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## **“When I Get Home, I Want to Forget”**

### MEMORY AND AMNESIA IN THE OCCUPIED PHILIPPINES, 1901–1904

**Kimberly Alidio**

The colonization of the Philippines promoted a civilizing mission that marked the emergence of the United States as a colonial power. In the United States’ self-presentation abroad as well as to its citizens at home, the progressive language of reform provided American imperialism with exceptionalist rhetoric and universalist legitimation. In 1903, a year after the presidential proclamation of the end of the Philippine-American War, Governor-General William H. Taft heralded the U.S. civil rule in the Philippines. Despite the Philippine war for national sovereignty having been a “mistaken struggle,” Taft declared the Filipino people as the perfect object of the American civilizing mission.

Their sacrifice and their bravery are worthy of our admiration and bespeak a people capable of greater things. . . . Their quick desire and power to imitate the good they see and understand, their openness to the reception of new and better things, however lacking in a political knowledge of its difficulties and real essence—all these traits, added to a peculiar social sense and charm, make them a people peculiarly subject to the good and developing influence of a friendly and sympathetic government in which they are given a gradually increasing part, and justify an entirely different policy in dealing with them and promoting their welfare from that which England has necessary to pursue with Mohammedan and Buddhist peoples, having neither sympathy with, nor understanding of, modern European ideas.<sup>1</sup>

In this address, Taft publicizes U.S. imperialism as an exceptional romance between the colonized subject and the American civilizing mission. The key to this exceptionalism appeared to be the affinity between the Christianized Filipino and the Anglo-American progressive reformer—a relationship lacking in both the foregoing Spanish regime and the contemporary British empire.

The representations of Filipinos took center stage in how the United States understood the extent of its power to transform individuals and “races.” The racialization of the Filipino subject against variant standards of civilization was a cornerstone of progressive ideology of rule. Radical changes in production, urban development, transportation, public health, and education were premised on Philippine moral uplift and rationalized social organization.<sup>2</sup> The United States used colonial administration to

control vast national and ethnological terrains in the colony, while simultaneously it erected a colonial public school system that purported to meet the immediate needs of the Filipino majority. This majority presumably was manipulated by the “political bosses” put in place by the Spanish regime. Legislation passed in 1901 established the Bureau of Public Instruction, organizing schools as centers for the dissemination of technology, with English as the language of instruction. By supplying the Filipino tenant sharecropper with a vocation and skills to lead him out of debt, colonial administrators sought to reorganize Philippine economic relations and to produce a new species of moral personality.<sup>3</sup> As in its campaign against immigrant “boss rule” in American cities, progressive ideology advocated democratic government and refashioned middle-class ideals as counterbalances to patronage.

This essay examines letters written home by a husband and wife from Ann Arbor, Michigan, who spent three years in the Philippines as schoolteachers. The letters that I have selected to discuss reveal a couple’s engagements with the official imperial project. From 1901 to 1904, Harry and Mary Cole witnessed shifting modes of state rule, warfare, famine, and cholera. In those contexts, they experienced the dilemmas of assessing Filipinos as recipients of and resisters to American imperialism. Such judgments of the colonized’s potential for civilization speak to the Coles’ intimate complicity in an ideology of rule informed by Anglo-American progressivism. The American teachers were pressed to differentiate the traits of Filipino loyalty from the characteristics of guerrilla duplicity, in their attempts to determine an individual’s “fitness for civilization.”

As sources of American popular memory, the letters written by Harry and Mary Cole to their family and friends in Ann Arbor show that collective bonds were sustained between two small towns in the colony and in the metropole. The Coles exercised various strategies to traverse imperial space, particularly to transmit the colonial experience to the familiar locality for evaluation. Mary asked her relatives and community at home to help her define her role in the global stage of American empire. She rooted herself in the future and the far away: the moment of eventual return to Michigan. Assuming a manly cosmopolitanism in his letters, her husband Harry did not fare so well by the end of their stay. For him, distance from local and national communities had become a sentence of forced exile. Feeling neglected by colonial bureaucracy, outraged with and envious of military power, left with “savages,” and attacked by Americans at home, Harry Cole expressed severe dislocation and a failure to articulate himself within the professional and political structures available to him. He complained about being restricted to the town and that his professional work was not advancing. Instead of the pursuit of progress, the colonial career had sent him “back about two centuries.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite the exceptionalist rhetoric of the U.S. imperialists, the emergent American bourgeoisie shared many of the duties of carrying out the civilizing mission with the middle classes in European colonies. Anglo, largely Protestant, university-based professionals represented civil rule in the Philippines, often refashioning the tenets of character, civilization, and masculinity.<sup>5</sup> Harry and Mary Cole opted for civil service in the Philippines because their occupations—University of Michigan chemistry professor and public school elementary teacher—did not provide enough to buy a house. To avoid draining the resources of their extended family, they joined the large contingent of Michigan teachers going to the Philippines in 1901.

