



A Memory Called Empire

Arkady Martine

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Ambassador Mahit Dzmare arrives in the center of the multi-system Teixcalaanli Empire only to discover that her predecessor, the previous ambassador from their small but fiercely independent mining Station, has died. But no one will admit that his death wasn't an accident--or that Mahit might be next to die, during a time of political instability in the highest echelons of the imperial court.

Now, Mahit must discover who is behind the murder, rescue herself, and save her Station from Teixcalaan's unceasing expansion--all while navigating an alien culture that is all too seductive, engaging in intrigues of her own, and hiding a deadly technological secret--one that might spell the end of her Station and her way of life--or rescue it from annihilation.

A Memory Called Empire Details

Date :

ISBN :

Author : Arkady Martine

Format :

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Space, Space Opera

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From Reader Review A Memory Called Empire for online ebook

Dianne says

My Rating: 3.5 Stars

A detailed preview that contains massive world-building and a bit of intrigue as one woman begins her new ambassadorship amidst political unrest only to discover her predecessor may not have died of natural causes.

Heavy on small details that can be distracting, hopefully it will lead to smooth sailing throughout the rest of the book!

True science fiction/fantasy fans are going to want to add this to their reading list, the entire book, NOT the preview!

I received a complimentary ARC PREVIEW edition from Macmillan-Tor/Forge Tor Books.

Series: Teixcalaan - Book 1

Publisher: Tor Books (March 26, 2019)

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Genre: Scifi | Fantasy

Full Book Print Length: 464 pages

Available from: Amazon | Barnes & Noble

For Reviews, Giveaways, Fabulous Book News, follow: <http://tometender.blogspot.com>

Elizabeth Bear says

An exceptional first novel recommended for fans of Cherryh, Leckie, Banks, and Asimov.

Sana says

HOLY THRONE GOALSSSS. I love everything about the cover, really.

Also, 2019 books are already winning so hard

'A Memory Called Empire is a fast-paced, character-led tale of empire, intrigue and rebellion with a murder at its heart.'

MY KIND OF SCI-FI, YESSSS

Petrik says

ARC provided by the publisher—Tor Books—in exchange for an honest review.

Easily one of the cleverest sci-fi debuts I've read so far.

A Memory Called Empire is Arkady Martine's debut novel and the first installment in the *Teixcalaan* series. Ambassador Mahit Dzmare arrives in Teixcalaan only to find out that the previous ambassador from the same mining station as hers has died. Contrary to her belief, nobody wants to admit that his death wasn't an accident, and now it's up to Mahit to uncover who's behind the murder. At the same time, she also has to save the place where she came from—Lsel—from the Teixcalaan expansion. *A Memory Called Empire* at its core is a murder mystery story. If you start this book expecting tons of action, there's a chance that you'll be sorely disappointed. The main charm of the book lies in Mahit's challenges in navigating the unfamiliar culture of Teixcalaan; it's a book heavily centered on politics. In my opinion, this novel was a bit reminiscent of *The Traitor Baru Cormorant* by Seth Dickinson. The main difference between the two is that while I disliked *The Traitor Baru Cormorant*, I highly enjoyed reading this one due to a superb prose that clicked with me.

“The problem with sending messages was that people responded to them, which meant one had to write more messages in reply.”

It did, however, take me a long time to be wholly invested in the main character; almost 50% into the book truthfully speaking. I wasn't really impressed by Mahit's character at first, and the fact that the story was almost entirely told through her perspective actually made me think that the book wasn't working for me. However, I was gladly proven wrong. The second half of the book did more than redeem what I initially thought was lacking in the book—fascinating characters. By then, I've come to realize that the reason I had some issues with Mahit in the earlier half of the book wasn't that she was poorly written, but it was because she needed some time for her personality to shine and she hasn't really interacted much with the main side characters; Three Seagrass and Twelve Azalea. These two characters truly made Mahit's personality bloom. The unlikely relationships that Mahit formed with these two characters were utterly delightful to read and I loved reading every moment of it. Eventually, the novel ended up becoming an exhilarating ride due to the gradual increase in tension and most of all, my growing investment in the characters and their fates. Plus, Martine was brilliantly able to make weird character names work. I'm not kidding, I've read a lot of books and this was literally the first time I've read characters' names as original as those in *A Memory Called Empire*. Here's an example:

“‘I am Six Helicopter,’ said the man—Mahit stared at him, and wondered when he'd learned to say his name with not only a straight face but with that degree of smugness”

