

La Lumiere Occidentale: Orientalism and Imagings of Filipinos

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Introduction

There is a wealth of French titles on the country covering a variety of subjects: cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, new species of snails, the country's archeological and anthropological importance, cultural minorities like the Negritos, torpedo warfare, higher education, spiritual conquest, French trade and the country's economic development, the feasibility of having the Philippines as a rest station for French ships in the region and analyses of Spanish colonial policies, among others.

Voyagers – which included traders, adventurers, technicians, missionaries, scholars, travellers, navigators and diplomats who came to trade, discover, see, explore, study, understand on individual capacity or on official detail Philippine realities – left behind written impressions, conceptions, perceptions, or assumptions still need to be analyzed and interrogated.

While French imperialist interests in the archipelago were not successful in making it a part of France d'outre-mer, French texts do not necessarily come with only “neutral” images of Philippine realities. The French have after all, time and again tried through the past centuries to obtain trading rights in the Philippines, if not make her a part of France d'outre-mer.¹

This study analyzes and interrogates French texts on Philippine realities. They constitute the French's gazing at the complex, dynamic, variable, constitutive and constituting, internally contradictory, specific, indissoluble, real processes² lumped under the category “Philippine culture and society.” The study has three aims: 1) critically analyze a couple of French voyagers' accounts of their travels in the Philippines, specifically their imagings and representations of Filipinos and Philippine realities; 2) determine if these imagings and representations are fabricated realities that constitute the Philippines as the Ontological “Other” opposite Europe's Self, in this particular case, France; and should this be the case, 3) demystify these constructs and open the margins for alternative histories.

For this purpose André Bellesort's *De Ceylan aux Philippines* (1927) and Ferdinand Philippe Marie d'Alençon, duc d'Orléans' *Luçon et Mindanao: Extrait d'un Journal de Voyage en Extrême-Orient* (1870) were chosen for two reasons: 1) they were

written during the last quarter of the 19th century, a period when France was about to shift from assimilation to association in its colonial policy (Betts 1961);³ and 2) Bellesort as member of the French Academy and D'Orléans as Duke d'Orléans, are strategically positioned in this process of ideological production of knowledge about the Philippines.

An inquiry into these colonialist policies of *assimilation and association* aims at demystifying Bellesort and D'Orléans's views on the Spanish colonial regime. It also will interrogate their own thinking on assimilation and/or association as orientalist attempts to establish French racial superiority and constitute Spain as one of France's European 'Others'.

As impressions of these Frenchmen included not only observations of the Philippines, its culture and society during the last quarter of the 19th century, but also of Spanish colonial policies in the archipelago, a separate discussion of the imagings and representations of the Philippines and the Filipinos and those of Spain as colonizer vis-à-vis other colonizers will be made.

Informing the present discussion is Edward Said's discourse on Orientalism, which he defines as an area of scholarship "*that lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental,*" and "*a discourse... a systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the Post-Enlightenment period*" (Said 1978: 2-3).

Orientalism is a material construct that involves a concomitant constitution of the Occident and Orient: Europe simultaneously consolidates itself as Master and Sovereign Subject, attributing to itself all the positive valuations and a superior positionality at all times, and all the land masses, cultures, histories, peoples it boxes in the term "Orient" (read: makes "Oriental") as Other, slave, subject in the lower case, made to possess all negative valuations, and a relatively inferior positionality, at all times.

This "*construct of the Orient*" has its supporting institutions (foreign service, departments of Oriental Studies, Oriental languages, literature and history, vocabulary, (women's names represent conquered territories), scholarship (conventional anthropology that uses ethnography as an ideological weapon) imagery (Indiana Jones' adventures which perpetuate myths of the "mysterious Orient" and the "Dark Continent" as virginal lands) and doctrines (white man's burden, U.S. Pres. McKinley's benevolent assimilation proclamation) (Hidalgo and Legasto 1993: 1-2).

This filtering through an "accepted grid" in "Western consciousness" is premised on exteriority. In making the Orient speak, in describing and representing it, the author

as Orientalist is only concerned with the fact that what is said or written indicates that he is “*outside the Orient both as an existential and as a moral fact*” (Said 1978: 21). As the Philippine situation during the period under study is essentially a colonial one, a certain reworking of this framework is needed. Instead of focusing on Filipinos as “orientals” alone, this study will discuss them as colonized “orientals”.

France and La Lumière Occidentale

Binary oppositions and dichotomies such as East-West, Occident-Orient, Colonizer-Colonized ought to be taken further to avoid oversimplifying the colonial situation as involving only monolithisms undifferentiated by race, class, and gender of both colonized and colonizers. Analyses of the situation in terms of race-class-gender determinations produce more than essentialized imagings. In *De Ceylan aux Philippines*, Bellesort's insistence on race as a determination of social practice, i.e., colonial policy and its implementation, therefore, seems promising. Yet in using race as a category in his personal observations and analyses of France's fellow colonizers (Portugal, England, Germany and Spain) – whose colonies he visited during his *rapides escales* of Asia from October to December 1897 – his real purpose is to conjure a hierarchy of European colonizers, with the Spaniards as the most primitive where persona and imperialist praxis are concerned, and the French as the most sophisticated (read: civilized/the best colonizer). Corollary to this, the higher the location in the imperialist hierarchy a colonizing country is, the more justified its imperialistic endeavours. This hierarchical positioning reinforces Bellesort's tendency to dichotomize European colonial realities into We/French/France/French colonial situation vs. You/Non-French/Rest of Europe-World/Non-French colonial situation. But he also privileges the French colonial enterprise as solely justified civilizing mission, while admitting that colonization is a bloody enterprise and all colonizers are guilty of slaughter. To illustrate (Bellesort 1927: 251):

...Nous aussi nous avons massacré, comme les anglais et les marchands de Hollande; quel est donc le peuple dont l'histoire, surtout l'histoire coloniale, n'ait pas les mains rouges? Mais l'Espagne a introduit dans ses meurtres une idée d'holocauste. Elle avait allumé à ses autodafes la torche dont elle incendia tant de villages indiens. Sa croix ne fut pas moins sinistre que le croissant. D'ailleurs, le sang more coule encore aux veines de ses fils, et si leur hérédité africaine leur a rendu plus facile l'acclimatation sous les tropiques et l'équateur, elle les a brûlés d'un fanatisme que les influences occidentales n'ont pas éteint... Ce sont aujourd'hui des fanatiques éternés, des âmes violentes et molles, des autoritaires faibles.”⁴

Bellesort images Spanish colonizers, thanks to the Moorish/African (read: savage, primitive) blood in their veins, as more brutal (read: insane, unreasonable, untempered, un-French and therefore, unjustified) in their slaughter of the native population: mad,

fanatical, and violent in a way that Western influences have been unable to temper and thus they are weak figures of colonial authority. They are the “Othered” European colonizer opposite the European Master Colonizer (read: French) whose blood is “uncontaminated” by that of savages and endowed with all positive valuations.

