Edward Said, from *Orientalism* (1978): extracts from Introduction (pp. 1-28), from ‘The Scope of Orientalism’: part II, ‘Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental’ (pp. 49-73), and from ‘Orientalist Structures and Restructures’: section IV ‘Pilgrims and Pilgrimages, British and French’ (pp. 166-197).

Edward Said, from ‘Preface’ to the 2003 re-issue of *Orientalism* (pp. xi-xxiii)

From ‘Introduction’

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On a visit to Beirut during the terrible civil war of 1975-1976, a French journalist wrote regretfully of the gutted downtown area that "it had once seemed to belong to ... the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval." He was right about the place, of course, especially so far as a European was concerned. The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. Now it was disappearing; in a sense it had happened, its time was over. Perhaps it seemed irrelevant that Orientals themselves had something at stake in the process, that even in the time of Chateaubriand and Nerval Orientals had lived there, and that now it was they who were suffering; the main thing for the European visitor was a European representation of the Orient and its contemporary fate, both of which had a privileged communal significance for the journalist and his French readers.

Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly). Unlike the Americans, the French and the British – less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss – have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling Orientalism, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) **/2/** as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. In contrast, the American understanding of the Orient will seem considerably less dense, although our recent Japanese, Korean, and Indochinese adventures ought now to be creating a more sober, more realistic "Oriental" awareness. Moreover, the vastly expanded American political and economic role in the Near East (the Middle East) makes great claims on our understanding of that Orient.

It will be clear to the reader (and will become clearer still throughout the many pages that follow) that by Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent. The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient-and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist--either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. Compared with Oriental studies or area studies, it is true that the term Orientalism is less preferred by specialists today, both because it is too vague and general and because it connotes the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European colonialism. Nevertheless books are written and congresses held with “the Orient” as their main focus, with the Orientalist in his new or old guise as their main authority. The point is that even if it does not survive as it once did, Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental.

Related to this academic tradition, whose fortunes, transmigrations, specializations, and transmissions are in part the subject of this study, is a more general meaning for Orientalism. Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers. political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social, descriptions, and political accounts concerning the **/3/** Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on. This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx. A little later in this introduction I shall deal with the methodological problems one encounters in so broadly construed a "field" as this.

The interchange between the academic and the more or less imaginative meanings of Orientalism is a constant one, and since the late eighteenth century there has been a considerable, quite disciplined – perhaps even regulated – traffic between the two. Here I come to the third meaning of Oriental ism, which is something more historically and materially defined than either of the other two. Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically. scientifically. and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the

limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity "the Orient" is in question. How this happens is what this book tries to demonstrate. It also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.

Historically and culturally there is a quantitative as well as a qualitative difference between the Franco-British involvement in the Orient and – until the period of American ascendancy **/4/** after World War II – the involvement of every other European and Atlantic power. To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate rearms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental "experts" and "hands," an Oriental professoriate, a complex array of "Oriental" ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use – the list can be extended more or less indefinitely. My point is that Orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the Bible lands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did. Out of that closeness, whose dynamic is enormously productive even if it always demonstrates the comparatively greater strength of the Occident (British, French, or American), comes the large body of texts I call Orientalist.

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I doubt that it is controversial […] to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in those countries that was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact –and yet *that is what I am saying* in this study of Orientalism. For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main" circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an

individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer.

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My idea is that European and then American interest in the Orient was political according to some of the obvious historical accounts of it that I have given here, but that it was the culture that created an interest, that acted dynamically along with brute political, economic, and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that it obviously was in the field I call Orientalism.

Therefore, Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world. It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a *certain* will or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" 'cannot do or understand as "we" do). Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world.

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[N]early every nineteenth-century writer (and the same is true enough of writers in earlier periods) was extraordinarily well aware of the fact of empire: this is a subject not very well studied, but it will not take a modern Victorian specialist long to admit that liberal cultural heroes

like John Stuart Mill, Arnold, Carlyle, Newman, Macaulay, Ruskin, George Eliot, and even Dickens had definite views on race and imperialism, which are quite easily to be found at work in their writing. So even a specialist must deal with the knowledge that Mill, for example, made it clear in *On Liberty* and *Representative Government* that his views there could not be applied to India (he was an India Office functionary for a good deal of his life, after all) because the Indians were civilizationally, if not racially, inferior. The same kind of paradox is to be found in Marx, as I try to show in this book. In the second place, to believe that politics in the form of imperialism bears upon the production of literature, scholarship, social theory, and history writing is by no means equivalent to saying that culture is therefore a demeaned or denigrated thing. Quite the contrary: my whole point is to say that we can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting. It is this idea that Gramsci, certainly, and Foucault and Raymond Williams in their very different ways have been trying to illustrate […] Therefore I study Orientalism as a dynamic exchange between **/15/** individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires – British, French, American – in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced. What interests me most as a scholar is not the gross political verity but the detail, as indeed what interests us in someone like Lane or Flaubert or Renan is not the (to him) indisputable truth that Occidentals are superior to Orientals, but the profoundly worked over and modulated evidence of his detailed work within the very wide space opened up by that truth. One need only remember that Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* is a classic of historical and anthropological observation because of its style, its enormously intelligent and brilliant details, not because of its simple reflection of racial superiority, to understand what I am saying here.

The kind of political questions raised by Orientalism, then, are as follows: What other sorts of intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly, and cultural energies went into the making of an imperialist tradition like the Orientalist one? How did philology, lexicography, history, biology, political and economic theory, novel-writing, and lyric poetry come to the service of Orientalism's broadly imperialist view of the world? What changes, modulations, refinements, even revolutions take place within Orientalism? What is the meaning of originality, of continuity, of individuality, in this context? How does Oriental ism transmit or reproduce itself from one epoch to another? In fine, how can we treat the cultural, historical phenomenon of Orientalism as a kind of *willed human work* – not of mere unconditioned ratiocination – in all its historical complexity, detail, and worth without at the same time losing sight of the alliance between cultural work, political tendencies, the state, and the specific realities of domination? Governed by such concerns a humanistic study can responsibly address itself to politics *and* culture.

[…]

Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-a-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader. containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf. None of this takes place in the abstract, however. Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient affiliates itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself. The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences, and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore constitutes an analyzable formation - for example, that of philological studies, of anthologies of extracts from Oriental literature, of travel books, of Oriental fantasies – whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it strength and authority.

It is clear, I hope, that my concern with authority does not entail analysis of what lies hidden in the Orientalist text, but analysis rather of the text's surface, its exteriority to what it describes. I do not think that this idea can be overemphasized. Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. He is never concerned with the Orient except as the first cause of what he says. What he says and writes, by virtue of the fact that it is said or written, is meant to indicate that the Orientalist is outside the Orient, both as an existential and as a moral fact. The principal product of this exteriority is of course representation : as early as Aeschylus's play The Persians the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar (in Aeschylus's case, grieving Asiatic women). The dramatic immediacy of representation in The Persians obscures the fact that the audience is watching a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient. My analysis of the Orientalist text therefore places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invisible, for such representations as representations, not as "natural" depictions of the Orient. This evidence is found just as prominently in the so-called truthful text (histories, philological analyses, political treatises) as in the avowedly artistic (i.e., openly imaginative) text. The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient. "Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden," as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

from ‘The Scope of Orientalism’: part II, ‘Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental’ (pp. 49-73)

[…]

To speak of scholarly specialization as a geographical "field" is, in the case of Orientalism, fairly revealing since no one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to it called Occidentalism. Already the special, perhaps even eccentric attitude of Orientalism becomes apparent. For although many learned disciplines imply a position taken towards, say, human material (a historian deals with the human past from a special vantage point in the present). There is no real analogy for taking a fixed, more or less total geographical position towards a wide variety of social. linguistic, political, and historical realities. A classicist, a Romance specialist, even an Americanist focuses on a relatively modest portion of the world, not on a full half of it. But Orientalism is a field with considerable geographical ambition. And since Orientalists have traditionally occupied themselves with things Oriental (a specialist in Islamic law, no less than an expert in Chinese dialects or in Indian religions, is considered an Orientalist by people who call themselves Orientalists), we must learn to accept enormous, indiscriminate size plus an almost infinite capacity for subdivision as One of the chief characteristics of Orientalism – one that is evidenced in its confusing amalgam of imperial vagueness and precise detail. […] **/51/** By and large, until the mid-eighteenth century Orientalists were Biblical scholars, students of the Semitic languages, Islamic specialists, or, because the Jesuits had opened up the new study of China, Sinologists. The whole middle expanse of Asia was not academically conquered for Orientalism until, during the later eighteenth century, Anquetil Duperron and Sir William Jones were able intelligibly to reveal the extraordinary riches of Avestan and Sanskrit. By the middle of the nineteenth century Orientalism was as vast a treasure-house of learning as one could imagine. There are two excellent indices of this new, triumphant eclecticism. One is the encyclopedic description of Orientalism roughly from 1765 to 1850 given by Raymond Schwab in his *La Renaissance orientale*. Quite aside from the scientific discoveries of things Oriental made by learned professionals during this period in Europe, there was the virtual epidemic of Orientalia affecting every major poet, essayist, and philosopher of the period. Schwab's notion is that "Oriental" identifies an amateur or professional enthusiasm for everything Asiatic, which was wonderfully synonymous with the exotic, the mysterious, the profound, the seminal; this is a later transposition eastwards of a similar enthusiasm in Europe for Greek and Latin antiquity during the High Renaissance. In 1829 Victor Hugo put this change in directions as follows: "Au siècle de Louis XIV on était helléniste, maintenant on est orientaliste." A nineteenth-century Orientalist was therefore either a scholar (a Sinologist, an Islamicist, an IndoEuropeanist) or a gifted enthusiast (Hugo in *Les Orientales*, Goethe in the *Westöstlicher Diwan*), or both (Richard Burton, Edward Lane, Friedrich Schlegel) .

[…]

Academic Orientalists for the most part were interested in the classical period of whatever language or society it was that they studied. Not until quite late in the century, with the single major exception of Napoleon's Institut d'Egypte, was much attention given to the academic study of the modern, or actual, Orient. Moreover, the Orient studied was a textual universe by and large; the impact of the Orient was made through books and manuscripts, not, as in the impress of Greece on the Renaissance, through mimetic artifacts like sculpture and pottery. Even the rapport between an Orientalist and the Orient was textual, so much so that it is reported of some of the early-nineteenth-century German Orientalists that their first view of an eight-armed Indian statue cured them completely of their Orientalist taste. When a learned Orientalist traveled in the country of his specialization, it was always with unshakable abstract maxims about the "civilization" he had studied; rarely were Orientalists interested in anything except proving the validity of these musty "truths" by applying them, without great success, to uncomprehending, hence degenerate, natives. Finally, the very power and scope of Orientalism produced not only a fair amount of exact positive knowledge about the Orient but also a kind of second-order knowledge – lurking in such places as the "Oriental" tale, the mythology of the mysterious East, notions of Asian inscrutability – with a life of its own, what V. G. Kiernan has aptly called "Europe's collective day-dream of the Orient." One happy result of this is that an estimable number of important writers during the nineteenth century were Oriental enthusiasts: It is **/53/** perfectly correct, I think, to speak of a genre of Orientalist writing as exemplified in the works of Hugo, Goethe, Nerval, Flaubert, [Edward] Fitzgerald, and the like. What inevitably goes with such work, however, is a kind of free-floating mythology of the Orient – an Orient that derives not only from contemporary attitudes and popular prejudices but also from what Vico called the conceit of nations and of scholars. I have already alluded to the political uses of such material as it has turned up in the twentieth century.

[…]

There are such things as positive history and positive geography which in Europe and the United States have impressive achievements to point to. Scholars now do know more about the world, its past and present, than they did, for example, in Gibbon's time. Yet this is not to say that they know all there is to know, nor, more important, is it to say that what they know has effectively dispelled the imaginative geographical and historical knowledge I have been considering. We need not decide here whether this kind of imaginative knowledge infuses history and geography, or whether in some way it overrides them. Let us just say for the time being that it is there as something more than what appears to be merely positive knowledge.

