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### Author

Samonte, Cecilia

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# Obtaining “Sympathetic Understanding”: Gender, Empire, and Representation in the Travel Writings of American Officials’ Wives, 1901–1914

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CECILIA A. SAMONTE

The presence of ladies seemed to be specially gratifying to the people whom we met, as evidence of our confidence in the sincerity of their friendly reception.

—*Report of the Philippine Commission, 1900*

What is the relationship between gender and empire? How did women respond to and shape colonization? What can travel writing reveal about their complicity and resistance to subjugation and assimilation? How did race shape the nature of this process? Over the years, scholars have undertaken studies that directly challenge the landscape of imperial history by foregrounding gender, integrating both literary and non-literary texts into more orthodox narratives and structures of knowledge, and interrogating the social relations between the dominant white hierarchy and the colonized. As the field continues to expand, the opportunity to make comparative analyses of various areas has also grown. One such area is Southeast Asia, and among such works are those that explore the narratives of American women who traveled to the Philippines at the end of the Philippine-American War in 1902 and at the commencement of American civil governance over the Islands. Up until this surge, the written accounts of wives, missionaries, tourists, and teachers have been largely absent from the scholarship of Philippine-American history.

This essay focuses on texts that have been marginalized from conventional histories of the US regime in the Philippines. I argue that, to fully comprehend the foundations of the American colonial project in the early twentieth-century Philippines, it is important not only to include the perspectives of white American wives but to recognize that they were active agents of empire who significantly

shaped the foundations of American political hegemony. Focusing on accounts written by wives of American colonial administrators, I will analyze how white women employed empathy and sentimentality not only in representing race and empire but, more importantly, in also realizing the empire's aims of conquest and subjugation. From the time they learned about their husbands' "mission," to the times they encountered head-hunters and Muslim dattos, wives offered a largely intimate and sentimental account of the peoples they met, the official rituals and ceremonies they participated in, their response to threats of insurgency and violence, and their pursuit of "sympathetic understanding" between Filipino society and the American official community. While these actions provided some access to understanding Filipino character and culture, they also served to reinforce colonial hierarchies and bolster racialization and assimilation. The capacity of women to travel, perform specific roles for the state, and to portray their experiences in travel literature reorients the field of imperial history and calls into question our present understanding of the origins and workings—the historiography—of colonial political hegemony. Instead of enforcing power through military and legal structures, American officials' wives pursued the state's aims of control and mastery by deploying subtle but effective means of coercive compassion that not only established the emotional bases of colonization, but also significantly diminished any possibility of resistance and autonomy.

My work extends the work of scholars who have provided important avenues within which to affirm, challenge, and negotiate the intersections of gender, imperialism, postcolonialism, race, representation, and travel writing. From the time that Edward Said's *Orientalism* established the crucial relationship between knowledge production, representation, and power, many scholars have challenged and redefined the imperial narrative to such an extent that not only did Western women become more visible, but they were also recuperated from their marginal and subordinate positions.<sup>1</sup> Scholars have demonstrated that white women travelers transgressed societal conventions, assumed crucial roles, and consequently contributed invaluable to the body of imperialist discourse. Billie Melman, Margaret Strobel, Nupur Chaudhuri, Kumari Jayawardena, and Rosemary George have redefined the field of both women's history and colonial history by contesting traditional perspectives that relegate white women in colonial settings to the domestic sphere and depict them as being incapable of exercising any agency in shaping foreign relations. Using multiple sources and providing for a broader field of women, countries, and agendas, these scholars have contributed valuable discussions on how women assumed ambiguous positions of dominance (over people of color) and subordination (to the white patriarchy), and performed unique roles within the social and cultural arenas in both reinforcing and resisting the dominant ideals that justified colonial rule.<sup>2</sup> In this article, I intend to show how this is reflected in the experiences of administrators' wives. These wives who encountered early twentieth-century Philippine society occupied intriguing positions: while they

conformed to the roles and protocol demanded by the dominant white male structure, they also protested the violence and racism perpetuated by American military forces; at the same time, while they tried to demonstrate empathy and affection for the “new American citizens,” they also racialized and undermined the capacity of the Filipinos to be independent and autonomous.

