and still thinks often of his homeland. But more than being a study of a Filipino immigrant from a certain era, "Immigration Blues," as well as other stories by Santos, are studies in old age.

In American culture, the elderly do not generally occupy positions of honor and respect. In a society that values youth, success, and material productivity, the old are relegated to a position on the sidelines of life. What they contribute to society is not so easily measured as it is for those in the prime of life. In addition, popular culture, in everything from television to jokes (the cognitive lapses of the elderly often being the subject of humor), creates negative stereotypes of old people. Numerous studies of attitudes to the elderly on the part of the young as well as the middle-aged suggest that old age is viewed as a time of helplessness, loneliness, dependence, senility, and passivity. Old people spend most of their time sitting around and doing nothing—or so many people appear to believe. Not all the studies suggest such a negative view, and over the last twenty years, as people live longer, more healthy, and more productive lives, this view of the old could well be slowly changing. But it remains deeply ingrained. The term "ageism" was coined to describe such biased attitudes to the old.

With that background in mind, how does Santos depict his old characters? Does he reflect the negative stereotype or does he undermine it?

The first thing to note is that Alipio is a character drawn realistically from life. When at the age of eighty-two Santos wrote his memoir *Memory's Fictions: A Personal History*, he confessed that in his old age he had come in some respects to resemble Alipio. Like his character he spent much of his time alone, and also like Alipio he was given to reminiscing, wondering whether his friends all over the world were well and knew he was still alive. "I have become my character, a character I created before I knew what direction my life would take," Santos writes. In his article "Pilipino Old Timers: Fact and Fiction," he again quotes a passage given to Alipio in "Immigration Blues" and uses it to point out that there is no difference between the "old timer" in real life and his fictional representation.

So what is the nature of that real life fictional representation? An examination of Alipio seems in some ways to suggest a negative picture of old age, one that confirms the kind of stereotypes that researchers in aging and advocates for the elderly deplore.

This is Alipio: he lives in the past a lot (exactly the way the old are routinely perceived); he is in poor health since his car accident; he is hard of hearing; he does not have enough to keep him busy. He even prepares lunch early because he has nothing else to do. He spends a lot of his time sitting on his porch watching construction work and nodding to strangers as they pass. He has few visitors, and he hardly speaks to anyone as there is no one to whom he wants to speak. Gerontologists (those who study the aging process) sometimes call this kind of withdrawal "retreatism" or "disengagement." In many cases it is considered a defense mechanism: the aged may convince themselves that they do not wish to participate in social life, or do not mind being alone, rather than face the painful fact that they, like most others, are dependent on other people, and not having enough people in their life is a cause of loneliness and distress.

There is a deep sadness about Alipio. He still broods over his wife's death, and since he has no children, he is truly alone in the world. When it transpires that often he whiles away the time by watching television or listening to the radio until he falls asleep, the impression given is of a man who has given up on life. This is a sign of what gerontologists call "alienation." As Zena Smith Blau describes it in *Aging in a Changing Society:*

Alienation is an extreme form of maladaptation, characterized by the feeling that "there is just no point in living," by feelings of regret over the past, by the idea that "things just keep getting worse and worse," and by abandonment of all future plans.

Those at risk for developing an attitude of alienation include those who, like Alipio, have recently lost a spouse. Being a husband or a wife is a major role in life, like that of having a productive occupation, which keeps people engaged in the world and sustains their morale, their sense of usefulness.

What it is like to be old and have neither of these things is also apparent from another of Santos's stories, "The Day the Dancers Came," which appears in *Scent of Apples*. The main character is a Filipino called Fil. He is fifty years old, which may not seem very old, but it is his age that is emphasized. He looks old, and he feels old. Old age has prematurely come upon him. This is how he experiences it:

A weariness, a mist covering all things. You don't have to look at your face in the mirror to know that you are old, suddenly old, grown useless for a lot of things and too late for all the dreams you had wrapped up well against a day of need.

Fil lives in a Chicago apartment with another old timer named Tony, who is dying of a wasting disease. Fil is excited because a troupe of dancers from the Philippines is coming to Chicago. He plans to introduce himself to them, give them a tour of Chicago, and then invite them back to his apartment for a Filipino meal. But what happens when he tries to put his plan into action is nothing like what he imagined. When he arrives at

the hotel where the dancers are to perform, they and their entourage are already milling around in the lobby. Fil feels unwelcome in the midst of all these beautiful young people. He is conscious of how old his face looks, and his "horny hands." Everyone is talking but he is able to talk to no one. The little speech he had rehearsed in his apartment now strikes him as foolish; they would only laugh at him. He eventually plucks up the courage to invite two of the young male dancers to his apartment, but they just walk away with hardly a word. Fil tries again, and is ignored again. He might as well be invisible.

Fil's story is a sad one, made even sadder by the fact that his friend Tony is dying. Soon Fil will be entirely alone. Can the old timers be redeemed? Is there anything about them that offers hope, or is old age everything the cultural negative stereotypes present it to be? The answer is yes, there is redemption, of a kind. Let us return to Alipio.

Alipio is a religious man. His explanation for the loss of his wife is that God took her. And in his eyes it was a matter of God's will regarding whether he would walk again after his car accident. Monica notices and comments on his strong belief in God. Toward the end of the story, Alipio twice uses the phrase, "God dictates." This does not seem merely to be a routine statement of faith but one that has real practical consequences for him. He is aware that life flows on, controlled by some force (which he chooses to call God) that is beyond the petty strivings of the individual. Individuals may have their plans and their designs, but there is a larger pattern at work too, the working of the divine in the world. Alipio is aware of this. One might call it wisdom. When many other things have departed forever, wisdom is there for the old. In this respect, despite his many failings, Alipio offers a glimpse of the archetype of the wise old man, the man who has lived long and knows the way things are. And in this lies his salvation. Look at how he reacts when Monica suddenly comes into his life. His response could not have been predicted from what has been shown of him up to this point. He had no thought of taking another wife, but when Monica arrives and her intentions become known, he goes along with what God sends. He has won a new lease on life.

This story's ending shows that Alipio defies the stereotypical notion that the old are rigid and stuck in their ways. The message is clear: there is still hope for new things, transformations can still happen and in the most unexpected of ways, even when one does not ask for them or seek them. Life is eternally unpredictable, and as Alipio shows, the old can be as swift as the young to adapt to new circumstances and accept what comes to them. Alipio deserves his new young wife. She may not be another Sensiang, his first wife, but one senses that he will no longer be falling asleep watching television, or aimlessly sitting around the house doing nothing.

