

BEAUTY REGIMES

GENEVIEVE ALVA CLUTARIO

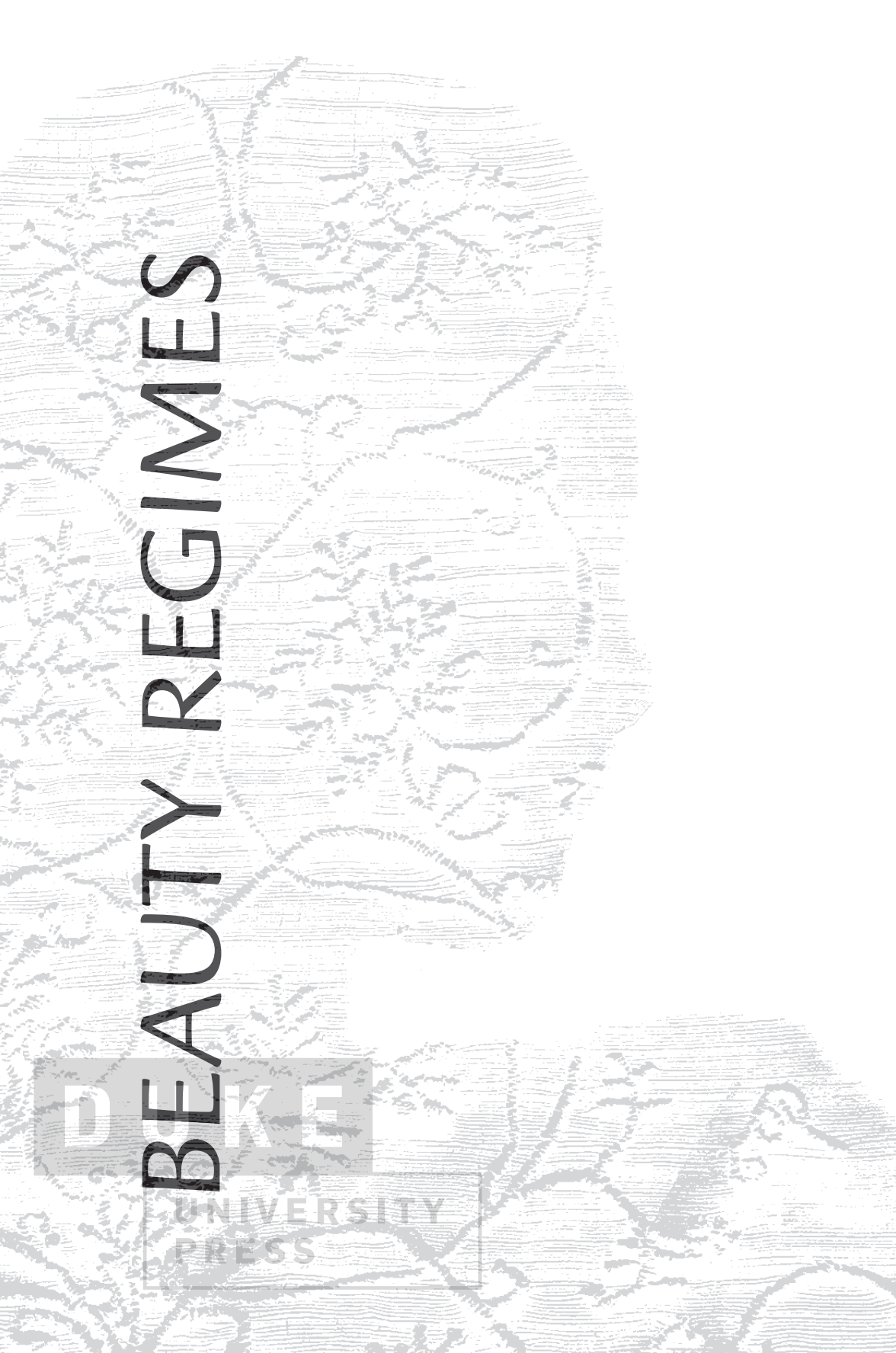
A History of Power and
Modern Empire in the
Philippines, 1898-1941

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INTRODUCTION

A Queen Is Crowned

On February 24, 1938, the popular Manila-based magazine *Graphic* published a multipage feature on eighteen-year-old Guia Balmori: “A Queen Is Crowned: Guia Balmori, Daughter of a Manila Labor Leader Crowned Guia I, Miss Philippines and Queen of the Philippine Exposition.” The article provided an intimate look at how the beauty queen was made publicly presentable.¹ Balmori appeared “smiling and serene” after winning a cut-throat competition that included soliciting votes and sponsorships.² Balmori defeated the other young women contestants from all over the Philippines, earning the much-coveted title of Miss Philippines. Balmori’s coronation was the climactic spectacle of the 1938 Philippine Exposition.

The article begins early in the morning on the day of the pageant, documenting the behind-the-scenes process of becoming a beauty queen. Alongside a full-length photograph of Balmori adorned in her coronation regalia, the *Graphic* article offers a detailed description of Balmori’s *terno*, a formal gown consisting of a floor-length skirt, with a long train and matching bodice, and its most recognizable feature, the “butterfly sleeves.” Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns aptly refers to this gown as an “overprivileged icon of ideal womanhood

and of the mother nation,” symbolizing the “feminized, demure, and upper-class Filipina.”³ Designer Ramon Valera, along with an unacknowledged team of seamstresses and embroiderers, created Balmori’s dramatic garment with hand-sewn gold and green sequins and rhinestones that created a stalactite effect on the skirt, long train, and standing collar.⁴ The *Graphic* article also details Balmori’s beauty regimen as she is prepared for her public appearance by a crew of hairstylists and makeup technicians who flex their skills: a professional hairstylist meticulously curls and pins Balmori’s hair into a stylish coiffure; a “deft” Max Factor beautician artfully pencils in eyebrows, applies lipstick, and flicks on a last dusting of face powder.⁵ Balmori’s public face requires the work and expertise of many. These beauty workers labor toward the moment when Balmori stands “regal” in all her “splendor” outside her well-to-do Ermita home. There, the *reina* greets her public. The article reported that Balmori waved to the crowds of onlookers who “crane[d] their necks” and clapped their hands in excitement before a number of attendants and military escorts whisked her away to the coronation.

