

IMAGING WOMEN IN THE SARSUWELA

PATRICIA MARION Y. LOPEZ

Introduction

The *sarsuwela* was born in the Philippines in the last decade of the nineteenth century when Filipino writers decided to create their own versions of a Spanish theatre tradition. In a short period, the *sarsuwela* had spread from Manila to the neighboring provinces and became widely popular in the country. The new form reached its golden age in the first half of the twentieth century, before it was supplanted by the vaudeville and the film industry in the 1940s. Among the first films to be made in the Philippines were actually *sarsuwela* performances.

The new genre was a big change from the *comedia* which had been for a long time, the dominant theatre form in the country. At the end of the nineteenth century, a number of writers had begun to feel dissatisfied with the stylized dialogues, medieval settings and characters of the *comedia* and felt that the *sarsuwela*, which used contemporary language, everyday situations and familiar characters, was a more effective instrument for articulating more relevant issues and sentiments. In Manila, Severino Reyes was one of the leaders of the

movement against what was felt was an obsolete tradition. He wrote R.I.P., a play critiquing the comedia. After its performance, many comedia lovers were indignant and launched a protest against Reyes. Debates between these two groups were published in the periodicals of the period.

At the beginning of the sarsuwela's development, the Philippines had already undergone a major revolution and was negotiating the imposition of a new colonial order. The social and political conditions necessitated the development of literary and theatre forms which addressed the anxieties and changing perceptions of the Filipino people. It was around the same period for example when the Tagalog novel as a distinct literary form took shape. Many of the early novelists held the view that literature should be an accurate reflection of life and a means of enlightenment (Reyes 1982, 12-13). Thus, they drew plots, characters, settings, themes and subject matter from contemporary life, which was a contrast to older genres like the *awit* and the *korido*. Like the sarsuwela, the novel gained popularity in just a short period of time and in the succeeding years, became a strong tradition in Tagalog literature.

The new literary and theatre forms also needed to be adequate for social critique and for the expression of strong anticolonial/nationalist sentiments. The effects of Jose Rizal's *Noli me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo* for example, were still felt. In addition, a number of Tagalog dramas¹ and sarsuwela were labelled "seditious" by the American government. These included *Hindi Aco Patay* (1903) by Juan Matapang Cruz, allegedly, *Kahapon, Ngayon at Bukas* (1903) by Aurelio Tolentino, and *Walang Sugat* (1902) by Severino Reyes.

Not all sarsuwela (likewise not all novels and dramas) were overtly nationalistic or political in content. Many works began to center on domestic themes, focusing on everyday situations and problems like courtship, love, marriage, and family life. The sarsuwela showed the social conventions and mores of the time as they featured everyday life in the early part of the 1900s. The stories were often set in the

contemporary period, and were frequently in spaces of the home and its surroundings (e.g. the living room, the garden). It is in these spaces where the presence of women became more prominent and it is therefore not too surprising why women function as the main characters in many of these sarsuwela.

This paper is concerned with how women, particularly women's bodies, were constructed through the texts of the sarsuwela, and how they perhaps allowed, even for just a short period, the subversion of well-instituted modes of bodily conduct. Implicit here is the idea that representation of bodies through a theatre form is always a discursive practice, contributing to the establishment and maintenance of a particular colonial, patriarchal, social order. Thus, the body is not seen as a "natural" physical entity/object; it is socially and historically fashioned, and ultimately a site of negotiations of power.

My study relates the sarsuwela to the books of conduct or rulebooks for women written in the nineteenth century. The rulebooks were continued to be published and circulated until the early twentieth century, around the same time the sarsuwela became very popular in the country. The rulebooks were often written by men or priests and were mostly aimed at women readers. These books contained many rules by which women should think and conduct themselves, both in public and private, and were strongly moralistic. Perhaps one of the most known works is Modesto Castro's *Ang Pagsusulatan ni Urbana at Feliza na pagcacaalaman nang magandang asal na ucol sa pagharap sa capoa tao* which was first published in 1864. The work became quite popular as it was reprinted several times, translated into two different languages (Iloco and Bikol), all the way until 1946 (Baquiran 1996, ix).

The sarsuwela was similar to the rulebook in a number of ways, particularly in its moralizing nature, didactic content, use of idealized characters, and germinal realism. More importantly, the rulebook and the sarsuwela represented women in a similar fashion. It should be noted that these representations were not limited to the sarsuwela and rulebooks alone, but were shared by the Tagalog novel and drama which

took shape around the same time the sarsuwela did. Not surprisingly, some of the famous sarsuwelistas were also well-known novelists or dramatists.

By relating the sarsuwela to the rulebook, this paper hopes to shed light on the logic behind the imaging of women characters in the sarsuwela. Important here is the idea that the archetypal representations of the women characters in the sarsuwela are very much grounded in socially and historically constructed notions of womanhood set in place by a particular colonial and patriarchal order. At the same time, these representations are not exactly identical to those of the rulebook women, as they indicate the changes in social order already happening at the time. My analysis also aims to bring out possible ways by which women in the sarsuwela were able to transgress the established norms of the rulebook.

