



Empire of Memory

Eric Gamalinda , Ricardo M. de Ungria (editor)

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This is a land both fact and fiction, where generations leave no trace of themselves and everything is constantly wiped out by clockwork destruction: typhoon, tsunami, earthquake, drought. Because of this we have no memory of ourselves: we remember only the last deluge, the last seismic upheaval.

Two friends are hired by Marcos to rewrite Philippine history. Their mission: to make it appear that Marcos was destined to rule the country in perpetuity. Working from an office called Agency for the Scientific Investigation of the Absurd, they embark on a journey that will take them across a surreal panorama of Philippine politics and history, and in the process question all their morals and beliefs. This landscape includes mythological sultans, mercenaries, the Beatles, messianic Amerasian rock stars, faith healers, spies, torturers, sycophants, social climbers, sugar barons, millenarian vigilantes, generals and communists--the dizzying farrago of lovers and sinners who populate the country's incredible story. By the end of their project--and this breathtaking novel--the reader emerges from a world that is at once familiar and unbelievable. It's what real life might look like if both heaven and hell were crammed into it, and all its creatures were let loose.

Empire of Memory Details

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Apple says

Now this is a book that every Filipino should read. Eric Gamalinda captures the very essence of how Filipinos endure despite all the bad things that happened in our shared past. In addition, he also effectively conveys our gullibility, mysticism, disillusionment, yearning, strength, and our many flaws. But despite the latter, Gamalinda places his focus on the number one strength of the Filipinos - our HOPE. We may be ruled by corrupt officials, stricken by natural disasters, may find ourselves without a job, a house, without money, and yet we can still smile and love and believe. I appreciated the great many details in the book - snippets of important history, popular culture, descriptions of places, people and things. The stories and situations depicted felt so familiar, as if the words were written for me, for my countrymen. Reading 'Empire of Memory' truly made me look back on my own treasure trove of memories. SUCH A GOOD READ.

Gena Myrtle says

I fell in love from the first page down to the last. The main characters working for the government—and in fact getting more favor from the Palace by the day—start questioning their work, their morals, their future, in the hands of an administration they knew was bound to fall. And it's not just them but everyone in this story. This novel is a fight between ideology and finding one's true self that may or may not be congruent to one's ideals for the country. This reminds me of what Marx one said that every part of history is a class struggle; but after reading this I became more firm that within every class, a person struggles with one's self: the contradiction between one's material needs, vainglorious attempts at fame and legacy, familial love, and political ideals. Even after the revolution, the fight—among classes, between political factions, and with one's self—continues. Not your common Marcos era book.

Ivan Labayne says

nagkape si Sal X, pero di sya si Sal Paradise. Inimbestigahan ni Al at Jun ang absurd, pero di sila makatingin sa mga sarili at ke Marcos o Ninoy. Halos walang boses to

Don Castillo says

A historical-political-adventure novel about deception, censorship, treachery, activism, and love (for family and for the country).

Alan Warren says

Extremely entertaining story enriched by a background of assumed historical fact, it's really hard to tell if it's a factual background as the book is about recording history with a flavour that supports the financier of the work. You'll need a dictionary to read this book, I did; the author, Filipino by birth, has a far superior command of the English language than I. It's a good read, enjoyed it immensely!

Anna says

Ambitious and expansive. It's cleverly constructed, and the characters are complex and engaging. It handles the history of the Philippines deftly without ever seeming like an exposition dump. Highly recommended!

Gaby says

A wonderfully rich novel, this covers Philippine current history with a deft hand and a strong sense of humor. Magical realism in the Southeast Asian context with jabs at Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, Eric Gamalinda weaves in history with fantasy. The scene where Imelda Marcos had the Beatles beaten up on their way to the airport was both hilarious and true - she felt insulted when they refused to do a command performance in Malacanang Palace during martial law so her henchmen attacked them! This is one of the best works of contemporary Philippine literature. Highly recommended!

Lit React says

For my money this book is a strong contender for the great Philippine novel. During my stay in college, I got the impression that the work traditionally feted as the great Philippine novel is *A Woman with Two Navels*. Don't you believe it. *Empire* and *Woman* topically share the shame theme of identity and searching. The title alone of *Woman* implies two mothers, or at least, two sources of nourishment for an infant. Personally though I found *Woman* to be staid, and well, boring. (This is not to knock Nick Joaquin, I like some of his short stories, particularly *May Day Eve*.) *Empire* on the other hand is alive; it's opening chapter after all details how Filipinos chased the Beatles out of the country! Pop, love, treachery, rebellion, fantasies, hip, remorse. If for nothing else *Empire* captures perfectly what a crazy country the Philippines is, an exasperating, befuddled country of forgetful romantics.

Dean says

This one I found difficult to finish. Not that it isn't well written—the language is awkward in some spots but overall nothing remarkably bad—but it groans under the weight of its own story. There are more characters than we know what to do with. And at the end of it Al didn't feel to me like he developed all that much.

I felt the same way after reading Syjuco's *Ilustrado*. Both novels seem like an attempt to catalogue all of the ills of the Philippines, to paint this big, vast (middle, maybe even upper, class) view of the country. I think that's a project too big for one book, or even one author.

Hazzelle Lewinski says

Every Filipino should read this! The untold history

Chrissie the Reformed Book Hoarder says

3.5