Almost from earliest times in Europe the Orient was something more than what was empirically known about it. At least until the early eighteenth century, as R. W, Southern has so

elegantly shown, European understanding of one kind of Oriental culture, the Islamic, was ignorant but complex. For certain associations with the East – not quite ignorant, not quite informed – always seem to have **/56/** gathered around the notion of an Orient. Consider first the demarcation between Orient and West. It already seems bold by the time of the *Iliad*. Two of the most profoundly influential qualities associated with the East appear in Aeschylus's *The Persians*, the earliest Athenian play extant, and in *The Bacchae* of Euripides, the very last one extant. Aeschylus portrays the sense of disaster overcoming the Persians when they learn that their armies, led by King Xerxes, have been destroyed by the Greeks. The chorus sings the following ode:

Now all Asia's land
Moans in emptiness.
Xerxes led forth, oh oh!
Xerxes destroyed, woe woe!
Xerxes' plans have all miscarried
In ships of the sea.
Why did Darius then
Bring no harm to his men
When he led them into battle.
That beloved leader of men from Susa?

What matters here is that Asia speaks through and by virtue of the European imagination, which is depicted as victorious over Asia, that hostile "other" world beyond the seas. To Asia are given the feelings of emptiness, loss, and disaster that seem thereafter to reward Oriental challenges to the West; and also, the lament that in some glorious past Asia fared better, was itself victorious over Europe.

In *The Bacchae*, perhaps the most Asiatic of all the Attic dramas, Dionysus is explicitly connected with his Asian origins and with the strangely threatening excesses of Oriental mysteries. Pentheus, king of Thebes, is destroyed by his mother, Agave, and her fellow bacchantes. Having defied Dionysus by not recognizing either his power or his divinity, Pentheus is thus horribly punished, and the play ends with a general recognition of the eccentric god's terrible power. Modern commentators on *The Bacchae* have not failed to note the play's extraordinary range of intellectual and aesthetic effects; but there has been no escaping the additional historical detail that Euripides "was surely affected by the new aspect that the Dionysiac cults must have assumed in the light of the foreign ecstatic religions of Bendis, Cybele, Sabazius, Adonis, and Isis, which were introduced from Asia Minor and the Levant and swept **/57/** through Piraeus and Athens during the frustrating and increasingly irrational years of the Peloponnesian War" [Geoffrey S. Kirk].

The two aspects of the Orient that set it off from the West in this pair of plays will remain essential motifs of European imaginative geography. A line is drawn between two continents.

Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant. Aeschylus represents Asia, makes her speak in the person of the aged Persian queen, Xerxes' mother. It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this articulation is the prerogative, not of a puppet master, but of a genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries. There is an analogy between Aeschylus's orchestra, which contains the Asiatic world as the playwright conceives it, and the learned envelope of Orientalist scholarship, which also will hold in the vast, amorphous Asiatic sprawl for sometimes sympathetic but always dominating scrutiny. Secondly, there is the motif of the Orient as insinuating danger. Rationality is undermined by Eastern excesses, those mysteriously attractive opposites to what seem to be normal values. The difference separating East from West is symbolized by the sternness with which, at first, Pentheus rejects the hysterical bacchantes. When later he himself becomes a bacchant, he is destroyed not so much for having given in to Dionysus as for having incorrectly assessed Dionysus's menace in the first place. The lesson that Euripides intends is dramatized by the presence in the play of Cadmus and Tiresias, knowledgeable older men who realize that "sovereignty" alone does not rule men; there is such a thing as judgment, they say, which means sizing up correctly the force of alien powers and expertly coming to terms with them. Hereafter Oriental mysteries will be taken seriously, not least because they challenge the rational Western mind to new exercises of its enduring ambition and power.

But one big division, as between West and Orient, leads to other smaller ones, especially as the normal enterprises of civilization provoke such outgoing activities as travel, conquest, new experiences. In classical Greece and Rome geographers, historians, public figures like Caesar, orators, and poets added to the fund of taxonomic lore separating races, regions, nations, and minds from each other; much of that was self-serving, and existed to prove that Romans and Greeks were superior to other kinds of people. But concern with the Orient had its own tradition of classification and hierarchy. From at least the second century B.C. on, it was lost on no traveler **/58/** or eastward-looking and ambitious Western potentate that Herodotus – historian, traveler, inexhaustibly curious chronicler – and Alexander – king warrior, scientific conqueror – had been in the Orient before. The Orient was therefore subdivided into realm previously known, visited, conquered, by Herodotus and Alexander as well as their epigones. and those realms not previously known, visited, conquered. Christianity completed the setting up of main intra-Oriental spheres: there was a Near Orient and a Far Orient, a familiar Orient, which Rene Grousset calls "l'empire du Levant", and a novel Orient. The Orient therefore alternated in the mind's geography between being an Old World to which one returned, as to Eden or Paradise, there to set up a new version of the old, and being a wholly new place to which one came as Columbus came to America, in order to set up a New World (although, ironically, Columbus himself thought that he discovered a new part of the Old World). Certainly neither of these Orients was purely one thing or the other: it is their vacillations, their tempting suggestiveness, their capacity for entertaining and confusing the mind. that are interesting.

Consider how the Orient, and in particular the Near Orient, became known in the West as its great complementary opposite since antiquity. There were the Bible and the rise of Christianity; there were travelers like Marco Polo who charted the trade routes and patterned a regulated system of commercial exchange, and after him Lodovico di Varthema and Pietro della Valle; there were fabulists like Mandeville; there were the redoubtable conquering Eastern movements, principally Islam, of course; there were the militant pilgrims, chiefly the Crusaders. Altogether an internally structured archive is built up from the literature that belongs to these experiences. Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations: the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West. What gives the immense number of encounters some unity, however, is the vacillation I was speaking about earlier. Something patently foreign and distant acquires, for one reason or another, a status more rather than less familiar. One tends to stop judging things either as completely novel or as completely well known; a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. **/59/** In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things. If the mind must suddenly deal with what it takes to be a radically new form of life – as Islam appeared to Europe in the early Middle Ages – the response on the whole is conservative and defensive. Islam is judged to be a fraudulent new version of some previous experience, in this case Christianity. The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and in the end the mind reduces the pressure upon it by accommodating things to itself as either "original" or "repetitious." Islam thereafter is "handled": its novelty and its suggestiveness are brought under control so that relatively nuanced discriminations are now made that would have been impossible had the raw novelty of Islam been left unattended. The Orient at large, therefore, vacillates between the West's contempt for what is familiar and its shivers of delight in – or fear of – novelty.

Yet where Islam was concerned, European fear, if not always respect, was in order. After Mohammed's death in 632, the military and later the cultural and religious hegemony of Islam grew enormously. First Persia, Syria, and Egypt, then Turkey, then North Africa fell to the Muslim armies; in the eighth and ninth centuries Spain, Sicily, and parts of France were conquered. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Islam ruled as far east as India, Indonesia, and China. And to this extraordinary assault Europe could respond with very little except fear and a kind of awe. Christian authors witnessing the Islamic conquests had scant interest in the learning, high culture, and frequent magnificence of the Muslims, who were, as Gibbon said, "coeval with the darkest and most slothful period of European annals." (But with some satisfaction he added, "since the sum of science has risen in the West, it should seem that the Oriental studies have languished and declined"). What Christians typically felt about the Eastern armies was that they had "all the appearance of a swarm of bees, but with a heavy hand . . . they devastated everything": so wrote Erchembert, a cleric in Monte Cassino in the eleventh century.

Not for nothing did Islam come to symbolize terror, devastation, the demonic hordes of hated barbarians. For Europe, Islam was a lasting trauma. Until the end of the seventeenth century the "Ottoman peril" lurked alongside Europe to represent for the whole of Christian civilization a constant danger, and in time European civilization incorporated that peril and its lore, its great events, **/60/** figures, virtues, and vices, as something woven into the fabric of life. In Renaissance England alone, as Samuel Chew recounts in his classic study *The Crescent and the Rose*, "a man of average education and intelligence" had at his fingertips, and could watch on the London stage, a relatively large number of detailed events in the history of Ottoman Islam and its encroachments upon Christian Europe. The point is that what remained current about Islam was some necessarily diminished version of those great dangerous forces that it symbolized for Europe. Like Walter Scott's Saracens, the European representation of the Muslim, Ottoman, or Arab was always a way of controlling the redoubtable Orient, and to a certain extent the same is true of the methods of contemporary learned Orientalists, whose subject is not so much the East itself as the East made known, and therefore less fearsome, to the Western reading public.

There is nothing especially controversial or reprehensible about such domestications of the exotic; they take place between all cultures, certainly, and between all men. My point, however, is to emphasize the truth that the Orientalist, as much as anyone in the European West who thought about or experienced the Orient, performed this kind of mental operation. But what is more important still is the limited vocabulary and imagery that impose themselves as a consequence. The reception of Islam in the West is a perfect case in point, and has been admirably studied by Norman Daniel. One constraint acting upon Christian thinkers who tried to understand Islam was an analogical one; since Christ is the basis of Christian faith, it was assumed – quite incorrectly – that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity. Hence the polemic name "Mohammedanism" given to Islam, and the automatic epithet "imposter" applied to Mohammed. Out of such and any other misconceptions "there formed a circle which was never broken by imaginative exteriorisation ... The Christian concept of Islam was integral and self-sufficient" [Norman Daniel]. Islam became an image – the word is Daniel's but it seems to me to have remarkable implications for Orientalism in general – whose function was not so much to represent Islam in itself as to represent it for the medieval Christian.

> The invariable tendency to neglect what the Qur'an meant, or what Muslims thought it meant, or what Muslims thought or did in any given circumstances, necessarily implies that Qur'anic and other Islamic doctrine was presented in a form that would con-**/61/**vince Christians; and more and more extravagant forms would stand a chance of acceptance as the distance of the writers and public from the Islamic border increased. It was with very great reluctance that what Muslims said Muslims believed was accepted as what they did believe. There was a Christian picture in which the details (even under the pressure of facts) were abandoned as little as possible, and in which the general outline was never abandoned. There were shades of difference, but only with a common framework. All the corrections that were made in the interests of an increasing accuracy were only a defence of what had

> newly been realised to be vulnerable, a shoring up of a weakened structure. Christian opinion was an erection which could not be demolished, even to be rebuilt. [Norman Daniel]

This rigorous Christian picture of Islam was intensified in innumerable ways, including-during the Middle Ages and early Renaissance – a large variety of poetry, learned controversy, and popular superstition. By this time the Near Orient had been all but incorporated in the common world-picture of Latin Christianity – as in the *Chanson de Roland* the worship of Saracens is portrayed as embracing Mahomet *and* Apollo. By the middle of the fifteenth century, as R W. Southern has brilliantly shown, it became apparent to serious European thinkers "that something would have to be done about Islam," which had turned the situation around somewhat by itself arriving militarily in Eastern Europe. Southern recounts a dramatic episode between 1450 and 1460 when four learned men, John of Segovia, Nicholas of Cusa, Jean Germain, and Aeneas Silvius (Pius II), attempted to deal with Islam through *contraferentia*, or "conference." The idea was John of Segovia's: it was to have been a staged conference with Islam in which Christians attempted the wholesale conversion of Muslims. "He saw the conference as an instrument with a political as well as a strictly religious function, and in words which will strike a chord in modern breasts he exclaimed that even if it were to last ten years it would be less expensive and less damaging than war." There was no agreement between the four men, but the episode is crucial for having been a fairly sophisticated attempt – part of a general European attempt from Bede to Luther – to put a representative Orient in front of Europe, to stage the Orient and Europe together in some coherent way, the idea being for Christians to make it clear to Muslims that Islam was just a misguided version of Christianity. Southern's conclusion follows: **/62/**

> Most conspicuous to us is the inability of any of these systems of thought [European Christian] to provide a fully satisfying explanation of the phenomenon they had set out to explain [Islam] – still less to influence the course of practical events in a decisive way. At a practical level, events never turned out either so well or so ill as the most intelligent observers predicted; and it is perhaps worth noticing that they never turned out better than when the best judges confidently expected a happy ending. Was there any progress [in Christian knowledge of Islam]? I must express my conviction that there was. Even if the solution of the problem remained obstinately hidden from sight, the statement of the problem became more complex, more rational, and more related to experience . . . . The scholars who labored at the problem of Islam in the Middle Ages failed to find the solution they sought and desired; but they developed habits of mind and powers of comprehension which, in other men and in other fields, may yet deserve success.

