

## “Pedagogic Invasion”: The Thomasites in Occupied Philippines

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### Abstract

The early education of the Philippines by American voluntary teachers (the Thomasites) is often hailed as a laudatory project. However, education can be a deceptive gift. The ethnographic writings of the Thomasite teachers, like Mary Fee's *A Woman's Impressions of the Philippines*, reveal that these well-meaning American teachers had their own colonial opinion of their Filipino students. Perhaps unwittingly, the Thomasite teachers were still part of the American colonial education policy. Most especially, the memoir writings reveal a perception of Filipino males as effeminate and childlike, an opinion that did much to legitimize the American colonial mandate.

### Keywords

colonial education, ethnography, masculine colonial rhetoric, travel narratives

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*Our dear Supervisor, if you have heard me make some mistakes in my speech and in my pronunciation, please excuse me. You know very well that English is not my native language.*

- from the account of William C. Freer<sup>1</sup>

*I have no answers. In the end, I find myself right where I started. Like the Surigao priest, I recommend an exorcism. What needs to be exorcised though is not the devil but colonialism-as-devil.*

- Judy Celine Ick from *Bearers of Benevolence* (2001)

### COLONIAL PROJECTIONS: THE SHIFT FROM ANTHROPOLOGY TO PEDAGOGY

The debate over the Philippine annexation allowed for a blossoming of anthropology. Its premise of scientific knowledge prompted the architects of the US colonial project to argue from a moral high ground—to study the native populace, particularly, the “savages” or “wild tribes,” was to help colonial rule formulate responsive policies that would advance the welfare and future of these people. Yet more than policy formulation, the ethnographic representation of the Filipinos unwittingly challenged the moral fiber and readiness of the US to take on as its wards an “archipelago of heathens.” Its discourse was not only marshaled in the official debates, but was refracted into the common language of the wider American public. Both inside and outside the congressional halls, the Filipino became an anthropological subject, a Darwinian template that awaited the bestowal of benevolence.

Partha Chatterjee succinctly sums up the colonial intent of highlighting racial differences in “representing the other” as inferior and radically different and, hence, “incorrigibly inferior” (33). The master narrative of exceptional imperialism, however, was not content with the inert display of the “inferiority” of the colonized. Part of its narrative drive was the transformation of the “savage native”—the lowest in the racial hierarchy—into modern political subjects under the tutelage of the US. The “making of the Igorot”<sup>2</sup> was imbued with this value. The colonial ethnographers Jenks and Worcester found in the Cordillera an economic and anthropological goldmine. Not only was the “Igorot” mined as an “intellectual jurisdiction,”<sup>3</sup> the consequent appropriation of the role of the paternal master convincingly demonstrated the failure of the Spaniards to give the “savages” a “square deal.”<sup>4</sup>

Aside from the military measures, education was considered as the most powerful apparatus in restoring the peace in the islands. It united both the highland and lowland in embracing the colonial presence. Ngugi wa Thiong’o remarks on the comprehensive scheme of colonialism:

The maintenance, management, manipulation, and mobilization of the entire system of education, language and language use, literature, religion, the media, have always ensured for the oppressor nation power over the transmission of a certain ideology, set of values, outlook, attitudes, feelings, etc., and hence power over the whole area of consciousness. (51)

Hence as the Philippine-American war that killed nearly two hundred thousand civilians and nearly twenty-thousand Filipino soldiers subsided, an ideological intervention was urgently felt. The pacification effort took the form of soldiers being enlisted as teachers. This traded the image of a violent or threatening figure for a paternal one. Veric writes that the “pacification” effort of extending public education was seen as a military strategy. To argue this point, Veric cites Military Governor General Arthur MacArthur: “The matter is so closely allied to the exercise of military force in these islands that in my annual report I treated the matter as a military subject” (209).<sup>5</sup> But as the military’s role become more suspect after reports of its atrocities reached the US public, the Philippine Commission realized that the sympathy of the Filipino populace could only be earned through a civilian colonial regime. Its advocacy was to enlist the ruling class in a collaborative effort to win over the larger Filipino populace.

Education was viewed by the Philippine Commission as “one of the most forceful agencies for elevating the Filipinos, materially, socially and morally, and preparing them for a large participation in the affairs of government” (Taft quoted in May 78). Despite this persuasive belief, however, the incipient years of the Bureau of Education bore the marks of a schismatic empire. The figures that were tasked with administering plans and strategies did not exhibit a continuity of vision.<sup>6</sup> With each leader having individual convictions as to what the people needed the most, the bureau through the different administrative periods differed exceedingly in its approach to solving difficulties. More importantly, the strategies to execute the bureau’s pedagogical policies were not responsive to the local realities. The vision to equip the average Filipino with the wherewithal to alter him into a politically and economically productive being through did not see fruition.

At the outset, the Bureau of Education faced grave logistical problems. Aside from lack of funding for the schools, the teachers also complained of the poor administration of the Education Bureau that at times aggravated their personal difficulties. The schoolteachers also became the target of criticisms as the Catholic clergy and parents accused them of proselytizing students. These factors worsened the conditions of the floundering bureau whose earlier administrative management, despite its plans of providing the Filipino youth with industrial skills responsive to their everyday needs, ended up with contradictory policies.

