

# 3

## Orientalism Now

On les apercevait tenant leurs idoles entre leurs bras comme de grands enfants paralytiques.

—Gustave Flaubert, *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . .

—Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

# I

## Latent and Manifest Orientalism

In Chapter One, I tried to indicate the scope of thought and action covered by the word *Orientalism*, using as privileged types the British and French experiences of and with the Near Orient, Islam, and the Arabs. In those experiences I discerned an intimate, perhaps even the most intimate, and rich relationship between Occident and Orient. Those experiences were part of a much wider European or Western relationship with the Orient, but what seems to have influenced Orientalism most was a fairly constant sense of confrontation felt by Westerners dealing with the East. The boundary notion of East and West, the varying degrees of projected inferiority and strength, the range of work done, the kinds of characteristic features ascribed to the Orient: all these testify to a willed imaginative and geographic division made between East and West, and lived through during many centuries. In Chapter Two my focus narrowed a good deal. I was interested in the earliest phases of what I call modern Orientalism, which began during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth. Since I did not intend my study to become a narrative chronicle of the development of Oriental studies in the modern West, I proposed instead an account of the rise, development, and institutions of Orientalism as they were formed against a background of intellectual, cultural, and political history until about 1870 or 1880. Although my interest in Orientalism there included a decently ample variety of scholars and imaginative writers, I cannot claim by any means to have presented more than a portrait of the typical structures (and their ideological tendencies) constituting the field, its associations with other fields, and the work of some of its most influential scholars. My principal operating assumptions were—and continue to be—that fields of learning, as much as the works of even the most eccentric artist, are constrained and acted upon by society, by cultural traditions, by worldly circumstance, and by stabilizing influences like schools, libraries, and governments; moreover, that both learned and imaginative

writing are never free, but are limited in their imagery, assumptions, and intentions; and finally, that the advances made by a "science" like Orientalism in its academic form are less objectively true than we often like to think. In short, my study hitherto has tried to describe the *economy* that makes Orientalism a coherent subject matter, even while allowing that as an idea, concept, or image the word *Orient* has a considerable and interesting cultural resonance in the West.

I realize that such assumptions are not without their controversial side. Most of us assume in a general way that learning and scholarship move forward; they get better, we feel, as time passes and as more information is accumulated, methods are refined, and later generations of scholars improve upon earlier ones. In addition, we entertain a mythology of creation, in which it is believed that artistic genius, an original talent, or a powerful intellect can leap beyond the confines of its own time and place in order to put before the world a new work. It would be pointless to deny that such ideas as these carry some truth. Nevertheless the possibilities for work present in the culture to a great and original mind are never unlimited, just as it is also true that a great talent has a very healthy respect for what others have done before it and for what the field already contains. The work of predecessors, the institutional life of a scholarly field, the collective nature of any learned enterprise: these, to say nothing of economic and social circumstances, tend to diminish the effects of the individual scholar's production. A field like Orientalism has a cumulative and corporate identity, one that is particularly strong given its associations with traditional learning (the classics, the Bible, philology), public institutions (governments, trading companies, geographical societies, universities), and generically determined writing (travel books, books of exploration, fantasy, exotic description). The result for Orientalism has been a sort of consensus: certain things, certain types of statement, certain types of work have seemed for the Orientalist correct. He has built his work and research upon them, and they in turn have pressed hard upon new writers and scholars. Orientalism can thus be regarded as a manner of regularized (or Orientalized) writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives, and ideological biases ostensibly suited to the Orient. The Orient is taught, researched, administered, and pronounced upon in certain discrete ways.

The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of

representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire. If this definition of Orientalism seems more political than not, that is simply because I think Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities. Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities. Its objective discoveries—the work of innumerable devoted scholars who edited texts and translated them, codified grammars, wrote dictionaries, reconstructed dead epochs, produced positivistically verifiable learning—are and always have been conditioned by the fact that its truths, like any truths delivered by language, are embodied in language, and what is the truth of language, Nietzsche once said, but

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps such a view as Nietzsche's will strike us as too nihilistic, but at least it will draw attention to the fact that so far as it existed in the West's awareness, the Orient was a word which later accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations, and that these did not necessarily refer to the real Orient but to the field surrounding the word.

Thus Orientalism is not only a positive doctrine about the Orient that exists at any one time in the West; it is also an influential academic tradition (when one refers to an academic specialist who is called an Orientalist), as well as an area of concern defined by travelers, commercial enterprises, governments, military expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the Orient is a specific kind of knowledge about specific places, peoples, and civilizations. For the Orient idioms became frequent, and these idioms took firm hold in European discourse. Beneath the idioms there was a layer of doctrine about the Orient; this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like. For any European during the nineteenth century—and I think one

can say this almost without qualification—Orientalism was such a system of truths, truths in Nietzsche's sense of the word. It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric. Some of the immediate sting will be taken out of these labels if we recall additionally that human societies, at least the more advanced cultures, have rarely offered the individual anything but imperialism, racism, and ethnocentrism for dealing with "other" cultures. So Orientalism aided and was aided by general cultural pressures that tended to make more rigid the sense of difference between the European and Asiatic parts of the world. My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness.

This proposition was introduced early in Chapter One, and nearly everything in the pages that followed was intended in part as a corroboration of it. The very presence of a "field" such as Orientalism, with no corresponding equivalent in the Orient itself, suggests the relative strength of Orient and Occident. A vast number of pages on the Orient exist, and they of course signify a degree and quantity of interaction with the Orient that are quite formidable; but the crucial index of Western strength is that there is no possibility of comparing the movement of Westerners eastwards (since the end of the eighteenth century) with the movement of Easterners westwards. Leaving aside the fact that Western armies, consular corps, merchants, and scientific and archaeological expeditions were always going East, the number of travelers from the Islamic East to Europe between 1800 and 1900 is minuscule when compared with the number in the other direction.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Eastern travelers in the West were there to learn from and to gape at an advanced culture; the purposes of the Western travelers in the Orient were, as we have seen, of quite a different order. In addition, it has been estimated that around 60,000 books dealing with the Near Orient were written between 1800 and 1950; there is no remotely comparable figure for Oriental books about the West. As a cultural apparatus Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgment, will-to-truth, and knowledge. The Orient existed for the West, or so it seemed to countless Orientalists, whose attitude to what they worked on was either paternalistic or candidly condescending—unless, of course, they were antiquarians, in which case the "classical" Orient was a credit to *them* and not to the lamentable modern Orient.

And then, beefing up the Western scholars' work, there were numerous agencies and institutions with no parallels in Oriental society.

