Gender relationships in the fiction of Bienvenido N. Santos

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GENDER RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FICTION OF
BIENVENIDO N. SANTOS

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This dissertation examines literary representations of gender in Philippine society. It argues that a central and continuing concern in Philippine fiction is the gender roles and social attitudes surrounding the female. A principal focus in this context is the querida. This figure is linked to an endemic machismo that continues to be associated with the double standards of society.

Through the five novels and seventeen short stories by Bienvenido N. Santos, this dissertation examines the relationships between history, religion, material class and gender relationships. It considers the changes that occur over Santos' literary career, especially as he changes to modern and American settings. It concludes that while there is much realist reflection of the social status quo in the texts, there is also some critical commentary effected through narrative distance and implied irony which is more apparent in Santos' later works.
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I. Introduction

Many post-colonial literary critics argue that the common problems besetting present societies are due to the differences of race and class. Because of a 'Self/Other' binary opposition, there usually exists an irreconcilable conflict between two subjectivities, as each claims its 'Self'-ness at the expense of an objectified Other. To these two seemingly inseparable elements of identity, contemporary feminism would add gender as a third element. Feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir\(^1\) claim that there is nothing harder for an individual than to encounter the differences of race, class and gender. If the Blacks who belong to the working class clamor for their place in society, those who belong to the female gender have to fight a double battle for the same objective. Theoretically and practically, women have been victims of society's patriarchal rule. There exists a difference in power between males and females because society inculcates and authorizes differential structures of weakness or strength. There is a correlation between gender and society/culture. Unlike sex, which can be defined specifically through biology, gender — the construction of a sexually differentiated identity according to a range of discursive impositions of power relationships — is normally classified, or valued, by the society itself.\(^2\)

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Any literature is more or less related to history — either political, social or economic. Richard Croghan remarks that, '[t]he history of a nation can be learned in its constitution, its laws, and its political statements. But to know the history of a nation's spirit, [one] must read its literature.'³ Resil B. Mojares states that 'of the social realities through which, and against which, the Filipino novel had to shape itself, colonialism is the most important.'⁴ Indeed, colonialism is a visible element in the Filipino novels.

This dissertation argues that Filipino women's place is greatly influenced by past colonization. Having been colonized by the Spaniards for nearly four centuries (from the 1520s to 1890s) and ruled by Americans for nearly fifty years (1898 to 1946), the Filipino people have acquired traits, values and attitudes from their past colonizers.⁵ Living in one of the Third World countries, Filipino women have varied experiences which determine their place in Philippine society. Under colonialism, race played a significant role in constructing the Filipino as different and religion was important in both providing a place for women in the social fabric and co-opting her into colonial structures. Later, class became a more important determining factor, while in modern times, gender has also assumed a greater social significance as an issue in its own right. Gender, however, has always been one of the key components of Philippines' cultural life. I shall focus specifically on this component in this work.

⁵ The country was also under the Japanese rule for nearly five years (1941 to 1946), but there has been less influence on the everyday lives of the Filipinos, more so on their values.
I have chosen the fiction of Bienvenido N. Santos as the focus of this study because of its consistent engaging with issues regarding women throughout different periods of colonial history, as well as the coverage of themes of national interest, which are indirectly associated with women and their plight. Tracing the historical time-period of the Philippines however, Santos' works themselves cannot be considered as belonging to the 'colonial' literature, because most were written from the late fifties onwards, several years after Liberation in 1946. Nonetheless, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o has pointed out, there is a lingering colonization of the mind that outlasts political impositions and it is this cultural impact that Santos reveals across the changing circumstances of his entire output.

This dissertation attempts a study of five selected novels plus seventeen short stories taken from his five books. Generally, his works can be categorized into: 1) those which depict Philippine life (especially the rural setting); and 2) those which depict the lives of the Filipinos in an American setting. Santos, obviously, has other concerns aside from the place of the women in society, one of which is the essential theme of 'departure and homecoming.' But one discourse underlying all of his themes is that of gender.

Relatively little work has been done on Santos beyond thematic and social history commentary. This dissertation proposes an analysis of images of women in selected Santos texts (after the approach of Elaine Showalter) as a necessary starting-point to

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6 Jaime An Lim, pp. 16-17.
9 Elaine Showalter, Speaking of Gender (New York; Routledge, 1989).
feminist readings of his work. Such a critique is thought to be appropriate in the case of texts informed more by Anglo-American literary tradition than by French literary theory. One reason for not foregrounding feminist theory (especially as it pertains to literature) is its heavy reliance on post-structuralism. In keeping with much of the Philippines’ literary history, Santos’ work must be assessed, initially at least, in terms of its mimeticism (reflection or repetition) of social reality.

The second chapter of this dissertation provides a background to the Philippine social system, including some general points on the Philippine colonial past. In doing so, it focuses on the place of women from the pre-Hispanic period to the present day. To locate Santos, as a writer, Chapter Two also includes a brief history of Philippine literature.

The body of the work (Chapters Three and Four) offers a discussion of the works of other writers followed by a discussion of Santos' works. Chapter Three aims to place Santos' works within the context of how other writers depict gender relationships. It includes works by Santos’ contemporaries: Kerima Polotan Tuvera, Nick Joaquin, and F. Sionil José; and works by more recent writers, Ninotchka Rosca and Jessica Hagedorn. This part aims to identify some common elements in literary treatments of the theme. Chapter Four covers a discussion of Santos’ novels and short stories, with their depiction of gender relationships as its focus.

Since they work primarily in a realist mode, Bienvenido N. Santos’ works reflect the status quo for Filipino women. Attempts are made however, to criticize, as are evidenced by his later works. His contemporaries also reflect the plight of the Filipino women but the two more recent writers' works (Rosca’s and Hagedorn’s) are
remarkable: they overtly explore the weaknesses of the social system and offer some alternatives to improve the *status quo*.

As a part of the 're-awakening' phase of the writer of this paper on the *real* status and role of the Filipino women as well as their need for *liberation* (in its truest sense), this dissertation hopes to 'illumine', though with a tiny sparkle, the path of contemporary Filipino women.
II. The Philippines: Its Literary and Socio-Cultural Background

To discuss the fiction of Bienvenido N. Santos, it is necessary to know first a brief background of the Philippines, in both literary and social contexts.

A. Literary Background

The Philippines already had its own literature before the colonizers came. Before the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines, there was an oral tradition in the form of songs, riddles and proverbs, which were handed down from one generation to another. There was also a written tradition, which has now largely disappeared because texts were inscribed on 'barks of trees, dried leaves and bamboo cylinders.'

Most contemporary works in Philippine literature are written in English. But this arises simply because of the colonial imposition of English as the medium of instruction. However, the production of books written in Tagalog increased, especially since the use of Filipino (the national language) was strictly imposed by the Aquino government in 1986. Nowadays, due to various economic, political problems and social issues besetting the country, there has been a very intensive campaign for Filipinism. This campaign has been

2 formerly referred to as the national language.
indirectly inspired through literary journals, articles, and other publications, as well as the popular media.

The rise of local languages among the Filipinos comes after a confused history of colonial linguistic imposition. The use of the Spanish language was related to the religious conversion of the 'indios' during the first colonial regime. Because of the Spaniards' 'racial superiority', the government also promoted the people's use of the vernacular. In fact, 'the friars looked upon a Filipino who wanted to learn Spanish and become more educated as a future liberal and therefore a rebel.' Thus, a complicated mixture of the vernacular and Spanish held sway for four hundred years.

With the beginning of American rule in the Philippines, English was introduced in the government and educational systems. At this time, the American-dominated state wanted the Filipinos to use English, but could not totally eradicate Spanish. So, English was added to 'Spanish as an official language.' But because of the diversity of the languages and dialects spoken by the native Filipinos, the American rule found difficulty in affording 'full opportunity to all the people of the islands to acquire the use of the English language.' Nonetheless, the people's minds had been conditioned to believe that English was 'the indispensable language of liberty.' This, and the officially enforced use of English in schools, colleges and universities, led to its superceding Spanish and displacing local languages to domestic and unofficial status.

At the same time, only a small percentage of the people could

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4 Emy Pascasio, p. 238.
5 Emy Pascasio, p. 239.
6 Emy Pascasio, p. 239.
go to schools and universities. Moreover, the American presence, compared to Spain's, was relatively short: 1898 to 1946. It took time for a small group of Western-educated Filipinos to begin writing in English. They, too, had a problem in reaching a wide audience:

> [r]eading, writing and thinking in a language that only a small percentage of the total population can command, they tend to write for one another, for their students and colleagues if they are teachers, and for the few readers whom they can reach.⁷

These difficulties notwithstanding, a surprisingly large body of writing in English has now appeared.

Philippine literature in English can be categorized into three periods. Josephine B. Serrano's *A Survey of Filipino Literature in English* classifies works into: Apprenticeship (1910-1935); the Emergence (1935-1945); and the Contemporary (1945 to the Present). Richard V. Croghan's *The Development of Philippine Literature in English* categorizes them as: The Early Period (1900-1930); the Middle Period (1930-1960); the Modern Period (1960-1975). Antonio G. Manuud's *Brown Heritage: Essays on Philippine Cultural Tradition and Literature* classifies them similarly: The Period of Apprenticeship (1900-1930); The Period of Emergence (1931-1944); and The Period of Awareness (1945 to date). The three books discuss almost the same time patterns, especially those of Serrano's and Manuud's, so it is reasonable to use a combination of these three classifications. However, this discussion uses 1945 as a cut-off because it marks a historical significance—penultimate year before Liberation.

Apprenticeship, the Period of Emergence and the Period of Awareness (or the Contemporary Period), have their own internal patterns of growth.

The Period of Apprenticeship.

Because of this period's closeness to the Spanish Era, the writers still displayed literary qualities derived from the Hispanic tradition: 'Spanish literary qualities still clung to them such as Spanish floridness of expression, the flowery phrases...'8

To promote literary awareness and motivate writers to use English, literary competitions were held. 'The first of these was that offered by the Philippines Free Press in the field of short story.'9 There was also an interest in the literary essay. 'The essay took a form similar to that utilized by British and American writers, but because the essay is a free form of composition, it soon developed its own characteristics such as ' ... a variety of subject matter and individual style; originality and freshness hardly discernible in Western essays; less inhibit[ion] by requirements inherent in other literary genres.'10 These essays started to tackle socio-economic and political issues. However, the plays produced during this period were 'mostly highly emotional rather than intellectual experiences....'11

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8 Pura Santillan-Castrence, as quoted by Josephine Serrano, A Survey of Filipino Literature in English. (Quezon City: Phoenix, 1987). p. 3.
9 Josephine Serrano, p. 4.
10 Josephine Serrano, p. 5.
11 Josephine Serrano, p. 5.
into psychological subjects. \(^{12}\)

Contact with American plays was also extensive since foreign plays were often staged in Manila. The drama had difficulty in reconciling Filipino experiences and realities with Western artistic expression.

Also, as a part of the program for the students' journalistic interests, the University of the Philippines published the *College Folio*. \(^{13}\) Having been the first university to be established by the Americans (1908), the University of the Philippines had, of course, instructed students via/and in the English language. The early writers, who were directly trained by American teachers, used the *College Folio* for their first imitative literary expressions. They had been exposed primarily to American and English authors and to the students of those times, the native literature was practically a 'foreign literature'; English and American authors 'dominated their textbooks.' \(^{14}\)

In this phase of literary output the level of expression was not consistently high, since '...the writers were hurdling the obstacles of learning a new language and of learning it well enough to write in it...' \(^{15}\)

There was a theme... in which a moral, a message, if you wish, had to be brought home to the reader, and the writer worked away at his or her material in easy-time consecutiveness, confusing no one, and leaving no one in perplexity or in curiosity about possible valuable hidden meaning in the story not made immediately patent at a first reading.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{12}\) Josephine Serrano, p. 5.
\(^{13}\) Richard Croghan, *The Development of Philippine Literature in English Since 1900*. p. 7.
\(^{14}\) Josephine Serrano, p. 1.
\(^{15}\) Herbert Schneider, S.J., 'The Period of Emergence of Philippine Letters', *Brown Heritage*, p. 574.
One of the writers to be noted here during this period is Paz Marquez Benitez, author of the award-winning 'Dead Stars', the 'first short-story in English written by a Filipino.'\textsuperscript{17} Benitez was one of those who inspired Bienvenido N. Santos when he was a student at the University of the Philippines and from 'under whose tutelage [he] learned the craft of fiction.'\textsuperscript{18}

The Period of Emergence.

As people gained control over the new language, more became interested in trying their skills in writing. The thirties was a 'time of self-discovery and of rapid growth,'\textsuperscript{19} thus, the name of the period. The Philippine Writers League was organized in 1939 to strengthen the literary community. 'There was an inflorescence in Philippine literature. A sunburst of glory seemed to illumine the whole country. Everybody was eager to try his wings; a new wave of freedom permeated not only the life of the people but also the literature produced.'\textsuperscript{20} This was a 'transition' period, for both the individual people and the government. With the inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935, the people felt the need to prepare themselves for 'another' independence which was soon to happen - the independence granted by the United States of America in 1946:

This brought renewed political ferment into Philippine literature. Political freedom gave the writers a feeling of responsibility. The realization of the task of nation-building fostered social consciousness which found expression in

\textsuperscript{17} Florentino B. Valeros and Estrellita V. Gruenberg, \textit{Filipino Writers in English}. (Quezon City: New Day, 1987). p. 34.
\textsuperscript{18} Leonor Aureus-Briscoe, Foreword: \textit{Dwell in the Wilderness}, (Quezon City: New Day, 1985).
\textsuperscript{19} Josephine Serrano, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{20} Josephine Serrano, p. 43.
proletarian essays. It also awakened aspirations toward a national literature leading the essayists back to their Filipino origins and traditions.\textsuperscript{21}

Serrano enumerates the following as the literary qualities typical of this period:

1. The writers consciously and purposefully set out to create a national literature. They proclaimed that writers should reflect the Filipino way of life, traditional values as Filipinos, and even utilize the tropical vegetation of the Islands as an appropriate background for their stories and poems.

2. The writers had gained full control of the English language and could manipulate it successfully as a literary medium.

3. Experimentation with different literary forms and techniques and moods was the fashion. Writers in Europe and America were declaring a new freedom of thought and a freedom from any form of literary convention.

4. Three groups of writers emerged:
   a. Those who were deeply concerned with social consciousness.
   b. Those whose main concern was craftsmanship.
   c. Those who were determined to explore local color. Some of the third group called themselves the Veronicans. Their aim was 'to make their writings bear the imprint of the face of the Philippines just as the cloth of Veronica bore the imprint of the face of Christ.'\textsuperscript{22}

Father Herbert Schneider, in \textit{Brown Heritage}, remarks that:

What gave lasting direction... to Philippine letters were the diametrically opposed critical theories of José Garcia Villa and Salvador P. Lopez. Villa made our writers conscious of the fact that a writer is first an artist. This means that the writer's excellence or lack of it depends on his ability to so structure his experience that it illuminates at least in part man and life. If a writer's craftsmanship is weak, no subject matter, regardless how serious and deep, can save him from bad writing.\textsuperscript{23}

Salvador P. Lopez insisted that

\begin{quote}
\textit{literature [must] serve the ends of political change and}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21} Josephine Serrano, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{22} Josephine Serrano, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{23} Herbert Schneider, \textit{Brown Heritage}, p. 588.
revolution.... It presupposes that the principal and central value of man, that which constitutes his being a man, is political.24

It seems that Villa had more influence over other writers than Lopez. Although ‘[a] new outlook on art and literature started to emerge, [which] was again centered on content,’25 the writers kept writing about the ‘moonlight, stardust, sunsets, flowers...the pseudo-sophistication of clever people.’26

The writers’ preoccupation with the ‘romantic’ and the ‘art for art’s sake’ theory could have been brought about by their Western notion of literature which emphasized the craft of fiction within the codes of the New Criticism.

The balance shifted a little with José Garcia Villa’s publication of his poem, ‘Man Songs’ (1929). He was charged with ‘poisoning public morals and offending the taste of decent Manila readers.’27 Nevertheless, he still received an international acclaim because of his Poems by Doveglion and Have Come, Am Here. These poems, which touched on ‘public morality’, were not welcome inside the Philippines, but were highly appreciated abroad28. The struggle between social content and aesthetic technique carried over into later writers. One of these is Bienvenido N. Santos. One of his earlier works is The Day the Dancers Came29 which ‘portrayed a man’s search for his national identity.’30

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24 Salvador P. Lopez cited in Herbert Schneider, p. 585.
25 Herbert Schneider, p. 584.
26 Herbert Schneider, p. 584.
27 Josephine Serrano, p. 45.
28 Serrano, p. 45.
29 The book was published 1967.
30 Richard Croghan, p. 251.
The Period of Awareness (Contemporary Period).

The Period of Awareness (or Contemporary Period) is characterized by 'a growing sense of nationalism and by a deeper search for identity', figured as a personal quest.\textsuperscript{31} Joseph Galdon also notes that one other dimension emerges in the novels of the period of awareness, and that is the gradual universalization of the Philippine Novel in English.' (p. 8)

The literature of this period is marked by the following qualities:

1. Filipino writers are still sensitive to literary fashions abroad, especially from the United States. For decades the Filipinos had been exposed to the mass culture of the Americans. This was even more so after the war. Some might question the value of this fact in relation to Filipino culture, but it is a fact which cannot be denied. Filipino writers get fellowships or grants or scholarships from the Rockefeller, Ford, Guggenheim, and Asia Foundations. Their studies abroad involve them deeply in current literary trends, and this cannot fail to affect their work....

2. More incentives were offered to creative effort. The Palanca Memorial Awards are attractive. The Republic Cultural Heritage Award is a great incentive. The Philippines Free Press short story contest was another incentive; so was the Stonehill Award.

3. The writers have a better knowledge of their craft. They have a more thorough academic training and are at home in the literatures of America, England, continental Europe, and Asia and Africa.

4. Guerilla stories and 'liberation' stories began to appear early during this period.

5. This period saw the appearance of literary criticism. Critical essays had been written before this period, but their numbers have been negligible.\textsuperscript{32}

Among the literary genres, the short story is the most popular form. At this time the novel develops artistic indirection through the use of symbol and image, and achieves a more organic

\textsuperscript{31} Richard Croghan, p. 249.  
\textsuperscript{32} Josephine Serrano, p. 128.
integration of plot, theme and style. Majid categorizes the novels under the Period of Awareness into: 1) Novels of Social Concern; 2) Novels of Change and Identity; and 3) Novels of Ambition and Integrity. He puts *The Volcano* and *Villa Magdalena* under this last heading.

