

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## The Barrio in Navarra's Fiction

Teresita Gimenez-Maceda

*Philippine Studies* vol. 25, no. 1 (1977) 30–49

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

## The Barrio in Navarra's Fiction

TERESITA GIMENEZ-MACEDA

Tuyom is a small barrio in Carcar, Cebu, that juts out to the sea. Typical of the condition in many parts of Cebu, its land is dry and barren. Life is extremely difficult and, to survive, its people resort to fishing, *tuba*-gathering, and selling copra and maguey. The place is poor and the people remain poor. The hardships and sufferings of the people of his barrio, Tuyom, their struggles to survive, are the concerns of Marcel M. Navarra, "father of modern Cebuano writing."<sup>1</sup> Writing from 1931 to 1955 for vernacular magazines (mainly for *Bisaya*), Navarra probed into his people's problems and thoughts in search for some meaning to the bitter and oppressed lives they lead. Viewed in their totality, his stories express a compelling vision of life in the barrio.

### THE BARRIO AS A SOURCE OF SUFFERING

In the story "Ang Pasko sa Tuyom" (Christmas in Tuyom), Navarra gives us an insight into the daily life of Tuyom's people by describing Ingko Tityong's occupation:

Mosayo sila pagmata sa buntag ug itugway ang usa ka turong baka nga iyang binatang; dayon molanit sa iyang bugsay, sapang ug lambo aron manubid; tapos makapamahaw sa iyang pag-uli gikan sa dagat adto na usab hikit-an sa taliwala sa kamagayan aron manggalab kon dili man ugaling ilawom sa usa ka punoan sa naglarayng kalubihan daplin sa kamagayan aron manghinunok kun magbal-is. Bisan pa ning kahintang nga malisod nang mahalín ang magay, nagpadayon siya sa pagpangmagay sanglit wala man siya'y laing kapaingnan nga buhat sarang makabangil pag-ayo sa ilang

1. Navarra was the first Cebuano realist writer. His short stories are innovative in a period of adventure and fantasy tales, sentimental and didactic stories. In 1937, he won first prize in the first Cebuano short story writing contest, for his "Ug Gianod Ako," considered to be the first modern short story in Cebuano. He helped found the writers' organization LUDABI in 1956, and edited *Bag-ong Suga* (1963-68) and *Bisaya* (1969-73).

pagpuyo . . . . Ma-Domingo, si Ingko Tityong mangormata ug mga halakoton, ingon pananglit sa mga binultong magay kun sinakong kopras paingon sa lungsod ug inig pauli magbago usab ang iyang binatnang baka sa nagkalainlaing tinaboan sa mga Tuyumanon ug sa mga taga silingang balangay. Ang iyang kinormatahan, kunuhaan sa bahin sa tag-iya sa karomata ug sa baka, makasapal gayod sa asin, buwad, ginamos ug pipila ka gantang bugas.<sup>2</sup>

He wakes up early and pastures the bull he tends, then readies his oars, spear, and net for fishing. Upon returning from the sea, he eats breakfast, then is seen either in the middle of the maguey fields reaping, or under one of the nearby coconut trees cleaning and stripping maguey fibers. He continued selling maguey even when it was hard to sell it, because he had no other means to improve his lot . . . Every Sunday, Ingko Tityong brings to town in a borrowed *carromata* his rolls of maguey and sacks of copra and brings back with him some items needed by the people of Tuyom and its neighboring barangays. After turning over part of the earnings to the owner of the *carromata* and the cow, the share left him can buy only salt, dried and salted fish, and a few gantas of rice.

It is what Navarra time and again refers to as a *kakha-tuka* life, a hand-to-mouth existence.

Many of Navarra's characters share the kind of life Ingko Tityong lives. However, while Ingko Tityong accepts his way of life (Mabuhì lamang, kana igo na! — It is enough to be able to live!), others dream and hope to be alleviated from their misery. But forces work against them: nature is harsh, the social structure is unjust, and the war adds to their impoverishment. In his early stories, Navarra sees his people as victims of these forces.

"Tingali ang Adlaw Mosilang Ugma" (Maybe the Sun Will Rise Tomorrow) is the pathetic story of a couple, Dikoy and Garita, who find themselves driven from the land they have been tilling for most of their lives.<sup>3</sup> The story focuses on a day in their lives when everything seems to work against them and nature is especially cruel.

On this day, as Dikoy begins plowing his field, nature lashes out in all its fury and sends strong rains to ruin his work. The rains

2. "Ang Pasko sa Tuyom," *Bisaya*, 23 December 1940. In the subsequent footnotes, references are given to the published stories in the Cebuano magazines in which these stories appear. Although several issues of these magazines are no longer available, publication data were indicated in the original typescripts which Navarra made available to the author.

3. "Tingali ang Adlaw Mosilang Ugma," *Bisaya*, 7 February 1938.

pour throughout the day, preventing Dikoy from fishing with his tattered fishnet. It is a troubled Dikoy who strains his eyes in the late evening hours, mending a tattered fishnet while wondering where to get food for his family and worrying how to plow a field made muddy and sticky by the storm.

Dikoy and Garita try to forget the "ulan nga mibunok sa dughan" (storm raging in the heart) with visions of better times. Dikoy dreams of a big catch:

Atubang kaniya diha na ang sabay nga makasugakod sa dasmag sa mga danggit kun pagatpaton, ug matod niya sa hilom, makahigop usab intawon ug panagsa si Garita ug Tolindoy sa sabaw sa tinula.

He already saw in front of him the fishnet strong enough to withstand the onrush of samaral and spade fishes. He said to himself, how nice it would be if Garita and Tolindoy could taste fish broth once in a while.