Once you've started reading this novel, I think you will easily agree with me that Arkady Martine is a very intellectual author. The reason why I say this is mainly because of the incredibly intricate world-building, and Martine's implementation of it into the storyline. I won't lie, I haven't read sci-fi/space opera as much as I've read epic fantasy. However, from my experience so far, the world-building in sci-fi/space opera rarely reach the intricacy that can easily be found in epic fantasy. However, *A Memory Called Empire* amazed my vision and imagination with its super detailed world-building, and its seamless integration into every aspect of the book. Technology, culture, memory, legacy, language, citizen's behavior, identity crisis, and history, they were all written impeccably. Most of the novel was told in the past tense, but there were a few times where the narrative shifts to present tense and Martine nailed this transition wonderfully. Not only did the changes in tenses feel natural, it was also necessary to enhance the frantic scenes portrayed. I'd like to also add it's better to take your time reading this book. Digest each word slowly, because there're a lot of nuances to appreciate in the multi-layered world-building. Plus, Martine didn't spend a lot of time explaining the terminology; it's up to the reader to define what the terms mean through the context of the story and narrative. Luckily, there's a glossary near the end of the book that will help readers a lot in understanding what each in-world term means, or who the characters are.

"Histories are always worse by the time they get written down."

Written with finesse, *A Memory Called Empire* didn't feel like a debut effort at all. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have guessed this is a debut if no one has told me about it. The prose was so vivid, engaging, and easy to follow despite a myriad of terminologies and unique names to remember. The intro of my review said crystal clear - it's very easy for me to claim that *A Memory Called Empire* is one of the cleverest sci-fi debuts I've ever read. There are a lot of promising books being published in 2019, and I'm pretty damn sure that Arkady Martine's skillfully crafted debut will be one of the books that many readers rave about in the future.

"Better to take action than to be paralyzed by the thousands of shifting possibilities."

Official release date: March 26th, 2019

You can buy the book with free shipping by clicking this [link](#)!

The quotes in this review were taken from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.

You can find [this](#) and the rest of my reviews at [Novel Notions](#)

Cindy ☆? Savage Queen ? says

My ARC has arrived!!!

Liviu says

the writing style just didn't work out for me which was regrettable since this one looked really cool

Kogiopsis says

If you enjoy *The Goblin Emperor* or Aliette de Bodard's Xuya Universe, you'll want to pre-order this book ASAP. Same goes if you were intrigued by *The Traitor Baru Cormorant*, whether or not you've read or enjoyed it.

Masterfully intricate politics, subtleties of language and character, and interplanetary drama played in tiny gestures at social gatherings. Arkady Martine has hit it out of the park. I'll post a full review closer to the release date.

Aliette says

An intricate, layered tale of empire, personal ambition, political obligations and interstellar intrigue. Vivid and delightfully inventive.

Fran says

Still trying to find my words for this one. Keep coming back around to: Exquisite and Smart as hell.

Sherwood Smith says

It I had known that I would only get four chapters in this NetGalley "ARC" I would not have volunteered for it, as I really dislike reading part of a book, especially if one is obliged to review it without seeing the whole. Four chapters is usually mostly setup.

And so it is here. We're introduced to what promises to be a vast space opera universe as a (relatively) young diplomat, Mahit Dzmare, is sent to the enigmatic and culturally complex Teixcalaan as an ambassador from her home station. She's sent to investigate the mysterious fate of her predecessor in a culture that is supposed to be peaceful and civilized.

In the last chapter of the preview, we discover that yeah, not so much on the peaceful and civilized--but she has no idea why.

What little can be glimpsed of Teixcalaan in four chapters is tantalizing. I liked Mahit, and really liked the insouciant Three Seabreezes, her guide. There were some small debut issues (like *a lot of italicized words* simply *everywhere* for *emphasis* that didn't seem really necessary) but those are small bumps in an otherwise engaging road.

I really want to read the rest.

Preview provided by NetGalley

Alice says

TW/CW : I can't think of any except maybe death and kinda disturbing funeral rituals

2.5/5

I would not have finished this book if it wasn't an ARC and I felt like I had to power through it and review the whole thing.

It's **not a bad book** by any means though, it just wasn't for me personally.

We follow Mahit who just became the ambassador of her station in this huge empire. As she comes into the capital she realizes her predecessor is dead, and she suspects he was killed. **Court intrigue and political maneuvers** will ensue.

It's a politics and diplomacy-heavy book. It's very smart and even **intellectual**, Martine created an empire that is all about poetry and language. You'll read long paragraphs just about the language of the empire and the linguistic of it.

