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## The Minoros of Emiliano Gabuya

LOLITA RODRIGUEZ LACUESTA

During a symposium on Sugbuanon literature at the University of the Philippines in 1978, Natalio Bacalso, speaking of Sugbuanon drama, touched on the *moro-moro* and its place in the history of Sugbuanon drama. He cited several writers of the moro-moro, among them, Emiliano Gabuya. He said Gabuya gave "the moro-moro modern touches," and added that Gabuya's moro-moro, "has the trimmings of an opera" and that "many songs are strewn throughout . . ."<sup>1</sup>

But Emiliano Gabuya (1905-62) was not, strictly speaking, a moro-moro writer. Nor did he simply give the moro-moro modern touches. He wrote a type of drama that was derivative of the moro-moro (christened *linambay* by the Cebuanos) but which differed radically from it. He forsook its length (which sometimes required nightly presentations for more than two weeks to complete), but used variations of its Moro-Christian conflict as dramatic backdrop for elements found in the succeeding drama form, the *sarsuyla* (as the Cebuanos called the zarzuela), and created a distinct form of drama popularly called *minoros* by the Cebuanos. Literally meaning "like the moro-moro," this dramatic innovation, which is synonymous with Gabuya's name to this day, is a world apart from the moro-moro.

Like Vicente Sotto, who sought to do away with what to him were antiquated forms of drama without relevance to everyday Sugbuanon lives and concerns, Emiliano Gabuya deplored the Cebuano's predilection for and addiction to the *linambay*, the Cebuano version of the moro-moro or *komedya*. Pastora Alonzo recalls that during their marriage

1. Natalio Bacalso, "Sugbuanon Drama: From Moro-Moro to Movie-Script," *Sugbuanon Literature: A Symposium on its History, Poetry, Drama, Fiction, Essay, Radio Scripts* (University of the Philippines Library, 1978), p. 20.

Emiliano never went to a linambay presentation although there were numerous occasions when he could have, since it was popular entertainment fare among the masses, especially during town fiestas. He even went to the extent of forbidding her to watch the linambay, and asked her what it was she found enjoyable in them.<sup>2</sup>

The irony lies in the fact that the minoros, by its very nature, brings to mind the very drama form Gabuya so despised and causes even such Sugbuanon literary figures as Natalio Bacalso to include his name among moro-moro writers. This is ironic because close readings of the plays show that although they draw life from and are inspired by the linambay, they also incorporate stylistic qualities of the "new drama" sweeping Cebu then, the zarzuela or sarsuyla, as the Cebuanos called it. Emiliano Gabuya, in creating his minoros, consciously or not, created a transitional dramatic form combining features of the linambay and the sarsuyla.<sup>3</sup>

Gabuya's minoros has the obligatory Moro-Christian conflict of the linambay, along with its elements of color, romance and adventure, its royal personages who always fall in love with people not of their own kind, and, at least in the earlier plays, versified language of a quality not found in everyday Cebuano speech. All these are added to elements culled from the "new drama" and thus we have the songs and dances of the sarsuyla, characterizations of comparatively greater depth, a high degree of sentimentality, and love scenes that are more realistic and lyrical than those found in the linambay.

Gabuya's minoros, however, differs from the linambay or moro-moro in a very important aspect. Whereas the latter features Moro-Christian conflict in some far away land (usually European), Gabuya's minoros presents the same conflict in his native land. For instance, *Tirana*, perhaps the most popular minoros, features conflict in an island just off Cebu. *Maha*, which was almost as popular, is set in Mindanao and Cebu. The controversial *Dimakaling* is set in the wilds of Lanao.<sup>4</sup>

2. Pastora Alonzo, first wife of Emiliano Gabuya and erstwhile actress in Cebuano dramas, interview in Corinthian Gardens, Pasig, 14 August 1985.

3. The *zarzuela* was also called *sarswelang binisaya*, *la zarzuela bisaya*, *opereta bisaya*, and *operetang binisaya* by the Cebuanos. Gabuya seemed to have occasionally used the term *opereta bisaya* for the *minoros* (cf. title page of *Sirena: Opereta Bisaya* in the National Library). For this study, the term *minoros* is used for all Gabuya plays based on the Moro-Christian conflict.

4. Emiliano Cavan Gabuya, *Tirana* (originally *Terana*), full-length minoros in three acts with twenty-five songs (manuscript, probably written earlier than 1931); *Maha*, full-length minoros in three acts with five songs (manuscript, probably written earlier than 1929); and *Dimakaling*, full-length minoros in three acts with places for four songs indicated but not written (manuscript, 1935).

Furthermore, the conflict was not always between Christian Filipinos and Moros, as in the *linambay*. Of the seven extant minoros, only *Maha* and *Dimakaling* feature conflict between Christian Filipinos and Moros. Even then, it is only in *Maha* that the conflict is clearly religious and ideological.<sup>5</sup> *Tirana* features a conflict not only between two Christian Filipino brothers, but also between them and a Chinaman and the inhabitants of the island they trade with, who are not, strictly speaking, Moros. They are, more correctly, pagan Filipinos of the days of the *barangay* (although Gabuya slips somewhat in a stage direction for the lighting up of a *Lucky Strike* in act 1 of the play). *Princesa Mayana* features a conflict between two groups of pre-Spanish Filipino islanders.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, whereas the *linambay* had a religious content, with the Moro-Christian conflict always resolved with the defeat of the Moro infidels and their conversion in the end, the inference being that the Christian god is the better and true god, in the minoros there is a distinct a-religiosity. A general feeling of respect for all beliefs is present in the plays. *Mahoma* is for the Moros and *Bathala* (God the Creator) is for the Christians. No conversions are effected, except perhaps in the case of the princess *Maha*, and even then, the conversion is a private one. No baptismal rite is conducted by any Christian priest. *Maha*'s conversion to the God of her beloved *Cencio* is a matter between her and *Mahoma*. In other words, Gabuya veered away from the *linambay* "Moro versus Christian" formula.

Finally, there is the matter of length. Where the *linambay* took an average of nine days to present, and sometimes took sixteen, all the minoros have the form of the "new drama" and can be staged in one night.

Emiliano Gabuya therefore injected his own modifications, made alterations and, most importantly, made contributions to a popular formula. In so doing, he made the dramatic action more understandable, more believable, and consequently created a more effective drama. In essence, Emiliano Gabuya elevated the *linambay* to a new artistic and

5. The term "Moro" is used here in a nonpejorative manner, being the term in Gabuya's time for those who now call themselves "Muslims." A news article in *Bag-ong Kusog* (hereinafter *BK*), for instance, declares "Nangayo Nga Ang Mga Moros Makapili Usab" (Suffrage for Moros Asked), 30 September 1927, p. 11. Another reads "Ang Panagsangka sa Moros ug Kostablis sa Lanao" (The Fight Between Moros and the Constabulary in Lanao), 2 March 1928, p. 20.

6. Gabuya, *Princesa Mayana*, full-length minoros in three acts with eleven songs (manuscript, 1928).

dramatic level and created a drama form that incorporated the best of both the linambay and the sarsuyla.

### THE PLAYS

A look at the dates of the minoros gives a fascinating insight into their significance vis-a-vis the rest of the Gabuya canon as well as the direction taken by Emiliano Gabuya's literary life. Of the extant minoros, *Tirana* and *Maha* can be dated according to their first recorded appearance on the Cebuano stage: 1931 and 1929, respectively.<sup>7</sup> *Princesa Mayana* (1928), *Sirena* (1932) and *Dimakaling* (1935) are dated by the playwright on their title pages.<sup>8</sup> Only *Serenia* and *Lorna* are undated.<sup>9</sup> His other surviving works, except for *Patay'ng Buhi*, bear dates later than 1934.<sup>10</sup>

In other words, not only were these dated and datable minoros written between 1928 and 1935, in the beginning of Gabuya's dramatic career, but they were the only kind of drama he wrote at this early period of his dramatic life, at least until 1934. They were therefore the first and only fruits of Gabuya's youthful artistic vigor. In addition, his three most successful minoros—*Princesa Mayana*, *Maha*, and *Tirana*—arguably the most successful of all his works, were written consecutively between 1928 and 1931.

