



Rizal Without the Overcoat

Ambeth R. Ocampo

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This book is a collection of essays from Ambeth R. Ocampo's newspaper column "Looking Back" that began in the Philippine Daily Globe and later moved to the Philippine Daily Inquirer. He presents a readable and painless introduction to Jose Rizal and offers fascinating insights, lively anecdotes, academic intrigue, and little-known facts about the hero as human. Investigating Rizal's own writings - his diaries, letters, and other papers – Ocampo attempts to strip the countless myths and rumors that surround the national hero.

Rizal Without the Overcoat Details

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From Reader Review Rizal Without the Overcoat for online ebook

Emily Dy says

Between the covers of this book, Jose Rizal suddenly comes alive. You will not hear the usual textbook stories of the moth and the flame, or that old tale of Rizal throwing his remaining slipper into the river after the first one was swept away by the currents, so that whoever finds them will have the complete pair.

This is a book that will tell you that Rizal was kind of funny looking, with a small frame and a rather large head, that he had a lot of girlfriends, and that he even tried hashish 'for experimental purposes'. It gives you a peek into his insecurities and his frustrations, down to the little stories of how he hated tipping because he was so kuripot, or that while he was living abroad, he was too proud to let his landlady find out that he had no more money for food, so he would go out for a stroll every lunch time to give her an impression that he'd gone out to dine.

It's a whole bunch of little stories that show you how Rizal was "just like us".

And then Ocampo takes you through the story behind the "Mi Ultimo Adios", the politics behind the KKK, and a narration of what happened that morning of December 30, 1896.

You take a step back and remember that this is the man who influenced the course of our history and helped solidify our sense of nationhood.

That's when you see that heroes are people who were "just like us".

And it's these people who are more interesting to learn about and learn from, not the mythical heroes we hear about in school. You begin to relate to them, and to wonder what was going through their heads, the emotions raging in their hearts...

This curiosity lead me to read the "Mi Ultimo Adios" with fresh eyes, and I've never found it more beautiful. Now it's challenging me to take a second look at the *Noli Me Tangere* and the *El Filibusterismo*.

If you read "Rizal Without the Overcoat", be prepared to go down the path of rediscovering our national hero, and in turn rediscovering our sense of being Filipino. Trust me, it's more fun this second time around :)

Nicolo Yu says

The Philippine educational system almost did purge my love for Rizal and his works. His two novels, **Noli Me Tangere** and **El Filibusterismo** were force fed to me in high school in a dialect I have no love for. The Tagalog translations would have been approved by Rizal enthusiastically, since he wrote these books for his people and wished it would have been readable to a larger audience. The books were originally written in Spanish, the language of the Philippine elite and colonial masters, but it was foreign to the masses, Rizal's intended audience. But Tagalog, the base dialect for the Philippine national language was something I've never had a strong affinity for. It is funny that Cebuano, the native vernacular for a larger percentage of the

Philippine population was not chosen, but instead it was the second most spoken dialect and which also happened to be the patois of the capital Manila. This was something that always rankled the Filipinos who lived beyond the capital by besides that, it was that and the way it was taught to me that almost made swore off Rizal forever.

I said almost because, reading the eminent Rizal scholar and historian Ambeth Ocampo's **Rizal: Without The Overcoat** helped me discover that I may still have a little love left for the material after all. This book is a collection of Ocampo's newspaper columns that helped humanize a legend and a myth. He writes about how his search for Rizal helped uncover little facts about the national hero like what he had for breakfast, his spend thriftiness and his smoking habit. The most iconic images of Jose Rizal have him dressed in a Western style coat. The coat has come to represent how distant he has become to a new generation of Filipinos who had to endure a mangled teaching of the state required Rizal studies course in both the secondary and tertiary levels. I am of that generation and it helps that Ocampo peels the layers to expose Rizal's humanity under all that legend and myth.

This book is easy to read, it helps that the material was originally intended for a newspaper audience and not as an academic paper for review by Ocampo's historian peers. The accessibility helps overcome one's initial misgiving about reading additional material on Rizal. But this helps a lot in my recovery and jumpstart a desire to read the Rizal novels again. This time I will read them in English; a new translation was done for the 150th anniversary of his birth and is said to be an excellent one.