In "Immigration Blues," then, Santos presents both sides of the coin, negative and positive images of old age. He shows that life is many-sided and cannot be put in a box with only one label.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on "Immigration Blues," in *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, 2004.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Kim discusses Santos's focus on Filipino laborer exiles who came to the United States after World War II.

The theme of the immigrant as permanent exile has held a special fascination for Filipino immigrant writer Bienvenido N. Santos, whose short stories set in the Filipino immigrant community in America are attempts to give voice to the exile in Asian American literature. Santos is writing as one of them. He had come to this country as a cultural envoy immediately prior to World War II. Forced to extend his sojourn because of the war, Santos traveled widely in America. During this time, he says, he was profoundly moved by the lives of his Filipino compatriots here. Although he was supposed to work towards cultural understanding between the Philippines and the United States and to study English and American literature, he "studied instead the Filipino heart." When he returned to the Philippines after the war, Santos was "sad and disheartened . . . but full of stories about his lonely and lost fellow exiles in America."

"In memory of the Pinoys whose lives I shared," Santos published a collection of short stories, *You Lovely People*, in the Philippines in 1965. Santos' portrait of Filipino American life in the 1940s is a tale of men wandering, sometimes lost, in a hostile and sterile climate. It is a journey from bouyant innocence to degraded experience, which can only be endured because the exile still cherishes his memories of home.

An oldtimer helps the narrator of the stories, Ben, understand how the degradation of Filipinos in America has taken place: "I have seen many a child . . . lost in a thousand fogs of the big and small cities of the country. Those are stories for you, Ben, but they are all sad stories. All our stories are sad." Ben learns the story of Nanoy, who dies alone in a vermin-infested basement room; of Delfin, whose blonde wife keeps him waiting on the front steps of their apartment building while she seduces other men inside; of Pete, whose white wife drowns their sons in the bathtub when driven to distraction by their neighbors' racial taunts; and of Tan, whose white wife becomes an alcoholic after she is rejected by her friends and family for marrying a Filipino: "Lord, the things Filipinos do in this country. The things we say. What keeps us living on like this from day to day, from loveless kiss to loveless kiss, from venomed touch to venomed touch. . . . [T]hey are blessed ones like Nanoy, though it took him too long to die."

The transformation of innocent, hopeful young Filipino immigrants eager for a life of freedom and happiness into a community of lonely exiles is gradual and irreversible. As the years pass, their glowing letters filled with "bright hopes for the future and tales of the glitter of life in the new country" cease, even while their aging parents continue to wait for the few dollars they hope to receive, "weaving bright dreams of the future." Meanwhile, the son drifts from one menial job to another and is eventually engulfed by the depravity that surrounds him:

Soon he was gambling himself, laughing with the men when they laughed about vulgar things he himself now knew. . . . Now the drifting from one city to another. Here would

be new faces. would be a new lease on life. But it was the same brown face everywhere, the same shortcomings, the same pitfalls. And, the things he saw, the things he knew, the things he heard from the drunken lips of whores. Who was good, was there any good face, any good heart that remained so in this crowd?

The promise of America ultimately becomes a song repeated by cynical bellhops in their rooming houses for laughs. The monument to Lincoln, the poor boy who became president, becomes the background for souvenir photographs of Filipino men with their white girlfriends. The Gettysburg Address, which they had diligently memorized as school children in the Philippines, becomes, like the "landmarks of American history . . . meaningless . . . meaningless."

The illusion of America is replaced by a fleeting dream of the homeland, pastoral, lyrical, and no longer accessible to them. For Ben, it is the memory of bamboo groves and the fragrance of lime in his mother's hair. For some men it is the dream of carrying huge bags filled with silver dollars home to their families. For others it is the memory of their now dead wives' dark and trusting eyes. For one man, it is a faded, much-fingered photograph of an unknown Filipino girl, who has come to represent home to him. When Fabia asks Ben if the Filipina has changed during his twenty years of exile in America, Ben is careful with his answer because he knows that "all these years, he must have held on to certain ideals, certain beliefs, even illusions peculiar to exile." Since there were so few Filipino women in America, years might pass during which a Filipino never saw a Filipino woman. Once, when Ambo is hospitalized, a Filipino nurse attends him. Just seeing her makes him want to live: "[T]hrough his fevered mind, she was his sister, she was his mother, she was his sweetheart, she was his wife, ministering to him, talking to him with love and he was home again."

The burden of the exile is the fear of dying alone in a hostile land. Kang had felt it keenly, and the terrible fear of dying among strangers far from home loomed ominously before him. What had kept Ambo from suicide in moments of profound despair and loneliness was the hope that he was remembered at home, more than "a named mentioned now and then, casually, always without love," more than "a blurred face in a picture fast yellowing with the years":

I've gone hungry for days and days in the Loop, looking vacantly at stores; in vermin-infested little rooms among the shiftless and unwashed; and I didn't care at all if I went to bed and woke up no more. . . . I thought of hurling myself into the river, but now I wanted to live; I mean, if I died, I wanted to die not here, please not here, in the faraway land, but somewhere in the islands where it is possible someone yet lives who loves me.

Even those who have lost real contact with their homes are gripped with a common anxiety when the fighting in the Philippines threatens even their distant illusions:

Little brown men with sad, oily faces, lines deep under the eyes and around the mouth; frightened eyes, like those of a hunted deer; yellow figures and rough, hardened with labor, chafed from steaming water and the touch of hot plates and glasses. We have

known of hunger away from home, ten years, twenty, thirty, a lifetime. What place will be bombed next, we ask, what do you think? My hometown?

In the end, the Filipino in America survives the loss of his innocence and illusions because of his ability to accept reality. Ambo gives up pretending someone is waiting for him in the islands: perhaps the answer lies in "wanting to remain here forever, not wanting to go home no more. Six feet of sod's six feet of sod—anywhere—and worms look pretty much the same in any climate, under any flag."

The central contradiction of Filipino immigrant life during this period has been described as alienation or feelings of displacement among those who have left a traditional society where community, kinship, and mutual support are the basis of individual mental health:

Filipinos . . . traditionally have enjoyed a highly developed sense of community (*bayanihan*) dependent on face-to-face (*damay*) relations. They have drawn their identity from extended family lines. . . . [In America, they faced] both physical distances between themselves and their motherland [which was evolving in their absence into a place to which they could no longer easily return], and the psychological distances between the Pinoys and earlier migrants from Europe and East Asia. . . . The Pinoy's expectation of *belonging* to others and not just to himself somehow had to be satisfied.

