ORIENTALISM

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it in its Islamic branch, Orientalism resemble each other very closely is a historical, cultural, and political truth that needs only to be mentioned to an Arab Palestinian for its irony to be perfectly understood. But what I should like also to have contributed here is a better understanding of the way cultural domination has operated. If this stimulates a new kind of dealing with the Orient, indeed if it eliminates the “Orient” and “Occident” altogether, then we shall have advanced a little in the process of what Raymond Williams has called the “unlearning” of “the inherent dominative mode.”

The Scope of Orientalism

... le génie inquiet et ambitieux de Européens ... impatient d'employer les nouveaux instruments de leur puissance ...

—Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Fourier, Préface historique (1809), Description de l'Égypte
ent race, a different discipline, different conditions of life." What makes their work of governing possible is their sense of being supported at home by a government that endorses what they do. Yet directly the native populations have that instinctive feeling that those with whom they have to deal have not behind them the might, the authority, the sympathy, the full and ungrudging support of the country which sent them there, those populations lose all that sense of order which is the very basis of their civilization, just as our officers lose all that sense of power and authority, which is the very basis of everything they can do for the benefit of those among whom they have been sent.

Balfour's logic here is interesting, not least for being completely consistent with the premises of his entire speech. England knows Egypt; Egypt is what England knows; England knows that Egypt cannot have self-government; England confirms that by occupying Egypt; for the Egyptians, Egypt is what England has occupied and now governs; foreign occupation therefore becomes "the very basis" of contemporary Egyptian civilization; Egypt requires, indeed insists upon, British occupation. But if the special intimacy between governor and governed in Egypt is disturbed by Parliament's doubts at home, then "the authority of what ... is the dominant race—and as I think ought to remain the dominant race—has been undermined." Not only does English prestige suffer; "it is vain for a handful of British officials—endow them how you like, give them all the qualities of character and genius you can imagine—it is impossible for them to carry out the great task which in Egypt, no we only, but the civilised world has imposed upon them."

As a rhetorical performance Balfour's speech is significant for the way in which he plays the part of, and represents, a variety of characters. There are of course "the English," for whom the pronoun "we" is used with the full weight of a distinguished, powerful man who feels himself to be representative of all that is best in his nation's history. Balfour can also speak for the civilized world, the West, and the relatively small corps of colonial officials in Egypt. If he does not speak directly for the Orientals, it is because they after all speak another language; yet he knows how they feel since he knows their history, their reliance upon such as he, and their expectations. Still, he does speak for them in the sense that what they might have to say, were they to be asked and might they be able to answer, would somewhat uselessly confirm what is already evident: that they are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves. Their great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies.

Egypt in particular was an excellent case in point, and Balfour was perfectly aware of how much right he had to speak as a member of his country's parliament on behalf of England, the West, Western civilization, about modern Egypt. For Egypt was not just another colony: it was the vindication of Western imperialism; it was, until its annexation by England, an almost academic example of Oriental backwardness; it was to become the triumph of English knowledge and power. Between 1882, the year in which England occupied Egypt and put an end to the nationalist rebellion of Colonel Arabi, and 1907, England's representative in Egypt, Egypt's master, was Evelyn Baring (also known as "Over-baring"), Lord Cromer. On July 30, 1907, it was Balfour in the Commons who had supported the project to give Cromer a retirement prize of fifty thousand pounds as a reward for what he had done in Egypt. Cromer made Egypt, said Balfour:

Everything he has touched he has succeeded in. ... Lord Cromer's services during the past quarter of a century have raised Egypt from the lowest pitch of social and economic degradation until it now stands among Oriental nations, I believe, absolutely alone in its prosperity, financial and moral."

How Egypt's moral prosperity was measured, Balfour did not venture to say. British exports to Egypt equaled those to the whole of Africa; that certainly indicated a sort of financial prosperity, for Egypt and England (somewhat unevenly) together. But what really mattered was the unbroken, all-embracing Western tutelage of an Oriental country, from the scholars, missionaries, businessmen, soldiers, and teachers who prepared and then implemented the occupation to the high functionaries like Cromer and Balfour who saw themselves as providing for, directing, and sometimes even forcing Egypt's rise from Oriental neglect to its present lonely eminence.

If British success in Egypt was as exceptional as Balfour said, it was by no means an inexplicable or irrational success. Egyptian
I

Knowing the Oriental

On June 13, 1910, Arthur James Balfour lectured the House of Commons on "the problems with which we have to deal in Egypt." These, he said, "belong to a wholly different category" than those "affecting the Isle of Wight or the West Riding of Yorkshire." He spoke with the authority of a long-time member of Parliament, former private secretary to Lord Salisbury, former chief secretary for Ireland, former secretary for Scotland, former prime minister, veteran of numerous overseas crises, achievements, and changes. During his involvement in imperial affairs Balfour served a monarch who in 1876 had been declared Empress of India; he had been especially well placed in positions of uncommon influence to follow the Afghan and Zulu wars, the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, the death of General Gordon in the Sudan, the Fashoda Incident, the battle of Omdurman, the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War. In addition his remarkable social eminence, the breadth of his learning and wit—he could write on such varied subjects as Bergson, Handel, theism, and golf—his education at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, and his apparent command over imperial affairs all gave considerable authority to what he told the Commons in June 1910. But there was still more to Balfour's speech, or at least to his need for giving it so didactically and moralistically. Some members were questioning the necessity for "England in Egypt," the subject of Alfred Milner's enthusiastic book of 1892, but here designating a once-profitable occupation that had become a source of trouble now that Egyptian nationalism was on the rise and the continuing British presence in Egypt no longer so easy to defend. Balfour, then, to inform and explain.

Recalling the challenge of J. M. Robertson, the member of Tyneside, Balfour himself put Robertson's question again: "What right have you to take up these airs of superiority with regard to people whom you choose to call Oriental?" The choice of "Oriental" was canonical; it had been employed by Chaucer and Mandeville, by Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, and Byron. It designated Asia or the East, geographically, morally, culturally. One could speak in Europe of an Oriental personality, an Oriental
atmosphere, an Oriental tale, Oriental despotism, or an Oriental mode of production, and be understood. Marx had used the word, and now Balfour was using it; his choice was understandable and called for no comment whatever.

I take up no attitude of superiority. But I ask [Robertson and anyone else] . . . who has even the most superficial knowledge of history, if they will look in the face the facts with which a British statesman has to deal when he is put in a position of supremacy over great races like the inhabitants of Egypt and countries in the East. We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it. It goes far beyond the petty span of the history of our race, which is lost in the prehistoric period at a time when the Egyptian civilisation had already passed its prime. Look at all the Oriental countries. Do not talk about superiority or inferiority.

Two great themes dominate his remarks here and in what will follow: knowledge and power, the Baconian themes. As Balfour justifies the necessity for British occupation of Egypt, supremacy in his mind is associated with "our" knowledge of Egypt and not principally with military or economic power. Knowledge to Balfour means surveying a civilization from its origins to its prime to its decline—and of course, it means being able to do that. Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a "fact" which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for "us" to deny autonomy to "it"—the Oriental country—since we know it and it exists, in a sense, as we know it. British knowledge of Egypt is for Balfour, and the burdens of knowledge make such questions as inferiority and superiority seem petty ones. Balfour nowhere denies British superiority and Egyptian inferiority; he takes them for granted as he describes the consequences of knowledge.

First of all, look at the facts of the case. Western nations as soon as they emerge into history show the beginnings of those capacities for self-government . . . having merits of their own . . . . You may look through the whole history of the Orientals in what is called, broadly speaking, the East, and you never find traces of self-

government. All their great centuries—and they have been very great—have been passed under despotisms, under absolute government. All their great contributions to civilisation—and they have been great—have been made under that form of government. Conqueror has succeeded conqueror; one domination has followed another; but never in all the revolutions of fate and fortune have you seen one of those nations of its own motion establish what we, from a Western point of view, call self-government. That is the fact. It is not a question of superiority and inferiority. I suppose a true Eastern sage would say that the working government which we have taken upon ourselves in Egypt and elsewhere is not a work worthy of a philosopher—that it is the dirty work, the inferior work, of carrying on the necessary labour.

Since these facts are facts, Balfour must then go on to the next part of his argument.

In it a good thing for these great nations—I admit their greatness—that this absolute government should be exercised by us? I think it is a good thing. I think that experience shows that they have got under it a far better government than in the whole history of the world they ever had before, and which not only is a benefit to them, but is undoubtedly a benefit to the whole of the civilised West . . . We are in Egypt not merely for the sake of the Egyptians, though we are there for their sake; we are there also for the sake of Europe at large.

Balfour produces no evidence that Egyptians and "the races with whom we deal!" appreciate or even understand the good that is being done them by colonial occupation. It does not occur to Balfour, however, to let the Egyptian speak for himself, since presumably any Egyptian who would speak out is more likely to be "the agitator who wishes to raise difficulties" than the good native who overlooks the "difficulties" of foreign domination. And so, having settled the ethical problems, Balfour turns at last to the practical ones. "If it is our business to govern, with or without gratitude, with or without the real and genuine memory of all the loss of which we have relieved the population (Balfour by no means implies, as part of that loss, the loss or at least the indefinite postponement of Egyptian independence) and no vivid imagination of all the benefits which we have given to them; if that is our duty, how is it to be performed?" England exports "our very best to these countries." These selfless administrators do their work "amidst tens of thousands of persons belonging to a different creed, a differ-
affairs had been controlled according to a general theory expressed both by Balfour in his notions about Oriental civilization and by Cromer in his management of everyday business in Egypt. The most important thing about the theory during the first decade of the twentieth century was that it worked, and worked staggeringly well. The argument, when reduced to its simplest form, was clear, it was precise, it was easy to grasp. There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put to the disposal of one or another Western power. That Balfour and Cromer, as we shall soon see, could strip humanity down to such ruthless cultural and racial essences was not at all an indication of their particular viciousness. Rather it was an indication of how streamlined a general doctrine had become by the time they put it to use—how streamlined and effective.

Unlike Balfour, whose theses on Orientals pretended to objective universality, Cromer spoke about Orientals specifically as what he had ruled or had to deal with, first in India, then for the twenty-five years in Egypt during which he emerged as the paramount consuli-general in England's empire. Balfour's "Orientals" are Cromer's "subject races," which he made the topic of a long essay published in the Edinburgh Review in January 1908. Once again, knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control. Cromer's notion is that England's empire will not dissolve if such things as militarism and commercial egotism at home and "free institutions" in the colony (as opposed to British government "according to the Code of Christian morality") are kept in check. For if, according to Cromer, logic is something "the existence of which the Oriental is disposed altogether to ignore," the proper method of ruling is not to impose ultrascientific measures upon him or to force him bodily to accept logic. It is rather to understand his limitations and "endeavor to find, in the contentment of the subject race, a more worthy and, it may be hoped, a stronger bond of union between the rulers and the ruled." Lurking everywhere behind the pacification of the subject race is imperial might, more effective for its refined understanding and infrequent use than for its soldiers, brutal tax gatherers, and incontinent force. In a

word, the Empire must be wise; it must temper its cupidity with selflessness, and its impatience with flexible discipline.

To be more explicit, what is meant when it is said that the commercial spirit should be under some control is this—that in dealing with Indians or Egyptians, or Shilluks, or Zulus, the first question is to consider what these people, who are all, nationally speaking, more or less in statu pupillari, themselves think is best in their own interests, although this is a point which deserves serious consideration. But it is essential that each special issue should be decided mainly with reference to what, by the light of Western knowledge and experience tempered by local considerations, we conscientiously think is best for the subject race, without reference to any real or supposed advantage which may accrue to England as a nation, or—as is more frequently the case—to the special interests represented by some one or more influential classes of Englishmen. If the British nation as a whole persistently bears this principle in mind, and insists sternly on its application, though we can never create a patriotism akin to that based on affinity of race or community of language, we may perhaps foster some sort of cosmopolitan allegiance grounded on the respect always accorded to superior talents and unselfish conduct, and on the gratitude derived both from favours conferred and from those to come. There may then at all events be some hope that the Egyptian will hesitate before he throws in his lot with any future Arabi. . . . Even the Central African savage may eventually learn to chant a hymn in honour of Astraea Redux, as represented by the British official who denies him sin but gives him justice. More than this, commerce will gain."

How much "serious consideration" the ruler ought to give proposals from the subject race was illustrated in Cromer's total opposition to Egyptian nationalism. Free native institutions, the absence of foreign occupation, a self-sustaining national sovereignty: these unsurprising demands were consistently rejected by Cromer, who asserted unambiguously that "the real future of Egypt . . . lies not in the direction of a narrow nationalism, which will only embrace native Egyptians . . . but rather in that of an enlarged cosmopolitanism." Subject races did not have it in them to know what was good for them. Most of them were Orientals, of whose characteristics Cromer was very knowledgeable since he had had experience with them both in India and Egypt. One of the convenient things about Orientals for Cromer was that managing
them, although circumstances might differ slightly here and there, was almost everywhere nearly the same. This was, of course, because Orientals were almost everywhere nearly the same.

Now at least we approach the long-developing core of essential knowledge, knowledge both academic and practical, which Cromer and Balfour inherited from a century of modern Western Orientalism. Knowledge about and knowledge of Orientals, their race, character, culture, history, traditions, society, and possibilities. This knowledge was effective: Cromer believed he had put it to use in governing Egypt. Moreover, it was tested and unchanging knowledge, since “Orientals” for all practical purposes were a Platonic essence, which any Orientalist (or ruler of Orientals) might examine, understand, and expose. Thus in the thirty-fourth chapter of his two-volume work Modern Egypt, the magisterial record of his experience and achievement, Cromer puts down a sort of personal canon of Orientalist wisdom:

Sir Alfred Lyall once said to me: “Accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind. Every Anglo-Indian should always remember that maxim.” Want of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind.

The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician, albeit he may not have studied logic; he is by nature sceptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavor to elicit a plain statement of facts from any ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will generally be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half-a-dozen times before he has finished his story. He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination.

Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, “devoid of energy and initiative,” much given to “foulsome flattery,” intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are “lethargic and suspicious,” and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Cromer makes no effort to conceal that Orientals for him were always and only the human material he governed in British colonies. “As I am only a diplomatist and an administrator, whose proper study is also man, but from the point of view of governing him,” Cromer says, “… I content myself with noting the fact that somehow or other the Oriental generally acts, speaks, and thinks in a manner exactly opposite to the European.” Cromer’s descriptions are of course based partly on direct observation, yet here and there he refers to orthodox Orientalist authorities (in particular Ernest Renan and Constantin de Volney) to support his views. To these authorities he also defers when it comes to explaining why Orientals are the way they are. He has no doubt that any knowledge of the Oriental will confirm his views, which, to judge from his description of the Egyptian breaking under cross-examination, find the Oriental to be guilty. The crime was that the Oriental was an Oriental, and it is an accurate sign of how commonly acceptable such a tautology was that it could be written without even an appeal to European logic or symmetry of mind. Thus any deviation from what were considered the norms of Oriental behavior was believed to be unnatural; Cromer’s last annual report from Egypt consequently proclaimed Egyptian nationalism to be an “entirely novel idea” and “a plant of exotic rather than of indigenous growth.”