RE de Leon says

This collected edition of columns by the distinguished (some say infamous) historian Ambeth Ocampo is now among the most popular books on Rizal there are in today's market. Which is good, because 'Overcoat' introduces you to a very human, very relateable Rizal. Most Filipinos know the basic story anyway, so if you're an average Pinoy, this is a pretty good book.

If, on the other hand, you're looking for a more extensive examination of Rizal's life, you're beat off with Austin Coates' "Rizal, Philippine nationalist and martyr" or Leon Maria Guerrero III's "The First Filipino: A Biography of Jose Rizal."

That said, what Ocampo has achieved with this book is almost miraculous. He's taken a subject to which the average Filipino is exposed Ad Nauseum, and actually managed to make Rizal not only interesting, but inspiring.

And that's what makes Ambeth Ocampo, and *Rizal Without The Overcoat* which is arguably his most famous work, a true Filipino treasure.

RE de Leon

Agoo, La Union

7:55 PM January 2, 2011

Michael Gerald says

This is the second book of Ambeth Ocampo that I have read, and arguably his best. His essays about Dr. Jose P. Rizal, one of the Philippines' national heroes, are superb and inspiring. They do not make Rizal a superman, but present the hero as a man with some faults (as we all are), but a great man all the same, as seen in his education, poems, novels, essays, works, actions, and martyrdom. The best essay in the book is the one about why Rizal deserves to be called one of our national heroes, with excerpts from Rizal's letter to a Portuguese friend. He was a great man for a nascent Filipino nation at the time.

Princess says

Learned that Rizal is also an ordinary mortal like all of us. Thought he was a superhero or something. I admire Ambeth Ocampo's writing! I already liked him when I was reading the prologue. This book is not only educational but also very entertaining. You get to know Rizal beyond the usual novels he wrote. There were a lot of trivia about him.

K.D. Absolutely says

This book is a compilation of 94 articles that Ambeth Ocampo wrote for his column "Looking Back" in the newspaper *Philippine Daily Globe* from October 1987 to July 1990. By "removing the overcoat" Ocampo meant that he wanted the Filipinos to learn the "more human" side of Dr. Jose Rizal (1861-1896), our country's national hero. You see, Dr. Rizal's monuments all over the country are normally based on those pictures of him while he was in cold countries of Europe so he wore an overcoat which is something not needed when you are in the Philippines.

I do appreciate the intent of Ocampo and probably his publishers in coming up with this compilation. Filipinos must know more about Rizal and Ocampo is still young so he has that appeal to our younger generations. There is no question that the book is worth all its awards and accolades on this aspect.

However, being a compilation of previously-released articles, some of which I have already read or knew from my previous Rizal courses in school, I thought that the book would have been more engaging if Ocampo just wrote a Rizal biography using these articles. I know that it would have taken a lot of efforts on his part but it would not have given me the feeling that everything was just thrown in to the book to earn some easy bucks. I am not saying this because the book is just a compilation but also the insufficient references made to Ocampo's claims on Rizal. I knew that he already had some detractors regarding the manner of his writing that seemed to have been mostly based on *hearsays* and he already answered in threatening manner that whoever says that must read for himself the volumes and volumes of letters and monographs, pamphlets, etc that he listed on the last page of the book. I mean, I appreciate the fact that he listed his sources but I thought that it would have been more professional if not altogether prudent if he included footnotes instead of just claiming that he read this and read that and expect his readers to believe him as if he is the only surviving authority to speak about *our* national hero. This is my first book by him so I am still to form my impression of him as a writer or a person. However, my initial feeling was that he seemed to me like a lazy historian because if you write about history and you want people to believe you, put your documentations properly and not just write for the sake of shocking your readers. Also, for me, he seemed to be an arrogant person especially when I got reminded, via some writings in this book, of his

debate regarding Rizal sketches that Mr. Manoling Morato (born 1933) included in his book. The much younger Ocampo accused Morato that those sketches were fake and the poor old man had to defend himself. I am not siding with Morato but I thought that the argument would not have turned ugly if Ocampo just kept silent. After all, nobody has the monopoly of writing about Rizal and earn some bucks in the process. Mr. Morato is the son of the first appointed mayor of Quezon City, the well-respected Tomas Morato, a blond and blue-eyed Spanish settler in the Philippines so there might be some basis that were not documented but just passed on to Morato's father by his friends who happened to get those sketches from Rizal himself.