It is on the basis of these plays, especially the first three, that Gabuya acquired a dramatic reputation, and it was to these plays that he would keep going back as he went on with his dramatic career, the plays forming the basic repertoire for his *volante* troupes as they moved from one *salida* (show) to another. He never quite acquired a firm grasp of the Sugbuanon domestic sarsuyla or the *dulang mahinoklogon*, the Sugbuanon term for

7. *Kampilan* (Muslim Sword), possibly a minoros judging from the title, is mentioned as a work of Gabuya acted on the eve of the August 1931 fiesta of Toong, Cebu, in honor of San Roque. This would seem to point to a missing minoros. *BK* 4 September 1931, p. 22. Also in Wilhelmina Ramas, *Sugbuanon Theatre From Sotto to Rodriguez and Kabahar: An Introduction to Pre-War Sugbuanon Drama* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1982), pp. 65 and 291.

8. Gabuya, *Sirena*, full-length minoros in four acts and two additional *cuadros*, with eighteen songs (rewritten from a manuscript written in 1932). These three are among Gabuya works found in the National Library. Traumatic circumstances relative to *Tirana* and *Dimakaling* drove the playwright, in 1952, to copyright them.

9. *Ibid.*, *Serenia*, one-act minoros with five songs (manuscript, no date) and *Lorna* one-act minoros with five songs (manuscript, no date).

10. *Ibid.*, *Patay'ng Buhi*, sarsuyla in three acts and three *molaciones* with six songs (rewritten from a manuscript written in 1934).

realistic drama. It is in the *minoros*, along with his involvement in its *volante* tradition that his contribution to Sugbuanon theatre lies.

*Princesa Mayana*, dated 1928, seems to be the earliest of the plays, and the earliest *minoros*.<sup>11</sup> It is among those set in pre-Hispanic times, when *rajah* and *datu* held sway. It is not certain when *Maha* was written or first performed. However, it is first mentioned in *Bag-ong Kusog* as having been performed 15 September 1929, in the town of Ronda, Cebu, for the fiesta of the Virgin Mary.<sup>12</sup> Six years later, it would be cited "among the popular works that have made their authors famous in the theatrical world," along with Buenaventura Rodriguez' *Pahiyum*, Florentino Borromeo's *Dura Lex*, and Vicente Alcosoba's *Paz*.<sup>13</sup> Unlike *Princesa Mayana*, *Maha* is set in contemporary times.

*Tirana* was among those entered in the controversial 1931 drama festival contest in San Nicolas, Gabuya's home district. It is judged by most of those interviewed to be the most popular of Gabuya's works. Like *Princesa Mayana*, the play is set in the days of the early Filipinos but uses trading between them and the Chinese as background for a dramatic situation.

*Sirena* was originally presented on 24 September 1932.<sup>14</sup> Its presentation along with *Maha*, *Tirana*, and a play by another playwright during the 14-19 May 1936 fiesta celebration in Tudela, Misamis Occidental, is mentioned in *Bag-ong Kusog*.<sup>15</sup> The play is set in pre-Spanish times.

*Dimakaling* is dated 1935. It is set in modern Mindanao and must have derived inspiration from the stories of Moro bandit chieftains. There is reason to believe that the play was written in Lanao, considering its date, which corresponds to the time spent there by the author. It shows the author's familiarity with the terrain of that part of Mindanao. This is the play which later became a source of great frustration for Gabuya, who claimed it was the basis of the Visayan movie of the same title.

11. Family members interviewed aver that *Princesa Mayana*, in its original title *Sidapa*, marked the debut of Emiliano Gabuya on the Cebuano stage at the age of seventeen. This makes 1922 its probable date of presentation as *Sidapa*.

12. *BK*, 27 September 1929, pp. 20-21, in Ramas, *Sugbuanon Drama*, p. 35, p. 285.

13. *BK*, 2 November 1935, pp. 17, 25; *Ibid.*, p. 333.

14. The manuscript, found in the National Library, also contains a certification by Tomas Reambonanza, originally of Maribojoc, Bohol but by 1952 a teacher in the Cuambog Elementary School. Reambonanza certifies that he saw the play in November 1933 in Tagbilaran, Bohol, presented by Gabuya "in which showing" he came to "know the author and . . . appreciate his dramatic talent," a positive proof that his *volante* career took the playwright to Bohol in 1933.

15. *BK*, 29 May 1936, pp. 6, 31. In Ramas, *Sugbuanon Drama*, p. 307. The dates of presentation coincide with the years spent in Mindanao by the Gabuya troupe.

Careful reading of *Lorna* and *Serenia* (the latter to be differentiated from *Sirena*), both undated, has made us conclude that they are one and the same play. The differences seem to lie only in the names and characterizations of some of the characters. Both are written around a Muslim princess named Lorna in *Lorna* and Serenia in *Serenia*, who retains the same attributes in both. The only other change is in the second lead, named Alemia in the former and Marbana in the latter, who is the daughter of a *bihag* (captive) in the former, and the daughter of a slave in the latter. All other characters and characterizations remain the same. *Serenia* and *Lorna* are alike textually. Perhaps they were never presented, or were presented a few times and then abandoned, with the author thinking of going back to them at some future time. Perhaps they are merely exercises in which the author tried to see which combinations worked and which did not. In any case, the two plays are the shortest among the extant minoros and show the least effort, relying mainly on stock situations and stock characters.

Finally, a note on the songs of these minoros, the number of which varies. *Sirena* has eighteen songs. *Tirana* has twenty-five. Some have less, like *Maha*, which has only five. In all cases, only the lyrics of the songs are incorporated into the texts, and in some instances, only song numbers indicate the musical portions. For instance, "Awit #4" indicates where a song is to be sung in *gula VII, act II* of *Dimakaling*. Fortunately, in the case of *Tirana*, the theme song has become so popular as to be thought of as a folk song and preserved for posterity in the hearts of the Sugbuanons.

### THE THEMES

There are three themes commonly found in the minoros. The first is the theme of love; the second that of evil brought by forces outside a community or kingdom; and the third that of rivalry between the sexes.

Love in many forms, but most especially love that is reciprocated but frustrated by forces outside the lover and the beloved, is the most common theme of the plays, and also their basic subject matter. Perhaps this is because Gabuya knew his audience to be first and foremost romantics at heart, or because he knew from experience, and before that, from instinct, that love always sells, especially when it is tragic or ill-fated, as in the case of Mayana, Maha, and Tirana, the three memorable royal heroines of his three more popular minoros. Or perhaps it was because Emiliano Gabuya was himself a hopeless romantic. Certainly

his life was a series of love stories, each one different from the others and yet each one so distinctly important to Gabuya that he would always leave one love in pursuit of the next, never taking compromise as a way out. In any case, all the *minoros* are love stories.

Evil brought upon a kingdom or community by the arrival of an outsider is also another underlying theme. This is best articulated in *Princesa Mayana* when the villain Malumpat, seething at the acceptance the hero Balilong has found with Mayana and Sultan Omalikpok, finds the Sultan alone, and tells him of his forebodings:

MALUMPAT:

Daan pa akon'g namolong nga  
Kanang gidaa ni Batilan maoy  
makapahilanat sa atong polo . . .  
our island . . .

MALUMPAT:

I knew it. That baggage  
that Bantilan brought with  
him will bring a fever to

OMALIKPOK:

Unsa'y giyawit mo?

OMALIKPOK:

What are you mumbling about?

MALUMPAT:

Mo-abut da ang adlaw nga molanay  
ang sakit dinhi sa ato nga wala  
nay tambal nga maka-ayo.

MALUMPAT:

The day will come when  
disease will sweep our land,  
disease which no medicine  
can cure.

(*Princesa Mayana*, act II, scene 4, p. 27)

The newcomer will bring havoc on the kingdom, and nothing will be the same again. Evil will sweep the island, like a disease with no cure. Malumpat's words, self-serving though they are, underscore this ever-present idea.

In these plays, there is always an idyllic barangay or kingdom or island. And always, a stranger comes along and his arrival results in some drastic change in the idyllic set-up. The stranger may be a Christian as in *Maha* and *Tirana*, in which case the linambay formula of Moro-Christian conflict is followed, albeit with slight variations. In some plays, as in *Princesa Mayana*, the catalyst of change is a prince of another similar tribe. But always, there is an outsider, or stranger, impinging on the idyl and causing drastic changes.