In more recent scholarship, what becomes apparent is an increasing interest in women’s subversion of traditional spheres and in the historical and cultural contexts that redefine their identity and shape their attitudes and approaches toward colonial domination. Amy Kaplan, for example, dismantles the proverbial national-imperial and public-private divides, and demonstrates how fears about the “anarchy” of the racial other, which are rooted in previous encounters with slavery, immigration, and Native Americans, consequently shape efforts abroad to preserve the nation “at home.”<sup>3</sup> Kristin Hoganson and Alison Sneider draw persuasive connections between the pursuit and questioning of empire and women’s increasing quest for empowerment.<sup>4</sup> Once again, they show how white women went beyond the confines of the private to work toward social and legal equality while also claiming a stake in the establishment of the colonial state. As I focus on wives of colonial administrators, I attempt to broaden the discussion by showing how travel also played a significant role in allowing these women to move beyond their domestic spheres and assume a more public role. I will also show that their complicity and negotiation within the colonial setting was greatly shaped by personal backgrounds steeped in social and political privilege as well as in the late nineteenth-century spirit of Progressivism.

There is also a growing body of literature that examines and critiques the dynamics involved in white women’s encounter with difference. Two of these works, Kimberly Alidio’s “‘When I Get Home, I Want to Forget’: Memory and Amnesia in the Occupied Philippines, 1901–1904” and Vicente Rafael’s “Colonial Domesticity: White Women and United States Rule in the Philippines” are especially crucial in grounding my discussion and in providing different ways to think about the meaning and significance of the roles played by administrators’ wives in negotiating and perpetuating the objectives of American “benevolent assimilation.”<sup>5</sup> Using “unofficial” sources such as letters and travel accounts, both works focus on the dual role of domesticity and sentimentalism in enforcing the “civilizing mission” of Progressivism, gaining the allegiance of the Other, as well as in the “ordering of differences” that consequently calcifies racist characterizations and perpetuates social inequality. The wives I focus on in this study produced travel narratives that clearly reflect similar processes at work. However, I build on the scholarship by broadening the range of the “domestic” to include wives’ interaction and engagement with the state itself. By accompanying their husbands on numerous provincial trips across the country, meeting local officials, witnessing the negotiations involved in the establishment of civil government, and attending

numerous official gatherings, white women helped realize the goals of empire, not only by affirming race, but by eradicating it as well.

The paper will examine Helen Taft's *Recollection of Full Years*, Edith Moses' *Unofficial Letters of an Officials' Wife*, and entries from the unpublished diary of Nanon Fay Worcester as they explore the relationship between empire, gender, sentiment, and representation. These women had varied backgrounds. Born and raised in Cincinnati, Helen Herron Taft came from a politically prominent family; her father was a United States Attorney and a State Senator during the administration of President Benjamin Harrison, and her maternal grandfather was a member of Congress representing the Lowville district of New York. One of her earliest childhood recollections was her visit to the White House, then occupied by Rutherford Hayes. Her husband, William Howard Taft, was sent by President William McKinley to be chief civil administrator whose incumbency helped in improving the Philippine economy and in paving the way for Filipino representation within the colonial hierarchy. Edith Moses was the wife of University of California professor Bernard Moses who specialized in the fields of European history, political economy, political science (which he founded as a separate discipline at Berkeley), and Latin America. He was a member of the Philippine Commission from 1900 to 1902 and organized the Philippine system of public education. Nanon Fay Leas Worcester was the wife of Dean Conant Worcester who was appointed to the Philippine Commission in 1899 and eventually became Secretary of the Interior of the newly-formed government.

All the women in this study accompanied members of the Second Philippine Commission, which was formed in 1901 and was tasked to recommend measures that would pacify the Islands and pave the way for the establishment of American civil governance. Military rule officially ended in 1899, and President McKinley proceeded to appoint select groups of administrators, scholars, and legal experts to investigate conditions existing in the newly-acquired territory. From 1899 to 1902, these commissions led by Cornell president Jacob Gould Schurman (1899–1901) and Ohio federal judge William Howard Taft (1901–1913) travelled across the country and gathered information which would be used in formulating a considerable number of laws geared toward the establishment of civil municipal and provincial governments which “would do more than any other single occurrence to reconcile the Filipinos to American sovereignty.”<sup>6</sup> This led to the enactment of two major policies. The first of these was “Westernization,” which was realized through the organization of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government; the establishment of free trade and industrial development; and the institution of public education and health improvements. The other policy was that of “Filipinization,” which saw the gradual integration of Filipinos, mainly from the elite class, into the government.<sup>7</sup>