This paper focuses on three Tagalog sarsuwela, *Paglipas ng Dilim*, *Ang Kiri* and *Ang Dalagang Bukid*. These three, perhaps some of the most popular and well-loved sarsuwela in Manila, were written and performed during the period when the sarsuwela was at its height of popularity in the Philippines. While there were a number of serious, dramatic sarsuwela, many works, such as those mentioned, were comedies and featured jokes and caricatures of people in Philippine society. This, in addition to the elements of music and dance, made the sarsuwela a highly entertaining theatre form.

Dalagang Bukid, written by Hermogenes Ilagan and Leon Ignacio, was first performed in 1919 at Teatro Zorilla. It is said to be the work which launched the famous Atang dela Rama into stardom. The play was an enormous success in its first performances and was restaged about a thousand times after. It was also the first sarsuwela to be translated into film. Not long after, Precioso Palma and Leon Ignacio wrote *Paglipas ng Dilim* in 1920. *Ang Kiri*, written by Servando de los Angeles and Leon Ignacio, was performed six years later. This play was the first to feature a “kiri” or coquette as a main character, played again by the talented Atang dela Rama.

My analysis will only focus on the scripts and scores of the sarsuwela and will not cover the performance aspect. This is primarily because documented performances from the 20s and 30s are non-existent. Although there have been recent productions of these sarsuwela, not all have been documented on video.

This study draws its framework from Resil Mojares's essay "Catechisms of the Body" in *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History*, a study of the representations of the body in literary genres of the Spanish colonial period. In this work, Mojares looks at images of the body in literary texts as products or agents of disciplinal, colonizing forces. According to Mojares, central to the establishment of a colonial power was the regulation and refashioning of the body of the colonized. A key strategy employed in the formulation of "docile" bodies during the colonial period was the distribution of literary texts under the category of "books of conduct" or *manual de urbanidad* which prescribed ways of thinking, feeling, moving, speaking, etc. The rules set by these manuals were based on a series of binary oppositions, "between high and low, inside and outside... clean and dirty, straight and bent, centered and decentered, formed and unformed..." (Mojares 2002, 176-177). These also implicated the constructions of gender relations where women were cast as the inferior sex; women's bodies were often seen as the root of sin.

The role of books of conduct or rulebooks in the perpetuation of a patriarchal social order is further analysed by Teresa Wright (2004). Following the theoretical concepts laid out by Louis Althusser, she views the rulebooks as texts constituting the ideological state apparatuses. Thus, the kind of social order existing in rulebook society was one meant to be a model for the "real" world. In addition, the rulebook world was one which ultimately suited the interests of the colonial state.

The contents of the 10 rulebooks describe an idealized orderliness in a world where practically every word, thought, and act is carefully considered so that the ordered way of life

is never disturbed. A major premise on which these books are founded is that life is a network of binaries, the two greatest and most pervasive of which involve the spiritual and the temporal, good and evil. By steering human thought and behaviour towards the “spiritual” and the “good,” and presenting these as elements of the ideal life, the maxims, guidelines, and exemplars in these texts affirm rulebook order and ensure its perpetuation. (Wright 2004, 41)

According to Wright, the motivating forces behind the idea of *urbanidad* were duty and propriety. She states that duty is “constantly invoked in the rulebooks to impel individuals to follow rules laid down before them” (ibid., 48). Propriety on the other hand, “determines the rights and responsibilities proper to individuals in a particular position or state of life” (ibid., 48). In addition, propriety means “avoiding quarrels and arguments, controlling one’s emotions so these, at least are not revealed” (ibid., 49). Upholding these principles is fundamental to the maintenance of social order and harmony in rulebook society.

So pervasive are the concepts of *urbanidad*, duty and propriety that they are invoked even in the guidelines that govern a person’s private life, thus imbuing private behaviour with a social dimension. In a way, this is understandable, for in the rulebook world’s elaborate network of relationships, any breach of propriety, whether committed in private or in public, is bound to have repercussions on everyone else. It is bound to disrupt or at least disturb the established social order. (ibid., 49)

Stability and order was thus brought about by compliance and conformity which in turn affirmed the hierarchical concepts of order in the world of the rulebooks where the place of women was always subordinate to that of men. Moreover, the prime concern of the rulebooks was the disciplining of women, which included the fashioning of how they thought and behaved even when in a private environment/space.

Interestingly, Wright's study also includes a discussion on how the rulebook world may have been subverted by women in the "real" world. She argues that while Philippine society in the nineteenth century was in many ways similar to rulebook society, there were women who went against the norms and resisted the limitations placed on them. Wright likewise states that due to economic changes happening in the nineteenth century, along with the influx of liberalism, as well as the rise of a new middle class, and the eventual formation of nationalism, the ideal, harmonious world advocated by the rulebooks was placed under threat. In fact, she says the publication of the rulebooks could have been an attempt by dominant sectors of society to preserve the status quo. However, the rulebooks could have unwittingly, helped the Filipinos fulfil their desire for equality with the Spaniards, through the development of *urbanidad* (ibid., 133).

The World of the Sarsuwela and Rulebook Order

The sarsuwela discussed in this paper revolve around the love story of a *dalaga* and a *binata*, but include other side plots and stories. While the plays are mostly about romantic love and the relationship between young men and women, they also touch on issues related to married life, parenthood, and life in the barrio and in the city. In many ways, the world created by the sarsuwela has the same hierarchical social order grounded in binary oppositions found in rulebook society. The premium given to duty and propriety and thus conformity and compliance in the rulebooks is echoed in the sarsuwela.