These strangers bring with them conflict and tragedy—the disease that Malumpat refers to. Paradoxically, these bringers of change are



always innocuous, always well-meaning, always "good." They are not villains out to destroy; their only fault is that they inevitably fall in love with the princesses who inevitably respond to their love.

Finally, the battle between the sexes is another constant underlying theme in the minoros. Perhaps this is best represented by *Princesa Mayana*, where it is manifested, firstly, in the use of routines reminiscent of two traditional Cebuano theatricals, the *balitaw* and the *garay* and secondly, in the constant bickering of Taason and Kaputay, the male and female characters who carry the burden of comic relief in the play.

The Visayan *balitaw* is not just a song, but a verbal joust between man and woman sung while both are dancing. It is in effect a make-believe courtship dance of lover and beloved.<sup>16</sup> The man cajoles the woman into accepting his love, putting up arguments in support of his suit, while the woman disdainfully refutes every argument in preparation for her rejection of the proffered suit. In a good *balitaw*, a battle of wits in verse song and dance ensues, a microcosm of the eternal battle between the sexes. Whoever comes up with the best arguments set in the cleverer verse, and has the last say, wins. From the outcome of the *balitaw* therefore is inferred the answer to the eternal question of which is the better sex.

In act 1 of *Princesa Mayana* a routine reminiscent of this old theatrical form is performed by Omalikpok, Mayana's father, and his brother Bantilan, together with Kaputay and Marenay, two ladies-in-waiting. The men and women of the village surround them, acting as chorus and witness, singing a refrain after every argument. Balilong and Mayana are present, but do not participate. A rhymed riddle sung by the men and women preface the song-and-dance joust, and then Bantilan rises, takes up the guessing- game mood set by the men and women, and the *balitaw* commences:

BANTILAN:

Unsa kining gugmaha,  
Kanimo Marenay . . .

BANTILAN:

What is this love  
For you, Marenay

TANAN:

Insi manding oray *balitaw* . . .

ALL:

Insi manding oray *balitaw* . . .

16. See Celestino Relampagos, "The Growth, Development and the Present Status of the Cebu Visayan Drama" (M.A. thesis, University of San Carlos, 1955), pp. 20-21. Also Ma. Colina Gutierrez, "The Cebuano *Balitaw* and How it Mirrors Visayan Culture and Folk Life" (M.A. thesis, University of San Carlos, 1955).

## BANTILAN:

Sa langit gihatag,  
 Kanimo ko itanyag,  
 (UBANAN SA SAYAW)

## TANAN:

Lan lolan laran  
 Lan laran lan lararan  
 Lan lararan lanlaran  
 Lan lararan . . .

## MARENAY:

Isayaw Bantilan  
 Ang awit sa gugma

## TANAN:

Insi manding oray balitaw . . .

## MARENAY:

Ma-oy gikinahanglan  
 Kanamo igasa (SAYAW)

## TANAN:

Lan, lolan laran . . . etc. . . . Lan, lolan laran . . .

(MITINDUG SI OMALIKPOK UG MI-AWIT) (OMALIKPOK RISES AND DANCES)

## OMALIKPOK:

Sumpay sa kinabuhi  
 Kanimo ko ilay-ilay . . .  
 (UBANAN SA SAYAW)

## TANAN:

Lan lolan, etc.

## KAPUTAY:

Unsa kanang gugmaha  
 Kanino Omalikpok . . .

## TANAN:

Insi manding oray balitaw . . .

## BANTILAN:

Given from heaven,  
 To you I offer,  
 (DANCES)

## ALL:

Lan lolan laran  
 Lan laran lan lararan  
 Lan lararan lanlaran  
 Lan lararan . . .

## MARENAY:

Dance Bantilan  
 The song of love

## ALL:

Insi manding oray balitaw . . .

## MARENAY:

That which is needed  
 Offer to us (DANCE)

## ALL:

## OMALIKPOK:

Life's continuance  
 To you I offer  
 (DANCES)

## ALL:

Lan lolan . . .

## KAPUTAY:

What does that love  
 Mean to you Omalikpok . . .

## ALL:

Insi manding oray balitaw . . .

KAPUTAY:

Ikaw kay tigulang na  
Sa daplin maghinoktok  
(UBANAN SA SAYAW)

KAPUTAY:

You because you are aged  
Should stay and mope by the side  
(DANCES)

(Ibid., act I, Scene 7, p. 10)

The chagrined Omalikpok thanks Kaputay for her well-aimed insult, but is not daunted. Using his age as an argument, he deftly reasons that happiness should all the more be given to him because he deserves it. To this, Kaputay only replies that he can tell her anything and it would have no meaning. Bantilan interjects, addressing Marenay, and thereafter the two men take turns imploring the two women to pay attention to their supplication. The women merely tease and play with their affections. Every argument meets with rebuttal. This round, by all gauges, is won by the women.

But then in the garay in act II, the men have the upperhand. The garay, a debate in rhymed verse with no set measure, is rather long, consisting of a hundred and sixty-three lines. It begins with an initial polite inquiry from Bantilan if Marenay would care to listen to his "... diutay nga gologinaray./ Garay-garay nga pasumbingay" (a short garay, meant to confide and complain) and the latter prodding him to go on. Bantilan then cites the gods who help him, using archaic language derivative of the linambay:

BANTILAN:

Tabi, Tagulilong, Marenay,  
Tagulilong kang bayhon labihay  
Nahidiin-diin ako nahisay-a  
Sa kalualhatian nangita,  
Ug si Kabadlit bina-oran  
Bisan pa-ambiton sa himaya  
Nga ginahambin mo baya.

BANTILAN:

If you please, Marenay  
Woman like the Tagulilong,  
I have been to many places  
In search of happiness,  
Kabadlit I have asked  
Let me feel even a wee bit  
Of the happiness you can give

Binatu sa pangamatakan  
Binuligan ni Lalahon,  
Ginagian kong kabunturan  
Patig-halong sa kapatagan,  
Miabut sa imong silong  
Baya imong patalinghugan  
Angay ba sa gugma ikaw pahayagan?

Aided by Lalahon,  
Mountains I have traversed  
On my way to the plains  
Now under your dwelling  
Listen to me if you please  
But are you worthy of love?

This is followed a few lines later by a moment of passion by Bantilan, who dares to hold Marenay. She is offended and scolds Bantilan. To his plea that she take pity on him and his love, she declares that he will never own her heart only to break it. She further suggests that he go and seek her father, a suggestion which leaves Bantilan aghast. He declares it is her he wants, not her father.

And so the garay goes, argument met with rebuttal, supplication answered with insult. Its spirit is best expressed toward its end and when Marenay, assuming an intriguing tone that holds some hope, philosophizes:

MARENAY: (DAW BI-AY BI-AY)

Dali-dali-on ba  
Kani-kanihon ba,  
Tagsa pa gani'y imong udlot  
Tagurha nay akong lagilay  
Kawayan ba kay magutli,  
Luwag ba kay magutli  
Si Inday ug ingnon pa,  
Si Inday ma'g pasidungog pa.

Apan unsa may igahawid ko,  
Sa mga tinguha mo,  
Ang kamote wa pa unddi,  
Ang obe wa pa harogo  
Ang ma-is maga-banay pa  
Ang humay tang-buol-buol pa.

MARENAY: (TAUNTINGLY)

Must one hurry  
Must one listen to reason  
Where you have only one leaf  
I already have two  
Not like bamboo or ladle I am  
Both you can easily cut  
This Inday you see  
Will seek her fortunes yet

What can I give in return  
For your offer,  
The camote is not yet rounded  
The ube is the same  
The corn is still young  
The rice stalks still forming.

(Ibid., act II, scene 2, pp. 23-25)

This is followed by Bantilan's warning to the Lady to be careful lest the time come when she will fall for him and "... magapus na ang imong mga ti-il / Sa talikan-hong paghigugma . . ." (your feet be bound / by magical love . . .). But the proud Marenay refuses to be fazed. She comes at him with renewed brutality, warning him not to cow her with threats but rather prepare well for another joust lest he be defeated again. She crowns her response with an *awit* replete with mockery, likening Bantilan to a dried-up spring as he runs out of solid arguments. Bantilan hits back, warns her again, and teases that he may deny her when the time comes. Furious, Marenay looks about the stage for something to hit Bantilan with, finds a piece of wood, and chases Bantilan off the stage. The scene

ends. Clearly, Bantilan had hit a sensitive chord. One can imagine the men in the audience gloating.