Such an imbalance between East and West is obviously a function of changing historical patterns. During its political and military heyday from the eighth century to the sixteenth, Islam dominated both East and West. Then the center of power shifted westwards, and now in the late twentieth century it seems to be directing itself back towards the East again. My account of nineteenth-century Orientalism in Chapter Two stopped at a particularly charged period in the latter part of the century, when the often dilatory, abstract, and projective aspects of Orientalism were about to take on a new sense of worldly mission in the service of formal colonialism. It is this project and this moment that I want now to describe, especially since it will furnish us with some important background for the twentieth-century crises of Orientalism and the resurgence of political and cultural strength in the East.

On several occasions I have alluded to the connections between Orientalism as a body of ideas, beliefs, cliches, or learning about the East, and other schools of thought at large in the culture. Now one of the important developments in nineteenth-century Orientalism was the distillation of essential ideas about the Orient—its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness—into a separate and unchallenged coherence; thus for a writer to use the word *Oriental* was a reference for the reader sufficient to identify a specific body of information about the Orient. This information seemed to be morally neutral and objectively valid; it seemed to have an epistemological status equal to that of historical chronology or geographical location. In its most basic form, then, Oriental material could not really be violated by anyone's discoveries, nor did it seem ever to be reevaluated completely. Instead, the work of various nineteenth-century scholars and of imaginative writers made this essential body of knowledge more clear, more detailed, more substantial—and more distinct from "Occidentalism." Yet Orientalist ideas could enter into alliance with general philosophical theories (such as those about the history of mankind and civilization) and diffuse world-hypotheses, as philosophers sometimes call them; and in many ways the professional contributors to Oriental knowledge were anxious to couch their formulations and ideas, their scholarly work, their considered contemporary observations, in language and

terminology whose cultural validity derived from other sciences and systems of thought.

The distinction I am making is really between an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity, which I shall call *latent* Orientalism, and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth, which I shall call *manifest* Orientalism. Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant. In the nineteenth-century writers I analyzed in Chapter Two, the differences in their ideas about the Orient can be characterized as exclusively manifest differences, differences in form and personal style, rarely in basic content. Every one of them kept intact the separateness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability; this is why every writer on the Orient, from Renan to Marx (ideologically speaking), or from the most rigorous scholars (Lane and Sacy) to the most powerful imaginations (Flaubert and Nerval), saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption. The Orient existed as a place isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts, and commerce. Thus whatever good or bad values were imputed to the Orient appeared to be functions of some highly specialized Western interest in the Orient. This was the situation from about the 1870s on through the early part of the twentieth century—but let me give some examples that illustrate what I mean.

Theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality with the West most easily associated themselves early in the nineteenth century with ideas about the biological bases of racial inequality. Thus the racial classifications found in Cuvier's *Le Rigne animal*, Gobineau's *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, and Robert Knox's *The Dark Races of Man* found a willing partner in latent Orientalism. To these ideas was added second-order Darwinism, which seemed to accentuate the "scientific" validity of the division of races into advanced and backward, or European-Aryan and Oriental-African. Thus the whole question of imperialism, as it was debated in the late nineteenth century by pro-imperialists and anti-imperialists alike, carried forward the binary typology of advanced and backward (or subject) races, cultures, and societies. John Westlake's *Chapters on the Principles*

*of International Law* (1894) argues, for example, that regions of the earth designated as "uncivilized" (a word carrying the freight of Orientalist assumptions, among others) ought to be annexed or occupied by advanced powers. Similarly, the ideas of such writers as Carl Peters, Leopold de Saussure, and Charles Temple draw on the advanced/backward binarism<sup>3</sup> so centrally advocated in late-nineteenth-century Orientalism.

Along with all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerate, uncivilized, and retarded, the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or—as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory—taken over. The point is that the very designation of something as Oriental involved an already pronounced evaluative judgment, and in the case of the peoples inhabiting the decayed Ottoman Empire, an implicit program of action. Since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected: it was that simple. The *locus classicus* for such judgment and action is to be found in Gustave Le Bon's *Les Lois psychologiques de revolution des peuples* (1894).

But there were other uses for latent Orientalism. If that group of ideas allowed one to separate Orientals from advanced, civilizing powers, and if the "classical" Orient served to justify both the Orientalist and his disregard of modern Orientals, latent Orientalism also encouraged a peculiarly (not to say invidiously) male conception of the world. I have already referred to this in passing during my discussion of Renan. The Oriental male was considered in isolation from the total community in which he lived and which many Orientalists, following Lane, have viewed with something resembling contempt and fear. Orientalism itself, furthermore, was an exclusively male province; like so many professional guilds during the modern period, it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders. This is especially evident in the writing of travelers and novelists: women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing. Flaubert's *Kuchuk Hanem* is the prototype of such caricatures, which were common

enough in pornographic novels (e.g., Pierre Louys's *Aphrodite*) whose novelty draws on the Orient for their interest. Moreover the male conception of the world, in its effect upon the practicing Orientalist, tends to be static, frozen, fixed eternally. The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement—in the deepest sense of the word—is denied the Orient and the Oriental. As a known and ultimately an immobilized or unproductive quality, they come to be identified with a bad sort of etemality: hence, when the Orient is being approved, such phrases as "the wisdom of the East."

Transferred from an implicit social evaluation to a grandly cultural one, this static male Orientalism took on a variety of forms in the late nineteenth century, especially when Islam was being discussed. General cultural historians as respected as Leopold von Ranke and Jacob Burckhardt assailed Islam as if they were dealing not so much with an anthropomorphic abstraction as with a religio-political culture about which deep generalizations were possible and warranted: in his *Weltgeschichte* (1881-1888) Ranke spoke of Islam as defeated by the Germanic-Romanic peoples, and in his "Historische Fragmente" (unpublished notes, 1893) Burckhardt spoke of Islam as wretched, bare, and trivial.<sup>4</sup> Such intellectual operations were carried out with considerably more flair and enthusiasm by Oswald Spengler, whose ideas about a Magian personality (typified by the Muslim Oriental) infuse *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918-1922) and the "morphology" of cultures it advocates.

What these widely diffused notions of the Orient depended on was the almost total absence in contemporary Western culture of the Orient as a genuinely felt and experienced force. For a number of evident reasons the Orient was always in the position both of outsider and of incorporated weak partner for the West. To the extent that Western scholars were aware of contemporary Orientals or Oriental movements of thought and culture, these were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him, or as a kind of cultural and intellectual proletariat useful for the Orientalist's grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as superior judge, learned man, powerful cultural will. I mean to say that in discussions of the Orient, the Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence; yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence.