I like politics and diplomacy but I also need some.. entertainment when I read a book. **I didn't feel like this one really had any**. There's kind of a murder mystery but there's no reveals, no surprising moments. We understand very early who probably killed and we don't...really care ? Mahit doesn't either because she has bigger problems by then. But those problems are not really much more exciting for us as readers, or at least for me.

The whole part of the book (and it's an important part) about **language construct, linguistics and poetic structures** really wasn't for me. I do not care. I think if you are a writer or a poet yourself, if you studied english lit in university or anything like that it could totally be your jam, but it just wasn't mine. My native tongue isn't english and I never studied english above high school. I had some (french) linguistic classes in uni and it bored me to tears... So yeah, I don't think I was the target audience here, if I had known how much it relied on language I might not have picked it up but I didn't realize that before it was "too late".

Also of course there's that whole storyline about the Imago Machine, a technology that only Mahit's station uses, bringing the memories of now dead people in the head th next generation so that they never forget anything about their past, about their competences and experiences.

Mahit's imago malfunctions very early on in the story and she is left without one. So the fun part that could have brought that technology into the story.. Wasn't there. The imago was mostly used as a political pawn... How frustrating.

Characters and worldbuilding

Some of the problem might also come from the fact that I didn't feel like the characters were really fleshed out. They all had their use and we get a general idea of who they are but..Also, not really. Even Mahit feels **hollow** to me when I think about her now.

I don't think there was much worldbuilding either. Those parts were actually used to talk about language and poetry mostly. Other than that we know that the Teixcalaani do not smile widely, make personal space very important and... love poetry. I cannot tell you one other thing about the world.

This book spends so much time telling us about Mahit's state of mind right then and there, and talk to us about language that it forgot to really develop the characters and the world. **It's pretty, it's super smart and intellectual but it's missing something.** Something that make it real and human. There was some of it, some scenes here and there really brought me what I wanted... But most of the time it didn't, and I felt bored.

To finish on a positive note, I did enjoy the relationship between the 2 main characters, Mahit and Three Seagrass, it was one of the part that helped make the story a bit more human (though it wasn't enough, there wasn't that many scenes like that between the two. I mean, they are always together so there's many scenes between the two but if you remove the scenes where they strictly talk about politics and what to do next there's not that many left).

In my mind, it's like if you took the Imperial radch from Ancillary Justice but didn't have any AI or the vengeance plotline, with the technology of Ninefox Gambit, but no battles or active war; also language instead of maths. So it really depends on your tastes with this one.

Even though I didn't enjoy myself at all, I don't want to give it less than 2.5 (and 3 on GR), because there was nothing wrong with it, I couldn't see any problematic parts, nothing infuriated me. I was just bored.

ARC provided by Netgalley and Tor books in exchange for an honest review

Chris says

copy from Netgalley in exchange for a review

TL;DR: Just finished, on a train quick notes: Complex, nuanced, multilayered, thoughtful. Emotional. Absolutely wrecked me. It's a **brilliant** book in all senses. Read it.

Lengthier below:

I'm going to put my cards on the table here, before going any further. I think Arkady Martine's *A Memory Called Empire* is an absolutely brilliant book. It has everything I want in sci-fi, wrapped up in one very imaginative package. It asks complicated, thoughtful questions about society, about culture, cultural appropriation, and what empire actually means. It even provides some answers, and not all from the same perspective. It does this by giving us complex characters, with their own hopes, drives and fears, and putting them into a rich, vividly imagined world. It's a world with tensions between great political powers and those just outside their reach, and where politics can have swift and deadly personal consequences.

Yeah, I liked this one.

It starts with Mahit Dzmare, the new ambassador from a small, single system mining concern to the towering (and difficult to spell) Teixcalaanli Empire. Mahit has immersed herself in Teixcalaanli culture since childhood to prepare for this role, but been thrust into it not entirely prepared, due to the sudden demise of her predecessor. Teixcalaanli is the lead weight on the surrounding galactic sheet. Their ships are everywhere, heavily armed and exuding authority. But what the story shows us is more about their soft power. The way that Teixcalaanli culture wraps itself around and through the cultures surrounding it, so that the songs they sing are Imperial songs – or derived from them. So that the books they read are Imperial books – or drawn