We would be wrong, I think, to underestimate the reservoir of accredited knowledge, the codes of Orientalist orthodoxy, to which Cromer and Balfour refer everywhere in their writing and in their public policy. To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact. Men have always divided the world up into regions having either real or imagined distinction from each other. The absolute demarcation between East and West, which Balfour and Cromer accept with such complacency, had been years, even centuries, in the making. There were of course innumerable voyages of discovery; there were contacts through trade and war. But more than this, since the middle of the eighteenth century there had been two principal elements in the relation between East and West. One was a growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread in-
interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history; furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. The other feature of Oriental-European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination. There is no way of putting this euphemistically. True, the relationship of strong to weak could be disguised or mitigated, as when Balfour acknowledged the "greatness" of Oriental civilizations. But the essential relationship, on political, cultural, and even religious grounds, was seen—in the West, which is what concerns us here—to be one between a strong and a weak partner.

Many terms were used to express the relation: Balfour and Cromer, typically, used several. The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal." But the way of enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence. Yet what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West. Thus the two features of cultural relationship I have been discussing come together. Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his world. In Cromer's and Balfour's language the Oriental is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Oriental is contained and represented by dominating frameworks. Where do these come from?

Cultural strength is not something we can discuss very easily—and one of the purposes of the present work is to illustrate, analyze, and reflect upon Orientalism as an exercise of cultural strength. In other words, it is better not to risk generalizations about so vague and yet so important a notion as cultural strength until a good deal of material has been analyzed first. But at the outset one can say that so far as the West was concerned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West. The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing.

During the early years of the twentieth century, men like Balfour and Cromer could say what they said, in the way they did, because a still earlier tradition of Orientalism than the nineteenth-century one provided them with a vocabulary, imagery, rhetoric, and figures with which to say it. Yet Orientalism reinforced, and was reinforced by, the certain knowledge that Europe or the West literally commanded the vastly greater part of the earth's surface. The period of immense advance in the institutions and content of Orientalism coincides exactly with the period of unparalleled European expansion; from 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth's surface to about 85 percent of it. Every continent was affected, none more so than Africa and Asia. The two greatest empires were the British and the French; allies and partners in some things, in others they were hostile rivals. In the Orient, from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to Indochina and Malaya, their colonial possessions and imperial spheres of influence were adjacent, frequently overlapped, often were fought over. But it was in the Near East, the lands of the Arab Near East, where Islam was supposed to define cultural and racial characteristics, that the British and the French encountered each other and "the Orient" with the greatest intensity, familiarity, and complexity. For much of the nineteenth century, as Lord Salisbury put it in 1881, their common view of the Orient was intricately problematic: "When you have got a . . . faithful ally who is bent on meddling in a country in which you are deeply interested—you have three courses open to you. You may renounce—or monopolize—or share. Renouncing would have been to place the French across our road to India. Monopolizing would have been very near the risk of war. So we resolved to share." 10

And share they did, in ways that we shall investigate presently. What they shared, however, was not only land or profit or rule; it was the kind of intellectual power I have been calling Orientalism. In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas 11 and a unifying
set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics. But like any set of durable ideas, Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals as well as those called Occidental, European, or Western; in short, Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine. If the essence of Orientalism is the inexorable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction. When it became common practice during the nineteenth century for Britain to retire its administrators from India and elsewhere once they had reached the age of fifty-five, then a further refinement in Orientalism had been achieved; no Oriental was ever allowed to see a Westerner as he aged and degenerated, just as no Westerner needed ever to see himself, mirrored in the eyes of the subject race, as anything but a vigorous, rational, ever-alarm young Raj.

Orientalist ideas took a number of different forms during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First of all, in Europe there was a vast literature about the Orient inherited from the European past. What is distinctive about the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which is where this study assumes modern Orientalism to have begun, is that an Oriental renaissance took place, as Edgar Quinet phrased it. Suddenly it seemed to a wide variety of thinkers, politicians, and artists that a new awareness of the Orient, which extended from China to the Mediterranean, had arisen. This awareness was partly the result of newly discovered and translated Oriental texts in languages like Sanskrit, Zend, and Arabic; it was also the result of a newly perceived relationship between the Orient and the West. For my purposes here, the keynote of the relationship was set for the Near East and Europe by the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, an invasion which was in many ways the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another, apparently stronger one. For with Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt processes were set in motion between East and West that still dominate our contemporary cultural and political perspectives. And the Napoleonic expedition, with its great collective monument of erudition, the Description de l’Égypte, provided a scene or setting for Orientalism, since Egypt and subsequently the other Islamic lands were viewed as the live province, the laboratory, the theater of effective Western knowledge about the Orient. I shall return to the Napoleonic adventure a little later.

With such experiences as Napoleon’s the Orient as a body of knowledge in the West was modernized, and this is a second form in which nineteenth- and twentieth-century Orientalism existed. From the outset of the period I shall be examining there was everywhere amongst Orientalists the ambition to formulate their discoveries, experiences, and insights suitably in modern terms, to put ideas about the Orient in very close touch with modern realities. Renan’s linguistic investigations of Semitic in 1848, for example, were couched in a style that drew heavily for its authority upon contemporary comparative grammar, comparative anatomy, and racial theory; these lent his Orientalism prestige and—on the other side of the coin—made Orientalism vulnerable, as it has been ever since, to modish as well as seriously influential currents of thought in the West. Orientalism has been subjected to imperialism, positivism, utopianism, historicism, Darwinism, racism, Freudianism, Marxism, Spenglerism. But Orientalism, like many of the natural and social sciences, has had “paradigms” of research, its own learned societies, its own Establishment. During the nineteenth century the field increased enormously in prestige, as did also the reputation and influence of such institutions as the Société asiatique, the Royal Asiatic Society, the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, and the American Oriental Society. With the growth of these societies went also an increase, all across Europe, in the number of professorships in Oriental studies; consequently there was an expansion in the available means for disseminating Orientalism. Orientalist periodicals, beginning with the Fundgraben des Orient (1809), multiplied the quantity of knowledge as well as the number of specialties.

Yet little of this activity and very few of these institutions existed and flourished freely, for in a third form in which it existed, Orientalism imposed limits upon thought about the Orient. Even the most imaginative writers of an age, men like Flaubert, Nerval, or Scott, were constrained in what they could either experience or say about the Orient. For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the stranger (the Orient, the East, “them”). This vision in a sense created and then served
The two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours. The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going. A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery, as Disraeli once called it. Yet what has, I think, been previously overlooked is the constricted vocabulary of such a privilege, and the comparative limitations of such a vision. My argument takes it that the Orientalist reality is both anthropic and persistent. Its scope, as much as its institutions and all-pervasive influence, lasts up to the present.

But how did and does Orientalism work? How can one describe it all together as a historical phenomenon, a way of thought, a contemporary problem, and a material reality? Consider Cromer again, an accomplished technician of empire but also a beneficiary of Orientalism. He can furnish us with a rudimentary answer. In "The Government of Subject Races" he wrestles with the problem of how Britain, a nation of individuals, is to administer a wide-flung empire according to a number of central principles. He contrasts the "local agent," who has both a specialist's knowledge of the native and an Anglo-Saxon individuality, with the central authority at home in London. The former may "treat subjects of local interest in a manner calculated to damage, or even to jeopardize, Imperial interests. The central authority is in a position to obviate any danger arising from this cause." Why? Because this authority can "ensure the harmonious working of the different parts of the machine" and "should endeavour, so far as is possible, to realise the circumstances attendant on the government of the dependency." The language is vague and unattractive, but the point is not hard to grasp. Cromer envisions a seat of power in the West, and radiating out from it towards the East a great embracing machine, sustaining the central authority yet commanded by it. What the machine's branches feed into it in the East—human material, material wealth, knowledge, what have you—is processed by the machine, then converted into more power. The specialist does the immediate translation of mere Oriental matter into useful substance; the Oriental becomes, for example, a subject race, an example of an "Oriental" mentality, all for the enhancement of the "authority" at home. "Local interests" are Orientalist special interests, the "central authority" is the general interest of the imperial society as a whole. What Cromer quite accurately sees is the management of knowledge by society, the fact that knowledge—no matter how special—is regulated first by the local concerns of a specialist, later by the general concerns of a social system of authority. The interplay between local and central interests is intricate, but by no means indiscriminate.

In Cromer's own case as an imperial administrator the "proper study is also man," he says. When Pope proclaimed the proper study of mankind to be man, he meant all men, including "the poor Indian"; whereas Cromer's "also" reminds us that certain men, such as Orientals, can be singled out as the subject for proper study. The proper study—in this sense—of Orientals is Orientalism, properly separate from other forms of knowledge, but finally useful (because finite) for the material and social reality enclosing all knowledge at any time, supporting knowledge, providing it with uses. An order of sovereignty is set up from East to West, a mock chain of being whose clearest form was given once by Kipling:

Mule, horse, elephant, or bullock, he obeys his driver, and the driver his sergeant, and the sergeant his lieutenant, and the lieutenant his captain, and the captain his major, and the major his colonel, and the colonel his brigadier commanding three regiments, and the brigadier his general, who obeys the Viceroy, who is the servant of the Empress.12

As deeply forged as is this monstrous chain of command, as strongly managed as is Cromer's "harmonious working," Orientalism can also express the strength of the West and the Orient's weakness—as seen by the West. Such strength and such weakness are as intrinsic to Orientalism as they are to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference.

For that is the main intellectual issue raised by Orientalism. Can one divide human reality, as indeed human reality seems to be genuinely divided, into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly? By surviving the consequences humanly, I mean to ask whether there is any way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division, say, of men into "us" (Westerners) and "they" (Orientals). For such divisions are generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends. When one uses categories like Oriental and Western as both the starting and the end points of analysis, research, public policy
(as the categories were used by Balfour and Cromer), the result is usually to polarize the distinction—the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western—and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies. In short, from its earliest modern history to the present, Orientalism as a form of thought for dealing with the foreign has typically shown the altogether regrettable tendency of any knowledge based on such hard-and-fast distinctions as “East” and “West”: to channel thought into a West or an East compartment. Because this tendency is right at the center of Orientalist theory, practice, and values found in the West, the sense of Western power over the Orient is taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth.

A contemporary illustration or two should clarify this observation perfectly. It is natural for men in power to survey from time to time the world with which they must deal. Balfour did it frequently. Our contemporary Henry Kissinger does it also, rarely with more express frankness than in his essay “Domestic Structure and Foreign Policy.” The drama he depicts is a real one, in which the United States must manage its behavior in the world under the pressures of domestic forces on the one hand and of foreign realities on the other. Kissinger's discourse must be taken on his own terms, at least a polarity between the United States and the world; in addition, of course, he speaks consciously as an authoritative voice for the major Western power, whose recent history and present reality have placed it before a world that does not easily accept its power and dominance. Kissinger feels that the United States can deal less problematically with the industrial, developed West than it can with the developing world. Again, the contemporary actuality of relations between the United States and the so-called Third World (which includes China, Indochina, the Near East, Africa, and Latin America) is manifestly a thorny set of problems, which even Kissinger cannot hide.

Kissinger's method in the essay proceeds according to what linguists call binary opposition: that is, he shows that there are two styles in foreign policy (the prophetic and the political), two types of technique, two periods, and so forth. When at the end of the historical part of his argument he is brought face to face with the contemporary world, he divides it accordingly into two halves, the developed and the developing countries. The first half, which is the West, is deeply committed to the notion that the real world is external to the observer, that knowledge consists of recording and

classifying data—the more accurately the better.” Kissinger's proof for this is the Newtonian revolution, which has not taken place in the developing world: “Cultures which escaped the early impact of Newtonian thinking have retained the essentially pre-Newtonian view that the real world is almost completely internal to the observer.” Consequently, he adds, “empirical reality has a much different significance for many of the new countries than for the West because in a certain sense they never went through the process of discovering it.”

Unlike Cromer, Kissinger does not need to quote Sir Alfred Lyall on the Oriental's inability to be accurate; the point he makes is sufficiently unarguable to require no special validation. We had our Newtonian revolution; they didn’t. As thinkers we are better off than they are. Good: the lines are drawn in much the same way, finally, as Balfour and Cromer drew them. Yet sixty or more years have intervened between Kissinger and the British imperialists. Numerous wars and revolutions have proved conclusively that the pre-Newtonian prophetic style, which Kissinger associates both with “inaccurate” developing countries and with Europe before the Congress of Vienna, is not entirely without its successes. Again unlike Balfour and Cromer, Kissinger therefore feels obliged to respect this pre-Newtonian perspective, since “it offers great flexibility with respect to the contemporary revolutionary turmoil.” Thus the duty of men in the post-Newtonian (real) world is to “construct an international order before a crisis imposes it as a necessity”: in other words, we must still find a way by which the developing world can be contained. Is this not similar to Cromer's vision of a harmoniously working machine designed ultimately to benefit some central authority, which opposes the developing world?

Kissinger may not have known on what fund of pedigreed knowledge he was drawing when he cut the world up into pre-Newtonian and post-Newtonian conceptions of reality. But his distinction is identical with the orthodox one made by Orientalists, who separate Orientals from Westerners. And like Orientalism's distinction Kissinger's is not value-free, despite the apparent neutrality of his tone. Thus such words as “prophetic,” “accuracy,” “internal,” “empirical reality,” and “order” are scattered throughout his description, and they characterize either attractive, familiar, desirable virtues or menacing, peculiar, disorderly defects. Both the traditional Orientalist, as we shall see, and Kissinger conceive of the difference between cultures, first, as creating a battlefront that
separates them, and second, as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other. With what effect and at what considerable expense such militant divisions have been maintained, no one at present needs to be reminded.

Another illustration dovetails neatly—perhaps too neatly—with Kissinger's analysis. In its February 1972 issue, the American Journal of Psychiatry printed an essay by Harold W. Gildden, who is identified as a retired member of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, United States Department of State; the essay's title ("The Arab World"), its tone, and its content argue a highly characteristic Orientalist bent of mind. Thus for his four-page, double-columned psychological portrait of over 100 million people, considered for a period of 1,300 years, Gildden cites exactly four sources for his views: a recent book on Tripoli, one issue of the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram, the periodical Oriente Moderno, and a book by Majid Khadduri, a well-known Orientalist. The article itself purports to uncover "the inner workings of Arab behavior," which from our point of view is "aberrant" but for Arabs is "normal." After this auspicious start, we are told that Arabs stress conformity; that Arabs inhabit a shame culture whose "prestige system" involves the ability to attract followers and clients (as an aside we are told that "Arab society is and always has been based on a system of client-patron relationships"); that Arabs can function only in conflict situations; that prestige is based solely on the ability to dominate others; that a shame culture—and therefore Islam itself—makes a virtue of revenge (here Gildden triumphantly cites the June 29, 1970 Al-Ahram to show that "in 1969 [in Egypt] in 1070 cases of murder where the perpetrators were apprehended, it was found that 20 percent of the murders were based on a desire to wipe out shame, 30 percent on a desire to satisfy real or imaginary wrongs, and 31 percent on a desire for blood revenge"); that if from a Western point of view "the only rational thing for the Arabs to do is to make peace . . . for the Arabs the situation is not governed by this kind of logic, for objectivity is not a value in the Arab system."