Literature recruiting Americans to the teaching service projected the Philippines as an ideal location for professional living and leisure. The colonial administration promoted the Philippines's "natural" advantages for refreshment, discipline, and advancement. Professional associations were to be maintained during conferences and lectures in Baguio, a temperate vacation resort in the mountains zoned especially for American leisure. An excerpt from a 1911 Bureau of Education pamphlet captures the significance of the Philippines to progressive education: "The administration of the Bureau is hampered by no embarrassing precedents; it has reasonably ample funds with which to execute its plans. . . . Such an opportunity probably never existed anywhere."<sup>6</sup> Ann Arbor forged numerous ties to the colonial bureaucracy through the University of Michigan. Faculty exchanges were established with the University of the Philippines, whose first deans of the Colleges of Medicine, Law, Engineering, and Agriculture were Michigan faculty and alumni. In addition, Philippine Commissioners Dean Worcester and Bernard Moses were former professors.

To justify colonial policies to such American citizens as the Coles entailed placing the emphasis on the practice of progressive reform abroad in the colonial sphere. The experience must not appear enormously problematic or traumatic. The Coles' separation from their families was an emotionally difficult rite of passage toward independent living. The first year in the Visayan Islands concerned the efforts to create a home, including the trials with servants, the availability of American food, and getting used to their neighbors and students. The Bureau of Education promised that their transition to the colony would be relatively painless and buffeted by amenities that were to provide not luxury but American status: plentiful, familiar food, a high salary, and guaranteed safety. Instead, the Coles and other colonial teachers encountered an infrastructure that barely met their needs or protected them from epidemics and war. The colonization of the Philippines unfolded with contradictions that were constitutive of empire building at this time. In particular, the isolation and hatred of the

“native” are defining elements of the bureaucrat’s labor for the colonial state.<sup>7</sup>

On 28 September 1901 the Coles sailed down the San Juanico Strait, which divided the island of Samar on the east from their teaching station in the western part of Leyte. Meanwhile, on that same day, an attack by Filipino townspeople and armed forces took an American infantry company by surprise in the eastern Samareño town of Balangiga. Harry Cole described to his mother the conditions into which he and his wife entered in September of 1901:

Probably while we were on the boat or perhaps a little later in the day, only six or seven miles away across the water, between forty and fifty of our men were being slaughtered. The company was surprised while at dinner, and nearly every one was killed. Now the next thing the Americans do is to send over a number of soldiers with orders to burn the towns, destroy everything which can sustain life, and kill every living thing, man, woman, child, and domestic animal. (H. C., 20 October 1901)

Company C of the United States Ninth Infantry was one of several units assigned to Samar in 1901 to block the entry of supplies to the Filipino resistance. The attack of the townspeople and the armed guerrillas led by General Vicente Lukban was a response to weeks of forced labor, mass imprisonments, and the seizure of food supplies under the military occupation. Of the 74 soldiers in Company C, 45 were killed. Following the ambush, American forces waged a genocidal campaign, which produced thousands of civilian deaths on the island and the leveling of Balangiga.

To this day, the events that unfolded in Balangiga after September 1901 invite widely contested interpretations of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines. In 1997, legislative proposals in the U.S. Congress were introduced to support or to block the return of the war booty to the church in Balangiga. The ensuing debate has raised questions about the production of memory of the civilizing mission. Throughout the Philippine-American War, the priests of Balangiga rang the church bells to warn the townspeople of U.S. search and destroy missions. The looting of the bells took place weeks after the surprise attack. In late 1997, Representative Robert A. Underwood (D.-Guam) submitted a resolution to return one of the two church bells, which comprises a war memorial in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Underwood’s proposal spoke to the “historical injustice” that Guam shares with the Philippines as possessions in the American empire after 1898.<sup>8</sup>

Bearing witness to an event that has become central to one contemporary discussion of American empire, the Coles’ correspondence is a valuable source of the intersections of the civilizing mission and colonial

warfare. The articulation of a U.S. ideology of rule took place within the context of the military pacification, which preceded the establishment of civil rule in most of the islands. Samar and Leyte were islands separated not only by the San Juanico Strait but also by distinct administrations, military and civil. Mary wrote to her mother, "Everything is very peaceful and quiet about our place and we are getting along very nicely. I am not afraid over here and don't worry about us. We're all right. Although the soldiers are still fighting in Samar it affects Leyte very little" (M. C. 26 January 1902). Subsequent letters nevertheless show how the repercussions of Lukban's attack did reach their teaching station in Palo.

