

philippine studies

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

Watch in the Night **by Edilberto K. Tiempo**

Review Author: Miguel A. Bernad

Philippine Studies vol. 2, no. 1 (1954): 62–66

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

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

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

best fueled ships (U. S.) could never (have) overtaken" the enemy before he reached the safety of waters protected by his own planes and submarines operating from Okinawa and Japanese bases.

If the proof of the pudding is in the eating thereof, then full vindication for American tactics lies in the fact that the results undoubtedly made it possible for MacArthur to step up his timetable for invading the Philippines, and considerably hastened victory by virtually decimating the Japanese naval air forces and by sinking twenty and damaging as many more of the enemy fleet during the operation.

Admiral Ozawa was a shrewd antagonist. He possibly might have served his country's purpose to better advantage if he had not stuck so assiduously to Tokyo-made plans and had instead committed his battle line and carrier divisions against MacArthur's forces and the U. S. Seventh Fleet employed in the invasion of western New Guinea. Ozawa, however, inflexibly followed the overall strategy of "Operation A-go." On the other hand, Admiral Spruance, while not ignoring his greater responsibility for the successful capture of the Marianas, demonstrated his "power of decision and coolness in action" to vary overall strategy sufficiently to divert most of his forces from the Marianas and go after the enemy.

The book is not outstanding from a literary standpoint, nor is it intended to merit such distinction. The author achieves superior narrative form by the use of naval phraseology, which provides a realism that could not otherwise be obtained. Whether the reader is a serious student of history or merely likes history related in an intimate manner, he will find *New Guinea and the Marianas* as full of action literally as its newsreel counterpart is visually.

HARRY S. HUDSON

WATCH IN THE NIGHT. By Edilberto K. Tiempo. Archipelago Publishing House, Manila. 1953. Pp. 212. P8.50.

This is a war story, accepted for the Ph. D. degree by an American university (Iowa) where apparently a novel may be presented in lieu of a doctoral dissertation. To evaluate it properly, it should be approached from two angles: as a novel, it must be tested by literary standards; as a historical novel, it must stand the test of historical truth.

Artistically, the work has much to commend it. Mr. Tiempo has the story-teller's gift, and many an episode is told with vividness and realism. He also has that adjunct to the story-teller's art, the gift of description—exact, leisurely

description (particularly of country life) which at times takes on an idyllic quality. It is also a pleasure to note the absence of that unhealthy eroticism which seems to pervade much contemporary Philippine writing. There are indeed love scenes in the book, but without sentimentality or offense against good taste.

It is pleasant to record these excellences because when we view the work as a whole (and a novel must be viewed first and foremost as a whole), we note certain artistic inadequacies. The work seems to lack organic unity: of theme, of character, of action.

The story indeed begins well, portraying a Protestant minister of liberal views at odds with his more "orthodox" (the better term might perhaps be puritanical) congregation. This theme by itself might have been developed to dominate the novel, but it is dropped after chapter 2, and is followed by a succession of themes (love, the war, the choice between collaboration and resistance, guerrilla warfare and life in the hills, etc.) without a dominating theme to organize the pieces into a whole. Thus, the only connecting link between episodes is a temporal one (they all happened during the war) and the fact that one hero (Mr. Cortes) is supposed to be involved in all that happens. But here, precisely, is one of the weaknesses of the story—a twofold weakness, in fact. In the first place, very little happens through the hero's direct intervention: indeed, many episodes could have occurred whether he were there or not, and the author has to remind us occasionally that Cortes was, as it were, "among those present." In the second place, of those things which do affect him directly or which he affects, very few have any relation to his character as a *minister*. Yet it is as a Protestant minister that he is supposed to be the hero of the story.

This fact is best seen in that one act of his which does affect the course of events: he is supposed to have been the guard who fired the shot that killed the envoys, which in turn precipitated the surrender of the troops. But this act is committed by him as a guard on sentry duty: it has nothing to do with his character as minister. His ministry is irrelevant to this incident, as it is irrelevant to most of the episodes in the book after Chapter 2. Indeed, the only reason why we remember that he is a minister is because the author keeps reminding us, in so many words, that he is one. But if in the first two chapters of a book it is essential to the story that the protagonist be a minister, and in the remaining chapters that fact is irrelevant (indeed a hindrance), then there is a lack of unity in the conception of the story, a basic flaw in its architecture.

We might contrast this book with two novels (best sellers in their time) where the protagonist is a priest: *The Cardinal* and *The Keys of the Kingdom*. In both cases, the story is about a priest. Take away the priestly character of the protagonist, and the story falls. Many of the episodes would have no meaning, and some of them could not happen at all, if the protagonist were not a Catholic priest. This is not true of *Watch in the Night*. Make Cortes a lawyer, or a student, or a teacher, and the story would remain unaltered—except, as we said, in the first two chapters which have little bearing on what follows. There is of course that scruple (it is too little, really, to be called a soul-struggle) about being a man of peace and having to become a man of war: that might be more likely in a minister than in a layman. But that scruple somehow seems unconvincing. It is hard to believe that Cortes really could not find justification for the use of arms. The scruple seems artificially created, superimposed as though an afterthought; it is introduced too late in the story, and in the final analysis it also has little bearing on most of the action.