Garita, on the other hand remarks wistfully:

Pastilan no, Koy, kun maluoy si Nyor Tino, unya ihatag kanato ang duha sa tulo ka bahin sa abot sa yuta? . . . Kon kita pa lang unta ang tag-iya sa yuta nga ato karong giuma?

Imagine, Koy, if Nyor Tino would suddenly take pity on us and give us two thirds of the income of the land? . . . If only we were the owners of the land we tilled?

But Navarra underlines the futility of their hopes, when he writes:

Ang ilang panabot sa kinabuhi sama sa tanang panabot sa mga tawo nga ingon kanila sa matang. Ang makagagahom nga bathala nagbuot nga maingon sila kanila kinsa hapit patyon ang lawas sa hugtanayang paning-kamot aron mabuhi ang kaulit sa uban.

They understood life according to how people of their social class understood life. And the Almighty God willed that they become like those who sweat and break their backs to death to perpetrate the greed of others.

In contrast to the dark and stormy day, Garita is greeted by a beautiful sunrise the next morning. She welcomes it as a promise of good things to come for her and Dikoy. But a man in a khaki uniform arrives with the landlord's message that the couple are to leave the land they have been tilling; the landlord has sold the land to Mr. Torres, a retired teacher, who would no longer need the services of Dikoy and Garita. Ironically then, the sunrise that seemed to contain the promise of a better life brings Dikoy and Garita bad news. The story ends with Dikoy and Garita staring

blankly at each other, too stunned to speak. Outside the sun shines on a cloudless sky.

In this story, we can feel the heavy pessimism that characterizes many of Navarra's stories. It is not enough that nature inflicts hardships on Dikoy and Garita; the land on which their very survival depends is taken away from them too. Here, Navarra reveals the harshness of a social system that gives only a fraction of the income from the land to the tenant who breaks his back working on it and who, after years of tilling the land, loses it to one who "envies the fertility of the soil" (naibug nianang yuta abi tabunok man).

Navarra never fails to underline the poverty of his people. Even children are made to express the hunger that characterizes most of the days in Tuyom. "Ang Pahigmata" (The Awakening), for example, opens with the main character, the boy Dikoy, complaining to his friend, Dyak, that he had set out that morning for his farm chores on an empty stomach:

- Nganong wa ka man motimotimo?
- Motimotimo unta kon diha pay timotimoon.
- . . . Kining, wa gyod bisan dukot na lang sobra sa inyong panihapon . . . ?
- Maayo man god kaayong pagkaluto ni Nanay ang iyang gilung-ag gabii ug nindot kaayo ang dukot nga kan-on ug nahurot ang tanang dukot.
- Why didn't you eat even just a little?
- I would have wanted to had there been anything to eat.
- What about burnt rice left over from your supper?
- Well, Nanay cooked our rice so well last night that even the burnt part looked so good. So, we ate it all up.<sup>4</sup>

It is because of the earnest desire to taste even a slice of the good life that Sisto of "Ang Tumoy sa Buwang" (The End of a Cockfight) and Elena in "Palita Ko'g Sanina, ha?" (Buy me a Dress, Huh?), gamble away the little money they have. As often happens in Navarra's stories, good fortune eludes them.<sup>5</sup>

The people's indigence is further aggravated with the coming of war, which impoverishes them materially and morally. In "Ang Hunsoy Sungsonian Usab" (The Clay Pipe Needs Refilling) Navarra dramatizes the guerrillas' exploitation of civilians during wartime.<sup>6</sup>

4. "Ang Paghimata," *Bisaya*, 27 February 1939.

5. "Ang Tumoy sa Buwang," *Bisaya*, 28 September 1933; "Palita Ko'g Sanina, Ha?" *Bisaya*, 26 February 1947.

6. "Ang Hunsoy Sungsonian Usab," *Bisaya*, 18 September 1954. The story was originally entitled "Ang Kuwako Wala Nay Sungsong" (The Pipe is Empty) and was

Instead of protecting the civilians and being sympathetic to their needs, the guerrillas who guard the cliffs of Lipata from the Japanese squeeze the barrio residents dry: while the guerrillas have the luxury of rolled tobacco leaves, Tuyom's folk are left with only ashes in their clay pipes.

Details of the story emphasize the soldiers' conscious efforts to take advantage of the goodness and naiveté of the people, who happily render them service. Although food is scarce, they demand the very best of food from the residents. Thus Malta, at the beginning of the story, stares blankly at the fire she has just built, wondering what she is to serve the soldiers when her own family has nothing to eat. "Nganong maulaw? Wala man gani kitay ikapamahaw karon!" (Why should we be ashamed? We don't even have any breakfast for ourselves today!) reasons her husband. Malta resorts to borrowing a bowl of corn meal from a neighbor.

For breakfast alone, the soldiers are served several varieties of food. The sergeant insists that he be fed rice, claiming he has a weak stomach and is not used to eating corn. The soldiers also ask for volunteers to guard the cliff at night since, according to Malta's naive reasoning,

Dili sab mahimo nga dili pakatulgon ang mga sundawo magabii kay magmalapoy ang ilang mga lawas ug dili na hinoon makasugakod sa kombati simbako duna na usay Hapon nga modunggo sa ato.

It is not right for them not to get some sleep for they might not have enough strength to fight in case some Japanese do land here.

The men of Lipata are thus forced to take turns keeping vigil.