The proximity of different forms of government in the Visayan Islands was not exceptional. The Philippine-American War raged in key areas in the three major regions of Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao. At the time that the Coles docked in Manila in 1901, 75 percent of the archipelago had been "pacified" under the jurisdiction of Governor-General Taft. The rest of the archipelago remained in a state of war, which the U.S. military pursued largely independently of civilian oversight, and with open disregard for the human costs imposed on those whom Taft professed to uplift. After December 1900, the American military employed policies of forced resettlement and depopulation campaigns, including the shelling of villages and the restriction of rice trade and cultivation. In a 1901 *New York Times* interview, an American military general estimated a death toll of 600,000 Filipinos in Luzon alone.<sup>9</sup>

The Balangiga incident confirmed, for many, the deceitfulness of Filipinos, who appeared to welcome the American military, as General Lukban had. With the purpose of circulating the suspicion that duplicity was a guerrilla strategy of the Filipino resistance, General "Howlin" Jake Smith ordered harsher measures to demand the consent of the colonized. A circular issued in 1901 defined the improved treatment of Filipino subjects: "Every native, whether in arms or living in the pueblos or barrios will be regarded and treated as an enemy until he has conclusively shown that he is a friend. This he cannot be by mere words or promises, nor can it be done by aiding us in ways that do no material harm to the insurgents." Aside from punitive burning of suspected villages, the military tested allegiances by resettling townspeople into prescribed zones and treating those found outside as public enemies.<sup>10</sup>

In their first descriptions of the town of Palo, the Coles noted the nearest military garrison, the number of American men and women, and the distance to Tacloban, the capital of Leyte. The Coles reported to their families that they kept close to the town and under the protection of the governor. Aside from the threat of violence, the Philippine-American War was uneven ground for building a home. For civilian Americans, the deviation from standard rules of warfare blurred the difference between ally

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and enemy. While military logic instructed American civilians to treat Filipinos as enemies until proven as friends, the civil government defined their colonial subjects as willing students of American democracy and industry. In a similar sense, American civil servants in Leyte during the war were compelled to parcel out loyalty tests to their natural environment, as Harry Cole's anecdote shows:

While fishing the natives would catch a fish, pick it up and look it over and down its mouth and say, 'Are you from Samar or Leyte?' 'You are from Samar, an insurrecto fish, so back you must go into the water; or you are from Leyte, Americanisto, you are a good fish, so I will keep you.' So the fish we eat now I suppose are all loyal to our government. (H. C., 20 October 1901)

The humor of this story passed on to Ann Arbor has a popular media counterpart in the published memoirs of schoolteachers. William Freer expressed in his memoir the widely supported view of "insurrectos" as "a small number of shrewd and lawless men" who led an ignorant populace into armed resistance and away from "peaceful life and industry." Schoolteachers as well as other civilian Americans found comfort in the idea that guerrillas were robber barons, or *ladrones*, who did not enjoy popular support.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than view the relationship between violent eradication and benevolent assimilation as irreconcilable, General Superintendent of Education David Barrows portrayed public education as a necessary counterpoint to military strategies. He directed educators to use professionalized management to gauge the assimilation of Filipinos into rational thought structures. In contemporary newspapers, American teachers appeared as alternative "armies," a designation echoed in later historical narratives.<sup>12</sup> Noting the war as part of the challenge of rehabilitating Filipinos, the first Philippine Commission believed that insurgents waged war for freedoms that American rule could grant them by example and with close tutelage.

Defining an idealized partnership of Americans and Filipinos within the teleology of progress, tutelage emerged as a metonymy of teacher-student and American-Filipino relations. In this professional-client model, the American must be able to assess the potential in the Filipino and then efficiently act on such knowledge. Implicit in this model was the American's internal struggle to empower his or her rational potential. As a 1907 colonial teacher's manual suggested, "The pupils do not need to understand the exact reason for every order which is given by the teacher. All they need is to feel that the teacher knows best, and that he is always reasonable and just."<sup>13</sup> To facilitate this partnership, the American teacher must call forth his or her own progressive beliefs. Teachers ideally sought

obedience not by exerting brute force or by emphasizing superiority but by convincing students of the rightness of rational living. Mary Cole attempted to break habits of whispering, spitting, allowing livestock in the classroom, and studying out loud. "I told them partly in English, partly in Spanish, and partly in Visayan that it was not the custom in America for the children to do such and that I should like to have them do as American children" (M. C., 15 October 1901). The teacher's character and rational set of rules constituted classroom order. Because she maintained such order, Cole declared that she never found reason to discipline her students physically. Teachers who used corporal punishment, she argued, incorrectly assessed the potential of their colonial wards: "They should have known that [students] could not quit in a day a habit of years" (M. C., 9 February 1902).