The generation of today as well as all the future generations must be wary about the books that the latter-day historians like Ocampo claim to be true. In the first place, why remove the overcoat? I grew up in our small town in a Pacific island looking at Rizal statue with the overcoat and it did not affect my admiration and emulation of his traits. I thought that the coat reminds us of his sojourns abroad. It might as well be inspiring because most of the young Filipinos today dream of working overseas because of the unavailability of good jobs in the country.

So, I'd rather that Rizal keep the coat on.

Albert says

We were forced to read this book for our book review in "Buhay, Gawin at Sinulat ni Rizal" subject during college. However, reading this book made me appreciate Jose Rizal more. I learned his humbleness and the challenges he faced.

Jerome Baladad says

i like all the historical essays included in this book!! what the author Ocampo has been doing to make Rizal more human to present-day readers is laudable. remember that Rizal's venerated as a saint by certain groups of people in Luzon (I refuse to call them 'sects' as it's condescending), so I can imagine some of them could be in disbelief if they get to read this book. as it seems to me, the basic premise, really, of this book, is that national heroes are just like anyone of us--human beings, with warts and all. and that we can be heroes in our own way in our present time, as we continue to get inspired from the kind of life that the national hero Rizal led in his lifetime.

Jareed says

"Jose Rizal Mercado y Alonso (1861-96) is the Philippine national hero because an American governor gave him that recognition. President Taft did not choose Aguinaldo because he was too militaristic; Rizal fitted the ideal of national leader for the Filipinos. (Arcilla 1984:88)"

Jose Rizal is touchy subject for most Filipino scholars. It is worth emphasizing that unlike the designation of the Narra as the National tree, or the Mango as the National fruit, *eiusdem generis*, there is no law designating Rizal as the Philippine national hero. So contrary to popular belief, the post of 'THE' National Hero is, in all its actuality, lodged in a genuine debate, and not merely in a verbal one.

If you are interested in reading a more academic approach of why Rizal is worthy of being labeled as the Philippine national hero, read Leon M. Guerrero's book *The First Filipino*

The title is not a mere designation. *Rizal Without the Overcoat* endeavors to present Rizal, without the overcoat, the overcoat of the European influence embossed upon this enamored persona through his European education. In some sense, this could be certainly taken as a post-colonial approach in viewing Rizal.

The book is a compilation of articles Ambeth Ocampo wrote in a Philippine newspaper, which says a lot about his writings. Ocampo's writing has been designated as 'popular history' and it is not without any grounding at all. Popular history is history writing striving for a very wide audience of non-specialists. Reading this made me feel I was going through a Rizal trivia book, it was enjoyable (who doesn't love trivias?), and had its moments. Of course the necessary critiques of this form includes the style, analytical depth and the wealth of resources/references which in Ocampo's case has suffered from existential dearth. Be critical in reading Ocampo, you may just subliminally fall into his bandwagon.

But is there a need to remove the overcoat? Who is Rizal but the man who sought education in the foreign shores to liberate his people? Is he too not defined by the knowledge, motivations, social stimuli he encountered wearing that overcoat? Is the overcoat not a part of who Rizal truly is?

P.S.

Entirely not part of this book's review!

I seem to keep reading the statement that Rizal wrote for the people, for the masses, for the 'Indios'! Rizal did not write for the masses, the two seminal novels were originally written in Spanish, a Lingua Franca known only to the Filipino landed elite, the landlords, and even to them a limited number was capable of reading. More importantly, books were a luxury then compared to today. *Noli* and *El Fili* were inaccessible when it first came out.

This review has been cross-posted at imbookedindefinitely

Eron Salazar says

I was and is always an admirer of Rizal. I was just in HS when Ocampo wrote his *Inquirer* series. And as he has fervently mentioned, schoolers and university students don't pay much attention to history lessons, more so to a "cliche" subject such as Rizal.

Before I left for abroad, my brother gave this book to me reassuring me that it is a good read. Only, I read it a year later but all it gave me is a smile in my heart towards our history, and our pride as a people.