### PLOT STRUCTURE

A close examination of the minoros of Emiliano Gabuya will reveal one very salient point. Every one of them begins in medias res. When we consider that Gabuya was basically unlettered and therefore could not have had access to ideas on dramatic structure that one might get in a course in theater or drama, we must attribute this to his instinctive understanding of an audience which was basically impatient about long introductions and wanted to know immediately what was in store for them in the next two hours or so.

*Princesa Mayana* is especially noteworthy in this aspect. One might suppose that a play written in the early part of a dramatist's career would betray some awkwardness, especially in the manner it begins, but this play's beginning has tremendous dramatic impact.

The curtain opens on a scene typical of a Gabuya minoros: One of festivity complete with singing and dancing in front of Datu Omalikpok's nipa hut, the "royal palace." The datu's daughter whose name the play takes as title, is seen by the audience. She is beautiful and sports a garland of flowers around her neck. Then, almost as soon as the curtains open, the royal *agong* is struck. All the lights go out. The actors leave the stage in great haste and terror. In the ensuing commotion and chaos, the play begins.

The source of terror and panic is the *mamulhot*, a man in a frightful mask. He is carrying a torch, and two men stand on either side of him. He drives his spear into the second step of the datu's house and makes known his intentions, in rhyme. He is the messenger of an *onggo*, a pre-wedding ritual from pre-Hispanic times still followed by some minority tribes living in the hinterlands. The spear driven into the second step announces his purpose, as custom requires.

Immediately the audience's curiosity is aroused and its attention is focused. The sense of gaiety first presented onstage is held in abeyance by the rough intrusion of the messenger of the *onggo*. There is tension here and the total shifting of gears, as it were, makes for great dramatic force, abetted by the play of lights and the furious striking of the *agong*, as well as the use of masks by the intruders. Within the first few scenes of the play, the conflict—or the promise of it—is established. The masked messenger of the *onggo* is going to change the nature of things in the idyllic kingdom of Datu Omalikpok.

The *minoros* also shows a high degree of craftsmanship in relation to structural balance and parallelism. This varies from the similarity of the opening scenes in acts I and II of *Dimakaling*, where the bandit chieftain is shown demonstrating his powers, to the similar parental opposition to the love between Maha and her Christian lover by her Sultan father and his Christian parents in the first two acts in *Maha*, to the manner in which each act in *Tirana* is opened by the theme song "Awit ni Tirana" and closed by variations of it.

It is in *Princesa Mayana* however, that this intelligent arranging of elements structural and dramatic is most felt. And here again, the fact that it is the earliest among the extant plays and reputed to have been the first presented by the author can only lead to the conclusion that the young Gabuya possessed an instinctive grasp of theater rarely found in fledgling playwrights.

First of all, we have the aforementioned use of the *balitaw* and *garay*. The *balitaw* for act I and the *garay* for act II not only underscore and embody the underlying man-versus-woman theme. They also serve as balance points for the play while providing perfect parallels in form as well as content. What the *balitaw* expresses, the *garay* confirms. Both are earthy, lighthearted, lyrical, and witty. Both have the same participants. But most importantly, each serves to highlight the first two acts of the play.

The other manner in which balance and parallelism are exhibited in the play is in the arrangement of scenes. In act I, a scene showing Kaputay trying (but failing) to seduce Malumpat is followed by a wooing scene between Mayana and Balilong. In act II, the chaotic and vulgar scene between Kaputay and Taason, where the latter's underpants and morals are exposed, is balanced by another romantic scene between Mayana and Balilong. In the last act, the scene of the wounded Taason's coming home from battle and Kaputay's change of heart, after some bickering, is balanced by the opposite manner Mayana receives her husband. Finally, the color and excitement of the opening scenes of act I where the *mamulhot* arrives with his *onggo* and strikes fear into the little kingdom, is balanced by the romance and pageantry of the wedding scene which opens act III.

These contrasting scenes, while serving as counterpoints to each other in the same act, render every act of the play equal in weight to the others even as they further the play's action. Emiliano Gabuya, in the *minoros*, and even as early as *Princesa Mayana*, was not simply a teller of tales presented in drama form. The tales set in drama form are well-structured

and the scenes skillfully arranged.

Finally, a noteworthy aspect of Gabuya's minoros in terms of structure, and this is true of all of his works for that matter, has to do with the *gula* or scenes comprising the acts. Gabuya's scenes are fluid, with each one almost always running on to the next. Clear-cut scenes that begin with an empty stage and end with an equally empty one are rare. He did not seem to follow an underlying rule regarding scene divisions, the scenes seemingly merely marked by the entrances of characters. In this aspect he calls to mind the French system where the entry of a new character signals a new scene.<sup>17</sup>

### THE CHARACTERS

In terms of character, three classes are noteworthy in the minoros: the hero, the heroine, and the fool or *gracioso*.

The heroines are the most fascinating, most well-rounded, and most precisely delineated. They also show the most spirit and humanity. In the seven surviving plays the ones who stand out are the three princesses Mayana, Maha, Tirana. Wanawana of *Dimakaling* is also remarkable, along with Maninay, the number one wife who leads the sexual revolution in *Sirena*, but they are not given the same focus as the three princesses.

The princesses, two pre-Hispanic and one contemporary, are strong characters. Of course one can easily enough attribute their strength to their being royalty, but literature has a surfeit of weak princesses, so royalty is but a minor factor here. These princesses may weep and languish at some points in the plays but essentially each one exhibits a kind of steadfastness which makes each remain true to her heart's wishes.

In addition to this strength of mind, these royal women have a collective straightforwardness in the expression of what is in their hearts that is contrapuntal to what we may call the Maria-Clara mold of some of the heroines of Filipino literature. They are healthy women with healthy responses and all are openly demonstrative once their feelings are known to them and to their loved ones. Tirana is almost kissed by Emi soon after he declares his love for her in act I. The same act ends with a kiss between them after a duet. Mayana does not offer excuses or even demur when her uncle bids her to entertain Balilong the first time he is

17. See Joel Trapido, ed., *An International Dictionary of Theatre Language* (Westport, Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 756.

introduced to her. Maha takes the initiative and offers to elope with Cencio and even outlines their escape route, being more familiar with the terrain of her father's kingdom.

These three women's spontaneity and freedom from sexual shackles are entirely in order, since these plays, with the exception of *Maha*, are set in pre-Hispanic times, in the days of the *barangays*. This was long before the friars and their sexual codes came to our shores, and long before the Spaniard's idea of the *Filipina* and her "virtues" existed.

Furthermore, the fact that royal blood runs in these women's veins is no great psychological or emotional obstacle to them. There is no instance in the plays where a romantic action is deferred or avoided because of the burden of the princesses' royalty, for example. Neither did Emiliano Gabuya make these women, despite their titles, mere decorative appurtenances. They are shown in numerous instances to be actually doing chores. For example, Tirana and her sister Dinay fetch water and firewood in preparation for dinner.

The most striking of all these heroines is the princess Maha. As soon as she appears onstage in *gula II* of act I she immediately establishes her preeminence. For example, she immediately shows she is as used to being in command as is her father, Sultan Salti. When the Sultan presents Cencio, the captive teacher, to her, she takes charge, issuing orders to and asking questions of the captive through Titik, her lady-in-waiting. When he asks that he be unbound, she does not hesitate nor wait for word from her father, who is also onstage. She orders Titik to free him. But, mark, she is not to be trifled with. When the prisoner asks if he could make another request, she answers: "Mahimo, apan paminawon ko usa" (You could, but I reserve judgment.) She is the Sultan's daughter and her words and actions do not belie this.

It is Maha who defies father and king to marry the man she loves. *Gula VII*, act I contains a classic confrontation scene between father and daughter. Maha makes known her intentions to marry. Salti informs her that he wanted to speak about that to her, and the scene turns violent when Maha informs her father that it is Cencio whom she wants to marry, not Mala or Halas:

SALTi:

(MAMINTI) Maha!! Maha!!  
Ang kinaiya sa kinaiyahan  
tahuron ang akong poong nga nag  
dili kanimong hugot nga padili,

SALTi:

(CURSING) Maha!! Maha!!  
It is deepest tradition that my  
words be respected, forbidding  
you from marrying that



ang pagminyo mo ni-anang  
binunyagan, maayo pang patyon  
ko ikaw (DUNGAN SA HINAGIBAN)

Christian. I might as well  
kill you. (GRABBING A SWORD).