This model of colonial relations was sorely tested in the Coles' narrations of the military campaign and the smallpox epidemics. In 1902, a complex of disease, famine, and war created problems all over the country, in which the upper classes, the Chinese, and the Americans had access to most medical care and food rations. By restricting the sale of rice and fishing rights on Leyte during January 1902, the garrison in Samar attempted to starve suspected insurgents. The military ordered that anyone within three miles of the Leyte coast would be shot on sight. Historian Reynaldo Iletto emphasizes the interrelated phenomena of military pacification and the spread of disease. Troop movements spread viruses while Filipinos responding to military food embargoes sold rice on the black market, thereby breaking quarantines.<sup>14</sup>

Alerted to the outbreak of smallpox in February 1902, the teachers inquired about illness in their students' households and dismissed three children from the school. Notwithstanding orders from the capital to institute quarantines and vaccinations, the town had no medical staff, American or Filipino. Without immediate success, Harry Cole had the provincial governor telegram for a doctor. He also conferred with the mayor about health regulations, and requested mortality statistics from the local friar. The military hospital in the capital refused Cole medical supplies because the town was under civil jurisdiction. Although Cole succeeded in obtaining vaccination for himself and his wife, he learned that he would not be admitted to the hospital if he fell ill. No response from Filipinos, however, surpassed his indignation at the indifference of the division superintendent of education. Cole wrote to his family, "He did not think it necessary to close the school and said, 'Well, I don't think you will take the small-pox, and you might as well keep on with your work.' I did not ask him if he wished to come and teach here as I know how he avoids all danger and does not even visit our schools." In Cole's view, not only did the military not reveal its "evil purposes" in the colony; the civil bureaucracy also neglected, if not endangered, its employees (H. C., 16 February 1902).



Soon after General Smith's campaign in Samar, American troops arrested Palo's mayor and Chinese merchant and took them to Catbalogan, Samar's capital. In their efforts to intervene, the Coles discovered the varieties of torture involved in pacification. Horrified by the acts performed in the name of the United States, Harry Cole took action on behalf of the families and communities of the detained. Taking many trips to the capital in search of information, he acted as liaison between Palo and civil authorities. The bruises and scars of released prisoners mesmerized Mary Cole. She described them in detail:

As he told of the cruelty with which he had been treated I felt disgraced. They pounded him over the head with bottles, striking his shaven spot because he was a padre. We saw the great sores they made. His neck was very sore, showing where ropes had been, also on his wrists and ankles. He would be drawn up by ropes and then let down with a thud, bruising his body dreadfully. There are great sores all over his body. They tied his hands and feet, then filled him with water and then jumped on him with their feet. They also cut the chord under his tongue and he was given nothing to eat. Wouldn't such treatment make insurrectos of anybody. (M. C., 20 January 1902)

Mary Cole's fascination with the military's handiwork on the Filipino body was part of her process of comprehending the possibilities of American power in the colony. She often returned to the procedures of torture in subsequent letters and diary entries. Inviting her Ann Arbor readers to inhabit the category of "insurrecto" was a highly inflammatory gesture that signaled her rejection of systematized intimidation. Cole cast blame with the military for actions that were morally and strategically wrong: "If [Filipinos] were to judge the American people as a race from the soldiers, they must surely think we are their inferiors" (M. C., 20 January 1902).

Similarly, Harry described Filipinos as caught between the punishments of the U.S. military and the demands of the Filipino insurgents. In a letter to Secretary of Interior Dean Worcester, Cole spoke for the Filipinos of Palo: "To say that they are frightened is but putting it mildly. I have seen them almost swoon from sheer terror. I have heard them talk about fleeing to the mountains, but they say they can not for then the insurrectos will kill them; they are afraid to stay here for fear of the American soldiers" (H. C. to Dean Worcester, 10 January 1902). Evident in his letters home are such moments in which Filipinos in the immediate vicinity appear depoliticized and in need of his paternal care. In these moments, the Coles sought to intervene as nonmilitary personnel who represented the best of Anglo-American civilization.

In his letter to the Secretary of Interior, Cole inserted himself into ongoing political debates about civil and military rule. Invoking all of the

responsibilities given to schoolteachers by official literature, he was obligated to tell the “truth” about military intimidation and gladly took it upon himself to write to colonial officials on behalf of his Filipino “charges.” In the narrative addressed to the political world, Cole embodied beneficence and rationality and spoke as the conscience of the colonial project: “I am not pleading for [Palo’s mayor] alone, but it is the entire people here; and more than this the integrity and faithfulness of the American people. The people here say they are without hope now, except they seem glad to have us here; for they say that we are all they have now to give them hope” (H. C. to Dean Worcester, 10 January 1902). The Worcester letter makes use of the ideological centrality of schoolteachers to pressure the secretary of interior to maintain American ideals in the colony. In contrast, a letter to his brother argued that expansionist policies were irrational and costly, and that teachers had negligible influence in the entire project (H. C. to Leon Cole, 27 October 1901).

The question of pacification and policy remained unresolved in either the metropole or the colony. Notwithstanding President Theodore Roosevelt’s proclamation of successful pacification on 4 July 1902, the Philippine-American War continued in some form into the next decade. Outrage arose in the United States to call for the court-martial of General Smith. On 28 January 1902, the Senate Committee on the Philippines began closed hearings about military tactics of counterinsurgency. Using testimony given by soldiers who had practiced torture, the Senate debated the meaning of civilized warfare. From Palo, Harry Cole argued with his family along similar lines. Cole sought to disprove the official stories issued to the United States from the colony, charging that reports about the military campaigns were “fixed up and whitewashed.” Some family members resisted these narratives and prompted the following accusation from Cole: “You think I must be mistaken concerning the orders for killing everything in Samar. It is true that I am mistaken if you take reports that reach the U.S., but nobody in the U.S. knows what is going on here” (H. C., 16 March 1902).

