STEELING THE BUTTERFLY: THE IMPERIAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF IMELDA MARCOS, 1966-1990

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

AMERICAN STUDIES

AUGUST 2018

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Keywords: Imelda Marcos, First Lady, Martial Law, U.S.-Philippine relations, Gender studies, Empire studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my final farewell to this dissertation project with much joy and appreciation. I am deeply grateful to the people who have supported me throughout my doctoral program. First, I would like to acknowledge my ancestors who paved the way, in the hopes that their family might have a chance at a better life. I offer my thanks to Ong Ho, Elena Bañaga, and Robert and Beatriz Bareng. *Agyamanak la unay.*

I am most especially indebted to my dissertation chair, Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, for her indispensable mentorship. Her generosity of time and labor has made a tremendous impact on my work; her unflagging confidence in me has profoundly changed my life for the better. I also extend my sincere gratitude to Mari Yoshihara, Joyce Mariano, Elizabeth Colwill, and Vina Lanzona for their incredible support and encouragement throughout the writing process. I am eternally grateful to my extraordinary dissertation committee for helping me realize my potential even when I had very little confidence in myself.

I want to thank the American Studies department at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa for allowing me to embark on this academic journey. Thank you to Lori Mina and Rumi Yoshida for helping me navigate through the oftentimes-inscrutable institutional bureaucracies. I am also thankful to Robert Perkinson and Patricio Abinales for their guidance and valuable advice, particularly during the early stages of my doctoral program.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of librarians and archivists at various research institutions. More specifically, I would like to thank the librarians at the University of Hawai‘i’s Hamilton Library, Lopez Museum & Library, The Bantayog Library, and the Ilocos Norte Provincial Library. Thank you to the staff and archivists at ‘Ulu‘ulu Moving Image Archive of Hawai‘i, Hawai‘i State Archives, and the LBJ Presidential

Library. I am grateful for the financial support of the American Studies department at UH Mānoa, Center for Philippine Studies, and the LBJ Foundation.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to my esteemed classmates and colleagues who helped shape this dissertation by reading through my (very) rough drafts and offering their valuable insights. More specifically, I thank Sanae Nakatani, Yu Jung Lee, Yanli Luo, Jeanette Hall, Stacy Nojima, Yohei Sekiguchi, Pahole Sookkasikon, Sean Trundle, Yuka Polovina, and Kim Compoc. I am particularly grateful to Jeanette Hall for her generous spirit and for providing such sharp and consistent feedback. I wish to especially thank Stacy Nojima for her unwavering friendship and tireless support and encouragement—it is my honor to have started and finished graduate school right next to you. I am also fortunate to have friends and family whose constant supply of kindness helped me power through some of the challenges of the dissertation process—Sarah Smorol, Mo Wells, Judy Relosimon, Sophia Wong, Tony Siakkhasone, Erika Bareng, Maria Editha Castillo, and Carrie Lau.

I extend my deepest love and gratitude to my best friend and husband, Julio Andres Landivar, for his relentless support throughout the years. Thank you for always believing in me, even when I didn't have faith in myself. Your unconditional love has fueled me through the lonely and often isolating writing process. I couldn't ask for a better partner in life.

Finally, my dissertation is dedicated to my parents—Ruben and Evangeline Bareng—and my brother, Joseph. My parents sacrificed much of their youth so that their children may have a chance to pursue their dreams. Every single word on my dissertation was made possible by your love and devotion to your family. *Salamat po sa lahat ng sakripisyo at pagmamahal na ibinuhos ninyo sa amin.* In many ways, my brother Joseph's courage and strength in the face of his disabilities far surpasses any institutional accolades and honors. This one's for you, Joe.

ABSTRACT

Taking center stage in this dissertation project is the controversial figure of former Philippine First Lady, Imelda Romualdez Marcos, her multiple iterations as a gendered political subject, and her relationship with empire building, state power, and nationalism. Remembered for her flair for drama and excess—epitomized by the shocking discovery of her lavish shoe collection in 1986—and her complicity in the political plunder and crimes of her husband's regime, Imelda Marcos is trivialized, demonized, caricatured, and at times, revered.

This dissertation examines the relationships between cultural representation, state violence, gender, and empire. Grappling with fantasies affixed to the figure of Imelda Marcos, it argues that the emergence of specific "Imelda" iconographies at particular historical moments are significant to the reimagining of United States-Philippine geopolitical relations. This interdisciplinary project utilizes a diverse range of materials including print media, television, and government archives as well as works of art, performances, and film. As the specter of Imelda continues to fascinate and bewilder in the current context of state-sanctioned violence in the Philippines, it is imperative to understand representation and the popular cultural imaginary's role in bringing about a new geopolitical and economic order in the post-World War II era.

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INTRODUCTION

> When we were elected, we were called the Kennedys of the Far East. I remember that *The New York Times*, *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek* covered us. I even had my own articles in *Reader's Digest*. Because we were fighting for the same thing America stands for. This estrangement is just an interlude, an intermission. Wait till the second time around. It's going to be a big, big love affair. [*Sings*] "Love is lovelier the second time around…."[1]
>
> Imelda Marcos

Imelda Marcos is arguably one of the most recognized female political figures of the twentieth century. Her image has metamorphosed throughout the decades, accessed by the viewing public from carefully recorded and circulated articles and images produced by journalists, photographers, cartoonists, filmmakers, and state proxies. The appearance of her image is usually followed by an intense, visceral reaction ranging from reverence to disgust. Often remembered for her flair for drama and excess and her complicity in the political plunder and crimes of her husband's regime, Imelda Marcos is frequently reduced to symbols and sound bites, the most common of which involve her butterfly sleeves, shoes, and bouffant as well as ostensibly random (but perhaps carefully crafted) ramblings about "beauty" and "truth." The 1987 *Playboy* magazine interview from which the epigraph was taken suggests that Imelda was keenly aware of the political import of her media-generated images in the United States. The nine-page *Playboy* article was published one year after the Marcoses were forced out of the Philippines and set at the Marcoses' exilic residence—a mansion in Makiki Heights, overlooking

[1] "Playboy Interview: Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos," *Playboy* 34, no. 8 (August 1987): 61.

the iconic Diamond Head in Honolulu, Hawai'i. The interview was conducted by freelance writer Ken Kelley who enlisted *San Francisco Examiner* reporter Phil Bronstein, who was, incidentally, a Pulitzer Prize finalist in international reporting for his coverage of the fall of the Marcos regime.[2] The piece began with an editor's introduction and an anecdotal section by Kelley that recapitulated his experience with the interview (he concluded that in terms of "sheer entertainment value, Imelda wins hands down").[3] The seven-hour interview was published in a straightforward form, with labeled conversations and a few descriptive inclusions.[4] The curious spotlight on the Marcoses in a controversial American men's magazine signals just how much the Marcoses had utilized and infiltrated so many pockets of cultural life in the United States. Imelda was depicted as a sharp and strange interlocutor—but her words signaled a more sinister, spectral return and an acute awareness of the significance of representational practices in maintaining political power and masking political violence. Furthermore, the article sheds light on the magazine's editor and interviewers' logics and perceptions as well. As Imelda pushed for recognition as part of "us Americans," the editor labeled the Marcoses as having the "ultimate colonial mentality" for having such a "tone" that suggested that the Philippines "is the 51st state—more American than America."[5]

My encounters with Imelda Marcos, like most people, have remained in the realm of representations. Martial Law had already been lifted in the Philippines by the time I was born, but the Marcoses and their cronies still controlled much of the country. I was too young to

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[2] This was the first *Playboy* article that featured Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos—the magazine's previous attempt fell through at the last minute. According to Ken Kelley, despite Ferdinand's uncertainty, he was convinced by Phil Bronstein to continue with the interview. See "Playboy Interview: Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos," 52.
[3] "Playboy Interview: Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos," 52.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

remember in sharp focus the impacts of the Marcoses' conjugal dictatorship. I was only a few months old when my parents moved to Baguio City—five hours away from the capital—inadvertently avoiding the chaotic aftermath of the opposition leader's assassination at the Manila International Airport in 1983.[6] What I do remember about the Marcos era were the loud shushings and the fear of violent reprisal should one get caught supporting the "wrong" side. A close relative, for example, was jailed for violating the Marcos regime's curfew and weapons regulations (he was carrying a pocket knife) and was subsequently stabbed in a public restroom for associating with an anti-Marcos radio personality. Contradictions prevailed in the era of state repression. At my grandparents' home deep in a mountainside province, I saw posters of Ferdinand and Imelda and heard conversations filled with pride for the Ilocano son and his beauteous wife while voices of rebellion grew louder in the urban capital of Manila. Even among the Marcos loyalists, however, Imelda was silently blamed for the regime's downfall. I moved to Honolulu, Hawai'i after Imelda Marcos had already returned to the Philippines to face criminal charges in 1991 and simultaneously stage a political comeback. My snapshot memories of Philippine Martial Law—a general threat of violence and censorship, painted over by mythic images of Ferdinand and Imelda—and Cynthia Enloe's seemingly simple yet provocative question, "Where are the women?" provoked my interest in the study of gender, representation, and geopolitics.

This dissertation project examines the transformations of the figure of Imelda in order to understand the crucial connectivities between gendered representations and geopolitics of the Cold War era. Imelda's representation has undergone a series of public reconstructions

[6] On August 17, 1987, Manila International Airport (MIA) was renamed Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) after the Marcoses' slain political opponent, Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino.

throughout the years, almost overshadowing the enormity of the Marcoses' crimes, which were buttressed for years by United States power. In 1965, the American press described the new Philippine First Lady as "reminiscent of Eleanor Roosevelt" with the "grace and attractiveness of Jackie."[7] In 1966, Imelda wined and dined with American diplomats, receiving the nickname "Jewel of the Pacific" from United States President Lyndon Baines Johnson.[8] Twenty years later, in 1986, the scene was drastically different: the Marcoses hurriedly fled the Philippines for exile in Honolulu and a reported 3,000 pairs of shoes were found as angry protesters stormed the abandoned presidential palace. A few years later, she was in New York City, at the center of a trial unprecedented in United States legal history.

My project takes a serious look at representations of Imelda Marcos as a vital part of a neocolonial, capitalist, and patriarchal economy of meaning and value that ties the Philippines to the United States by exploring the ways in which her figure is produced, circulated, understood, and made operable at specific historical moments from 1966 to 1990. To be clear, this project is not about Imelda-the-person, but rather about her representations and how they operate in specific historical and geopolitical landscapes. I argue that the figure of Imelda is a crucial cultural site in which Americans and Filipinos made sense of their identities and negotiated the changing demands of Philippines-United States neocolonial relations. Just as the United States neocolonial practices helped shape the spectacles of Imelda, the imperial spectacles and cultural productions of Imelda also reveal much about the United States. The Marcos regime may be notorious for its theatricality and edifice complex, deployed to erect a particular image of itself—but its silent partner, the United States government, also relies on specific narratives to sanitize,

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[7] Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy* (New York: Times Books, 1987), 51.
[8] Ibid.

erase, or reinvent history.[9] The United States empire has had much to gain from the creation of the visible-turned-invisible and significant-turned-trivialized Imelda Marcos because the public spectacle of Imelda conveniently distracts from and minimizes American responsibility in the widespread human rights violations of the Marcos regime. This dissertation is also necessarily about the figure of the United States as the American identity and neocolonial project were often projected on Imelda.

Mainly in a chronological fashion, this dissertation investigates four major Imelda iconographies as produced and expressed by mainstream cultural "texts," from 1966 when she first emerged as an international public persona to 1990 when she became the center of a high-profile trial by jury in New York City.[10] To do this, I plan to address the following guiding questions: What facilitated the emergence of Imelda's public personas? Why and how was the figure of Imelda invoked from 1966 to 1990 in the American cultural imaginary? How did the figure of Imelda operate (and was made operable) in specific historical moments and what work did it do in the Philippines-United States neocolonial, geopolitical landscape? What might the study of Imelda's media representations tell us about the relationship between the cultural imaginary and state-sponsored political violence? Who ultimately benefitted from the (re)productions, transformations, and erasures of various Imelda iconographies at different historical moments from 1966 to 1990?

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[9] Gerard Lico used this term in his book *Edifice Complex* to explore the connections between the Marcos regime's architectural structures and their desire to legitimize and maintain power. See Gerard Lico, *Edifice Complex: Power, Myth, and Marcos State Architecture* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003).

[10] I refer to the archives of this dissertation as "texts" in order to gesture to its eclectic range. This interdisciplinary study considers a wide range of mainstream media productions such as editorial cartoons and televised beauty pageants, to name a few, as research materials deserving of serious study.

History and Background

Attempting to write a succinct biography of Imelda Marcos is a challenging but unavoidable task. It is, after all, critical to learn as much about the subject of this dissertation in order to historically contextualize her evolving representations. The challenge, however, lies in discerning between facts, fabrications, and speculations that resulted from suppression of free press during Martial Law. In the effort to de-clutter from sheer hearsay and propaganda, instead of writing a biography of Imelda Marcos, this section attempts to contextualize Imelda's emergence vis-à-vis Philippines-United States relations.

Imelda Marcos' childhood—like the many other pieces that make up her life—is a contested chapter, filled with contradictions, distortions, and distractions. Works by Carmen Navarro Pedrosa (1987) and Katherine Ellison (1988), two of the most often cited biographical texts about Imelda, claim that Imelda's Malacañang-crafted biographies are, in fact, no different from Imelda's extravagant attires—they are mere fabrications, an intentional fashioning of her heritage and upbringing in order to fit the illustrious political image that the Marcoses worked so hard to build and maintain. I utilize the Imelda biographies by Ellison and Pedrosa because they offer American and Filipino perspectives on Imelda's life, respectively, even drawing the ire of Imelda and resulting in the exile of the latter.

Imelda Remedios Visitacion Trinidad Romualdez was born on July 2, 1929 in Manila, Philippines. The Romualdez family was considered relatively prominent and wealthy, dating back to their Spanish colonial forebears. Her great grandmother, Trinidad Lopez Romualdez, was the daughter of Don Francisco Lopez, a philandering Spanish priest. Although the Romualdez family is known for their political and economic influence as landed elites, Pedrosa

reveals that Imelda, in fact, grew up in relative poverty.[11] Imelda vehemently and vindictively denied Pedrosa's claims, until this version of her life proved useful as she faced a New York jury for charges of racketeering and fraud in 1990. Her father, Vicente Orestes Romualdez, was a lawyer who hailed from a prominent family in Manila. Vicente had five children by his first wife, Juanita Acereda, who reportedly died of leukemia. Vicente remarried—this time to Imelda's mother, Remedios Trinidad, who bore six children and suffered from depression and died of pneumonia in 1938. Following her mother's death and her father's failing law practice, the Romualdez family moved back to their paternal grandmother's rural Province of Leyte, where they lived in relative comfort. Imelda, however, was treated as an outsider and even reportedly lived in a garage—shunned as the daughter of Vicente's second wife.

Imelda's formative years coincided with American colonial rule in the Philippines. Spain's defeat in the Spanish-American War in 1898 ended its colonial rule of the Philippines (1565-1898) and began United States colonization (1898-1935). The 1898 Treaty of Paris peace agreement between the two colonial powers resulted in Spain relinquishing control over its overseas empire including Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Far from peaceful, the United States began its military occupation over its newly acquired territories with imperial fervor and faced much resistance by Philippine nationalists. The Philippine-American War (1899-1902) resulted in the death of 4,234 American troops and a disproportionate number of Filipino casualties: approximately 16,000-20,000 Filipino soldiers and 200,000 Filipino civilians.[12] Gradually, however, pacification would lead to the consolidation of United States colonial rule in the Philippines through the establishment of civil apparatuses that placated anti-

[11] Carmen Navarro Pedrosa, *Imelda Marcos: The Rise and Fall of One of the World's Most Powerful Women* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).
[12] Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumer's Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 7.

imperial resistance in the Philippines and the United States and made the project of American colonialism seem benevolent.[13] By 1934, the United States Congress had passed the Tydings-McDuffie Act, which promised Philippine independence after a Commonwealth period of ten years.

The shifting American colonial project in the Philippines seemed to have shaped a significant portion of Imelda's upbringing. She attended the all-girls Holy Infant Academy, learned the English language and American history from mostly American and German teachers.[14] At thirteen years old, Imelda witnessed the violence and disruption of World War II. Her hometown of Leyte in the Visayas region was a particularly significant American military site where the United States General Douglas MacArthur reportedly and repeatedly staged his now-famous photo, traipsing to the shoreline in 1945, a photographic contribution to the American liberation narrative.[15] Imelda's youth was marked with encounters with Americans, particularly American soldiers, during World War II. According to Ellison, Imelda seemed so

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[13] For example, the Americans introduced an electoral system that increasingly allowed Filipino elites participation in political office and civil service "in the name of preparing the Philippines for eventual self-rule." See Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Rosskamm Shalom, eds., *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship, and Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1987), 35. This was achieved, according to historian Benedict Anderson, "by smashing, often with great brutality, all opposition" and resulting in the "vastly improved the economic position of the mestizos" who were already affluent during Spanish colonialism. This group of landed elites whose personal ties are consolidated with political and personal intimacies, under the auspices of American colonial machinery, "were for the first time forming a self-conscious ruling class." See Benedict Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines: Origins and Dreams" *New Left Review* 1, no. 69 (May-June 1988): 10-11. The Americans also established an English language universal public education system pioneered by a group of American teachers that came to be known as Thomasites. In Warwick Anderson's *Colonial Pathologies*, the author discusses the role of medicine in the United States' imperial, "civilizing" project. See Warwick Anderson*, Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
[14] See Katherine Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 21-22. Also see "Playboy Interview: Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos," 18.
[15] Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, "Illicit Labor: MacArthur's Mistress and Imperial Intimacy," *Radical History Review* 2015, no. 123 (2015): 87-114.

influenced by the Americans that, many years later, she still kept General MacArthur's wife's photo on her piano. And indeed, as mentioned earlier, she would sometimes refer to "us Americans" in interviews.[16] Imelda's childhood and hometown were rife with gendered martial heroics that positioned the United States as the noble, benevolent, masculine rescue/liberator figure to the rendered voiceless and helpless Filipinos. Furthermore, for Imelda's generation, World War II recast the position of the United States from a colonizer to a benevolent rescuer.[17]

By the end of the war, the sixteen-year-old Imelda learned to sing American songs and chase after United States military vehicles in exchange for food. Soon, Imelda began receiving accolades for her physical attractiveness and popularity. For example, in a 1949 local beauty pageant in Tacloban, Leyte, Imelda was officially recognized as the "Rose of Tacloban." In 1952, Imelda returned to a war-torn Manila in search for better opportunities. While attending the Philippine Women's University, and reportedly having little interest in academic pursuits, Imelda sharpened her organizing, performing, and negotiating abilities. She most infamously competed and lost the Miss Manila beauty contest in 1953. With strategic arbitration, however, she managed to convince the Mayor of Manila to bestow upon her the title of Muse of Manila.[18]

After first meeting in 1954, the courtship of Ferdinand Marcos and Imelda Romualdez has fascinated local tabloids and social pages. Twelve years her senior, Ferdinand Edralin Marcos from Sarrat, Ilocos Norte first gained infamy when he allegedly shot and killed his father's political opponent, Julio Nalundasan. Ferdinand was convicted and sentenced to death.

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[16] Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 54.
[17] Bienvenido Lumbera, "From Colonizer to Liberator: How U.S. Colonialism Succeeded in Reinventing Itself After the Pacific War," in *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream 1899-1999,* eds. Angel Shaw and Luis H. Francia (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 193-203.
[18] This experience plunged Imelda into Manila's world of gossip and scandal. According to Katherine Ellison, Imelda was rumored to have had an affair with Mayor Arsenio Lacson. See Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines,* 31-21.

However, the Marcos family appealed the verdict and the Supreme Court of the Philippines overturned Ferdinand's conviction. While facing trial, Ferdinand also completed his law degree and reportedly ranked first in the bar examination. The real details of the case, like many other details of the Marcos saga, are hotly contested. This case, however, might demonstrate Ferdinand's early reliance and deployment of the legal system to achieve his own personal aspirations. In addition, Ferdinand slickly maneuvered his reputation from an accused murderer to an aspiring lawyer and politician. He benefited from the spoils of American colonial government and World War II in the Philippines. He understood and utilized the power of the American style electoral system as well as the political potential of martial heroics. Throughout his political career, he boasted about his wartime exploits and medals, claims that were later disputed and proved false by historian Alfred W. McCoy.[19]

After a much-publicized eleven-day engagement in Baguio City, Imelda and the young lawyer-turned-congressman Ferdinand were married in a secret, civil wedding. The secular ceremony was followed by a grand reception with 1,000 guests and a list of wedding sponsors that was nothing short of a Philippine political who's who. Imelda gave birth to three children: Maria Imelda "Imee" Romualdez Marcos, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Romualdez Marcos, Jr., and Irene Marcos-Araneta. The couple also adopted their youngest daughter, Aimee Romualdez Marcos. In the interim, Marcos continued his rise through the political ranks, becoming a senator and senate president five years after he married Imelda.

Ferdinand Marcos was elected into the highest seat of Philippine politics in 1965 and stayed in power until 1986. As First Lady, Imelda accompanied Ferdinand through numerous state-sponsored trips and even traveled on her own, famously brokering deals with Muammar

[19] Jeff Gerth and Joel Brinkley, "Marcos's Wartime Role Discredited in U.S. Files," *New York Times*, January 23, 1986.

Gaddafi in Libya and socializing with Fidel Castro in Cuba. Imelda's ambassadorship extended beyond the political with her efforts to collect expensive works of art and collect famous celebrity friends such as pianist Harvey Lavan "Van" Cliburn Jr., heiress Doris Duke, and actor George Hamilton. As the appointed Minister of Human Settlements in the Philippines, Imelda also exhibited great interest in edificial endeavors to "beautify" the capital. Using her position, she orchestrated the ostensibly philanthropic construction of the Philippine Heart Center, Lung Center of the Philippines, Manila Film Center, and Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Although in the beginning of the Marcos presidency in 1965, there was much hope that the young and charming leader would bring about much-needed economic, political, and social change in the Philippines, the administration immediately showed signs of authoritarianism and broken promises. Campaigning under the banner of "law and order," Marcos capitalized on the public's concerns regarding increasing crime and decreasing police performance. After his election, Marcos' reliance on policing to increasingly amass power and enforce autocratic rule occurred against the backdrop and support of Washington's counterinsurgency efforts. In addition, although Marcos pledged to avoid sending Philippine troops to fight America's war in Vietnam, he backpedaled on his campaign pledge and dispatched a group of Philippine combat engineer battalion to Vietnam. This political move gave the Marcoses close access to a beleaguered Johnson administration, desperate to find allies in its anti-communist crusade in Southeast Asia.

Ferdinand Marcos also fell short on his promise of land reform and poverty continued to grow while he began lining the pockets of his allies and his own with funds intended for public use. According to economist James K. Boyce, "He built a domestic power base among military officers, civilian technocrats, and a fraction of the elite who became known as the President's

'cronies.'"[20] By 1969, the promise of the Marcoses started to fade but an expensive, violent, and fraudulent electoral campaign resulted in the re-election of Ferdinand Marcos. In one account, Ferdinand was reportedly able to secure election funds by "manipulating U.S. checks to its Filipino employees" with the United States turning a blind eye after Ferdinand threatened to search an American naval vessel suspected of harboring nuclear weapons.[21] Marcos not only "secured crucial external backing from the US government, skillfully manipulating its preoccupation with the military bases," he also "personally invest[ed] in the electoral campaigns of key US politicians."[22] With the use of public funds and political savvy, Ferdinand Marcos became the first (and last) president in Philippine history to be re-elected.

Ferdinand Marcos was also the first Philippine president (but not the last) to declare Martial Law.[23] The Marcoses would later vehemently deny the connection between the declaration of Martial Law and Ferdinand's determination to stay in power after his second, and what was supposed to be his final, term due to presidential term restrictions in the Philippine constitution. Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law on September 21, 1972, claiming that the Philippines faced imminent danger from Communist overthrow. Although a new military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines had, indeed, formed under the leadership of former University of the Philippines English Professor Jose Maria Sison in 1968 (The New People's Army or NPA), some historians have claimed that Marcos largely exaggerated the Communist

[20] James K. Boyce, *The Philippines: The Political Economy of Growth and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), 8.
[21] Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader,* 163.
[22] Boyce, *The Philippines*, 8.
[23] Gloria Macapagal Arroyo placed Maguindanao under martial law in 2009; Rodrigo Roa Duterte placed Mindanao under martial law in 2017.

threat in the Philippines in order to secure American backing and assistance.[24] In reality, the NPA did not pose a major threat to the Philippine government in 1972 but "grew rapidly after the imposition of martial law, its ranks swollen due to the depressed living conditions and the closing off of legal channels of dissent."[25] Poverty, social unrest, escalating state repression, and disenchantment with the government fomented more opposition to the Marcos regime in the form of student youth movements (such as *Kabataang Makabayan*), Muslim secessionists in southern Philippines (Moro National Liberation Front), leftist organizations (National Democratic Front), and the Catholic Church's radicalized priests and nuns.[26] The Marcos regime criminalized all forms of dissent and jailed political opponents, journalists, and demonstrators. While in the beginning of the regime, the business elites largely supported Martial Law, by the late 1970s, many of them complained that the centralization of corruption rewarded only those within the Marcoses' inner circle.[27] Perhaps feeling the pressure to demonstrate some semblance of credibility and democracy, Ferdinand Marcos officially lifted Martial Law in 1981 but maintained its repressive practices such as the power to arrest without warrant. The exiled opposition leader Benigno Aquino's assassination in 1983 escalated the growing opposition to the Marcos regime, culminating in the 1986 People Power Revolution that toppled the Marcos dictatorship. The shy widow of the slain opposition leader, Corazon Aquino, became the first female President in Philippine history.

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[24] Raissa Robles, *Marcos Martial Law: Never Again* (Manila: Filipinos for a Better Philippines, Inc., 2016), 31-33.
[25] Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader,* 164-165.
[26] Ibid. See also Mark R. Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 9. See also Robles, *Marcos Martial Law,* 22-23.
[27] Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader,* 169.

Imelda fled the Malacañang Palace with her family in 1986, in the midst of an overwhelming anti-Marcos people's revolt. They left behind evidence of national plunder, most infamously, Imelda's large collection of shoes. The Marcoses spent time in exile in Honolulu, Hawai'i until Ferdinand died from multiple organ failure in 1989. Imelda faced United States federal racketeering charges in Manhattan and was acquitted in 1990. She returned to the Philippines in 1991 and was jailed, released, and acquitted of corruption charges. Imelda campaigned for the Philippine presidency herself twice, finishing 5th in 1992 and withdrawing from the presidential race in 1998.[28] To date, the ongoing search for plundered wealth and legal accountability still continues. For example, although the U.S. District Court of Hawai'i ruled in favor of 7,526 victims of Marcos abuses in 1994 and 1995, the disbursement of settlement payments have only begun in 2011 due to legal disputes over Marcos assets.[29] Meanwhile, the Marcos dynasty continues its influence in the Philippines. To date, her eldest daughter, Imee Marcos, is the Governor of Ilocos Norte—a Marcos stronghold in northern Philippines. Her son, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. placed second in his quest for the Philippine vice-presidential seat in 2016. He is now protesting the results and demanding election recount at the Philippine's Supreme Court and is rumored to be eyeing the Philippine presidency in a few years. Imelda Marcos herself is 88 years old and currently a member of the Philippine House of Representatives, serving the Province of Ilocos Norte 2nd district's elected representative.

[28] "Imelda Marcos Withdraws from Philippine Presidential Race," *CNN*, April 29, 1998, http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9804/29/philippines.marcos/index.html?iref=allsearch
[29] Seth Mydans, "First Payments Are Made to Victims of Marcos Rule," *New York Times*, March 1, 2011.

Theory and Methods

This project, at its core, is an exploration of the relationships between cultural representation, state power, gender, and empire. More specifically, this dissertation grapples with the relationship between political violence and the cultural imaginary, primarily using a feminist approach to political culture, a postcolonial understanding of Philippine-United States relations, and discourse analysis. This interdisciplinary study draws on a wide range of source materials such as newspapers, magazines, television, film, and editorial cartoons in order to conduct a discourse analysis of how Imelda's iconographies became legible in popular media. The eclectic quality of these archives speaks to the adaptability and flexibility of this dissertation's subject—the figure of Imelda—who appears in an array of cultural "texts" from *The New York Times* to *Playboy*. This work is concerned with the mass consumption and production of "Imelda Marcos" in popular mediums, which are not merely reflective but constitutive of her iconographies.[30]

It is also important to note the limitations of this project. Although the bulk of this dissertation's archives—mass media representations of Imelda largely produced and circulated in the United States and Manila—illuminate the historically specific geopolitical conditions between the United States and the Philippines, this project does not fully grapple with the complexity and breadth of archives from the Philippines as well as other parts of the world. The deliberate choice of Manila-centered archives, for instance, was a result of the available archival materials as well as recognition that the Marcoses managed their authoritarian regime through their power base in Manila. Furthermore, although Imelda indeed circulated in other countries such as China, Cuba, Australia, and Libya, to name a few, the archives from these locations fall outside the scope of this study that focuses on Philippines-United States relations.

[30] See Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 2013).

Attempting to comprehend and contextualize the varied cultural representations of Imelda requires an awareness of the ways in which "gender" and "woman" are used as feminist analytical frameworks for understanding history and its contemporary consequences. In academia, as Joan Wallach Scott points out, the term gender has been utilized in many ways. At times, gender has been used synonymously with the term woman. Other scholars, on the other hand, deployed the term to actively distance from ostensibly declaratory feminist politics denoted by "woman." Scott points out that gender does not "carry with it a necessary statement about inequality or power nor does it name the aggrieved (and hitherto invisible) party."[31] For some, substituting "gender" for "women" is a conscious rejection of the analytical utility of the man/woman separate spheres. "Gender is, in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body."[32] As more recent scholarly work focus on sex and sexuality, Scott finds the term gender useful "for it offers a way of differentiating sexual practice from the social roles assigned to women and men."[33] In the field of Women's Studies and International Relations, the term "woman" as a social category has been useful in legitimating and recuperating women's voices and contributions to world politics and addressing the structural inequalities of patriarchal social systems.[34] This dissertation is partly an effort to join the current conversations regarding the role of women in the international political landscape. However, the task of writing women—their accomplishments and predicaments—into the preexisting historical narrative proved insufficient, especially in postmodern scholarship. An analytical emphasis on gender evokes historically specific convictions about masculinity and femininity, about *how* people become "men" and

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[31] Joan Wallach Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1056.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] See J. Ann Tickner, *Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

"women," and how power works between and through these socially constructed relationships. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* emphasizes the performative nature of gender identities and contends that what "we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through the sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body."[35] This analysis is especially useful in comprehending the multiple iterations of Imelda as historically specific performances and deployments through which power, gender, race, class, and neocolonial categories and relations are expressed and reconfigured.

Cynthia Enloe's foundational feminist work in international relations, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, deeply inspired this project from its inception. Enloe's work sparked my curiosity about how gendered underpinnings sustain international politics. "By taking women's experiences of international politics seriously," Enloe asserts, "…we can acquire a more realistic understanding of how international politics actually 'works.'"[36] And, indeed, First Ladies as diplomatic wives are crucial to the maintenance of the gendered political system. This project, however, is not a feminist recovery of Imelda Marcos but rather an examination of her feminized labor as Philippine First Lady and her depictions as crucial components in Philippine and American geopolitics.

Importantly, this dissertation builds on Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart's work that genealogizes Imelda's narrative "traces."[37] According to Picart, the shape-shifting "Imeldific" cultural productions naturalize—and even pathologize—monstrosity and irrationality as female

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[35] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2008), xv.
[36] Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 4.
[37] Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart, "Media Star and Monster: Spectacle and the 'Imeldific,'" *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 15, no. 2 (2005): 99–117.

and Filipino at certain historical moments.[38] The "Imeldific," Picart argues, reveals the "boundary lines of a western, patriarchal commodity culture."[39] Exposed as *nouveau riche* who never truly belonged to the moneyed, aristocratic class, Ferdinand and Imelda were eventually shunned for their excessiveness.[40] Picart's definition and usage of the word "monster" to refer to Imelda is also particularly useful in this dissertation. According to Picart, if we were to use the etymological roots of the word "monstrous" (in Latin, *monere* means "to warn" and *monstrare*, "to point to"), the figure of Imelda Marcos could be understood as a monster—"someone one 'points to' in order to 'demonstrate' or 'warn against' behavior that could be disruptive to civic order."[41] This is especially true after her excessive behaviors of consumption and destruction were exposed in 1986, rendering the "effort it took to create beautiful illusions…obscenely visible."[42] Building on Picart's work (but focusing more on empire, international politics, and gender, instead of class) I am interested in the narrative and monstrous "traces" of Imelda and examines how these "traces" function in a geopolitical landscape.

Although not its main focus, this dissertation is informed by the now-established field of Filipino/a American studies. The study of Imelda's representations—as a First Lady, beauty queen, international hostess, excessive shopper, and exonerated widow—are also necessarily about representations of Filipinos in the diaspora. The cultural and political ramifications of the Marcos regime deeply influenced and accelerated the outmigration of Filipinos where they experienced racially caused inequalities while simultaneously participating in settler colonial

[38] "Imeldific" is an adjective that signifies extreme extravagance.
[39] Picart, "Media Star and Monster," 113.
[40] Ibid., 114.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 107.

practices.[43] Moreover, the Philippine state under Marcos systematically capitalized on gendered human labor as commodity through the Philippine state's reliance on colonial infrastructures. The Philippine state's "labor brokering" practices, according to Robyn Rodriguez, exposed the critical role of the state and (neo)colonialism in the process of globalization.[44] A critical component of the Philippine state's migrant labor brokerage has been the mobilization of a specifically gendered, heroic, and nationalistic discourse to encourage loyalty and the continued flow of remittances into the country. The figure of Imelda Marcos sits squarely in the middle of politics and culture—as an unofficial political figure and crucial cultural apparatus of the Philippine state during the Marcos era. Imelda's representations in the cultural imaginary also informed the understanding of Philippine women in the Philippines and abroad and are critical components to the understanding of Filipino/a American and Philippine studies.

This project is also in conversation with the works of Nan Enstad, Mimi Nguyen, Lucy Burns, and Mina Roces as they grapple with the performative and generative power of beauty and fashion.[45] Enstad's examination of American working women's fashion as a form of resistance in the 1909 shirtwaist strike in New York demonstrates how these women used existing cultural ideas of what it meant to be a "lady" for political purposes. I find Enstad's framework useful in conceptualizing the political work of first ladies, by treating the first lady

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[43] See Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Ethnicity and Inequality in Hawai'i* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008). See also Candance Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai'i* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

[44] See Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, *Migrants for Export: How the Philippine State Brokers Labor to the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010).

[45] See Nan Enstad, "Fashioning Political Identities: Cultural Studies and the Historical Construction of Political Subjects," *American Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (December 1998). See also Mimi Nguyen's "The Biopower of Beauty: Humanitarian Imperialisms and Global Feminisms in an Age of Terror," *Signs* 36, no. 2 (2011): 359-383. See also Lucy Burns, "Your Terno's Draggin': Fashioning Filipino American Performance," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 21, no. 2 (2011): 199-217.

pulpit as a cultural arena fraught with patriarchal society's anxieties over women's bodies and their political participation. Nguyen's analysis of the intersections between biopower and geopolitics is a valuable model for understanding how the force of beauty is tied to imperial dominance via humanitarian and global feminist programs of empowerment (also known as "makeovers"). I am interested in the particular investments in Imelda's beauty (its presence and absence), as circulated through racialized, gendered, and imperial channels, as well as its changing and contested meanings and values. Burns' examination of the *terno*—perhaps one of the most recognized Philippine national costumes and symbols—demonstrates the use of clothes and the bodies that wear them as sites of discipline and resistance. Burns delves into the semiotics of the *terno* as a "national object that is equally fluid in its form and unfixed in what it symbolizes."[46] In the case of Imelda, the *terno* is mobilized as a proto-nationalist symbol and as a political tactic to legitimize Ferdinand's power and her access to it. Historian Mina Roces provides an in-depth analysis of the politics of gender and dress, specifically how the Filipina suffragette movement in the early 20th century utilized the *terno* as a political tool.[47] Like Burns and Roces, I look at Imelda's fashion as a metaphor, a prop in her political performances of nation, gender, race, and class.

This dissertation is also deeply informed by postcolonial feminism particularly as I intend to focus on tracing the multiple routes and operations of representation, knowledge production, and power, as compounded by neocolonial realities and global capitalist expansion. Postcolonial feminists view representation and knowledge production as significant aspects in understanding colonial legacies and neocolonial realities, with an eye on the multiplicity of women's

[46] Burns, "Your Terno's Draggin,'" 201.
[47] Mina Roces, "Gender, Nation and the Politics of Dress in Twentieth-Century Philippines." *Gender & History* 17, no. 2 (August 2005): 354-377.

experiences, memories, and imaginations. My dissertation takes into account the types of knowledge and power employed, produced, and enabled by the shape-shifting representations of Imelda Marcos at specific historical moments.

In the tradition of Neferti Tadiar's *Fantasy-Production*, I consider the role of imagination as a serious form of labor in a political economy. According to Tadiar, imagination has material consequences, with international media as its main vessel for understanding the world. She defines "fantasy" as an imaginary framework, an unconscious, symbolically structured meaning that shapes not only people's desires but also directly affects our various modes of acting "in reality," with the nation-state as its "fundamental component."[48] The fantasy practices of the Philippine and American nation-states, she argues, are very much grounded on (hetero)normative gender and sexuality logics. Tadiar's work on the imaginary significantly widens the framework of intelligibility in which I attempt to understand Imelda's representations because the representational practices that circulate her multiple iconographies are absolutely tied to and made operable by the geopolitical motivations and desires of the American and Philippine nation-states. The American and Philippine mainstream media were, and to a lesser extent continue to be, the apparatus through which the figure of Imelda is made intelligible and useable; her representations not only reflect the attitudes and desires of nation-states but also reveals the tensions, inconsistencies, and cracks in the story of Philippine-United States neocolonial relations.

Finally, this dissertation attempts to understand the transnational significance of Imelda Marcos. I hope to disrupt the various Philippine and American nationalist narratives about Imelda that occlude a gendered imperial analysis of her traces. Transnationalism is an analytical

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[48] Neferti Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 70.

framework for understanding the increased, varied, and multiple mobilizations of goods, peoples, and ideas. The term gained force in academia the late 20th century and has since been used to understand the "global" results of modernity. According to Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, transnationalism is a more nuanced, accurate, and effective way to explain the various movements and connectivities compared to the ubiquitous term "global."[49] It questions binary oppositions and categories such as center-periphery, domestic-foreign, national-international, global-local that has informed previous histories and historiographies. The spatial parameters of transnational studies pay more critical attention to cultural asymmetries, contradictions, and multiplicities. Transnationalism as an analytical framework also destablizes the notion of the nation-state's hegemonic grip on social, political, and economic relations, identities, and knowledge formations by taking heed of other power structures and hegemonies that operate outside the borders of the nation-state. This framework allows for a multivalent tracing of routes, flows, and asymmetries. I make use of comparative and interdisciplinary approach to understand processes of transfer, exchange, and mutual influence beyond the nation-state.

Grappling with the transnational helps us understand the various sites of power, lines of differences, connectivities, and conditions of possibilities invoked by specter of Imelda. Denise Cruz's *Transpacific Femininities* provides a useful model for examining Imelda as a transnational symbol. Cruz looks at the constant making and remaking of representations of the "Filipina" particularly in the English-language literary production of the Philippine ruling elite from the early to mid-twentieth century. During the crucial periods of colonization and imperial changeovers between Spain, the United States, Japan (and U.S. again), the Philippine elite produced ideas of Filipinaness and femininity to redefine the "boundaries of race, nation, class,

[49] Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 7, no. 4 (2001): 663-679.

gender, sex."[50] It is precisely the socially transformative possibilities of the transpacific Filipina that triggers the anxieties of the elites, as they grapple with maintaining their class status amid imperial changeovers. Cruz argues that the "creation of a national literary tradition was seriously entwined with elites' attempts to define the Filipina" in order to construct and articulate hierarchical lines of differences that benefited the elites and marginalized the indigenous, women, and working class.[51] The elite, she points out, was "problematically complicit in the marginalization of these others."[52] The creation and reinvention of the transpacific Filipina demonstrates the significance of this construction to "national discourse, to identities and communities at home and abroad, and to the reformation of the Philippines' changing interactions with other nations."[53] In other words, Filipino and Filipina elites responded to the tensions and insecurities brought about by overlapping empires by focusing on the figure of the transpacific Filipina—a figure that, until today, represents possibilities of disrupting social boundaries. In many Philippine anti-colonial nationalist narratives, female representations tend to focus on male-centered nationalism and discourses. Cruz points out that far from being just symbolic and bound to the land, the "Filipina" was represented as a "transgressive woman who flouted norms, spoke multiple languages, traveled, and was both the product and producer of a nation and culture in flux."[54] Transpacific Filipina authors actively engaged in and negotiated the processes of representation as agents. Cruz ends with the contemporary production of Filipina websites and blogs, in which Filipinas challenge the dominant representations of Filipina bodies as objects of commodification and consumption. These Filipina bloggers, argues Cruz, "are part

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[50] Denise Cruz, *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 10.
[51] Cruz, *Transpacific Femininities,* 5.
[52] Ibid.*,* 9.
[53] Ibid.*,* 7.
[54] Ibid.*,* 19.

of a long history of Filipina women who actively contested their discursive production in a wide number of media forms."[55] Cruz successfully expresses postcolonial feminist concerns in two important ways. First, by paying attention to the social construction of varying representations of Third World Filipinas, Cruz subverts Western feminism's tendency to homogenize *all* Third World women. Secondly, she illuminates the centrality of gender in the construction of Filipino nationalism. Far from just a marginal concern, representations of transpacific feminism shaped Philippine nationalist and global relations.

Like Cruz, my dissertation still hinges on the notion of nationhood, but focuses on a postcolonial feminist critique of pervasive nationalist discourses. I also focus on the transnational Philippine and American cultural imaginaries and discourses that allowed for the emergence and consumption of particular Imeldific iconographies.[56] In a sense, my project is similar to Melanie McAlister's treatment of Americans' "encounters" with the Middle East after 1945 through cultural imaginations. McAlister argues that cultural products played a major role in making the Middle East an "acceptable area for the exercise of American power" and "in representing the Middle East as a stage for the production of American identities--national, racial, and religious."[57] The "mobile sign" in McAlister's work is the Americans' historically specific perception of the "Middle East."[58] Similarly, I deploy "Imelda" as a mobile sign, critical to the articulation and formation of racial, gender, and imperial boundaries. From 1965-1990, the transforming representations of the figure of Imelda reflected the changing American and Philippine motivations during the Cold War. Following the figure of Imelda reveals markers and

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[55] Ibid., 230.
[56] Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, & U.S. Interests in the Middle East Since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
[57] Ibid., 3.
[58] Ibid., 42.

indications of a Philippine-American Cold War relationship. The United States and its proxy war in Asia that positioned the Philippines as an American laboratory or "showcase of democracy" in the Asia and Pacific region projected its geopolitical hopes onto the newly elected Marcoses—a Camelot figure (the Kennedys of the Far East, as Imelda declared in the epigraph). As the promise of democracy in Asia soured, the real motivations of the United States were exposed but the American character remained intact through the monstrous figurations of Imelda.

Chapter Outline

This project is organized chronologically, tracing Imelda's geopolitical iconographies and focusing on her representations as key components in Philippine-United States relations during the Cold War. As such, I trace the evolving figure of Imelda in four key historical moments during the Marcos regime when the Philippines and the United States converged through the figure of Imelda: (1) the Marcoses' first American state visit in 1966, (2) the 1974 Miss Universe Pageant in the Philippines, (3) the overthrow and exile of the Marcoses in 1986, and (4) Imelda's acquittal by an American jury in New York in 1990. I define the "Marcos regime" not through Ferdinand's official capacity as president or dictator (1965-1986), but rather through the much longer power of the Marcos image that has sustained to the day of this writing. These moments were chosen mainly because there is a paucity of scholarly work on how the figure of Imelda was made operable at these critical points in Philippines-United States relations. Moreover, attempts to take Imelda seriously in scholarly endeavors faces the difficulty of finding "truth" in a sea of state-controlled archives. Rather than writing about Imelda herself (and unavoidably getting trapped in a web of half-truths and lies), this project instead delves right into the representations themselves—projections of desires and fantasies that are central to the structures of neocolonial relations.

The first chapter analyzes the figure of Imelda during her political debut at the Marcoses' 1966 United States State Visit. Imelda's fairytale-like international appearance showcased the seeming success of United States-Philippine partnership during a critical juncture in America's intensifying Cold War involvement in Vietnam. With Ferdinand's exaggerated war hero credentials, his charismatic English oratory skills, and clean-cut *barong* (Philippine traditional shirt) and Imelda's statuesque physique, donned with a form-fitting *terno* (Philippine traditional dress), and melodic Tagalog and English repertoires, many American onlookers expressed admiration as they looked at what seemed to be the start of a triumphant American alliance in the increasingly unstable Southeast Asia. For some, it was also the evidence and culmination of America's seemingly "benevolent assimilation" of the Philippines.[59] The figure of Imelda became an important discursive site through which Cold War neocolonial fantasies were mapped and mobilized. The state visit was also an important dress rehearsal for what was to become a Marcos dictatorial regime that relied on a gendered public image as well as keen understanding of American Cold War stakes in an attempt to intensify and extend national power.

Chapter two is an exploration of Imelda at the peak of her political power, during the internationally televised 1974 Miss Universe pageant in the Philippines. Two years after the declaration of Martial Law, the pageant was a glaring attempt at shaping the global and national narrative about the Philippines under the Marcos regime. With Imelda at the helm as the pageant's architect, director, and beauty queen, she appears at critical junctures, carefully choreographing beauty over the growing violence of Martial Law. Through Imelda's efforts, the

[59] The phrase "benevolent assimilation" comes from United States President William McKinley's 1898 proclamation of America's seemingly altruistic mission in the Philippines during the Philippine-American War, also known as the Philippine War of Independence. This benign façade was used as justification for United States occupation, conquest, and empire building in the Philippines.

pageant also conveniently manufactured a story of a friendly, feminized Philippine nation that, unlike its volatile neighbors, was hospitable and available for western consumption and export.

The third chapter unpacks the shape-shifting figure of Imelda at the moment of her forced exile in 1986. Driven out of the Philippine Malacañang Palace by an historic popular uprising, the figure of Imelda momentarily retreats from mainstream newsprint and television only to reappear as the monstrous figure that embodies the impossibility and inexplicability of the third world condition. In the 1988 docufilm *A Dangerous Life,* Imelda surfaces as the main villain while her masculine counterparts, Ferdinand and the American heroic figure, are defanged and resuscitated.

