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A Matter of Language

Review Article: Rolando S. Tinio

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"Theater As a Springboard to Films," "Devaluation Devalued in Films," "Whatever Happened to the Filipino Moviegoer," "Acting Technology," "Films as Reflections of National Character," and "The Job and the Power of the Critic," enlighten the reader with the essential things that affect films. "Films as Reflections of National Character" is truly the best of the lot. Laxa, in the Foreword, says, "Films as Reflections of National Character is easily the highlight of this book, for it can help instill, or sharpen, in movie people a sense of patriotism and social responsibility."

"Directorial Quirks," "How a Film Director Wastes His Producer's Money," "Relationships and the Movie Industry," and the "Producer-Director-Writer-Actor Relations," acquaint the reader with the activities, both positive and negative, of persons in the industry. "Directorial Quirks" for instance, is entertaining and interesting, for the reader sees the director as he truly is—human. The director shows "a charming childlike curiosity and an in-depth understanding of human nature."

"The need for a Philippine Film Commission," suggests the creation of an institution for the betterment of film. This essay intrigues the reader because it starts with a quote that is against the need for a Philippine Film Commission. In the essay, the author gives his idea of what the Commission should be, who should take part in it, and what role it should have in the movie industry.

A quick glance at the essays shows that they are informative, instructive, and, entertaining. However, there are some essays in the book where the author manifests his own biases, and with his personal comments transforms the essays at times into his own personal diary. But then again, the book is, *Inside Philippine Movies*, and no matter how the reader looks at it, the essays are true, behind the reel and for real. Readers of *Inside Philippine Movies* will find the book true to its title. The book is a look inside the movies. After reading *Inside Philippine Movies*, the reader will know more of the inside of the Philippine film industry, and get to see, feel, and sense, not only the "reel-ity" of persons in and behind film, but their reality as well.

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A Matter Of Language: Where English Fails. By Rolando S. Tinio.
Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1990.

In the Foreword to this volume, N.V.M. Gonzalez writes: "After a sojourn abroad of nearly 17 years, how fulfilling it was for me to read in the *Philippine Daily Globe* Tinio's essays on Filipino and our twists and turns on the road to achieving a national language. Gone the mumbo-jumbo of the past

from both purists and vernacularists alike. We were done, likewise, with the root-word hunters and the nitpickers. The message we were getting was: we have a language; let us use it. You have to say this with some urgency and considerable wit besides, especially these days. Here, arguably, are our most engaging essays on an inevitably necessary subject." (p. ix)

Tinio says himself, in the "Author's Note," to *A Matter Of Language*, that he has "included in this volume essays I wrote more than ten years ago in order to indicate how long I have been ruminating on the language problem and, more important, to show how negligibly things have changed since 1976. The same observations could have been made a decade later, with only one significant change: Pilipino has become Filipino" (p. xiii). Tinio's insights have come to him "not through scientific study or research but only through actual language use as a poet, drama director and literature teacher trained in the exegetical method espoused by American New Critics in the '50s" (p. xiii). He confesses that his greatest epiphany came when he started to write poetry in Tagalog. "The language opened up to me an entire universe of subject matter completely hidden to me by my poetry in English. While I do not claim that Filipinos cannot explore intimate subject matter through English, I will have to admit that this particular Filipino cannot" (p. xiii). These original insights about the nature of language and thought-and-feeling which he sensed, Tinio says, were systematized when he was introduced to language philosophy while taking up graduate courses in philosophy at the Ateneo de Manila University (p. xiii).

Tinio's background and credentials make him admirably suited to write on the language problem in the Philippines. He was born in Tondo, Manila, in 1937. He graduated with a Ph.B. from the University of Santo Tomas in 1955 and an M.F.A.: Creative Writing (Poetry) from the State University of Iowa in 1958. He taught English, theater arts courses and Pilipino at the Ateneo de Manila University through 1958-1975, after which he joined the Research and Analysis Center of the Department of Public Information, under whose auspices he organized Teatro Pilipino with the cooperation of the Cultural Center of the Philippines. He is known as a stage director, actor and designer. But he is essentially a poet, originally in English and since 1965 in his native language Tagalog. He has also written short plays in English and Tagalog and critical essays, mostly in English. He has been translating foreign plays in and from English for production by Teatro Pilipino since 1976.

In 1977, Tinio began writing a column, "Touchstones," for *Metro Manila* and in 1986-87 "Totally Tinio" for *The Manila Chronicle*. He wrote "In Black and White" for the *Philippine Daily Globe* from 1987 to mid-December 1989 after which he resumed writing "Totally Tinio" for *The Manila Chronicle*. *A Matter Of Language* gathers together the articles on language which Tinio wrote for these various publications. Six of the articles are from "Touch-

stones" to indicate, as Tinio himself points out, how long the problem of language has been with us, and how little has actually changed in the problem over the years. Thirty odd essays are taken from "In Black and White" and are dated some ten years after the "Touchstone" articles.

The problems which Tinio discusses are the inevitable and obvious ones. They are political, social, philosophical, cultural and nationalistic. Tinio touches every base, and makes profound sense at every point. Particularly impressive are his three articles on "Why Tagalog?" and his three essays on "The Bilingual Fallacy." The seminal essay, of course, is the first in Part Two of the collection: "Does Filipino Really Exist?" The subsequent essays on Filipino explore some very intriguing areas—"Teaching in Filipino," "Gradual Filipino," "Creating Filipino," "Fixing Filipino" and "Filipino, Deep and Shallow." "Resisting Filipino" and "Pure and Impure Filipino" make a considerable amount of sense at the present point in the language discussion (controversy?) in the Philippines. Tinio makes great sense and writes (in English!) with a master's touch.

The Appendix to the present collection includes a paper read by Tinio at a national seminar on Bilingual Education at the Ateneo de Manila from 27 March to 6 April 1974. Tinio's paper which is entitled: "Pilipino as a Medium For Higher Learning," strikes at the very heart of the problem. "I suppose I am suggesting that a native Tagalog who cannot express complicated thinking in Tagalog has not really been doing complicated thinking but has merely been remembering and reciting English statements which convey complicated thought. In other words, if he cannot express his philosophy or social science, his chemistry or mathematics, in Tagalog, he is giving evidence, not of the inadequacy of Tagalog, but of the inadequacy of his grasp of philosophy, social science, chemistry or mathematics" (p. 123).

Asia 2020: A Vision of East Asia in The Year 2020. By Victor A. Lim and Erlinda L. Marty. Makati: Asian Institute of Management, 1993.

East Asia in the year 2020 will be the home of the fastest growing economies in the world during the last decades of the twentieth century, and will have sustained that growth into the next two decades of the twenty-first. This is the vision that emerged when scenarios of eight East Asian countries were generated and combined. Some of these scenarios grouped East Asia with China and Japan to form a dynamic Asia Pacific region. They also justified calling the next hundred years the "Pacific Century."

The idea of writing a scenario of the future was conceived early in 1991 at the organizational meeting of the twenty-fifth Anniversary Celebration Committee of the Asian Institute of Management in Manila. The Institute planned to celebrate its first quarter century in February 1993. It was pro-