Finally, Ambo recognizes that his folk loyalty and community is the community of exiles to which he does in fact belong. This fraternity of shared suffering and common understanding is the most meaningful aspect of their lives; together they are the "homeless waifs . . . the forgotten children of long lost mothers and fathers, as grown up men without childhood, bastards in an indifferent country." But they are as kin to one another:

The Filipino members of the orchestra were looking at Leo and Val; the boys acknowledged their glances and smiles passed through music. The glances said, Filipino? Yes. And the smiles said, countryman, do I know you, or have we met before, or shall we meet perhaps, it's a familiar face, Countryman; this music is for you; my steps are easy, happy moving steps because the music is for you, Countryman.

The themes in *You Lovely People* are brought together in one story that Santos wrote in 1966. "The Day the Dancers Came," which won the *Philippines Free Press* annual short story contest that year, is a concise and unified expression of the conditions of Filipino exiles in America and their fleeting confrontation with the ideal that has sustained them through their years of exile. Filipino Acayan, retired special post office policeman, former hospital, hotel, and factory worker, waiter, cook, gardener, and bearer of "several jobs that born no names," had "never looked young." His life, emblematic of the lives of thousands of other Filipino men who came to the land of golden opportunity to eke out a living on its fringes, unable to make enough money to return to their native lands but prevented by anti-miscegenation laws from marrying and starting families, has passed him by unaware like an aborted foetus. Fil has not been permitted to develop a full life, and he suddenly finds himself an old man: "In the beginning, the words he often heard were: too young, too young; but all of a sudden, too young became too old, too late.

What had happened in between? A weariness, a mist covering all things." Fil had worked as a menial in a Cook County hospital, tending a row of bottles on a shelf:

[E]ach bottle containing a stage of the human embryo in preservatives, from the lizard-like foetus of a few days, through the newly-born infant, with the position unchanged, cold and cowering and afraid. Sometimes in his sleep, Fil dreamed of preserving the stages after infancy, but somewhere he drew a blank like the many years between too young and too old.

Fil Acayan's marginal existence has made his life a shadow, a recording to be played back on a portable tape recorder, which he calls his "magic sound mirror." In his isolation he has learned to make the lonely world around him meaningful through fantasy: staring at the ceiling over many years, he begins to see landscapes, and rivers in the stains and cobwebs. He imagines civilizations waxing and waning as the ceiling is changed by soot and age. Staring at the ceiling becomes a game he can play by himself while forgetting the passage of time.

When the dancers from Manila come to Chicago, he hopes to taste his lost youth and his homeland through them. He wants to invite them, his *paisanos*, to his apartment for *adobo*, to take them sightseeing in "his" Chicago. From the point of view of the dancers, it would be senseless to eat *adobo* with some old Filipino exile in Chicago. The decades Fil has lost between youth and old age divide them permanently. Fil, like many Meiji Japanese, Ch'ing Chinese, and Yi Dynasty Koreans, has been cut off from his homeland by the years between their arrival in America and today. Even his dialect, which he speaks in "florid, sentimental, poetic" style into the tape recorder, is the language of a past not known to the dancers and strange to their modern ears. Fil demands the impossible of them: he wants to relive through them the lost period between his infancy and old age, the period that spans his life in America. So the "beautiful people" reject his awkward, diffident advances, brushing past him, laughing and chatting at the hotel, their hair pomaded and exuding the fragrance of "long forgotten essence of *camia, ilang-ilang, dama de noche*." Rebuffed, Fil fantasizes that, if they had accepted his invitation, they would have returned to the islands to tell their countrymen of the kind, amusing old Filipino who took them into his apartment:

They would tell their folks: We met a kind, old man, who took us to his apartment. It was not much of a place. It was old—like him. When we sat on the sofa in the living room, the bottom sank heavily, the broken springs touching the floor. But what a cook that man was! And how kind! We never thought that rice and *adobo* could be that delicious. And the chicken *relleno*! When someone asked him what the stuffing was—we had never tasted anything like it— he smiled, saying, 'From heaven's supermarket,' touching his head and pressing his heart like a clown.

Since the moment that would have served him as a memory of his relived lost youth remains only a fantasy, Fil records the dancers' performance on his tape recorder. He can then play back the performance, experiencing the clapping bamboo poles, the dancers' bare brown legs, "the sounds of life and death in the old country," the Igorots, the lovers, the gongs, and the feasts of his mislaid youth and distant homeland over and

over again in the narrow confines of his apartment. Fil knows that he will never go back to the Philippines.

The only meaningful reality in Fil's life is his friendship with his roommate, a retired porter. Tony is Fil's only family; like *manong* Fil, he was brought to America for menial labor and then relegated to a life of poverty and isolation. The two men share their exile huddling together in their loneliness, suspended between a dimly recalled homeland and the inaccessible fringes of American society. Fil is the dreamer; Tony is the realist. Tony knows that they will die in America, alone and discarded, while Fil dreams of the islands. Tony does not even attend the dancers' performance.

Fil's fantasies are abruptly interrupted by his realization that Tony is really dying, that he may lose the only family and friend in his life, the only one who has shared his floating life, "stranded without help" in the middle of a shoreless and indifferent sea.

The intended audience for the stories is less the American reader than the intellectual in the Philippines, whose idealization of American life and culture and aristocratic dissociation from the lowborn Pinoy Santos challenges in stories of the shared suffering and alienation of Filipinos of all social classes. There is an undertone of reproach in the portrayal of the contrast between the Filipino exile in America, who has sustained himself on dreams of the homeland, and the "beautiful people" of contemporary Manila, who little resemble the ideal cherished by the exile. In "The Long Way Home," rich Filipinos in posh coffee shops and bayside rivieras discuss in fluent Castilian or in "psuedo-Yankee twang" their plans to leave their war-torn mother country for Europe or America, "where everything can be bought for money." Santos is particularly concerned with the contrast between the Filipinos who are desperate to come to America and become completely assimilated into American life and the "oldtimers" who "did not want to become American citizens because they planned to return home to the Philippines, living the remainder of their days in the old villages, where their roots are." The irony is that most of the oldtimers never made it home again.

Although Santos has not devoted his literary attention exclusively to the Filipino American experience, the life of the exile has continued to haunt him. He made three more trips to America, at first as a Rockefeller and Guggenheim fellow and later as an Exchange Fulbright Professor. In 1972, he and his family were preparing to leave for the Philippines when martial law was declared. The novel that he had scheduled for publication was disapproved and canceled; and although he had been slated to teach in the fall semester, the schools had been closed. And so Santos himself has become an unwilling exile, living in America indefinitely, suspended between the same two worlds of the oldtimers about which he had so poignantly written.