American wives found themselves constantly negotiating this historical setting. Consequently, these women occupied ambivalent positions within private and public domains. As their texts reveal, while they were concerned with the

management of the household, they also devoted considerable attention to the local peoples, lifestyles, customs, and religion, as well as how these would relate to the establishment of American dominion.<sup>8</sup> Traditionally, colonialists' wives have been depicted as either villains whose envy and racism contributed to the downfall of empire or as victims who were constantly subject to the male-dominated imperial structure. Both characterizations inevitably attributed the decline and loss of empire to these women.<sup>9</sup> In recent years, scholars have attempted to provide more complexity to the scholarship. As partners, wives usually offered support in the form of what Helen Callaway, in her work on European women in Colonial Nigeria, calls both "feminine graces" and "women's work."<sup>10</sup> Whether they were hostesses of official dinners or active observers of diplomatic negotiations between American and Filipino political leaders, American wives in the Philippines engaged actively with empire and significantly provided for its continuity.

### **Attaining Political Ends through Social Means**

The presence of official wives and children made it possible for the American official community and prominent Filipino citizens to engage and interact within a social space. American wives hosted and attended receptions that allowed members of the American civil and military echelon, Filipino political elite, and even former insurrection leaders to get together, assess each other's proclivities, negotiate differences, and pave the way for future interactions. At the outset, wives expressed how valuable these opportunities would be in rekindling feelings of friendship and trust that had once defined the relationship of the two groups before the outbreak of the Philippine-American War. Hosts hoped that such gatherings would obfuscate and reduce feelings of mistrust and hostility generated during the three-year war. Motivated by a desire to help in providing for the continuity of empire, American wives demonstrated determination, resiliency, perseverance, agency, shrewdness, and tact in constructing a social environment that justified American hegemony.

In the initial stages of civil governance, parties, dances (*bailes*) and other social gatherings helped cleanse the specter of colonization while presenting the vision of a common future grounded on collaborative partnership. According to Helen Taft, "They seemed greatly pleased with the spirit of the occasion which served to demonstrate in a particular manner the fact that America was in the Philippines as a friend rather than as an arbitrary ruler; that there was to be none of the familiar colour or race prejudice, so far as we were concerned, in the association of the two peoples; that the best thing to do was to acknowledge a mutual aspiration and strive for its fulfillment in friendly co-operation, and there was a heart-lift for us all."<sup>11</sup> Taft also wrote that "neither politics nor race" were to intervene in their quest to establish a "very wide and diverse acquaintance."<sup>12</sup> She hosted dinners and parties at least once a week and made it a point to have an "interestingly cosmopolitan" gathering of people. She was also aware that in order to gain acceptance, she had to

abide by the local protocol: “And we did not fail to observe all the desirable forms. Both Filipinos and Europeans expect a certain amount of ceremony from the representatives of government and are not at all impressed by ‘democratic simplicity’; so believing in the adage about Rome and the Romans, we did what we could.”<sup>13</sup> This dose of “ceremony” involved having a whole retinue of guards and “footmen” available to receive guests; an orchestra that played music that “added greatly to the festive air of things;” and an “oriental atmosphere” made possible by Japanese lanterns and the flora of “Filipino forests” including potted plants, ferneries, and orchids.<sup>14</sup>

Wishing to be “polite” by calling on Filipino friends at the right time, Edith Moses also wrote about how she acclimated to the different social atmosphere she found herself in.<sup>15</sup> Describing dinners as “more entertaining” than their American equivalents, she admits that it was difficult to learn table etiquette initially, but that she eventually found herself “learning in Filipino style to pick off an olive or pickle at the end of a fork presented me by neighbor” and “to say the proper thing in response to a toast to my ‘beauty and intellect.’”<sup>16</sup> On more than one occasion, wives also expressed how they felt it was incumbent upon them to partake of all varieties of food served. Otherwise, one risked turning a “wavering amigo” into an “enemigo.”<sup>17</sup> Moses attests that to “die rather than hurt a principale’s feelings” was her guiding motto, and if this meant drinking liver tonic with a former rebel leader and eating all of the “deadly dishes” presented to them, then it was a “terrible bugbear” she was willing to endure.<sup>18</sup> Worcester was also aware of the pressure of partaking of meals so as not to “hurt people’s feelings.”<sup>19</sup>

Eventually, wives wrote about how they needed to sometimes “give up the fight,” but they knew how crucial their hospitality could be in gaining the loyalty of Filipino officials. Wives knew that if they were to achieve any measure of success in having the Filipino political elite align to the American political agenda, the initial process demanded a demonstration of their conformity to local customs and mores. Wives knew that these dinners and parties would contribute toward defusing the tension between military officials, who were reluctant to relinquish control of the Islands, and civil officials responsible for providing the foundation for a Filipino-American democratic political system.