The final chapter examines the figure of Imelda Marcos when she was acquitted by American jury in New York City in 1990. The media spotlight shone on Imelda and her cowboy-styled lawyer made for dramatic press coverage of the acquittal. The reportage also illuminates the gendered and racial ideologies at work at a time of geopolitical uncertainty between the United States and the Philippines. The American media largely dramatized Imelda's acquittal, perhaps unwittingly reinforcing her defense team's strategies and, moreover, glorified the American justice system and erased American culpability in exonerating Imelda. The Philippine mainstream newsprint media, however, had a very different take on Imelda's acquittal. An analysis of Philippine editorial cartoons reveals an insistence on Imelda's *and* America's guilt at the expense of continuing trauma for the victims of the Marcoses' conjugal dictatorship.

The aphorisms of the Philippine Martial Law period and the Marcos regime continue to haunt Philippine cultural and political life today. With the recent election of authoritarian figures in the Philippines and the United States, people once again grapple with the immense power of representation and imagery in geopolitics. When Imelda blithely hinted at a political reunion

with the United States as part of her vision of a political comeback in the *Playboy* interview in the epigraph, she pointed to her media representation as proof of her professed "goodness." She was only as good and innocent as the United States, she intimated. At times when the distinction between truths and lies seem more difficult to distinguish, it is imperative to pay attention to (mis)representational practices. This project is an attempt to address and understand how the power of representation operates, sometimes with tragic and enduring consequences.

CHAPTER 1

A "SILENT" DEBUT: THE 1966 U.S. STATE VISIT AND THE POLITICAL RISE OF IMELDA MARCOS

> Mrs. Ferdinand Marcos, gifted singer and eloquent speaker, proved yesterday that as First Lady of the Philippines she knows when not to talk, too.[1]
>
> *Washington Post,* September 17, 1966

During Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos' first official state visit to the United States on September 1966, the American and Philippine print media buzzed with excitement, following every movement of the celebrated Philippine President and First Lady. Predicted to be on the precipice of political greatness, Ferdinand was expected to publicly pledge support for the American Cold War conflict in Southeast Asia while also negotiating economic and military agreements on behalf of the Philippines. Peppered among news and government documents of the official heads of state was "[o]ne of the most candid and friendly First Ladies ever to visit Washington," also dubbed "The First Lady of Asia"—Imelda Romualdez Marcos.[2] She appeared in the newspaper archives conspicuously—almost any coverage was paired with a photograph of Imelda with descriptions of her body, fashion, modesty, intelligence, and interests. Meanwhile, at the White House, U.S. government officials spent months carefully planning the event, down to the dinner menu consisting of Crabmeat Chesapeake, Roast Sirloin of Beef, Creamed Spinach and a special dessert specially dubbed Glacé Imelda.[3]

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[1] Dorothy McCardle, "Her Silence Is Diplomatic," *Washington Post*, September 17, 1966.
[2] Ibid. See also Vera Glaser, "Imelda Marcos: The First Lady of Asia," *Parade*, September 11, 1966, 26-27.
[3] Menu, 09/14/66, "Dinner-Pres. Of Philippines & Mrs. Marcos 9/14/66," Social Entertainment, Social Files, Box 79, LBJ Library.

While today Imelda Marcos is remembered for her excess and greed, epitomized by her closet shoes, in 1966, Americans admired Imelda's practices of consumption, her work ethic, fashion, and beauty. In Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart's essay that genealogizes Imelda's depictions as an excessive woman exemplified by the term "Imeldific," she points out that in the 1960s, "allusions to Imelda's 'excessiveness' are not yet exploited with overt moralistic overtones, [but] their mythic qualities are already in evidence."[4] In other words, although the figure of Imelda was not yet "Imeldific" in its monstrous excessiveness, she embodied familiar gendered myths that ostensibly resonated with the readers of mainstream newsprint media in the United States and the Philippines.[5]

This first chapter explores the Marcoses' 1966 United States state visit as a springboard to analyze American and Philippine cultural and political discourses about Imelda in the beginning of her tenure as Philippine First Lady. Through this analysis, I hope to shed light on the public stagings of beauty, fashion, and nationhood that made her emergence possible and launched her political persona in the Philippine and American political and cultural imaginaries. I argue that the state visit itself was a crucial platform in shaping the image of Imelda. She emerges as a powerful symbol of Cold War integration that, on the surface, offered the promise of an egalitarian Philippines-United States relations. This representation simultaneously set the foundation for a new national order—a Philippine protonationalist-turned-authoritarian state project that utilizes Imelda's beauty as a potential source of nationalist pride and post-independence recovery in order to create and maintain the Marcoses' power and legitimacy.

In this chapter, I take into consideration the United States and Philippine mainstream print media and United States government documents related to the Marcoses' state visit. My

[4] Picart, "Media Star and Monster," 103.
[5] Ibid.

archives operate as conduits for the emergence of Imelda as they make visible the logics and discourses surrounding the early fascination with this political figure. Print-capitalism in the 1800s, as Benedict Anderson argues in his seminal work, "laid the bases for national consciousness" or, as he popularly phrased, "imagined communities."[6] According to Anderson, "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation."[7] Although I pay attention to the relevance of Anderson's theory, I also consider the changes and discontinuities given the historical context of the 1966 state visit. By midcentury, although television steadily made its way into American homes and rivaled newsprint and radio as the main mass medium in the United States, the social and political traction of print journalism still resonated strongly with the lives of many Americans. In a study of the overall changes in the U.S. newspaper industry from 1945-1965, David Randall Davies notes that despite the changes and challenges posed to the newsprint industry, particularly with rising competition especially after the unprecedented television coverage of President John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and rising production costs, newsprint still dominated as the United States' leading mass media platform in the 1960s. More specifically, Davies mentions that by 1966, "newsprint sales—always a good barometer of newspaper health—reached an all-time high of 9.12 million tons, more than twice the usage of 1945."[8] As a business, newspapers also flourished, bringing in more revenue from advertising than television and allocating a

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[6] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 44.
[7] Ibid., 46.
[8] David Randall Davies, "An industry in transition: Major trends in American daily newspapers, 1945-1965," Ph.D. diss. (University of Alabama, 1997), accessed October 6, 2017, http://eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.eres.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/docview/304364714?accountid=27140.

significant amount of money into capital improvements and plant expansion.[9] In addition to newsprint, I will examine government documents produced by the U.S. government in order to understand the practices and motivations of various United States state actors in their early encounters with Imelda.[10] The Cold War climate of government secrecy, as demonstrated by the numerous confidential and secret files that were only made available for public viewing decades later, indicates a level of government control of what information the media and its citizens may access. Government secrecy may also indicate the social and political gravity of such documents at the time of its production. I devote my attention to American mainstream print media and United States Department of State documents because these archival sites actively participated in how the figure of "Imelda" was accessed and perceived as well as in the reshaping of Philippine-U.S. relations in the 1960s.

This chapter is driven by an analysis of the intersections between culture and politics. Melani McAlister's examination of Americans' "encounters" with cultural representations of the Middle East since 1945 and the development of American national interests in the area provides a useful framework in understanding the connections between politics and culture. McAlister's work builds upon the premise that "foreign policy has a significant cultural component" and that "understanding the political import of culture requires that we position cultural texts *in* history, as active producers of meaning, rather than assuming that they merely 'reflect' or 'reproduce'

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[9] Ibid.

[10] According to the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), "historical U.S. government documents (federal, congressional, and presidential records) are documents generally created or received by the President and his staff, by Congress, by employees of Federal government agencies, and by the Federal courts in the course of their official duties," accessed October 7, 2017, https://www.archives.gov/research/recover/identifying-government-documents.html. Although I am unable to find Philippine government documents dating back to the 1966 state visit, many of the documents available in the United States show correspondence between Philippine and American state actors. My research materials give me a substantial, albeit incomplete, view of the events surrounding the state visit.

some preexisting social reality."[11] Similarly, American investments in portraying a specific cultural image of Imelda Marcos in 1966 coincided with the American state's expanding—and increasingly violent and unpopular—role in Asia during the Cold War. I argue that more than just a ceremonial occasion, this particular state visit sheds light on the public stagings of gender, imperialism, and race. Moreover, through the exoticized inclusion of Imelda Marcos' beauty, fashion, and silent demeanor in American print media, the U.S. rearticulated its colonial past, its project of global and capitalist expansion, and its national character during the Cold War.

I apply Denise Cruz's concept of "transpacific femininities"—the constant making and remaking of the "Filipina" by the English-language literary productions in the Philippines during periods of colonization and imperial changeovers—as a model to understand representations of Imelda during the Cold War. In particular, I am interested in Cruz's discussion of what emerges as a representational pattern of the early 20th century elite Filipina and its ties to United States empire: "The elite Filipina's desire—to emulate and become a model of femininity for others—becomes a comforting rationale that reaffirms the continued involvement of the United States in the Philippines as a project of benevolence."[12] This characterization of the "Filipina" reemerges during the Cold War through the figure of Imelda. Her silent demeanor and fashion choices are highlighted by American and Philippine press in ways reminiscent of the English language literary archives in Cruz's book.

Some of the questions that drive this inquiry include the following: How are the concepts of beauty, fashion, and nationhood mobilized through the figure of Imelda at the height of civil unrest in the United States and Cold War conflict abroad? What are the varying investments in invoking specific iconographies of Imelda in 1966 and how did these media discourses operate in

[11] McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 5.
[12] Cruz, *Transpacific Femininities,* 47.

a geopolitical context? How is the colonial articulated in newspaper archives documenting Ferdinand and Imelda's first official state visit to the United States and why is it deployed at this particular moment? In what ways does Imelda's emergence as the Philippine first lady in American media reinforce or contradict American gendered imperial logics? How and why is the language of fashion and gendered consumption significant, especially as deployed simultaneously with the language of politics? I utilize these questions as guidelines in my attempt to make sense of the figure of Imelda Marcos within the context of Philippine-United States relations.

Still reeling from the massive destruction of World War II, the Philippines officially gained independence from the United States on July 4, 1946. The new independent nation faced numerous challenges particularly in its efforts to reconstruct its infrastructure, economy, and society. For its part, the United States negotiated a favorable trade agreement with the Philippines in exchange for reconstruction aid. In order to receive this aid, the United States brokered an amendment to the Philippine constitution that allowed Americans special trading rights with its former colony. For some, this postwar conditional support signaled an unequal post-colonial relationship between the two nations that disproportionately benefited the United States and the land-owning class of Filipino elites. Many poor, working class families—mostly farmers—who saw little to no improvement in the polarized Philippine social strata grew increasingly dissatisfied with the disproportionate power and resources that landowners wielded over their tenant farmers. Crippling debt, poverty, and very little upward mobility pushed many to join the *Hukbalahap*—originally a movement against the Japanese during World War II—in

seeking reform.[13] The *Hukbalahap* eventually developed into a Communist guerilla movement that demanded economic and land reforms from the newly formed post-WWII Philippine government. Increasingly wary of the prospect of a Soviet-backed Communist network sweeping the globe, the United States supported Philippine President Manuel Roxas in his quest to eliminate the *Hukbalahap,* by then a perceived insurgent Communist threat against the Philippine Republic.[14]

A few years later in 1953, the U.S. and CIA-backed presidential campaign of Ramon Magsaysay signaled a committed effort on the part of Americans to steer the Philippines away from the spread of Communism in the Asia Pacific region.[15] Magsaysay, a tall and well-built schoolteacher, World War II veteran, former secretary of defense, and a "self-styled populist who prided himself on his ability to connect with ordinary Filipinos" became known for his anti-*Huk* counterinsurgency campaign that significantly weakened the movement.[16] Despite the *Huk* movement's eventual decline, its specter still haunted the Philippine and United States governments. The *Huk*'s "unfinished revolution" and potential for social change simultaneously offered inspiration and possibilities as well as anxieties and fear, particularly from the ruling

[13] The *Hukbalahap* or *Huks* was a peasant-based resistance movement established in 1942. It originally stood for *Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon* (The Nation's Army Against the Japanese) but was later reconfigured as an underground communist resistance movement against the Philippine government.
[14] Manuel Roxas was the President of the Philippines from May 28, 1946 – April 15, 1948.
[15] After World War II, the United States sent former CIA agent and Air Force Colonel Edward Lansdale to the Philippines to help thwart what Americans believed was a growing Soviet-led Communist network in Southeast Asia. Lansdale orchestrated an organized campaign against the *Hukbalahap*, which involved a combination of propaganda, community development, counterinsurgency methods, and the installation of a pro-American leadership. For more information on Lansdale's campaign to fight the *Hukbalahap*, see *The United States and the Philippines: In Our Image* (Alexandria, VA: PBS Video, 1989) Videotape.
[16] Vina A. Lanzona, *Amazons of the Huk Rebellion: Gender, Sex, and Revolution in the Philippines* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 256.

elites and the Americans.[17] After Magsaysay's untimely death in a fatal plane crash in 1957, his successors continued to grapple with issues of social unrest, poverty, economic instability, foreign influence, government corruption, and land reform by seeking the approval of the masses and its former colonizer, the United States. In addition, Magsaysay's strong populist and mythic appeal, outspoken opposition to the communist movement, and close relationship with the United States government, followed by his predecessor Diosdado Macapagal's focus on land reform, anti-corruption, and renewed nationalism laid the foundation for the political rise of Ferdinand Marcos.

Ferdinand's populism, youth, and oratory skills, however, were greatly amplified by the growing popularity of his wife Imelda. Known as a tall, fair-skinned beauty queen from a prominent family in the province of Leyte, Imelda gained national popularity after her whirlwind 11-day engagement with the young senator from Ilocos Norte. The highly-publicized marriage had the elements of a celebrity "love team" that captivated the nation. Politically, while Ferdinand's Ilocano background gained him much support from his constituents in the northern third of the archipelago, Imelda purportedly brought in a significant number of votes from her hometown in the central Visayas region. In November 1965, Ferdinand and his "secret weapon" Imelda secured victory over the incumbent Diosdado Macapagal.[18] The stage was set for a domestic and foreign Cold War engagement as well as a resurgence of nationalist sentiment suspicious of American post-colonial influence on the archipelago. The U.S. Department of State, on the other hand, was determined to maintain a stronghold in the Philippines—a "showcase of democracy" in Asia.

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ferdinand often referred to Imelda as his "secret weapon." See Vicente L. Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 126.

As social and political uncertainties and anxieties permeated the United States and the Philippines during the Cold War, the public's infatuation with Imelda in the early years of the Marcos presidency as a spectacularized beauty served to reestablish a "special relationship" between the U.S. and the Philippines in the aftermath of World War II. The focus on Imelda placed fashion and gendered subservience alongside discussions of war and violence, economic and military aid, military bases negotiations, and post-colonial parity at the center of United States and Philippine Cold War politics. Moreover, the politics of Philippine nation building and nationalism at the outset of Ferdinand Marcos' rule as Philippine president was also increasingly framed and measured by the beautific and consumptive practices of Imelda. As American political actors scrambled to gain international support for what was perceived as a rapidly spreading threat of communism, the Philippines grappled with the consequences of economic stratification, class conflicts, and unjust international economic policies. Merely two decades after gaining independence from the United States, the Philippines' desire for national autonomy was imbued on the figure of Imelda, who became a fragile and desirable metonym for the nation at large. The 1966 U.S. state visit served as the setting for establishing diplomatic relations and the figure of Imelda emerged as a major site of critical Cold War discourse that attempted to renarrate the colonial past and shape the face of the political future.

Public Display of Bilateral Affections: The 1966 U.S. State Visit

State visits by leaders of allied countries are generally considered ceremonial events, marked by public and private celebrations, meetings, speeches, and media coverage.[19] Those ceremonial events carry considerable political weight. Often, a head of state issues a formal invitation that is subsequently accepted or denied by another country's head of state. Before

[19] *Dictionary of Politics and Government* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), 235.

Ferdinand Marcos' first U.S. state visit, the United States hosted two other sitting Philippine presidents: Carlos P. Garcia (1958) and Diosdado Macapagal (1964). Aside from official state visits, Philippine presidents have also met with United States government officials to discuss matters relating to Philippine independence, economic cooperation, and security treaties.[20] This section looks at the 1966 U.S. state visit by Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos as a watershed event in Philippine-United States relations during the Cold War. The state visit functioned as a public display of renewed neocolonial relations that positioned the United States as a seemingly benign power and the Philippines as an avaricious partner.

From September 12-27, 1966, Imelda and Ferdinand traversed through a number of United States locations: Honolulu, Hawai'i (September 12-13, September 25-27); Maryland (September 13), Arlington County, Virginia (September 15); Washington D.C. (September 16); Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (September 16); New York City (September 16, 17-22); Ann Arbor, Michigan (September 19); Chicago, Illinois (September 19); San Francisco, California (September 22-23); and Los Angeles, California (September 24-25). In fifteen days, the Marcoses met with U.S. state leaders, attended receptions and galas (including the opening of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York), played golf, shopped, held press conferences, attended church mass, addressed a joint session of U.S. Congress, and received honorary degrees (the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and University of Michigan conferred degrees on Ferdinand; University of San Francisco Women's Division conferred a degree on Imelda).[21]

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[20] "Visit by Foreign Leaders of Philippines," U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/visits/philippines

[21] "Separate Program for Mrs. Marcos When She is Not Accompanying the President" "Philippines (Dinner), 9/14/66," Bess Abell, Social Files, Box 17, LBJ Library. See also Hawai'i State Archives, Governor Burns Collection, GOV13-84, Visiting Dignitaries: President Marcos of the Philippines September 12-13, 25-27, Depart of State For the Press, 09/01/1966.

Pressured by rising anti-war and civil rights social unrest at home, exacerbated by the increasing military and civilian deaths in Vietnam, the Johnson administration eagerly sought international support.[22] According to Mark Atwood Lawrence, a Vietnam War scholar, "In 1965 and 1966, the Johnson administration intensified its efforts to obtain troop commitments—or at least economic and military equipment—from its allies." "American policymakers," Lawrence adds, "believed such contributions were crucial to substantiate U.S. claims to be fighting on behalf of the entire 'free world.'"[23] In exchange for proffering support, many of these countries received "aid" as part of their renewed close relationships with the United States. Indeed, a number of countries particularly in the Asia and Pacific region responded positively to Washington's call for arms against the perceived Communist threat. While the United States' major allies such as France, Britain, Italy, and Canada declined to offer aid, South Korea, New Zealand, Thailand, Australia, and the Philippines provided military support.[24] With the growing American need to demonstrate international alliances and the Philippines' newly elected President and First Lady quickly attracting the attention and curiosity of American political and press circles, the Philippine first couple was poised to make their grand American debut during their much-anticipated state visit.

Knowing the importance of the Marcoses' state visit, the U.S. State Department paid much attention to and consciously sought media coverage of the state visit. On July 25, 1966, a Department of State telegram from Manila to the Secretary of State's office highlighted the U.S.

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[22] According to the National Archives' Military Records, there were 1,928-recorded U.S. military fatalities in 1965. In 1966, there were 6,350 U.S. military fatalities. "Vietnam War U.S. Military Fatal Casualty Statistics," National Archives, accessed April 22, 2016, http://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html#date.
[23] Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 110-111.
[24] Ibid.

press coverage of the impending Marcos visit. The telegram summarized articles from various sources including *The Associated Press*, *The Manila Chronicle*, and *The Manila Times* that reported on Ferdinand Marcos' decision to accept a state visit.[25] In addition, Mrs. Johnson's press secretary Liz Carpenter underscored the significance of a positive press coverage of the Marcos visit. In a memo addressed to President and Mrs. Johnson, Carpenter urged them to consider supporting a powerful media campaign that could bolster Johnson's reputation:

> The forthcoming visit of the Phillipine [*sic*] President offers a great opportunity for big layouts and TV coverage showing The President as a World Leader. I wish we could go all-out in Life layouts, a special TV program, everything—that combats the Kennedy line that Johnson is only a good <u>domestic</u> President.[26]
>
> The Marcos [*sic*] are young and very attractive (thus appealing for magazine coverage). The Phillipines [*sic*] are a good, safe country to advertise.[27]

The perceived "attractiveness" of the Marcoses and the Philippines clearly played a major role in the White House's public relations strategy. In Carpenter's account, President Johnson's reputation benefited from a much-publicized declaration of Philippine-U.S. diplomatic relations by dispelling his political opponent's criticism that Johnson's leadership is only effective domestically. This memo reveals that media coverage mattered very much for Johnson's Cold War strategy; the Marcoses and the Philippines provided a well-timed and appealing opportunity to manufacture Cold War public perception. To be sure, Liz Carpenter wrote another memo to the President on September 6, 1966 insisting that "The Marcoses are the perfect time to tell the

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[25] Cable, Manila 900, 07/25/66, #13, "Philippines, Marcos Visit Papers--Cables," Country File, NSF, Box 280, LBJ Library.
[26] The underlined portion was found on the original version of the document.
[27] Memo, from Liz Carpenter to LBJ and Lady Bird, 08/24/66, "President Marcos of the Philippines & Mrs Marcos, State Dinner 9/14/66," Liz Carpenter's Files, Social Files, Box 26, LBJ Library.

American people all about the ingredients that go into a State visit."[28] The visit was an opportunity to showcase the bodies of racialized subjects, made possible by the historical conditions and erasures of the colonial past. The Philippines and the Marcoses were only as "good" and "safe" to advertise so long as the problematic conditions of the colonial past and neocolonial present were muted and blurred.

One way to divert the attention from the conflicts of the colonial past was to focus on an ambivalent "friendship" between the two nations within the context of the United States' war efforts in Vietnam. For example, a United States sponsored film chronicled the state visit as particularly salient for the United States as it actively sought allies for its escalating Cold War involvement in Asia. A film from the LBJ Presidential Library moving picture collection chronicling President and Mrs. Johnson's monthly activities narrate the arrival of the Philippine President and First Lady and underscore the perceived significance of their visit for United States foreign policy. The film, which is part of today's LBJ Presidential Library's digital collection, was originally recorded by the White House Naval Photographic Unit (also known as the WHNP Center). Naval photographers were tasked with covering selected official White House events, with the scope of film coverage varying with each presidential administration. As part of the Johnson administration's efforts at chronicling events for public relations and historical archiving purposes, these "Navy films"—a series of monthly reports on the American President and First Lady's activities—give us a glimpse of what was deemed significant for White House coverage and distribution. The film's third-person narrator guides the viewers through a chronology of the key events and offering commentary on their social and political implications. In the beginning of the film, the narrator summarizes the most significant events from September

[28] Memo, from Liz Carpenter to LBJ, 09/06/66, "President Marcos of the Philippines & Mrs Marcos, State Dinner 9/14/66," Liz Carpenter's Files, Social Files, Box 26, LBJ Library.

to October 1966. In a low commanding voice, the male narrator explains that President Johnson is busy campaigning on behalf of his party for the 1966 off-year elections. The film shows Johnson embarking on a plane and, with Lady Bird Johnson, shaking hands with a cheering crowd. The camera pans out to focus on a sign that reads "All the Way with LBJ!" and the narrator goes on to explain that while many Americans were concerned with election outcomes domestically, the international political landscape had some new key players:

> The world was suddenly and dramatically re-apprised of the aspirations of other men. Men whose depth of awareness and total commitment to a new dream like one day reshape the destiny of an entire frontier. Their beginning success would hinge upon the reactions and convictions of the president of the United States.[29]

Simultaneously, a video of Ferdinand Marcos speaking on a podium appears on camera and shifts over to Johnson and Imelda listening intently. Prior to covering the Marcoses' visit, the film reported on events and issues facing the Johnson administration such as economic inflation, social health care, racial unrest and violence, rapid urbanization, and Vietnam War opposition. General Ne Win of Myanmar (called by its former name, Burma) visited the United States right before Marcos and the film highlighted his "policy of international non-alignment" that "won him the reputation of the 'most neutral of neutrals'."[30] The description of Ne Win's visit paled in comparison to that of the Marcoses, whose arrival was narrated with much enthusiasm:

> In the normal course of events, official visits by foreign heads of state often have little impact on the relations between two countries. But the arrival of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos and his lovely wife Imelda promise to be one of the

[29] TheLBJLibrary, "The President: September-October 1966. MP878," accessed July 1, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uauvkMGWhDU&spfreload=10.
[30] Ibid.

> rare exceptions. For the two leaders, the visit represented an opportunity for both of their countries to renew a long-standing bond of friendship.[31]

As a "rare exception" to other official state visits that have "little impact" on foreign relations, the Philippine visit was characterized as a special event to an otherwise ceremonial and banal government affair.[32] The renewal of a "long-standing bond of friendship," as the film's narrator confidently claims, simultaneously implies and belies the complicated colonial and neocolonial history between the two nation-states.[33] Only twenty years since gaining official independence from the United States and the devastation of World War II, a visit from a widely popular Philippine president at a crucial moment in the Cold War era represented potential bargaining leverage for the former American colonial outpost. Moreover, as the film is produced and motivated by the United States government, it deliberately highlighted the political importance of the Marcoses' visit. As opposed to the coverage of Ne Win's visit, for example, which only lasted a mere one minute and eleven seconds, the Marcos coverage lasted almost two minutes and not only verbally explained it as singularly significant but the narrator also went into detail regarding Ferdinand's motivations. The narrator explains that it was his "first opportunity to impress upon the American people some of the home truths about the realities of power in Asia…realities that had prompted him to commit a 2000-man force to South Vietnam despite strong congressional and leftist opposition in his own country."[34] Indeed, Marcos was given the opportunity to address the United Nations general assembly and a joint session of Congress during his visit and the American media jumped at each opportunity to report on the Marcoses' every move.

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

The stakes were high for the United States and the state visit proved to be the ideal theater for staging Cold War alliances. The importance of such a publicly visible state visit was palpable in the correspondence of members of the U.S. State Department. For instance, in White House Chief of Protocol James W. Symington's memo to Social Secretary Bess Abell on August 18, 1966, he made clear that President Johnson wanted the Marcos state visit to be "a 'spectacular' one" possibly involving a "'Girls' Welcoming Committee," pending Mrs. Johnson's approval.[35] This brief but revealing memo demonstrates President Johnson's strong interest in making a showcase out of this state visit. According to the U.S. Department of State official website, the White House Chief of Protocol's office "extends the first hand that welcomes presidents, prime ministers, ruling monarchs, and other leaders" to the United States. Its Visits Division is in charge of planning and carrying out the schedules of visiting dignitaries and heads of state.[36] As the Chief of Protocol, Symington's memo speaks volumes about the significance of this particular state visit for United States diplomacy and foreign relations. Additionally, Symington's inquiry indicates a close relationship between the Chief of Protocol's official diplomatic activities and the gendered labor of a social secretary when it comes to hosting foreign dignitaries. A few weeks later, in a White House memo for Walt Rostow (Special Assistant to the President), Robert E. Kintner (Cabinet Secretary) also expressed the grave importance of the Marcos visit for the Johnson administration. Kintner wrote, "From all I can gather the visit of President Marcos is a very important one, and therefore the President will want the best possible material for the arrival ceremony, for the toast, and on any other occasion where

[35] Memorandum for Bess Abell, 08/18/66, "Philippines (Dinner), 9/14/66," Bess Abell, Social Files, Box 17, LBJ Library.
[36] "Office of the Chief of Protocol," U.S. Department of State, accessed June 06, 2017, https://www.state.gov/s/cpr/.

he will have to speak."[37] For the Johnson administration, all hands were evidently on deck as they prepared for the spectacle of the Marcos visit.

Details of the motivations and hesitations of the Johnson and Marcos administrations in planning for a U.S. state visit were also evident. For example, Vice President Hubert Humphrey emphasized the importance of the upcoming Marcos visit in his memo with an attached news article to President Johnson. "I thought you might like to see the attached clipping about President Marcos," he wrote. "This man is going to be a great source of strength to you on his visit to the United States. He is getting things done in his country."[38] The attached news clip reported on Ferdinand's efforts to challenge the *Huk*'s communist advances with a government land reform program.[39] As the second-in-command to the president, Humphrey's memo not only reveals the political importance of the Marcos state visit but also demonstrates much effort on the part of the executive branch in finding and examining key United States allies as a "source of strength" for the beleaguered administration. Others, however, expressed some uneasiness with the potential unconditional fanfare associated with the public spectacle of a state visit. Months before the visit, United States Ambassador to the Philippines William McCormick Blair, Jr. expressed in a confidential telegram to Washington that the "increasing likelihood" of the event "can be a launching mechanism for new and more fruitful relationship between the two countries."[40] In his telegram, Blair voiced his strong confidence in Ferdinand Marcos, stating that

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[37] Memorandum for Walt Rostow, 09/07/66, #17, "Philippines, Marcos Visit Papers," Country File, NSF, Box 280, LBJ Library.
[38] Memo, 08/12/66, #22, "Philippines, Marcos Visit Papers," Country File, NSF, Box 280, LBJ Library.
[39] Memo, 08/12/66, #22a, "Philippines, Marcos Visit Papers," Country File, NSF, Box 280, LBJ Library.
[40] Deptel 497, From American Embassy (Manila) to Secretary of State (Washington DC), #42, 07/14/66, "Philippines Cables, Vol. 3," Country File, NSF, Box 278, LBJ Library.

he "may well be the last Philippine president to offer the US all-out collaboration."[41] Despite his optimism, however, Blair expressly forewarned Washington of the possible consequences of a Marcos state visit. According to Blair,

> The combination of a genuine war hero who speaks eloquently and a beautiful, charming, and talented First Lady is almost certain to receive unusual attention of U.S. press and other media. I am concerned that enthusiastic response…may give rise to extravagant expectations of him on our part, and veil profound continuing problems.[42]

While considering the appeal of a convenient Cold War ally, the United States ambassador, who arguably had more insight on the Philippine first couple because he resided in the Philippines as part of his tenure, was markedly cautious about the possible consequences that "enthusiastic" media attention may have on public perception. Discerning the seductive appeal of Ferdinand's heroism and Imelda's beauty, fused with the media's critical role in shaping the public's opinion, Blair feared that Americans might unduly rely on the Marcoses for Cold War support while overlooking "profound continuing problems."[43] In another instance, a National Security Council staff member weighed in on the potential benefits and challenges posed by the state visit through a memorandum titled "A Marcos Visit: The Plot Thickens." East Asia specialist James C. Thomson, Jr. wrote to National Security Advisor Walt W. Rostow about the "problem of a Marcos visit" that he believed was becoming increasingly "complex."[44] Thomson pointed out that "unless [Marcos] can return with some highly tangible goodies…with his hands very full,"

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Memorandum for Mr. Rostow, "A Marcos Visit: The Plot Thickens," #181b, 05/04/66, "Philippines Memos, Vol. 2," Country File, NSF, Box 278, LBJ Library.

he would rather not visit Washington.[45] Thomson went on to explain that Ferdinand Marcos "fears the juxtaposition of Philippine troops in Vietnam with a Washington visit, as this might tag him with the label of 'American errand boy.'"[46]

Ferdinand's fears were indeed reflected by the Philippine media coverage of the state visit. In Manila, newsprint sources anticipated the upcoming presidential state visit with much expectation as well as skepticism. Despite "little partisan criticism" in the Philippines particularly as the visit was viewed as an opportunity to address unresolved issues such as the Philippine war veterans' claims, bases agreement, and financial assistance, some critics dismissed the state visit as "traditionally nothing more than a social function."[47] The *Philippine Free Press* article continues to cite the critics of the state visit: "'In going to Washington,' said *Chronicle* columnist Ernesto O. Granada, 'Mr. Marcos is going to a tea party. Not to the wars."[48] Although the majority of Philippine political opinion seemed to support the upcoming state visit, some viewed the event as a wasteful use of valuable and limited government resources, especially as so many Filipinos lived in dire poverty. For example, on September 10, 1966, *The Manila Chronicle* reported on its front page that University of the Philippines (UP) students demonstrated on the grounds of the Malacañang Palace against the deployment of the Philippine Civic Action Group (PHILCAG) to Vietnam as well as the Marcoses' upcoming state visit to the United States.[49] As the nation's premier state institution of higher learning and one of its leading universities, the UP students' rally signaled an early critical voice against Philippine involvement in the Vietnam War as well as the Philippine state's efforts to renew its ties with the United

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[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Jose F. Lacaba, "On To Washington!: 'A Working Visit, Not A Junket'—Marcos," *Philippines Free Press*, September 3, 1966.
[48] Ibid.
[49] "Students Denounce Viet Aid," *The Manila Chronicle,* September 10, 1966.

States through an elaborately planned state visit. In a separate editorial piece, the author emphasized the rationale behind the student opposition to a Marcos state visit: "It should be emphasized that the student demonstration was mainly against the President's U.S. visit. For the students felt that the President did not have to force the country into war by sending the PHILCAG to South Viet Nam if he was not thinking of going to the U.S. on a begging mission."[50] Memories of colonial past and ongoing experiences of unequal neocolonial present affected much of the discourses surrounding the state visit.

Meanwhile, American newsprint and magazine coverage of the Marcoses' state visit generally supported the United States' Cold War imperatives. In celebrating the state visit as a successful diplomatic affair, the media fulfilled the U.S. State Department's efforts to create a positive media campaign. For example, Drew Pearson's *Washington Post* piece declared Marcos' visit as most significant, given the geopolitical conditions affecting the United States at the time: "A lot of presidents, prime ministers and potentates have visited the White House this year, but none more important than Ferdinand Marcos, President of the Philippines, first modern Republic to emerge in Asia, a showcase of American Democracy."[51] Even Pearson, a controversial journalist known for publishing scandalous stories about public figures, had extremely positive remarks about Marcos and the much-publicized state visit. *The New York Times* similarly hailed the visit as "the strongest boost that has yet to come from an Asian statesman…when so much American interest is centered in that part of the world."[52] Indeed, the visit is a significant historical moment, which sets the tone for the eventual violence, collusion, disregard, and eventual condemnation as shared between the United States and the Philippine

[50] Ernesto O. Granada, "Student Demonstration Was Against FM's State Visit," *The Manila Chronicle*, September 10, 1966.
[51] Drew Pearson, "War Hero Marcos' Visit Is Important," *Washington Post*, September 14, 1966.
[52] "Press Hails Marcos Visit," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 25, 1966.

states. As Raymond Bonner observes, "The state visit, in September 1966, became a prelude to, and preview of, the next twenty years of the U.S.-Marcos relationship, from the charm of Imelda Marcos to the cunning effectiveness of her husband."[53]

In many ways, this state visit also functioned within the framework of Cold War integration—as opposed to, and alongside, containment—that simultaneously promoted United States global power and its Cold War policy of containment by producing the image of a non-colonial and egalitarian American national identity and an eager, grateful, but suspiciously avaricious Philippine nation. The works of Christina Klein and Penny Von Eschen on American "middlebrow" representations of non-Communist Asia from 1945-1961 and U.S. State Department's deployment of African American jazz musicians as cultural ambassadors during Cold War, respectively, demonstrate the varied imperatives to polish American image in the international political and cultural arenas.[54] Soviet anti-American propaganda during this era emphasized American domestic issues and turmoil especially related to Jim Crow segregation and racial violence in the United States. Decolonization movements in many parts of Africa, Middle East, and Asia also complicated the United States' efforts to win "hearts and minds" abroad at it simultaneously expanded its military, political, and economic dominance after World War II. In response, United States policymakers increasingly prioritized race relations and civil rights issues—many times, only in rhetoric—to polish its image on the international political Cold War arena by mobilizing unconventional cultural ambassadors in order to produce an appearance of domestic harmony and international integration. In this instance, the American Cold War integrationist project hinged on the figure of Imelda Marcos.

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[53] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 51.
[54] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Silencing the Beauty

Imelda was introduced to Americans and became a visible public figure through numerous news and magazine coverage of the 1966 state visit. As mentioned earlier, the Johnson administration understood the importance of positive media attention and sought to portray the Marcoses and the state visit in ways that benefited the administration's Cold War agenda. Indeed, the State Department made a concerted effort to attract the media's attention. For example, among the numerous RSVP letters received by Social Secretary Bess Abell for the White House state dinner in honor of the Marcoses included acceptance letters from media representatives from CBS News, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Chicago Tribune*.[55] In addition, in a September 13, 1966 memo, Liz Carpenter informed President Johnson that *Life* magazine had expressed interest in publishing a photograph of the Philippine and American presidents.[56] Carpenter insisted, "It is highly important that we stress 'substance' in this particular visit and not just the glamour."[57] The U.S. Department of State's efforts to create a media buzz around the state visit paid off in a slew of substantive and glamorous reportage—the most enthusiastic of which focused on the Philippine First Lady.

When Imelda appeared on the pages of American newspaper and magazines, she was often compared to, arguably, the most popular and glamorous First Lady in the American imagination—Jacqueline "Jackie" Kennedy. Like Imelda, Jackie was perceived as quiet but highly intelligent, worldly, and fashionable. The American media had already invented the "First

[55] Letters from Tony Sargent (09/01/66), Mr. and Mrs. Charles de Young Thieriot, and Walter Trohan (08/30/66), "Dinner-Pres. Of Philippines & Mrs. Marcos 9/14/66," Social Entertainment, Social Files, Box 79, LBJ Library.
[56] Memo from Liz Carpenter to LBJ, 09/13/1966, Appointment File, September 14-15, 1966 President Marcos – Philippines, Diary Backup, Box 45, LBJ Library.
[57] Ibid.

Lady" in the form of Jackie Kennedy. Imelda supplanted the mold vacated by Jackie and satisfied America's need to demonstrate friendly transnational exchanges during the Cold War.

Imelda's American media debut was indeed appealing. Stories about the First Lady and the accompanying photos lived up to the American public's expectations of a Camelot-like debut. Imelda was generally characterized as a former beauty queen with an extremely strong work ethic and an intelligent mind. For instance, she was described by a *Honolulu Advertiser* article as an "untiring hostess, has a fantastic memory for names and a keen political sense."[58] Interestingly, a few news articles curiously focused on Imelda as a woman of sheer self-control in her consumptive habits and speech. More specifically, news sources reported on Imelda's ability to curb her shopping instincts as well as her capacity to speak. At a time of Cold War international negotiations between the Philippines and the United States, the emphasis on and celebration of Imelda's silence and restraint could be read as reassurances that economic aid gained during the state visit will be in the hands of a judicious First Lady and, in effect, Philippine President. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the U.S. State Department and the media warily anticipated Ferdinand's aggressive demands in exchange for Cold War military support. Representing Imelda as simple, quiet, and frugal justified United States economic aid and continued neocolonial involvement, in exchange for a mostly symbolic military support of United States Cold War expansion from the Philippine government. Imelda and her silent restraint stood in as a symbolic rationale for American Cold War imperatives. The Philippine media, on the other hand, negotiated this American imposition also through Imelda's silence and simplicity. The First Lady's silence and simplicity represented a developing post-colonial

[58] Don C. Becker, "P.I. First Lady No Figurehead," *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 12, 1966.

Philippine nation in search for its unique place and character among other nations, namely its former American colonizer.

A significant part of the Marcoses' state visit involved securing economic assistance from the United States, with the understanding that the Philippines would offer support for the Johnson administration's intensifying and increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam. The United States government utilized economic aid as a coercive diplomatic tool to achieve American neocolonial and Cold War aims. The press coverage of the Johnson-Marcos negotiations confirmed that the Philippines successfully secured economic assistance and its place as a critical American ally in Asia. On September 16, 1966, *Washington Post* reported that Ferdinand Marcos "left the White House yesterday with a pack of money and pledges of U.S. support for projects" while Marcos expressed support of the United States in the Vietnam War.[59] On the same day, *The New York Times* article titled "American Widen Aid to the Philippines" similarly detailed the United States' increased economic assistance to the Philippines, including $45 million in agricultural programs, $16-20 million in military equipment, technical assistance and scientific research and training in food production, typhoon control and space technology, and commitment to provide compensation for Filipino World War II guerrillas.[60] A *Time* magazine cover story on October 21, 1966 recounted another substantial Marcos victory from the state visit, one that resonated with anti-American sentiment in the Philippines:

> The Washington visit also managed to quell some of the voices from the Philippine left, which argues against further U.S. involvement in the Philippines. Marcos won a pledge from the U.S. to cut its lease on bases (Clark Field and

[59] Dan Kurzman, "U.S Pledges Marcos Several Types of Aid," *Washington Post*, September 16, 1966.
[60] Richard Eder, "Americans Widen Aid to Philippines," *New York Times*, September 16, 1966.

> Subic Bay) from 99 years to only another 25. The complex demands of parity and tariff arrangements set up by the Laurel-Langley Trade Agreement have provoked dissension among Filipinos and Americans engaged in developing the country: Marcos reached one of the first accommodations on that thorny issue in a decade. Lyndon Johnson agreed to open negotiations for a new trade instrument that would ease both Filipino fears and American appetites.[61]

The 1955 Laurel-Langley Trade Agreement is an amendment to the Bell Trade Act of 1946, which "ensured the unrestricted flow of American goods to the Philippines and granted 'parity' rights allowing U.S. citizens equal rights to exploit Philippine natural resources" in exchange for post-WWII aid.[62] Marcos' negotiations during the state visit were intended to assuage nationalist discontents at home as well as American business interests abroad. The coverage of Imelda as a silent, submissive, acquiescent First Lady, I argue, provided an arena to voice and pacify Filipino and American uncertainties and desires in this particular historical period.

The coverage celebrating Imelda's restraint and silence appeared in American news sources during the state visit. For example, the *Honolulu Advertiser* reported on the First Lady's shopping activities not for herself, but only for her children. The article also emphasized that despite attending a fashion event, she abstained from purchasing: "Mrs. Marcos said the only shopping she did in New York was at F.A.O. Schwartz toy store where she bought books and a starfish for her daughters and a James Bond car for her son. She attended a fall fashion show of children's clothes…but did not buy anything."[63] The article later explains that the reasons for her shopping restraint were climate differences between New York and the Philippines, her busy

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[61] "The Philippines: A New Voice in Asia," *Time*, October 21, 1966, 38-42.
[62] Eric Gamalinda, "English Is Your Mother Tongue/Ang Ingles Ay ang Tongue ng Ina Mo" in *Vestiges of War,* 249.
[63] Mary Cooke, "First Lady Meets Press," *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 26, 1966.

schedule, and lack of luggage space. Evidently, the press found it noteworthy to emphasize her self-discipline and practicality in the face of a whirlwind state visit that included a stay at the exclusive Kahala Hilton, Blair House, Waldorf Towers, and attendance at the opening night of the Metropolitan Opera. The obvious pomp and circumstance of the state visit—with much time and resources devoted to the planning and executing of the visit's many events—was, in ways, mitigated through the portrayal of Imelda's subdued demeanor.

Imelda not only practiced fiscal restraint, her body was also a site of self-denial. Despite access her reported access to opulence, Imelda was portrayed as a woman who clearly has the financial means but refuses to flaunt them in public. During the Marcoses' short layover in Honolulu, *Star-Bulletin* writer Ligaya Fruto (who, notably, became a strong opponent of the Marcos regime and Martial Law in the Philippines) praised Imelda for her modesty and humility: "Probably one of the main sources of Mrs. Marcos's ever-growing popularity is her reputation for standing firm against the many temptations that face a woman in a position of great influence and power. She has refused all expensive gifts—one of which was a pair of 60-carat diamonds—with a tact that has won the admiration even of those whose generosity she has rebuffed."[64] This article explicitly depicted Imelda as the epitome of self-discipline, restraint, and incorruptibility. In the face of much influence, power, and adoration, she refused to indulge in opulence. This early representation of Imelda as a privileged yet unpretentious First Lady conveyed that the new Philippine administration—as signified by her fashion choices—was friendly to the United States, independently wealthy, and modest.

In addition to representations of Imelda as privileged yet restrained during the U.S. state visit, she was also represented as a dutiful and quiet First Lady. In an article published on

[64] Ligaya Fruto, "Mrs. Marcos is a lady of action and grace," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 12, 1966.

September 17, 1966 (figure 1.1), Imelda is praised for her singular diplomatic skills, which the writer candidly identifies as her "silence."[65] The title, "Her Silence is Diplomatic," was paired with a photo of Imelda sitting down with her hands folded on her lap and her eyes glancing off to the side. The caption just as succinctly stated the article's main theme: "MRS. FERDINAND MARCOS…she knows when not to talk."[66] "Mrs. Ferdinand Marcos," *Washington Post* writer Dorothy McCardle described, was a "gifted singer and eloquent speaker [who] proved yesterday that as First Lady of the Philippines she knows when not to talk, too."[67] The article refers specifically to a moment during the state visit when a reporter asked her about a possible Johnson visit to the Philippines. Although "she obviously had a diplomatic secret up her sleeve," Imelda stopped herself short of answering the question. According to the article, "Her expressive face lighted up when she was quizzed as to the possibility of her being hostess to the LBJs and she started to reply. Then caught herself."[68] Imelda instead responded, "No, no I must not answer that question…That is for the two Presidents to announce."[69] The same article goes on to describe Imelda's jewelry—her numerous Philippine made pearl necklaces and even pieces of jewelry called "teklites" that "descended from outer space."[70] The significance placed on Imelda's proficiency at being silent indicated a particular kind of speechlessness—a willful kind of silence, not an inherent quiet disposition. Imelda had the potential to speak as she was painted as a "gifted singer and eloquent speaker" and a woman who "obviously had a diplomatic secret up her sleeve," but she *chose* to be silent. Moreover, the timing of her silence was praised by *Washington Post* article. She was commended not simply for being silent, but knowing *when* to

[65] McCardle, "Her Silence is Diplomatic."
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

be silent. The highly favorable profile story that depicted Imelda's expertise at being silent or, more specifically, her self-censorship can be read as celebration of her gendered acquiescence. It suggested that a woman with considerable influence and political savvy knew better than to step beyond the boundaries of gendered political etiquette during the Cold War. Beyond complimenting Imelda's diplomatic discretion, however, was the article's revelation of the possibility of a reciprocal state visit. Through Imelda, the public declaration of Philippine-United States friendship was playfully and innocuously insinuated. The article suggested international parity through the unthreatening figure of Imelda—a woman that had potential but chose not to speak—and easily transitioned into her *terno*, extraterrestrial jewelry, busy schedule, and lack of shopping time. Moreover, Imelda's silence, portrayed as a highly desirable feminine characteristic, was implicitly juxtaposed with those who were not silent—second-wave feminists who questioned the gender roles and inequalities; anti-war protesters who spoke up against the United States' bloody intervention in Vietnam; and anti-American demonstrators in the Philippines wary of the United States' neocolonial influence on the nation.

By Matthew Lewis, Staff Photographer

MRS. FERDINAND MARCOS
. . . she knows when not to talk

Her Silence Is Diplomatic

Figure 1.1 "Her Silence Is Diplomatic," *Washington Post,* September 17, 1966

Strikingly familiar but different, the *Manila Chronicle* also focused on Imelda's perceived silence as an important character trait. In an article by Rosalinda L. Orosa, the Philippine First Lady was depicted as a simple, patriotic woman who will represent the

Philippine nation-state on the international stage through the state visit. The article anticipated the foreign audience's reaction to Imelda's debut. According to the article, the audience will not be "dazzled" or "overwhelmed" by Imelda but will regardless recognize the Philippines' stature through the first lady. She does not have to impress nor speak, as her body and attire will effectively speak volumes for her:

> The First Lady's shoes and bags will likewise speak eloquently, if silently, for their country of origin, being not just comparable but even superior in material, style and finish to the best from Dior, I. Magnin, Balenciaga, Givenchy, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bonwit Teller and scores of other name establishments patronized by the world's best-dressed women. (Other Philippine ladies, take note, and we hope follow suit!)[71]

The American and Philippine news coverage of Imelda expressed particular desires for the future of Philippine-U.S. relations. The United States sought to attract Marcos' support while also expressing hesitation at Marcos' demands. In this case, Imelda's silence represented a comforting reassurance of the colonial subject's desire to stay quiet. On the other hand, the Philippine article conveyed a desire to affirm the Philippines' independence from and parity with foreign (and especially western) nations.

