

At Home in the Cordillera Wilds: Colonial Domesticity in the Letters of Maud Huntley Jenks, 1901-1903¹

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This paper examines colonial domesticity as embodied in the notion of “home.” At the beginning of U.S. colonial rule in the Philippines, a number of American women came as officials’ wives to establish home in the islands. Although valued as domestic figures, they were involved in more complex power relations that extended beyond the domicile and affirmed their complicity to colonialism. By problematizing the trope of separate spheres that had long assigned gender spatial identities into home and nation, this study reveals how colonial domesticity blurred this divide as it reinforced the dominant discourse of racial difference. Focusing on the letters of Maud Huntley Jenks written to her family in Wisconsin during her stay in the islands with anthropologist-husband Dr. Albert E. Jenks, I examine how colonial “otherness” is articulated by invoking “home” through Mrs. Jenks’ descriptions of the Cordillera landscape, its inhabitants, and the 1904 St. Louis Fair.

KEYWORDS: Colonial domesticity, separate spheres, home, travel writing, gender

The deconstructing of the spatial significance of the Cordillera during American colonial rule has been a focal point in continuing scholarship on the region.² Recent sociological and historical accounts consider how the Cordillera and its tribal inhabitants were recast into what Paul Kramer terms as an “intellectual jurisdiction.”³ Propelled by both its benevolent and democratic vision, the U.S. civilizing mission saw the creation of knowledge as strategic in transforming a “heathen” populace into self-willed, political subjects.

Anthropology injected an official and “scientific” voice in the search for knowledge.⁴ At the forefront of this endeavor was the Bureau of Ethnological

Survey for the Philippine Islands, which was headed by Dr. Albert E. Jenks. He had come to the islands to study the non-Christian tribes, particularly, the Igorots. Visually documenting the “Igorots” effectively coded them as “barbaric” and “savage” in claims made through scientific racism. This representation conjured as well the paternal intent of U.S. imperialism in bestowing upon these people, believed to occupy the lowest rung on the evolutionary ladder, the light of civilization.

Dr. Jenks’ *Bontoc Igorot* (1905) was emblematic of the U.S. colonial project’s intellectual pursuit. The book was hailed as the “most complete study ever made of a primitive

people”⁵ and assured Dr. Jenks of a prime position in the academe after his return to the U.S.⁶ Photographs of half-naked Igorots abundantly populate the book and render its anthropometric descriptions seemingly incontestable. These visual representations became an unequalled spectacle at the 1904 St. Louis Fair, as the Igorots and their material culture were exhibited in an elaborate display that Dr. Jenks himself took a major role in assembling. As the ultimate signifier of racial alterity, the Igorot’s presence served as a powerful narrative drive for the U.S. civilizing mission in the Philippines.

Yet as resisting readings may have decoded the subterfuge of U.S. benevolent assimilation, there remains the call of historian Frank Jenista to “alter the contours of the narrative bequeathed by participants such as Jenks and Worcester.”⁷ Such is to underscore the fact that official accounts, largely in the form of “scientific” and objective literature, have taken primacy over narratives that, although ignored for their impressionistic qualities, may provide valuable insights into the “intimate” workings of colonialism. This study seeks to shift critical attention to the letters of Mrs. Maud Huntley Jenks which, up to this time, have served as a mere post-script to the Philippine career of Dr. Jenks.

The epistolary form, while argued to be the discursive tool of “home,” differentiating women’s writings from those of men as personal and private, circulates perceptions that are forged and charged by spaces beyond the private. As the letters of Mrs. Jenks prove, the discourse of colonial domesticity blurred the spaces between home and nation as she participated through her roles as wife and assistant in her husband’s anthropological project.

The letters in the collection *Death Stalks Philippines Wilds* were written to the parents of Mrs. Jenks in Wisconsin during the couple’s stay in the islands, mostly in the Cordillera. Consisting of some 165 letters and journal entries written from 1901 to 1903, the collection was published only in 1951, nearly half a century after the Jenks returned to the U.S. In the preface to the collection, editor Carmen N. Richard—in thanking the late

Mrs. Jenks for entrusting the personal letters to her while praising Dr. Jenks’ “scientific” achievement—unwittingly reveals the gender and, hence, the discursive binary that underlie the trope of separate spheres. The letters as gesture of the domestic/interior/private are now retrieved to provide a public re-telling of the “dramatic experiences” shared by Dr. Jenks with his wife, but which in his publications do not signify as they belong to a genre that provides “accurate sources of information about the Philippines and their people.”⁸ By delineating the discursive outputs of Dr. and Mrs. Jenks, gendered spatial identities are made to emerge into a dichotomy of interior/exterior.

Meyda Yegenoglu’s (1998) use of the Derridean term “supplement”⁹ in her work on the orientalist discourse of Western women’s travel accounts illumines *Death Stalks Philippine Wilds’* textual position vis-a-vis Dr. Jenks’ works. According to Yegenoglu (1998), Western women’s narratives were not seen as essential as they merely “function(s) to constitute the fullness and coherence of the narratives of men” (76). As the “originary” text, men’s accounts are by themselves complete and the knowledge inhering from them cannot be supplanted by women’s texts. This distinction, Yegenoglu (1998) argues, thus produces discursive binaries that describe women’s texts as inessential and marginal. In this regard, women’s accounts are seen as only capable of adding, often, sentimental and intimate details to complete the picture.

Mrs. Jenks’ letters have been cited in studies regarding Dr. Jenks’ career but only to ascertain personal details of his life in the Philippines. No in-depth study has yet been made to explore how her writings shared in the orientalist discourse and the epistemic violence inhering in the objectification of the Igorots in her letters home. In this context, it is hoped that a resisting reading of Mrs. Jenks’ letters will intervene in the reconstruction of the Cordillera narrative by highlighting the agency of a white woman and how her subject position as a domestic figure is complicit with the power structures of colonialism. Although viewed as peripheral to the dominant colonial discourse, it is this very subject position that produced Mrs.

Jenks' unrehearsed articulation of colonial "otherness."