In their minds, the Coles’ personal correspondence occupied a privileged space set apart from the politically charged climate in which newspaper editors and politicians discussed the economic and moral rationales for retaining a noncontiguous territory. The teachers who published memoirs about their colonial experience, on the other hand, clearly sought to influence public opinion and national memory. William Freer, in the preface to his 1906 account, declared that he “trusts that the perusal of the following pages will result in a stronger conviction of the unwisdom of granting any greater degree of self-government.”<sup>15</sup> Suggesting that her readers give “pause to give a tender thought to the land which most Americans revile when they are in it, but which they sentimentally regret

when they have left it,” Mary Fee indicated how her published memoir was shaped by the goals of commemorating colonial public schools.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Mary Cole explicitly distinguished her letters from teachers’ literature intended for broad consumption:

Under no condition are you to publish any of my letters, for they are not written in any style for publication; no paragraphs have I made so as to save space. Things are jotted down just as they come to me without system or form and people might think they were written for publication and criticize. It isn’t written in any kind of style, and I’m ashamed of it, it is so stupid in places and I know that those who read it will not criticize it” (M. C., 17 September 1901).

Asking that her mother circulate her letters among women friends and relatives, Cole trusted that her selected audience would not find fault with her lack of writing “style” (M. C., 22 July 1901).

I have chosen to violate Mary Cole’s wish to keep her letters private because teachers’ personal correspondence lends important clues about the production of selective memory of empire among Americans. In several ways, Harry and Mary Cole saw themselves as distanced from the official imperial project. As aspirants to middle-class living, they entered colonial service at an initial stage of their professional careers. Mary Cole’s correspondence shows that she kept her sights firmly on Ann Arbor; she emphasized that her Philippine experience was to provide the financial opportunity to purchase a house.

A strong longing for home in her letters oriented Mary Cole toward the familiar, as she experienced initial disorientation and cultural confusion. Cole missed not only individual family members; her letters regularly projected herself into her memory of Ann Arbor (and less frequently, the United States) during the changing seasons and holidays. In 1901 she wrote to her family, “Although we cannot be with you in person, we are there in spirit and thought, for we can travel through space in that form at least” (M. C., 23 August 1901). More material exchanges were fabric samples folded into letters: having received a handkerchief from home, Cole sent cloth made from pineapple fibers for her mother and neighbors to evaluate (M. C., 17 September 1901). After making a dress out of the gauzy material, she asked her folks to imagine her in the “Filipino waist” among “pickaninnies” in the Visayan town. As her family touched the cloth, they were asked to imagine it against her skin: “I am getting so freckled and brown that it will be hard to tell me from a Filipino pretty soon” (M. C., 23 August 1901). As her letters demonstrate, Mary Cole strongly identified with her home community: what was most important to her psychic survival in the colonies was affirmation from her friends and

family in Ann Arbor, rather than accordance with the American imperial administration. In many of their letters from the Philippines, both Mary and her husband expressed loyalty to region as a way to remove themselves from the national imperatives of expansionism. Even in the midst of the U.S. war of conquest against Philippine armed national forces did the Coles attempt to wield the colonial gaze without being accountable. For them, the ravages of disease and war on Filipinos complicated their tasks as teachers and, at the very least, served as colorful tales from the colony. In sum, professional and regional identities allowed teachers such as the Coles to depoliticize their careers in the Philippines.

The manner in which civil servants tried to shield their narrated experiences from the politics of conquest suggests how Americans generally tend to exempt themselves from the era of high imperialism at the turn of the century. In canonical texts, U.S. historians have explained Western interventions in Asian political economies as the search for economic and cultural resolutions for domestic anxieties. By representing the Philippines as a temporary outlet for exported goods and cultural conflicts, these historians emphasize that colonization was performed under duress and constituted an aberrant episode in nation building.<sup>17</sup> As civil servants responsible for identifying U.S. imperialism with a benevolent and rational project of public schooling, colonial teachers, however, remind us of how the colonization of the Philippines was intricately interwoven into American civil society.