Here is a book that reassures us that Rizal is alive and kicking even after more than a century of his

execution. The once out-of-reach Jose has now been turned into one of us. Thanks to this book! Jose Rizal is the definitive embodiment of the modern Filipino. Except for his genius being, I see myself in his very nature - one who values family and education, one who thrifts himself only to buy what he likes best, peace-loving, humble and humorous. I am sure most readers felt the same way.

What I am sad about is the fact that Rizal's love for country has been diminished from our souls. Though he left for Europe to be educated, he chose to come back to give back. And that what is lacking to most of us especially the overseas Filipinos. I'm guilty as charged. But here's hoping that the dream he had for the country will soon be realized. Only then that his death will truly achieve its essence.

Jr Bacdayan says

Finally! My semester has just ended. I'm getting about two weeks off from the university before another one starts. I'm going to catch up on my reading list, I've fallen way behind schedule. Haha! Anyway, one of my courses this semester was PI 100 or the "Rizal" course. As one of our final requirements, we were required to submit an essay on Ambeth Ocampo's renowned book Rizal Without the Overcoat. Here's what I wrote (crammed might be a better word choice) Heh heh:

My Perception of Jose Rizal and Ambeth Ocampo's Rizal Without the Overcoat

Of all the things I have learned in our humble university, none of it I treasure more than the ability to see things objectively and contextually. I used to be a brash and outspoken young man always quick to make assumptions and always fiery with passion for what I deemed was right; even when all I had was a premature conclusion. I brought this attitude here in our university and was quickly humbled by men and women that maintained their calm and adhered to logic, not sudden whims and misguided passion. This, I said to myself is what I wish to become. I resolutely set to change my ways and actions. To some degree I think I have succeeded. But improving oneself is a continuous and endless process that every individual must aim for. Even our venerated national hero was not the product of biological perfection and natural wisdom. He slowly, meticulously improved himself with every mistake he made, with every book he read. Like you and me, he is a human being that achieved what he did, not because he is special or was destined by some great prophecy, but because he worked for it. A good example would be in the field of language. He did not become a polyglot naturally; language did not come easy to him. It was the product of a diligent and willful learning process. In his letters to his sister, he expostulated that while in Germany, he had a hard time learning the native tongue. He didn't understand some of the dialects and accents of the natives. Then, on a latter correspondence, he would state he had finally been able to understand everybody but that the problem was not everybody could understand him. This is a clear example of language acquisition through exposure. As an Organizational Communication major, I have taken several units of Psycholinguistics and can summarily say that this is a normal thing, that Rizal's acquisition of various languages was boosted because he was exposed to them. Filipinos often marvel when they see that Rizal was literate in a handful of languages. Even my Filipino teacher in high school called him "genius" when she told us this fact. I stated earlier that I learned to see things contextually, and is important to see things that way. If you contextualize, Rizal wasn't necessarily a genius because he was a polyglot. He was only a hardworking and ambitious individual who had the opportunity to be exposed to such languages. Yes, the acquisition rate may seem a little fast, but it isn't exactly genius. Rizal worked diligently to become the man he was. And this is what's missing from all the books and biographies about him. This is what they fail to say. Anybody can be like Jose Rizal.