The best part of Southern's analysis, here and elsewhere in his brief history of Western views of Islam, is his demonstration that it is finally Western ignorance which becomes more refined and complex, not some body of positive Western knowledge which increases in size and accuracy. For fictions have their own logic and their own dialectic of growth or decline. Onto the character of Mohammed in the Middle Ages was heaped a bundle of attributes that corresponded to the

"character of the [twelfth-century] prophets of the 'Free Spirit' who did actually arise in Europe, and claim credence and collect followers." Similarly, since Mohammed was viewed as the disseminator of a false Revelation, he became as well the epitome of lechery, debauchery, sodomy, and a whole battery of assorted treacheries, all of which derived "logically" from his doctrinal impostures. Thus the Orient acquired representatives, so to speak, and representations, each one more concrete, more internally congruent with some Western exigency, than the ones that preceded it. It is as if, having once settled on the Orient as a locale suitable for incarnating the infinite in a finite shape, Europe could not stop the practice; the Orient and the Oriental, Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, or Whatever, become repetitious pseudoincarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West) they were supposed to have been imitating. Only the source of these rather narcissistic Western ideas about the Orient changed in time, not their character. Thus we will find it commonly believed in the **/63/** twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Arabia was "on the fringe of the Christian world, a natural asylum for heretical outlaws, " and that Mohammed was a cunning apostate, whereas in the twentieth century an Orientalist scholar, an erudite specialist, will be the one to point out how Islam is really no more than second-order Arian heresy.

Our initial description of Orientalism as a learned field now acquires a new concreteness. A field is often an enclosed space. The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. An Orientalist is but the particular specialist in knowledge for which Europe at large is responsible, in the way that an audience is historically and culturally responsible for (and responsive to) dramas technically put together by the dramatist. In the depths of this Oriental stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire whose individual items evoke a fabulously rich world: the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Eden, Troy, Sodom and Gomorrah, Astarte, Isis and Osiris, Sheba, Babylon, the Genii, the Magi, Nineveh, Prester John, Mahomet, and dozens more; settings, in some cases names only, half-imagined, half-known; monsters, devils, heroes; terrors, pleasures, desires. The European imagination was nourished extensively from this repertoire: between the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century such major authors as Ariosto, Milton, Marlowe, Tasso, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and the authors of the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Poema del Cid* drew on the Orient's riches for their productions, in ways that sharpened the outlines of imagery, ideas, and figures populating it. In addition, a great deal of what was considered learned Orientalist scholarship in Europe pressed ideological myths into service, even as knowledge seemed genuinely to be advancing.

[...]

One ought again to remember that all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free-floating objects into units of knowledge. The problem is not that conversion takes place. It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be. To the Westerner, however, the Oriental was always *like* some aspect of the West; to some of the German Romantics, for example, Indian religion was essentially an Oriental version of Germano-Christian pantheism. Yet the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else: he does this for himself, for the sake of his culture, in some cases for what he believes is the sake of the Oriental. This process of conversion is a disciplined one: it is taught, it has its own societies. periodicals, traditions, vocabulary, rhetoric, all in basic ways connected to and **/68/** supplied by the prevailing cultural and political norms of the West. And, as I shall demonstrate, it tends to become more rather than less total in what it tries to do, so much so that as one surveys Orientalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the overriding impression is of Orientalism's insensitive schematization of the entire Orient.

How early this schematization began is clear from the examples I have given of Western representations of the Orient in classical Greece. How strongly articulated were later representations building on the earlier ones, how inordinately careful their schematization, how dramatically effective their placing in Western imaginative geography, can be illustrated if we turn now to Dante's *Inferno*. Dante's achievement in *The Divine Comedy* was to have seamlessly combined the realistic portrayal of mundane reality with a universal and eternal system of Christian values. What Dante the pilgrim sees as he walks through the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso is a unique vision of judgment. Paolo and Francesca, for instance, are seen as eternally confined to hell for their sins, yet they are seen as enacting, indeed living, the very characters and actions that put them where they will be for eternity. Thus each of the figures in Dante's vision not only represents himself but is also a typical representation of his character and the fate meted out to him.

"Maometto" – Mohammed – turns up in canto 28 of the *Inferno*. He is located in the eighth of the nine circles of Hell, in the ninth of the ten Bolgias of Malebolge, a circle of gloomy ditches surrounding Satan's stronghold in Hell. Thus before Dante reaches Mohammed, he passes through circles containing people whose sins are of a lesser order: the lustful, the avaricious, the gluttonous, the heretics, the wrathful, the suicidal, the blasphemous. After Mohammed there are only the falsifiers and the treacherous (who include Judas, Brutus, and Cassius) before one arrives at the very bottom of Hell, which is where Satan himself is to be found. Mohammed thus belongs to a rigid hierarchy of evils, in the category of what Dante calls *seminator di scandalo e di scisma*. Mohammed's punishment, which is also his eternal fate, is a peculiarly disgusting one: he is endlessly being cleft in two from his chin to his anus like, Dante says, a cask whose staves

are ripped apart. Dante's verse at this point spares the reader none of the eschatological [sic] detail that so vivid a punishment entails: Mohammed's entrails and his excrement are described with unflinching accuracy. Mohammed explains his **/69/** punishment to Dante, pointing as well to Ali, who precedes him in the line of sinners whom the attendant devil is splitting in two; he also asks Dante to warn one Fra Dolcino, a renegade priest whose sect advocated community of women and goods and who was accused of having a mistress, of what will be in store for him. It will not have been lost on the reader that Dante saw a parallel between Dolcino's and Mohammed's revolting sensuality, and also between their pretensions to theological eminence.

But this is not all that Dante has to say about Islam. Earlier in the *Inferno*, a small group of Muslims turns up. Avicenna, Averroës, and Saladin are among those virtuous heathens who, along with Hector, Aeneas, Abraham, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, are confined to the first circle of the *Inferno*, there to suffer a minimal (and even honorable) punishment for not having had the benefit of Christian revelation. Dante, of course, admires their great virtues and accomplishments, but because they were not Christians he must condemn them, however lightly, to Hell. Eternity is a great leveler of distinctions, it is true, but the special anachronisms and anomalies of putting pre-Christian luminaries in the same category of "heathen" damnation with post-Christian Muslims does not trouble Dante. Even though the Koran specifies Jesus as a prophet, Dante chooses to consider the great Muslim philosophers and king as having been fundamentally ignorant of Christianity. That they can also inhabit the same distinguished level as the heroes and sages of classical antiquity is an ahistorical vision similar to Raphael's in his fresco *The School of Athens*, in which Averroës rubs elbows on the academy floor with Socrates and Plato (similar to Fenelon's *Dialogues des morts* [1700-1718], where a discussion takes place between Socrates and Confucius).

The discriminations and refinements of Dante's poetic grasp of Islam are an instance of the schematic, almost cosmological inevitability with which Islam and its designated representatives are creatures of Western geographical, historical, and above all, moral apprehension. Empirical data about the Orient or about any of its parts count for very little; what matters and is decisive is what I have been calling the Orientalist vision, a vision by no means confined to the professional scholar, but rather the common possession of all who have thought about the Orient in the West. Dante's powers as a poet intensify, make more rather than less representative, these perspectives on the Orient. Mohammed, Saladin, **/70/** Averroës, and Avicenna are fixed in a visionary cosmology – fixed, laid out, boxed in, imprisoned, without much regard for anything except their "function" and the patterns they realize on the stage on which they appear.

[...]

[T]he Orientalist attitude [...] shares with magic and with mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are because they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter. The European encounter with the Orient, and specifically with Islam,

strengthened this system of representing the Orient and, as has been suggested by Henri Pirenne, turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the Middle Ages on was founded. The decline of the Roman Empire as a result of the barbarian invasions had the paradoxical effect of incorporating barbarian ways into Roman and Mediterranean culture, Romania; whereas, Pirenne argues, the consequence of the **/71/** Islamic invasions beginning in the seventh century was to move the center of European culture away from the Mediterranean, which was then an Arab province, and towards the North. "Germanism began to play its part in history. Hitherto the Roman tradition had been uninterrupted. Now an original Romano--Germanic civilization was about to develop." Europe was shut in on itself: the Orient, when it was not merely a place in which one traded, was culturally, intellectually, spiritually outside Europe and European civilization, which, in Pirenne's words, became "one great Christian community, coterminous with the ecclesia... The Occident was now living its own life." In Dante's poem, in the work of Peter the Venerable and other Cluniac Orientalists, in the writings of the Christian polemicists against Islam from Guibert of Nogent and Bede to Roger Bacon, William of Tripoli, Burchard of Mount Syon, and Luther, in the *Poema del Cid*, in the *Chanson de Roland*, and in Shakespeare's *Othello* (that "abuser of the world") , the Orient and Islam are always represented as outsiders having a special role to play inside Europe.

[...]

from ‘Orientalist Structures and Restructures’: section IV ‘Pilgrims and Pilgrimages, British and French’ (pp. 166-197).

Every European traveler or resident in the Orient has had to protect himself from its unsettling influences. Someone like Lane ultimately rescheduled and resituated the Orient when he came to write about it. The eccentricities of Oriental life, with its odd calendars, its exotic spatial con/**167**/figurations, its hopelessly strange languages, its seemingly perverse morality, were reduced considerably when they appeared as a series of detailed items presented in a normative European prose style. It is correct to say that in Orientalizing the Orient, Lane not only defined but edited it; he excised from it what, in addition to his own human sympathies, might have ruffled the European sensibility. In most cases, the Orient seemed to have offended sexual propriety; everything about the Orient – or at least Lane's Orient-in-Egypt – exuded dangerous sex, threatened hygiene and domestic seemliness with an excessive "freedom of intercourse," as Lane put it more irrepressibly than usual.

But there were other sorts of threats than sex. All of them wore away the European discreteness and rationality of time, space, and personal identity. In the Orient one suddenly confronted unimaginable antiquity, inhuman beauty, boundless distance. These could be put to use more innocently, as it were, if they were thought and written about, not directly experienced. In Byron's "Giaour," in the *Westöstlicher Diwan*, in Hugo's *Orientales*, the Orient is a form of release. a place of original opportunity, whose keynote was struck in Goethe's "Hegire"-

> Nord und West [und] Süd zersplittern,
> Throne bersten, Reiche zittern,
> Flüchte du, in reinen Osten
> Patriarchenluft zu kosten!
> (North, West, and South disintegrate,
> Thrones burst, empires tremble.
> Fly away, and in the pure East
> Taste the Patriarchs' air.)

One always returned to the Orient – "Dort, im Reinen und in Rechten/Will ich menschlichen Geschlechten/In des Ursprungs Tiefe dringen" (There in purity and righteousness will I go back to the profound origins of the human race) – seeing it as completion and confirmation of everything one had imagined:

> Gottes ist der Orient!
> Gotts ist der Occident!
> Nord- und südliches Gelände
> Ruht im Frieden seiner Hände.

(God is the Orient!
God is the Occident!
Northern and southern lands
Repose in the peace of His hands.)

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The Orient, with its poetry, its atmosphere, its possibilities, was represented by poets like Hafiz – *unbegrenzt*, boundless, Goethe said, older and younger than we Europeans. And for Hugo, in "Cri de guerre du mufti" and "La Douleur du pacha", the fierceness and the inordinate melancholy of Orientals was mediated, not by actual fear for life or disoriented lostness, but by Volney and George Sale, whose learned work translated barbarous splendor into usable information for the sublimely talented poet.