Three questions form the focus of this study. First, how was "home" articulated in the trajectory of travel? Second, what discursive shifts were created when Mrs. Jenks participated in the epistolary and ethnographic realms, and what impact did these shifts have on the trope of the separate spheres? Third, how was Mrs. Jenks' agency constituted through her negotiations with the colonial environ? In an attempt to answer these questions, I examine the dominant motifs mapped out in Mrs. Jenks letters, namely, descriptions of the Cordillera landscape and its inhabitants, and her participation in the 1904 St. Louis Fair. It is believed that a closer look at the way these elements are deployed will reveal the ideologically charged nuances of "home."

THEORIZING "HOME"

In charting the changes of the paradigm of separate spheres over the last century, historian Linda Kerber¹⁰ comprehensively reveals how it has been reinforced as a "metaphor" or a "trope" to explain women's role in American society and culture. The paradigm's efficacy in explaining social phenomena or occurrences has become so deeply ingrained in the American consciousness that the word "sphere" and its referent have effectively suffused the public's language. Yet despite cataloguing the theoretical permutations the trope of "separate spheres" has been subjected to, Kerber (1988) seems to have overlooked an important consideration. In her conclusion, for instance, she writes:

As we discuss the concept of separate spheres, we are tiptoeing on the boundary between politics and ideology, between sociology and rhetoric. We have entered the realm of hermeneutics; our task—insofar as it involves the analysis and demystification of a series of binary opposites—is essentially one of *deconstruction* (italics mine). (p. 39)

It is worthy to note that as Kerber stresses the task of "deconstructing" the paradigm of separate spheres in terms of who and how gender roles are defined, she does not factor into her discussion how it had been ideologically energized to serve the expansionist motives of 19th century America, as middle-class American white women were called on to serve in colonial missions. The silence on the matter, a historical oversight or hermeneutic outage so to speak, can lead our attention to the complex configuration of power relations that lie central to the U.S.' geopolitical concept of "home."

Kerber (1988) further argues that "the reconstruction of gender relations is related to major issues of power, for we live in a world in which authority has traditionally validated itself by its distance from the feminine" (39). Here, the "authority" she refers to is implied as absolutely excluding women from wielding power. Yet the period of U.S. occupied Philippines may provide vital clues on how American women, though excluded from the central mechanisms of power, were in fact complicit to colonialism. Hence, as Kerber is vigilant for the "constant analysis of language" (39) to map the thoroughfares of power, she in effect calls attention to its embedded flows through the domicile, once thought of as immune or inessential to its operations.

Amy Kaplan's (1998) *Manifest Domesticity*, on the other hand, illumines in a postcolonial light what scholars like Kerber may have excluded in inquiring into the paradigm of separate spheres. By focusing on "home" as a powerful site for ideological notions of the U.S. as an imperial power, Kaplan (1998) is able to identify a "blind spot" in the scholarship on the paradigm of separate spheres. She argues that domesticity was never factored into the equation of national and foreign concerns, since women were seen as innocuously functioning solely within the confines of the domicile. Kaplan (1998) claims that scholars ignored the fact that the discourse of manifest destiny, which appropriates the duty of saving the uncivilized world as the duty of the white race, was concurrent with the preoccupation of antebellum middle-class American women with domesticity (583).

While the nation was in a tumultuous race to expand its borders, “home” remained a societal fulcrum that gave the U.S. a semblance of steadiness, a space within which the family was protected from the violent displacement of indigenous peoples. Yet, this became the major contradiction of the times. “Home,” despite the insistence on its use to signal a national unity, became a highly polemical term as the issues regarding it depicted the non-acceptance of racial groups into what was dominantly an Anglo-Saxon race. “Home” in the trajectory of the U.S. expansionist history had been—ontologically—a white realm (585).

Kaplan (1998) traces the deep relation between the imperialist and domestic discourses to their common use of a regenerative rhetoric that masks domination as “global harmony” (p. 588). Rethinking the “separate spheres” anew, Kaplan asserts that since “home” circumscribes spaces, “home” for empire puts up both physical and metaphorical enclosures to protect it from the foreignness that impinges on it (585). Hence the “separate spheres” that used to divide the female and male realms into the emotional and intellectual domains now functions as a gender unifier. Men and women become allies as the nation extends to other geographies. So considered, the “separate spheres” paradigm is reconfigured into the binary of “domestic/foreign” while “home” becomes a site that should be protected from racial otherness. Such a view can only be possible, however, if “domesticity” is made to function as something that conquers and tames.

Kaplan (1998) construes the nature of “home” as highly unstable, contrary to what is viewed as its essence. Its borders, constructed at multiple levels, should be flexible to the demands of imperial expansion. In this regard, the metaphorical register of home as a fluid construction is valuable in resolving the contradictions found in white woman’s colonial narrative on the Philippines—particularly, in the writings of Mrs. Jenks. That she became deeply involved in the scientific venture of her anthropologist-husband shows how her daily activities were not solely contingent on the

domestic. In the years she resided in the islands, she traveled extensively with Dr. Jenks as she assisted him in photographing the Igorots, procuring artifacts from them during her visits to their houses in the *barrio*, editing Dr. Jenks’ notes and manuscript, and cataloguing the artifacts collected for the Fair before finally sending them to the U.S. While such tasks echo the usual assignation of colonial wives as “helpmate” or “assistance” of their husbands, it is without doubt that these tasks warrant the women’s presence in the public sphere (Dagut, 2000) and provide them with a more textured subjectivity. Mrs. Jenks’ domestic duties were equally charged with the ethnographic energies of Dr. Jenks’ incursions into the wilderness. Within the interiors of the Cordillera, “home” embodied Mrs. Jenks’ mobility.

Although the word “home” literally punctuates many of Mrs. Jenks’ letters, a closer look at its construction reveals its manifold nature. Her use of the word as a narrative prompt is meant to refer to her Wisconsin home. The colonial topography, whenever its beauty overwhelms her, instantaneously evokes nostalgia for her home in the U.S. Such occasions manifest how the Philippine archipelago—which Mrs. Jenks calls “home” as well—is subsumed into the geopolitical continuum of empire. Nowhere in her letters does Mrs. Jenks call her “home” a “temporary dwelling”¹¹ in its anthropological sense. It is “home” as having been greatly invested in with time and affection. As an anthropologist’s wife, “home” is a performative site where her marital duties are carried out. It is a locus in which the colonial ideology is filtered and fused with her sentiments towards the Igorots—moments that engender affection and repulsion all at one time.