This fact of substitution and displacement, as we must call it, clearly places on the Orientalist himself a certain pressure to reduce the Orient in his work, even after he has devoted a good deal of time to elucidating and exposing it. How else can one explain major scholarly production of the type we associate with Julius Wellhausen and Theodor Noldeke and, overriding it, those bare, sweeping statements that almost totally denigrate their chosen subject matter? Thus Noldeke could declare in 1887 that the sum total of his work as an Orientalist was to confirm his "low opinion" of the Eastern peoples.<sup>5</sup> And like Carl Becker, Noldeke was a philhellenist, who showed his love of Greece curiously by displaying a positive dislike of the Orient, which after all was what he studied as a scholar.

A very valuable and intelligent study of Orientalism—Jacques Waardenburg's *L'Islam dans le miroir de l'Occident*—examines five important experts as makers of an image of Islam. Waardenburg's mirror-image metaphor for late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Orientalism is apt. In the work of each of his eminent Orientalists there is a highly tendentious—in four cases out of the five, even hostile—vision of Islam, as if each man saw Islam as a reflection of his own chosen weakness. Each scholar was profoundly learned, and the style of his contribution was unique. The five Orientalists among them exemplify what was best and strongest in the tradition during the period roughly from the 1880s to the interwar years. Yet Ignaz Goldziher's appreciation of Islam's tolerance towards other religions was undercut by his dislike of Mohammed's anthropomorphisms and Islam's too-exterior theology and jurisprudence; Duncan Black Macdonald's interest in Islamic piety and orthodoxy was vitiated by his perception of what he considered Islam's heretical Christianity; Carl Becker's understanding of Islamic civilization made him see it as a sadly undeveloped one; C. Snouck Hurgronje's highly refined studies of Islamic mysticism (which he considered the essential part of Islam) led him to a harsh judgment of its crippling limitations; and Louis Massignon's extraordinary identification with Muslim theology, mystical passion, and poetic art kept him curiously unforgiving to Islam for what he regarded as its unregenerate revolt against the idea of incarnation. The manifest differences in their methods emerge as less important than their Orientalist consensus on Islam: latent inferiority.<sup>6</sup>

Waardenburg's study has the additional virtue of showing how

these five scholars shared a common intellectual and methodological tradition whose unity was truly international. Ever since the first Orientalist congress in 1873, scholars in the field have known each other's work and felt each other's presence very directly. What Waardenburg does not stress enough is that most of the late-nineteenth-century Orientalists were bound to each other politically as well. Snouck Hurgronje went directly from his studies of Islam to being an adviser to the Dutch government on handling its Muslim Indonesian colonies; Macdonald and Massignon were widely sought after as experts on Islamic matters by colonial administrators from North Africa to Pakistan; and, as Waardenburg says (all too briefly) at one point, all five scholars shaped a coherent vision of Islam that had a wide influence on government circles throughout the Western world.<sup>7</sup> What we must add to Waardenburg's observation is that these scholars were completing, bringing to an ultimate concrete refinement, the tendency since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to treat the Orient not only as a vague literary problem but—according to Masson-Oursel—as "un ferme propos d'assimiler adéquatement la valeur des langues pour pénétrer les mœurs et les pensées, pour forcer même des secrets de l'histoire."<sup>8</sup>

I spoke earlier of incorporation and assimilation of the Orient, as these activities were practiced by writers as different from each other as Dante and d'Herbelot. Clearly there is a difference between those efforts and what, by the end of the nineteenth century, had become a truly formidable European cultural, political, and material enterprise. The nineteenth-century colonial "scramble for Africa" was by no means limited to Africa, of course. Neither was the penetration of the Orient entirely a sudden, dramatic afterthought following years of scholarly study of Asia. What we must reckon with is a long and slow process of appropriation by which Europe, or the European awareness of the Orient, transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic, and even military. The fundamental change was a spatial and geographical one, or rather it was a change in the quality of geographical and spatial apprehension so far as the Orient was concerned. The centuries-old designation of geographical space to the east of Europe as "Oriental" was partly political, partly doctrinal, and partly imaginative; it implied no necessary connection between actual experience of the Orient and knowledge of what is

Oriental, and certainly Dante and d'Herbelot made no claims about their Oriental ideas except that they were corroborated by a long *learned* (and not existential) tradition. But when Lane, Renan, Burton, and the many hundreds of nineteenth-century European travelers and scholars discuss the Orient, we can immediately note a far more intimate and even proprietary attitude towards the Orient and things Oriental. In the classical and often temporally remote form in which it was reconstructed by the Orientalist, in the precisely actual form in which the modern Orient was lived in, studied, or imagined, the *geographical space* of the Orient was penetrated, worked over, taken hold of. The cumulative effect of decades of so sovereign a Western handling turned the Orient from alien into colonial space. What was important in the latter nineteenth century was not *whether* the West had penetrated and possessed the Orient, but rather *how* the British and French felt that they had done it.

The British writer on the Orient, and even more so the British colonial administrator, was dealing with territory about which there could be no doubt that English power was truly in the ascendant, even if the natives were on the face of it attracted to France and French modes of thought. So far as the actual space of the Orient was concerned, however, England was really there, France was not, except as a flighty temptress of the Oriental yokels. There is no better indication of this qualitative difference in spatial attitudes than to look at what Lord Cromer had to say on the subject, one that was especially dear to his heart:

The reasons why French civilisation presents a special degree of attraction to Asiatics and Levantines are plain. It is, as a matter of fact, more attractive than the civilisations of England and Germany, and, moreover, it is more easy of imitation. Compare the undemonstrative, shy Englishman, with his social exclusiveness and insular habits, with the vivacious and cosmopolitan Frenchman, who does not know what the word shyness means, and who in ten minutes is apparently on terms of intimate friendship with any casual acquaintance he may chance to make. The semi-educated Oriental does not recognise that the former has, at all events, the merit of sincerity, whilst the latter is often merely acting a part. He looks coldly on the Englishman, and rushes into the arms of the Frenchman.

**The sexual innuendoes develop more or less naturally thereafter. The Frenchman is all smiles, wit, grace, and fashion; the English-**

**man is plodding, industrious, Baconian, precise. Cromer's case is of course based on British solidity as opposed to a French seductiveness without any real presence in Egyptian reality.**

Can it be any matter for surprise [Cromer continues] that the Egyptian, with his light intellectual ballast, fails to see that some fallacy often lies at the bottom of the Frenchman's reasoning, or that he prefers the rather superficial brilliancy of the Frenchman to the plodding, unattractive industry of the Englishman or the German? Look, again, at the theoretical perfection of French administrative systems, at their elaborate detail, and at the provision which is apparently made to meet every possible contingency which may arise. Compare these features with the Englishman's practical systems, which lay down rules as to a few main points, and leave a mass of detail to individual discretion. The half-educated Egyptian naturally prefers the Frenchman's system, for it is to all outward appearance more perfect and more easy of application. He fails, moreover, to see that the Englishman desires to elaborate a system which will suit the facts with which he has to deal, whereas the main objection to applying French administrative procedures to Egypt is that the facts have but too often to conform to the ready-made system.