What Orientalists like Lane, Sacy, Renan, Volney, Jones (not to mention the *Description de I'Egypte*), and other pioneers made available, the literary crowd exploited. We must recall now our earlier discussion of the three types of work dealing with the Orient and based upon actual residence there. The rigorous exigencies of knowledge purged from Orientalist writing an authorial sensibility: hence Lane's self-excision, and hence also the first kind of work we enumerated. As for types two and three, the self is there prominently, subservient to a voice whose job it is to dispense real knowledge (type two), or dominating and mediating everything we are told about the Orient (type three). Yet from one end of the nineteenth century to the other – after Napoleon, that is – the Orient was a place of pilgrimage, and every major work belonging to a genuine if not always to an academic Orientalism took its form, style, and intention from the idea of pilgrimage there. In this idea as in so many of the other forms of Orientalist writing we have been discussing, the Romantic idea of restorative reconstruction (natural supernaturalism) is the principal source. Every pilgrim sees things his own way, but there are limits to what a pilgrimage can be for, to what shape and form it can take, to what truths it reveals. All pilgrimages to the Orient passed through, or had to pass through, the Biblical lands; most of them in fact were attempts either to relive or to liberate from the large, incredibly fecund Orient some portion of Judeo-Christian/Greco-Roman actuality. For these pilgrims the Orientalized Orient, the Orient of Orientalist scholars, was a gauntlet to be run, just as the Bible, the Crusades, Islam, Napoleon, and Alexander were redoubtable predecessors to be reckoned with. Not only does a learned Orient inhibit the pilgrim's musings and private fantasies; its very antecedence places barriers between the contemporary traveler and his writing, unless, as was the case with Nerval and Flaubert in their use of Lane, Orientalist work is severed from the library and caught in the aesthetic project. Another inhibition is that Orientalist /**169/** writing is too circumscribed by the official requirements of Orientalist learning. A pilgrim like Chateaubriand claimed insolently that he undertook his voyages exclusively for his own sake: "j'allais chercher des images: voilà tout." Flaubert, Vigny, Nerval, Kinglake, Disraeli, Burton, all undertook their pilgrimages in order to dispel the mustiness of the pre-existing Orientalist archive. Their writing was to be a fresh new repository of Oriental experience but, as we shall see, even this project usually (but not always)

resolved itself into the reductionism of the Orientalistic. The reasons are complex, and they have very much to do with the nature of the pilgrim, his mode of writing, and the intentional form of his work.

What was the Orient for the individual traveler in the nineteenth century? Consider first the differences between an English speaker and a French speaker. For the former the Orient was India, of course, an actual British possession; to pass through the Near Orient was therefore to pass en route to a major colony. Already, then, the room available for imaginative play was limited by the realities of administration, territorial legality, and executive power. Scott, Kinglake, Disraeli, Warburton, Burton, and even George Eliot (in whose *Daniel Deronda* the Orient has plans made for it) are writers, like Lane himself and Jones before him, for whom the Orient was defined by material possession, by a material imagination, as it were. England had defeated Napoleon, evicted France : what the English mind surveyed was an imperial domain which by the 1880s had become an unbroken patch of British-held territory, from the Mediterranean to India. To write about Egypt, Syria, or Turkey, as much as traveling in them, was a matter of touring the realm of political will, political management, political definition. The territorial imperative was extremely compelling, even for so unrestrained a writer as Disraeli, whose Tancred is not merely an Oriental lark but an exercise in the astute political management of actual forces on actual territories.

In contrast, the French pilgrim was imbued with a sense of acute loss in the Orient. He came there to a place in which France, unlike Britain, had no sovereign presence. The Mediterranean echoed with the sounds of French defeats, from the Crusades to Napoleon. What was to become known as "la mission civilisatrice" began in the nineteenth century as a political second-best to Britain's presence. Consequently French pilgrims from Volney on planned and projected for, imagined, ruminated about places that were principally *in their minds*; they constructed schemes for a typically /**170/** French, perhaps even a European. concert in the Orient, which of course they supposed would be orchestrated by them. Theirs was the Orient of memories, suggestive ruins, forgotten secrets, hidden correspondences, and an almost virtuosic style of being, an Orient whose highest literary forms would be found in Nerval and Flaubert, both of whose work was solidly fixed in an imaginative, unrealizable (except aesthetically) dimension.

[...]

As an index of the difference between British realities and French fantasies, it is worthwhile recalling the words in Cairo of the painter Ludovic Lepic, who commented sadly in 1884 (two years after the British occupation had begun) : "L'Orient est mort au Caire." Only Renan, ever the realistic racist, condoned the British suppression of Arabi's nationalist rebellion, which, out of his greater wisdom, he said was a "disgrace to civilization."

Unlike Volney and Napoleon, the nineteenth-century French pilgrims did not seek a scientific so much as an exotic yet especially attractive reality. This is obviously true of the literary

pilgrims, beginning with Chateaubriand, who found in the Orient a locale sympathetic to their private myths, obsessions, and requirements. Here we notice how all the pilgrims, but especially the French ones, exploit the Orient in their work so as in some urgent way to justify their existential vocation. Only when there is some additional cognitive purpose in writing about the Orient does the outpouring of self seem more under control. Lamartine, for instance, writes about himself, and also about France as a power in the Orient; that second enterprise mutes and finally controls imperatives heaped upon his style by his soul, his memory, and his imagination. No pilgrim, French or English, could so ruthlessly dominate his self or his subject as Lane did. Even Burton and T. E. Lawrence, of **/171/** whom the former fashioned a deliberately Muslim pilgrimage and the latter what he called a reverse pilgrimage away from Mecca, delivered masses of historical, political, and social Orientalism that were never as free of their egos as Lane's were of his. This is why Burton, Lawrence, and Charles Doughty occupy a middle position between Lane and Chateaubriand.

Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem, et de Jérusalem à Paris* (1810-1811) records the details of a journey undertaken in 1805-1806, after he had traveled in North America. Its many hundreds of pages bear witness to its author's admission that "je parle éternellement de moi," so much so that Stendhal, no self-abnegating writer himself, could find Chateaubriand's failure as a knowledgeable traveler to be the result of his "stinking egotism." He brought a very heavy load of personal objectives and suppositions to the Orient, unloaded them there, and proceeded thereafter to push people, places, and ideas around in the Orient as if nothing could resist his imperious imagination. Chateaubriand came to the Orient as a constructed figure, not as a true self. For him Bonaparte was the last Crusader; he in turn was "the last Frenchman who left his country to travel in the Holy Land with the ideas, the goals, and the sentiments of a pilgrim of former times." But there were other reasons. Symmetry: having been to the New World and seen its monuments of nature, he needed to complete his circle of studies by visiting the Orient and its monuments of knowledge: as he had studied Roman and Celtic antiquity, all that was left for him was the ruins of Athens, Memphis, and Carthage. Self-completion: he needed to replenish his stock of images. Continuation of the importance of the religious spirit: "religion is a kind of universal language understood by all men," and where better to observe it than there in the Orient, even in lands where a comparatively low religion like Islam held sway, Above all, the need to see things, not as they were, but as Chateaubriand supposed they were: the Koran was "le livre de Mahomet"; it contained "ni principe de civilisation, ni précepte qui puisse élever le caractère." "This book," he continued, more or less freely inventing as he went along, "preaches neither hatred of tyranny nor love of liberty. "

To so preciously constituted a figure as Chateaubriand, the Orient was a decrepit canvas awaiting his restorative efforts. The Oriental Arab was "civilized man fallen again into a savage state": no wonder, then, that as he watched Arabs trying to speak French, Chateaubriand felt like Robinson Crusoe thrilled by hearing his /**172/** parrot speak for the first time. True, there were places like Bethlehem (whose etymological meaning Chateaubriand got completely wrong) in

which one found again some semblance of real – that is, European – civilization, but those were few and far between. Everywhere, one encountered Orientals, Arabs whose civilization, religion, and manners were so low, barbaric, and antithetical as to merit reconquest. The Crusades, he argued, were not aggression; they were a just Christian counterpart to Omar's arrival in Europe. Besides, he added, even if the Crusades in their modem or original form were aggression, the issue they raised transcended such questions of ordinary mortality:

> The Crusades were not only about the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre, but more about knowing which would win on the earth, a cult that was civilization's enemy, systematically favorable to ignorance [this was Islam, of course], to despotism, to slavery, or a cull that had caused to reawaken in modern people the genius of a sage antiquity, and had abolished base servitude? [Chateaubriand]

This is the first significant mention of an idea that will acquire an almost unbearable, next to mindless authority in European writing: the theme of Europe teaching the Orient the meaning of liberty, which is an idea that Chateaubriand and everyone after him believed that Orientals, and especially Muslims, knew nothing about:

> Of liberty, they know nothing; of propriety, they have none: force is their God. When they go for long periods without seeing conquerors who do heavenly justice, they have the air of soldiers without a leader, citizens without legislators, and a family without a father. [Chateaubriand]

Already in 1810 we have a European talking like Cromer in 1910, arguing that Orientals require conquest, and finding it no paradox that a Western conquest of the Orient was not conquest after all, but liberty. Chateaubriand puts the whole idea in the Romantic redemptive terms of a Christian mission to revive a dead world, to quicken in it a sense of its own potential, one which only a European can discern underneath a lifeless and degenerate surface. For the traveler this means that he must use the Old Testament and the Gospels as his guide in Palestine, only in this way can the apparent degeneration of the modern Orient be gotten beyond. Yet Chateaubriand senses no irony in the fact that his tour and his vision will reveal nothing to him about the modern Oriental and *his* destiny.

What matters about the Orient is what it lets happen to Chateaubriand, what it allows his spirit to do, what it permits him to reveal about himself, his ideas, his expectations. The liberty that so concerns him is no more than his own release from the Orient's hostile wastes. Where his release allows him to go is directly back into the realm of imagination and imaginative interpretation. Description of the Orient is obliterated by the designs and patterns foisted upon it by the imperial ego, which makes no secret of its powers. If in Lane's prose we watch the ego disappear so that the Orient may appear in all its realistic detail, in Chateaubriand the ego dissolves itself in the

contemplation of wonders it creates, and then is reborn, stronger than ever, more able to savor its powers and enjoy its interpretations:

> When one travels in Judea, al first a great ennui grips the heart; but when, passing from one solitary place to another, space stretches out without limits before you, slowly the ennui dissipates, and one feels a secret terror, which, far from depressing the soul, gives it courage and elevates one's native genius. Extraordinary things are disclosed from all parts of an earth worked over by miracles: the burning sun, the impetuous eagle, the sterile fig tree; all of poetry, all the scenes from Scripture are present there. Every name encloses a mystery; every grotto declares the future; every summit retains within it the accents of a prophet. God Himself has spoken from these shores: the arid torrents, the riven rocks, the open tombs attest to the prodigy; the desert still seems struck dumb with. terror, and one would say that it has still not been able to break the silence since it heard the voice of the eternal. [Chateaubriand]

The process of thought in this passage is revealing. An experience of Pascalian terror does not merely reduce one's self-confidence, it miraculously stimulates it. The barren landscape stands forth like an illuminated text presenting itself to the scrutiny of a very strong, refortified ego. Chateaubriand has transcended the abject, if frightening, reality of the contemporary Orient so that he may stand in an original and creative relationship to it. By the end of the passage he is no longer a modern man but a visionary seer more or less contemporary with God; if the Judean desert has been silent since God spoke there, it is Chateaubriand who can hear the silence, understand its meaning, and-to his reader-make the desert speak again.

The great gifts of sympathetic intuition which had enabled Chateaubriand to represent and interpret North American mysteries in *René* and *Atala*, as well as Christianity in *Le Génie du Christianisme*, are aroused to even greater feats of interpretation during the *Itinéraire*. No longer is the author dealing with natural primitivity and romantic sentiment: here he is dealing with eternal creativity and divine originality themselves, for it is in the Biblical Orient that they were first deposited, and they have remained there in unmediated and latent form. Of course, they cannot be simply grasped; they must be aspired to and achieved by Chateaubriand. And it is this ambitious purpose that the *Itinéraire* is made to serve, just as in the text Chateaubriand's ego must be reconstructed radically enough to get the job done. Unlike Lane, Chateaubriand attempts to consume the Orient. He not only appropriates it, he represents and speaks for it, not in history but beyond history, in the timeless dimension of a completely healed world, where men and lands, God and men, are as one. In Jerusalem, therefore, at the center of his vision and at the ultimate end of his pilgrimage, he grants himself a sort of total reconciliation with the Orient, the Orient as Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Greek, Persian, Roman, and finally French. He is moved by the plight of the Jews, but he judges that they too serve to illuminate his general vision, and as a

further benefit, they give the necessary poignance to his Christian vindictiveness. God, he says, has chosen a new people, and it is not the Jews.