The fascination with Imelda's silence was especially salient at a historical moment when the Philippines was actively promoted as a tourist destination by the Philippine government through its Board of Travel and Tourist Industry. The Marcos regime would eventually capitalize on the Philippine tourism industry to bolster its economic and political interests. Namely, Marcos utilized tourism promotion as a development strategy especially under Martial Law in order to

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[71] Rosalinda L. Orosa, "First State Visit for the First Lady," *The Chronicle Magazine,* September 3, 1966, 6.

generate foreign business and luxury construction that benefited the regime and its many cronies.[72] Additionally, the United States and the Philippines simultaneously negotiated American military presence in the archipelago. As both nation-states actively advanced their interests through tourism and militarism, Imelda became the most recognizable Filipina figure—a quiet, cosmopolitan, beautiful woman who seemed endearingly westernized but also attractively and unthreateningly foreign. This particular Filipina femininity through the body of Imelda can be read as a major component of the creation of desire for and commodification of the Philippines through the figure of the accessible yet foreign Imelda.

Imelda was not only an acceptable but highly appealing political subject in 1966 through her invisibility in the realm of politics, hypervisibility in beauty and fashion, and modesty in the realm of consumption and material accumulation. Tracing Imelda's early (lack of) consumptive practices, fashion choices, and public declarations of submissiveness demonstrate that gendering and racialization of American heteronormative capitalist practices via beauty and fashion is at the heart of legitimizing international political power in the post-World War II era. Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart calls the figure of Imelda in the 1960s as the "new Filipina." As a "transcendent figure," Picart argues, Imelda was "beautiful enough to be featured on the covers of U.S. magazines and to entrance an international fan base, but vulnerable and domesticated enough to attest to the truthfulness of stereotypes concerning the sweetly subservient or docile Asian woman."[73] The figure of the "new Filipina" also strengthened the United States government's integrationist policy through, I argue, the creation of a non-threatening figure that did not desire the commodities and freedoms offered by the capitalist culture but was rather readily consumable by the Western heteropatriarchal gaze. In a sense, Imelda served as a Cold War

[72] Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader*, 182.
[73] Picart, "Media Star and Monster," 105.

bridge between the United States and the Philippines while setting the stage for the marketing of the Philippines using the nationalist symbol of the purity of Filipina womanhood. In other words, Imelda was both a "new" and "traditional" Filipina on the stages of American empire.

Fashioning United States Cold War Integrationism and Philippine Nationalism

The power dynamics and cultural logics that produced the early representations of Imelda—the ones that contributed to the attractive image readily consumed by the American and Philippine public—were made visible, articulated, and shaped through the media reportage of Imelda's first official state visit to the United States. While the state visit itself was the stage through which Cold War political stakes were calculated and performed, it was through the figure of Imelda Marcos as articulated in mainstream newspapers and magazines that the Philippines and the United States governments expressed their particular visions of postcolonial nationalism and Cold War integrationism, respectively. Through the figure of Imelda, the United States government was able to articulate its project of Cold War integrationism in order to justify and make palatable its ongoing war in Vietnam and neocolonial policies in the Philippines. For many Filipinos, Imelda embodied a renewed nationalist sentiment that celebrated a particular Philippine national identity and conveyed suspicions and fears of neocolonial imposition. Major newspapers and magazines in the United States and the Philippines that covered the state visit usually accompanied detailed reports on Imelda Marcos. Particular attention was paid to introducing Imelda to the public—her background, appearance, interests, and demeanor. Moreover, many of these articles included vivid descriptions of Imelda's body, beauty, and fashion—seemingly arbitrary descriptions that, I argue, were in fact modes of expressing Cold War stakes and insecurities.

The strikingly detailed, plentiful, and precise news coverage of Imelda's appearance was typical of the manner that women were depicted during this time. As visible public figures, the bodies of First Ladies were carefully scrutinized and deliberated particularly in the mass media. For example, *The Honolulu Advertiser*'s September 12, 1966 feature article described Imelda as a "36-year-old mother of three" who was "as attractive as in 1953 when she was a beauty queen and being offered movie contracts. Her 36-23-35 figure of those days is virtually unchanged."[74] Although these news articles also discussed Ferdinand Marcos' body and attire, descriptions of Imelda were more deliberate and precise. For example, in two separate *New York Times* articles, Ferdinand was described on both occasions as a "slight wiry man."[75] Similarly, the *San Francisco Chronicle* also commented on Ferdinand's physique and attire in its news coverage of the Philippine head of state's arrival: "Marcos, a slim, erect and authoritative man in a gray summer suit of Italian cut and foulard handkerchief, greeted many of the crowd by name."[76] Ferdinand's body and clothes were mentioned merely in passing in these news reports; moreover, no emphasis was placed on his sartorial intentions nor was his body celebrated with much fanfare.

The depiction of Imelda as an unchanging, accessible, beautiful Asian woman can be understood in the context of Asian female stereotypes dating back to the nineteenth century as either docile "lotus blossom babies," China dolls, or geisha girls or devious "dragon ladies."[77] The passage of immigration laws such as the Page Act (1875), Chinese Exclusion Act (1882),

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[74] Becker, "P.I.'s First Lady No Figurehead."
[75] Eder, "Americans Widen Aid to Philippines." See also Will Lissner, "Indonesian Role in Peace Bid Seen," *New York Times*, September 19, 1966.
[76] Maitland Zane, "S.F.'s Big 'Mabuhay' for Marcos," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 23, 1966.
[77] Renee E. Tajima, "Lotus Blossoms Don't Bleed: Images of Asian Women" in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women,* ed. Asian Women United of California, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

Cable Act (1922), and the Johnson-Reed Act (1924) reflected and produced historically specific anti-Asian sentiment in the United States.

More specifically, Imelda's place in the United States racial imaginary was framed through the history of Filipino immigration. Although Filipino immigrants entered the United States in the early twentieth century as American "nationals," many experienced racial discrimination especially in the 1930s.[78] Like other racialized and marginalized groups in the United States, Filipinos were denied citizenship, housing, and jobs. Racial slurs such as "goo-goos" and "monkeys" directed towards Filipinos and signs in front of businesses reading, "POSITIVELY NO FILIPINOS ALLOWED" reflected strong anti-Filipino sentiment in the United States.[79] Many white Americans perceived the mostly male Filipino immigrants as "troublemakers," "headhunters," "untamed," and "primitive savages."[80] By the 1960s, however, the demographics of Filipinos in the United States was changing—the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) was established through the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act of 1948 and facilitated the arrival of mostly female nurses from the Philippines.[81] The program was created as part of the United States' Cold War strategy to counter Soviet propaganda through integrationist tools. By 1965, President Johnson's Cold War imperatives led to the signing of the Hart-Celler Act, which abolished immigration quotas based on national origin. Symbolically, at least, this legislation signaled the American government's desire to be perceived as racially tolerant and inclusionary despite a long history of racism and exclusionary laws.

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[78] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little Brown, and Company, 1998).
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 325.
[81] See Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

Imelda's international political debut took place during this time of containment, and as Klein argues, integration. According to Klein, American national identity formation during the Cold War grappled with its "rise to global power…at the very moment when nationalist leaders throughout Asia were in the process of throwing off Western domination."[82] As Americans pondered how to "define [their] nation as a nonimperial world power in the age of decolonization," Imelda Marcos made her debut and set the precedent for a new kind of alliance between the United States and the Philippines—one that brought the two nations in a Cold War geopolitical embrace, symbolically connected through the body of Imelda.

Although the majority of the state visit coverage in the United States highlighted the Marcos-Johnson political negotiations, a significant number of articles focused on Imelda Marcos' body and attire. The coverage of Imelda's fashion choices was indeed rooted in gendered and racialized stereotypes but, I argue, was also an expression of American Cold War imperatives. *Parade* magazine's September 11, 1966 issue anticipated the arrival of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos in the United States with a two-page profile of Imelda titled "The First Lady of Asia."[83] *Parade* is a nationwide Sunday news magazine in the United States that publishes a variety of feature stories and interviews with "virtually every major star, political leader and President since 1941."[84] The magazine, which prides itself as the "most widely read magazine in America," is still in circulation today and distributed by hundreds of American newspapers including the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Washington Post.*[85] Publishing a prominent feature story on Imelda Marcos in 1966 signaled a major American political debut for the Philippine First Lady. The article's main photo (figure 1.2) showed Imelda and Ferdinand standing

[82] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 9.
[83] Glaser, "Imelda Marcos: The First Lady of Asia."
[84] "About Us," *Parade,* accessed July 21, 2017, https://parade.com/about-us/.
[85] Ibid.

alongside and looking at each other, with their three children standing in front of them. The photograph was perhaps reminiscent of John and Jacqueline Kennedy's photos with their children—iconic images of the heteropatriarchal nuclear family in Cold War America. The "beauty," as the subtitle dubbed Imelda, was the "brunette wife of the president of the Philippines," who "comes on strong."[86] The writer, Vera Glaser, went on to describe Imelda's physical features, her "magnificent honey-colored skin, eyes of fiery topaz and the figure of a beauty queen," with "brains and energy to boot."[87] In more than one instance, Glaser described Imelda's sartorial choices including her "pointed heels and bright Philippine terno," her preference for "Philippine styles" as well as "slacks, Paris frocks, Italian knits and American suits."[88] Glaser took special notice that although Imelda showed preference for Philippine, European, and American fashion, "she seldom dons her fabulous jewels."[89] The reader was taken on a Euro-American tour through Imelda's apparel choices, demonstrating that in addition to Philippine wear, the First Lady's preferences were western in nature. The Philippines, with Imelda's body and dress as its metonym, was reintroduced to *Parade* magazine's audience in an attractive, colorful, and unthreatening manner. In another article, *The New York Times* reported "The statuesque (5 feet 7 inches) beauty said she liked Western clothes, especially suits, and she cares less about who designs an outfit than what it looks like."[90] As a visible Filipina figure, descriptions of Imelda's beauty and fashion operated to enchant the American readership and to demonstrate a close relationship between the Philippines and the United States. The magazine informed the American public not only about Imelda but also what she represented—the

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[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] "A Peek at Fashion, New York Style, For First lady of the Philippines," *New York Times*, September 19, 1966.

seemingly beautiful product of American intervention abroad. Without formally endorsing the United States, Imelda's body was nonetheless made operable as a Cold War cultural ambassador through gendered images of domesticity.

A First Family portrait: President and Mrs. Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines pose proudly with their three children: (l. to r.) Ferdinand Jr., Irene and Maria Imelda.

IMELDA MARCOS:

THE FIRST LADY OF ASIA

This beauty and her husband, President of the Philippines, will pay us a state visit

by VERA GLASER

Figure 1.2 "Imelda Marcos: The First Lady of Asia," *Parade*, September 11, 1966

While the Philippine and American presidents negotiated over extremely delicate political issues, the media's focus on Imelda's body and clothes could be read as distraction from the failures of American intervention in Vietnam. Understood within the context of 1966 Cold War politics, the writer's particular interest in Imelda's clothing choices by highlighting her preference for Philippine *as well as* European and American fashion styles signals a desire for a particular type of subject—one that is simultaneously perceived as foreign and cosmopolitan. Imelda's foreignness (as marked by her intentional deployment of Philippine fashion through the *terno*) and her cosmopolitanism (represented by her preference for western styles) embodied an American fantasy rooted in the desire to believe in American exceptionalism and benevolence. Americans were exposed to the consequences of warfare in Vietnam through mass media at the same time that newspapers and magazines introduced the figure of Imelda—a beautiful product of the purported "special relations" between the U.S. and the Philippines. Imelda's body was the visual marker of American exceptionalism; her carefully staged attires signaled the burgeoning Cold War "friendship" between purportedly equal nations.

Imelda's body, beauty, and fashion, as articulated in the media, participated in America's Cold War project of integration. Imelda's interest in Philippine and European fashion, juxtaposed with her modesty, appealed to Cold War American sensibilities as Imelda appears to embody a combination of Westernized, hyperfeminine, and Asian stereotypes. The ideological war between capitalism and communism is also articulated through the fashion and shopping choices of the First Lady. While U.S. state actors cultivated Cold War alliances with Ferdinand, the U.S. media discourse about Imelda suggests that geopolitical alliance also relied on constructing specific cultural representations. Depictions of her beauty and her growing interest in the consumption of Western goods functioned as a Cold War tool of integration. The reintroduction

of the Philippines to the American political arena and the rearticulation of the alliance between the two nation-states, in many ways, coalesced through the discourses about Imelda's body, beauty, and fashion.

At this historical juncture, particular investments in Imelda's beauty were circulated through racialized, gendered, and imperial channels. These revelations and discussions of Imelda's beauty are not simply happenstance and a product of its time. These carefully manufactured political images of Imelda were, in fact, instrumental components of an international Cold War strategy. To take beauty seriously, as Nguyen asserts, requires an elaboration of its "force as biopower."[91] Beauty, Nguyen adds, "as a discourse and concern about the vitality of the body but also of the soul, can and does become an important site of signification, power, and knowledge about how to live."[92] United States empire-building in the late 19th century and global expansion in the 1960s are simultaneously erased and sidelined during the Marcoses' state visit as Imelda's exoticized inclusion through beauty and consumption took center stage. The biopower of Imelda's beauty was staged in various media outlets for the purpose of American Cold War integrationist imperatives. While the United States proactively sought democratic allies in its violent anti-communist campaign in Asia in 1966, the Marcoses' visit provided an opportunity for the United States to reshape its relations with its former colonial outpost in the Pacific, reconstruct its national identity, and reestablish political dominance in the region. The fascination with Imelda's beauty, fashion, and consumptive practices revealed some of the gendered norms of this period and also signals an American and Philippine Cold War investment in the circulation of these beautific images. In other words, beauty was mobilized during the Cold War when the U.S. undertook the integrationist strategy of

[91] Mimi Thi Nguyen, "The Biopower of Beauty," *Signs* 36, no. 2 (2005): 364.
[92] Ibid.

"winning the hearts and minds" of people in the Asia Pacific region and to justify neocolonial development in the Philippines at the height of the Vietnam War. Ferdinand Marcos, aware of the American strategy in Vietnam, warned during his speech to a joint session of the U.S. Congress in 1966: "We are not winning the war for the mind and heart of Asia. We are in danger of losing it."[93] Imelda represented the ideal showcase of American democracy both physically as well as through her consumptive practices.

Mimi Nguyen's analysis of the intersections between biopower and geopolitics in "The Biopower of Beauty" and *The Gift of Freedom* are valuable models for understanding how the force of beauty is tied to state and imperial dominance.[94] As Nguyen's work suggests, beauty's promise erases empire's violence and legitimizes political power in often times covert and even seemingly pleasurable ways. Imelda's introduction to American culture and society through the media functioned to mobilize her body as a Cold War diplomatic integrationist tool, as an example of America's ostensibly successful colonial project in the Asia Pacific region and the subsequent affection and gratitude from its former colonial subjects. The "Americanization" of Filipinos was viewed by some as evidence of the Filipinos' welcome acceptance of American

[93] Kurzman, "U.S. Pledges Marcos Several Types of Aid."

[94] Nguyen states that the nongovernmental organization, Beauty without Borders, and its efforts to spread the "promise of beauty" through makeovers at the Kabul Beauty School in Afghanistan "is emblematic of the instrumentalization of beauty as an index of the welfare of populations" and "is exemplary of emerging transnational forms of intervention and interpenetration between state institutions and social organizations."[94] In Nguyen's analysis, the biopower of beauty as articulated through the language of humanitarianism and feminism in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, is inextricable from the ways in which liberal empire justifies and normalizes war-making, masks its violent origins and consequences, and produces the situation from which it can exonerate itself of its own crimes. See Nguyen, "The Biopower of Beauty." See also Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

colonialism, culture, and ideals.[95] The figure of Imelda during the state visit embodied this belief in American exceptionalism and benevolence—that American colonial interventions abroad were inherently different from other colonial conquests in its purportedly benevolent intentions and outcomes.

A look at mainstream Philippine news coverage of the state visit quickly complicates the façade of American Cold War exceptionalism. Manila-based newspapers such as *The Manila Chronicle* and the *Philippines Free Press* focused on a number of issues including PHILCAG deployment to Vietnam, World War II Philippine veteran war claims as well as growing opposition to Philippine involvement in America's war in Vietnam. The *Philippines Free Press*, the Philippines' oldest weekly news source established in 1907, also reported heavily on the state visit.[96] Its front-page cover on September 10, 1966 was a large picture of Lyndon Johnson with the title "Will the U.S. Pay Its Debt To the Philippines?" The title referred to one of the biggest issues on the state visit agenda: Philippine veterans' claims for their services fighting on behalf of the United States during World War II. The ensuing article argued against the notion that the

[95] The documentary film *The U.S. and the Philippines: In Our Image* (1989), based on Stanley Karnow's Pulitzer Prize winning book *In Our Image* (New York: Random House, 1989), is about the United States imperial experience in the Philippines. The film traces the history of American social, economic, and political influence on the archipelagic nation. In the three-part PBS documentary film, former CIA official Charles Morin discusses the strategic importance of the Philippines during the Cold War: "…we saw the danger of the Philippines falling [to Communism], the danger to Southeast Asia, to the entire Asian mainland… All of the evidence tended to point to the fact that the vast majority of the people of the Philippines who loved the United States of America who admired our system of government wanted nothing more than to have that system of government for themselves so that if we can only help them to help themselves, that would be the way to victory." See *The United States and the Philippines: In Our Image* (1989).

[96] "About the *Philippines Free Press* Online," The *Philippines Free Press* Online, accessed July 1, 2017, https://philippinesfreepress.wordpress.com/about/.

Philippine veterans' claims "arose from a 'mere' moral obligation on the part of the U.S."[97] Far from a "sentimental" obligation, the article asserted that the Philippine veterans' claims were based on solid legal grounds as "mostly payment for services already rendered."[98]

In addition to the skepticism and polarized response to the state visit, mainstream Philippine news also found journalistic space to discuss Imelda's carefully curated wardrobe. A critical difference between American and Philippine reportage on Imelda, however, was the emphasis not on Imelda's preference for western and Philippine styles but rather on her exclusively Philippine wardrobe. On September 3, 1966, *The Manila Chronicle* reported on Imelda's upcoming busy schedule during the U.S. state visit with details of her various activities, meetings, and responsibilities. The article, which was printed on the *Women & Society* section, concluded with a curious emphasis on Imelda's choice of clothes for the state visit: "Mrs. Marcos has indicated that in all the functions she will attend, she will be wearing made-in-the-Philippines products. Her shoes and bags will be made in Marikina and her *ternos* by three of Manila's top couturiers (Christian, Moreno and Valera) will as much as possible avail of Philippine materials."[99] The newspaper evidently followed Imelda's Philippine-made sartorial choices closely. On the same day, the *Chronicle Magazine*—a weekly supplement of *The Manila Chronicle*'s Saturday edition with articles on culture, arts, and human-interest topics—published a feature article titled "First State Visit for the First Lady." Centered around her perceived humility and nationalism, the article paints a rosy picture of the First Lady as having "absolutely no intentions of dazzling or overwhelming the American public with Parisian gowns and

[97] Napoleon G. Rama, "Will The U.S. Pay Its Debt to the Philippines?" *Philippines Free Press*, September 10, 1966.
[98] Ibid., 3.
[99] "First Lady Faces Tight Sked in the U.S.," *The Manila Chronicle,* September 3, 1966.

diamond-studded tiaras, matching shoes and bags from Bergdorf-Goodman."[100] The article declares that Imelda's wardrobe "will not consist of a single foreign-made item…if she can help it."[101] Instead, the First Lady's "desire to take along only Philippine-made wear" had reportedly developed into an "obsession."[102] The magazine article continued with an in-depth explanation of Imelda's carefully chosen wardrobe:

> Her luggage will contain matching alligator shoes and bags made in Marikina, costumes representing the Philippines' three principal regions (the terno for Luzon, the patadiong for the Visayas and the Muslim gown for Mindanao), all designed by leading Filipino couturiers Ramon Valera, Pitoy Moreno and Christian Espiritu. And if Mrs. Marcos can find a substitute for a mink coat, she will surely wear that too.[103]

Her body was clearly evoked as a site of nationalism. The types of fabric and accessories that adorned her body at the state visit stood in for a particular strand of Philippine nationalism. Imelda's fashion choices expressed cultural pride and her American debut through the state visit was also a debut for a Philippine nationalist sentiment anchored on beauty. According to the article, carefully manufactured attires had a clear message and audience: "Foreigners seeing Mrs. Marcos' necklace will quickly get the point, namely, that as early as the third century, highly-skilled craftsmanship was already to be found in the Philippines."[104] These articles reflected a strong desire to proclaim an independent Philippine national identity and international parity through the body, beauty, and fashion of Imelda.

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[100] Orosa, "First State Visit for the First Lady."
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid.

The media reportage, which followed the First Lady's fashion choices and shopping activity with great detail, demonstrated the force of beauty as both an apparatus of Cold War integrationist strategy and a budding symbol of Philippine cultural nationalism. The *terno* is perhaps one of the most recognized national costumes and symbols of the Philippines. Its modern incarnation is a floor-length, one-piece dress, most commonly recognized by its prominent butterfly sleeves. In a *New York Times* article about Indonesia's role in a planned peace talk with North Vietnam, the writer abruptly described an unrelated topic—Imelda's attire: "Mrs. Marcos, wearing a lime yellow 'terno,' a long Philippine dress with butterfly-wing shoulders like giant epaulettes, sat in the studio."[105] The *Honolulu Advertiser* writer Mary Cooke reported on Imelda's dress with much detail. Cooke wrote, "Mrs. Marcos wore her beautiful national dress, the terno. It was of bright green pina cloth ornamented with a girdle of matching appliqued daisies that began at the waist and scattered down the length of the skirt. Contrasting color accents were her violet clutch bag and matching pumps and unfurnished gold earrings, bracelet and ring with which were set amethysts and diamonds."[106] Interestingly, the writer asked Imelda if she would wear her *terno* dresses throughout the duration of her state visit. Imelda responded and said, "Most of the time…Whenever it is possible."[107] The early emphasis on the frequency of Imelda wearing the *terno* implied an acknowledgement of the performative aspect of dressing in the national garb. It also indicated awareness of the advantages of appearing publicly in a *terno*, both for the American audience and Imelda. The *terno* would later become

[105] Lissner, "Indonesian Role in Peace Bid Seen."
[106] Mary Cooke, "Beautiful Wife of Philippines President Charms Welcomes," *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 13, 1966.
[107] Ibid.

synonymous with Imelda, as she deployed the dress to help legitimize her husband's regime and strategically signify Filipinaness.[108]

The *terno* in today's cultural imaginary is arguably popularized in many parts of the world because of Imelda Marcos' fondness for wearing them in the public eye. Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns' examination of the *terno* demonstrates the use of clothes and the bodies that wear them as sites of discipline and resistance. Burns delves into the semiotics of the *terno* as a "national object that is equally fluid in its form and unfixed in what it symbolizes."[109] Burns' *Puro Arte* provides a productive framework in analyzing the mobilizations and circulations of the spectacularized Filipino body in specific historical moments.[110] Following Imelda's representational genealogy in the United States media uncovers the "conditions of profit *and* pleasure that make possible the production and circulation of the Filipino/a performing body."[111] When news reports exalt Imelda's beauty, fashion, and submissiveness, these "spectacular accomplishments," using Burns' words, "tend to blind us, serving often to mystify rather than open up historical conditions."[112]

In the case of Imelda in 1966, the *terno* is mobilized as a proto-nationalist symbol and as a political tactic to legitimize Ferdinand's early claims to international political power and her access to it. Imelda's fashion as a metaphor, symbol, and prop in her political performances of nation, gender, race, and class was mobilized in this particular historical moment as, I argue, a public staging of Cold War integrationism and Philippine nationalism. The fluidity of the *terno*, as Burns points out, is made manifest as we later trace the meanings and mobilizations of the

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[108] Roces, "Gender, nation, and the politics of dress in the twentieth century Philippines."
[109] Burns, "Your Terno's Draggin': Fashioning Filipino American Performance," 201.
[110] Burns, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire.*
[111] Ibid., 3.
[112] Ibid., 15.

terno when Imelda falls out of America's favor. Imelda was considered appealing, but also marked as different within the boundaries of the nation; she was marked by the *terno* as specifically Filipina, erasing all traces of American empire's legacy on the colonized subject.

CHAPTER 2

THE PAGEANTRY OF VIOLENCE: IMELDA MARCOS AND THE 1974 MISS UNIVERSE PAGEANT IN MARTIAL LAW PHILIPPINES

> Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the First Lady of the Philippines, Madame Imelda Romualdez Marcos, it is my privilege to present the Miss Universe 1974 this statue of Maria Clara, made out of 3,700 Philippine shells. It is a symbol not only of Filipina womanhood but the Philippines, the Pearl of the Orient Seas. Miss Universe, it's all yours.[1]
>
> Jose Aspiras, Secretary of Tourism, Philippines

For the first time in its franchise history, the Miss Universe pageant was held in Asia on July 21, 1974.[2] The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the pageant's venue—the newly built Folk Arts Theater in Manila, Philippines—took place just a few days before the much-anticipated, live television-broadcasted international event.[3] With all the pomp and circumstance of the pageant, casual observers may have easily forgotten that for almost two years, the country had been under direct military rule after the proclamation of Martial Law on September 21, 1972. Brief reminders of draconian rule appeared on government-controlled print media with messages such as "Support the New Society", "Let Cleanliness and Beauty Mark Our Progress", "*Sa Ikauunlad*

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[1] Miss Universe Beauty Pageant 1974, "Miss Universe 1974 - Full Show," YouTube, 1:47:53, CBS Television Network, July 21, 1974, posted by "tttpageant," February 17, 2013, accessed November 20, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOzH9OoNc4s.

[2] Prior to the 1974 Miss Universe pageant, the competition was held in only four other locations: Long Beach, California (1952-1959); Miami Beach, Florida (1960-1971); Dorado, Puerto Rico (1972); and Athens, Greece (1973).

[3] Although it is still widely known in some circles as the "Folk Arts Theater," the building has since been renamed Tanghalang Francisco Balagtas.

Ng Bayan, Disiplina Ang Kailangan" (For the Nation's Progress, Discipline is Needed), and "Be Home Before Midnight."[4] Instead, the state-run media teemed with photographs of smiling, sashed beauty queens, with reporters following their every move and publishing numerous profiles of the young women. Rivaling the press coverage of the Miss Universe contestants was that of Philippine First Lady Imelda Marcos who figured prominently in the pageant events—she was credited for bringing the pageant to the Philippines, managing the speedy construction of the venue, organizing colorful parades, and even gifting a large statue made of thousands of shells to the newly crowned Miss Universe from Spain.[5] In the previous chapter, we followed the figure of Imelda as she was introduced to the world through the 1966 U.S. state visit; in 1974, she produced a spectacle that literally attempted to bring the world into the Philippines as well as effectively reintroduce the country to an international audience through the Miss Universe pageant.

This chapter examines the intersecting discourses of beauty, development, and authoritarianism surrounding the 1974 Miss Universe pageant in the Philippines. More specifically, it examines how Imelda Marcos—her political actions as well as representations—were foundational to the persistence of state repression in the archipelago. The rhetoric of the Miss Universe pageant itself fueled Imelda's self-representation as a cosmopolitan patron of the arts and beauty—a representation that still fuels the admiration of many Marcos supporters today. At a time of social and political repression especially after the declaration of Martial Law, the Miss Universe pageant functioned as a highly visible cultural spectacle, a powerful veneer that attempted to dictate national and international discourses about the Philippines through

[4] My translation. These messages were printed on various pages of the *Baguio Midland Courier*, *Bulletin Today*, and *Times Journal*.
[5] For example, see "First Lady offers Folk Arts Theater to the people," *Daily Express*, July 8, 1974.

constructions and productions of Filipina femininity and nationhood revolving around the figure of Imelda. In response to Cynthia Enloe's call to take women and their experiences of international politics seriously in order to understand "how international politics actually 'works'," this chapter highlights an often-ignored moment in the Marcos era.[6] I argue that pageantry, "Imelda", and her insistence on beauty and development were not frivolous asides or "pet projects" in history—they were central apparatuses of state control that worked to legitimize the Marcos regime the 1970s and continues to influence Philippine society and politics well into the 21st century.

The Miss Universe pageant was arguably the biggest international event hosted by the Philippines—and specifically, Imelda Marcos—at this point in Marcos' presidency. The Philippines selected its Miss Philippines title-holder through the annual Binibining Pilipinas pageant with the winner representing the country in international beauty contests such as the Miss Universe pageant. In 1974, the Philippine representative was Guadalupe Sanchez from Manila. According to the Miss Universe Organization's website, the pageant sites were chosen "based on a number of factors including city infrastructure and capabilities of the venue for production."[7] The Miss Universe Organization most likely decided to hold the pageant in Manila in 1974 because of Philippine contender Margarita Moran's successful coronation in Athens, Greece the previous year (which made her the second Filipina to win the Miss Universe contest after Gloria Diaz's 1969 victory). Moran's success also seemingly provided the Marcos Martial Law regime an opportunity for positive international publicity.

The Marcos administration spent an astonishing amount of effort and resources to organize, accommodate, and stage the beauty competition. Although specific details of the

[6] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches & Bases*, 4.
[7] "About," *Miss Universe*, accessed October 31, 2017, https://www.missuniverse.com/about.

event's overall costs are difficult to find due to the Marcos regime's control of information, *Washington Post* reported that "millions of dollars" were spent to hold the event in the Philippines.[8] According to the article, some of the expenditures involved the construction of a new theater that had been "doubled in size and rushed to completion" as well as efforts by the military to "transport palm trees into town" and "cloud seeding efforts to draw the monsoon rains away from the capital."[9] In another account, the total expenditure of the pageant was estimated at 40 million pesos.[10] Surprisingly, given its global reach and spectacle, there is a paucity of scholarly work on the 1974 Miss Universe pageant and its ties to the Marcos regime. This chapter is an attempt to bring to light the significance of this event, following Lucy Burns' assessment that "[c]ultural products, such as music festivals, fashion shows, and beauty pageants, were deployed to perform the salvific miracles of Marcos's 'compassionate state.'"[11] Studying the Miss Universe pageant gives us a unique insight into the mechanisms and discourses involved in maintaining Martial Law in the Philippines.

This spectacle of the pageant illuminates how women—and particularly Imelda—were needed to sustain authoritarian rule. Imelda's rise to political power was on full display in the events leading to and during the pageant and her political rise and cultural projects only continued in the years to come. One year after the pageant, she was appointed Governor of Metro Manila; four years later, she became the Minister of Human Settlements. These appointments accrued to Imelda while the violence and repression of Martial Law became institutionalized. As Burns has aptly pointed out in *Puro Arte*, "Imelda's numerous cultural initiatives were a stunning

[8] H.D. S. Greenway, "Miss Universe Frenzy Hits the Philippines," *Washington Post*, July 21, 1974.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 140.
[11] Burns, *Puro Arte*, 80.

deployment of spectacle to blind the world and Filipinos themselves to the poverty, corruption, and murder ongoing under this administration."[12] Decades later, the narratives of beauty and pageantry in the Philippines that Imelda helped engender in 1974 are still central mechanisms in the exercise of state power in the modern Philippine state.

One of the major challenges of this chapter is the lack of reliable archival materials due to the strict state ownership and censorship of the Philippine media after declaration of Martial Law in 1972. Ferdinand Marcos understood the massive influence of the media in controlling the public's perception. According to Raymond Bonner, "Marcos had closed off what was probably the most effective means of dissent by shutting down the country's newspapers along with the radio and television stations."[13] In fact, most of the Philippine media outlets ceased operation during Martial Law except for a few handpicked publications owned or published by Marcos' family members and cronies. With critical attention to the Philippine state's control of the media, this chapter will analyze archives from newspapers, photographs, and the televised broadcast of the pageant. Using discourse and visual analysis as well as reading against the grain of these state-controlled archives will reveal the power of beauty and spectacle as embodied by Imelda in perpetuating political repression and legitimizing authoritarian rule.

By 1974, Ferdinand Marcos had already held the Philippine presidency by election and forceful decree for almost nine years. Marcos declared Martial Law through Proclamation 1080 under the pretext of establishing law, order, security, and development in the face of public disorder and a communist threat, particularly after the alleged assassination attempt on his

[12] Ibid.
[13] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 122.

Secretary of Defense Juan Ponce Enrile.[14] Martial Law established an authoritarian regime that abolished the Philippine Republic, suspended civil rights and the writ of habeas corpus, and established absolute military and police control with Ferdinand Marcos as its absolute commander-in-chief.[15] Under Ferdinand's direction, the military "took over public utilities, shut down Congress, suppressed the media (except those owned by the Marcoses and their relatives), imposed a curfew and restricted travel out of the country. Any civilian caught with a firearm faced the death penalty."[16] Central to Marcos' authoritarian regime were the promises of law and order through military rule and reformation/development through what he termed "Ang Bagong Lipunan" or "The New Society." Marcos relied on the New Society program to create the illusion of benevolence, innovation, and progress even as the opposite was taking root. He paid particular attention to crafting a message of political and economic reformation that would purportedly benefit the poor and working class and dismantle the old, land-owning, oligarchic power.[17] Ferdinand's populist veneer reportedly worked in favor of his regime as the majority of domestic and international reaction to the early stages of the Martial Law era was, for the most part, positive. In the Philippines, "[Marcos'] restoration of security won him wide public support and a tenuous political legitimacy, particularly in Manila, where crime and chaos had been most acute under the Republic."[18] Under Richard Nixon's presidency, the United States government also reacted with general acquiescence to and support of Marcos' declaration of Martial Law.[19]

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[14] Alfred W. McCoy, *Policing America's Empire: The United States, the Philippines, and the Rise of the Surveillance State* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 395.
[15] Ferdinand E. Marcos, "Proclamation No. 1081, s. 1972," *Official Gazette of the Republic of the Philippines*, accessed October 3, 2017, http://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/1972/09/21/proclamation-no-1081/.
[16] Robles, *Marcos Martial Law*, 11.
[17] Ibid., 39.
[18] McCoy, *Policing America's Empire*, 397.
[19] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator,* 116.

United States officials may have been aware of Marcos' dictatorial ambitions, but so long as Marcos exaggerated the anti-communist ends of Martial Law and played favorably to American bases and economic stakes, the United States government willingly supported the authoritarian regime.[20]

The declaration of Martial Law and plans for a New Society may have consolidated official power in the hands of Ferdinand; however, growing talks of a conjugal dictatorship with his wife Imelda had been gaining much traction in the Philippines.[21] In Katherine Ellison's biography of Imelda, she asserts that after the declaration of Martial Law, Ferdinand increasingly withdrew from public view for "security reasons."[22] The president apparently feared assassination plots and "grew dependent on his wife and aides for information, and usually left it to Imelda to keep up appearances outside of the palace."[23] It is no wonder then, that many Filipinos have identified Imelda as a public official, even before her official appointments were made. Media speculation about Imelda's official capacity appeared on several news articles before the declaration of Martial Law. For instance, on March 16, 1971, Eduardo R. Sanchez of the *The Manila Times* criticized Ferdinand for dismissing suspicions that Imelda would run for president in 1973 by calling it a "big joke."[24] If it were a "big joke," Sanchez declared that it must be a private one "because it looks serious in public."[25] Sanchez suggested that the Philippine Constitutional Convention consider an amendment to clarify the First Lady's role in

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[20] Robles, *Martial Law,* 32-33.
[21] This term was coined by Primitivo Mijares, who wrote a book in 1976 by the same title. The former Marcos aide and journalist later mysteriously disappears; his whereabouts are still unknown to this day. See Primitivo Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and Imelda Marcos*, (Union Square Publishing, Manila, 1976).
[22] Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 134.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Eduardo R. Sanchez, "'Big Joke': Definitive role of First Lady urged," *Manila Times*, March 16, 1971. (Retrieved from the Lopez Museum and Library No page number provided.)
[25] Ibid.

order to prevent the public from overly speculating "everytime [sic] she does something other than cut ceremonial ribbons like attending official meetings or conferring with banker-creditors of the government."[26] Adding to the swelling speculations and contradicting his previous dismissive remarks, Ferdinand suggested a few months later that Imelda might take part in the 1973 presidential election in order to prevent a Communist-supported candidate from taking over the Philippine presidency.[27] The Philippine-based newspaper *Daily Mirror* published an *Associated Press* report of Imelda fiercely denying that she would succeed her husband's presidency. Imelda reportedly declared, "No, I am not going to succeed my husband as President…I have no political ambitions whatsoever."[28] Philippine news outlets and the public were understandably suspicious of the first lady's official role; by 1974, Imelda's political influence and activities were tantamount to that of a public official. For example, her solo travels reached far and wide: in May 1968, Imelda visited Washington, D.C., purportedly for medical purposes but was honored with a private dinner usually reserved for heads of state at the White House; from 1974-1980, she traveled on diplomatic tours to China, Libya, Cuba, U.S.S.R., Mexico, Algeria, Bolivia, Burma, Egypt, and Nepal.[29] Furthermore, Ellison points out that in 1972, Imelda's position [as a national leader and the other half of the "conjugal dictatorship"] was "gruesomely confirmed…when a killer who supposedly had meant to strike the President chose his wife as a stand-in."[30] In a live-television broadcast that would be replayed many times after the assassination attempt, Filipinos watched as a bolo knife-wielding man in a dark suit

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[26] Ibid.
[27] "Imelda says she won't succeed FM," *Daily Mirror*, October 11, 1971. Retrieved from the Lopez Museum and Library. No page number provided.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Remarks by the President, written by Sparks, Valenti, McPherson, 05/13/68, #152, "Philippine Memos, Vol. IV," Country File, NSF, Box 279, LBJ Library. See also Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 150.
[30] Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 134.

attacked Imelda. She appeared on television again after the attack, in her hospital gown, bemoaning her fate. Despite denials, the political power of the First Lady was in full display and the Philippine public were unconvinced of her confessed neutrality.

In 1974, Imelda's symbolic power was unabashedly on display as she spearheaded a Martial Law style beauty pageant—a spectacle that revealed a great deal about the beautific mechanisms of authoritarian rule in the Philippines. Through the apparatus and discourse of the pageant, Imelda weaponized beauty, development, and cosmopolitanism in the maintenance of state power. The representational practices of the Philippine nation under Martial Law that configured the Filipina beauty as a stand-in for the nation itself played a crucial role in the emergence of what Neferti Tadiar calls the New World Order—a world in which fantasies about the hyperfeminization of the Philippine nation were carried out on and through the real bodies of women as beauty contestants, domestic workers, mail-order brides, and prostitutes.[31] The 1974 Miss Universe beauty pageant and the consequent marketing of the Filipina as currency in Marcos' New World Order are inextricably linked as the pageant demonstrates the sexualized, gendered, and racialized codes of the "Free World," a literal fantasy-production played out on an international stage, shaping and restructuring capitalist desires and the political economy in a globalized context.[32]

The first part of this chapter traces the media coverage leading up to the pageant and pinpoints the frameworks used to generate excitement and desire for the Philippines. Specifically, it focuses on newsprint reportage of Imelda and her involvement in the construction of the pageant's venue, the Folk Arts Theater. While the Folk Arts Theater's construction worked to mystify the Marcos regime's edificial powers, its inauguration was a large-scale

[31] Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production,* 50.
[32] Ibid.

exercise aimed at educating the masses on how to consume the spectacles of parade and pageant. The second part of this chapter delves into the live television broadcast of the 1974 Miss Universe pageant. It looks closely at critical moments during the pageant when gendered, racialized, and sexualized codes converged on stage with performances meant to position the Philippines and its women as accessible, obtainable currencies in the neocolonial, globalized market of the Martial Law era.

Setting Up Smokescreens: Newspaper Coverage on the Eve of the 1974 Miss Universe Pageant

In the weeks before the Miss Universe pageant, 65 contestants from all over the globe gradually arrived in Manila to participate in the numerous events leading up to the main contest. Manila-based newsprint media printed copious stories and photos of the contestants' arrival and activities. They also published numerous profiles on all the "beauties," as they were dubbed. Based on these state-controlled archives, the Philippine media and its readership seemed immensely preoccupied with the pageant and its chief conductor, Imelda. The beauty contest and Imelda filled the front pages of every mainstream newspaper outlet in Manila for almost the entire month of July. Full-page advertisements of the pageant and coverage of Imelda's numerous projects grazed the pages of these state-sanctioned newspapers, including *Bulletin Today* (owned by Hans Menzi, Ferdinand's former military aide), *Daily Express* (published by Ferdinand's law school classmate and sugar baron, Roberto Benedicto), and *Times Journal* (owned by Imelda's brother and ambassador to the United States, Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez).

In the weeks leading to the international spectacle, a parallel narrative was being crafted about the Philippines by these Marcos-approved newspapers in order to cultivate an environment

enticing for both nationalists that sought self-reliance as well as foreign investors that preferred privatization and deregulation. With Imelda and the upcoming beauty pageant as smokescreens and evidence of national "stability," the Philippine state quietly encouraged foreign investors and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank to invest and intervene in the Philippines. As the self-proclaimed ultimate Filipina mother/hostess, Imelda constructed and presented her "home" to Filipinos and foreigners and capitalized on this state-controlled pedagogical moment to shape the spectators' responses to her rendering of Philippine Martial Law.

Imelda Marcos' reputation as a local beauty queen preceded her role as the Philippines' First Lady. In 1949, she had joined a local beauty pageant in her hometown in Leyte and was crowned the Rose of Tacloban. After World War II, Imelda returned to a war-torn Manila in search for other opportunities. While attending the Philippine Women's University, she sharpened her organizing, performing, and negotiating abilities. She famously competed and lost the Miss Manila beauty pageant in 1953. With her strategic arbitration skills put into action, however, she managed to convince the Mayor of Manila to bestow upon her the title of Muse of Manila.[33] After first meeting in 1954, the 11-day courtship of the young lawyer-turned-congressman Ferdinand Marcos and the beauty queen from a prominent family Imelda Romualdez fascinated local tabloids and social pages. They got married in a secret, civil wedding, but their secular ceremony was followed by a grand reception with 1,000 guests. Imelda, the beauty queen, enchanted the masses with her good looks. A childhood friend later described her first impression of Imelda: "I thought she was the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

[33] This experience plunged Imelda into Manila's world of gossip and scandal. According to Katherine Ellison, Imelda was rumored to have had an affair with the Mayor of Manila, Arsenio Lacson. See Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 31-32.

She reminded me of the Virgin Mary. Long hair, beautiful face. That's how I remember her."[34] This perception of Imelda as a beauty queen not only enthralled the masses but also strategically positioned her as a hostess to the most prestigious beauty contest in the world, the Miss Universe pageant. Armed with her deep knowledge of beauty, pageantry, and politics, Imelda was instrumental in producing a spectacular deception to hide the ugly consequences of Philippine Martial Law.

While the country anticipated the crowning of a new Miss Universe, the headline-stealing beauty queen was arguably Imelda Marcos. Coincidentally, the pageant was to be held on the same month as Imelda's birthday. Not to be outdone on her birthday, Imelda occupied the many pages of newspapers with photographs, articles, advertisements, and well-wishers. On July 2, the *Philippines Daily Express* featured two leading photographs of the First Lady right under its masthead. In fact, the entire first page featured four news stories related to Imelda. In addition, *Bulletin Today*'s front-page article covered Imelda's "traditional spiritual pilgrimage" on her birthday.[35] Other headliners of the day included Imelda's nutrition program, Imelda's reception of renowned pianist Van Cliburn, the beauty contestants' arrival, Juan Peron's death (who was succeeded by his wife, Isabel), and the Laurel-Langley Agreement's expiration.[36] On July 4, 1974, the front page of the *Philippines Daily Express* similarly highlighted Imelda's birthday with a photograph of the First Lady at her birthday mass in Leyte.[37] The other headlining photograph was that of a group of schoolteachers rehearsing for a dance performance for the

[34] *Imelda: Power, Myth, Illusion*, directed by Ramona Diaz (2003; Los Angeles, CA: Unico Entertainment, 2004), 103 min., DVD.
[35] "First Lady marks birth anniversary," *Bulletin Today,* July 3, 1974.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Untitled, *Philippines Daily Express*, July 4, 1974.

Kasaysayan ng Lahi (History of Race) parade.[38] Her birthday-as-news was a significant acknowledgement of Imelda's power as First Lady and celebrated (though self-imposed) mother of nation. Displaying her body—and notably, not Ferdinand's—was a central strategy of the Marcoses' Martial Law and New Society program. Specifically, the purported promises of Martial Law—development, cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and law/order—had a female face: Imelda's.

Spotlighting Imelda in the weeks before the pageant functioned to quell some of the Filipino nationalists wary of foreign influence on the Philippines as well as to attract outside capital from foreign investors. As Linda Richter points out, "Aggressive efforts [by the Marcos administration] were made to attract international gatherings of global appeal," such as the Miss Universe pageant. Indeed, the Marcos regime relied on spectacular events to bolster its image and legitimize its claims to power. More than just a politically advantageous event, however, this international spectacle depended on Imelda as a symbol of Filipina beauty and femininity to produce a palatable image of Martial Law. The weeks leading up to the Miss Universe pageant was the ideal time to showcase Imelda's representational prowess particularly in the coverage of the Folk Arts Theater's completion and inauguration.