**B. Author and Text**

Bienvenido N. Santos is one Filipino writer who was greatly influenced by English and American writers while studying at the University of the Philippines. In the process of writing poems, he ‘found favor in the eyes of such discerning writer-critics as José Garcia Villa and T. S. Eliot.’33 His later exposure to the field of creative writing in the United States, as well as his employment with the Philippine Commonwealth Government-in-Exile, helped him improve his craft. With his fellowship, workshop experiences and formal writing degree courses in the United States, he inevitably came in contact with American writers and lecturers, such as Paul Engle, Robert Coover, Donald Justice;34 as well as famous literary critics such as I.A. Richards.35 He consequently adapted in his writings some skills derived from these figures. A proof of this is the direct association between Sherwood Anderson’s ‘Memoirs’ and his autobiographical story, ‘My Memorable Christmas in America’, in *The Day the Dancers Came.*36 Santos’ early inspiration from José Garcia Villa continued even when he was already in the United States. While serving as an employee with the Government-in-Exile, he worked with Villa as ‘ghost writer’.

33 Florentino B. Valeros and Estrellita V. Gruenberg, p. 201.
34 Florentino Valeros and Estrellita Gruenberg, p. 231.
36 Francisco Arcellana, p. 716.
Significantly though, he wrote 'articles which José Garcia Villa would not write because he was above writing about such stuff as the abaca industry in the Philippines.'\textsuperscript{37} The balance between social realism and artistic technique, Filipino and American life, would remain throughout Santos' extensive literary career.

While the earlier sections of the chapter describe the gender relationships within the texts, this section aims to explore the relationships between the author's lived experience and the portrayal of women in his fictions.

As already noted, Bienvenido N. Santos started his writing career in the Philippines. He first tried his skill in 1931-1941, after which he went to the United States as a government pensionado until 1946, at the same time working as an employee of the Philippine government-in-exile during the Japanese occupation. After this year, in 1946, he went back to the Philippines and stayed there until the 1960s, then returned to the United States as a creative writing student and teaching fellow in various universities. Since the 1970s, Santos has divided his time between America and the Philippines.

Santos, like any writer, was culturally shaped long before he established a literary career. It was not only his contact with Jose Garcia Villa, but the fact that his early writing — even before its treatment of the inbuilt nostalgia of the emigrant Pinoy — looks backward to 'the simple life of the people and the tragedy, comedy... tenderness, gentleness that speaks of the goodness of things that have a happy ending' that showed how his work reflected an age more familiar to the great poet than to people

building reputations in the sixties or later.\textsuperscript{38} Let us also consider the approximate years the different works (novels and short story collections)\textsuperscript{39} were written:\textsuperscript{40}

- \textit{Dwell in the Wilderness} - (Pre-War : 1931-1941);
- \textit{You Lovely People} - 1955;
- \textit{Brother, My Brother} - 1960;
- \textit{The Volcano} - 1965;
- \textit{Villa Magdalena} - 1965;
- \textit{The Day the Dancers Came} - 1967;
- \textit{The Praying Man} - 1967;
- \textit{The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor} - 1983;

One thing noticeable is that the early works of the writer (referring to novels and short story collections only), especially those written in 1930s and 1950s, mostly deal with local men and women and his portrayal of these is mainly based on ‘traditional’ customs and practices, e.g., the observance of feasts and rituals or weddings, such as the ‘three-day grace period’ in ‘Days of Grace’ (\textit{Dwell in the Wilderness}), or more narrowly defined issues such as family (or husband-wife) relationships, like the jealousy/insecurity felt by Mr. Salazar towards his wife (‘House on the Hill’, \textit{Brother My Brother}). As Santos writes his later works, he starts to broaden his field of concern. His work during the sixties — i.e., \textit{Villa Magdalena}, \textit{The Volcano}, and \textit{The Praying Man} — emphasizes serious sociopolitical issues such as corruption (both financial, especially in \textit{The Praying Man}, and physical and spiritual, as in \textit{Villa Magdalena}).

\textsuperscript{38} Valeros, \textit{Filipino Writers in English}, p.200.
\textsuperscript{39} He also produced two poetry books: \textit{The Wounded Stag} (1956) and \textit{Distances: In Time} (1983).
\textsuperscript{40} Attempts were made to know ‘exact’ dates the fictions were written. However, Santos says, ‘there is no such thing as an “exact date” involved in the writing of both long and short fictions.’ The writings ‘took over indeterminate, non-continuous, segments of time. Source: BNS’ letter, dated 13 Dec. 1991, Naga City, Philippines.
Over this period and more noticeably in his most recent work, Santos centers on the themes of expatriation, of longing and belonging, of departure and arrival, and ultimately, of homelessness, which parallels the characters' loss of and search for identity as a Filipino. These themes are clearly discernible in the novels, *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco* and *The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*, as well as in the short story collection, *You Lovely People*. These books depict men and women who are displaced from their native land and struggle against life's oddities in a strange land, the United States.

Indications of a shift in Santos' representation of women can be gleaned in that the first three novels written during 1960s portray most of the women as weak, submissive and subservient, and those in the later works less so. Women like Doña Magdalena and Maritzu are examples of the Filipino women who had been easy prey to men's dominiance and authority. Women in the barrios, especially (as in *The Volcano*), cannot decide over simple things without consulting, or worse, having the approval of, their husbands. Moreover, most of them are confined to domestic duties. In the later works, *The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor* and *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*, women have started to become career-oriented, more assertive and less-domesticated. Women like Dr. Imelda Sotto (*What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*) and Fely Jaime (*The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*) are engaged in their respective careers. Imelda Sotto is a famous and generous pediatrician, while Fely Jaime is in-charge of a 'nursing home'. Because they are engrossed with their duties outside their homes, they become less-domesticated, and instead, hire domestic helpers
(mostly female) who can do the housework for the family. The men, on the other hand, become less autocratic. They start to consult their wives regarding important things, especially financial matters. Unlike Don Vicente (The Volcano) or Don Magno (Villa Magdalena), Dr. Pacifico Sotto, Professor Arturo Jaime, and the other Filipino doctors (What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco), show their regard and concern for their respective wives and allow them to participate in their decision-making. Being away from their 'home' leads these Filipinos to discover the outer world and adopt aspects of a different culture. The men start to form a more 'liberated' consciousness in their relationships with women (who are their equals).

This is not the case however, among Santos' lower-class expatriates. While the o.t.'s exposure to US culture may cause some changes in their perception of women, the novel The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor focuses more on the old-timers' dream - their Filipino dream - of gaining material wealth. Sol's relationships with Blanche Hardman and Morningstar reveal a certain tenderness and a respect for women (once he grows too old to pursue his materialist goals), but he obviously is still not so much concerned with the 'liberated' consciousness of the women as with his perception of a woman as something physical (or providing temporary comfort).

On the other hand, regardless of when each novel was written, there are elements common to all of them. One of these is the querida system. From the time of Don Magno and Don Vicente, up to Cris Magat, who is more or less the epitome of the Filipino businessman in 1970s, up to Dr. Pacifico Sotto and J.P. who are representatives of the Filipino immigrants to the United States, this
'extra-marital business' is common. This suggests that the representation of gender is not wholly influenced by the writer's or the character's exposure to a new culture. Santos has included this continuity of behaviour as a major motif in the social fabric of the Filipinos. Even though the women are starting to become assertive and career-oriented, the men once again place them in a lower position. However, whether the author intends it or not, the women sometimes do show increasing independence, even in the case of becoming 'whores' as a calculated means of gaining economic prosperity or entry into a higher class. The writer therefore encourages readers to further examine the social values of the Filipinos and their cultural history. Santos even straightforwardly states that

the 'querida business' in the Philippines is so flagrant you can't miss it if you were writing fiction with Filipino characters in the Philippines even if you tried. And why should you? It's our social cancer, the biggest flaw in the character, in our culture. It's so much a part of life in our country, the fictionist doesn't have to 'preach' to make his/her point. 41

Writing about this querida system in the Philippines indicates Santos' awareness of its social significance and allows us to identify him as a social-realist writer. His very awareness of the issue and willingness to represent it in literature implies his objection to it.

In exploring the need to reassess attitudes to gender, Santos also devises some textual strategies for encouraging a critical attitude in readers towards the social behavior represented in each text. In 'The Door', as in some other parts of You Lovely People, the author uses a first-person narrator to relay another first-person account. Ambo, one of the major characters in the book, tells the story about Delfin's 'unmanliness' and Mildred's infidelity while his

41 from his same letter
educated young 'protégé' records it for the readers. The author therefore creates a double distance — between the reader and the behavior of the characters — to lead readers to assess more objectively Delfin's situation. The readers' discovery of Delfin's subjective judgment of his friend Ambo balances their initial sympathy for him. The writer's use of a second voice in the narrative effectively draws the author away from his own subjectivity. On the other hand, Ambo's voice in the narrative also motivates readers to feel sympathy for Delfin. His narration says everyone - Delfin's friends - dislikes Delfin's silence about Mildred's infidelity. It is through Ambo's pity with and sympathy for Delfin — his recording of their conversation — that neutralizes readers' disapproval of Delfin and affirmation of his friends' 'nationalistic' and 'manly' ethos.

Irony is one of Santos' techniques to create a position of critical appraisal of the contents of some of the texts. He impresses on readers the irony in and around the characters. Both these ironies are visible in 'Quicker with Arrows' (You Lovely People). Val's outward gestures stand in contrast to his real feeling for Fay. His actions, i.e., reluctance to introduce Fay to his friends, contradict his feelings for her. The story's ending, that of Fay's leaving Val, leaves a suspended emotion in both readers and Val's Filipino friends. After all his uncertainties regarding his relationship with Fay, Val's surprising acknowledgment and recognition of her presence as his girlfriend, as well as his 'public' announcement (to his friends) of his forthcoming marriage to Fay, provokes an initial response in readers: a focusing on Fay's extreme happiness with and acceptance of his proposal. Thus, her refusal of Val's long-term commitment shocks both the group in the party as well as the
readers.

Not only is the irony existent within the character but also around him/her. Sometimes, this results from a difference or gap between circumstances and what is intended by the character. This is easily discernible in 'The Day the Dancers Came' (The Day the Dancers Came). Filemon Acayan's enthusiasm to meet the famous Filipino Dancers and spend time with them contrasts with the cold reception of the dancers. His eagerness to have a lasting remembrance of the dancers' performance in Chicago brings him disappointment when all their voices and the sounds of their dancesteps he wanted to tape turn to 'nothing now...but the full creaking of the tape on the spool' (p. 21). These circumstances which confound Fil Acayan's wish to belong show one angle of Santos' ironic technique. However, the opposing personalities of Filemon Acayan (Fil) and Antonio Bataller (Tony) in the same story further complement this ironic technique. Although both of them reflect their longing for their home country, each has his own way of overcoming/nurturing such feeling. Fil's imaginativeness contrasts with Tony's practicality. Fil's enthusiasm to meet the Dancers contrasts with Tony's aloofness. Fil's illusory perception of his motherland stands against Tony's practical ways of surviving - how to 'stay afloat'. Nevertheless, Tony's failing health justifies his different attitude, but it does not necessarily mean his failure or lack of longing for his motherland. Both of them feel the pain of being away. In Tony's case, the pain is more physical. Santos uses these ironies to convey the complexities of longing and belonging, as well as disillusionment, and to put the reader at a critical distance from both characters.

Santos also critiques the civil status of the Filipino woman. In
'Immigration Blues' (*The Scent of Apples*), the writer emphasizes it through an ironic technique. While the first part of the narrative sees Alipio as someone who remembers his deceased wife and their love for each other as the key factor in their marriage, the later part implies that he agrees with Antonieta Zafra’s ‘proposal’ about Monica’s marriage to Alipio, a marriage which could possibly happen without love, arising only out of a common understanding about a marriage-of-convenience.

To uplift the woman’s status, Santos brings forth his question of the Filipino male character’s aspiration, the so-called Filipino dream. This dream, which mainly focuses on the material/commercial nature of life, causes Sol (*The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*) to associate a woman with money and his pursuit of material comfort. Morningstar criticizes her one-dimensional, sex-based relationship with Sol, and opts for one with a sense of spiritual nourishment. It is ironic enough that amidst Sol’s ‘industry, sense of humor [and] his basic goodness as a human being,’[^42] he forgets to equip himself with another intangible aspect of his personality. The same reason - the pursuit of the Filipino Dream - also causes Sol to think of Blanche Hardman as someone of only physical or commercial value. Describing her gift to him of her body as ‘all she could afford’ in payment for his hospitality ironically qualifies the warm friendship he extends towards her and her son Jerry (*The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*, p. 148).

It is possible therefore that Santos’ making visible this *querida* system, as well as questioning the socially ascribed worth of the Filipino woman and the inconsistent, materially-oriented

values of the Filipino man, serves to motivate readers to think of the shortcomings of 'traditional' Filipino gendering.

Beyond a critique of the Filipino gendering however, is Santos' implied critique of the Filipino's sense of longing and belonging, of leaving and returning. In You Lovely People for example, the voices of two narrators supplement each other to record the experiences of the 'hurt men' and the 'lovely people' in the United States. Ambo's accounts of his fellow 'old-timers' and Pinoys add to Ben's (the other narrator's) accounts of his fellow pensionados, or the 'educated boys and girls'. However, to parallel the theme of leaving and returning is the narrator's return to his country during the Liberation. His own narrative of the returned Pinoys' and pensionados' difficulties experienced in their home country after the War confirms the book's message of homelessness. He himself is half-hearted about leaving the country 'which had been [his] home during the war years' ('For These Ruins', p. 159) and returning to the 'devastated country' where his family is waiting for him. Nevertheless, Ben's returning role as the ultimate narrator in the last few chapters of the book not only returns himself as a recorder of events which transpired among the Pinoys and the pensionados but also as a participant. He now includes Ambo's (the other narrator's) accounts of experiences in the Philippines after the War. Apparently, all their experiences lead to a conclusive fact that they all meet the point of 'homelessness'.

Charges that Santos simply reproduces the mores of the society have to be weighed against the fact that the writer is not only conscious of the Filipinos' historic past, which obviously intermingles with the present, but is constrained by the need to portray them consistent with the social atmosphere of his chosen
setting. *The Volcano* and *Villa Magdalena* mainly deal with the period up to and including Japanese occupation and thus, have a stronger 'residue' of the Spanish colonial culture. *The Praying Man*, *The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor* and *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco* deal with the post-War period, hence are more inclined towards the American culture. Santos does not merely construct a nostalgic past but also reveals the hypocrisies and injustices covered by his fiction.

Although commentators usually focus on Santos' interest in the workings of the Filipino heart, especially in the expatriate context, this theme is communicated through relationships between the sexes and operates within a cultural frame in which discourses of gender are a significant element. It can be argued, therefore, that the means of exploring one theme become themselves thematized (even if 'the workings of the heart' are in fact separable from questions of gender representation!). Santos' awareness — conscious or unconscious — of the flaws in Philippines society as they manifest themselves in gender relations enables him to reflect them in his fiction, thus, making him a social-realist writer. However, although he mainly reflects, he also criticizes, the status quo, as he reacts against the 'Filipino myth of machismo and the Filipino woman [who is] only slightly better than a sex object.'

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43 from his same letter
III. Some Images of Women in Selected Filipino Works

If we are to appreciate properly the representations of gender in Santos' work, we need to have some comparative context to highlight what is commonplace and what is remarkable. Since his output covers such a long period, I have selected three novels that appeared alongside his early works in which gender relationships have a significant place, and two novels by contemporary writers also centred on the representation of women. Three of these works are by women and the two contemporary ones are also written out of the Filipino diaspora of which Santos is part. These texts enable us to establish more clearly the extent to which Santos' images of women are the product of individual vision or part of a general patriarchal culture, and how much his representation of women changes over time and as a result of expatriation.

A. Social Background

If literary production has been shaped by political, and especially colonial forces, then so has the place of women in Philippine society. Culture is generally defined as 'a set of attitudes, values, beliefs and responses which result in a recognizable established pattern of social behavior.'¹ These beliefs include religious/spiritual norms. How society puts weight on each man and woman is related to their 'value judgments' and these are often

made on a basis of deep-seated spiritual beliefs. In the Philippines these are predominantly Catholic with their origins in Spanish colonialism.

Since Santos grew up in a pre-war society still partly insulated from the West as represented by American Protestant materialism, it is worth mentioning the broad outlines of his formative environment as they relate to perceptions of women. From the Spanish conquest in 1521 until the nineteenth century, there was instilled in Filipinos a belief in the Holy Trinity (God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost), and Jesus Christ's mother, Mary. The importance still given to the Holy Virgin may also have roots in a pre-Hispanic native spirituality. This took the form of nature worship: of sea, river, mountain, beast, the sacrificed swine. They had priests, called *bailanes* - indigenes who were supposed to talk with their gods. Most of these *bailanes* were females. 2 These *bailanes* or *catalonans*, as they were called by other islanders, were carriers of the concepts and values of the their society and "solved many of the social and psychological problems of their business and followers". 3

Before the Spaniards arrived in 1521, the early Filipinos, descended from the Malay race, had already their own communal form of government. It was centered on the family or village. This system started from the localized kin-groups called 'barangay' or 'banwa', derived from the boat people of Malay-Indonesian race who migrated to the Philippines for trading. The community was headed by 'nobles or *datus* who were not subject to any supra-

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village political authority. As with women in many Pacific and African pre-contact societies who held high status and had clearly defined areas of influence and competence, the pre-colonial Filipino women supposedly enjoyed equal rights and privileges with, or even higher positions than, men. As the Penal Code of Kalantiao (1433) states, the men were "decorously gallant to women, respecting and protecting them with a chivalry unknown in the rest of Asia... and the wealthy ones were carried around in chairs and shaded from the sun".

The Filipino Christianization occurs mainly from the sixteenth century until the nineteenth century. The Spanish colonizers spread Catholicism over the whole archipelago using a 'standard step-by-step divide-and-rule tactic,' to dominate and colonize the people (natives) by 'inveigling certain barangays to adopt the Christian faith and then employing them against other barangays which resisted colonial domination.' As a consequence of this 'tactic', there resulted the people's 'respect' for authorities, be they in the government, or in the Church. Their respect for Church and 'knowledge' of the Holy Word and the Commandments of God, has a direct relationship with the people's attitudes and aspirations, and

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5 Pam Thomas, 'The Impact of Aid, Development and Technological Change', *Women and Development,* Australia National University, Canberra: Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education. 29 (1983) p. 3.
6 There is some debate over this claim. Blair & Robertson states that public affairs could not be discussed with women (*The Philippine Islands,* Vol. VIII, p. 251) but Isabel Rojas-Aleta supports Carmen Guerrero Nakpil that women had equal rights with, or even had dominant roles, over men (*A Profile of Filipino Women,* pp. 11-2).
8 Guerrero Nakpil, p. 11.
9 Guerrero Nakpil, p. 11.
specifically, women's role and status in society.

A basic element of Catholicism is the belief in the 'Virgin Mother' of Jesus Christ. The Catholic doctrines say that Mary, who 'conceived without sin', stands as the Theotokos or God-Bearer, and should be given due importance because

...it is only in the Virgin (Mary) that the Church can become a mediator (in the co-redemptive sense) of all the graces, 'mediatrix omnium grattianum'. It is through Mary that we come to Jesus... and to love Christ means to love Mary his Mother and, in the light of redemption, our Universal Mother.