**Since there is a real British presence in Egypt, and since that presence—according to Cromer—is there not so much to train the Egyptian's mind as to "form his character," it follows therefore that the ephemeral attractions of the French are those of a pretty damsel with "somewhat artificial charms," whereas those of the British belong to "a sober, elderly matron of perhaps somewhat greater moral worth, but of less pleasing outward appearance."<sup>9</sup>**

Underlying Cromer's contrast between the solid British nanny and the French coquette is the sheer privilege of British emplacement in the Orient. "The facts with which he [the Englishman] has to deal" are altogether more complex and interesting, by virtue of their possession by England, than anything the mercurial French could point to. Two years after the publication of his *Modern Egypt* (1908), Cromer expatiated philosophically in *Ancient and Modern Imperialism*. Compared with Roman imperialism, with its frankly assimilationist, exploitative, and repressive policies, British imperialism seemed to Cromer to be preferable, if somewhat more wishy-washy. On certain points, however, the British were clear enough, even if "after a rather dim, slipshod, but characteristically Anglo-

Saxon fashion," their Empire seemed undecided between "one of two bases—an extensive military occupation or the principle of nationality [for subject races]." But this indecision was academic finally, for in practice Cromer and Britain itself had opted against "the principle of nationality." And then there were other things to be noted. One point was that the Empire was not going to be given up. Another was that intermarriage between natives and English men and women was undesirable. Third<sup>1</sup>—and most important, I think—Cromer conceived of British imperial presence in the Eastern colonies as having had a lasting, not to say cataclysmic, effect on the minds and societies of the East. His metaphor for expressing this effect is almost theological, so powerful in Cromer's mind was the idea of Western penetration of Oriental expanses. "The country," he says, "over which the breath of the West, heavily charged with scientific thought, has once passed, and has, in passing, left an enduring mark, can never be the same as it was before."<sup>10</sup>

In such respects as these, nonetheless, Cromer's was far from an original intelligence. What he saw and how he expressed it were common currency among his colleagues both in the imperial Establishment and in the intellectual community. This consensus is notably true in the case of Cromer's viceregal colleagues, Curzon, Swettenham, and Lugard. Lord Curzon in particular always spoke the imperial lingua franca, and more obtrusively even than Cromer he delineated the relationship between Britain and the Orient in terms of possession, in terms of a large geographical space wholly owned by an efficient colonial master. For him, he said on one occasion, the Empire was not an "object of ambition" but "first and foremost, a great historical and political and sociological fact." In 1909 he reminded delegates to the Imperial Press Conference meeting at Oxford that "we train here and we send out to you your governors and administrators and judges, your teachers and preachers and lawyers." And this almost pedagogical view of empire had, for Curzon, a specific setting in Asia, which as he once put it, made "one pause and think."

I sometimes like to picture to myself this great Imperial fabric as a huge structure like some Tennysonian "Palace of Art," of which the foundations are in this country, where they have been laid and must be maintained by British hands, but of which the Colonies are the pillars, and high above all floats the vastness of an Asiatic dome.<sup>11</sup>

**With such a Tennysonian Palace of Art in mind, Curzon and Cromer were enthusiastic members together of a departmental committee formed in 1909 to press for the creation of a school of Oriental studies. Aside from remarking wistfully that had he known the vernacular he would have been helped during his "famine tours" in India, Curzon argued for Oriental studies as part of the British responsibility to the Orient. On September 27, 1909, he told the House of Lords that**

our familiarity, not merely with the languages of the people of the East but with their customs, their feelings, their traditions, their history and religion, our capacity to understand what may be called the genius of the East, is the sole basis upon which we are likely to be able to maintain in the future the position we have won, and no step that can be taken to strengthen that position can be considered undeserving of the attention of His Majesty's Government or of a debate in the House of Lords.

**At a Mansion House conference on the subject five years later, Curzon finally dotted the i's. Oriental studies were no intellectual luxury; they were, he said,**

a great Imperial obligation. In my view the creation of a school [of Oriental studies—later to become the London University School of Oriental and African Studies] like this in London is part of the necessary furniture of Empire. Those of us who, in one way or another, have spent a number of years in the East, who regard that as the happiest portion of our lives, and who think that the work that we did there, be it great or small, was the highest responsibility that can be placed upon the shoulders of Englishmen, feel that there is a gap in our national equipment which ought emphatically to be filled, and that those in the City of London who, by financial support or by any other form of active and practical assistance, take their part in filling that gap, will be rendering a patriotic duty to the Empire and promoting the cause and goodwill among mankind.<sup>12</sup>

**To a very great extent Curzon's ideas about Oriental studies derive logically from a good century of British utilitarian administration of and philosophy about the Eastern colonies. The influence of Bentham and the Mills on British rule in the Orient (and India particularly) was considerable, and was effective in doing away with too much regulation and innovation; instead, as Eric Stokes has convincingly shown, utilitarianism combined with the legacies**

of liberalism and evangelicalism as philosophies of British rule in the East stressed the rational importance of a strong executive armed with various legal and penal codes, a system of doctrines on such matters as frontiers and land rents, and everywhere an irreducible supervisory imperial authority.<sup>13</sup> The cornerstone of the whole system was a constantly refined knowledge of the Orient, so that as traditional societies hastened forward and became modern commercial societies, there would be no loss of paternal British control, and no loss of revenue either. However, when Curzon referred somewhat inelegantly to Oriental studies as "the necessary furniture of Empire," he was putting into a static image the transactions by which Englishmen and natives conducted their business and kept their places. From the days of Sir William Jones the Orient had been both what Britain ruled and what Britain knew about it: the coincidence between geography, knowledge, and power, with Britain always in the master's place, was complete. To have said, as Curzon once did, that "the East is a University in which the scholar never takes his degree" was another way of saying that the East required one's presence there more or less forever.<sup>14</sup>

But then there were the other European powers, France and Russia among them, that made the British presence always a (perhaps marginally) threatened one. Curzon was certainly aware that all the major Western powers felt towards the world as Britain did. The transformation of geography from "dull and pedantic"—Curzon's phrase for what had now dropped out of geography as an academic subject—into "the most cosmopolitan of all sciences" argued *exactly* that new Western and widespread predilection. Not for nothing did Curzon in 1912 tell the Geographical Society, of which he was president, that

an absolute revolution has occurred, not merely in the manner and methods of teaching geography, but in the estimation in which it is held by public opinion. Nowadays we regard geographical knowledge as an essential part of knowledge in general. By the aid of geography, and in no other way, do we understand the action of great natural forces, the distribution of population, the growth of commerce, the expansion of frontiers, the development of States, the splendid achievements of human energy in its various manifestations.