He makes some other concessions to terrestrial reality, however. If Jerusalem is booked into his itinerary as its final extraterrestrial goal, Egypt provides him with material for a political excursus. His ideas about Egypt supplement his pilgrimage nicely. The magnificent Nile Delta moves him to assert that

> I found only the memories of my glorious country worthy of those magnificent plains; I saw the remains of monuments of a new civilization, brought to the banks of the Nile by the genius of France. [Chateaubriand]

But these ideas are put in a nostalgic mode because in Egypt Chateaubriand believes he can equate the absence of France with the absence of a free government ruling a happy people. Besides, after Jerusalem, Egypt appears to be only a kind of spiritual anticlimax. After political commentary on its sorry state, Chateaubriand asks himself the routine question about "difference" as a result of /**175/** historical development: how can this degenerate stupid mob of "Musulmans" have come to inhabit the same land whose vastly different owners so impressed Herodotus and Diodorus? This is a fitting valedictory to Egypt, which he leaves for Tunis, Carthaginian ruins, and finally, home. Yet he does one last thing of note in Egypt: unable to do more than look at the Pyramids from a distance, he takes the trouble to send an emissary there, to have him inscribe his (Chateaubriand's) name on the stone, adding for our benefit, "one has to fulfill all the little obligations of a pious traveler." We would not ordinarily give much more than amused attention to this charming bit of touristic banality. As a preparation, however, for the very last page of the *Itinéraire*, it appears more important than at first glance. Reflecting on his twenty-year project to study "tous les hasards et tous les chagrins" as an exile. Chateaubriand notes elegiacally how every one of his books has been in fact a kind of prolongation of his existence. A man with neither a home nor the possibility of acquiring one, he finds himself now well past his youth. If heaven accords him eternal rest, he says, he promises to dedicate himself in silence to erecting a "monument à ma patrie." What he is left with on earth, however, is his writing, which, if his name will live, has been enough, and if it will not live, has been too much.

These closing lines send us back to Chateaubriand's interest in getting his name inscribed on the Pyramids. We will have understood that his egoistic Oriental memoirs supply us with a constantly demonstrated, an indefatigably performed experience of self. Writing was an act of life for Chateaubriand, for whom nothing, not even a distant piece of stone, must remain scriptively untouched by him if he was to stay alive. If the order of Lane's narrative was to be violated by scientific authority and enormous detail, then Chateaubriand's was to be transformed into the asserted will of an egoistic, highly volatile individual. Whereas Lane would sacrifice his ego to the Orientalist canon, Chateaubriand would make everything he said about the Orient wholly dependent on his ego. Yet neither writer could conceive of his posterity as continuing on fruitfully after him. Lane entered the impersonality of a technical discipline: his work would be

used, but not as a human document. Chateaubriand, on the other hand, saw that his writing. like the token inscription of his name on a Pyramid. would signify his self; if not, if he had not succeeded in prolonging his life by writing, it would be merely excessive, superfluous.

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Even if all travelers to the Orient after Chateaubriand and Lane have taken their work into account (in some cases, even to the extent of copying from them verbatim), their legacy embodies the fate of Oriental ism and the options to which it was limited. Either one wrote science like Lane or personal utterance like Chateaubriand. The problems with the former were its impersonal Western confidence that descriptions of general, collective phenomena were possible, and its tendency to make realities not so much out of the Orient as out of its own observations. The problem with personal utterance was that it inevitably retreated into a position equating the Orient with private fantasy, even if that fantasy was of a very high order indeed, aesthetically speaking. In both cases, of course, Orientalism enjoyed a powerful influence on how the Orient was described and characterized. But what that influence always prevented, even until today, was some sense of the Orient that was neither impossibly general nor imperturbably private. To look into Orientalism for a lively sense of an Oriental's human or even social reality – as a contemporary inhabitant of the modern world – is to look in vain.

The influence of the two options I have described, Lane's and Chateaubriand's, British and French, is a great deal of the reason for this omission. The growth of knowledge, particularly specialized knowledge, is a very slow process. Far from being merely additive or cumulative, the growth of knowledge is a process of selective accumulation, displacement, deletion, rearrangement, and insistence within what has been called a research consensus. The legitimacy of such knowledge as Orientalism was during the nineteenth century stemmed not from religious authority, as had been the case before the Enlightenment, but from what we can call the restorative citation of antecedent authority. Beginning with Sacy, the learned Orientalist's attitude was that of a scientist who surveyed a series of textual fragments, which he thereafter edited and arranged as a restorer of old sketches might put a series of them together for the cumulative picture they implicitly represent. Consequently, amongst themselves Orientalists treat each other's work in the same citationary way. Burton, for example, would deal with the *Arabian Nights* or with Egypt indirectly, *through* Lane's work, by citing his predecessor, challenging him even though he was granting him very great authority. Nerval's own voyage to the Orient was by way of Lamartine's, and the latter's by way of Chateaubriand. In short, as a form of growing knowledge Orientalism resorted mainly to **/177/** citations of predecessor scholars in the field for its nutriment. Even when new materials came his way, the Orientalist judged them by borrowing from predecessors (as scholars so often do) their perspectives, ideologies, and guiding theses. In a fairly strict way, then, Orientalists after Sacy and Lane rewrote Sacy and Lane; after Chateaubriand, pilgrims rewrote him. From these complex rewritings the actualities of the modem Orient were systematically excluded, especially when gifted pilgrims like Nerval and Flaubert preferred Lane's descriptions to what their eyes and minds showed them immediately.

In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these. Direct observation or circumstantial description of the Orient are the fictions presented by writing on the Orient, yet invariably these are totally secondary to systematic tasks of another sort. In Lamartine, Nerval, and Flaubert, the Orient is a re-presentation of canonical material guided by an aesthetic and executive will capable of producing interest in the reader. Yet in all three writers, Orientalism or some aspect of it is asserted, even though, as I said earlier, the narrative consciousness is given a very large role to play. What we shall see is that for all its eccentric individuality, this narrative consciousness will end up by being aware, like Bouvard and Pécuchet,[1] that pilgrimage is after all a form of copying.

When he began his trip to the Orient in 1833, Lamartine did so, he said, as something he had always dreamed about: "un voyage en Orient était comme un grand acte de ma vie intérieure." He is a bundle of predispositions, sympathies, biases: he hates the Romans and Carthage, and loves Jews, Egyptians, and Hindus, whose Dante he claims he will become. Armed with a formal verse "Adieu" to France, in which he lists everything that he plans to do in the Orient, he embarks for the East. At first everything he encounters either confirms his poetic predictions or realizes his propensity for analogy. Lady Hester Stanhope is the Circe of the desert; the Orient is the "patrie de mon imagination"; the Arabs are a primitive people; Biblical poetry is engraved on the land of Lebanon; the Orient testifies to the attractive largeness of Asia and to Greece's comparative smallness. Soon after he reaches Palestine, however, he becomes the incorrigible maker of an imaginary Orient. He **/178/** alleges that the plains of Canaan appear to best advantage in the works of Poussin and Lorrain. From being a "translation," as he called it earlier, his voyage is now turned into a prayer, which exercises his memory, soul, and heart more than it does his eyes, mind, or spirit.

This candid announcement completely unlooses Lamartine's analogic and reconstructive (and undisciplined) zeal. Christianity is a religion of imagination and recollection, and since Lamartine considers that he typifies the pious believer, he indulges himself accordingly. A catalogue of his tendentious "observations" would be interminable: a woman he sees reminds him of Haidée in *Don Juan*; the relationship between Jesus and Palestine is like that between Rousseau and Geneva; the actual river Jordan is less important than the "mysteries" it gives rise to in one's soul; Orientals, and Muslims in particular, are lazy, their politics are capricious, passionate, and futureless; another woman reminds him of a passage in *Atala*; neither Tasso nor Chateaubriand (whose antecedent travels seem often to harass Lamartine's otherwise heedless egoism) got the Holy Land right – and on and on. His pages on Arabic poetry, about which he discourses with supreme confidence, betray no discomfort at his total ignorance of the language. All that matters

[1] Flaubert's last, unfinished novel that satirizes the intellectual aspirations of two French *bourgeois*.

to him is that his travels in the Orient reveal to him how the Orient is "la terre des cultes, des prodiges," and that he is its appointed poet in the West. With no trace of self·irony he announces:

> This Arab land is the land of prodigies; everything sprouts there, and every credulous or fanatical man can become a prophet there in his turn.

He has become a prophet merely by the fact of residence in the Orient.

By the end of his narrative Lamartine has achieved the purpose of his pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, that beginning and end point of all time and space. He has internalized reality enough to want to retreat from it back into pure contemplation, solitude, philosophy, and poetry.

Rising above the merely geographical Orient, he is transformed into a latter-day Chateaubriand, surveying the East as if it were a personal (or at the very least a French) province ready to be disposed of by European powers. From being a traveler and pilgrim in real time and space, Lamartine has become a transpersonal ego **/179/** identifying itself in power and consciousness with the whole of Europe. What he sees before him is the Orient in the process of its inevitable future dismemberment, being taken over and consecrated by European suzerainty. Thus in Lamartine's climactic vision the Orient is reborn as European right-to-power over it:

> This sort of suzerainty thus defined, and consecrated' as a European right, will consist principally in the right to occupy one or another territory, as well as the coasts, in order to found there either free cities, or European colonies, or commercial ports of call....

Nor does Lamartine stop at this. He climbs still higher to the point where the Orient, what he has just seen and where he has just been, is reduced to “nations without territory, patrie, rights, laws or security ... waiting anxiously for the shelter" of European occupation.

In all the visions of the Orient fabricated by Orientalism there is no recapitulation, literally, as entire as this one. For Lamartine a pilgrimage to the Orient has involved not only the penetration of the Orient by an imperious consciousness but also the virtual elimination of that consciousness as a result of its accession to a kind of impersonal and continental control over the Orient. The Orient's actual identity is withered away into a set of consecutive fragments, Lamartine's recollective observations, which are later to be gathered up and brought forth as a restated Napoleonic dream of world hegemony. Whereas Lane's human identity disappeared into the scientific grid of his Egyptian classifications, Lamartine's consciousness transgresses its normal bounds completely. In so doing, it repeats Chateaubriand's journey and his visions only to move on beyond them, into the sphere of the Shelleyan and Napoleonic abstract, by which worlds and populations are moved about like so many cards on a table, What remains of the Orient in Lamartine's prose is not very substantial at all. Its geopolitical reality has been overlaid with his plans for it; the sites he has visited, the people he has met, the experiences he has had, are reduced to a few echoes in his pompous generalizations. The last traces of particularity have been rubbed out in the "résumé politique" with which the *Voyage en Orient* concludes.

Against the transcendent quasi-national egoism of Lamartine, we must place Nerval and Flaubert in contrast. Their Oriental works play a substantial role in their total oeuvre, a much greater one than

Lamartine's imperialist *Voyage* in his *oeuvre*. Yet both of them, /**180**/like Lamartine, came to the Orient prepared for it by voluminous reading in the classics, modem literature, and academic Orientalism; about this preparation Flaubert was much more candid than Nerval, who in *Les Filles du feu* says disingenuously that all he knew about the Orient was a half-forgotten memory from his school education. The evidence of his *Voyage en Orient* flatly contradicts this, although it shows a much less systematic and disciplined knowledge of Orientalia than Flaubert's. More important, however, is the fact that both writers (Nerval in 1842-1843 and Flaubert in1849-1850) had greater personal and aesthetic uses for their visits to the Orient than any other nineteenth-century travelers. It is not inconsequential that both were geniuses to begin with, and that both were thoroughly steeped in aspects of European culture that encouraged a sympathetic, if perverse, vision of the Orient. Nerval and Flaubert belonged to that community of thought and feeling described by Mario Praz in *The Romantic Agony*, a community for which the imagery of exotic places, the cultivation of sadomasochistic tastes (what Praz calls *algolagnia*) , a fascination with the macabre, with the notion of a Fatal Woman, with secrecy and occultism, all combined to enable literary work of the sort produced by Gautier (himself fascinated by the Orient), Swinburne, Baudelaire, and Huysmans. For Nerval and Flaubert, such female figures as Cleopatra, Salome, and Isis have a special significance; and it was by no means accidental that in their work on the Orient, as well as in their visits to it, they pre-eminently valorized and enhanced female types of this legendary, richly suggestive, and associative sort.

In addition to their general cultural attitudes, Nerval and Flaubert brought to the Orient a personal mythology whose concerns and even structure required the Orient. Both men were touched by the Oriental renaissance as Quinet and others had defined it: they sought the invigoration provided by the fabulously antique and the exotic. For each, however, the Oriental pilgrimage was a quest for something relatively personal: Flaubert seeking a "homeland," as Jean Bruneau has called it, in the locales of the origin of religions, visions, and classical antiquity; Nerval seeking – or rather following – the traces of his personal sentiments and dreams, like Sterne's Yorick before him. For both writers the Orient was a place therefore of *déjà vu*, and for both, with the artistic economy typical of all major aesthetic imaginations, it was a place often returned to after the actual voyage had been completed. For/**181**/ neither of them was the Orient exhausted by their uses of it, even if there is often a quality of disappointment, disenchantment, or demystification to be found in their Oriental writings.