This doctrine calls for the Catholic people's veneration of Mary, the Mother of Christ, who conceived without committing a sin, which means that she was a virgin. The association between the Virgin Mother and the virgin female in the society stems from the standards imposed on women by the Church: The Virgin Mary and the female saints provided an idealised vision of woman: chaste, virginal, loving and other-worldly.

This apparent moral standardization provides arguments among the feminists, feminist writers and/or critics. Most feminists question the valuing of virginity because presumably, the society not only 'requires' females to be virgins or pure, but also to become 'feminine' - which indirectly demands them to be obedient and submissive to their husbands, and in general, to the male gender. As Anne Summers points out, this submission affords women a certain compensation. In conforming to the church they gain moral

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authority over family and social behavior, becoming 'God's police'. The reverse of this - also authorized by the Biblical figures of Mary Magdalene and Delilah - is social condemnation of the woman as a 'damned whore.'

In the Philippine social context, it seems that this fixation on virginity is a direct derivative of the Spanish colonization, although the Islamic faith which was establishing itself around Manila and Mindanao long before the Spaniards came also places considerable importance on virginity. Both cultures, however, derive from the same Judaic patriarchal base. Pre-contact Filipino males are reported to have disliked women who were still virgins when they married. In fact, some men were hired to 'ravish and take away virginity from young girls, for the natives considered it a hindrance and impediment if the girls were virgins.'

Statistics on religions/denominations in the Philippines reveal that over 85% are Catholics; only less than fifteen per cent comprise the other religious groups, headed by Aglipayans. These would immediately show that most of the Filipinos believe in the Catholic teachings - and therefore, practice their veneration of Mary, the Mother of God, as the intercessor. Presumably, in doing so, they will have to associate women in the society with Mary, the Virgin, and Mother of God. Literature, being a mouthpiece of the people's culture, reflects this phenomenon. Nick Joaquin's *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* and Santos' books, such as *The Volcano* and *Dwell in the Wilderness*, depict this reality.

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14 Blair & Robertson, Vol. XVI, p. 231.
15 people whose religious denomination is Aglipay, founded by Gregorio Aglipay, a former Catholic priest, who protested against Catholicism, and later on formed his own group of believers.
There seems to be a striking paradox in how Filipino men regard women - how husbands treat their wives or give importance to women only as a lover, wife or a mother to their children. Here is an anecdote taken from Bulatao's 'Split-Level Christianity', which shows the Filipino men's respect for Christian authorities and their teachings set against their willingness to conform to the standards of the society, which indirectly reveals how they value women, married or unmarried:

A group of alumni, sixteen years after graduating from a Catholic school, meet together one evening at a private home for a class reunion. Present at their reunion are two priests, their former teachers. The evening passes pleasantly, amid fond recollections of schooldays. At about 10:30 p.m., an offer is made to send the two priests by car back to their school. After the two priests leave, the group transfers to Pasay to a certain nightclub of ill repute. Almost everyone goes along and a number end up with prostitutes. There is much joking about the fact that their wives think them to be 'safe' in a class reunion.16

The disparity between respect for religious-based ideals of womanhood and marriage and actual secular relationships with women is clear. Men revere Mary and believe in her being a 'virgin' and therefore expect their wives to be pure like her. In practice, when wives prove to be carnal creatures they are treated as no different from whores17. On the other hand, if they are as pure as they are expected to be, they appear to flout the church's teaching on the value of sex and procreation in marriage, and a man may well seek satisfaction in the prostitute whose proscription by the church makes her a figure of sexual fascination.

Another example of this is a graduate of a Catholic boy's college who 'seeks out other women':

17 Anne Summers, p. 296.
Once, suspecting his wife of unfaithfulness, he hits her with his fist and drives her out of the house. When charged with inconsistency her husband says: 'I was never serious about those other women. My wife has no right to go out with another man.' When asked to reconcile this double standard with principles learned in school ("Thou shalt not commit adultery), he answers: 'It's just human weakness. In Negros every hacendero has a querida... Some have several.'

Cris Magat, in Bienvenido Santos's *The Praying Man*, confirms this ironic connection between women's 'purity' and men's pleasure. He, who venerates the Virgin Mother as protector, treats his wife as his shield from economic and emotional stress, but keeps Janet as his mistress. Although it is "practically impossible" to gather data about extra-marital relationships in Filipino culture, broad generalisations are possible. Like most men in Western or non-Western society who are expected to 'sow their wild oats' and to display their virility, men in contemporary Philippines, especially in the metropolis, who have queridas (mistresses) still feel proud and society does not condemn them, but women who commit adultery are criticized by the society. Thus, it shows that there is a double standard of morality: a 'liberated' view for men, and a conservative one for women. People usually say, *talagang ganyan* whenever a man has been found out to have a querida.

Regardless of religious theory, when the Spanish civil laws took effect, Filipino women were deprived of some of their rights, such as, 1. the right to divorce, 2. to have children regardless of marital status, 3. the right to own property, 4. freedom to contract business arrangements independently of the husband, 5. retention of maiden name, and 6. a central role in religious practices.

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18 Jaime Bulatao, p. 20.
20 literally means 'that really is and/or should be' - an acceptance of one’s fate
Stigma still attaches to infringements of these prohibitions such as, having children regardless of marital status, although the Philippine Constitution does not include this.

Isabel Rojas-Aleta summarizes the plight of Filipino women during the Spanish period:

The effect of Spanish colonization was to demote the Filipino woman to a minor social status. She was mainly sheltered from everyday affairs and prevented from participating in business, political, educational and social affairs. 22

The Philippines had been under the Spanish regime for nearly four centuries (from 1520s to 1890s). After this period, came the 'democracy-loving' and 'equality-seeking' Filipinos influenced by United States' ideology. The following is a typical impression of the Americans' legacy to the Filipinos during the American period:

The American regime ... brought about several reforms which gradually led to the social and political emancipation of the Filipino women. Educational opportunities were opened up equally to men and women. This led to women's greater awareness of social events and eventually to the establishment of their right to vote.23

It is true that Filipino women, since the American period, have exercised their right of suffrage and have been educated, but the claim that both men and women have been given their equality remains to be proven. Also, the claim that the American period opened the doors for women to assert themselves and fight denies historical events during the Spanish regime, because even then, a number of Filipino women fought for their country, such as Gabriela Silang, a woman-general who headed an army of 20,000 men against the Spaniards. The secular liberalization under the American influence, moreover, operated within a cultural

23 Isabel Rojas-Aleta, pp. 11-2.
framework whose Protestant base is as patriarchal as the cultural practices of Catholicism.

The claim of 'equality of men and women' has been commonly heard but this still remains debatable. Even nowadays, there are some nationalist groups of women clamoring for this so-called equality: equal rights, equal privileges. One of these is GABRIELA,24 taken from the name Gabriela Silang. This is 'an umbrella organization consisting of a loose coalition of women's organizations.'25

Amidst these American-influenced claims for female emancipation, there remains the fact that Filipino women still suffer from inequality - either in their careers or in their families. Delia Aguilar's dissertation includes an interview with several women in the Philippines, coming from different walks of life. Two of these, named Luz and Leonor, speak up, on behalf of the Filipino women. Luz says:

As much as I hate to admit it, I must go home now because I have to cook. I cannot let my husband cook (she hears this from a fellow member of a nationalist organization) ... so it's still very much present, the expectation that the wife and mother is responsible for the household chores...Now, I have a friend who also sings (three of us used to sing together, two men and myself). He's leaving soon for an engagement abroad, and he has three children. So I told him, "you can do that because you're not a mother."

...Because I'm a mother, my contribution has become very limited.26

Leonor voices a similar sentiment:

I'm waiting for the day when Conrado and I can really, really exchange criticism about each other's works, to have lively

24 General Assembly Binding Women for Integrity, Equality and Action
26 Delia Aguilar, p. 399.
(maybe not heated) debates about what we really think strongly about. Right now he doesn't know what my position really is on women, so he becomes defensive and tries to explain why Marxists have not taken up the issue of women...27

Although there are a number of female nationalist organizations in the country clamoring for equality, it is ironic to note that within a Filipino woman's heart is her attachment to being 'feminine':

What are the components of feminismo? The studies and images which have been reviewed lead us to a few guesses as to what some of these components might be. The Filipino woman wants to get married; to have children (childlessness or even a one-child marriage is not preferred); to be subordinate yet equal; to be seductive without being seduced; to be beautiful; to be educated; to be a companion to her husband; and a mother to her children.28

We can notice here that these features are characteristic of the different contributions, starting from the early Filipinos, up to the colonizers' eras. Thus, a Filipina - her character, dreams and aspirations and attitudes - is a conglomeration of all the 'portions' of her history. Most women still believe that their being 'feminine', their present status, needs to be preserved. Even Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, a Filipino woman writer, confirms this:

There have been three men in her (the Filipino woman’s) life: her Asiatic ancestor, the Spanish friar, the American, and like Chekov's Darling, she echoes all the men she has known in her person. Perhaps in a few generations, the Filipina will crystallize into a clear, pure, internally calm, symmetrical personality with definite facets in the predictable planes. Perhaps in time, the different strains which now war within her in mongrel contradictions will have been assimilated into a thoroughbred homogeneity. But when that happens, the Filipino woman will have lost the infinite unexpectedness, the abrupt contrariness, the plural predictability which now makes her both so womanly and so Filipino.29

There is a double movement here in which the women's quest

27 Delia Aguilar, p. 393.
28 Gelia Castillo, as quoted by Aguilar, p. 48.
29 Carmen G. Nakpil, p. 7.
for empowerment both parallels the nation's quest for identity and functions within the constraints of a national identity. Woman is presented as an ideal attainable some day and somehow in the future, but possibly never realizable except in terms of colonization, as a contrary child echoing the male authorities of Asia, Spain and America, waiting to be led through an evolutionary process to shed a present hybridity that is both scorned and celebrated.

B. Images from Fiction of the Early Period

Some of Bienvenido N. Santos' contemporaries are Kerima Polotan, Nick Joaquin, and F. Sionil José. Those works in which the gender relationship is strongly visible are Nick Joaquin's The Woman Who Had Two Navels; F. Sionil José's Two Filipino Women, and Kerima Polotan's Hand of the Enemy.

Nick Joaquin's The Woman Who Had Two Navels

This novel revolves around the life of a woman named Connie Escobar, who claims to have two navels. Some readers will focus their interpretation of the book on the consequences of Connie's claim and possibly, on whether there is really any truth behind it. Others, however, will be more interested to know why Connie claims to have two navels. The text presents a complex background for Connie's claim to connect it with her state of being.

Connie Escobar, the woman who 'had two navels', is portrayed as a liar. Her mother, Señora Concha de Vidal, says that everything Connie has told Dr. Pepe Monson, among others, is a lie - that she  

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has been married a year ago, not ‘yesterday’, and that she only has one navel, not two. Concha Vidal reveals to Pepe what she believes she knows about Connie.

Although the book makes close associations between the two female characters, it nevertheless appears that Concha consciously adopts the rigidity of social ‘codes’, while her daughter wishes to deviate from them. Concha is largely accepted by the other characters as a ‘model’ of successful womanhood while Connie is portrayed as a ‘failed female’ (as in her fleeing her husband) and an almost ‘male’ character (as in her running her car fast, risking herself on the verge of death).

*The Woman Who Had Two Navels* implies that Filipino society - its culture and values - is a mixture of mainly Hispanic and American traditions. Though much emphasis is placed on Catholicism as a unifying and defining characteristic, the people’s manner of revering God is almost superficial because of this confusing mixture of influences:

pert girls dancing with abandon all night long in the cabarets and fleeing in black veils to hear the first Mass at dawn; boys in the latest loudest Hollywood styles, with American slang in their mouths and the crucifix on their breasts...(p. 27)

The women in the novel are very conscious of their appearance and beauty. They think that appearing beautiful is an obligation, a responsibility to God. As Concha Vidal says:

But I’m a woman, Father...and I’m sure God meant us to be beautiful, like roses and peacocks and diamonds. He must love that sort of thing or he wouldn’t have troubled to create such a lot of them. I don’t understand why you men won’t honor the labors of women to make themselves lovely... Beauty is a virtue too- or, anyway, a responsibility. A rose that was ugly has disobeyed God... (p. 106)

Equally manifested is the women’s search for the ideal man or the hero. Here, Connie’s lies are brought about by her search for
the hero. Connie leaves school because she happens to know that her father is a 'dirty politician' - she is sent to school through the money of the government. Her expectation of an ideal father is turned around. Because her father is not her ideal father, she continues to seek for him until she finds some aspects of the old Dr. Monson to idealize. Nevertheless, he cannot accept that she believes in him, because he himself has never had lived up to his ideals. Thus, the past generation (represented by old Dr. Monson) has never been an excellent model for the present generation (represented by Connie). As Ricaredo Demetillo says,

we can visualize the changing patterns of Philippine social life from the heroic age of the ilustrados, succeeded by the American colonial period that ends with the coming back of the American G.I.'s in 1946...31

It is not only Connie's generation which experiences this, but more especially, the generation of early women, such as Concha's. Through her recollections of her past (her adolescence), we come to know that it was common among the younger generation to admire, if not, 'idolize' a man of higher standing. Usually, they adapt their appearances and behaviors to suit the person they admire:

When I was a little girl people like your father (Dr. Monson) were my conscience walking around in elegant clothes...They were a reference, a dictionary that I always had open before me. I could never doubt how a word like 'virtue', for instance, was spelled... (p. 13)

This admiration of a 'reputable' man or anybody else who can be considered a hero 'commands' a 'standard' set of rules among the women; ie., to appear beautiful, or to appear presentable to whomever they idolize and to the people around them. In other words, they become too self-conscious:

I wrap myself up in a bullfighter's cape, and feel very safe when people turn their heads to stare and when my friends say: "How stunning and dazzling Concha Vidal always is!" (p.106)

They seem to be drawn into doing what the rest in the society are doing, not because they want to purify their spirit. The social environment is too strong an influence on individuals who swing pendulum-like from one extreme to the other:

Late in the 17th and early 18th centuries, a wave of folk mysticism had swept Manila. Unlettered peasants turned hermits and emerged bearded prophets and thaumaturgists... beautiful girls suddenly stopped dancing and shut themselves up in their rooms, to pray and to fast; young widows, horrified by the power of death over love, gave away their inheritance and embraced mortification...(p. 123)

However, a part of the people's conformity to the society is how they easily twist their spiritual vocation to meet the society's expectations. This is exemplified by Concha's aborted 'beatification' in favor of her marriage to Manolo Vidal.

Throughout the whole novel, there is always an interplay between religion and the people's attitudes. We can associate again the people's 'veneration' of Mary, the Mother of Christ, with some of the women's qualities such as being 'chaste, virginal, loving and other-worldly,' and of being 'Brides of Christ,' 'godly helpmates to their husbands.' Mary, Paco Texeira's wife, seemingly symbolizes in some ways, the characteristics of Mary, the Mother: that of the self-suffering, self-sacrificing mother. Despite the fact that she has knowledge of her husband's affair with Dona Concha Vidal, she still remains the ever-patient, ever-forgiving wife. She also gives enough allowance to her husband to meet Connie Escobar in the Tovarich Club, and opts to stay at home to take care of her children,

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32 Roberta Hamilton, pp. 51-2.
33 Roberta Hamilton, p. 74.
which surprises her friends because she has previously agreed to their going out:

But as I said, I've changed my mind. Oh, you don't need me there, Paco - you're a big boy now. I'm not your muse or your nurse or anything like that. Tonight, I just want to stay home. ...And it's time you were dressing up, Paco. Come on, I'll help you...(pp. 130-131)

On the other hand, the religiosity which Concha Vidal and the other ilustrados like Manolo Vidal's father project, seems to be superficial and contradicts what characterizes a true Christian. Concha, being a wife of an ilustrado, is 'apparently a good wife and a devoted mother', but possesses a 'lecherous' attitude: "you had better seduce her before she seduces you" (p. 73).

Macho Escobar's father seems to be a 'religious' person, but does not act as one. During Macho's birthday, his father presents him with a woman: 'The boy would soon be going to prostitutes anyway explained his father, and might as well have a clean woman of his own right in the house' (p. 74). Giving such a gift could be a part of his authority as a rich landowner in the South of the Philippines, but just the same, it deviates from his being a Catholic/Christian.

The two priests in the book represent the role of the Church in upholding the morality of the society. Father Tony, who is expected to support Connie, seems to condemn her because she has sinned. He wants the woman to confess to him that she is telling a lie, but he can't help her. Once he knows that Connie has two navels, he refuses to help her and recommends another priest, an older one, for her confession. Once Connie approaches a 'strange old priest with luminous eyes' (p. 178) to ease her burden, she is more troubled with what is happening within her. He repeatedly
mentions to her that having that Biliken (Buddha figure) as an idol is a sin, an evil, so she needs to 'Confess, my child, confess!' (p. 183), to free her of her 'complete possession by, the Devil' (p. 182). Yet ultimately this does nothing to lessen Connie's burden. Father Tony's modern rational existentialism requires Connie to make her own moral choice and leaves him unable to cope with darker challenges of spiritual crisis. The old priest strongly believes that he can overcome darkness, but can only do so in a brutal opposition of salvation or damnation. In either case, the Church is unable to work with Connie as a complex independent personality. She must either renounce her independence and conform as a 'true daughter of the church' (and therefore a Mary-style ideal woman) or she is left wandering in the dark without any support from the Church.

It is interesting to note that Nick Joaquin, who studied at the University of Santo Tomás, a Dominican institution, and who entered a seminary in Hong Kong, dwells in most of his works on his own questioning of the Church's politics and how they and the interaction of pagan and Christian cultural elements affect the status of women.34

Santos works in a much more secular framework than does Joaquin, but in his fiction the same kind of religious-based either/or dilemma confronts most of his women characters, and is revealed more through social interaction than psychological drama.

Sionil Jose's *Two Filipino Women*

*Two Filipino Women* is a combination of two novellas. The first novella is entitled 'Obsession' and the second one is entitled

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34 Laura Oloroso, 'Nick Joaquin and his Brightly Burning Prose Works', in Manuud, *Brown Heritage*, p. 78.
'Cadena de Amor'. As the title suggests, the book deals with two kinds of Filipino women: one who goes into prostitution, and the other who is married to a Senator's son and later on becomes active in politics. The book, being set in the early sixties, depicts contemporary women, unlike Joaquin's Post-war women. This contrast is more evident in the second novella's protagonist, Narita, who involves herself in politics, showing her as the epitome of late-Philippine independent woman.