The construction of the Folk Arts Theater (FAT) was authorized by Imelda as part of her larger Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) project situated on reclaimed land on Roxas Boulevard near Manila Bay. Conceptualization and fundraising for the CCP started at the very beginning of the Marcos presidency. At the 1966 U.S. state visit, the Marcos and Johnson administrations discussed plans of building the CCP, with Imelda as its chairperson. The American government enthusiastically supported Imelda's plans to build the CCP particularly

[38] Ibid.

because of the negative publicity generated from the Soviet Union's anti-American Cold War propaganda that criticized and capitalized on the racial discrimination and racist policies in the United States. In response, the United States government devised several strategies including the use of the arts as Cold War diplomacy.[39] One year later, the Marcoses received a commitment of $3.5 million from the United States Congress' Philippine Special Fund for Education account (which was an amendment to the 1962 Philippine War Damage Legislation).[40] Imelda also sought monetary donations, art works, and services from Filipino and foreign business owners, corporations, philanthropists, and artists.[41] Although Imelda intended to complete the center before the 1969 election ostensibly to bolster Ferdinand's infrastructure achievements during his first elected term, the project faced financial trouble due to campaign overspending.[42] Imelda's project encountered much opposition, particularly from Ferdinand's archenemy, Senator Benigno Aquino. According to Lico, Aquino "branded the Cultural Center an institution for the elite, a center for the performing arts which was partial to foreign artists. By December of 1968, his speeches had evolved from questions of the relevance of Imelda's cultural Parthenon, to a comparison of Imelda to the deposed Argentine dictator's wife, Eva Peron."[43] Despite much criticism, however, Imelda received free reign after the declaration of Martial Law in September 1972 as Ferdinand set in motion a government bailout of the project, assuming all financial responsibility for the state's main cultural apparatus.[44] The Folk Arts Theater was built

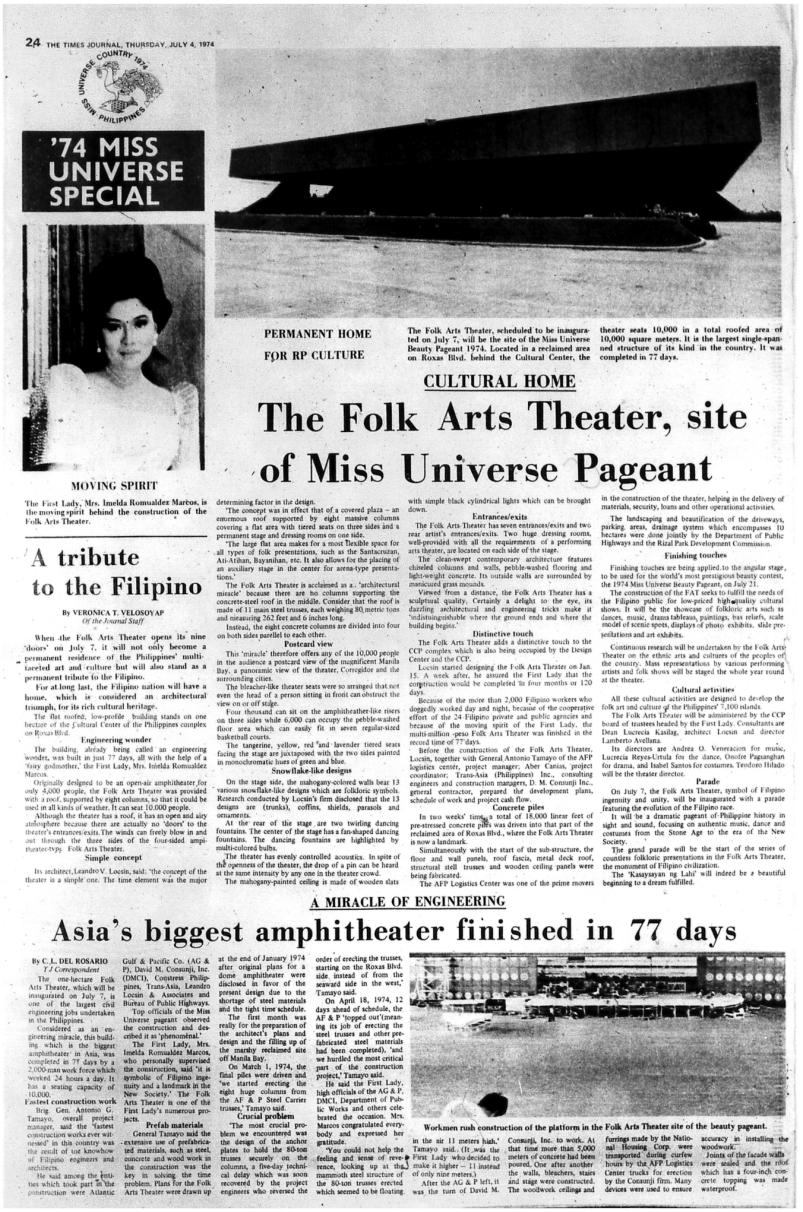
[39] See Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World.*
[40] Memorandum, "Special Fund Support for Philippine National Cultural Center," 06/19/67, #104, "Philippines Memos, Vol. 3," Country File, NSF, Box 278, LBJ Library.
See also Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 90.
[41] Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 90-92.
[42] Ibid., 94.
[43] Ibid., 94-95.
[44] Ibid., 98.

specifically for the 1974 Miss Universe pageant and cost fifty million pesos in CCP bonds.[45] With about 2,000 workers and 14 contractors that labored around-the-clock, the Folk Arts Theater was completed in an astounding seventy-seven days.

The Folk Arts Theater was valuable propaganda in the Philippine martial state's attempt to beguile the viewing masses. The Folk Arts Theater not only reflected the Marcos regime's reliance on architecture to maintain and legitimate its power (their 'edifice complex,' according to Lico) but also its dependence on the figure of Imelda to mask its violent potentials.[46] The Folk Arts Theater's epic completion was depicted in a language that appealed to the royal, fairytale, nationalist, and religious fascination of many Filipinos. Moreover, the media discourse surrounding its conception, construction, and completion orbited almost entirely around the figure of Imelda Marcos. For instance, in a full-page homage to the newly built theater (figure 2.1), the *Times Journal* hailed the building a "miracle of engineering," a "tribute to the Filipino," and a "home for Philippine culture."[47] Imelda was dubbed the "fairy godmother" and "moving spirit" behind the architectural wonder.[48] Printed in its entirety, Imelda's inauguration speech cited the Folk Arts Theater as "monument to the Filipino spirit and a shining symbol of their unity."[49] Placing the spotlight on Imelda at this historical moment was crucial and deliberate. In its visuals and contents, Ferdinand was almost entirely absent in the media coverage of the theater's completion and in the weeks leading up to the Miss Universe pageant. Indeed, the erasure of Ferdinand also effectively concealed the presence of Martial Law in the Philippines,

[45] Ibid., 107.
[46] A phrase derived from Lico, *Edifice Complex*.
[47] "'74 Miss Universe Special," *Times Journal*, July 4, 1974.
[48] Ibid.
[49] "'Let this be a symbol of the unity of our race,'" *Philippines Daily Express*, July 9, 1974.

revealing in its stead a “New Society” or a “compassionate society” as promulgated and embodied by Imelda and her beauty.[50]



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UNIVERSE COUNTRY 1974 MISS PHILIPPINES

'74 MISS UNIVERSE SPECIAL

PERMANENT HOME FOR RP CULTURE

The Folk Arts Theater, scheduled to be inaugurated on July 7, will be the site of the Miss Universe Beauty Pageant 1974. Located in a reclaimed area on Roxas Blvd. behind the Cultural Center, the theater seats 10,000 in a total roofed area of 10,000 square meters. It is the largest single-spanned structure of its kind in the country. It was completed in 77 days.

CULTURAL HOME

The Folk Arts Theater, site of Miss Universe Pageant

MOVING SPIRIT

The First Lady, Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos, is the moving spirit behind the construction of the Folk Arts Theater.

A tribute to the Filipino

By VERONICA T. VELOSO YAP
Of the Journal Staff

When the Folk Arts Theater opens its nine 'doors' on July 7, it will not only become a permanent residence of the Philippines' multifaceted art and culture but will also stand as a permanent tribute to the Filipino.

For at long last, the Filipino nation will have a home, which is considered an architectural triumph, for its rich cultural heritage.

The flat roofed, low-profile building stands on one hectare of the Cultural Center of the Philippines complex on Roxas Blvd.

Engineering wonder

The building, already being called an engineering wonder, was built in just 77 days, all with the help of a 'fairy godmother,' the First Lady, Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos.

Originally designed to be an open-air amphitheater for only 4,000 people, the Folk Arts Theater was provided with a roof, supported by eight columns, so that it could be used in all kinds of weather. It can seat 10,000 people.

Although the theater has a roof, it has an open and airy atmosphere because there are actually no 'doors' to the theater's entrances/exits. The winds can freely blow in and out through the three sides of the four-sided amphitheater-type Folk Arts Theater.

Simple concept

Its architect, Leandro V. Locsin, said: 'the concept of the theater is a simple one. The time element was the major determining factor in the design.

'The concept was in effect that of a covered plaza – an enormous roof supported by eight massive columns covering a flat area with tiered seats on three sides and a permanent stage and dressing rooms on one side.

'The large flat area makes for a most flexible space for all types of folk presentations, such as the Santacruzan, Ati-Atihan, Bayanihan, etc. It also allows for the placing of an auxiliary stage in the center for arena-type presentations.'

The Folk Arts Theater is acclaimed as a 'architectural miracle' because there are no columns supporting the concrete-steel roof in the middle. Consider that the roof is made of 11 main steel trusses, each weighing 80 metric tons and measuring 262 feet and 6 inches long.

Instead, the eight concrete columns are divided into four on both sides parallel to each other.

Postcard view

This 'miracle' therefore offers any of the 10,000 people in the audience a postcard view of the magnificent Manila Bay, a panoramic view of the theater, Corregidor and the surrounding cities.

The bleacher-like theater seats were so arranged that not even the head of a person sitting in front can obstruct the view on or off stage.

Four thousand can sit on the amphitheather-like risers on three sides while 6,000 can occupy the pebble-washed floor area which can easily fit in seven regular-sized basketball courts.

The tangerine, yellow, red and lavender tiered seats facing the stage are juxtaposed with the two sides painted in monochromatic hues of green and blue.

Snowflake-like designs

On the stage side, the mahogany-colored walls bear 13 various snowflake-like designs which are folkloric symbols. Research conducted by Locsin's firm disclosed that the 13 designs are (trunks), coffins, shields, parasols and ornaments.

At the rear of the stage are two twirling dancing fountains. The center of the stage has a fan-shaped dancing fountains. The dancing fountains are highlighted by multi-colored bulbs.

The theater has evenly controlled acoustics. In spite of the openness of the theater, the drop of a pin can be heard at the same intensity by any one in the theater crowd.

The mahogany-painted ceiling is made of wooden slats with simple black cylindrical lights which can be brought down.

Entrances/exits

The Folk Arts Theater has seven entrances/exits and two rear artist's entrances/exits. Two huge dressing rooms, well-provided with all the requirements of a performing arts theater, are located on each side of the stage.

The clean-swept contemporary architecture features chiseled columns and walls, pebble-washed flooring and light-weight concrete. Its outside walls are surrounded by manicured grass mounds.

Viewed from a distance, the Folk Arts Theater has a sculptural quality. Certainly a delight to the eye, its dazzling architectural and engineering tricks make it 'indistinguishable where the ground ends and where the building begins.'

Distinctive touch

The Folk Arts Theater adds a distinctive touch to the CCP complex which is also being occupied by the Design Center and the CCP.

Locsin started designing the Folk Arts Theater on Jan. 15. A week after, he assured the First Lady that the construction would be completed in four months or 120 days.

Because of the more than 2,000 Filipino workers who doggedly worked day and night, because of the cooperative effort of the 24 Filipino private and public agencies and because of the moving spirit of the First Lady, the multi-million-peso Folk Arts Theater was finished in the record time of 77 days.

Before the construction of the Folk Arts Theater, Locsin, together with General Antonio Tamayo of the AFP logistics center, project manager; Aber Canias, project coordinator; Trans-Asia (Philippines) Inc., consulting engineers and construction managers, D. M. Consunji Inc., general contractor, prepared the development plans, schedule of work and project cash flow.

Concrete piles

In two weeks' time, a total of 18,000 linear feet of pre-stressed concrete piles was driven into that part of the reclaimed area of Roxas Blvd., where the Folk Arts Theater is now a landmark.

Simultaneously with the start of the sub-structure, the floor and wall panels, roof fascia, metal deck roof, structural steel trusses and wooden ceiling panels were being fabricated.

The AFP Logistics Center was one of the prime movers in the construction of the theater, helping in the delivery of materials, security, loans and other operational activities.

The landscaping and beautification of the driveways, parking areas, drainage system which encompasses 10 hectares were done jointly by the Department of Public Highways and the Rizal Park Development Commission.

Finishing touches

Finishing touches are being applied to the angular stage, to be used for the world's most prestigious beauty contest, the 1974 Miss Universe Beauty Pageant, on July 21.

The construction of the FAT seeks to fulfill the needs of the Filipino public for low-priced high-quality cultural shows. It will be the showcase of folkloric arts such as dances, music, drama tableaus, paintings, bas reliefs, scale model of scenic spots, displays of photo exhibits, slide presentations and art exhibits.

Continuous research will be undertaken by the Folk Arts Theater on the ethnic arts and cultures of the peoples of the country. Mass representations by various performing artists and folk shows will be staged the whole year round at the theater.

Cultural activities

All these cultural activities are designed to de-elop the folk art and culture of the Philippines' 7,100 islands.

The Folk Arts Theater will be administered by the CCP board of trustees headed by the First Lady. Consultants are Dean Lucrecia Kasilag, architect Locsin and director Lamberto Avellana.

Its directors are Andrea O. Veneracion for music, Lucrecia Reyes-Urtula for the dance, Onofre Pagsanghan for drama, and Isabel Santos for costumes. Teodoro Hilado will be the theater director.

Parade

On July 7, the Folk Arts Theater, symbol of Filipino ingenuity and unity, will be inaugurated with a parade featuring the evolution of the Filipino race.

It will be a dramatic pageant of Philippine history in sight and sound, focusing on authentic music, dance and costumes from the Stone Age to the era of the New Society.

The grand parade will be the start of the series of countless folkloric presentations in the Folk Arts Theater, the monument of Filipino civilization.

The 'Kasaysayan ng Lahi' will indeed be a beautiful beginning to a dream fulfilled.

A MIRACLE OF ENGINEERING

Asia's biggest amphitheater finished in 77 days

By C. L. DEL ROSARIO
T.J Correspondent

The one-hectare Folk Arts Theater, which will be inaugurated on July 7, is one of the largest civil engineering jobs undertaken in the Philippines.

Considered as an engineering miracle, this building which is the biggest amphitheater in Asia, was completed in 77 days by a 2,000-man work force which worked 24 hours a day. It has a seating capacity of 10,000.

Fastest construction work

Brig. Gen. Antonio G. Tamayo, overall project manager, said the 'fastest construction works ever witnessed' in this country was the result of our knowhow of Filipino engineers and architects.

He said among the entities which took part in the construction were Atlantic Gulf & Pacific Co. (AG & P), David M. Consunji, Inc. (DMCI), Construex Philippines, Trans-Asia, Leandro Locsin & Associates and Bureau of Public Highways.

Top officials of the Miss Universe pageant observed the construction and described it as 'phenomenal.'

The First Lady, Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos, who personally supervised the construction, said 'it is symbolic of Filipino ingenuity and a landmark in the New Society.' The Folk Arts Theater is one of the First Lady's numerous projects.

Prefab materials

General Tamayo said the extensive use of prefabricated materials, such as steel, concrete and wood work in the construction was the key in solving the time problem. Plans for the Folk Arts Theater were drawn up at the end of January 1974 after original plans for a dome amphitheater were disclosed in favor of the present design due to the shortage of steel materials and the tight time schedule.

The first month was really for the preparation of the architect's plans and design and the filling up of the marshy reclaimed site off Manila Bay.

On March 1, 1974, the final piles were driven and 'we started erecting the eight huge columns from the AF & P Steel Carrier trusses,' Tamayo said.

Crucial problem

'The most crucial problem we encountered was the design of the anchor plates to hold the 80-ton trusses securely on the columns, a five-day technical delay which was soon recovered by the project engineers who reversed the order of erecting the trusses, starting on the Roxas Blvd. side instead of from the seaward side in the west,' Tamayo said.

On April 18, 1974, 12 days ahead of schedule, the AF & P 'topped out' 'unraveling its job of erecting the steel trusses and other prefabricated steel materials had been completed), 'and we hurdled the most critical part of the construction project,' Tamayo said.

He said the First Lady, high officials of the AG & P, DMCI, Department of Public Works and others celebrated the occasion. Mrs. Marcos congratulated everybody and expressed her gratitude.

'You could not help the feeling and sense of reverence, looking up at the mammoth steel structure of the 80-ton trusses erected which seemed to be floating in the air 11 meters high,' Tamayo said. (It was the First Lady who decided to make it higher – 11 instead of only nine meters.)

After the AG & P left, it was the turn of David M. Consunji, Inc. to work. At that time more than 5,000 meters of concrete had been poured. One after another the walls, bleachers, stairs and stage were constructed. The woodwork ceilings and furrings made by the National Housing Corp. were transported during curfew hours by the AFP Logistics Center trucks for erection by the Consunji firm. Many devices were used to ensure accuracy in installing the woodwork.

Joints of the facade walls were sealed and the roof which has a four-inch concrete topping was made waterproof.

Workmen rush construction of the platform in the Folk Arts Theater site of the beauty pageant.

[50] Imelda Marcos later published a book titled *The Compassionate Society and Other Selected Speeches* (Manila: National Media Production Center, 1976) that expounded on her view of the “Compassionate Society.”

The building's master plan was not only to complete its speedy and "miraculous" construction but also included an elaborate folkloric performance leading up to the Miss Universe pageant. The *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* parade marked the inauguration of the Folk Arts Theater on July 7, 1974. The parade was intended to not only mark the official opening of the Folk Arts Theater but to also educate the masses on its intended symbolic meaning—a recuperation and celebration of Filipino heritage and identity under the tutelage of the Marcos regime, with Imelda and Ferdinand as its mythic progenitors, and the "New Society" as its glorified, predestined future. The theater was presented as a gift from First Lady Marcos to the Filipino people. As one news article reported, Imelda "called on the Filipino people [at the FAT inauguration] to meet the challenge of discovering their true selves. [She] made the exhortation as she turned over the Folk Arts theater building to the Filipino people through her husband, President Ferdinand E. Marcos."[51] The inaugural parade, its advertising campaign, and news coverage functioned to instruct the public on how to understand the past based on the Marcos regime's version of history as well as to accept the Marcos regime's cultural authority and demands for discipline. As scholar Tony Bennett argues in *The Birth of the Museum*, museums and exhibits possess the power to impose the ruling class' version of history and modes of acceptable behavior on the masses. The declaration of Martial Law turned these exhibitionary projects into the state's cultural arm and disciplinary apparatus essential to the maintenance of Marcos regime. Despite presenting the *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* parade as representing the interests of the Filipino people, its main function was to demand discipline and engineer the consent of the public.[52]

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[51] "Call for nat'l identity issued," *Bulletin Today*, July 8, 1974.
[52] See Edward Bernays, "The Engineering of Consent," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 250, no. 1 (March 1, 1947): 113-120.

The government and the media, under the supervision of Imelda, publicized the event in order to reach a large viewership across the country. Their campaign slogan "Share-a-TV Sa Barrio" (figure 2.2) aggressively targeted urban *barangays* with step-by-step procedures to bring the parade's live telecast to its residents. For example, step three of the campaign's advertisement asked people with extra television sets to bring them to the town center to share. Otherwise, those with television sets in their homes or businesses were asked to allow their friends and neighbors to watch the program with them.[53] Imelda capitalized on the growing popularity of television sets and live satellite broadcasting to bring her version of Filipino history and culture to every citizen. The 2.5-hour colorful display with thousands of live spectators consisted of a series of tableaus dramatizing Filipino history "from Stone Age to the New Society."[54] Newspaper coverage of the parade pointed to its intended audience. For example, according to the *Daily Express*,

> Vividly depicting the history of the country… "*Kasaysayan*" drew a mammoth crowd composed of a mixture of Filipinos and foreigners. Those who were not able to witness the parade personally were able to get a comfortable view of it at home on their television sets. The rest of the world has yet to see the parade that heralded the Inauguration of the Folk Arts Theater on delayed telecast via satellite…And the dioramas depicting the various stages of Philippine history had both Filipino and foreign visitor limp with excitement.[55]

[53] Untitled, *Bulletin Today,* July 7, 1974.
[54] "Kasaysayan Ng Lahi: Everybody's still talking about it," *Philippines Daily Express*, July 9, 1974.
[55] Ibid.

Through the Share-a-TV campaign, multiple layers of imagined communities were purposefully engendered by the Marcos regime.[56] Local government officials were deployed as custodians of the New Society with Ferdinand and Imelda as their reinvented selves—*Malakas* (strong) and *Maganda* (beautiful), the mythical progenitors of indigenous Philippine society. Barangay leaders were tasked with encouraging TV owners (in their homes, restaurants, stores, hospitals, dormitories, schools, etc.) to "have their sets ready and open for the public viewing on [July 7, 1974 at 4:00 p.m.]."[57] The masses were educated on the circumscribed consumption of the inaugural parade. Viewership of the parade was encouraged as a compulsory communal experience as orchestrated by the government, not a private or solitary one. The commanding tone of the Share-a-TV campaign mandated the public's acquiescence to the government's orders: "Your own barangay leaders will arrange na all those with TV sets in your place *must* have these sets ready and open for the public viewing on that date."[58] In a sense, the spectators were forced to view the parade as they were inundated with newspaper announcements as well as collective viewing stations. Moreover, the insistence on viewing the parade in the domestic space of the home demonstrated Imelda's extended, invasive reach into private, intimate spaces as she positioned herself as national hostess and mother figure. The live telecast of the parade also positioned the Philippines as an international sensation and competitor as it reportedly surpassed the St. Patrick's Day Parade in the United States, left foreigners "limp with excitement" and curious about the "perfect beauties" produced in the Philippines.[59] As a preamble to the Miss Universe pageant, the *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* carefully combined the powerful discourses of

[56] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
[57] "Share-A-TV Sa Barrio," *Bulletin Today,* July 7, 1974.
[58] Ibid. Italicized portion is mine. In this context, "*na*" translates to "that" in Tagalog.
[59] "Kasaysayan Ng Lahi: Everybody's still talking about it," *Philippines Daily Express*, July, 9, 1974.

nationalism and beauty to appeal to Philippine national pride as well as entice foreign investments and stimulate a budding tourism industry.

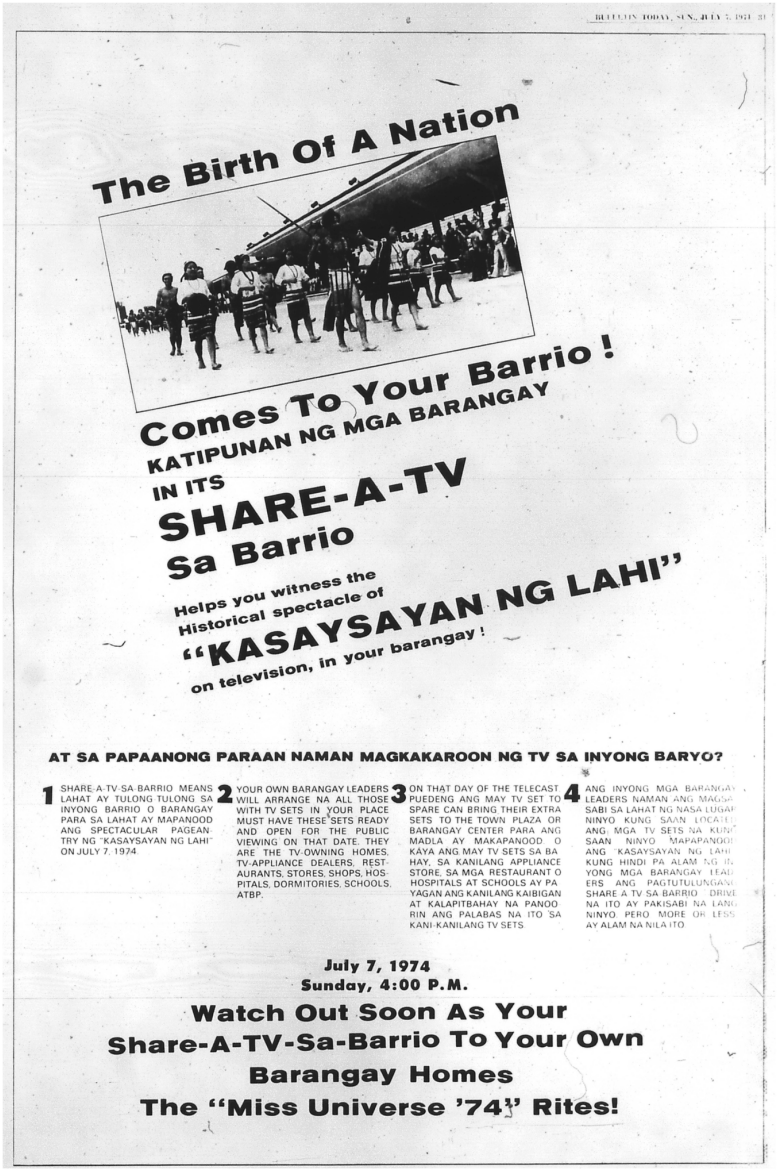

Figure 2.2 "Share-A-TV Sa Barrio," *Bulletin Today*, July 7, 1974

A few days before the parade, the *Daily Express* reported in an uncharacteristically understated manner that the Philippines received $86 million in new loans from the World Bank

to finance electricity, rural population, and health projects.[60] The short article was published on page seven of the daily newspaper, under its *The Nation* section. Although it occupied the top of the page along with another article about the surrender of Manobo rebels in Southern Philippines, the rest of the page was dedicated to mundane advertisements. A quick survey of the same day's front-page news reveals Imelda's birthday mass, *Kasaysayan ng Lahi* rehearsals, and United States-Russia atomic bomb agreement as headlining news. Even the front page "news highlights" did not allocate newsprint space for the newly acquired World Bank loan in its "In the Nation" nor "In the World" briefs. Why would the image-obsessed Marcoses put a damper on its newly acquired external debt, choosing instead to focus on Imelda's birthday, FAT's inauguration, and United States-Russia relations? The media understatement surrounding the World Bank loan could indicate that its media presence was less advantageous to the Marcos regime compared to that of the *Kasaysayan Ng Lahi*, the Miss Universe pageant, and Imelda. This media (in)attention demonstrates the Marcos regime's reliance on pageantry to create the illusion of national unity and simultaneously negotiate international transactions that would restructure the Philippine economy and eventually contribute to the country's massive foreign debt. The Philippine print media and Imelda understood the significance of presenting a sense of stability at home and controlling the audience's response in order to subdue opposition to Martial Law and invite foreign investments to the Philippines. While the July 1974 media coverage, parade, and television-sharing campaign attempted to teach the people how to consume the upcoming beauty spectacle, the Miss Universe pageant television broadcast served as the Marcos regime's staging ground to project and legitimize its absolute martial authority over the Philippines.

[60] "World Bank gives RP $86 million in new loans," *Philippines Daily Express*, July 4, 1974.

Defanging Martial Law: The Live Television Broadcast of the 1974 Miss Universe Pageant

The 1974 Miss Universe pageant in Manila was an historical moment when beauty and authoritarianism converged on domestic and international stages. Imelda Marcos made this convergence possible, with the results of her rising political power and influence on full display for the big event. Not simply a performance, however, the pageant engaged issues vital to the legitimization of the Marcos authoritarian regime. The pageant also negotiated tensions both at home and abroad: it articulated Marcos' vision of a New Society through a cultural spectacle, justified the use of draconian measures to maintain law and order, and developed a particularly gendered and sexualized Philippine brand to attract tourism and foreign investments and encourage gendered Philippine labor export. As Sarah Banet-Weiser argues in *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, beauty pageants "confront national [and international] tensions about gender and race and, through performances of 'diversity' and femininity, 'resolve' these tensions."[61] The Marcos regime utilized the spectacle of the beauty pageant to pacify fears of an uncertain (and potentially oppressive and violent) future under Martial Law for both national and international audiences. The beauty pageant itself, as presented to the world by Imelda, was a powerful source of political legitimacy for the Marcos regime; a close reading of the televised event gives an insight into the mechanisms of Marcosian authoritarian rule in the early years of the Martial Law era in the Philippines.

Although many of the formulaic elements of the Miss Universe pageant found its way to the Philippine program, the 1974 pageant diverged from previous contests particularly in its opening presentation.[62] The pageant opened with enthusiastic applause to a close up shot of the

[61] Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 7.
[62] Miss Universe Beauty Pageant 1974, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show"

pageant venue—a large covered proscenium with a flat "floating" roof. The camera panned out to show the 1973 Miss Universe winner from the Philippines, Margie Moran (figure 2.3). She stood on the right side of the venue, wearing her crown, Miss Universe sash, and a white Philippine *terno*. The camera angle made her look particularly dominant—the tip of her crown reaches the very top of what she called a "magnificent new building"—the Folk Arts Theater. The reigning beauty queen introduced herself and welcomed the television audience in English. Although the choice of English as the show's main language was not unusual in the pageant's history, it does reveal much about its intended audience: English-speaking television viewers. Not surprisingly, the pageant was broadcasted by the American television network, Columbia Broadcast System (CBS) and its advertising time slots were dominated by American products. In addition, the pageant was held during prime-time viewing in the United States as it was broadcasted at 10 a.m. on Sunday in the Philippines and 9 p.m. on Monday in the United States (Eastern Standard Time).

Figure 2.3 Screenshot of Miss Universe 1974 opening scene—Margarita Moran in front of the Folk Arts Theater, "Miss Universe 1974 - Full Show," July 21, 1974, YouTube

The opening scene and speech by Margarita Moran conveyed the crucial symbols essential to the legitimization of the Marcos regime—its imposing edifice and Philippine womanhood. As the Marcos regime utilized tourism to bolster its public reputation and personal resources, it relied on opening the Philippines—specifically, its landscape and women—to the tourist consumer. Moran's body in front of the Folk Arts Theater was a welcoming figure that embodied Filipina femininity that Imelda Marcos had been presenting to the public for almost a decade. Moran wore what might be observed as Imelda's cultural and political "uniform" during her opening remark—her white terno literally glittered like her bedazzled crown that sits on top of her polished bouffant. The welcoming messenger was cloaked in a recognizable and desirable Filipina form popularized by Imelda, at once exoticized and familiar. By featuring her in front of the newly built theater, the viewer's first impression of the host country was its grandiose and modern infrastructure, a landscape demonstratively capable of producing and developing consumable spaces in a global capitalist economy. The underlying sense of national pride and touristic consumption, as represented by the Folk Arts Theater and an idealized figure of Filipina femininity, was a strategic discourse that conveyed a particular message to its audience: through the vehicle of its modern edifice and representative female body, the Philippines ostensibly thrived and were made available for the consumer under the Marcoses' authoritarian regime.

Moran's speech was also laden with and informed by western colonial discourse and institutions dating back to the early twentieth century. According to Mina C. Roces, the history of beauty contests in the Philippines dates back to the nineteenth century when "beautiful women were chosen to parade as *reynas* (queens) and *zagalas* (escorts of the queen or princesses) at

religious processions particularly the Santa Cruzan held in May in honor of the Virgin Mary."[63] However, Roces points out that in the twentieth century, Americans "tapped this Filipino predilection for honoring beautiful women when they invented the Carnival…in 1908 right after the Americans 'pacified' the Philippines. Tired of war, the jovial ambiance of a carnival appealed to many, and the yearly events became a very popular tradition in Manila. One of the highlights of the Carnival was the proclamation of the Carnival Queen."[64] Moreover, as Mark Johnson argues in an essay about gay beauty contests in Zamboanga City and Jolo in southern Philippines, "beauty contests are filled with instances of stylistic and verbal discourse that are clearly embedded in colonial ministrations," particularly the American educational institution.[65] The legacy of American educational institutions in the Philippines pioneered by a group of American teachers that came to be known as "Thomasites" has had long-lasting, deleterious, and uneven effects on Philippine national culture.[66] Viewed from this neocolonial context, Moran's speech took on a meaning deeper than a simple welcoming remark. Moran recited her opening remarks with controlled intonation and precise pronunciation: "Hello. I am Maria Margarita Moran, Miss Universe 1973. I am speaking to you from the City of Manila on the Philippine Islands. The Miss Universe beauty pageant will be televised from this magnificent new building, the Folk Arts Theater. It will come to you live via satellite. Mabuhay. Welcome to the

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[63] Mina C. Roces, "Women in Philippine Politics and Society" in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience in the Philippines*, ed. Hazel M. McFerson (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), 171.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Mark Johnson, "Negotiating Style and Mediating Beauty: Transvestite (*Gay/Bantut*) Beauty Contests in the Southern Philippines," in *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender Contests, and Power*, eds. Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, Beverly Stoeltje (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 95.
[66] Renato Constantino, "The Miseducation of the Filipino," in *Vestiges of War*.

Philippines."[67] Moran's introductory speech was spoken almost entirely in English, except for her final declaration of "Mabuhay." As if reading from a prompt, Moran diligently recited the welcoming speech, demonstrating her proficiency in the English language. As a prologue to the pageant, Moran's speech could be read as evidence of the "benevolent" legacies of American colonialism. Indeed, as Johnson argues, "beauty is about education and the mastery of the English language."[68] For the Marcos regime, the deliberate choice to feature Moran as the show's opening act indicated a desire to intimately communicate with the pageant's intended audience and potential visitor that the Philippines (and, specifically, the Filipina) embodied beauty and discipline as subjects of both Martial Law and American imperialism.

Following Moran's welcome speech, the live show began with festive music paired with the loud voice of a male announcer who introduced the pageant's stage openers: the Philippine Military Academy's (PMA) honor guard.[69] This particular pageant opening starkly differed from that of the past few years. Normally, there might be a brief announcement of the pageant location followed by the immediate onstage appearance of the beauty contestants to a choreographed song number. In the Philippines, however, the military appeared front and center following Margie Moran's television introduction. Uniformed men marched in double vertical formation with seven flag holders on each side and one guard at its center on the main stage ramp (figure 2.4). The "most beautiful girls in the universe," as the announcer proclaimed, appeared on the back stairs leading to the stage as the guards' vertical formation separated. The television camera took a bird's eye view of the stage, with the beauty pageant contestants in their national costumes walking to the tune of "Let's Be Friends." The PMA honor guard made way for the

[67] Miss Universe Beauty Pageant 1974, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show"
[68] Johnson, "Negotiating Style and Mediating Beauty," 95.
[69] Miss Universe Beauty Pageant 1974, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show"

contestants who formed a single file line on the stage ramp, with each woman getting individual camera attention before veering off to the sides of the stage. The honor guard remained at the center of the stage as the pageant hosts were introduced. American big band singer, actress, and television personality Helen O'Connell was the main television host. She waved to the television audience, wearing a bright yellow terno. Donning a barong tagalog, American radio and television personality and long-time pageant host Bob Barker was introduced to the stage with the PMA honor guard lined up horizontally from each side. Barker bowed and saluted the audience as three PMA guards looked on. The camera shifted over to the enthusiastic live studio audience—a group of Filipino and foreign bodies wearing mostly white barong tagalogs and ternos. The PMA honor guard remained on stage as Barker began the formal program of the pageant. In his opening statement, Barker announces:

> Welcome to the first Miss Universe beauty pageant in history to originate from the Far East. We're coming to you from the Philippines—where Asia wears a smile. A land of 7,200 beautiful islands and more than 40 million very beautiful people.[70]

Escorted by a woman in a white terno, a sash, and a bouffant similar to Moran's Imelda-like earlier attire, the contestants then partook in the pageant's customary parade of nations.

[70] Ibid.

Figure 2.4 Screenshot of Miss Universe opening scene—Philippine Military Academy honor guard in formation, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show," July 21, 1974, YouTube

Although the contestants were the main attraction of the beauty pageant, the introduction to the live show put the spotlight on the Philippine military through a forceful display of masculine state power on stage. The pageant organizers' deliberate choice to feature the military demonstrates the ubiquitous existence of Martial Law in Philippine society. So omnipresent was military control that even in an event that ostensibly had nothing to do with martial power, the military featured prominently. Indeed, the PMA occupied the stage in an imposing manner. Visually, their uniforms, flags, and linear formations strikingly dominated the stage. The public display and performance of militarized male bodies alongside desirable feminized bodies also demonstrated Marcos' Martial Law's intoxicating formula: the combination of development, nationalism, law/order, and beauty. Imelda would continue to use this formula to justify her husband's dictatorship as well as her own excessiveness. In order to have beauty, as conveyed by the opening act of the Miss Universe pageant in the Philippines, Filipinos must have discipline—particularly, discipline enforced by decree under the militarized dictatorial rule of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos. In this scene, beauty and discipline danced in contrived harmony: beauty

softened discipline while discipline enabled the beautiful. The underlying message of law and order as prerequisites to beauty not only worked to legitimize the Marcoses' claims to power but also presupposed that Filipinos lacked the traits to achieve self-rule without the strict, authoritarian measures imposed by the state. In addition to the anti-communist rhetoric that Ferdinand used to justify Martial Law to the international community (and especially to the United States), he relied on a familiar racist logic stemming back to the American colonial era. In sum, Filipinos, like unruly children, were perceived as undisciplined and unsuitable for self-rule—a situation that encouraged colonial expansion and empire building based on racist perceptions of non-white peoples.[71]

Domestic and international audiences were exposed to the twin promises of beauty and (martial) order along with messages of global harmony and cooperation. The show's choreography unsubtly confronted these issues as the beauty pageant contestants energetically sang to the tune of "Let's Be Friends" while the military weaved in and out of the carefully choreographed entrance. The movements were simultaneously precise and dizzying. The military marched in uniformed accuracy, guarding the stage with their presence and making way for the smiling, singing women dressed in colorful costumes. This choreographed opening number presented militarism as necessary, omnipresent, and palatable. Meanwhile, by pairing it so closely to militarized bodies, beauty was also being weaponized to gloss over the violent potential of absolute military rule.

The opening act made sense in the context of the pageant's host country and targeted audience. Internationally, and especially for the United States, the Philippines represented a "showcase of democracy" in Asia. The Philippines under Ferdinand Marcos was a close United

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[71] See Rudyard Kipling, "White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands" *McClure's Magazine* 12, no. 4 (February 1899): 1-2.

States ally in the midst of much domestic and international opposition to the Vietnam War. For instance, the Philippine government provided assistance (albeit relatively small and mostly symbolic) to United States troops in Vietnam by sending a civic action group of engineers in 1966. The United States also maintained strategically crucial military bases on its former colonial outpost in the Pacific (Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Naval Base) as well as brokered unequal economic agreements that favored foreign investments in the Philippines. When Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law, many of his opponents referred to his authoritarian rule as "the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship" because of the United States' support of his regime. Cloaked in anti-communist rhetoric, Ferdinand basically received "a blank check" from the United States to help fund his efforts to crush Philippine insurgents.[72] According to Schirmer and Shalom, United States officials "saw events in the Philippines at the time against the backdrop of the all-consuming problem of Vietnam…[and were] determined to apply what was for them the crucial lesson of this experience: that insurgencies must be defeated *before* they reach the level of Vietnam in 1965."[73] Martial Law mutually benefited the United States and the Marcoses as it eliminated fears of communist takeover in Southeast Asia, maintained American neocolonial military and economic control over the Philippines, supplied Marcos with seemingly unlimited American military and financial support, and suppressed any resistance to Marcos' dictatorship.

The Miss Universe opening act, therefore, could be read as a deliberately choreographed effort to cover the ugliness and brutality of the Vietnam War and glorify the imposition of Martial Law in the Philippines. The Philippines was where "Asia [wore] a Smile" only in relation to the unsmiling parts of Asia, particularly Vietnam. In showcasing the Philippine

[72] Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader,* 225.
[73] Ibid.

Islands as smiling and beautiful, Martial Law was defanged while simultaneously demonstrating the possibility of a friendly, hospitable, and cooperative country in an otherwise extremely unstable region ravaged by a proxy war led by the United States.

The Marcoses and their growing cabal of cronies capitalized on the unrestricted access to power and American support that Martial Law made possible. Part of the Marcos regime's main strategy to legitimate its claims to power was to develop a tourism industry that benefited the Marcoses' personal and political objectives. As Linda Richter points out, the Philippine tourism industry was a marginal economic sector until after the declaration of Martial Law in 1972 when it became a priority industry especially after the establishment of the Department of Tourism (DOT) on May 11, 1973.[74] Bob Barker's opening remarks, describing the Philippines as "Where Asia Wears a Smile," came directly from the DOT's campaign to bolster Philippine tourism and the Marcos regime's reputation. According to Richter, "To further the image of a peaceful, contented society, the DOT built a promotional campaign around the Philippines' most important asset—a cheerful, hospitable people. The slogan, 'Where Asia Wears a Smile,' was a particularly adroit choice for defusing criticism of life under the New Society."[75] With Imelda as its director, the Marcos regime capitalized on the beauty pageant as advertisement for the budding Philippine tourism, one that was marketed as a racialized, gendered, and sexualized industry. Potential tourists were enticed to visit the Philippines and fulfill their most "exotic" desires, to be served by the Filipina who "wears a smile."

The pageant's co-host, Helen O'Connell, delivered a series of scripted commentaries in between the show's live performances that demonstrates the Marcos regime's efforts to develop

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[74] Linda Richter, *The Politics of Tourism in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1989), 52-55.
[75] Ibid., 56.

and publicize its nascent tourism industry. These scripted commentaries also show the critical role Imelda Marcos played in developing and promoting the reputation of the Philippines as an international tourist destination. In describing the Folk Arts Theater, O'Connell marveled at its incredibly fast construction as well as Imelda's authority to reschedule and expedite its creation:

> Of course [FAT] wasn't to be started until 1976. However, the First Lady wanted it to be ready for our pageant. So the word went out—have the building ready in 70 days! Early in January, our survey team…went away shaking [their] heads and looking for alternate locations just knowing it could not be done. But on January 28, the first piling went into the reclaimed land…70 days later, this is what they found. And now here we are. It's hard to believe. But believe me, when the Filipinos make up their minds to do something, they really get it done.[76]

By "Filipinos," perhaps O'Connell really meant Imelda Marcos and the unrestricted power that she possessed because of Martial Law. Suggesting instead that inherent persistence and tenacity—not dictatorship—brought about the unbelievable completion of the theater effectively masked the real reasons behind its rapid construction. O'Connell's commentaries were carefully scripted to convey the Marcos regime's efforts to market the Philippines as a tourist destination with Imelda as its determined hostess "cleaning house" for potential visitors.

The FAT's inaugural parade was featured in O'Connell's next segment. She described the celebration's massive scale with two million live spectators and 22,000 parade participants.[77] "The floats told the history of the country and they didn't stop rolling by for over five hours," O'Connell said in an exaggerated tone.[78] The camera showed a video replay of the inaugural

[76] Miss Universe Beauty Pageant 1974, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show"
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

parade, with numerous people lined up in formation akin to a military parade. She continued to speak as the camera showed the Philippine President and First Lady perched from their viewing area with a few other spectators, in standing ovation and applauding the parade-goers. O'Connell concludes the short segment, "Of all the audience, there was no one who enjoyed the parade more than the president and first lady. The Folk Arts Theater was really opened with a bang. The only way they do things here."[79] The co-host spoke with bewilderment as she recounted the parade's extravagance—a type of ostentation palatable to its viewers and conveniently erasing traces of Martial Law and Marcos dictatorship. Traces of United States colonialism were also erased as O'Connell spoke directly to American television viewers:

> Except for you world travelers and WWII vets, I bet a lot of you aren't quite sure where the Philippine Islands are located…We homebodies in the United States are apt to say, well way out there someplace west in the ocean…Well, here we are… [pointing to map, figure 2.5] …in the middle of all this blue sea here in the South Pacific, just 1800 miles south of Japan, 3700 miles from Australia and an hour and half's flight from the mainland of China…right in the center of things sits the Pearl of the Orient the Philippine Islands, hustling and bustling with 40 million of the friendliest people you'll find any place in the world and the third largest English speaking country in the world, and right now about eight thousand of them sitting on the edge of their seats trying to guess along with you who the next Miss Universe will be.[80]

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.

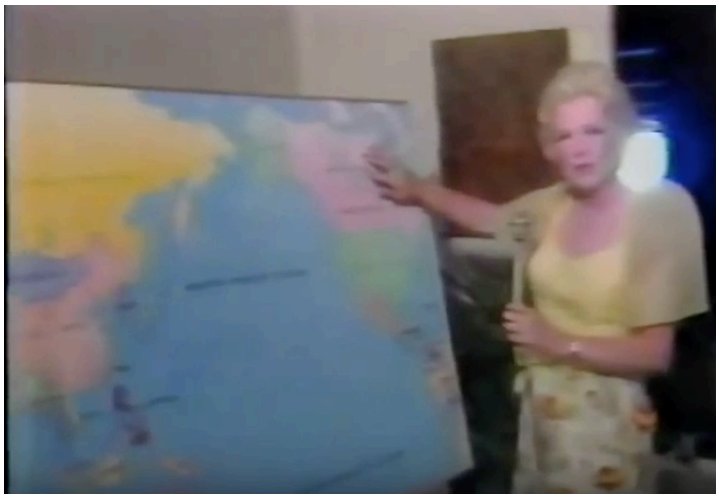

Figure 2.5 Screenshot of Helen O'Connell's cultural interlude during the 1974 Miss Universe pageant, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show," July 21, 1974, YouTube

Through the vehicle of an international beauty pageant, the Marcos regime was able to clean up its own image as well as erase/retell that of the Philippines' former colonizer's (and vital Marcos ally). O'Connell's dialogue with her television viewers assumes Americans' lack of knowledge about the Philippines. Despite being the "largest English speaking country in the world," the specter of American colonialism was conveniently left out of the monologue. Moreover, as O'Connell pinpointed the Philippines on the world map, she conveniently did not mention a country that most Americans in 1974 were probably most familiar with in Asia: Vietnam. The Philippines, after all, was marketed as "Where Asia Wears a Smile," in sharp contrast with the unspeakable violence occurring in Vietnam. While literally locating the Philippines on the world map, O'Connell's scripted commentary presented the Philippines under Marcos as a desirable destination for tourists and investors and thus concealing deep-seated domestic and international issues.

O'Connell's subsequent commentary about a popular Philippine transportation vehicle, the jeepney, even further revealed the pageant's effort to obscure the troubled colonial history

between the United States and the Philippines. The narration focused on the jeepneys in the nation's capital city of Manila, the site of Imelda's largest and most involved urban project during the Marcos era. In describing the birth of the now-iconic means of transport, O'Connell presented the audience with the capital city's highly abridged and sanitized experience of World War II:

> At the end of World War II, Manila was growing by leaps and bounds and had little or no public transportation. However, there were thousands and thousands of war surplus jeeps and supply depots and enterprising citizens bought them for peanuts and established their own private bus routes and with an eye for beauty began to decorate them to fit their own individual taste.[81]

O'Connell's cursory and largely erroneous account of Manila's post-war recovery focused on its supposedly flourishing economic development despite the massive devastation and deaths caused by indiscriminate Japanese and American firepower.[82] Contrary to her rosy narrative, it took many years for Manila (and the nation) to recover from the economic, political, environmental, and human destruction of World War II especially because of the extremely underfunded United States postwar reconstruction efforts in the Philippines. The jeepney—a form of transportation born out of war and necessity—was given a beautific international debut. O'Connell described the visible consequence of World War II as both unique and beautiful with "all the colors of the rainbow, not to mention the stripes, circles, squares, blobs of mirrors, and rows of just about

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[81] Ibid.

[82] Ishaan Tharoor, "Manila was known as the 'Pearl of the Orient.' Then World War II happened," *Washington Post*, accessed April 18, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/19/manila-was-known-as-the-pearl-of-the-orient-then-world-war-ii-happened/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b371b7878f3e.

anything that shines or sparkles in designs that will dazzle the wildest modern abstract painter."[83] The host continues, "If it's not the gayest and most beautiful way to travel, at least it's a lot more handsome than the graffiti we see in spray paint."[84] By highlighting the beauty of the jeepney, O'Connell and the pageant organizers once again effectively eluded, trivialized, and glamorized the complicated history between the Philippines and the United States. Likened to an art piece, the jeepney drivers' efforts at refurbishing the leftovers and scraps of war with colorful, shiny, and sparkly décor were used as beautific distraction from the violent and (neo)colonial past and present.

