Marxist theory as largely economic, as Hardach and Karras do' is 'unacceptable' (p. xiv). Students will nevertheless find the book useful, not least in its open-endedness.

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Orientalists have traditionally been concerned with describing, criticizing and characterizing the writings of Muslims and Middle Easterners which are thought to be representative of the society and culture in which they are produced. However, orientalists and their intellectual allies do not take kindly to similar exercises being carried out on their own literary productions. The sense of indignation which has been provoked in various academic quarters by the publication of Edward Said's excellent study *Orientalism* (London/Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. £8.95) is perhaps itself an indication of the orientalist attitudes he has attempted to describe. Yet this is not to say that Said is using the classic orientalist technique on orientalist texts. He does not argue that orientalism represents or reflects Western culture and society, but that it *is* 'a considerable dimension of modern political–intellectual culture, and [that] as such [it] has less to do with the Orient than it has with "our" world.' His analysis of orientalism is of course a critical one (hence the indignation), but true to the best principles of literary and cultural criticism the analysis is not concerned to show up discrepancies between 'reality' and the orientalists' picture of it. Instead, it seeks to draw out the structures of underlying assumptions, themes and motives by which orientalism, as a complex, occasionally shifting, political–intellectual phenomenon, has been connected to its object. Readers may be tempted to argue that a sustained denunciation of orientalist sins is itself in danger of ending up in an irrational posture – by its indiscriminate rejection of everything that has been achieved by orientalist scholarship. But to argue in this way would be to misunderstand seriously the object of this book, which is not only a catalogue of Western prejudices about and misrepresentations of Arabs and Muslims. It is not primarily an assessment of the scholarly acceptability of Western studies in the histories, cultures and societies of the Middle East. It is both of these things, but not only and not primarily. In so far as it is such a catalogue and such an assessment, it is of course very partial – in the double sense of being at once fragmentary and subordinated to an overriding argument. Its outstanding contribution lies in its attempt to analyse the *authoritative structure* of orientalist discourse – the closed, self-evident, self-confirming character of that distinctive discourse which is reproduced again and again through scholarly texts, travelogues, literary works of imagination, and the *obiter dicta* of public men of affairs. In Said's words,

> what we must respect and try to grasp is the sheer knitted-together strength of Orientalist discourse, its very close ties to the enabling socio–economic and political institutions, and its redoubtable durability. After all, any system of ideas that can remain unchanged as teachable wisdom . . . from the period of Ernest Renan in the late 1840s until the present in the United States must be something more formidable than a mere collection of lies. Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a

considerable investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid of filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied – indeed, made truly productive – the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture.

Said's object is thus more subtle and more interesting than many, even sympathetic readers appear to have grasped. For its basic thrust is not that Western scholarship on the Middle East must be rejected (whether altogether or in part) but that the authority of orientalist discourse – that which enables this discourse to reproduce itself essentially unchallenged – must be seen as a problem, and understood as such within the context of the institutional, political and socio-economic conditions in which orientalism has flourished. One might regret that Said has not rooted his analysis more firmly in the particular conditions within which this authoritative discourse was historically produced. There are a few tantalizing observations about the different historical circumstances which might help to explain the varying degrees of theoreticism and practicality that informed French and English orientalism in the nineteenth century, but they are barely developed. One might wish that Said had said something, however brief, about the connections of nineteenth century orientalist discourse with those 'scientific' discourses whose aim was to represent groups within Europe itself as 'the Other': the theories of racial essence, of social degeneration, of cultural authenticity and inauthenticity which sought to account for, to see-through, to romanticize the industrial working classes, the Jews, the gypsies, *etc.* One might want to disagree with what Said sometimes identifies as the source of orientalism's distorting authority – the employment of general categories which obscure the human particular. But none of this detracts from the remarkable originality of this very important book. The view that orientalist scholarship embodies an approach which is intellectually inadequate has come to be held by a number of serious Western academics: see, for instance, Leonard Binder's Introduction to *The Study of the Middle East.* Said's book reminds us that the hegemony of orientalism is still so massive that it is not feasible to try to develop alternative approaches without first confronting it with a view to undermining, not its rational achievements, but its traditional authority. There is no short-cut to a reconstructed field of Middle East studies. And to those who habitually react to critiques of orientalism with indignant cries about babies being thrown out with the bathwater, one can only say: find the baby.

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Each of the eight essays in *Nationality and the Pursuit of National Independence*, ed. T. W. Moody (Belfast: The Appletree Press, for the Irish Committee of Historical Sciences, 1978. £6.50) stands by itself, but their themes touch at various angles. Collectively they are a valuable contribution, mainly to the history of the British Isles, primarily to that of Ireland (the subject of three essays and most of a fourth). Running through the volume is a conviction that elements of 'national' feeling are far older than the starting-point conventionally assigned to them of 1789. All latter-day nationalism, as the editor writes, 'harked back to national