MAHA:  
Patya ako kon daw ugaling  
sayup ko ang paghigugma sa tawo  
nga maoy gitudlo sa akong paad.  
(MOTA-ON)

MAHA:  
Kill me if I'm wrong in loving  
a man whom my heart tells me to  
love.  
(ADVANCES TO MEET THE BLADE)

SALTI:  
Maha!! Maha!! Nakaila ka kanako?  
Nakaila ka sa akong balaod? Ang  
tinuho-an sa asawa, ang tinuho-an  
sa amahan, tinuho-an sa anak.  
Ang balaod ko, balaod sa kinabuhi  
ug kamatayon.

SALTI:  
Maha!! Maha!! Do you know who  
I am? Do you recognize my  
laws? The belief of a husband,  
the belief of a father, is the  
belief of a daughter. My word  
is word on life and death.

(*Maha*, act I, scene 7, p. 14)

But Maha's resolve only gets stronger. She enlists the help of Halas, explaining gently that she knew of his love for her but a marriage without love would only make them both miserable. Halas, only too eager for Maha not to marry his arch enemy Mala, suggests that the princess flee with Cencio.

And so it is that Maha flees to a culture alien to hers to give life to her love for Cencio. By so doing not only does she give up the life and the circumstances she is used to, but the faith she grew up with as well. Her only prayer is that Mahoma may understand her.

But if we must find a princess most representative of the heroines of the minoros, she must be Tirana. Tirana is not as fiercely independent nor as openly aggressive as Maha, nor half as imperious, but she embodies qualities mentioned in the minoros approximating an idealized view of woman. She is beautiful. So beautiful that she causes brother to fight brother. She is portrayed as coy, sweet, and gentle, qualities found in other heroines as well but which are most obvious in her. The last is especially significant, since most of the minoros speak of *kalumo* (gentleness, softness) as a desirable and necessary trait of woman.

Tirana is also a dutiful daughter to Sultan Solpi and this quality of filial piety makes her follow her father's wish for her to marry Oyo. But not before expressing her resistance in another classic father-daughter confrontation scene:

TIRANA:

Tumana ang imong kabubut-on,  
 apan sa akong kabubut-on akoy  
 tag-iya ug akoy may katungod sa  
 pag-gamit niining kabubut-ona . . .  
 (MIHILAK)

(NANGISUG ANG DATU)

DATU:

Tirana! Tirana . . .! Ako ang  
 gamhanan dinhi, nagdaghan kita  
 tungod sa akong balaod, napuno  
 kining walog tungod sa akong  
 kabubut-on, nagmalipayon kita  
 dinhi kay sukad sa sinugdan wala  
 pay nangako pagsupak sa akong  
 kabubut-on ug hinuon karon ang  
 kaugalingon kong anak mangunay sa  
 pagsupak? Gaba-an ka . . .! Gaba-an  
 ka . . .!

(MIHILAK SA TIRANA)

TIRANA:

Amahan ko kon maoy imong kalipay  
 nga mag sud-ong kanako nga  
 magsubo, ani-a itugyan ko ang  
 akong lawas apan ang akong  
 kabubut-on dili ko ihatag . . .  
 Ani-a dawata . . .! Dawata ug  
 ipakaon sa mga iro sa kahilayan . . .

TIRANA:

Follow your will if you must,  
 but my will I own and I alone  
 have right to . . . (WEEPS)

(THE DATU GETS LIVID)

DATU:

Tirana! Tirana . . .! I'm the  
 power here, by my laws we  
 live, by my will this vale is  
 now inhabited by us, we are  
 happy here. No one has ever  
 brooked me, and now you dare  
 to do so? My own daughter!  
 Fear the Gods! Fear the  
 heavens!

(TIRANA WEEPS)

TIRANA:

My father, if seeing my unhappy  
 self will make you happy, then  
 I grant you my body—but my  
 will I cannot grant . . . Take it  
 . . .! Take it and give it to the  
 dogs . . .

(Tirana, act III, scene 37, p. 43)

She agrees despite herself, but she withholds complicity: she calls it withholding her will. Her inner self will never be conquered.

For Tirana is a woman in love, loyal and faithful despite temptation, steadfast in her belief that her Emi will come back to her. She spends a good part of the play waiting by the sea for her loved one, Emi. She is "Tirana nga makaluloy" (pitiful Tirana) as her theme song says, pining for her loved one while at the same time trying to reject the overtures of Oyo, the evil brother. Toward the end of the play, when Emi arrives, singing her song, just at the point when the marriage vows are to be said,

she shows Emi that her heart is still his, until he dies in her arms, felled by his own treacherous brother.

Ultimately, however, what gives Tirana heroic proportions is her vulnerability, something that Maha does not have. And in this she is also the most successful of all the heroines of the minoros. She has the capacity to suffer, unlike Maha who, for instance, does not hesitate to leave Cencio in Cebu when his parents mistreat her. Maha dies for her love for Cencio, but it is Tirana who suffers for her love, pained at first by Emi's absence, then forced into a marriage she does not want, and finally shattered by his death in her arms. She outlives her love, but she knows only pain.

The heroes in the minoros, sad to say, with the exception of Balilong and, to a certain extent, Dimakaling, are by and large insipid and flat. They do not seem to have the strength or the drama that the women possess.

Balilong of *Princesa Mayana* is the only Gabuya hero who is "ideal" from the start. He does not go through the tentative stages that Emi of *Tirana* and Cencio of *Maha* go through. Balilong's stature is summed up in *gula* II, act II when Balilong's friend Bantilan (Mayana's uncle) says that in any duel his money would be on Balilong because Balilong "... pangamot ... may pani-il, ug puno sab ang o ..." (knows how to use his hands, his feet, and he has a head). Nor is Balilong equipped solely with these particular physical and intellectual attributes. "May ka-abtik usab ang dila" (he also has a quick tongue), adds Marenay, referring to his facility with words where the ladies are concerned, a talent already displayed in the gentle love scenes between him and Mayana in the last two scenes of act I. (It is in these love scenes also that Balilong displays a gift for music, singing songs that speak of his love for the beautiful princess.)

In addition to all these physical and intellectual qualities Balilong also has the prerequisite goodness of heart, gentleness of demeanor and softness of speech that make a character *buutan* (good), qualities which he shares with Emi and Cencio. And most of all, in contrast to both, Balilong is a Rajah's son and therefore has the additional grace of royal lineage. Balilong therefore is the "ideal minoros hero," who at the same time is the most reminiscent of the linambay heroes: physically strong, intellectually smart, quick-tongued, gentle in demeanor, soft of speech and, perhaps most important of all, royal of lineage.

However, Balilong is so "ideal" as to be a caricature. He has no faults, no flaws. He serves mainly as suitor and then consort to Mayana. His

character is static and one-dimensional. And therefore he does not have the humanity and tragic dimension that Emi, or even Cencio, own. Viewed in this respect, Emi is the most effective of all the minoros heroes.

Emi is handsome, physically strong, and has a good singing voice, qualities which make him, like Balilong, irresistible to women. He is gentle and able to weep, like Cencio of *Maha*. He is, also, *good*, the *better brother* who tries vainly to instill some decency in Oyo, and who agrees to go to Cebu to bring back Onga's gifts to Dinay for their wedding (Oyo refuses). And it is this very "goodness" which is Emi's fatal flaw. His reactions to situations are so slow, so low-keyed, as to render him ineffectual. When Oyo drags Dinay, Tirana's sister, offstage in order to abuse her, he watches from the shadows and does nothing. He is only described as *magsubo* (sad). Of course there are indications from previous scenes that Oyo is not one for respecting his elder brother's sensibilities, but Emi's inability to take action marks him, apart from being ineffectual, as weak-willed and shallow. This is further stressed in a later scene after Dinay is found and brought onstage, weak and in tattered clothes. All Emi can do is cry even as Oyo warns him he will be killed if he tells on him.