The pageant's pièce de résistance were the final judgment and the grand coronation of the 1974 Miss Universe winner. Summoned on stage for the last time before crowning a new winner, the reigning Miss Universe Margarita Moran slowly marched down the center stage with her royal regalia—a crown, sash, pearl drop earrings, scepter, and a white terno. She made her way to an intricately designed wooden throne overlooking the five finalists from Aruba, Finland, Colombia, Wales, and Spain who were standing on a circular, raised platform. As Barker rapidly announced the runners-up, the camera zoomed out showing the stage framed by the beauty participants in the backdrop, two terno-clad Filipina ushers on both sides of the five finalists, and a white statue of a female figure perched on a podium on the far right of the stage. The final two contestants from Spain and Wales waited in nervous anticipation as the host explained the importance of the first-runner up title. Barker finally broke the suspense when he announced: "The big moment…the first runner up is Miss Wales. Miss Spain is Miss Universe!"[85] The 1974 Miss Universe from Spain, Amparo Munoz, received the routine ornamentation bestowed upon

[83] Miss Universe Beauty Pageant 1974, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show."
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

pageant winners, walked down the stage in tears, and returned back to center stage next to the aforementioned white statue.

Following Munoz's coronation, the pageant program took an uncharacteristic turn: Barker announced the arrival the Philippine Secretary of Tourism, Jose Aspiras. The former Philippine Congressman and Presidential News Secretary presented the newly crowned Miss Universe with "a beautiful gift" from First Lady Imelda Marcos. He took over the microphone with a reverberating announcement:

> Ladies and gentlemen, in behalf of the First Lady of the Philippines Madame Imelda Romualdez Marcos, it is my privilege to present the Miss Universe 1974 this statue of Maria Clara, made out of 3,700 Philippine shells. It is a symbol not only of Filipina womanhood but the Philippines, the Pearl of the Orient Seas. Miss Universe, it's all yours.[86]

The figure and character of the Maria Clara was derived from Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* (1887)—an allegorical work aimed at exposing the ills of Spanish colonialism and commonly cited as instrumental in the formation of Philippine national identity.[87] In his book, Rizal also mapped out the beginnings of a nation populated by the men and women that fit into his nationalist ideals.[88] Maria Clara was the unattainable symbol of nation; the ideal, feminine representation of "motherland." She was the illegitimate child of a Spanish friar and her

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[86] Ibid. See also Richter, *The Politics of Tourism in Asia*, 55.
[87] Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not)* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).
[88] In the face of Spanish colonial repression, the scathing social commentaries against Spanish colonial rule in Rizal's work inspired revolution and ultimately led to the national hero's exile and execution. Of Filipino and Chinese descent, Rizal was part of an elite group called *ilustrados*—Filipino middle-class males educated in Spanish language and in the Western tradition of enlightenment and modernity. *Noli Me Tangere* offered a glimpse of late nineteenth century racial and gender relations of power through the eyes of the Spanish-educated and Filipino nationalist Rizal.

salvation was in the hands of a young male *ilustrado*.[89] Sisa, the other main female character of Rizal's novel, was characterized as brown-skinned, earthy, and a simple, sacrificial mother. Like Maria Clara, Sisa was also in need of protection from corruption and colonialism. The difference between the two, however, was that Maria Clara, the white damsel, was the demure representation of nation. To this day, many Filipinos conjure the image of Maria Clara to describe their ideal innocent and modest woman and a metonym for the Philippine nation. The Maria Clara was a powerful gendered and sexualized symbol of Philippine womanhood that, on the geopolitical level, contributed to imaginary frameworks or what Tadiar calls "fantasy-production" practices with real, material consequences. Not coincidentally, the Philippine Secretary of Tourism was tasked with the concluding performance, a move that signaled a growing problematic relationship between tourism, gender, and the Philippine state.

Aspiras' presentation of the Maria Clara statue as gift (figure 2.6) emphasized the central roles of Imelda Marcos, Philippine womanhood, and tourism in promoting the agenda of the Philippine state under Marcos' dictatorship. Imelda may not have appeared in person at the pageant, but as the architect and muse of the international spectacle, she "appeared" through Aspiras and the Maria Clara statue at what could be argued as a gift-giving display rivaling the coronation of the pageant winner. The crowning moment may have belonged to Amparo Munoz, but Imelda managed to upstage the beauty queen without even appearing on screen. By conjuring Imelda as the beneficent benefactor of the Maria Clara statue, Aspiras was able to invoke and connect multiple dimensions of power relations. One might ask, why was it so important for the Philippine Tourism Secretary to appear on stage, conjure Imelda, and display the figure of the Maria Clara? Invested with specific meanings, Imelda represented feminine power, tempered by

[89] *Ilustrado* refers to Filipino middle-class men educated in Spanish language and in the Western tradition of enlightenment and modernity.

the unchanging, domesticated, passive symbol of the Maria Clara. In other words, Imelda could appear as the architect and organizer of the international pageant only in by emphasizing the presence of a passive and fragile female body, the Maria Clara. Imelda, and notably, not Ferdinand, was called upon as the representative of the state. Constructing the Maria Clara's feminine body was a crucial part of the Marcos regime's strategy of simultaneously imbuing Imelda (and the Philippine nation) with a particularly unthreatening feminine symbol like the Maria Clara while also accruing absolute power by any means necessary.

Figure 2.6 Screenshot of Amparo Munoz, Bob Barker, and Jose Aspiras during the presentation of the Maria Clara, "Miss Universe 1974 – Full Show," July 21, 1974, YouTube

Aspiras' presence at the conclusion of the pageant was a strategic and significant step for the Marcoses as they actively promoted tourism under their "New Society." Richter points out, as a relatively new enterprise, Philippine tourism "had no real enemies" at its inception in 1973.[90] With Aspiras at its helm, Marcos "could build a potentially important industry critically

[90] Richter, *The Politics of Tourism in Asia*, 55.

dependent on stability and relatively unconcerned about political freedom."[91] Ferdinand recognized tourism's potential in assuaging fears of his dictatorship. In a *Times Journal* article, Ferdinand playfully reflected on the stealthily advantageous aspect of the beauty pageant: "In a light-hearted vein, the President noted that he did not have to issue a presidential directive to the people who have taken the Miss Universe candidates to their heart."[92] Indeed, Aspiras' gift-giving performance signaled tourism's increasing importance as a Philippine industry, rooted in the feminine access that tourism promised. The gifting of the Maria Clara symbolized the availability of the Philippine nation; the act of gift giving by Aspiras and Imelda demonstrated the power of the state to use tourism to maintain and legitimate its power.

The 1974 Miss Universe beauty pageant functioned as a practice run for how Imelda and the Marcos regime would weaponize beauty to create a patina over the ugliness of the Marcos dictatorship. Positioned as both architect and muse of the international spectacle, Imelda wielded significant power that foreshadowed her role in the Martial Law era. She was appointed as Governor of Metropolitan Manila in February 1975, which put her in charge of the nation's capital region or as she liked to call it, "City of Man."[93] According to Raissa Robles, some Filipinos called Manila the "City of Ma'am" behind Imelda's back. Perhaps another moniker could also be suitable, "City of Madam," as Imelda facilitated the marketing not only of the Philippine nation but specifically Filipino women as commodities in the Marcos regime's pursuit of political legitimation and personal aggrandizement. The Miss Universe pageant was Imelda's largest scale marketing effort to date, deployed to attract (mostly heterosexual male) tourists to the Philippines by displaying Imelda's seemingly innocuous vision of the beautiful—Philippine

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[91] Ibid.
[92] "President cites unity in Miss U," *Times Journal*, July 17, 1974.
[93] Robles, *Marcos Martial Law*, 157.

landscapes, architecture, culture, and women. Indeed, the Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT) aggressively promoted the Philippines as a touristic destination in the years following the beauty pageant. A 1976 official publication by the Department of Tourism highlighted the Marcoses' efforts to establish the Philippine nation and Filipino women as accessible to foreigners. Most of its pages were filled with colorful photographs of Philippine flora, fauna, and people. It contained descriptions of various cities and regions, festivals, travel tips, and a directory for the interested visitor. The book fit the general bill of a travel guide with a few standout exceptions: a poem and a section on Philippine women.

The poem, titled "In every man there is a dream," spoke to an implicitly male traveler yearning to fulfill a dream of freedom and serenity.[94] The poem identified with a male desire to escape the urbanized, globalized landscape in search of a "faraway," less travelled place that he can "call his own." The Philippines was marketed as an isolated and accessible destination for

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[94] In every man there is a dream.
One that throbs to be fulfilled.
A dream to, one fine day, drop his labors,
and flee to an island he can call his own
A faraway place. A land of sunny living,
Unclouded by thought.
To fish. To hunt. To swim. To laze.
To be free once again.
To doze to the sound of the gossiping waves.
And let the sand trickle through his toes.

Perhaps, if only once in his lifetime,
a man deserves to see his dream.
To fly to the islands of his imaginations.
In this much travelled world, there is still
such a place.
The Philippines.
Where more than 7,000 islands wait.
Come. See all your island dreams come true.

See *Philippines: Where Asia Wears a Smile* (Philippines: Department of Tourism Philippines, January 1976), 8-9.

the laboring male. He doesn't simply explore the islands; he can call it his own. The poem appealed to a particular frontier narrative that presupposes an untouched, virgin land to be "discovered" by the man who "deserves to see his dream."[95] Moreover, this DOT poem contributed to what Tadiar refers to as "fantasy-production" practices by the Philippine state that positioned the Philippines in a world system of representation and accumulation. The Western codes of fantasy of the "Free World" were clearly utilized by the DOT under Marcos.[96] The poem portrayed the Philippines as a dream-like paradise to escape the realities of western capitalist demands. The DOT campaign poem transported the would-be visitor and potential touristic spender to the "islands of his imaginations," thus constructing the Philippines as a utopic destination designed to fulfill the discontented patriarchal, capitalist system.

Following the many pages of photographs and island descriptions was a section on "The People" that included a subsection titled "The Women" (figure 2.11).[97] In its brief description, the DOT publication began with a heteronormative statement that relegated the Filipina to, at best, a supportive role to men: "The Filipina has always had her place in Filipino society. Beside her man. And if need be, behind him."[98] According to the publication, the Filipina is "sought after" and "elusive." If necessary, she is an "earth-mother" who is "caring, fussing and loving." She "has a basic Malay look," it continued, "and at certain angles may look slightly European." The publication went on to describe the Filipina's apparent effect on men: "With men, she is

[95] In Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather*, she refers to the Western imperial projection of "forbidden sexual desires and fears" onto unknown lands, peoples, and cultures as "porno-tropics for the European imagination." See Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
[96] Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production*.
[97] *Philippines: Where Asia Wears a Smile*, 82-83.
[98] Ibid.

Oriental, even inscrutable. She has a way about her. She is a kind of woman all her own."[99] Considering the targeted audience of the publication—English-speaking, literate, working class males with enough resources to travel to the "islands of his imaginations"—the section on Philippine women read as an advertisement for their availability as national commodities. For example, their photographs showcased the different Filipina "looks" that mimicked the display of women's bodies in beauty pageants. The four headshots focused on women's faces, with side-by-side placement, convenient for those looking to compare the various "looks" in the description. The following page contained photos of women in ethnic garb. The top photo of women with conical hats worn by farmers depicted rural labor while the photo below portrayed female factory workers. The other photograph of three women dressed in colorful clothing demonstrated the various kinds of "native" costumes. On the bottom right of the page were two seemingly out-of-place photographs of two women—the first was a close-up headshot of a woman wearing nothing but an elaborate silver pearl necklace and makeup; the other photograph displayed a woman's entire body, clad in a white swimsuit and sitting on a rock formation by the sea. Compared to the four photographs on the opposite page, these two images represented the modern Filipina woman, sexualized by the camera angle and publication placement and cropping. Similar to a beauty pageant, the Filipinas on the DOT brochure were displayed with and against each other, with close-up headshots and wearing national costumes and bathing suits. The multiplicity of "looks" marketed the Filipina beauty and sexuality as products of indigeneity and Spanish colonialism. What made the Filipina unique—"a kind of woman all her own"—was her perceived flexibility, bending to the whims and expectations of the heterosexual, male consumer. The Filipina was marketed as the ultimate shape-shifter. Individually and as a whole,

[99] Ibid.

these images were invested with specific meanings for the viewer/spectator that functioned to establish the Filipina as available for heterosexist consumption and export.

Indeed, the Marcos regime institutionalized the Philippine state's labor export policy through its Presidential Decree P.D. 442 (also known as the Labor Code of the Philippines), promulgated in the same year of the pageant. The government-organized labor export was expected to benefit the neocolonial Philippine state under Marcos in several ways: first, as a source of foreign exchange reserves through remittances to mitigate the country's growing debt; second, to help counter the opposition's growing numbers.[100] Thus began the Philippine state's organized Filipino migrant export apparatus, a labor brokerage system that markets, exports, and then mythologizes its migrant citizens as national heroes.

Imelda Marcos and her representations as mother of nation, cultural patroness, and the living embodiment of the Maria Clara were essential in the construction of tourism and migration as major components of Philippine national economy. Featuring the Maria Clara as symbolic of Philippine womanhood distracted from the effects of the economic and sexual exploitation of Filipino women. As part of a larger packaging of the Philippines, "the Filipina" represented the beauty and discipline espoused and demanded by Ferdinand and Imelda. The Miss Universe pageant was utilized by the Marcos regime to set up the desire for and export of Filipinas; it commenced and concluded with powerful symbols of Philippine womanhood—Miss Universe Margarita Moran, the Maria Clara, and First Lady Imelda Marcos in order to remind its audience of the most advertised, commodified Philippine national product—its women. Tourism and

[100] See Robyn Magalit Rodriguez, "Toward a Critical Filipino Studies Approach to Philippine Migration," in *Filipino Studies: Palimpsests of Nation and Diaspora*, eds. Martin F. Manalansan IV and Augusto F. Espiritu (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

migration were essential in masking Martial Law's ugliness; Filipino women were used as commodity and currency to advance the Marcoses' political and personal agendas.

In 1979, Imelda yet again expanded her official capacity when she was appointed as Minister of Human Settlements—a cabinet post that Ferdinand created specifically for Imelda and granted her control of government funds and access to urban properties of her choosing.[101] The Miss Universe pageant presented Imelda the opportunity to fuse what Gerard Lico identifies as a connection between architecture and state tyranny under Marcos: "[The pageant] gave enough opportunity to display state-defined Philippine culture and officiated identity at global coverage."[102] If, as Lico contends, the Marcoses "conceived the use of architecture's influence to perpetuate their power," then beauty as articulated by Imelda is the discourse through which they justified their authoritarian presence.[103] Having honed her skills in managing the Miss Universe pageant with the unbridled ostentation enabled by Martial Law, Imelda Marcos continued her grandiose projects even at the expense of human life. In 1981, she attempted to repeat the "miraculous" construction of the Folk Arts Theater by building the Manila Film Center for the Manila International Film Festival (MIFF). Imelda reportedly insisted on the film center's speedy construction, a "feat that would make world headlines."[104] According to Carmen Navarro Pedrosa, Imelda wanted to accomplish the impossible: "to build a massive structure like the Parthenon and inaugurate a film festival that would rival the one in Cannes."[105] This time, however, tragedy struck when a wall collapsed, killing an unspecified number of workers who

[101] Robles, *Marcos Martial Law*, 158.
[102] Lico, *Edifice Complex*, 140.
[103] Ibid.,129.
[104] Pedrosa, *Imelda Marcos: The Rise and Fall of One of the World's Most Powerful Women*, 175.
[105] Ibid.

were working around-the-clock to finish the construction.[106] Despite public demands to stop construction, however, Imelda ordered its resumption without exhuming the deceased bodies.[107] The violence of absolute power under Martial Law was literally buried and covered in the service of Imelda's vision of beauty and development for the city and the nation. The 1974 Miss Universe pageant was a significant event in understanding the mechanisms of Martial Law in the Philippines as it was Imelda's dress rehearsal for using the beautific in an attempt to disguise violence, ugliness, and greed.

[106] According to Pedrosa, human rights groups estimated the number of dead workers at 35 to 150. See Pedrosa, *Imelda Marcos: The Rise and Fall of One of the World's Most Powerful Women*, 176.
[107] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRE'S MONSTER: THE EXILIC REPRESENTATION OF IMELDA MARCOS

When Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos, their family, and entourage arrived at Hickam Air Force Base in Honolulu, Hawai'i on February 26, 1986, Governor George Ariyoshi and First Lady Jean Ariyoshi welcomed the Marcoses with leis and hugs. It was a surreal scene: the exiled dictators received a customary tourist welcome, staged as if they had not just been forced out of their country by a large scale popular uprising. The moment of political turmoil and regime change that ousted the Marcoses and installed Corazon Aquino as Philippine President had captivated the American media. News stories proliferated in newspapers and television, with photographs and videos that have now become powerful records of the deposed dictators' downfall. Exiled to Honolulu, the frail and ailing Ferdinand was escorted out of a United States Air Force transport jet while Imelda was photographed in dark sunglasses, hugging her grandson tightly.[1] Despite the heavy media coverage, the event was relatively subdued apart from a crowd of about 200 Marcos loyalists assembled outside the Hickam gate with a large banner that read "Welcome! President and Mrs. Marcos & Co. We love you…Please live with us!" A few miles away, an anti-Marcos crowd gathered outside the Prince Kuhio Federal Building, holding signs expressing their opposition to Marcos asylum in Hawai'i.[2] The signs read: "No Dictator Welcome," "Marcos Go to Siberia," and "No Aloha for Marcos."[3]

The media, government, and filmic discourses surrounding the Marcoses' forced exit from the Philippines and arrival in Hawai'i reveal the imperial relations at play between the

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[1] Although these photos were widely circulated, they can both be found here: *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 1986.
[2] Jerry Burris and Jim Borg, "Marcos says family chose U.S.," *Honolulu Advertiser*, February 27, 1986.
[3] Vicki Ong and Walter Wright, "Hawaii rally celebrates 'new dawn,'" *Honolulu Advertiser*, February 26, 1986.

United States, the Philippines, and Hawai‘i during this contested historical moment. With Hawai‘i—the home of Native Hawaiians—now offered as a “home” to former Philippine dictators and more than 100,000 Filipino American settlers, the spectacle of exile turned into an exercise in and staging of United States imperial encounters. The multiple levels of refusal (from government officials, ordinary citizens, and Imelda) to the United States federal government’s efforts to provide sanctuary to the Marcoses in Hawai‘i illuminate the contradictions of United States Empire in the Pacific.

This chapter examines the media, government, and filmic discourses about Imelda Marcos’ flight from the Malacañang Palace and arrival in Hawai‘i in 1986. The Marcoses were airlifted from the Malacañang Palace to Clark Air Base in Angeles City, Philippines.[4] They were then transported to Guam before arriving in Honolulu where Ferdinand died in 1989 and where Imelda resided until she was allowed entry back to the Philippines in 1991. It will trace the invention of Imelda as an ostentatious, shoe-obsessed monster—first, at the precise moment when she and her husband were removed from power and exiled in Hawai‘i and second, through a 1988 fictionalized film that retold the story of the Marcoses’ final years in power from the perspective of an American journalist. While Imelda’s figuration became more monstrous and irrational, representations of the United States turned more benign. Images of American benevolence and rescue supplanted critical representations of United States support for foreign dictators. I utilize major newsprint, magazine, and television sources in Hawai‘i and the continental United States that covered the Marcoses in exile as well as government documents from the Hawai‘i State Archives, particularly correspondences from Governor George Ariyoshi’s collection. I then shift archival focus with an exploration of *A Dangerous Life*, an HBO

[4] Clark Air Base was an American-controlled Air Force Base in northern Philippines from 1903-1991.

docufiction that revisited the history-making moment of the Marcoses' downfall. Released a mere three years after the Marcos overthrow, the internationally circulated film historicized the Marcoses' downfall to an American audience and attempted to recreate a version of American masculinity through its American male protagonist and against the monstrous figure of Imelda. In exploring these archives, I ask the following questions: As Imelda left one site of United States Pacific Empire (the Philippines) for another (Hawai'i), what narratives and tensions emerged during moments of dictatorial and imperial unraveling? Despite the seemingly warm and welcoming gestures that corresponded to American neocolonial interests in Hawai'i, multiple refusals to accept the United States government's plans to provide the Marcoses sanctuary in Honolulu reveal the motivations and contradictions of American imperial formations in the Pacific. In *A Dangerous Life*, how do the intersecting figures of Imelda Marcos, Tony O'Neil, and Celie Balamo function to sustain colonial narratives of gendered rescue in the filmic retelling of the Marcos overthrow?[5] This chapter analyzes the precarious moment of regime change in the Philippines and exile in Hawai'i through nonfictional and fictional depictions of Imelda Marcos. The shifting representations of Imelda as a monstrous figure in these various discursive sites made possible the erasure of American culpability and (re)creation of certain mythologies that sustain hegemonic notions of what it means to be an "American" in the world.

"Sacrifice the Queen": The Fall of Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos

When Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, he extended his political rule indefinitely, consolidated political and economic power, and suppressed much of his opposition.

[5] A fictional character played by Philippine actress, Dina Bonnevie.

Although Marcos defined his form of government as "constitutional authoritarianism," his critics and opponents referred to Marcos' Martial Law as a dictatorship or, as the whistleblower Primitivo Mijares dubbed it, a "conjugal dictatorship."[6] Scholar Mark Thompson argues that Marcos' rule was, in fact, "sultanistic" as he "pursued not ideological goals but personal gain, and his regime was organized around family and friends, not strong state institutions."[7] Marcos justified the legitimacy of his dictatorship by aligning with United States Cold War rhetoric and emphasizing the threat of communism, or in his words, an "armed insurrection and rebellion against the Government of the Republic of the Philippines."[8] Although the "Cold War" may have been experienced and defined as ideological global rivalry between communist and capitalist world-systems during this period, struggles of economic and political decolonization in Southeast Asia complicated such binaristic understanding of the Cold War. What may have been imagined as a global ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union played out on the battlegrounds of Southeast Asia quite differently, with political leaders like Ferdinand Marcos taking advantage of the Cold War ideological warfare in order to extend his national power.[9]

As Ferdinand manipulated the Philippine Constitution to perpetuate his political power and suppress opposition, Imelda Marcos won renown for her unprecedented affluence and political influence as First Lady. In the years following her massive cultural project's debut through the 1974 Miss Universe Pageant, Imelda's performances as First Lady were largely interpreted by the American newsprint media as a benign but curious aberration in world politics.

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[6] Mijares, *The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos and Imelda Marcos*.
[7] Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle*, 4-5.
[8] Marcos, "Proclamation No. 1081, s. 1972."
[9] See Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

For example, *Cosmopolitan* magazine named her one of the ten richest women in the world in 1975. Listed with the likes of Queen Elizabeth II and Doris Duke, Imelda was considered by the writer Richard Baker as "the richest woman in the world *bar none.*"[10] The conservative *Reader's Digest* also featured Imelda on the front page of its March 1976 issue. Dubbing her the "Inimitable Imelda," the magazine cover included a painted photograph of the first lady in her signature terno and bouffant. The writer, Beth Day, described Imelda as "one of the most active First Ladies the world has known."[11] This conservative magazine, known for its anti-communist stance, depicted Imelda in such a positive light that even her diplomatic missions to Russia in 1972 and China in 1974 were merely noted as part of Imelda's development as an "effective leader in her own right."[12] In 1980, a *Christian Science Monitor* article seemed somewhat confused by Imelda's powerful *and* feminine persona. Although the article discussed the mounting criticism of the Marcos regime's authoritarianism and Imelda's "royal living style" amidst a poverty-stricken populace, a conversation with Imelda brought some confusion as she "sound[ed] surprisingly feminine for a woman of such power and position."[13] Indeed, her acclaimed beauty and glamour rivaled her reputation as a very demanding politician, but reports of the Marcoses' authoritarian regime eventually led to more questions from the media.[14] By the

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[10] "Ten Richest Women in the World," *Cosmopolitan*, December 1975, 165.
[11] Beth Day, "The Inimitable Imelda: First Lady of the Philippines," *Reader's Digest*, March 1976, 16. Beth Day was an American journalist who married Philippine Minister of Foreign Affairs under Ferdinand Marcos, Carlos P. Romulo. She also wrote *Inside the Palace: The Rise and Fall of Ferdinand & Imelda Marcos* (New York: Putnam, 1987), an insider's exposé of the Marcoses' political maneuverings and frivolity.
[12] Day, "The Inimitable Imelda," 19.
[13] "Powerful 'FL'—a 'star' and a 'slave,'" *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA) September 19, 1980.
[14] A January 31, 1976 telegram from the U.S. Department of State to the American Embassy in Manila reveals that Imelda has "come to be regarded [at the State Department] more as a pest than a guest." See "Media Comment on Mrs. Imelda Marcos," Wikileaks Cable, dated January 31, 1976. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1976STATE024050_b.html

1980s, Imelda's numerous diplomatic tours abroad and her "edifice complex" at home had caught the attention of the American press. For example, a 1981 *Washington Post* article titled "The Powerful Imelda Marcos" referred to Imelda as Ferdinand's "nonpareil ambassador to the world at large" who had a propensity for "ordering grandiose public buildings to be constructed in impossibly short order."[15] After Marcos' staunchest political rival Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino's assassination in 1983, Imelda's superficial declarations that she was quitting politics neither dispelled suspicions of her involvement in Aquino's murder nor the assumption that she would succeed her husband's political office.[16]

Although Imelda exhibited her political power informally in the first years of Ferdinand's presidency, she increasingly demonstrated her influence in both formal and informal political spheres as the Marcoses tightened their grip on the Philippines. As discussed in the previous chapter, she controlled a considerable amount of wealth and power and played the ultimate hostess in extravagant gatherings. While she flaunted her power through an internationally broadcasted Miss Universe Pageant in 1974, she also displayed her formidable influence in private functions. While much of Imelda's political power was tied to her husband, she was not merely a political pawn.

Imelda's maneuverings were particularly pronounced during moments when she played the role usually expected of First Ladies: that of a hostess. In 1973, for instance, during Ferdinand's 56th birthday, Imelda reportedly made several top military generals "dance to her

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[15] "The Powerful Imelda Marcos," *Washington Post*, January 18, 1981. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1981/01/18/the-powerful-imelda-marcos/00d40c82-0e05-4672-8dea-cd0e860d524a/?utm_term=.45407abd4e79

[16] William Chapman, "Imelda Marcos Says She Will Quit Politics," *Washington Post*, September 20, 1983.

tune."[17] According to Raissa Robles, several witnesses, including United States Ambassador William Sullivan and Philippine Secretary of National Defense Juan Ponce Enrile, described the event as garish and humiliating as top military generals were required to dress in straw skirts, high-heeled shoes, bras, and lipstick while dancing the hula.[18] The state-controlled Manila press reported this event as a "quiet birthday" but eyewitness accounts maintained that the gathering lasted two days. This event suggests that Imelda's unrestricted access to power that allowed for the fulfillment of her requests that transgressed societal gendered expectations. In this anecdotal scenario, Imelda's ability to compel (male) military generals to cross-dress for *her* entertainment flipped the gendered script in such an ostentatious way as to be "humiliating" even for some spectators. If, indeed, the "entertaining" aspect of this performance was the absolute feminization of the most masculinized members of society, then perhaps this also suggests that Imelda considered the Native Hawaiian hula as a feminizing practice and a fitting addition to her degrading repertoire.

In addition to organizing over-the-top birthday parties, Imelda also orchestrated a grand nuptial for her family. At her youngest daughter Irene's wedding to Greg "Greggy" Araneta (a wealthy businessperson from a prominent Filipino family) in 1981, Imelda reportedly spent more than $10 million for the occasion.[19] Imelda transformed the farming village of Sarrat in Ilocos Norte into a "fantastical rendition of a Spanish colonial town." Not one to shy away from using public money to fund personal extravaganzas, Imelda hired three thousand laborers (some, soldiers) to rebuild and expand the local airport, construct a new luxury hotel, restore an historic

[17] Robles, *Marcos Martial Law,* 156.
[18] Ibid., 156-157.
[19] Ellison, *Imelda*, 179.

church, pave streets, and even reconstruct the private homes of prominent residents.[20] Irene walked down the aisle in a $20,000 gown paired with a 20-foot diamond-studded veil.[21] Imelda displayed her power ostentatiously and without reservation, growing increasingly out-of-touch with a country that continued to struggle with profound poverty and would soon reject the fascist Marcos regime.

Imelda also controlled numerous public and private funds and properties especially after Ferdinand secured government positions (Governor of Metro Manila, Minister of Human Settlements), executive orders (Executive Order No. 30 s. 1966 created the "Cultural Center of the Philippines," with Imelda as its chairperson), and agencies (the Metro Manila Commission, a political unit with Imelda as its appointed Governor) specifically for his wife. Imelda reportedly showered her friends, guests, and supporters with luxurious gifts. In Ricardo Manapat's book exposing the Marcos regime's practice of cronyism and plunder, he revealed Imelda's penchant for lavishing her cabal of loyalists with expensive presents.[22] Her publicly funded largesse consisted of watches, precious stones, jewelry, and monetary gifts.[23] Imelda also became infamous for her over-the-top shopping sprees, purchasing in a single day an entire art collection with reckless abandon.[24] On other occasions, she purchased approximately $2.1 million worth of jewelry in a one-day shopping spree in Manhattan, an estate worth $5.95 million, and properties such as the Crown Building in New York City for $51 million.[25] Imelda and Ferdinand plundered the state to an unprecedented degree while--despite their rhetoric—their promise of

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[20] Robles, *Marcos Martial Law,* 156-157.
[21] Ibid., 179-180.
[22] Ricardo Manapat, *Some Are Smarter Than Others: The History of Marcos' Crony Capitalism* (New York: Aletheia Publications, 1991).
[23] According to Manapat, in only one year (between 1983-1984) Imelda gave away approximately $70 million in gifts.
[24] Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 213.
[25] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 248, 309, 388.

land reform and "law and order" failed miserably. Ferdinand arguably became "Master Cacique" or "Master Warlord," in the words of historian Benedict Anderson.[26] Imelda, on the other hand, became known as the "Iron Butterfly" for her signature butterfly-sleeved gown as well as her toughness. She also had an adjective created for her—Imeldific—meaning ostentatious and extravagant.[27] When Ferdinand and Imelda were forced out of the Malacañang Palace in 1986, the Marcoses' excesses had become even more evident with the discovery of the material loot they had left behind: jewelry, paintings, designer clothes, and perhaps most infamously, Imelda's cache of shoes.

While the Marcoses plundered the public coffers, a growing movement—both communist and non-communist—had been fomenting in many parts of the country, mostly because of the deteriorating social and economic conditions under the Marcos regime. In Mindanao, a growing Muslim separatist group called the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) embarked on an anti-government guerilla movement in 1972 in response to the grievances of the minority Muslim population in a largely Catholic nation. A burgeoning youth movement emanating from the nation's capital also began rallying against the corruption and injustices of the Marcos regime. In 1970, a series of large, student-led demonstrations called the First Quarter Storm demanded changes in the Philippines' economic system as rising debt, inflation, unemployment, and increasing prices put pressure on the most vulnerable sectors of society. In central and southern Luzon, the armed division of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), the New People's Army (NPA), gained much traction particularly as Marcos' agrarian reform efforts

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[26] Anderson, "Cacique Democracy in the Philippines."
[27] According to Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart and Donald Kirk, the adjective was "bestowed upon her by a rambunctious Manila press." See Picart, "Media star and monster,"108-109. See also Donald Kirk, "Doing the Cha-Cha in the Philippines," *The New Leader* 80, no. 17 (November 3, 1997).

failed and many families were plunged into abject poverty. According to the documentary *Batas Militar,* despite Ferdinand's promises of far-reaching land reform, he focused most of his energy on stripping the old oligarchic families of their wealth and redistributing those resources to his cronies instead of the poor, working class.[28] These cronies, as Ellison points out, pocketed "millions of dollars from preferential government loans, contracts, or guarantees…[and] had direct links to the generous Imelda, who often seemed more ready than her husband to view the treasury as a private gift stockroom."[29] Inevitably, the Marcoses' cronies—made up of mostly Marcos and Romualdez relatives, friends, political allies, favored military and business leaders—coalesced as a new class of government-backed elites with much to gain from continued dictatorial rule.

Politically, the Marcos regime was slowly losing the trust and support of their constituents. Despite Ferdinand's strong candidate endorsements, his conservative and populist Nacionalista Party saw a decrease in voter support while the opposition party—the Liberal Party—won many electoral seats. Additionally, opposition leader Ninoy Aquino had gained much support despite his imprisonment and subsequent exile, an anti-Aquino smear campaign, and reports of massive electoral fraud. According to Aquino, "Marcos's big mistake was in crushing the opposition so overwhelmingly when he could simply have defeated us. We used to act as a buffer between the Government and all the protest in the country. Now the people are

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[28] *Batas Militar*, (Philippines: Foundation for World Wide People Power, September 21, 1997), 116 min., VHS. For example, immediately after the declaration of Martial Law, the son of a prominent family, Eugenio "Geny" Lopez, Jr., was arrested and imprisoned for allegedly plotting to assassinate Ferdinand. Reportedly, although Ferdinand promised to release Lopez if his father transferred some of the family businesses over to the Marcoses, Lopez remained in prison for five more years. Among the businesses acquired by the Marcoses were the Manila Electric Company (Meralco), which was "sold" to Imelda's brother, "Kokoy" Romualdez, and the television network ABS-CBN. Ferdinand's policies marginalized many of the landed elites while he created his own gang of cronies that supported his dictatorial aims.

[29] Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 175.

taking out all their problems directly on Malacañang [the Presidential Palace]."[30] Rather than create a private army to terrorize opposition, Ferdinand made the country's entire police state into his personal army. In the first few months after the declaration of Martial Law, Marcos arrested thirty thousand people including his political rival Aquino.[31] The Marcoses' political opponents were imprisoned, tortured, and/or forced into exile. When Martial Law officially ended in 1981, the number of tortured political detainees may have decreased but there was a marked rise in those murdered and vanished by extra-judicial killings.[32]

Despite these clearly undemocratic and criminal acts, the United States government continued to support the Marcos regime up until they fled Malacañang Palace in 1986. As Robles posits, the United States "was obsessed with three things: its military bases, American business interests and the need to fight global Communism."[33] Growing evidence of the Marcos regime's flagrant human rights abuses, corruption, and plunder did very little to spur consecutive Washington administrations to action. Their relationship with America ran so deeply and intimately, in fact, that the Marcoses reportedly contributed a million dollars to Richard Nixon's campaign.[34] Economist James Boyce agrees: Marcos "secured crucial external backing from the U.S. government, skillfully manipulating its preoccupation with the military bases, and personally investing in the electoral campaigns of key U.S. politicians."[35] Nixon initially denied

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[30] Philip Shabecoff, "Protest Movement in the Philippines Widening Rapidly," *New York Times*, March 12, 1970, 10. (Source derived from Schirmer and Shalom, 157-158)
[31] Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle*, 57-58.
[32] In the Philippines, extra-judicial killings became known as the practice of "salvaging"—a when suspected dissident, criminal, rebel, or political rival is arrested, tortured, and killed (sometimes the victim's body is found and other times, he or she just disappears) by the military or police.
[33] Robles, *Marcos Martial Law*, 181.
[34] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 140-141.
[35] Boyce, *The Philippines: The Political Economy of Grown and Impoverishment in the Marcos Era,* 8.

supporting Marcos' plans to declare Martial Law. Nonetheless, a declassified United States government memorandum of conversation later confirmed that although Nixon was careful to specify that the United States would not support a "military dictator," he would "'absolutely' back up Marcos 'to the hilt' so long as what he was doing was to preserve the system against those who would destroy it in the name of liberty."[36] Seemingly guided by racial assumptions, Nixon indicated that he "understood that Marcos would not be entirely motivated by national interests, but this was something we had come to expect from Asian leaders."[37] Gerald Ford's administration also tolerated the Marcos regime. In fact, in a gesture of friendship, Ford visited Manila on December 6, 1975 after meeting with Chairman Mao Zedong of the People's Republic of China and President Suharto of Indonesia.[38] In Ford's speech, he addressed Ferdinand Marcos directly and expressed the desire to discuss with Marcos the future of Philippines-United States relations as well as that of Asia.[39] When Jimmy Carter took office in 1975, he proclaimed "human rights" as one of his presidency's priorities. The Marcoses took notice and, at least superficially, released a few prisoners and held (fraudulent) elections. Despite claims of pursuing human rights abroad, however, "the core of Marcos' power during Carter's administration," asserts Richard Bonner, "was not touched."[40] The presidential election of Ronald Reagan provided the Marcoses with reprieve from accusations of human rights violations. Reagan was also a close Marcos ally from his days as governor of California. Reagan's foreign policy

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[36] Memoranda for the President Files, 1/10/71, White House Special Files, President's Office Files, Top Secret; Sensitive, National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, accessed December 16, 2017, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v20/d233.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "Gerald R. Ford," Office of the Historian, accessed December 16, 2017, https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/travels/president/ford-gerald-r.
[39] Gerald Ford, "Remarks on Arrival at Manila, the Philippines," December 6, 1975, The American Presidency Project, accessed December 16, 2017, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5418.
[40] Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, 168.

strategy, which came to be known as the Reagan Doctrine, emboldened the Marcoses as it largely viewed political instability abroad as the result of the Soviet Union's communist scheme and, notably, not from tyranny, torture, corruption, and poverty.

However, the United States' support for Marcos was no longer tenable in light of the increasing public remonstrations against the brutality of his authoritarian regime. On August 21, 1983, the Philippines and the world watched in horror as photographs and a video recording showed the exact moment of Ninoy Aquino's ecstatic arrival at the Manila International Airport and, in a few seconds, the sound of the gunshots that killed the opposition leader at point-blank range, his limp, murdered body dragged by soldiers and into a van. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. was a Philippine Senator (Liberal Party), journalist, lawyer, and one of the founders of *Lakas ng Bayan* political party.[41] Aquino hailed from a politically prominent, landed family from Tarlac in the Central Luzon region of the Philippines. Although he operated within the same social circle as the Marcoses (he belonged to the same University of the Philippines fraternity as Ferdinand Marcos and was also rumored to have courted Imelda before Ferdinand), he became prominent for his persistent and vocal critique of the Marcos regime. Like Ferdinand, Ninoy was an articulate and charismatic politician, predicted by many as the next President of the Philippines. Ninoy warned the Philippine public of Ferdinand's impending declaration of Martial Law and indeed, in 1972, under Ferdinand's absolute state power, Ninoy was duly arrested and imprisoned for seven years. After suffering a heart attack in 1980, Ninoy was given permission to travel to the United States to seek medical treatment. He continued his campaign against the Marcos regime in the United States and subsequently planned his return to the Philippines in 1983. The Marcos administration blamed Aquino's assassination on Rolando Galman, the

[41] The literal English translation of *Lakas ng Bayan* is "Power of the Nation," but it is often translated as "People's Power."

supposed lone gunman who was also killed moments after Aquino's murder. Less than three years after Ninoy's assassination, the Marcoses' tyrannical mandate was toppled in a series of events leading up to the 1986 coup d'état. The death of Ninoy had some unexpected consequences for the Marcos regime: his death "stimulated [Marcos'] left-wing opponents and widened their influence" to include the "middle forces of Philippine political life" and became a highly visible symbol of state tyranny that enraged and mobilized the masses and placed the spotlight on his unassuming, grieving widow, Corazon "Cory" Aquino.[42]

Corazon opted for a public, open-casket, nine-day funeral for her deceased husband and a very public funeral procession, which drew a large crowd of supporters. Even the residents of the conservative, middle class district of Makati joined in covering the streets in yellow to show their support of Aquino and disapproval of the Marcos government.[43] Cory began joining the rallies and had become a moral figurehead that gained enthusiastic support from the masses. Cory's austere appearance—her typical outfit consisted of a plain yellow blouse, eyeglasses, simple pearl earrings, and a short curly hairstyle—caught the public's attention, especially in contrast to Imelda's more elaborate public costuming. And indeed, the contrast between the two powerful women was deliberate and productive of political change. As Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart aptly asserts, "Cory Aquino's body, as a 'mere' housewife, became packaged, for both local and

[42] Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader,* 279.
[43] According to journalist Kathleen Barnes, although Ninoy Aquino's supporters (mostly moderates from the middle and upper classes) initially used the color yellow to welcome the exiled opposition leader, it was instead used to symbolize anti-Marcos sentiments after his gruesome murder. It was purportedly inspired by the song "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree" by Tony Orlando and Dawn and would later symbolize support for Corazon Aquino's presidential campaign. See Kathleen Barnes, *Trial by Fire: A Woman Correspondent's Journey to the Frontline* (New York: ASJA Press, 2007), 45.

international audiences, as Imelda's diametrical opposite…Cory's exemplary 'goodness' could only be configured against Imelda's excessive commercial 'badness.'"[44]

In 1985, with mounting pressure from the American government to demonstrate some semblance of democracy, Ferdinand announced that he was ready to hold a snap election—an election ordered earlier than expected ostensibly to take advantage of an electoral opportunity or, in the case of Marcos, to assuage public unrest. The decision to hold the snap election on February 7, 1986, Robles contends, "began the improbable cascade of events that led to the People Power uprising that overthrew [Marcos'] regime."[45] Ferdinand waged his final campaign and election with characteristic fraud and violence. Ferdinand proclaimed himself winner on February 25, 1986 and Cory staged a rival inauguration in an act of bold defiance. Internal turmoil struck one of the final blows to the Marcos regime when its main source of state terror, the military, factionalized with the formation of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM). A group of military officers that served under Marcos for many years—notably Minister of Defense Juan Ponce Enrile and Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines Fidel V. Ramos—resigned from their posts and staged a public coup d'état.[46] The nuns and priests who had long been politicized on behalf of the poor in their fight against state terror were publicly joined by Cardinal Jaime Sin who called an end to Martial Law, announced support of Cory, and summoned the Filipinos to surround and protect Enrile's faction at Camp Aguinaldo. More than a million gathered on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) in an historic

[44] Picart, "Media Star and Monster," 108-109.
[45] Robles, *Marcos Martial Law*, *189*.
[46] United States Military Academy (West Point) graduate Fidel V. Ramos is Ferdinand Marcos' cousin. Ramos was President of the Philippines from 1992-1998.

nonviolent mass uprising, a People's Power Revolution that ended twenty years of Marcos rule enabled by American assistance.[47]

The immediate aftermath of the Marcoses' forced flight out of the Philippines and into a life of exile in Hawai'i is critical in making sense of the persistent gendered image of the United States in global politics. In Ellison's biography of Imelda Marcos, she observed that during and after the 1986 overthrow, much of the animosity and ridicule was directed at the exiled First Lady.[48] In one of the many jokes about the conjugal dictators, according to Ellison, Ferdinand sought the advice of Filipino chess grandmaster Eugene Torre regarding the best strategy to save the Philippines and Torre's response was telling: "Easy. Sacrifice the Queen. If that doesn't work, resign."[49]

While this chapter acknowledges the justified anger towards Imelda—her crimes, plunder, and utter disregard for the poverty and hopelessness of so many Filipinos—its main concern is to understand the *how* the international figuration of Imelda at her moment of dethronement and exile has functioned to distract attention from the role of the United States in supporting dictatorships abroad. As the horrors of the Marcos regime unraveled before the world, the representational monstrosity of an American-supported corrupt dictatorship was displaced by the monstrosity of Imelda. Hinging on heterosexist and gendered assumptions, it became easier to focus on Imelda as a monstrous, uncontrollable female consumer rather than to recall the United States' role in supporting the Marcoses' 20-year authoritarian rule. While Imelda was exposed for her opulence, the Philippines was increasingly figured as an inscrutable, illogical space where "democracy" might have prevailed but ultimately failed, fulfilling an American

[47] For more information, see Robles, *Marcos Martial Law*, Chapter 6; Bonner, *Waltzing with a Dictator*, Chapter 17; Al McCoy, *Policing America's Empire*, 414-415.
[48] Ellison, *Imelda: Steel Butterfly of the Philippines*, 228.
[49] Ibid.

first-world fantasy that third world countries were incapable of self-governance. Combined with the depiction of revolution as an overnight miracle in the Philippines (although anti-Marcos resistance had existed for many years), Imelda represented the feminine foil to "America": masculine hero in international politics, a symbol of tutelage and rescue, legitimized once again as the leader of the "free world."

Paradise, Prison, and Shoes: America's Exit Strategy

The United States government—particularly Ronald Reagan, the State Department, and Congress—grappled with the consequences of a widely publicized Philippine social unrest and regime change in 1986. The American and newly liberated Philippine mainstream media feverishly covered the events leading up to, and following, the forced exit of the Marcoses. From front-page news, letters to the editor, editorial pieces, and special news sections, the American press paid very close attention to what the *Los Angeles Times* referred to as the "chaotic demise of the Philippine president [which] ended the career of one of Washington's staunchest but most vexing Asian allies."[50] While Ferdinand and Cory were front and center of the unfolding international spectacle, the United States' intimate involvement with the deposed dictators came under careful scrutiny. For instance, *Chicago Tribune*'s February 25, 1986 headline placed a spotlight on the United States' close collaboration with the Marcoses: "Reagan's resolve caves in: President calls for 'old friend' to step down."[51] In Philippine media, America's involvement was palpable as news broke about the Marcoses fleeing the presidential palace with full, and unsurprising, American assistance. The Marcos entourage left the chaotic situation in Manila and

[50] Bob Secter, "Marcos' Lust for Power a Key Element in His Demise," *Los Angeles Times,* February 26, 1986.
[51] "Reagan's resolve caves in: President calls for 'old friend' to step down," *Chicago Tribune*, February 25, 1986.

quietly and unceremoniously arrived in Honolulu, but the consequences of American empire in the Pacific were loud and clear.

This section examines the trajectory of the United States' representation vis-à-vis that of Imelda's as it attempted to resuscitate its international image and diffuse the international scandal during and after the Marcoses' removal from power. It looks closely at three different representational moments. The first is situated in Hawai'i as multiple acceptances and refusals of American power in newsprint and television media reveal the cracks in United States imperial formations in the Pacific. The United States' attempt to house its former allies in Hawai'i found opposition in unlikely camps: government officials, residents, and Filipinos in Hawai'i as well as Imelda. Their refusals were most certainly not the same, however, their vocalizations placed tension on the United States' efforts to contain and diffuse the results of an American-backed dictatorship in the Philippines. Moreover, depictions of Hawai'i as neutral "safe" receptacle for the consequences of dictatorship and empire demonstrate the importance of feminized representations in maintaining colonial interests. Second, as the media's focus shifted to the Marcoses' ill-gotten wealth and the shocking discovery of Imelda's shoes, denunciations of American collusion diminished. The revelation of Imelda's excesses confirmed an American neocolonial fantasy of an undisciplined, hyperfeminized third world through representations of Imelda. In the third instance, the audience is presented with a monstrous figuration of Imelda and an American figure of gendered rescue in *A Dangerous Life* (1988). This television series is significant because of its proximate temporality to the Marcoses' exile, its filmic technique of combining truth and fiction, and its circulation that attempted to reach a wide, multinational audience. Imelda's representation as *the* monster ultimately distracted from the United States' collusion with the Philippine conjugal dictators and reestablished a long-held gendered colonial

belief in American benevolence that positions the Philippines as a third world nation unable to govern itself. Imelda's representational monstrosity enables the fiction of gendered benevolence and rescue that was an essential condition in sustaining positive American self-fashionings in the post-Marcos era.