Among the bureau directors, David P. Barrows was considered to have significant impact on the educational policy. An anthropologist by profession, he headed the Bureau of Ethnography until his appointment in 1903 after the uneventful performance of Fred Atkinson who was seen as not having been able to resolve the critical problems it faced

from the moment Act 74 (May 84), the establishment of widespread educational system, was implemented. It was likewise through this act that stipulated the hiring of more than 1,000 teachers, now remembered as the Thomasites.

Barrows knew very well the extent of the challenges he faced and was determined to revive the education bureau. He broke away from Atkinson's lead by instituting an education that was inspired by the Jeffersonian principles of literacy. He lessened the emphasis on the industrial education designed by Atkinson for he felt that this would only provide industries with "a great body of unskilled labor, dependent for living upon its daily wage, willing to work in great gangs, submissive to the rough handling of the "boss" (99).

Barrows did not turn his back on his anthropological training. He used many of the discipline's analytical tools, particularly the survey,<sup>7</sup> to investigate problems that he observed during his school inspections around the islands. Of these problems, he realized that the most urgent was the system of *caciquismo*<sup>8</sup> that continuously enslaved the peasant Filipino to his feudal master. The notes he made in his journals were mostly in the nature of ethnographic writing, delving deep into the relations of indebtedness of people in the barrios. Barrows was convinced that only the American values of diligence and honest industriousness could reverse this unequal social relation and instill egalitarian values among the people. Hence a public wide educational system, the main target of which was the peasantry, was established.

The Thomasites who eventually took over the soldiers mostly had middle-class background. Lured by the promise of travel and adventure, they were deployed in far-flung islands to instruct the Filipinos on the rudiments of egalitarian education. The Bureau of Education, intent for the teachers to gain more knowledge about their students' peculiarities, suggested conducting smaller ethnographic studies.<sup>9</sup> In this context, it is not surprising that many of the accounts of the Thomasites could actually be read as "ethnographic writings" that ruminate on the "deficient Filipino race."

In analyzing the relation of ethnography to travel writing, Jas Elsner and Joan Pau Rubiés assert that the "ethnographic impulse" is "so embedded" in the genre as it allows the traveler to generate and build a collection of details which could be considered as "information" (242). Its discursive device of classification, categorization, description and analysis prove effective in the exploration of "curious behavior" that largely marks the initial encounter of travelers with the local inhabitants. Elsner and Rubiés, however, distinguish among the types of travelers as well as writers when discussing the "level of ethnographic focus" (244). They conclude that ethnographic writing has proven

efficacious for classifying peoples to the extent that it had inscribed the “travel narrative within a scientific project” (253).

Seen in this regard, the role of the schoolteacher in the execution of colonial policies could not be discounted. Their accounts have functioned as bearers of the Thomasites’ legacy from which have been substantially inferred their “altruism.” Yet it cannot be denied the growing tendency among contemporary scholars to offer a counter-reading to historical accounts written by people whose vantage point is remote from the locus where historical negotiations and tensions are a natural occurrence. Colonial mediations largely occurred and failed at levels when individual participants became caught in foreign policies fraught with opposition from the local culture or from other colonial agents as well.

This article attempts at a rereading of the Thomasite accounts for the discontinuities and disruptions in their pedagogical vision in the Philippines. As travel narratives, they are valuable in disclosing the actual conditions within which individual teachers dispensed with their duties in the islands and, in so doing, unravel the complex ramifications of interactions between the Thomasites and the local community. While the “personal” is the core of these accounts, it is not to be denied that these teachers acted on the directives of their superiors who protected at all costs the viability of the colonial project. What began as the overriding goal of “egalitarian values” gradually morphed into varied accounts of discontent, suspicion, hopelessness and even contempt as these teachers directly dealt with problems specific to their assigned places. Many were disgruntled. Many complained of their late salaries, homesickness and disputes with local priests and parents over complaints of proselytizing students (May 87).

I adhere to the theoretical framework advanced by the growing literature on the US occupation of the Philippines that questions the paradigm of *exceptionalism* to expose the gap at which many of the ideals of this egalitarian pedagogy failed. One of the pioneering studies is that of Glenn Anthony May’s *Social Engineering*. Two of the more recent studies, namely, of Jane Margold’s “Egalitarian Ideals and Exclusionary Practices: US Pedagogy in the Colonial Philippines” (1995) and Julian Go’s “Chains of Empire, Projects of State: Political Education and US Colonial Rule in Puerto Rico and the Philippines” (2000) on colonial pedagogy describe how colonial policies are more often *projected* than actually realized (Nicholas Thomas, qtd. in Go 335).

According to Margold and Go, the geographic distance that wedged the metropole from the colonial territory resulted in situations in which the schoolteachers had to “reappropriate” or “subvert” the policies. Go sees this phenomenon in the very nature of

US colonial empire. With a colonial territory geographically located on the other side of the globe, the directives were often dissonant from the actual sites where they were to be implemented. The focus of these recent works is to explain how the Thomasites became agents in carrying out colonial educational policies while a careful contrapuntal reading of their personal accounts would illustrate 'history from below' that defies many of the grand narratives borne of colonial aspirations.

I would like to investigate the Thomasite phenomenon through the lens of "pedagogic invasion" with which Mary Fee describes the Thomasites's presence in *A Woman's Impressions of the Philippines* (1910)—hailed as an emblematic text of the Thomasite experience. Sections of narratives in books *Bearers of Benevolence* (2001), *Tales of the American Teachers in the Philippines* (1959), and the most recent publication *Back to the Future: Perspectives on the Thomasite Legacy to Philippine Education* (2003) will be explored for their scholarly and narrative range. It is hoped that a cross-referencing among these texts will allow for a plurality of views as the 'personal' is made to properly account for the historical era that gave birth to it.