For a time, he tried to write about the recent city-bred and middle-class Filipino immigrants, who have been settling in the United States according to the new Immigration and Naturalization preferences established in 1965. Santos tried a "funny novel," *What the Hell for You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*, about "the new breed of Filipino immigrants, professionals and businessmen who lived in mansions on hills above the babel of the narrow streets, or in the exclusive residential sections away from

the smell of the harbor and the fish markets." But there is something prosaic and distasteful about this "new breed," who according to Santos are "independent, luckier, . . . smart," and callous:

They know all the answers or seem to, anyhow; they glow with confidence, a beautiful people. . . . No loneliness for them. Loneliness is a disease, a terminal disease, they say in so many words, and they talk a lot. They hold glittering parties around their swimming pools, the diamonds on the fingers outshining the light in their eyes. No nostalgia for the new breed. The talk closest to home revolved around the current pesodollar exchange, tax exemptions, loopholes in the tax laws and proven ways of circumventing [*sic*] them. Investments. New car models. At the last party I attended, they were comparing the relative power and clarity of their C.B. radios and how to keep them from being stolen.

Among the new immigrants, Santos says he feels like an "oldtimer" and wonders if his presence makes them think of their old parents back home. Consistently, he returns to his interest in the older, laboring exile:

I could not forget the smell of decay and death in the apartments of the old-timers among my countrymen who sat out the evening of their lives before television sets in condemned buildings in downtown San Francisco. Then the grin in both story and writer kept getting twisted in a grimace of pain close to tears.

Santos cannot resist focusing on the old exiles, because "now I realize that perhaps I have also been writing about myself.

Source: Elaine H. Kim, "New Directions," in *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and Their Social Context*, Temple University Press, 1982, pp. 265-72.

BOOKRAGS

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Tan discusses the stories in Santos's Scent of Apples *and their common theme of expatriation and its effects.*

Scent of Apples: A Collection of Stories (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1979, 178 pages) is Bienvenido N. Santos's first book to be published in the United States, but fifteen of the sixteen stories in this collection have appeared before in two books published in the Philippines: eleven in *You Lovely People* (Bookmark, 1955) and four in *The Day the Dancers Came* (Bookmark, 1967). Thus, all the stories in this new collection are familiar to Filipino readers except the first one, "Immigration Blues," whose significance in the book, apart from its own separate virtue as a story of understated pathos and the very human and selfish motive of marriage for convenience, is that it brings to the present decade the continuing story of Filipinos in America.

The common themes of these stories about Filipinos in America are universal themes of exile, loneliness, and isolation. Into these themes Santos has folded the special flavor of Filipino nostalgia for home, which, for the exiles, meant also the past. When Santos achieves a perfect blending of the universal themes and the indigenous sensibility, the results are such emotionally poignant works as the title story and the prize-winning "The Day the Dancers Came," two stories in which nostalgia accentuates the sense of exile and isolation.

For one reason or another Santos's Filipino expatriates stay on in America even when their dream of success in the land of plenty has finally vanished. Ambo, the narrator in many stories, has attempted to return, only to be disappointed at home, not so much by the yearly typhoon that plagues his home in the Bicol region as by the betrayal of a friend whom he used to help in Washington, D.C. So he seeks another passage, perhaps a final one, back to America. Celestino Fabia can never return to his native shore in the Visayas because, having stayed twenty years on a remote farm in Michigan, no one will remember him. His only link with the Philippines is a faded picture of a Filipina he does not even know. Filemon Acayan can only make a symbolic return by welcoming and attempting to entertain the Bayanihan Dancers in Chicago. When they turn down his offer to drive them around the city and to eat at his apartment, he makes what seems a desperate effort at preserving the last moorings with his country: he attends their show and records their songs and the sounds of their agile, dancing feet doing the tinikling. However, when he plays the tape recorder at his apartment for the benefit of his dying friend, another Filipino exile, Filemon presses the wrong button, and in one clumsy moment erases what he has tried so hard to preserve—his last link with his people and country—thus making his isolation more devastating and complete.

Many more like him never return, even symbolically, and many do not even dream of returning. Lost and confused in strange cities among strange people, they drift aimlessly, and to forget a weariness which is more than physical they play poker or billiards, and drink and seek momentary solace in the faithless arms of women. They have become spiritual drifters, suffering as much ruin as the warravaged Philippines. In

a sense, they are the people to whom the words of Father Ocampo in "For These Ruins" accurately apply: "We have seen pictures of our blasted cities. But there are ruins other than the eyes can see."

It is the mark of Santos's genius as a fictionist to have portrayed these ruins in story after story, to have given a spiritual and cultural counterpart to the physical ruins suffered by the Philippines during the last war. To be sure, the stories of Santos in this collection are not about the Filipinos in the Philippines who, having suffered the physical effects of war, have also suffered its spiritual effects. The scarred psyche caused by the war remains for other Filipino writers to record, and many have attempted to do so. Having spent the war years in America, Santos could only write about those who have been, literally, far from battlefronts. Yet, it is a further measure of his genius that his stories are no less memorable and true, his characters no less lonely, for that fact.

If the outbreak of the war gave Santos the personal opportunity to travel and lecture extensively in America and enabled him to meet many Filipino expatriates, the consequent occupation of the Philippines by the enemy gave him the artistic fulcrum to elevate reality into art. It fired his imagination so that he began to see the war as one more dimension in the isolation of the expatriates. It became for him as a writer, if not as a man, the ultimate symbol of the *lostness* of his countrymen in America. I say this notwithstanding the fact that in the present book only three stories have something to do with the war, and even here the war is a mere backdrop: because in many stories he has transmuted the physical ruins of his country into the spiritual ruins of his countrymen abroad.

In exploring the many dimensions of the isolation of the expatriates, Santos, however, has not stopped with the war. War, after all, is a historically contained event, and although a people may suffer its consequences long after it is over, the isolation it imposes on its victims comes from the outside and from foreign enemies. Besides, the Filipinos about whom Santos has written were not direct victims of the war. If they suffered from isolation from their country as a result of the war, their isolation is somehow lessened by their own helplessness and by a great deal of historical inevitability. What is more painful is that isolation for which they were responsible and which to a certain degree they could prevent. In almost all the stories this is the kind of isolation that Santos has tried to explore.

There are at least four sources of this isolation. One is excessive nostalgia for the homeland. Another is betrayal by fellow men, by fellow-Pinoy. The third is the death of a dream of success, ironic in that the dream dies in the land which has caught the imagination of the world, and of Filipinos especially, as the land of promise, the land of opportunity. The characters of Santos, after a brief fling with the ideal, wake up one morning to find that America has turned out to be the land of unfulfilled promises, of lost opportunities. The last source of isolation is the confusion brought about by trying to live in two culturally different worlds.