This article is just one of thousands celebrating Filipino beauty contests and winners published in the mainstream Philippine media between 1908 and 1941, during the years of US colonial rule before World War II. In many ways, *Graphic*’s multipage feature on Balmori substantiates what historian Ambeth Ocampo calls the “Filipino obsession with beauty contests,” referring to the pervasiveness of beauty pageants across barrios, towns, and regions in the Philippines and throughout the diaspora that have developed into a mainstay of Filipino life.⁶ In 1994, Philippine secretary of tourism Vicente J. Carlos declared, “Beauty contests are part of Philippine culture. They say if you want anything to succeed in the Philippines, hold a beauty pageant or a cockfight.”⁷ Just a decade later, the Philippines swept two out of four titles in the Big Four international beauty pageants (Miss Universe, Miss World, Miss International, and Miss Earth), making the Philippines the only Asian country to have multiple title winners in all four categories. In 2015, Filipina Pia Wurtzbach won the Miss Universe title; this was followed by Catriona Gray’s Miss Universe victory in 2018. News pieces and social media show a staggering number of Filipino fans dedicated to these beauty queens and also to the industry itself. Beyond the large international pageant circuit, which features mainly young, single, able-bodied, cisgender women who embody a very narrow definition of beauty ideals, there is also a “larger constellation of Filipino gay, *bakla*, and transgender beauty pageants,” and there are pageants for overseas domestic workers in places like Hong Kong and Milan.⁸

It might be easy to dismiss Filipinx cultural obsession with beauty pageants as frivolous.⁹ But Robert Diaz invites us to take this interest more seriously by asking, “What does it mean to commit to articulations of *biyuti* even when such a commitment seems frivolous and risky to do so?”¹⁰ Here Diaz refers to *biyuti*, an astute riff on the word *beauty* that “marks the flourishes, humorous asides, and idiomatic expressions that many queer Filipinos in the diaspora utilize to negotiate the travails of daily life,” or what Martin Manalansan refers to as the exigencies of “kinship and family, religion, sexual desire, and economic survival.”¹¹ Diaz’s provocation can be extended not only to Ocampo’s declaration of Filipinos’ obsession with beauty contests but also to a broader collective passion for beauty. In other words, what can we gain by taking beauty seriously?

Beauty Regimes does just that. It tracks emotional, physical, and financial investments in Filipina beauty production. By beauty production, I mean the products made by Filipinas, the performances of beauty, and the strategies to control and define beauty. Indeed, it takes power to declare that something is beautiful. Processes of self-beautification can also function as self-empowerment.¹² Beauty can serve as a source of pleasure, fulfilling aesthetic desires; or, as Jennifer Nash illustrates, resistant beautification rituals provide delight and care in the sensorial fulfillment of physical touch and connection.¹³ Efforts to define what is beautiful depend on concepts of the able body, race, gender, class, and sexuality. However, knee-jerk associations between beauty and frivolity misrecognize or ignore the levels of influence, control, empowerment, and resistance embedded in concepts of beauty. Beauty is powerful and functions as a structuring force that determines individual and cultural practices. It influenced national and transnational politics and policy formation during the overlapping imperial regimes and rise of Filipino nationalism between 1898 and 1941. Aesthetics, fashion and dress, and the labor of beautification “[cut] across national and imperial boundaries.”¹⁴ Beauty as a force impacted individuals as well as imperial and national cultures, production and consumption, politics, and transnational labor.¹⁵

At the turn of the twentieth century, beauty and fashion were contested measures of modernity in the Philippines. During the turbulent transitions between the Spanish, US, and Japanese imperial regimes (from 1898 to 1941) and the simultaneous Filipino nationalist movements, beauty, fashion, and personal appearance were central to the concomitant projects of imperial expansion and modern nation-building. During these years, the Philippines remained a colony despite winning a revolution against Spain and declaring its

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independence. The United States seized the Philippines in addition to Spain's other island colonies, claiming that Filipinos were not yet ready for independence. The Commonwealth period of the 1930s, a so-called transitional period to prepare for and anticipate national independence after colonialism, was interrupted by World War II. The Philippines then found itself under the control of a new regime—the Japanese Empire. In this time of overlapping empires and repeated denial of Philippine national independence, “Filipina beauty” developed into a highly charged political, economic, and cultural force at the center of global change. Thus, I tell the untold story of beauty work and empire and show how gender became the lens through which Filipino nationalist aspirations and modern empires were understood.

Filipina beauty structured what it meant to be a modern subject of a modern empire and how Filipinos envisioned their new nation. Beauty also proved to be a powerful political tool for controlling and managing bodies and desires. Beauty, dress, and fashion provided instruments with which to discipline subjects, establish norms, and structure hierarchies of difference. At the same time, laying claims to beauty or finding pleasure in beautification could function as resistant acts against the disciplinary imposition of norms.¹⁶ Deep investments in and aspirations to beauty and its promises of status and power also reworked, expanded, and at times developed into new industries and systems of beauty work and production. The Philippines became both a source of and resource for beauty, though not always for Filipinos themselves.

In defining and considering “beauty,” I am less interested in philosophical inquiries such as Immanuel Kant's notion of the sublime; instead, I am more focused on the social and political contexts and constructions that inform self-presentation.¹⁷ I use the concept of beauty to address the practices of personal appearance and self-presentation that encompass beauty, dress, and fashion. These distinct categories worked in tandem with one another in the construction of modern beauty cultures. Beauty tells us a great deal about social formations, commerce, consumption, labor, social interactions and control, and policy. Tracking practices of constructing personal appearance sheds light on the changing relationships between the production, marketing, and consumption of articles of dress and beauty commodities and services.¹⁸

My study of beauty explores its location at the interstices of culture and political economy.¹⁹ Popular and scholarly discourse more often than not treats beauty, fashion, and dress as frivolous and therefore apolitical. As Mimi Nguyen warns, though, “Much might be lost in dispensing with (what is dismissed as) mere ornament, or subtracting from the surface.”²⁰ My

work examines Filipina appearance in order to locate and connect seemingly disparate local and transnational circulations of ideologies, people, capital, policies, material culture, and the labor of constructing femininity. Examining the framework of beauty as encompassing the economies of fashion and beautification considers beauty a force that traverses culture, commerce, and politics rather than a passive thing to behold.²¹ Beauty and beautification are action, performance, and interaction.