### A WOMAN'S IMPRESSIONS OF THE PHILIPPINES: IN RETROSPECT

Mary Fee's *A Woman's Impressions of the Philippines* is an often-cited text in the study of colonial pedagogy for its plethora of "woman's impressions" of the US-occupied islands. Published in 1910, it is a Thomasite teacher's lengthy account of her keen and critical observations on Philippine society and culture. More importantly, it echoes the US's role in shaping a people's "inchoate" selfhood into a state of social and political progress characterizing the modern, independent subject.

An extensive study of Fee's memoirs in Vicente Rafael's "Mimetic Subjects: Engendering Race at the Edge of Empire"<sup>10</sup> reveals that the memoir gained the widest reception among the accounts written by American women who resided in the islands during the first quarter of the US colonial administration. Encouraging reviews of the account were made in the *New York Times*, *The Nation* and *Outlook*. These prompted the publication of a second edition in 1912. An attempt to write the account into novel form in 1912, this time entitled *The Locust Years*, however, proved unremarkable (Rafael 146).

Fee's memoir was the most highly read among the few published travel accounts of American women of the period. Such fact affirms the keen interest of the US reading public regarding the "nature" of its heathen wards and the "success" of the colonial mechanism in its project of transformation. Balce-Cortes asserts in a similar vein the function of travel



narratives as “ideological primers for ordinary Americans to embrace their “new” role as colonizers” (92). That this account was written by a woman points to Fee’s gaining a place in an industry in which men are considered to be the key players. The physically-arduous and adventurous journey to the war-torn Philippines had long been a masculine preserve that is discursively reflected in what is known as “objective” and “scientific” writing. It is with these qualities that Fee’s writing is seemingly associated.

While Fee’s account displays the same concerns as of the other accounts of American women—housekeeping, observations on the youths and maidens, cultural practices etc—her work clearly departs from the self-effacing and unassuming style of the rest of the women. Significant portions of Fee’s writings attempt to “analyze” the Filipino character, social and industrial condition of the Filipinos, and politics—matters that other women would simply offer cursory remarks alongside the day’s domestic concerns. Fee’s “ethnographic study” on the Philippines and its people, on the other hand, claims a distinct argumentative and, hence, authoritative voice. Remembrances of her earlier experiences in the islands (for instance, “Our First Few Days in the City,” “My First Experience as a Teacher of Filipinos,” “My Early Experiences in Housekeeping”) provides the narrative scaffold into which she injects many of her essentialist remarks. Some of the significant areas she comments on are the sociopolitical developments the US eagerly desired for the Filipinos but had since then failed. According to Fee, the failure is due to the Filipino race’s incomprehensibility of the more complex workings of the outside world from which it had been isolated.

A closer look at this argumentative voice reveals Fee’s distinct adherence to the dominant discourse of the masculine colonial rhetoric prevalent at the time. A significant portion of her analyses reveals how she equates the notion of American manhood as the main goal of the civilizing project in the Philippines. Fee stresses this kind of manhood as the apex of civilization. Racial differences dominant in her highly gendered descriptions of her students’ brown bodies reflect as well differences in gender constructions between the Filipinos and the Americans.

The structure of her book shows how the writing of feminine concerns affirms her affinity with her female compatriots. On the one hand, her acerbic remarks of their feminine “duplicity” (particularly of the pretty Radcliffe graduates) assert her own dislike towards their using gender as a tool to receive privileges from men. Yet while writing about the more “analytical” and “masculine” concern of sociopolitical structures render her as an exception from the feminine lot, her observations lapses into an ironic concern over the feminine values of her female compatriots and how such resonate in her study of the

gender roles of Filipino men and women. She becomes most reductive in her remarks not only in considering gender as a factor that differentiates the Filipino male and female from their American counterparts, but in assigning it as a value upon which racial characteristics of the Filipinos are deduced. Fee's rhetoric clearly subscribes to the stereotypes of the Filipino male as feminine, an image that was largely circulated in print media to bolster the colonial governments' effort in nullifying the Filipino demands for self-government.

To understand the favorable critical reception of the memoir during its publication is to investigate the Philippines Fee keenly constructs in the text vis-à-vis the colonial project on pedagogy. It is also beneficial to inquire into how such a construction reflects Fee's own moments of distancing from the noble goals of the public educational project that the US believed would dismantle the centuries-long inequality among the Philippines' social classes. As an individual civilian actor deployed in the occupied Philippines, we see how Fee's understanding of the workings of colonialism does not disengage her from the principles of what she terms as the US "pedagogical invasion" (33) which sheds light on the fissures of the colonial chain. It does not prove the inexperience of the US in governing a new colonial territory but affirms what the colonialists have long suspected—a paucity seen as inhering in an undeveloped race.

### A SCHOOLTEACHER'S MAIDEN VOYAGE

Fee's travel account begins with the common re-telling of a sea voyage from San Francisco where she departed on the army transport *Buford* ahead of the larger group of teachers who came on the ship *Thomas*. She affirms this momentous occasion by stating that she "was going to see the world" to instruct her "little brown brother, and to pass the torch of Occidental knowledge several degrees east of the international dateline" (2). Later in the chapter, this philanthropic spirit dampens as the ship rolled past the beautiful city of San Francisco: "The day was symbolic of the spirit which sent young America across the Pacific—hope, brilliant hope, *with just a cloud of doubt*" (italics mine 5).