Two of the best stories in this collection explore the pathos of nostalgia. In "Scent of Apples," Celestino Fabia travels thirty miles from his farm to the city just to listen to a

Filipino talk about the Philippines. This certainly is not bad, but his keeping a picture of a Filipina when in fact he is married to an American is something else. It is not fair to his wife, to say the least. His wife happens to be a faithful woman, who saved him from freezing in the snow when he had appendicitis, and who worked as a scrub woman in the hospital to pay the bills. She is worthy of her namesake, the biblical Ruth. He has a good-looking son and an apple orchard which gives him more apples than he can sell. The surplus apples rot in the storeroom, and he gives them to the pigs. His wife, his son, and the apple orchard are abundance enough, but his excessive nostalgia for home, where nobody remembers him, makes him blind to all these blessings. He wastes his abundance, like the apples he gives to the pigs, throwing, so to speak, the proverbial pearls to the swine. Hence, we note in passing, the aptness of the apple-symbol and the title. This story should make the exile rethink his idea of home: not a place where you were born and grew up, but where you are at present, where your love is. But man, especially the exile, is an incorrigible dreamer. How often in the solitude of an exile do the images of home crowd into his lonely mind! And in this lies the pathos of the story.

Another such dreamer is Filemon Acayan in "The Day the Dancers Came," Growing old in a foreign country is sad enough, but if one could accept it as inevitable, if one tried to make the best of the situation, one would suffer less. This seems to be what Acayan is trying to do in Chicago until he hears of the coming of the Filipino dancers. Then he begins to dream: welcome the dancers, entertain them, show them around the city, invite them to eat Filipino dishes at his apartment, so that when they return to the Philippines they will remember him. But all his efforts at trying to establish a link with his countrymen are frustrated. When he accidentally erases what he has recorded in his "sound mirror" he loses the last link with what he knows as home. In a symbolic way, this underscores the irony and pathos of longing.

"The Door" and "Letter: The Faraway Summer" explore the other source of isolation. Betrayal, especially by a friend, is so crushing that it could burst even the mighty heart of a Caesar. This allusion to Caesar is not uncalled for. Santos himself deliberately, albeit implicitly, alludes to Caesar's "Et tu, Brute." In the story "The Door," Delfin knows that his American wife is unfaithful, but he cannot do anything, does not do anything, because he loves her. She entertains men in their apartment, and when he comes and finds the door locked, he waits on the stairs until her lover comes out. One Christmas evening, Ambo, a friend of Delfin and the narrator of the story, visits him and his two little daughters. Delfin is not at home, and Ambo, while waiting for him, takes time to fix the blinkers of the Christmas tree. The girls lock the door. When Ambo finally leaves the apartment he finds Delfin waiting outside. To Ambo's Christmas greetings Delfin can only ask the stabbing question in the dialect, "Why you also, Ambo?" ("*Bakit ikaw rin ba, Ambo?*" in Tagalog.) It is significant that Delfin expresses his most profound hurt in his mother tongue. The pathos is that Delfin does not know the truth, and it is cold comfort to say that at least Ambo has not actually betrayed his friend, because for Ambo it is as if he has.

In "Letter: The Faraway Summer" betrayal comes in the form of one man's, one Pinoy's, lack of *utang na loob* and the other man's sensitivity to such cold and general reference

as "just one of those Pinoys" when friendship demands a warmer reference. In "For These Ruins" betrayal comes from one who does not understand the special value we Filipinos attach to *utang na loob*. Julia Flores, an uneducated Filipina, has a son by an American soldier whose life she has saved in Bataan. She is left by her husband and is driven away with her son from America by her in-laws.

Beginning with "And Beyond, More Walls" and ending with "Lonely in the Autumn Evening," seven stories must be taken as one long story (the stories being merely episodes); Santos here chronicles the aimless lives of Filipinos whose dream of success has come to naught. The focal story is that of Nanoy, a taxi driver, whose death brings the Filipinos together in communal suffering, and in whose misfortune they see their own. In these stories we see the resiliency, humor, and *bayanihan* spirit of the the Filipinos abroad, three qualities which sustain them and earn for them from their American friends the sobriquet "you lovely people." It is also in these stories that the real name of Ambo, Pablo Icarangal, takes on a larger significance, for it is he who goes around soliciting contributions in order to help defray the funeral expenses of Nanoy. Ambo's act may be seen simply as an expression of basic human sympathy and charity. As Filipinos we see it as a concrete example of the values of *damay* and *bayanihan*, of *awa*, or pity, for someone who has suffered at the hands of fate. In Ambo we see a praise-worthy Filipino who has not lost his soul even in a foreign land.

The other story that deals with frustrated dreams is "The Contender," the story of a former boxer who, doomed to sell pencils because he is going blind, loses in the larger arena of life.

The story that deals with the confusion of trying to live in two culturally different worlds is "Quicker with Arrows." In love with Fay Price (an unfortunate choice of name), Valentin Rustia cannot make up his mind whether he should marry this American cashier in a government cafeteria or a pampered Filipina heiress. As long as there is war and he is in America, he need not make a decision, but the war ends, he has to return to the Philippines and he has to decide. Unfortunately, the decision to marry Fay comes too late and he loses her; and the price for such procrastination, which in Rustia is a result of "cultural stress" (Leonard Casper's phrase in the Introduction to the book), is loneliness and isolation.

Memorable and sad as most of these stories are, they, nevertheless, leave the reader unsatisfied. Even "Scent of Apples" falls short of being great. The reason, I think, is that Santos, consciously or not, leaves his protagonists groping in the darkness of their isolation. He denies them that sudden moment of illumination of their condition, that "epiphany," as James Joyce calls it, that moment when the protagonist, provoked by an image, a sound, or a smell, realizes something about himself, or about the nature of life in general. It need not be a full awakening, an apocalyptic vision, such as we have in the novel or novella. An intimation, a glimpse, a flash, would suffice in a short story, provided that it allows the protagonist to experience a change in perception or attitude; to become, if slightly, a different person, though not necessarily a better one, at the end of the story from what he was at the beginning. A more useful term for this change than Mark Schorer's imprecise "moral evolution" would be Robert Frost's "momentary stay

against confusion." This term suggests more accurately that the moment of illumination need not be, in a short story, as clear, final, and irrevocable as the shout of "Eureka!" or Mr. Kurtz's "the horror! the horror!"