Bellesort’s attempt to attribute to their moorish heritage Spaniards’ supposed ability to easily acclimatize themselves to a tropical/equatorial environment and their propensity for brutality violence and laxness in their colonial enterprise, which he says, unfortunately, prevents them from becoming good figures of colonial authority, is underscored by a basic late 19th century assumption: all races developed unilineally and independently through common phases of development, “*from simple, undifferentiated states to complex, interrelated states,*” this change driven by “*a struggle for survival,*” (McGee and Warms 1996: 7). This assumption totally ignores complexity, dynamism and specificity of the various constitutive processes conveniently boxed in labels like history, culture and civilization. Late 19th century evolutionism proposes three grand stages of cultural development—savagery, barbarism (both subdivided into lower, middle and upper stages) and civilization (McGee and Warms 1996: 8) .

This schema would locate, although questionably, European cultures in the third grand stage, i.e., civilization. Bellesort’s hierarchy of colonizers reworks this problematic schema. For him, Spain, though geographically a part of the European continent and therefore, civilized as the rest of Europe ought to be, her African blood, her dark untamed side (read: unenlightened/not subjected to reason), casts her as the European “Other” not only of the French but of other European colonizers without African blood.

Another concept underlining Bellesort’s “Othering” of Spain is born, again, of late 19th century concepts of evolution: the possibility of man originating from the apes. As this species was believed as the closest — capability/trait-wise— man could have originated from, the more apish one’s appearance was, the less developed one was; inversely, the less apish one’s features were, the higher the stage of development. This thinking again creates a hierarchy of races affecting Africans. Considered as more “apish” in their features/behavior/habits, they were located at the bottom. Europeans were at the very top and the other races somewhere in between.

In imaging Germany, Bellesort describes the Germans as follows (Bellesort 1927: 145):

moins hétérogène, se soutient, forme une famille compacte, travaille assidûment, jouit peu. L’Allemand possède la faculté qui manque à l’Anglais, comme au Français, hélas! d’adapter ses productions aux besoins de chaque pays. C’est à l’industrie allemande que le Chinois s’adresse de préférence; c’est le génie allemand qui accapare de jour en jour les grand marchés du monde.

Bellesort privileges the Germans over the English and the French where Asian trade is concerned. But, he says, France selflessly attends to *higher* matters. Beyond German colonial commercial concerns and prosperity, there is the sublime calling France responds to: the passing on of the *Lumière Occidentale* (read: French), i.e., scattering the “*principe de liberté humaine et sociale*” in the rest of the uncivilized world (Bellesort 1927: 42).

As for the English, long stereotyped as the traditional enemy of France, Bellesort describes the former as (Bellesort 1927: 144-145):

hautain, jouisseur flegmatique, guindé même après boire, comme si son ivresse, sa fréquente ivresse, obéissait encore à une consigne impérative, organisateur, admirable et travailleur médiocre, – chez qui la paresse a revêtu la forme élégante des sports, – l’Anglais de Hong Kong boit ferme, joue au polo, entretient généralement une maîtresse chinoise ou une métisse, fréquente assez souvent chez les «Américaines», dépense beaucoup et dirige les affaires de haut.

Bellesort lauds their having brought the “light” of European justice to Sri Lanka, supposedly in accordance with the natives’ system of justice (Bellesort 1927: 71) :

Les Anglais y ont établi leur cour de justice. Vers midi le juge monte sur son estrade, les avocats s’installent autour d’une table ronde et compulsent leurs dossiers; la foule entre... Si quelque chose pouvait justifier l’iniquité de la conquête, ce serait assurément un spectacle pareil: des gentilshommes bienveillants et bien élevés, venus de très loins pour rendre la justice à un peuple indigène, selon l’esprit de sa vieille jurisprudence et dans ce qui reste debout du palais de ses rois”

Bellesort’s comparison of British and French missionaries locates England at some amorphous locus more advanced than that of Spain’s within the stage called *civilization*. As French missionaries are described as “*enflammé[s] du zèle civilisateur que respire le génie de la France*,” and who agree to suffer life far away from their homeland “*pour l’amour de cette humanité qu’elle a tant servie*,” in order to “*former d’honnêtes gens afin que Dieu récolte des âmes*,” they embody “*l’âme pitoyable et maternelle du pays de France*” (Bellesort 1927: 141-142, 150). Their devotion embellit et précisât l’idée de la France chez les *deshérités* de l’Extrême-Orient. Et certes le cinghalais des hautes classes distingue bien sur leur visage le *reflet de cette lumière généreuse* dont notre légende est comme imprégnée. *Il leur marque une déférence qui ne s’égare point et ne vas pas aux représentants de toutes les chapelles étrangères, souvent trop habiles à faire servir le prestige du Christianisme aux petits profits de l’industrie européenne* (Bellesort 1927: 42-43)

In contrast, Bellesort images English missionaries as inferior to their French colleagues as they are incapable of “*dépouiller leurs préjugés hostiles et pousser l’abnégation jusqu’à*

enseigner le langue et le respect de la France aux enfants annamites ou malgache" (1927: 42-43). And how best to underscore the superiority of French missionaries than to hear it from a colonized himself, the same Filipino exile in Hong Kong commenting on the enviable fortune of the Annamese who have the French as colonial masters: "*Vous avez des pretres, vous, non des bourreaux en soutane!*" (Bellesort 1927: 208) .