Examining the Philippines under overlapping empires during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries reveals a deep investment in Filipina beauty. During this era, individual women sometimes wielded their personal appearance as weapons or defenses against colonial racism. They also leveraged beauty and fashion to solidify their social and economic class statuses. During the US colonial period, the colonial state and the private sector viewed Philippine feminine dress and adornment as lucrative transnational enterprises. At the same time, beauty's affective power rallied communities and created new forms of belonging and colonial subject formations, as in the case of the Filipina beauty pageants.²²

Historian Mina Roces's work on Philippine national dress and politics stresses that beauty encompasses character, respectability, tradition, modernity, and status.²³ Indeed, the Tagalog word for beauty, *maganda*, is as much about virtue, family background, heritage, and individual achievement as it is about aesthetic appeal. Aesthetic practices and values provide a sensorial index of what is considered normal, valuable, and desirable—and what is not. Thus, I understand beauty in terms of physical appearance and as a cultural force that, as Manalansan argues, “extends to other realms of social and personal life” as well as to political and economic arenas.²⁴

The phrase “beauty regime” might seem like a malapropism for “beauty regimen.”²⁵ But as Emily Raymundo argues, “Beauty regimens are never separate from beauty regimes.”²⁶ I use the word *regime* much in the same way as Inderpal Grewal, whose approach to studying empire, power, and “networks” focuses on the “transnational connectivities” between subjects, technologies, and ethical practices.²⁷ In other words, *regime* identifies the beauty practices and forms of labor operating on individual, national, and transnational scales.²⁸ There is no shortage of studies of political regimes, and the majority of these studies focus on authoritarian regimes in contrast to democratic state formations. Others take a liberal approach, asserting that regimes are simply neutral states or even that regimes encourage benevolence and voluntary cooperation from constituents.²⁹ Susan Strange offers an important critique of regime theories, saying they “exclude hidden agendas and

to leave unheard or unheeded complaints.”³⁰ In step with newer scholarship on political regimes, such as studies on “local” regime formations in South-east Asia, my work homes in on factors often overlooked in the production and maintenance of regimes. I look specifically at the network of knowledge and power involved a complex constellation of players, including the insular state’s bureaucracies and bureaucrats, private industries, individuals who held no official titles but who nevertheless advanced political agendas, and the subjects whose everyday lives were predicated on their ability to navigate colonial regime change.

I use regime as a framework to account for what Raymond Williams calls “social formations” and to understand beauty’s relationship to power and its role in the accumulation of power. Beauty and fashion encapsulated specific networks and arrangements that maximized political, economic, social, and cultural power that converged in the Philippines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Beauty and fashion provided the tools to control how bodies should look and how bodies should operate. In thinking about beauty regimens *and* beauty regimes, I identify the various colonial and private institutions involved in forming what political scientists identify as regimes’ power to structure patterns of principles, values, procedures, and norms.³¹ The conceptualization of beauty regimes provides a powerful lens through which to understand modern empire’s “ensemble of practices, institutions, force, and contradictions.”³² Beauty and fashion operate in both formal and informal capacities to normativize appearance, behavior, and beliefs.³³ Philippine beauty regimes relied on processes of normalization to regulate gender roles, racial hierarchies, and colonial operations in everyday life. For example, with the expansion of the public school system, the matriculation of girls increased and so did the degree of surveillance of their bodies. Schools increasingly policed students’ everydaywear, discouraging Filipina-style dress and later pressuring students to wear American-style white cotton uniforms. School officials argued that Filipina dresses were unhygienic and cumbersome and would hinder girls’ performance and productivity in the classroom. In addition to larger forces, historical agents—embroiderers, seamstresses, consumers, beauty contestants, and government officials—actively participated in the work of building and maintaining the Philippines as a colony and as a nation *and* changed and challenged the disciplinary norms of empire’s beauty regimes.

Much of the beauty regimes’ tactics focused on modes of dress and ornamentation. Expanding on Roland Barthes’s work on fashion systems, I trace sartorial presentations and meaning-making as well as the Filipina labor that went into producing the materials of fashion and beauty from 1898 to 1941. In

his book, *The Fashion System*, Barthes argues that “written clothing,” that is, the written discourse on clothing in fashion periodicals, and processes of signification do the work of fashion. Beyond “real clothing,” or actual garments themselves, written clothing in various forms of media such as magazines assigns fashion a “supercode,” or a system of words and meanings that “take over” the clothing.³⁴ In my chapters I examine the supercodes of garments and other forms of adornment and modes of constructing personal appearance. At the same time, each chapter examines the *production* and *use* of actual materials of dress and ornamentation, which Barthes dismisses, but which actually emphasize how Filipinas embodied and actively participated in the connected systems of labor, production, and meaning-making at the heart of the concomitant projects of empire and nation-making. My focus on Filipina beauty regimes asks how shifting constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and class informed colonial power structures and modes of control as forms of resistance to modern imperialism. For example, at the turn of the twentieth century, elite Visayan women drew from their arsenals of luxurious garments made by local seamstresses and embroiderers as well as from their dresses procured in fashion centers like Paris to visually perform and preserve their statuses at the pinnacle of local hierarchies of power. They also wielded fashion as a weapon with which to directly counter US presumptions of white American women’s superiority during the rocky transition from Spanish to US colonialism.

Through the framework of beauty and fashion systems, *Beauty Regimes* tracks the formal state actors involved in the structuring of US empire and its new colony, the Philippines, and how such processes were inextricably connected to the Philippines as a “nation-to-be” or “in development” as well as to the development of Philippine nationalism from 1898 to 1941.³⁵ However, the production and governance of values, norms, and practices goes well beyond state actors. Beauty regimes take into account how nonstate actors across geographies and from various economic, ethnic, gender, and racial positions influenced how the regime worked. I look to the colonial state’s arrangement with other entities, including militaries, nonstate groups and organizations, and private industries and institutions. Beauty and fashion industries that flourished during the colonial period depended on information networks between the United States’ Office of the Secretary of War and US consuls in European fashion-production centers who circulated design samples back to the Philippines. These samples were then further distributed through informal networks of homeworkers and shared with public industrial schools. Workers were then required to copy these styles in their work to

meet American market demands. These networks of labor and material culture influenced the negotiation and implementation of tariffs and the regulation of imported and exported materials that went into the making of a garment outprocessing system during the early twentieth century. In accounting for fashion and beauty systems as core parts of imperial operations, I outline the contours of these overlooked arrangements, bringing into sharp relief the connections and convergences—or what Lisa Lowe calls the “intimacy”—of modernity, empires, and capitalism. Tracing the threads of empire, *Beauty Regimes* illustrates how coloniality “operates through precisely spatialized and temporalized processes of both differentiation and connection.”³⁶