The protagonists of Santos's stories draw us into their world by the force of their isolation and loneliness. Indeed, pathos is the most arresting emotional quality of these stories. Depending on one's aesthetics, it may or may not be enough. However, the stories of Tolstoy, Mann, Conrad, Kipling, Joyce, and Marquez show us that pathos can, artistically, be more poignant and satisfying if the protagonist is made aware of his condition, of some meaning in his experience or other people's. It does not matter if that meaning is not positive or wholesome so long as the protagonist becomes aware of it, and to a certain degree it clarifies an aspect of his experience. Reading the stories of Ivan Ilych, Aschenbach, Arsat, Dravot, Conroy, and Colonel Buendia elevates our sympathetic identification with them from mere pathos to tragic pity. The mature aesthetic experience does not remain in a nether world of feeling because the pain of knowing experienced by the protagonist illuminates both his understanding and ours. In his conscious suffering the protagonist elicits, if not actually demands, respect from the reader, and this respect expunges the temptation of the reader to feel, his pity, superior to the protagonist. An unconsciously suffering protagonist is looked down upon as somebody to be pitied without necessarily being respected. Shakespeare and the Greek tragedians understood this important psychological point in the aesthetic experience of literary art. If we examine our feeling of pity toward Fabia, Acayan, and Rustia, we will discover that we harbor a certain degree of superiority to them. Not so with Ambo, especially in "Letter: The Faraway Summer," because, even in his inarticulateness, he seems to know.

Santos, a professor of English and Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at Wichita State University, Kansas, is now an American citizen. But like many of his characters, he dreams of returning to the Philippines. He writes in the Preface that he has in fact made several attempts; the last one did not materialize because of the declaration of martial law. Whether he will ever return or not is not too important for Philippine literature. What is important is that he continue to write about the Filipinos whereever they are, in America, in the Bicol region, or in the slums of Sulucan. And whatever in the vast heartland of America stirs him to creative efforts, be it the scent of apples or that of "calamondin fruit and fresh papaya blossoms," be it a wintry landscape or the memory of a tropical skyline dominated by Mayon, the important thing, we need hardly remind him, is to carve in high relief the peculiar character of the Filipino soul.

Critical Essay #4

In the following essay, Casper discusses the displaced person theme in Santos's work.

In the fall of 1942, Ben Santos was summoned from his studies at Columbia University and assigned a basement desk in the Information Division of the Commonwealth Building (now the Philippine Embassy) in Washington. Some of the upstairs officials preferred speaking Spanish and, on the avenues, passing as Latin Americans. Near Santos worked Jose Garcia Villa, mindlessly clipping news items about Bataan and Corregidor while lost in reveries about his first volume of poems, just released: *Have Come, Am Here*. Santos' own sentiments were fixed on his homeland and the immeasurable distances placed by war between it and not only the Philippine government-in-exile which he served, but also anxious *pensionados* like himself with endangered families still in the occupied islands.

His enforced separation from his wife and three young daughters brought him closer to fellow "exiles" whom he later met when the U.S. Office of Education asked him to tour America, lecturing on the worth and stamina of Filipinos as allies. "I loved my countrymen," he wrote, "the so-called Pinoys who were simple and good and trusting once they found you were not a snob." His stories about their anguish and strengths were eventually collected in *You Lovely People* (1955). But he has never really ceased to write about these "hurt men," whose isolation he was to share again in the postwar decades, as resident author on Midwest campuses.

The hard circumstances of prewar Filipino immigrants have been recounted too capably in Carey McWilliams' preface to Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* to require repetition. For years, one of the most unnatural conditions imposed on the *sakadas* who cut Hawaiian sugar cane, or the truckfarm *cargadores* of the Imperial Valley, or the transient menials in the rundown neighborhoods of Chicago and New York, was the near absence of Filipino women among them. When women did occasionally appear, they had to defend themselves against attention turned desperate; and their caution, reinforcing Filipino decorum, was often misunderstood. In "Brown Coterie," one of the original collection's nineteen episodes, a number of educated "Filipina girls" are scolded for avoiding the "good-for-nothing boys who circulate around here." In their enforced loneliness, some Filipinos earned a reputation as "blonde chasers"; others sought in American women the virtues of fidelity and tenderness which they associated with the half-remembered, half-romanticized motherland. Novelist-critic N. V. M. Gonzalez is surely correct in seeing this ideal as providing *You Lovely People* with "a heroine, the Filipino woman. Obviously, she is what no woman in the flesh can ever be; still, the hurt men are as if possessed. I suspect that it is their private vision of her which made them different, handsome in their awkward way, and which guaranteed survival of some kind."

Filipinos, like their agrarian counterparts elsewhere, traditionally have enjoyed a highly developed sense of community (*bayanihan*), dependent on face-to-face (*damay*) relations. They have drawn their identity from extended family lines, fortified by very real and multiple ritual godparenthood (*compadrinazco*), even when nearly four hundred

years of Spanish overrule and half a century of American sovereignty prevented development of any clear image of national identity. Some of the psychological security derived from supportive family closeness had to be sacrificed by persons migrating to metropolitan Manila or to American fields and canneries, despite the fact that their earnings were shared with those left behind. The Pinoy's isolation became an extension of the pain of separation that other Filipinos felt when transported from one island (and vernacular) to another, or from rural barrios to makeshift *barong-barongs* dangerously propped on the edge of city railroad tracks or slowly collapsing into storm-sewer *esteros*. Furthermore, the feeling of uneasy identity, natural to the Commonwealth years of experiments in political independence, was multiplied among overseas Filipinos because of both physical distances between themselves and their motherland, and the psychological distances between the Pinoys and earlier migrants from Europe and East Asia. In addition to the usual difficulty that all humans have, of negotiating a single selfhood out of *being* and *becoming*, the Pinoy's expectation of *belonging* to others and not just to himself somehow had to be satisfied.

The wonder is that, under all this cultural stress epitomized by the war years' abrupt rupture of family communications, so many Pinoys managed to remain "lovely people." Like Bulosan, Santos can chronicle the varieties of pathetic frustration; the sense of abandonment associated with liberation from a colonial past; the wearing away of protective naivete. But, again like Bulosan, he captures the infallible faith, the resilience, the resurgent dream of self-recognition and esteem, the folk endurance of a people partially immunized against despair by so long a history of dispossession.

The difficulty of reconciling the Filipino dream of solidarity with the American dream of individualism, of unity risking and enriched by diversity, is implied in the mestizo form of *You Lovely People*. Many of its episodes are self-contained; others, with Ben at the circumference or Ambo (Pablo) at their center, provide a kind of continuity compatible with change. Ambo's trembling hands and poker face mirror the Pinoy's profound disquiet under a mask of serenity. Similarly, Ben's near-anonymity barely conceals the fact that whatever is missing in him has to be found in these others, their gentleness, their thoughtless betrayals, their confusions and confessions. Santos deliberately keeps center and circumference subservient to the circle of Pinoy compatriots —such is the book's socioesthetic. Both Ambo and Ben exist in that purest of compassions: shared suffering, as concelebrated offering.

