



# Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery

*M. Evelina Galang*

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"*Angel de la Luna* is a beautifully told, and at times, heartbreaking coming of age and coming to America story. Evelina Galang is a masterful storyteller and through her brilliant voice and craft, Angel and her family become ours too."—Edwidge Danticat

Angel has just lost her father, and her mother's grief means she might as well be gone too. She's got a sister and a grandmother to look out for, and a burgeoning consciousness of the unfairness in the world—in her family, her community, and her country.

Set against the backdrop of the second Philippine People Power Revolution in 2001, the contemporary struggles of surviving Filipina "Comfort Women" of WWII, and a cold winter's season in the city of Chicago is the story of a daughter coming of age, coming to forgiveness, and learning to move past the chaos of grief to survive.

**M. Evelina Galang** is the author of *Her Wild American Self* and the novel *One Tribe*. She has edited the anthology *Screaming Monkeys: Critiques of Asian American Images*. She is currently writing *Lolas' House: Women Living with War*, stories of surviving Filipina WWII "Comfort Women," and is at work on a new novel. Galang teaches in and directs the creative writing program at the University of Miami, is core faculty for VONA/Voices: Voices of Our Nation Arts Foundation, and has been named one of the one hundred most influential Filipinas in the United States by Filipina Women's Network.

## Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery Details

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# **From Reader Review Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery for online ebook**

## **Mariel Cruz says**

This is an absolutely beautiful and amazing book. I loved every page and every part of the story. This was a great book to read, especially right now, with the current state of the politics. It was so empowering to read about a young girl growing up during a time of protest in the Philippines. The passages about her and her family protesting against the government were so beautifully written. I could feel what the characters are feeling. I could feel the power of their words and their resistance to the government.

I love that the book takes place in the Philippines and the United States, showing the struggles of immigration and homesickness. As someone from a family of immigrants, I resonated with those struggles and sacrifices that these characters made. I also loved that the book included some phrases in Tagalog (language of the Philippines). As a Filipino American, I loved reading those phrases I was also familiar with. There's enough context in the writing that you can still understand the story even if you don't understand all the words.

I also loved that the book had so many strong female characters in the story. All the main characters are strong women overcoming the challenges in their lives. And the sections of the story about the Filipino "comfort women" were also amazing to read. You can really feel the struggles that these women felt. Those passages were so beautifully written. I absolutely loved this book, and I would definitely recommend it to anyone looking for a strong female lead, and looking for a book that resonates with the current political state.

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## **Ryan says**

Whoa. Exactly what I needed to read at this point in my life.

Evelina tells stories that need to be heard. Stories of the unimaginable horrors Filipina "comfort women" endured during WWII. Stories of the passion behind the second Philippine People Power Revolution—about anger at injustice. Stories about the devastation and grief from losing a family member too soon. Evelina weaves all of this together into a teenager's coming-to-America story.

Throughout, you can feel Angel's yearning to have a close relationship with her mom despite feeling abandoned. She uses music (drums!) as an outlet for her emotions. There's a fascinating contrast between her life as an aktibista in the Philippines versus being the new kid at school in middle of a cold Chicago winter. Yet there's a constant passionate, fighting spirit rallying against the status quo.

I happened to be travelling when I read this book: I left tears on a bus in rural Vietnam, in the Hong Kong airport, on a plane to Shanghai. . . .

Evelina's words reached deep inside of me, awakening something in the core of my being. Lately, I've been feeling like a part of me is missing—something to do with my identity: who I am and where I came from. This book helped to point me in the right direction. A new all-time fave.

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## Rachel says

*“You need your English to be world citizens,” she says, “but do not forget how to speak Filipino. And do not forget the dialects you have grown up speaking. We can’t let foreign imperialists brainwash us. Ours is a beautiful, literate language.”*

Wow, this book. Reading it is /such/a ride. I love that it’s so rich in Filipino culture. I love that it draws attention to Filipino history, from the struggles of the Filipina “Comfort Women” of WWII to the second Philippine People Power Revolution in 2001. It’s also great to (finally) meet someone who /doesn’t/ think highly of the American Dream. But ... I also have to say that it does feel like the author is trying to pull off too many different things at once. I also kind of wish that Evelina Galang had included a glossary since she uses Tagalog quite a lot in her writing, but I find myself understanding her reasons for not doing so after reading her explanation at the end.