We recognize geography as the handmaid of history. . . . Geography, too, is a sister science to economics and politics; and

to any of us who have attempted to study geography it is known that the moment you diverge from the geographical field you find yourself crossing the frontiers of geology, zoology, ethnology, chemistry, physics, and almost all the kindred sciences. Therefore we are justified in saying that geography is one of the first and foremost of the sciences: that it is part of the equipment that is necessary for a proper conception of citizenship, and is an indispensable adjunct to the production of a public man.<sup>18</sup>

**Geography was essentially the material underpinning for knowledge about the Orient. All the latent and unchanging characteristics of the Orient stood upon, were rooted in, its geography. Thus on the one hand the geographical Orient nourished its inhabitants, guaranteed their characteristics, and defined their specificity; on the other hand, the geographical Orient solicited the West's attention, even as—by one of those paradoxes revealed so frequently by organized knowledge—East was East and West was West. The cosmopolitanism of geography was, in Curzon's mind, its universal importance to the whole of the West, whose relationship to the rest of the world was one of frank covetousness. Yet geographical appetite could also take on the moral neutrality of an epistemological impulse to find out, to settle upon, to uncover—as when in *Heart of Darkness* Marlow confesses to having a passion for maps.**

I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there.<sup>18</sup>

**Seventy years or so before Marlow said this, it did not trouble Lamartine that what on a map was a blank space was inhabited by natives; nor, theoretically, had there been any reservation in the mind of Emer de Vattel, the Swiss-Prussian authority on international law, when in 1758 he invited European states to take possession of territory inhabited only by mere wandering tribes." The important thing was to dignify simple conquest with an idea, to turn the appetite for more geographical space into a theory about the special relationship between geography on the one hand and civilized or uncivilized peoples on the other. But to these rationalizations there was also a distinctively French contribution.**

By the end of the nineteenth century, political and intellectual circumstances coincided sufficiently in France to make geography, and geographical speculation (in both senses of that word), an attractive national pastime. The general climate of opinion in Europe was propitious; certainly the successes of British imperialism spoke loudly enough for themselves. However, Britain always seemed to France and to French thinkers on the subject to block even a relatively successful French imperial role in the Orient. Before the Franco-Prussian War there was a good deal of wishful political thinking about the Orient, and it was not confined to poets and novelists. Here, for instance, is Saint-Marc Girardin writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on March 15, 1862:

La France a beaucoup a faire en Orient, parce que l'Orient attend beaucoup d'elle. Il lui demande raeme plus qu'elle ne peut faire; il lui remettrait volontiers le soin entier de son avenir, ce qui serait pour la France et pour l'Orient un grand danger: pour la France, parce que, disposee a prendre en mains la cause des populations souffrantes, elle se charge le plus souvent de plus d'obligations qu'elle n'en peut remplir; pour l'Orient, parce que tout peuple qui attend sa destinee de l'etranger n'a jamais qu'une condition precaire et qu'il n'y a de salut pour les nations que celui qu'elles se font elles-memes.<sup>18</sup>

Of such views as this Disraeli would doubtless have said, as he often did, that France had only "sentimental interests" in Syria (which is the "Orient" of which Girardin was writing). The fiction of "populations souffrantes" had of course been used by Napoleon when he appealed to the Egyptians on their behalf against the Turks and for Islam. During the thirties, forties, fifties, and sixties the suffering populations of the Orient were limited to the Christian minorities in Syria. And there was no record of "l'Orient" appealing to France for its salvation. It would have been altogether more truthful to say that Britain stood in France's way in the Orient, for even if France genuinely felt a sense of obligation to the Orient (and there were some Frenchmen who did), there was very little France could do to get between Britain and the huge land mass it commanded from India to the Mediterranean.

Among the most remarkable consequences of the War of 1870 in France were a tremendous efflorescence of geographical societies and a powerfully renewed demand for territorial acquisition. At the end of 1871 the Societe de geographie de Paris declared itself

no longer confined to "scientific speculation." It urged the citizenry not to "forget that our former preponderance was contested from the day we ceased to compete . . . in the conquests of civilization over barbarism." Guillaume Depping, a leader of what has come to be called the geographical movement, asserted in 1881 that during the 1870 war "it was the schoolmaster who triumphed," meaning that the real triumphs were those of Prussian scientific geography over French strategic sloppiness. The government's *Journal officiel* sponsored issue after issue centered on the virtues (and profits) of geographical exploration and colonial adventure; a citizen could learn in one issue from de Lesseps of "the opportunities in Africa" and from Gamier of "the exploration of the Blue River." Scientific geography soon gave way to "commercial geography," as the connection between national pride in scientific and civilizational achievement and the fairly rudimentary profit motive was urged, to be channeled into support for colonial acquisition. In the words of one enthusiast, "The geographical societies are formed to break the fatal charm that holds us enchained to our shores." In aid of this liberating quest all sorts of schemes were spun out, including the enlisting of Jules Verne—whose "unbelievable success," as it was called, ostensibly displayed the scientific mind at a very high peak of ratiocination—to head "a round-the-world campaign of scientific exploration," and a plan for creating a vast new sea just south of the North African coast, as well as a project for "binding" Algeria to Senegal by railroad—"a ribbon of steel," as the projectors called it."

Much of the expansionist fervor in France during the last third of the nineteenth century was generated out of an explicit wish to compensate for the Prussian victory in 1870-1871 and, no less important, the desire to match British imperial achievements. So powerful was the latter desire, and out of so long a tradition of Anglo-French rivalry in the Orient did it derive, that France seemed literally haunted by Britain, anxious in all things connected with the Orient to catch up with and emulate the British. When in the late 1870s, the *Societe academique indo-chinoise* reformulated its goals, it found it important to "bring Indochina into the domain of Orientalism." Why? In order to turn Cochin China into a "French India." The absence of substantial colonial holdings was blamed by military men for that combination of military and commercial weakness in the war with Prussia, to say nothing of long-standing and pronounced colonial inferiority compared with Britain. The

"power of expansion of the Western races," argued a leading geographer, La Ronciere Le Noury, "its superior causes, its elements, its influences on human destinies, will be a beautiful study for future historians." Yet only if the white races indulged their taste for voyaging—a mark of their intellectual supremacy—could colonial expansion occur.<sup>20</sup>

From such theses as this came the commonly held view of the Orient as a geographical space to be cultivated, harvested, and guarded. The images of agricultural care for and those of frank sexual attention to the Orient proliferated accordingly. Here is a typical effusion by Gabriel Charmes, writing in 1880:

On that day when we shall be no longer in the Orient, and when other great European powers will be there, all will be at an end for our commerce in the Mediterranean, for our future in Asia, for the traffic of our southern ports. *One of the most fruitful sources of our national wealth will be dried up.* (Emphasis added)

Another thinker, Leroy-Beaulieu, elaborated this philosophy still further:

A society colonizes, when itself having reached a high degree of maturity and of strength, it procreates, it protects, it places in good conditions of development, and it brings to virility a new society to which it has given birth. Colonization is one of the most complex and delicate phenomena of social physiology.