A prominent demarcation line exists between the barrio/*bukid* and the cosmopolitan city center. While the former represents a life of simplicity and peace, the latter is portrayed as the locus of sinful lifestyles. In the sarsuwela the simple but virtuous life in the barrio/*bukid* is privileged while the life in the city is portrayed as fraught with temptation and danger. Equated with the barrio is the idea of the traditional, and therefore, truly "Filipino," while the city is associated with modernization, and the corrupting influences of the "foreign." The

city is a place where money can buy everything and where the influences of modern (American) ways of thought have permeated people's lives.

This dichotomy works in the classification of characters who are either rural folk (*taga-bukid*) or city dwellers (*taga-Maynila*). Rural folk are portrayed as poor but down to earth, traditional in terms of speech and dress, awkward in fancy social gatherings, and naïve of the ways of the city folk. In *Dalagang Bukid*, a character who fits this type is Teroy, who in the opening scene of ACT 1, is reproached by his friend Tano for his ignorance of city ways.

Teroy Ala eh... kagaganda pala ng kabaret dine.

Tano: Hindi kabaret ito; ito ang tinatawag na night club, nabotas ka... este nobatos ka...

Teroy: Ala eh... hindi sa nobatos, nababaguhan lamang ako, pagka't doon sa amin eh ang sayawan ay sa madilim, kung minsan sa mga kamalig lamang ng palay e nagkakatapos na.

Tano: Ibahin mo dito sa amin; dine kwalta ang pinaguusapan, pag may kuwalta ka iduduyan ka sa kaligayahan.

The characters associated with the city, the "taga-Maynila," are those of the moneyed class including those who hold high government offices. These people are usually portrayed as powerful and wealthy, but also loose in their morals. They are usually depicted wearing fancy and often modern clothes. These characters are in stark contrast to the "taga-bukid" class, who are often depicted as righteous and virtuous.

Andres: Bastian, sino ba ang nagsasayaw na iyon? Iyang lalaking magara ang bihis?

- Bastian: Iyon bang kasayaw ni Mely?
- Andres: Oo.
- Bastian: Iyon ang si Senador Balubad na kasalukuyang *Chairman ng...*
- Andres: Mukhang malakas magtapon; gabi-gabi narito iyan e
- Bastian: A, talaga... may balon iyang pinagkukunan.
- Andres: Eh, iyon namang isa. Iyon namang kasayaw ni Teklang maawain?
- Bastian: Iyon naman ang si Congresista Saluyot na siyang *Chairman ng...*
- Andres: Malakas ding gumasta ang Congresistang iyan en...
- Bastian: Bakit nga hindi lalakas eh, sa iyon ang *Chairman ng...* malaki ang sahod niyan.
- Andres: Kaya pala ganoon.
- Bastian: Ikaw naman... para kang bagong salta dito, tanong ng tanong.

This kind of dichotomy exists in the other sarsuwela. In *Ang Kiri* for example, one can easily place the characters under each category. The descriptions in parenthesis are lifted from the first page of the script.

Taga-bukid	Taga-Maynila
Pilar, 20 taon (<i>dalagang mabait, mananahi</i>)	Sesang, 22 taon (<i>dalagang haliparot</i>)
Jacinto, 21 taon (<i>binata, nag-aaral</i>)	Ramon, 55 taon (<i>matandang mayaman</i>)
Biang, 55 taon (<i>ina ni Jacinto</i>)	Norris, 30 taon (<i>representante</i>)
	Soter, 30 taon (<i>fiscal</i>)
	Pepe, 25 taon (<i>manunulat</i>)

In *Paglipas ng Dilim*, the classification of “taga-bukid” and “taga-Maynila” is not very apparent although it is clear that there is a distinction made between the traditional and the modern. This is demonstrated through the descriptions of Estrella’s and Dona Carmen’s attire.

D. Carmen: Naku, narito na naman ang babaeng ito; (IRAPAN SI ESTRELLA) dadalodalo pa sa mga reunion ay gayong hindi man lamang marunong mag-ayos ng kaniyang sariling katawan, ni manumit. Naku ang ayos ah... Pase... Hoy, Maring, manong sabihin mo riyan sa kaibigan mong naging Reyna pa naman sa Rizal day na kung dadalo sa mga reunion en grandeng gaya nito ay paparoon muna sa bahay at mayroon akong tatlong modista upang magturo sa kaniya ng paggayak sa sarili. Tignan mo nga, parang panakot ng mani.

Maring: Talaga pong si Estrella ay ganiyan kung manamit. Ayaw pong sumunod nang labis sa moda, sapagka’t siya’y naririmarim.

D. Carmen: Ang sabihin mo'y talagang atrasada siya.
Para siyang bagon salta rito sa Maynila.

One will also find characters who want to go beyond their “natural” position in the social order. These are the individuals who deny their “taga-bukidness” and adopt the airs and affectations, or privileges of the wealthy, urban elite. They are usually made to look ridiculous or are mocked for their pretentiousness. Take for example the character of Petra from *Dalagang Bukid*. She is a middle-aged woman, poor and most likely from the “taga-bukid” class who becomes the lover of Mr. John, a retired American soldier. The couple, both aging, are a source of ridicule for the people around them.

