

## Reimagining the *Manileña*: The Effect of Material Culture on Identities (1898-1937)

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In a world where half of the population are women, it is ironic that this segment has remained rather invisible in the pages of its past. In big events that shaped the world or on the everyday recounting of daily life, women remain a footnote at best in the retelling of the story. One doesn't even have to go far to see this lack of visibility in the name of how the study of the past is called – History. It is very evident that the name is rather skewed towards HIS story and not HER story, so how can it be considered as OUR story when half of the population remains quiet, under represented if not almost invisible.

As a footnote in history, it is unfortunate that women are deemed as appendages of the story of men or are considered as commodified products to be consumed, subsumed and disposed. In both cases, the women are still seen through the lens of the male gaze. How did this happen? Why is this the case? What are the reasons or facts that contributed to this? Did it evolve or devolve throughout the years? Has anything changed?

In my own way, I would like to be able to contribute in correcting the imbalance in this storytelling that continues to be pervasively male with this study. Hoping to contribute to the body of feminist work on, for and about the Filipina specifically at the capital of the country, this study is interested to find out about the *Manileña's* identity construction and evolution from the hands of Spain to the hands of the Americans by utilizing the visual artifact of print media. Through the process of going through pages and pages of periodicals, the study hopes to locate the women specifically the *Manileña* and the different images that were created and portrayed. First and foremost, can she even be found? If yes, How was she discussed or pertained to?, What images were created?, How were images the portrayed?, What were the changes through time?, and How did these images affect the evolution of the image under different colonial masters? Embedded in the words, pictures and themes of the print advertisements, articles and photos in the periodicals are possible messages that might help us gain more perspective as to what *Manileña* image or images were formed in the country's past. Interestingly enough, these sources have been ubiquitous but have never been fully utilized in the historical study of image formation of women during the Spanish and American period in the Philippines.

Being a SYLFF fellow opened me up to opportunities that help shape my academic life, not only was I able to finish my masters degree with the SYLFF scholarship but I have been lucky enough to be granted the SRA award to pursue extensive archival research on my chosen topic for my doctoral dissertation. After receiving the grant, I did archival research in several libraries in Spain, the United States of America and the Philippines. By visiting various libraries in these countries, I was able to access valuable primary sources that have remained ignored and underutilized when it came to understanding how print media from 1898-1937 in the Philippines reproduces or socially reconstructs gender via the images and text within its folds.

It was at the Agustinos Filipinos library (Valladolid, Spain), the Hemeroteca Nacional and Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid, Spain) where I was able to locate important primary materials for the Spanish period. The archival research done at the Library of Congress in Washington DC provided the sources I needed for the transition story of the *Manileña* reimagining in the process of changing colonial affiliation from the Spanish to the Americans. While it was my visit to the National Library of the Philippines, the Rizal Library of the Ateneo de Manila University and the University of the Philippines Main Library where I was able to collate and collect both primary and secondary sources relevant to my topic that would complete the story I wanted to write.

After my archival research, I was able to collect about 20,000 images pertinent to my study. I was also able to research, photocopy and scan the various books and manuscripts that I needed to be able to begin the writing process of this research. For a historian, being able to see and handle the primary documents are of utmost importance because these documents are the source of our analysis, the source of our stories. If we were lawyers, these documents would be where we get our evidence, these documents help us tell the story of the past. In line with this, going through all the periodicals, books and manuscripts gave me a clearer picture as to where I would want my paper to go, a good example would be the periodization of the study. The only time one can become aware of these things is when one is in the midst of the actual primary sources. Suffice it to say, it would have been a true challenge for me to be able to collect all the information I have with me right now without the SRA grant. For this, I am truly thankful.

At present, I am in the process of piecing all of the research together and choosing the main images to be used. I believe that this research would be meaningful as it hopes to find out the social implications of visual culture and its impact on a gendered image by using social history of image construction. Interrogating the intersection of media, gender, urbanization and modernity, it will hopefully add to the study of understanding image formation in a colonial context.