This equation of self-reproduction with colonization led Leroy-Beaulieu to the somewhat sinister idea that whatever is lively in a modern society is "magnified by this pouring out of its exuberant activity on the outside." Therefore, he said,

Colonization is the expansive force of a people; it is its power of reproduction; *it is its enlargement and its multiplication through space*; it is the subjection of the universe or a vast part of it to that people's language, customs, ideas, and laws.<sup>21</sup>

The point here is that the space of weaker or underdeveloped regions like the Orient was viewed as something inviting French interest, penetration, insemination—in short, colonization. Geographical conceptions, literally and figuratively, did away with the discrete entities held in by borders and frontiers. No less than entrepreneurial visionaries like de Lesseps, whose plan was to liberate the Orient and the Occident from their geographical bonds,

French scholars, administrators, geographers, and commercial agents poured out their exuberant activity onto the fairly supine, feminine Orient. There were the geographical societies, whose number and membership outdid those of all Europe by a factor of two; there were such powerful organizations as the Comite de l'Asie frangaise and the Comite d'Orient; there were the learned societies, chief among them the Societe asiatique, with its organization and membership firmly embedded in the universities, the institutes, and the government. Each in its own way made French interests in the Orient more real, more substantial. Almost an entire century of what now seemed passive study of the Orient had had to end, as France faced up to its transnational responsibilities during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

In the only part of the Orient where British and French interests literally overlapped, the territory of the now hopelessly ill Ottoman Empire, the two antagonists managed their conflict with an almost perfect and characteristic consistency. Britain was *in* Egypt and Mesopotamia; through a series of quasi-fictional treaties with local (and powerless) chiefs it controlled the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Suez Canal, as well as most of the intervening land mass between the Mediterranean and India. France, on the other hand, seemed fated to hover over the Orient, descending once in a while to carry out schemes that repeated de Lesseps's success with the canal; for the most part these schemes were railroad projects, such as the one planned across more or less British territory, the Syrian-Mesopotamian line. In addition France saw itself as the protector of Christian minorities—Maronites, Chaldeans, Nestorians. Yet together, Britain and France were agreed in principle on the necessity, when the time came, for the partition of Asiatic Turkey. Both before and during World War I secret diplomacy was bent on carving up the Near Orient first into spheres of influence, then into mandated (or occupied) territories. In France, much of the expansionist sentiment formed during the heyday of the geographical movement focused itself on plans to partition Asiatic Turkey, so much so that in Paris in 1914 "a spectacular press campaign was launched" to this end.<sup>22</sup> In England numerous committees were empowered to study and recommend policy on the best ways of dividing up the Orient. Out of such commissions as the Bunsen Committee would come the joint Anglo-French teams of which the most famous was the one headed by Mark Sykes and Georges Picot. Equitable division of geographical space was the

rule of these plans, which were deliberate attempts also at calming Anglo-French rivalry. For, as Sykes put it in a memorandum,

it was clear . . . that an Arab rising was sooner or later to take place, and that the French and ourselves ought to be on better terms if the rising was not to be a curse instead of a blessing. . . ,<sup>23</sup>

The animosities remained. And to them was added the irritant provided by the Wilsonian program for national self-determination, which, as Sykes himself was to note, seemed to invalidate the whole skeleton of colonial and partitionary schemes arrived at jointly between the Powers. It would be out of place here to discuss the entire labyrinthine and deeply controversial history of the Near Orient in the early twentieth century, as its fate was being decided between the Powers, the native dynasties, the various nationalist parties and movements, the Zionists. What matters more immediately is the peculiar epistemological framework through which the Orient was seen, and out of which the Powers acted. For despite their differences, the British and the French saw the Orient as a geographical—and cultural, political, demographical, sociological, and historical—entity over whose destiny they believed themselves to have traditional entitlement. The Orient to them was no sudden discovery, no mere historical accident, but an area to the east of Europe whose principal worth was uniformly defined in terms of Europe, more particularly in terms specifically claiming for Europe—European science, scholarship, understanding, and administration—the credit for having made the Orient what it was now. And this had been the achievement—inadvertent or not is beside the point—of modern Orientalism.

There were two principal methods by which Orientalism delivered the Orient to the West in the early twentieth century. One was by means of the disseminative capacities of modern learning, its diffusive apparatus in the learned professions, the universities, the professional societies, the explorational and geographical organizations, the publishing industry. All these, as we have seen, built upon the prestigious authority of the pioneering scholars, travelers, and poets, whose cumulative vision had shaped a quintessential Orient; the doctrinal—or doxological—manifestation of such an Orient is what I have been calling here latent Orientalism. So far as anyone wishing to make a statement of any consequence about the Orient was concerned, latent Orientalism supplied him with an enunciative capacity that could be used, or rather mobilized, and turned into

sensible discourse for the concrete occasion at hand. Thus when Balfour spoke about the Oriental to the House of Commons in 1910, he must surely have had in mind those enunciative capacities in the current and acceptably rational language of his time, by which something called an "Oriental" could be named and talked about without danger of too much obscurity. But like all enunciative capacities and the discourses they enable, latent Orientalism was profoundly conservative—dedicated, that is, to its self-preservation. Transmitted from one generation to another, it was a part of the culture, as much a language about a part of reality as geometry or physics. Orientalism staked its existence, not upon its openness, its receptivity to the Orient, but rather on its internal, repetitious consistency about its constitutive will-to-power over the Orient. In such a way Orientalism was able to survive revolutions, world wars, and the literal dismemberment of empires.