Gildden continues, now more enthusiastically: "it is a notable fact that while the Arab value system demands absolute solidarity within the group, it at the same time encourages among its members a kind of rivalry that is destructive of that very solidarity"; in Arab society only "success counts" and "the end justifies the means";

Arabs live "naturally" in a world "characterized by anxiety expressed in generalized suspicion and distrust, which has been labelled free-floating hostility"; "the art of subterfuge is highly developed in Arab life, as well as in Islam itself"; the Arab need for vengeance overrides everything; otherwise the Arab would feel "ego-destroying" shame. Therefore, if "Westerners consider peace to be high on the scale of values" and if "we have a highly developed consciousness of the value of time," this is not true of Arabs. "In fact," we are told, "in Arab tribal society (where Arab values originated), strife, not peace, was the normal state of affairs because raiding was one of the two main supports of the economy." The purpose of this learned disquisition is merely to show how on the Western and Oriental scale of values "the relative position of the elements is quite different." QED.¹⁷

This is the apogee of Orientalist confidence. No merely asserted generality is denied the dignity of truth; no theoretical list of Oriental attributes is without application to the behavior of Orientals in the real world. On the one hand there are Westerners, and on the other there are Arab-Orientals; the former are (in no particular order) rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values, without natural suspicion; the latter are none of these things. Out of what collective and yet particularized view of the Orient do these statements emerge? What specialized skills, what imaginative pressures, what institutions and traditions, what cultural forces produce such similarity in the descriptions of the Orient to be found in Cromer, Balfour, and our contemporary statesmen?

II

Imaginative Geography and Its Representations:
Orientalizing the Oriental

Strictly speaking, Orientalism is a field of learned study. In the Christian West, Orientalism is considered to have commenced its formal existence with the decision of the Church Council of
Viennie in 1312 to establish a series of chairs in “Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, and Syriac at Paris, Oxford, Bologna, Avignon, and Salamanca.” Yet any account of Orientalism would have to consider not only the professional Orientalist and his work but also the very notion of a field of study based on a geographical, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit called the Orient. Fields, of course, are made. They acquire coherence and integrity in time because scholars devote themselves in different ways to what seems to be a commonly agreed-upon subject matter. Yet it goes without saying that a field of study is rarely as simply defined as even its most committed partisans—usually scholars, professors, experts, and like—claim it is. Besides, a field can change so entirely, in even the most traditional disciplines like philology, history, or theology, as to make an all-purpose definition of subject matter almost impossible. This is certainly true of Orientalism, for some interesting reasons.

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 employ 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.

All of this describes Orientalism as an academic discipline. The “ism” in Orientalism serves to insist on the distinction of this discipline from every other kind. The rule in its historical development as an academic discipline has been its increasing scope, not its greater selectiveness. Renaissance Orientalists like Erpenius and

Guillaume Postel were primarily specialists in the languages of the Biblical provinces, although Postel boasted that he could get across Asia as far as China without needing an interpreter. 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 synomymous 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 Indo-Europeanist) or a gifted enthusiast (Hugo in _Les Orientales_, Goethe in the _Westöstlicher Diwan_), or both (Richard Burton, Edward Lane, Friedrich Schlegel).

The second index of how inclusive Orientalism had become since the Council of Vienna is to be found in nineteenth-century chronicles of the field itself. The most thorough of its kind is Jules Mohl’s _Vingt-sept Ans d’histoire des études orientales_, a two-volume logbook of everything of note that took place in Orientalism between 1840 and 1867. Mohl was the secretary of the Société asiatique in Paris, and for something more than the first half of the nineteenth century Paris was the capital of the Orientalist world (and, according to Walter Benjamin, of the nineteenth century). Mohl’s position in the Société could not have been more central to the field of Orientalism. There is scarcely anything done by a
European scholar touching Asia during those twenty-seven years that Mohl does not enter under "études orientales." His entries of course concern publications, but the range of published material of interest to Orientalist scholars is awesome. Arabic, innumerable Indian dialects, Hebrew, Pehlevi, Assyrian, Babylonian, Mongolian, Chinese, Burmese, Mesopotamian, Javanese: the list of philological works considered Orientalist is almost uncountable. Moreover, Orientalist studies apparently cover everything from the editing and translation of texts to numismatic, anthropological, archaeological, sociological, economic, historical, literary, and cultural studies in every known Asian and North African civilization, ancient and modern. Gustave Dugat’s *Histoire des orientalistes de l'Europe du XIIe au XIXe siècle* (1868-1870) is a selective history of major figures, but the range represented is no less immense than Mohl's.

Such eclecticism as this had its blind spots, nevertheless. 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'Égypte, 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 comprehending, hence degenerating, 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—lingering 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 perfectly correct, I think, to speak of a genre of Orientalist writing as exemplified in the works of Hugo, Goethe, Nerval, Flaubert, 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.

Today an Orientalist is less likely to call himself an Orientalist than he was almost any time up to World War II. Yet the designation is still useful, as when universities maintain programs or departments in Oriental languages or Oriental civilizations. There is an Oriental "faculty" at Oxford, and a department of Oriental studies at Princeton. As recently as 1959, the British government empowered a commission "to review developments in the Universities in the fields of Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African studies... and to consider, and advise on, proposals for future development." The Hayler Report, as it was called when it appeared in 1961, seemed untroubled by the broad designation of the word Oriental, which it found serviceably employed in American universities as well. For even the greatest name in modern Anglo-American Islamic studies, H. A. R. Gibb, preferred to call himself an Orientalist rather than an Arabist. Gibb himself, classicist that he was, could use the ugly neologism "area study" for Orientalism as a way of showing that area studies and Orientalism after all were interchangeable geographical titles. But this, I think, ingeniously belies much more interesting relationship between knowledge and geography. I should like to consider that relationship briefly.

Despite the distraction of a great many vague desires, impulses, and images, the mind seems persistently to formulate what Claude Lévi-Strauss has called a science of the concrete. A primitive tribe, for example, assigns a definite place, function, and significance to every leafy species in its immediate environment. Many of these grasses and flowers have no practical use; but the point Lévi-Strauss makes is that mind requires order, and order is achieved by discriminating and taking note of everything, placing everything of which the mind is aware in a secure, definable place, therefore giving things some role to play in the economy of objects and entities that make up an environment. This kind of rudimentary classification has a logic to it, but the rules of the logic by which a green fern in one society is a symbol of grace and in another is con-
considered maleficent are neither predictably rational nor universal. There is always a measure of the purely arbitrary in the way the distinctions between things are seen. And with these distinctions go values whose history, if one could unearth it completely, would probably show the same measure of arbitrariness. This is evident enough in the case of fashion. Why do wigs, lace collars, and high buckled shoes appear, then disappear, over a period of decades? Some of the answer has to do with utility and some with the inherent beauty of the fashion. But if we agree that all things in history, like history itself, are made by men, then we will appreciate how possible it is for many objects or places or times to be assigned roles and given meanings that acquire objective validity only after the assignments are made. This is especially true of relatively uncommon things, like foreigners, mutants, or "abnormal" behavior.

It is perfectly possible to argue that some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality. A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call "the land of the barbarians." In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours" which is "theirs" is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary. I use the word "arbitrary" here because imaginative geography of the "our land--barbarian land" variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for "us" to set up these boundaries in our own minds; "they" become "theirs" accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from "ours." To a certain extent modern and primitive societies seem to derive a sense of their identities negatively. A fifth-century Athenian was very likely to feel himself to be nonbarbarian as much as he positively felt himself to be Athenian. The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways. Yet often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is "out there," beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own.

The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard once wrote an analysis of what he called the poetics of space. The inside of a house, he said, acquires a sense of intimacy, secrecy, security, real or imagined, because of the experiences that come to seem appropriate for it. The objective space of a house—its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms—is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel: thus a house may be haunted, or homelike, or prisonlike, or magical. So space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here. The same process occurs when we deal with time. Much of what we associate with or even know about such periods as "long ago" or "the beginning" or "at the end of time" is poetic—made up. For a historian of Middle Kingdom Egypt, "long ago" will have a very clear sort of meaning, but even this meaning does not totally dissipate the imaginative, quasi-fictional quality one senses lurking in a time very different and distant from our own. For there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away. This is no less true of the feelings we often have that we would have been more "at home" in the sixteenth century or in Tahiti.

Yet there is no use in pretending that all we know about time and space, or rather history and geography, is more than anything else imaginative. 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
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 through Piraeus and Athens during the frustrating and increasingly irrational years of the Peloponnesian War.”

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.
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 realms 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 René 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 Orient is purely one thing or the other: it is their oscillations, 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 Varthena and Pietro della Valle; there were fabulists like Mandeville; there were the ineluctable 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 sensation 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.

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 Erchemberg, 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 the whole of Christian civilization a constant danger, and in time European civilization incorporated that peril and its lore, its great events,
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 "impostor" applied to Mohammed. Out of such and many other misconceptions there formed a circle which was never broken by imaginative exteriorisation. . . . The Christian concept of Islam was integral and self-sufficient. . . . 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 convince 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.

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:
Most conspicuous to us is the inability of any of these systems of thought [European Christianity] 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.44

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.45 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 pseudo-incarnations 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 twelfth and thirteenth centuries that Arabia was "on the fringe of the Christian world, a natural asylum for heretical outlaws,"46 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.47

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, Asarza, Isis and Osiris, Sheba, Babylon, the Genii, the Magi, Nineveh, Prestor 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.

A celebrated instance of how dramatic form and learned imagery come together in the Orientalist theater is Barthélemy d'Herbelot's Bibliothèque orientale, published posthumously in 1697, with a preface by Antoine Galland. The introduction of the recent Cambridge History of Islam considers the Bibliothèque, along with George Sale's preliminary discourse to his translation of the Koran (1734) and Simon Ockley's History of the Saracens (1708, 1718), to be "highly important" in widening "the new understand-
This inadequately describes d'Herbelot's work, which was not restricted to Islam as Sale's and Ockley's were. With the exception of Johann H. Hottinger's *Historia Orientalis*, which appeared in 1631, the *Bibliothèque* remained the standard reference work in Europe until the early nineteenth century. Its scope was truly epochal. Galland, who was the first European translator of *The Thousand and One Nights* and an Arabist of note, contrasted d'Herbelot's achievement with every prior one by noting the prodigious range of his enterprise. D'Herbelot read a great number of works, Galland said, in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, with the result that he was able to find out about matters hitherto concealed from Europeans. After first composing a dictionary of these three Oriental languages, d'Herbelot went on to study Oriental history, theology, geography, science, and art, in both their fabulous and their truthful varieties. Thereafter he decided to compose two works, one a *bibliothèque*, or "library," an alphabetically arranged dictionary, the second a *florilège*, or anthology. Only the first part was completed.

Galland's account of the *Bibliothèque* stated that "orientale" was planned to include principally the Levant, although—Galland says admiringly—the time period covered did not begin only with the creation of Adam and end with the "temps où nous sommes":

"d'Herbelot went even further back, to a time described as "plus haut" in fabulous histories—to the long period of the pre-Adamite Solimans. As Galland's description proceeds, we learn that the *Bibliothèque* was like "any other" history of the world, for what it attempted was a complete compendium of the knowledge available on such matters as the Creation, the Deluge, the destruction of Babel, and so forth—with the difference that d'Herbelot's sources were Oriental. He divided history into two types, sacred and profane (the Jews and Christians in the first, the Muslims in the second), and two periods, pre- and postdiluvian. Thus d'Herbelot was able to discuss such widely divergent histories as the Mogul, the Tartar, the Turkish, and the Slavonic; he took in as well all the provinces of the Muslim Empire, from the Extreme Orient to the Pillars of Hercules, with their customs, rituals, traditions, commentaries, dynasties, palaces, rivers, and flora. Such a work, even though it included some attention to "la doctrine perverse de Mahomet, qui a causé si grands dommages au Christianisme," was more capably thorough than any work before it. Galland concluded his

"Discours" by assuring the reader at length that d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque* was uniquely "utile et agréable"; other Orientalists, like Postel, Scaliger, Golius, Pococke, and Erpenius, produced Orientalist studies that were too narrowly grammatical, lexicographical, geographical, or the like. Only d'Herbelot was able to write a work capable of convincing European readers that the study of Oriental culture was more than just thankless and fruitless: only d'Herbelot, according to Galland, attempted to form in the minds of his readers a sufficiently ample idea of what it meant to know and study the Orient, an idea that would both fill the mind and satisfy one's great, previously conceived expectations. In such efforts as d'Herbelot's, Europe discovered its capacities for encompassing and Orientalizing the Orient. A certain sense of superiority appears here and there in what Galland had to say about his and d'Herbelot's *materia orientalia*; as in the work of seventeenth-century geographers like Raphael du Mans, Europeans could perceive that the Orient was being outstripped and outdated by Western science. But what becomes evident is not only the advantage of a Western perspective: there is also the triumphant technique for taking the immense fecundity of the Orient and making it systematically, even alphabetically, knowable by Western laymen. When Galland said of d'Herbelot that he satisfied one's expectations he meant, I think, that the *Bibliothèque* did not attempt to revise commonly received ideas about the Orient. For what the Orientalist does is to confirm the Orient in his readers' eyes; he neither tries nor wants to unsettle already firm convictions. All the *Bibliothèque orientale* did was represent the Orient more fully and more clearly: what may have been a loose collection of randomly acquired facts concerning vaguely Levantine history, Biblical imagery, Islamic culture, place names, and so on were transformed into a rational Oriental panorama, from A to Z. Under the entry for Mohammed, d'Herbelot first supplied all of the Prophet's given names, then proceeded to confirm Mohammed's ideological and doctrinal value as follows:

C'est le fameux imposteur Mahomet, Auteur et Fondateur d'une hérésie, qui a pris le nom de religion, que nous appelons Mahometane. Votre le titre d'Eslam.

Les Interprètes de l'Alcoran et autres Docteurs de la Ley Musulmane ou Mahometane ont appliqué à ce faux prophète tous les éloges, que les Athées, Pauliciens ou Paulistins & autres Hérétiques ont attribué à Jésus-Christ, en lui étant sa Divinité. . . ."
The Scope of Orientalism

Bibliothèque is an idea of Orientalism's power and effectiveness, which everywhere remind the reader that henceforth in order to get at the Orient he must pass through the learned grids and codes provided by the Orientalist. Not only is the Orient accommodated to the moral exigencies of Western Christianity; it is also circumscribed by a series of attitudes and judgments that send the Western mind, not first to Oriental sources for correction and verification, but rather to other Orientalist works. The Orientalist stage, as I have been calling it, becomes a system of moral and epistemological rigor. As a discipline representing institutionalized Western knowledge of the Orient, Orientalism thus comes to exert a three-way force, on the Orient, on the Orientalist, and on the Western "consumer" of Orientalism. It would be wrong, I think, to underestimate the strength of the three-way relationship thus established. For the Orient ("out there" towards the East) is corrected, even penalized, for lying outside the boundaries of European society, "our" world; the Orient is thus Orientalized, a process that not only marks the Orient as the province of the Orientalist but also forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept Orientalist codifications (like d'Herbelot's alphabetized Bibliothèque) as the true Orient. Truth, in short, becomes a function of learned judgment, not of the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist.

