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Dramatics at the Ateneo de Manila: A History of Three Decades, 1921-1952

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in other areas of dissent down through the centuries, it might be revised.

When many theologians disagree with official non-infallible Church teaching, we should reflect on the words of Yves Congar, O.P. (*Theology Digest* 25 [Spring 1977]: 15–20) writing on “The Magisterium and Theologians – A Short History.” He concludes an authoritative and thought-provoking article by asking for a rethinking of the relationship between theologians and the magisterium to prevent the magisterium from being isolated from the living reality of the Church. The theologians have their own original charism and service to the Church that must be recognized. “Theologians should not be regarded only from the point of view of their dependence on the magisterium” (p. 20). There must be a hierarchy of values wherein we put the truth, “the apostolic faith which has been handed down, confessed, preached and celebrated, at the top, and under it, at its service, we must place the magisterium of apostolic ministry and the research and teaching of theologians, together with the belief of the faithful. In this way the differentiated, organically articulated work of magisterium and theologians reflects the life of the Church” (ibid.).

When the ecclesial role of theologians is thus recognized, an author such as McFadden will not hesitate to acknowledge their dissenting voices, which sometimes come through loud and clear as in the question at hand.

In spite of my serious criticism of the author, I still would recommend the book for the wealth of information on details of the research going on in modern medicine, in areas of overriding concern to all theologians.

Gerald W. Healy

DRAMATICS AT THE ATENEO DE MANILA: A HISTORY OF THREE DECADES, 1921–1952. By Miguel A. Bernad, S.J. Manila: Ateneo Alumni Association, 1977. 303 pages.

The Western concept of drama and theater entered the Philippines through religious hands in the late sixteenth century, and Wenceslao E. Retana, in *El teatro en Filipinas desde sus orígenes hasta 1898* (Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suárez, 1910) credits the Jesuits with being “los verdaderos difundidores de cultura literaria,” since it was in their schools that theatrical presentations were first used as a means of instruction (p. 17). The development of drama in the Philippines has been definitely influenced by this, the fact that dramatics has always been a part of Jesuit pedagogy. This has determined not only the frequency of stage presentations and their purpose and role as co-curricular activities, but also the choice of plays read, performed, and used as models by students, as well as the theatrical styles and methods they learned or were exposed to. Since many of these students

went on to become teachers, actors, directors, and writers, as well as theatre lovers, the Jesuit imprint on drama in the Philippines is indelible, of long history, and an important factor to consider in the study of its development.

Father Bernad's monograph "is an attempt to tell the story of the Ateneo stage during three . . . decades: from 1921 to 1952" (p. vi). The initial date, 1921, was the year the Ateneo passed from the control of Spanish to that of American Jesuits. Before 1906, almost all of the stage presentations at the Ateneo were in Spanish. After 1906, two full-length plays were staged each schoolyear, one in Spanish – the major production – and one in English. After 1921 the English play superseded the Spanish production in importance, and after 1925 the Spanish plays ceased to be presented altogether. After 1952 the Ateneo moved to the present campus at Loyola Heights, and this event, in Father Bernad's opinion, marked the start of a different era that would require a different chronicler. The years from 1921 to 1952 include, therefore, the years the American Jesuits spent in the Ateneo in Intramuros (destroyed by fire in 1932) and on Padre Faura in Ermita.

For the Ateneo alumnus (or his family and friends), the book is rich in nostalgia and memories. The first of the four parts takes the reader through the years in Intramuros (1921–1932), when plays were staged in the *salón de actos* (where Jose Rizal's *Junto al Pasig* had first been produced in 1880); when Shakespeare was performed in English for the first time in the Philippines (*The Merchant of Venice* in 1910; *Richard III* in 1917; *Julius Caesar* as the first production of the American Jesuits in 1921); when Father Henry Lee Irwin, S.J., then a young scholastic, directed his first play; when gala performances had as patrons Governor General Leonard Wood and Archbishop Michael J. O'Doherty; when the Passion play was first conceived and written ("in the decade of the 1920's the biggest theatrical event in Manila," p. 26); and when in 1931 *Cyrano de Bergerac* was first introduced to Manila audiences.