'Obsession', which mixes a little of the business of 'dirty politics' and economics in the Philippines, mainly focuses its attention on the leading character, Ermi Rojo, whom 'customers' call Dies Mil (because she charges ten thousand pesos to the first customer who wants to sleep with her). Although the book presents this woman as having such a lowly occupation, it aims to justify her entering into that kind of job. The usual main reason is a woman's determination to help her family financially. But in Ermi Rojo's case, it is mainly due to her search for identity and self-possession. She no longer has anybody from her family to live with - she only has an 'adopted' family (her driver's family) who stay with her. Ermi charges ten thousand pesos so that barely anyone will be willing to pay her that much. The money does not interest her very much. This is because she still values her virginity, and as Rolando Cruz, the male character-narrator, finds out, despite her association with the pick-up business, she is still a virgin before she goes to bed with him. The novella justifies the prostitute by comparing her morally to any ordinary citizen. Ermi says to Rolando during one of their private moments:

You and your pompous morality... How can you be so dumb as not to know that we are not different, that we are very much
alike? Go before a mirror, Roly, and ask yourself how you have behaved during the last ten years, or even just during the last ten days. We are alike, I repeat. I sell mine - and you - you sell yourself. (p. 12)

This is an attempt to criticize the bureaucratic and worse, autocratic, system of government, be it at the local or national level. It is true that Rolando is, more or less, similar to Ermi. He is, and has been, exploited by his superiors. He 'used to sell everything, including soft drinks...composed advertising copy... wrote hortatory speeches for corporate and government hierarchs...'(p. 13). Therefore, he and Ermi are both victims: he, of the power trade and Ermi, of the flesh trade.

The novella could have given a good idea of a woman when it stops at the portion where Ermi signifies her intention to improve her status by putting up a restaurant business, but it still gives us the idea that Ermi seeks her past - by going to the pick-up bar every night. Also, although the novella attempts to give justice to the prostitutes, still, it projects an image that a man always has the desire to take advantage of women, or to take the opportunity, whenever it is offered, to 'satisfy their flesh'. Rolando, although trying to help Ermi, just the same belongs to the group of men who are willing to pay for their desire. Moreover, they both seem to be willing (and therefore less noble) victims. Ermi has the chance to 'break free' and start a restaurant but keeps up her call-girl role, while Rolando uses her to feel good but continues to exploit the political/economic system.

The second novella, 'Cadena de Amor', portrays an image of a dutiful daughter, wife and daughter-in-law, and the dramatic influence of fame and wealth upon her life.

The early parts of the novella focus on the female character's
background: her poor family, her rural childhood and adolescence and her betrothal to Lopito Reyes, son of a wealthy senator. Being a dutiful daughter of a 'drunkard' father and a meat vendor, she conforms to the arrangement saying that,

“We are in debt to them. Without Lopito, I would be stuck with this’, she cast a glance around her, at the bedraggled yard, the dilapidated house, the cadena de amor dying and brown on the brick wall. (p. 57)

Narita’s marriage to Lopito enables her to study in Assumption College in Manila through the financial support of Senator Reyes. This, being a part of the 'arrangement', doesn't give her the freedom to be with her friends and/or classmates because she has to stay in the convent. She is portrayed as a responsible and sensible wife to Lopito and a dutiful daughter-in-law to Senator Reyes. Although she has her servants, she finds time to cook for her husband and do other household chores. Nevertheless, as the usual consequence of a pre-arranged marriage, she feels unhappy with Lopito and their marriage gets rough, especially when she discovers his interest in men.

The readers' attention is at first focused on the difficulties a stereotypical ‘good’ woman encounters as a result of a pre-arranged marriage. However, the second portion of the novella is centered, more or less, although not completely, on breaking these stereotypes (loyal, nurturing, domestic). Liberating herself from the bondage of her husband and her unhappiness which resulted from it, Narita seeks her sexual happiness. She has relationships with men, such as Col. Antonio Cunio. At this point however, the novella turns again to stereotypes when Narita becomes the 'querida'/mistress of the Philippine Ambassador (Old Man) to New York. She knows she doesn’t have a good future with the
Ambassador, but she does it for material security.

This search for material security ties in, however, with Narita's desire for wealth and fame. To gain her popularity, she goes back to the Philippines after her stay with the Ambassador in the US. For her, acquiring wealth is not enough. Notwithstanding the failure of Narita's involvement in politics, the novella has shown an attempt of a Filipino woman to break free from the ties of men, to assert her rights and seek her freedom.

Both novellas aim to justify their female protagonists. Both of these novellas, in some way, attempt to break some stereotypical images of women. Ermi appears to be independent financially, and Narita strong, ambitious and emotionally independent. However, the novellas seem to break these stereotypes only at a superficial level. Neither of them could truly say that they have totally 'broken free' and are finally happy in breaking out of the conventional roles.

The two protagonists may be interpreted as still belonging to the stereotypical sex roles. Although Ermi Rojo is portrayed as one who wishes to find her worth as a person, she nevertheless seems a weak person because she is dependent on men's desire for her. Her ultimate decision to get married to Andy compromises her ideal of self-possession. Narita, of 'Cadena de Amor', despite her enthusiasm to be engaged with politics, is still a vulnerable figure. She always confers with her male associates before making decisions even though she also 'uses' them as she climbs the social and political ladder. Her relationship with the Ambassador, as well as her dependence on her father-in-law's support, undermines her presentation as a 'superwoman', famous and 'powerful'.

The prevailing voice is male (the narrators') in both novellas;
and the language (discourse) within the texts is biased. The presence of male narrators, as well as the male characters' attitudes, indicate the novellas' prevailing 'machismo'. The language, the discourse itself, demonstrates it more. In 'Obsession', Rolando Cruz, the narrator, speaks of sympathy for women, as exemplified by his willingness to help Ermi find her 'right' place by establishing a restaurant. He also suggests he is self-sacrificing in conceding her a dominant place in his life:

> Perhaps, this is what love has always been, whether it is for a woman or for a cause --- the readiness to give and not ask for anything in return, the unquestioning willingness to lose everything, even if that loss is something as precious as life itself. (p. 46)

But this remains superficial and hypocritical because Rolando Cruz's sacrifice gives him pleasure - makes him feel self-righteous despite his frequent visit to the pick-up bars even after he meets Ermi. Rolando Cruz is still a stereotypical flesh-seeking, dominating man.

In 'Cadena de Amor', Col. Cunio externally shows his concern for Narita - he sympathizes with her unhappiness with her former husband because of their incompatibilities. In an audio tape, he speaks of his seeming appreciation of Narita's 'independence':

> We went in her Mercedes; she said it was better that way because she felt more independent. To feel independent. She did not give much of a chance for even a man like me to be her master. Or at least be on top. (p. 67)

As his statement continues however, he appears to be rejecting that 'sense of independence', as he says: 'Don't you know that even when we were doing it, she wanted to be on top?' (p.67). The fact that he refers to her wanting to be on top during their sexual intercourse means that he belongs to those who want themselves to be on top - in any form - of women and that he only thinks of their
relationship in sexual terms.

The language of the narrator constructs an image of woman as thing, or object, or a place, instead of being a person herself. In ‘Obsession’, Rolando Cruz says:

I would not get her the second time --- a balding, middle-aged man had tabled (my emphasis) her the whole evening till closing time but was not prepared to part with ten thousand. (p. 9)

He also mentions the common phrase for keeping a mistress, with its associations of place and object and possession:

There were many offers, she told me, to make her a full time mistress, to be “garaged” as the expression went, but she was familiar with the liabilities that arose from such arguments. (p. 14)

Senator Reyes, who extends his concern for and attention to Narita, can be viewed as a fatherly figure, as well as a nurturing mother. It is from him she learns the ‘business’ of politics and the importance of money. However, these qualities indicate that he has the interest to be the ruling figure, the authority, not only in the lives of others (in the political milieu), but also in Narita’s life.

I knew Narita as a child, I watched her grow; her ideas on nationalism, she got them from me. I was instrumental in shaping them, grinding them. Not that she did not have a mind of her own... (p. 101)

The novellas attempt to break stereotypes but do not finally succeed. The male characters want to be the powerful figure, ruling over women. The women, in turn, although having had the chance to find their self-worth and identity, still possess characteristics of vulnerability and submissiveness. As the first novella’s title suggests, the men, in general, are ‘obsessed’ with women’s bodies, and are seen from this perspective, instead of from other more qualifying ones.
Of the three contemporaries, F. Sionil José's fiction is most similar to Santos' in its worldly attention to social detail. Many of the same elements of gender relationships appear in both sets of works, though Santos is not as overtly didactic and is more subtly critical of the status quo than José. The latter's socialist leanings have a direct bearing on his attempt to examine gender and power, both in making the connection more apparent and restricting his ability to analyse the deeper moral and ideological aspects of patriarchal hegemony because of a concentration on surface material elements such as money, employment and sex.

**Kerima Polotan's *The Hand of the Enemy***

*The Hand of the Enemy* focuses its 'exploration' on the female protagonist, Emma Gorrez. Unlike Connie and Concha in *The Woman Who Had Two Navels* who are too self-indulgent and want themselves surrounded by luxuries in life, Emma is not preoccupied with how she looks, or how she can attract males. The book portrays her as a wife who shares her time and effort with her husband to earn their living, and is more preoccupied with other things: her wifely and motherly duties, her assertions or rights as a worker in the printing press financed by the Cosios, or as a teacher in Plaridel High School in Tayug.

The book portrays Emma as an assertive individual but unlike other female characters such as Norma, she is a calm, yet not too-persistent individual. Although she comes from a wealthy family, she does not bank on her family's support but tries to mold her own future, which angers her ailing father. Rather than waiting for her father's financial aid from their 'eight hundred hectare' farm in Laguna (p. 3), she goes to Manila and seeks 'casual' or temporary
employment. This quest for her own future establishes a significant theme in the book, that of self-possession and its loss. Upon her father’s re-marriage to a piano teacher, Emma loses her connection with her family.

Both Miguel Bernad and Leonard Casper outline this central theme of 'loss of selfhood'. This separation from her family and her quest for ‘self-identity’, also causes her a number of losses: her loss of autonomy to prove her self-worth in the business; her loss of her husband Doming, and ultimately, the loss of her lover Rene Rividad.

As with the contrasting pairs of both of the other books, Emma Mercene Gorrez stands as counterpoint to Norma Rividad who is different in terms of attitudes to family and life. Emma accepts her responsibilities as sole parent of her two children when she decides to leave Doming and return to Tayug to teach. Norma, wife of the principal, often leaves their children in the care of their father whenever she goes to another town to meet her lover(s).

Nevertheless, Norma is seen as an almost irresponsible mother and wife. The book suggests that she charges her illicit affairs with other men to her 'sense of loss' - she is an illegitimate child of the former vice-mayor in Tayug - her 'business' is a symptom of her search for her true 'world', a true identity. If Norma finds herself in sensual abandon, Emma demonstrates a stoic alternative of respectable, solitary resistance to dependence on others. There are distinct differences in their attitudes, however.

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While Emma remains solitary, Norma wants to keep herself publicly known. Emma learns to love Rene and wishes to demonstrate her love for him, but is constrained from doing so:

\[...no one had said anything....Rividad and Emma had stood there, feeling awkward and shy --- and guilty, like conspirators on the verge of being discovered. \textit{(The Hand of the Enemy, p. 108).}\]

She admires and enjoys Rene's company, but she seemingly can not decide for herself whether she will accept Rene's proposal for a more permanent relationship. What she feels is different from what she says and how she acts. The book effectively reveals the irony of her feelings and actions when, at the end of the novel where Rene's house is burned, and apparently Rene burns himself, Emma now unashamedly shouts, 'I love you! I love you!' to the imaginary Rene who is now turning to ashes.

On the other hand, Norma is more vocal and 'scandalous' regarding her personal life, even her affairs with men. When she feels the 'burden' of having relationships with men aside from her husband and might be feeling guilty (as when she has her child aborted), she nevertheless accepts to carry that burden and makes no demands of her husband: 'I don't need your help...you hear me? You take your sickening self-righteousness away - I can wreck my life alone.' (p. 82).

The social and moral attitudes of society always have a direct effect on women. Somehow, both women are 'doomed' to suffer the judgments of the society. This is evident in the novel. Emma leaves Doming in Pasay because she can not tolerate her husband's 'dirty' business with the Old Man (Mr. Navarro) - his superior in the office he's working with. Doming 'pimps' (as Emma says) the Old Man's search for young flesh, like that of their female employees.
This is also related to the novel's theme of 'betrayal'. Emma prefers to find an alternative life rather than remain with the person who has 'betrayed' her. This betrayal is not physical, but moral. Amidst the sacrifices they share as husband and wife, working hard in the Crescent Press just to earn a living, Doming learns compromise and corruption. This Emma cannot accept.

Alongside the issue of 'sense of loss' or 'loss of selfhood' is the issue of 'double morality'. The people, who can be categorized into the 'urbanized' and the 'village folks', have their own ways of judging other people, based on their unwritten norms and standards. The people in Tayug condemn Norma's illicit affairs with other men, but they do not condemn the affairs of the vice-mayor to whom daughter Norma was born by one of his 'illegal women'. The 'urbanized' people, however, specifically in Manila, also tolerate these 'illegal affairs' to a higher degree in order to maintain a facade of respectability. The Old Man, Doming's 'boss', doesn't have any problem pursuing his 'business' with younger women, because undoubtedly, the people around him don't mind it - or put up with it because they value status and wealth more. Glo, who has a 'talent' of her own (she works in a radio station), prefers to be a mistress to Doming, to enjoy her luxuries. Her standards of living are so high that she definitely needs Doming's resources. Her friends come from the 'arty people' (p. 88); she loves throwing parties for them. She is of course, cunning in her treatment of men:

[She] took care that there was never between her and her, ah, friends, anything so gross as an outright exchange of money. Gifts, yes. Expensive canvasses. Stones. Cashmeres. Perfumes. Rare editions.... (91)

Like 'Obsession' and 'Cadena de Amor' in Two Filipino Women, the novel, The Hand of the Enemy, also depicts the lower status of
women, especially of the *querida/mistress*. Although Norma Rividad shows outrightly her freedom to engage with other men, she is nevertheless empowered by men. In the end, they seemingly have the authority over their relationship. Norma is caught unaware when, after having tried to keep their relationship away from public scrutiny, hears that the captain (of the PC detachment nearby) publicly confirms their illicit affair: ‘Taking both her hands in his, he said, loud enough for people around to hear, “Darling, we had a lovely time”, and walked back to the waiting vehicle’ (p. 79). Hence, the men are seen to be holding her ‘honor’ or ‘reputation’.

The men also hold the higher posts in offices, or are the ones given the higher responsibility in any work/job. The leaders of the protest strike are male workers; the principal in Plaridel High School is male; and in national politics, the men run the affairs. The women, that is, Leonora Cosio, only serve as backup for jobs such as distributing goods and organizing pre-election campaigns.

Although the book shows a male-dominated society, it nevertheless presents an idea of female assertion. Nora, Emma, even Glo, pursue their own happiness on their own terms within the limits of social control.

Upon seeking her 'peaceful' world after she leaves her family, Emma Mercene, as a teacher, faces a responsibility as an adviser of the school paper in Plaridel High School and the History Club. These two co-curricular duties provide her chances to expand her horizon as a person and as a teacher with wider understanding of the local community. She meets Doming Gorrez at the printing press for the school paper; she discovers the history behind Tayug, the place where she teaches. Tayug’s history, the so-called 1931 uprising, not only tells about the colonial invasion which consequently
brought some social changes, but it also provides some details as to the role women played in society, specifically, in the people’s revolt against their enemies. The women, who maintained their domestic routine, also helped the men assert their rights to their properties. There was even a woman who:

picked up a rifle and aimed it at His Honor (alcalde) and pulled the trigger and laughed at the noisy way His Honor died; and screaming, picked up a red flag, and ran across the plaza, clambering up Rizal’s statue, and waved and waved and waved the flag... (p. 13)

The book may perhaps claim its success in imparting the message that whatever and however the society judges, its women are always affected. It may also have been successful, through the character of Emma, in revealing a new and more dynamic attitude to women. The book’s strategy of letting the readers know this in the first few pages is to explore more the events around Emma which promote her 'sense of independence' and freedom. It might not have been thoroughly successful, however, to claim that Emma is a completely independent and free woman - free from the moralistic conventions of the society to which she belongs. She tries to go outside the circle of social restrictions, but she is caught somewhere in-between the boundary. She herself, is lost.

This loss, however, can be explained by the book's message that 'Life - is the enemy. A man has wounds it cannot heal, a woman has wants it cannot give, and everyone burns with a fatal fever.' (p. 26). It may sound pessimistic to some, but it is the book's way of justifying Emma's loss of selfhood, Rene Rividad's sacrifice with his disloyal wife, and Norma's illicit affairs with other men. Whatever happens to anyone, it is the life itself which he/she should struggle with. From this perspective, it can be interpreted
that the weaknesses of the characters, both men and women, have
not yet been resolved. Rene Rividad’s suicide is not an answer to
his ‘reputation’ or ‘dignity’ as a respectable principal and husband.
This ending offers a message of both Emma’s emotional
‘uncertainty’ and Rene’s ‘resigned’ attitude towards life, which
ironically defeats the purpose of showing Emma’s assertiveness and
independence.

Obviously, the novel gives greater attention to female
possibilities for self-determination, but there is still much
awareness of being constrained by social expectations. Santos sees
more the need to escape from the status quo. Perhaps his relative
distance allows this, Kerima Polotan’s quest after women’s
liberation operating out of a well established social and literary
position that continued under the Marcos government.

What is clear from this survey and the earlier discussion of
Santos’ output is that he is fairly typical of the period in his
concerns over sexuality and the social position of women,
particularly those who are driven by personal or economic need to
transgress norms of gendered behaviour. His differences stem from
his later investigation of these themes outside of Philippines society
and his quiet but insistent attention to the role men play in
maintaining discriminatory practices and attitudes.

C. Some Contemporary Images of Women

The Philippines’ socio-historical milieu produced various
kinds of women. There has been always a debate as to the
multiplicity of their roles as wife, as sister, or simply as a woman,
and as a whole, as an agent of change. The case of Imelda Marcos
could be raised as an example. It is common knowledge that having been the wife of the deceased Ferdinand Marcos, Imelda is criticized as being ‘more powerful’ than her husband; that she contributed to his downfall. On the other hand, there is the claim that she rose to fame because of his power.

A part of the women’s response to such questions is the growth of the feminist movement's clamoring for women’s rights and privileges as individuals and as members of society. Their concerns are issues related to women not only as women within the family but women within the nation. Lynn Lee comments that ‘the contemporary women’s movement is developing a coherent analysis of women’s oppression in the context of Philippine history and society.’ The women’s movement operates in any form, be it through the media, music, industry, among others. This of course includes the rise of the feminist writers who aim to expose the real status of Filipino women. They, together with those who have the same concerns, ‘take up the very difficult task of tackling powerful, male dominated institutions.’