Local Hawai'i news sources—mainly, *The Honolulu Advertiser, Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* and the television station KGMB—covered the Marcoses' forced exit from the Philippines and arrival in Honolulu extensively. From February 25-28, 1986, media in Hawai'i was consumed with the political situation in the Philippines and its implications for island life. Among the reporters' main concerns was the likelihood that the United States would provide asylum for the deposed dictator, his wife, their more than ninety companions, and innumerable boxes of plundered goods.[52] Washington and Hawai'i government officials were interviewed regarding the possibility of the United States giving sanctuary to the Marcoses in Hawai'i. One article explained that because President Reagan was "considering Hawaii as a sanctuary," a few high-ranking officials in Washington sought Senator Inouye's thoughts if Hawai'i were chosen as a "safe haven" for the Marcoses. Inouye compared the Marcoses' situation to that of another dictator-in-exile: "[Inouye] didn't think Lon Nol would cause any problem and said people in Hawaii prided themselves on the aloha spirit."[53]

Indeed, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos were not the first authoritarian figures to seek and find refuge in Hawai'i. In addition to Lon Nol of Cambodia who first settled in Hawai'i in 1979, former South Korean President and dictator Syngman Rhee of Korea died in exile in Honolulu in 1965. Thus, it was no surprise when an *Associated Press* article on the front page of the *Star-*

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[52] This included Fabian Ver, a former Philippine Armed Forces chief accused of involvement in the 1983 assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino.
[53] Gregg K. Kakesako, "Inouye: U.S. Eyes Hawaii as a Marcos Sanctuary," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin,* February 25, 1986.

Bulletin detailed President Ronald Reagan's "promise" to provide a "safe haven" for Marcos and his entourage. According to the article, while the United States government "quickly embraced the fledgling Philippine government of his successor, Corazon Aquino," it simultaneously "whisked Ferdinand Marcos out of his palace in a helicopter…and President Reagan guaranteed Marcos 'his peace, his safety and his dignity' in the United States."[54]

After much speculation, it became clear that the Reagan administration had unilaterally chosen Hawai'i as the Marcoses' destination in exile. The relocation or "whisking" of exiled authoritarian figures to Hawai'i was but one of the many consequences of empire building on the Hawaiian Islands.[55] Upon the Marcoses' arrival in Hawai'i, American government officials emphasized the islands' role as an ostensibly friendly, hospitable "aloha" state. However, colonial vestiges unfold through the exploration of the bizarre drama of the Marcoses' exile. The

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[54] Terrence Hunt, "U.S. Quickly Embraces New Regime; Reagan Promises Marcos Safe Haven," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 25, 1986.

[55] Following the arrival of a British expedition on the island chain in 1778, the Native Hawaiians suffered an immense population decline. Once Hawai'i was mapped, sailors, entrepreneurs, and missionaries steadily arrived on the islands. Despite the efforts of the sovereign Hawaiian Kingdom to maintain independence, United States military and businesses conspired to imprison and overthrow Hawai'i's reigning Queen Lili'uokalani. In 1898, as the United States embarked on an imperial takeover of the Philippines, Guam, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, it also illegally annexed the Kingdom of Hawai'i. See Stephen Kinzer, *Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawai'i to Iraq*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 9-30. Following yet another illegal referendum by the United States, Hawai'i voters (the majority of whom were not Native Hawaiians) approved the proposition to admit Hawai'i as the 50th U.S. state in 1959. As Hawai'i became a United States military and economic center in the Pacific, it also became "home" to thousands of laborers from many parts of the world, including China, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. In 1986, when the Marcoses made landfall in Hawai'i, the neocolonial conditions persisted with the vastly different Hawai'i demographic consisting of mostly settlers from the aforementioned countries, the disproportionate reliance on military and tourism for economic survival, and the continuing dispossession of Native Hawaiians. However, resistance to American control and exploitation of Hawaiian lands and people manifested particularly as the Hawaiian sovereignty movement gained traction in the 1960s. By the 1980s, the Hawaiian language was officially restored in the Department of Education curriculum and indigenous activists resisted United States military presence and exploitation of Hawaiian lands such as in Kahoolawe and Makua Valley.

United States' efforts to disassociate from its former dictator-ally relied on invoking gendered narratives of "paradise" that erased American culpability. The drama that unfolded illuminates what Vernadette Gonzalez refers to as the "*mutual* work" of tourism and militarism in the Pacific region that enables the United States' project of neocolonial dominance.[56] Gonzalez points out that Ferdinand and Imelda's "escape route—to the American base in the Philippines, then to Guam en route to Hawai'i—mapped out the tropical cartography of American desire, showing how American militarism and the economies of tourism incorporated far-flung places into the same circuits."[57] As the American-supported Marcos dictatorship met its demise after 20 years, these imperial circuits were indeed evident as the United States sought to shelter its long-time Cold War ally in Honolulu.

Much was at stake in ensuring that the Marcoses found asylum on the islands. Ostensibly, one of the main reasons was to prevent violence in the Philippines by offering the prospect of asylum to Marcos in exchange for his peaceful withdrawal. Additionally, as *The New York Times* reports, "Washington felt a sense of obligation to Marcos" for allying with five United States administrations and collaborating with their Cold War interests.[58] Aside from publicly pledging support for United States' war in Vietnam, Marcos sent a Philippine engineering battalion to Vietnam, allowed the United States to continue its control and use of military bases in various parts of the Philippines, and held a 1966 regional summit in Manila to help advance Lyndon Johnson's "more flags" program in Vietnam. Securing a place of political asylum for Marcos was made possible by the intertwined Cold War histories of and colonial discourses about

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[56] Vernadette Vicuña Gonzalez, *Securing Paradise: Tourism and Militarism in Hawai'i and the Philippines* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013), 4.
[57] Gonzalez, *Securing Paradise*, 9.
[58] David K. Shipler, "Does Marcos Deserve Asylum?" *New York Times*, March 4, 1986. http://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/04/world/issues-and-debates-does-marcos-deserve-us-asylum.html

Hawai‘i and the Philippines—spaces that were staging grounds for imperial violence but imagined as hospitable and paradisiacal. As Simeon Man similarly argues, Hawai‘i’s centrality as a “laboratory of war making” in the United States’ war in Vietnam was obscured by discourses of racial liberalism and modernity that depicted Hawai‘i as an exceptional “paradise.”[59]

Indeed, America’s insistence on offering Hawai‘i as an asylum to dictators like the Marcoses constituted a continued United States colonial presence on the islands, and one that relied on access to an idealized and feminized Hawaiian “paradise.” The perceived availability of Hawai‘i as a space of asylum for the Marcoses hinged on the articulation of the so-called “aloha spirit,” which naturalized, feminized, and universalized this sense of hospitality, generosity, and benevolence. Corresponding with the advent of tourism in Hawai‘i in the late 18th century, the Native Hawaiian female body has been imagined and made operable “to naturalize the desirability of Hawai‘i as passive islands ripe for the colonial project of domestication.”[60] In Adria L. Imada’s examination of the role of hula circuits in facilitating United States imperial objectives in Hawai‘i, the author discussed the operationalization of the word aloha in American colonial discourse. According to Imada, particular meanings of aloha were “[i]magined and deployed as mutuality, intimacy, and hospitality” and has thus “managed to mask U.S. imperial expansion in Hawai‘i, providing an illuminating metaphor for U.S.-Hawai‘i relations over the past century.”[61] Instead of remembering colonial encounters between Hawaiians and Americans as “violent and aggressive,” it was instead “frequently imagined as points of intimate contact,

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[59] Simeon Man, “Aloha Vietnam: Race and Empire in Hawai‘i’s Vietnam War,” *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 2015): 1085-1108.
[60] Catherine Ceniza Choy and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Gendering the Trans-Pacific World* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 143.
[61] Adria L. Imada, *Aloha America: Hula Circuits Through the U.S. Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 9.

with Hawaiians freely giving aloha to Americans, and Americans eagerly accepting these gifts of hospitality."[62] When Senator Inouye and Governor Ariyoshi invoked the island's famous "aloha spirit" in their attempts to convince the public to welcome or at least tolerate the arrival of the exiled Marcoses, they participated in the instrumentalization of aloha to carry out continuing United States imperial interests in Hawai‘i. In a letter to Governor Ariyoshi, Secretary Shultz praised Hawai‘i's "courteous and dignified welcome" to the Marcoses, which according to Shultz is a sure sign that "Hawaii's reputation as the 'Aloha' state is well deserved."[63] Shultz's appropriation of aloha was deliberate and specific—it simultaneously conjured the perceived readiness of Hawaiian hospitality *and* obscured the overtly aggressive United States imperial interests in making Hawai‘i a hostess to the deposed conjugal dictators.

What might initially seem as America's unilateral decision and strategic usage of feminized discourses, however, also revealed multiple resistances to the government's attempt to contain the fallout of its collusion with the Philippine dictators. Government officials and residents, including Filipino Americans, in Hawai‘i voiced their opposition to the Marcoses' asylum in Honolulu. For instance, opposition to Marcos' exile in Honolulu was vocalized even as Senator Inouye and Governor Ariyoshi actively requested that the "Island's famous Aloha Spirit…be extended to Marcos."[64] In particular, Mayor Frank Fasi refused to offer state security protection for the Marcoses. Fasi said, "Under no circumstances would we spend 10 cents of taxpayers' money to protect any deposed head of state who comes to Hawaii to live." Other

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Letter from George P. Shultz to George R. Ariyoshi, March 8, 1986, George R. Ariyoshi Collection, Box 236-234, Philippines 1986, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Hawai‘i State Archives.
[64] Kakesako, "Mayor Fasi Says City Won't Offer Security for Marcos." See also Ariyoshi interview, KGMB 9, ENG84, April 9, 1980, 'Ulu‘ulu: The Henry Ku‘ualoha Giugni Moving Image Archive of Hawai‘i.

oppositional voices included Hawaiian community leader Gard Kealoha who relayed a message to Ferdinand Marcos: "…you are not welcomed in these islands of aloha…There is no place for you here. You are, indeed, a man without a country, and you deserve no less." An outspoken anti-Marcos Filipino American and scholar, Belinda A. Aquino, also expressed her concern about an extended Marcos exile in Hawai'i. She vocalized her concern in a KGMB 9 television interview: "Some people don't want him here. It's not just the Filipino community anymore that we're talking about, it's the whole of Hawaii."[65] These responses to the United States government's demand to offer Hawai'i as host to its former dictator-allies demonstrates that, indeed, American imperialism relies on internal contradictions and ambiguities. Hawai'i represented an ambiguous space for the United States government as its officials faced the ugly consequences of American intervention abroad. When the Marcoses were forced out by a democratic upheaval in the Philippines, the United States government dumped the responsibility of dealing with the dictators on Hawai'i. The burden of inclusivity now rested on Hawai'i and government officials were quick to call on the spirit of "aloha" to sanitize the imposition.

In the tense moments of regime change, Imelda momentarily disappeared from American and Philippine news media; she was only visible in photographs and the occasional article while the focus was mostly on Cory and Ferdinand. However, in rare moments, she also voiced her utter disappointment at the prospect of living in Hawai'i. Although Ferdinand "seemed reasonably content with Hawaii," as reported in *Newsweek* magazine, Imelda was reportedly "'in the depths of despair' about the prospect of living permanently in Hawaii. 'Even Manila would be better,' she was quoted in saying."[66] In the midst of conversations and debates

[65] "Marcos coming," KGMB 9, ENG694, February 24, 1986, 'Ulu'ulu: The Henry Ku'ualoha Giugni Moving Image Archive of Hawai'i.
[66] Russel Watson and Richard Vokey, "How to spend a billion," *Newsweek,* March 24, 1986.

about the Marcoses' post-exile conditions, Imelda was represented (by the media as well as her own self) as unhappy in Hawai‘i.

Imelda's aversion to living in exile in Hawai‘i could be read in multiple ways. Imelda's rejection of a place that provided her a "safe haven" was perhaps a rejection of a perceived insularity of the islands—one that was incompatible with her representation as a cosmopolitan jet-setter, a First Lady that traveled the world to negotiate with heads of state. As mentioned earlier, Imelda was not the first controversial political figure to live in exile in Hawai‘i. What made the Marcoses different was the large number of Filipinos that migrated to islands from the early twentieth century when the Philippines and Hawai‘i were still territories of the United States. Filipinos in Hawai‘i, often referred to by local newspapers as "Isle Filipinos," weighed in on the possibility of Marcos residing in exile in Honolulu. In 1986, 115,000 Filipinos lived in Hawai‘i—about 12 percent of Hawai'i's population. Of those, a reported 75 percent hailed from the northern Luzon region of the Philippine archipelago, Ilocos Norte, and called themselves Ilocanos. Many of the early Ilocanos that migrated to Hawai‘i were part of a contract laborer group called *sakadas*, who were recruited by the Hawai‘i Sugar Planter's Association from 1916-1946.[67] Ilocos Norte is also the birthplace of Ferdinand Marcos and is sometimes referred to as the "Solid North"—an electoral bloc that, more recently, voted for Ferdinand's daughter Imee as Laoag City's Governor and Imelda as a member of the House of Representatives from the region's 2nd district. According to Belinda A. Aquino, the Marcos loyalists would often stage parties, rallies, public parades, thus attracting much local media coverage.[68] In truth, however, Aquino contends that, as part of the Marcos loyalists' strategy to display immense support for the

[67] Belinda A. Aquino, "The Politics of Ethnicity among Ilokanos in Hawaii," *Old ties and New Solidarities: Studies on Philippine Communities* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000), 100-116.
[68] Ibid.

deposed dictators, they would bus-in people to demonstrations and events to make their group appear larger. Although not as conspicuous, the anti-Marcos faction was particularly robust in college campuses and among the younger generation of Filipinos in Hawai‘i.

Imelda’s rejection of Hawai‘i may also be read as a distancing from a labor history that produced a working class of Filipinos in Hawai‘i—which was also reflected in an increasingly polarized Philippine class structure—incompatible with her own excessive consumption, luxury, and beauty that she closely identified with. Several O‘ahu neighborhoods were considered for the Marcoses’ residency: Waialae-Kāhala, Mānoa, Aina Haina, and Makiki; all were, and continue to be, wealthy and exclusive communities. For example, Mānoa Valley consisted mostly of wealthy, white residents due to racial restrictions in real estate as far back as the 1920s.[69] Many residents of these neighborhoods debated whether they would allow the Marcoses residence in their community. For example, residents of Mānoa signed a formal petition urging their local officials to find an alternative location for the Marcoses.[70] Through all of these speculations, disapproval, and debate, however, was the lack of acknowledgment that most Filipinos residing in Hawai‘i could not afford to live in these expensive communities. In a somewhat unusual, raw television interview, long-time Marcos supporter Francisco Ugale, commented on the much-disputed question of where the Marcoses would reside in exile: “Now they asked us, why don’t you find a place for them where there’s lots of Filipinos. So, we said, Kalihi! But then we said, that’s a middle-class people. They said, we don’t mind. We’ll go there!”[71] Although the interview seemed disjointed and the context rather unclear, one can draw a few observations

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[69] David E. Stannard, *Honor Killing: Race, Rape, and Clarence Darrow’s Spectacular Last Case* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 31-34.
[70] Petition, March 11, 1986, Miscellaneous Correspondence, Ariyoshi Files 236-234, Philippines 1986, Hawai‘i State Archives.
[71] Interview of Francisco Ugale, KGBM 9, ENG705, March 28, 1986. ‘Ulu‘ulu: The Henry Ku‘ualoha Giugni Moving Image Archive of Hawai‘i.

based on the historical specificity of Ugale's comments. Perhaps the suggestion that the Marcoses live in a place "where there's lots of Filipinos" was based on the hope of strong support for the Marcoses in Filipino neighborhoods. There is, after all, no evidence that the Marcoses intended to reside in less than their lavish accommodations. However, the comment also implicitly acknowledged the racial and class divide in Hawai'i's real estate, whereby the majority of working class immigrants and Native Hawaiians remained—as they are today—systematically denied access to affluent residential areas. Of course, the Marcoses *did not* live in predominately Filipino areas such as Kalihi and Waipahu. Imelda's lamentations further illustrated the class division engendered by empire, except the focus on her irrational grief displaced the blame mainly on her.

In considering the contradictions between the U.S. State Department's and Imelda's perceptions of exile in Hawai'i—as paradise and prison—one is faced with the convergences and vestiges of empire building in Hawai'i and the Philippines. In its efforts to create allies in the Asia Pacific region against its global war against communism, the United States cultivated deep relations with the Marcoses despite their abuses of power. The United States found a convenient place to dump its former dictator/allies, linking the histories of former colonial outposts in the Pacific. While news interviews of government officials emphasized a gendered touristic rendering of Hawai'i as a hospitable and friendly paradise, government documents revealed the contradictory interests and challenges to the dominant narrative of American empire in Hawai'i. Imelda emerged as an irrational figure, who strategically appeared and retreated from the archives with the press taking notice of her performances of victimhood and lamentations of Hawai'i not as paradise but as prison. The dissonant interplay between the United States, Hawai'i, and Imelda revealed the ambiguities and consequences of American empire building in

the Pacific. The fall of the Marcoses destabilized the United States' democratic claims to world power and placed tension on the representational project of American neocolonial discourse that attempted to displace the consequences of undemocratic governance and violence on its Cold War laboratories. Local news coverage of the event demonstrated resistance to America's insistence on securing Hawai'i as its Pacific repository for deposed dictators. Imelda's unwillingness to stay within the parameters of "paradise" disrupted the United States' project to contain the Marcoses and the failures of empire would soon get displaced on Imelda.

Imelda's noticeable absence from mainstream media discourse in the days during and after the overthrow was, indeed, short-lived as the presidential palace was soon opened to the public and her shocking shoe collection was discovered. About a week after the Marcoses arrived in Honolulu, the front pages of American and Philippine mainstream newspapers reported that the Malacañang Palace had been forcibly opened and vandalized by angry protesters. What emerged from the mass takeover of the palace was a mountain of evidence of the Marcoses' extreme opulence and excessiveness. Particular attention was paid to Imelda's closet where an initial inventory found an astounding evidence of a luxurious lifestyle: a receipt for $107,000 for a gown and silk dresses, five shelves of Gucci handbags with price tags still attached, 68 pairs of gloves, and most infamously— 3,000 pairs of shoes.[72] Also reported, but not quite as committed to public memory as Imelda's iconic shoes were "a man's briefcase [presumably Ferdinand's] jammed with pornographic video cassettes and some music tapes that promised 'complete success.'"[73] This news story was featured on *The New York Times* on March 9, 1986, accompanied by a photo of Imelda's closet full of dresses and two women conducting

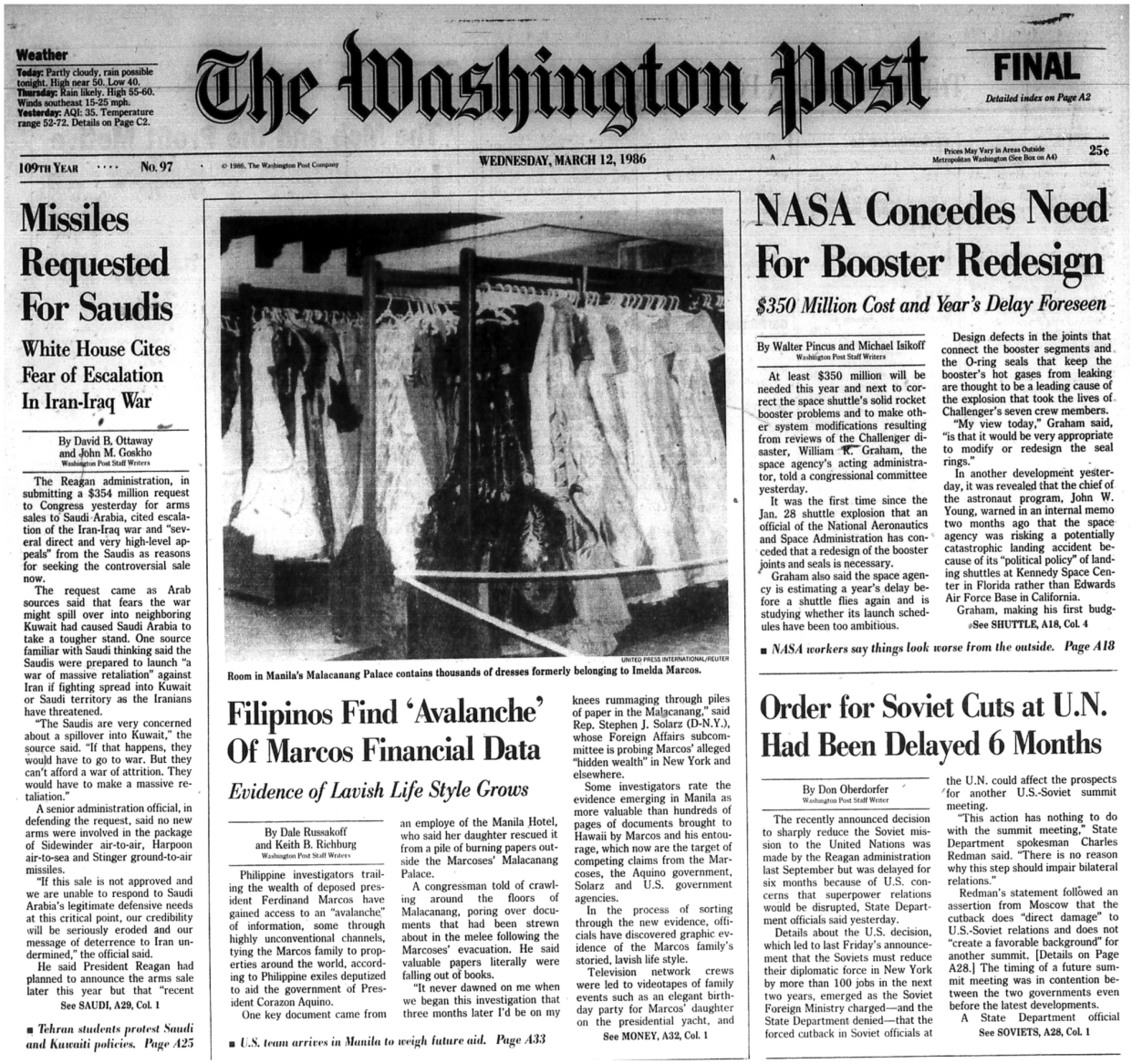
[72] Fox Butterfield, "In Manila Palace: Silk Dresses, 6,000 Shoes," *New York Times*, March 9, 1986.
[73] Ibid.

inventories.[74] United States Representative from New York, Stephen J. Solarz, who toured the palace before it was opened as a museum to the public the following week had this to say about his recent experience: "Compared to Imelda, Marie Antoinette was a bag lady."[75] Known for his active involvement in foreign policy issues, Solarz was considered instrumental in uncovering evidence of the Marcoses' plunder and, as one article claims, he was credited for the "blockbuster disclosure about [Imelda's] shoes."[76] Solarz's comparison between Imelda and the 18th century French queen proved quite catchy and somewhat apt, considering the mass uprising that stripped these women's powers. His sound bite, however, was also reflective of the narrative shift in the aftermath of the Marcos regime—American empire disappeared from view while its representative bodies, like Solarz, were framed as rational critics, aghast at the irrationality and pretentiousness of Imelda. A few days later, *Washington Post* featured a similar photo of Imelda's former possessions even more prominently on its front page (figure 3.1).[77] Although the article seemingly tried to focus on the "avalanche" of the Marcos regime's financial data, the writers self-consciously understood the "shock value" of Imelda's lavishness.[78] The intimate details, as in the previous article, were all too enticing for Solarz:

> "The private quarters made Versailles look like an Appalachian hovel," Solarz said, adding that Imelda Marcos had "a double king-sized bed in a room the size

[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Solarz was also the Head of the United States Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. See also Douglas Martin, "Stephen J. Solarz, Former N.Y. Congressman, Dies at 70," *New York Times,* November 29, 2010, accessed January 17, 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/30/nyregion/30solarz.html.
[77] Keith B. Richburg and Dale Russakoff, "Filipinos Find 'Avalanche' Of Marcos Financial Data," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1986.
[78] Ibid.

of a football field." He said the room containing her clothes and shoes was three times the size of his congressional office.[79]



Weather
Today: Partly cloudy, rain possible tonight. High near 50. Low 40.
Thursday: Rain likely. High 55-60. Winds southeast 15-25 mph.
Yesterday: AQI: 35. Temperature range 52-72. Details on Page C2.

The Washington Post

FINAL
Detailed index on Page A2

109TH YEAR .... No. 97 © 1986, The Washington Post Company WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 1986 A Prices May Vary in Areas Outside Metropolitan Washington (See Box on A4) 25¢

Missiles Requested For Saudis

White House Cites Fear of Escalation In Iran-Iraq War

By David B. Ottaway and John M. Goskho
Washington Post Staff Writers

The Reagan administration, in submitting a $354 million request to Congress yesterday for arms sales to Saudi Arabia, cited escalation of the Iran-Iraq war and "several direct and very high-level appeals" from the Saudis as reasons for seeking the controversial sale now.

The request came as Arab sources said that fears the war might spill over into neighboring Kuwait had caused Saudi Arabia to take a tougher stand. One source familiar with Saudi thinking said the Saudis were prepared to launch "a war of massive retaliation" against Iran if fighting spread into Kuwait or Saudi territory as the Iranians have threatened.

"The Saudis are very concerned about a spillover into Kuwait," the source said. "If that happens, they would have to go to war. But they can't afford a war of attrition. They would have to make a massive retaliation."

A senior administration official, in defending the request, said no new arms were involved in the package of Sidewinder air-to-air, Harpoon air-to-sea and Stinger ground-to-air missiles.

"If this sale is not approved and we are unable to respond to Saudi Arabia's legitimate defensive needs at this critical point, our credibility will be seriously eroded and our message of deterrence to Iran undermined," the official said.

He said President Reagan had planned to announce the arms sale later this year but that "recent

See SAUDI, A29, Col. 1

■ *Tehran students protest Saudi and Kuwaiti policies. Page A25*

UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL/REUTER
Room in Manila's Malacanang Palace contains thousands of dresses formerly belonging to Imelda Marcos.

Filipinos Find 'Avalanche' Of Marcos Financial Data

Evidence of Lavish Life Style Grows

By Dale Russakoff and Keith B. Richburg
Washington Post Staff Writers

Philippine investigators trailing the wealth of deposed president Ferdinand Marcos have gained access to an "avalanche" of information, some through highly unconventional channels, tying the Marcos family to properties around the world, according to Philippine exiles deputized to aid the government of President Corazon Aquino.

One key document came from an employe of the Manila Hotel, who said her daughter rescued it from a pile of burning papers outside the Marcoses' Malacanang Palace.

A congressman told of crawling around the floors of Malacanang, poring over documents that had been strewn about in the melee following the Marcoses' evacuation. He said valuable papers literally were falling out of books.

"It never dawned on me when we began this investigation that three months later I'd be on my knees rummaging through piles of paper in the Malacanang," said Rep. Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.), whose Foreign Affairs subcommittee is probing Marcos' alleged "hidden wealth" in New York and elsewhere.

Some investigators rate the evidence emerging in Manila as more valuable than hundreds of pages of documents brought to Hawaii by Marcos and his entourage, which now are the target of competing claims from the Marcoses, the Aquino government, Solarz and U.S. government agencies.

In the process of sorting through the new evidence, officials have discovered graphic evidence of the Marcos family's storied, lavish life style.

Television network crews were led to videotapes of family events such as an elegant birthday party for Marcos' daughter on the presidential yacht, and

See MONEY, A32, Col. 1

■ *U.S. team arrives in Manila to weigh future aid. Page A33*

NASA Concedes Need For Booster Redesign

$350 Million Cost and Year's Delay Foreseen

By Walter Pincus and Michael Isikoff
Washington Post Staff Writers

At least $350 million will be needed this year and next to correct the space shuttle's solid rocket booster problems and to make other system modifications resulting from reviews of the Challenger disaster, William R. Graham, the space agency's acting administrator, told a congressional committee yesterday.

It was the first time since the Jan. 28 shuttle explosion that an official of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration has conceded that a redesign of the booster joints and seals is necessary.

Graham also said the space agency is estimating a year's delay before a shuttle flies again and is studying whether its launch schedules have been too ambitious.

Design defects in the joints that connect the booster segments and the O-ring seals that keep the booster's hot gases from leaking are thought to be a leading cause of the explosion that took the lives of Challenger's seven crew members.

"My view today," Graham said, "is that it would be very appropriate to modify or redesign the seal rings."

In another development yesterday, it was revealed that the chief of the astronaut program, John W. Young, warned in an internal memo two months ago that the space agency was risking a potentially catastrophic landing accident because of its "political policy" of landing shuttles at Kennedy Space Center in Florida rather than Edwards Air Force Base in California.

Graham, making his first budg-

See SHUTTLE, A18, Col. 4

■ *NASA workers say things look worse from the outside. Page A18*

Order for Soviet Cuts at U.N. Had Been Delayed 6 Months

By Don Oberdorfer
Washington Post Staff Writer

The recently announced decision to sharply reduce the Soviet mission to the United Nations was made by the Reagan administration last September but was delayed for six months because of U.S. concerns that superpower relations would be disrupted, State Department officials said yesterday.

Details about the U.S. decision, which led to last Friday's announcement that the Soviets must reduce their diplomatic force in New York by more than 100 jobs in the next two years, emerged as the Soviet Foreign Ministry charged—and the State Department denied—that the forced cutback in Soviet officials at the U.N. could affect the prospects for another U.S.-Soviet summit meeting.

"This action has nothing to do with the summit meeting," State Department spokesman Charles Redman said. "There is no reason why this step should impair bilateral relations."

Redman's statement followed an assertion from Moscow that the cutback does "direct damage" to U.S.-Soviet relations and does not "create a favorable background" for another summit. [Details on Page A28.] The timing of a future summit meeting was in contention between the two governments even before the latest developments.

A State Department official

See SOVIETS, A28, Col. 1

Figure 3.1 "Filipinos Find 'Avalanche' Of Marcos Financial Data," *Washington Post*, March 12, 1986

[79] Ibid.

Similar to his previous statement, Solarz effectively communicated this to his (presumably American) audience just how absurd his discoveries have been through the use of hyperbolic comparisons with, specifically, Western figures and landmarks.

In these shocking exposés, Americans were only mentioned as eyewitnesses, political pundits, and critics while Imelda was exposed as the true monster. After the revelation of Imelda's grandiose shoe collection, she dominated public discourse as a monstrous, illogical, profligate spender. And, indeed, she was. However, the discourse of overconsumption, excessiveness, and absurdity effectively distracted the public from the brutality of Ferdinand's authoritarian rule and the American support that sanctioned it. American involvement in sustaining the Marcos regime was overshadowed by the revelation of the "true monster" of the 20-year Marcos saga: Imelda. While her crimes were real and reprehensible, the condensation of evil into the figure of Imelda represented a displacement of crime and complicity onto a single, female figure. As Imelda became more incomprehensible in her excesses, the United States' unbelievably deep-rooted support of the Marcoses faded into the "logical" realm of global politics. In a sense, Imelda became the sole owner of her lavishness, but *how* she was able to acquire her wealth throughout the years waned from the limelight.

Imelda Marcos also reappears more frequently in the American television media as her extravagances were exposed. The American Broadcasting Company's prime time news program, 20/20, aired an episode titled "The Marcos Millions" in March 1986, which detailed the "shocking story of the Marcos family fortune." Using footage from videotapes recovered in the presidential palace, reporter Jim Laurie described the lavish lifestyle of the Marcoses with

particular focus on Imelda, "the real spender of the [Marcos] family."[80] In front of one of Imelda's iconic projects, the Folk Arts Theater, Laurie clarifies how Imelda was able to afford her expensive lifestyle: "Imelda Marcos, it seems seldom distinguished between government property and that of her own. Despite increasing poverty here at 10 percent contraction in the economy in the past few years, she pushed through dozens of lavish personal pet projects, some very much white elephants."[81] While Imelda figured prominently as the dictatorship's voracious consumer, Ferdinand was interestingly sidelined and even portrayed positively and sympathetically. Laurie reports:

> By contrast, the life of the father seemed simple. Ferdinand Marcos was preoccupied largely with his power and his health. His bedroom, large dark and bare, a hospital bed, oxygen tanks, and other medical equipment at the ready. A fully equipped basement clinic, too. Alongside the machines that monitored the president's health: the robust pictures of the man he was a few years ago and the man he wanted to be again. The personal videos also show another side of Marcos, his devotion to his grandchildren. A man who lavished time and money on his family.[82]

The news segment showed videos clips of Ferdinand in unassuming, seemingly innocent situations—playing golf, working at his desk, and riding a golf cart with his wife and grandchildren. The narration, revealed much sympathy for the aging dictator and very little, if any, criticism. His "simple" life was contrasted with his wife's unbelievable extravagance.

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[80] "From the archives: Excerpt Imelda Marcos from ABC 20/20 March 1986," YouTube video, ABC Television Network, March 1986, posted by Jim Laurie, August 3, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3259VEA0Is
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

Ferdinand was portrayed as an aging, ailing former leader, nostalgic of his youth. As evidenced by his austere personal space, his consumption was deemed acceptable as he only "lavished time and money on his family"—unlike his wife, who lavished time and money on herself. The clearly gendered representation of the conjugal dictators indicates the ways in which feminization of political figures functions to demonize and exculpate some perpetrators and not others. While they were both to blame for the horrors of Martial Law, the media's figuration of Imelda disproportionately blamed the female, overconsuming, and highly visible tyrant.

Juxtaposed with the abject poverty experienced by so many in the Philippines, the evidence of Imelda's material accumulation was even more disturbing. A television news coverage broadcasted in Hawai'i reported the reactions of some of Manila's slum dwellers that visited the abandoned presidential palace. For example, they interviewed a couple that "often go[es] to bed hungry, trying to live on their $17/week income."[83] Another couple described their entire home as smaller than Imelda's bed and whose entire wardrobe consisted of just a few shirts. "They were stunned by Imelda's store room of 2,700 pairs of shoes and hundreds of designer gowns," the reporter declared.[84] In these depictions of Imelda, she and her shoes were caricatured instead of grappling with American culpability in funding, allowing, and cooperating with her monstrosity. Sensationalizing Imelda's overconsumption completely overshadowed American involvement and failures in the Philippines. In this moment, Imelda embodied all that made the third world situation hopeless and inexplicable to the first world observer and meanwhile camouflaging her partners-in-crime, Ferdinand Marcos and the United States.

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[83] "Marcos Palace," KGMB 9 News, ENG700, March 14, 1986, 'Ulu'ulu: The Henry Ku'ualoha Giugni Moving Image Archive of Hawai'i.
[84] Ibid.

America's "Heroic" Return in *A Dangerous Life*

An examination of *A Dangerous Life* allows us to unpack how the representation of Imelda in the aftermath of the Marcoses' downfall can work to (re)establish certain myths integral to the production of a gendered American identity, imagined as inherently incorruptible and heroic. The film may initially appear critical of American support of the Marcos regime but at the cost of maintaining gendered and racialized fictions about the Philippines as inherently irrational and unable to self-govern while the United States re-emerges as a heroic masculine figure of rescue. The Australian-produced *A Dangerous Life* is a filmic rendition of the final years of the Marcos regime. The three-part, six-hour long, miniseries was broadcast in the United States on Sunday, November 27, 1988 on the American cable premium network Home Box Office (HBO); the show was also aired in Australia, Finland, Philippines, and West Germany and released on home videotapes in Canada. The miniseries was filmed primarily in the Philippines, but it was reportedly temporarily moved to Sri Lanka because a former high official under Marcos tried to halt the film's production.[85]

The story unfolded from the perspective of the film's main character, Tony O'Neil, a white, heterosexual American male television reporter played by American actor Gary Busey. From Tony's vantage point, the audience witnessed the events leading up to the Marcoses' forced exile as well as his personal intimacies and entanglements in the Philippines. The film's fictional subplot revolved around Tony's relationship with his Filipina girlfriend, Celie Balamo (Dina Bonnevie), and his Australian wife and photojournalist, Angie Fox (Rebecca Gilling).

[85] *A Dangerous Life* was the second film written by Australian screenwriter David Williamson, in collaboration with film producers Hal and Jim McElroy, which explored the effects of dictatorial regimes in Southeast Asia through the perspective of white male journalists. Their first film, *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982), dramatized the fall of Sukarno in Indonesia. Notably, although *The Year of Living Dangerously* was set in Indonesia, it was mostly filmed in the Philippines (and starred some Filipino actors) due to permitting issues and violent threats.

While Tony was busy covering the latest Philippine news and romancing Celie, he was caught off guard when his wife informed him of her impending arrival in Manila. Following the murder of her brother at a student-led anti-Marcos rally, Celie was detained and violently tortured by the state police until Tony used his connections to rescue her from captivity. The very emotional and traumatized Celie left Manila and joined the New People's Army, an underground communist guerilla movement in a remote, impoverished area in northern Philippines. Again, Tony managed to track down Celie but she decided to continue working with the New People's Army (the military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines). When a violent clash with the military upset Celie, she decided to return to Manila and was subsequently "salvaged" by the Philippine government's forces. Tony later found Celie's slain body in a large landfill where many poor Filipinos scavenge through garbage for a living. Although Tony's relationship with his wife soured after he revealed his extramarital affair, they reconciled at the end of the film in the midst of a jubilant crowd, burning and destroying all that the Marcoses had left behind.

Released almost three years after the Marcoses were forced out of the Philippines, the film offers a post-dethronement cinematographic narrative that blurs the line between fact and fiction. For example, the film opens with a short video interview of Benigno Aquino the night before his murder when he talks candidly about the futility of wearing a bullet-proof vest: "…[I]f they hit me on the head, there's nothing we can do there. In a matter of 3-4 minutes, it could be all over, you know. And I might not be able to talk to you again after this. So, this is the danger."[86] The audience is immediately made aware of the film's genre, docufiction, a combination of documentary and fictional scenes and characters. Paying attention to both its cinematographic directions, the filmmakers collaborated with Southeast Asian historian and

[86] *A Dangerous Life*, directed by Robert Markowitz (1988; McElroy & McElroy Productions, 1989) VHS.

professor Alfred W. McCoy as well as renowned actors in Philippine cinema.[87] The filmmakers' attempt to legitimize the film by incorporating actual news reports, interviews, and footage contribute to the film's critical stance on the United States government's collusion with the Marcoses. However, the film's fictional narrative remains embedded within an American gendered fantasy of benevolence and rescue in the Pacific. This is particularly salient in three dramatized scenes when the film utilizes the figure of Imelda to highlight the irrationality, coercion, and monstrosity that the American protagonist encounters in the turmoil-ridden Philippines.

Even though Ferdinand Marcos figured prominently as one of the film's antagonists, Imelda was its most visible adversary. The videotape's back cover blurb attempted to entice its viewers by emphasizing the historical significance of the film's story. For instance, it factually pitted Cory against Ferdinand but emphasized the narrative drama between Cory and Imelda. Although it mentioned the film's general plot—"The unique story of how 'people power' ousted the former dictator Ferdinand Marcos and installed Cory Aquino as president"—the text promised its viewers a chance to go "behind the scenes of the complex Filipino society to meet Imelda Marcos…and Cory Aquino" through the eyes of Tony O'Neil and Angie Fox.[88] The film's opening scene immediately established the figure of Imelda Marcos as the film's ultimate villain. The viewer was greeted with eerie, ominous, deep bass music accompanied by the distinctive sound of high-heeled footsteps. From a low camera angle, a pair of shiny gold shoes appeared before the camera panned upwards to reveal a woman wearing a gold and black dress

[87] Professor Alfred McCoy is considered one of the leading scholars in Southeast Asian history and United States covert operations. On January 23, 1986, he also wrote a *New York Times* exposé about Ferdinand Marcos' "fake medals." See Alfred W. McCoy, Biography (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of History), https://history.wisc.edu/people/mccoy-alfred-w/

[88] See *A Dangerous Life*, videotape, back cover.

and ruby-studded necklace and earrings, with her hair in a bouffant. An informed audience would immediately recognize the character played by Philippine actress Tessie Tomas—Imelda Marcos. The stern-looking Imelda was met by General Fabian Ver (Mervyn Samson), who warned her of Ninoy's impending arrival in the Philippines. Imelda responded: "I warned him not to come back when I saw him in New York three months ago. He wants to grab power!"[89] Ferdinand (Ruben Rustia), by contrast, remained silent in this opening act as he scowled at the visibly enraged Imelda. The audience thus first met the Marcoses through an encounter with Imelda—an encounter that took on particular significance given Imelda's international notoriety for her immense shoe collection. Her shoes took on an iconic status and symbolic meaning, condensing all that is absurd, ostentatious, and tyrannical about the Marcoses into an object. In fact, her shoes appeared several times throughout the film at key moments, signaling Imelda's arrival and, in the end, her forced exit. Imelda emerged as the film's archetypal villain or *kontrabida* in Philippine cinema. The film's emphasis on her irrationality, deviousness, and excessiveness in the following three scenes were instrumental in defining and elevating the heroism of its main protagonist or *bida*, Tony O'Neil.[90]

The first two instances were back-to-back scenes of Imelda Marcos and Celie Balamo singing as Tony (and the audience) attempted to comprehend the social, cultural, and political situation in the Philippines. These scenes were essential in Tony's character development as the viewers got an initial glimpse of his political stance and personal life. During an ill-timed

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[89] *A Dangerous Life*.

[90] Ibid. It is also significant to note that although Corazon Aquino is portrayed as one of the film's protagonists, her historical importance is overshadowed by the fictional character of Tony O'Neil. The story unfolds through and orbits around Tony's point of view and character. Although the filmmakers chose to highlight actual footage of Cory addressing the United States Congress in its final scene, the portrayal of Cory throughout the film was not nearly as in-depth and complex as that of Tony's.

political soirée at the Malacañang Palace on the same night of Ninoy's funeral, Tony found himself in a heated conversation with a representative of the United States Embassy in the Philippines, Mike Heseltine. Believing that the Marcoses were responsible for Aquino's murder, Tony questioned the official investigation's findings and accused the United States government of complicity. After Mike dismissed Tony's accusations, the scene shifted to a concurrent dinner conversation between Ferdinand and a United States senator. Addressing the American senator, Ferdinand exclaimed, "We embrace you, we salute you, we thank you for coming here and helping us during those dark days of World War II."[91] The scene then abruptly shifted to Imelda in front of an orchestra, proclaiming: "Love is the most potent force in the world…more powerful than the nuclear bomb. And love can only be expressed in one way: Feelings."[92] She serenaded the crowd with Morris Albert's "Feelings," and her voice became background music to Ferdinand as he denied any involvement with Aquino's assassination.

This scene positioned the proxies of the American state and American media against each other—the corruptibility and/or gullibility of the state in contrast with the idealism and incorruptibility of the media. While the audience was presented with a critique of the American state, mediated by the truth-seeking American journalist, Imelda was inserted as an irrational, musical interlude to demonstrate the ironies of the conjugal dictatorship. As Ferdinand attempted to distract and dissuade their American guests with ostensibly logical reasoning, Imelda became the source of illogical reasoning as she tried to define "love" by comparing it with a "nuclear bomb" and singing a love song in a tense and badly timed gathering. While the American government representatives enabled the Marcoses, only the discerning Tony (and the audience) saw through the spectacle and deception. Imelda here was utilized as a source of irony and

[91] *A Dangerous Life*.
[92] Ibid.

irrationality that "gave away" the ugly truth through her overdramatic repertoire. She was contrasted with the rational (read: male) voices, further amplifying Tony's heroic masculinity—one searching for truth and justice behind all the Marcoses' glamour and façade as exemplified by Imelda. While the American state was critiqued in this scene, the figure of gendered benevolence and rescue was reborn through Tony O'Neil's character. The fiction of an inherent, unshakable masculine American ideal was redeemed and sustained in the figure of a rugged, muckraking individual whose moral compass was unwavering in the face of an Imelda-style, flamboyant gathering.

Tony fits what Susan Jeffords argues in *Hard Bodies* as a reclaiming of American masculinity in the Reagan era.[93] Faced with anxieties over the United States' failures in the Vietnam War that many believed was a result of inadequate, "soft" leadership as well as the rise of third wave feminism at home, the "Reagan Revolution" sought to save the United States' international reputation and national self-image by reaffirming American men's masculinity. This was particularly manifest in the display of hypermasculinized hard bodies in 1980s films such as *Rambo*. Like John Rambo, Tony represented an unbending American manhood with a relentless desire for justice, contrasted with the "soft" and complicit American government.

The second scene further highlighted the film's projection of American masculinity as the main protagonist encountered another Filipina expressing her "feelings of love." Immediately following Imelda's song number, the scene shifted to Tony in a white tank top, gazing into the distance. The dim lighting, candles, and informal clothing immediately suggested an intimate scene. Tony was in sharp focus in front of the camera; behind him was a soft-focused silhouette of a woman. His deep reverie was broken when the woman started singing in Tagalog. The

[93] Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

camera switched focus to reveal Celie in light pink, satin pajama shirt, singing: "*Bakit kailangan kita*? / *Bakit uhaw sa hamog*? / *Pag-ibig ko sinta*."[94] Celie seductively signaled for Tony with her finger and he asked her: "What language do you think in?" She responded, "I think in English. Except that when I feel intensely about something, I have to speak in Tagalog. Tagalog is for the emotions, and we Filipinos are very emotional people." "I've noticed that," Tony replied.[95] In deliberately placing Imelda and Celie in back-to-back scenes, Tony and the viewers were exposed to a particular type of Filipinaness—a performative and emotional one, familiar with English and made sexually available. Their feelings were racialized and sexualized as they performed to seduce American men. As "very emotional people," these women were presented with a questionable capacity to reason and inability to control their "feelings." In both instances, Tony's masculine presence was "needed" to resolve and advance the factual and fictional storylines—first, as a truth-seeking journalist intent on exposing the Marcoses and defiant at Imelda's fancy gathering and second as a lover to his mistress who has yet to find out about his marital status. Tony's character was portrayed as a heroic savior, attempting both to "save" Celie from her own people and from herself, and to "save" the Filipino people by exposing the truths about the Marcoses and the American government. These two successive scenes (re)establish a gendered American fantasy that positions a white heterosexual male as the benevolent rescuer of women and nonwhite people.