The story also brings out the soldiers' lack of concern for the very lives they are supposed to protect. While Malta squats and waits for the rest of the food to be brought in by the volunteers, she is upset by a soldier's firing at a sailboat. She tries to protest, fearing for the lives of those on the boat, but is greeted with a careless and unconcerned answer:

- Kanang gilay-ona sa bilos dili na kaha maabut sa bala? Gimatngonan ni Malta ang iyang mga pulong.
- Abut pa kaayo! misinhag ang nagpabuto.
- Apan dili na gayud maigo ang nagsakay sa bilos, naghinaut si Malta nga pasaligon siya sa sundalo nga walay kuydawo.

written in 1947. Navarra later revised the story and substituted "hunsoy," clay pipe, for "kuwako."

— Kon maigo, pasensiya!

— Do you think your bullets can reach that distant sailboat? Malta carefully chose her words.

— Of course they can! snapped the one who fired the gun.

— But will they not hit those in the sailboat? Malta, asked, hoping that the soldier would allay her fears.

— Too bad for them if they get hit.

All throughout the story, Malta feels conscious about her humble condition. She does not, for instance, approach the soldier who requests her to bring him the rolled tobacco leaf she has prepared especially for him, because “nahinumdom siya nga gision ug nanimahong angso ang iyang saya nga sinansan” (she remembered her tattered saya which still smelled strongly of urine). Although exploited, she happily serves the guerrillas. She is all too eager to please the men who are supposed to protect the people of the barrio, even if she and her family have to skimp on food:

Nagtilagak ang laway ni Malta nga nagsud-ong sa usa ka sundalo . . . ug hinigop sa utang kamonggay nga sinubakan ug bansikol. Dihay mga higayon nga mahimong limot-limotan ang kagutom, apan karon nga nagtutok si Malta sa kabuhong nga gisaloan sa mga sundalo, misamot kangilo ang kahaw-ang nga kanunay iyang gibati. Kagabii, ang gipanihapon nila linung-ag nga kamoteng kahoy ug ang salin maoy gitimo nila kaganina didto sa balay. Mo-duol na sa tuig nga ang magtiayong Malta-Imok talagsa na lamang magakaon sa kalan-on gikan sa bugas mais. Naandan na nila ang mga sinagol-sagol nga untan-kamonggay, tinagudtagud nga nangka ug puso sa saging, galay sa kamoteng bagon, kinilaw nga kapayas — nga ilang sulaan sa linugit nga lubi. Ang kahimtang ni Malta-Imok wala maglayo sa kahimtang sa ilang mga silingan ug kadaghanan sa taga Lipata. Apan bisan pa niini, makakita gihapon sila sa pagkaon alang sa mga tawo nga manalipod ug magpakamatay alang sa katunhayan sa yutang natawhan.

Malta's mouth watered at the sight of a soldier . . . sweating over a delicious bowl of malunggay and fish soup. There were times when one could afford to forget hunger, but at this moment when Malta was staring at the abundance of food shared by the soldiers, the hunger pains she always felt became even more acute. Last night, their food for supper was cassava, and the leftovers were all they had for breakfast. It was almost a year now since the couple, Malta-Imok, had tasted corn meal. They had gotten used to malunggay leaves mixed with bits of nangka and banana blossoms, young kamote leaves, raw papaya soaked in vinegar, which they ate together with scraped coconut meat — food they used to feed their pigs. The condition of the couple Malta-Imok did not differ much from

that of their neighbors and many others in Lipata. In spite of this they were still able to find means and ways to feed the men who were willing to die for the preservation of their native land.

The people's condition is symbolized by the empty clay pipe that Malta keeps in her mouth. The empty pipe represents the people's hunger pangs. In the end, Malta has to be content with leftovers she begs from the soldiers.

Guerrilla abuses toward the end of war cause Torino, main character in "Paingon sa Bagong Kalibutan" (Heading Toward a New World) to become insane.<sup>7</sup> Once tortured by the Japanese and later mauled by the guerrillas on the false suspicion of helping a Japanese collaborator, he becomes confused as to who the enemy really is. As the church bells ring to welcome the New Year and the end of the war, Torino pathetically murmurs over and over, "Armi diri, Hapon didto!" (Army here, Japanese there!).

The hope of release from the afflictions of war and the expectation that war would end soon enable the people to endure the hardships of war. In Navarra's fiction, however, hopes and dreams are hardly ever realized since something tragic always thwarts them.

In "Usa Niana Ka Gabii" (One Night) the couple Pistoy and Onyang talk about the widespread rumors that liberation is at hand.<sup>8</sup> While Onyang is pessimistic, Pistoy is convinced that the war is nearing its end. His thoughts are already of leaving behind the poverty of Tuyom and of looking for a job in the city. He counsels his wife: "Ayaw wad-a ang paglaum, Onyang. Hibaw-i nga kadtong nahubsan sa paglaum wala na hinoon makasud-ong sa pag-abut sa atong Kaluwasan." (Never lose hope, Onyang. Remember that those whose hopes dry up will never be able to witness the dawn of our liberation.) Like Dikoy and Garita in "Tingali ang Adlaw Mosilang Ugma" who never see the sun rise in their lives, Onyang and Pistoy never see the dawn of their liberation. Late in the evening, they are massacred by some Japanese soldiers who, while escaping from the Americans, have strayed to Tuyom.

Navarra's stories all reveal his conception of the barrio as a source of suffering and enslavement. Though the people dream, struggle, and hope to be released from their misery, they never become free.

7. "Paingon sa Bag-ong Kalibutan," *Bisaya*, 1 January 1947.

8. "Usa Niana Ka Gabii," *Ang Republika*, 11 March 1948.