Mrs. Jenks’ Cordillera’s “home” indicates her complex positionality in the colonial matrix as she stands between the liminal spaces of domesticity and nation. With these spaces coalescing in the act of writing, a textual tension surfaces as Mrs. Jenks shifts from the ethnographic to the epistolary in writing about the varied components of her days. The epistolary functions as the rhetoric of the intimate and familiar, while the ethnographic, as the

discursive tool of anthropology, emerges through her citations of Dr. Jenks' notes on the Igorots. Yet in her letters, the two realms are woven into the quotidian as she flitters from cataloguing the domestic demands of the day—scouring the silver, changing the linens, etc.—and proceeds to commenting on recent historical matters (such as the chair that carried Gen. Aguinaldo's wife back to Bontoc) to ethnographic reflections on the *sementeras*, the headhunter tribe's societal and political structure, and the nativist spirituality—all of which display her privileged proximity to the Igorots and produces observations that Kramer calls astute and worthy of ethnographic merit (194).

"Home," as glimpsed from Mrs. Jenks' letters, is problematized as it now expands to accommodate "foreignness" into its physical space. It evolves into a complex web of relations that confronts gender in locations whose boundaries are imperially marked. As a microcosm of power relations, "home" foregrounds the displacement of the local inhabitants and a rupture in the native culture.

THE "VERITABLE PARADISE": COLONIAL HOME AND NATION

Chapter One of *Death Stalks the Philippine Wilds*—entitled "Gateway to the Unknown"—is prefaced by a re-telling of how Mrs. Jenks' father initially objected to his daughter accompanying her anthropologist-husband Dr. Albert Jenks on a sea voyage to the Philippines. Visions of islands plagued with disease and famine and populated with savages was enough for Mr. Huntley to imagine his daughter—who has never been away from home—would be unsafe and vulnerable to the treacheries of the wilderness.

Mrs. Jenks' aunt, Mary Dorwin, however, intercedes on her behalf, by reminding Mr. Huntley of the misfortune that befell their Aunt Colista. Her parents dissented to her marrying a man headed for California to make his fortune from the gold rush. Left behind, she suffered a heartbreak that eventually led to her death.

This reference to a sentimental tale of heartbreak and the gold rush that began in 1848 frames Mrs. Jenks' journey to the Philippines. The same spirit—the search for bounty—can be inferred from the motivations behind the expeditions to California and to the U.S.' newly acquired tropical colony. What finally convinced Mr. Huntley to allow her daughter to go with her husband is not this promise of material bounty, but the "noble vision of the voyage" to uplift the lives of a heathen populace. Dedicated to this goal is Dr. Jenks' anthropological mission in the islands that accords with President McKinley's declaration: "Philippines are ours, not to exploit, but to develop, to civilize to educate, to train in the science of self-government. This is the path of duty which we must follow or be recreant to a mighty trust committed to us" (4).

In her journey to the islands half a century after the gold rush, Mrs. Jenks is given much more leeway than her Aunt Colista who was helpless before her own sorrow. Mrs. Jenks, this time, is valorized as embodying the spirit of feminine loyalty, womanly ambition and adventure as she becomes Dr. Jenks' ally in yet another rush that would bring thousands of American men and women to the Philippines—the "new and last American frontier" (Kramer, 1998). Hence on June 30, 1902, the Jenks embark on a sea voyage that spans 7,000 miles from Wisconsin across the Pacific to the Philippine islands on the US transport *Meade*. While on her passage from San Francisco to Japan, Mrs. Jenks writes in her letter dated July 3 of visions of her home in Wisconsin, as they are refracted in the sceneries she encounters on her trip:

As we looked down close to the side of the boat, where she cut the water, we could see great patches of light shimmering like a million fireflies. They remind me of the faint-glowing cold light in that rotting old stump in our wood pasture there at home. (p. 3)

This poetic (re)construction of home preempts her arrival in the Philippines. When the ship *Meade*

finally docks in Manila on July 15, she writes: “After a last night on shipboard, we shall be ready to probe the mysteries of the strange land before us” (9). The use of the words “probe” and “mysteries” composes the archipelago as an enticing expanse that heralds the couple’s new adventure. One finds in her choice of words the spirit of the earlier male explorers who cast the landscape as a metaphoric female that awaits exploration. But the manner she ends this letter in softens into a female voice, one that necessarily anchors itself on “home”—an intimate, familiar sphere—that contrasts with the earlier “strange land.” Calling the new land “home” renders its “mysteries” as no longer formidable. As she begins to claim an immediate tie with the place, Mrs. Jenks greets her family: “So now, my dear ones at home, I greet you with much love from this lovely new home of ours.” (9)

This articulation of “home”—a major motif in Mrs. Jenks’ travel narratives—rhetorically reconciles her with the colonial geography as she re-assembles her married life into domestic fluidity. The process creates dichotomies in Mrs. Jenks’ articulation of her life in the Philippines. As a wife tasked with the duty of keeping house in the hinterlands, she is confined to the domestic sphere that calls for the rhetoric of boy servants, cooks, hygiene, linens and the food supply. Yet concomitant to her wifely duties is her own ethnographic involvement with the Igorots.

Engagement with these tasks appears to replicate the “separate spheres” to which many women are beholden in their roles as wives accompanying their husbands on colonial missions. Yet the conflation of domesticity with an explicit anthropological task in the name of nation does not create a distinct divide in the spaces Mrs. Jenks locates herself in. It in fact makes the boundaries of home permeable and produces a rhetorical ambivalence echoed through the discursive elements on which Mrs. Jenks foregrounds “home” in her travel narratives—namely, the Cordillera landscape, the boy servant Antero as iconic of colonial transformation, and the preparations for the 1904 St. Louis Fair. These elements convey the spatial references through which Mrs. Jenks

would conduct her days in the islands. The Cordillera landscape represents the interiority of Philippine wilderness that indicates both a physical and discursive conquest reflecting Mrs. Jenks’ self-image as the “first white American woman” to have traveled adventurously in the archipelago. Antero, a boy servant who became a famous figure at the 1904 St. Louis Fair, appears in Mrs. Jenks’ letters as her most efficient house help who was trained in service to his colonial masters and endeared for his efficiency. Finally, the 1904 St. Louis Fair that Mrs. Jenks writes about excitedly as she assists in the collection of artifacts for display marks a journey back to her U.S. “home” where the efforts of the U.S. civilizing mission are laid out in grand spectacle before the American public. These elements serve as narrative scaffolds of Mrs. Jenks’ everyday life and appear individually or, at times, meld with each other like layers in a composition.