Emi's character is transformed, however, when he goes back to Cebu. (Oyo, whom the Chinaman first asks, refuses.) From this point on he begins to acquire an importance in the play. His absence gives him the proportions his presence cannot give. Tirana waits for him day and night. Onga waits for him. The King, sensitive to Tirana's pain, waits for him. In the end, when he arrives just at the point when the marital rites are being performed for Onga and Dinay and Oyo and Tirana, he completes his road to heroism by dying for his love of Tirana at the hands of his brother. Like Cencio who dies with his Maha and acquires heroic proportions, Emi's tentative character undergoes a purificative process and becomes heroic at last. In Emi, Gabuya moves away from the predictable cardboard figures that are the heroes of the linambay.

The fools or *graciosos* constitute the third fascinating group of characters in Gabuya's minoros. They are present in all the plays, generally to a very successful extent. They provide comic relief or humorous touches to what otherwise are grim, sometimes tragic, proceedings (not to mention their giving the cast and crew time for costume or stage changes). Some are quite sympathetic, while others are only exasperating, but all are usually satisfactory vehicles for commentaries on life and human nature in general.

Taason in *Princesa Mayana* is the quintessential Gabuya fool. Introduced in the beginning of act II to counterbalance the unease which the masked messenger of the ongo brings to the peaceful kingdom in the first act, his entry is less than grand. Act II opens with Marenay and Mayana discussing the encounter between Balilong and a masked intruder the night before. Then Marenay asks Mayana where the king is. She replies that he left early to go to Ilaya to get Taason. "What for?," asks Marenay. "So he can help defend us," Mayana replies. To this, the latter scoffs: "Unsay kapuslanan niadtong Taason nga talawan pa kadto sa tanang nangamatay?" (Of what use is Taason to us when he is more cowardly than the dead?). It is clear Taason's function is to provide occasions for laughter, as Marenay's line most probably did.

The *bugno* with Kaputay, which takes place in the same act, reveals this function further. The scene is preceded by that in which a seething Malumpat, warns Omalikipok of the "disease with no cure" that will surely follow on the heels of the arrival of Balilong on their shores, and then is about to slay the king when the latter rebukes him for his envy. It is a heavy scene. Malumpat exits with an implied threat to make things worse. Omalikipok and Bantilan exit. It was Bantilan's cry of warning that saved the king's life.

The *bugno* scene lifts the tension, if only for the moment. The same is true in *gula VII* where Taason, clad in the edited version of his previous costume, decides to confront Kaputay for the final answer as to whom she loves. This scene is also preceded by a wooing scene between Mayana and Balilong which acquires menacing tones when Malumpat enters and proceeds to challenge Balilong to a duel. Mayana intercedes, saying if Malumpat wants a duel the king has to be informed and the proper procedure followed, but Malumpat ignores her. He is about to slay Balilong, when Mayana puts herself between them and dares Malumpat to kill her first. Mollified, Malumpat lowers his bolo and asks Mayana to send Balilong away from the Kingdom. Balilong exits upon Mayana's prodding and Malumpat, alone with Mayana, finally reveals his love for his cousin. Horrified, Mayana rejects Malumpat, and the scene ends with Malumpat vowing to destroy her if he can't have her. Then comes Taason and Kaputay's scene. Humor is restored. But more than and aside from the humor, there is pain and the coping with it, all expressed by a simple soul named Taason. The audience can identify with him. He is an ordinary man suffering the pains of loving too well but not wisely.

Taason is, also, an ordinary man in relationships with his superiors. Such is the unique position of Taason and the other direct descendants of

the *posong* and the *gracioso* of the *linambay* in these plays. He is the ordinary man, close enough to royalty to be able to talk back to them, but nevertheless on a level lower than theirs and always made to feel inferior. His concerns, real to him, are far removed from the King's. He is the "common tao," never quite taken seriously by those that rule. Taason, along with his companions, fulfills a function in the hierarchy of the kingdom. He can talk back to the king without fear of reprisal or punishment. The king may call him names for doing so, but he knows his value. He is the king's sounding-board, perhaps the only one in the kingdom whom the king can depend on to tell the unvarnished truth, especially about himself.

In *Tirana*, it is Onga the Chinaman who is invested with the qualities of a fool, although with slight variations, as we shall see. The main source of his being a comic character, of course, lies in his being a Chinaman. This allows for potshots at his nationality as well as his peculiar way of talking, for it is peculiar of the Filipino audience to laugh at the peculiarities of diction of other nationalities, especially the Chinese, and this Gabuya exploits to the hilt. Gabuya takes pains to write his lines according to the manner in which they are supposed to be delivered, complete with accent and chopped words as well as some sputtering in between, all geared toward eliciting laughter from an audience all too familiar with the neighborhood Chinaman. But, more than this, Onga is funny because he has a funny way of looking at things. When Dinay comes home abused for instance, he tries to convince the Sultan to give her to him in marriage, the Sultan earlier on having shown no interest in his suit, using metaphors of trading to drive home his point:

ONGA:

Latu Soppi, ikaw wa'a agi  
badigya no? Sa tin-nahan,  
luna liyotay kapin sa puhonang  
tugot na . . . Mutang ko ikaw  
badigya isda, misan pa didi  
bawi puhonan, badigya na, lugay-  
lugay badigya mahoh man . . .  
Tinuot kana sotti ko, mahoh  
isda lugay-lugay lugot . . .

DATU:

Ambut . . . ! Ayaw ko'g sulti-i  
niana kay dili ako  
magpapatigayon . . .

ONGA:

Latu Soppi, you no tly sel no?  
In sto', having litta plofit  
good oledi . . . Sapos fo'  
example you selling fish, even  
if no' ge' back capital, sel  
oledi, if too late sell, fish  
stink . . . ! I telling you tlue,  
fish stink too long sel . . .

DATU:

I don't know . . . ! Don't talk  
like that because I'm no  
businessman . . .

ONGA:

Padihas da kana Linay, kalon  
 liyotay pa himawo kana Linay,  
 human na kawat iya kadipay . . .  
 Umma, sunot umma, sunot pa  
 umna, himawo na lakhang tawo  
 owaw ka . . .

ONGA:

Same t'ing Linay, now few  
 people only know abou' Linay,  
 her happiness oledi taken . . .  
 Toma'low, nex' deh, nex' nex'  
 deh, plenty know, you  
 ashamed . . .

(*Tirana*, act II, scene 25, p. 29)

These lines bring Onga's Chinese trader character to the fore. He is a shrewd negotiator. To him there can be no other more apt metaphor for Dinay than merchandise that stands to get spoiled if kept longer in stock. He loves Dinay, as the earlier scenes have already established, and the feeling is reciprocated, but the Sultan is not too keen on the romance. Now his chance has come and he tries another tack, explaining things in the only manner he knows, hoping the Sultan might comprehend.

These lines also show an aspect of the character of Onga that differentiates him from Taason and the rest of the fools of the minoros. Onga is funny, the lines are funny, but he is also shrewd and wise in the ways of the world. Onga's fool is not quite the fool of Taason therefore because while both are similarly funny, Onga has the added dimension of being a Chinese trader and a shrewd reader of opportunities. He is a wise fool. He is not simply a buffoon in the sense that Taason is. In the end, although his stature as trader and conduit of material goods that allow for a new lifestyle does not spare him from ridicule from the islanders, he is the wise foreigner who always manages to have the upperhand over us Filipinos despite his accent.

There are other fools in the other minoros: Lukong in *Dimakaling*, Dongdo in *Sirena*, and Masangka in *Maha*. They, like Taason and Onga the Chinaman, serve a duality of purpose. One is to make the audience laugh. Comic relief. The other is to make the audience see. Social commentary.

Perhaps the question might be asked: Why is there always a fool in every minoros? The obvious answer is of course that the linambay is littered with their ancestors, the gracioso or posong.<sup>18</sup> The other answer

18. For the role of the *gracioso* in the linambay as a medium for "the release of social tension" and the "symbolic bridging of social distance," see Resil Mojares, *Theater in Society, Society in Theater: Social History of a Cebuano Village, 1840-1940* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1985), p. 88.

may lie in the way Emiliano Gabuya looked at himself in relation to the world. He was the fool, living in the land of royalty, not quite on the same level as those who rule because of power or wealth or education, but endowed with enough artistic talent to be able to caricature and comment on their ways.