In addition to being good hostesses and guests, American wives also used their involvement in the social scene to gauge the precarious peace that characterized the end of the war. All three wives write about how members of the military would warn them about get-togethers which could be easy targets for rebel attacks. They also took the opportunity to assess the allegiance of the local elite. In the chapter “Manila Society,” Moses writes about these issues in detail. At a party given by a relative of one of the “greatest Filipino politicians,” she writes how an insurrection officer who was known to have ordered the execution of eight American soldiers in the Apalit district was warmly received by the hosts: “The family of our host have been rather reticent regarding their relations to the insurrecto leaders, but

I noticed the old grandmother, who . . . patted him affectionately on the back. I imagine they know him better than they are willing to acknowledge.”<sup>20</sup> At another affair given by the Alcaldes, a Filipino family well known in “exclusive anti-American circles,” Moses tries to be very civil or “*muy simpatico*” in the face of suspicious and possibly hostile company.<sup>21</sup> In the end, she felt she was rewarded for her efforts after being invited by the lady of the house to the “inner sanctum.”<sup>22</sup> Again, Moses reveals the precarious nature of the alliance formed with the local elites. Despite their seeming cooperation and civility, members of the elite could be a potential threat and had to be kept from assuming political leadership of the Islands.

### **Unofficial Commission Members**

But wives were not limited by traditionally prescribed roles in the private and domestic sphere. Their narratives show that they played a significant role in the establishment of civil government in key provinces around the country, and that they both understood and supported the charge put upon the Commission. From the time her husband was delegated to establish civil government in the Philippines, Taft expressed an immediate willingness and readiness to embark on what she perceived was going to be a “big and novel experience.”<sup>23</sup> As she states: “I have never shrunk before any obstacles, when I had the opportunity to see a new country and I must say I have never regretted any adventure.”<sup>24</sup> But in the course of her stay in the Islands, Taft evolved from being a curious traveler to a dedicated political actor who felt they were there for a “purpose which was at last defined,” and consequently helped in establishing peace and effecting pacification in the archipelago.<sup>25</sup> For her, the work of the Commission was “first, last and always to us the subject of the greatest moment” where “being so much a part of our flag’s mission in a strange field . . . added to our patriotism which we had never felt before.”<sup>26</sup> In another instance, Moses talks about how one local governor, who was “deeply interested in the plans of our government,” actually consulted her on “all conceivable subjects involving America and the Philippines.”<sup>27</sup> Since she felt it her duty to promote “the cause,” she held the discussion through the night.<sup>28</sup> Wives were privy to a large number of major issues dealt with by the Commission, including matters involving the new roles that were to be assigned to local “*presidentes*,” the organization of municipalities, and issues of taxation.<sup>29</sup> In contrast to other texts which depict wives as passive members of the American community who contributed mainly to the reenactment of the American home on foreign soil, the narratives of these wives reveal their ability to enter the public arena in their commitment to be more actively engaged in the project of tranquility and “pacification.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Constructing the “Other”**

As Alison Blunt contends, there is a very thin line between ethnography and travel knowledge: “writings by travelers were crucial in providing the empirical basis for the



theoretical arguments of comparative ethnologists.”<sup>31</sup> Through their travel accounts, wives redefined the meanings of “civilization” and “barbarism” for their American audience. In the course of establishing homes in the capital city of Manila, they developed concrete ideas about the Filipino elite and their capability for self-governance. On the other hand, through their trips to the northernmost and southernmost parts of the country, all wives were quick not only to form ideas about the people’s “downright savagery” but, more importantly, they were also able to offer ideas about how American administrators could manage such difference to their advantage.<sup>32</sup>