## LANDS OF PROMISE

There are, however, inhabitants of Tuyom who, strongly aware of their hopeless situation, uproot themselves from their barren land to seek a better life elsewhere. To these people, Mindanao and the city are the promised lands. Yet, even when they succeed in realizing their material desires, some tragedy always occurs that makes them drift back to the barrio.

In "Sa Lunhawng Tugwayanan" (In the Green Fields), the couple Iping and Karing give up their land in Tuyom to look for a better life in Mindanao.<sup>9</sup> Though corn and fruits grow abundant in the fields they buy in Cotabato, their lives in the promised land are rendered meaningless by a tragedy that befalls them — the death of their only son.

Iping's main reason for moving his family out of Tuyom was to provide his growing son with a better future. He had realistically appraised his situation in Tuyom, and no matter how he looked at it, he saw no chance of economic upliftment:

Kanang mga lubi nga wala na mamunga. Kanang mga magay. Ang tanan nga atong gisupsopan sa pagkabuhi. Anaa pa ang bili sa kopras ug magay. Nahibalo ka na nga hapit dili na gani lingion sa mga pumapalit ug kon mahalin man gayud, ang bayad dili gani paigo sa magugol sa pagsaka, pagbuak, pagbulad, paggalab, paghilibis, pagbal-is ug paglaba! Unya ang buhulisan pa nianang yuta nga luyat na kaayo ang makaul-og pa kanato. Dili layo ang adlaw nga mahigmata kita nga dili na unya makatindog sa kagutom, ug makasaksi nga lain nay nanag-iya . . . ning luna sa yuta nga atong napanunud sa atong katigulangan.

Those coconut trees that no longer bear fruit. Those maguey plants. Everything that we depend on for our living. There is the price of copra and maguey. You know that buyers hardly take a look at them; when they do, what they pay is not even enough to cover expenses for breaking the ground, plowing, reaping, removing of the thorns, drying, bleaching, and washing! Moreover, we are burdened with the tax on our arid land. The day is not far when we will be too weak to stand up because of hunger, when we will wake up to discover that the land we inherited from our parents . . . will no longer be ours.

Iping does not even consider working for Don Silvestre's hacienda for, as he explains to Karing, he would only be chained to a life of perennial debts — from his salary would be deducted payment for

9. "Sa Lunhawng Tugwayanan," *Bisaya*, 8 July 1940.

goods he would be forced to buy. Only Mindanao, with its fertile lands, would provide him and his family an escape from hardship, a more secure future.

In Iping's eagerness to accomplish his goals, however, he neglects to consider the feelings of his wife, Karing, who had never desired to leave Tuyom. Although she cannot reconcile herself to life away from her roots, she obeys Iping's wishes like a good wife and hides from him her homesickness and loneliness.

Ironically, just when Iping's cornfields grow lush with promise of a good harvest, Dodong, his son, dies. The story ends with Iya Angkay, an old woman who has taken care of the boy, turning away from the tableau of Karing, Iping, and the dead Dodong to face Iping's ripening cornfields. Abundance and success seem to come in exchange for Karing's loneliness and Dodong's life. Iping has been too absorbed in making provisions for Dodong's future to detect his family's unhappiness. Suddenly, with his son's death, all of Iping's efforts toward a good harvest become pointless. Life away from Tuyom, though economically more rewarding, has become meaningless.

Another land of promise for the people of Tuyom is the city. The city represents for them freedom from the barrenness of their land. It means freedom from backbreaking work, from root crops and bananas, from malunggay leaves and corn meal, from having to wake up so early in the morning to fish for food, from having to pull a carromata to town every Sunday to barter copra and maguey with dry and salted fish. The city is a place of easy money and many opportunities for material advancement. Many migrate to the city in search of more financial rewards.

The city, however, presents other evils. Here, the migrant Tuyomanon discovers the ugliness of life. He encounters superficial enjoyments, corruption, moral decay. He finds it difficult to involve himself deeply with other people and to form meaningful ties with others. Thus, Li's interest in his girl friend, Aurora, in "Ang Bulak ug ang Bathala sa Kahasol" (The Flower and the God of Discord) goes only as far as the hotel room.<sup>10</sup> Eleno, in "Ang Midyas Pinilotan" (The Mended Socks) is hesitant to court Marina, afraid to get involved with her.<sup>11</sup> Artemio in "Dili Mawala ang

10. "Ang Bulak ug ang Bathala sa Kahasol," *Bisaya*, 15 May 1939.

11. "Ang Midyas Pinilotan," *Bisaya*, 18 December 1939.

Panganod" (The Clouds Will Not Disappear) returns to Tuyom from Manila and brags about his hotel-and-movie affair with Clara Mirasol.<sup>12</sup> Pedring in "Mihagtos ang Akong Pasol" (My Fishing Tackle Snaps) fouls up what could have blossomed into a meaningful relationship when he makes the mistake of taking the girl he loves, Maria Aurora, to a hotel room.<sup>13</sup>

For Navarra, no deep relationship can be established by those who are too concerned with money, with the power it yields, and the pleasures it buys. "Ang Kasaba sa Langit" (The Wrath of Heaven) and "Hataas na ang Adlaw" (The Sun is Up) depict the immoral lives of two government officials.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Gacutan in "Ang Kasaba" heads a department under the city mayor. He accepts bribes from Chinese businessmen, threatens anyone who works for the opposition with losing their jobs, takes advantage of job applicants like Chita Morel who would consent to do anything as she needs a job badly. On the other hand, Serafin in "Hataas" accepts a bribe of ₱20,000 from his friend, Johnny, in return for protection of the latter's "business interests" while he is abroad. Taking advantage of his friend's absence, he commits adultery with Johnny's wife, Madge. In a dream-vision, Serafin sees himself hanging from a tree branch over a vast emptiness, at the same time witnessing himself and Madge wallowing in mud. There seems to be no salvation for him who is buried too deeply in the mire of immorality and corruption.