This whole didactic process is neither difficult to understand nor difficult to explain. 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 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

(This is the famous imposter Mahomet, Author and Founder of a heresy, which has taken on the name of religion, which we call Mohammedan. See entry under Islam.

The interpreters of the Arians and other Doctors of Muslim or Mohammedan Law have applied to this false prophet all the praises which the Arians, Paulicians or Paulanists, and other Heretics have attributed to Jesus Christ, while stripping him of his Divinity...)

"Mohammedan" is the relevant (and insulting) European designation; "Islam," which happens to be the correct Muslim name, is relegated to another entry. The "heresy...which we call Mohammedan" is "caught" as the imitation of a Christian imitation of true religion. Then, in the long historical account of Mohammed's life, d'Herbelot can turn to more or less straight narrative. But it is the placing of Mohammed's counts in the Bibliothèque. The dangers of free-wheeling heresy are removed when it is transformed into ideologically explicit matter for an alphabetical item. Mohammed no longer roams the Eastern world as a threatening, immoral debaucher; he sits quietly on his (admittedly prominent) portion of the Orientalist stage. He is given a genealogy, an explanation, even a development, all of which are subsumed under the simple statements that prevent him from straying elsewhere.

Such "images" of the Orient as these are images in that they represent or stand for a very large entity, otherwise impossibly diffuse, which they enable one to grasp or see. They are also characters, related to such types as the brigadiers, misers, or gluttons produced by Theophrastus, La Bruyère, or Selden. Perhaps it is not exactly correct to say that one sees such characters as the miles gloriosus or Mahomet the imposter, since the discursive confinement of a character is supposed at best to let one apprehend a generic type without difficulty or ambiguity. D'Herbelot's character of Mahomet is an image, however, because the false prophet is part of a general theatrical representation called orientale whose totality is contained in the Bibliothèque.

The didactic quality of the Orientalist representation cannot be detached from the rest of the performance. In a learned work like the Bibliothèque orientale, which was the result of systematic study and research, the author imposes a disciplinary order upon the material he has worked on; in addition, he wants it made clear to the reader that what the printed page delivers is an ordered, disciplined judgment of the material. What is thus conveyed by the
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 there 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 *seminatore 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 detail that so vivid a punishment entails: Mohammed’s entrails and his excrement are described with unflinching accuracy. Mohammed explains his 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 anachronistic 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 Fénelon’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,
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 Clunian Orientalists, in the writings of the Christian polemicians 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.

And so, indeed, is the Orientalist attitude in general. It 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
only for Europe. Hence the vacillation between the familiar and the alien; Mohammed is always the imposter (familiar, because he pretends to be like the Jesus we know) and always the Oriental (alien, because although he is in some ways “like” Jesus, he is after all not like him).

Rather than listing all the figures of speech associated with the Orient—its strangeness, its difference, its exotic sensuousness, and so forth—we can generalize about them as they were handed down through the Renaissance. They are all declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the timeless eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent, which is sometimes specified, sometimes not. For all these functions it is frequently enough to use the simple copula is. Thus, Mohammed is an imposter, the very phrase canonized in d’Herbelot’s Bibliothèque and dramatized in a sense by Dante. No background need be given; the evidence necessary to convict Mohammed is contained in the “is.” One does not qualify the phrase, neither does it seem necessary to say that Mohammed was an imposter, nor need one consider for a moment that it may not be necessary to repeat the statement. It is repeated, he is an imposter, and each time one says it, he becomes more of an imposter and the author of the statement gains a little more authority in having declared it. Thus Humphrey Prideaux’s famous seventeenth-century biography of Mohammed is subtitled The True Nature of Imputation. Finally, of course, such categories as imposter (or Oriental, for that matter) imply, indeed require, an opposite that is neither fraudulently something else nor endlessly in need of explicit identification. And that opposite is “Occidental,” or in Mohammed’s case, Jesus.

Philosophically, then, the kind of language, thought, and vision that I have been calling Orientalism very generally is a form of radical realism; anyone employing Orientalism, which is the habit for dealing with questions, objects, qualities, and regions deemed Oriental, will designate, name, point to, fix what he is talking or thinking about with a word or phrase, which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply to be, reality. Rhetorically speaking, Orientalism is absolutely anatomical and enumerative: to use its vocabulary is to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts. Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge. These are a few of the results, I think, of imaginative geography and of the dramatic boundaries it draws. There are some specifically modern transmutations of these Orientalized results, however, to which I must now turn.

III

Projects

It is necessary to examine the more flamboyant operational successes of Orientalism if only to judge how exactly wrong (and how totally opposite to the truth) was the grandly menacing idea expressed by Michelet, that “the Orient advances, invincible, fatal to the gods of light by the charm of its dreams, by the magic of its chiaroscuro.” Cultural, material, and intellectual relations between Europe and the Orient have gone through innumerable phases, even though the line between East and West has made a certain constant impression upon Europe. Yet in general it was the West that moved upon the East, not vice versa. Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient; Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice. But in addition I have been using the word to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line. These two aspects of Orientalism are not incongruent, since by use of them both Europe could advance securely and unmetaphorically upon the Orient. Here I should like principally to consider material evidence of this advance.

Islam excepted, the Orient for Europe was until the nineteenth century a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance. This is patent true of the British experience in India, the Portuguese experience in the East Indies, China, and Japan, and the French and Italian experiences in various regions of the Orient. There were occasional instances of native insubordination to disturb the idyll, as when in 1638–1639 a group of Japanese Christians threw the Portuguese out of the area; by and large, however, only the Arab and Islamic Orient presented Europe with an
unresolved challenge on the political, intellectual, and for a time, economic levels. For much of its history, then, Orientalism carries within it the stamp of a problematic European attitude towards Islam, and it is this acutely sensitive aspect of Orientalism around which my interest in this study turns.

Doubtless Islam was a real provocation in many ways. It lay uneasily close to Christianity, geographically and culturally. It drew on the Judeo-Hellenic traditions, it borrowed creatively from Christianity, it could boast of unrivaled military and political successes. Nor was this all. The Islamic lands sit adjacent to and even on top of the Biblical lands; moreover, the heart of the Islamic domain has always been the region closest to Europe, what has been called the Near Orient or Near East. Arabic and Hebrew are Semitic languages, and together they dispose and dispose of material that is urgently important to Christianity. From the end of the seventh century until the battle of Lepanto in 1571, Islam in either its Arab, Ottoman, or North African and Spanish form dominated or effectively threatened European Christianity. That Islam outstripped and outshone Rome cannot have been absent from the mind of any European past or present. Even Gibbon was no exception, as is evident in the following passage from the Decline and Fall:

In the victorious days of the Roman republic it had been the aim of the senate to confine their councils and legions to a single war, and completely to suppress a first enemy before they provoked the hostilities of a second. These timid maxims of policy were disdained by the magnanimity or enthusiasm of the Arabian caliphs. With the same vigour and success they invaded the successors of Augustus and Artaxerxes; and the rival monarchies at the same instant became the prey of an enemy whom they had so long been accustomed to despise. In the ten years of the administration of Omar, the Saracens reduced to his obedience thirty-six thousand cities or castles, destroyed four thousand churches or temples of the unbelievers, and edified fourteen hundred mosques for the exercise of the religion of Mohammed. One hundred years after his flight from Mecca the arms and reign of his successors extended from India to the Atlantic Ocean, over the various and distant provinces. . . .

When the term Orient was not simply a synonym for the Asiatie East as a whole, or taken as generally denoting the distant and exotic, it was most rigorously understood as applying to the Islamic Orient. This "militant" Orient came to stand for what Henri Baudet has called "the Asiatic tidal wave." Certainly this was the case in Europe through the middle of the eighteen century, the point at which repositories of "Oriental" knowledge like d'Herbelot's Bibliothèque orientale stop meaning primarily Islam, the Arabs, or the Ottomans. Until that time cultural memory gave understanding adequate prominence to such relatively distant events as the fall of Constantinople, the Crusades, and the conquest of Sicily and Spain, but if these signified the menacing Orient they did not at the same time efface what remained of Asia.

For there was always India, where, after Portugal pioneered the first bases of European presence in the early sixteenth century, Europe, and primarily England after a long period (from 1600 to 1758) of essentially commercial activity, dominated politically as an occupying force. Yet India itself never provided an indigenous threat to Europe. Rather it was because native authority crumbled there and opened the land to inter-European rivalry and to outright European political control that the Indian Orient could be treated by Europe with such proprietary hauteur—never with the sense of danger reserved for Islam. Nevertheless, between this hauteur and anything like accurate positive knowledge there existed a vast disparity. D'Herbelot's entries for Indo-Persian subjects in the Bibliothèque were all based on Islamic sources, and it is true to say that until the early nineteenth century "Oriental languages" was considered a synonym for "Semitic languages." The Oriental renaissance of which Quiner spoke served the function of expanding some fairly narrow limits, in which Islam was the catchall Oriental example. Sanskrit, Indian religion, and Indian history did not acquire the status of scientific knowledge until after Sir William Jones's efforts in the late eighteenth century, and even Jones's interest in India came to him by way of his prior interest in and knowledge of Islam.

It is not surprising, then, that the first major work of Oriental scholarship after d'Herbelot's Bibliothèque was Simon Ockley's History of the Saracens, whose first volume appeared in 1708. A recent historian of Orientalism has opined that Ockley's attitude towards the Muslims—that to them is owed what was first known of philosophy by European Christians—"shocked painfully" his European audience. For not only did Ockley make this Islamic pre-eminence clear in his work; he also "gave Europe its first authentic and substantial taste of the Arab viewpoint touching the
wars with Byzantium and Persia.” However, Ockley was careful to dissociate himself from the infectious influence of Islam, and unlike his colleague William Whiston (Newton’s successor at Cambridge), he always made it clear that Islam was an outrageous heresy. For his Islamic enthusiasm, on the other hand, Whiston was expelled from Cambridge in 1709.

Access to Indian (Oriental) riches had always to be made by first crossing the Islamic provinces and by withstanding the dangerous effect of Islam as a system of quasi-Arian belief. And at least for the larger segment of the eighteenth century, Britain and France were successful. The Ottoman Empire had long since settled into a (for Europe) comfortable senescence, to be inscribed in the nineteenth century as the “Eastern Question.” Britain and France fought each other in India between 1744 and 1748 and again between 1756 and 1763, until, in 1769, the British emerged in practical economic and political control of the subcontinent. What was more inevitable than that Napoleon should choose to harass Britain’s Oriental empire by first intercepting its Islamic thoroughway, Egypt?

Although it was almost immediately preceded by at least two major Orientalist projects, Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 and his foray into Syria have had by far the greater consequence for the modern history of Orientalism. Before Napoleon only two efforts (both by scholars) had been made to invade the Orient by stripping it of its veils and also by going beyond the comparative shelter of the Biblical Orient. The first was by Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805), an eccentric theoretician of egalitarianism, a man who managed in his head to reconcile Jansenism with orthodox Catholicism and Brahmanism, and who traveled to Asia in order to prove the actual primitive existence of a Chosen People and of the Biblical genealogies. Instead he overshot his early goal and traveled as far east as Surat, there to find a cache of Avestan texts, there also to complete his translation of the Avesta. Raymond Schwab has said of the mysterious Avestan fragment that set Anquetil off on his voyages that whereas “the scholars looked at the famous fragment of Oxford and then returned to their studies, Anquetil looked, and then went to India.” Schwab also remarks that Anquetil and Voltaire, though temperamentally and ideologically at hopeless odds with each other, had a similar interest in the Orient and the Bible, “the one to make the Bible more indisputable, the other to make it more unbelievable.” Ironically, Anquetil’s Avesta transla-

tions served Voltaire’s purposes, since Anquetil’s discoveries “soon led to criticism of the very [Biblical] texts which had hitherto been considered to be revealed texts.” The net effect of Anquetil’s expedition is well described by Schwab:

In 1759, Anquetil finished his translation of the Avesta at Surat; in 1786 that of the Upanishads in Paris—he had dug a channel between the hemispheres of human genius, correcting and expanding the old humanism of the Mediterranean basin. Less than fifty years earlier, his compatriots were asked what it was like to be Persian, when he taught them how to compare the monuments of the Persians to those of the Greeks. Before him, one looked for information on the remote past of our planet exclusively among the great Latin, Greek, Jewish, and Arabic writers. The Bible was regarded as a lonely rock, an aerolite. A universe in writing was available, but scarcely anyone seemed to suspect the immensity of those unknown lands. The realization began with his translation of the Avesta, and reached dizzying heights owing to the exploration in Central Asia of the languages that multiplied after Babel. Into our schools, up to that time limited to the narrow Greco-Latin heritage of the Renaissance [of which much had been transmitted to Europe by Islam], he interjected a vision of innumerable civilizations from ages past, of an infinity of literatures; moreover the few European provinces were not the only places to have left their mark in history.

For the first time, the Orient was revealed to Europe in the materiality of its texts, languages, and civilizations. Also for the first time, Asia acquired a precise intellectual and historical dimension with which to buttress the myths of its geographic distance and vastness. By one of those inevitable contracting compensations for a sudden cultural expansion, Anquetil’s Oriental labors were succeeded by William Jones’s, the second of the pre-Napoleonic projects I mentioned above. Whereas Anquetil opened large vistas, Jones closed them down, codifying, tabulating, comparing. Before he left England for India in 1783, Jones was already a master of Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian. These seemed perhaps the least of his accomplishments: he was also a poet, a jurist, a polyhistor, a classicist, and an indefatigable scholar whose powers would recommend him to such as Benjamin Franklin, Edmund Burke, William Pitt, and Samuel Johnson. In due course he was appointed to “an honorable and profitable place in the Indies,” and immediately upon his arrival there to take up a post with the East India Company.
began the course of personal study that was to gather in, to rope off, to domesticate the Orient and thereby turn it into a province of European learning. For his personal work, entitled "Objects of Enquiry During My Residence in Asia" he enumerated among the topics of his investigation "the Laws of the Hindus and Moghulians, Modern Politics and Geography of Hindustan, Best Mode of Governing Bengal, Arithmetic and Geometry, and Mixed Sciences of the Asiatics, Medicine, Chemistry, Surgery, and Anatomy of the Indians, Natural Productions of India, Poetry, Rhetoric and Morality of Asia, Music of the Eastern Nations, Trade, Manufacture, Agriculture, and Commerce of India," and so forth. On August 17, 1787, he wrote unassumingly to Lord Althorp that "it is my ambition to know India better than any other European ever knew it." Here is where Balfour in 1910 could find the first adumbration of his claim as an Englishman to know the Orient more and better than anyone else.