Among all the trips her party took, Taft highlighted their sojourns to the southern and northern parts of the archipelago. The Southern trip consisted of visits to such places as Sulu, Jolo, Zamboanga and Davao where the majority of the locals were Muslim (also called *Moros*). In terms of the imposition of civil governance, the Southern Philippines, also called Mindanao, posed a unique challenge for American officials because they “absolutely refused” to be subordinate to the central “Filipino” government in Manila. But despite some initial opposition, local officials eventually upheld the “American policy of establishing markets and schools and honest trade relations,” depending on “American protection with determined faith” while declaring that they would fight against neighbors if the US government were to leave.<sup>33</sup> In the course of her visit to the northern part of the country, Taft draws a strong correlation between race and the ability for self-governance. She engages in a rather extended discussion of the Igorots. Describing the men as having “long, murderous-looking spears” and the women as being “evidently the burden-bearers,” she indicates, “There is hardly an American who has ever lived among them for any length of time who has not a real admiration and affection for them and yet, to all intents and purposes, they are naked savages. They are most amenable to civilising (sic) influences.”<sup>34</sup> For Taft, administrators should enforce the policy of benevolence with caution, lest they mistake this group’s affability and independence with the capacity to live according to basic hallmarks of the American way of life. Taft invests the colonized with attributes of simplicity, backwardness, and passivity, implying that they need regular guidance.<sup>35</sup>

In a similar manner, Moses also devotes considerable attention to the different rites and ceremonies practiced in various provinces. During a trip to the Northern region inhabited by the Igorots, for example, she becomes especially fascinated with rituals that had never been mentioned in writings on the Philippines. According to her, “They have many strange customs, but no one has investigated them. . . . It would be interesting to learn their language, and find out what they believe.”<sup>36</sup> One such custom was the *tiyow* feast, a traditional rite involving the disbursement of a dead man’s property, with half going to the family and half allotted to the community. Moses later concludes that the feast was held in order to bring good fortune and to ward away evil.<sup>37</sup> Like Taft, Moses assumes the persona of an ethnographer as she goes about describing the ceremony in detail and explaining

the underlying beliefs that motivate such practices. She observes with keen interest the physical set-up, the participants, and, finally, the rite itself. Sounds of drums and dancing provide the background for the ceremony as the rite is mediated by a priestess who presides over the anointing of the deceased's family and the sacrificial slaughter of animals. The blood from the animals is then used to "mark" all the family members. At the end of it all, Moses indicates how the ceremonies were "curious, but unintelligible."<sup>38</sup>

Although she offers explanations of the clear distinctions between the different Filipino regional groups, Moses makes general assertions about overall traits and behavior in the last chapter entitled "Characteristics of the Filipinos."<sup>39</sup> In this segment, she attempts to disprove preconceived notions about Filipinos that even she tended to believe. One such impression is that of Filipinos as "lazy and endowed with an ingrained dislike for work of any kind."<sup>40</sup> In fact, she writes, Filipino women have great business ability and clearly possess a "trading instinct," which, for her, is probably racially determined since "it has not been eradicated by Spanish dominion or by the tendency of a subject race to imitate its superior."<sup>41</sup> Aside from this, she contends that she has never come across any family or head of the family who was not engaged in a profession or any type of business. Moses also dispels the accusations that Filipinos are warmongers and are "naturally untruthful,"<sup>42</sup> asserting that they are "naturally timid and peace loving" and that, if the opposite were the case, it could only be caused by colonizers who "governed them with selfish aims."<sup>43</sup> While Moses seems to absolve Filipinos of any negative traits, she also negates initiative and agency and depicts them as viable wards of the state, thereby strengthening the case for McKinley's colonial policy of "benevolent assimilation."

Worcester devotes the same kind of attention to the "mountain people" she encountered on her visits. Once again, her text exhibits a combination of derision and admiration for these groups living in Northern Philippines. While depicting them as "dirty," "naked savages" who embody "utter barbarism," she also writes about how a number of the same people are "beautifully formed and graceful" and resemble "bronze statues" and, on official occasions, can even "behave somewhat like civilized human beings."<sup>44</sup> But unlike the other wives' narratives, she writes extensively about the various methods American commissioners used not only to gain trust and acceptance but also to assert power. Taking advantage of the intermittent strife that existed among rival groups, American officials eventually assumed the role of arbiter and judge. And as they were approached about different grievances such as murders and thefts, officials used emphatic ways to demonstrate support and sincerity. Worcester reveals in her narrative that at one point, all the Governor had to do was say something, "no matter what, just so you say it as if you meant it." In fact, the Governor "said that the last time he was in Banaue the head men came to talk to him about some murderers who had been arrested, and for reply he recited Goff's poem on water, with all the fire and enthusiasm he could put into it, and then turned to Lieut. Gallman who speaks their language and told him to explain that the