Those who leave Tuyom in search of a better life in the city are eventually disillusioned. Although they succeed in landing good-paying jobs and, sometimes, powerful positions, some experience always jolts them into a realization of the meaninglessness and ugliness of life in the city. They are then forced to go back to the barrio to lead solitary lives.

"Si Hari Bernardo" (King Bernardo) is about a man whose encounter with injustice in the city triggers a series of tragic events that lead to his insanity and forced isolation from the rest of Tuyom.<sup>15</sup>

Bernardo leaves Tuyom early in his life to seek material advance-

12. "Dili Mawala ang Panganod," *Alimyun*, 7 March 1955.

13. "Mihagtos ang Akong Pasol," *Bisaya*, 22 September 1948.

14. "Ang Kasaba sa Langit," *Bisaya*, 23 December 1953; "Hataas na ang Adlaw," *Bisaya*, 24 June 1953.

15. "Si Hari Bernardo," *Bag-ong Adlaw*, 5 and 12 August 1946.

ment in the city. Through hard work, he earns for himself a good position in a shipping company. From the view of his poor neighbors in Tuyom, Bernardo is "nagalingkod sa ibabawng tumoy sa kalibutan" (sitting on top of the world). But Bernardo is unable to keep his good fortune. When one of his men dies as a result of what he believes is company negligence, he testifies against his employer. His testimony sparks a series of disastrous events. First, Bernardo loses his job. Disenchanted with city life, he returns to Tuyom, where his wife dies shortly afterward. Taking pity on him, his relatives take care of his two children. They send him to Bogó, in northern Cebu, to take care of some lands. There he is forced, against his conscience, to set fire to the hut of an evicted tenant who has refused to leave the land. Guilt-ridden, Bernardo becomes insane. When he returns to Tuyom, he is reduced to an outcast imprisoned in a tiny hut and released only occasionally during his lucid moments.

The awareness of his own oppressed state makes Bernardo imagine himself king. Significantly, he idealizes his kingdom as one ruled by justice, where ignorant and helpless people like himself are tolerated instead of maltreated:

Pasayloa ang mga tawo nga walay alamag. Mga tawo sila nga pinangga sa Ginoo. Mga tawo sila nga sama sa sagbut kansang kapuslanan mao da ang pagpatunhay sa pagbuhì sa kabayo, baka . . . ug ubang mananap sa kalibutan.

Forgive people who are ignorant. They are people also loved by God. They are like weeds that serve as fodder for the horse, the cow . . . and other animals of this world.

Acting as his idealized king, Bernardo protects the rights of the oppressed and sees to it that justice is given them. Thus in the end, when he accidentally captures some Japanese soldiers on the shores of Tuyom, he insists, by his "kingly" right, that the guerrillas turn them over to the authorities who would decide their fate:

Dili ako makatugot nga usa ka dautang buhat inyong himoon dinhi sa akong atubangan. Dinakpan na sila apan wala kamoy katungod sa pagkastigo ug pagkamatay kanila. Dad-a hinoon sila ngadto sa inyong mga opisyal ug silay pahukma unsay maayong buhaton alang ning mga pobre.

I cannot permit you to harm them in front of me. They are prisoners, but you do not have any right to punish or kill them. Take them instead to the proper authorities who will decide what to do with these poor creatures.

Hari Bernardo wins a major battle when the guerrillas pay heed to his

advice. A crazy man in an insane time like war, he turns out to be in Tuyom the sanest man in thought and deed.

"Ang Kalibutan Matapus" (The World Will End), like "Si Hari Bernardo," depicts the life of a man, Ingko Bayon, who drifts back to the barrio after living in the city.<sup>16</sup> He returns to live in Son-ok, a barrio like Tuyom. Here, he later comes to be regarded insane because he lives in self-imposed isolation.

The story unfolds on a stormy day when the world is *nagbinabaye paghilak* (crying like a woman). It is a day that has long been awaited by Ingko Bayon, a day he has predicted to be the end of the world. Nobody in barrio Son-ok has taken him seriously, but he goes on preparing for what he thinks is going to be his last meal. A flashback of Ingko Bayon's life as a young man explains his welcome embrace of the end of the world.

Ingko Bayon leaves his barrio when still a young man. As a customs detective in the city, he loses sight of his values and is tempted to accept large bribes from businessmen who want to evade taxes on their goods. He becomes engrossed in the superficial pleasures his ill-gotten money has brought him. This eventually costs him the life of his wife, whom he shoots to death upon discovering her in another man's arms. In a sense, this costs him his life too, for though he escapes imprisonment through the work of some influential friends, he loses all will to live. Realizing the evil money has brought him, he leaves the corrupt life of the city and drifts back to the barrio — there to live a solitary life of extreme poverty:

Wala siyay tinigum bahandi nga kalibutanon. Nakaamgo na siya nga ang salapi, bisan tuod makahupay sa kainit ug katugnaw, bisan mohatag kaniya sa tanang kalami ug kasayonan, bisan makapapha usahay sa sakit lawasnon, maoy usa ka dakung sakit nga antuson sa kalag. Atubangon ning hanap nga kasayuran, nananggot siya aron ang iyang tuba paliton sa mga mananagway ug mga dakung koprador nga maoy tigpangapod sa mga tindahan sa tuba sa siyudad, ug ang salapi nga madawat iyang ipalit ug bugas ug ginamus nga gikinahanglan uyamot sa iyang tiyan.