John: You are very beautiful!

Petra: Thank you darling. I'm very enjoy
with you dahil sa dollar mo...

John: I know, honey, because the brave soldier is
ready to die for his country and his girl.

Petra: Yes, honey, ole soldiers never die.

She has an emotional outburst after being made fun of by the waiter, Tano and Bastian at the nightclub.

Petra: Bakit ninyo kami pinagtatawanan...?
(Umiiyak) Ngayon ba't ang tingin ninyo
sa amin ay ganito lamang kami'y inyong
uuyamin at papalibhasain. Dapat ninyong
malamang ako'y isang Pilipina, at isa rin
ninyong kabalat at kababayan, na nalalaang
pumatay at magpakamatay!

In general, the use of any other language aside from Tagalog, is also a sign of affectation and is often mocked in the sarsuwela. In

Paglipas ng Dilim, the pretentious upper class is epitomized by the family of Don Torcuato, Dona Carmen and Caridad, who like to address each other in Spanish, a way of showing their being of the “alta-sociedad.” This however, contradicts Don Torcuato’s claim of being a true patriot whenever he brags about his being a revolutionary war hero.

Caridad: Papa, papa...

D. Torcuato: Que, hija?

Felipe: : At viva Espana pala ang lenguaje official ng
familiang ito, ha Martin?

Martin: Aba, viva Espana ba lamang. May wikang
Chinechaw pang nalalaman ang mga taong
iyan.

Likewise, the character of Pakita, who is described as “isang binibining mahiligin sa wikang Ingles” is often a source of amusement for her friends as she often pretends not to understand or speak Tagalog.

Pakita: Oye Martin: where is Caridad?

Martin: Mi no visto, este visto. Tagalog ka nama’y
ano’t di mo siyang salitain, at ng tayo’y
magkaintindihan.

Pakita: What?

Martin: Aba talagang mahigpit din naman ang
sumpong. This boy- (AT ITUTURO SI
FELIPE)

Felipe: Huwag mo nga akong ingglisin at sasabihin
ko sa iyo kung saan naroon...

Exposing pretentious behaviour is prevalent in the sarsuwela and makes up the bulk of the comedic content. The caricatures found in the plays are not far from people in real life. The song “Pagganito at Pagganyan” sung by “Artista X” in *Paglipas ng Dilim* refers to the Filipinos’ habit of imitating everything foreign even if it does not suit them. The following is an excerpt from the song.

Art X: Ang bala na’y nagsasabing
 tayong mga Pilipino’y
 magaling na tagagaya sa lahat ng bisyo
 Makita raw si Quesong
 ang sapatos ay de tango
 ay nagtanggo namang lahat
 pati po ni pareng Tiago

Nang makita raw sa sine
 Ang bigote po ni Chaplin
 Nagbigote namang lahat
 Ang binata pos a atin
 Ng makita po si Doglas
 Na naka Bombay estail
 Pati na si Mamang Gusting
 At lalakad nang paganyan...
 Paganito’t paganyan...

Koro At lalakad nang paganyan...
 Paganito’t paganyan...

Art X: May isa pa pong ugaling
 Araw-araw’y nakikita,
 Sa Escolta’t sa Rosario
 Sa Pasay at sa Luneta,
 Ng ating kabinataang
 Namamatay sa pustura
 Nguni’t di man makabayad
 Sa Sastre’y sa Labandera

Trahe'y kulay salaginto
 Efe-afa ang sombrero
 Sapatos ay a la Quezon,
 Kung minsan pa'y de tsaleko
 My baston pang hawakhawak
 Exelentes ang tabako,
 Bago pala ito'y pawang
 Mga indocumentado
 At lalakad nang paganyan...
 Paganito't paganyan...

Through humor, the playwrights of the sarsuwela voice disapproval of the rampant social changes. The playwright's stance, particularly in *Paglipas ng Dilim*, is in opposition to the influences brought by the foreign (and in this sense, American) culture. The traditional life in the bukid or the barrio becomes the ideal image of what being "Filipino" is.

The narrative of the sarsuwela has often been described as formulaic and predictable; it always has to have a happy ending. In the sarsuwela's world, the concept of right and wrong is based on whether one's actions help maintain the "natural" places of people and things. Order is threatened when individuals do things which are not appropriate to their status/position. Thus, characters are identified as "good" or "bad" based on their ability to conform and comply with the social order. The price of non-conformity to social rules is misery and social ostracism. In order to restore harmony, the good character always triumphs over the bad character, which in turn gets punished by his/her own deeds or repents in the end. This could also be interpreted as a desire for the maintenance of an idyllic but "endangered" social order.

The three sarsuwela have similarities in terms of structure. The first act always begins with a social gathering and an atmosphere of festivity. This is a convenient way of introducing all the characters as well as their relationships with each other. This also enables the

playwright to bring together characters representing various sectors of society. This scene is characterized by an atmosphere of gaiety, marked by dancing and lively music, but it always ends in disastrous although comedic situations. The second act is where the roots of conflict are developed and the motives of the characters become clearer. This is also where things go from bad to worse. The third act is when the truth is uncovered, dubious characters are exposed, and wrongly accused characters are exonerated. This is also characterized by the reuniting of lovers who had quarrelled, the reconciliation of enemies, and the punishment or repentance of “bad” people.