government would look after the whole matter. The people were pleased beyond words with the speech the Governor had made.”<sup>39</sup> On another occasion, she also mentions how instrumental the Governor was in retrieving the head and body of a murdered man and of the jubilation expressed in the official’s intervention. In fact, Worcester wrote about how her husband endeared himself so much he that came to be considered an *apo* (“god”): “The presidente of Bagabag told us that ‘apo’ means to the Ifugaos a god, and that is what Dean is to them. He said that the civilized people were surprised and delighted with Dean’s policy with the wild men, which was so fast making them into peaceable citizens.”<sup>40</sup> As the wives use their narratives to construct the images of what they believe to be manifestations of “utter barbarism,” they play an important role in justifying the professed political and moral reasons for the program of “benevolent assimilation.” The texts demonstrate that despite the fact that significant development is made in paving the way for amicable relations, the cultural divide denies the possibility of self-determination and independence at this stage of colonization. Using the discourses of ethnography and anthropology to support their position, the wives attempt to make readers understand why the government has to continue its campaign while ensuring that Filipinos continue to be treated as perilous and subordinate.

### **Working toward the Preservation of Empire**

How then did Taft, Moses, and Worcester envision a future for the colonial “adventure” of the United States in the Philippines? Each narrative makes concrete prescriptions for the eventual success of the American civil establishment. It was clear that despite the various inroads made by civil officials in effecting peace and tranquility in the different provinces, forces supporting martial rule continued to question and challenge the alliance made by members of the Commission and Filipino officials. Moses targets military officers in her critique of empire. For example, she mentions the kind of scorn a particular sailing captain expressed about the people: “He said not one of them took any interest in the laundry or kitchen, nor could they ask an intelligent question.”<sup>45</sup> She concludes that

it is . . . difficult to make the Filipino believe in our theory of political equality, when so many Americans are disposed to emphasize by their conduct the idea of social inequality. . . . There may, perhaps, never be a warm personal feeling for us as a people, for we are of a different race. But gradually the memory of the wars will fade away; the arrogance of victory and the sense of humiliation engendered by defeat will be forgotten. The moral and material advantages of the Union will, in the course of time, become clearer to both parties, and there is every reason to expect they will live in peace and profit by their friendly cooperation.<sup>41</sup>

Although they knew the kinds of risks and dangers their sojourns entailed, all of the wives affirmed their commitment to see the success of their mission. Taft reiterates that the Commission “was definitely pledged to the rapid adjustment of affairs on a civil and representative basis.”<sup>42</sup> Moses even takes a direct hand in addressing the underlying antagonism between the Americans and their “fellow citizens.”<sup>43</sup> She organizes a dancing “club” that would result in “bringing Americans and natives together socially.” An American woman could gain membership only if she would “promise” to dance with a Filipino and in the same manner, American men had to “pay attention to Filipina girls instead of Americans.”<sup>44</sup> This is one of the instances where Moses takes a direct hand in fulfilling the aims of empire. She uses her status as an official’s wife to initiate and encourage socialization between the two groups. This clearly belies the notion associated with the *memsahibs* in English colonies that women, especially wives of administrators, caused the deterioration in race relations because of their petty jealousies. As Ronald Hyam indicates, “sexual worries are the ‘ultimate basis of racial antagonism.’”<sup>45</sup> In this specific case, Moses’ contribution was crucial in reinforcing the Commission’s commitment to the preservation of empire. As Taft wrote,

Personally to superintend the establishment of civil government throughout the Islands at a time when many of the people were still in sympathy with armed resistance to our authority was a tremendous task for the Commission to undertake, but it was thought that only through direct contact could anything like sympathetic understanding be obtained. Tranquility had, as speedily as possible, to be restored, and while the ungentle persuasion of armed force continued for some time to be a necessity, the methods adopted by the civil officials never failed to make a visible and lasting impression.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, wives acknowledged that the “peace” they desired would require the Filipinos’ to forget the violence and brutality inflicted by the previous war and to unquestioningly adhere to the American colonial structure.