The third scene further demonstrates how the recuperation of American masculinity in the aftermath of the Marcos regime relies on the manipulative and monstrous figure of Imelda. In this scene, Tony's character embodied the well-meaning American male and American media,

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[94] "Why do I need you? / Why do I thirst for dew drops? / My love, darling." My translation. See *A Dangerous Life*.
[95] *A Dangerous Life.*

ensnared in a "dangerous life" in the Philippines. After airing his television report about the United States' strategic interests in the Philippines and its friendship with the Marcoses, with special focus on Imelda's lavish projects and simultaneous disregard for the poverty-stricken populace, Tony was forcibly taken from his home to meet with the First Lady. The scene began with an image of Imelda's shoe closet with two women dressed in identical maid's outfits, tending to her shoes. One of them retrieved a pair and waited for Imelda to finish fixing her bouffant. Imelda walked to her bed, sat, and lifted her leg while her assistant slipped the shoes on her feet. The camera focused very closely on Imelda's feet as the process of shoe removal and insertion took place. Only the sound of bare skin squeezing into a pair of high-heeled shoes was audible to the viewers. The focus on her shoes could be read as a signifier of the Marcoses' dysfunction and irrationality. The filmmakers no longer needed to visually explain the Marcoses' excesses—all they needed was a pair of shoes to convey the illegitimacy of the dictators. Afterward, a familiar low, ominous music played in the background as the camera showed an imposing portrait painting of Imelda. When Tony arrived at the palace, he was forcefully escorted to a room with an enormous white bed and an imposing canopy, visual cues that he had arrived in Imelda's bedroom. The intimacy of the Imelda's bedroom harkened back to the previous scene with Celie, suggesting a similarly sexualized situation, albeit coerced. That Tony's meeting with Imelda took place in her bedroom was significant also because it again established Filipinas as sexualized objects of desire for white men. In this scene, Imelda's strategy was already transparent to the audience. Her manipulation and coercion were nothing new; however, this scene demonstrated Tony's resolve in the face of temptation. After some flattering words from the First Lady, Tony was summoned to sit close to Imelda and they began to converse:

IMELDA MARCOS: Food is only one of the needs of the Filipino. There's something he needs even more than that.
TONY O'NEIL: What is that?
IMELDA MARCOS: Respect. Until Ferdinand and I, the world looked down on the Philippines and the Filipino. We were a *poor* third world country. We are still a poor country, but the buildings I have made have been noticed all over the world. We now have the respect of great artists, movie stars, and international leaders. I have made Manila one of the great cities and every Filipino feels proud. [She places a hand on his knee] Tony, if there's anything that bothers you about my policies, please come to me. I will only be too happy to explain.[96]

The sexually charged scene positioned Imelda as a powerful and manipulative First Lady who used not only her position of power but also her femininity to reach her objectives. When she placed her hand on Tony's knee, any suspicion of Imelda's intentions was erased: indeed, she deliberately used her power and womanhood to seduce and intimidate her critics. Of particular interest in this analysis was Tony's positionality as the "rational" American media personality who must learn to navigate through the unintelligible figuration of Imelda. The film self-consciously deployed Tony's character as a confused but identifiable protagonist who must expose Imelda for the true monster that she had become. He emerged as the heroic journalist who exposed the evils and contradictions of Martial Law as represented by Imelda. His last encounter with "Imelda" was his discovery of her shoe collection, which he ostensibly used to further his journalistic career. What emerged from the film through Tony's character was an appealing, but not entirely new, version of the United States: an inherently good, masculine, Samaritan state that persisted in search of its truth and justice in the crisis-ridden Philippines. In its wake, is the figure of Imelda, an embodiment of the "irrational" third world and whose increasing monstrosity enabled American empire to sweep its crimes under the carpet (and as we will see in the next chapter, her crimes as well).

[96] *A Dangerous Life.*

Indeed, one might argue that American masculinity in the aftermath of the Marcos regime was produced, in part, against the negative feminine image of a monstrous Imelda. In one of the final scenes of *A Dangerous Life,* a crowd of anti-Marcos demonstrators celebrated by ransacking the presidential palace and burning all traces of the dictatorial regime. Making his way through a sea of jubilant Filipinos waving Philippine flags and yellow ribbons, Tony O'Neil finished his saga in the Philippines by reconciling with his estranged wife, Angie Fox. Imelda, by contrast, departed aboard a dark transport jet, singing to the tune of Frank Sinatra's "New York, New York" with a blank, crazed stare, stroking a bouquet of flowers. The formula was now complete. Democracy seemingly returned to the Philippines, the monstrous and American-imitating dictator was overthrown, and the white American couple was reunited. The untamed, rugged muckraker had found his happy ending as he exited the Philippines with firm resolve, his dignity and masculinity intact. The film's ending is instructive in understanding how the monstrous figuration of Imelda functioned in relation to the United States' gendered national character.

The mainstream media and filmic representations of Imelda at the moment of overthrow and exile are significant in understanding how American neocolonial interests and mythologies were reinforced and reestablished through Imelda's figurations. In Hawai'i, the United States government's attempts to hide its complicity with the vicious Philippine dictators were faced with multiple refusals of American neocolonial power. The federal government's insistence on sheltering Imelda and Ferdinand in Honolulu relied on old colonial tropes that portrayed Hawai'i as a perpetually welcoming, acquiescent, feminized space to "dump" the United States' former dictator-allies—tropes that some officials and Hawaiian residents rejected. When Imelda's shoes and other excesses were discovered, she became an easy target: a monstrous figure that not only

confirmed American neocolonial fantasies of third world irrationality and inability to self-govern, but also positioned American eyewitnesses and observers as rational critics horrified at the third world spectacle. Subsequently, Imelda turned into an irredeemable figure in relation to the rational, redeemable American like Tony O'Neil in *A Dangerous Life.* In order to make sense of the United States' 20-year support of tyranny in the Philippines, a masculine hero incarnates America's positive self-image even as the film elides the historical resistance of American neocolonial interests in the Pacific. Americans may have been "exposed" as the Marcoses' collaborators, but as we have seen in *A Dangerous Life,* a new "truth" about Americans as heroic and incorruptible emerges. Tracking the monstrous representation of Imelda reveals a persistent recuperation of a benevolent American identity whose presence abroad is justified and remembered as a benign crusade against a shoe-obsessed tyrant—an American masculine heroic comeback on the heels of a dictator.

CHAPTER 4

AMERICAN IMPERIAL CONVICTIONS AND THE 1990 UNITED STATES FEDERAL CASE AGAINST IMELDA MARCOS

> It was on the wrong side of the ocean. It was a totally silly case. We are not big brothers to the people overseas.[1]
>
> Thomas O'Rourke, Juror

> What is an American court? What am I doing here at 40 Foley Square trying a case involving the theft of money from Philippine banks?[2]
>
> Judge John F. Keenan

On July 3, 1990, the front page of *The New York Times* featured a photo of Imelda Marcos on her knees, dressed in all black, rosary in hand, as she slowly made her way down the aisle, toward the altar of New York City's landmark St. Patrick's Cathedral Church. The photo was taken the day before, on Imelda's 61st birthday. The pleading, melancholic expression on her face belied the day's headline: "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."[3] The end of the three-month long trial described by one scholar as reminiscent of a "circus and street theater" sparked a wide-ranging mix of reactions.[4] The trial only reinforced what Imelda's critics already knew about the former Philippine First Lady and Governor of Metro Manila—her flair for melodrama and obsession with a luxurious lifestyle funded from public coffers. Her exultant supporters waited outside the United States Court House in

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[1] Craig Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case," *New York Times*, July 3, 1990.
[2] William Glaberson, "The 'Wrong' Court: Marcos Acquittal Is Seen as Reaction of Jury to Hearing Manila Case in U.S.," *New York Times*, July 3, 1990.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Belinda A. Aquino, *Politics of Plunder: The Philippines Under Marcos*, 2nd ed. (Manila: University of the Philippines, 1999), 129.

Manhattan to celebrate the ruling, singing "Happy Birthday" and "God Bless America."[5] The anti-Marcos faction inside the courtroom, on the other hand, "sat across the aisle in stunned silence" as the presiding juror read the verdict: "Not guilty."[6]

Imelda's jubilation upon hearing the United States Federal grand jury's verdict to acquit was a far cry from her dismal first day in exile in Hawai'i on February 26, 1986. In the interim, although the Marcoses begrudgingly remained in Honolulu by the orders of the United States government. Contrary to Imelda's claims of pauperism and persecution, the couple lived in relative opulence.[7] They resided in a multimillion-dollar estate in Honolulu's Makiki Heights, hosted elaborate parties, dined at expensive restaurants, employed a household staff (that included a hairdresser, priest, and pianist), traveled in a black stretch limo, and shopped at upscale department stores like Liberty House.[8] This exilic reverie was interrupted on October 21, 1988 when a United States Federal grand jury indicted Ferdinand, Imelda, and a list of co-conspirators on criminal charges of racketeering, fraud, and obstruction of justice.[9] They alleged that the Marcoses illegally pilfered Philippine public funds into the United States and used the

[5] Glaberson, "The 'Wrong' Court."
[6] Howard Kurtz, "U.S. Jury Clears Marcos in Fraud Case," *Washington Post,* July 3, 1990.
[7] According to *The New York Times*, the United States government ordered the Marcoses to remain in Honolulu after a secret, video recorded evidence surfaced that Ferdinand attempted to purchase $25 million in weapons to support a coup against his successor Philippine President Corazon Aquino. See Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."
[8] For more information about the Marcoses in Hawai'i, see Kendall J. Wills, "Marcos and Wife Enjoy The High Life in Hawaii," *New York Times*, November 16, 1988, accessed January 31, 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/1988/11/16/us/marcos-and-wife-enjoy-the-high-life-in-hawaii.html. See also James S. Kunen, Scott Haller, Maria Wilhelm, and Victoria Balfour, "Imelda Marcos Waits in Hawaii for the Other Shoe to Drop," *People* 30, no. 21 (November 21, 1988).
[9] The Marcoses' co-defendants were the following: Adnan Khashoggi, Bienvenido Tantoco, Gliceria Tantoco, Roberto Benedicto, Rodolfo Arambulo, Bienvenido Tantoco Jr., Karl Bock Peterson, Jaime Alberto Arias, and California Overseas Bank. This list was compiled from Aquino, *Politics of Plunder* and Pedrosa, *Imelda Romualdez Marcos: The Verdict.*

money to purchase properties, jewelry, and paintings. Claiming that Ferdinand was too sick to attend their arraignment on October 31, 1988 in New York, Imelda traveled solo to plead not guilty and post a $5 million bond in exchange for her temporary release. Ferdinand's death due to multiple organ failure on September 28, 1989 turned Imelda into the main defendant in what was to become an outlandish trial that ended with a very public and dramatic acquittal.

This final chapter examines the figure of Imelda at the center of a controversial trial in New York City. Inspired by David E. Stannard's analysis of the 1932 Massie Trial in Honolulu in his book *Honor Killing*, this chapter attempts to understand the social and political contexts, discourses, and dynamics at play in the court case against Imelda Marcos.[10] The discourses surrounding the trial, and particularly the 1990 acquittal of Imelda, demonstrates how the geopolitical concerns of the Philippines, and between the Philippines and the United States played out through the evolving figure of the former Philippine First Lady. Her acquittal was the penultimate chapter in America's co-dependent affair with the conjugal dictators and the beginning of Imelda's solo political act. In what was supposed to be a moment of reckoning for the atrocities and plunder committed by the Marcoses, Imelda was instead unequivocally acquitted by an American jury. The other half of the conjugal dictatorship got away with her crimes and her vindication in a United States court carried much import for Imelda. As Carmen

[10] The Massie Trial or Massie Affair was a 1932 criminal trial that began when Thalia Fortescue Massie accused a group of local Hawaiian men of assault and rape. The trial ended in a hung jury and, seeking revenge, Thalia's husband and mother arranged for the kidnapping and murder of one of the accused men, Joe Kahahawai. This was called "honor killing"—a murder justified to protect the honor of a white woman. Grace Fortescue and Tommie Massie hired the famous attorney Clarence Darrow for their defense and the trial became a national spectacle. The murderers were initially sentenced to ten years in prison but later significantly reduced by Territorial Governor Lawrence Judd to one hour. The Massie Affair ignited racial tensions in Hawai‘i and captured global attention. David Stannard effectively uses the rape and murder case to unpack a detailed social and political examination of the Hawaiian Islands and its peoples under the United States colonial rule. See Stannard, *Honor Killing*.

Navarro Pedrosa, the former spokesperson for the Philippine government during the trial and author of three books about Imelda Marcos observed, the former First Lady reveled in her acquittal by the American justice system:

> When critics ask why she had escaped answering for the crimes committed during the Marcos dictatorship, she has a ready answer—'I was acquitted.' And that, she proudly adds, was in America, where justice cannot be bought. The suggestion is that having been acquitted by an American court wipes away her guilt for the crimes she had been accused of in the Philippines.[11]

Through the drama of the trial and the perception of the United States legal system as an unimpeachable and utopian beacon of justice, Imelda was able to effectively resurrect and rebrand herself on the stages of American empire, which eventually enabled a Marcos dynasty political comeback that still looms large in Philippine politics today. Coming back full circle to the center of American imperial power, the figure of Imelda Marcos at the New York trial is an instructive point of departure to discuss the neocolonial factors at play at the end of America's Cold War partnership with the Marcoses.

This chapter engages with Amy Kaplan's work on United States imperialism and culture in order to understand the complex conditions and consequences of American imperialism that resulted in the unprecedented trial and made her acquittal possible. In *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, Kaplan argues that rather than just a unilinear movement of power, imperialism transforms not only the colony and colonized but also the imperial center itself. Kaplan challenges the meanings of "domestic" and "foreign" and contends that those are, in fact, ambivalent descriptions that serve to secure the national borders and identities that reinforce

[11] Carmen Navarro Pedrosa, *Imelda Romualdez Marcos: The Verdict* (Philippines: Accu-map, Inc., 2016), i.

empire building. The great irony of empire, as it attempts to extend its control of and secure resources beyond its imagined boundaries even at the expense of plundering and dispossessing peoples, is that the fruition of the American imperialist project will lead to the shattering of its own imagined national identity "as the boundaries that distinguish it from the outside world promise to collapse."[12] The collapsing and blurring of these binary divisions was unmistakably evident in the media discourses surrounding the 1990 courtroom drama with Imelda Marcos on center stage.

It is important to note, however, that the context of Kaplan's theorization of "empire" is distinct from the context of the 1990 Philippines-United States relations that is the focus of this chapter. Kaplan's discussion of American "empire" in the 19th century reveals the contradictory impulses between American identity and foreign affairs at a time when the United States grappled with domestic issues such as segregation and the failures of Reconstruction at home and colonial expansion abroad. In 1990, the United States appeared to be the sole world power after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The technologies of globalization also connected many parts of the world in ways that brought the foreign and domestic much closer than before. The Philippines was no longer an American colony in 1990 but rather viewed as a strategic location for continuing United States military presence, foreign trade, and touristic destination in the Asia and Pacific region.

In this critical moment, even as the prosecutors attempted to expose Imelda's crimes through a profusion of evidence and witnesses, an amalgam of historical, political, and neocolonial beliefs and representations in the courtroom would help to exonerate the former First Lady. Instead of obscuring or even attempting to change widely held assumptions and ideas

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[12] Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 16.

about the United States, the Philippines, and Imelda, her defense team unabashedly exposed the contradictions and consequences of American intervention and empire building in the Philippines. Her lawyers capitalized on the American jury's (and, arguably, the majority of the American public's) misconception of the Philippines as a "backward" and "irrational" third world foil to their first world self-image in order to absolve Imelda while simultaneously characterizing the American nation as Imelda's long-time supporter/enabler and harbinger of justice. Imelda's defense team was able to utilize and even embrace her gendered and racialized monstrous image in order to convince the grand jury to rule in her favor.

The defense team's implication that the excessive figure of Imelda was the monstrous product of Philippine politics and culture reasserted a colonial binary of "domestic" and "foreign." The judge and jury's confusion and annoyance pertaining to the case's jurisdiction highlighted their dismay over the staging of what they viewed as a third world farce in a "rational" American courthouse. The juror's comment in the epigraph, for instance, suggests a desire for geopolitical division ("It was on the wrong side of the ocean") and a willful forgetting of the colonial entanglements between the two nations ("We are not big brothers to the people overseas").[13] Moreover, in characterizing the case as "totally silly," the juror characterized the Marcos case as trivial, absurd, and out-of-place, especially in relation to the implied significance of the American criminal justice system.[14] In addition, Judge Keenan's pointed questions in front of the jury ("What is an American court? What am I doing here…trying a case involving the theft of money from Philippine banks?") revealed his underlying belief that the Marcos case did not belong in an American court and demanded the clarification and reestablishment of invisible national boundaries that separated the United States "domestic" concerns with those deemed

[13] Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."
[14] Ibid.

unquestionably "foreign."[15] Within Amy Kaplan's formulations, a guilty verdict would have been an impossible outcome, given the American judge and jury's discomfort with the anarchic consequences of American empire as exemplified by Imelda's presence in an American courtroom. To prosecute her in the United States would have compelled the Americans to wrestle with a monstrous figure made possible by American imperial interventions abroad.

This chapter argues that the American and Philippine media's coverage of the New York trial was an attempt to grapple with the gendered and imperial convictions that exonerated Imelda. The verdict was a shocking moment that prompted introspection—while Americans avoided questions about American complicity with the exonerated figure of Imelda, Philippine news sources sharply criticized the acquittal and demanded recognition of the imperial intimacies responsible for the continuing national trauma. This chapter thus focuses on the process that remythologized Imelda and reframed American national identity through the media's recapitulation and mediation of the New York trial's innocent verdict. This mediated process was a significant layer through which the story of the trial was retold and processed by the public. The American and Philippine media's portrayal of Imelda's "innocence" at the conclusion of the trial reveals much about fantasies and desires of both nations as they grapple with the aftermath of a dictatorship enabled by American Cold War ambitions in Southeast Asia. Imelda reappears on the international spotlight with her equally conspicuous defense lawyer and the apparition of her dead husband/co-dictator, Ferdinand Marcos. What emerges from the media's retelling of the trial were gendered imperial convictions and negotiations stemming from the media's representations of Imelda Marcos at the unprecedented trial in Philippine-United States history.

[15] Glaberson, "The 'Wrong' Court."

This chapter utilizes mainstream American and Philippine media coverage in the form of written articles, photographs, and editorial cartoons of the trial. Although broadcast television had become a popular mode of viewing news stories in the United States and the Philippines, electronic media coverage of trials via sound and video recordings and photographs was still prohibited in United States courtrooms in 1990.[16] Because of that, newspapers played a crucial role in communicating and circulating information about the most up-to-date daily courtroom developments and proceedings. Through this print coverage, readers were exposed to and became part of what Imelda herself has since dubbed the "trial of the century."[17] The archive of this chapter, therefore, also stands for the active and productive representational space through which the figures of Imelda, the United States, and the Philippines were understood and (re)constructed. This is particularly true as the personalities and theatrics of the trial dominated the news media, preoccupied the public's imagination, and distracted from the serious issues raised by the prosecutors. This chapter, therefore, is not about the trial as it happened in 1990 but rather about the media's "replaying" of the courtroom performances and the discourses that emerged through this process.

In the previous chapter, an examination of the shifting representations of Imelda at the moment of exile demonstrated how the United States' national image shifted in particularly stark contrast with the irrational and monstrous figure of Imelda. The New York trial occurred only a few years since the Marcoses were forced out of the Philippines, but much had transpired since Corazon Aquino assumed the Philippine presidency in their wake. The trial coincided with a unique historical juncture in Philippines-United States relations—a controversial military bases

[16] "History of Cameras in Courts," United States Courts, accessed February 15, 2018, http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/cameras-courts/history-cameras-courts.
[17] "The First Lady Treatment," *Vanity Fair*, February 1, 2007, accessed February 15, 2018, https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2007/02/wayne-imelda200702.

agreement neared its expiration amidst a growing anti-American sentiment among the Filipino citizenry and a struggling Philippine government that inherited the aftermath of the Marcoses' dictatorship. While the American government gathered thousands of documents and a slew of witnesses for the trial, Philippines-United States relations were facing critical changes and uncertainties. Most notably, serious negotiations were under way as the controversial RP-US Military Bases Agreement (MBA) between the two nations was nearing its expiration. At the end of World War II and after the Republic of the Philippines achieved nominal independence from the United States, the Military Bases Agreement was signed on March 14, 1947. In the agreement signed by Philippine President Manuel Roxas and United States Ambassador Paul McNutt, the United States took control of 23 bases, rent-free for 99 years.[18] The MBA guaranteed the United States continued occupation of Philippine sites, including "the largest U.S. military facilities outside the United States," Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base.[19] In 1966, Ferdinand Marcos negotiated to shorten the terms of the agreement to an earlier expiration date of 1991. By the time Imelda faced trial in New York, the Philippines and the United States were in the midst of exploratory talks to discuss the future of American bases in the Philippines. Rising anti-American nationalism complicated the negotiations between the two nations. In an attempt to address some of the concerns of the critics of the United States' military presence in the Philippines, the American government (represented by U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of the Philippines Nicholas Platt) published a volume titled *In Our Mutual Interest* that attempted to highlight the ostensibly positive impacts of U.S. military facilities in the archipelago. The 64-page publication seemingly intended for a Philippine readership concluded with a section titled

[18] *The US Bases in the Philippines: A Time for Hard Decisions*, Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs, (Loyola Heights, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1990), 12.
[19] Schirmer and Shalom, *The Philippines Reader*, 97.

"Q's and A's About the Bases" that sought to answer what were presumably the most pressing questions about the bases. Some of the concerns included the American undermining of Philippine sovereignty, fear of nuclear weapon attack, unequal pay of Filipino nationals in U.S. bases, American extraterritorial rights in the Philippines, and the sexual exploitation of women and growing AIDS epidemic in areas around the military bases.[20]

In addition, anti-American demonstrators, numerous coup attempts against Philippine President Corazon Aquino, and the evacuation of American Peace Corps volunteers out of the Philippines ramped up the pressure to reach an amicable solution to the impending treaty expiration. In fact, on the same day that the jury announced their verdict on Imelda's case, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on American anxieties over the abduction of an American Peace Corps volunteer by suspected communist insurgents in the Philippines.[21] The kidnapping, according to the article's secondary headline "may indicate a dangerous shift in the rebel campaign to shut U.S. military bases."[22] Indeed, communist rebel groups in the Philippines had, for some time, represented a challenge to the United States' anti-communist efforts in Southeast Asia. In 1990, however, the Americans no longer had the support of a dictatorial regime that exacerbated poverty and state-sanctioned violence in the Philippines (strong driving forces in increasing communist membership) while suppressing dissent and publicly announcing the Marcos regime's anti-communist efforts. As discussed in the previous chapters, the United States willingly financed the dictatorship only so long as the Marcoses also supported the Americans' foreign policy objectives in Southeast Asia. Consequently, the Marcos trial in New York occurred against the backdrop of the United States' Cold War project in the Philippines. The

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[20] *In Our Mutual Interest: U.S. Military Facilities in the Philippines*, publisher and date not identified, but possibly from Manila: United States Information Service, 1990 or 1991.
[21] Bog Drogin, "U.S. Worried by Peace Corps Kidnapping," *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1990.
[22] Ibid.

much-publicized presence of Imelda in an American courtroom was a singularly visible and unintended blowback from American intervention abroad. In other words, Imelda was in New York precisely because Uncle Sam was in Manila.

In 1990, the United States continued to grappled with its national image through the media's figurations of Imelda. This time, although Imelda herself was on trial, the United States government and the American spectator public were also implicit co-defendants. In the end, her innocence was reestablished because in popular American consciousness the United States, too, had to be acquitted of and separated from its imperial project in the Philippines. The mainstream American media's coverage of Imelda's trial was a way through which the American public processed and renegotiated its nation's own complicity with the Marcoses' crimes. The first part of this chapter explores the geopolitical implications and gendered imperial logics of Imelda's acquittal in an American court as articulated by the newsprint media. The American media's retelling of Imelda's trial centered on her excessiveness, shoes, the legality of the trial, and her conspicuous lawyer. What emerged from the United States newsprint media was the erasure of American guilt, the idealization of the American legal justice system, and the implication of Philippine culture as the ultimate reason for and source of Imelda's monstrosity. What does the mainstream American media's recapitulation of the verdict reveal about the nature of the American public's processing of the event? How did the representations of Imelda and her lawyer operate within its geopolitical context and what tensions and contradictions of American empire were exposed over the course of the courtroom drama? The second section examines the editorial cartoons from mainstream Manila-based Philippine newspapers that featured renderings of Imelda Marcos and the United States as the Philippine nation grappled with the ramifications of her acquittal. What viewpoints and questions did these Philippine-based editorial cartoons

raise in the wake of Imelda's acquittal? What was included and omitted in the media's retelling of the verdict speaks volumes about the "making" of Imelda's and the United States' innocence in this historical moment.

The Making of a "Small, Fragile Widow" in New York City

The three-and-a-half-year United States federal case against the Marcoses culminated in a trial by jury that lasted from March 20, 1990 to July 2, 1990 at the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York in Manhattan. The court was presided over by Judge John F. Keenan, a native New Yorker nominated to the federal bench by President Ronald Reagan in 1983. The case was assigned to a team of special prosecuting attorneys—Public Corruption Unit Chief Charles LaBella and Columbia University Law Professor Debra Livingston. Imelda, on the other hand, hired an American trial lawyer named Gerald Leonard "Gerry" Spence to represent her in court.

Although the result of the trial itself was significant in helping Imelda position for a future political comeback, Imelda's acquittal also brings to light the gendered and imperial logics that made her exoneration possible. Through the American newsprint media, the spectator public "witnessed" the debate over the United States' role in in the world, particularly in mediating conflicts assumed to be entirely "foreign" matters. Imelda and her alleged crimes were doubly framed as "foreign" by her defense team and the American media, enabled by and in relation to her lawyer's all-American cowboy persona. At stake in the political quagmire over Imelda's crimes was the widespread desire to disassociate from the messy consequences of American Cold War foreign policies and interventions in Southeast Asia. The culmination of the Imelda Marcos courtroom drama in New York revealed the American logics and anxieties over the spatial and political linkages embodied by the figure of Imelda. Indeed, when we look at the

question of "What is an American court?" as expressed by Judge Keenan in this chapter's epigraph, the answer was clear: the American court was perceived by the jury and the mainstream American media as an incorruptible space, distinct and separate from the consequences of its own making.

A survey of major American news coverage of the verdict revealed a second layer of reshaping Imelda's image at this critical moment in history. Her lawyer may have depicted her as a "small, fragile widow" in court but on the "stages" of American media, the figure of Imelda shapeshifted as a cultural site through which Americans made sense of their national identity. The news coverage revealed a process of public reckoning—what was framed and filtered in the news coverage of the trial demonstrated the stakes involved in remythologizing Imelda and the United States. Inasmuch as the American press attempted to tell the story of Imelda's trial and verdict, it was also a story about an American national identity grappling with its own history of complicity with a dictator.

The prosecution's criminal case against the Marcoses had a formidable start. Then-U.S. District Attorney Rudolph Giuliani of contemporary "law and order" infamy was so certain of its outcome that he "confidently promised a conviction of Marcos."[23] It centered on proving that the Marcoses' stolen wealth was illegally transferred from the Philippines to other nations, and ultimately, to the United States. The jury charged the Marcoses with a violation of the United States' Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). More specifically, they faced trial over four charges: (1) Racketeering Acts, (2) Conspiracy to Commit Racketeering, (3) Obstruction of Justice, and (4) Mail Fraud.[24] The charges carried a maximum of 50 years in

[23] Aquino, *Politics of Plunder*, 128.
[24] Ninotchka Rosca, "Tense moments before verdict, then pandemonium in court," *Manila Times*, July 4, 1990.

prison and $1 million in fines.[25] Imelda's most high-profile co-defendant, Saudi Arabian billionaire Adnan Khashoggi, was charged with mail fraud and obstruction of justice for allegedly aiding the Marcoses in concealing their plundered loot.[26] However, Ferdinand's death created an additional burden on the prosecuting team to prove that his widow had knowledge that the funds she used to purchase properties and goods in the United States were stolen. In order to prosecute Imelda in violation of the RICO Act, the prosecuting attorneys needed to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Imelda was, in fact, more than just Ferdinand's wife—that she was one of the main conspirators in stealing money from the Philippine government and then secretly transferring the stolen wealth from the Philippines to offshore bank accounts which was then used to purchase investments in the United States. The prosecution's case focused on the by-products of the Marcoses' plundered wealth, especially their most visible, edificial manifestations at America's financial and cultural center—four Manhattan skyscrapers. These properties were The Herald Center, 40 Wall Street, 200 Madison Avenue, and The Crown Building.[27]

In stark contrast to the prosecuting team's straightforward, fact-finding approach, Imelda Marcos' defense was based on the portrayal of Imelda as a naïve widow and a former American ally in the Pacific—an image carefully manufactured and presented by her famous and provocative lawyer. According to the news stories of Imelda's acquittal, Spence's meandering and theatrical defense focused on several arguments: (1) that Imelda was a persecuted widow who may have spent a lot of money and received gifts, but knew nothing of where the funds

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[25] "N.Y. jury acquits Imelda, Khashoggi," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 2, 1990.
[26] Adnan Khashoggi gained international infamy with his role in brokering the 1986 United States-Iran arms deal. For more information on the case against Adnan Khashoggi, see United States v. Khashoggi, 717 F. Supp. 1048 (S.D.N.Y. 1989), https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/717/1048/1584199/
[27] Pedrosa, *Imelda Romualdez Marcos: The Verdict*, 95.

came from, (2) what the majority of Americans assume to be irrational spending and corruption were actually rooted in Filipino culture, (3) that it was unfair to prosecute Imelda in the United States' courtroom because the Marcoses were American-supported allies for decades, and (4) the entire case was the result of the Philippine government's (headed by President Corazon Aquino) calculated interference with the United States legal justice system.

While the prosecution team "stuck to a more traditional approach" of presenting graphs, flow charts, thousands of documents, and 95 witnesses to prove their case, Imelda's defense team relied on the power of personality and performance of the main defendant and lawyer.[28] Indeed, representations and reinventions of Imelda were crucial to her defense team's strategy. While the discovery of her shoes reduced her to a symbol of flamboyance, ostentation, and greed, Spence exploited these figurations with particularly overt gendered and racialized language that seemingly appealed to the American jury. The jury consisted mostly of blue-collar workers—seven women and five men, three of whom were postal employees, two Transit Authority workers, a Con Edison employee, and another who worked at New York Telephone.[29] Almost all of the jurors knew about Imelda's 3,000 pairs of shoes, but only a few were aware of the Marcoses' crimes.[30] This is significant in Imelda's defense team's strategy of portraying her as the Filipina "other." The strategy was picked up by the American media quite carefully. For example, although the "she-was-a-little-woman defense hit home" for the jurors, it also seemed to "hit home" for the media. A "News Analysis" article by *The New York Times'* William Glaberson, for instance, interpreted Spence's defense as particularly effective because it

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[28] Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."
[29] Consolidated Edison, Inc. or Con Edison is an energy company based in New York City. See Craig Wolff, "Strategies Show Sharp Contrasts in Marcos Trial," *New York Times*, April 3, 1990, accessed February 15, 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/03/nyregion/strategies-show-sharp-contrasts-in-marcos-trial.html.
[30] "N.Y. jury acquits Imelda, Khashoggi."

"highlighted Mr. Spence's suggestion that Mrs. Marcos was frail and far from home."[31] That a frail Filipina "far from home" and facing a legal fight in a big metropolitan American city, indeed, makes more sense for the jury and the media in its attempt to process the trial.

Spence's strategy of proving that Imelda and her crimes were, indeed, "foreign" issues that did not belong in an American court were highlighted by the Imelda's performance and costuming in and out of the courtroom. In their vivid descriptions of Imelda's attire and performance, American news media outlets narratively replayed Spence's reinvention of Imelda as an innocent, "small, fragile widow." Perhaps to emphasize that she was, in fact, a widow, Imelda fashioned her body with signifiers of mourning. Her performance was as dramatic as it was formulaic and consistent. She wore the same black dress every day, with her preferred accessories—her rosary and tears. Imelda frequently visited church, with her loyal supporters and the press in tow throughout her trial. For example, she was spotted lighting 19 candles and dropping an envelope in a donation box at the St. Andrews Church in New York during lunch break on the first full day of jury deliberations on July 1, 1990.[32] In *The New York Times*' lengthy coverage of the acquittal, the trial was described as having a "surreal quality…that never diminished."[33] The article highlighted the performative aspects of the trial—Imelda's courtroom seating arrangement, her supporters' daily crusade to find space in the courthouse gallery or steps (namely, her sister who happened to be a nun). On several occasions, Imelda cried, coughed up blood, and collapsed in the courtroom. The *San Francisco Chronicle* published a photograph of Imelda being carried away on a stretcher, with an oxygen mask and her signature

[31] Glaberson, "The 'Wrong' Court."
[32] Romina N. De Los Reyes, "Imelda prays as jurors decide," *The Manila Chronicle*, July 1, 1990.
[33] Wolff, "Marcos is Acquitted in Racketeering and Fraud Case."

frail and downcast facial expression.[34] *The New York Times* writer's assessment of the courtroom atmosphere as "surreal" marked the trial as a bizarre, strange occurrence, an aberration in what the writer ostensibly imagined as a reasonable American legal proceeding. Although the dramatic events of the trial may have made it seem more of a theatrical piece in a city renowned for its Broadway shows than a serious trial, the courtroom dramatics as replayed in newsprint media reiterated the foreignness of Imelda-the-defendant. Moreover, the sensationalized discourses surrounding the trial erased any sort of American connection to and responsibility for creating the conditions that allowed the Marcoses to plunder and tyrannize with impunity—arguably an even more "surreal" and bizarre occurrence than Imelda's courtroom theatrics.

Imelda's courtroom performances could be read as her version and deployment of *puro arte,* which Lucy Mae San Pablo Burns offered as an episteme, "as a way of approaching the Filipino/a performing body at key moments in U.S.-Philippine imperial relations."[35] Imelda's theatrics suggested an effort to be performative and as a way of negotiating this particular historical event for her advantage. On the "stages" of the courtroom, church, and newspaper articles and photographs, circulations of Imelda's performing body conveyed meaning to the viewing masses. Although Burns finds potential in the performing body as a resistant and oppositional subject, in this instance Imelda capitalized on her hypervisibility and positioned her body as an icon of irrationality and inscrutability in order to gain sympathy. In publishing numerous photos of Imelda's post-verdict performance in church, the media unwittingly visually confirmed her vindication by the American jury and God. The ubiquitous photos of Imelda crawling on her knees at St. Patrick's Cathedral—a performance consumed by an international

[34] "Marcos Taken to Hospital After Collapsing in Court," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, June 1, 1990.
[35] Burns, *Puro Arte*, 2.

viewing public (figure 4.1)—reinforced her vindication by church and (American) state. In the United States, the distancing of Imelda as uniquely "foreign," was solidified in the heavy circulation of her ostensibly private moment at church. Depictions of Imelda "crawling" or "walking" on her knees distanced her American readers, who may have interpreted this moment as a particularly foreign and unusual moment. The readers were positioned as voyeurs of a private performance, indulging in the close observation of Imelda's body of difference and participating in the spectatorship of gendered penitence.

Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges In Racketeering and Fraud Case

Chester Higgins Jr /The New York Times

Imelda Marcos making her way to the main altar at St. Patrick's Cathedral after acquittal on charges that she looted the Philippine Treasury.

Figure 4.1 Front page, post-acquittal photograph of Imelda Marcos, *New York Times,* July 3, 1990.

The visual evidence of Imelda's "otherness" reflected one of the important pieces of her defense's strategy. Her lawyer Gerry Spence particularly exploited characterizations of Imelda's gender and culture throughout the trial. In a front page *New York Times* article, Spence was described as "relentless in his portrayal of Mrs. Marcos as a 'small, fragile widow,' who knew little about big-time investments, even in the face of much testimony that suggested otherwise."[36] Philippine Studies scholar and anti-Marcos activist Belinda A. Aquino observed in her book analyzing the dictatorship and corruption of the Marcos era that "[i]n a complete reversal of Imelda's willful role in the Marcos dictatorship, Spence spun a tale about the innocent status of women in Philippine culture. He invented his own 'conventional wisdom' by distorting Philippine history and portraying his client as a simple housewife whose only crime was 'loyalty to her deceased husband.'"[37]

However, Spence's legal argument was a bit messier than Aquino's assessment suggests. Although Imelda was, indeed, portrayed and judged as "innocent" because she supposedly lacked knowledge that her wealth was obtained illegally, she was painted as guilty of the uncontrollable desires brought about by her gender and culture. In a lengthy *New York Times* article, journalist Craig Wolff perceived parts of the trial as an indictment of Philippine culture and "Filipino style of governing."[38] According to Wolff,

> Her lawyers said that Mrs. Marcos's lavish buying was part of the culture, including her infamous collection of thousands of pairs of shoes. Her lawyers

[36] Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."
[37] Aquino, *Politics of Plunder*, 130.
[38] Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."

> even explained the testimony about kickbacks and 'commissions' that went to President Marcos as a natural component of the Philippine system.[39]

A widely circulated newspaper like *The New York Times*' coverage of the defense team's insistence on the possibility that Imelda's crimes were, in fact, results of Philippine culture was printed without caution and clarification. Considering that Imelda had already gained infamy for her greed and excessiveness as symbolized by her shoe collection, the news article's readers would have processed Wolff's journalistic observation as a plausible explanation for the First Lady's ostentation. In this formulation, the gendered conflation of nation, race, and class depicted Imelda's consumption practices as excessive and irrational like the reported "kickbacks" in Philippine politics. Picart succinctly asserts the implications of depictions of Imelda's excesses: "Imelda, with her numerous excesses, and in particular her commercial excesses, illustrates to us the boundary lines of a western, patriarchal commodity culture. Through her evolving rhetorical portraitures, one glimpses the fear of the possibility that such a market, long the preserve of western male rationalism, may be overrun by overly ambitious, highly irrational exotic female others."[40] In other words, Imelda's excessiveness was assumed irrational because of her "otherness." White women's consumption practices were not necessarily assumed as part of their "culture." Imelda, on the other hand, was assumed to harbor such irrational desires because of her race, cloaked in the term "culture" by the article.

Furthermore, contrary to Belinda A. Aquino's assertion, she was not framed as a "simple housewife." In fact, Gerry Spence embraced the public's perception of Imelda as an excessive third world woman and he was successful in utilizing her reputation as a profligate shopper to make his case. *The New York Times'* coverage of the acquittal seemingly viewed her negative

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Picart, "Media Star and Monster," 113.

reputation at face value. According to Wolff, "For Mrs. Marcos, who has been parodied and reviled for her ostentatious life style, the trial confirmed her reputation as a 'world-class shopper,' in the words of her own defense team."[41] An adjacent article, a "News Analysis" by William Glaberson, reiterated Spence's admission that Imelda truly was a "world class shopper."[42] This was, according to Glaberson, "a fact that anyone who is at all interested in shoes already knew."[43] Moreover, Wolff's article continued, the jury "never grasped why the case had been brought to an American courtroom and certainly they did not see her as a thief."[44] On the surface, Wolff was simply stating the defense team's affirmation of Imelda's reputation for profligacy, the jury's confusion over jurisdiction, and belief in Imelda's innocence. However, *The New York Times'* coverage may have unwittingly omitted any and all details of Imelda's excessiveness especially in relation to the extreme poverty experienced by so many Filipinos.

This journalistic omission was further highlighted in the newspaper's visual design. By omission, this particular retelling of the verdict erased any possibility of guilt and instead reiterated Imelda's reputation for excess without even questioning her profligacy's imperial source and its tragic consequences. Through unintentional erasure in newsprint coverage, the image of Imelda underwent a second round of reconstruction. The highly-regarded news source's choice of pull-quotes, for example, revealed its editorial strategy. A pull-quote is typically a short text "pulled" from the main body of the article in a larger font. This visual element is used to break up news stories and functions to attract readers or highlight the article's main points. *The New York Times'* full-page spread titled "The Marcos Verdict: Jurors' Skepticism Defeats a Four-Year Case" included the aforementioned article by Wolff and two other stories by

[41] Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."
[42] Glaberson, "The 'Wrong' Court."
[43] Ibid.
[44] Wolff, "Marcos Is Cleared of All Charges in Racketeering and Fraud Case."

Glaberson and an unnamed writer. The page was designed with three pull-out quotes: (1) "'Just because she was married to him doesn't make her guilty.'" (2) "'The Government did a terrible, terrible job.'" (3) "The she-was-just-the-little-woman defense hits home."[45] If these pull-out quotes were to successfully do its job of grabbing the audience's attention or highlighting the important points of the articles, the message overwhelmingly recapitulated precisely what Imelda's defense conveyed to the jurors. Moreover, the newspaper's public readership got a gist of two main perspectives through the pull-out quotes: the jurors' and the defense team's. The prosecutors' perspective ostensibly only deserved the spotlight in the form of a juror's critical comment. The anti-Marcos faction also barely received coverage except for a few disappointed comments from the Philippine government's representatives.

Imelda's image also functioned in implicit relation to Corazon "Cory" Aquino—the other most visible Filipina figure that had recently dominated international news. While Corazon Aquino's reputation for being a "simple housewife" stood in stark contrast with Imelda's extreme extravagance, the trial repositioned both women's political reputations. Corazon Aquino was no longer "just a housewife"—she was also the President of the Republic of the Philippines, determined to recover the wealth that the Marcoses had plundered from the Philippine treasury for two decades and accused of "meddling" with United States politics. Imelda, on the other hand, was constantly referred to as the "widow," "First Lady," and "wife," and not by her former official titles as Governor of Metro Manila and Minister of Human Settlements. For example, *The New York Times* referred to Imelda as "the widow of the former Philippine President," "former Philippine President's widow," and "former First Lady"; the *Chicago Tribune* and *Los*

[45] See full spread: *New York Times*, July 3, 1990.

Angeles Times referred to her as "former First Lady."[46] The choice of words depicts the newly-acquitted Imelda—not as the equally culpable former government official and co-dictator but as the gendered object unwillingly entangled and persecuted in a masculinized battle within and between nation-states.

Moreover, she was depicted as a helpless victim, facing persecution by the United States and Philippine governments (masterminded by Cory). News of anti-American sentiment and violence in the Philippines undoubtedly cast a shadow over Philippines-United States relations. Spence's insinuation before the jury that the Philippine government might have influenced Imelda's indictment, declaring "No prosecution, no bases," implicitly conveyed that although it was allowable for the United States to intervene in the Philippines it was unacceptable for the Philippines to have any bearing on American politics.[47] The geopolitical context in the Philippines also suggested instability and rage in a nation that for decades has been depicted as America's friendly ally in the Asia Pacific region. Imelda's trial in New York, therefore, did not exist in a vacuum. As the prosecution amassed thousands of meticulously collected evidence against Imelda, her lawyer commenced the trial with allegations of American collusion with her alleged crimes—claims that seemed believable given the continuing American neocolonial interventions in the Philippines.[48] While Cory's government dealt with increasing anti-American nationalism in the Philippines, Imelda was characterized as the helpless Filipina figure on the world stage. Unlike the defiant anti-American Philippine rebels and the meddling, overreaching

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[46] See *New York Times*, July 3, 1990. See also George E. Curry, "Jury acquits Imelda Marcos," *Chicago Tribune*, July 3, 1990. See also William Rempel, "Imelda Marcos Found Not Guilty," *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1990.
[47] William Rempel, "Marcos: Ex-First Lady Acquitted," *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1990.
[48] Spence alleged that then-CIA Director and Vice President George H.W. Bush advised the Marcoses to purchase properties in New York. See Herbert Atienza, "Imelda says Bush knew of Marcoses' US investments," *Manila Times*, April 5, 1990.

Corazon Aquino, Imelda embodied the obedient "other," rejoicing at vindication by an American jury.

Imelda reemerged in these news accounts precisely as her defense had intended—a "small, fragile widow" and a "world-class shopper." In contrast, Corazon Aquino was no longer depicted as a widow or housewife as she had been so prevalently portrayed at the beginning of her political career, but as a head of state that allegedly attempted to intervene in an American legal proceeding and "disappointed" by the jury's decision. Although the trial was a case between the United States and Imelda Marcos, the newspaper accounts barely mentioned the United States government prosecuting attorneys but rather focused on who appeared to be Imelda's "real" nemesis, Corazon Aquino. This is a significant juxtaposition because Imelda's gendered excessiveness and irrationality had worked so effectively, packaged against the backdrop of Cory's perceived simplicity and rationality.[49] The battle between the two women during the trial was framed through an imperial understanding of Philippine politics and culture, domesticating both women and tacitly deflecting from the United States' role in the international legal scandal.

Representations of Imelda's body also became a signifier of difference and distance between the United States and the Philippines. Imelda literally invaded the American "domestic" space with her "foreign" presence; her visibility as such emphasized that she did not belong. Her embodied "otherness" made sense to an American spectator audience because such distancing played a major part in the fantasy of domestic/foreign geopolitical separation and boundaries. In this case, Imelda Marcos represented the contradictions and anarchic quality of American imperial expansion, an imperial illusion pointed out by Amy Kaplan. While the figure of Imelda

[49] Picart, "Media star and Monster," 108.

in New York reignited questions about the United States' role in the world, domestic media discourse participated in reinforcing imagined boundaries against the threat of the "foreign other." Kaplan describes this domestic discourse as an attempt to correct and reenact the "anarchic qualities of empire through its own double movement."[50] In other words, when American empire's consequences, this time embodied in the figure of Imelda, boomeranged back home in New York, the jury and mainstream media also reemphasized the domestic/foreign binary between the United States and the Philippines. The judgment in the courtroom and ensuing media coverage converged in their articulation that Imelda was not America's problem.

Imelda's American Cowboy in New York City

Understanding the production and function of "Imelda" in the 1990 New York trial involves the unpacking of another figure: Gerry Spence's all-American lone cowboy persona. The manufacturing of Imelda's image was only as effective as it worked in tandem with that of Gerry Spence's characterizations. Imelda's gendered and racialized foreignness was juxtaposed with Spence's particular brand of white American masculinity, a rugged lone ranger individual reminiscent of the main character Tony O'Neil in *A Dangerous Life*, as discussed in the previous chapter. Spence's cowboy persona was a significant part of the courtroom drama as he represented a reassertion of an idealized American white masculinity made even more pronounced vis-à-vis the figure of Imelda. The emphasis on Imelda's foreignness, as juxtaposed with her lawyer's American cowboy figure made it thinkable and allowable to exonerate the former Philippine First Lady while also reshaping the United States' self-image as intrinsically forthright and an innocent bystander, free from the constraints of the international scandal. In this

[50] Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture,* 28.

historical moment, however, Imelda was not the villain—she was the necessary "other" to the American self-image that Spence projected to the American spectator public.