In *Ang Kiri*, Jacinto, the young student, is portrayed as the victim of the worldly ways of Sesang, who epitomizes the corrupt, morally loose city-dweller. In Sesang’s world, Jacinto avails himself of luxuries he can never afford and is thus frowned upon by the rest of society. He is sanctioned by his girlfriend, Pilar and his mother, Biang for forgetting his duties (i.e., taking care of his mother and marrying his fiancé) and his rightful place in the world (i.e., in the barrio). By going back to the barrio, living a life of a farmer, and marrying Pilar, he restores the natural order of things, is respected by society, and lives a happy life.

Women in the Order

A woman in the sarsuwela is always located in a lower position in relation to men or to her parents. If she is poor, a woman has hardly any economic independence. Her happiness is always dependent on her luck of finding true love, which most often equates with having a good and wealthy (or economically independent) husband. A woman does not have the same privileges as a man in terms of job opportunities or education. Her main role is to be a mother and a wife.

She is often bound by either her duty to her parents or to her husband. Going against these prescriptions marks her as a wayward woman, while adopting a self-sacrificing stance or almost martyr-like position, makes her an ideal woman.

In *Dalagang Bukid*, Angelita is torn between her duty to her parents and her love for Cipriano. By marrying Severino, an old but wealthy man, she secures her family's as well as her own financial future, but at the same time denies herself true love and happiness.

The importance of an unmarried woman's compliance with the roles imposed on her by society is central to the establishment of social order in the sarsuwela where the main figures are actually women. As the distinction between "taga-bukid" and "taga-Manila" is very clear, so is the difference between the "dalagang mahinhin" or "mabait," and the "dalagang haliparot."

The listing of characters in the script of *Ang Kiri* (also known as *Ang Dalagang Masaya*) illustrates this well.

Sesang, 22 taon (*Dalagang haliparot*)
 Pilar, 20 taon (*Dalagang mabait, mananahi*)
 Jacinto, 21 taon (*Binata, nag-aaral*)
 Biang, 55 taon (*Ina ni Jacinto*)
 Ramon, 55 taon (*Matandang mayaman*)
 Norris, 30 taon (*Representante*)
 Soter, 30 taon (*Fiscal*)
 Pepe, 25 taon (*Manunulat*)
 Amboy, 25 taon (*Alila*)
 Mga panauhin sa piging
 Mga manggagapas (magsisiawit sa loob)

These characters also correspond to the archetypes found in the rulebook—the "virtuous woman" and the "sinful woman."

	Dalagang mabait/mahinhin	Dalagang haliparot
<i>Dalagang Bukid</i>	Angelita	
<i>Paglipas ng Dilim</i>	Estrella	Caridad
<i>Ang Kiri</i>	Pilar	Sesang

Chastity

In the rulebook, the preservation of a young woman's or a dalaga's chastity is of primary concern. This virtue is treated as something very precious and fragile that must be guarded. According to Wright (2004, 59-60), this is the reason why the rulebooks warn a young woman to maintain her purity of mind and body. The dalaga's life is subjected to many strictures. She is not, for example, encouraged to read novels and metrical romances and must only keep herself occupied with domestic chores and duties. She is also to avoid participating in dances and socials as these require her to dress extravagantly and to display herself before people. These are also occasions which will put her in close contact with men, who could seriously endanger her chastity.

Warnings against compromising one's chastity are found in the sarsuwela and are particularly expressed through songs such as "Nabasag ang Banga" from *Dalagang Bukid* and the song about unripe mangoes in *Paglipas ng Dilim*. In both songs, the use of euphemisms for sex and virginity is quite playful.

"Nabasag ang Banga" is sung by Angelita in the first act of *Dalagang Bukid*. The song tells a story about a young maiden who encounters a handsome boy when she goes out to get water. Due to the actions of the boy, the maiden drops the jar she is carrying, and she goes home in tears. The broken banga is a metaphor for the lost virginity and marred reputation of the girl. The song, though humorous, is meant to be a word of warning to young women who do not want to be harmed or "mapahamak." Implicit in the text is the social expectation that women be protective of their virginity. While society tolerates men's inability to control their own desires, women are expected to repress theirs. Carrying and protecting the jar is seen as a woman's duty and not a man's. At the same time, the image of a delicate and easily broken jar is equated with the fragility of a woman's chastity and reputation.

The song also echoes the words of warning found in the rulebook, which often depict the outside world as a place where evil rules; it is a world where men are demonized. Thus, the rulebooks also warn parents to be vigilant at all times and to never leave their daughters alone with men. A good example of this is a passage from the book *Urbana at Feliza* wherein Feliza confesses to her sister her moment of weakness upon seeing Amadeo. Feliza's ability to contain her emotions and to refrain from speaking to the man is taken by her sister and her mother as a sign of strength and good character. This passage is followed by a chapter written by a priest who tells Feliza's mother of the importance of keeping women far from situations where they could give in to temptation, and eventually fall into the clutches of evil (De Castro 1996, 115-130).