Domesticity framed many American expansionist maneuvers in the late nineteenth century. It served as an institution to be created in homes of the conquered as well as a justification for civilizing missions overseas. American imperial endeavors intertwined with the emergence of Anglo women's moral authority in U.S. culture. Within institutional networks, white women established their presence in professional life, comprising approximately half of the student population at major universities in turn-of-the-century United States. Historians have discussed the changing ideas of femininity, particularly as feminine nurturing was a quality that both hindered and helped white women engage with scientific technologies.<sup>18</sup> As married women increasingly entered the work force, they shared with their husbands the practical and ideological tasks of colonial service. In some sparsely populated towns, husbands acted as traveling barrio supervisors while their wives taught secondary and high school classes. For an Anglo-American woman, whether single or married, a colonial career could advance social power and authority, or, at the very least, bring her unprecedented recognition. In her first month of teaching, Mary Cole wrote, "I never was noticed at home, but here I draw as much attention as Barnum's circus. I am simply stared at all the time, and often crowds of women and children gather in front of the house" (M. C., 3

In contrast to his  
wife, Harry used  
his letters as a  
forum to insert  
himself into  
national  
discussions in  
the United States.  
His references to  
powerful figures  
in colonial politics  
outweighed the  
interpersonal  
mode of  
communication.  
Inversely, his  
criticism of  
Governor-General  
Taft revealed the  
trauma of his  
colonial  
experience.

October 1901). In reward for such attention, Cole extended her domestic realm by teaching Filipinas how to bake cakes.

More broadly, domestic ideology involved the delineation of boundaries between the familiar and the strange.<sup>19</sup> Although the Philippines was never imagined to be a colony for American immigration and settlement, a significant number of civil servants forged long careers there. Two teachers who made the islands their home for many decades chose to perform their marriage ceremony at the Coles' house in Palo. As inhabitants of one of the larger bungalows in the western part of the island of Leyte, the Coles often housed visiting American soldiers and administrators. Both Mary and Harry found the company of other Americans to be a welcome respite from the Palo townspeople. In contrast to the published accounts of teachers charmed by their students, the Coles did not express much paternal affection for the local population. Their preoccupation, instead, was establishing a haven apart from their colonial duties.

Establishing a domestic sphere within the colony, however, constituted one of Anglo-American women teachers' most important imperial tasks. Noting that one-fourth of the teachers on her transport were women, Mary Cole wrote that "there is a large number of young girls who have known nothing but ease and comfort all their lives who will not find things as they are at home and who will get homesick of course" (M. C., 23 August 1901). In contrast, she was "determined that we shall keep well and happy and not get homesick even if we do live back in the days of our grandfathers part of the time. I made up my mind before we started that we must like it here whether or no" (M. C., 23 August 1901). Through her letters and exchanges of small, household gifts and gossip, Cole labored to maintain daily connections between the home that she left in Ann Arbor and the home she was keeping in Palo. Her job of maintaining the illusions of safety and distance from the colonial warfare engulfing the Visayan Islands freed Harry to remove himself politically from the imperial project.

This interdependence framed a strategy for the Coles during their three-year stay in Leyte. In their letters the Coles together described their immediate shock and dismay with the turn of events in 1902. In contrast to his wife, Harry used his letters as a forum to insert himself into national discussions in the United States. His references to powerful figures in colonial politics outweighed the interpersonal mode of communication. Inversely, his criticism of Governor-General Taft revealed the trauma of his colonial experience. Such letters imparted to the local community that Cole felt marginalized on the edges of empire, where his experience was ironically an impotent source of authority. His circle of intimates did not function as a concrete reference group, as hers did for his wife: he was set adrift in the expanse of empire.

It is all very easy for the people in the States half way around the globe, who have never been to a tropical country, who know nothing of conditions here, whose resentment has never been stirred by gross mistreatment [by] one's own government, who have never endured some years of life among ignorant and half savage people, and deprived of *all* the advantages of civilization and association with one's own people. (H. C., 22 April 1904).

To reinforce the boundaries of his subjectivity during the stresses of colonial war and the demands of professionalization and progressive ideals, Harry Cole turned toward racial explanations. Cole defended his flourishing Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism to his friends and family:

I know I do not take any pains to give [Filipinos] the idea that they are as good as we are. I feel the same now as when I was at home, and yet I do not doubt that I am getting a somewhat proud and domineering manner. However I shall leave that for you to decide when we return. I guess there is not much change only in my pride for our own race as compared with others—and I really do not think that is *bad* in itself” (H. C., 8 April 1904).

In this narration, Cole presented himself as an ordinary American whose experience in the Philippines confirmed his sense of racial superiority.

Letters from 1901 bear out the suspicion that Cole arrived in Palo with a racist orientation: after five weeks he had wearied of teaching “monkeys” to speak English (H. C., 5 November 1901). The ideology of rule in the Philippines turned on the questions of the “truthful” essence of the colonized and the appropriate technology of tutelage and discipline. The civilizing mission promised visceral and ideological gratification in return for the work of civil servants: the fruits of labor would be harvested in the progress of the colonized. Harry Cole came to confirm with his wife the theory that civilization took generations to build, rather than the bureaucratic time of colonial contracts and political maneuvers. “How can we expect a colored race, with the baser natures and the natural tendencies to evil,” he asked his family back home, “to attain without years and years, or even generations, of training, even to a crude imitation of a good form of government?”