In the following two chapters, Fee becomes the observant traveler who focuses her attention on the sights in San Francisco to Honolulu while also keeping an eye on her female compatriots. Here Fee shares an affinity with the other landscape descriptions of American women as she waxes poetic in her rendition of the sea that "lay purple and dark, with the same sad, sweet loneliness that a prairie has in the dusk" (11). Her descriptive passages on her ten-day sightseeing in Hawaii are a good example of how travel narratives create preconditioned perceptions of a place. By citing Mark Twain's "Roughing It,"



a travel adventure book successfully published in 1872, Fee situates herself—a female traveler—in the tradition of the enterprising male who wants to make it big in the American West.

The contrapuntal elements of fiction and fantasy rendered in a light-hearted manner worked for the appeal of this work to a wide readership. However, the actual sights Fee wrote about in the chapter elucidate the excesses of travel texts when disappointingly she states that contrary to her imagined “great acreage of tropical vegetation,” “what we really found was a modern American city” (15). That what she witnessed in Hawaii was not what Twain wrote about thirty years earlier seems to deprive her of the adventures to which the “vagabond author” made a fortune out of—a fact that rendered her writing less than it could have been. Her descriptions, for instance, of her brief visit downtown were simply phrased, for example, as “the stores were just like of the United States” (16).

Fee’s trip from Honolulu to Guam that she describes as “the most desolate spot I had ever seen” (27) suddenly grows more interesting when she notices on board “political prisoners who had been in exile and were returning to their native land” (28). Such cursory allusion to a distinct presence squeezed in between her observations of other passengers fragments and, in fact, undermines the significance of the period’s political realities. Her attempt to seek reasons for the prisoners’ return to their native land—“whether for trial or freedom” (28)—is concluded by admitting ignorance.

Yet Fee’s mention of Admiral Dewey, who is cited in almost all “arrival” descriptions in the travel narratives during the US occupation as an iconic marker to the traveler’s entry into the islands, defies a redundancy. With Dewey as now part of the imagination of the US colonizer, any arrival is supposed to have been infused with the spirit of easy yet salutary conquest. But Fee’s reference to Dewey is presumably the most insipid inasmuch as the vessel *Buford* did not afford her the chance of reliving the grand naval entry: “It was no use going into a trance and coming up in imagination with Dewey, because he did not come our way” (30).

The passages recalling Fee’s actual arrival in Manila again do not depict an affinity with the other “arrival” descriptions of women writers that show them rhapsodizing about the land through the act of surveillance counting them as part of colonialism’s geographical processes (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 142). By recalling how the pedagogical venture floundered through the years she also inadvertently comments on the tentative success of the US colonial experiment in the Philippines. Here, she writes about the other Americans who had returned home:

A few have shaken the dust of the Philippines forever from their feet, and are seeking fame in the home land and wooing fortune in the traffic of great cities or in peaceful rural life. Some, perhaps, may read these lines, and, reading, pause to give a tender thought to the land which most Americans revile while they are in it, but which they sentimentally regret when they have left it. (31)

Following the passage, Fee gives an assessment of her own engagement with the role of a schoolteacher:

Eight long years have slipped by since that night, and in that time a passing-bell has tolled for the Philippines which we found then. Who shall say for many a year whether the change be for better or for worse? But the change has come, and for the sake of a glamour which overlay the quaint and moribund civilization of the Philippines of that day I have chronicled in this volume my singularly unadventurous experiences. (32)

This “singularly unadventurous” life, although seen from hindsight, contrasts to the tone of what she terms as the American schoolteachers’ “pedagogic invasion of Manila” (33) after finally disembarking from the Buford. Although to what exactly she does attribute her “unadventurous” life after her eight year residence in the Philippines may not immediately be apparent in her accounts, one senses a defined preoccupation with gender in the key chapters in which she analyses the Filipino race. This fixation with gender, together with race, becomes an ‘analytical tool’ shaping her view of the Filipino children, men and women. It is also in the conflation of gender and race that Fee defines her own subjectivity as a single woman and schoolteacher opposite her female compatriots.

#### AMERICAN MANHOOD AND THE TROPES OF THE FEMININE AND CHILDLIKE FILIPINO

To locate Fee’s analysis of the Filipino character within the larger colonial discourse, it is crucial to understand the turn-of-the-century American *rhetoric of manhood* that fueled the congressional debates over the Philippine issue. It can be argued that what sustained the debate was the pervasive reference to the racialized representations of the Filipino colonized subject. This was skillfully used by the imperialists in their dire attempt to convince the public of the viability of occupying the Philippines.

The rhetoric of manhood discloses an understated anxiety within American culture at the time, according to Kristin Hoganson. “Male degeneracy” was the fear that the US male populace had become weakened by the material comforts accompanying industrialization. Populated by men who belong at the helm of two historical crucial periods, the Civil War and the millennial change, the pull of these two ends—the memory of a great war and the tendency among young men to rest on the laurels of past glory—worried many as to the future of what was once a virile nation.

