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## **Sa Bagwis ng Sigwa: Mga Dula sa Buhay at Panahon ni Andres Bonifacio**

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## Book Reviews

**SA BAGWIS NG SIGWA: MGA DULA SA BUHAY AT PANAHOON NI ANDRES BONIFACIO.** By Domingo G. Landicho. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1978. ix, 202 pages.

Emerging into prominence to found the Katipunan and dying amidst tragic circumstances in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the figure of Andres Bonifacio continues to stride across the pages of history as a larger-than-life character. That he was a nationalist who embodied the different forces at work in history at a particularly critical period has been the thesis of many studies on the man. Unlike the other heroes who have been made the objects of a myth-debunking process, Bonifacio appears to have grown in stature and influence, especially for those who have rediscovered the hero's particular relevance to the contemporary movement for liberation.

From history to myth to literature is not really a complicated journey; presumably, the subject is the same man. What differs is the perspective through which the subject is scrutinized. That the literature of the sixties and the seventies has continued to look back into the life and times of Andres Bonifacio is proof enough that the links forged between the past and the present have been strengthened with the passage of time. Of these links, one of the most enduring is the idea that the suppression of freedom can unleash a storm so furious that it leaves much destruction in its wake.

In *Sa Bagwis ng Sigwa*, the well-known Tagalog fictionist and poet Domingo Landicho uses another literary form to mine history. In a series of plays revolving around the figure of Bonifacio, Landicho recreates certain critical events in the life of the hero from Tondo — the early years of the Katipunan, his marriage, his deepening commitment to the cause, the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, the turbulent Tejeros Convention, his trial and subsequent death. The trilogy carries the reader progressively from the personal to the public world of the historical personage until such a point is reached that the personal is almost obliterated in favor of the more pressing social concerns that involve a whole society.

The first in the trilogy—"Unang Alay"—allows the reader some

glimpses into the early years of Bonifacio's formation as a leader of his people. It details the relationship between Bonifacio and his family, and the way he is perceived by various members of the community; more importantly, it introduces the woman who is to marry Bonifacio and who later is to serve as the *lakambini* of the Katipunan. The rest of the play features scenes that expertly juxtapose private relationships and social consciousness, as Gregoria de Jesus becomes more and more privy to the secrets of the movement and hence more involved.

As inevitable as the process of Gregoria de Jesus' initiation into the complexities of the movement is the gradual shift from the bantering mood of the opening scenes to the grim and dismal atmosphere of the last section—the death of the couples' first born. This unfortunate event merely augurs the things that are to come, for the child's death is only the first of the many offerings that will be demanded of Bonifacio and his wife.

Playing a most significant role in helping define the dramatist's vision of the world is the language employed. At times terse and elliptical, sometimes lyrical but carefully restrained to prevent a self-conscious wallowing in sentiment, Landicho's language never fails to sustain the brisk quality of the narrative. In the first play, the dramatist deftly utilizes his craft to project various tones — from the light, teasing, almost flippant mood of the first part, to the dark forebodings conveyed in the middle section, to the tragic overtones of the child's death. The play's last *awit* articulates the motif that will recur in an endless series of variations in the other two parts:

Unang alay  
 Unang tuwa  
 Unang mithi  
 Unang alay ay buhay  
 Sa kinabukasan.  
 Ang kamatayan ay dapithapon  
 Na may koronang magdamag  
 Walang tinig maging ang simoy  
 Sa kanyang pagdalit ng habag,  
 Huwag pagupo sa dusa,  
 Huwag pagapi sa hapis,  
 Hanapin natin ang bukas  
 Na may panalig.

The ending is appropriately one that seeks to assuage the feelings of the bereaved by making them realize that only in transcending personal pain can they find meaning in their sufferings.

"Part Two," for which structurally "Part One" serves as a "Preface," plunges the reader headlong into history as the play zeroes in on the various events dotting the historical landscape, beginning with the discovery of the

Katipunan in 1896 and ending with the commencement of Bonifacio's trial for treason a year later. The image of the title — *Sa Bagwis ng Sigwa*, "on the wings of the storm" — captures the violent collision of forces both on the personal and social levels. The lyrical tone and intimate personal glimpses that characterize "Unang Alay" must now give way to a more subdued and serious atmosphere as the destiny of a war-ravaged nation becomes the focus of attention. Serving as the pivotal affair is the well-known clash between the two factions, the Magdalo group headed by Aguinaldo and the Magdiwang led by Bonifacio.