The second method by which Orientalism delivered the Orient to the West was the result of an important convergence. For decades the Orientalists had spoken about the Orient, they had translated texts, they had explained civilizations, religions, dynasties, cultures, mentalities—as academic objects, screened off from Europe by virtue of their inimitable foreignness. The Orientalist was an expert, like Renan or Lane, whose job in society was to interpret the Orient for his compatriots. The relation between Orientalist and Orient was essentially hermeneutical: standing before a distant, barely intelligible civilization or cultural monument, the Orientalist scholar reduced the obscurity by translating, sympathetically portraying, inwardly grasping the hard-to-reach object. Yet the Orientalist remained outside the Orient, which, however much it was made to appear intelligible, remained beyond the Occident. This cultural, temporal, and geographical distance was expressed in metaphors of depth, secrecy, and sexual promise: phrases like "the veils of an Eastern bride" or "the inscrutable Orient" passed into the common language.

Yet the distance between Orient and Occident was, almost paradoxically, in the process of being reduced throughout the nineteenth century. As the commercial, political, and other existential encounters between East and West increased (in ways we have been discussing all along), a tension developed between the dogmas of latent Orientalism, with its support in studies of the "classical" Orient, and the descriptions of a present, modern, manifest Orient

articulated by travelers, pilgrims, statesmen, and the like. At some moment impossible to determine precisely, the tension caused a convergence of the two types of Orientalism. Probably—and this is only a speculation—the convergence occurred when Orientalists, beginning with Sacy, undertook to advise governments on what the modern Orient was all about. Here the role of the specially trained and equipped expert took on an added dimension: the Orientalist could be regarded as the special agent of Western power as it attempted policy vis-a-vis the Orient. Every learned (and not so learned) European traveler in the Orient felt himself to be a representative Westerner who had gotten beneath the films of obscurity. This is obviously true of Burton, Lane, Doughty, Flaubert, and the other major figures I have been discussing.

The discoveries of Westerners about the manifest and modern Orient acquired a pressing urgency as Western territorial acquisition in the Orient increased. Thus what the scholarly Orientalist defined as the "essential" Orient was sometimes contradicted, but in many cases was confirmed, when the Orient became an actual administrative obligation. Certainly Cromer's theories about the Oriental—theories acquired from the traditional Orientalist archive—were vindicated plentifully as he ruled millions of Orientals in actual fact. This was no less true of the French experience in Syria, North Africa, and elsewhere in the French colonies, such as they were. But at no time did the convergence between latent Orientalist doctrine and manifest Orientalist experience occur more dramatically than when, as a result of World War I, Asiatic Turkey was being surveyed by Britain and France for its dismemberment. There, laid out on an operating table for surgery, was the Sick Man of Europe, revealed in all his weakness, characteristics, and topographical outline.

The Orientalist, with his special knowledge, played an inestimably important part in this surgery. Already there had been intimations of his crucial role as a kind of secret agent *inside* the Orient when the British scholar Edward Henry Palmer was sent to the Sinai in 1882 to gauge anti-British sentiment and its possible enlistment on behalf of the Arabi revolt. Palmer was killed in the process, but he was only the most unsuccessful of the many who performed similar services for the Empire, now a serious and exacting business entrusted in part to the regional "expert." Not for nothing was another Orientalist, D. G. Hogarth, author of the

famous account of the exploration of Arabia aptly titled *The Penetration of Arabia* (1904),<sup>24</sup> made the head of the Arab Bureau in Cairo during World War I. And neither was it by accident that men and women like Gertrude Bell, T. E. Lawrence, and St. John Philby, Oriental experts all, posted to the Orient as agents of empire, friends of the Orient, formulators of policy alternatives because of their intimate and expert knowledge of the Orient and of Orientals. They formed a "band"—as Lawrence called it once—bound together by contradictory notions and personal similarities: great individuality, sympathy and intuitive identification with the Orient, a jealously preserved sense of personal mission in the Orient, cultivated eccentricity, a final disapproval of the Orient. For them all the Orient was their direct, peculiar experience of it. In them Orientalism and an effective praxis for handling the Orient received their final European form, before the Empire disappeared and passed its legacy to other candidates for the role of dominant power.

Such individualists as these were not academics. We shall soon see that they were the beneficiaries of the academic study of the Orient, without in any sense belonging to the official and professional company of Orientalist scholars. Their role, however, was not to fight academic Orientalism, nor to subvert it, but rather to make it effective. In their genealogy were people like Lane and Burton, as much for their encyclopedic autodidacticism as for the accurate, the quasi-scholarly knowledge of the Orient they had obviously deployed when dealing with or writing about Orientals. For the curricular study of the Orient they substituted a sort of elaboration of latent Orientalism, which was easily available to them in the imperial culture of their epoch. Their scholarly frame of reference, such as it was, was fashioned by people like William Muir, Anthony Bevan, D. S. Margoliouth, Charles Lyall, E. G. Browne, R. A. Nicholson, Guy Le Strange, E. D. Ross, and Thomas Arnold, who also followed directly in the line of descent from Lane. Their imaginative perspectives were provided principally by their illustrious contemporary Rudyard Kipling, who had sung so memorably of holding "dominion over palm and pine."

The difference between Britain and France in such matters was perfectly consistent with the history of each nation in the Orient: the British were there; the French lamented the loss of India and the intervening territories. By the end of the century, Syria had

become the main focus of French activity, but even there it was a matter of common consensus that the French could not match the British either in quality of personnel or in degree of political influence. The Anglo-French competition over the Ottoman spoils was felt even on the field of battle in the Hejaz, in Syria, in Mesopotamia—but in all these places, as astute men like Edmond Bremond noted, the French Orientalists and local experts were outclassed in brilliance and tactical maneuvering by their British counterparts.<sup>25</sup> Except for an occasional genius like Louis Massignon, there were no French Lawrences or Sykeses or Bells. But there were determined imperialists like Étienne Flandin and Franklin-Bouillon. Lecturing to the Paris Alliance française in 1913, the Comte de Cressaty, a vociferous imperialist, proclaimed Syria as France's own Orient, the site of French political, moral, and economic interests—interests, he added, that had to be defended during this "age des envahissants imperialistes"; and yet Cressaty noted that even with French commercial and industrial firms in the Orient, with by far the largest number of native students enrolled in French schools, France was invariably being pushed around in the Orient, threatened not only by Britain but by Austria, Germany, and Russia. If France was to continue to prevent "le retour de l'Islam," it had better take hold of the Orient: this was an argument proposed by Cressaty and seconded by Senator Paul Doumer.<sup>26</sup> These views were repeated on numerous occasions, and indeed France did well by itself in North Africa and in Syria after World War I, but the special, concrete management of emerging Oriental populations and theoretically independent territories with which the British always credited themselves was something the French felt had eluded them. Ultimately, perhaps, the difference one always feels between modern British and modern French Orientalism is a stylistic one; the import of the generalizations about Orient and Orientals, the sense of distinction preserved between Orient and Occident, the desirability of Occidental dominance over the Orient—all these are the same in both traditions. For of the many elements making up what we customarily call "expertise," style, which is the result of specific worldly circumstances being molded by tradition, institutions, will, and intelligence into formal articulation, is one of the most manifest. It is to this determinant, to this perceptible and modernized refinement in early-twentieth-century Orientalism in Britain and France, that we must now turn.