Two works that attempt this task are: Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters* (1990), and Ninotchka Rosca's *State of War* (1988). These books are products of authors who were actually exposed to macho militarism and overt sexism in the Philippines. Rosca herself was a victim of unjust treatment under the Marcos regime. After moving to the United States, both writers became more aware of feminist theory and practice. Their novels feature two classes of Filipino women - the group which is a conglomerate of both

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38 Lyn Lee, p. 223.
Spanish and American influences, and another group which, more or less, represents the contemporary youth of the Philippines. Both Dogeaters and State of War could be considered historical novels because they document the rise and fall of the Philippine government from the Spanish period to the American, and into the Post-War Period. Nevertheless, they also could be considered as politically- and socially-awakening books because they explore the present-day conditions arising out of these colonial periods.

Although State of War 's main interest is the revolutionary bomb attack planned for the Commander's speech at the Festival in K____, it nevertheless makes sidetrips through Philippine history, government and culture. Through the book's 'flashback technique', the readers understand the society's attitudes towards the women, which are indirectly but undeniably brought about by the Spanish colonialism. How society treats men as superior to women and how parents interfere with the personal and marital affairs of their children are evident in the book. Apart from these, as in Dogeaters, the females of the early years after the Spanish colonization, had acquired the habit of showing to the public their 'excellence' and 'dignity' by dressing well and at the same time, showing their hidden parts. These women have seemingly accepted their role and engage in restrained sexual flirtation for the male's benefit:

Being farm girls conscripted from plantations around Manila, their thighs were plump with the sun's sap - a virtue they made sure he (Old Andy) noticed by lifting their skirts and pretending to fan their lower limbs, moving their petticoats to and fro..... (State of War, p. 76)

In Dogeaters, Spanish-influenced attitudes can be revealed in the self-conscious behaviour of the women, i.e., appearing always beautiful in front of people, especially around men. This level of
awareness as an object of public regard finds later expression in the American-inspired craze for beauty contests. Beauty pageants, which are still popularly practised today in the Philippines, only serve to institutionalize the stereotypical evaluation of women according to their physical appearance rather than mental or intellectual attributes. The *Dogeaters* brings to us the idea that the beauty pageant is 'a farce, a giant step backward for all women....' (p. 109). Daisy Avila (Mutya), a beauty pageant winner herself, brutally says in a TV interview that the First Lady, who spearheaded the beauty contest in which Mutya competed, is 'furthering the cause of female delusions in the Philippines' (*Dogeaters*, p. 109). This self-indulgence and consciousness of one's beauty and appearance, is obviously questioned by both books. *State of War* offers a view of the pre-colonial women who were devoid of this 'consciousness' of appearance and dress, but who still possessed their inner qualities:

They (the women) walked with wisdom, dressed simply in an ankle-length piece of cloth wrapped and knotted about the hips, breasts left bare --- until the Spaniards infected them with shame and made them hide their strength beneath layers of petticoats, half-chemises, drawers, skirts, blouses, shawls, and veils...(*State of War*, p. 192)

The women give superior status to the men. This is evident in the way they give preference and position to the dining tables during mealtime: 'She (Maya) took the seat to Carlos' right, yielding to him the table's head as befitted the man of the household.'(p.160).

Even while the women defer to the men, they also manipulate them in subtle but powerful ways. Maya nags Juan Carlos to get married soon, while her maidservant (later known as Liwayway) offers her convent-raised daughter to be Juan Carlos' wife. Both
mothers arrange the future marriage of Juan Carlos and Mayang. This act shows a matriarchal system because it is the women who decide over others’ welfare. It could also be noted that although both Maya and her servant (Mayang’s mother) decide for their respective son/daughter, they nevertheless remain as puppets: Maya, being ‘manipulated’ and controlled by her husband, and the servant, being controlled by Maya and other household members. As Maya says to her servant, ‘It is perfect, of course, for you have been raised after my own image. You can carry on after me.’ (State of War, p. 188). They are both controllers, as well as, puppets. The same is true with Mayang (or Maya Jr.) who later takes her name from Maya, her mother-in-law. Mayang, as Juan Carlos’ wife, gains the ‘power’ to control her husband, but at the same time, inevitably, is a victim of Maya’s control over her. Living in a patriarchal home, she possesses no control over the whole domestic property and decisions, or even personal things such as naming her future children.

It is obvious that Maya has acquired her power and authority over the entire household. She assumes her high status as a matriarchal ruler. On the other hand, it seemingly appears that her power is merely confined inside the household - her maidservants obediently and meekly follow her. Undoubtedly, she remains to possess a tough, invulnerable image of a person and wife, but she is vulnerable outside her home. Her ignorance of what is happening in the community, or the price increase, or even the advancement in technology such as innovations in vehicles, proves her weakness outside her domestic ‘influence’.

Mayang’s seduction of her husband, which leads to his craving for her sexual favors, reduces Juan Carlos to a weaker sexual
position. Nevertheless, like Leonor Bautista (*Dog eaters*) who depends on her religious icons around her room and her daily novenas to the saints for her decisions, Mayang later refuses to 'show' Carlos 'the way again' because she believes that in doing so, she will disobey what the nuns of Laguna had told her:

(They) had laid strict injunction against the expression of desire that rather than violate it, Mayang bit her nails, hugged a small cushion to her chest, and moaned in her rocking chair. She had sleepless nights... (p. 200)

This again shows how the lives of the women (or even of the men) are influenced by their spiritual beliefs. However, this belief seems to be superficial because, there is an apparent contradiction between their action and their faith. Mayang, for instance, attends mass regularly because she believes she will purge her sin of committing herself to Hans, her husband's German associate. She knows that what she is doing is a sin, but she continues to do it because she believes she 'washes' sin from herself anyway, by going to church everyday and keeping her novenas regularly. *Dog eaters* reveals the people's display of 'religious' devotions to God, accompanied by the presence of religious icons in the house. Sometimes, this religiosity is exposed on hypocrisy, as when Col. Nicasio Ledesma's wife, Leonor Bautista, uses the privacy of her devotions to escape from her husband and to exert control over him. (p. 67).

Obviously, the book presents a critique of the superficial religiosity of the Filipinos. This critique is confirmed by the book's offering an alternative: a pre-Hispanic spiritual tradition dominated by women:

the women were in passage so that strangers could stay clear, for women then were in communion with the gods, praying to the river, the forest spirits, the ancient stones, pouring out blood

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libations in evening rituals, healing the sick, foretelling the results of wars, quarrels, couplings, and the seasons. (*State of War*, p. 192).

The link between the Church and the sexual oppression of women is shown in the following:

[H]e reached the river and surprised a woman leaving the waters --- a dark, malayan girl with an acacia tree's sturdiness. Secure in the drowsy hour, she had taken off her clothes to bathe herself and managed to equally surprise the priest with an image of a brown Venus... he tripped on the hem of her skirts and overwhelmed her with his weight. (pp. 154-155)

The girl's gestures basically reflect the people's 'respect' for authority, especially that of the Church:

The girl, who was fourteen years old, knew enough not to resist the priest, having grown up surrounded by the gossip of elders and taken to heart the admonition that the tenderest of thighs, whether of chicken or of women, belonged to the friars. She yielded her virginity on a bed of pebbles and curled arms and legs tightly about the pain of the unholy entrance, bit her lower lip, and thought of how much all this silliness should cost the stupid priest....(pp. 154-155)

One noticeable irony here is that the priest, as preacher of the sanctity of the Virgin, is the one who 'deflowers' the girl, and then uses his authority again:

He gave her a gold coin, stamped with a profile of a king no one had ever seen, and having made arrangements for her weekly visit to the church, he turned around, humming the “Ave Maria”...(p. 155).

It is apparent though, that the book attempts to show an assertive woman as represented by Maya and Mayang. It also breaks the Spanish tradition of requiring children or in-laws to be ever-obedient, ever-inferior individuals, in any decision-making. Here, although the time span is during the Spanish period, it allows a woman to speak up. Mayang asserts her right to name her future child (it's still in her womb), much to Maya's (her mother-in-law's) regret: 'I am señora now... I am not a child....' (p. 215). This is an
obvious message of the book on one's assertion of his/her rights.

*Dogeaters* is set among upper-class present-day Filipinos, thus, it focuses more on contemporary women, and their self-indulgent unconcern, implying possible ways to correct them.

The novel presents the effects of the American popular culture on the attitudes of the Filipinos. Their exposure to Western culture makes them more interested in Hollywood movie actors and actresses who in turn, are imitated by the local movie stars. This exposure to entertainment increases their awareness of sexual images - the appeal of a 'voluptuous body', as in the case of the youngsters who envy Lolita Luna, the 'sexy' local actress. In *State of War*, the influence on the young and old of the Western entertainment business is typified briefly by Clarissa who takes a great interest in a 'matinee idol' (p. 252). While the men fancy 'voluptuous bodies' of young actresses, the women, or the female youngsters like Clarissa, rush to the theater circus just to gain a glance of the male stars' handsome faces and extraordinary skills.

*Dogeaters* and *State of War* portray Filipino society in a state of flux. *Dogeaters* uses a fragmented narrative - showing the influences of the various colonial periods, ie., Catholicism (from the Spaniards); the Hollywood and pop culture (from the Americans). However, unlike books written in the early fifties, or 1960s and 1970s, *Dogeaters* and *State of War* try to subvert the notion that women should be treated like Mother Mary, by merely judging them on their virginity, or even perhaps, beauty. These texts argue that women should play a more important role than housewife or babysitter. In *Dogeaters*, the closing 'Kundiman' (pp. 250-251)40

40 literally means Philippine love aria.
summarizes the whole issue. The 'kundiman' speaks of the Mother as Mother Mary, the intercessor of God, yet the people's belief in her intercession has not been exactly wholehearted, as she (You) [has] 'been defiled, belittled, and diminished...' (p. 250). This Mother is used more as a metaphor of the Mother-land, the Philippines herself, which, because of past colonizations, has undergone worse changes. 'Thy kingdom never came' obviously says that her power to own her own territory to claim her privileges, has not yet come true.

The 'Kundiman' also attempts to decolonize the Mother. It warns her to be aware of the 'serpents in [her] garden...[l]icking [her] ears with forked tongues, poisoning [her] already damaged heart...'

Aware of the Mother's sufferings from the effects of colonialism, the 'kundiman' cautions her that there are still more 'serpents' roaming around the country, which can anytime use their 'fangs', ready to bite people.

Generally, the 'Kundiman' conclusion suggests that people need to relate Mother Mary - their spiritual belief/faith - to more important things than mundane issues of motherhood and femininity. It also suggests that their faith must engage with their sociopolitical concerns.

Both of these latter-day works depict the same conditions of ingrained sexism as all the other works considered here, including Santos'. They are, however, much more deliberately feminist in outlook, not only in offering a more central place to socially active women characters, but in working through experimental forms and language to pull apart what they depict and even suggest a woman-centered culture as a viable Philippine alternative. The more radically feminist outlook of these texts, compared to Santos' and
those of the earlier period surveyed above, can obviously be attributed to the difference in generations. Despite their common expatriation, contemporary Philippines experience and western thinking make Hagedorn and Rosca bolder and more aggressive than Santos and others of a mildly critical, liberal humanist era.
IV. Gender Relationships in Santos' Fiction

There are three key elements to be discussed in a consideration of Santos' fictional depiction of Filipino gendering: the images in the texts, the social change behind (and in) the fiction and the life of the writer, either in the Philippines or the United States. These three elements are interlinked but can also be treated separately. In the ensuing commentary I discuss the fictional accounts alongside the Philippines' socio-cultural matrix. Similar to the other writers' texts discussed earlier, Santos' texts show a relationship between the people's Catholic faith and their attitude towards the place of women in Philippine society.

A. Types/Roles of Men and Women

The strong religious consciousness, whatever its form, constitutes a major determinant in Santos' work, although there are not very many references to priests or the church in his work.

In Santos' novels, virginity is given associations of being 'pure' and untouched, and is a major factor in producing social conformity. In The Volcano, although we know that Tina is distressed at her boyfriend's disappearance, we are also led to infer that she is psychologically affected by what the children in the community call her. Just because she has often been seen with Junior, the people call her 'junior's widow' (p. 204). Her reaction to this name-calling reveals her awareness of people's moral expectations as she replies angrily by shouting, 'Junior never touched me!' (p. 205). Both she and the people are preoccupied with the social morality arising
from the cult of the Virgin.

Attached to this issue of virginity is the tradition among rural people that newly married couples ought to observe a three-day 'grace period' before they can sleep together and live as husband and wife. Enteng, in 'Days of Grace' (Dwell in the Wilderness), irritably and impatiently follows what his family and relatives say about the 'grace period'. According to them, this belief is significant because: '...the first day of grace is dedicated to Jesus, the second to Mary, and the third to Joseph [.]' (p. 100). Much to the dislike of the couple (Enteng and Belen), they have to follow what the community observes, because, as Enteng's uncle says, '[a]ll your people have observed these three days of grace.'(p.100)

Santos also depicts the women's 'demureness' and 'oversensitivity' in this novel of traditional rural society. Dr. Hunter (The Volcano) wonders how women are able to bathe 'out in the open' keeping 'their clothing on' (p. 63), and remarks upon their hesitation to 'disrobe even in the presence of a lay nurse' (p. 63). Dr. Hunter describes the Filipino woman as 'so modest, so delicate, oversensitive to touch'.

Being 'so modest, so delicate, oversensitive to touch', describes the Filipina's 'sense of dignity' which is closely tied to a sense of shame, aptly called supog in Bicol.\(^1\) One can bathe with dignity in public if there is no shameful display; but a woman cannot maintain self-esteem by letting others, especially males, touch any of her bodily parts. So, the husband refuses to bring his laboring wife to Dr. Hunter: 'No, no, not by a man! Only midwives had the right to

\(^1\) It refers to the language/dialect used by the inhabitants of the Bicol Region situated south of Manila. Albay, one of Bicol's provinces, is where the action of The Volcano mainly takes place.
deliver a child.’ (p. 197)

In his other novels, especially those with more contemporary, urban and upper-class settings, we find outgoing, independent, even brash women. But there is a continuing presence of dignified and demure female characters (Imelda Sotto, Grace, Mila and others) that suggests Santos' support for this type as the ideal Filipina.

Accompanying her belief in the Catholic doctrine on 'chastity' and 'sin' is the woman’s refusal to accept anything contrary to what the Church teaches and professes. Maritzu rejects contraceptives because she believes it is a sin. She doesn’t say goodbye to Dr. Hunter before leaving the hospital because of her guilt in the face of Catholic doctrine. Because of shame, she keeps her veil pulled 'low over her face, and turn[s] her head away while Don Vicente wave[s].' (The Volcano, p. 200)

The people’s knowledge of the 'doctrines', set against their greater involvement in the world beyond home and church usually poses some conflict. This happens to Enteng, who, although he knows it is now high-time to break the tradition, still conforms to the community's belief on 'days of grace', which later on makes him a helpless man. He resorts to self-sacrifice through physical pain such as scalding his feet with hot water instead of violating the tradition. Teban, of 'No Villain' (Dwell in the Wilderness), thinks God punishes him for Consing's 'interlude of madness', because he doesn't control his physical urge with his wife, especially during 'nights when he would wake up after restful hours of sleep'. He is tempted by 'the warmth and the softness of the woman he loved and the heady scent that came to him from her, lashing at his body that fought for release' (p. 39). His reaction to Consing's
intermittent 'madness' is that of recrimination and guilt for what he does to Consing every time she is not pregnant. This guilt arises from his belief in guilt, reward and/or punishment inculcated by Catholicism. Instead of doing positive things to solve the problem, Teban helplessly blames himself for Consing's illness and consequently turns himself to vices like smoking and cockfighting, believing that these would keep him busy instead of interfering with Consing's sound sleep at night.

It is apparent therefore, that these people base their decisions and 'value-judgments' on their spiritual belief. It is not only Maritzu, Enteng and Teban who believe they deserve some kind of punishment from God, and feel guilty for having done something 'contrary' to the doctrine, but many others. There seems to be a constant 'communication' between the person and God - whatever he/she does, it is necessary for him/her to seek His decision. In 'Immigration Blues' (Scent of Apples), Mrs. Antonieta Zafra retells Alipio and Monica how she acquired her residence in the United States; she allowed God to influence her decision:

> All week she talked to God. It was the same God she had worshipped and feared all her life. Now they were palsy walsy, on the best of terms. .... He brooded with her, sympathized with her, and finally advised her to go look for an elderly Filipino who was an American citizen, and tell him the truth of the matter. Tell him that if he wished, it could be a marriage in name only. For his trouble, she would be willing to pay. How much? If its a bit too much, could she pay on the installment plan? If he wished... otherwise... Meanwhile He would look the other way.... ('Immigration Blues', p. 13)

Like the others, Mrs. Zafra is obviously dependent on God's support. Here, it is less of a punishing-God but more of a flexible-and listening-God, with whom she communicates.

This difference is confirmed by Don Vicente who tells Dr. Hunter that 'all these hundred years, they have been repeating the
words of the Catholic ritual without understanding...' (The Volcano, p. 167).

Strangely enough, it may be the Church's dogma concerning the superiority of the male that contributes to male flouting of its moral codes. While it is true that there is a commandment against adultery and that they value their family bond - as a reflection of their perception of the Holy Family - the men always have the courage to engage in extra-marital affairs, because presumably, the wives are taught to be submissive: 'Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands for the husband is the head of the wife.' This results in the tendency of the male to do whatever he wants to do, without making any conscious effort to consider what his wife feels. So while the society castigates the woman — the querida — who presumably ruins the relationship of the couple and the family, it nevertheless ignores the man's subjugation of both his wife and the querida.

A typical example of this dynamic can be seen in Villa Magdalena. Doña Magdalena conforms to the the conventional religious type of the 'ideal' housewife: she 'spent the longer part of the morning in the kitchen, looking after the preparation of the food, tasting and retasting the soup....' (p. 63) When he arrives from work, she tak[es] off her husband's shoes 'while he look[s] down on her, smiling contentedly', and 'wait[s] on him at the dining table'. This may, in itself, be considered an 'ideal' act of Doña Magdalena towards her husband, but the couple's lack of communication proves that she is merely forced into the situation, performing those acts 'blindly'. In other words, she is not happy to do them, as when they were eating, she 'was silent or talked to Nora and Elisa....

ignoring him completely....’ (p. 63). Seen from this point of view, she is reduced to a servile and domesticated wife. The extent of her internalising a traditional demure role can be inferred even from the later ragings of her madness.

A woman’s domesticity can also be viewed not only in the legal wife’s but in the mistress’s context. Fred describes Pat

...as an excellent cook. She had no maid in the house. She kept busy mopping the floor, tending her plants, and embroidering linen and silk, most of which belonged to Don Magno.... Her cooking was not fancy like the food we ate at the Villa, but more down to earth and delicious...(Villa Magdalena, p. 118).