For his sources, the playwright seems to have relied on some historical accounts, notably the *Revolt of the Masses* and the *Writings and Trial of Andres Bonifacio*, both by Teodoro Agoncillo. The work, however, is not purely history even as the dramatist attempts to interweave history and the imagination in the evocation of some crucial events for the purpose of throwing light onto the ideological differences between the two factions. The language is thus now utilized to articulate some deep-seated conflicts springing from basic dissimilarities in interests, goals, and total world views. On various levels, the storm has been unleashed; a consequence of its fury is the imminent death of Bonifacio.

The last play in the trilogy is aptly entitled "Dapit-Hapon" — the twilight of a short but meaningful life. Depicting the final days of Bonifacio, the play delineates the different characters' varied responses to the fate of the doomed man. Of interest is the manner in which Landicho creates imaginary characters and by skillfully combining historical data and the creative imagination, he sets out to reinforce the trilogy's theme — Bonifacio as the defender of the oppressed and the downtrodden. To the end, he looks at himself as the champion of the masses against the ilustrados, the "ibong mandaragit" who had the upper hand in Tejeros. He must die as another sacrifice to another set of gods.

The cycle is thus completed with the death of Bonifacio. But still, the struggle must go on as the grieving but still defiant Gregoria de Jesus asserts with clenched fists:

Nagkamali kayo, mga taksil! Akala ninyo'y mamamatay ang simulain ni Andres Bonifacio. Nagkakamali kayo! Ang kanyang simulain ay sisibol at magiging moog ng sambayanan para sa tunay na kalayaan. Ang tagumpay ninyo'y babasaging bula. Sa wakas, bayan ang mamamayani! Ito ang batas ng kasaysayan.

Clearly, Landicho's work belongs to the tradition of protest even as it uses actual historical events in order to shed light on the present movement which has for its goal real freedom. The trilogy calls to mind the patriotic plays of the early 1900s, for both past and present dramatic works share a common insight: the realization that literature may be employed to objectify certain social experiences that feature oppression and injustice. In the final

analysis, *Sa Bagwis ng Sigwa* derives its power and significance from its successful attempt to force the present to reckon with its past and to draw relevant lessons from its history and the men who determined its course.

Soledad S. Reyes

CHRISTIAN ETHICS II. A PRESENTATION OF SPECIAL MORAL THEOLOGY IN THE LIGHT OF VATICAN II. By C. Henry Peschke. Alcester and Dublin: C. Goodlife Neale, 1978. xv, 627 pages.

The author, Henry Peschke, S.V.D., ambitioning a contemporary manual in moral theology, presents us with the companion volume to his 1975 text on General Moral. This second volume covers the matter traditionally found in the older manuals under special moral. Following the directive of Vatican II (Priestly Formation) for the renewal of moral theology, the author gives a rich scriptural basis whenever possible. He is honest in facing controversial questions and is not afraid to take a position, giving his theological reasons.

On contraception the author faces the issues squarely and honestly. After situating the problem in our contemporary world he gives the official answer of *Humanae Vitae* and then goes on to give the pastoral interpretations of the Encyclical as proposed by various National Conferences of Bishops around the world. Excluding abortion, which all condemn, and after stressing the fact that Paul VI does not mention mortal sin, a good number of the Bishops offer their people various interpretations such as the choice of the lesser evil in a conflict of duties (either artificial contraception or serious danger to the marriage), and the right to follow one's conscience if it dissents for weighty reasons. Granting the disvalue in contraception, these considerations will enable most couples to find peace of soul when, with the best of good will, they cannot follow the encyclical literally. These pastoral letters of the National Bishops' Conference are judged by the author to be "truly acts of the ordinary teaching office of the Church" (p. 476).

On abortion the author defends the traditional doctrine while honestly admitting the current controversy among Catholic theologians with regard to therapeutic abortion, in the mother-child dilemma when there is no other means to save the life of the mother. Also the scientific reasons for accepting delayed hominization today are presented with the consequent moral judgment that "one could not speak of abortion in the strict sense before the elapse of a period of about 14 days" (p. 355). He draws the logical conclusion that "one could not also simply classify the IUD or those medicines and pills that possibly or certainly hinder the fertilized ovum from nidation as 'abortive' means. . . ." (ibid.). Nevertheless, because the fertilized ovum is alive "contraceptives which prevent a fertilized ovum from nidation cannot