But French missionaries may be seen in a different light. They are not *all* quite concerned *only* with the harvest of souls and exempt from worldly concerns such as trade and commerce as Bellesort implies. French Jesuits, according to one study, were involved in a "a trade company project for China and Japan" from which a 300%-profit was expected, and for which the missionaries were to be given free passage. Another one, returning in 1697 after spending nine years in China, was reportedly directly involved with the creation of the *Compagnie de Chine* ⁵ (Nardin 1989: 17)

As for the deference reportedly shown only to French missionaries, Ferdinand D'Orléans describes in *Luçon et Mindanao* (D'Orléans 1870: 72-75) the extraordinary social position of the non-French *padre* in his Philippine parish thus:

Le curé est comme le roi du village: depuis le gobernadorcillo, qui en est la première autorité, jusqu'au dernier habitant, tous se découvrent devant lui et viennent lui baiser la main avec un respect affectueux, je dirais presque filial... Quelque peu considérable que soit le village, quand même il ne se compose que de cases de bambou, deux édifices sont invariablement en pierre et de dimensions monumentales: l'église et la maison du curé (el convento)..

D'Orléans also pictured these missionaries and parish priests as renouncing "*à leur pays natal et à tout espoir d'y revenir; ils se consacrent désormais à cette nouvelle patrie, qu'ils vont chercher au delà des mers, avec tout le zèle de gens qui n'ont plus rien au monde*" (D'Orléans 1870: 74).

D'Orléans, like Bellesort, has his own system of privilegings, which conditions his perceptions. He constitutes the Philippines as part of that material construct called "Orient" (D'Orléans 1870: 79)

[n]os chambres sont embaumées de la douce odeur que répandent des guirlandes de sampaguita; un enfant vient encenser les riches tentures de nos lits: on veut nous faire rêver des délices de l'Orient dans une atmosphère parfumée.

In his 219-page account of his travels to Pampanga (San Fernando, Sta. Ana, Mexico, Arayat), Bulacan, Laguna (Pagsanjan, Sta. Cruz, Los Baños, Mount Maquiling, Majajai, Mount Banahaw), Batangas (Tanauan, Lipa, Tagaytay), Antipolo, Las Piñas, Parañaque, Pateros, Malate, Binondo, Cavite (Bacoor); Mindanao, Iloilo (Molo and Jaro), Zamboanga, Panay, Cotabato, Basilan, and Negros, D'Orléans' Philippines is "*un éden et une mine d'inépuisables richesses*" peopled by a race who needs to be rescued from the "*funestre influence de l'oisiveté*" (D'Orléans 1870: 214, 141). He explains that

Filipinos do not need to work to survive [“...aucun besoin ne la pousse au travail”] because “dans le petit coin de terre qui entoure sa case, croît à l’envi, pour ainsi dire, qu’il s’en occupe, tout ce qui est nécessaire pour existence, en assez grande quantité non seulement pour suffire à ses besoins, mais encore pour lui faire un petit revenu.” (D’Orléans 1870: 106-107, 139) His Philippines is also peopled by the “Moors” of Cotabato who blend well with a “troop of monkeys” – “[d]es pirogues en grand nombre, montées par des **Mores à demi-nus, à l’air sauvage**, au type malais accentué, s’écartent rapidement à la vue de la canonnière, et vont s’abriter derrière les palétuviers **au milieu desquels se jouent des troupes de singes** and Tagalogs who “grim[p]ent **comme des singes** au sommet des arbres” (1870: 164-165, 183). This part of the “Orient” is also peopled with “tribus barbares” like the Tinguianes, the Igorots, the Ifugaos and the Tirurays, all of which D’Orléans categorizes as either “barbares,” “sauvages,” “primitifs” or “inférieurs,” again pointing to his use of social darwinist yardsticks. One trait of these Filipino “Orientals” is that “il faut qu’un visage blanc lui montre le chemin,” as he describes Tagalog soldiers (1870: 30).

This paradise-like part of the “Orient” is governed by a Spain spoiling Filipinos (“On voudrait demander à l’administration [espagnole] de le traiter moins en enfant gâté” [1870: 143]), although its rule “plus qu’aucune autre en Asie, s’est appliquée à améliorer la condition morale et matérielle du peuple que la conquête a fait tomber entre ses mains” (1870: 146) ⁶ Spain has conformed to the “moral” duty of a colonizing nation, the bearer of the L[l]umière occidentale, this Western L[l]ight, of working for the good of the colonized (1870:144-145):

Il nous paraîtrait bien dur de reconnaître aux nations européennes le droit d’exploiter dans un but égoïste les peuples asiatiques. En se chargeant de les gouverner, n’ont-elles pas assumé sur elles le devoir de travailler à leur propre bien, à leur avancement?

Part of the “Orient”’s future is to take its place in the world as a rich resource for the Metropolis, i.e., Spain (1870: 218): “Espérons cependant que le jour viendra où ce **beau pays des Philippines pourra devenir une importante ressource pour la métropole, et tenir dans le monde la place qui lui est due.**”

To D’Orléans’ mind, the best workers of the Spanish colonial government are the monks who “ont amené les indigènes des Philippines **au plus haut point de civilisation dont soit susceptible maintenant une race qui était, il y a quatre siècles, au dernier degré de la barbarie**” (D’Orléans 1870: 216) .

If Bellesort’s agenda is to privilege the French over every other European colonizer, to discursively dichotomize “European affairs” into We/French/more positive valuations vs. You/Non-French/less-positive-if-not-directly-opposite-valuations, to constitute France as the Master colonizer (read: most advanced/civilized with justified imperialist intentions/endeavours), D’Orléans’ project aims at conjuring the image of a paradise-

like part of the “Orient” to which civilization was brought by the “*best yet persecuted*” workers in the employ of the colonial government—the friars (“*Que l’Espagne les laisse donc continuer en paix leurs travaux, exercer leur bienfaisante influence*” [D’Orléans 1870: 217]). D’Orléans writes that the friars are unjustly accused of being a liability to the progress of the colony, of hindering the flight of the population towards a more active life and wider spheres. (D’Orléans 1870: 216).

This is not to say that there were no good friars in the Philippines or that anti-clergy feeling permeated, without exception, the whole of Philippine society ⁷ but D’Orléans’ representations of the *padre* in the Philippine setting are monolithisms that are unqualified by specificities. For if there were good friars – d’Orléans’ ideas constitute the viewpoint of a national of a colonizing country looking at the work of another colonizing nation, not that of a native’s perspective -- there were also those who abused the colonials.