Jones's official work was the law, an occupation with symbolic significance for the history of Orientalism. Seven years before Jones arrived in India, Warren Hastings had decided that Indians were to be ruled by their own laws, a more enterprising project than it appears at first glance since the Sanskrit code of laws existed then for practical use only in a Persian translation, and no Englishman at the time knew Sanskrit well enough to consult the original texts. A company official, Charles Wilkins, first mastered Sanskrit, then began to translate the Institutes of Manu; in this labor he was soon to be assisted by Jones. (Wilkins, incidentally, was the first translator of the Bhagavad-Gita.) In January 1784 Jones convened the inaugural meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, which was to be for India what the Royal Society was for England. As first president of the society and as magistrate, Jones acquired the effective knowledge of the Orient and of Orientals that was later to make him the undisputed founder (the phrase is A. J. Arberry's) of Orientalism. To rule and to learn, then to compare Orient with Occident: these were Jones's goals, which, with an irresistible impulse always to codify, to subdue the infinite variety of the Orient to "a complete digest" of laws, figures, customs, and works, he is believed to have achieved. His most famous pronouncement indicates the extent to which modern Orientalism, even in its philosophical beginnings, was a comparative discipline having for its principal goal the grounding of the European languages in a distant, and harmless, Oriental source:

The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed, that no philologer could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source.

Many of the early English Orientalists in India were, like Jones, legal scholars, or else, interestingly enough, they were medical men with strong missionary leanings. So far as one can tell, most of them were imbued with the dual purpose of investigating "the sciences and the arts of Asia, with the hope of facilitating ameliorations there and of advancing knowledge and improving the arts at home" so the common Orientalist goal was stated in the Centenary Volume of the Royal Asiatic Society founded in 1823 by Henry Thomas Colebrooke. In their dealings with the modern Orientals, the early professional Orientalists like Jones had only two roles to fulfill, yet we cannot today fault them for strictures placed on their humanity by the official Occidental character of their presence in the Orient. They were either judges or they were doctors. Even Edgar Quinet, writing more metaphysically than realistically, was dimly aware of this therapeutic relationship. "L'Asie a les prophètes," he said in Le Génie des religions; "L'Europe a les docteurs." Proper knowledge of the Orient proceeded from a thorough study of the classical texts, and only after that to an application of those texts to the modern Orient. Faced with the obvious decrepitude and political impotence of the modern Oriental, the European Orientalist found it his duty to rescue some portion of a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur in order to "facilitate ameliorations" in the present Orient. What the European took from the classical Oriental past was a vision (and thousands of facts and artifacts) which only he could employ to the best advantage; to the modern Oriental he gave facilitation and amelioration—and, too, the benefit of his judgment as to what was best for the modern Orient.

It was characteristic of all Orientalist projects before Napoleon's that very little could be done in advance of the project to prepare for its success. Anquetil and Jones, for example, learned what they did about the Orient only after they got there. They were confronting, as it were, the whole Orient, and only after a while and after considerable improvising could they whittle it down to a smaller
province. Napoleon, on the other hand, wanted nothing less than to take the whole of Egypt, and his advance preparations were of unparalleled magnitude and thoroughness. Even so, these preparations were almost fanatically schematic and—if I may use the word—textual, which are features that will bear some analysis here. Three things above all else seem to have been in Napoleon's mind as he readied himself while in Italy in 1797 for his next military move. First, aside from the still threatening power of England, his military successes that had culminated in the Treaty of Campo Formio left him no other place to turn for additional glory than the East. Moreover, Talleyrand had recently animadverted on "les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles dans les circonstances présentes," and this notion, along with the appealing prospect of hurting Britain, drew him eastwards. Secondly, Napoleon had been attracted to the Orient since his adolescence; his youthful manuscripts, for example, contain a summary he made of Marigny's *Histoire des Arabes*, and it is evident from all of his writing and conversation that he was steeped, as Jean Thiry has put it, in the memories and glories that were attached to Alexander's Orient generally and to Egypt in particular. Thus the idea of reconquering Egypt as a new Alexander proposed itself to him, allied with the additional benefit of acquiring a new Islamic colony at England's expense. Thirdly, Napoleon considered Egypt a likely project precisely because he knew it tactically, strategically, historically, and—not to be underestimated—textually, that is, as something one read about and knew through the writings of recent as well as classical European authorities. The point in all this is that for Napoleon Egypt was a project that acquired reality in his mind, and later in his preparations for its conquest, through experiences that belong to the realm of ideas and myths culled from texts, not empirical reality. His plans for Egypt therefore became the first in a long series of European encounters with the Orient in which the Orientalist's special expertise was put directly to functional colonial use; for at the crucial instant when an Orientalist had to decide whether his loyalties and sympathies lay with the Orient or with the conquering West, he always chose the latter, from Napoleon's time on. As for the emperor himself, he saw the Orient only as it had been encoded first by classical texts and then by Orientalist experts, whose vision, based on classical texts, seemed a useful substitute for any actual encounter with the real Orient.

Napoleon's enlistment of several dozen "savants" for his Egyptian Expedition is too well known to require detail here. His idea was to build a sort of living archive for the expedition, in the form of studies conducted on all topics by the members of the Institut d'Egypte, which he founded. What is perhaps less well known is Napoleon's prior reliance upon the work of the Comte de Volney, a French traveler whose *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* appeared in two volumes in 1787. Aside from a short personal preface informing the reader that the sudden acquisition of some money (his inheritance) made it possible for him to take the trip east in 1783, Volney's *Voyage* is an almost oppressively impersonal document. Volney evidently saw himself as a scientist, whose job it was always to record the "état" of something he saw. The climax of the *Voyage* occurs in the second volume, an account of Islam as a religion. Volney's views were canonically hostile to Islam as a religion and as a system of political institutions; nevertheless Napoleon found this work and Volney's *Considérations sur la guerre actuel de Turcs* (1788) of particular importance. For Volney after all was a canny Frenchman, and—like Chateaubriand and Lamartine a quarter-century after him—he eyed the Near Orient as a likely place for the realization of French colonial ambition. What Napoleon profited from in Volney was the enumeration, in ascending order of difficulty, of the obstacles to be faced in the Orient by any French expeditionary force.

Napoleon refers explicitly to Volney in his reflections on the Egyptian expedition, the *Campagnes d'Egypte et de Syrie, 1798–1799*, which he dictated to General Bertrand on Saint Helena. Volney, he said, considered that there were three barriers to French hegemony in the Orient and that any French force would therefore have to fight three wars: one against England, a second against the Ottoman Porte, and a third, the most difficult, against the Muslims. Volney's assessment was both shrewd and hard to fault since it was clear to Napoleon, as it would be to anyone who read Volney, that his *Voyage* and the *Considérations* were effective texts to be used by any European wishing to win in the Orient. In other words, Volney's work constituted a handbook for attenuating the human shock a European might feel as he directly experienced the Orient: Read the books, seems to have been Volney's thesis, and far from being disoriented by the Orient, you will compell it to you.

Napoleon took Volney almost literally, but in a characteristically
subtle way. From the first moment that the Armée d'Égypte appeared on the Egyptian horizon, every effort was made to convince the Muslims that "nous sommes les vrais musulmans," as Bonaparte's proclamation of July 2, 1798, put it to the people of Alexandria. Equipped with a team of Orientalists (and sitting on board a flagship called the Orient), Napoleon used Egyptian enmity towards the Mamelukes and appeals to the revolutionary idea of equal opportunity for all to wage a uniquely benign and selective war against Islam. What more than anything impressed the first Arab chronicler of the expedition, Abd-al-Rahman al-Jabarti, was Napoleon's use of scholars to manage his contacts with the natives—that and the impact of watching a modern European intellectual establishment at close quarters. Napoleon tried everywhere to prove that he was fighting for Islam; everything he said was translated into Koranic Arabic, just as the French army was urged by its command always to remember the Islamic sensibility. (Compare, in this regard, Napoleon's tactics in Egypt with the tactics of the Requerimiento, a document drawn up in 1513—in Spanish—by the Spaniards to be read aloud to the Indians: "We shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses [the King and Queen of Spain] may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey," etc. etc. etc.) When it seemed obvious to Napoleon that his force was too small to impose itself on the Egyptians, he then tried to make the local imamas, cadis, muftis, and ulemas interpret the Koran in favor of the Grande Armée. To this end, the sixty ulemas who taught at the Azhar were invited to his quarters, given full military honors, and then allowed to be flattered by Napoleon's admiration for Islam and Mohammed and by his obvious veneration for the Koran, with which he seemed perfectly familiar. This worked, and soon the population of Cairo seemed to have lost its distrust of the occupiers. Napoleon later gave his deputy Kieber strict instructions after he left always to administer Egypt through the Orientalists and the religious Islamic leaders whom they could win over; any other politics was too expensive and foolish. Hugo thought that he grasped the teachful glory of Napoleon's Oriental expedition in his poem "Lui":

Au Nil je le retrouve encore.
L'Égypte resplendit des feux de son aurore;
Son astre impérial se lève à l'orient.

Vainqueur, enthousiaste, éclatant de prestige,
Procede, il étonna la terre de prodiges.
Les vieux sheiks vénérèrent l'émir jeune et prudent;
Le peuple redoutait ses armes inouïes;
Sublime, il apparut aux tribus éblouies
Comme un Mahomet d'Occident."

(By the Nile, I find him once again.
Egypt shines with the fires of his dawn;
His imperial orb rises in the Orient.
Victor, enthusiast, bursting with achievements,
Prodigious, he stunned the land of prodigies.
The old sheiks venerated the young and prudent emir.
The people dreaded his unprecedented arms;
Sublime, he appeared to the dazzled tribes
Like a Mahomet of the Occident.)

Such a triumph could only have been prepared before a military expedition, perhaps only by someone who had no prior experience of the Orient except what books and scholars told him. The idea of taking along a full-scale academy is very much an aspect of this textual attitude to the Orient. And this attitude in turn was bolstered by specific Revolutionary decrees (particularly the one of 10 Germinal An III—March 30, 1793—establishing an école publique in the Bibliothèque nationale to teach Arabic, Turkish, and Persian) whose object was the rationalist one of dispelling mystery and institutionalizing even the most recondite knowledge. Thus many of Napoleon's Orientalist translators were students of Sylvestre de SACY, who, beginning in June 1796, was the first and only teacher of Arabic at the École publique des langues orientales. Sacy later became the teacher of nearly everyone Orientalist in Europe, where his students dominated the field for about three-quarters of a century. Many of them were politically useful, in the ways that several had been to Napoleon in Egypt.

But dealings with the Muslims were only a part of Napoleon's project to dominate Egypt. The other part was to render it completely open, to make it totally accessible to European scrutiny. From being a land of obscurity and a part of the Orient hitherto known at second hand through the exploits of earlier travelers, scholars, and conquerors, Egypt was to become a department of French learning. Here too the textual and schematic attitudes are evident. The Institut, with its teams of chemists, historians, biol-
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ogists, archaeologists, surgeons, and antiquarians, was the learned
division of the army. Its job was no less aggressive: to put Egypt
into modern French; and unlike the Abbé Le Mascarie’s 1735
Description de l’Egypte, Napoleon’s was to be a universal undertak-
ing. Almost from the first moments of the occupation Napoleon
saw to it that the Institut began its meetings, its experiments—
its fact-finding mission, as we would call it today. Most important,
everything said, seen, and studied was to be recorded, and indeed
was recorded in that great collective appropriation of one country
by another, the Description de l’Egypte, published in twenty-three
everous volumes between 1809 and 1828.8

The Description’s uniqueness is not only in its size, or even in the
intelligence of its contributors, but in its attitude to its subject
matter, and it is this attitude that makes it of great interest for the
study of modern Orientalist projects. The first few pages of its
préface historique, written by Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Fourier, the
Institut’s secretary, make it clear that in “doing” Egypt the scholars
were also grappling directly with a kind of undiluted cultural,
geographical, and historical significance. Egypt was the focal point
of the relationships between Africa and Asia, between Europe and
the East, between memory and actuality.

Placed between Africa and Asia, and communicating easily with
Europe, Egypt occupies the center of the ancient continent. This
country presents only great memories; it is the homeland of the
arts and conserves innumerable monuments; its principal temples
and the palaces inhabited by its kings still exist, even though its
least ancient edifices had already been built by the time of the
Trojan War. Homer, Lycurgus, Solon, Pythagoras, and Plato all
went to Egypt to study the sciences, religion, and the laws.
Alexander founded an opulent city there, which for a long time
enjoyed commercial supremacy and which witnessed Pompey,
Caesar, Mark Antony, and Augustus deciding between them the
fate of Rome and that of the entire world. It is therefore proper
for this country to attract the attention of illustrious princes who
rule the destiny of nations.

No considerable power was ever amassed by any nation,
whether in the West or in Asia, that did not also turn that nation
toward Egypt, which was regarded in some measure as its natural
lot.84

Because Egypt was saturated with meaning for the arts, sciences,
and government, its role was to be the stage on which actions of a
world-historical importance would take place. By taking Egypt,
then, a modern power would naturally demonstrate its strength and
justify history; Egypt’s own destiny was to be annexed, to Europe
preferably. In addition, this power would also enter a history whose
common element was defined by figures no less great than Homer,
Alexander, Caesar, Plato, Solon, and Pythagoras, who graced the
Orient with their prior presence there. The Orient, in short, existed
as a set of values attached, not to its modern realities, but to a
series of valorized contacts it had had with a distant European
past. This is a pure example of the textual, schematic attitude I have
been referring to.

Fourier continues similarly for over a hundred pages (each page,
incidentally, is a square meter in size, as if the project and the size
of the page had been thought of as possessing comparable scale).
Out of the free-floating past, however, he must justify the
Napoleonic expedition as something that needed to be undertaken
when it happened. The dramatic perspective is never abandoned.
Conscious of his European audience and of the Oriental figures he
was manipulating, he writes:

One remembers the impression made on the whole of Europe
by the astounding news that the French were in the Orient. . . .
This great project was meditated in silence, and was prepared
with such activity and secrecy that the worried vigilance of our enemies
was deceived; only at the moment that it happened did they learn
that it had been conceived, undertaken, and carried out success-
fully. . . .

So dramatic a coup de théâtre had its advantages for the Orient as
well:

This country, which has transmitted its knowledge to so many
nations, is today plunged into barbarism.

Only a hero could bring all these factors together, which is what
Fourier now describes:

Napoleon appreciated the influence that this event would have on
the relations between Europe, the Orient, and Africa, on Medi-
terranean shipping, and on Asia’s destiny. . . . Napoleon wanted
to offer a useful European example to the Orient, and finally also
to make the inhabitants’ lives more pleasant, as well as to procure
for them all the advantages of a perfected civilization.