Gail Bederman in *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (1995) defines manhood as a “historical, ideological process” (7). Implied is the fluid convergence of societal factors that locate itself in the bodies, in gender, and above all, in race. This relationship had been the most potent in asserting for the supremacy of the male American manhood that functioned as the normative worldview for gender. In writing about the Philippines, Bederman refers to the representation of the ‘Filipino native’ as sharing an ideological affinity with Indian savages and Negroes. They were shown as racial aberrations whose “savage” qualities could only be quelled by a masculinity embodied by the American white male. In quoting one of the speeches of Senator Beveridge, for instance, Bederman illustrates the conflation of manhood and race:

God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has ... made us adept in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. (22)

In Kristin Hoganson’s *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (2000), “gender” is placed at the center of the US imperial history. By doing so, she deftly positions the key players of the imperialist and the anti-imperialist camps as invoking historical constructions of manhood. For Hoganson, to inquire into the forces that motivated imperial pursuits half-way across the world is to “turn the spotlight from perceptions of the Filipinos to American self-perceptions” (138). To investigate the nature of this “self-perception” is to allow for an analysis that veers away from an utterly political reading of imperial dynamics to one that reveals the rhetorical mechanisms by which these self-perceptions were strengthened and validated. Similarly, such view would be instructive on how Filipino racial and gender stereotypes, used as the main arguments for retaining the islands, informed the foreign policies of the US colonial rule in the Philippines.

When Commodore Dewey spectacularly won the war at the Manila Bay, it was not only to announce the easy victory of US over a “fast growing old woman” with which Spain was largely depicted (172), but it was to indicate a new possession. In the scramble for new territories at the time, this acquisition served as a much needed jolt to the US whose expansionist tendencies were significantly predicated on their manly ability to tame the wilderness and the ‘savages’ as a test to harness their virile strengths.

The anxiety over manhood, however, did not go unchecked in the congressional halls. For the anti-imperialists who represented the more elderly and subdued strain of politicians, “manhood” was defined not merely as a display of brute force that does not distinguish the young, hot-blooded imperialists from “savages.” It is a principle that can only be achieved after one has gained much experience, maturity, restraint and control. In this regard, Senator Hoar, embodying these characteristics and adamantly against the occupation of the Philippines, aligned himself with the vision of his forefathers in what he considered was more of a “high principle.” He attacked the imperialists by discrediting his arguments: “There is nothing of the Declaration of Independence in it. There is nothing of the Constitution of the United States in it. There is nothing of the fathers in it. There is nothing of George Washington in it, or Thomas Jefferson” (qtd. in Hoganson 167).

The exchange of words, however, did not suffice as the imperialists of which the leading proponents were young and impetuous politicians sought the power of stereotypes to advance their cause. Since the imperialists’ main contention was that the Filipinos were unfit for self-government, they needed corresponding representations for this incapacity. The most powerful were those of the ‘uncivilized savages’, the ‘childlike Filipino’ and the ‘feminized Filipino’ (Hoganson 134-137). Although these had their earlier usage in disparaging Native-American men and African-American men, the stereotypes took on a more elaborate use for the Filipinos whose clamor for independence needed to be discredited. Not only would dealing with these types of people enhance American manhood, but by cunningly using the personages of the ‘child’ and ‘feminine’ Filipino, there is the implication of ‘manhood’ being transformed into a benevolent paternalism.

This rhetoric of manhood, however, does not stand as a unified argument against the anti-imperialists. As Kristin Hoganson argues, it is more of a worried response to the evolving gender ideologies at the time (139). While the antis were being labeled as ‘womanly’, the imperialists had an opportune time constructing the “opposition to war as a sign of cowardice, weakness, or other supposedly unmanly attributes” (176). On the other hand, the imperialist women, belonging to various leagues, demonstrated the growing impact of the pro-war cause. Mothers, particularly, were seen as effective agents to the opposition as they appeared “morally righteous” (178).

Seen within the context of the prevalent gender wars that dictated the nature of visual representations of actors involved in the US debate over the Philippine issue, Fee's "analysis" of the character of the Filipino can be argued as resulting from the values it advocated. Fee's dominant concern for the feminine and its inflections, for instance, surfaces as she repeatedly directs her attention to the pretty "happy sinners from Radcliffe" (17) whom she considers as educated ladies, yet she cherished a contempt for their "duplicitous" ways. She sees these women as ill-suited for the civilizing task for which everyone traveled so far away from home. For Fee, the Radcliffe girls seem petulant because of their failure to realize the gravity of the work cut out for them. On the other hand, her self-reflexive descriptions rely on the words "old maid," "stout," and "unadventurous" to differentiate her from the Radcliffe girls she describes.

In Margold's analysis of the US colonial pedagogy in the Philippines, she uses Fee's account to extract the educational values instilled by the teachers. In her initial remarks regarding Fee, she states that despite her insights into the social and political structures of colonial Philippines, her memoirs actually "reveal a good deal of acuity about her own situation as an aging, unmarried schoolteacher" (383). Arriving in 1901, Fee resided in the islands for almost a decade. Rafael writers, "Fee remained in the colony far longer than any of the other American women who wrote about their experiences there" (147). Margold further posits that Fee's choice to stay behind in the Philippines signals an insecurity that "she would sink dramatically in social position if she returned home" (383).

In chapter six, Fee notes the incongruence of appointing a female co-teacher whose "excessive" knowledge of "cones" would go to disuse in the company of the tribal Macabebes:

A very tall young woman who was the possessor of an MA degree in mathematics from the University of California, and was supposed to know more about the conic sections than any woman ought to know, was sent up among the Macabebes, who may in ten generations arrive at an elementary idea of what is meant by conic sections. (Fee 48)

The discordance of having overqualified young Americans teaching the Filipinos runs through many of Fee's comments over the presence of the Thomasite teachers in the archipelago. As a more senior representative of such group, she is able to justify her own dissatisfaction of not having her full potential utilized. It is this perception that made

her remark on the “sonambulance of philanthropy which brought us pedagogues to the Philippines” (102).