#### LITERARY ELEMENTS IN THE MINOROS

The use of literary elements of the *linambay* and the *sarsuyla* has already been mentioned. Emiliano Gabuya made use of the color, romance and adventure, the royal personages who fall in love with the "wrong kind," language of a quality not found in everyday Cebuano speech, and, finally, the Moro-Christian conflict of the *linambay*, although with slight variations. They are the elements which speak of the relationship of the *minoros* to the earlier dramatic form. From the *sarsuyla*, he took the songs and dances, the more than one-dimensional portraiture of characters, the high degree of sentimentality, and the more realistic and more lyrical love scenes.

But beyond the elements from the *linambay* and the *sarsuyla*, the *minoros* also embody what may be called the quintessential literary elements of the art of Emiliano Gabuya. Foremost among these is the use of humor and wit. Gabuya is remembered as a man of great wit and humor by all and the *minoros* are more than adequate testimonials. They are replete with humorous situations, speeches and one-liners designed to evoke hearty guffaws, and amusing characters whose personalities were designed to create appropriate responses.

Scenes full of humor counterbalance previous heavy scenes, like the *bugno* scene of *Kaputay* and *Taason*. Furthermore, some of the more humorous situations in these plays were employed to lighten suspenseful scenes to provide the same kind of comic relief. For instance, near the end of *Maha Sultan Salti*, unaware that *Cencio* has hidden in *Maha's* room, hears a crash from inside, storms into the room and finds *Cencio's* shoes. This infuriates him of course, and he comes out of the room and announces that he has found someone. By this time the princess is in tears, begging her father to spare her husband's life. The Sultan's men then emerge from the room with a sack, out of which emerges a very much shaken *Masangka*, the *gracioso* of the play.

Then of course we have the specialized kind of humor which characters like *Onga* present. *Onga* the Chinaman speaks in a funny way, a way that is familiar to the audience, each one of whom must have had a



favorite Chinese "suki" as objective correlative to Onga, and Gabuya exploits this. At one point he makes Onga dance with joy. To Chinese music, of course. And of course, every character in the play calls or refers to him as "insik" a term that connotes humor and the special way Filipinos regard the Chinese among us in general.

Gabuya has two levels of humor. One is verbal and on a comparatively higher plane, consisting mainly of witty one-liners. For instance, in *gula IV*, act II in *Maha*, when Cencio's father Hayo convinces the search party that the fugitive lovers could be in a pumpboat just then pulling out of the Cebu harbor and the Moros decide to go after the pumpboat in a *pangko*. Hayo manages to say under his breath: "Malunod pa unta kamo" (I hope you all drown).<sup>19</sup>

The other humor is on a lower plane, perhaps designed mainly for the pit, consisting of bizarre and even vulgar situations, such as when Kaputay and Taason in *Princesa Mayana* engage in a fight that ends with Taason exposed in his underpants. Included with these are the off-color sexual jokes as in *Tirana* where the pit must have had a field day responding to Onga's and even Oyo's sexual jokes. The following exchange is a fairly good example:

ONGA:  
Mayo hap on Linay ikaw ma-anyak  
kalon hapon haa . . . !

MIKATAWA USA SI: . . . DINAY:  
Unsa? Hapon paba god karon?  
Naaay ang mga manok nanugdon  
na . . . !

ONGA:  
Wa'a sap ayan manok . . . Manok  
ngih ngih liyotay tu'ok layon  
. . . Pilo tawo pangita pa  
kadipay haaaa . . . !

DINAY:  
Uy . . . ! Nakatunong uroy  
. . . !

ONGA:  
Gut'asta'noon Linay looking  
very pletty dis asta'noon ha . . . !

DINAY (LAUGHING)  
What? Is it still afternoon?  
But the chicken have roosted  
already!

ONGA:  
No matta' chick'n . . . litt'a'  
da'kness only sleep oledi . . .  
But peoples still looking  
'appiness haaaa . . . !

DINAY:  
Uy . . . ! He's right on target  
. . . !

19. A *pangko* is a very swift Muslim boat now used to catch smugglers of contraband goods.

ONGA:  
Kana tonong himo samot  
laan . . . Wa'a kinanlan tannaw  
. . . Didi paliyo lagum kana  
tusdok hiddo . . .

ONGA:  
Hitting the ta'get I you we can  
plan . . . No need looking  
. . . Not like if we t'reading  
needle . . .

(*Tirana*), act I, scene 11, p. 13)

The balitaw in *Princesa Mayana* also carries sexual jokes. Kaputay belittles Omalikipok's declarations, telling him he is an old man who should just stay in a corner and brood. It is humor built on the Filipino penchant for making fun of the infirmities of others. Omalikipok, King though he is, is no exception to the infirmities of age, an insinuation full of sexual innuendos.

This tendency to make fun of infirmities extends to a liberal dose of humor based on physical deformities. In *Sirena*, when the forces of Mahanong and Balikwad meet on the shore of Humonhon, where Mahanong's forces seek shelter from a storm, the clash between the two groups is partly brought on by Bektot, a follower of Balikwad, calling out a challenge to "... Kanang na-ay pinangko," (that one with his hair in a bun) referring to Dongdo, the "gracioso" in the play, a follower of Mahanong. Dongdo shouts back: "Ikaw nyang bektota ka, matul-id ka unya ug akoy mosukol . . ." (You hunchback you, you might yet straighten up if I give you the run-over . . .). (act II, scene 18, p. 23) And a free-for-all ensues.<sup>20</sup>

Through the years during which Gabuya wrote the minoros, he moved from the use of both poetry and prose in *Princesa Mayana*, which is his earliest extant work, to the use of more natural prose only in the latter works. This has already been cited as the main reason for the play's being considered closest to the linambay. What must be emphasized is the great beauty of the language of *Princesa Mayana*, which has perhaps most of the more beautiful passages in Gabuya's extant works.

Even more remarkable than the beauty of the actual passages is the author's employment of both verse and prose. Gabuya uses verse for the initial exchanges between Omalikipok and the intruders, and uses prose for dialogue between Omalikipok and his family and friends. It is therefore suggested that in the verse exchanges something important is happening, and that this is the elevated language used in court. Mean-

20. *Sirena*, like *Dimakaling*, has scene numbers that do not begin with every new act.

while, conversations among family are in prose, the better to underscore the informal and unofficial quality of the exchanges. Incidentally, the use of verse in the exposition of opposing views must have had tremendous appeal and familiarity for audiences whose entertainment had heretofore consisted mainly of the verbal jousts that went with the *kolilisi*, the *balitaw* and the *linambay*.

Gabuya further used a lot of images in the minoros. His favorites were images culled from nature and agriculture. For instance, in *Princesa Mayana* when the Mamulhot comes to seek audience with Mayana's father, the latter meets and assures the intruder that he is not like the *agukoy* who runs at the approach of men:<sup>21</sup>

OMALIKPOK (MANAUG SA HAGDANAN  
NGA SIGIG SULIT)

OMALIKPOK (SPEAKING AS HE  
GOES DOWN STAIRS)

Kun si Agukoy atong dulgon,  
Sa iyang lungag motagu kay mang-  
gi-olawon  
Mosuk-sok kay mahadlokon  
Dili pakita kay dili man  
makida-iton.

If the agukoy,  
Who into his hole hides for  
shyness  
Digging deep out of fear  
Refusing to be seen,

Ang sa agukoy akong supakon,  
Ug sa akong baye kamo dapiton,  
Sa mga maayong tinguha kamo  
pasak-on,  
Kon dautan kamo alabug-abugon

The agukoy I will not be,  
To my house I invite you,  
With good will I welcome you,  
But, drive you out I will, if  
you are evil.

(*ibid.*, act I, scene 4, p. 3)

In the next scene, Bantilan again uses the natural behaviour of the crab to describe the eventuality of things. When Omalikpok chides him for not insisting on the masked intruder's removal of his mask so that they could have determined the man's identity, he replies:

BANTILAN:  
Palabuan ta usa ang panahon.  
Asa ra gud kana. Inigabut sa

BANTILAN:  
Time will tell us that.  
It will come. When the

21. The *agukoy* is a tiny, bright-colored crab which runs when approached.

ta-ub, ang kagang moguwa gayud	tide turns high, the crab
sa iyang longag nga gitago-an.	from its hole emerges.

(*Princesa Mayana*, act I, scene 5, p. 8)

They will know the man's identity soon enough. All things must come naturally. The crab will come out of its hole when high tide comes. And not before.