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Filipinas, from beauty queens to the embroiderers, contributed to imperial and colonial nationalist formations. The majority of these Filipina subjects did not physically traverse national borders. Nevertheless, they navigated and shaped transnational and global flows, networks, and infrastructures.³⁷ Their lives and labor were part of the complicated forces structured by intertwined histories of Philippine nationalism, legacies of Spanish empire, US imperialism, and the shadow of Japanese empire on the horizon. *Beauty Regimes* accounts for the complex matrixes of institutions, actors, resources, commodities, behaviors, signs, and symbols that worked to regulate rules, procedures, norms, and principles formed under conditions of empire.³⁸



FIGURE 1.1. Manila, 1919. Mario Feir Filipiniana Library, Metro Manila, Philippines.

I do not present an exhaustive history of Filipina beauty and fashion, Philippine nationalism, or US empire. Rather, I provide alternatives and possibilities for understanding how empires overlap, how nationalism and nations formed against and with the colonial state, and how colonial subjects navigated dramatic shifts in power. This is a history that takes into account both formal and informal responses to structures of authority and that uncovers connections and relationships between seemingly disconnected people and institutions. Pushing at the boundaries that keep these fields and histories separate forces us to reckon with the messiness of overlapping imperial and national formations.³⁹ The links, networks, and relationships can appear overwhelming. Yet, it is a worthwhile and rewarding endeavor to delve into the messiness of arrangements, links, and networks.

Graphic's piece on the 1938 Philippine Exposition and Miss Philippines contest reveals the complex contours of empire's connections and conjunctures. The piece tracks Balmori's impact as a beauty queen through not only her physical appeal but also her familial, political, and social connections. It juxtaposes descriptions of Balmori's personal life and connections with political and economic developments, using pictorials and detailed textual descriptions of her education, her social clubs, and her family's involvement in politics and Filipino labor movements to bring readers into the excitement of the world of pageantry.⁴⁰ The article's many questions concerning Balmori's familiarity and involvement with the labor movement directly targets major political and economic concerns. This was particularly relevant as the second election for the presidency of the Commonwealth was set to take place later that year. The piece's title, "A Queen Is Crowned: Guia Balmori, Daughter of a Manila Labor Leader, Crowned Guia I, Miss Philippines and Queen of the Philippine Exposition," makes obvious reference to Balmori's father, Joaquin Balmori, a labor leader, government official, and journalist.⁴¹ Balmori's uncle, Jesús Balmori, was a well-respected and award-winning Spanish-language poet, playwright, and journalist. Her "pedigree" lent credibility to the article's accounts of Guia's "regal" demeanor. To this, she added her own accomplishments. *Graphic* reported to readers that she was enrolled in a secretarial course at the University of Santo Tomás and aspired to work at a Manila business firm upon receiving her degree. Her social circle included a popular group of young women, referred to as "sub-debs," short for "sub-debutantes," a term that referred to upper-class young women approaching

the age to be “presented” into Manila’s high society. These sub-debs socialized at luncheons, teas, parties, and balls. In other words, Balmori fit the image of the beauty queen and embodied 1930s Filipino notions of *maganda*—beauty and good character. To contemporary readers, the inclusion of questions of labor organizing and politics in an article celebrating the newly crowned Miss Philippines may seem jarring. Considering the long trajectory of the deeply intertwined relationship between pageantry and politics, though, this piece was in no way unusual.

Balmori’s victory sheds light on the economic and political currents of the time. As Miss Philippines, Balmori possessed the power to gain the attention—admiration and perhaps criticism—of the nation-to-be. The year 1938 marked the fourth year of the Commonwealth, a “trial period” intended to ready the Philippines and Filipinos for national independence. Philippine nation-building had developed after roughly four hundred years of Spanish colonization, culminating in the Philippine Revolution. It continued to take shape throughout the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars at the turn of the twentieth century and throughout the US imperial period. Even before the United States government passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act, which set a date for Philippine independence, declarations of a Philippine nation as an “imagined community” had already manifested.⁴² Claims to a Filipino national identity had emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, and Philippine independence was first claimed by the Political Constitution of 1899, also called the Malolos Constitution. The creation of a Miss Philippines title was thus also an assertion of a national identity. However, the pageant title was an emblem of *Filipina*-ness.

Beauty Regimes focuses on the connections and relationships between overlapping empires and nation-building and uses the framework of Filipina beauty to examine the process by which the colony became a nation. At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States presented itself as *the* model for the Philippines to follow. In this narrative, the United States, a former British colony, won independence and fashioned itself into a modern democratic state. The Philippines therefore could achieve modern nationhood only under the tutelage of the United States—a project the United States called “benevolent assimilation.”⁴³ For Americans, the making of a Philippine nation was a derivative process, and the Philippines was seen as perpetually in a state of development. To be sure, there were many visions and divergent enterprises active in the move toward Philippine nationhood. But from the onset of its imperial takeover, the United States invested heavily in shaping

the Philippines as a profitable colony and military stronghold in Asia. If there was to be an independent Philippine nation, the United States intended to continue to benefit from it.

The uncertainty around when and if national independence would be realized further complicated the formation of Philippine nationalism. In the second half of the nineteenth century, reformists sought enfranchisement through the acquisition of Spanish identity and citizenship rather than through the formation of a separate independent Philippines. As historian Vicente Rafael contends, Philippine nationalism “began as a movement among groups uncertain about their identity and anxious about their place in society.”⁴⁴ Radical nationalists like Andrés Bonifacio and the members of Katipunan drove nationalist movements to shift toward a fight for sovereignty and independence, which provoked the formation of a Filipino identity. The Philippine Revolution against Spain was victorious, and the Malolos Constitution declared Philippine independence and sovereignty. However, the 1898 signing of the Treaty of Paris, which marked the United States’ victory in the Spanish-American War, resulted in the United States purchasing and claiming a number of Spain’s colonies, including Puerto Rico, Guam, Cuba, and the Philippines.⁴⁵ Thus, Filipinos remained colonial subjects—but now of the United States—and were neither fully citizens of the Philippines nor fully citizens of the United States.⁴⁶ The United States positioned itself as a “big brother” ushering the Philippines into modern nationhood in its own likeness.⁴⁷ This process made “the social and territorial space for the formation of a ‘Filipino nationality.’”⁴⁸ Nation-making was, therefore, a project of empire.