I remember my History 1 class like it was only yesterday. Professor Jerome Ong handled our class superbly and presented History with a certain charm and complete knowledge that my high school history classes had been missing. I remember learning for the first time that Aguinaldo was responsible for the deaths of several heroes, especially Andres Bonifacio. It opened my eyes and it was what prompted my love for history. Even as I child I have always been fascinated by the past and all its hidden complexities. Sorry, I digress. We proceeded on the topic of whether Rizal was rightful national hero. Professor Ong gave us the usual Bonifacio was the leader of the revolution, he represented the masses. Rizal was an American-sponsored hero, that he was a conscious hero, the usual UP, Bonifacio-inclined speech. Then he asks us what we think. Immediately everybody was begging to agree. I could hear their assents and their outbursts at such a travesty. I too was inclined to agree. But then I remembered to look at it objectively and contextually. I wasn't convinced. Firstly, I thought that although it is standard practice to endow the title of national hero to the leader of the revolution, it doesn't necessarily mean that we should adhere to it. It is weak to think that we should change our national hero just to fit the mold of the others around us. It is a national identity, it's what makes us special and adhering to that submissive line of though is self-abdication. On the subject of him not representing the masses, I think this is superfluous as class has nothing to do with love for one's country. Nationalism, works and influence are basis for a hero, not the amount on his bank. Isn't being a Filipino enough? If a majority of Filipinos are females, should the National hero be a female? I agree it should be considered, but it should not be the main point. On Rizal being an American sponsored hero, I said at that time that I thought that even if they didn't choose him, we would have chosen him anyway. After reading Ambeth Ocampo's book, I now see that even before the Americans chose him, he was already a national hero of sorts. I guess I agree with Ocampo when he said that even Bonifacio would say that Rizal is the national hero. I do think that the Americans just solidified an already widespread belief. On Rizal being a conscious hero I ask: Does it matter? So what if he was aware and prepared for what he did? Does it mean that he doesn't deserve to be a national hero? For me, I'm even more impressed because he had the resolution to do it, which of course is only if it is true. Nobody knows the truth but the man himself. If it is, it only proves that Rizal loved his country more than himself, to those saying that he did it out of vanity, I disagree. Vanity knows nothing but self-preservation. I do think I was the only one in class who was on Rizal's side. I came out of the class determined to learn more about that topic. I clearly remember defending Rizal from one of my classmates whom I had the opportunity of sharing a bus ride home with. We spent two hours arguing about that matter on the way to Cavite where we both live, where the Bonifacio-killing Aguinaldo used to live. It was a long ride home.

I came to this PI 100 hundred class knowing that I believed that Rizal was the rightful National hero. I was determined not to let the professor sway me if she didn't present some irredeemable fact or some new tidbit I didn't know. Of course, if you're open-minded you cannot discount the fact that you might learn something that will sway you. What's right is circumstantial. But if the professor gave the same old pro-Bonifacio his-hish, then I wouldn't waver in my Rizal belief. Now that we are ending this semester, I would just like to say that I really appreciate the way you handled this course. The way you love to question us and challenge us. That you didn't impose upon us but rather you made us think and consider then choose for ourselves what to believe in. Thank you

Now that I've established my beliefs before I read Ambeth Ocampo's praised Rizal Without the Overcoat, I can now say that it solidified my beliefs about Jose Rizal rather than alter them. Back then, I remember believing that Rizal is the rightful National hero but I never idolized him or placed him in an unreachable pedestal. I guess it can be attributed to an event in my life that has allowed me to see him for the human being that he is. It was sixth grade I think, I had just transferred to a regular private school in Pasay from an International School near Tagaytay. I was an English speaking kid who had a really hard time with the Filipino subject. In my former school, we didn't study about the Philippines or Rizal or Filipino. We studied, spoke, wrote in English. We memorized America's presidents, the fifty-one states. We studied Nebraska's corn industry, its capital, its state bird, and its topography. We read Mark Twain, H.G. Wells, and a watered down version of Moby Dick. In short, we studied America. Although, we did also have world history. I can't

remember the Philippines being in it though. Well, to be fair the majority of the students were foreigners. A few years later, I would learn that a year or two after I left, they started integrating the Filipino subject. Oh, well. So I wasn't really familiar with Rizal or Filipino history for that matter, when I came to study him. I only knew him as the guy in piso, whereas my schoolmates had studied him since they were practically babies. For me, he paled in comparison against George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Joan of Arc, Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, all the other more renowned heroes of the world. These were the guys I grew up studying and loving. So when I encountered Rizal, he didn't seem special to me at all. Not when Genghis Khan and Iskandar the Great conquered the world. Not when Washington defeated the British and Lincoln abolished slavery. What did Rizal do but write books? Unfortunately, this was my line of thinking when I was younger. Of course, things changed when I went to high school and learned more substantial information about him. But I always saw him as human and nothing more.

Regarding Ambeth Ocampo's book, I'd have to say that I devoured it like pizza. I read it in an entire day. I've always been a bookworm and have always cultured love for classical books. I've read both the *Noli* and *El Fili* twice, first in Filipino back in high school, then in English on my own accord. Back then, I'd read Dostoyevsky, Joyce, Nabokov, Hemingway, Camus, Garcia Marquez, etc. I thought that it would be a shame if I didn't read Rizal work's properly too, so I did. I'd have to say that he doesn't fade in comparison to the great literary artists of the world. He made me proud that we had a talent worthy of a Penguin's Classic publication. That started my fascination with Rizal. So when given a chance to know him better, I guess I just hungrily grabbed that opportunity.

