

# Unveiling the Hidden Narratives: Imagining Manila Literature Empire And Orientalism

In the realm of literature, certain places hold an allure that is hard to resist. These places become symbols of inspiration and imagination for writers, creating a literature empire that captures the essence of diverse cultures. Manila, the bustling capital of the Philippines, has been one such place that has stimulated the minds of esteemed authors throughout history. From Jose Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" to Miguel Syjuco's "Ilustrado," Manila has emerged as a prominent setting in the world of literature.

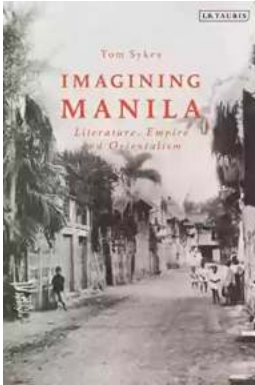
As we delve into the rich tapestry of Manila's literary heritage, we must also examine the impact of orientalism on these narratives. Orientalism, a term popularized by Edward Said, refers to the exoticizing and romanticizing of the East by Western cultures. Manila, being a city steeped in colonial history, often becomes a canvas for such orientalist stereotypes, both in local and international literature.

## The Legacy of Manila in Literature

Manila possesses a distinct charm that has captivated writers for centuries. Its strategic geographic location as a gateway to Asia, combined with its cultural diversity and historical significance, makes it an intriguing setting for creative minds. From the Spanish colonial era to the American occupation and beyond, Manila has witnessed a myriad of experiences that have shaped the city and its people.

**Imagining Manila: Literature, Empire and Orientalism** by Tom Sykes (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5



Language	: English
File size	: 716 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
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Print length	: 217 pages
Screen Reader	: Supported



One of the most notable literary works depicting Manila is Jose Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere" (Touch Me Not). Published in 1887, this novel explores the social and political landscape of the Philippines under Spanish rule. Rizal masterfully uses Manila as a backdrop to reveal the injustices inflicted upon the indigenous population, highlighting the oppressive colonial regime.

Fast forward to the 21st century, Miguel Syjuco's "Ilustrado" takes readers on a literary journey through present-day Manila and its complex history. This novel, which won the prestigious Man Asian Literary Prize in 2008, explores the idea of identity and the multifaceted nature of Filipino society. Through richly layered storytelling, Syjuco provides a modern perspective on Manila, unearthing hidden narratives and challenging established stereotypes.

## **The Influence of Orientalism**

When examining Manila's literary empire, one cannot overlook the influence of orientalism. Throughout history, Western literature has often portrayed the East as mysterious, exotic, and primitive. Orientalist narratives tend to reinforce stereotypes and create a distorted image of cultures and societies.

Manila, being a former colony of Spain and the United States, has been portrayed through these orientalist lenses. The allure of the "exotic Orient" has led to the perpetuation of certain clichés in literature, creating a distorted image of Manila and its people.

However, it is important to recognize that not all narratives succumb to orientalist tendencies. Authors like Rizal and Syjuco, although writing within the backdrop of orientalism, challenge these stereotypes through their storytelling. They offer a nuanced portrayal of Manila, moving beyond the exotic facade and delving into the complexities of its society.

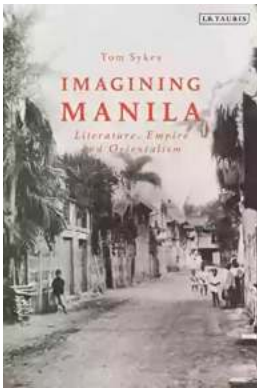
## **The Reimagining of Manila's Literature Empire**

As we reflect on Manila's literature empire, it is crucial to question and transcend the boundaries constructed by orientalism. By embracing diverse voices and narratives, we can redefine the literary landscape of Manila and empower marginalized perspectives.

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of Filipino authors exploring Manila's narratives through a different lens. Lourde de Veyra's "Super Panalo Sounds!" and F.H. Batacan's "Smaller and Smaller Circles" are just two examples of contemporary literature giving voice to the underrepresented in Manila's society.

Furthermore, the rise of digital platforms has opened new avenues for Filipino writers to share their stories and challenge orientalist stereotypes. Through online publications and social media, writers can shape public perceptions of Manila, presenting a more authentic and inclusive depiction of the city and its diverse communities.

In the realm of Manila's literature empire, the influence of orientalism is undeniable. However, it is essential to critically analyze these narratives and the impact they have on shaping cultural perceptions. By encouraging diverse voices and challenging stereotypes, we can reimagine Manila's literary landscape, creating a space that celebrates the multifaceted nature of the city and its people.



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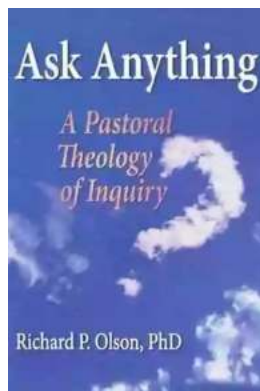
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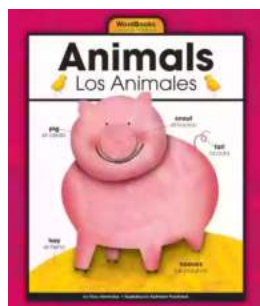
The city of Manila is uniquely significant to Philippine, Southeast Asian and world history. It played a key role in the rise of Western colonial mercantilism in Asia, the extinction of the Spanish Empire and the ascendancy of the USA to global imperial hegemony, amongst other events. This book examines British and American writing on the city, situating these representations within scholarship on empire, orientalism and US, Asian and European political history. Through analysis of novels, memoirs, travelogues and journalism written about Manila by Westerners since the early eighteenth century, Tom Sykes builds a picture of Western attitudes towards the city and the wider Philippines, and the mechanics by which these came to dominate the discourse.

This study uncovers to what extent Western literary tropes and representational models have informed understandings of the Philippines, in the West and elsewhere, and the types of counter-narrative which have emerged in the Philippines in response to them.



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