None of this would be possible without a continuous application
to the project of the arts and sciences.85
To restore a region from its present barbarism to its former classical greatness; to instruct (for its own benefit) the Orient in the ways of the modern West; to subordinate or underplay military power in order to aggrandize the project of glorious knowledge acquired in the process of political domination of the Orient; to formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory, its importance to imperial strategy, and its "natural" role as an appendage to Europe; to dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial occupation with the title "contribution to modern learning" when the natives had neither been consulted nor treated as anything except as pretexts for a text whose usefulness was not to the natives; to feel oneself as a European in command, almost at will, of Oriental history, time, and geography; to institute new areas of specialization; to establish new disciplines; to divide, deploy, schematize, tabulate, index, and record everything in sight (and out of sight); to make out of every observable detail a generalization and out of every generalization an immutable law about the Oriental nature, temperamental, mentality, custom, or type; and, above all, to transmute living reality into the stuff of texts, to possess (or think one possesses) actuality mainly because nothing in the Orient seems to resist one's powers: these are the features of Orientalist projection entirely realized in the Description de l'Égypte, itself enabled and reinforced by Napoleon's wholly Orientalist engulfment of Egypt by the instruments of Western knowledge and power. Thus Fourier concludes his preface by announcing that history will remember how "Égypte fut le théâtre de sa [Napoleon's] gloire, et préserve de l'oubli toutes les circonstances de cet événement extraordinaire." 74

The Description thereby displaces Egyptian or Oriental history as a history possessing its own coherence, identity, and sense. Instead, history as recorded in the Description supplants Egyptian or Oriental history by identifying itself directly and immediately with world history, a euphemism for European history. To save an event from oblivion is in the Orientalist's mind the equivalent of turning the Orient into a theater for his representations of the Orient: this is almost exactly what Fourier says. Moreover, the sheer power of having described the Orient in modern Oriental terms lifts the Orient from the realms of silent obscurity where it has lain neglected (except for the inchoate murmurings of a vast but undefined sense of its own past) into the clarity of modern European science. There this new Orient figures as—for instance, in Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire's biological theses in the Description—the confirmation of laws of zoological specialization formulated by Buffon.75 Or it serves as a "contraste frappante avec les habitudes des nations Européennes,"76 in which the "bizarre jouissances" of Orientals serve to highlight the sobriety and rationality of Occidental habits. Or, to cite one more use for the Orient, equivalents of those Oriental physiological characteristics that made possible the successful embalming of bodies are sought for in European bodies, so that chevaliers fallen on the field of honor can be preserved as lifelike relics of Napoleon's great Oriental campaign.77

Yet the military failure of Napoleon's occupation of Egypt did not also destroy the fertility of its over-all projection for Egypt or the rest of the Orient. Quite literally, the occupation gave birth to the entire modern experience of the Orient as interpreted from within the universe of discourse founded by Napoleon in Egypt, whose agencies of domination and dissemination included the Institut and the Description. The idea, as it has been characterized by Charles-Roux, was that Egypt "restored to prosperity, regenerated by wise and enlightened administration ... would shed its civilizing rays upon all its Oriental neighbors."78 True, the other European powers would seek to compete in this mission, none more than England. But what would happen as a continuing legacy of the common Occidental mission to the Orient—despite inter-European squabbling, indecent competition, or outright war—would be the creation of new projects, new visions, new enterprises combining additional parts of the old Orient with the conquering European spirit. After Napoleon, then, the very language of Orientalism changed radically. Its descriptive realism was upgraded and became not merely a style of representation but a language, indeed a means of creation. Along with the langues mares, as those forgotten dormant sources for the modern European demonics were entitled by Antoine Fabre d'Olivet, the Orient was reconstructed, reassembled, crafted, in short, born out of the Orientalists' efforts. The Description became the master type of all further efforts to bring the Orient closer to Europe, thereafter to absorb it entirely and—centrally important—to cancel, or at least subdue and reduce, its strangeness and, in the case of Islam, its hostility. For the Islamic Orient would henceforth appear as a category denoting the Orientalists' power and not the Islamic people as humans nor their history as history.

Thus out of the Napoleonic expedition there issued a whole
series of textual children, from Chateaubriand’s *Itinéraire* to La- 
martine’s *Voyage en Orient* to Flaubert’s *Salammbo*, and in the same 
tradition, Lane’s *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* and 
Richard Burton’s *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah 
and Meccah*. What binds them together is not only their common 
background in Oriental legend and experience but also their learned 
reliance on the Orient as a kind of womb out of which they were 
brought forth. If paradoxically these creations turned out to be 
highly stylized simulacra, elaborately wrought imitations of what 
a live Orient might be thought to look like, that by no means 
detracts either from the strength of their imaginative conception or 
from the strength of European mastery of the Orient, whose 
prototypes respectively were Cagliostro, the great European im-
personator of the Orient, and Napoleon, its first modern conqueror. 

Artistic or textual work was not the only product of the 
Napoleonic expedition. There were, in addition and certainly more 
influential, the scientific project, whose chief instance is Ernest 
Renan’s *Système comparé et histoire générale des langues sémi-tiques*, 
completed in 1848 for—neatly enough—the Prix Volney, and the 
geopolitical project, of which Ferdinand de Lesseps’s Suez 
Canal and England’s occupation of Egypt in 1882 are prime in-
stances. The difference between the two is not only in magnitude 
but also in quality of Orientalist conviction. Renan truly 
believed that he had re-created the Orient, as it really was, in 
his work. De Lesseps, on the other hand, always was somewhat awed 
by the newness his project had released out of the old Orient, and 
this sense communicated itself to everyone for whom the opening 
of the canal in 1869 was no ordinary event. In his *Excursionist 
and Tourist Advertiser* for July 1, 1869, Thomas Cook’s enthusiasm 
carry on de Lesseps’s:

On November the 17th, the greatest engineering feat of the present 
century is to have its success celebrated by a magnificent inauguration 
fête, at which nearly every European royal family will have 
its special representative. Truly the occasion will be an exceptional 
one. The formation of a line of water communication between 
Europe and the East, has been the thought of centuries, occupying 
in turn the minds of Greeks, Romans, Saxons and Gaul, but it was 
not until within the last few years that modern civilization began 
seriously to set about emulating the labours of the ancient 
Pharaohs, who, many centuries since, constructed a canal between 
the two seas, traces of which remain to this day. . . . Everything 
connected with [the modern] works are on the most gigantic scale, 
and a perusal of a little pamphlet, descriptive of the undertaking, 
from the pen of the Chevalier de St. Stoess, impresses us most 
forcibly with the genius of the great Master-mind—M. Ferdinand 
de Lesseps— to whose perseverance, calm daring and foresight, 
the dream of ages has at last become a real and tangible fact . . . 
the project for bringing more closely together the countries of the 
West and the East, and thus uniting the civilizations of different 
epochs.*

The combination of old ideas with new methods, the bringing to-
gether of cultures whose relations to the nineteenth century were 
different, the genuine imposition of the power of modern technology 
and intellectual will upon formerly stable and divided geographical 
entities like East and West: this is what Cook perceives and what, 
in his journals, speeches, prospectuses, and letters, de Lesseps 
advertisements.

Genealogically, Ferdinand’s start was auspicious. Mathieu de 
Lesseps, his father, had come to Egypt with Napoleon and remained 
there (as “unofficial French representative,” Marlowe says**) for 
four years after the French evacuated it in 1801. Many of Fer-

* In accordance with such notions the name of the investment company formed by de Lesseps in 1858 was a charged 
one and reflected the grandiose plans he cherished: the Compagnie
universelle. In 1862 the Académie française offered a prize for an epic on the canal. Börner, the winner, delivered himself of such hyperbole as the following, none of it fundamentally contradicting de Lesseps's picture of what he was up to:

Au travail Ouvriers que notre France envoie,  
Tracez, pour l'univers, cette nouvelle voie  
Vos pères, les héros, sont venus jusqu'ici;  
Soyez ferme comme aux intempéries,  
Comme eux vous combattez aux pieds des pyramides,  
Et leurs quatre mille ans vous comptent aussi!  
Oui, c’est pour l’Univers! Pour l’Asie et l’Europe,  
Pour ces climats lointins que la nuit enveloppe,  
Pour le Chinois perdu et l’Indien demi-nu;  
Pour les peuples heureux, libres, humains et braves,  
Pour les peuples méchants, pour les peuples esclaves,  
Pour ceux à qui le Christ est encore inconnu.64

De Lesseps was nowhere more eloquent and resourceful than when he was called upon to justify the enormous expense in money and men the canal would require. He could pour out statistics to enchant any ear; he would quote Herodotus and maritime statistics with equal fluency. In his journal entries for 1864 he cited with approbation Casimir Leconte’s observation that an eccentric life would develop significant originality in men, and from originality would come great and unusual exploits.65 Such exploits were their own justification. Despite its immemorial pedigree of failures, its outrageous cost, its astounding ambitions for altering the way Europe would handle the Orient, the canal was worth the effort. It was a project uniquely able to override the objections of those who were consulted and, in improving the Orient as a whole, to do what scheming Egyptians, perfidious Chinese, and half-naked Indians could never have done for themselves.

The opening ceremonies in November 1869 were an occasion which, no less than the whole history of de Lesseps’s machinations, perfectly embodied his ideas. For years his speeches, letters, and pamphlets were laden with a vividly energetic and theatrical vocabulary. In the pursuit of success, he could be found saying of himself (always in the first person plural), we created, fought, disposed, achieved, acted, recognized, persevered, advanced; nothing, he repeated on many occasions, could stop us, nothing was impossible, nothing mattered finally except the realization of "le résultat final, le grand but," which he had conceived, defined, and finally executed. As the papal envoy to the ceremonies spoke on November 16 to the assembled dignitaries, his speech strove desperately to match the intellectual and imaginative spectacle offered by de Lesseps’s canal:

Il est permis d’affirmer que l’heure qui vient de sonner est non seulement une des plus solennelles de ce siècle, mais encore une des plus grandes et des plus décisives qu’a vues l’humanité, depuis qu’elle a une histoire ci-bas. Ce lieu, où confinent—sans désormais y toucher—l’Afrique et l’Asie, cette grande fête du genre humain, cette assistance auguste et cosmopolite, toutes les races du globe, tous les drapeaux, tous les pavillons, flottant joyeusement sous ce ciel radieux et immense, la croix debout et respectée de tous en face du croissant, que de merveilles, que de contrastes saisissants, que de rêves répétés chimériques devenues d’alpables réalités! et, dans cet assemblage de tant de prodiges, que de sujets de réflexions pour le penseur, que de joies dans l’heure présente et, dans les perspectives de l’avenir, que de glorieuses espérances! ..

Les deux extrémités du globe se rapprochent; en se rapprochant, elles se reconnaissent et se reconnaissant, tous les hommes, enfants d’un seul et même Dieu, éprouvent le tressaillement joyeux de leur mutuelle fraternité! O Occident! O Orient! rapprochez-vous, regardez, reconnaissiez, sajouez, étreignez-vous! ..

Mais derrière le phénomène matériel, le regard du penseur découvre des horizons plus vastes que les espaces mesurables, les horizons sans bornes où mouvent les plus hautes destinées, les plus glorieuses conquêtes, les plus immortelles certitudes du genre humain. ..

[Dieu] que votre souffle divin plane sur ces eaux! Qu’il y passe et repasse, de l’Occident à l’Orient, de l’Orient à l’Occident! O Dieu! Servez vous de cette voix pour rapprocher les hommes les uns des autres!66

The whole world seemed crowded in to render homage to a scheme that God could only bless and make use of himself. Old distinctions and inhibitions were dissolved: the Cross faced down the Crescent, the West had come to the Orient never to leave it (until, in July 1956, Gamal Abdel Nasser would activate Egypt’s taking over of the canal by pronouncing the name of de Lesseps).

In the Suez Canal idea we see the logical conclusion of Orientalist thought and, more interesting, of Orientalist effort. To the West, Asia had once represented silent distance and alienation; Islam was militant hostility to European Christianity. To overcome such
IV

Crisis

It may appear strange to speak about something or someone as holding a sexual attitude, but a student of literature will understand the phrase more easily if he will recall the kind of view attacked by Voltaire in Candide, or even the attitude to reality satirized by Cervantes in Don Quixote. What seems unexceptionable good sense to these writers is that it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books—texts—say; to apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality is to risk folly or ruin. One would no more think of using Amadis of Gaul to understand sixteenth-century (or present-day) Spain than one would use the Bible to understand, say, the House of Commons. But clearly people have tried and do try to use texts in so simple-minded a way, for otherwise Candide and Don Quixote would not still have the appeal for readers that they do today. It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human. But is this failing constantly present, or are there circumstances that, more than others, make the textual attitude likely to prevail?

Two situations favor a textual attitude. One is when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant. In such a case one has recourse not only to what in one’s previous experience the novelty resembles but also to what one has read about it. Travel books or guidebooks are about as “natural” a kind of text, as logical in their composition and in their use, as any book one can think of, precisely because of this human tendency to fall back on a text when the uncertainties of travel in strange parts seem to threaten one’s equanimity. Many travelers find themselves saying of an experience in a new country that it wasn’t what they expected, meaning that it wasn’t what a book said it would be. And of course many writers of travel books or guidebooks compose them in order to say that a country is like this, or better, that it is colorful, expensive, interesting, and so forth. The idea in either case is that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes. The comedy of Fabrice del Dongo’s search for the battle of Waterloo is not so much that he fails to find the battle, but that he looks for it as something texts have told him about.

A second situation favoring the textual attitude is the appearance of success. If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce and then encounters a fierce lion (I simplify, of course), the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe them. But if, in addition, the lion book instructs one how to deal with a fierce lion, and the instructions work
The Scope of Orientalism

perfectly, then not only will the author be greatly believed, he will also be impelled to try his hand at other kinds of written performance. There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement by which the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers' experiences. A book on how to handle a fierce lion might then cause a series of books to be produced on such subjects as the fierceness of lions, the origins of fierceness, and so forth. Similarly, as the focus of the text centers more narrowly on the subject—no longer lions but their fierceness—we might expect that the ways by which it is recommended that a lion's fierceness be handled will actually increase its fierceness, force it to be fierce since that is what it is, and that is what in essence we know or can only know about it.

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual, and arising out of circumstances similar to the ones I have just described, is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can create not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. This kind of text is composed out of those pre-existing units of information deposited by Flaubert in the catalogue of idées reçues.

In the light of all this, consider Napoleon and de Lesseps. Everything they knew, more or less, about the Orient came from books written in the tradition of Orientalism, placed in its library of idées reçues; for them the Orient, like the fierce lion, was something to be encountered and dealt with to a certain extent because the texts made that Orient possible. Such an Orient was silent, available to Europe for the realization of projects that involved but were never directly responsible to the native inhabitants, and unable to resist the projects, images, or mere descriptions devised for it. Earlier in this chapter I called such a relation between Western writing (and its consequences) and Oriental silence the result of and the sign of the West's great cultural strength, its will to power over the Orient. But there is another side to the strength, a side whose existence depends on the pressures of the Orientalist tradition and its textual attitude to the Orient; this side lives its own life, as books about fierce lions will do until lions can talk back. The perspective rarely drawn on Napoleon and de Lesseps—to take two among the many projectors who hatched plans for the Orient—is the one that sees them carrying on in the dimensionless silence of the Orient mainly because the discourse of Orientalism, over and above the Orient's powerlessness to do anything about them, suffused their activity with meaning, intelligibility, and reality. The discourse of Orientalism and what it made possible—in Napoleon's case, a West far more powerful militarily than the Orient—gave them Orientals who could be described in such works as the Description de l'Égypte and an Orient that could be cut across as de Lesseps cut across Suez. Moreover, Orientalism gave them their success—at least from their point of view, which had nothing to do with that of the Oriental. Success, in other words, had all the actual human interchange between Oriental and Westerner of the Judge's "said I to myself, said I" in Trial by Jury.