Ambeth Ocampo's *Rizal Without the Overcoat* is successful in its aim not because of certain secrets that it contains but rather because of the way in which it is presented. Ambeth Ocampo's prose is cleverly masqueraded as a coaxing friend or relative making chismis (gossip) to its reader. You feel as though it's a personal conversation and it creates an atmosphere of familiarity and enticement. It resonates with even the obscurest of readers because it considers its audience. This is a monumental commandment in the field of communication, know your reader. What good will a treasure of information be, if no one is willing to dig it up? I guess this is what happens to most of Rizal's biographies. Fortunately for most of us common folks, we have this book. No wonder it's a best-seller and can be found in the ever present National Book Store. Another thing that resonated with me is the cover of the book. I know, I know, don't judge a book by its cover. But I'm not judging, I'm merely appreciating the wit of the artist who chose it. It is ironic in the sense that inside Rizal's overcoat, there is a Superman suit. As if without the overcoat, you'll find something extraordinary. I guess this just a marketing strategy, but it really emphasizes the Filipino's tendency to worship Rizal.

Something that I found to be a double-edged sword for the book is its origin. That it was a compilation of previously written articles proved to be both its salvation and undoing. Its salvation because it is the reason for the freshness of the book, that it was free-flowing and constantly evolving without ever losing its familiar touch. That it didn't adhere to any timeline and though not necessarily arbitrary, it still had a sense of adventure. You are constantly thinking of which Rizal gem would you uncover next. Ocampo further augments this feeling by inculcating his experiences on discoveries as well. Now, it is also its undoing because it creates inconsistencies as well. On an earlier entry you would find Ocampo watering down the achievement of Juan Luna and Felix Resurrecion-Hidalgo when they won a gold and a silver medal respectively in a Spanish contest. He states that there were numerous gold and silver medals given that day so we had nothing to be proud of, that they didn't best our colonizers. Then he uses that same contest to illustrate that we have the capacity of greatness when it comes to the field of artistry. He mentions that they win medals, but fails to mention that there were numerous gold and silver medals awarded that day. If it is any consolation, I find comfort in the fact that a Juan Luna painting is gracing the halls of the Spanish Cortez as I write this essay.

What was I thinking when I read it? Rizal eating tuyo (dried sardines), Rizal being kuripot (thrifty), Rizal refusing to buy from the Chinese, I guess it amused me but it didn't in any way change my perception of

him. If anything, those tidbits and practices has done nothing but augment my endearment for him. The way you become closer to a person if you know more about him or her. One thing I found fascinating was the way I identified with Rizal's loneliness when he lived abroad and the way he used literature as company. I lived a while in Quezon City when I took summer classes in UP Diliman. I rented a room near SM North Edsa, terrified at the prospect of living alone for the first time. I just had two classes everyday and had loads of free time. To cope with loneliness I spent most of my time in the mall, studying and reading in coffee shops and browsing through book stores. I read to gain company. I know these are different circumstances, but it gave me a glimpse of what he must have felt during his travels. I remember walking around the mall with no idea of what I was to do, like Rizal walking aimlessly around Madrid to trick his landlady into thinking that he went out for lunch. Another thing is missing home-cooked food, much as Rizal craved for Filipino food. I also remember that I would skip meals just to be able to buy an expensive book I'd seen, like Rizal was thrifty so he could buy more books. We share the same passion, Rizal and I, but I never thought that we had more in common. I'm not necessarily as thrifty as Rizal, but I'm willing to sacrifice for my love of literature. Things like these make one more appreciative of heroes like Jose Rizal. It doesn't necessarily change your perception of him, but these wealth of information that Ambeth Ocampo has made available to us certainly has the capacity to change our perception of ourselves. We realize that we are what heroes are made of.

Rizal was a great man, but we can all be great. It saddens me that PI 100, this Rizal course is now relegated to be shelved. I think it still relevant that Rizal be compulsory studied in the future. So that even if the future generations already know that heroes such as Rizal are like them, they might also realize they are like heroes, like Rizal.