from them. So that, eventually, the habits of thought for these non-Imperial territories become conditioned into Teixcalaanli habits of thought. So that they see themselves as outsiders in their own cultures, so that they see Teixcalaanli as the Teixcalaanli do – as the centre of the universe. Mahit is a product of this strategy; she knows the culture of the empire she is being sent to treat with. Though proud of her own people, and what they've accomplished, she is riven by cracks of cultural confusion. In being proud of her differences, or conforming to their expectations of her differences, is she perhaps falling into the mode of the outsider that the Teixcalaan expect? Or can those be leveraged to her advantage? Similarly, in finding a lodestar in Teixcalaan, in appreciating its traditions, literature, media, politics – is she left little more than an ersatz portrayal of an outwith barbarian? Or is there the potential to craft a unique seeming from the blending of these values? Mahit is smart, pragmatic, incisive – and even as she's thinking about who she is, and the way she portrays herself, those around her are doing the same, adjusting their expectations in light of her arrival.

So yes. This is a book that has a lot to say about identity. About what the conception of self entails, and how we shape ourselves in a given environment. At the larger level, it explores this by looking at the differences between the Teixcalaanli and Mahit's station home – and at the casual arrogance and force, along with an undeniably rich history which allows the Teixcalaan to see themselves as the centre of the universe. At the micro level, it's about Mahit, and the way she handles being very far from home, and how she starts asking and answering questions around what home actually is.

Which may sound frightfully esoteric, but...isn't, really. It's a big question wrapped in more immediate ones – in the day to day politics of the empire, in Mahit's investigation into the demise of her predecessor. In the poems sung during marches by protestors, and at wakes. In the way that the Teixcalaanli see and question themselves. It's everywhere, and that means you get to think about the big question of identity while also wondering whether Mahit will, for example, manage to survive her first night in the Teixcalaanli Empire without being assassinated.

We'll come back to that in a second.

Before we do – I've talked about Mahit's struggle with identity, as part of an exploration of one of the text's larger themes. And it's fascinating, multi-layered, and like all good questions, raises more off the back of itself. But I also want to talk about Mahit more precisely.

As our interlocutor, she's fiercely clever, thinks fast and speaks fast as well. Having been flung into this shark-pool at short notice she, like us, is somewhat at a loss, and this allows us to be brought along for her journey while looking on her with a sympathetic eye. I felt for Mahit throughout. Her confusion, hurt, damage and determination all hit with the punch of precision-crafted steel. Not a super-powered avatar of justice, but a person trying to do their level best in difficult circumstances – something we can all, perhaps, identify with. I cheered her victories, and sorrowed in her defeats. What I really want to say here is that Mahit felt real. Lovingly, sympathetically, but honestly rendered, and entirely believable.

This extended out to the rest of the cast as well. The Teixcalaan have something of a stiff upper lip approach, cloaking emotion behind a façade – but in between the cracks of those Mahit runs into, you can feel a fire absolutely blazing. They are, much like Mahit, fierce people, proud of their culture and what they do – and if their empire is an engine of expansion and slow cultural infusion and homogeneity, the people within it would perhaps argue that it has to be so, and that the propagation of their civilisation and culture to the outer reaches is a necessity. Arrogance, yes, and it leaves so many questions about colonialism, and the liminality of both physical borders and ephemeral identity – but arrogance which comes well argued, and makes both Mahit and us stop and think before challenging them, as they must be challenged.

As part of that, it's a pure delight to see The City, the capital city of the empire, whose name underscores what its inhabitants see as its central nature to the universe. It's beautiful, connected, and in many ways vital. It feels like a real city, with its soaring columns, utilitarian government ministries, and suburbs you might not want to visit on your own at night. It contrasts wonderfully with the claustrophobic, intimate spaces of Mahit's home station, where the sky is something which happens to other people, and where their methods of cultural retention are less orthodox than the Teixcalaanli's worldwide network.

Anyway, that's the big questions again. But in between those, we see a mechanical beast of a station, ticking along through the centuries, with a lively cultural scene of its own, determined to hold its independence against the far larger and viciously enticing Teixcalaanli. Again, both feel like real places. Both have completely different moods, the people who we see are, on both sides, still people, but their viewpoint is coloured by their environs and their history to make their approaches totally different. The history of the Teixcalaanli oozes off the page, and you'll find you suddenly know a lot about it, perhaps unconsciously. What we get of the station is perhaps more direct, but no less impactful. Both feel like lived-in spaces, both feel like you could wake up there tomorrow, feel the clank of your feet on the station deckplates, or breathe the scent of the flowers in a Teixcalaanli night garden.