The paramount importance of Nerval and Flaubert to a study such as this of the Orientalist mind in the nineteenth century is that they produced work that is connected to and depends upon the kind of Orientalism we have so far discussed, yet remains independent from it. First there is the matter of their work's scope. Nerval produced his *Voyage en Orient* as a collection of travel notes, sketches, stories, and fragments; his preoccupation with the Orient is to be found as well in

Les Chimères, in his letters, in some of his fiction and other prose writings. Flaubert's writing both before and after his visit is soaked in the Orient. The Orient appears in the *Carnets de Voyage* and in the first version of *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (and in the two later versions), as well as in *Herodias*, *Salammbô*, and the numerous reading notes, scenarios, and unfinished stories still available to us, which have been very intelligently studied by Bruneau. There are echoes of Orientalism in Flaubert's other major novels, too. In all, both Nerval and Flaubert continually elaborated their Oriental material and absorbed it variously into the special structures of their personal aesthetic projects. This is not to say, however, that the Orient is incidental to their work. Rather – by contrast with such writers as Lane (from whom both men borrowed shamelessly), Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Renan, Sacy – their Orient was not so much grasped, appropriated, reduced, or codified as lived in, exploited aesthetically and imaginatively as a roomy place full of possibility. What mattered to them was the structure of their work as an independent, aesthetic, and personal fact, and not the ways by which, if one wanted to, one could effectively dominate or set down the Orient graphically. Their egos never absorbed the Orient, nor totally identified the Orient with documentary and textual knowledge of it (with official Orientalism, in short).

On the one hand, therefore, the scope of their Oriental work exceeds the limitations imposed by orthodox Oriental ism. On the other hand, the subject of their work is more than Oriental or Orientalistic (even though they do their own Orientalizing of the Orient); it quite consciously plays with the limitations and the challenges presented to them by the Orient and by knowledge about it. Nerval, for example, believes that he has to infuse what he sees with vitality since, he says,

> Le ciel et la mer sont toujours là; le ciel d'Orient, la mer d'Ionie se donnent chaque matin le saint baiser d'amour, mais la terre est morte, morte sous la main de l'homme, et les dieux se sont envolés!
>
> (The sky and the sea are still there; the Oriental sky and the Ionian sky give each other the sacred kiss of love each morning; but the earth is dead, dead because man has killed it, and the gods have fled.)

If the Orient is to live at all, now that its gods have fled, it must be through his fertile efforts. In the *Voyage en Orient* the narrative consciousness is a constantly energetic voice, moving through the labyrinths of Oriental existence armed – Nerval tells us – with two Arabic words, *tayeb*, the word for assent, and *mafisch*, the word for rejection. These two words enable him selectively to confront the antithetical Oriental world, to confront it and draw out from it its secret principles. He is predisposed to recognize that the Orient is "le pays des rêves et de l'illusion," which, like the veils he sees everywhere in Cairo, conceal a deep, rich fund of female sexuality. Nerval repeats Lane's experience of discovering the necessity for marriage in an Islamic society, but

unlike Lane he does attach himself to a woman. His liaison with Zaynab is more than socially obligatory:

> I must unite with a guileless young girl who is of this sacred soil, which is our first homeland; I must bathe myself in the vivifying springs of humanity, from which poetry and the faith of our fathers flowed forth! . . . I would like to lead my life like a novel, and I willingly place myself in the situation of one of those active and resolute heroes who wish at all costs to create a drama around them, a knot of complexity, in a word, action.

Nerval invests himself in the Orient, producing not so much a novelistic narrative as an everlasting intention – never fully realized – to fuse mind with physical action. This antinarrative, this parapilgrimage, is a swerving away from discursive finality of the sort envisioned by previous writers on the Orient. Connected physically and sympathetically to the Orient, Nerval wanders informally through its riches and its cultural (and principally feminine) ambience, locating in Egypt especially that maternal "center, at once mysterious and accessible" from which all wisdom derives. His impressions, dreams, and memories alternate with sections of ornate, mannered narrative done in the Oriental style; the hard realities of travel – in Egypt, Lebanon, **/183/** Turkey – mingle with the design of a deliberate digression, as if Nerval were repeating Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire* using an underground, though far less imperial and obvious, route. Michel Butor puts it beautifully:

> To Nerval's eyes, Chateaubriand's journey remains a voyage along the surface, while his own is calculated, utilizing annex centers, lobbies of ellipses englobing the principal centers; this allows him to place in evidence, by parallax, all the dimensions of the snare harbored by the normal centers. Wandering the streets or environs of Cairo, Beirut, or Constantinople, Nerval is always lying in wait for anything that will allow him to sense a cavern extending beneath Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem [the principal cities of Chateaubriand's *Itinéraire*] . . .
>
> Just as the three cities of Chateaubriand are in communication – Rome, with its emperors and popes, reassembling the heritage, the testament, of Athens and Jerusalem – the caverns of Nerval . . . become engaged in intercourse.

Even the two large plotted episodes, "The Tale of the Caliph Hakim" and "The Tale of the Queen of the Morning," that will supposedly convey a durable, solid narrative discourse seem to push Nerval away from "overground" finality, edging him further and further into a haunting internal world of paradox and dream. Both tales deal with multiple identity, one of whose motifs – explicitly stated – is incest, and both return us to Nerval's quintessential Oriental world of uncertain, fluid dreams infinitely multiplying themselves past resolution, definiteness, materiality. When the journey is completed and Nerval arrives in Malta on his way back to the European mainland, he realizes that he is now in "le pays du froid et des orages, et déjà l'Orient n'est plus pour moi qu'un de ces rêves du matin auxquels viennent bientôt succéder les ennuis du

jour." His *Voyage* incorporates numerous pages copied out of Lane's *Modem Egyptians*, but even their lucid confidence seems to dissolve in the endlessly decomposing, cavernous element which is Nerval's Orient.

His *carnet* for the *Voyage* supplies us, I think, with two perfect texts for understanding how his Orient untied itself from anything resembling an Orientalist conception of the Orient, even though his work depends on Orientalism to a certain extent. First, his appetites strive to gather in experience and memory indiscriminately: "Je sens le besoin de m'assimiler toute la nature (femmes étrangères). Souvenirs d'y avoir vécu." The second elaborates a bit **/184/** on the first: "Les rêves et la folie . . . Le désir de l'Orient. L'Europe s'élève. Le rêve se réalise … Elle. Je l'avais fuie. je l'avais perdue … Vaisseau d'Orient." The Orient symbolizes Nerval's dream-quest and the fugitive woman central to it, both as desire and as loss. "Vaisseau d'Orient" – vessel of the Orient – refers enigmatically either to the woman as the vessel carrying the Orient, or possibly to Nerval's own vessel for the Orient, his prose voyage. In either case, the Orient is identified with commemorative absence.

How else can we explain in the *Voyage*, a work of so original and individual a mind, the lazy use of large swathes of Lane, incorporated without a murmur by Nerval as his descriptions of the Orient? It is as if having failed both in his search for a stable Oriental reality and in his intent to give systematic order to his re-presentation of the Orient, Nerval was employing the borrowed authority of a canonized Orientalist text. After his voyage the earth remained dead, and aside from its brilliantly crafted but fragmented embodiments in the *Voyage*, his self was no less drugged and worn out than before. Therefore the Orient seemed retrospectively to belong to a negative realm, in which failed narratives, disordered chronicles, mere transcription of scholarly texts, were its only possible vessel. At least Nerval did not try to save his project by wholeheartedly giving himself up to French designs on the Orient, although he did resort to Orientalism to make some of his points.

In contrast to Nerval's negative vision of an emptied Orient, Flaubert's is eminently corporeal. His travel notes and letters reveal a man scrupulously reporting events, persons, and settings, delighting in their *bizarreries*, never attempting to reduce the incongruities before him. In what he writes (or perhaps because he writes), the premium is on the eye-catching, translated into self-consciously worked-out phrases: for example, "Inscriptions and birddroppings are the only two things in Egypt that give any indication of life." His tastes run to the perverse, whose form is often a combination of extreme animality, even of grotesque nastiness, with extreme and sometimes intellectual refinement. Yet this particular kind of perversity was not something merely observed, it was also studied, and came to represent an essential element in Flaubert's fiction. The familiar oppositions, or ambivalences, as Harry Levin has called them, that roam through Flaubert's writing – flesh versus mind, Salomé versus Saint John, Salammbô versus Saint Anthony – are powerfully validated by what he saw in the Orient, what, given**/185/** his eclectic learning, he could see there of the partnership between knowledge and carnal grossness. In Upper Egypt he was taken with ancient Egyptian art, its preciosity and deliberate lubricity: "so dirty

pictures existed even so far back in antiquity?" How much more the Orient really answered questions than it raised them is evident in the following:

> You [Flaubert's mother] ask me whether the Orient is up to what I imagined it to be. Yes, it is; and more than that, it extends far beyond the narrow idea I had of it. I have found, clearly delineated, everything that was hazy in my mind. Facts have taken the place of suppositions – so excellently so that it is often as though I were suddenly coming upon old forgotten dreams.

Flaubert's work is so complex and so vast as to make any simple account of his Oriental writing very sketchy and hopelessly incomplete. Nevertheless, in the context created by other writers on the Orient, a certain number of main features in Flaubert's Orientalism can fairly be described. Making allowances for the difference between candidly personal writing (letters, travel notes, diary jottings) and formally aesthetic writing (novels and tales), we can still re□ mark that Flaubert's Oriental perspective is rooted in an eastward and southward search for a "visionary alternative," which "meant gorgeous color, in contrast to the greyish tonality of the French provincial landscape. It meant exciting spectacle instead of humdrum routine, the perennially mysterious in place of the all too familiar." [Harry Levin] When he actually visited it, however, this Orient impressed him with its decrepitude and senescence. Like every other Orientalism, then, Flaubert's is revivalist: he must bring the Orient to life, he must deliver it to himself and to his readers, and it is his experience of it in books and on the spot, and his language for it, that will do the trick. His novels of the Orient accordingly were labored historical and learned reconstructions. Carthage in *Salammbô* and the products of Saint Anthony's fevered imagination were authentic fruits of Flaubert's wide reading in the (mainly Western) sources of Oriental religion, warfare, ritual, and societies.

What the formal aesthetic work retains, over and above the marks of Flaubert's voracious readings and recensions, are memories of Oriental travel. The *Bibliothèque des idées reçues* has it that an Orientalist is "un homme qui a beaucoup voyagé," only unlike most other such travelers Flaubert put his voyages to ingenious use. Most of his experiences are conveyed in theatrical form. He is **/186/** interested not only in the content of what he sees but – like Renan –in how he sees, the way by which the Orient, sometimes horribly but always attractively, seems to present itself to him. Flaubert is its best audience:

> . . . Kasr d-'Aini Hospital. Well maintained. The work of Clot Bey – his hand is still to be seen. Pretty cases of syphilis; in the ward of Abbas's Mamelukes, several have it in the arse. At a sign from the doctor, they all stood up on their beds, undid their trouserbelts (it was like army drill), and opened their anuses with their fingers to show their chancres. Enormous infundibula; one had a growth of hair inside his anus. One old man's prick entirely devoid of skin; I recoiled from the stench. A rachitic: hands curved backward, nails as long as claws; one could see the bone structure of his torso as clearly as a skeleton; the rest of his body, too, was fantastically thin, and his head was ringed with whitish leprosy.

Dissecting room: . . . On the table an Arab cadaver, wide open; beautiful black hair. . . .

The lurid detail of this scene is related to many scenes in Flaubert's novels, in which illness is presented to us as if in a clinical theater. His fascination with dissection and beauty recalls, for instance, the final scene of *Salammbô*, culminating in Matho's ceremonial death. In such scenes, sentiments of repulsion or sympathy are repressed entirely; what matters is the correct rendering of exact detail.