He had no material wealth. He was aware that money, even if it can satisfy hunger, even if it can shield his body from heat and cold, even if it can provide him with all the comforts of life, even if it can cure his bodily ailments, is the one great affliction of the soul. To prove his point, he worked only as a tuba-gatherer, selling tuba to the big suppliers in the city,

16. "Ang Kalibutan Matapus," *Alimyun*, 30 September 1952.

and the money he received as payment was sufficient only to buy him the rice and salted fish his stomach needed.

Bayon deliberately chooses to live a life of poverty, more as a result of his weariness to continue living. He has ceased feeling and finds no more reason for living. However, on the day he dreams is going to be the end of the world, he shows signs of responding to life once again, as he grows fearful that the strong rains and howling winds would bring with it a hurricane. Ironically, at the precise moment when he gathers just enough strength to stand up from his corner and confront the raging storm, a heavy object falls from the roof and knocks him unconscious.

#### THE BARRIO AS SOURCE OF LIFE AND BEAUTY

"Sa Lunhawng Tugwayanan," "Si Hari Bernardo," and "Ang Kalibutan Matapus" point to man's inevitable return to his roots after leaving home for other promised lands. Life away from the barrio is unbearable and meaningless. Something tragic always forces the main characters to come to this realization. Going back home to the barrio, however, is not a conscious decision on the part of characters like Bernardo and Bayon. Rather, they find themselves merely drifting back to it. In the stories "Pangitaa ang Tubag" (Look for the Answer) and "Ang Tawo nga Nangita sa Katahum" (The Man Who Searched for Beauty), however, the characters *will* to return to the barrio — there to seek a rebirth and a reaffirmation of life.<sup>17</sup> Here, Navarra lifts the cloud of pessimism that hovers over the stories earlier discussed. Having experienced life in the city, Navarra's characters finally realize that the material progress and economic upliftment they have hoped for are not as important as they think. More essential is the inner happiness that can be found in a simple life of peace and material detachment.

"Pangitaa sa Tubag" is a dialogue between a young man from the city who takes shelter in a small hut, and a scantily clothed man in his early thirties, the owner of the hut. On the whole, it expresses the puzzlement of the city visitor about how a man could possibly live on the barest essentials in a tiny, rotting hut and still

17. "Pangitaa ang Tubag," *Ang Republika*, 28 January 1948; "Ang Tawo nga Nangita sa Katahum," *Bisaya*, 24 March 1948.

remain contented and happy: "Nganong nag-antus ikaw ning lungag nga gamay, ning imong kahimtang nga makaluluoy?" (Why are you suffering in this small hole? How can you bear your pitiful condition?)

The owner of the hut explains to the young man that he willed to live in what seem to be miserable conditions. He recounts his past as a steward on the ship *Islas Filipinas*, where he enjoyed a large income because of his resourcefulness. But the pleasures he experienced with his money were momentary and brief:

Busog kanunay ang akong pitaka. Buhong ako sa bisan unsa. Apan diin ako mahisangko? Malipay ka karon, ugma maglabad ang ulo sa daghang kahasol ug kabalaka. Sa dalan sa lawasnong kalipay, mahisangko ikaw ngadto sa lawasnong kasakit.

Ang salapi makagagahum uyamot; alang gani sa kadaghan nga nangsimba kaniya, ang salapi mao ang tanan dinhi sa kalibutan. Apan, amigo, dinhi ra sa kalibutan, kutub lamang dinhi sa kalibutan. Kanila nga naglunang sa bahandi ihatag ang imong kaluoy kay, matud pa, makalusot pa ang usa ka kamelo sa lungag sa dagum kay sa usa ka bahandianon ngadto sa ginharian sa langit.

My wallet was always full. I had everything I needed. But where did I land? You may be happy today, but tomorrow, your head will ache because of many worries and anxieties. On the road to carnal pleasure, you will end up suffering.

Money is powerful. Because many idolize it, it has come to mean everything in this world. But give your pity to those who are wallowing in their riches because as the saying goes, "it is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

Realizing that his life in the city was without purpose, he stripped himself of his material possessions, equipped himself with the barest essentials and lived alone in what his visitor terms a small hole. Like Ingko Bayon, he worked as a tuba-gatherer to earn his rice and salted fish. Unlike Ingko Bayon, however, the man found happiness and meaning in his kind of "miserable" condition. It was only in this kind of living that he felt he could attain peace of mind:

Ako nag-antus? Makaluluoy ang akong kahimtang? Hinanali ra ang imong panghukom, amigo. Wala ako mag-antus. Sa tinuoray, ako ang labing malipayong tawo sa kalibutan. Ning akong kahimtang, hikaplagaan ko ang dugay ko nang gipangita — nga mao ang hingpit nga kalinaw.

Me, suffering? My condition, miserable? You made too hasty a judgment

of me, my friend. I am not suffering. In fact, I am the happiest man in the world. This condition of mine, this is what I had been searching for a long time — a life of perfect peace.

The older man presents to his young visitor a way of life possible only if one lives in the barrio. In their conversation, he stresses the superficiality of life offered by the city in contrast to the purity of life offered by the barrio. Long-lasting happiness can be found in the barrio. To attain it, however, one must detach himself from his material wants and be as poor as the barren land on which he lives.

As in “Panigtaa ang Tubag,” Navarra in “Ang Tawo nga Nangita sa Katahum,” makes a statement about what the barrio ultimately symbolizes for him. The barrio is still essentially as Navarra describes it in the earlier stories — dry and barren. Its inhabitants still live the same kind of life. But this time, he looks at Tuyom from the vantage point of one who has lived outside and has returned, discovering the goodness, the purity, and the inner beauty it has always had.