By forging together analyses of culture and political economy, I track the inextricably connected developments of empire-building and colonial national identity formations to multiple forms of gendered labor.⁴⁹ *Beauty Regimes* identifies the making of the *Filipina*, building on the work of Filipina suffrage movements, women’s clubs, labor movements, and histories of feminism.⁵⁰ The term *Filipina* also serves as an important analytic beyond the years of formal colonialism. Colonial and postcolonial developments in gendered labor, violence, and exploitation in the Philippines and throughout the ever-growing diaspora not only depended on the concept of the *Filipina* but also contributed to the formation of a Filipina subject. *Beauty Regimes* traces the threads that bind empire, nationalism, Filipinas, and ideas of Filipina womanhood. Though undeniably engaged with Philippine histories of militarization, the hard labor of colonial infrastructure-building, Filipino migrant laborers, and the work of colonial and Filipino political leaders, in its focus

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on beauty and fashion systems, *Beauty Regimes* uncovers the overlooked connections between the labor of performance and the concomitant work of colonial historical subjects as producers, consumers, colonial agents, and entrepreneurs.⁵¹ For instance, elite Filipinas' performances, such as public gestures of collaboration and friendship between colonial subjects and their colonizers, were vital to preserving Filipinas' wealth and status while maneuvering around colonial campaigns. Additionally, for US colonial agents, testaments to the success of colonial projects were couched in narratives of Filipinas' beautification and "modernization." Chosen modes of dress and accessories had the potential to exhibit visual, physical, and material claims to wealth, respectability, and modernity and functioned as testaments to the "triumphs" of colonization and of nationalism. Conversely, comportment, along with clothing, hairstyles, and a lack of jewels, could signify being underprivileged, marginalized, or in need of becoming modern. Examining the details of fashion and beauty systems at the intersections of gender, race, class, religion, and ethnicity provides a new and more nuanced story of modern empires and nation-making.

In initial confrontations between Americans and Filipinos at the turn of the century, images of Filipina womanhood became strategic tools with which to counter the US stereotypes of Filipino backwardness and savagery that justified the colonial project. For example, elite Filipino nationalists relied on Filipinas as proof of Philippine civilization, countering characterizations of barbarity in the Philippines by citing Filipinas in entrepreneurial positions as legacies of matriarchal precolonial societies.⁵² In other cases, Filipinas were expected to tout their moral superiority over white American women, as conveyed through their ability to preserve "traditional" values and shun American women's wild modern ways. Such "traditional" values, however, were often rooted in elite Spanish colonial culture. In other moments, Filipino leaders and the Philippine media celebrated Filipinas' modern "achievements" in education and the workplace. Filipinas were both objects of nationalist projects and subjects of a colony and a nation-to-be. In addition to suffrage movements and the growing number of Filipina civic organizations, beauty and fashion emerged as a critical arena in which Filipinas navigated their status as colonial subjects.⁵³ At the same time, these very sites where Filipinas asserted and negotiated their statuses and positions took place in the tenuous state of a nation deferred. The need to demonstrate their capacity for modern subjecthood shaped their demonstrations of belonging to either the metropole or the Philippines. It also spoke to their desire to cement their status in rapidly changing transnational cultures.

Excavating evidence of colonial beauty regimes always reminded me of the tenuous relationship between the archive and scholarship. At the beginning of my research journey, some warned me that my research would most likely bear little fruit because the archive was constructed against the very subjects of my research. The archive both sustains historical scholarship and reproduces hegemonic systems of knowledge. Saidiya Hartman exposes the brutality of archives in her argument that it indexes the violence inflicted upon enslaved Black women and “deposit[s] these traces in the archive,” thus committing another form of violence in the reduction of Black women to “fragments of discourse.”⁵⁴ Hartman’s work on “critical fabulation” pushes against the limits of archives to write the stories of Black women’s lives without reproducing the harm of dishonoring life and the violence of slavery. Challenging the conventions of archives and archival research, postcolonial feminist scholars also caution us to be suspicious of the archive, pointing to its organization—the ways institutions select and preserve particular documents and not others.⁵⁵ Traditional archival systems depend on the existence of documents, their submission, and their methods of categorization and preservation. These methods silence and erase as well as preserve. Moreover, preservation technology is not always accessible, adding to the vulnerability and eventual vanishing of sources. Critical archival scholars such as Lisa Lowe remind us that archives are “organized to preserve government records and information for the public; its imperatives are classification, collection, and documentation, rather than connection or convergence.”⁵⁶

I shifted my methodological approach by not presuming what might be contained in particular categories and titles and by questioning my own assumptions about where femininity and feminine worlds would appear in the documentation or evidence. Once I did, sources began to accumulate—bit by bit, fragment by fragment. Archival research requires bringing together seemingly unrelated and disparate collections and documents.⁵⁷ These sources were scattered across libraries and personal collections between the United States and the Philippines and were often hidden in mislabeled folders. In the face of what turned out to be archival excess, I experienced a kind of archive exhaustion. The numbers and lengths of descriptions and images of Filipinas were overwhelming. Boxes and folders not overtly labeled “women,” “girls,” “gender,” or “dress” contained images and promotional literature for Filipina fashion, documents and receipts tracking transactions between the United States and the Philippines for materials and labor for beauty commodities,

and even suggestions for implementing dress codes as a means by which to discipline young women.

My search for historical sources on beauty and fashion uncovered a broad range of documents written in Tagalog, Spanish, and English, including colonial government reports, personal letters and memoirs, prison intake records, anthropological photograph collections, portraits, women's magazines, and advertisements through which I tracked the diffusion of colonial, imperial, and nationalist systems.⁵⁸ Empire- and nation-building operated in the structural realm in spectacular displays like beauty pageants as well as in day-to-day experiences. My sources gave me insight into arenas typically considered "private" and "personal," such as clothing and beauty choices. Indeed, the archives revealed an obsession with Filipina appearance—with beauty as well as with ugliness. Durba Mitra calls for historians to pay close attention to obsession through repetition, as "repetition is purposeful and a way to constitute knowledge."⁵⁹ It became clear to me that a range of individuals, agents, groups, and institutions were obsessed with Filipinas and, more specifically, with Filipina appearance.