In all of Santos' fiction, this compulsion to belong consistently raised images of departure and provisional return, of loss and attempted recovery. The structure of his second collection of stories, *Brother, My Brother* (1960), is generally recollective of an original flight from the Sulucan slums of Manila to the greater opportunities in the less crowded prewar barrios of Albay under the shadow of Mt. Mayon. Guilt that the relative ease has not been deserved or adequately shared creates an alternating current of tensions not unlike the expatriation/ repatriation/reexpatriation pattern in *You Lovely People*. The same longing for home and homogeneity serves as a central motif for his first novel, *Villa Magdalena* (1965), in which, driven by the smell of death in their tanneries, various members flee the decaying Conde-Medallada ancestral home, for Japan and America. Only years later do they recognize that mortality cannot be outrun,

though mutual solicitude may offset it; and a family feeling is restored. A second novel, *The Volcano*, also published in 1965, dramatizes the Filipino crisis of identity by chronicling the lives of an American missionary family in the islands, between 1928 and 1958. Cross-cultural relationships at first rise smoothly; then, as a Philippine-American marriage is planned, abruptly drop. The sharp contours of the action resemble the perfect cone of Mt. Mayon, beneath whose picturesque slopes seethes a molten mass in perpetual threat of eruption. When ultranationalists violently demand that the Americans return to a country they have hardly known, for the first time they too experience (without quite appreciating) the Filipino's long-term sense of deprivation and homelessness.

In the May 1971-February 1972 issues of *Solidarity*, a Manila monthly, Santos serialized *The Praying Man*, a novel about a slum-dweller from Sulucan who becomes a multimillionaire by selling diluted drugs with the aid of government functionaries. (His wife remarks, "He has to meet, you know, the high cost of bribing.") But even though Santos implies that group-loyalty precious to Filipinos can so corrupt their feeling of community that it deteriorates into special-interest complicities, still he affirms its more positive side. What comforts the fugitive from justice is not the prospect of spending funds salted away in Swiss banks, but the trustworthiness he discovers in two persons from Sulucan, especially his best friend who is now a sculptor in Chicago. Penitent and unafraid, he returns from the States to face charges. The sculptor too is restored by that bond of friendship. He has been laboring on a cryptic memorial to a Sulucan eyesore, a man who daily lay naked and withered, "like the praying mantis," on a pallet near an open window: fatally diseased, yet refusing to die. Out of spite? Out of fear? By the end of the novel, the sculptor has recast his bronze in an attitude of courageous hope. Neither the millionaire's countless *queridas* nor the sculptor's affair of confused passion with Mabel, a student at Northwestern, has offered adequate "pain-killers for loneliness." However, the two men's friendship succeeds because it springs from Sulucan—symbol, in Santos, for folk loyalty and support; help from the helpless, in the absence of patrons.

The feeling of being a displaced person—of having lost or betrayed the traditional attitudes that ordered society—is inevitable in any society undergoing relatively rapid change. The reaction can be as violent as the revolutionary fervor which characterized the Sakdalista movement during the Commonwealth years, the postwar Huk uprising, and the civil unrest organized by the New Peoples' Army during the 1970s. All these had their origins partially in landlessness but just as significantly in absentee landlordism. According to both John Larkin's *The Pampangans* (1972) and Benedict Kerkvliet's *The Huk Rebellion* (1977), the paternalism of plantation owners diminished rapidly when they fled to the cities during the Japanese occupation. Class consciousness could be successfully appealed to, and then armed, only as the former familial relationship eroded. Indeed, class division has continued to increase as a result of postwar restrictions on land holdings, the sale of arable land for suburban development, reinvestment of subsequent profits in corporations clustered in high-rise Makati, and the increasing importance of industrial over agricultural portions of the gross national product. In addition, ex-tenants following ex-landlords to the metropolis have found fewer opportunities for personal services and therefore for patronage.

Changes such as these have caused a decline in the simple agrarian ideals that guaranteed cultural uniformity and stability. With diversification came a rise in expectations inadequately met by opportunities, so that large numbers of professionals who could not be absorbed by the Philippine economy or who preferred a meritocracy emigrated to the United States and Canada. After martial law was imposed late in 1972, political refugees swelled these numbers (Santos' novel-in-progress, *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco?*, uses material drawn from this group). Still more followed later, who considered regressive the autocratic rule of President/Premier Ferdinand Marcos and the rationalization of continuing "crisis government" under the guise of a New Society. By training, many of these later immigrants have been confident, self-possessed technicians, having little experience to share with earlier—and now older—Filipinos. Consequently, the "o.t.'s" (old-timers) may suffer from three kinds of distances at once: between themselves and their homeland; between themselves and their children who have known only America; and between themselves and recent arrivals whose Philippines, in some ways, is drastically different from their own.

Solomon King, in Santos' unpublished novel, The *Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*, feels bitterly this deterioration in the spirit of ethnic unity, which he himself will take to the grave. He has lived alone for thirty years in Chicago, surrounded by Poles and carefully preserved souvenirs of Sulucan where he was born and early orphaned. His father was a champion *arnis* fencer, using wooden weapons in "a silent duel of no touch." Solomon's life too has been spent in a kind of pantomime, so that he might pass unnoticed, untouched. But realizing that, like his idol Robert Taylor, he has not escaped the many little deaths that aging brings, he goes to Washington in search of whatever old friends may still be left. The lament of Solomon (a King Solomon less wise, and divided within himself) is played against a counterpoint of dialogues between anonymous Pinoys of his generation, at ease with one another but embarrassed by the better educated Filipinos now among them.

This new loneliness, this latest fear of no longer belonging to a culture which itself seems at times to be wasting away, finds expression in the rhythm of arrangement provided by the selections in *Scent of Apples*. "Immigration Blues" describes the still precarious situation of aliens and permanent residents, today. The segments of *You Lovely People* which follow are doubly retrospective, recovering incidents from Pinoy life during World War II, and folkways from a past even more remote. So receding a perspective could easily be considered nostalgic; or even elegiac; and the Pinoy characters, sentimentalists unable to adapt to the natural evolution of their dearest traditions. But the spiral motion of the final section makes it clear that Santos is offering an essentially timeless view of culture, which transcends history limited to the linear, the consecutive, and the one-dimensional.