The most celebrated moments in Flaubert's Oriental travel have to do with Kuchuk Hanem, a famous Egyptian dancer and courtesan he encountered in Wadi Haifa. He had read in Lane about the almehs and the khawals, dancing girls and boys respectively, but it was his imagination rather than Lane's that could immediately grasp as well as enjoy the almost metaphysical paradox of the almeh's profession and the meaning of her name. (In *Victory*, Joseph Conrad was to repeat Flaubert's observation by making his musician heroine – Alma – irresistibly attractive and dangerous to Axel Heyst.) Alemah in Arabic means a learned woman. It was the name given to women in conservative eighteenth-century Egyptian society who were accomplished reciters of poetry. By the mid-nineteenth century the title was used as a sort of guild name for dancers who were also prostitutes, and such was Kuchuk Hanem, whose dance "L'Abeille" Flaubert watched before he slept with her. She was surely the prototype of several of his novels' female characters in her learned sensuality, delicacy, and (accord-/**187**/ing to Flaubert) mindless coarseness. What he especially liked about her was that she seemed to place no demands on him, while the "nauseating odor" of her bedbugs mingled enchantingly with "the scent of her skin, which was dripping with sandalwood." After his voyage, he had written Louise Colet reassuringly that "the oriental woman is no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man." Kuchuk's dumb and irreducible sexuality allowed Flaubert's mind to wander in ruminations whose haunting power over him reminds us somewhat of Deslauriers and Frederic Moreau at the end of *L'Education sentimentale*:

> As for me, I scarcely shut my eyes. Watching that beautiful creature asleep (she snored, her head against my arm: I had slipped my forefinger under her necklace), my night was one long, infinitely intense reverie--that was why I stayed. I thought of my nights in Paris brothels – a whole series of old memories came back – and I thought of her, of her dance, of her voice as she sang songs that for me were without meaning and even without distinguishable words.

The Oriental woman is an occasion and an opportunity for Flaubert's musings; he is entranced by her self-sufficiency, by her emotional carelessness, and also by what, lying next to him, she allows him to think. Less a woman than a display of impressive but verbally inexpressive femininity, Kuchuk is the prototype of Flaubert's Salammbô and Salomé, as well as of all the versions of carnal female temptation to which his Saint Anthony is subject. Like the Queen of Sheba (who also danced "The Bee") she could say – were she able to speak – "Je ne suis pas une femme, je suis un monde." Looked at from another angle Kuchuk is a disturbing symbol of

fecundity, peculiarly Oriental in her luxuriant and seemingly unbounded sexuality. Her home near the upper reaches of the Nile occupied a position structurally similar to the place where the veil of Tanit – the goddess described as *Omniféconde* – is concealed in *Salammbô*. Yet like Tanit, Salomé, and Salammbô herself, Kuchuk was doomed to remain barren, corrupting, without issue. How much she and the Oriental world she lived in came to intensify for Flaubert his own sense of barrenness is indicated in the following:

> We have a large orchestra, a rich palette, a variety of resources. We know many more tricks and dodges, probably, than were ever known before. No, what we lack is the intrinsic principle, the soul /**188/** of the thing, the very idea of the subject. We take notes, we make journeys: emptiness! emptiness! We become scholars, archaeologists, historians, doctors, cobblers, people of taste. What is the good of all that? Where is the heart, the verve, the sap? Where to start from? Where to go? We're good at sucking, we play a lot of tongue-games, we pet for hours: but the real thing! To ejaculate, beget the child!

Woven through all of Flaubert's Oriental experiences, exciting or disappointing, is an almost uniform association between the Orient and sex. In making this association Flaubert was neither the first nor the most exaggerated instance of a remarkably persistent motif in Western attitudes to the Orient. And indeed, the motif itself is singularly unvaried, although Flaubert's genius may have done more than anyone else's could have to give it artistic dignity. Why the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies, is something on which one could speculate: it is not the province of my analysis here, alas, despite its frequently noted appearance. Nevertheless one must acknowledge its importance as something eliciting complex responses, sometimes even a frightening self-discovery, in the Orientalists, and Flaubert was an interesting case in point.

The Orient threw him back on his own human and technical resources. It did not respond, just as Kuchuk did not, to his presence. Standing before its ongoing life Flaubert, like Lane before him, felt his detached powerlessness, perhaps also his self-induced unwillingness, to enter and become part of what he saw. This of course was Flaubert's perennial problem; it had existed before he went East, and it remained after the visit. Flaubert admitted the difficulty, the antidote to which was in his work (especially in an Oriental work like *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*) to stress the form of encyclopedic presentation of material at the expense of human engagement in life. Indeed, Saint Anthony is nothing if not a man for whom reality is a series of books, spectacles, and pageants unrolling temptingly and at a distance before his eyes. All of Flaubert's immense learning is structured – as Michel Foucault has tellingly noted – like a theatrical, fantastic library, parading before the anchorite's gaze; residually, the parade carries in its form Flaubert's memories of Kasr el' Aini (the syphilitics' army drill) and Kuchuk's dance. More to the point, however, is that Saint Anthony **/189/** is a celibate to whom temptations are primarily sexual. After putting up with every sort of dangerous charm, he is finally given a glimpse into the biological processes of life; he is delirious at being able to see life being born, a scene for which Flaubert felt himself to be incompetent during his Oriental sojourn. Yet because Anthony is

delirious, we are meant to read the scene ironically. What is granted to him at the end, the desire to become matter, to become life, is at best a desire – whether realizable and fulfillable or not, we cannot know.

Despite the energy of his intelligence and his enormous power of intellectual absorption. Flaubert felt in the Orient, first, that "the more you concentrate on it [in detail] the less you grasp the whole," and then, second, that "the pieces fall into place of themselves." At best, this produces a spectacular form, but it remains barred to the Westerner's full participation in it. On one level this was a personal predicament for Flaubert, and he devised means, some of which we have discussed, for dealing with it. On a more general level, this was an epistemological difficulty for which, of course, the discipline of Orientalism existed. At one moment during his Oriental tour he considered what the epistemological challenge could give rise to. Without what he called spirit and style, the mind could "get lost in archaeology"; he was referring to a sort of regimented antiquarianism by which the exotic and the strange would get formulated into lexicons, codes, and finally clichés of the kind he was to ridicule in the *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*. Under the influence of such an attitude the world would be "regulated like a college. Teachers will be the law. Everyone will be in uniform." As against such an imposed discipline, he no doubt felt that his own treatments of exotic material. notably the Oriental material he had both experienced and read about for years, were infinitely preferable. In those at least there was room for a sense of immediacy, imagination, and flair, whereas in the ranks of archaeological tomes everything but "learning" had been squeezed out. And more than most novelists Flaubert was acquainted with organized learning, its products, and its results: these products are clearly evident in the misfortunes of Bouvard and Pécuchet, but they would have been as comically apparent in fields like Orientalism, whose textual attitudes belonged to the world of idées reçues. Therefore one could either construct the world with verve and style, or one could copy it tirelessly according to impersonal academic rules of procedure.

In both cases, with regard to the Orient, there was a frank acknowledgment that it was a world elsewhere, apart from the ordinary attachments, sentiments, and values of our world in the West. In all of his novels Flaubert associates the Orient with the escapism of sexual fantasy. Emma Bovary and Frédéric Moreau pine for what in their drab (or harried) bourgeois lives they do not have, and what they realize they want comes easily to their daydreams packed inside Oriental clichés: harems, princesses, princes, slaves, veils. dancing girls and boys, sherbets, ointments, and so on. The repertoire is familiar, not so much because it reminds us of Flaubert's own voyages in and obsession with the Orient, but because, once again, the association is clearly made between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex. We may as well recognize that for nineteenth-century Europe, with its increasing *embourgeoisement*, sex had been institutionalized to a very considerable degree. On the one hand, there was no such thing as "free" sex, and on the other, sex in society entailed a web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations of a detailed and certainly encumbering sort. Just as the various colonial possessions – quite apart

from their economic benefit to metropolitan Europe – were useful as places to send wayward sons, superfluous populations of delinquents, poor people, and other undesirables, so the Orient was a place where one could look for sexual experience unobtainable in Europe. Virtually no European writer who wrote on or traveled to the Orient in the period after 1800 exempted himself or herself from this quest: Flaubert, Nerval, "Dirty Dick" Burton, and Lane are only the most notable. In the twentieth century one thinks of Gide, Conrad, Maugham, and dozens of others. What they looked for often – correctly, I think – was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden; but even that quest, if repeated by enough people, could (and did) become as regulated and uniform as learning itself. In time "Oriental sex" was as standard a commodity as any other available in the mass culture, with the result that readers and writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the Orient.

It was certainly true that by the middle of the nineteenth century France, no less than England and the rest of Europe, had a flourishing knowledge industry of the sort that Flaubert feared. Great numbers of texts were being produced, and more important, the agencies and institutions for their dissemination and propagation were everywhere to be found. As historians of science and knowledge have/**191/** observed, the organization of scientific and learned fields that took place during the nineteenth century was both rigorous and all-encompassing. Research became a regular activity; there was a regulated exchange of information, and agreement on what the problems were as well as consensus on the appropriate paradigms of research and its results. The apparatus serving Oriental studies was part of the scene, and this was one thing that Flaubert surely had in mind when he proclaimed that "everyone will be in uniform." An Orientalist was no longer a gifted amateur enthusiast, or if he was, he would have trouble being taken seriously as a scholar. To be an Orientalist meant university training in Oriental studies (by 1850 every major European university had a fully developed curriculum in one or another of the Orientalist disciplines), it meant subvention for one's travel (perhaps by one of the Asiatic societies or a geographical exploration fund or a government grant), it meant publication in accredited form (perhaps under the imprint of a learned society or an Oriental translation fund). And both within the guild of Orientalist scholars and to the public at large, such uniform accreditation as clothed the work of Orientalist scholarship, not personal testimony nor subjective impressionism, meant Science.

[...]

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There are no English equivalents to the Oriental works by Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Nerval, and Flaubert, just as Lane's early Orientalist counterparts – Sacy and Renan – were considerably more aware than he was of how much they were creating what they wrote about. The form of such works as Kinglake's *Eothen* (1844) and Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to AI-Madinah and Meccah* (1855-1856) is rigidly chronological and dutifully linear, as if what the authors were describing was a shopping trip to an Oriental bazaar rather than an adventure.

Kinglake's undeservedly famous and popular work is a pathetic catalogue of pompous ethnocentrisms and tiringly nondescript accounts of the Englishman's East. His ostensible purpose in the book is to prove that travel in the Orient is important to "moulding of your character-that is, your very identity," but in fact this turns out to be little more than solidifying "your" anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and general all-purpose race prejudice. We are told, for instance, that the *Arabian Nights* is too lively and inventive a work to have been created by a "mere Oriental, who, for creative purposes, is a thing dead and dry-a mental mummy." Although Kinglake blithely confesses to no knowledge of any Oriental language, he is not constrained by ignorance from making sweeping generalizations about the Orient, its culture, mentality, and society. Many of the attitudes he repeats are canonical, of course, but it is interesting how little the experience of actually seeing the Orient affected his opinions. Like many other travelers he is more interested in remaking himself and the Orient (dead and dry-a mental mummy) than he is in seeing what there is to be seen. Every being he encounters merely corroborates his belief that Easterners are best dealt with when intimidated, and what better instrument of intimidation than a sovereign Western ego? En route to Suez across the desert, alone, he glories in his self-sufficiency and power: "I was here in this African desert, and I myself, and no other, had charge of my life." It is for the comparatively useless purpose of letting Kinglake take hold of himself that the Orient serves him.

[…]

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As a traveling adventurer Burton conceived of himself as sharing the life of the people in whose lands he lived. Far more successfully than T. E. Lawrence, he was able to become an Oriental; he not only spoke the language flawlessly, he was able to penetrate to the heart of Islam and, disguised as an Indian Muslim doctor, accomplish the pilgrimage to Mecca. Yet Burton's most extraordinary characteristic is, I believe, that he was preternaturally knowledgeable about the degree to which human life in society was governed by rules and codes. All of his vast information about the Orient, which dots every page he wrote, reveals that he knew that the Orient in general and Islam in particular were systems of information, behavior and belief, that to be an Oriental or a Muslim was to know certain things in a certain way, and that these were of course subject to history, geography, and the development of society in circumstances specific to it. Thus his accounts of travel in the East reveal to us a consciousness aware of these things and able to steer a narrative course through them: no man who did not know Arabic and Islam as well as Burton could have gone as far as he did in actually becom-/**196**/ing a pilgrim to Mecca and Medina. So what we read in his prose is the history of a consciousness negotiating its way through an alien culture by virtue of having successfully absorbed its systems of information and behavior. Burton's freedom was in having shaken himself loose of his European origins enough to be able to live as an Oriental. Every scene in the *Pilgrimage* reveals him as winning out over the obstacles confronting him, a foreigner, in a strange place. He was able to do this because he had sufficient knowledge of an alien society for this purpose.