And yet, even with the hypervisibility of Filipinas in newspapers, photographs, and government documents, many questions about and gaps in their histories remained, exposing the paradoxical limits of historical "visibility."⁶⁰ I argue that we cannot understand the relationship between colonial projects and nation-building without examining how colonial subjects, like Filipinas, were not only impacted by such projects but also actively shaped colonial and nationalist ventures within and beyond national borders. But traditional archives, particularly colonial archives, make it difficult to find the "voices" of many of the Filipina subjects in this book. Even with the numerous appearances of Filipinas in anthropological photographs, souvenir postcards, and stereographs as well as in descriptions in diaries and government documents, with a few exceptions, it was difficult to ascertain from these sources the individuals' agendas, emotions, and personal backgrounds—the very details that give insight into their lives as people. Even with my net cast wide, my research required weaving together "fragments" and rereading documents to excavate the experiences and viewpoints of Filipinas across racial, ethnic, and class lines.⁶¹

DUKE The Contours of a Beauty Regime

Through the prism of beauty, *Beauty Regimes* looks at the years between 1898 and 1941—a time of overlapping empires. During these years, colonial powers

shifted between Spanish, US, and Japanese control. These years marked rapid change that heightened the desire to structure and enforce social order. To many Filipinos, especially elites, nationalists, and members of the growing middle class, when regimes were changed, the location of power seemed to be in flux. The uncertain state of Filipino national independence increased, in many Filipinos, the desire for structures of order with which to secure and consolidate or gain power along shifting hierarchies of difference.

My focus on regimes as a way to understand social formations moves away from more standard periodization of Philippine and Philippine-American history. It looks not only at big events or episodes but also at the mechanisms of empire- and nation-building in everyday life. The book starts at the beginning of the US colonial regime and moves forward chronologically. Each chapter emphasizes temporal overlaps, highlighting that the making of “the Filipina,” “Filipina beauty,” and Filipina beauty work occurred under the conditions of overlapping empires. I frame the US-Philippine relationship within the context of transimperialism. That is, I do not separate the historical narratives of the US regime from the Spanish or Japanese empires. Rather, I use a transimperial framework to highlight the imperial residues and tensions that lingered and continued to shape colonial life even after regime changes.⁶² Beyond its chronology, each chapter takes on one fashion or beauty domain, tracing the local and transnational arrangements and connections made between Filipinas, colonial agents, state institutions, and private industries to fuel beauty economies. The chapters closely investigate overlooked instruments of discipline and control that were implemented by agents of empire and nationalism as well as by Filipina/o subjects seeking survival and empowerment.

Chapter 1 tracks the consequences of the shift from the Spanish to the US regime as a result of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars at the turn of the twentieth century. It centers encounters and confrontations between Filipina *mestiza* elites and white American women. American women who accompanied their husbands on the Second Philippine Commission were tasked with befriending Filipinas as a means of strengthening Filipino-American relations. The Commission brought women together in a range of social settings, from elegant ballroom dances to casual conversations in sitting rooms. But the intended friendly encounters were often rife with tension that manifested in sartorial descriptions and displays. In the memoirs, diaries, and letters written by white American women in the Philippines, imperial aggression engendered by the collision of hierarchies took place in the context of sartorial competition. Gowns and accessories became

the weapons used to undermine the others' sense of privilege. Embedded in gossip and expressions of jealousy and disdain were competing ideologies of whiteness, privilege, and respectability that the change in imperial regimes threw together. Diamonds, pearls, and gowns became the battlegrounds over which shifting definitions of whiteness and superiority were negotiated.

Moving beyond traditional narratives that describe beauty pageants during and after the colonial period as a manifestation of colonial mimicry, chapter 2 narrates a much more complex history. Examining the development of the Manila Carnival Queen contests that ran from 1908 to 1939, this chapter tracks the US colonial government's hand in the secularization of pageantry and the establishment of the Carnival Queen contests to make money, gain public attention, and perform colonial success through the presentation of beauty queens. These contests, which started as a showcase of colonial progress, paradoxically became a potent site for Filipino national identity formation. Filipino pageantry breached the disciplined choreography of the Manila Carnival Queen contests. Queens developed into powerful figures of ideal Filipina femininity that continued to shape gendered and sexualized performances of beauty and desirability well beyond the American colonial period.

Chapter 3 moves from the labor of performance to the labor of production. By the 1910s, the US colonial government initiated infrastructural changes to expand local industries into a much larger import-export business model. This chapter zeroes in on the United States' targeting of the Philippines as a resource for beauty production through the building of a transnational embroidery industry. Filipino-made embroidery paved the way for a new feature in US garment labor: outprocessing, in which American merchants would ship materials from the United States to the Philippines to be sewn and ornamented by Filipina needleworkers. Philippine dealers would then send the finished products back to the United States for American consumption. The establishment of a transnational embroidery industry based on import and export required political, social, and economic maneuverings in both the United States and the Philippines. The alliance between the US colonial and federal governments and the private sector expanded a cheap Filipina labor force whose "exotic" talent for handcrafted ornamentation was marketed aggressively to American consumers. The result was a transnational embroidery industry that linked the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. This chapter examines the relationship between Filipina-crafted embroidery and American style and consumption, illuminating the seemingly unlikely intimacies between colonialism, global capitalism, and a transnational industry of

feminized and racialized labor and commodities intended for mainly white American consumers.

A major feature of the developing transnational Philippine embroidery industry was its reliance on public colonial disciplinary institutions—namely public schools and prisons—to help expand and regulate commercial enterprises. Chapter 4 examines the disciplining of beauty workers in the intertwined public school and colonial prison system. These public institutions of reform functioned as a central nervous system for the embroidery industry. Through industrial education and labor, particularly in embroidery and other fine needlework, the new colonial state promised to usher Filipinos into a modern and industrialized life. However, an examination of embroidery, one of the most profitable exports, in industrial schools and prisons reveals a troubling story of racialized and gendered exploitation. While colonial institutions promised Philippine women and girls the education and skills to thrive in an advancing and industrializing society, in actuality, prisons and schools provided a controlled environment in which educating “pupil workers” and women prisoners constituted, in fact, the disciplining of a vulnerable and exploitable workforce for the profit of the colonial state and American investors. By linking embroidery and labor to colonial education and prison systems, this chapter questions the “benefits” of American colonialism and explores the hidden cost of uplift.