NABASAG ANG BANGA

Angelita: May isang Dalagang nasalok ng tubig;
Kinis ng ganda niya'y hubog sa nilatik;
Ano at kapagdaka'y biglang lumapit
Ang isang Binatang Makisig.
Wika ng Dalaga'y huwag kang magalaw;
Sagot ng Binata'y ako'y kaawaan;
Tugon ng Babai huwag kang mamuisit;
Sambot ng Lalaki'y ako'y umiibig.

Lahat: Ano ang nangyari?

Angelita: Nabasag ang banga
Pagka't ang Lalaki ay napadupilas;
Kaya ang Babai nandoon umiiyak
At ang sinasabi'y siya'y napahamak.

Ang kinasapitan pagdating sa bahay
Ano't umiiyak, tanong ng magulang;
Sago't ng Dalaga'y mangyari po Inay,
Ako ay tinakot ng isang asuwang.
At ng sabihin kong huwag kang magalaw

Agad na inagaw ang banga kong tangan;
 Kaya nga po umuwing walang dalang tubig
 At pati na ang baro'y napuno ng putik.

In *Paglipas ng Dilim*, the metaphor used is the unripe mango, which could be interpreted as the body of a young, unmarried dalaga. The pleasure in eating unripe/green mangoes is equated with indulging in premarital sex. The song is sung alternately by Caridad, the chorus, the women, or the men. The song in effect is a dialogue between Caridad, the chorus (i.e. representing the public), the women, and the men.

In the score found in the University of the Philippines College of Music library, this song begins with an invitation to eat the unripe mangoes, first sung by Caridad.

Caridad: Anong sarap, inyong tikman
 Ang naritong manggang hilaw
 Kapag inyong nasarapan
 Nakatutulo ng laway...

Lahat: (Huy)
 Anong sarap, ating tikman
 Ang naritong manggang hilaw
 Kapag ating nasarapan...

The next verse is again started by Caridad. Here she continues describing the unripe mango's effects on the body.

Caridad: Itong mangga, kapag mura
 Ay pangsakit ng sikmura
 Nguni't pag-abot sa dila
 Huy...
 Mawawalan ka ng diwa

Lahat: Itong mangga, kapag mura
 Ay pangsakit ng sikmura
 Nguni't pag-abot sa dila'y
 Mawawalan ka ng diwa

Caridad continues singing about the mango's addictive quality.

Hali kayo't inyong tigman
Itong aking manggang hilaw
Kapag inyong nasarapa'y
Sisipsiping walang humpay

Lahat: Hali kayo't inyong tigman
Ang naritong manggang hilaw
Kapag ating nasarapan
Tutulo ang ating laway

Caridad: Hala kayo't inyong tikman
Itong aking manggang hilaw
Kapag ating nasarapa'y
Sisipsiping sisipsiping walang humpay

Nguni't kung mamimihasang
Kakain ng murang mangga...
Wala kayong makikita
Na tatanda pang dalaga

Babae: Ang binatang makakain
Nitong mangga kong maasim
Sapilitang na hahanapin
Ang simbahan o ang hues...

Lalaki: Ang dalaga pag natikman
Itong mangga kapag hilaw...
Lilisan na sa magulang
Kahit lihim pakakasal

The song ends with a warning against giving in to temptation. These parts are sung by the women and then by the men. It is notable that Caridad, proclaiming the goodness of mangoes and its wonderful

effects on the body, is practically a temptress. She embodies the characteristics of a woman not to be imitated, lest one wants to ruin her reputation by getting pregnant. Men are also implicitly advised to avoid this kind of woman lest they get into trouble. The necessity of marriage to legitimize sex, and therefore pregnancy, is very clear in the song. Thus, the reputation of a woman is dependent on whether a man agrees to marry her or not.

Regulation and Discipline

The *mahinhing dalaga* is one who is successful at controlling and containing her body according to the prescribed ways of movement and behaviour dictated by the rulebook. The haliparot on the other hand, is one who is self-indulgent and lacks self control and discipline.

According to the rulebook, a virtuous woman has to be modest at all times and this is reflected in the way she dresses, moves, and speaks. An ideal dalaga has to dress simply, and must avoid calling attention to herself by “walking in a studied, affected, or flirtatious manner” because this shows bad character (Wright 2004, 61). Moderation should also be observed at all times, even in eating and drinking. She must also refrain from being obsessed with her body or from following trends in fashion that are inappropriate to her position/status (ibid.). According to Wright, all of these rules were supposed to help the dalaga create a favourable impression of herself. The rules also ensured that she did not arouse “evil” desires in men (ibid., 62).

The mahinhing dalaga is perfectly embodied by Estrella, who comes to a party in traditional, modest clothing. This of course, offends Dona Carmen, who is dressed in the exact opposite manner. In terms of movement, the mahinhin and controlled gestures of the dalaga are never “magaslaw,” unlike those of Sesang and Caridad.