LANDSCAPE AND THE TROPE OF THE “FIRST WHITE WOMAN”

Studies of landscape in colonial travel narratives reveal a distinct linguistic register with which responses to the foreign topography are inscribed. Scholars like Mary Louis Pratt (1994), Shirley Foster and Sara Mills (2002) have discerned from the travel narratives of British writers at the service of imperialism the tendency to *aestheticize* descriptions of the panorama.¹² This strategy is not claimed as a purely colonialist impulse but derives from earlier conventions of a lofty artistic expression. Often, the tone is lyrical and recalls earlier English poetic traditions. Elements in a landscape are discursively composed to appear as a seamless rustic composition that shows affinity with landscape paintings (Foster & Mills, 2002).

Women travelers, on the other hand, although found to manifest similar traits in their travel writing, display a more intense description of landscape. The tendency to aestheticize is infused with extreme emotionalism rendered in exaggerated language. The landscape overwhelms with its grandeur and what occurs is a meditative moment in which the

scenery loses its materiality and the emotion becomes the sole end of writing.

Mrs. Jenks' writings on landscape display an affinity with this convention of landscape description. Her privilege of traveling extensively all over the archipelago with Dr. Jenks, often on narrow trails of rugged terrain, renders her experiences of landscape significantly different from those of other white women who would complain of being "singularly unadventurous"¹³ in the archipelago. Mrs. Jenks articulates such distinction through the trope of the "first white woman." In many of her letters to her family, Mrs. Jenks marks her arrival in places no white woman had yet reached by referring to herself as the "first white woman." What would follow are descriptions of how the local people would continuously stare at her and would attempt to shake or touch her white skin. Dr. Jenks, in the introduction to his wife's collection of letters, attests to her unique experiences by according her the privilege of being "beyond question the first white woman to see an Igorot head-dance in actual celebration of the killing of a person and the taking of his head,"¹⁴ and also the unequalled achievement of being the "first white woman to cross the island of Mindanao."¹⁵

Feminist critic Susan Kollin argues for the significance of the trope to white woman's self-perception in relation to the conquest of frontiers. Kollin (1997) argues that the trope "highlights her yearning to assert agency and authority in nation-building projects" (105). So while the trope of the "first white woman" becomes a successful marker of history that preempts the arrival of other women, it also aptly reformulates the colonial hegemonic structure. By conjuring the image of a white woman at the frontier, mastery over the landscape is also achieved and challenges travel as a masculine discourse. It is in this context that Mrs. Jenks' landscape description as it is subsumed into her narrative of "home" can be viewed as defining her agency as a colonial figure. Moreover, Mrs. Jenks' account of the head-hunting ritual also represents another conquest—a discursive one. What enables her to write of such experience is the proximity to

danger that was once the domain of male travelers. Writing about such an adventure marks her success in traversing unscathed the male realm and claiming the right to it.

Writing about an arduous trip from Manila past the dangerous trails of Naguilian to Benguet where she and her husband would settle among the headhunting Igorot tribes, Mrs. Jenks is suddenly taken by the breathtaking view of the Cordillera region. A survey of the panorama would find her writing in her utmost lyrical voice. In their steep ascent, she finds the view more picturesque, and despite their exhaustion after days of fording rivers "were filled with emotions that are hard to put into words."

We rode for a couple of hours longer, constantly going up the steepest ascents....As we kept traveling higher and higher, the view was more and more picturesque. We could look back and see the ocean in the distance, and the hills and valleys had come through, and the river winding and twisting and finally flowing into the sea. In spite of our soaked clothing, we were filled with emotions that are hard to put into words—the emotions of grandeur, of appalling distances, and of extensive areas of varied color. (p. 41)

The overwhelming sense of panorama in Mrs. Jenks' letters is always an occasion to reminisce about home. Always invested with detailed language, Mrs. Jenks' enthuses about the gorges of Benguet and its "forest of real Wisconsin pine" that "look like ours at home." From mountainous heights, the expanse opens to her, and suddenly possibilities of "home" abound.

After a few days of trekking up the trails of Benguet, Mrs. Jenks is once more captivated by the colonial panorama as she relates in a letter dated September 9:

That day's ride was worth all the discomfort, for the scenery was exquisite. The trail was narrow most of the way....we could look

over the mountains and gorges and see the ocean extending a long way up the coast....The great gorges were covered with a tangle of tropical foliage, which seemed to separate here and there so that we could see far deep down into the almost bottomless depths. There were little mountain streams rushing down over the rocks; and finest of all, I thought, were the pines. You can hardly realize what it is to be riding through a tropical forest and then go around a mountain curve and suddenly see spread out before you a forest of real Wisconsin pines! I hope when we go down the trail some future day it will be clear weather so we may enjoy again all this alluring soul-stirring scenery. (p. 43)

This construction of “home” suffers from a visual ambivalence. The aesthetics inhere not from the sight at hand but from the transposition of her Wisconsin home onto the Cordillera landscape. This response surfaces again in their expeditions to Mindanao when Dr. Jenks was officially assigned to take over the post of Dr. Barrows at the Ethnographic Bureau. Dr. Jenks was tasked to arrange for the Moro tribes to be sent to the 1904 St. Louis Fair, a project that proved difficult because of the disagreements among colonial officials as to how best to administer the territory. Despite this, Mrs. Jenks finds her most home-like environment in the southern islands. Again, Mrs. Jenks assesses the panorama during a walk with Dr. Jenks. She further writes:

There we got out and walked around for a while. In spite of a few cocoanut (sic) trees, its rolling hills covered with shrubbery and many wild flowers were so homelike we almost felt we were back in Wisconsin. It was the most homelike landscape we had seen in the Philippines. (p. 165)

In many of these descriptions, Mrs. Jenks neglects the materiality of the Cordillera landscape. The point of reference is not the local environ as it

is inhabited by the headhunters or fierce tribes; instead the description transforms the landscape into an aestheticized veneer for the unfamiliar and threatening. The natives are nowhere to be found in her lyrical passages except as reminders of how the natural life could have been lush without them (75). In Mrs. Jenks’ own survey of the landscape, her gaze encompasses the expanse but renders it inanimate.