Orientalism, Foreign Policy and the Filipino Experience

At this point, a further delineation of what the Western-constructed “Orient” is and who the Filipino “Oriental” is. Bellesort speaks of the “Orient” thus (Bellesort 1927: 116):

L'Orient n'avait point étalé devant mes yeux de spectacle plus doux que ces silencieuses et pacifiques richesses, ni de paysage qui me dépaystât moins. La voilà donc, cette Cochinchine meurtrière! Quel matin de Provence et aimable fécondité! On dirait que la France a mis de son âme dans ces sillons et nous sourit dans ces nouveaux blés

The Manila Bellesort visited during his one-week stay from the evening of 20 November 1898 to the following Saturday, 27 November 1898, was a city awaiting results of negotiations in Paris of what would be a decisive treaty. In this one week stay in the country he paints a picture of this part of the “Orient” and of the Filipino as “Oriental,” France’s “Other.”

To comprehend the extent of the “othering” systematically effected, it is necessary to go into the colonial policy orientation of both writers. But first, it is important at this point to briefly discuss French colonial policy during the last quarter of the 19th century, which saw a shift from assimilation to association towards the last decade. Assimilation, considered as traditional French colonial policy, in essence meant that colonies were to become an integral, if noncontiguous, part of the mother country, with their societies and populations made over—to whatever extent possible—in her image. This entailed the use of the same constitutional laws to govern both the Republic and the colonies, and the establishment of the same Metropolitan institutions in the colonies. Assimilation implied a basic human equality and perceived environmental

differences/discrepancies between races, classes, social groups, as “results of differences in education,” (Betts 1961: 8, 13) as posited by Claude Adrien Helvétius, intellectual father of the French concept of assimilation (Betts 1961: 15). Education is the remedy for such discrepancies.

Association, on the other hand, is a colonial practice that allows the native to act as an “associate” of the European in developing the colonies. Association takes into account *“the geographic and ethnic characteristics of the particular region submitted to foreign control”* (Betts 1961: 106). It entails the retention of native institutions. Association then “implied mutual trust and friendly cooperation, but of two differently developed peoples whose relationship was described as one of teacher—or of “governor” in the sense of preceptor—and pupil” (Betts 1961: 129).⁸ This kind of colonial policy would be exemplified by the mid-19th century Dutch system in Java, Indonesia after they abolished Gen. Van den Bosch’s “Culture System” and the Anglo-Saxon scheme in Hong Kong and Burma (Betts 1961: 33-58).

The 1852 Constitution under Napoleon III declared a separate administration for French colonies. However, in 1854 and 1866, the French Senatus-Consulte leaned towards assimilation where Martinique, Guadeloupe and Réunion were concerned, that is, “[i]mportant functions, such as local administration, the police, religion, the press, and even credit institutions fell under the direct jurisdiction of the mother country” (Betts 1961: 19). Colonial reforms by Napoleon III in Algeria also exhibited the same leanings. In the early years of the Third Republic, assimilation was at the heart of its colonial policy – *“the colonies which existed in 1848 were again given the right to send representatives to parliament[, t]wo extra-parliamentary commissions in 1879 and in 1882, charged with the task of studying the possibilities of change in colonial administration, favored assimilation [and] the tariff law of 1892 assimilated economically many overseas areas to France”* (Betts 1961: 20).

Interests in comparative colonial studies were however, roused with the rapid growth of imperialism towards the end of the 19th century. The French were mostly interested in finding solutions to existing problems of economic governance. After studying fellow colonizers’ colonial policies, they found the Dutch and Anglo-Saxon policies – where the practice of association prevailed – as the most promising. During the last few decades of the 19th century, a policy similar to those of the Dutch and Anglo-Saxons in Tonkin in 1892 and Madagascar in 1896 was devised. The 1904 Colonial Congress favored a system of cooperation between natives and colonists which fused their economic interests and took into account both the natives and the colonists’ economic well-being; and impressed upon the natives the notion of work as obligation as the best means to civilize them and through which prosperity – both of colonists and natives -- is attained. The Colonial Congress of Marseilles in 1906, passed the resolution *“that the natives be utilized to the greatest extent possible from the military point of view; the native troops constitute the basis of the military forces charged with the defense*

of our overseas possessions” (Betts 1961: 35-38, 142-143, 156).

In a colonial situation, Bellesort envisages the colonialist as a guardian, while the native, as a minor. The “native-minor” reaches adulthood after undergoing a European education – *tutelle*⁹ – that would be preparation for some “eventual” turnover of power, an acquisition of enough “Europeanization” in manner and thinking and thus adjudged ready for self-government. This involves a certain re-making of the colonized to enable perception and articulation of realities in European terms. To Bellesort’s mind, readiness entails thought and articulation in terms of critical concepts such as *patrie* and *tutelle* (Bellesort 1927: 26-27).

On the other hand, D’Orléans thinks that “*il faudrait, d’ailleurs pour qu’elle pût réformer sa colonie, qu’elle entreprit d’abord de se réformer elle-même*” (D’Orléans 1870: 218). That D’Orléans thinks in terms of “colony” and “Metropolis” obviously points to his orientation towards assimilation. In his assessment of Spanish colonial rule, he admits being indulgent towards Spain, and his analysis does not go beyond certain admonitions to maximize growth and, thereby, the profit of the colony. Although with regards to Mindanao, he proposes the retention of some Muslim heads and costumes--

Occuper petit à petit le territoire, au lieu de se borner à de vaines excursions; gagner les chefs, se concilier les populations en respectant leur organisation et leurs coutumes, au lieu d’entretenir leurs haines par des dévastations périodiques, telles devrait être, il semble la politique de l’Espagne à l’égard de Mindanao (De Orléans 1870: 200).

as alternative to existing Spanish politics of sending troops to affirm her right of possession of the entire island. Never mind if Spain has to spend more on Mindanao as this will be recompensed in the future “*par un accroissement de puissance et de richesse*” (de Orléans: 201) at the disposal of the metropolis. D’Orléans did not elaborate on what becomes the colony when it reaches “adulthood,” so to speak. Neither does he set conditions for a clearer definition of what constitutes this stage of readiness for self-government. Rather, he envisages the colony’s future, as taking its place in the world as a rich resource for the Metropolis (De Orléans 1870: 218): “*Espérons cependant que le jour viendra où ce beau pays des Philippines pourra devenir une importante ressource pour la métropole, et tenir dans le monde la place qui lui est due.*”

And this actually is the very last thing he says in his text.