Despite the “Americanization” of Philippine embroidery for American markets, embroidery in *Filipiniana* wear, like the terno, not only continued but produced Filipina high fashion. Chapter 5 homes in on the terno, a formal gown worn by mestiza elite women, that came to symbolize class status as well as a specific kind of Filipina high fashion. This chapter traces the constellation of arenas that marked changes in the production of clothing, the development of a Filipina fashion system, and the construction of Filipino national identity rooted in Spanish *mestizaje*, elitism, and cosmopolitanism. I track the transformation that made the terno a high-fashion garment by the 1920s, as well as the glamorous body adornments that changed in conjunction with urbanization, the rise of Filipino fashion designers in local and transnational contexts, and the emergence of concomitant beauty industries.

The epilogue brings the reader into the years leading up to World War II. By examining the business of textiles and fashion, it tracks feelings of anticipation and uncertainty about the possibilities of Philippine independence, the potential consequences of imperial competition between the United States and Japan, and the threat of war. The epilogue looks at fashion as a space in which protectionist policies reflected not only growing economic and political

tensions between the United States and the Commonwealth of the Philippines but also anxiety over what a postcolonial Philippines would look like. The chapter also follows the competition between the US and Japanese empires that manifested in the Philippine textile markets. The epilogue ends by showing how dress became a critical tool to shore up feelings of anxiety against the uncertainty of impending war.

The histories presented in each of the chapters uncover the wide range of historical actors who worked to solidify, gain, or contest power and authority through beauty. Their deep investment in Filipina beauty, beautiful bodies and visages, and their potential to create consumable beauty generated political, economic, cultural, and social technologies that were unevenly advantageous—in terms of financial gain, power, and status—for US agents and industries and, to a lesser and yet still significant degree, for some Filipina/os. *Beauty Regimes* examines the everyday and spectacular performances that, linked with consumption, sartorial presentations, and beauty practices, uncover the multiple and previously overlooked circuits that cross and converge through Filipina bodies. In doing so, it reconfigures the geographies of colonialism and nationalism and accounts for the transpacific and transatlantic movements of bodies, ideas, goods, and capital.

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INTRODUCTION

- 1 "A Queen Is Crowned: Guia Balmori, Daughter of a Manila Labor Leader, Crowned Guia I, Miss Philippines of 1938 and Queen of the Philippine Exposition," *Graphic*, February 24, 1938, 8, 18–19.
- 2 "Queen Is Crowned," 18.
- 3 Burns, "Your Terno's Draggin'," 201.
- 4 For more on definitions of the *terno*, see Burns, "'Your Terno's Draggin'," 199–217; Coo, "Clothing and the Colonial Culture of Appearances"; Cruz, *The Terno*; Steinbock-Pratt, "'It Gave Us Our Nationality'"; M. Roces, "Gender, Nation and the Politics of Dress."
- 5 "Queen Is Crowned."
- 6 Ambeth R. Ocampo, "The Philippines' First Beauty Queen," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, February 3, 2017, <https://opinion.inquirer.net/101348/philippines-first-beauty-queen#ixzz5vYIDijGI>; Cannell, *Power and Intimacy*; Clutario, "Pageant Politics"; David and Cruz, "Big, *Bakla*, and Beautiful"; Johnson, *Beauty and Power*.
- 7 Tourism Secretary Vicente Ramos (1994), quoted in Banet-Weiser, *Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, 200.
- 8 David, "Transgender Archipelagos," 337. According to Robert Diaz, *bakla* "often denotes gay male identity, male-to-female transgender identity, effeminized or hyperbolic gay identity, and gay identity that belongs to the lower class." R. Diaz, "The Limits of *Bakla* and Gay," 721.
- 9 I use the designation *Filipinx* when referring to present-day circumstances. When addressing developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I use "Filipino" and "Filipina" to underscore the historical processes of identity constructions. A growing number of communities, scholars, and activists use the term *Filipinx*. More than a term of gender neutrality, the "x" in *Filipinx*, as Sony Corañez Bolton argues, "opens up a colonial relationality between histories of Spanish colonialism and US imperialism" and recognizes that "the simple act of altering one letter of the historically colonial language of Spanish and its ordering of binary gender, encourages an ethics of solidarity that brings *Filipinx* and *Latinx* peoples together." Bolton, "Tale of Two X's," 187.
- 10 R. Diaz, "Biyuti from Below," 417.
- 11 Manalansan, *Global Divas*, 90.

- 12 Banet-Weiser, "I'm Beautiful the Way I Am"; Lee, "Beauty between Empires."
- 13 Nash, "Writing Black Beauty," 105. See also Blain Roberts on the pleasures of connection, community, and care between Black women in beauty parlors. Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*, 97.
- 14 Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl around the World*, 31.
- 15 My work builds on the growing scholarship on race, gender, and the politics of beauty and fashion. Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen?*; Ford, *Liberated Threads*; Greer, *Represented*; Lee, Moon, and Nguyen Tu, *Fashion and Beauty in the Time of Asia*; Nguyen, "Biopower of Beauty," 362; Ochoa, *Queen for a Day*; Roberts, *Pageants, Parlors, and Pretty Women*; Saraswati, *Seeing Beauty, Sensing Race*; Nguyen Tu, *The Beautiful Generation*.
- 16 Nguyen, *Promise of Beauty*.
- 17 Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. For a critique on Kant's approaches to beauty, see Armstrong, "The Effects of Blackness."
- 18 Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China*; Kang, *Managed Hand*; Phạm, *Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet*, 81; Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*; Weinbaum et al., *Modern Girl around the World*.
- 19 Tadiar, *Fantasy Production*, 30.
- 20 Nguyen, "Right to Be Beautiful."
- 21 Nguyen, "Biopower of Beauty," 361.
- 22 Vanita Reddy's work on the power of beauty and fashion in formations of Indian diaspora underscores how "practices associated with beauty are socializing in the way that they make possible new racialized subject formations, affiliations, and forms of diasporic belonging." Reddy, *Fashioning Diaspora*, 19.
- 23 M. Roces, "Women in Philippine Politics and Society," 172.
- 24 Manalansan, *Global Divas*, 15.
- 25 I thank Heather Lee, Naoko Shibusawa, and Lili Kim for their input on the naming and shaping of this framework.
- 26 Raymundo, "Beauty Regimens, Beauty Regimes," 103.
- 27 Grewal, *Transnational America*, 3, 126.
- 28 Many thanks to Anonymous Reader 1 for this language.
- 29 Keeley, "Toward a Foucauldian Analysis of International Regimes."
- 30 Strange, "Cave! Hic Dragones."
- 31 Novadona Bayo, Santoso, Purna Samadhi, *In Search of Local Regime in Indonesia*, 16–17.
- 32 Hall, *Policing the Crisis*, xi.
- 33 Hall and Morley, *Essential Essays*, 365.
- 34 Barthes, *Fashion System*, 8–9.
- 35 For more on histories of nationalism under both Spanish and US colonial regimes, see Agoncillo, *Filipino Nationalism, 1872–1970*; Constantino, *Neo-colonial Identity and Counter-Consciousness*; Cullinane, *Ilustrado Politics*; Doran, "Women, Nationalism and the Philippine Revolution"; Iletto, *Pasyon*