Bill Ashcroft (2001), in writing about “place,” shares Mary Louise Pratt’s contention in identifying “surveillance” as a function of exploration and its writing (141-42). According to Ashcroft, a writer necessarily assumes a position of power as she composes colonial space into an aesthetically seamless landscape often dissociated from its human inhabitants. Ashcroft further asserts that the sheer elevated position of the writer necessarily accords her the power of creating order based on her own values. From that height, surveying the landscape embodies the colonial impulse for knowledge and boundaries.

Moreover, Pratts (1994) formulation of the major modes of writing about the colonial landscape may reveal Mrs. Jenks’ signification of her presence in the islands. The picturesque landscape as reminding her of her Wisconsin home signals a “privatized domestic fantasy”—as Pratt phrases it—which spells a desire to set up home (207). This “fantasy” is deflected through Mrs. Jenks aspirations of an invincible marriage that is in alliance with her husband’s anthropological endeavors.

Mrs. Jenks’ rhapsodizing on the landscape at times signals a tonal shift in her writings. Relevant passages are written in moments when the landscape doubles as a romantic setting to her marriage. In a letter on September 9, for example, Mrs. Jenks writes after their strenuous climb up Baguio and finally arriving in Trinidad:

I was so thankful we were nearly “home” that I didn’t mind anything else...Now that the trip is over and didn’t hurt me at all, I wouldn’t have missed any part of it. Besides, it has been wonderful to be with Bert. I tell

him now, since we have drunk from the same “canteen,” we are certainly bound together for life. (p. 44)

Despite the stark description of the natives as fierce and murderous, their habitat is not portrayed as dark or threatening. Her main association with them is through disease and death—values that negate her composition of the aestheticized colonial landscape. What encourages this sense of beauty and security is the colonial control in the Cordillera over headhunting practices of the Igorot tribes. Igorots found guilty of headhunting were subjected to stringent constabulary measures.¹⁶

In some of Mrs. Jenks’ letters in which she would write of being left behind in their Bontoc home while Dr. Jenks was away on anthropological expeditions often lasting for weeks, no sense of fear can be glimpsed. All that she writes of is her yearning for her husband. In the preface to Mrs. Jenks’ collection, this “sense of security” is a result of the husband’s precautionary measures. Dr. Jenks confesses that he would always deploy 10–15 American soldiers around their home (unknown to his wife), aware as he was of how much these natives would have loved to take the head of a white American woman.¹⁷ His return is always written with such emotion and anticipation. In a letter on December 19, Mrs. Jenks cannot hide her eagerness: “I darted off on a run to meet him. I have been glad to see him many times before, but never so glad as this time. I said I would never let him go again” (73).

“Home” as inscribed in Mrs. Jenks’ letters does not inhere from the materiality of the landscape. Instead, it is subsumed as an imaginary terrain within the geopolitical relations of her Wisconsin home. Only in this way does Mrs. Jenks feel secure within the hinterlands known as the fiercest in the islands. This colonial security likewise strengthens her aspirations for marital bliss, a loyalty that propels her to become the best ally of Dr. Jenks in his anthropological mission, which culminated in the display of the natives at the St. Louis Fair in 1904.

1904 ST. LOUIS FAIR

Sharon Delmendo in *The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* (2005) asserts that the 1904 St. Louis Fair functioned in two ways:

...first, by creating a visual display emblemizing the triumph of American colonial government to millions of American visitors and, second by inculcating in the exhibition’s Filipino subjects a sense of American cultural and racial superiority. (p. 52)

This “triumph of American colonial government” was significantly attributed to the achievements of colonial anthropologists like Dr. Jenks who believed that displaying the primitive life of the fierce headhunting Igorots would best argue for U.S. cultural hegemony and the need for its tutelage in its colonial territories. Yet what began as a scientific endeavor to depict the human evolutionary progress with the U.S. at the helm ended in the most deplorable representation of the Filipinos. The massive exploitation of the Igorots and their material culture, the crass commercialism that caused the death of some of the Igorots and gave way to the creation of racial stereotypes of the Filipinos indicts the U.S. colonial policy of “benevolent assimilation” as nothing else but a violent act of imperialism.

Two years before the opening of the 1904 St. Louis Fair, the newly-married Mrs. Jenks already began writing about preparations for it to her family in Wisconsin. In many of her letters, she would relate how she saw herself as an integral part of the exhibition, staunchly believing in its noble vision. She organized and edited Dr. Jenks’ notes for the book *Bontoc Igorot*, helped in the ethnographic survey in barrios such as taking the photographs of the natives, and assisted in the gathering and inventory of artifacts to be transported to the U.S. for display at the Fair.

The language with which she writes of all these activities inevitably enfold her into the ethnographic realm that influences her perceptions of the colonial

surroundings. It becomes noticeable, for instance, how changes in her tone intensify to reveal an exhilarated Mrs. Jenks whose emotional ownership over the St. Louis Fair propelled her to exclaim at the end of her stay in the islands: "I have had so much to do with the plans of this exhibit that I must say I often feel it is all my show" (204).