The woman’s lower status is not only apparent in her concern for and value of the man, in the way she serves him and waits for him and in the way she is dependent on him for all her basic concerns. In What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco, Dr. Tablizo’s mother ‘would not eat without him [Dr. Tablizo’s father]’ (p. 156). She not only demonstrates her servile attitude, but also the wife’s dependence on her husband. Moreover, a woman’s dependence can be visible in any decision-making, even in simple matters which she herself can readily provide. When Maritzu (The Volcano) objects to the possible use of ‘contraceptives’, enthusiastically proposed by Dr. Hunter, she refers to her husband’s ‘go-signal’, as she says to him, ‘As you please.... You’re my husband.’ (p. 199). The woman to whom Dr. and Mrs. Hunter offer their ‘useable’ items before leaving for the United States hesitates to accept them, staring at her husband as if to ask, "May I accept this?" (The Volcano, p. 28).

On the evidence of Santos’ texts, it seems that the Filipino woman allows herself to be categorized into several stereotypes. The most prominent of these are the dependent, caring, and...
domesticated Filipina. These qualities of being dependent, caring, and domesticated are reflected in the story, 'The Portrait' (*Dwell in the Wilderness*), whose main character, Apung Sabi, an old woman, turns into an almost lifeless wife when her husband, Apung Doro, dies. She cannot forget how they

had lived together --- suffering, toiling, laughing through the years. Hand in hand they had known the joys and sorrows that only youth could give. ...That was why when Apung Doro died, she felt as if she had lost a part of her life. Her loss, she felt, had made the rest of her life incomplete. (p.22)

Apung Sabi has tried to make her husband 'live again', at least through his portrait. Her family even struggles to have it laminated. Apung Doro's picture, after being laminated, will hopefully bring Apung Sabi back to her usual zest. Her immediate fainting when she sees the laminated portrait of her husband ironically symbolizes the importance of her husband to her life.

In 'Scent of Apples' (*You Lovely People*), Celestino Fabia, who has been away from the Philippines for twenty years, asks the narrator in one of his talks to a Filipino group, whether the image of a Filipina has changed. He clearly expects, if not hopes, that it is still the same nowadays. It is significant that he exempts the male from such expectations. Twenty years ago, '...our women were nice, [they were] modest, [they] went to church regular [sic], and [they] were faithful...It's the men who ain't.' ('Scent of Apples', p. 139).

Being dependent and domesticated places the woman in lower status because in most cases, the man takes advantage of her dependence and servitude. This is exemplified by Don Magno's treatment of his mistress Pat (*Villa Magdalena*). She remarks that he 'does not want me [Pat] to have a phone in the house so [I] never know when he is coming' (*Villa Magdalena*, p. 118). While Pat's
statement can be initially interpreted as proof of her complaint
against the situation; on the other hand, it also shows that she
submissively and willingly accepts whatever Don Magno does in
their relationship. In this case, she is an example of a woman who
is really dependent on man's support and actions; she considers any
circumstance as beyond her control.

If we read this situation onto *The Praying Man*, it would
appear that Janet is the same kind of stereotypical, weak and
submissive woman. As Junior's girlfriend, she does nothing to resist
Cris Magat's sexual advances. Instead, she is more ready to say,
'There's nothing I can do about anything, is there?', while clutching
Cris' lapels (p. 77). However, as the story progresses we are able to
see that she is also exploiting these advances to her own advantage
— to fulfil her desire for prosperity and moral reaffirmation. Finally
she is confident of pinning Cris Magat down, as evidenced by her
pictures posted on his wall. Thus the book portrays something of
the paradoxical weakness and power of the Filipina stemming from
the dichotomous representation as Virgin/mother/whore.

Nonetheless, the man continues to place woman in a lower
position in the society whether she allows him to or not. She
remains the ever-loving, ever-caring, ever-serving woman in his
life, while he embarks on some 'underground operation', of which,
naturally, his wife has no knowledge.

Here is where an unfair husband-wife relationship comes in.
To keep in tune with the 'moral' standards of the society and her
Catholic/Christian principles, the woman remains the ever-loyal,
faithful wife, and continues improving her domestic skills, thinking
that these make her an ideal companion. The husband, on the other
hand, finds another woman (or many women) easily, to give him
extra comfort and attention. Thus, the prevalence of the *queridas* or mistresses in the society is described.

Most, if not all, of Santos’ novels show this *querida* syndrome. Don Magno Medallada, of *Villa Magdalena*, is linked with many women, and keeps a secret, special relationship with Pat. Cris(pulo) Magat, of *The Praying Man*, is involved with Susan, his office’s secretary; with Janet Velasco with whom his son Junior has eloped; and many other girls coming from ‘all walks of life’. Dr. Pacifico Sotto, of *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*, has been previously involved with some women, most of whom come from élite circles or from the entertainment business in Manila. Don Vicente, of *The Volcano*, has had an affair with a young girl with whom he fathered a child, knowledge of which has possibly caused the suicide of his wife Doña Isabel. J.P., of *The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*, has been involved with ‘some of the more aggressive young debutantes’.

The question of why these men become involved with other women apart from their wives can be raised. Santos’ male characters mostly have stable jobs and occupy a higher post in their specific undertakings. Don Magno is a leather magnate; Cris Magat is a head of a drugs corporation; Dr. Sotto is a popular urologist; Don Vicente is a successful businessman. On the one hand, they may be considered successful, respectable men, yet their ‘respectability’ poses an irony because of their engagement with their *queridas*. It is also possible that these men have their 'other' woman/women to compensate for feelings of lack of success (lack of total control) because their wives are successful in their own right. Doña Magdalena is a wealthy landowner who, as Doña Asuncion claims, basically owns the Villa and its properties. Cris Magat’s wife, Grace,
is an active participant in the élite society. Imelda Sotto is a successful and very generous pediatrician, aptly called ‘Queen of Pediatricians, USA’. Doña Isabel, wife of Don Vicente, like Grace, belongs to the élite society of women. J.P.'s wife, Flora, an American woman, is also actively engaged in her social circle. Amidst their individual careers, they also manage to spend time with their husbands, even to the point of waiting on them. Nevertheless, having ideal wives or not is simply not the basic reason why these men engage in ‘other’ activities. Men enjoy increased status when they participate in this querida system. Apparently, the people within the community respect the man more if he has illicit, if not extramarital affairs. Their response to this kind of system is exemplified by the fact that the people around Don Vicente’s community (The Volcano) are aware of his affair with a young lady with whom he fathered a child and tolerate their relationship.

Considering that each novel is set in a post-Spanish period, one can very well say that the Spanish colonial attitude of ‘superiority/inferiority’ has been long imbibed in the consciousness of the people. J.P. (The Man Who Thought He Looked Like Robert Taylor), or Dr. Sotto (What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco), has been exposed to a different culture - the American culture - but their practice of the querida ‘syndrome’ is very similar to that of Don Vicente, or Don Magno, who, most likely, had been raised very close to the Spanish tradition.

Santos also illustrates the changes of outlook that accompanied Americanization. Specifically, the women have been given the leeway to work and enjoy their own respective careers. They have become more career-oriented and less-domesticated. Evidence of this is the contrast between Doña Magdalena or Doña
Isabel who merely stays at home and waits for her husband come home from work, and Imelda Sotto, Grace and Susan, who practise their profession. Nevertheless, liberation is not clearly evident yet because there still exists a traditional mentality - this elevation of man's status and its expression through the querida system. Moreover, although exposure to Western culture encourages women to become career-oriented and sociable, this does not exempt them from showing their vulnerability in some circumstances. Doña Isabel's apparent suicide is a consequence of Don Vicente's illicit affair with Clara (The Volcano). Doña Isabel attempts to show her resistance to the situation and her aggression against her husband by exposing her naked body to him when she comes to his 'office'. Doing this supposedly to let him realize that she is still attractive and will not allow Don Vicente to engage in any relationship with Clara, only leads her to being a sadly comic character. She makes herself compete with another female, and not to assert her rights as the legal wife to her husband.

B. Macho Image: Superiority or Insecurity?

In most of Santos’ fiction, there is always a notion that the male sex is stronger than the female sex. The male always wants to be the head of the group - be it a family, an organization, or politics. Don Magno, apart from his being the head of the leather industry, asserts his dominance at home. He assumes, according to himself, the work assigned to a man because obviously, the Villa, being originally owned by the two sisters Nena (Magdalena) and Asunción, lacks males. Their relatives are almost all females. The males, such as Señor Vidal, are in-laws, but not directly related to the two sisters. This is what Don Magno claims: 'Everything I have
done is for you, for us. There's no man in your family. I have tried to be that man...’ (Villa Magdalena, p. 68). His wanting to be the ruler places him in a confusing position because, although he sometimes believes that the woman has a role to play and/or has the capability, he wants himself to be always the dominant sex.

Some of the novels raise the question of whether the treatment of women by men, or the way they bring up the family is a part of the male machismo, or a part of the people's Catholic beliefs. The texts appear to be saying that the Filipino males are too preoccupied with sexuality, or their gender power. In What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco, Dr. Sotto raises the point that a Filipino male will be unlikely to subject himself to vasectomy:

The Filipino male is a funny guy. If he can't make a baby, he thinks he's a faggot. Besides, vasectomy is permanent. Up to this point, we believe it is. And that scares them. The fact that they'll never be able to father a child. They'd feel queer. Like they belong to a condemned species of mankind. (What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco, p. 31).

Filipino males are so 'tough-looking', especially 'when their balls (my italics) are concerned.' (p. 31). But Dr. Sotto believes that the man's objection to vasectomy is more of protecting his 'macho consciousness'. The Filipino male thinks that:

vasectomy is a form of castration which would change his voice and make him talk like a eunuch, or behave like a homosexual. He thinks he would become impotent...(What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco, p. 31)

It is implied that men are over-conscious of their masculinity. They see this as a power over the women, as evidenced by their obvious fear that vasectomy might affect their macho image. Filipino men, like most men in other societies, consciously respond to society's standards of masculinity. Since the culture determines
whether a person is masculine or feminine (or ambiguous), the man consciously tries to be masculine, to live up to his gender status. His sexuality and physical strength therefore become an implied gauge of his gender role. Having the ability to control the 'expression of fear' is one of those standards set by society for men.

Santos illustrates this expression of fear through some of the male characters, one of whom is Don Magno. Don Magno always wants to meet others' expectations, but he himself is afraid to encounter any failure. This engendering however, as Greenglass comments, leads the man sometimes to a point of caricature, because he often pretends to be emotionally tough although inward manifestation reveals that he is not.

Within this macho consciousness lies the Filipino's attachment to his spiritual faith. In *The Praying Man*, Cris Magat is confident everyone follows him because of his 'power', and he engages himself with other women apart from his wife Grace, while on the other hand, remaining 'faithful' to God. The novel's title, which aptly means the man who 'prays', also implies a man who 'preys'. Definitely, these are contradictory characteristics. While the person 'believes' in his faith, he also distorts what he believes in. Cris helps the Church financially, but continues to 'prey' on some women's flesh:

... while everybody was in an uproar looking for him ... the magnanimous donor who was to pose beside the Bishop - he was making love to a woman on the floor of the empty tool shop that had been chosen as the background for the picture. He was still a bit rumpled as he rushed to the group surrounding the Bishop, and raising the bishop's ring to his lips, he smelled the woman's body on his fingers.... *(The Praying Man,* p. 69)*

This double standard is also evident in his involvement in the

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adulterated-drugs business and with other women such as Susan, or even his son's girlfriend, Janet Velasco. Whenever a problem arises, 'he [begins] to pray, silently as he had learned to through the difficult years.' (p. 44).

On the secular front, while women have started to liberate themselves from bondage with the advent of American values, men became insecure with female liberation. One response has been a reactive exaggeration of the traditional machismo so that men assert their 'superiority' over their wives by assigning them some roles, such as doing the domestic chores, while making themselves the 'boss' of the family. What makes this visible is their tendency to assert superiority by means of their 'physical' strength. Emilio, a bully character in the 'End to Laughter', over-compensates for inner weakness by dominating the male and female vendors in the market area of Sulucan (Brother, My Brother).

During the people's transition to Western culture, there was a noticeable conflict between the men's outward manner of being superior and their inner uncertainty. One of the roles the wife has is that of 'holding the purse strings' of the family (What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco, p. 74), and this role poses a duality in the husband's real status. In What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco, David Dante Tolosa has a hard time preparing his project for the group of investors because he realizes Dr. Sotto's wife and the wives of the other investors have a strong influence over any undertaking their husbands engage in: '..I got the impression that the members of the Board who were all male would not make any financial commitments without the approval of their wives. ...' The husbands themselves admit this. (p. 25)

The men obviously become more insecure as their wives
continue to be admired by other people. Imelda, Dr. Sotto’s wife, is an example:

He (Dr. Sotto) had yet to meet Filipino, American, or whatever nationality, in whatever occupation or persuasion, whom Imelda could not charm. Everybody adored her. In their minds she stood on a dais, royalty herself. ...(What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco, p. 45)

The husband’s insecurity in the face of his wife’s prominence and popularity might be the reason why he has started to seek the company of other women. Therefore, his insecurity reflects his weakness as a husband. He does not want to appear weak in the face of the society. This in turn motivates him to ‘win’ other women to tell the society indirectly that he is superior over his wife. He is therefore imposing a kind of macho control.

However, this engagement with queridas as an assertion of male superiority seems to be problematic because the role of the woman itself is multi-faceted: ‘a clinging vine, sassy equal and queenly matriarch.’4 While she has been trained since childhood to be subservient, obedient to men, to ‘obey her father and the Señor Cura, to cast her eyes down...’5 she is nevertheless provided with privileged status: that of being ‘queen of the home’. The so-called queen has the privilege to ‘hold the purse strings’; her husband gives to her salary every pay day. But this status poses an irony because it merely emphasizes the wife’s doing the household chores. She becomes the ‘manager’ of the family’s affairs - decides over financial and material concerns - while the husband is maintaining his status as the dominant figure of the family. Ironically, he loves his wife so ‘dearly that in case of a quarrel [he] take[s] sides with [her] relatives even against [his] own father and

5 Carmen G. Nakpil, p. 9.
brother[s].' This 'queenly' status might lead one to think that the family is matriarchal. On the other hand, while the woman holds the purse strings, she remains with no control over her husband's power. Her status as 'treasure keeper' all the more forces her to be 'a clinging vine' to her husband. The man's resorting to his *querida/s* is a way of showing to his wife that she depends on his money and loyalty. He puts her in her 'proper' place, because he is fearful that her 'queen of the home' status will usurp his role as head of the family. This is a situation which the husband cannot accept. It is explicit, therefore, that he really is imposing his 'macho' image. Undoubtedly, Don Magno Medallada wants to show his superiority because he is somewhat bothered by the fact that Doña Asunción and Doña Magdalena own the Villa and its property.

On the other hand, Dr. Pacifico Sotto (*What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco*), or J. P. (*The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*), engage in extra marital relationships because they are the 'trend' of the times.

Despite the overt display of macho power, however, various kinds of weakness are shown in these male characters. Señor Vidal is such a tough man in relation to his subordinates, but he can do nothing when Isabel leaves him for Japan. Having been confined in a hospital, he decides to poison himself. There is a macho stoicism in this, but it is complicated by tenderness (it is his sacrifice to free his beloved as much as his despair at being abandoned) and by a kind of weak resignation: 'He was found.... lying on his side, his face to the wall, his knees bent a little forward, with his hands between his thighs, a favorite posture. ...' (*Villa Magdalena*, p. 60)

Don Magno is perplexed as to what to do with the situation

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inside the Villa. Doña Magdalena turns insane, playing the role of Doña Asunción, while accusing him of the many irresponsibilities he has shown to his wife, Doña Magdalena, when she was 'still alive'. Don Magno suffers from a different kind of fear, worse than 'physical fear':

It's not a physical fear. I feel no revulsion at the sight of her in her madness, but I pity her who had once been so lovely now broken up and demented.' (Villa Magdalena, p. 168)

In 'The Door' (You Lovely People), Delfin's friends see his character as one which does not fit the usual macho image. Delfin feels pressure from his friends about his 'looseness' with his wife, Mildred. Knowing that she 'ran around with other boys and [took] them to her apartment' (p. 85), Delfin's friends encourage him to do something drastic, or even violent, to his wife and her lover(s). Obviously, Delfin's friends are conscious of this macho image because they keep on saying that Delfin is a 'disgrace to our people'. For them, Delfin's tolerant behavior is a sign of unmanliness:

God, you're not a man. You must have been castrated in childhood. Why don't you leave that woman? Why do you make a goddamn fool of yourself?

('The Door', You Lovely People, p. 86)

They mock Delfin's 'unmanliness' to the extent of giving him an idea about a man in St. Louis who 'chased the man (his wife's lover) through the streets', 'slashed [his wife's] throat and 'cut her nipples' (pp. 86-87), obviously to motivate Delfin to do something about the infidelity of his wife instead of 'sleeping' elsewhere especially on winter nights' (p. 85).

Believing that Delfin's silence is a sign of unmanliness, his friends also consciously think of the image the situation conveys of their country. Ambo remarks, '[e]verything a Filipino did in America was a reflection on our country and our people.' (p. 85)
This imparts an apparent message that they (the Filipinos), in general, value 'manliness' through physical strength and superiority; that a man who does not make use of these 'tools' of machismo is a 'fool' and contaminates the rest with his 'filth' (p. 86).

The Filipino's test of machismo can be gauged in his sexual dominance over his woman, either by engaging himself with his querida or keeping his 'honor' by guarding his wife against 'monkey business'. This sense of maintaining honor poses to the man an insecurity or fear about his wife's loyalty. This might be true of Ambo who shares his thoughts with the narrator:

...she (Ambo's wife) didn't say she was happy I was coming. She didn't say she missed me. She even said, maybe I wouldn't like our old place any more. Now, tell me, has she perhaps fooled around? ('For These Ruins', You Lovely People, p. 163).

The man thus feels insecure with his wife and her activities, mainly because his thoughts are dominated by this machismo. Unlike Delfin, who has some proof of his wife's infidelity but does nothing against it, Mr. Rafael Salazar ('House on the Hill', Brother, My Brother) knows no proof that his wife is engaging in another affair with someone but makes all the best he can to give her 'a punishment, albeit quite expensive, for [her] lady's indiscretions' (p.75). He builds a house on the hill - 'a few thousand acres of wild trees' - to exile his wife, only because she attends parties and other social gatherings without him, as he is 'in his dingy office near the waterfront' (p. 76). His decision to build a house and seclude his wife from civilization springs from his insecurity that other men might take her away from him because she has many admirers, and is always 'squired by the city's eligible young men' (pp. 75-76).