and Revolution; Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*; Quibuyen, *Nation Aborted*; Schumacher, *Making of a Nation*.

- 36 Lowe, *Intimacies*, 5, 8.
- 37 I am indebted to the labors of transnational, women of color, and third world feminist scholars and their groundbreaking work in studies of colonialism, globalization, and empire. In addition to the works cited above and elsewhere in this book, such works include Alexander and Talpade Mohanty, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies*; Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*; Briggs, *Reproducing Empire*; Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*; García-Peña, *Borders of Dominicanidad*; Grewal and Kaplan, *Scattered Hegemonies*; Kang, *Managed Hand*; Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*; Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches*; Salazar Parreñas, *Force of Domesticity*; Wu, *Radicals on the Road*.
- 38 Here, I draw from Stephen Krasner's definition of political regimes. Krasner, *International Regimes*, 3.
- 39 Cruz, "Global Mess and Glamour"; Manalansan, "The 'Stuff' of Archives."
- 40 Here, the Philippine Exposition refers to the commerce and business exposition that was part of the festivities of the Manila Carnival, an annual fair modeled after the world's fairs and in which the Manila Carnival Queen contest served as the crowning point of the one- to two-week-long event.
- 41 M. Kerkvliet, *Manila Workers' Unions*.
- 42 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
- 43 For more on the United States' imperial projects of benevolent assimilation, see Agoncillo, *Filipino Nationalism*; Cullinane, *Ilustrado Politics*; Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*; Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood*; Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution*; Karnow, *In Our Image*; Kramer, *Blood of Government*; Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*.
- 44 Rafael, *Promise of the Foreign*, 19.
- 45 Capazzola, *Bound by War*; Caronan, *Legitimizing Empire*; McCoy and Scarano, *Colonial Crucible*; Poblete, *Islanders in the Empire*.
- 46 Scholars of Filipino immigration have examined the ambivalent position of Filipinos who migrated to the United States and other US territories such as Hawai'i. Isaac, *American Tropics*. For more on immigration and Filipinos' legal status as "nationals," see Baldoz, *Third Asiatic Invasion*; Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*.
- 47 Karnow, *In Our Image*; Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*.
- 48 Mojares, "Formation of Filipino Nationality," 12.
- 49 Michelle Mitchell and Naoko Shibusawa provide an insightful synthesis of gender, labor, capitalism, and imperialism. Mitchell and Shibusawa, "Introduction." Cedric Robinson's groundbreaking work put forth the idea of "racial capitalism," which argues that the very formations of capital and capitalism are intrinsically linked to and motivated by racism and race. Robinson, *Black Marxism*.
- 50 Ancheta and Beltran-Gonzalez, *Filipino Women in Nation Building*. For a detailed analysis of biographies and writings promoting the Filipina women's

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- movement, see D. Cruz, *Transpacific Filipinas*, 21–27; Aquino, “Filipino Women and Political Engagement,” 36–37; Winkelmann, *Dangerous Intercourse*.
- 51 My framing of performance draws from the work of Diana Taylor. Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*.
- 52 Francisco, “From Subjects to Citizens,” 113. For descriptions of women’s status in precolonial Philippines, see Alzona, *Filipino Woman*; Camagay, “Women through Philippine History,” 31–32; and Subido, *Feminist Movement in Philippines*.
- 53 Roces and other citations on suffrage, on civic groups, on Filipina education. M. Roces and Edwards, “Is the Suffragist an American Colonial Construct”; M. Roces, “Gender, Nation and the Politics of Dress”; M. Roces, “Filipino Elite Women and Public Health.”
- 54 Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” 3.
- 55 See for example the work of Arondekar, *For the Record*.
- 56 Lowe, *Intimacies*, 5.
- 57 For more on the structure of archives, mislabeling, and the disappearing of women from the archive, see Vicuña Gonzalez, *Empire’s Mistress*, 8–12. See also Mendoza, *Metroimperial Intimacies*, 29.
- 58 While there are many languages and dialects in the Philippines, most of the sources made available to me were written in Tagalog.
- 59 Mitra, *Indian Sex Life*, 4.
- 60 Arondekar, *For the Record*, 3. Marisa Fuentes’s work on gender, women, and slavery in the Caribbean interrogates the implications of archival obsessions with particular forms of violence inflicted upon Black women that obscure other kinds of brutality. The hypervisibility of some narratives consequently renders other histories invisible. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, 128–29.
- 61 Brewer and Medcalf, *Researching the Fragments*.
- 62 Clutario, “World War II and the Promise of Normalcy.”

1. TENSIONS AT THE SEAMS

- 1 The original iteration of the second Philippine Commission, often referred to as the Taft Commission, was composed of William Taft, Henry Clay Ide, Luke Wright, Dean Worcester, and Bernard Moses. Between 1900 and 1916, more Americans and Filipinos would join the Commission. These members included Benito Legarda, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera, Jose de Luzuriaga, James Francis Smith, William Cameron Forbes, William Morgan Shuster, Newton W. Gilbert, Rafael Palma, Gregoria Araneta, Juan Sumulong, Fran Branagan, Charles Elliot, Francis Burton Harrison, Victorino Mapa, Jaime C. de Veyra, Vicente Ilustre, Vicente Singson Encarnacion, Henderson Martin, Clinton L. Riggs, Eugene Elliott Reed, and Wilford Denison. Most Filipinos who took part in the Commission were Partido Federal (Federal Party) members. In addition to staff and a few Filipino and American journalists, a few wives, sisters, and children accompanied the Commission. While the Com-