The story though. OK. It's great. I'm not going to spoil it, but it starts with a mystery. What happened to Mahit's predecessor? And how can she keep the charming, intelligent, beautiful, thoughtful Teixcalaanli from absorbing her station? Should she even want to? There's...a lot going on in the answers to those questions. Some of it involves politics – the dialogue there is absolutely pitch perfect, often wry, often viciously funny. Some of it involves violence, politics by other means. There's assassinations (as alluded to earlier!), murders, explosions and investigations. Underneath all that is a slow-boiling tension which kept me turning pages until late in the night, because I needed to know what happened next. The story, like any good mystery, hides a lot from you, and then lets you back behind the curtain as it goes on. The pace remorselessly ratchets up, and the conclusion left me breathless.

As I said earlier: Yeah, I liked this one. There's so much going on, and it all manages to fit together absolutely perfectly.

Short version: If you're here for the world-building, this book has your back. If you're here for the characterisation, this book has your back. If you're here for a plot filled with political intrigue and occasional explosions, this book has your back. If you're here for the big ideas, the way that this text asks them and weaves it through the narrative is incredibly impressive – reminiscent of the best of Iain M. Banks, while being startlingly original in its approach. So there, too, this book has your back.

Should you be reading this? Yes, yes you should. It's a brilliant debut, and I'm already craving more. Go out and pick up a copy right now, read it, and thank me later.

Hélène Louise says

4,5 stars, review to come near publishing date

A very personal and captivating story, but not a read for any science-fiction lover.

I'll explain all this in my review, waiting for publishing it as asked by the publisher :)

Dave says

"A Memory Called Empire" is a densely-packed, detailed story of interstellar palace intrigue. Those expecting shoot-em-up action need to slow it down a little here. It's a very thick story that takes a while to be fully revealed. One of the central themes is past lives memory in the form of imago machines much like the past lives of Frank Herbert's Bene Gesserits and often a struggle for mind domination with a ghost from the past. Other themes involve how a minority culture on a distant frontier maintains its political and cultural independence in the face of a world-devouring empire that swallows up planets and absorbs the planet's technology and culture, spitting it back out as part of the empire's culture much as the world Hellenized under Alexander the Great or Romanized under the Roman Empire. Most of all, it's a story of a barbarian ambassador entering the empire's capital and learning slowly but surely how to negotiate the treacherous politics of an empire whose heart is being ripped asunder by internal strife and struggles for succession of an aging leader. Amazingly, it's a very interesting journey without a whole lot of bombs bursting in the air - well, maybe one or two.

Many thanks to the publisher for providing a copy for review.

Megan says

exhales *inhales* *screams quietly* I FINISHED A MEMORY CALLED EMPIRE AND I DON'T???
EVER WANT TO READ ANYTHING ELSE?? EVER AGAIN???

I'm so sorry you all have to wait until March. I cannot begin to tell you how MUCH there is in this book. Philosophy, poetry, politics, ethics, mystery, language, literary heritage, HERITAGE, LEGACY. LEGACY. AND WHAT IT ALL MEANS. I CAN'T GET ENOUGH.

I want to talk about the politics of the self and the ethics of legacy. The poetry of heritage. I WANT TO WRITE ESSAYS ABOUT THIS BOOK. I want to explore civilization vs barbarism and the violence of peacetime and the idea of succession and what that means as a person and as a ruler and as a legacy of a person. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE MORALITY OF CONTROL AND THE VARIABLE DEFINITIONS OF CONTROL AND CIVILIZATION AND SELF. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE WORDS "YOU" AND "WE". I WANT TO CRY BC THIS BOOK IS SO DAMN BEAUTIFUL.

I want to post a more coherent review soon, when I can form thoughts beyond the overwhelming knowledge that no book I read after this will ever quite match up to this one.

.

(This is not much more coherent, but it is more concise, and I think that's possibly as far as I'll get.)

This book is FULL in a way that few others are--it's dense but not unreadable, it's jam-packed but not hurried or frantic, it's twisty but not confusing. I love everything about the worldbuilding, the language, the poetry,

the history of the Empire and the legacy of the Station--and how each place conserves and preserves in a galaxy that is always moving, always changing. The conversation about civilization that is born in this book is FASCINATING. It's the sort of book that makes me wish I loved book clubs, because I want to discuss this in every book club on the planet. The characters are just as full as the plot, each with their own story to brush up against Mahit's, and Mahit...Mahit might be my favorite character of all time. The cleverness, the brilliance, the way her mind works is amazing to read. And the SELF--the Question of the Self--is so central and so INTERESTING. And I love it. Simply saying, I love this book, more than words can express.