It is evident that in both schemes, whether association or assimilation, the colonizing power is envisaged as indispensable to the improvement, growth and development of the colony. It is accorded a position of power and superiority as teacher/guide/trustee, source of knowledge/light/civilization that supposedly has the good of the colony in mind. Filipino “Orientals” are imaged, and in the process “Othered,” as occupying a position of relative inferiority, backwardness and dependency on Spanish knowledge/

light/civilization. They can take their place in the world either as an important resource for Spain, or after being re-made in the her images, after having fulfilled all European requirements for self-government, they may embark on their own. Bellesort and de Orléans saw, through their social darwinist norms and standards that this part of the “Orient” and their “Oriental Others” still required Western benevolent tutelage, they either commended the colonizing power on a job well done or they proposed an alternative colonial policy which justified the passing on the proverbial *flambeau de civilization* to the lost children of humanity, i.e., imperialism.

It is premature to say this outright of Bellesort, especially as his proposition of protectorateship actually suggests the possibility that Bellesort accords almost equal degrees of civilization to colonized and colonialist, the former, having declared themselves ready for self-government, and the latter, whom he has “othered” as having Moorish blood (Bellesort 1927: 251). Moreover, he refers to the Philippine revolution as no more than a Tagalog insurrection confined to a limited district (Bellesort 1927: 250)

Et la meilleure preuve enfin que leur empire est illusoire, c'est que l'insurrection contre laquelle ils se battent n'en a bouleversé qu'un canton limité, non que les peuplades voisines s'intéressent à leur cause, mais parce que ces personnes indépendantes se soucient fort peu de ce qui se passe chez les étrangers.

This thinking belies the existence of a common cause, a common struggle and a common identity. In one stroke, Bellesort represents Spain negatively and nullifies all statements regarding Filipino desire for separation from the Mother Country Spain and denies their readiness for self-government. He also images Filipinos as oblivious of, at the very least, apathetic, at worst, about realities around them.

Obviously, Bellesort has not completed his “othering” of Spain. What had began as “un chemin frayé à coups de hache dans la splendeur d'une forêt vierge” (Bellesort 1927: 252) he now considers a failure. Spain's failure is seen in the following: Jolo and Sulu living independently of Spain; Negritos recognizing no masters and Igorots governing themselves; usage of the Spanish language is not widespread; brigands threatening areas around Manila; and the Spaniards having no precise maps (read: knowledge of precise parameters) of their supposed territory, thus a non-conformity with the scientism of the times (Bellesort 1927: 249-250).

The friars who were the prime movers of Spanish colonisation in the beginning, were “capables de fureur dévotieuse, mais aussi des plus rudes sacrifices[, qui].... persuadent moins l'idolâtre qu'ils ne le magnétisent....[et qui] apprennent sa [c'est-à-dire, celle de “l'idolâtre”] langue, vivent de sa vie; bien plus, ils le protègent contre les rapines de leurs compatriotes” (Bellesort 1927: 252-253) are now deterrents to progress in the colony. They give men of integrity who wish to settle and invest in the country a hard time, and have men of integrity like Blancos (read: those who spite the friars by

refusing to do what they want) replaced with Polaviejas ¹⁰ (read: those who cooperate with friars), who have enlightened men (read: articulate and prospective heirs who studied in the Metropolis espousing not separatist notions, but those that allow for association between Metropolis and colony) like Rizal executed (Bellesort 1927: 260-262). These friars should have been men “dont l'honneur et le désintéressement seraient éprouvés” for “[c]’est aux meilleurs d’entre nous d’aller régir les enfants perdus de l’espèce humaine” (Bellesort 1927: 306). The Philippines is ideologically, Bellesort claims, a disaster, for it is run by men who privilege religion over scientific thought, whose legacy to the natives D’Orléans (D’Orléans 1870: 14) best describes as “Au fond de chaque chambre est dressé une sorte d’autel, orné et entretenu par les soldats et surmonté d’une image de sainte Barbe, patronne des artilleurs. L’Indien ne saurait vivre sans une image de saint auprès de lui.

In keeping with their image as “bad figures of colonial authority,” these Spanish friars have no faculty for recognizing in the likes of Rizal or of any other member of the native elite the best kind, on racial grounds, with whom the colonial government can work or *associate* for developing the colony. No matter how heartening Bellesort berates Spanish friars, his concept of the *mission civilatrice* of a colonizing country as validated by 19th century social darwinism persists. For how else could he patronizingly conceive of non-Europeans as the lost (read: savages where Europe is concerned) children of the human species?

Three hundred years of Spanish regime failed to do anything, as far as Bellesort is concerned. So how can he but smile at the attempt of a youthful native general, one Emilio Aguinaldo, one *ilusionado* who dreams of “*établir une république des Philippines*.” Calling Aguinaldo a Washington and Bolivar wannabe, Bellesort declares that Aguinaldo fires the imagination of the Filipinos and

entretient précieusement les croyances religieuses au coeur de ses Indiens; il se rend compte que son prestige s’amoinrirait de la diminution de la foi.... Ces âmes tagales, tout embrumées de mystère, attribuent au jeune héros un pouvoir surhumain. Il a beau vivre sous leur tentes, participer à leur labeurs, fondre les balles, boulanger le pain noir, cuire des graines de maïs; déjà sa physionomie s’estompe d’un brouillard fabuleux. Il se dirait invulnérable que ses Indiens le croiraient. (Bellesort 1927: 306, 266)