The years at Padre Faura are divided into three parts. The first four years (1932–1936) led up to the building of the auditorium, at one time called "the best theatre in the Orient" (p. 104). The next five, which the author calls "The Opulent Years," comprised the time in which plays were staged in this auditorium – from *Hamlet* in 1937 to *Who Ride on White Horses* in 1941 – till the eve of the war. The final ten years at Padre Faura, before the transfer to Loyola Heights, were the postwar years, when the auditorium having been wrecked in the war, plays were staged in the gymnasium or at the neighboring Assumption Auditorium. This period was climaxed by the first production directed by Father James B. Reuter, S.J., a drama-pageant called *Francis of Navarre* (1952), in which girls from convent schools performed onstage alongside the Ateneo boys for the first time in Ateneo stage history. Father Bernad notes that this marked quite a gain in collegiate drama, which traditionally had had all-male casts in boys' schools and all-girl casts

in girls' schools. In an earlier chapter, he had also noted that in 1931 the Apostolic Delegate was said to have walked out in protest at the showing of a love scene on stage (the balcony scene in *Cyrano*, with boys playing both roles). The gain was shortlived, however, because in 1953 the Plenary Council of Manila forbade men and women to share the same stage in a play — a ban of obvious significance to campus drama.

The book's epilogue surveys briefly the dramatic activity in succeeding years: the founding by Onofre Pagsanhan of the Dulaang Sibol in the Ateneo High School, a drama group which moved from Shakespearean productions to translations and adaptations of foreign plays into Tagalog, and finally into the writing and staging of original plays in *Pilipino* by the students (the group has already contributed two major playwrights to the current theatrical scene); and the years in which productions in the college and graduate school were directed by theatre personalities James B. Reuter, S.J., and Rolando Tinio.

Father Bernad ends by noting the "real reflowering of amateur dramatics . . . in Manila and in some provincial capitals" which he calls "almost as rich and as interesting as the flowering of professional theatre during the war years." He poses the question in closing: "To what extent has the Ateneo stage contributed to these flowerings of theatre? It is an interesting question." (p. 204).

He does not analyze or interpret them, but the 30 years that Father Bernad records in great detail and with obvious sympathy can certainly not be ignored by the student of drama in the Philippines. Those were the years when the works and the techniques of modern Western drama were most intensely taught to and absorbed by a significant sector of studentry: Ateneans who later founded drama guilds (the Barangay Theater Guild, for example); ventured into writing, directing, television, and film; became actors and theatre devotees. Those were the years when the vernacular theatre died in the cities (before them, the *zarzuelas* and *dramas* still lived; soon after them, the translations and adaptations began, to be followed by a return to original writing in the vernacular), killed and buried by the onslaught of Shakespeare and other Anglo-American writers whose plays were being staged on school campuses, among the most influential in the field of drama being certainly the University of the Philippines and the Ateneo.

Those 30 years were dark years for the vernacular theatre, but served to introduce to the young people who were later to lead Philippine theatre back home to the vernacular (and before them to their parents and teachers) the major works, the techniques, and the realistic temper of Western theatre. They were important years of transition, for when the vernacular theatre returned, it had left behind the romanticism of the *komedya* and the *zarzuela* and had come into its own age of realism, a realism learned from Western models.

Thus, an extremely valuable portion of the Bernad work is Appendix B, which records the titles (unfortunately not always the authors), the dates, the casts, and sometimes the crews of all plays presented at the Ateneo, in English and Spanish, from 1910 to 1952. This information, culled mainly from the Archives of the Society of Jesus in the Philippines, not only documents dramatic activity on the Ateneo campus for 42 years, but provides important source material for a study of later Philippine drama. These were the plays that were read, watched, performed by, and that influenced several generations of students, future teachers, actors. The photographs further document styles of presentation (stage and costume design, blocking, etc.). For the history of drama in the Philippines that must be written someday, one would need these data, and similar documentation for such campus centers of dramatic activity as the University of the Philippines, Philippine Normal College, and St. Paul's College of Manila. In the absence of professional theatre in these and succeeding years, it was this campus theatre that shaped much Philippine dramatic taste and experience.