Gender, being culturally determined, or, as Cate Poynton puts
it, a 'social creation', conditions an individual from childhood to appear and act either as masculine or feminine, based on the standards of the society. In 'Friends of Mine' (*Dwell in the Wilderness*), Burandong, a grade schooler, assumes the role of *Eddie Polo* and sometimes, *Elmo Lincoln*, 'the mighty', and serves as protector of his 'heroine', Luz. He appears to be so mighty and strong to his classmates, even when he gets sick and can not manage to 'expand his chest...clench his fists and r[u]n after the assailant of the heroine' (p. 20). Ida, a rich pupil of Ms. Samonte, comes in contact with Fortunato's manliness. She sincerely offers him, 'as a spirit of Christmas', some money from her bank account because [she] knew how badly [he] needed the money, but Fortunato sarcastically replies:

Thank you, rich girl, but this pauper can get along without you....I hope you mean well. But even you perhaps will not understand why after this, I shall not be able to look at you. I had wanted so much to be a man in your eyes and now.... ('Dear Miss Samonte', *Brother, My Brother*, p. 121).

Therefore, the consciousness of the men (or even the women) of this 'machismo', starts at an early age.

While the male characters (the protagonists) are preoccupied with how to appear 'strong' and 'powerful', most of the female characters try to subvert their men's strength and power. They are there to prove that men cannot claim to have their dominance over women. In *Villa Magdalena*, this subverting the notion of a weak and dominated woman is exemplified by the three generations of women. Isabel, who is Doña Magdalena's niece, starts to assert her supposed right to live the way she wants and thus, flees with Sol to Japan. She also asserts her right to have a word about her inherited

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land in the province, instead of allowing Don Magno to manage it, and ultimately, take over her assets which are definitely beyond his conjugally-owned property. A stronger level of subverting men's power is typified by Elisa, Isabel's daughter. Having been raised with a Western education, she shows in the novel a set of contrasts between the Spanish-inherited culture, which is more inhibited, and the Western-acquired culture, which is more free. Unlike Doña Magdalena, who had been 'enclosed' by Don Magno inside the Villa and had never engaged in any job for her own career, Elisa epitomises the post-war generation of Filipino women who are more career-oriented and less domesticated. Elisa has studied medicine and immediately practises her profession in America as a plastic surgeon. She is also more expressive of her love or any emotion she feels. She is more free to tell Fred what she wants him to do to her and she is forthright in her love-making - as Fred describes it, '... with one violent gasp she took me lips and all, and immediately we were up in those terrible heights - without having to climb, we were there right away. ...' (Villa Magdalena, p. 235) As a part of her Western exposure, Elisa values her independence and doesn't want any man to dominate her. She shares her thoughts with Fred:

I don't like being dependent on a man. And most of these fellows are mere boys. They're older than I, but they're still boys, quite immature. They don't know how to express themselves, they don't understand anything outside of their professions. They haven't read anything that had not been assigned to them in class. Some of the best looking ones are the dumbest. Others talk of nothing but basketball. These are the conceited ones whose language and manners are pompous. How can I fall in love with these inferior and miserable creatures? (Villa Magdalena, p. 208)

However, even though in some of the novels and short stories women start to become assertive, they still project some kind of
weakness. In *Villa Magdalena*, for example, Elisa's initial discourse reveals her desire to become independent. The later event, especially when she gets emotionally involved with Fred, shows that she still carries within her the tendency to overplease, to serve and be victim to men. She asserts her right to express herself and do what she wants, as proven by this statement,

I don't care about who I am or what I am. I know what I am. I'm not blaming anybody, I'm miserable, but I'm happier now in my misery. But you (Fred), why must you continue living with a woman who doesn't love you? Or do you still think she does. ...?(p. 212)

However, as she continues, she reveals her willingness to let Fred play the dominant role in their relationship:

... you're blind, blind! Tell me, do you hate me? Sometimes I think you do. But don't hate me, darling. I'll give up everything for you. If you wish, we can let the world know that I'm your woman. I'll serve you. I'll serve you, if you wish, like a slave....(*Villa Magdalena*, p. 212)

Social change, whether because of a life abroad or the increased Westernization at home, is a factor in the changing consciousness of Filipino men and women. In 'Brown Coterie', the Filipino scholars' exposure to the United States somehow helps change their outlook on gender relationships. The men start to share the household work. This is a gratifying transformation which helps to liberate the women. While they are starting to break through the stereotypes however, they are still confined to conventional ways of thinking, i.e., male is strong; female is weak; Filipino man is the breadwinner and the Filipino woman is the 'domestic' expert. The 'educated Filipinas' tease the 'educated boys' who wash the dishes and do the cooking in the kitchen, saying that these kinds of work do not reflect the Pinoy's image:

"You're not Pinoys," the sisters from Michigan chorused.
"You're not the real McCoys," said Helen.
"You're synthetic", said Angela.
"I suppose you want a professional dishwasher or a professional cook, someone you can order around, whom you can pay after the day's work is over...

('Brown Coterie', You Lovely People, pp. 120-121)

The 'girls' feel that the 'boys' who work in the kitchen, especially those who don their aprons, look 'henpecked... how touchingly domestic, how illiterate anybody seemed who cleaned pots and cut the cabbage' (pp. 119-121). Thus traditional cultural orientation mixes with the need to assert an ethnic identity to undermine the possibility of changing sex-role stereotypes offered by exposure to American life.

C. The Pinoy's Encounter with the Woman: Quest for the Romanticized Motherland

As mentioned in the earlier discussion, Santos' five novels and five short story collections are categorized mainly into those which show the Philippine (especially the rural) setting with local female and male characters, and those which show the Filipino man's experiences with the 'white' culture during his stay in the United States as immigrant or government pensionado.

This section concentrates on those patterns or motifs which characterize the works reflecting the Pinoy's lives in the United States. Some of these motifs/patterns are: the loss of/search for identity; difficulties in assimilation; racism; and the pervading 'colonial mentality'. It can be gleaned that these motifs/patterns coalesce around the Pinoy's continual perception of and search for the woman which ultimately has a direct bearing on his longing for his Motherland.

The men characterized in the novels, What the Hell For You
Left Your Heart in San Francisco and The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor are less representative of the majority of the Filipinos who live in the United States. Generally, they belong to the 'educated Filipino boys', who comprise the minority. Most of the Filipinos whom Santos portrays in the rest of his works are those so-called 'old-timers', 'ot's' for short, or as Eric in 'Brown Coterie' (You Lovely People) calls them, 'the genuine Pinoys'. The lives of these 'ot's' are mainly depicted in the short story collections, such as, Scent of Apples, The Day the Dancers Came, and You Lovely People. However, like the 'genuine Pinoys', the 'educated boys and girls' - the sons-of-the rich as well as the scholars or the government pensionados - have also experienced the hardships, the sufferings, and the 'cultural conflicts', which had become normal to the Filipino migrant.

The longer the Filipino has stayed in the United States, the higher the intensity of his yearning to go home, and with this longing goes his longing for the woman in his life — mother, sister, or wife. His encounters with different women, especially with Americans (though they may, in the long term, prove unsatisfactory under the stresses of differing backgrounds and social expectations), provide him comfort and consolation. The woman of course, whether she be an ordinary lover, a wife or a girlfriend, is significant for him because he needs her company. In 'Woman Afraid' (You Lovely People), Alice consoles and gives comfort to Cris, a Filipino waiter, who is so depressed about the invasion of Manila by the Japanese, and 'cuddle[s] him like a baby' (pp. 103-104). He loves Alice, and is fond of looking at her eyes because they resemble those of his mother (p. 100).

N.V.M. Gonzales states that the stories in You Lovely People,
for example, produce a ‘concept of a center and 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.’8 Ambo [or Pablo Icañgal] (You Lovely People), like any other old-timers, misses his own wife, sister and mother, and longs to see his home country. However, he is unaware that he, himself, demonstrates some gestures typical of his loved ones back home. He extends his hospitality to his compatriots in two visible ways: by treating them to a restaurant he manages and inviting them to a nightclub later in the night; and by using his leadership to collect money from others for a decent burial of one of his compatriots. Ambo’s character of nurturing and caring for his compatriots indirectly represents that of his Motherland.

The Pinoy or the old-timer finds comfort and security from the woman, and he sees in her the woman he loves back home. Ambo gets confined in a hospital and happens to meet a Filipino nurse. He persists in wanting to know the girl more, because for him, ‘she [is] his sister, she [is] his mother, she [is] his sweetheart, she [is] his wife, ministering to him, talking to him, with love, and he [is] home again’ (‘So Many Things’, pp. 113-114). He sends her flowers although finds out later that she has not received them. Ambo is also excited to see a Filipino girl ‘with smooth brown skin and the most wonderful smile in the world’ because she looks like ‘Mother and Lucia, too’ (‘Prelude to Home’, You Lovely People, p.152). He prefers to stay with Mrs. Morales after his friends report to the U.S. Armed Forces. He can tolerate the daughter’s indifference to him, because their (the mother and the daughter’s) mere presence provides him contentment: ‘Here was a chance to be

among native womenfolk whose ways he understood and liked. There were very few Filipino women in the United States. There was a time when he didn’t see one for years and years.’ ('So Many Things’, p. 113). The Filipino’s longing for his loved one extends up to the point of self-sacrifice and unexpected financial expenditures, just to satisfy his aspiration. Tony already criticizes Fil ('The Day the Dancers Came’ [of the same title]) for the latter’s plan to spend time with and money on the Filipino dancers, but just the same, Fil pursues it - he excitedly goes to the Hamilton Hotel - only to find out that these dancers are aloof to him. Nevertheless, he still manages to maintain his excitement, especially since these women resemble the women back home, as symbolized by the fragrance ‘long forgotten, essence of camia, of ilang-ilang, and dama de noche.’ (p.12).

It is not only the Filipinos in the States, however, who experience this longing for home, but also the others who are expatriates in other lands. Sol and Isabel ('The Enchanted Plant') flee to Japan and live there for several years, even since before the Japanese occupation. Having stayed there for quite a time does not stop either of them from longing for their country. It is Sol, however, who suffers from extreme longing because he associates his life in Japan, or even his wife, Isabel, with the memories of his own mother. When he gets sick, he remembers the kindness and attention of his mother to him all the more, and 's]uddenly, he felt a yearning for his mother's voice' (p. 41). His request from Isabel to sing symbolizes his desire to see and be with his mother because he recalls how she used to sing, especially when he was sick. He tells Isabel that 'the song she sang was a ballad of unrequited love' (p. 40). Together with this is his association of everything with
Palomar [his native place] and his memories in Villa Magdalena:

[a] nipa-thatched house beside the kangkong fields; sudden, loud, drunken talk in dark streets... curses and exclamations in a dialect he knew well; a mansion with many rooms and many corners; the whistle of a train promising return; dust in his eyes and throat one day in Lent ---; the drone of a sewing machine, a gray head bent over the needle, withered hands fumbling with a thread under a dim light, and the kindliest of eyes, the sweetest of voices....(p. 43)

Wherever the Filipino man is and whatever nationality his loved one may be, there exists an imaginary vision of what the woman should be and how she should act towards him. Because the Filipino consciousness is always preoccupied with the mother, the wife or the sister, he indirectly 'requires' his woman to possess characteristics similar to his Woman back home.

One of the traditional virtues a Filipino woman must presumably possess is her fidelity/loyalty to her husband, or to the man she loves. This expectation becomes a two-sided concern - for both the woman and the man - because she, coming from a different culture, seemingly ought to conform to the culture of her husband. She however, may have expectations of her own. Flora, J.P.'s American wife, faces some adjustments upon staying in the Philippines with her husband. Somehow, she thinks that the people's culture is similar to hers. She is disgusted to find out how little value they seem to attach to privacy, as one woman touches Flora's abdomen when she is pregnant, and worse, asks her how she manages her husband's absence, now that she is in the 'period of extreme sexuality' (The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor, p. 117).

In You Lovely People, Santos depicts the pain the Pinoys and other immigrants in the United States through the voices of both Ambo and the narrator. The distancing involved in playing between
these two voices is a way of controlling the sentimentality and their interweaving also relates to the structure of the book itself. The book is neither a short story nor a novel. It has a novelistic continuity of character across the stories, but it has too complex and discontinuous a plot to be considered a novel. However, a few critics comment that it has a similar beginning and ending: the issue of longing for the Philippines and ultimately hating/resenting their presence in the United States, which ultimately results to the reverse: the longing for the Philippines becomes a hatred and hatred of the US becomes a longing. Santos has seen to it that ‘[w]hen the book opens, a Filipino in America is homesick for Filipinas. When the book closes, a Filipino in the Philippines is “homesick” for America. The circle closes.’9

I have already discussed the excessively genital/physical dimension of machismo and its identification with national as well as gender identity. In the case of the Pinoy, cut off from cultural roots and given degrading work and accommodation, we might expect a crisis of identity that manifests itself, if not in compensatory sexual excess (boasting of conquests), in anxieties of emasculation that fix on woman as protective mother and mother as identifying (security-giving) homeland. It may be useful here to refer to Freud’s Oedipus complex theory, the basic assumption of which is that the child, during the phallic stage (age 3 to 6),

thinks that the same thing could happen to him... 10

When paralleled with Freud's theory, the Filipino man's longing for 'his sister, his wife, his sweetheart, and his mother', relates to the boy's dependence for his emotional protection. He knows he is secured through clinging to the women in his life. But again, like the child in Freud's theory (and given his macho cultural formation), he basically doesn't want to become a 'castrated' individual like his mother. So he is caught between longing for and fear of scorn of the woman. He longs for the Filipina as mother and sister and goes to the American women for sex (but can't settle down with her because she is not 'family'/domestic). This social psychology then also supports the cyclic structure both of the book itself and the theme of leaving and returning.

Cultural differences cause varying degrees of conflict. In 'Quicker with Arrows', Fay immediately reacts negatively towards the woman [portrayed in the Visayan song he sang] who requests the man to tell her soon as to whether he does not love her any more, by saying that '... the girl in the song is nuts. If my man doesn't want me any more, I'd know, he doesn't have to tell me.'(p.145).

Because he is consciously aware of the culture back home, the Filipino is confronted with mixed feelings and confusions in his affairs with any woman while living in America. One of these is his sensitivity to his compatriots' reactions regarding his woman. He is beset with perplexed emotions as to whether his friends within the circle, his family and relatives back home, would accept his American lady as his loved one. In 'Quicker with Arrows' (Scent of Apples), Val feels this kind of perplexity. He is so bound by his

10 Greenglass, p. 47.
culture that it is hard for him to act honestly on his feelings towards Fay, an American lady. He loves the girl, in fact, '[h]e wanted Fay around... [a]lone in the apartment, waiting for her to come.... (pp. 146-147), but he seemingly hesitates to let others (his compatriots) see and meet Fay. As a consequence of Val’s indecisions, Fay remarks, 'Val, you're ashamed of me.' (pp. 146-147), to which Val protests because 'deep in his heart... he was telling the truth because it was not really shame that he felt: it was something else, something he could not quite define.' His conforming to his culture at the expense of his personal feelings leads Fay to leave the shocked Val.

It is not only the Filipino man, however, who suffers from this confusion as a result of inter-racial marriage. The foreign woman also experiences a social turmoil which may even lead to psychological torture. Marge, married to 'pug-nosed' Pete, drowns their two sons, and later becomes insane, because she can't manage any more to hear her 'white' friends and neighbors' satirical comments that, as a result of her having been married to a Filipino, she bore herself 'two monkey boys' ('Woman Afraid', *You Lovely People*, pp. 105-106). This incident also causes Alice to think about her marriage to Cris - wanting herself reassured by asking Cris whether 'it was really true about Marge and the babies [...] ' ('Woman Afraid', p. 107). The story has obviously worried her and affects her treatment of her husband: '...she would not let him touch her.... she was cold and full of an unnameable fear of something that now he [Cris] knew.... (p. 107).

Despite the obvious background of white prejudice, the stories focus more on attitudes within the Filipino migrant community. In the adjustments made by either party (the man or the woman), the
attitudes of the Filipino man's compatriots - men and women - seem to be crucial. It is apparent however, that their judgments are really confined with their own culture - they seemingly do not like any American or foreign lady with whom a Filipino falls in love. It is to be pointed out moreover, that among the group, the Filipino women, not the men, are those who refuse other culture. In 'Brown Coterie', it is they who cast hostile eyes on Eric’s American girlfriend Virginia. These 'educated Filipina girls' criticize the lovers’ small gestures of affection: 'They [Eric and Virginia] were still in each other's arms when some of the girls presumably on their way to the kitchen, saw them, and they gasped....(p. 125). It is to be noted however, that these 'educated girls' express their hostility in an indirect/restrained manner: through stealing of malicious glances at the girl 'when she [is] not looking' ('Brown Coterie', You Lovely People, p. 161), and contrarily, showing their 'hospitality' by 'practically talk[ing] her into eating everything on the table, including the peppery victuals' (p.125). Their behavior is directed not so much at the girl but at the Filipino men, while Virginia and Eric 'sat under the trees and held hands or sat on the grass and talked and laughed' (p. 125).

Apart from depicting culture differences and the Filipino's conformity to his own culture, the short stories also provide insights into how the Filipinos' stay in the United States alters their outlook. Both 'Brown Coterie' and 'Quicker with Arrows' (You Lovely People) show this changing consciousness. Although the 'girls' say that the 'boys' like American women more because they surely 'can get [their] money's worth' from them ('Brown Coterie', p. 123), the 'boys' nevertheless point out to the 'girls' that it is high time for them to change their attitudes towards men. The 'boys' say that
the 'girls' are too aloof, because they are preoccupied with wrong notions about sex and partnerships. Senen blames the girls for the boys' reluctance to spend time inviting them to dinners or dance parties, and checks the girls' attitude towards male company. He remarks that the girls need to 'grow up... get rid of [their] inhibitions....' (p. 124). Instead of letting others 'tag along' as chaperones and 'looking forward to wedding bells' whenever a male merely invites any one of them out, they should act in conformity with their feelings and interests. Senen rhetorically says, 'What's wrong with holding hands? We embrace in dances, don't we? Then why can't we leave a dance hall hand in hand? What's wrong with a good-night kiss?' (p.124). Eric calls the women 'snobs' (pp. 124-125). He 'scolds' them for avoiding the 'good-for-nothing boys who circulate around here':

...[T]hat's what's wrong with all of you...I know of several instances when other boys --- those whom you call Pinoys, the genuine ones --- have tried to date you. Their intentions are honorable. You don't know how much they respect you; you'll never know. They are good boys, poor, yes. They had to go through the hell that's a Pinoy's life in this country, washing dishes, being a servant boy, driving a car, etc....They come to you awkward, shy, incoherent, and what do you do? You give them the cold shoulder and insult them to their faces. I know one of you who kept returning flowers sent by a boy who perhaps would make a better husband than anyone of us here...

(pp. 124-125)

Dr. Mendoza's remarks, in 'Quicker with Arrows', offer a possible answer as to why these women are hostile to the foreign women who take time out with the men:

...they can be very mean about it. They feel that one of them should marry you, that is, you should marry one of them. Something like that. You know how superior they feel about themselves. At least, each feels superior enough to think she's worthy of you, every blessed one of them. They believe that you have no business getting into a mess with some American girl whom you're not going to marry anyhow. (pp. 150-151)
Nevertheless, while it is true that the men criticize the women's discrimination against the Pinoys and comment on the women's traditional and conservative views on relationships, they still want the women to hold the same status: that of being 'queen of the home' and inferior to men.