Again, Bellesort resorts to dichotomizations such as mystery/fact, religion/science and faith/reason. Like the Spanish friars, he thinks Aguinaldo’s leadership and influence are anchored on something unscientific. Both capitalize on the faith of the natives, which cloud their minds to prevent critical (read: scientific) conception of the realities around them, and make fanatics out of them. Bellesort suggests that Filipino “Orientals” are lost children that initially benefitted from the civilizing teaching of the friars, who later began running this part of the “Orient” unscientifically. Likewise, the masses are helpless prey to Aguinaldo’s ambitions, incapable of thinking for

themselves, lost children that need to be guided towards the correct (read: logical/scientific/French) perception of realities around them. But his appropriation of the Spanish substantive “*ilusionado*” to describe Aguinaldo and his amused reaction to this young native general’s attempt to establish a republic end all assumptions that Bellesort accords equality between colonist and colonized. It seems more than a happy coincidence that both Aguinaldo and Bonifacio espoused separatist ideas and were imaged negatively by Bellesort, the first as a hanging chief who had the latter, “*grand-maitre du Katipunan qui ne rêvait que pillage et assassinat*” (Bellesort 1927: 266), executed. Both happen to be the anti-thesis of the *ilustrado* Rizal as imaged by Bellesort. Bonifacio may be reading, among other books, Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, Carlyle’s *History of the French Revolution* and the *Lives of the American Presidents* in Spanish, and is “*much better read in modern thought than many of the more affluent students who frequented the colleges and univeristy in Manila for social prestige rather than out of interest in education,*” (Schumacher 1996: 182) but he lacks higher formal education; and like Aguinaldo, is not of the *ilustrado* type educated in the universities of Spain, France, Belgium or Germany.

In another part, Bellesort writes: “*Les métis et les Indiens que l’on croise partout à Manille ne diffèrent, ni par la nature ni par l’éducation, des Tagals d’Aguinaldo*” (Bellesort 1927: 268). Education, he makes abundantly clear, refers to training (scientific, if possible) in Europe. “*Nature*” he refers to may be the sum total of the Filipino re-made into the image of the European by education and thereby, in manner and thinking, and with a willingness to associate/work with the colonialists. Bellesort considers them the best kind with whom to work or associate. This “*nature*” may be further elucidated by his choice of Filipino interviewees. All were capable of articulating for themselves and in terms recognized by a French person like Bellesort: from his Tagalog informant, the old exile, his child, to the engineer-insurrectionist leader in Hong Kong. He only interacted or selected recounting only interactions with people he felt had the nature and/or education that rendered them credible sources of information. They were not likely to give him legends like “*le bruit qui courait au faubourg de Tondo qu’on voyait vers dix heures du soir une lumière pareille à une femme echevelée de serpents,*” before the insurrection, by which the people guessed that the hour was near; or the other rumor that “*à Biacnabato une femme avait accouché d’un enfant habillé en général*” (Bellesort 1927: 267).

As for his other interviewees, his brief contact with his sole informant from among the masses, a native ferryman who affirmed he was *de buena gente*, not of the Katipunan, and that the Spaniards were good masters, he only cites along with a statement from a mestizo, who claimed to have a government position, as prologue to his conclusion that “*la vérité est que l’insurrection est bien moins populaire qu’aristocratique*” (Bellesort 1927: 263). The other people he recounted speaking with were all foreigners. Bellesort’s attempt to obtain representation from groups outside that of his Hong Kong informants is a commendable attempt to use class identity as determination in

analyzing the colonial situation in the Philippine and without constituting classes out of what were actually amorphous social groups. Yet it is alarming that he chose to give no representation to capitalists like the Pedro Rojas, whom he believed were putting funds into the “insurrection” for essentially budgetary reasons; or from “*les possesseurs terriens*” (land owners), whose sons and friends who travelled to Europe he believed as responsible for forming the guerillas, who were actually “*les mécontents, les ratés, les demi-savants et leur maisonnée indienne, sûrs de leurs montagnes, plus sûrs de l’ignorance des Espagnols*” (Bellesort 1927: 264-265) ¹¹; or the bandits, who draw inspiration from Aguinaldo. But then again, why waste time interviewing people who were again *not* likely to give reliable information as they conformed *not* in nature *nor* education to one’s requirements/specifications for dependable sources of information?

Bellesort’s selection of this incident with the ferryman serves to create still another binary opposition: *de buena gente* vis-à-vis *de Katipunán*. By virtue of the connotations of belonging to *de buena gente*, Bellesort automatically locates the Katipunán at some locus opposite it and attributes to it valuations that put it almost in league with Aguinaldo, Bonifacio and the bandits, or the “dark forces” the Spaniards were having a hard time putting under control. Like the mestizos and natives he met, Aguinaldo, Bonifacio and the Katipunán conformed neither in education nor nature to Bellesort’s specifications. Rather

[i]ls ont, comme eux [les Tagals d’Aguinaldo], des têtes fines, des corps pétris d’une grâce de femme, et souvent, plus souvent, comme eux aussi, de larges faces glabres, des fronts d’hydropcéphales, une lèvre supérieure si distante du nez que toute la physionomie en contracte un air douloureux ou stupide. Et cependant, résidents étrangers et Espagnols s’accordent à les juger faux, paresseux, cupides, joueurs. Ils prostituent leurs femmes à l’Européen, et leurs femmes se livrent avec d’autant moins de scrupules que c’est un honneur pour elles de mettre au monde un enfant qui ait un alto nariz. Ils suintent le vice. (Bellesort 1927: 268)

To further legitimize his conclusion regarding Aguinaldo—which he forms without having spoken to the latter, to anyone of the latter’s confidants or lieutenants (Bellesort admits in his post-scriptum having only passed through the country) -- and therefore, anyone/thing else associated with the general, he cites the example of Don Alberto Isaac, ¹² the decorated jeweller, who was not Spanish, but from the *colonie étrangère*, and who has very close ties with Spanish friars and officers and whose sympathies clearly lay with those of the Spaniards (Bellesort 1927: 284) :

Les deux lieutenants mangeaient silencieusement; mais le capitaine et don Alberto éclataient en témérités. Ils fusillaient Aguinaldo entre deux coups de fourchette. Que dis-je fusiller! Il s’agissait bien de fusiller, vraiment! Le gros mépris [c’est-à-dire, le capitaine] s’entendait à supplicier les hommes.