Once we begin to think of Orientalism as a kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient, we will encounter few surprises. For it is true that historians like Michelet, Ranke, Toqueville, and Burckhardt emphat their narratives "as a story of a particular kind," the same is also true of Orientalists who plotted Oriental history, character, and destiny for hundreds of years. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Orientalists became a more serious quantity, because by then the reaches of imaginative and actual geography had shrunk, because the Oriental-European relationship was determined by an unstoppable European expansion in search of markets, resources, and colonies, and finally, because Orientalism had accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution. Evidence of this metamorphosis is already apparent in what I have said of Napoleon, de Lesseps, Balfour, and Cromer. Their projects in the Orient are understandable on only the most rudimentary level as the efforts of men of vision and genius, heroes in Carlyle's sense. In fact Napoleon, de Lesseps, Cromer, and Balfour are far more regular, far less unusual, if we recall the schemata of d'Herbelot and Dante and add to them both a modernized, efficient engine (like the nineteenth-century European empire) and a positive twist: since one cannot ontologically obliterate the Orient (as d'Herbelot and Dante perhaps realized), one does have the means to capture it, treat it, describe it, improve it, radically alter it.
The point I am trying to make here is that the transition from a merely textual apprehension, formulation, or definition of the Orient to the putting of all this into practice in the Orient did take place, and that Orientalism had much to do with that—if I may use the word in a literal sense—*preposterous* transition. So far as its strictly scholarly work was concerned (and I find the idea of strictly scholarly work as disinterested and abstract hard to understand: still, we can allow it intellectually), Orientalism did a great many things. During its great age in the nineteenth century it produced scholars; it increased the number of languages taught in the West and the quantity of manuscripts edited, translated, and commented on; in many cases, it provided the Orient with sympathetic European students, genuinely interested in such matters as Sanskrit grammar, Phoenician numismatics, and Arabic poetry. Yet—and here we must be very clear—Orientalism overrode the Orient. As a system of thought about the Orient, it always rose from the specifically human detail to the general transhuman one: an observation about a tenth-century Arab poet multiplied itself into a policy towards (and about) the Oriental mentality in Egypt, Iraq, or Arabia. Similarly a verse from the Koran would be considered the best evidence of an incalculable Muslim sensuality. Orientalism assumed an unchanging Orient, absolutely different (the reasons change from epoch to epoch) from the West. And Orientalism, in its post-eighteenth-century form, could never revise itself. All this makes Cromer and Halford, as observers and administrators of the Orient, inevitable.

The closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put it more circumspectly, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth. It raises questions about the predisposition towards innocence or guilt, scholarly disinterest or pressure-group complicity, in such fields as black or women's studies. It necessarily provokes unrest in one's conscience about cultural, racial, or historical generalizations, their uses, value, degree of objectivity, and fundamental intent. More than anything else, the political and cultural circumstances in which Western Orientalism has flourished draw attention to the debased position of the Orient or Oriental as an object of study. Can any other than a political master-slave relation produce the Orientalized Orient perfectly characterized by Anwar Abdel Malek?

a) On the level of the position of the problem, and the problematic... the Orient and Orientalists [are considered by Orientalism] as an "object" of study, stamped with an otherness—as all that is different, whether it be "subject" or "object"—but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character. ... This "object" of study will be, as is customary, passive, non-participating, enmeshed with a "historical" subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself: the only Orient or Oriental or "subject" which could be admitted, at the extreme limit, is the alienated being, philosophically, that is, other than itself in relationship to itself, poised, understood, defined—and acted—by others.

b) On the level of the thematic, [the Orientalists] adopt an essentialist conception of the countries, nations and peoples of the Orient under study, a conception which expresses itself through a characterized ethnic typology... and will soon proceed with it towards racism.

According to the traditional orientalists, an essence should exist—sometimes even clearly described in metaphysical terms—which constitutes the inalienable and common basis of all the beings considered; this essence is both "historical," since it goes back to the dawn of history, and fundamentally a-historical, since it transfixes the being, "the object" of study, within its inalienable and non-evolutive specificity, instead of defining it as all other beings, states, nations, peoples, and cultures—as a product, a resultant of the action of the forces operating in the field of historical evolution.

Thus one ends with a typology—based on a real specificity, but detached from history—and, consequently, conceived as being intangible, essential—which makes of the studied "object" another being with regard to whom the studying subject is transcendent; we will have a homo Sinicus, a homo Arabicus (and why not a homo Aegypticus, etc.), a Homo Africanus, the "normal man," it is understood—being the European man of the historical period, that is, since Greek antiquity. One sees how much, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the hegemony of possessing minorities, unveiled by Marx and Engels, and the anthropocentrism dismantled by Freud are accompanied by eurocentrism in the area of human and social sciences, and more particularly in those in direct relationship with non-European peoples.**

Abdel Malek sees Orientalism as having a history which, according to the "Oriental" of the late twentieth century, led it to the impasse described above. Let us now briefly outline that history as
it proceeded through the nineteenth century to accumulate weight and power, "the hegemonism of possessing minorities," and anthropocentrism in alliance with Eurocentrism. From the last decades of the eighteenth century and for at least a century and a half, Britain and France dominated Orientalism as a discipline. The great philological discoveries in comparative grammar made by Jones, Franz Bopp, Jakob Grimm, and others were originally indebted to manuscripts brought from the East to Paris and London. Almost without exception, every Orientalist began his career as a philologist, and the revolution in philology that produced Bopp, Sacy, Burnouf, and their students was a comparative science based on the premise that languages belong to families, of which the Indo-European and the Semitic are two great instances. From the outset, then, Orientalism carried forward two traits: (1) a newly found scientific self-consciousness based on the linguistic importance of the Orient to Europe, and (2) a proclivity to divide, subdivide, and redivide its subject matter without ever changing its mind about the Orient as being always the same, unchanging, uniform, and radically peculiar object.

Friedrich Schlegel, who learned his Sanskrit in Paris, illustrates these traits together. Although by the time he published his Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indianer in 1808 Schlegel had practically renounced his Orientalism, he still held that Sanskrit and Persian on the one hand and Greek and German on the other made more affinities with each other than with the Semitic, Chinese, American, or African languages. Moreover, the Indo-European family was artistically simple and satisfactory in a way the Semitic, for one, was not. Such abstractions as this did not trouble Schlegel, for whom nations, races, minds, and peoples as things one could talk about passionately—in the ever-narrowing perspective of populism first admired by Herder—held a lifelong fascination. Yet nowhere does Schlegel talk about the living, contemporary Orient. When he said in 1800, "It is in the Orient that we must search for the highest Romanticism," he meant the Orient of the Sakuntala, the Zend-Avesta, and the Upanishads. As for the Semites, whose language was agglutinative, unesthetic, and mechanical, they were different, inferior, backward. Schlegel's lectures on language and on life, history, and literature are full of these discriminations, which he made without the slightest qualification. Hebrew, he said, was made for prophetic utterance and divination; the Muslims, however, espoused a "dead empty Theism, a merely negative Unitarian faith." Much of the racism in Schlegel's strictures upon the Semites and other "low" Orientals was widely diffused in European culture. But nowhere else, unless it be later in the nineteenth century among Darwinian anthropologists and phrenologists, was it made the basis of a scientific subject matter as it was in comparative linguistics or philology. Language and race seemed inextricably tied, and the "good" Orient was invariably a classical period somewhere in a long-gone India, whereas the "bad" Orient lingered in present-day Asia, parts of North Africa, and Islam everywhere. "Aryana" were confined to Europe and the ancient Orient; as Léon Poliakov has shown (without once remarking, however, that "Semites" were not only the Jews but the Muslims as well), the Aryan myth dominated historical and cultural anthropology at the expense of the "lesser" peoples.

The official intellectual genealogy of Orientalism would certainly include Gobineau, Renan, Humboldt, Steinthal, Burnouf, Remusat, Palmer, Weil, Dozy, Muir, to mention a few famous names almost at random from the nineteenth century. It would also include the diffusive capacity of learned societies: the Société asiatique, founded in 1822; the Royal Asiatic Society, founded in 1823; the American Oriental Society, founded in 1842; and so on. But it might perforce neglect the great contribution of imaginative and travel literature, which strengthened the divisions established by Orientalists between the various geographical, temporal, and racial departments of the Orient. Such neglect would be incorrect, since for the Islamic Orient this literature is especially rich and makes a significant contribution to building the Orientalist discourse. It includes work by Goethe, Hugo, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Kinglake, Nerval, Flaubert, Lacé, Burton, Scott, Byron, Vigny, Disraeli, George Eliot, Gautier. Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we could add Doughty, Barret, Loti, T. E. Lawrence, Forster. All these writers give a bolder outline to Disraeli's "great Asiatic mystery." In this enterprise there is considerable support not only from the unearthing of dead Oriental civilizations (by European excavators) in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, but also from major geographical surveys done all through the Orient.

By the end of the nineteenth century these achievements were materially abetted by the European occupation of the entire Near
Orient (with the exception of parts of the Ottoman Empire, which was swallowed up after 1918). The principal colonial powers once again were Britain and France, although Russia and Germany played some role as well. To colonize meant at first the identification—indeed, the creation—of interests; these could be commercial, communicational, religious, military, cultural. With regard to Islam and the Islamic territories, for example, Britain felt that it had legitimate interests, as a Christian power, to safeguard. A complex apparatus for tending these interests developed. Such early organizations as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1698) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701) were succeeded and later abetted by the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the Church Missionary Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804), the London Society for Promoting Christianit Among the Jews (1808). These missions "openly joined the expansion of Europe." Add to these the trading societies, learned societies, geographical exploration funds, translation funds, the implantation in the Orient of schools, missions, consular offices, factories, and sometimes large European communities, and the notion of an "interest" will acquire a good deal of sense. Thereafter interests were defended with much zeal and expense.

So far my outline is a gross one. What of the typical experiences and emotions that accompany both the scholarly advances of Orientalism and the political conquests aided by Orientalism? First, there is disappointment that the modern Orient is not at all like the texts. Here is Gérard de Nerval writing to Théophile Gautier at the end of August 1843:

I have already lost, Kingdom after Kingdom, province after province, the more beautiful half of the universe, and soon I will know of no place in which I can find a refuge for my dreams; but it is Egypt that I most regret having driven out of my imagination, now that I have sadly placed it in my memory.94

This is by the author of a great Voyage en Orient. Nerval's lament is a common topic of Romanticism (the betrayed dream, as described by Albert Béguin in L'Ame romantique et le rêve) and of travelers in the Biblical Orient, from Chateaubriand to Mark Twain. Any direct experience of the mundane Orient ironically comments on such valorizations of it as were to be found in Goethe's "Mahometgeschang" or Hugo's "Adieux de l'hôtesse arabe." Memory of the modern Orient disputes imagination, sends one back to the imagination as a place preferable, for the European sensibility, to the real Orient. For a person who has never seen the Orient, Nerval once said to Gautier, a lotus is still a lotus; for me it is only a kind of onion. To write about the modern Orient is either to reveal an upsetting demystification of images culled from texts, or to confine oneself to the Orient of which Hugo spoke in his original preface to Les Orientales, the Orient as "image" or "pensée," symbols of "une sorte de préoccupation générale."95

If personal disenchantment and general preoccupation fairly map the Orientalist sensibility at first, they entail certain other more familiar habits of thought, feeling, and perception. The mind learns to separate a general apprehension of the Orient from a specific experience of it; each goes its separate way, so to speak. In Scott's novel The Talisman (1825), Sir Kenneth (of the Crouching Leopard) battles a single Saracen to a standoff somewhere in the Palestinian desert; as the Crusader and his opponent, who is Saladin in disguise, later engage in conversation, the Christian discovers his Muslim antagonist to be not so bad a fellow after all. Yet he remarks:

I well thought . . . that your blinded race had their descent from the foul fiend, without whose aid you would never have been able to maintain this blessed land of Palestine against so many valiant soldiers of God. I speak not thus of thee in particular, Saracen, but generally of thy people and religion. Strange is it to me, however, not that you should have the descent from the Evil One, but that you should boast of it.96

For indeed the Saracen does boast of tracing his race's line back to Eblis, the Muslim Lucifer. But what is truly curious is not the feeble historicism by which Scott makes the scene "medieval," letting Christian attack Muslim theologically in a way nineteenth-century Europeans would not (they would, though); rather, it is the airy condescension of damning a whole people "generally" while mitigating the offense with a cool "I don't mean you in particular."

Scott, however, was no expert on Islam (although H. A. R. Gibb, who was, praised The Talisman for its insight into Islam and Saladin98), and he was taking enormous liberties with Eblis's role by turning him into a hero for the faithful. Scott's knowledge probably came from Byron and Beckford, but it is enough for us
here to note how strongly the general character ascribed to things Oriental could withstand both the rhetorical and the existential force of obvious exceptions. It is as if, on the one hand, a bin called "Oriental" existed into which all the authoritative, anonymous, and traditional Western attitudes to the East were dumped unthinkingly, while on the other, true to the anecdotal tradition of storytelling, one could nevertheless tell of experiences with or in the Orient that had little to do with the generally serviceable bin. But the very structure of Scott's prose shows a closer intertwining of the two than that. For the general category in advance offers the specific instance a limited terrain in which to operate: no matter how deep the specific exception, no matter how much a single Oriental can escape the fences placed around him, he is first an Oriental, second a human being, and last again an Oriental.

So general a category as "Oriental" is capable of quite interesting variations. Disraeli's enthusiasm for the Orient appeared first during a trip East in 1831. In Cairo he wrote, "My eyes and mind yet ache with a grandeur so little in unison with our own likeness." General grandeur and passion inspired a transcendent sense of things and little patience for actual reality. His novel *Tancred* is steeped in racial and geographical platitudes; everything is a matter of race, Sidonia states, so much so that salvation can only be found in the Orient and amongst its races. There, as a case in point, Druzes, Christians, Muslims, and Jews hobnob easily because—someone quips—Arabs are simply Jews on horseback, and all are Orientals at heart. The unisons are made between general categories, not between categories and what they contain. An Oriental lives in the Orient, he lives a life of Oriental ease, in a state of Oriental despotism and sensuality, imbued with a feeling of Oriental fatalism. Writers as different as Marx, Disraeli, Burton, and Nerval could carry on a lengthy discussion between themselves, as it were, using all those generalities unquestioningly and yet intelligibly.

With disenchantment and a generalized—not to say schizophrenic—view of the Orient, there is usually another peculiarity. Because it is made into a general object, the whole Orient can be made to serve as an illustration of a particular form of eccentricity. Although the individual Oriental cannot shake or disturb the general categories that make sense of his oddness, his oddness can nevertheless be enjoyed for its own sake. Here, for example, is Flaubert describing the spectacle of the Orient:

To amuse the crowd, Mohammed Ali's jester took a woman in a Cairo bazaar one day, set her on the counter of a shop, and coupled with her publicly while the shopkeeper calmly smoked his pipe.

On the road from Cairo to Shubra some time ago a young fellow had himself publicly buggered by a large monkey—as in the story above, to create a good opinion of himself and make people laugh.

A marabout died a while ago—an idiot—who had long passed as a saint marked by God; all the Moslem women came to see him and masturbated him—in the end he died of exhaustion—from morning to night it was a perpetual jacking-off. . . .