The passages depicting Mrs. Jenks' involvement charts at the same time her mobility outside home. In her letter of January 18, for instance, she writes of helping out in photographing the Igorots:

Last week Bert and Mr. Martin were getting the pictures and measurements of 25 men and women as types of the race. I worked with them the first 3 days, and we had a most interesting time". (p. 93)

Yet despite this "most interesting time" it is clear how Mrs. Jenks senses the violent intrusiveness of forcing the Igorot in being documented:

It was easy to get the men, but almost impossible to get any of the women. They were evidently afraid. Finally, the last day Bert asked the presidente of Bontoc to have some women come, and he did. We would look up the alley and see him coming hauling a girl by the arm, and she would be talking and yelling as if she were being led away for slaughter. I said to Bert, "For mercy's sake, stop him. What will those women think of us!" (p. 93)

Apparently, Mrs. Jenks' myopic notion of the Fair limits itself to her husband's professional gain, a desire she unabashedly enthuses about in her letters and journal. Weeks earlier, she writes in a series of letters to her family back home of the honor bestowed upon Dr. Jenks after receiving his appointment as the new chief of the Ethnological Survey following Dr. Barrows' appointment as the general superintendent of the schools in the Philippines:

Bert has had more scientific and administrative experience here than he would have had in ten years in the States (154).

You won't realize what all this means. Bert is not only to install the ethnological exhibits in St. Louis, but is also to be chief of that department. In St. Louis he will be a juror and one of the Fair commissioners for the Philippines too. He will come in touch with all the best men in his line at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, and will be in a position of honor and importance as an anthropologist. (p. 155)

This partakes of the belief in the overriding colonial mission that the anthropological study was the only way to produce knowledge that would help the natives. In a letter dated 1902 September 10, Mrs. Jenks for the first time matter-of-factly mentions the "talk of having a Philippine exhibit at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis." As her stay in the islands leads her to the actual preparations for the Fair, Mrs. Jenks slowly realizes the professional significance of her husband's participation in the St. Louis Fair, one that deepens her alliance to his work and to the marriage as well. No doubt that even early on, Mrs. Jenks already defines her role in the entire venture: "As the wife of an anthropologist, I speak" (46).

Unwittingly, Mrs. Jenks definition of her role as the "wife of an anthropologist" also defines her own attitudes and sentiments towards the ethnographic work. In a letter September 14, Maud lightly distinguishes how "we have been buying native things. Bert, having to be scientific, calls them "artifacts" (47). Interestingly, the divide between what is scientific and what is not is articulated in this telling passage:

I want to get as good a collection as I can of Igorot things; for, besides being interesting, the nature of Bert's work is such that he ought to have them. Of course, he will get many things himself, but when I get artifacts from a native, they mean much more to me. Seeing

their houses, I get a good idea of their life too. It seems an awful life—the dirty dark houses, the women with their one garment or two—their hair hanging loose, and the naked babies and children. How different from our life at home! (p. 55)

Mrs. Jenks' sees her involvement as invested with emotions that any lady of good demeanor is expected to possess. Yet the passage illumines how she sees the artifacts as originating from a material culture that is reduced to a site of difference between life in the colonial territory and the privileged comfort of her Wisconsin life. This practice of gathering "artifacts" for her own personal collection is distinguished by Mrs. Jenks from the "official museum" temporarily built in Manila to house the collection gathered for the Fair before being sent to U.S. At this personal level, she mimics the Western anthropological tenet of divesting the natives of their cultural icons for the purpose of "objective knowledge." The artifacts, displaced from their natural environment, and hence of their cultural complexity, are turned into display items and couched anew in a narrative meant to underscore the supremacy of the white evolutionary history. So that even as she comments on the culture, artistry and native wit of these people as evidenced by the artifacts she buys, she nonetheless undermines these by stressing the "savageness" of the natives.

In many of her visits to the Igorot houses in the barrios, the attention she gives to the "dirty dark houses" throughout her letters as the cause of disease and death among the Igorot is the same emphasis she gives to the natives' dark skin. Mrs. Jenks writes:

When I write about the nakedness of these people, you must remember that their skins are not white, but are so dark, in many cases, as to be almost bronze. Whatever the reason is, a dark-skinned person here without clothes does not at all appear as a white-skinned person would. *Perhaps it's that we are accustomed to seeing them, perhaps*

it is their absolute unconsciousness of being without clothes. It almost seems that their dark skin clothes them sufficiently (italics mine). (p. 95)

The tentativeness in Mrs. Jenks' description is glimpsed from her effort to distinguish between the words "dark" and "bronze." The attempt to aestheticize the native's body and, hence, inject a positive value to it, becomes manifest in her use of "bronze" to qualify "dark" as in occasions when she would describe the headhunters as having "such well-developed bodies they are like bronze statues come to life" (78).

Such markers of difference define her gaze of the natives. In the passage above the native becomes an object of gaze, lifeless and unable to reciprocate the gaze. This gaze on other occasions rehearses the natives into a tableau at the St. Louis Fair—primitive still life. If Dr. Jenks interacts with the natives in the agency of an anthropological and colonial persona, a more complex set of relations are found in Mrs. Jenks as her subjectivity is dictated upon by a web of duties at home—the natives as servants, the natives as savages yet childlike creatures, the natives as a source of anxiety, and the natives as ethnographic subjects as well—all these perceptions coalescing in the act of writing. For instance, during a hike on the Bontoc trail, Mrs. Jenks ponders on the Igorots accompanying them on their trip:

We are resting now with about twenty-five bronze figures squatted around us. These Igorot are quite repulsive at times. You should see them eat—they fill their mouths as full as they can stuff them. One of the men who have been carrying me is a sight to behold....He would create a sensation anywhere in the United States. (p. 81)

In many of Mrs. Jenks' letters, it is noticeable how her lack of language with which to inscribe her strange and overwhelming experiences into a narrative urges her to subscribe to her husband's rhetoric—one that is legitimized by the official

discourse of anthropology. At some point, she would briefly lose narrative confidence when relating information concerning the Igorot's societal and cultural life. Instead of relying on her own discursive ability, she quotes huge blocks of paragraphs from her husband's notes yet would conclude her letter by fittingly reverting to the domestic concerns that echo an earlier dichotomy of anchoring herself to "home," the familiar terrain.

Until the end of her residence in the Philippines, Mrs. Jenks staunchly believed in the noble mission of the U.S. towards its Filipino "wards." She sees the importance of the St. Louis Fair as embodying a compendium of data on the non-Christian tribes gathered through the stringent methodologies of anthropology. The implicit goal is to give the American public a sense of what and who they are not, and more importantly, a self-congratulatory sense of how far they have evolved from the rudiments of human life—this overarching alterity staged in pageantry before the privileged position of the fairgoer. "Information" is the object of their expedition in the Philippines and with the "objective" discourse of natural science the debate concerning Philippines' annexation will now be put to rest while everyone's effort will be marshaled to fulfill a task as noble and urgent as civilizing a populace of savages.