Would it not upset Bellesort’s neat little classifications of people he met here if he

found out that upon Rizal's return in 1888, his archetype of the *native associate* was actually perceived by certain sectors in Philippine society, i.e., the people "in the mountains" as a "magical curer," a "god-man" and "redeemer," whose *popular biography merges with that of Christ's life and versions of Tagalog mythical figures* (Ileto 1985: 13). The Spanish authorities had Rizal publicly executed exactly so that these "ignorant masses" would realize their mistake. Still, these natives interpreted this execution, thereby subverting it, as the re-enactment of the Passion and Death of Christ. As Ileto points out: "*Rizal the Filipino Christ rather than Rizal the doctor and historian, was the rallying point of the thousands who joined the Katipunan rebellion in 1897*" (Ileto 1985: 13). Those groups called *kapatirans* awaiting Rizal's return as *Bathala* or as "*ugat o pintig para sa makabuluhang pagbubuo ng damdaming bayan*," (Alaras 1988: 13) still exist today in some parts of the country.

Though Bellesort puts Aguinaldo, Bonifacio and the Katipunan opposite Rizal, constituting them as the latter's dark "other," Aguinaldo of the *principalia*, *les possesseurs terriens*, and Bonifacio of the lower-middle class (Schumacher 1996: 181) were not exactly perceived in the same manner. Bonifacio, the Katipunan *supremo*, who was able to articulate the grievances of the masses had good relations with the *tulisanes* surrounding Manila, although the Katipunan rebellion he led did not meet with positive reactions from the *principalia* outside the core Tagalog provinces (Ileto 1985: 13-14). Certain groups "from the mountains" had begun interpreting the Katipunan in their own terms, had switched signs, and emerged in the lowlands as Katipunan fighters. Many such "fanatical" associations and bandit groups like the *Colorum* sects, *Pulajanes*, *Gabinistas*, *Dios-Dios* were using the insignia of the Katipunan, fighting with such paraphernalia as magical ropes, as did the *Colorum* of Tayabas (Ileto 1985: 12-14). The *principalia* rebels thought this was not the way to fight the colonial regime. They rallied behind Aguinaldo, whom they perceived as conforming more to their concept of a "proper" head of a revolution. The revolution had to be rid of its "dark" side: "*Bonifacio was [thus] accused of being a fanatic, entertaining ambitions to kingship and spreading rumors about the return of Bernardo Carpio, was executed.*" With Aguinaldo as head, the Katipunan became "*a liberal nationalist movement seeking to form a republic that would be recognized by all civilized nations*" (Ileto 1985: 14).

Bellesort only looked into the nature and education of participants in the Revolution, systematically effecting not only the "othering" of the Filipino "Orientals" as requiring Spanish tutelage but also further marginalizing Filipino "Orientals" who conformed neither in education nor nature to his specifications of a native "associate." But had he gotten representation from these sectors, from the so-called "bandits" for example, he would have glimpsed certain strains of mass participation through groups like the *Babaylanes* of Papa Isio that "*fought under the banner of the Malolos Republic against the ephemeral hacendero sponsored Negros Republic in 1899 and its American successor, but had existed in the 1890s, attacking haciendas and calling for the abolition of sugar*," (Schumacher 1996: 195)¹³ or perhaps, the Guardia de Honor which at "*the time of the*

1896 revolution,... began to attack Spanish outposts, but soon turned its wrath against the landlords of Tarlac and Nueva Ecija as well, and likewise resisted the forces of the Malolos Government,” (Schumacher 1996: 195) or the *Cofradía de San José* of Apolinario de la Cruz and Colorum followers of Sebastian Caneco¹⁴ which the Aguinaldo Government tried suppressing in 1898 “because they were urging “the gente proletaria to abandon their fields, to the detriment of the landlords” (Schumacher 1996: 186). He might have discovered that “these movements or communities attracted victims and resisters of nineteenth century economic development—sugarcane workers impoverished by the price crash of the 1880’s debtors, displaced farmers, tax or labor evaders,” as well as “survivors of cholera and smallpox epidemics who journeyed to pilgrimage sites in fulfillment of their vows,” and even “plain vagabonds and seekers of magical powers” (Ileto 1985: 11).

Or he could have gotten talked to women in the areas he visited, like Manila, for example, and could have glimpsed some of the faces of working women, like the *cigarreras* in the city’s four tobacco factories who went on strike to denounce the “extortion activities of some maestras or accused them of oral defamation and even physical injuries,” or of the *sinamayeras* who may either be a Chinese or Spanish mestiza or a native woman, who had the privilege, because of her economic origin, “of enrolling in a colegio,” who would earn a large profit from her trade but exploited the underpaid *bordaderas*, whose difficult job would leave them stooped and blind for half of their lives; or the *maestras*, who demanded an increase in their salaries, those 21 teachers who in 1896 (based on the payroll of the City government) could be surmised to have remained “in their posts since the fighting took place outside Manila,” or women and women teachers “used as couriers and informers during the revolution of 1896” (Camagay 1995: 11, 28-29, 39, 72, 74-75).

But then again, Bellesort only spent a limited amount of time—a week in November 1898—in this part of the “Orient.” Actually, he visited only Manila, Bulacan, passed through Calumpit and San Fernando on his way to Tarlac. The Filipinos he saw did not fulfill his requirements for reliable sources of information. Especially not the voiceless women he objectifies and “others” twice over—first as Filipino “Orientals,” next as “Oriental” women—through statements like the following (Bellesort 1927: 223):

Les pieds nus dans leurs pantoufles, les bras nus, la gorge nue, la cigarette à la bouche et des flots de cheveux s’abattant sur leurs reins. Elles errent indolemment, mais il y a de l’autorité dans leur indolence, de la souveraineté dans leur grâce. Le front bombé, les yeux brillants, le nez béant à toutes les senteurs, les lèvres charnues pour mieux plonger dans les fruits mûrs, elles se sentent fortes du regard des hommes et du scapulaire qui fait une tache noire sous la transparence de leur mantille. On dirait que, si le péché est en elles, ces femmes croient en porter sur elles l’absolution.

