

Book Reviews

Beauty Regimes: A History of Power and Modern Empire in the Philippines, 1898-1941, by Genevieve Alva Clutario. Duke University Press, 2023. xvii + 338 pp. \$28.95 paperback. ISBN 9781478019640.

Genevieve Alva Clutario's *Beauty Regimes: A History of Power and Modern Empire in the Philippines, 1898-1941* builds on the work of Mina Roces and Stephanie Coe and offers a fascinating analysis with which to understand the role of beauty and beauty production in the Philippines during US colonial rule. Through a trans-imperial analysis accounting for Spanish, American, and Japanese imperialism, Clutario demonstrates the various ways Filipinas and Americans (re)negotiated and (re)created Filipina identity through seemingly everyday, sartorial practices. By providing several viewpoints, the author exhibits the way gender complicated and played a crucial part in shaping national discourses and identities.

Clutario defines beauty regimes as, "...beauty practices and forms of labor operating on individual, national, and transnational scales," (5) and it is those three avenues with which she analyzes the beauty and beauty production. The first two chapters analyze the complex racial tensions between elite Filipinas and white American women in public and private spaces through examining individual accounts and national print media. With a highly original analysis, the first chapter examines the "politics of pettiness" (22) between elite Filipinas and white American women in colonial encounters to demonstrate the power struggles found within private spaces such as homes or ballrooms. Clutario deftly and creatively uses the archive—through diary entries, personal letters, and memoirs of white American women—to demonstrate the motivations of both elite Filipinas and white American women in wearing and displaying their identities. Filipina women used sartorial practices to create a Filipina identity entrenched within cosmopolitanism countering American perceptions of Filipinos, while white American women used these same practices to demonstrate themselves as models of modernity.

The second chapter details the beauty pageant as a multifaceted site of colonial expression and national identity creation. While initially created to "project a positive image of the American empire," (69) through beauty pageants, Filipinas negotiated opposing identities of the traditional and modern woman to create the "perfect type of modern Filipino woman" (91). Clutario also demonstrates the role of popular media, following much in the vein of Benedict Anderson, in the creation of a national identity by demonstrating not only how newspapers and articles rallied Philippine citizens behind a Filipina beauty queen

but also how articles on Filipina queens created an image of the ideal Filipino woman that others should follow. By exploring the beauty pageant complex, the author demonstrates the important ways in which beauty crafted a hegemonic national identity for Filipino women.

Chapters 3 and 4 move away from the elite Filipina woman to detail the roles that lower-class Filipina women played in the transnational Philippine embroidery industrial complex. Chapter 3 highlights the interwoven relationship between labor, material culture, gender, and race in the US empire's investment in a transnational Philippine industry and the creation of a feminized, non-white racialized workforce. In wanting to compete with the European embroidery industry, Americans exoticized Philippine products and exploited brown bodies for white consumption. These embroidery businesses also acted as sites of resistance for Filipina women who were not eager to participate in colonial and capitalist projects. Through a transimperial lens, Clutario unveils how skills initially obtained by Filipinas to demonstrate their "idealized" femininity under Spanish rule transformed into disposable brown labor under the US colonial regime. The fourth chapter continues the exploration of the Philippine embroidery industry through a case study of public schools and prisons. Americans used the ideology of modernizing women to build up the embroidery industry. If Filipinas were modernized by gaining skills that would allow them to earn capital, they could then become better citizens and blossom into proper women.

The final chapter weaves together the role of elite Filipina women and beauty production by analyzing the *terno* as a garment that performed multiple forms of labor—building a gendered identity, adorning nationhood, creating an industry of high-fashion, and solidifying class status. The *terno*, a garment that stemmed from the Maria Clara dress, allowed Filipinas to claim status and identity by structuring itself against different types of the modern Filipina woman—the flapper and the *coed*. The *terno* was a garment that fought against American assumptions of Filipina identity by emphasizing wealth, *mestiza* identity, and cosmopolitanism. The book concludes with an epilogue pointing toward World War II and Japanese control of the Philippines. Even prior to the military occupation of the Philippines, the Japanese were infiltrating the Philippines through the textile market. Philippine fashion magazines emphasized sartorial practices of preparedness by emphasizing the importance of khakis in fashion.

Clutario offers insightful and creative analyses of various archival texts; however, for a book that focuses much of its content on sartorial presentation, there are not enough images conveying the sartorial practices that she notes throughout the book. The book would have only been strengthened with the inclusion of these images allowing the reader to fully grasp the importance of these garments in shaping the national discourse.

Beauty Regimes unearths the complex ways beauty battles with and against colonial power structures and the various ways that colonial subjects resist and (re)create national identities. The book will be of interest to scholars of feminism, fashion, colonialism, empire, and nation-building. Methodologically, Clutario demonstrates creative ways to read archival material and provides a new lens in which to examine the complicated relationships between Filipinos and Americans. In taking the role of beauty seriously, the author demonstrates how colonial projects affect even seemingly innocuous everyday practices of dressing oneself and consumption of popular media and are equally as important to analyze as political texts in understanding how nations are formed.

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To Be an Actress: Labor and Performance in Anna May Wong's Cross-Media World, by Yiman Wang. Oakland, CA: University of California Press 2024. xvi + 265pp. \$34.95 paper. ISBN 978-0-5203 4632-1 paper; ISBN 978-0-5209-7580-4 ebook.

Anna May Wong debuted as an extra in the 1919 silent film *The Red Lantern* and later attracted notice as “The Mongol Slave” in Douglas Fairbanks’ *The Thief of Baghdad* (1924). Unsurprisingly, racial discrimination shaped both the stereotypical parts she was cast in and the more substantive roles she was denied. Thus, Wong has come to epitomize the historical lack of Asian American representation in film, television, and theater. Yiman Wang’s *To Be an Actress* does not soft-pedal the racism and sexism of the entertainment industries and artistic circles in which Wong moved. Wang provides many reminders of how Wong’s appearance was fetishized in film and photography, and how she was denied roles in favor of yellowface leads (most famously in MGM’s 1937 blockbuster *The Good Earth*). At the same time, her book resists portraying Wong simply as a victim of typecasting. Instead, Wang presents her as a performer-worker who continually tried to expand her craft and enhance her professional image,