Mel Vincent says

It made me laugh a lot and I learned a side of Rizal that I never knew existed. It was refreshing to know the minute details and the events that happened during the course of his life and the other aspects that included it from his career, academics, even to his kinky side and the impact that he has generated in the country and around the world. He was a genius and very idealistic and opinionated and everything that he touched was thus harnessed and I was amazed to know that he knew a lot about other sciences, even in farming and in business and in other diseases when he was only an ophthalmologist! I was practically engrossed with the book because not only did I find it very interesting but because Rizal is one of my idols. It is truly sad that most Filipino especially my generation do not share the interest that I have surrounding the life and works of Rizal and it is appalling too that the Government has sort of banned or even censored even the 2 only circulating works of Rizal which should not be. How could the youth know more of Rizal when we only get a piece of him in *Noli* and *Fili* and what the history books imply? And Ambeth Ocampo has justified and even summed up Rizal with this book and it is true that most Filipinos only view Rizal as the National Hero and sure they read his books and recite his poems but know nothing of its intent and purpose. It is actually ironic to say that we know Rizal but we only know him from what the books have told us and not of his true character and disposition as seen in his writings and letters. When should these writings be open or be printed so that we the Filipino people might be able to fully understand him we never know but we may learn a little about Rizal through reading this book. Bravo

kb says

This showcases Ambeth Ocampo's in-depth knowledge about national hero Jose Rizal in the most reachable and understandable presentation. I read a lot of things about Rizal in this book that I have never encountered before, such as what he usually ate for breakfast, how he cope with his financial constraints during his stay in Europe, why he thought learning English shouldn't be a priority of his, among others.

Diane says

The first time I ever heard about Ambeth Ocampo was when we attended the 2011 PEN Conference. I got to share an elevator with him and had him sign my copy of Looking Back #4. He gave a lecture about the history of Philippine money and it was easily one of the best lectures of the two days. The lecture was both funny and informative, if you can believe a study of history can be funny. He also uses the same technique with his writings. Ambeth Ocampo keeps a column in the Opinions page of the Philippine daily Inquirer every Wednesday and Friday. He's published a collection of these columns in small Looking Back books sold for 99Php. His writings are very easy to read, very witty and would not nauseate you with too many information in one essay. This is one of the reason why he's one of the most read historian today.

I'm finished with the required 3 units of Rizal for college and sad to say that I learned more from this book than from that class. I paid 3000++ for a professor that is always 30 minutes late and spends 30 minutes more arranging the wires of the projector. We're left, or I should say, my classmates were left with 30 minutes for actual discussion. That is the case if he actually comes to class...which he rarely does. Hay.

Overcoat contains a wide range of subject on the national hero; from the everyday stuff like what he ate for breakfast, what he read, his prescription for kulam, to the controversial subject on Rizal vs. Bonifacio for National Hero. There are also an interview with Rizal biographer Austin Coates (DYK that Coates met Gandhi and Sun Yat Sen's and Tagore's family personally?) and German Rizal lecturer Manuel Sarkinskyaz. There are also some things to be learned about other heroes such as Mabini, Aguinaldo (who apparently haven't read any of Rizal's novel), Bonifacio, etc.

Its a really interesting read, especially because the articles are short and written in a manner that a simple Filipino could read. It really is like 'sitting down with a friend who shares what he has learned'. And as what other reviewers have said, Ocampo in this book manage to make the study of Rizal interesting and new again.

It was good to know that Rizal without the overcoat is human and it made him more inspiring. :)

Vana says

After reading Rizal: Without The Overcoat, I was amazed by how our National Hero Jose Rizal survived in the 18th-19th century, it was as if he knew everything that will happen. I bought this book because we are asked to make a book review about Jose Rizal in our P.I. 100 Life and Works of Jose Rizal. I wasn't concern about buying the book which will give me interest in reading about our hero, I was more concern in buying the cheapest one (the small blue book also by Ambeth Ocampo). But then I saw this book, and started reading page 1. Surprised by Pacquiaos' face attached to Adolf Hitlers' body, I became anxious on reading

the book. I saw that picture in my news feed on facebook, and seeing it in a book, I thought, "akala ko prank lang yung photo". Hilarious as it may be, Ambeth Ocampo's book gave what the title says. Truly a winner.