Participating in the progressive activity of measuring the colonized subject, Cole saw the “true” Filipino as the savage rather than as the racial adolescent or the half-civilized pupil. His lengthy descriptions find the townspeople, young and old, in hammocks, drinking coconut wine, smoking long cigars, spitting red betel nut juice, clad only in loin cloths. Cole reserved his most bitter tirades for Filipinos whom he claimed to know more intimately than any colonial administrator assuming the white man's burden:

It makes a mighty difference whether one is an official and receives the homage of these people simply *because* he is an official, or whether he lives *amongst* the people as an ordinary civilian and not in an official capacity. The latter condition is that in which we see the people as they *are*. Here is where we find the savage (H. C., 22 April 1904).

Such racialization demanded a social relation of the civilized and the primitive that differed from the U.S. ideology of rule. Cole's turning away from the colonial project came out of a belief that the Filipino subject deserved something other than colonial tutelage. Revising his critique of the military after three years of teaching, he charged that Filipinos "can not appreciate the sparing of their lives" (H. C., 30 June 1902).

Cole claimed that his judgments of the Filipino populace reflected experiential truths rather than racist preconceptions. Needless to say, Cole did not become an anti-imperialist; rather, he described empire as a corporation that could do without his labor: "The more I see of things here, the more convinced I am that the bringing of us teachers over here was a huge political deal . . . and as far as being an expansionist is concerned, I am perfectly willing to let the next man do the expanding" (H. C., 23 August 1901). The racialized strategy of popular discourse contributed to an erasing of Americans' involvement in the imperial scrambles at the turn of the century. One letter from 1903 presaged the isolationism and nativism that dominated the United States in later decades:

I hope we shall never again strike a country so expensive as this. It should be a cheap country to live in, and labor should be cheap. But I must say nothing about this—and when I get home, I want to forget about this country and people as soon as possible. I shall probably hate the sight of anything but a white man the rest of my life (and some of these are none too loveable) [*sic*]. (H. C., 17 October 1903).

One imagines that the Coles' return to Ann Arbor closed the chapter not on their professional lives or their progressive beliefs but on their intimacy with U.S. imperialism in the Philippines.

The United States formulated imperial policies by promoting a progressive ideology of rule. At the same time, the American state defined a "benevolent" project in recognition for the sacrifices performed by its Filipino allies against Spain in 1898. The contradictions of the colonial romance between the American and the Filipino surface in the contemporary debate about the Balangiga church bells.

The question of how to memorialize the battle of Balangiga gave rise to differing interpretations of the relationship between Americans and Filipinos after 1898. The widely divergent representations of the Filipino as the duplicitous guerilla-enemy or as the ingratiating and imitative stu-

dent-ally rehearsed conflicting views held by the military and civil branches of the colonial administration, particularly during the war. As the contemporary debates demonstrate, neither Americans nor Filipinos have reconciled the question of whose trust was betrayed. Was it that of the Filipinos, who fought with the American military against Spain, only to be colonized further by the United States? Or was it the trust of the American infantry troops, who fell victim to Balangigueño guerrillas in disregard to the “civilized” rules of war?

Among those who opposed the return of bells are Senators Jesse Helms and Strom Thurmond, some local Wyomingans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars lobby. Several enlisted and civilian Americans expressed in interviews the fear that the U.S. soldier (or the memory of U.S. bravery against the “insurrecto”) would be greatly diminished by the view that the battle of Balangiga was an incident of imperial conquest. By emphasizing the violent experience of war, this coalition understated the imperialist agenda of “pacification.” While exempting the individuals murdered at Balangiga from colonial accountability, such views reproduced the imperial representation of Filipino guerrillas as enemies of rationality and progress; as *ladrones* whose struggle, in Taft’s words, was “mistaken.” During the spring of 1998 Senator Craig Thomas (R.-Wyo) proposed legislation (S. 1903) to block the return of spoils of war to foreign countries. In April 1998, President Clinton stated that he could not resolve the matter without consulting Congress, implying that the two church bells would most likely remain in the United States.

The Philippine Embassy, meanwhile, asserted that the Balangiga massacre was an episode of the war for national sovereignty against the United States. While some organized groups demanded the restoration of both bells to the town of Balangiga, the official political response to the American military’s position was a compromise resolution.<sup>20</sup> The Philippine embassy supported Representative Underwood’s resolution to deliver one bell each to the Philippines and the United States. Each country would share ownership of the bells, placing one authentic bell next to a duplicate of the other. This symmetrical arrangement, a Philippine Embassy spokesperson said, was a “gesture of healing and friendship” that would “honor both sides.”<sup>21</sup>

In statements accompanying his proposal, Representative Underwood drew much needed attention to the decolonizing struggles shared by the peoples of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshals, the Federated State of Micronesia, the New Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, and his constituents in Guam. The compromise, however, suggests that the only possible public response to the U.S. military’s conceptions of the brave American soldier and the misguided Filipino terrorist was to bring to a close the colonial chapters of



our shared histories. In emphasizing the “special partnership” forged by Americans and Filipinos during the trials of colonization and nation building, one can remember the battle of Balangiga only from a great distance.