SERVANTS AND ANTERO

The discourse on servants is a common theme in many of the white women's travel narratives. As the women's domestic life is dependent on the efficacy of servants, their employment becomes necessary in replicating the comforts of women's original home. Yet the transposition of domestic comforts necessarily creates conflicts and dissonances as the servants are asked to abide by Western standards of housekeeping. The servants' sheer presence at "home" paradoxically constitutes the physicality and absence of values of hygiene, aesthetics, and space argued as inhering from racial difference. Thus, by executing his role efficiently, the servant is considered at once trained, educated,

and disciplined in the art of colonial service. On the one hand, the mistress succeeds as an effective domestic manager if she is able to instill in the servant an appreciation for the colonizer's culture as manifested through his eagerness to be of "service" to the needs of the master.

Mrs. Jenks' commentaries on the servants share racialized views with other white women. In a letter dated July 23, 1902 right after her arrival in the islands, Mrs. Jenks writes of how she and her husband have to stay temporarily in a boarding house while in Manila. Her observation on how her hostess allows her servant to run the house reveals her own intent in setting up a household where she has full authority. Equipped with hearsay knowledge on how to best deal with the servants, she writes:

The woman here is an American and very pleasant, but she has a sick baby and pays little attention to her house. The "boys"—"muchachos" in Spanish—are natives who run the house, and they are really boys.

It would take me a long time to get used to these muchachos. I don't think the Filipinos have at all attractive faces. They look stupid; to me they are repulsive. . . . People complain of them very much and say they have to be watched—but what would you expect. (p. 15)

At the end of this passage, she repeats a warning obviously taken as "truth" among her circle of women friends: "But they say one has to be severe with these servants, because, if they are not afraid, they won't do a thing for you" (16). The "severity" Mrs. Jenks refers to describes her own initial attitude towards the servants. Not only does it ensure discipline and, hence, the efficacy of her household but it also establishes the "social distance" prerequisite to such master-servant relations.¹⁸

As Mrs. Jenks settles into her life in the islands, her encounters with the "muchachos" and her writings of these disclose a growing sympathy toward them. The "severity" with which she intended on applying on them lessens as she

developed a more “personal relation” with the Igorots, who on account of her husband’s scientific mission, at times populate her Cordillera dwelling. Although they have been ethnologically described as “fierce headhunters,” Mrs. Jenks celebrates the fact that in her presence they seem to manifest their real selves—that is, being “gentle” and “childlike.”

At one point, Mrs. Jenks assumes a maternal tone as she worryingly writes of the need to teach the servant Igorot boys the values of hygiene and education. This discourse on hygiene is also prevalent in the writings of British women and has been argued as finding an “easy outlet in the work of women writers traveling in an imperial context, whose own racial divide between savagery and civilization would be situated within the domestic realm” (Morin, 1998). This obsession for hygiene is woven into a feeling of affection, as seen in this passage relating to a nine-year-old servant named Tolingan:

He was as dirty as he could be when he came, but I had one of the older boys take him to the spring and wash him with soap, and now he goes down and has a bath this morning. He is really too little, but you would be surprised to see how well he does it. (p. 53)

Apparently, Mrs. Jenks encounters’ with the Igorot boys give way to a sense of affection for them, but this is due in part to what seemed to her as deprivations caused by their natural way of life. To address this “deficiency,” Mrs. Jenks would write of occasions in which she teaches these boys the rudiments of reading and writing in English. This attitude is based on what she views as the only probable reasons—“for pure missionary reasons or scientific study”—why anyone would want to stay longer in the Philippines (25). A tender feeling can be glimpsed, for instance, in this passage:

Poor little kids—after they had been up in my room last night, I told Mrs. Barrows that I had the burden of the heathen world on my shoulders. I guess I should have been a missionary. (p. 57)

Yet Mrs. Jenks’ comments are at times unforgiving, especially when her essentialist beliefs are undermined by a specific encounter, as with the cook whom she expected was skilled in cooking rice, for she “thought all Igorot could.” Disappointed and impatient, she writes:

I have a cook, who is the biggest fool I’ve seen in my whole life. He can’t even cook rice and I thought all Igorot could do that. He can’t understand a word of English, and to everything we say to him, he says “Hayz” in the most idiotic fashion. (p. 90)

These totalizing ethnographic statements are in contrast to her effusive appreciation of Antero. Mrs. Jenks easily assesses Antero’s worth as equivalent to having “forty cooks.” Despite the praises on Antero, it is clear that his demeanor and linguistic abilities are seen only within the context of his being able to provide efficient service in the household and for mimicking his masters’ appearance. In the following passage, Mrs. Jenks catalogues the “good” traits of Antero:

He is a good-looking Igorot who wears clothes. Mrs. Hunt has some white suits made for him. He sweeps the whole house every morning, and sweeps clean, sets the table, waits on the table in style, washes the dishes—he does everything well.

...Ever since we came he has been our right-hand man, and we are surprised anew every day at his brilliance...He has brains and ideas of his own, and is worth forty cooks as I have. (p. 91)

The passages do not afford Antero any complex, human qualities, but reduces him into a creature all but efficiently providing service. Taken as a model for the other boy servants, Antero is distinguished by his cleanliness, a quality “absent” in the nature of the Igorot: “I am going to try to have the boys keep themselves clean. Antero is clean, but the others are not” (91).

Antero in this provision of service does not only complement Mrs. Jenks inside her home's physical space, but his utility also extends to the ethnographic tasks she carries out in the barrios. He figuratively becomes an effective continuum in which Mrs. Jenks inscribes both her roles as a wife and assistant. His wit is emphasized by Mrs. Jenks on occasions when he would bargain with the Igorots, on her behalf, over the prices of their personal possessions.