To this solid core of documentation, the body of the book adds details and memorabilia. Its tone is that of an easy, leisurely memoir, or of an intimate chat between friends and colleagues with common memories. Ateneans will recognize the names sprinkled through the pages: their contemporaries, their fathers and uncles, past or present personalities in the government, in business, in the literary and artistic worlds. They will smile to remember their old teachers — the legendary Father Irwin and his thundering rages, and the young (now older, or promoted to high positions, or since departed) Jesuits who helped out in production or business management for the annual Ateneo plays. They will reminisce about their old classmates, not only the stars who played lead roles, but also those who played girls' roles, or who wrote reviews and publicity for the *Ateneo Monthly* or the *Guidon*, or those who sold tickets, hammered together sets, or ushered in the audience.

Dramatics at the Ateneo 1921–1952 grew out of a larger work in progress, a history of the Ateneo. Information for it was gathered from such Ateneo archival materials as school newspapers, theatre programs, and Jesuit reports; letters from and interviews with former students and Jesuit teachers; and of course from the personal memories of the author, who was an actual witness to part of the era that he records. Although he follows a chronological path, the author pauses where fancy bids him: to explain the procedures within the Jesuit order that the plans of an auditorium have to go through for approval; to remember a student actor or backstage hand who later became a famous man; to trace the different assignments given a Jesuit before or after his stint at directing student theatricals; to record a quirk of personality, a twist of fate; to linger for a few pages to quote favorite passages from *Cyrano de Bergerac*, before recalling that *Cyrano* was played by Narciso Pimentel, Jr., *Valvert* by Arsenio Lacson, *de Guiche* by Lamberto V. Avellana, and *Roxane*

alternately by Francisco A. Romualdez and Feliciano Jover Ledesma; to look backward or forward from the moment at hand to wax nostalgic or prophetic; to comment or to whisper asides, as one who lived a memory feels entitled to do.

Father Bernad is obviously writing about the Ateneo for Ateneans and friends. Unlike the scholar, Father Bernad's Atenean reader will not quibble over the fact that some footnotes are missing from places where scholarship would expect them to be; and will not be bothered by the fact that the list of abbreviations does not include *WL* (a search through footnotes later reveals this to be short for *Woodstock Letters*). Father Bernad's audience will reminisce with him, appreciate his comments and asides, and keep the book to show their grandchildren the parts they played in Ateneo dramatics of an era now gone.

The book is personal rather than scholarly, memoir rather than history, but from it can be gleaned material for history, and data to support further study.

Doreen G. Fernandez

TOWARDS A SOUTHEAST ASIAN COMMUNITY. By Estrella D. Solidum. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974. 267 pages.

For all the non-politicians of the world today, government decision-making is a process shrouded in mystery. With every controversial government policy there is, at least among the more sophisticated laymen, widespread speculation: whose decision was it? On what basis was the decision made? What is the long-term purpose of the policy? It is our curiosity about such matters that leads us to books such as Ms. Estrella D. Solidum's *Towards a Southeast Asian Community*. This book is a study of decision-making in the five ASEAN countries over the ten-year period from 1959 to 1969, during which these nations tried out three different forms of regional cooperation: ASA (Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines); Maphilindo (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines); ASEAN (Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines). It is a fascinating account of the trials these countries went through in their attempt to learn to cooperate to solve the problems that they shared — underdevelopment, poverty, colonial economies, internal subversion — and the problems that existed between them — Thai-Malaysian border troubles, the Philippines' claim to Sabah, the Indonesian policy of *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia.

Ms. Solidum uses as her framework a group of three hypotheses on how people learn to cooperate — i.e., by experiencing rewards for such activities before being asked to make sacrifices to further the joint interest. She then sets up five variables that were important in the group-cooperation efforts of