Why bother with those one considers as bad informants, especially from one being

imaged as Eve, naked despite what would probably be her *camisa de piña*, her *tapis* and her *mantilla*, with hair always flowing, biting into fruits, tempting men ¹⁵ with their nakedness, powerful and “sacrilegiously” believing that they possess the absolution to their sin? At least d’Orléans bothers to detail what the Filipinas are wearing and what they put in their hair (D’Orléans 1870: 16-17):

Qui n’a vu dépeinte quelque part cette piquante figure: ces traits que relève un teint bronze et qui, bien que empreints du type de la race malaise, ont leur singularité et leur charme, cette taille bien prise, ces flots de cheveux d’ébène qui traineraient souvent jusqu’à terre sans le grand peigne qui les retient? Que de fois n’a-t-on pas décrit le costume des femmes tagales: fichu d’ananas qui flotte autour d’un cou élégant, camisole presque transparente qui ne descend pas jusqu’à la ceinture, longue pièce d’étoffe qu’elles nomment tapis, serrée autour de la taille et qui presse le haut de la jupe, petites chinelas enfin, qui laissent voir presque en entier leurs pieds nus?

In the end, it is a matter of systemic selectivity and the processing of the data included in the text for purposes of making it conform or validate a writer’s viewpoint. In Bellesort and d’Orléans’ texts, only data that box and “other” Filipinos as “Orientals” still requiring a colonizing power’s presence in their daily existence and thereby, justifying the continuation of its civilizing mission, are included. Only data that constitute and “other” Filipino women as the exotic, sinful “Oriental” are included. For this, both Bellesort and D’Orléans, and their texts, merit the appellation “orientalist.”

Conclusion

Orientalist texts such as those written by Bellesort and D’Orléans are still available in libraries, archives and even small bookstores in Paris. The texts discussed here are just two of hundreds or thousands that continue to perpetuate the myth of the “Orient.” These hundreds and thousands of texts continue to be sources of knowledge about the land masses, peoples, nations, and their realities which have been boxed in the term “Orient.” They will continue to be sources of prejudiced knowledge about the so-called “Orient” and “Orientals” unless they are interrogated and demystified.

It was glimpses of our realities that Bellesort and D’Orléans caught as they passed through our country. Yet, everything they glimpsed was filtered through a grid, through a pre-conceived construct of our realities, thanks to social darwinist yardsticks underlying their assumptions about cultures and the development of cultures and peoples. The resulting images offered by both voyagers in their texts, are thus, no more than monolithisms that privileged the European, specifically the French, as the ultimate source of L[1]ight, marginalizing, i.e., “othering” Filipinos and Philippine realities as requiring still the presence of a colonizing power in our daily lives, justifying

European imperialist endeavours and the violence resulting from it.

The French are still very visible and are still imaging themselves, a benevolent European country with a mission to bring her best technology to the Philippines and share her very rich cultural heritage with Filipinos, i.e., emancipation through science/technology and French culture and civilization. This is not to say that they are still at it, so to speak, but it pays to be vigilant if only to avoid complicity with texts that continue to perpetuate myths about our realities.

Endnotes

- 1 As early as 1685, a French company trade agent named Veret proposed the possibility of trade of sugar, shells and pesos with the Philippines and in 1705, the French government was urged to “*send three ships to Mindanao Island and others not in the possession of European powers that are highly rich in gold and spices*” (Nardin 1989: 3-4)
- 2 This definition of material realities comes from Raymond Williams (1977: 75-82).
- 3 Raymond Betts takes the period between the fall of the ministry of Jules Ferry and World War I to discuss the shift in French colonial theory from assimilation to association and its application to France d’Outre-mer, notably to Indochina.
- 4 Editor’s note: underscoring in quoted passages provided by the author.
- 5 One of the many East India companies, the second of this name created in 1698. Nardin notes that the first was founded in 1660 and absorbed by the Compagnie des Indes Orientales.
- 6 D’Orléans’s assessment of the Spanish colonial rule went no further than saying that the Philippines was not being cultivated as it should be—“*[m]ais il s’en faut de beaucoup que ce pays soit cultivé comme il devrait être*” (1870: 138) -- and a few suggestions on how to bring about progress to the colony via administrative reforms, breaking up of monopolies, improvement of the means of communication and attending to the state of agriculture and commerce—without actually discussing how to go about these. He travelled more extensively than Bellesort and his text is much shorter.
- 7 See John N. Schumacher’s “Recent Perspectives on the Revolution” (1996: 198-203).
- 8 Association differs from the concept of protectorate in that the latter implies a “*relationship between two states, one stronger than the other, but both of a similar degree of civilization*” with the stronger one providing “*his protection, receiving in return tribute or military aid, if necessary.*” Whereas the purpose of association is “*to develop the natives in the framework of their own civilization[---]. also mundane –economic cooperation[, is] ...restricted to internal matters, and ... could function in areas not submitted to the regime of the protectorate[.]*” “*the protectorate idea is primarily an administrative one on an international level[, providing] “a solution to the problem of relationship to be established between France and her overseas possessions”*” (Betts 1961: 128-129).
- 9 *Tutelle* implies teaching/guiding/protecting. In other words, mentorship. The process is one of progression of the native from “infancy” to “adulthood,” from a “primitive state” to a “civilized one.” The native’s welfare as minor and beneficiary is underscored by the colonists, and the constitution of the colonist as trustee/guardian/adult/teacher and the colonized as beneficiary/underaged/minor/student on racial grounds and the affirmation of the “moral right” to alleviate the plight of the native by bringing him the fruits of civilization are again, validated by late 19th century social Darwinism.
- 10 Ramon Blanco and Camilo Polavieja served as governor generals during the last years of Spanish rule.
- 11 These people may have travelled to Europe but as Bellesort mentions no names it is difficult to

determine whether they have trained there as well.

- 12 Bellesort wrote that Isaac was decorated because of the “*la bravoure qu’il afficha en maintes rencontres, où on le vit poursuivre, le pistolet au poing, une troupe de bandits qualifiés d’insurgés*” (Bellesort 1927: 276).
- 13 Schumacher continues: “*They themselves appear to have been a continuation of the movement of Dios Buhawi from the 1880s, which was itself related to an earlier Babaylan movement in Panay*” (Schumacher 1996: 195).
- 14 By then, Caneco’s group had been calling itself the *Katipunan ni San Cristobal* (after the mountain where the group began). “[*As a result of the general dislocation following the war with Spain Caneco interpreted the war as “tantamount to a cataclysm leading to a total reordering of the universe”*” (Schumacher 1996: 186).
- 15 Priests included. Bellesort recounts an incident with a Dominican friar named Medio, who, instead of speaking of the revolution, , commented in a soft and hoarse voice that Filipinas ought to wear butterflies instead of diamonds in their hair.

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