In the succeeding chapters, however, Fee’s authorial voice becomes clearer as it repeatedly uses the notions of the “feminine” as a point of comparison between the nature of her female compatriots with that of the Filipino character:

Like women, they get heady on a small allowance of power; and indeed in both sexes there are emphasized certain characteristics which we are accustomed to look upon as feminine. Their pride is feminine as I have analyzed it. (93)

Fee conceives of the American manhood as the embodiment of the ideal that everyone should aim for. But this is where a logical impasse seems to surface. For Fee, the Filipinos undeveloped race would never approximate the American ideal of manhood. The Filipino exhibits a potential that comes close to the intelligence latent in the female, particularly, that of the American feminine. At this point, Fee constructs the hierarchy of evolution based on gender and assigns the woman as a median point in the evolution. The Filipino race cannot aspire for the highest point of development for it does not know of “brilliancy.”

In a passage regarding the “woman question” Fee refers to the introduction of a bill for female suffrage. Although Fee cites the author of the bill as in touch with the progressive movements in Europe, she nevertheless undercuts his efforts by highlighting the dichotomy between the “real” conditions in the country and the “ideal” conditions of which the bill for female suffrage is an example. The very use of the word ‘ideal’ at once constitutes impossibility on the part of the Filipinos whose intelligence cannot appreciate its nuances.

Fee’s memoir paints a picture of an idiotic Filipino who is unable to comprehend the complex workings of progress. By predicating her arguments on the innate inadequacy of the race, Fee asserts that the Filipino cannot go beyond the superficial to look into the forces that propel certain phenomena to operate. This she extends into all aspects of the human intellect which is vital in building structures that assure the progress of a people—economic, social, political and religious. In her comments, for instance, on the advocacy of the Protestant missionaries in the islands, Fee gives a stark judgment. She considers the evangelical efforts of her Protestant compatriots as futile:



To the complacent Protestant evangelist who smacks his lips in anticipation of the future conquest of these Islands, I would say frankly that there is no room for Protestantism in the Philippines. The *introspective quality* which is inherent in true Protestantism is not in the Filipino temperament. Neither are the vein of simplicity and the dogmatic spirit which made the strength of the Reformation. Protestantism will, of course, make some progress so long as the fire is artificially fanned. There will always be found a few who cling ardently to it. But most Americans with whom I have talked (and their name is legion) have agreed with me in thinking that it will never be strong here. (Italics mine, Fee 185-6)

Fee, in this context, hastens a conclusion regarding Catholicism as most suited to the Filipino psyche as the people are not given to introspection, the vital factor to a fruitful spiritual life. They cannot transgress the trappings of performative rituals in the Catholic church as “[the Filipino] believes in it with the implicit faith of one who has never investigated” (186). At this point, Fee cites other nations of the Catholic faith—the Irish and German—to strike a comparison concerning the extent of engagement a people exerts with its religion. But Fee once more undermines the Filipino race by stressing the fact that the Filipino faith did not result from any historical formative struggles such as the Battle of the Boyne or the Thirty Years’ War. Instead, faith was simply a dogmatic imposition by the previous Spanish colonizers and the Philippines had never undergone a deep confrontation with its teachings. According to Fee, the Filipinos would have found it more expedient to opt for a “religious secession” from the church rather than any radical move that could have created a more significant and liberating schism from the sources of power, that is, the church. Here Fee sings a familiar refrain by asserting that what resolved the impasse in the colonized history of the Filipinos was the arrival of the Americans in 1898.

The logic Fee marshals in the above passage is the same as what she uses in constructing her arguments on the inability of the Filipino to view certain things with complexity. This she cites in her passages concerning the artistic inclinations of the people. According to Fee, talent resides in the Filipinos, but what stops them from making themselves brilliant artists, is the very fact that they considers it sufficient that such potentiality exists and that it can be harnessed anytime they wish. The image of stunted growth is predominant in Fees discourse of the Filipinos and the objective correlative of such is the image of the orphan baby:

The Filipino is a like an orphan baby, not allowed to have his cramps and colic and to cut his teeth in the decent retirement of the parental nursery, but dragged out instead into distressing publicity, told that his wails are louder, his digestive habits more uncertain, his milk teeth more unsatisfactory.... Naturally he is self-conscious, and—let us be truthful—not having been a very promising baby from the beginning, both he and his nurses have had a hard time. (Fee 84)

Fee's analysis of the Filipino's inability to self-rule echo the early colonial attempts to build a specific typology of knowledge that would discredit even the Filipino *ilustrado*, men who represent the people's highest educational achievement. "Knowledge" as the colonial actors define it is one based on a systematic and scientific extrapolation rather than the trappings of European modernity which was seen by many American colonialists as producing effete. "Knowledge" was constructed as the epitome of manhood similar to the members of the American colonial community who were celebrated for their adventurous grit, toil, dedication and service. Hence even Taft, who was committed to inscribing the Filipino *ilustrado* into its program of colonial collaboration and saw its role as bridging the gap between the regime and the wider populace, knew that he had to keep on believing in the image of the intellectually deficient Filipino in order to preserve American rule and retention of the islands. Hence, the educated Filipino, had to continuously suffer the criticisms of the Americans for sporting their education as nothing but an ornament. It was this logic, borne on the axes of gender and race, which allowed for Fee to assert the Filipino race's femininity—a stunted development, one that had not reached and shall never reach complete, mature manhood that embodies colonial America. This lack of manhood became the rationale to politically disenfranchise the Filipinos.