In no writer on the Orient so much as in Burton do we feel that generalizations about the Oriental – for example, the pages on the notion of *Kayf* for the Arab or on how education is suited to the Oriental mind (pages that are clearly meant as a rebuttal to Macaulay's simple-minded assertions) – are the result of knowledge acquired about the Orient by living there, actually seeing it firsthand, truly trying to see Oriental life from the viewpoint of a person immersed in it. Yet what is never far from the surface of Burton's prose is another sense it radiates, a sense of assertion and domination over all the complexities of Oriental life. Every one of Burton's footnotes, whether in the *Pilgrimage* or in his translation of the *Arabian Nights* (the same is true of his "Terminal Essay" for it) was meant to be testimony to his victory over the sometimes scandalous system of Oriental knowledge, a system he had mastered by himself. For even in Burton's prose we are never directly given the Orient; everything about it is presented to us by way of Burton's knowledgeable (and often prurient) interventions, which remind us repeatedly how he had taken over the management of Oriental life for the purposes of his narrative. And it is this fact – for in the *Pilgrimage* it is a fact – that elevates Burton's consciousness to a position of supremacy over the Orient. In that position his individuality perforce encounters, and indeed merges with, the voice of Empire, which is itself a system of rules, codes, and concrete epistemological habits. Thus when Burton tells us in the *Pilgrimage* that "Egypt is a treasure to be won," that it "is the most tempting prize which the East holds out to the ambition of Europe, not excepted even the Golden Horn, " we must recognize how the voice of the highly idiosyncratic master of Oriental knowledge informs, feeds into the voice of European ambition for rule over the Orient.

...

Edward Said, from the preface to the 2003 re-edition of *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003).

xi

Nine years ago I wrote an afterword for *Orientalism* which, in trying to clarify what I believed I had and had not said, stressed not only the many discussions that had opened up since my book appeared in 1978, but the ways in which a work about representations of "the Orient" lent itself to increasing misinterpretation. That I find myself feeling more ironic than irritated about that very same thing today is a sign of how much age has crept up on me.

[...]

xii

I have never taught *anything* about the Middle East, being by training and practice a teacher of the mainly European and American humanities, a specialist in modern comparative literature.

[...]

Yet *Orientalism* is very much a book tied to the tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history

[...]

xiii

Orientalism's first page opens with a 1975 description of the Lebanese Civil War that ended in 1990, but the violence and the ugly shedding of human blood continues up to this minute. We have had the failure of the Oslo peace process, the outbreak of the second Intifada, and the awful suffering of the Palestinians in the reinvaded West Bank and Gaza, with Israeli F-16s and Apache helicopters used routinely on the defenseless civilians as part of their collective punishment. The suicide bombing phenomenon has appeared with all its hideous damage, none more lurid and apocalyptic of course than the events of 11 September, 2001 and their aftermath in the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq [...] This is all part of what is supposed to be a clash of civilisations, unending, implacable, irremediable. Nevertheless, I think not.

I wish I could say that general understanding of the Middle East, the Arabs and Islam in the United States has improved somewhat, but alas, it really hasn't. For all kinds of reasons the situation in Europe seems to be considerably better. In the US the hardening of attitudes, the tightening of the grip of demeaning generalisation and triumphalist cliché, the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt for dissenters and "others" has found a fitting correlative in the looting and destruction of Iraq's libraries and museums. What our leaders and their intellectual lackeys seem incapable of understanding is that history cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that "we" might inscribe our own future there and impose our own forms of life for these lesser people to follow. It is quite common to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad peoples can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar. But this has often happened

with the "Orient", that semi-mythical construct which since Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in the late 18th century has been made and re-made countless times [...] In the process the uncountable sediments of history, **/xiv/** that include innumerable histories and a dizzying variety of peoples, languages, experiences, and cultures, all these are swept aside or ignored, relegated to the sand heap along with the treasures ground into meaningless fragments that were taken out of Baghdad's libraries and museums. My argument is that history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and re-written, so that "our" East, "our" Orient becomes "ours" to possess and direct.

I should say again that I have no "real" Orient to argue for, I do, however, have a very high regard for the powers and gifts of the peoples of that region to struggle on for their vision of what they are and want to be. There's been so massive and calculatedly aggressive an attack on the contemporary societies of the Arab and Muslim for their backwardness, lack of democracy, and abrogation of women's rights that we simply forget that such notions as modernity, enlightenment, and democracy are by no means simple and agreed-upon concepts that one either does or does not find, like Easter eggs in the living-room. The breathtaking insouciance of jejune publicists who speak in the name of foreign policy and who have no knowledge at all of the language real people speak has fabricated an arid landscape ready for American power to construct there an ersatz model of free market "democracy," without even a trace of a doubt that such projects don't exist outside of Swift's Academy of Lagado.

What I do argue also is that there is a difference between knowledge of other peoples and other times that is the result of understanding, compassion, careful study and analysis for their own sakes, and knowledge that is part of an overall campaign of self-affirmation. There is, after all, a profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of co-existence and enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control. It is surely one of the intellectual catastrophes of history that an imperialist war confected by a small group of unelected US officials (they've been called chickenhawks, since none of them ever served in the military) was waged against a devastated Third World dictatorship on thoroughly ideological grounds having to do with world dominance, security control, and scarce resources, but disguised for its true intent, hastened and **/xv/** reasoned for by Orientalists who betrayed their calling as scholars. The major influences on George W Bush's Pentagon and National Security Council were men such as Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami, experts on the Arab and Islamic world who helped the American hawks to think about such preposterous phenomena as the Arab mind and centuries-old Islamic decline which only American power could reverse. Today bookstores in the US are filled with shabby screeds bearing screaming headlines about Islam and terror, Islam exposed, the Arab threat and the Muslim menace, all of them written by political polemicists pretending to knowledge imparted to them and others by experts who have supposedly penetrated to the heart of these strange Oriental peoples. Accompanying such war-mongering expertise have been CNN and Fox, plus myriad evangelical and right-wing radio hosts, innumerable tabloids and even middle-brow journals, all of them re-cycling the same unverifiable fictions and vast generalisations so as to stir up "America" against the foreign devil.

[...]

Without a well-organised sense that these people over there were not like "us" and didn't appreciate "our" values -- the very core of traditional Orientalist dogma -- there would have been

no war. So from the very same directorate of paid professional scholars enlisted by the Dutch conquerors of Malaysia and Indonesia, the British armies of India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, West Africa, the French armies of Indochina and North Africa, came the American advisers to the Pentagon and the White House, using the same clichés, the same demeaning stereotypes, the same justifications for power and violence (after all, runs the chorus, power is the only language they understand) in this case as in the earlier ones. These people have now been joined in Iraq by a whole army of private contractors and eager entrepreneurs to whom shall be confided every thing, from the writing of textbooks and the constitution to the **/xvi/** refashioning of Iraqi political life and its oil industry. Every single empire, in its official discourse, has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilise, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of willing intellectuals to say calming words about benign or altruistic empires, as if one shouldn't trust the evidence of one's eyes watching the destruction and the misery and death brought about by the latest *mission civilisatrice*.

[...]

Twenty-five years after my book's publication, *Orientalism* once again raises the question of whether modern imperialism ever ended, or whether it has continued in the Orient since Napoleon's entry into Egypt two centuries ago. Arabs and Muslims have been told that victimology and dwelling on the depredations of empire is only a way of evading responsibility in the present. You have failed, you have gone wrong, says the modern Orientalist. This, of course, is also V S Naipaul's contribution to literature, that the victims of empire wail on while their country goes to the dogs. But what a shallow calculation of the imperial intrusion that is, how summarily it scants the immense distortion introduced by the empire into the lives of "lesser" people and "subject races" generation after generation, how little it wishes to face the long succession of years through which empire continues to work its way in the lives, say, of Palestinians or Congolese or Algerians or Iraqis. We allow justly that he Holocaust has permanently altered the consciousness of our time: why do we not accord the same epistemological mutation in **/xvii/** what imperialism has done, and what Orientalism continues to do? Think of the line that starts with Napoleon, continues with the rise of Oriental studies and the takeover of North Africa, and goes on in similar undertakings in Vietnam, in Egypt, in Palestine and, during the entire 20th century in the struggle over oil and strategic control in the Gulf, in Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Afghanistan. Then think of the rise of anti-colonial nationalism, through the short period of liberal independence, the era of military coups, of insurgency, civil war, religious fanaticism, irrational struggle and uncompromising brutality against the latest bunch of "natives". Each of these phases and eras produces its own distorted knowledge of the other, each its own reductive images, its own disputatious polemics.

My idea in *Orientalism* is to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange. I have called what I try to do "humanism", a word I continue to use stubbornly despite the scornful dismissal of the term by sophisticated post-modern critics. By humanism I mean first of all attempting to dissolve Blake's "mind-forg'd manacles" so as to be able to use one's mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding. Moreover, humanism is sustained by a

sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods: strictly speaking, therefore, there is no such thing as an isolated humanist.

[...]

xviii

As a humanist whose field is literature I am old enough to have been trained 40 years ago in the field of comparative literature, the leading ideas of which go back to Germany in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Before that I must mention the supremely creative contribution of Giambattista Vico, the Neopolitan philosopher and philologist whose ideas anticipate those of German thinkers such as Herder and Wolf, later to be followed by Goethe, Humboldt, Dilthey, Nietzsche, Gadamer, and finally the great 20th Century Romance philologists Erich Auerbach, Leo Spitzer, and Ernst Robert Curtius. To young people of the current generation the very idea of philology suggests something impossibly antiquarian and musty , but philology is in fact the most basic and creative of the interpretive arts. It is exemplified for me most admirably in Goethe's interest in Islam generally, and Hafiz in particular, a consuming passion which led to the composition of the *West-Östlicher Diwan*, and it inflected Goethe's later ideas about *Weltliteratur*, the study of all the literatures of the world as a symphonic whole that could be apprehended theoretically as having preserved the individuality of each work without losing sight of the whole.

xix

There is a considerable irony to the realisation then that as today's globalised world draws together in some of the ways I have been talking about here, we may be approaching the kind of standardisation and homogeneity that Goethe's ideas were specifically formulated to prevent. In an essay he published in 1951 entitled “Philologie der Weltliteratur” Erich Auerbach made exactly that point at the outset of the postwar period, which was also the beginning of the Cold War. His great book *Mimesis*, published in Berne in 1946 but written while Auerbach was a wartime exile teaching Romance languages in Istanbul, was meant to be a testament to the diversity and concreteness of the reality represented in Western literature from Homer to Virginia Woolf; but reading the 1951 essay one senses that for Auerbach the great book he wrote was an elegy for a period when people could interpret texts philologically, concretely, sensitively, and intuitively, using erudition and an excellent command of several languages to support the kind of understanding that Goethe advocated for his understanding of Islamic literature.

Positive knowledge of languages and history was necessary, but it was never enough, any more than the mechanical gathering of facts would constitute an adequate method for grasping what an author like Dante, for example, was all about. The main requirement for the kind of philological understanding Auerbach and his predecessors were talking about and tried to practise was one that sympathetically and subjectively entered into the life of a written text as seen from the perspective of its time and its author (*einfühlung*). Rather than alienation and hostility to another time and a different culture, philology as applied to *Weltliteratur* involved a profound humanistic spirit deployed with generosity and, if I may use the word, hospitality. Thus the interpreter's mind actively makes a place in it for a foreign Other. And this creative making of a

place for works that are otherwise alien and distant is the most important facet of the interpreter's mission.

All this was obviously undermined and destroyed in Germany by National Socialism. After the war, Auerbach notes mournfully, the standardisation of ideas, and greater and greater specialisation of knowledge gradually narrowed the opportunities for the kind of investigative and everlastingly enquiring kind of philological work that he had represented, and, alas, it's an even more depressing fact that since Auerbach's death in 1957 both the idea and practice of humanistic research have shrunk in scope as well as in centrality. The **/xx/** book culture based on archival research as well as general principles of mind that once sustained humanism as a historical discipline have almost disappeared. Instead of reading in the real sense of the word, our students today are often distracted by the fragmented knowledge available on the Internet and in the mass media.