Harry and Mary Cole, too, faced a narrow set of choices in recording their colonial experiences. While they maintained progressive beliefs in humane military pacification and pedagogy, the Coles attempted to revise significantly their personal identification with the American empire. The fissures in their correspondence indicate the ruptures of imperial memory. Examination of the Coles’ correspondence reveals that neither strategies to bolster or to avoid the official imperial project absents the American civil servant from complicity in the colonial encounter. By preserving and defending their good intentions from encroachments by the U.S. administration and domestic media, the Coles turned away from a political judgment of the disciplinary and violent process of the civilizing mission. Their letters provide a cautionary tale for those at the end of the twentieth century who would commemorate the colonial wars in the islands by invoking a “special partnership” between the United States and the Philippines.

## Notes

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1. William Howard Taft, “The Duty of Americans in the Philippines” (address given before the Union Reading College, Manila, 17 December 1903). Excerpted in John Bancroft Devins, *An Observer in the Philippines* (Boston: American Tract Society, 1905), 398.

2. Vicente L. Rafael, ed., *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

3. David P. Barrows, “Education and Social Progress in the Philippines,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 30 (July 1907): 73.

4. Harry N. Cole to Helen M. N. Cole, 18 November 1901, Harry N. Cole Papers, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. All the letters from Harry and Mary Cole are housed in this collection and will henceforth be cited by initials and date in the text. Most of Harry Cole’s letters were written to Helen M. N. Cole; when this is not the case, it is noted in the text. All of Mary Cole’s letters are addressed to J. E. Scott.

5. Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 210. The involvements of American middle-class religious, cultural, and economic organizations in state policies of expansion are discussed in Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982). For alternate approaches to the reshaping of Anglo-American middle-class masculinity in the U.S. empire see

Warwick Anderson, "The Trespass Speaks: White Masculinity and Colonial Breakdown," *American Historical Review* 102 (December 1997): 1343–70; and Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

6. Bureau of Education, *A Statement of Organization, Aims, and Conditions of Service in the Bureau of Education* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1911), 11.

7. Ranajit Guha makes this point in his examination of George Orwell's simmering anxieties in British Burma. See Ranajit Guha, "Not at Home in Empire," *Critical Inquiry* 23 (spring 1997): 482–93.

8. House Resolution 312, United States House of Representatives, 105th Congress, 1st Session, introduced 7 November 1997.

9. Luzviminda Francisco, "The First Vietnam: The Philippine American War, 1899–1902," in *The Philippines: End of an Illusion* (London: AREAS, 1973). Excerpted in Daniel B. Schirmer and Stephen Roskamm Shalom, eds., *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorships, and Resistance* (Boston: South End, 1987), 8–19.

10. For the inscription of the Samar campaign by American historians see John Morgan Gates, *Schoolbooks and Krags: The United States Army in the Philippines* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1973); Joseph L. Schott, *The Ordeal at Samar* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 286–87; and Moorfield Storey and Marcial P. Lichauco, *The Conquest of the Philippines by the United States, 1898–1925* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 138–39.

11. William B. Freer, *The Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher: A Narrative of Work and Travel in the Philippine Islands* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 137. "Army of American Teachers Sails for the Philippines: Second Brigade Moves on to a Great Campaign of Education," *San Francisco Chronicle* (24 July 1901), 12.

12. David P. Barrows, "Education and Social Progress in the Philippines," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 30 (July 1907): 73.

13. H. C. Theobald, *The Filipino Teacher's Manual* (New York: World Book Co., 1907), 49. See also Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978).

14. Reynoldo C. Iletto, "Cholera and the Origins of the American Sanitary Order in the Philippines," in *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures*, ed. Vicente L. Rafael (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 51–82.

15. Freer, *The Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher*.

16. Mary H. Fee, *A Woman's Impression of the Philippines* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1912), 43–44.

17. The explanation of American expansionism as a result of late-nineteenth-century cultural anxieties is presented by Richard Hofstadter, "Manifest Destiny and the Philippines," in *American Imperialism in 1898: Problems in American Civilization*, ed. Theodore P. Greene (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1955), 54–70. Walter LaFeber has asserted that the search for markets and resources alone stimulated American policymakers. LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860–1898* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963).

18. Fee, *A Woman's Impressions of the Philippines*, 181.

19. Anglo-Protestant women participated in American expansionism by invoking their Victorian moral influence. See Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue:*

*The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). For an analysis of racial and middle-class privileges of domesticity in the occupied Philippines see Vicente L. Rafael, “Colonial Domesticity: White Women and United States Rule in the Philippines” *American Literature* 67 (December 1995): 639–66.

20. In late fall of 1997, the Pintig Cultural Group of Chicago produced a musical about the Balangigüeño resistance, creating alliances between local groups in the Philippines to call for the unequivocal return of the bells.

21. James Brooke, “U.S.-Philippines History Entwined in War Booty,” *New York Times*, 1 December 1997, A14.