This disenfranchisement is effectively demonstrated in other Thomasite accounts, particularly, involving the teaching of the English language. Even in the individual accounts of schoolteachers, we see the same stereotypes of the childlike savage circulated widely. An example of this is a passage from Alice M. Kelly's account:

The male population gathered around curiously, but not too near. They spoke no English or Spanish, and I of course spoke not one word of Igorot. I made up my mind one day that I would make them speak to me, in my own tongue, so I caught one old man who could not run, and grasping him by the shoulders, repeated over and over again, "Good morning, Mrs. Kelly," until, at last, like a child, old Chapdai wonderingly repeated the words. Whenever I saw him or any other Igorot, I greeted

him in the same manner, and was delighted when, very often, they saluted me first. (Qtd. in Ick 133)

What follows the passage above is a re-telling by Mrs. Kelly of an exchange with Judge Burritt who was at the time appointed by Governor Taft to take charge of the court justice in the Cordillera. Judge Burritt relates a “very laughable incident” in which several old Igorot men, upon seeing him in court, gave out the greeting “Good morning, Mrs. Kelly.”

Although Alice M. Kelly must have felt triumphant, one can only infer the disenfranchisement of the Igorot man in this colonial encounter. What begins as a linguistic stalemate between Chapdai and Mrs. Kelly is resolved when she takes the decisive step to make the old Igorot man speak “*in (my) own tongue*,” an imposition that linguistically disables him and, by doing so, renders him like a child totally dependent on her verbal instructions. The ‘delight’ that finally overtakes Mrs. Kelly is the reward for her efficient efforts with its effects multiplied in no time as more Igorot men deliver their greetings in the same manner.

The Igorot man, on the other hand, becomes a faceless tableau stressing the engaged Thomasite teaching a native to speak English. Mrs. Kelly is the active one declaring how the whole exchange will begin and end. Chapdai’s agency is effaced; he does not offer any resistance except that he “wonderingly repeated the words.”

The rhetoric of manhood is extensively reflected in the primers that were adapted into the Philippine context in order for the Filipino children to visually locate themselves as active agents of their education. By changing the figures and transposing their encounter onto the Philippine context, students were lured into a world whose values greatly differed from theirs.

The lessons, moreover, did not have any direct impact on their local realities. An example of a lesson asks the student to define the “world’s great men”:

Give the life story of some of the world’s great men. Explain simply the most obvious effect of each life has had upon the world.... Such men as Washington, Lincoln, McKinley, Gladstone, and Rizal can be made living realities to the child if skillfully presented, and will serve as the basis for lessons on patriotism. (Qtd. in May 88)

The teaching resources, however, demonstrate the powerful use of what I call as “syllogisms of mimicry” that pedagogically constructs a good Filipino as that could be made to aim for manhood if he were to become a ‘good man’. The following syllogism is an example:

This boy did not go to school.

He went to play in the water.

He does not like to read and write.

He does not like his teacher.

He will not make jars and baskets.

He will not get water for his mother.

He will not carry the baskets for her.

He is not a good boy.

He is a bad boy.

He will not be a good man.

(Qtd. in May 101)

This lengthy syllogism depicts a boy who did not show up in school and chose instead to “play.” The cataloguing of his dislikes—“tasks” which when accomplished will make him a “good man”—is also based on the activities which the US designed education expected a student to fulfill in order to equip himself with the skills of an independent, free man. The reference to “jars and baskets” is telling of the industrial education advocated by Atkinson (May 93) which was opposed by Barrows. In the syllogisms, the abrupt linking of a boy disliking school is connected to a future that is not only bleak but asserts the inability to mature into a “good man” (qtd. in May101).

In the end, civilization—the zenith of a complex evolutionary process—will never be the preserve of the Filipinos according to the turn-of-the-century rhetoric of manhood. To extract a similar syllogism: to be white is to be civilized. To be non-white is to be a savage who needs to be subjected to the tutelage of the Americans. Race is immutable—and Elliot writes of this in the preface to *The Philippines: To the End of the Commission Government; a Study in Tropical Democracy*: “race is a fact which cannot be obliterated by sentiment, a change of government, or even religion...” (qtd. in Veric 214).

In another passage, Elliot indicates the totalizing effort of the US colonial apparatuses to ensure that nothing escapes it: “education, health, material development, in fact all the external and visible work of the government has been subordinated to the purpose of creating in the Filipinos a consciousness of race unity” (214) It appears that of all these fields, education has substantially engaged the Filipino mind and sentiment. That alone should account for its success, one that had made the ‘brown race’ ever more desirous for what they are not.

### CONCLUSION: READING BEARERS OF BENEVOLENCE

The centennial celebration of the Thomasites’ arrival in the Philippines in 1998 brought to the fore historical concerns that called for serious critical reckoning. One such effort came was the publication of the book *Bearers of Benevolence* (2001). The book gathers various accounts of both the Thomasites’ experiences in the islands and the Filipino students’ and teachers’ remembrances of the time. On the back cover, one finds the promise of the volume to reveal the lives of “men and women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Philippines— of Americans bearing benevolence to Filipinos and of Filipinos bearing the benevolence— and of both still assimilating the meaning of that experience 100 years later.”

