

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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## **The Descartes Highlands.**

Gamalinda, Eric (Author)

Nov 2014. 300 p. Akashic, paperback, \$15.95. (9781617753046).

In his darkly spellbinding novel, Filipino author Gamalinda (*People Are Strange*, 2012) takes a meditative look at religion, sex, family, and identity. Born in the Philippines and sold for adoption, stepbrothers Mathieu and Jordan have never met, merely sharing a hunch that the other exists. Raised in France, Mathieu is now a documentary filmmaker traveling through Southeast Asia with his girlfriend, Janya. Jordan lives in New York, where he helps his adoptive mother run an abortion clinic perpetually attacked by religious fanatics. At Janya's urging, Mathieu returns to the islands of his birth for information about his father, whose life story is shrouded in ever-evolving mystery. Likewise, frustrated by his mother's increasing gloominess, Jordan seeks to connect with his brother. Their alternating perspectives, interrupted by journal entries their father wrote as a war prisoner in Manila, gradually unveil their mutual isolation and insatiable desire for meaning. With a keen eye for splendor amid the grotesque, Gamalinda writes with a poet's heart and a philosopher's mind, while entralling readers with emotional, gritty storytelling.

— *Jonathan Fullmer*