*Quid dicis* of the following fact: some time ago a santo (ascetic priest) used to walk through the streets of Cairo completely naked except for a cap on his head and another on his prick. To piss he would doff the prick-cap, and sterile women who wanted children would run up, put themselves under the parabola of his urine and rub themselves with it.88

Flaubert frankly acknowledges that this is grotesque in a special kind. "All the old comic business"—by which Flaubert meant the well-known conventions of "the cudged slave. . . . the coarse trafficker in women . . . the thieving merchant"—acquire a new, "fresh . . . genuine and charming" meaning in the Orient. This meaning cannot be reproduced; it can only be enjoyed on the spot and "brought back" very approximately. The Orient is watched, since its almost (but never quite) offensive behavior issues out of a reservoir of infinite peculiarity; the European, whose sensibility tours the Orient, is a watcher, never involved, always detached, always ready for new examples of what the *Description de l'Egypte* called "bizarre jouissance." The Orient becomes a living tableau of queerness.

And this tableau quite logically becomes a special topic for texts. Thus the circle is completed; from being exposed as what texts do not prepare one for, the Orient can return as something one writes about in a disciplined way. Its foreignness can be translated, its meanings decoded, its hostility tamed; yet the generality assigned to the Orient, the disenchantment that one feels after encountering it, the unresolved eccentricity it displays, are all redistributed in what is said or written about it. Islam, for example, was typically Oriental for Orientalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Carl Becker argued that although "Islam" (note the vast generality) inherited the Hellenic tradition, it could neither grasp
nor employ the Greek, humanistic tradition; moreover, to understand Islam one needed above all else to see it, not as an "original" religion, but as a sort of failed Oriental attempt to employ Greek philosophy without the creative inspiration that we find in Renaissance Europe. For Louis Massignon, perhaps the most renowned and influential of modern French Orientalists, Islam was a systematic rejection of the Christian incarnation, and its greatest hero was not Mohammed or Averroës but al-Hallaj, a Muslim saint who was crucified by the orthodox Muslims for having dared to personalize Islam. What Becker and Massignon explicitly left out of their studies was the eclecticism of the Orient, which they backhandedly acknowledged by trying so hard to regularize it in Western terms. Mohammed was thrown out, but al-Hallaj was made prominent because he took himself to be a Christ-figure.

As a judge of the Orient, the modern Orientalist does not, as he believes and even says, stand apart from it objectively. His human detachment, whose sign is the absence of sympathy covered by professional knowledge, is weighted heavily with all the orthodox attitudes, perspectives, and moods of Orientalism that I have been describing. His Orient is not the Orient as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized. An unbroken arc of knowledge and power connects the European or Western statesman and the Western Orientalists; it forms the rim of the stage containing the Orient. By the end of World War I both Africa and the Orient formed not so much an intellectual spectacle for the West as a privileged terrain for it. The scope of Orientalism exactly matched the scope of empire, and it was this absolute unanimity between the two that provoked the only crisis in the history of Western thought about and dealings with the Orient. And this crisis continues now.

Beginning in the twenties, and from one end of the Third World to the other, the response to empire and imperialism has been dialectical. By the time of the Bandung Conference in 1955 the entire Orient had gained its political independence from the Western empires and confronted a new configuration of imperial powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Unable to recognize "its" Orient in the new Third World, Orientalism now faced a challenging and politically armed Orient. Two alternatives opened before Orientalism. One was to carry on as if nothing had happened. The second was to adapt the old ways to the new. But to the Orientalist, who believes the Orient never changes, the new is simply the old betrayed by new, misunderstanding dis-Orientals (we can permit ourselves the neologism). A third, revisionist alternative, to dispense with Orientalism altogether, was considered by only a tiny minority.

One index of the crisis, according to Abdel Malek, was not simply that "national liberation movements in the ex-colonial Orient worked havoc with Orientalist conceptions of passive, fatalistic "subject races": there was in addition the fact that "specialists and the public at large became aware of the time-lag, not only between orientalist science and the material under study, but also—and this was to be determining—between the conceptions, the methods and the instruments of work in the human and social sciences and those of orientalism." The Orientalists—from Renan to Goldziher to Macdonald to von Grunebaum, Gibb, and Bernard Lewis—saw Islam, for example, as a "cultural synthesis" (the phrase is P. M. Holt's) that could be studied apart from the economics, sociology, and politics of the Islamic peoples. For Orientalism, Islam had a meaning which, if one were to look for its most succinct formulation, could be found in Renan's first treatise: in order best to be understood Islam had to be reduced to "tent and tribe." The impact of colonialism, of worldly circumstances, of historical development: all these were to Orientalists as flies to wanton boys, killed—or disregarded—for their sport, never taken seriously enough to complicate the essential Islam.

The career of H. A. R. Gibb illustrates within itself the two alternative approaches by which Orientalism has responded to the modern Orient. In 1945 Gibb delivered the Haskell Lectures at the University of Chicago. The world he surveyed was not the same one Balfour and Cromer knew before World War I. Several revolutions, two world wars, and innumerable economic, political, and social changes made the realities of 1945 an unmistakably, even cataclysmically, new object. Yet we find Gibb opening the lectures he called Modern Trends in Islam as follows:

The student of Arabic civilization is constantly brought up against the striking contrast between the imaginative power displayed, for example, in certain branches of Arabic literature and the literalism, the pedantry, displayed in reasoning and exposition, even when it is devoted to these same productions. It is true that there have been great philosophers among the Muslim peoples and that some of them were Arabs, but they were rare exceptions. The Arab mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the processes of thought, cannot throw off its intense feeling for the separateness and the individuality of the concrete events. This
is, I believe, one of the main factors lying behind that "lack of a sense of law" which Professor Macdonald regarded as the characteristic difference in the Oriental.

It is this, too, which explains—what is so difficult for the Western student to grasp until it is explained to him by the Orientalist—the aversion of the Muslims from the thought-processes of rationalism. . . . The rejection of rationalist modes of thought and of the utilitarian ethic which is inseparable from them has its roots, therefore, not in the so-called "obscurantism" of the Muslim theologians but in the atomism and discreteness of the Arab imagination.  

This is pure Orientalism, of course, but even if one acknowledges the exceeding knowledge of institutional Islam that characterizes the rest of the book, Gibb's inaugural biases remain a formidable obstacle for anyone hoping to understand modern Islam. What is the meaning of "difference" when the preposition "from" has dropped from sight altogether? Are we not once again being asked to inspect the Oriental Muslim as if his world, unlike ours—"differently" from it—had never ventured beyond the seventh century? As for modern Islam itself, despite the complexities of his otherwise magisterial understanding of it, why must it be regarded with so implacable a hostility as Gibb's? If Islam is flawed from the start by virtue of its permanent disabilities, the Orientalist will find himself opposing any Islamic attempts to reform Islam, because, according to his views, reform is a betrayal of Islam: this is exactly Gibb's argument. How can an Oriental slip out from these manacles into the modern world except by repeating with the Fool in King Lear, "They'll have me whip'd for speaking true, thou'll have me whip'd for lying; and sometimes I am whip'd for holding my peace."

Eighteen years later Gibb faced an audience of English compatriots, only now he was speaking as the director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard. His topic was "Area Studies Reconsidered," in which, among other aperçus, he agreed that "the Orient is much too important to be left to the Orientalists." The new, or second alternative, approach open to Orientalists was being announced, just as Modern Trends exemplified the first, or traditional, approach. Gibb's formula is well-intentioned in "Area Studies Reconsidered," so far, of course, as the Western experts on the Orient are concerned, whose job it is to prepare students for careers "in public life and business." What we now need, said Gibb, is the traditional Orientalist plus a good social scientist working together: between them the two will do "interdisciplinary" work. Yet the traditional Orientalist will not bring outdated knowledge to bear on the Orient; no, his expertise will serve to remind his uninitiated colleagues in area studies that "to apply the psychology and mechanics of Western political institutions to Asian or Arab situations is pure Walt Disney."  

In practice this notion has meant that when Orientals struggle against colonial occupation, you must say (in order not to risk a Disneyism) that Orientals have never understood the meaning of self-government the way "we" do. When some Orientals oppose racial discrimination while others practice it, you say "they're all Orientals at bottom" and class interest, political circumstances, economic factors are totally irrelevant. Or with Bernard Lewis, you say that if Arab Palestinians oppose Israeli settlement and occupation of their lands, then that is merely "the return of Islam," or, as a renowned contemporary Orientalist defines it, Islamic opposition to non-Islamic peoples, a principle of Islam enshrined in the seventh century. History, politics, and economics do not matter. Islam is Islam, the Orient is the Orient, and please take all your ideas about a left and a right wing, revolutions, and change back to Disneyland.

If such tautologies, claims, and dismissals have not sounded familiar to historians, sociologists, economists, and humanists in any other field except Orientalism, the reason is patent obvious. For like its putative subject matter, Orientalism has not allowed ideas to violate its profound serenity. But modern Orientalists—or area experts, to give them their new name—have not passively sequestered themselves in language departments. On the contrary, they have profited from Gibb's advice. Most of them today are indistinguishable from other "experts" and "advisers" in what Harold Lasswell has called the policy sciences. Thus the military—national-security possibilities of an alliance, say, between a specialist in "national character analysis" and an expert in Islamic institutions were soon recognized, for expediency's sake if for nothing else. After all, the "West" since World War II had faced a clever totalitarian enemy who collected allies for itself among gullible Oriental (African, Asian, undeveloped) nations. What better way of outflanking that enemy than by playing to the Oriental's illogical mind in ways only an Orientalist could devise? Thus emerged such masterful ploys as the stick-and-carrot technique, the Alliance for
Progress, SEATO, and so forth, all of them based on traditional "knowledge" retooled for better manipulation of its supposed object. Thus as revolutionary turmoil grips the Islamic Orient, sociologists remind us that Arabs are addicted to "oral functions," while economists—recycled Orientalists—observe that for modern Islam neither capitalism nor socialism is an adequate rubric. As anticolonialism sweeps and indeed unifies the entire Oriental world, the Orientalist damn the whole business not only as a nuisance but as an insult to the Western democracies. As momentous, generally important issues face the world—issues involving nuclear destruction, catastrophically scarce resources, unprecedented human demands for equality, justice, and economic parity—popular caricatures of the Orient are exploited by politicians whose source of ideological supply is not only the half-literate technocrat but the superliterate Orientalist. The legendary Arabists in the State Department warn of Arab plans to take over the world. The pernicious Chinese, half-naked Indians, and passive Muslims are described as vultures for "our" largesse and are damned when "we lose them" to communism, or to their unregenerate Oriental instincts: the difference is scarcely significant.

These contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as camel-riding, terrorist, hook-nosed, venal lechers whose undeserved wealth is an affront to real civilization. Always there lurks the assumption that although the Western consumer belongs to a numerical minority, he is entitled either to own or to expend (or both) the majority of the world resources. Why? Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being. No better instance exists today of what Anwar Abdel Malek calls "the hegemonism of possessing minorities" and anthropocentrism allied with Eurocentrism: a white middle-class Westerner believes it his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition "it" is not quite as human as "we" are. There is no purer example than this of dehumanized thought.

In a sense the limitations of Orientalism are, as I said earlier, the limitations that follow upon disregarding, essentializing, denuding the humanity of another culture, people, or geographical region. But Orientalism has taken a further step than that: it views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West. So impressive have the descriptive and textual successes of Orientalism been that entire periods of the Orient's cultural, political, and social history are considered mere responses to the West. The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior. Yet if history during the twentieth century has provoked intrinsic change in and for the Orient, the Orientalist is stunned: he cannot realize that to some extent the new [Oriental] leaders, intellectuals or policy-makers, have learned many lessons from the travail of their predecessors. They have also been aided by the structural and institutional transformations accomplished in the intervening period and by the fact that they are to a great extent more at liberty to fashion the future of their countries. They are also much more confident and perhaps slightly aggressive. No longer do they have to function hoping to obtain a favorable verdict from the invisible jury of the West. Their dialogue is not with the West, it is with their fellow-citizens. Moreover, the Orientalist assumes that what his texts have not prepared him for is the result either of outside agitation in the Orient or of the Orient's misguided inanity. None of the innumerable Orientalist texts on Islam, including their summa, The Cambridge History of Islam, can prepare their reader for what has taken place since 1948 in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, or the Yemen. When the dogmas about Islam cannot serve, not even for the most Panglossian Orientalist, there is recourse to an Orientalized social-sciences jargon, to such marketable abstractions as elites, political stability, modernization, and institutional development, all stamped with the cachet of Orientalist wisdom. In the meantime a growing, more and more dangerous rift separates Orient and Occident.

The present crisis dramatizes the disparity between texts and reality. Yet in this study of Orientalism I wish not only to expose the sources of Orientalism's view but also to reflect on its importance, for the contemporary intellectual rightly feels that to ignore a part of the world now demonstrably encroaching upon him is to avoid reality. Humanists have too often confined their attention to departmentalized topics of research. They have neither watched nor learned from disciplines like Orientalism whose unremitting ambition was to master all of a world, not some easily delimited part of it such as an author or a collection of texts. However, along with such academic security-blankets as "history,"
"literature," or "the humanities," and despite its overreaching aspirations, Orientalism is involved in worldly, historical circumstances which it has tried to conceal behind an often pompous scientism and appeals to rationalism. The contemporary intellectual can learn from Orientalism how, on the one hand, either to limit or to enlarge realistically the scope of his discipline's claims, and on the other, to see the human ground (the foul-rag-and-bone shop of the heart, Yeats called it) in which texts, visions, methods, and disciplines begin, grow, thrive, and degenerate. To investigate Orientalism is also to propose intellectual ways for handling the methodological problems that history has brought forward, so to speak, in its subject matter, the Orient. But before that we must virtually see the humanistic values that Orientalism, by its scope, experiences, and structures, has all but eliminated.

2

Orientalist Structures and Restructures

When the seyyid 'Omar, the Nakeeh el-Ashrâf (or chief of the descendants of the Prophet) . . . married a daughter, about forty-five years since, there walked before the procession a young man who had made an incision in his abdomen, and drawn out a large portion of his intestines, which he carried before him on a silver tray. After the procession, he restored them to their proper place, and remained in bed many days before he recovered from the effects of this foolish and disgusting act.

—Edward William Lane, An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians

. . . dans le cas de la chute de cet empire, soit par une révolution à Constantinople, soit par un démembrment successif, les puissances européennes prendront chacune, à titre de protectorat, la partie de l'empire qui lui sera assignée par les stipulations du congrès, que ces protectorats, définis et limités, quant aux territoires, selon les voisins, la sûreté des frontières, l'analogie de religions, de mœurs et d'intérêts . . . ne consacreront que la souveraineté des puissances. Cette sorte de souveraineté définie ainsi, et consacrée comme droit européen, consistera principalement dans le droit d'occuper telle partie du territoire ou des côtes, pour y fonder, soit des villes libres, soit des colonies européennes, soit des ports et des échelles de commerce . . . . Ce n'est qu'une tutelle armée et civilisatrice que chaque puissance exercera sur son protectorat; elle garantira son existence et ses éléments de nationalité, sous le drapeau d'une nationalité plus forte. . . .

—Alphonse de Lamartine, Voyage en Orient