Spence built his professional law career around his reputation as a country lawyer from Jackson, Wyoming who "has spent his lifetime representing the poor, the injured, the forgotten and the damned against what he calls 'the new slave master,' a combine of mammoth corporations and gargantuan government."[51] The self-proclaimed champion of the underdog represented a few high-profile clients before taking on Imelda's case and prided himself in having never lost a criminal case in his career.[52] The swashbuckling lawyer understood the power of language, performance, and personality; years before he gained fame as an attorney, Spence already labeled himself the "best trial lawyer in America."[53]

Like Imelda, Spence consistently wore his signature attire like a uniform: a tan, fringed jacket over a black turtleneck, a cowboy hat over shoulder-length gray hair, and cowboy boots. The American mainstream media was fascinated by Spence's trademark style, a typical hypermasculinized figure of the Reagan era.[54] Perhaps in the context of the portrayal of greed and excess in the 1980s (typified by the film *Wall Street*), the prosecuting team was positioned as methodical, soulless proxies of the state while Spence represented an outsider figure, an anti-establishment lone ranger determined to fight for justice and the underdog. Mainstream American newspapers took particular notice of Spence and highlighted his lively personality and countryside background. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, described Spence as Imelda's

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[51] "Gerry Spence," accessed February 7, 2018, http://gerryspence.com.
[52] For example, Spence represented the family/estate of slain labor union activist and nuclear power technician, Karen Silkwood.
[53] Jan Hoffman, "A Triumph of One Man's Personality: The American Courtroom's Buffalo Bill," *New York Times*, October 15, 1993, accessed February 17, 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/15/news/a-triumph-of-one-man-s-personality-the-american-courtroom-s-buffalo-bill.html?pagewanted=all.
[54] See Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*.

"flashy attorney…of Jackson, Wyo."[55] *The Guardian* was more precise in its depiction of Spence:

> Garry [sic] Spence, Mrs Marcos's chief defen[s]e counsel, who persisted in wearing his Wyoming cowboy hat throughout, deployed the stratagems of chivalry in his client's cause. Mrs Marcos, a working-class girl made good, was a victim and her only crime, he said at one point, was "loving her husband for 35 years". She was a "world-class shopper", but also a "world-class human being".[56]

The emphasis on Spence's background—in a nutshell, a cowboy from America's heartland—imbued his character with perceived "chival[ric]" authority to defend the right of a "working class girl," a wife who was characterized as an eager and innocent participant in the world through capitalist consumption. Furthermore, Imelda was increasingly positioned as a working-class victim, persecuted by the American and Philippine governments and whose liberation could only come from the efforts of the anti-establishment, lone cowboy, figure of rescue: Gerry Spence.

The attention given to the figure of Spence-as-cowboy in this historical moment illuminated a productive representational framework in the saga of Imelda Marcos' trial. In Eric Hobsbawm's *Fractured Times*, the author traces the genealogy of the lone North American cowboy figure and attempts to explain its international popularity.[57] According to Hobsbawm, the myth of the lone cowboy "represented the ideal of individualist freedom pushed into a sort of

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[55] "Imelda Marcos Acquitted" *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1990.
[56] "From the archive, 3 July 1990: Tears and cheers as Imelda cleared," *The Guardian,* July 3, 1990, accessed February 26, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/03/imelda-marcos-fraud-cleared-philippines-1990.
[57] Eric Hobsbawm, "The myth of the cowboy" in *Fractured Times* (New York: The New Press, 2013), accessed March 13, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/mar/20/myth-of-the-cowboy.

inescapable jail by closing of the frontier and the coming of big corporations."[58] Simultaneously, the American cowboy figure also represented a dangerous, nativist, and racist ideal: "the defence of the native Waspish American ways against the millions of encroaching immigrants from lower races."[59] At this juncture, Hobsbawm contends that the cowboy figure "becomes the lanky, tall Aryan," an "invented cowboy tradition [that] is part of the rise of both segregation and anti-immigrant racism."[60] Case in point, Gail Bederman's examination of the remaking of (white) American manliness in the Progressive era through discourses of civilization around the turn of the 20th century demonstrates how Theodore Roosevelt transformed himself from being viewed as a soft, effeminate politician to a virile cowboy figure.[61] Crucial to Roosevelt's makeover was the rejuvenation of American manhood (the reclamation of white male authority) through aggressive, nativist, and racially-motivated American imperialism. Closer to today, the reinvention of the cowboy myth coincided with the political rise of Ronald Reagan who actively channeled the cowboy persona, except that the lasso was increasingly replaced by a gun. Hobsbawm suggests that a significant reason for the cowboy's cultural impact might be explained by the "in-built anarchism of American capitalism" or the "ideal of an individual uncontrolled by any constraints of state society."[62]

In the Imelda Marcos case, the anarchic qualities embedded in the cowboy persona manifested in three ways: (1) Spence's anti-establishment stance that defied the conventional standards and etiquette of the courtroom, (2) representations of Imelda as a "world class shopper," unrestricted by state authority, and (3) Spence's insistence on preventing American

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).
[62] Ibid.

empire's negative consequences (i.e. Imelda) from ricocheting and remaining in the United States. And indeed, as conveyed by the media, Spence performed his cowboy persona impeccably. The American media was fascinated with Imelda's "folksy" lawyer, especially as he contrasted so starkly against the "cool, businesslike prosecutor" in the urban, cosmopolitan setting of New York City.[63] For a reported $5 million, Spence put on a performance that recast Imelda's public persona and captivated the attention of the news media.[64] Although Imelda navigated through the trial with the help of her very expensive and nationally renowned lawyer, the American media largely ignored his pay grade in favor of portrayals of Spence as a uniquely individualistic, rugged cowboy. In this imagined persona, Spence represented a white masculine figure undeterred in his personal pilgrimage for justice, unaffected by the temptation of money, and unintimidated by authority figures. On several occasions, he reportedly challenged and aggravated the highest-ranking authority of the court, Judge Keenan. As one newspaper article observed, Spence's "oratorical gift, the withering cross-examinations, the refusal to cower before judges or prosecutors" and "center-stage manner" were instrumental factors in his "triumph of personality."[65] His use of straightforward, repetitive, colorful language proved theatrical and effective. He "deliberately sprinkles his language with plain-spoken images" and catch phrases that "he repeats throughout the trial."[66] The *San Francisco Chronicle*'s coverage of the acquittal

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[63] Craig Wolff, "Lawyers Begin Marcos Trial in Air of Raucous Contention," *New York Times*, April 4, 1990, accessed February 15, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/1990/04/04/nyregion/lawyers-begin-marcos-trial-in-air-of-raucous-contention.html.

[64] According to multiple sources, including Belinda Aquino's *Politics of Plunder* (130) Imelda paid Gerry Spence $5 million. For more information on Gerry Spence's self-characterizations, see "Gerry Spence," accessed February 7, 2018, http://gerryspence.com.

[65] Hoffman, "A Triumph of One Man's Personality: The American Courtroom's Buffalo Bill," https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/15/news/a-triumph-of-one-man-s-personality-the-american-courtroom-s-buffalo-bill.html

[66] Ibid.

depicted Spence as a "Wyoming lawyer who sported an ever-present cowboy hat" who "repeatedly clashed" with Judge Keenan.[67] *The Washington Post*'s coverage of the acquittal quoted Spence during one of his battles with Judge Keenan. "You do everything possible to subvert my purpose," Spence reportedly said in court.[68]

This particular portrayal positioned Spence's presumed White masculine sincerity and idealism against Imelda's Filipina avarice, materialism, and greed. This juxtaposition functioned without much critique from the American media's coverage of the trial because it reestablished a national self-identity consistent with a benevolent and exceptional understanding of American world power against the irrational foreign "other." Spence was able to play the white masculine figure of rescue to Imelda's victimized foreign "other" because the gendered and racialized logics of American imperialism. Imelda's presence in the United States—at center stage, no less—threatened the American national self-image of unbridled independence from the threat of its own imperial doing. Spence represented the aspirational American figure—that somehow, despite the ugly consequences of American intervention abroad, there exists a genuine American identity in the shape of Gerry Spence.

Philippine Editorial Cartoons: Visual Critiques from the Margins

Much of the mainstream American newsprint's coverage of the 1990 New York verdict sensationalized and caricatured Imelda Marcos and Gerry Spence, effectively participating in and replaying her defense's legal tactics commensurate with an American national self-identity and rooted in gendered imperial logics. Frustration among journalists was evident in the Philippine newsprint media even before the acquittal's announcement. For instance, Ninotchka Rosca

[67] "Imelda Acquitted of Raiding Philippine Treasury," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 3, 1990.
[68] Howard Kurtz, "U.S. Jury Clears Marcos in Fraud Case."

observed in her *Manila Times'* Sunday magazine editorial that there was an "inescapable" feeling "that there's some racist and sexist element in the way [the Imelda Marcos] trial has been handled and is being covered by the US media."[69] The New York verdict also exposed the bitter political divisions in Philippine politics between the supporters of the Marcos family and that of Corazon Aquino's administration.[70] This section turns to a powerful visual mode of critique in Philippine mass media: editorial cartoons. In Alfredo and Irene Roces' book about the political cartoons of the Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos era, the authors posit that in the context of the problematic and intimate relationship between the Marcoses' dictatorship and the mass media, "political cartoons make marvelous human history because they not only portray events, they say something about the emotional and psychological forces surrounding public figures and events."[71] Unlike written history that "deliberately and proudly suppress[es] all their own feelings…in a self-conscious effort to appear objective," "political cartoonists make no bones about their personal biases, flaunting their emotional and subconscious attitudes towards their subjects."[72] Indeed, this shorthand mode of communication condenses critique within one frame, effectively conveying its message(s) through recognized visual cues. The news coverage of the 1990 New York trial resulted a series of political cartoons, mostly from the Philippines, that effectively expressed the mass media's interpretation of the event. Representations of Imelda Marcos alongside prevailing American cultural referents allowed for the articulation of critique from the Philippine press. The Philippine cartoonists resisted the idealization of the American

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[69] Ninotchka Rosca, "Letter from New York: More About the Trial," *The Sunday Times Magazine*, *Manila Times*, July 1, 1990.
[70] "Verdict revives political divisions," *Manila Chronicle*, July 4, 1990.
[71] Alfredo Roces and Irene Roces, *Medals and Shoes: Political Cartoons of the Times of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, 1965-1992* (Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil Publishing Inc., 1992), 8.
[72] Ibid.

court and deviated from the American media's unquestioning depiction of Imelda as a "small, fragile widow" in New York. As the following editorial cartoons published immediately after the verdict illustrate, the American justice system and nation itself was portrayed as equally absurd and culpable as Imelda.

The history of Philippine editorial cartooning or *komiks*, much like that outside the Philippines, was connected to the formation of the printing press for mass consumption most likely around mid to late nineteenth century.[73] Political graphic art relied on the newsprint medium's access to a wide readership in order to circulate its visual message. "The printed image," according to Alfredo and Irene Roces, "made it possible to fulfill the peculiar character of a political satire: something that can be relished in private because of its hostile message, and yet simultaneously something that can be circulated extensively if it is to do its 'dirty work.'"[74] Mass media censorship during the Spanish colonial period, early American colonial era, Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II, and Martial Law restricted political critique and prevented the growth editorial cartooning as a visual form of communication in the Philippines.[75] It was during the postwar period from 1945 to 1972 that Philippine editorial cartooning benefited from relative freedom of the press. During Martial Law, Ferdinand Marcos' tight grip on Philippine media suppressed much of political cartooning except for a few underground journalists that braved the violent ramifications of dissent. Editorial cartoons about the Philippines were also "woefully sparse" outside the archipelago, except for a few published

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[73] For more information on the history of Philippine political cartooning, see Alfredo Roces, "Mang Juan and Uncle Sam: The Filipino Caricaturist as Historian" in Alfredo and Irene Roces, *Medals and Shoes: Political Cartoons of the Times of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, 1965-1992* (Pasig, Metro Manila: Anvil Publishing Inc., 1992). The essay was originally published in *Political Cartoons, Political Caricature of the American Era 1900-1941* (Philippines: Vera Reyes Inc., 1985).
[74] Ibid., 156.
[75] Ibid.

in Australia, United States, and Hong Kong. The assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983, the People's Power Revolution in 1986, and the Marcoses' forced exile to Hawai'i saw an increase in the production of and interest in editorial cartoons depicting the conjugal dictators. Around the time of Ferdinand's death, the Marcoses had already "dissolved into cartoon characters," especially with Imelda Marcos facing trial in New York.[76] Alfredo and Irene Roces likened Imelda's fate to that of Cinderella, whose "coach has reverted to a pumpkin" without a "prince charming" to find her missing shoes that would "turn her into that princess she had lusted so desperately to be."[77]

Although news of Imelda's exoneration in New York dominated the front pages of many mainstream American newspapers, few utilized the editorial cartoon genre to express its reaction to the event. One exception was the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s depiction of Imelda in her now-iconic post-verdict posture (figure 4.2). In two frames, the editorial cartoon by the newspaper's full-time cartoonist Tom Meyer illustrated Imelda in her typical bouffant hairstyle, black dress accented with a fur collar, and her hands tightly gripping a rosary. She was depicted on her knees, with her eyes closed, praying, and with a speech bubble above her head that read: "How can I ever thank you for exonerating me, Lord?" In another speech bubble, the invisible "Lord" answered: "Give the money back." The figure of Imelda responded in the following frame, "Hahaha! Omnipotent and a sense of humor too! You're the greatest!"[78] In this particular American illustration, the figure of Imelda was portrayed in a similar fashion as in many of the mainstream American newspapers, that of her penitent performance at St. Patrick's Cathedral—her fur collar symbolized her excesses, her shoe was strategically visible to convey greed, and

[76] Ibid., 14.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Tom Meyer, editorial cartoon, *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 4, 1990.

her response to the "Lord" demonstrated her irrationality. Without the presence of any United States cultural referents, the illustration was decontextualized, relying instead on the reader's knowledge of the trial and the familiar images the media had generated. Furthermore, in choosing to thank the "Lord" for her exoneration, the cartoonist erased the real source of her acquittal: The United States judicial system. In addition, the figure of Imelda faced the "Lord's" judgment alone as she was the only one featured in the frames. By simply laying out her absurdity in this confessional moment as merely a product of her personal degeneracy, the cartoon lost its broader political potential, and perhaps also revealed its political purview. Imelda was rendered alone in her feigned penitence without any of her co-conspirators. Her theft was personified as the ultimate sin while American responsibility and guilt were effectively erased in the process.

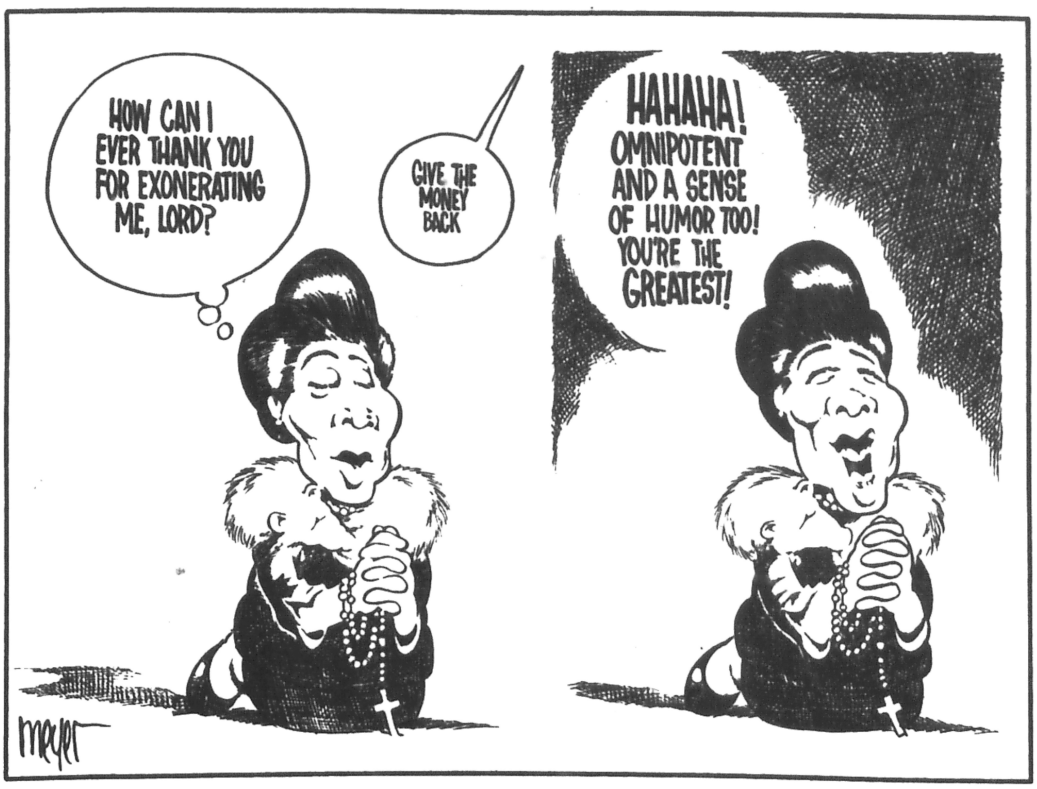

Figure 4.2 Editorial cartoon by Tom Meyer, *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 4, 1990.

Across the Pacific, Philippine editorial cartoons published after the Marcos acquittal featured explicit critiques of the American justice system's decision to exonerate Imelda. The cartoons' most pronounced technique was to use symbols of the United States (the nation, people, and/or government) personified in the figures of Uncle Sam and Miss Liberty. In doing so, these editorial cartoons unquestionably implicated the United States in the latest saga of the Marcoses' crimes as well as critiqued and exposed notions of American justice and liberty as farce and a sham. Unlike the majority of American newsprint media, the American justice system and Imelda Marcos—and their systemic, long-term collusions—did not emerge unscathed in these satirical drawings of the New York trial.

As opposed to the American media's all-too familiar and ubiquitous depiction of Imelda in her fragile and penitent state, Philippine editorial cartoons such as the one featured on *The Manila Chronicle*'s July 4, 1990 issue portrayed Imelda as powerful, calculating, and opportunistic in her quest for freedom. In this particular instance, she was portrayed as the iconic Miss Liberty figure. Imelda-as-Liberty held a bag of American currency (as signified by the dollar sign) instead of a torch and a tabula ansata with the initials "KBL" imprinted on its front cover instead of the original's "July IV MDCCLXXVI." Inscripted on the base of the Imelda/Miss Liberty figure were the words "Happy Birthday."[79] Based on Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's *Liberty Enlightening the World* or Statue of Liberty design in the late nineteenth century, the Lady Liberty or Miss Liberty icon has since symbolized the American nation and the

[79] Untitled editorial cartoon, *Manila Chronicle*, July 4, 1990.

political ideal of freedom or liberty.[80] In depicting Imelda as Miss Liberty, the unnamed cartoonist challenged the American ideal of freedom. For the newly exonerated Imelda, this "freedom" meant the ability to keep her ill-gotten wealth as symbolized by the bag of money. In addition, Imelda's acquittal also opened the possibility of her return to the Philippines to rescucitate and potentially lead the Marcoses' political party, KBL (*Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* or New Society Movement). Imelda was not simply vindicated, she was dramatically acquitted on her birthday—an easily perverted happenstance that Imelda would later utilize in her quest to characterize the Marcos dynasty as destiny. In ascribing agency to the figure of Imelda, the political cartoon disrupted the mainstream American fantasies of Imelda as a helpless widow exonerated by a seemingly incorruptible American justice system. The figure of Imelda was depicted as embodying and invading the very symbol of the United States, the Statue of Liberty, thus exposing the intimate and corrupt collusions that enabled theft and structured American imperial ambitions in the Philippines. Imelda was just as guilty as one of the most revered symbols of American freedom; instead of upholding her most valued torch that would supposedly "enlighten the world," Miss Liberty was implicated with a bag of money, suggesting that, like Imelda, the United States was (mis)guided by greed. In other words, there was no distancing or separating of Imelda's crimes and American national identity—in this visual critique, they were one and the same.

[80] For a more detailed discussion of the Liberty figure, see Roger A. Fischer's *Them Damned Pictures: Explorations in American Political Cartoon Art* (New Haven, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1996).

Figure 4.3 Untitled editorial cartoon, *Manila Chronicle*, July 4, 1990

The *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *The Manila Times* also published editorial cartoons in the wake of the verdict, this time with illustrations of Imelda alongside the figure of Uncle Sam. In the Philippines, the intensity of American neocolonial influence and interference on the social, political, economic, and cultural facets of Philippine life was often highlighted in the political cartoons in the post-World War II era. "The political cartoons of the era, both local and international," observed Roces, "very lucidly portray[ed] this American dictation, a favorite imagery being Uncle Sam as puppeteer."[81] The figure of Uncle Sam, usually rendered as a tall male figure with broad shoulders, a pronounced nose, and wearing a tailcoat and a top hat, personified the United States as a nation, people, and/or government. In Jess Abrera's editorial

[81] Roces and Roces, *Medals and Shoes*, 10.

cartoon for the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, the cartoonist featured a large profile of Uncle Sam's head, wearing his typical top hat and bow tie etched with stars and stripes and a speech bubble with the words "She's innocent" (figure 4.4). The Uncle Sam figure's facial expression was beaming with a wide-eyed smile and his hand outstretched and holding the figure of Imelda Marcos in a black dress, her eyes closed, her cheeks chubby, and her hair in a bouffant. Uncle Sam appeared to be shaking the figure of Imelda from high up in the air while fragments fell from her dress and accumulated into a mountain of "racketeering & fraud charges" underneath her. The cartoon also featured a third figure, a thin, barefoot female figure with long hair and tattered, patched up clothes. The expression on her face as she looked up at the figure of Uncle Sam and Imelda was one of disbelief—her mouth was wide open and the speech bubble above her head contained the words "Sa tingin n'yo…" ("You think…").[82] In Abrera's editorial cartoon, Uncle Sam was depicted as giant, with his dominating face and arm. Despite Uncle Sam's large eyes, intently looking at the "evidence" literally falling out of Imelda's body, he still exonerated her. Moreover, the Uncle Sam figure's deranged-looking smile made it seem as if he was enjoying the double process of finding and revealing Imelda's crimes while simultaneously declaring her innocence. The bewildered female figure that witnessed the process of exoneration ostensibly symbolized the Philippine nation as signified by her tattered clothing and Tagalog speech bubble. She was much smaller in size compared to that of Uncle Sam and Imelda, suggesting poverty and helplessness. She represented every Filipin(a) who not only witnessed but, more importantly, bore the brunt of the Marcoses' crimes with full support from the American government. Her comment, "Sa tingin n'yo…" loosely translates to "You think…" However, "tingin" also literally translates to "sight"—thus further emphasizing the significance

[82] Jess Abrera, editorial cartoon, *Philippine Daily Inquirer,* July 4, 1990.

of visual representation in the myth/truth-making process that the Marcoses have long utilized to shape their public personas.

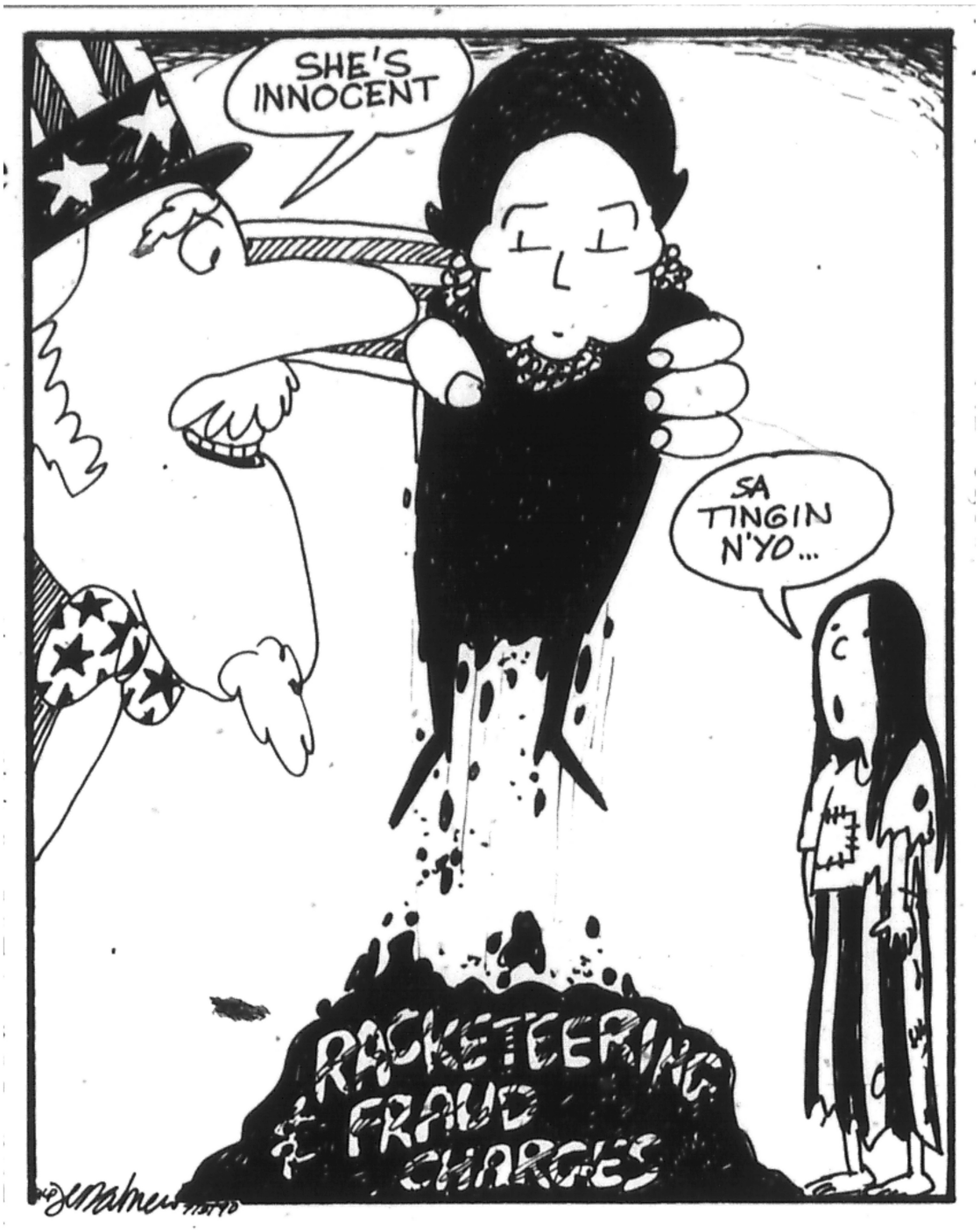

Figure 4.4 Editorial cartoon by Jess Abrera, *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, July 4, 1990

The Manila Times also published an editorial cartoon in response to Imelda's acquittal in New York that utilized the figure of Uncle Sam vis-à-vis Imelda as a form of visual critique (figure 4.5). In Leonilo Doloricon's depiction of the trial, the judge, jurists, and prosecutor—all of them men, and drawn in the likeness of Uncle Sam—surrounded the figure of Imelda Marcos. One of the jurors stood behind the stand and announced, "…Based on our judgment we find the defendant not guilty!"[83] Behind Imelda stood her lawyer, Gerry Spence, as signified by his signature cowboy hat. Although Spence's clothes differed slightly from the rest of the Americans in the cartoon, his face was similar to the other men in the room. Imelda looked worried, with her eyebrows knit and her lips pursed. Meanwhile, the Uncle Sam characters were depicted with happy, smiling faces—ostensibly signifying an American herd mentality or collusion. Doloricon's satirical depiction of the United States courtroom during Imelda's trial conveys the pretensions and theatricality of the American justice system. In rendering all the American participants of the trial as essentially the same, the cartoonist seemingly suggested that the American mindset and identity (as represented by Uncle Sam) played a significant part in absolving Imelda of her crimes. This editorial cartoon stood in stark contrast to the American media's attention to the dramatic clashes between the judge and Spence, for example. In this rendition, the makeup of the trial's participants mattered less than the American ideology that would eventually acquit Imelda. In this spectacle of American justice, the decision was predetermined by imperial convictions. No amount of evidence and personalities could have prosecuted Imelda because America, too, had to be acquitted of and forgiven for its role in propping up the Philippine dictators.

[83] Leonilo Doloricon, editorial cartoon, *Manila Times* July 4, 1990.

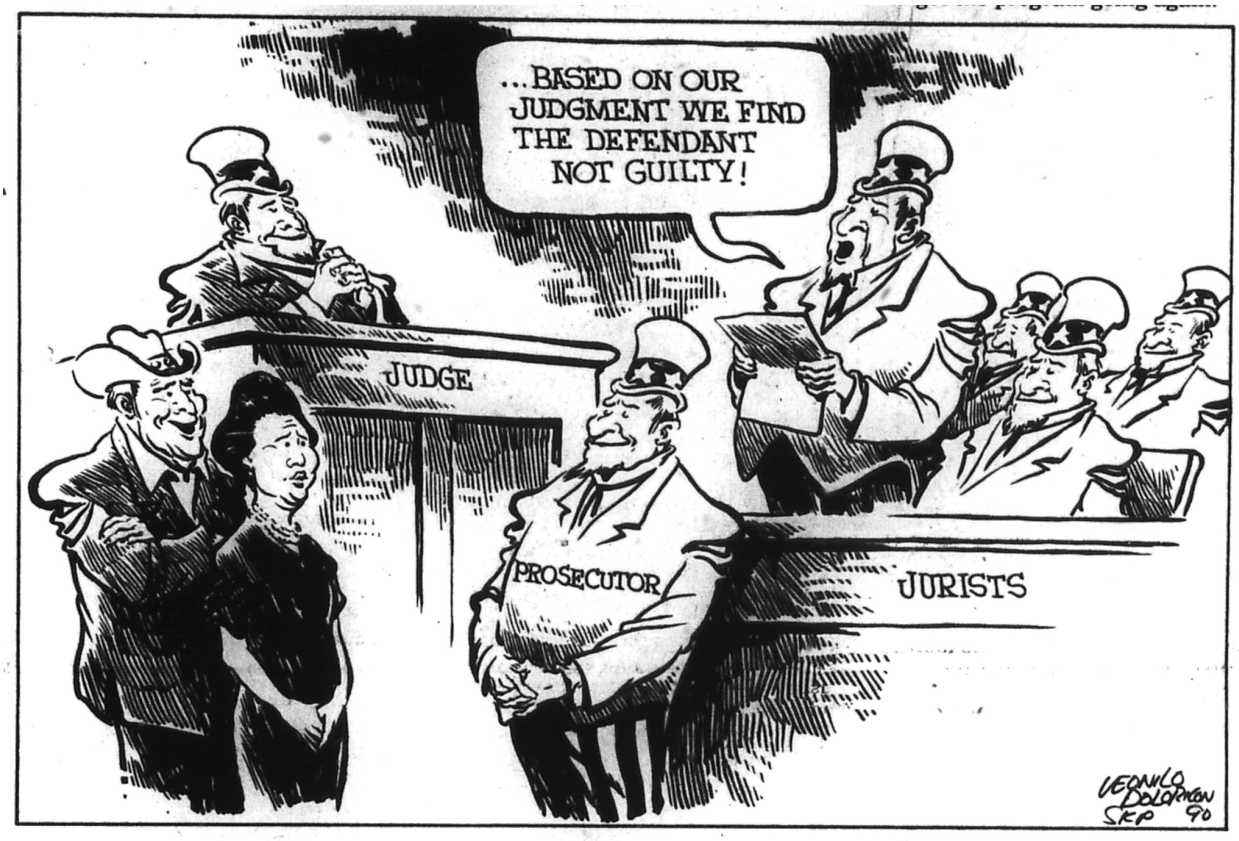

Figure 4.5 Editorial cartoon by Leonilo Doloricon, *Manila Times* July 4, 1990

The Manila-based editorial cartoons utilized the cartoon genre in a way that was absent in the American coverage of Imelda's acquittal—as a form of political critique meant to expose Imelda's guilt as well as parody the American imperial system that enabled her crimes. Within the context of a rising Philippine nationalism in the wake of Martial Law, the Philippine editorial cartoonists seemingly expressed what many Filipinos felt about the contradictions of American imperial ideologies. While touting virtues of freedom, equality, and justice, for example, the United States continued its neocolonial interventions abroad in the form of covert operations and military presence. While the United States media idealized the American justice system that exonerated Imelda, the Philippine media criticized the United States' symbols, rituals, and ideals as equally absurd and culpable as Imelda. The increasing anti-bases sentiment in the Philippines

reflected this unfavorable view of an overreaching and unscrupulous American empire. Just one day after Imelda's acquittal, on July 4, 1990, a large anti-American bases demonstration took place in Manila, "mar[ring]…[the] celebration of Filipino-American Friendship day."[84] Thousands reportedly marched to the United States Embassy in Manila and "denounced the continued intervention of the United States in the [Philippines'] internal affairs."[85] The demonstrators, most of whom were students and workers, condemned the United States military presence as well as its unjust economic and political interventions in the Philippines.[86] In the United States, it may have been easier to trust Gerry Spence's exoneration of Imelda as a widow with limited agency. In the Philippines, however, the memory of a Marcos dictatorship was all too raw, hemorrhaging and rotting at the seams where tyranny and poverty intersected with American militarism and occupation.

This chapter concludes with a political cartoon whose origins and content are reminders of the United States imperial power's messy, overlapping circuits. Corky Trinidad, an internationally renowned Manila-born Filipino cartoonist was forced out of the Philippines under the pressure of threats of violence from the Marcos regime.[87] After leaving the Philippines, Trinidad moved to Hawai'i, found work at the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and became the first Asian editorial cartoonist to gain syndication in the United States. The colonial and neocolonial linkages—the cartography of American imperial ambitions and interventions—were ever-present in the routes and movements that eventually brought Trinidad to Hawai'i. Hawai'i represents a

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[84] Milagros Montana, "Big anti-US bases rally mars Fil-Am Day celebration," *Philippines Journal*, July 5, 1990.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Mari-Ela David, "Editorial cartoon legend Corky Trinidad dies, legacy of his pen lives," http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/9845230/editorial-cartoon-legend-corky-trinidad-dies-legacy-of-his-pen-lives

liminal space where histories and contradictions of American imperialism intersected: from the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom to the settler colonial undertaking that brought peoples from many parts of the world, including the Philippines, to work in the majority white-owned plantations. Within this context, the American-backed dictators received asylum and lived alongside their supporters as well as their victims. After Imelda's New York acquittal, she was scheduled to return to her relatively opulent exile in Honolulu, regularly visiting her deceased husband's preserved body and awaiting her return to the Philippines.

The July 3, 1990 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* editorial cartoon by Trinidad depicted Imelda in a black dress, standing next to an all-male criminal lineup consisting of international criminals, the most conspicuous of whom was Panama's Manuel Noriega (figure 4.6). She was wearing her signature courtroom widow's outfit, a long-sleeve, knee-length black dress. Her chubby, smiling face is joined by the smiling faces of the other "criminals"; underneath the cartoon was a caption reading: "IT JUST SHOWS THAT WHAT WE DO IN OUR COUNTRY, TO OUR OWN PEOPLE—IS NONE OF YOUR @*#!! BUSINESS…"[88] The same cartoon was also printed on the July 5, 1990 editorial page of *The Manila Chronicle.*

[88] Corky Trinidad, editorial cartoon, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 3, 1990.

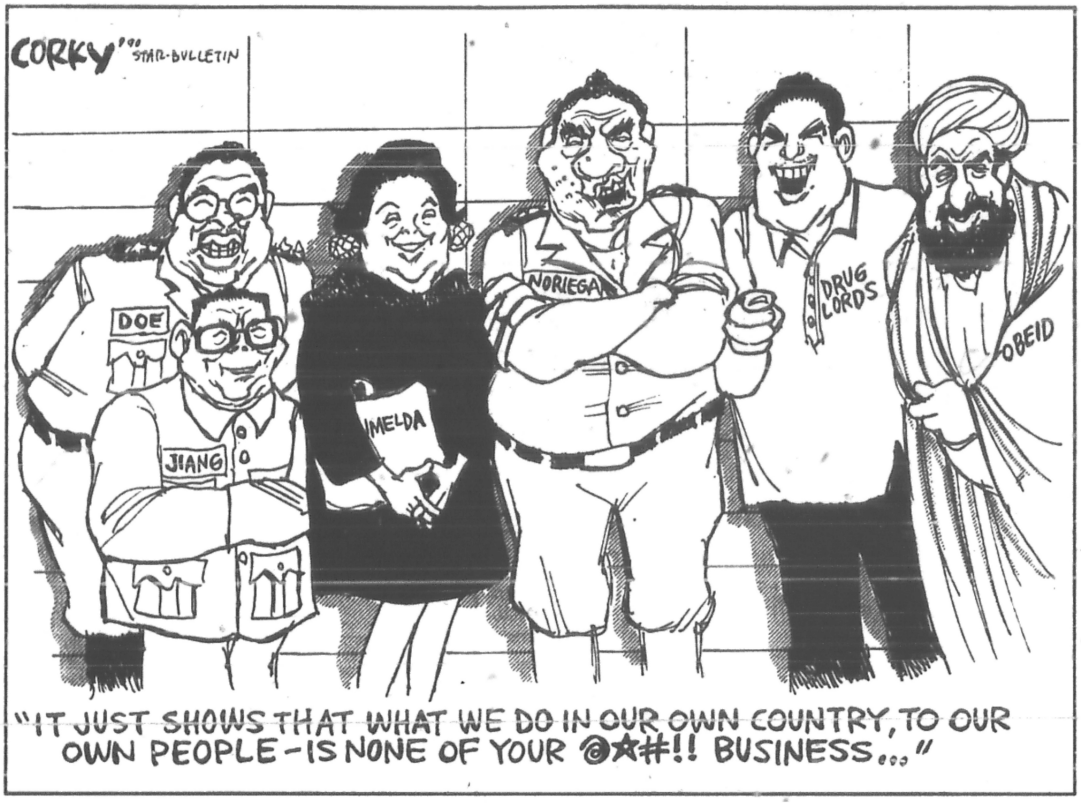

Figure 4.6 Editorial cartoon by Corky Trinidad, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 3, 1990

Trinidad's presentation of the figure of Imelda insists that the viewers restructure their gendered and imperial perspectives in order to take seriously the crimes committed by Imelda Marcos. In this cartoon, she is no longer the grieving widow or the laughable figure of excess; instead, her evident criminality provokes the audience to consider the transnational linkages of America's Cold War global ambitions and interventions. What they did "in [their] own country, to [their] own people" were unspeakable crimes and yet, the likes of Imelda could be absolved because American imperialism—its interventions, collusions, and enduring ideals—had worked so intimately and productively with dictators and contributed to the continuing trauma of their victims. The unfortunate ramification of misrepresentations of Imelda Marcos is its potential to be embraced and utilized by the perpetrators themselves. The 1990 case against Imelda Marcos

is now remembered in snapshots—overexposed images made possible by the power of American press coverage—a usable past that Imelda would manipulate to remake herself back on the stages of Philippine politics.

CONCLUSION

On November 8, 2016, the Philippine Supreme Court announced its decision to authorize the burial of Ferdinand Marcos at the Philippine national cemetery also known as *Libingan ng mga Bayani* (LNMB or Heroes' Cemetery) in Manila. The burial site is a mere one-hour drive from the tarmac where Marcos' archrival, Ninoy Aquino, was shot in the back of the head at point blank range upon his return from forced exile in 1983. Outraged at the Supreme Court's decision, demonstrators lined the very same street where thousands gathered in a national revolution that toppled the twenty-year Marcos regime in 1986. The 2016 presidential election of Rodrigo Duterte, a law-and-order, Machiavellian figure sometimes likened to Ferdinand Marcos and Donald Trump, was instrumental in fulfilling the wishes of Ferdinand's widow—Imelda Marcos—to bury her husband with military honors at the nation's capital. For months since Duterte's initial announcement supporting Marcos' hero's burial, a protest group called *Bawa't Bato* (Every Stone) placed stones inscribed with the names of the Marcos regime's victims on the proposed gravesite.[1] Their voices mattered little to the Duterte administration, however, as Ferdinand's remains were secretly transported from a mausoleum in his hometown of Batac, Ilocos Norte to Manila. On November 18, 2016, the remains of the dictator were buried on sanctified grounds in an unannounced, private ceremony.

Although media representatives were reportedly prohibited from the cemetery, photographs of the burial surfaced in the news and on social media outlets. The aging Imelda

[1] According to *CNN Philippines*, the Bawa't Bato initiative (made up of Bantayog, Martial Law Chronicles Project Team, UP Samasa Alumni, Claimants 1081, Akbayan Youth and Nameless Martyrs and Heroes) was established on June 26, 2016 to protest against Ferdinand's planned hero's burial. See CNN Philippines Staff, "Duterte confirms Marcos burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayani," *CNN Philippines,* August 9, 2016, http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/08/07/marcos-libingan-ng-mga-bayani-burial.html

Marcos stood out conspicuously in her long black *terno*, with perfectly pressed butterfly sleeves. Her bouffant with nary a trace of grey hair was lightly draped in black organza fabric and her manicured red and white fingernails clutched her red rosary beads.[2] She was surrounded by her daughters in matching white *ternos*, her son in a white *barong,* legions of Marcos relatives and loyalists in white outfits, and members of the Philippine military guard in uniform.

Although still alive at the time of this writing, in a way, Imelda has become somewhat of an apparition, appearing at moments and sparking controversy in her wake. For instance, when her daughter Imee Marcos appeared on the cover of the high society magazine *Philippine Tatler*'s October 2015 issue wearing a long red *terno* gown with her mother's signature butterfly sleeves, the Internet erupted with cheers and jeers. While some lauded the Ilocos Norte Governor for apparently looking youthful at age sixty, the magazine also drew the ire of many who saw through Imee the reincarnation of Imelda and the Marcos regime—a beautified image that served as a painful reminder of what many consider an unresolved, dark era in Philippine history.

These two recent Imelda sightings remind us of the power of representation in geopolitics. In the hands of the powerful, tyranny can be laid to rest, cloaked in heroism and glamourized, pantomiming beauty. In this dissertation, we witness the transformation of Imelda's image from 1966 to present day. Significantly, it is not the fixity of her representations but rather their malleability that has given the figure of Imelda geopolitical durability and potential for reinvention. She signaled to this reinvention in her 1987 *Playboy* interview, mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation. "This estrangement is just an interlude, an intermission. Wait till the second time around," she declared in reference to the Marcoses' relationship with the United

[2] Fiona Nicolas, "Marcos family thanks Duterte for allowing burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayani," *CNN Philippines,* November 18, 2016, accessed April 9, 2018, http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2016/11/18/marcos-family-thanks-duterte-supreme-court-burial-libingan-ng-mga-bayani.html.

States.[3] Just as the media enthusiastically participated in the remaking of Imelda, it seems Imelda deliberately utilized these gendered representations for her political advantage. When she was recast as a "small, fragile widow" at the 1990 New York trial, the image seemingly endured and launched her political comeback in Philippine politics. Moreover, as a political actor in her own right, this somewhat rehabilitated image was able to sustain a Marcos dynastic resurgence that so many Martial Law critics, opponents, and victims have feared.

The methodological approaches of this dissertation contribute to a wider field of women's studies that seeks to understand how gender works and is made operable in international relations. It responds to Cynthia Enloe's challenge to take women seriously in the study of international politics.[4] Enloe's foundational work inspired me to ask the feminist questions in approaching my controversial subject, whose political life was very much structured within and through a patriarchal system of power relations. In many ways, this dissertation attempted to confront the very source of Imelda's persistent presence in geopolitics—her changing representations through media, its adaptability and flexibility. Newspapers, magazines, and television, in particular, were central to the formation of Imelda's international image. Her emergence as a global persona was enabled and aided by the technology of her time. The power of the media was itself validated by the Marcos regime's relentless control and suppression of free speech and free press in the Philippines during Martial Law.

The archives and methods of this project implores its readers to reevaluate the role of the media in an age of rapid globalization and worldwide connectivity where technologies of communication could have serious political potential to influence people's opinions and futures.

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[3] "Playboy Interview: Imelda and Ferdinand Marcos," 61.
[4] Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches & Bases*, 4. See also Cynthia Enloe's *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

Indeed, we have to pay close attention to representations, particularly where it intersects with gender, politics, and imperialism. Perhaps through this, we can discern the images, languages, and performances that operate to legitimize authoritarian regimes and preserve a sense of national identity commensurate with perpetuating patriarchal and neocolonial apparatuses and logics.

The campaign for political and cultural legitimacy was, indeed, rooted in the control of mass media. From her Cinderella-like international debut in 1966, Imelda captivated her audience and masterfully played the "silent" and beautiful First Lady persona that resonated with the American public. The Marcoses' first U.S. state visit initiated a new kind of relationship between the Philippines and the United States—one in which a seemingly benign and docile Filipina figure on the stages of American empire represented the Cold War ambitions and desires of the United States. The American media's admiration and exoticization of Imelda's beauty during this period of the Cold War reflected an American global capitalist desire to rearticulate its colonial past through the body and consumption practices of Imelda Marcos. In other words, through the figure of Imelda, the United States mainstream media found a vehicle through which it attempted to reshape and redirect the discourses about the American national character during the increasingly tense domestic and international context of the mid-1960s. Almost a decade later, in 1974, Imelda Marcos had gained more political power after the imposition of Martial Law in the Philippines. She spearheaded the 1974 Miss Universe pageant in Manila, a spectacle that demonstrated the power of media and gendered performance in legitimizing authoritarian rule and engendering a neocolonial tourism industry using Philippine women as its main currency. When the Marcoses were forced out of the Philippines in 1986, the figure of Imelda was "exposed" as the true monster of the dictatorial regime. Through newsprint, government,

and filmic discourses, we find that as the figure of Imelda transmogrified, the United States national identity also shape-shifted into a familiar, gendered colonial trope of benevolence and rescue. The culmination of the 1990 New York federal racketeering and fraud case against Imelda became her moment of vindication. Her acquittal paved the way for the remythologization of her image as well as the reframing of American national identity as particularly separate from Imelda and her crimes. Through the mediated process of journalistic writing and cartooning, the American and Philippine media grappled with the ramifications of Imelda's verdict by reinforcing and resisting prevailing representations that enabled Imelda's exoneration.

The story of Imelda's evolving representation, therefore, is also a story about the recreation of American national identity in the geopolitical landscape. Although the United States' complicity with the Philippine dictators is widely recognized and accepted, the gendered American image of rationality, benevolence, and rescue nevertheless persisted. This neocolonial image, I contend, is made possible because of the international script that (re)cast Imelda as the United States' desirable figure or, later, its antithesis.

Decades after the Marcos regime lost its despotic rule over the Philippines, Imelda Marcos remains a cultural icon—but not as politically powerful as she was in her heyday. Internationally, she has been reduced to jokes about her shoes—a gendered trivialization of her importance. Her image may have seemingly shrunk to national significance, but lessons can be learned from her multiple incarnations. The figure of Imelda was central to the construction of a neocolonial masculine regime in the Philippines and the United States. She is, indeed, crucial to the heteropatriarchal system of international politics. Imelda continues to hang on to the images that she engendered more than fifty years ago, powerful representations that somehow survived

and threatens to thrive in today's digital age. She dusted off her butterfly sleeves and rose back to power, with her dynasty in tow, from the ashes of despotism and American neocolonial rule. As the Marcoses attempt to once again stake their claim on Philippine politics and society, we are reminded of the material consequences of (mis)representational practices—the real casualties and tragedies that beset the lives of so many in the Philippines. It is, with as much urgency and vital importance that we do not allow the history of tyranny and despotism enabled from within and without to repeat itself.

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