It is notable that all three sarsuwela begin with a party. As a public event which allows for different kinds of characters to converge, a party becomes a convenient space where contrasting behaviors and personalities are presented. It is also in social gatherings where one is able to see the tensions between conformity and non-conformity in the women characters of the sarsuwela. The first acts of all three sarsuwela are notably set in spaces which are not the realm of the virtuous. These are in Manila (a nightclub in *Dalagang Bukid*, an exclusive club in *Paglipas ng Dilim* and a rich home in *Ang Kiri*), and occur at a feast or celebration. The atmosphere becomes an excuse or an opportunity for a woman to forget or let go (at least temporarily) of the bodily strictures placed on her by society. The presence of alcohol, lively music, the legitimacy of close interaction between men and women, freedom of speech and movement, are conducive to breaking the rigid norms of behaviour imposed on people. It is in these spaces where the haliparot characters reign and where they are in their element.

The opening song in *Ang Kiri*, led by the lead character Sesang, articulates this feeling of freedom, gaiety, and celebration. Ultimately, the experience is one which is very physical.

Sesang: Ang tugtugin ay pang-aliw
 sa sinumang malungkutin
 Kahit tulog nagigising
 Napapawi ang lagim
 Natutulog, nagigising
 Ang panimdim, ang panimdim

Koro: Anong sarap, anong inam
 Nitong valse kung sayawan
 Tila mandin dinuduyan
 Yaring puso at katawan

Sesang: Anong sarap, anong inam
 Nitong valse kung sayawan
 Tila mandin dinuduyan
 Yaring puso at katawan
 Natutuwa tayong lahat
 Sa himig nang isang valse
 Pawang saya, walang hirap
 Bawa't isa'y nangangarap
 Ah...
 Pawang saya, walang hirap
 Bawa't isa'y nangangarap

In contrast to the mahinhing dalaga, the haliparot dresses ostentatiously and provocatively and moves and speaks to attract attention. She enjoys the attention of men and is free with them. Sesang and Caridad have multiple suitors and “nobyos” and they feel no shame at all. In ACT 1 of *Paglipas ng Dilim*, Caridad sings “Lumapit Kayo.”

Caridad: Sinasabi nilang ako
 Ay lubhang maraming nobyo
 May mediko't abogado,
 Senador at diputado,
 Ngunit sa lahat ng ito
 Ay maryoong numero uno.

Lalaki: Ngunit sa lahat ng ito
 Ako ang numero uno.

Caridad: At kung ako'y nagpapasyal
 Sa Luneta at saan man
 Lahat ng kabinataan
 Ay sa akin ang tinginan,
 May pasulyap, may panakaw,
 May tinging hinihimatay.

Lalaki: At kung kita'y tinitingnan
Ako ay hinihimatay.

Caridad: Habang sa aki'y nilapit
Kabig ako ke te kabig,
Lapit, iho, lapit, lapit,
Sa puso kong umiibig
Lapit kayo, makikisig
Sa dalagang nilalangit.

Lalaki: Lapit kayo, lapit, lapit
Sa dalagang nilalangit.

Caridad: At nang inyong makilala
Halina, kayo, halina...
Magsayaw tayo'y kumanta
At uminom ng serbesa,
Doon natin makikita
Yaong puso ng dalaga.

Lalaki: Halina kayo, halina...
Pintuhin ang dalaga,
Mahalin,
Sintahin,
Giliwi't irugin,
Magpahanggang libing...

In the first act of *Paglipas ng Dilim*, Sesang dances with many men as well. Her impropriety is noted by Pilar upon seeing her fiancé dance so closely with her. Pilar confronts Jacinto about this and they have an argument.

Pilar: Diit na diit, inyong katawan
At magkayapos na sumasayaw
Talagang bastos, siya at ikaw
Sa mga tao'y walang pitagan

Jacinto: Arte talaga ang isang sayaw

Pilar: Tila pa ako ay tinatawanan

Jacinto: Huag mamangha gayong
Talagang arte ang sayaw
Ngayon na bagong moda
Patawad ako giliw ko't sinta
Di na uulit maniwala ka

Pilar: Diit na diit, inyong katawan
At magkayapos na sumasayaw
Talagang bastos, siya at ikaw
Sa mga tao'y walang pitagan

Ang aking puso'y nagdaramdam
Sa ginawa mong kilos at asal
Masamang tao, walang pitagan
Sa gaya kong babaeng mahal

Jacinto: Huag magalit halina giliw
Di sinasadya patawarin
Ang inyong poot dagling pawiin
Ang gayong sayaw di uulitin

The mahinhing dalaga is rarely vocal of her desires. When it comes to talking about her feelings, especially towards a man, she is often cryptic and her actions are difficult to read. In *Dalagang Bukid*, Angelita explains this to Cipriano.

Cipriano: Angelita, kalian mo pa bibigyan ng katarungan ang aking taimtim na paniniwala sa iyo?

Angelita: Inaantok na ako, Cipriano, ibig ko nang magpahinga.

Cipiriano: Oo nga, nguni't lutasin mo na sana, Angelita, ang suliranin ng aking pusong patay sa pag-ibig sa iyo.

Angelita: O, eh, ano pa ba namang paglutas ang sinasabi mo, hindi mo ba nadarama ang katangiang ipinamalas ko sa iyo?

Cipiriano: Angelita, ang nais ko'y tiyakin mo, pagka't ako'y nauhaw sa batis ng iyong pagsuyo... ang bawa't sandaling lumipas, ay parusa sa aking kaluluwa, sa hindi mo pagsagot.