The assumption of “benevolence” as an unchallenged and unified notion wholly embraced by the Filipinos reflects a tentativeness that weakens the book’s theoretical intent. It uses post-colonial markers of “heterogeneity,” “benevolence,” and “assimilating” to correct the view that the Thomasites should be implicated in the colonial project. The problem with reading accounts in this manner is that it can be done from contrasting perspectives and still come up with the same antithetical conclusions. The use of the word “assimilating” is tentative in its attempt to argue for “altruism” on behalf of the American teachers. Its tentativeness, however, translates into logical tension when the book’s premise is engaged. The word “assimilating” signals a reluctance to heed the contrapuntal tones of the schoolteachers’ personal accounts as it might belie the claim for “benevolence.”

In the preface of *Bearers of Benevolence*, Judy Celine Ick describes the book as critically informed by the “distance afforded by a century of hindsight” (ix). That such time has passed since the arrival of the American teachers encourages a more complex questioning of the US pedagogical project. Further, the book distinguishes itself from the earlier publication, *Tales of the American Teachers in the Philippines* (1959), a collection of the Thomasites’ personal accounts, with the addition of new entries personal narratives which, according to Ick, attest to “the heterogeneity of experiences as they occurred on the most personal levels” (x).

This “most personal level” is taken up by Mary Racelis when she stakes a personal claim to the project by stating in the introduction that she sees it as an auspicious occasion to explore her “own Filipino-American heritage” (4). What is striking in this mode of foregrounding the personal to frame the book is that it cannot get past the sentimental tone which subsumes the more complex configuration of colonial language pedagogy, colonial subjects, negotiation and resistance beneath the niceties of student-teacher relationship. The “personal level” at which these accounts were written will never suppress the epistemological violence colonialism submits its subject to in any pedagogical enterprise. It is, as schoolteacher Mary Fee herself wrote, undeniably a “pedagogical invasion.”

The truth of the personal is taken as iconic and, here, the spirit of the word “heterogeneity” is invalidated. Even describing, for instance, the site that divided the colonizer from the colonized, Racelis signifies the “classroom” and “community” as the spheres of equality and reciprocity:

It was there that the Americans and Filipinos came face-to-face and began the process of learning from and about one another. There they met, *not as colonizer and colonized*, but as teacher and community member. (italics mine 4)

To assert that the teachers and students met “not as colonizer and colonized” at once nullifies the very colonial mandate under which the Thomasites dispensed their duties in the archipelago. And *Bearers of Benevolence* seems to have been designed to celebrate the illusory veil of reciprocity to emerge triumphant. The travel texts employed in the book were rendered as slippery accounts of altruism and personal volunteerism while the voice of the local, if allowed at all, sounds like a petulant child resisting authority or one totally in debt forever for the fortunes that the training has brought—an image that recalls the colonial rhetoric largely reproduced in the American colonial consciousness.

That this book came at a time when a growing literature on the US activities in the Philippines uncompromisingly challenges the myths of benevolence and unravels the resistance of the Filipinos to colonialism signals a theoretical myopia in probing into the contexts that propelled and sustained the activities of the schoolteachers. Much as the Thomasites were remembered for their hardwork and perseverance, a closer reading of their accounts of their lived experiences in the Philippines may indicate a break away from the usual claims of generosity. The travel accounts do not embody homogeneous altruism; they are, to use Ick’s words “heterogenous” and “personal” accounts. These terms make for a more complete portrait when coupled by words “splintered,” “dissonant,” “dissatisfied” views of the US pedagogical aspirations that failed as these teachers struggled with history at its most quotidian manifestation.



## NOTES

- 1 From the account of schoolteacher, William C. Freer, one of the most widely read accounts of a male Thomasite. The lines are from a Lorenzo Perez's speech. The student was asked to write an address thanking his teacher, Mr. Freer, for teaching Paracale (Ick 104-13).
- 2 For how the Igorot was used to justify colonial rule, Barclay's work is informative in terms of how the US colonial rule established spatial dominance over Cordillera.
- 3 See Kramer 78.
- 4 Found in "The Barrio Boy's Creed" a list of all lessons needed for the education of a barrio child.—"I believe in giving and receiving a square deal in every act of life" see Pecsán and Racelis 66. See also Paul Barclay in Julian Go and Anne L. Foster (2003).
- 5 See Charlie Samuya Veric's "Culture from Imperialism: American Colonial Education in the Philippines" in *Back to the Future: Perspectives on the Thomasite Legacy to Philippine Education*. Ed. by Corazon Villareal. Veric cites the work of Forbes 209.
- 6 See Glenn Anthony May for a profile of each administrative period.
- 7 The survey was used as a tool for the ethnographic study of Barrows. Civilians—schoolteachers, missionaries, and social workers—were encouraged to volunteer for the task.
- 8 See Paul Hutchcroft's article on caciquismo as a political system.
- 9 See Kramer's discussion on the restructuring of the colonial bureaus. Funding for ethnographic studies, such as Jenks and Worcester's, was cut. Attention was focused to develop the public education system.
- 10 Rafael's succeeding work on colonial domesticity also uses part of the article's title, "Colonial Domesticity: Engendering Race at the Edge of Empire, 1899-1912" found in *White Love* (2000).

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