All in all, *Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery* is a unique, enlightening and \*important\* coming-of-age and coming-to-America story. **I need more readers to pick this up and talk about it.**

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## Melissa says

M. Evelina Galang’s deft prose came to me like the smell of storm. Her prose is fluid, lush, like swaying banyan trees and the unmoving sea, but it was the voices Galang crafted that stayed with me. The women of this book were full of life and singsong: there was anger, bitterness, and love which made the narrative alive in the midst of trauma. *ANGEL DE LA LUNA & THE 5TH GLORIOUS MYSTERY* is the story of a young dalaga, a woman on the brink of an awakening, tethered between her country’s demands for equality and her mother’s desperate and determined will to survive. It begins in 2000, in the sweltering heat of Manila, and her father, a cab driver, is missing. The search for Panang leaves Ináy, her mother, broken, distant, gone, just like her father, but Angel has her sister and Lola Ani to take care of. The whirlwind of her father’s death leaves the family lost and adrift, but Angel finds solace in her Catholic school’s political movement. She marches the streets when the second Philippine People Power Revolution erupts in 2001. But when her mother reawakens from her morose slumber, Angel is abruptly lifted from her home, Manila, from everything she knows and holds dear, and is taken to a cold, distant city in the U.S. It’s here, surrounded by the gust of winds in Chicago, where Angel has her awakening: sexual, spiritual, and rebirth.

The narrative shifts in swift arcs, moving through the landscapes of Manila and Chicago like a film expanding and refocusing. But what shook me the most was the story of the Lolas (grandmothers in Tagalog): Filipina comfort women from World War II. I won’t reveal the plot, but when I finished the book, my body shook without volition, and a swell came from the belly to the throat: it was if the lolas’ stories entered my body. Galang has been researching Filipina comfort women since 1998, and their stories imbue the intergenerational trauma and resiliency of Angel and her family. Although Galang did not intend to write a YA narrative infused with the spoils after loss (Coffee House Press marketed it as their first published YA book), she succeeds at weaving a narrative that speaks directly to the pangs and melodies of the heart.

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## **Katy says**

Buzzfeed July 2016 - 34 Young Adult Books Every Feminist Should Read List

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## **Bridget says**

I absolutely ravaged this book. Lovely writing and a story that brought me back to my own teenage years.

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## **Katie Tillwick says**

Kinda good, kinda depressing. I became annoyed with not understanding the Tagalog dialect, but gradually picked it up.

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## **Mary Zambales says**

Galang had better works than this, but that being said, Angel's journey is a very compelling one. I like how this book is marketed as YA lit, because far too often we don't hear the voices of the youth that aren't white. On top of that, Angel doesn't focus her life on having a boyfriend, despite a love interest. I just felt it a bit jumbled at times, and in the beginning, I was more interested in her political activism than her personal life. Only in the second half, when Angel is in Chicago, do we get more into her personal story. Yet, the ending was satisfying. (In reality, it's a 3.5, but you can't give 0.5 ratings.) Lastly, I don't have issues with the lack of translation of the Tagalog phrases because I speak it, but do read the end note on why there was no glossary. Very interesting stuff.

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## **Lexi says**

A book centered around Filipinos? As a Filipino myself, sign me up ;)

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## **Will says**

Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery is a wandering and beautiful coming of age tale. The story opens with Angel de la Luna's father passing away. She comes to terms with this tremendous loss differently than her family members especially her mother which sets up one of the main conflicts of the book--Angel and her mother grappling toward understanding. Galang writes beautifully about a young woman being involved in women led activism in the Philippines and the strong connection between the main character and her best friend as well as her grandmother. I learned a great deal about Filipino activism which sparked me to learn a lot more about the political climate (and the role of the US) which I greatly appreciated. I think that Galang successfully depicted the tension between a mother and her teenage daughter. I found it difficult to read the book at times because of Angel's stubbornness, hard headedness, and refusal to share her

emotions with anyone. That being said, those are all very real facets of being a misunderstood teenager. Galang decided to write Tagalog words and sentences within and alongside English which was a refreshing change to the sometimes exoticification of non-English words. I thought this was a really interesting book that led me to research and a fair amount of critical thought but I often had a hard time really getting into it and was occasionally bored. I definitely recommend for those looking to learn more about Filipino experiences and a great non-white coming of age story.