And the mention of action brings us to another flaw in the structure: there seems to be no main action. The plot does not thicken, rise to a climax, fall to a denouement. The action is episodic: "This happened and then that." Some episodes are indeed well written, but episodes do not make a novel. Even Homer's episodic epic *did* have a theme (*Menin aeide thea*)!

On historical grounds, a similar judgment seems called for: much cause for praise, some cause for blame.

As a record of the war, this is a good historical novel, an accurate portrayal of the Philippines under Japanese rule. It is a human story, of how men lived, fought, died, or feared and tried to save their skin. Those who lived in the Philippines during the war years will recognize the picture as authentic. Indeed, the war is, as it were, the protagonist: Mr. Cortes is only an incident.

The book departs from historical truth in the picture presented of Filipino religious life. Mr. Tiempo, one feels sure, is a gentleman who would not deliberately distort facts to make Catholics ridiculous, and very probably he feels that all the incidents recounted here about Catholics are true. (Doubtless there are priests like Padre Saavedra, and there are instances of popular superstition; though it is unlikely that a priest would tolerate or justify them for the reasons alleged in the case of the cult of the bees.) Nevertheless, even granting all the incidents true, it is still possible to give accurate factual details and yet paint a false picture. What

would a foreigner think of American Protestantism if he were to read a novel in which the only ministers depicted were Father Divine and the mink-coated Negro Prophet of the mid-west? Or if the only Protestant service described were a session of the Holy Rollers?

The chief fault is one of omission. Cortes lives among the people in the hills and towns of Cebu and Negros, and the impression is given (doubtless unintended) that he is at one with them—a Protestant minister among a Protestant people. We are not told that the people among whom Cortes lives, who shelter him and fight for and with him, are overwhelmingly Catholic. They must have been: for Cebu island has over a million population almost totally Catholic, and Negros is very largely so. Mr. McPherson (p. 202) praises “the common *tao*,” his “noble effort” and “noble devotion.” It is well to remember that this common *tao*—who fought on Bataan and in the hills, who rescued Americans and fed them in hiding—this *tao* was, in eight cases out of ten, a Catholic, as was his more educated compatriot. A Protestant minister like Mr. Cortes could live among such people only by not exercising his functions—as Cortes did not exercise them. For had he continued to exercise his ministry he would have found himself as it were isolated from the generality of the masses: as the Protestant minister now finds himself isolated, cut off from the main current of Philippine life and culture, ministering to a congregation of fifty or a hundred in towns of twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants. *This* might indeed have served as a theme for the novel.

Some measure of praise is given to Catholics on page 202 in the mouth of the Rev. Mr. McPherson, an American Protestant missionary. “Several of the American and Dutch priests in Mindanao,” we are told, were “doing the same thing” as “a few American teachers and Filipino ministers.” Mr. McPherson adds: “I wish there were many more.” Generous, but surely an understatement? Surely there were many, very many more? I wish the author could have known some of the many priests, scholastics, and nuns (Filipino, American, Belgian, Irish, and other nationalities) who played heroes’ roles during the war. After all, one does not hear of many Protestant ministers risking death, or killed or tortured or imprisoned in dungeons. But Fort Santiago has imprisoned many a priest, including nine of my own Jesuit colleagues of the Ateneo de Manila—a college, incidentally, to which heroes have been proud to belong: from Rizal and Gregorio del Pilar to Manny Colayco and many a hero of the last war. Father Monaghan has told the story of some of them in *Under the Red Sun* (New York: McMullen, 1946).

There are still many Catholic priests and laymen such as these: heroes in war and, when the occasion demands (as in the recent elections), heroes in peace. I wish Mr. Tiempo could come to know some of them: he would then like us better. For my part, I like some of his writings, and hope for another (a better) novel from his pen.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE AMERICAN IDEA. By Theodore Maynard. Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York. 1953. Pp. 309. \$3.50.

In 1941 Mr. Maynard published a popularized history of the Catholic Church in America under the title *The Story of American Catholicism*. The present volume is in large part a retelling of that *Story*. Its publication was undoubtedly due to the public interest aroused and ignorance revealed by Mr. Paul Blanshard's attacks on the Catholic Church as constituting a menace to American freedom. One of the book's objectives is to show that such attacks have no foundation in history. Another is indicated by the author himself in the following words: "... to this day the majority of Americans think of the country as one in which Protestantism is and ought to remain in an ascendancy, and that only Protestants really belong, while all Catholics ought to be considered 'outsiders' who are here on sufferance. To inquire what degree of truth there may be in such an idea is one of the purposes of this book."

The work is divided into three sections of almost equal length: "The Consonance", "The Components", and "The Contribution." In "The Consonance", a brief survey is made of the history of the Catholic Church in the United States from colonial days to the twentieth century. A selective but frequently very detailed account is given of the activity of individual Catholics in the colonies, on the frontiers, among the Indians, and later, among the immigrants when the floods from Europe began to swell the New World's population. The survey tends to show that Catholicism is not something alien or inimical to the "American Idea" (the principles of American democracy as contained chiefly in the Constitution) but has existed in harmonious agreement with it from the very beginning. Also recorded are the troubles the Church had to weather from internal dissension and external attack.

How much the author's purpose will be furthered by the story of the Church's internal troubles, or why he included