Throughout the plays which take place on the shore (*Tirana*, *Sirena*, and *Princesa Mayana*) the author uses a preponderance of images from the sea and its creatures. In gula XIII of act II of *Princesa Mayana*, the arrival of the messengers of the *onggo* is heralded by a comment by Taason: "Ani-a na sila nganhi Talahuron . . . Nag-suo mora'g nangitag lambay . . ." (Here they come, your Majesty . . . Bringing torches as if they were catching crabs . . .)<sup>22</sup>

*Sirena*, which features love between Mahanong, a young pre-Spanish Filipino prince, and a mermaid princess, has fewer images than the earlier plays, but among these are several from the sea. *Sirena* is contemptuously referred to by the prince's father as "lumot sa dagat" (moss of the sea). This underscores her sea-born existence and her not being quite human.

It is interesting to note that the use of imagery diminishes in the later plays. Where *Princesa Mayana* was replete with images, *Dimakaling* has practically none. For some reason, the playwright stopped using them. Perhaps he did not mean *Dimakaling* to be lyrical. Indeed, it is the most prosaic of the plays, perhaps in deference to its subject matter, the world of Moro banditry, and its conclusion, the death at the hands of Dimakaling by the forces of the law with the help of his friend, Pendiyanan. However, the feeling remains that the play could have been served better by some lyricism.

Images from agriculture are also employed. When Mayana is asked why she cries after bestowing her love on Balilong, she answers: "Mao kining gugma'ng matuod nga inubanan sa luha. Ingon sa usa ka kahoy nga motagok kon putlan mo ug sanga; sa hinungdan nga itisok ug itanum aron manalingsing ug mamunga." (This is true love, coupled with tears. Just like a tree that emits sap when a part is cut from it, even as that part is planted and will soon sprout leaves and bear fruit.) The tears, like the

22. The *lambay* is a much bigger crab than the *agukoy* and without the latter's marked tendency to hide when approached. It is edible, unlike the *agukoy*.

sap that the tree emits to give life to another plant, is part and parcel of true love.

There is also significance in the names that Gabuya gives some of his characters. The names are clues to the nature of the characters. Mala, the villain in *Maha*, has a name which means "evil." Halas, the other villain in the same play, has a name which means "snake" in Visayan. Kaputay, the village flirt in *Princesa Mayana*, has a name derived from the Cebuano word "kapyot," which means "cling." And cling she does to the men in the play, from Bantilan to Malumpat, whose name also has ominous undertones, since it is derived from the Visayan word for "sly," to Taason. (Taason of course must be tall, his name being derivative of "taas" [tall] but then of course he could be made much more a figure of fun if a really short actor, or a dwarf, is cast in the role.)

#### FOLK ELEMENTS IN THE MINOROS

We also find in these plays a fine sprinkling of folk beliefs, customs, and habits. Foremost among these is the use of folk beliefs. In *Princesa Mayana* and *Tirana*, for example, much is said about the position of the moon and stars in relation to the destiny of men.

In act I of the former, when the messengers of the onngo insist on an immediate and positive response to their message, Omalikpok refuses to commit himself. It is not the propitious time. Look at Kampa and Laoyan. Their *pamalaya* (betrothal) occurred when the moon was past "takdol" (fullness) and now they are in misery. The messengers had come at a time when the moon was not in its proper phase, which for the *pamalaya* should be during its fullness. This is an old custom, and failure to follow it made them vulnerable to *bosung* or divine retribution.

In act I, scene 13 of *Tirana*, the object of discussion is a full moon with a star snuggled close to it. Tirana looks up and comments on the moon's brightness. Then she comments on the closeness of the star to the moon. Dinay gets up and bids her sister go upstairs. Tirana asks her to give her more time to enjoy the moon, and Dinay chides her: "Bo-ang ka? Nalimot ka sa sugilanon nga gikabilinbilin nga kono ang babaye nga magpasaya sa kahayag sa buwan atol nianang buwan ug bituon nga magakasiping, nga ug ulitawhan kono kadiyot lang makatangdo!" (Are you crazy? Have you forgotten the old tale that a woman who is shone upon by the moon when a star is intimate with it is easy conquest when courted?)

The concept of *bosung* or divine retribution in relation to going against the wishes of a parent is another folk belief manifested in the same play

and in *Maha*. In act III, scene 37 in *Tirana*, the princess is at first determined to deny the king's decision to marry her off to Oyo. But the king is equally firm. He reminds her of his position as father and the prospect of *gaba*, a synonym for divine retribution, should she disobey him. Tirana can only cry and answer that he could have her body but not her will and then, when Solpi shows repentance for his outburst, offer her apologies.

Dreams and their meanings also figure in *Sirena*. The play opens with Pandakan and his number one wife comparing notes on recent dreams. He cautions her that her dream, in which she grieves and exults unexplainably, could mean that some evil will befall her, while he himself volunteers the information that to dream of snakes, as he did, could mean someone will betray him. These are common folk beliefs. Their mention would have triggered understanding, and the desired apprehension, among the audience, for such dreams symbols are part and parcel of the Filipino folk consciousness.

The preternatural world is also represented in these plays. *Sirena* takes its title from its lead character, a mermaid. She is known onstage both in human and half-fish forms. She appears on stage with the help of stage effects that highlight her otherworldliness. The first time she appears onstage, a group of mermaids now in their human forms dance around a huge flower, which opens and reveals her.

When Mahanong's forces arrive in Humonhon to find shelter from a storm, Dongdo immediately lays the foundation for the supernatural events of the play. The island is known to be inhabited by *tagibanwas* (supernatural creatures). When Tato teases him about his fears, Dongdo recalls that men have been known to be whipped by unseen creatures in the island. When Mahanong disappears after Sirena makes her appearance and both fall in love, Dongdo can only feel justly proud of his forebodings. The place is enchanted.

Dongdo is certain he only has to ask for tuba from any coconut tree and tuba there will be. Tato is unconvinced, but is persuaded to stand before a coconut tree. Lo and behold, a *sugong*<sup>23</sup> full of *tuba* leans on the coconut tree. They try to see if their lost prince can be found in the same manner. They surround a flower and Tato asks that Mahanong be presented. Instead, Sirena appears and tells them the prince is a captive of Balikwad and his men.

23. A *sugong* is a bamboo container for *tuba*

The world of magic is also found in *Dimakaling*, which features the magical powers of a bandit king who is known to escape capture by making himself into a child, an old woman, a young girl, and a cripple. In the last scene of act III, when Dimakaling and his men come close to being captured, he runs to a tree, goes around it, and emerges as a young mute on the other side of the tree. The operatives question the mute and let him go. After they do, and the boy disappears, they learn that the mute was Dimakaling.

Finally, some observations on the function of tuba in the plays. The concoction is mentioned in most of the plays. In *Tirana* Datu Solpi is shown in act I, scene 6, inviting Onga the Chinaman to partake of some: "Ug kita, mangadto kita sa payag kay adunay tuba nga tam-is, manginum kita aron mawa'a ang imong kaguol" (As for us, let us go to my hut for some sweet tuba, so your sorrows will vanish). This is after the men Onga left in his boat have been devoured by crocodiles. In *Princesa Mayana* every male in the village, in celebration of Bantilan's safe return, partakes of the native wine in act II, scene 8. Except for Malumpat. He rejects every offer and gives all sorts of excuses, from being tired to feeling weak. Bantilan is dismayed by his nephew's behaviour.

Bantilan's feelings may be more understandable if one considers the values that go with the offering of tuba to anyone. To the Cebuanos, tuba is not only a drink. It is a means of social interaction. When it is offered, friendship and camaraderie are offered along with it. There is a wish for conviviality, for oneness, with the tuba serving as a bonding mechanism. When one rejects an offer to partake of it, one rejects not merely the drink but also the person offering it, along with his proffered friendship.

## CONCLUSION

This is where the beauty of the minoros lies. Malumpat is a strange character and his strangeness is brought out by instances like his refusal to partake of tuba. A bit of character delineation that even the pit can understand. For who among them has not felt like Bantilan or Omalikpok at this point? It is a simple, yet meaningful bit of character delineation, and the minoros is full of this—the little things that add up to great entertainment. This must have been the reason for the fact that, up to his dying day, Emiliano Gabuya and his audience never tired of his minoros.