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### **Meredith Camel says**

Wonderful story with fascinating insight into Filipino and Filipino-American culture. Richly textured with languages, poetic rhythms and vivid imagery.

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### **Justher says**

I'm giving this a full five stars because I believe we need more stories like this, with dialogue flitting in and out of Tagalog beautifully.

*Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery* is a novel told in the first-person about a young Filipina named Angel and how she struggles with losing a father, being a part of a revolution, and supporting her family as they pursue the American dream. Angel's main conflict is internal and with her mother. There are times when Angel, as the main character, is extremely frustrating, but her reactions make sense given the deep trauma that her family has gone through. There are many pretty moments scattered throughout the pages, and I believe much of it can be attributed to the strong imagery M. Evelina Galang crafts throughout the novel. Additionally, I really appreciated the references to Catholicism and healing and the hodgepodge elements that make up Filipino culture, though I would have liked to see more of that. In a similar vein, the relationship between Angel and her mother is very layered, and I appreciate how the novel ends, both uncertain yet hopeful.

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### **Anita Lock says**

The year is 2000. Fourteen-year-old Angel de la Luna loves her family. She tells the story of how she looks forward to the day when they have enough money to leave Manila and go to America in search of a better life. Unfortunately, Papang, Angel's father, has been missing for two weeks. In their search for him, Angel and her family discover that he is dead. The happiness Angel once had is replaced by anger towards God. Because of depression, Inay, her mother, feels powerless to be the source of strength and comfort Angel so desperately needs during this difficult transition in her life. This only fuels Angel's anger, especially since she thinks that Inay doesn't love her. As a result, she begins to distance herself from her mother. To make matters worse, Angel is furious when Inay suddenly decides that it is time to leave for America, expecting Angel to come with her. "Remember the dream?" Inay says. Angel replies with, "But Papang is gone. How can we live the dream? So instead of heading out to Chicago with Inay, Angel adamantly decides to stay back with her grandmother and little sister in the only home that she knows, Manila.

The plot, up to this point, is not as cut and dry as it appears, and it is not even near the middle of the book since there, indeed, is more to come! Galang masterfully weaves Filipino history -- from World War II (WWII) to the People Power Revolutions -- with the rising tension between Angel and Inay. And of course,

this all comes at one of the most inconvenient times in Angel's life: puberty. Fortunately over the next two years, Mother Mary, of St. Magdalena's school where Angel and her little sister attend, opens Angel's eyes to her country's politically unstable history by introducing her to new words, "words I am going to have to look up -- feudalism, proletarian internationalism, imperialism, bourgeois populism," and pertinent people, such as the aged Comfort Women, as well as farmers and other workers who are imprisoned for protesting against the Philippine government. Obviously, Mother Mary, who is no stranger to the horrors of WWII, is also an avid protester against injustice. Angel's eye-opening knowledge eventually leads her to protest in the People Power Revolution to overthrow President Estrada in 2001. Though her involvement with the Revolution provides meaning and purpose in her life for the first time in the year since Papang's death, it is short lived when she receives word from Inay that provisions have been made for her to move to Chicago.

Galang's meticulous portrayal of Angel's immigrant experience in America is nothing but poignant. Now educated in the truth about how the American government exploited her native country, Angel's view of "the country of her parent's dreams," is tainted. In addition to entering foreign territory, Angel feels as if she's been placed into a foreign family: Inay has since remarried and now has a toddler. It doesn't help that there is a language barrier at school, since the students' spoken English flows much faster than what Angel had been taught in Manila. Between unresolved conflict with Inay and trying to fit in at school, Angel keeps to herself until she hears the words of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech during Black History month. His words not only encourage Angel to speak up about injustice, but also help her realize that she has the skills to start a protest in her new school. This, of course, gets her in trouble at school, which only compounds her conflict at home. Desperately seeking answers to her plethora of questions about Inay, Angel begins corresponding with her grandmother, the only person who she feels understands her. Indeed, her grandmother has answers and solutions; however, it is up to Angel to seek them out.

Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery is not just a fictional story about a Filipino girl's search for identity. Angel, in many respects, reflects the humanity in all of us. Interspersed with strong language and adult themes, I consider this a heavy read since it is filled with the hard realities of life and deeply profound thoughts, which I recommend for mature young adult readers on up and, definitely, not for the faint of heart. Engaging and visceral, yet compassionate and heartwarming, these are but a few choice words to describe Galang's third in a collection of fabulous books focused on Filipina American issues.

Originally posted on Teenreads.com

Anita Lock, Book Reviewer

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## **Rich in Color says**

Review copy: purchased

Within just a few pages I suspected that this was a book that would challenge me and make me work – make me think. Prior to reading this book I had very little knowledge about the history of the Philippines and the novel covers a lot of historical territory. The bigger issue initially though was language. The majority of the text is in English, but Galang's characters code switch between English and Tagalog and there are no italics to be found. Yes, the meaning was often clear through context, but it was challenging to read with that bit of uncertainty. Looking to the back of the book, I found that there was no glossary, but there was a rather thorough explanation for that choice "In Context (Or, Why There is No Glossary)"

<http://www.mevelinagalang.com/pdf/In-...> I've read articles about authors using or not using italics and including or omitting glossaries and she makes a very strong case for writing in this style. The reader who doesn't know Tagalog may choose to use the Internet and find the definitions or just fall into the story and go with the flow. I really wanted to know what all of the words meant, but a conversation between Angel and her father convinced me to skip the definitions. He was explaining about how to listen to the blues, "The

trick, Angel, is not to think. Just feel it.”

There is plenty to feel in this story. Angel and her family are dealing with the unexpected loss of her father. In the aftermath, her mother pulls away from the family and adds one more loss. The book moves on to other issues though as Angel becomes increasingly involved with politics. She protests the corruption in the government in an effort to overturn the presidency. This section of the book was a little harder for me to follow. I wasn’t always certain what exactly was being protested and why, but even so, Galang’s story pulled me along. Angel, her sister Lila and her grandmother also visit elderly comfort women. These are women who were taken by Japanese soldiers during WWII and were used as sex slaves. The amazing strength of the women in this book and the stories of the comfort women blazed through any confusion I may have had on my first read through.

The beginning of the story centers on Angel’s immediate family and those closest to her. The second portion expands out into the larger community and the final section pulls back in again to a more intimate view of Angel’s inner conflicts. It’s in the final portion that the book felt the most like a young adult novel. In spite of the teen main character, it felt more like an adult novel in the beginning. I still can’t place my finger on why that was true for me, but maybe it was that there was so much that was unfamiliar in that part of the book. Also, when Angel was in the Philippines, she was attending a private Catholic school for girls and that was only part-time. Most of her time was taken up with work, family duties, and politics. She was dealing with adult situations as she stood in for her absent mother. The final section takes place in Chicago with her mother and around high school and her new friends. There was revolution in her political acts in the Philippines, but there almost seems to be more revolution here as she settles into her new situation in the U.S. and certainly in her interactions with her mother.

This is a story of self-discovery, family, hope and healing. There is a lot of pain and heartbreak within these pages, but there is also strength and beauty. Galang’s writing is lyrical and rich – something to savor.

Recommendation: Angel de la Luna and the 5th Glorious Mystery was on the 2014 Amelia Bloomer Project List and I am not surprised. This is a book not to be missed. Get it soon. It may require a little extra effort for a reader without the background knowledge or Tagalog language skills, but any effort is totally worth it. Angel and the women in her life will be with me for a long time to come.

Review originally posted at <http://richincolor.com/2014/06/review...>

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## **Ruth says**

Sometimes the plot seems to get lost in the gorgeous language. Sometimes the language seems a little TOO gorgeous. Still, this is a lovely YA book. I liked reading a story about a girl who comes from an activist family & finds ways to continue the tradition of resistance.

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