Both "The Day the Dancers Came" and "The Contender" are contemporary accounts of how two old-timers, awkward before the beauty and surpassing sophistication of young travelers from home, recoil into one another's care for final comfort. They are poignant couples, but couples nonetheless. "Quicker with Arrows" is a tale of distraught Philippine-American lovers, in a roomful of opportunists who are planning how they will exploit the chaos in their country, just after the holocaust at Hiroshima. And in "Footnote

to a Laundry List" a professor, recently returned from a ill-fated affair in the States, makes a sympathetic defense of a young female student, out of respect for what he remembers of love and innocence.

That this final sequence (present:present:remote past:recent past) is chronic, rather than chronological, suggests that Santos—throughout the entire collection—is less concerned with history perceived as ocean current or successive waves, than with culture as an entire archipelago of diverse islands in that stream. What he discerns is that any ethnic group consists of individual particles, no two of which are exactly identical (there are Filipinos, and Filipinos), but all of which have declared their commitment to participate, as if in some consummate entity. The declaration of a common bond, of course, tends to be more perfect than uneasy coexistence may actually turn out to be. Nevertheless, it provides a measure of meaning even for those who pay it lip service only.

This is the recurring theme in Santos' work: how hard it always is, yet how important, to be "Filipino" at heart, with all that that implies about human decency, good humor, and honor, consideration beyond courtesy, and putting both hands to a common burden; while at the same time trying to make a life out of being overseas Filipinos, Philippine-Americans, temporary "permanent residents" obligated to be buried "at home," or those assimilated beyond recovery of any heritage whatsoever.

As permeating as the scent of autumn apples is this single, persistent dream: the return of the Philippines to the man, whether or not a return to the Philippines is ever managed. Through dreams one presumes to distinguish the momentary from the momentous. For Santos, that ideal has too often been realized to be mocked as imaginary.

Source: Leonard Casper, "Introduction," in *Scent of Apples: A Collection of Stories by Bienvenido N. Santos*, University of Washington Press, 1979, pp. ix-xvi.

Topics for Further Study

Review the characters of Alipio and Monica, and then write a brief sketch set one year after they have married that portrays their partnership. Are they both satisfied with the arrangement they made, or is one partner more satisfied than the other? Are there any tensions between them? This is a creative exercise, but try to base your sketch realistically on the characters as they appear in the story, taking into account their personalities and motivations.

Investigate the system that allows foreign nationals to become U.S. citizens by marrying a U.S. citizen. Do the arrangements made by the characters in "Immigration Blues" constitute an abuse of the system? Why or why not?

Should recent immigrants to the United States from Asia or anywhere else in the world make an effort to fit in with American culture, or should they focus on preserving their own cultural heritage? Explain your answer.

Research the war of 1898 to 1902 that established American rule in the Philippines. Why did the United States embark on this war? What were its goals, and how were they achieved? What have been the long-term consequences of the American colonization of the Philippines?

Compare and Contrast

1970s: According to the 1980 census, there are 774,652 Filipinos living in the United States. This constitutes 0.3 percent of the total population.

Today: According to the 2000 census, Filipino Americans number 1.9 million. This is up from 1.4 million in 1990. The largest Filipino population is in California, at 918,678. Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Washington also have substantial Filipino populations. In Washington, the number of Filipinos has increased by 50 percent since 1990.

1970s: Filipino immigration to the United States increases due to the Immigration Act of 1965, which loosened restrictions on immigration from Asia. Once in the country, Filipinos are allowed, like immigrants from other countries, to bring their immediate family to join them, subject to visa approvals.

Today: Since the 1970s, the time necessary for approval of a visa application for a brother or sister has grown much longer. The process can literally take decades. Some Filipinos who immigrated during the 1980s are, therefore, still waiting for the immigration of their families from the Philippines to the United States to be completed.

1970s: With Filipino American writers such as Santos and Linda Ty-Casper publishing their work in the United States, Filipino American writing begins to make its way into the mainstream of American literature.

Today: A new generation of Filipino Americans is making its mark on literature, in a variety of literary forms and genres. Authors include Jessica Hagedorn (whose novel *Dogeaters* [1990] was nominated for the National Book Award), Ninotchka Rosca, Epifanio San Juan, and Michelle Skinner.

What Do I Read Next?

Santos's *Dwell in the Wilderness: Selected Short Stories* (1985) contains eighteen stories from the early part of Santos's career. Written between 1930 and 1941, these stories are set in the rural towns and villages in the Philippines familiar to Santos in his youth and early manhood.

Growing Up Filipino: Stories for Young Adults (2003), edited by Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, contains twenty-nine short stories, most of which have been written since the turn of the twenty-first century. The authors include those who live in the Philippines as well as American-born Filipinos. The stories reflect a wide range of issues that Filipino youth encounter.

Contemporary Fiction by Filipinos in America (1998), edited by Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, includes work by prominent Filipino writers such as Linda Ty-Casper, N. V. M. Gonzalez, Cecilia Manguerra Brainard, Greg Sarris, Marianne Villanueva, Vince Gotera, Eileen Tabios, and John Silva.

From Exile to Diaspora: Versions of the Filipino Experience in the United States (1998), by E. San Juan Jr, is the most comprehensive examination of the history and current status of Filipino Americans.

On Becoming Filipino: Selected Writings of Carlos Bulosan (1995), edited by E. San Juan Jr, is the first collection of Bulosan's short stories, essays, poetry, and correspondence to focus on the Filipino American experience. Bulosan was one of the pioneer Filipino American writers, and his work covers the period from the 1930s through the 1950s.

Further Study

Alegre, Edilberto N., and Doreen G. Fernandez, *Writers and Their Milieu: An Oral History of First Generation Writers in English*, De La Salle University Press, 1984.

This book contains a wide-ranging interview with Santos in which he discusses his career and his creative methods.

Campomanes, Oscar V., "Filipinos in the United States and Their Literature of Exile," in *Reading the Literatures of Asian America*, edited by Shirley Geok-Lin Lim and Amy Ling, Temple University Press, 1992, pp. 49-78.

This scholarly article examines themes of exile, identity, and language in the literature of Filipino Americans. It includes a discussion of Santos's work, including his short stories.

Casper, Leonard, *New Writing from the Philippines: A Critique and Anthology*, Syracuse University Press, 1966, pp. 127-33.

Casper provides an appreciative discussion of Santos's short stories, mainly those that record the disillusioning post-World War II return to Manila of many Filipino Americans.

Santos, Tomas N., "The Pinoy in Fact and Fiction," in *Solidarity*, Vol. 10, Nos. 5-6, 1976, pp. 132-36.

Tomas Santos (Bienvenido Santos's son) discusses Bienvenido Santos's short stories as a continuation of the work of Carlos Bulosan in chronicling the lives of Filipino Americans.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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