Antero's iconic presence vis-à-vis the other Igorot boys attests to the "success" of the colonial transformation. His textuality complements the efforts of Mrs. Jenks' racial and feminine duties. And having turned out to be an emblem of the colonial anthropological interpellation, Mrs. Jenks effusively shows her fondness towards him. In her letters back home regarding Antero, for instance, we see his self-hood constructed in the liminal space between the epistolary and ethnographic. He is praised mostly for his ability to imbibe the English language and to learn of the efficacy of providing service to colonial masters. It is not surprising that Mrs. Jenks feels quite emotionally maternal at their parting.

Antero performs the narrative propelled by the St. Louis Fair in which the natives become the invisible link of the white man's supremacist evolution and the successful application of the civilizing efforts of the US colonial rule.

CONCLUSION

The study of white women's travel narratives through the paradigm of separate spheres has been argued as failing to probe into the slippery relation of gender, race and empire. Simon Dagut, in his examination of the writings of middle-class British women of their lives in colonial South Africa, stresses the theoretical myopia of historians who view women's history as "conceptually segregated" by the very trope of separate spheres (556).

The letters of Mrs. Jenks show how, despite the seeming preoccupation with "home," the process by which it is reconstructed in the colonial territory strongly suggests her participation in the

"world outside the home." In fact, it suggests women's role in power relations as these are incorporated and reinforced into their domestic concerns. Women's narratives voice the contradictions borne by their efforts to create semblances of domesticity. "Home" becomes a site in which the white woman negotiates and re-assembles her identity against the colonial territory, while the creation of its stability discloses the horrifying disruptions of colonialism.

By deconstructing Mrs. Jenks' letters, it is hoped that part of the Cordillera narrative can now be read with a more critical interest in recuperating the multiple voices of both the colonizer and colonized as they interact along the axes of race, gender and empire. The reading also provides clues on how to go beyond seeing the text as merely constituting a "quotidian" annotation to the anthropological knowledge through which the Igorots have long been represented. Transcending the mere impressions the letters offer may just as well reconstruct a historical narrative, if not reach the bedrock of intimate knowledge that largely escapes other writings. Investigating the articulations of Mrs. Jenks' experience as her husband was deeply engaged in the study of the "wild tribes" may not only shift but also challenge the "grand narratives" to announce the more nuanced colonial encounters—those that may lead us to an understanding of how domesticity as embodied in "home" was at the heart of empire.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe so much to Dr. Miguel Q. Rapatan for patiently reading the drafts of this paper and for encouraging me to submit it for publication. This paper has also generously benefited from the critical comments of John Labella and the editorial reading of Jan Connie Maraan. I offer my thanks also to Dr. Nerissa Balce, Dr. David Bayot, Dr. Neil Garcia, Dr. Paz V. Santos, and Dr. Ronald Baytan for their insightful comments and suggestions. Finally, I would like to thank Rudy Ronald Sianturi whose presence supports and inspires.

NOTES

¹ An earlier version of this paper was read at the *Mobilis in Mobile International Conference on Travel Writing*, organized and hosted by the The University of Hong Kong, July 11-13, 2005.

² Recent studies on the Cordillera as a valuable U.S. colonial outpost are Gerard A. Finin's *The Making of the Igorot: Contours of Cordillera Consciousness* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2005) and Frank Jenista's *White Apos: American Governors on the Cordillera Central* (1987). Another group of work that specifically examines the exploitation of the Igorots at the 1904 St. Louis Fair includes Jose D. Fermin's *1904 World's Fair: The Filipino Experience* (Quezon City: University Press, 2004); Sharon Delmendo's *The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* (Quezon City: The University of the Philippines Press, 2005); and Benito M. Vergara's *Displaying Filipinos: Photography and Colonialism in Early 20th Century Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995). For a discussion on the ideological relation of empire and world expositions (including the 1904 St. Louis Fair) see Robert Rydell's *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

³ Paul A. Kramer, "The Pragmatic Empire: United States Anthropology and Colonial Politics in the Occupied Philippines, 1898-1916." Diss. Princeton U, 1998. pp. 182-199.

⁴ For a discussion of the relations of anthropology and colonialism see Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1994).

⁵ Maud Huntley Jenks, *Death Stalks the Philippine Wilds* (Minneapolis, Minn: The Lund Press, Inc. 1951), Carmen Nelson Richards, ed. Preface vi.

⁶ For a thorough discussion of how Dr. Jenks' Philippine experience greatly improved his career in the U.S. academe after his return to the U.S., see Mark Soderstrom's "Family Trees and Timber Rights: Albert E. Jenks, Americanization, and the Rise of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota." *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 3.2 (2004).

⁷ Paul Barclay, "They Have for the Coast Dwellers a Traditional Hatred": Governing Igorots in Northern Luzon and Central Taiwan, 1895-1915" in *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspectives*. Julian Go and Anne L. Foster (eds), p. 219.

⁸ Jenks, Preface vi.

⁹ Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), particularly, Chapter 3, Supplementing the Orientalist Lack: European Ladies in the Harem, pp. 68-94.

¹⁰ Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (June 1988), 9-39, esp. 10-11.

¹¹ For a discussion of anthropological fieldwork and its impact on spatial expressions of "dwelling" see James Clifford's "Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel and the Disciplining of Anthropology" in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1997, pp. 185-222.

¹² Mary Louis Pratt, "Travel Narrative and Imperialist Vision" in *Understanding Narrative*, James Phelan and Peter Rabinowitz, eds. (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1994); Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, eds. "An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing," (New York: Manchester University Press), 2002.

¹³ Mary Fee, *A Woman's Impressions of the Philippines* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1910), p.32.

¹⁴ Jenks, *Death Stalks Philippine Wilds*, Foreword, ix.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ For a discussion of the constabulary measures instituted by the U.S. colonial government policies to suppress headhunting activities see Paul Barclay, "They Have for the Coast Dwellers a Traditional Hatred."

¹⁷ Jenks, *Death Stalks Philippine Wilds*, Foreword, ix.

¹⁸ For an explanation of the concept of social distance, see Simon Dagut, "Gender, Colonial 'Women's History' and the Construction of Social Distance: Middle-Class British Women in Later Nineteenth-Century South Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26, No. 3 (Sept 2000), 555-72.

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