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Plausible Puppets: The Devils

Review Author: Joseph P. Del Tufo

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part of legislation. Poor workmanship in the making of bills could lead to grave consequences. Style and clarity of content are both important, for one follows from the other. Lack of a precise style could lead to disorganization, which in turn could lead to ambiguity. Ambiguity in the law leads to confusion in its interpretation and application. This part of the book could very well compose a separate volume, and should be of general interest, not only to the average citizen, political scientists, members of the bench and bar, but also to the legislators themselves. For that forms part of their function, and it is only in keeping with their position that they should have a clear grasp of the principles and practices of bill-drafting.

In his treatment, the author limits himself to fundamentals. This comes as both a virtue and a defect. Many books discuss too many side issues and lose track of the central point. This book succeeds in maintaining its sense of direction. It seems to suffer, however, in that it still leaves some questions unanswered. One would expect in so thick a volume (858 pp) that the author would touch on the many other offices making up the structure of Congress, and at least define their respective duties and functions. It does not. It likewise steers clear of controversial subject matters which sometimes call for personal reflection (and one is not quite sure whether this is a virtue or a defect).

If a book is to be judged on whether or not it achieves its aim, then it might be said that Rivera successfully realizes his aim to a great extent.

JORGE M. JUCO

PLAUSIBLE PUPPETS

THE DEVILS. A Play Based on a Book by Aldous Huxley. By John Whiting. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961. 128 pp.

Like Hopkins' *Spelt from Sybil's Leaves*, *The Devils* (based on Aldous Huxley's *The Devils of Loudun*), resolves the mystery of meaningful human living into a black and white choice. The salvation of Father Grandier, libertine priest, seducer of the innocent Philippe, and finally martyr to the powers of evil incarnated in a score of lesser characters, rests on his eventual acceptance of himself as a sinful creature who must humbly turn to God. But such a simple summary of this play hints at a failure to feel its power. It is a strong play. With the possible exception of one or two passages (see page 21, for example, where Fr. Grandier's prayer strikes this reader as much too formal for a priest), Fr. Grandier emerges from the text

as a plausible and humanly interesting person. His search for life's meaning through power, lust and love, suffering, persecution and death, all telescoped into two hours of stage action, manages to remain not only plausible, but powerful and penetrating; and John Whiting's skill in effecting this merits applause. The technique which serves Whiting well consists in fast-moving episodes wherein various groups of characters, moving on and off the stage of one's imagination like dancers, illumine the actions and character of Fr. Grandier by showing him to us through various and differently colored minds.

History offers a Father Urbain Grandier who was burned to death for witchcraft in 1634. His accusers blamed him for the diabolical possession of the nuns of St. Ursula's convent in Loudun. To dramatize what it might have been like to have been this Father Grandier, Whiting's play uses a host of minor figures. These figures never achieve any completely human personalities; most are puppets revealing now one, now another aspect of Father Grandier; one, the sewerman, plays an odd role somewhere between the ancient Greek chorus and the modern sub-conscious; another, Sister Jeanne of the Angels, after being a sheer villainess, develops in the latter part of the play into a counterpart of Father Grandier: she, one of his main accusers, ends in a living death, while he finds life in death. But if Whiting intended her to be realistic, he failed.

No critic has the right to demand that every character in a play be realistic. In *The Devils*, the exorcists are meant to be comic characters of the "humour" class, and other characters take on the sheer black of the stage villain. Only an excessively realistic view of drama could quarrel with their use. But precisely because most of the priests and nuns in this play are types, one cannot help feeling that the play embodies a naive and prejudiced view of the nature of religious life and particularly of religious chastity. This mars the play only in so far as it distracts us and makes us smile, much as a writer might be distracted and smile if most of the puppet characters in a play were perverted writers.

In addition to the value of knowing Fr. Grandier's conflict with the overwhelming questions, the play offers a delightfully lucid diction. Words reveal and for the most part do their work unseen. Whiting's economy of language and his ability to create credible conversation will please every reader. H.A.L. Craig has compared him to John Webster for his power with language, and no one, I think, will disagree.

JOSEPH P. DEL TUFO