

BARRIO AND CITY REPRESENTATIONS

IN CEBUANO FICTION: 1925-1940

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of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Literature

by

Lilia T. Tio

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THESIS COMMITTEE

Albuero
ERLINDA K. ALBURO, Ph. D.
Adviser

Filipinas
CLARITA C. FILIPINAS, Ph.D.
Member

Benlot
SANTIAGO F. BENLOT, D.A.L.T.
Member

Bucad
CATALINA M. BUCAD, M.A.
Member

PANEL OF EXAMINERS

Approved by the Committee on Oral Examination with a grade of passed

Albuero
ERLINDA K. ALBURO, Ph. D.
Adviser

Filipinas
CLARITA C. FILIPINAS, Ph.D.
Member

Benlot
SANTIAGO F. BENLOT, D.A.L.T.
Member

Bucad
CATALINA M. BUCAD, M.A.
Member

Accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE

Comprehensive Examinations PASSED July 25, 1980

Flores
FR FLORENCIO LAGURA, SVD
Dean, Graduate School

March 2, 1998
Date of Oral Examination

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of barrio and city representations in 185 Cebuano short stories in *Bag-ong* Kusog from 1925 to 1940 where the texts were explored in three contexts ideological, socio-cultural, and literary

Five basic patterns of representations emerged which operate on a relationship of contrast between barrio and city Viewed in the three contexts, the representations were product of the period's prevailing ideologies, the social crisis, and the native literary traditions They also shed light on the social process going on at the time

By their pervasiveness, the representations had themselves become the literary conventions in depicting the barrio and the city in terms of setting, character, action, and theme They had formed a significant part of the native literary traditions And they now stand for the disparities and inequalities between the barrio and city on a national level, between the poor and rich countries on a global level

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

Rationale of the Study

Country' and 'city' are very powerful words, and this is not surprising when we remember how much they seem to stand for in the experience of human communities (Williams, 1973: 1)

Barrio, city --- words that denote so much contrast in terms of human experiences and ways of life. They often evoke images and associations that are varied, distinct yet interrelated. To start, the barrio means different things to different people. For some, it means a life of placid and quiet surroundings, for others, images of farm life where one raises hogs, chickens, and goats concretize barrio life. Then there's the traditional association of the barrio to the *bahay kubo* where vegetables and fruit-trees in the backyard abound, as the folksong one learned in childhood goes. Or who could resist the image of the barrio as gleaned from stories where life is simple and uncomplicated, a place where real happiness can be found, where folks are gentle and have hearts of gold, where wants and needs are simple and thus attainable?

The *dalagang Pilipina* has come to mean the barrio lass who is the epitome of virtue, simplicity, and fidelity in love. She is the woman in her *saya* and *sarok* who unflinchingly brings food to her man working in the field. Innocence, honesty, and industry have been attributed to farmers and fishermen who break their backs to eke out a decent living. Yet these same images bespeak of hardships in the barrio: men who are trapped in the monotony of their hand-to-mouth existence, tenants who

are exploited by the landlords, men, women, and children who are starving because of drought typhoon, and some other calamities, remote depressed areas where people are backward, ignorant, and poor. Still, the images that dominate and persist in the researcher's mind are the idyllic ones - calm, starry nights unspoiled by artificial lights, men in their *carreteras* living an unhurried pace of life, graceful, lithe women with jars on their heads on their way to draw water from the well, long stretches of sandy seashore, early morning breeze, *nipa* huts framed by coconut trees, charming Filipino customs and native costumes - all these and so much more which bring in pleasant memories of the "good old days" and have become the typical idealized representations of the barrio in the Philippines.

In contrast, the city is frequently associated with noise, traffic jams, dirt and pollution. The *nipa* hut which seems to fit well in the barrio has become the symbol of poverty, of landlessness, of people's misery in squalid and dirty surroundings when viewed in the context of the city. Happiness in the city is equated with money and the "good life" money can offer. The city is the place where the innocent gets corrupted - it stands for the lure of money and women, of gambling and drinking, the loosening of moral values in the pursuit of these things. It is also the sure place where one could lose his touch of simplicity - the simple joys - that made his heart content in the barrio. In the city, love is fickle and materialistic. The "modern, liberated" ways of the city girl adulterated the Filipino woman's virtuous image. Yet the city, because of these and more, intrigues and fascinates. It is the place where opportunity beckons - a seat for advancement and learning, a place where one's potentials could be realized. Barrio folks would sell lands and carabaos to send

their children to schools and universities in the city. Some would uproot their entire family to try their luck in the city. The city opens minds. It expands horizons. And one could go on with these innumerable images when the researcher is suddenly struck by the thought: where did one get all these?

The barrio did not mean anything to the researcher till she got to visit her mother's hometown and sampled a way of life different from what she was used to: unpaved roads, crude means of transportation, absence of electricity and other household facilities, barrio folks staring unabashedly at strangers, early bedtime and early waking hours, etc. Another dimension was added as she got to visit larger cities like Manila and started to feel inadequate and "provincial" in one's outlook and way of doing things compared to the city-natives. Then nostalgia for the "better life" back home is stirred. Apart from these, the greater portion of barrio and city images came to life and entered one's consciousness from varied sources. Philippine movies, radio soap operas, literary writings, folk songs were not amiss in depicting and perpetuating these. All have, in one way or another, colored the researcher's and a good number of people's perceptions of the barrio and the city ways of life. These have also contributed a considerable measure of biases and prejudices in this regard. Moreover, these perceptions remain haphazard, ambiguous and disconnected.

When the idea of the study was brought up, the researcher grabbed at it for the following reasons: she has her own vivid idealizations of the barrio way of life. Her mother, coming from a barrio, formed greatly her perceptions and feelings of