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Soltero, The Screenplay

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"Ang Makata sa Panahon ng Makina." Kabilang si Almario (Rio Alma) sa makatang kampus ng dekada 60 at itinuring na isa sa pangunahing tagapagbago ng panulaan hanggang sa kasalukuyan.

Ang kanyang aklat na "Ang Walong Dekada ng Makabagong Dulang Pilipino" ay maituturing na kauna-unahang mapamili at masinop na paglipon sa mga tanging makata at tula ng ika-20 dantaon. Dito masasalamín ang kanyang matatag na pagkatarok sa pulso ng panulaang Pilipino sa loob ng nasabing panahon.

Ang kagalingan ni Virgilio S. Almario ay bunga ng kanyang pagsasaliksik at pagsubaybay sa naging takbo ng panulaan at ng kanyang paggalang sa mga makatang humuhubog sa kasalukuyang pagtula pagkaraan ng panahon ni Balagtas.

Bukod sa pihikang panlasa ng isang makata at kritiko, mapapansin agad sa koleksiyong ito ang isang bago ngunit matatag na paninindigan ng editor hinggil sa daloy at tunguhin ng panulaang Pilipino ngayon. Naglalangkap dito ang karaniwang kagalingan ni Virgilio S. Almario bilang kritiko at siya bilang Rio Alma, ang makata.

Tunay na mahalaga sa sinumang mag-aaral na naglalayong pag-igihin o pagibayuhin pa ang kanilang kasanayan sa larangan ng pagsulat ang pagbabasa ng mga aklat tulad ng "Patnubay sa Masinop na Pagsulat." Hindi lamang nito mapapalawak ang kaalaman ng isang mambabasa kaugnay ng mga batas at tuntunin sa wastong paggamit ng wikang Pilipino, kundi sa kabuuan, lubusang magiging mabisa ang pagpapahayag ng manunulat. Maipapakita o magagamit niya sa kanyang pagdadalubhasa tungo sa mabisang paraan ang kanyang kaka-yahan sa pagiging masinop.

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SOLTERO. THE SCREENPLAY. By Bienvenido M. Noriega, Jr. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1985. vi, 159 pages.

It is common knowledge that a number of Filipino feature films have been shot without a screenplay, or a scriptwriter. For a time, Filipino moviegoers couldn't care less. However, things seem to have changed in the last decade. Some Filipino scriptwriters have made such a great impact on the industry, as well as its audience, that a few have not only rivalled the popularity of film stars and directors but have had their scripts published as well. Ricardo Lee, in fact, has had four scripts published in three separate volumes—*Brutal*, *Salome*, *Moral*, and *Bukas . . . May Pangarap*. These books have been very valuable to students of film and literature, as well as to aspiring scriptwriters.

And now comes *Soltero*, the book.

April of 1984 saw the Filipino film industry being mildly shocked by the moderate commercial success of a movie that was simply about a bachelor looking for love. Devoid of the excessive sex and violence that characterized most of the Filipino films being shown then, "Soltero" nevertheless became popular, especially among students and young executives. Not a few people confessed to having shed not a few tears through the movie. Film critics were one in praising Pio de Castro III's fine direction and Jay Ilagan's sensitive performance as the *soltero*. The screenplay, however, received mixed reviews from both film critics and movie fans. It was alternately called moving, melodramatic, significant, and irrelevant. Some praised its "lyrical" Filipino; others deplored its "unnatural" dialogue.

The book, then, will be very valuable for people who wish to make up their own minds about the worth of the screenplay, especially since the movie is not out on videotape yet. But the book serves a purpose greater than that. It may in fact be so far the most significant published Filipino screenplay for researchers and critics because it includes materials not found in previously published screenplays. Aside from the filmed script, *Soltero* contains the dialogue and directions for scenes actually shot but not included in the final film; Rolando Tinio's English subtitles for the movie; reviews of the movie by Dante Argañoza, Mario Bautista, Behn Cervantes, Jose Lardizabal, Bienvenido Lumbea, Emmanuel A. Reyes, and Nestor U. Torre (as previously published in national newspapers), as well as by a certain Rod C. (Noriega's favorite review, written by an officemate on whom Noriega had partially based the character of Crispin, the *soltero*); and a short note about Noriega. One wishes, however, that the section on the scriptwriter were more substantial, especially since it acknowledges that Noriega and his character, Crispin, share much in common ("iisa ang timpla ng dugo't utak, at parehong-pareho ang mga hinaing ng kaluluwa" p. 159). This would have been helpful to researchers and critics who believe that the writer's life is important in understanding his work.

All in all, *Soltero*, the book, is a most welcome addition to the unfortunately short list of publications on Filipino film and is a must for film students and everyone else interested in film. It can also serve as a substitute for "Soltero," the film, for those who would like to be touched once more by Noriega's poignant tale and to perhaps shed a few more pleasant tears. It worked that way for me.

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