Undoubtedly, gender performs a crucial role in the textual production of US imperialist discourse on the Philippines, especially at the earliest stages of colonial rule. The significance of the writings of white women travelers stems from their ambivalent positions as women who were considered superior in the racial hierarchy yet subordinate to the patriarchal order. This unique positioning allowed administrators’ wives access to political and social spaces that enabled them to help realize the goals of the colonial state. Couching their objectives within the language of reform and “uplift,” they performed crucial roles in imposing the foundation of the American civil state, racial ordering, and cultural imperialism. Their narratives

which detail all these processes, contribute crucial “imperial knowledges” that, in many ways, complicate and redefine our understanding of the history of colonialism and the relationship between power and dissent.

The inclusion of women’s travel writing in the present literature is integral to revealing incongruities and complicating generally accepted truths and knowledge about the processes of colonial administration, assimilation, and sometimes even resistance. Through letters written to families and friends, these wives provide the “unofficial” story behind the official narrative of colonialism, and are able to express and articulate thoughts and feelings borne out of their direct personal connection to the American empire and its subjects. As ambivalent agents of empire, officials’ wives directly participated in the agenda of colonial expansion by deploying affect and empathy to strengthen the tenuous relationships between American and Filipino officials and by legitimating civil governance. In the end, the opportunity to cross domestic and private boundaries came with the opportunity not only to share in the power wielded by male counterparts but also to ensure the prevalence of the American colonial structure.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> Billie Melman, *Women’s Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718–1918: Sexuality, Religion, and Work* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Margaret Strobel, *European Women and the Second British Empire* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991); Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel, eds., *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992); Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman’s Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Colonial Rule* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995); Rosemary M. George, “Homes in the Empire, Empire in the Home,” *Cultural Critique* 26 (Winter 1993–94), 95–127.

<sup>3</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Allison L. Sneider, *Suffragists in an Imperial Age: U.S. Expansion and the Woman Question 1870–1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Kimberly Alidio, “‘When I Get Home, I Want to Forget’: Memory and Amnesia in the Occupied Philippines, 1901–1904,” *Social Text* 59 (Summer, 1999), 105–22; Vicente L. Rafael, “Colonial Domesticity: White Women and United States Rule in the Philippines,” *American Literature* 67 (December 1995), 639–66.

- <sup>6</sup> Bonifacio Salamanca, *The Filipino Reaction to American Rule 1901–1913* (Hamden, Connecticut, and London: Archon Books, 1968), 24.
- <sup>7</sup> Rosario M. Cortes, Celestina Boncan, and Ricardo Jose. *The Filipino Saga: History as Social Change* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 2000), 207.
- <sup>8</sup> Rosemary M. George, “Homes in the Empire, Empire in the Home,” *Cultural Critique* 26 (Winter 1993), 95–127; Vicente L. Rafael, “Colonial Domesticity: White Women and United States Rule in the Philippines,” *American Literature* 67 (December 1995), 639–66.
- <sup>9</sup> Mary A. Procida, “Married to the Empire: British Wives and British Imperialism in India, 1883–1947.” Diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1997, 29.
- <sup>10</sup> Helen Callaway, *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press in association with St. Antony’s College, Oxford: 1987), 165.
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- <sup>16</sup> Taft, 79.
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- <sup>19</sup> Nanon Fay Worcester, *Diary*, Bentley Historical Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1909, 32.
- <sup>20</sup> Moses, 153.
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- <sup>22</sup> Moses, 154.
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- <sup>24</sup> Taft, 33.
- <sup>25</sup> Taft, 142.
- <sup>26</sup> Taft, 129.
- <sup>27</sup> Moses, 307.

<sup>28</sup> Moses, 307.

<sup>29</sup> Moses, 122.

<sup>30</sup> Moses, 61.

<sup>31</sup> Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994), 79.

<sup>32</sup> Moses, 264.

<sup>33</sup> Taft, 171.

<sup>34</sup> Taft, 192–93.

<sup>35</sup> Cheryl McEwan, *Gender, Geography and Empire; Victorian Women Travellers in West Africa* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 101–2.

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<sup>37</sup> Moses, 258.

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<sup>42</sup> Moses, 354.

<sup>43</sup> Moses, 353.

<sup>44</sup> Worcester, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Worcester, 13–14.

<sup>40</sup> Worcester, 82.

<sup>45</sup> Moses, 133.

<sup>41</sup> Moses, 355.

<sup>42</sup> Taft, 142.

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