Angelita: Naku, ikaw naman. Napakaromantiko mo! Ang dalagang Pilipina'y kaiba sa lahat ng babae sa daigdig. Sa mga labi niya ma'y hindi kailan ma'y hindi mo maririnig na bigkasin ang wikang ikaw ay iniibig, ngunit mataimtim mong madadama ang kaniyang paggiliw, sa kaniyang mga kilos, at pakikipag-usap... Kaya...

Cipiriano: Kaya't ano... ituloy mo.

Angelita: Hahaaa! Kaya, umasa ka, ikaw lamang ang (Siyang paglabas ni Don Silvestre. Maabutan ang salitaan)

Part of being vocal about one's desires is also adopting the position of the male as the pursuer and going against the traditional role of woman as the object of pursuit. Both Caridad and Sesang play the role of the aggressor and openly express their feelings to the men they desire. Caridad for example, demands a dance from Ricardo, even if it means bumping off another man's name from her card. Worse, she even insists after being refused by Ricardo.

Conclusion

The haliparot dares and breaks the rules. Though she has her moments of victory, she never entirely gets her way. In addition, sarsuwela always end with the mahinhin woman winning over the haliparot, whose reputation is forever destroyed and thus feels remorse for her actions. In *Paglipas ng Dilim*, Caridad and her mother are exposed for their indecencies and are ostracized by the people. In *Ang Kiri*, Sesang is defeated as she finds out that the love of her life, Jacinto is already married to Pilar. She sees her mistake at the end of the play, repents for her behaviour, and even asks forgiveness from Pilar.

In the rulebooks, the sinful woman also ends up being punished or in misfortune and misery. Her plight could be quite horrific. She could be possessed by demons, fall ill, suddenly die and ultimately go to hell. Her sins also cause suffering to the people close to her. In addition to this, the sinful woman is ostracized from rulebook society because she disrupts the moral order. Men are told to stay away from women like her while virtuous girls and women are warned against associating with her as she could be a bad influence. According to Wright, this ostracism helps preserve the established order, while the punishment for the woman's sins serves as a warning against those who defy the moral codes. This in turn, underlines the value of conformity which assures the woman a proper place in society. Nonconformity leads to ostracism and possibly eternal damnation.

An analysis of the images of these two women's bodies reveals that the conventions of womanhood advocated by the rulebooks were still very much in place in the nineteenth century. Thus, the mahinhin (and therefore mabait) dalaga is the embodiment of the ideal colonized and gendered body. She is the woman who has internalized the rules of the books of conduct and who constantly and successfully controls and contains her own body. The haliparot on the other hand, breaks the established rules of conduct. Through her punishment or her own repentance in the plays, she represents what happens to women who transgress the rules of the social order.

Despite the overriding reiteration of compliance and conformity, the sarsuwela somehow acknowledge the potential power of women. There are moments in the plays when the hierarchical order is inverted. Sesang for example, uses her haliparot ways to gain some level of financial independence, which she uses in turn to “acquire” the man she is interested in. Although society condemns her behaviour, among the people that matter, she is a fearful force to be reckoned with. She is in some ways, the “demonic” character, while Jacinto, the vulnerable and weak one.

Jacinto: Isang dilag ako’y natatakot
Kumakaba yaring loob
Aking anghel na patnugot
Palayu in itong salot
Gipit na tayo
ang nakasuungan ng lagay kong ito
Bathala kong mahal
i-anyo mo ang aking palad
at ilayo sa pagkapahamak

Sesang: Dito ka na sasayaw
Magaling ka
Bantay bahay maari kaw baga?

Jacinto: Bantay bahay wika ninyo

Sesang: Oo...
Hoy Jacinto

Jacinto: Ako ngayon bantay bahay
Kaya pala pinaghintay
Baka kaya kung mawalan
Ay sa akin ipagbintang

Sesang: Hating gabi, walang tao
Dadalawa lamang tayo
Alisin mo ang medias ko

Jacinto: AKo baga ay mutsatso

Sesang: Huag aba makiliti
Dahan dahan ang daliri
Yaring likod ay makati
Kamutin mo sana pare

Jacinto: DItO ay kurot ang mabuti

Sesang: Aba kay saragate aray!

In addition, the sarsuwela seem to be more forgiving and less harsh in its treatment of its haliparot characters. Sesang for example, eventually finds true love in Pepe. The sarsuwela also portrays its haliparot characters as more human than the other characters. In fact, there are many songs in the play which articulate her feelings, problems, and interior conflict.

The sarsuwela, though still very patriarchal in their representations of women, bear signs of the changes that were happening in Philippine society in the 1920s. In looking at sarsuwela, there is much more to be uncovered and studied, including not just the scripts, but also the sarsuwela's performances and the moving quality of its music. The ideas posited above will hopefully open more avenues for discussions regarding the sarsuwela's articulation of socio-cultural contradictions.

Notes

- 1 In terms of form, the drama was distinct from the sarsuwela as it utilized less singing and dancing. In the drama, songs were mostly used as opening and closing numbers, or as theme songs. In the sarsuwela, songs were integral to the whole play.

- 2 The word “fiscal” is spelled this way in the script.
- 3 This is how the word is spelled in the script. See Ilagan 1987, 394.

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