The so-called superiority among the educated girls probably lies in the society's orientation - that of imposing stricter and more rigid rules on women. The 'educated girls' exemplify those who become pressured to guard the morality of the society. They are consciously aware that their manners abroad create impressions of them as the 'police', and specifically, as the female gender, of the society. Dr. Mendoza's remark about the women's 'superiority' might mean that the women in particular are conscious of their image towards the men. Although having been exposed and given the chance to liberate themselves from the link, the girls do not work within this new framework but rather uphold the society's tradition and identity. The Church imposes much pressure on the women to preserve the family's or the society's morality.

These characteristics encourage the Filipino men to appreciate more their roots and their countrymen, but they also put them in a disadvantaged position because, having been accustomed to being protected, nurtured and loved, they feel crippled or inadequate to face the cruelties of life, especially in a foreign land, being cooped up there, because back home are bayonets, bombs and guns, which prohibit them from being in touch with her. What makes this more difficult is that they encounter an internal battle: the battle between the culture their motherland has imposed on them and the others' culture which their new environment provides.

The battle between the existing culture and his own culture in
the mind of the Filipino continues until he finally goes home (after the War) and savors the 'sweetness' of once again belonging to his motherland. Nonetheless, J.P. and Cristina decide to go back to the United States and live there permanently, after having lived for sometime in the Philippines after the Liberation Period. This couple is but one of the examples of those who decide to settle in the US permanently. Now, these Pinoys, as well as the educated men and women, feel that the real Philippines is very much different from the romanticized Philippines. This is what Fil Acayan experiences in 'The Day the Dancers Came'. Somehow, although through them, he remembers his past - the essence of camia, of ilang-ilang and dama de noche - he realizes that they are entirely different from his generation. Fil Acayan finds all his 'dreams vanish into a blank tape.'

Similarly, J.P. and Cristina plan to bring 'cans of Philippine foods' ('Postscript: Homage', p. 182); their friends advise her not to forget to bring 'nice ternos, piña table sets' and J.P's barong tagalog (p.182), but this does not answer the question of their real identity, because they are both aware that the Philippines is not their home, and neither is the United States.

The theme of romantic illusion commonly found in Santos' novels and short stories might have been influenced by either his literary foundation or his lived experience as a writer. In other words, while his literary heritage gave him models of romantic writing, his later American education led him to realism in his writings. This literary romanticism traces back to the School of Romanticism applied through the works of Wordsworth, Keats,

among others. The Western/European literary 'dogmas', which were inevitably absorbed by the Philippine education, had a direct bearing on the early Filipino writers. Hence, a Filipino novelist José Rizal, the acclaimed national hero, had taken images of Filipino women based on his perceptions of the European women when he wrote his two novels, *Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not)* and *El Filibusterismo (The Reign of Greed)*. Rizal, having been educated mainly in Europe, had absorbed both the Europeans' perceptions of women, as well as the Europeans' Romantic literary theory. This results in Filipino women characters who are submissive, passive and domesticated. The protective, nurturing, and loving attitudes of a woman are exactly manifested by the women characters in the novels. In *Noli Me Tangere* for example, a distinct woman character, Maria Clara, is molded by the writer through a European eye. She possesses qualities which ultimately become stereotypes of the Filipino woman. She is 'certainly a good and beautiful woman, innocent, unselfish, and admirable in many respects...[She is] so sweet that everyone adore[s] her, so utterly feminine that everyone wishe[s] to protect her'.

Rizal's use of women to connote the Philippines, the Motherland, is a clear forerunner of Santos' romantic orientation. Nevertheless, the introduction of American models of writing - Anderson, Hemingway, among others - and the remarkable Post-War social events which happened in the Philippines, have led Santos to write more realistic fictions. This literary dualism therefore reinforces the social problematic illustrated in Santos' novels - the constant struggle between ideals and disillusionments figured upon the female characters.

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D. Discourse, Metaphor and Gender

Post-structuralist critics have introduced the concept that language is always 'articulated with other systems'. As the Bakhtin 'school' believes, 'all instances of languages [have] to be considered in a social context'; that literary texts carry social discourses. Thus, the way ideologies and institutions work shapes the way we use language even as that language can reveal the discursive underpinnings of social constructions. Raman Selden, in his simplification of Emile Benveniste's linguistic thought, states that of the two divisions of a text - *histoire* (narrative) and *discours* (discourse) - it is discourse which indispensably involves some 'cultural code'. Moreover, this discourse - whether focused around religion, class or sex - carries a set of meanings relating to power.

Edward Said, following Michel Foucault's theories, demonstrates the interconnection of knowledge and power via the medium of discourse (in his case the discourse of Orientalism).

Santos' treatment of the social relations of men and women is evident not merely in the story content, but also in the textual workings of image, and the discourse in general. The early parts of the chapter show how Santos' fiction reflects Filipino sociological patterns in thematic and content-based realist-mimeticism. Examining the language in the texts itself can provide further insights into the author's particular literary mediation of gender discourse. It can also help formulate opinions on how the attitudes of character, narrator and 'author' stand in relation to each other. It

14 Raman Selden, p. 75.
is through language that the power relationship is seen. It becomes the "medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order' and 'reality' become established." The manner of bringing in the language, the discourse itself, reflects the play of power.

Aside from the story context itself, the placement of women in the society is also evident in the knowing discourse of the characters as well as the narrators. Generally, it is observable that the male characters, especially the narrators (such as those in Villa Magdalena or What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco), place themselves as superior to women. They manifest this superiority through their preoccupation with the woman's body and dress. This construction enables these men to maintain their 'power' over the women. They know woman primarily by seeing her physical presence, which is a one-way operation of intellect.

David Dante Tolosa (What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco) not only shows the external characteristics of Filipino doctors and their wives, but also reveals his own consciousness:

Then it occurred to me that women, especially the Filipino wives whom I had met at parties on Diamond Heights, tended to overdress while their husbands, except those coming straight from the hospital or offices where they worked, wore casual clothes... (p. 181)

He also glances at Imelda's attire - how her dress fails to 'improve' her physical structure:

Imelda had on a lacy off-white dress which went down below the knees, but neither the dress nor the bra she was wearing helped any in accentuating her rather small breasts.... (p. 101)

In The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor,
Flora, J.P.'s wife, encounters some men ('most of whom were married') who show their intense interest in women's bodies. They 'ogled at her (Flora) as she lay in the sun on the grass in her bikini'. What makes this worse is that these men want more than a satisfaction of their eyes' curiosity:

In the swimming pool, what she thought at first were accidental brushes from hands and arms on her breasts and thighs were getting too frequent and too accurate to be purely accidental.... *(The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor, p. 63).*

This *preoccupation* with body and dress only connotes that the male wants to make distinct his own sexuality from that of the female. Tracing it to the 'masculine-dominated' concept of Freud's theory, the woman, since she is culturally-determined, is always associated with body and its distinguishing parts such as the breasts, hips, among others. Having a well-proportioned body and prominent breasts, in order to be beautiful, and of course, satisfying to men's eyes, are what the society has determined as female *desiderata.* Simone de Beauvoir says, 'Woman is riveted into a lopsided relationship with man; he is the One, she the Other. ...'17 This perception of a woman through a man's eyes clearly establishes the difference.

It seems that the male's sex-preoccupation is not bounded by occupation or educational background. David Dante Tolosa, who is a journalist, and Fred Medallada who is of good repute as an accountant to Don Magno's firm, are like Sol, who has not acquired a good education back in the Philippines. All of them have almost the same perceptions of women. When David Dante Tolosa's instructor in poetry encourages him to write the names of Filipino dialects on the chalkboard, he associates her words with his sexual past:

...Her voice sounded so close, I felt weak in the knees. "Don't stop now. Please keep going." I remembered other bedroom scenes, same words, same urgency. I ran towards the kitchen, ready to pounce on her. (p. 56)

This also connotes that sexuality is figured as animal (physical) domination.

David is not engaged in any querida business, unlike the board investors. He is overtly engrossed in his would-be project, the Filipino magazine, and hence is to be considered as a progressive, intellectual being. However, being the narrator, we are able to know he is still preoccupied with sex and gender differences.

In Villa Magdalena, as Fred becomes estranged from Nora and is denied sex, he starts to become more preoccupied with Elisa. But this could also be attributed to their position in the Villa. Nora, being directly related to the Condes, poses a threat to Fred. He himself is merely linked with Don Magno by family name. He is aware of Don Magno’s status in the Villa. Don Magno’s success would mean his success; Don Magno’s failure his own failure. This situation makes Fred feel that Nora is someone with whom to compete. But again, his romantic fancies with Elisa are all in terms of body and clothes:

I picked up a women’s magazine, pretending to read. Nora went around, turning off the lights. I heard Elisa’s car start, then roll away. On the page before me, I saw her smooth hands lightly veined with blue, her tapering fingers on the wheel, moving, gliding, and quite dimly, I had a glimpse of her shapely legs, a flash of white under the hem of her skirts above the knees... (Villa Magdalena, p. 206).

Fred’s resorting to a woman’s magazine after Nora denies him sex may imply that he wants to regain his lost masculinity and power over his wife.

The manner of bringing in the language, the discourse itself,
produces power. In *The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor*, it is not only Sol, the protagonist, who assumes his power/dominance over women. The narrator of the novel himself demonstrates his own power, and thereby supplements, if not, confirms Sol's power. Thus, the narrator describes Sol as being too sexy. One girl called him a sex maniac. Of course, they sounded sexy themselves when they called him these names. They liked sex with him. They loved his young strong body. His sex. His sexiness. (p. 62)

Not only does the narrator confirm Sol's 'sex' power, but he also establishes the standards of sexiness. The quoted statement, 'They liked sex with him', only establishes Sol's 'masculinity' and the women's 'femininity'. The language and the over-all discourse clearly express the inferiority of the woman because as if the man's 'sexiness' were the woman's points of reference to her interests and her desires. Moreso, the narrator's shift of 'one girl' to 'they' only confirms the general objects to the particular, singular subject. Sol becomes the phallic, authoritative figure to the women.

Cris Magat assesses the women with whom he gets involved based on their 'capacity' to engage in sexual activities, not on their intellectual assets. The narrator claims that all women are the same; all of them are 'bitches':

All they wanted was his money and his balls. They enjoyed him as much as he enjoyed them. Aroused, they acted the same way, grinding their crotches against his thighs, kissing, biting, clawing, touching him there, relishing the feel of it, talking about the beauty of it, then guiding it into whichever part of their bodies wanted it most. It was only in the sound of their voices and the odor of their sweat that they differed. (*The Praying Man*, p. 112).

The narrator claims both the similarities and differences of females based on their biological characteristics, as if to say that he himself is not biologically-identifiable, at the same time proudly
claiming his animal nature. He therefore identifies himself separately and distinctly from the woman.\footnote{Simone de Beauvoir, p. 33.} Also, although we know that Cris excludes Mila and Grace from his group of sexually potent females, he fails to dignify them either. He treats Mila as a harmless childhood friend and a servant, and Grace as a sexless deity who he believes is unable to satisfy his desires.

In the nexus of physicality, power and gender, another discursive unit is that of appetite. In the excerpt taken from \textit{The Praying Man}, appetite can be used as a sign of wanton excess indicating subordination. In \textit{Villa Magdalena}, Manang, who is literally less-educated and less-privileged becomes least-educated and least-privileged, from Fred's personal perspective. The following conversation demonstrates this power positioning:

‘What did you pray for?’ she asked.
‘I said, “Lord, don’t make me too hungry.”’
‘You did not pray for me?’
‘I was thinking of you all the time,’ I told her, but she didn’t get my point. She started walking....’

\textit{(Villa Magdalena, p. 107).}

There are two concepts discernible in the above-quoted conversation: the concepts of appetite and intellect/knowledge. Fred ironically uses his religious language to cater to his own desire. He wishes God's intervention in his desire for Manang's body. This hunger/appetite for body only reduces the woman to a weaker sex. She becomes a consumable item - which meets the man's needs.

Fred's reaction that, "I told her, but she didn't get my point', indicates woman's weaker status in the eyes of the man. Fred clearly establishes his superior position as against the inferior status of the woman in terms of knowledge or intellect.
Unarguably, he is setting up his 'power' over her. It is just like what Donne has stated about men and women: 'form is masculine and matter feminine: the superior, godlike, male intellect impresses its form upon the malleable, inert, female matter,'\(^{19}\) man is more rational; woman is more emotional. Germaine Greer adds that, 'the man [is] the will and the woman the passions.'\(^{20}\)

The three novels, *The Volcano*, *What the Hell For You Left Your Heart in San Francisco* and *Villa Magdalena*, use the metaphor of volcano to connote the woman's status. *The Volcano* makes associations with a woman who does not want others to see 'the centuries on her ancient body' (pp. 227-228), symbolic of women who are self-indulgent and modest, and who do not want others to see nor touch their bodies. However, a volcano which erupts because 'nobody pays attention to her' (*Villa Magdalena*, p. 186), suggests a woman who is capable of destroying, of 'throw[ing] her tantrum' and 'call[ing] attention to herself like a flirt' (p. 186). The discourse here views the woman as someone who 'deserves' the attention of the men - as if she were born to cater to the attention of the opposite gender. It is of interest that the ones who made these remarks are males. They believe women belong to the weaker sex. For them, women merely exist to 'attract' the opposite sex through their beauty.

Bacon has something to say about the use of metaphor to refer to women:

\[
\text{The raison d'etre of the metaphor which is to assume such importance is this: to say that nature is a woman is to posit, in an imaginary fashion, that there is one active pole and only one, the human spirit.}\]

\(^{19}\) Donne cited in Raman Selden, p. 85.

\(^{20}\) Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, pp. 219-220.

\(^{21}\) cited by Grosz, p. 219.
Nature, or the earth, is associated with the Mother who has the will and capacity to nurture and provide. It connotes that she is resource-giving to, and sometimes protecting of, the human race. The use of volcano in the texts, however, indicates that it is not only nurturing and providing, but also is capable of fury and destruction. The woman is to be propitiated, worshipped and feared - is othered as non-human/unknowable, a wild force to be tamed. However, the use of the volcano to represent a woman only reduces her to the stable, and most often, immobile aspect of nature. As such, she is timeless and idealized. Metaphorically linking her with nature inevitably fixates her. Her being fixated reduces her to a colonial, stereotypical image of something ‘[rigid] and [an] unchanging order and disorder.’

The motive of putting an ‘idealized’ image to a woman has not been successful within the discourse because apparently the volcano refers to a weaker female gender. She is one who wants others (her opposite) to take notice of her. Undoubtedly, this wanting is predetermined according to men’s concept of a woman’s physical beauty.

Whatever the possible causes, this preoccupation with sex definitely contributes to the weakening of women's position in the society. Filipino males still believe they are stronger than women; that women's main preoccupation should be to meet men's needs and satisfy their desires. Although some go abroad, especially to the United States, and are exposed to a different kind of culture, men can not free themselves yet from these macho attitudes and ideals. Evelyne Sullerot, a French feminist, attributes this to ‘cultural phenomena’. She says that it is ‘much easier to change

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natural than cultural facts'. She compares this difficulty with women’s ease to ‘relieve women from obligatory breastfeeding’ with men’s difficulty to ‘give babies their bottles’. She says that there is ‘inertia built into cultural phenomena that seems to slow down our control over natural phenomena’.  

Hélène Cixous, a French feminist, sincerely speaks about the necessity of a woman’s forming her own discourse:

If woman has always functioned ‘within’ the discourse of man... it is time for her to dislocate this ‘within’, to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it into her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of.  

Although the predominance of male voices in Santos’ work makes this project almost irrelevant, there is one important moment when it is countenanced. In The Man Who (Thought He) Looked Like Robert Taylor, although Morningstar uses a 'masculine'-associated term *fuck*, she nevertheless attempts to ‘dislocate’ and turn the language around, and successfully makes it hers. She accusingly refers to her relationship with Sol as not a sound one because ‘all we did - God almighty - for how long, was fuck. That’s all we have been to each other. Right? A lay.’ (p. 66). Somehow, she opens an-other alternative to a better relationship.

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Conclusion

This dissertation examined the place of women in Philippine society as represented in the novels and short story collections of Bienvenido N. Santos. It explored how men and the rest of the society value women and how they relate with them: as wives (simply housewives to some), career-women, and in some cases, lovers, or queridas (mistresses). It also showed that because of the Philippines' past colonization, the people's religion, or the teachings acquired from it, apparently gives bearing on how women are treated in the society.

Bienvenido N. Santos' works both reflect and criticize the status quo of Filipino women. His early works, especially those short stories written in the 1930s until 1940s, tend more towards reflecting women's place in the society and the stereotypes associated with their status. His later works, especially those which depict the Filipino lives in the United States, reflect and attempt to criticize the status quo of Filipino women through the characters' experiences in the other world. Santos' own lived experience directly affects much his depiction of women. His communication with other kinds of people - especially his expatriation in the United States - has resulted in the breaking of female stereotypes. Nevertheless, regardless of when Santos wrote the works, and where the specific setting is (either the Philippines or the United States of America), common issues are raised: machismo and the querida system. These social phenomena produce a 'double standard' of morality among the Filipinos.
In relating Santos’ works to those of other writers’ depiction of gender relationships, the following observations are made. Santos’ contemporaries mainly reflect or mimeticize the status quo of women. The attempt to criticize has not been very successful. The more recent works (contemporary ones), however, especially those by female writers, explore the weaknesses of the society’s gender treatments and offer some alternatives to improve the women’s lot.

If we analyze Santos’ fiction in the context of feminist or critical theories, we can see that the writer’s gender, together with the years he has written his works discussed here, constitute limiting factors as far as a genuinely liberationist vision is concerned. However, in interpreting or analyzing texts, it is necessary that a critic ‘must take account of the fictional nature... and not indulge in ‘rampant moralism’ by condemning all male authors for all the sexism in their books and approving women authors for raising the issues of gender.’¹ Santos, in his own way, has participated in the women's cause by highlighting in his works the gender relationships in Philippine society. To some extent, the 'non-committal' mimesis of Santos' writing provides an ambiguity for the reader which limits the power of the author's critique.² His work can seem a simple reflection of ordinary, everyday lives of women, but it may also be taken as an ironic criticism of social abuses. The very realism amounts to an exposé which, when accompanied by Santos’ narrative techniques of distancing and irony, constitutes a critique in itself. However, though Santos’s

¹ Michele Barrett’s third argument on Marxist feminist analysis of gender representation, as cited by Raman Selden, p. 140.
² Raman Selden, p. 140.
writings move away from traditional Philippines machismo as they are distanced in time and expatriation, they do not generate the same intensity of critical analysis as fiction by women writers, particularly those of the younger generation.
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