The story is about a well-known Cebuano writer, Carlos Miramar, who once lived in the city but now refuses to give up life in Tuyom for that of the city and rejects the offer to edit a new Cebuano magazine and the promises of material benefits it brings.

To emphasize the idea that a barrio like Tuyom is not to be judged by its surface appearance, Navarra plays up the contrast between city and barrio. Thus, Ben Medida, the publisher from the city is described as a picture of contentment and material satisfaction:

Puton siya nga pagkatawo nga maila sa mga bahin sa iyang lawas nga wala mataboni sa iyang *polo shirt* ug kalsonis nga maputi ug masinaw. May gitag-on siya, ug misamot unta ka hataas nga tan-awon kon wala pa ang iyang katambok nga milutaw pagayo sa iyang pus-on nga mibusyad sa iyang atubangan.

He was fair-complexioned as could be easily seen in the parts of his body left uncovered by his polo shirt and white, glossy pants. He was considerably tall, and would have looked taller were it not for his potbelly.

On the other hand, Carlos, the writer, is a picture of poverty and suffering:

Ang iyang buhok nga kaha wala maduaw sa gunting sulod sa mga duha ka bulan nagauphag ug namad-ay sa iyang mga dalunggan. Nangigdal ang mga

bukog sa iyang bukobuko ug kilid bisan pa sa bulingong kamisin nga nagatabon sa naasoyng bahin sa iyang lawas . . . Usa siya, sa laktud nga pagkasulti, ka tawhanon larawan sa iyang iro didto sa tugkaran ug sa balay nga iyang gipuy-an.

His hair, which had not been visited by a pair of scissors for two whole months, covered his ears. Even with the dirty undershirt he was wearing, the bones protruding from his sides and back were obvious. In short, he was the picture of his dog and his house.

Ben Medida cannot understand why a man of Carlos's stature chooses to live in what to him are wretched conditions — a house about to fall apart, dirty surroundings, a box for a writing table. He is puzzled as to why Carlos would voluntarily give up a life of comfort and ease in the city for a life of "kapait ug kawadon" (bitterness and poverty). Carlos knows that what Ben offers him would alleviate what appears to be his family's miserable condition. The money would ease their sufferings and would even provide extra pleasures. But he cannot return to the city to partake once again of its superficial joys. He is looking, he says, for a life of more lasting beauty which he knows he can never attain in the city:

Nianang imong suhol, dayag na lamang mahabwa gikan kanamo ang tanang kalisud ug kahuot nga a mong gibati. Tingali pa ganik, hikapinan pa ako alang sa lingaw-lingaw, sa suroy-suroy, sa sine, sa nightclub, sa tinagay-ay sa serbisa uban sa mga higala. Kataw-i ako, Ben, apan sultihan ko ikaw nga nangita ako sa katahum nga malungtaron, kanang katahum nga langitnon, ug mibati ako nga sa taliwala niining hilabihan kong kalisud ug kapait daw nagakaduol na ang akong gipangita. Asa ko kini hipalgi didto sa siyudad, taliwala sa iyang kagahub ug kalihok ug kagilok? Asa ako didto makapanghugas ug makapanlinis sa akong kaugalingon kon kanunay ikaw nga hipisikan ug hilabayan sa lapok sa sala?

With the salary you are going to pay me, my family would surely be released from suffering. Perhaps, I would even have something extra left for entertainment, for a movie, for nightclubs, for beers with friends. Laugh at me, Ben, but I will tell you that I am looking for lasting beauty, heavenly beauty. And I feel that it is in the midst of my extreme poverty and intense hardships that I will be able to find what I am looking for. Where will I look for this in the city? In the midst of its din and noise? Its turmoil? Its many temptations? Where will I wash and clean myself there when there we are always somehow spattered with the mud of sin?

As a writer, Carlos also feels that the city cannot provide him with the right materials to work on. For if he is to write about life, he has

to be able to write about its deeper realities, not its superficialities:

Unsa ang akong masulat didto, dili magagikan sa kahiladman sa akong kalag, dili magadala sa mga inagulo ug bakho sa kasingkasing nga gilumsan sa kaguol. Ang akong masulat didto pulos hapaw ug salingkapaw, hobo sa diwaanong katam-is ug kaputli. Dinhi, Ben, bisan tuod kahon lamang sa gas ang gihimo kong sulatanan, ug wala gani akoy lingkoranan, tolo na ka nobela ang akong nahuman. Gisugdan ko na ang ikaupat. Mga nobela kini nga, bisan dili kaha makapahimuot ug makalingaw sa ubos nga matang sa atong magbabasa, ikapasigarbo ko kanimo nga maoy mga nobela nga tinuod. Niining akong mga sinulat, gihukad ko ang tanan kong kahugaw, ang tanang kahugaw sa kalibutan — sa iyang kalasmo ug kabaho. Masulat ko kaha kini, Ben, kon atua pa ako sa siyudad?

Whatever I would write there would not come from the depths of my soul. It would not carry with it the sobbings of a heart drowned in sorrow. What I would write there would all be superficialities, shorn of the sweetness and purity of the spirit. Here, Ben, even if my desk is only a gasoline can, even if I have nothing to sit on, I have already written three novels, and I have started with the fourth. These are novels that, even if they cannot satisfy and entertain the poorer class of readers, I can be proud of because they are novels based on reality. In my novels, I have exposed all my filth — all the filth of the world — its foulness and stench. Would I be able to write this, Ben, if I were in the city?

