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Jovita Fuentes, A Lifetime of Music

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especially the sale of the Friar Lands in the early years of the American regime. All this material is helpful for an integral view of the total problem.

"If you do not know what happened before you were born, you will be like a child all your life." These words, attributed to the Roman Cicero, can be an apt final commentary on this book about Church history in the Philippines. The more information available concerning the years before the present generation came on the scene of life, the more accurate can be its judgments on the past and on the present that flows from that past. Despite its various limitations, which the author himself admits in the preface, this book can be a useful instrument for all those interested in the history of the Philippines.

F. X. Clark, S.J.

JOVITA FUENTES, A LIFETIME OF MUSIC. By Lilia Hernandez Chung.
Manila: The Jovita Fuentes Musicultural Society, 1979. 184 pages.

The reader starts out with the classic image of the prima donna as imperious, determined, self-centered yet self-giving, self-confident yet ever seeking perfection, vastly talented, feared and revered, respected and loved, bigger than life, beyond imagination — and the image remains intact. Drawn with bold clear strokes by niece Lilia Hernandez Chung, this portrait of Jovita Fuentes emerges as a living gift to the new generation of Filipinos for whom Jovita Fuentes would have remained only a mute legend.

Schooled in Spanish and brought up in the strict traditions of upper middle class gentility, Jovita Fuentes belonged to a large prosperous clan that delighted in music, dance and drama. Theirs was a household where even the servant girls sang at their tasks (it was from them that the young Jovita learned *Ay! Kalisud* and *Walang Angay*, Visayan folk songs that she was to make famous) and music surrounded and nurtured the young from infancy. The well-to-do father hired the best music teachers of the town (Capiz, now Roxas City) to hone the Fuentes children's talent. The family wealth allowed the determined Jovita to sail for Manila, and later Europe, in pursuit of greater achievements in her art.

Only a loving relative-biographer could have had access to a full view of the character of Jovita Fuentes. Only she could have softened the strong, almost harsh lines of the singer's portrait as total artist, for whom "*Hermoso seria morir cantando, morir, por el arte.*" After her triumphs in the most respected opera theatres of the world, she came home to teach. She was a formidable, commanding petite figure. "There were screams, furious scolding, tears, but she spoke with firm authority and gave unstintingly of herself." And yet, as a maturing young woman, first in Capiz, and then in Manila, there was an intense and apparently long lasting love affair between her and a brilliant

lawyer and childhood friend named Manuel Acuña Roxas. Long after Manuel Roxas became president, states the biography, Jovita's diaries give substantial evidence that that love always remained. But such was the strict, unmuddled sense of morality and refinement in her Catholic upbringing that not a breath of scandal touched the life of this artist. Shimmering shreds of young memories were to remain with Jovita Fuentes all her life — a lantern left by her sweetheart's window to prove his loyalty, a wild flower received and treasured, a crucifix hanging on a gold chain he wore till his death, because it was once hers — but she remained unswerving in her refusal to feed the gossip mills with any act that might be misinterpreted. In later years the diva would be thrown in the company of President Roxas and his family, but whatever emotions smouldered in her artist's heart, the bearing she showed the world was always confident and poised.

Lilia Hernandez Chung includes in this handsome volume reproductions of the many admiring reviews printed in the major European cities where Jovita Fuentes performed and photographs of the lovely diva in various stages of her life as well as in operatic roles that she essayed.

Thus does this niece-biographer conclude her graciously written tribute to a truly devoted and gifted woman — a woman for whom principles in life, love and art are to be held in strict but graceful dignity, who, as she moved across the concert halls of the world in "the cadenced walk of a 'princesita tagala'," "beautifully brown, dainty, and modest," captured the hearts of discerning critics and knowledgeable opera-goers, to become the greatest Cho Cho San of them all and one of the greatest sopranos ever.

Nenita O. Escasa

STUDIES ON THE MUNICIPALITY OF MANILA. By Luis Merino, O.S.A. Translated by Rafael López, O.S.A. *Views* 5,1 (June 1978), 96 pages; 6,1 (January 1979), 146 pages (Iloilo City: University of San Agustin).

These two issues of the University of San Agustin journal, *Views*, are completely devoted to three historical studies by Fr. Merino, part of a continuing series of monographs under the same general title. All deal with the social and institutional history of the Spanish city of Manila. They are based principally on a study of documents from the Archivo General de las Indias in Seville, most of them hitherto unexploited by historians. Though many examples of this type of institutional history of the Spanish colonial society exist for Latin America, it has hardly been attempted previously for the Philippines.

The first volume comprises the study "Municipal Government and Society: A Socio-Demographic Analysis of the Spanish Population of Manila (1571-1800)." It contains both a quantitative analysis — the number of Spa-