Carlos remains strong in his decision to remain in the barrio. Even Ben's plea to his conscience as a father whose responsibility it is to provide for his children's future and education does not change his mind. He believes that God is a good provider and he has placed the fate of his family in His hands:

... nakapalandong ako nga si Bathala mao ang nagumol sa tawo. Mahimo ba sila nga malig-ong haligi sa atong nasud ugma damlag kun mga yano ug mga maayong lunsoranon, maghamoy ba sila sa ilang mga tudlo kon maglunang sa bahandi, may kahibalo kun walay kabankaagan ... kining tanan pagbuot ni Bathala.

... I believe that it is God who shapes the destiny of man. Whether they will be the strong pillars of our nation in the future and remain good and responsible citizens, whether they will be poor or rich, wise or ignorant — all these are willed by God.

Carlos, at peace with himself and in harmony with his poverty, cannot leave Tuyom for the material rewards of the city. He has discovered the inner beauty, a dry and barren land like Tuyom has always had.

In the last two stories discussed, we find a significant change in the outlook of Navarra's main characters, brought about by their having confronted the evils in the city. They no longer think of the barrio in terms of sterile images (barrenness, dryness, unproductiveness, death) but in terms of life. They no longer dream of being relieved of their sufferings (although opportunities to do so are given them), but instead look at their sufferings as a source of joy. Realizing that material abundance can also create misery, they go back to the barrio to find the peace and lasting happiness that elude them in the city and other promised lands.

It is this complete realization of the value of poverty over material wealth that Navarra brings out in "Si Zosimo."<sup>18</sup> In contrast to "Tingali ang Adlaw Mosilang Ugma," the tenant in this story assumes the superior position over that of the landowner. He already has the wisdom to know that "ang mga datu sayonan pagdanggap sa bisan unsang tumo-tumo aron paglagit ug diyutay nga dalikdik nga makahatag ug hustisya sa ilang mga katahap" (the rich find it easy to fabricate falsehoods that will prove true their allegations). Thus, when the rich landowner, Nyor Pascua, accuses Zosimo, his former tenant, of stealing coconuts from his trees, thereby considerably cutting down his copra income, Zosimo can only take pity on him. He is appalled at how the rich attach so much importance to their material possessions, which, in this case, are merely the coconuts he has picked on three occasions to quench his thirst:

Tinuod nasaka ako sulod sa tolo ka higayon sa usa ka punoang lubi duol sa akong balay . . . Wala na ako maghago sa pagpananghid kanimo nga maoy tag-iya, tungod sa nagtuo man ako nga bisan pag lima ka gatus ka bunga sa inyong kalubihan ang dili mahilakip pagbuok inigpangopras ninyo, dili man makagibang sa inyong kadato. Kabos ako, Nyor, hanganlan man gani ug timawa, apan dili ko intawon ibaylo ang akong kalag bisan pag milyon ka milyon ka bunga sa lubi. Ug ania pay dakung matuod Nyor: Dili ko ibaylo ang akong katimawa sa imong kahalangdon. Dili ko ibugti ang akong kahimtang sa imong kahimtang. Dili ko ilimud, Nyor, nga akoy naluoy kanimo.

It is true that I did climb one of your coconut trees near my hut on three occasions . . . I did not waste time asking for your permission then, because I believed that even if you did not touch five hundred of your coconuts during copra time, your riches will not be diminished. I am poor,

18. "Si Zosimo," *Bisaya*, 6 July 1955.

Nyor, extremely poor. But I would never exchange my soul for millions of your coconuts. And here is another truth: I will never exchange my poverty for your wealth. I will not barter my condition for your condition. I will not deny, Nyor, that I pity you.

In this story, no longer does the poor man dream of the day when the land will be his or when his landlord will give him two-thirds of the income of the land as Dikoy and Garita do in "Tingali." He has come to realize that his life is in fact better than that of his landlord's. Thus, Zosimo would never barter his poverty for Nyor Pascual's riches.

The essentially pessimistic view of Navarra that the poor are always exploited and oppressed, that everything seems to conspire against them to chain them to their miserable existence, undergoes a dramatic change as the poor, in the final set of stories, realize that poverty can contain wealth. The poor no longer equate happiness with economic upliftment and material progress but with coming to terms with poverty itself. Rising above themselves, they see in their poverty a way to attain peace of mind and long-lasting happiness. They assume the superior position over the wealthy, whose obsession with material things, leads them to be suspicious and distrustful of other people.

The barrio, which at first appears a source of misery and suffering, becomes a source of life and happiness. The city and Mindanao which at first are symbols of fertility and abundance, become the source of death and moral decay.

## CONCLUSION

Marcel Navarra's view of the barrio is significant if one understands it in the context of Cebuano experience. His Tuyom, in the final analysis, is a microcosm of the larger Cebu. The dryness and barrenness of its land is the condition of many parts of Cebu. The life depicted by Navarra in his fiction, therefore, is expressive of the life lived by many Cebuanos who share with his characters dreams and hopes of being lifted from the *kakha-tuka* existence of gathering enough tuba and copra, binding enough maguey fibers, to trade for rice and dried fish. Navarra's fiction, however, shows the Cebuanos that their land can yield beauty, too. He shows them that migration to more fertile lands or to places which offer more prospects for material advancement do not always result in the

happiness they hoped to attain. Life away from one's roots is lonely and tragic, at times ruthless and cruel. The corruption and the evil that a place like the city yields make one realize the beauty of a life of peace and material detachment that only barrios like Tuyom can give.

What makes Navarra a significant writer therefore is that he made his stories vehicles for expressing a view of barrio life meaningful to his readers. He drew out of the authentic experiences of his people truths about their own lives and gave them his own eyes with which to see the inner beauty that even a barren land like Cebu contains.