## II

### Style, Expertise, Vision: *Orientalism* *f*s *Worldliness*

As he appears in several poems, in novels like *Kim*, and in too many catchphrases to be an ironic fiction, Kipling's White Man, as an idea, a persona, a style of being, seems to have served many Britishers while they were abroad. The actual color of their skin set them off dramatically and reassuringly from the sea of natives, but for the Britisher who circulated amongst Indians, Africans, or Arabs there was also the certain knowledge that he belonged to, and could draw upon the empirical and spiritual reserves of, a long tradition of executive responsibility towards the colored races. It was of this tradition, its glories and difficulties, that Kipling wrote when he celebrated the "road" taken by White Men in the colonies:

Now, this is the road that the White Men tread  
 When they go to clean a land—  
 Iron underfoot and the vine overhead  
 And the deep on either hand.  
 We have trod that road—and a wet and windy road—  
 Our chosen star for guide.  
 Oh, well for the world when the White Men tread  
 Their highway side by side!"

"Cleaning a land" is best done by White Men in delicate concert with each other, an allusion to the present dangers of European rivalry in the colonies; for failing in the attempt to coordinate policy, Kipling's White Men are quite prepared to go to war: "Freedom for ourselves and freedom for our sons/And, failing freedom, War." Behind the White Man's mask of amiable leadership there is always the express willingness to use force, to kill and be killed. What dignifies his mission is some sense of intellectual dedication; he is a White Man, but not for mere profit, since his "chosen star" presumably sits far above earthly gain. Certainly many White Men often wondered what it was they fought for on that "wet and windy road," and certainly a great number of them must have been puzzled as to how the color of their skins gave them superior ontological status plus great power over much of the inhabited

world. Yet in the end, being a White Man, for Kipling and for those whose perceptions and rhetoric he influenced, was a self-confirming business. One became a White Man because one *was* a White Man; more important, "drinking that cup," living that unalterable destiny in "the White Man's day," left one little time for idle speculation on origins, causes, historical logic.

Being a White Man was therefore an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned position towards both the white and the non-white worlds. It meant—in the colonies—speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures. It was a form of authority before which nonwhites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend. In the institutional forms it took (colonial governments, consular corps, commercial establishments) it was an agency for the expression, diffusion, and implementation of policy towards the world, and within this agency, although a certain personal latitude was allowed, the impersonal communal idea of being a White Man ruled. Being a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought. It made a specific style possible.

Kipling himself could not merely have happened; the same is true of his White Man. Such ideas and their authors emerge out of complex historical and cultural circumstances, at least two of which have much in common with the history of Orientalism in the nineteenth century. One of them is the culturally sanctioned habit of deploying large generalizations by which reality is divided into various collectives: languages, races, types, colors, mentalities, each category being not so much a neutral designation as an evaluative interpretation. Underlying these categories is the rigidly binomial opposition of "ours" and "theirs," with the former always encroaching upon the latter (even to the point of making "theirs" exclusively a function of "ours"). This opposition was reinforced not only by anthropology, linguistics, and history but also, of course, by the Darwinian theses on survival and natural selection, and—no less decisive—by the rhetoric of high cultural humanism. What gave writers like Renan and Arnold the right to generalities about race was the official character of their formed cultural literacy. "Our" values were (let us say) liberal, humane, correct; they were supported by the tradition of belles-lettres, informed scholarship, rational inquiry; as Europeans (and white men) "we" shared in

them every time their virtues were extolled. Nevertheless, the human partnerships formed by reiterated cultural values excluded as much as they included. For every idea about "our" art spoken for by Arnold, Ruskin, Mill, Newman, Carlyle, Renan, Gobineau, or Comte, another link in the chain binding "us" together was formed while another outsider was banished. Even if this is always the result of such rhetoric, wherever and whenever it occurs, we must remember that for nineteenth-century Europe an imposing edifice of learning and culture was built, so to speak, in the face of actual outsiders (the colonies, the poor, the delinquent), whose role in the culture was to give definition to what *they* were constitutionally unsuited for.<sup>28</sup>

The other circumstance common to the creation of the White Man and Orientalism is the "field" commanded by each, as well as the sense that such a field entails peculiar modes, even rituals, of behavior, learning, and possession. Only an Occidental could speak of Orientals, for example, just as it was the White Man who could designate and name the coloreds, or nonwhites. Every statement made by Orientalists or White Men (who were usually interchangeable) conveyed a sense of the irreducible distance separating white from colored, or Occidental from Oriental; moreover, behind each statement there resonated the tradition of experience, learning, and education that kept the Oriental-colored to his position of *object studied by the Occidental-white*, instead of vice versa. Where one was in a position of power—as Cromer was, for example—the Oriental belonged to the system of rule whose principle was simply to make sure that no Oriental was ever allowed to be independent and rule himself. The premise there was that since the Orientals were ignorant of self-government, they had better be kept that way for their own good.

Since the White Man, like the Orientalist, lived very close to the line of tension keeping the coloreds at bay, he felt it incumbent on him readily to define and redefine the domain he surveyed. Passages of narrative description regularly alternate with passages of re-articulated definition and judgment that disrupt the narrative; this is a characteristic style of the writing produced by Oriental experts who operated using Kipling's White Man as a mask. Here is T. E. Lawrence, writing to V. W. Richards in 1918:

. . . the Arab appealed to my imagination. It is the old, old civilisation, which has refined itself clear of household gods, and

half the trappings which ours hastens to assume. The gospel of bareness in materials is a good one, and it involves apparently a sort of moral bareness too. They think for the moment, and endeavour to slip through life without turning corners or climbing hills. In part it is a mental and moral fatigue, a race trained out, and to avoid difficulties they have to jettison so much that we think honorable and grave: and yet without in any way sharing their point of view, I think I can understand it enough to look at myself and other foreigners from their direction, and without condemning it. I know I am a stranger to them, and always will be; but I cannot believe them worse, any more than I could change to their ways.<sup>29</sup>

A similar perspective, however different the subject under discussion may seem to be, is found in these remarks by Gertrude Bell:

How many thousand years this state of things has lasted [namely, that Arabs live in "a state of war"], those who shall read the earliest records of the inner desert will tell us, for it goes back to the first of them, but in all the centuries the Arab has bought no wisdom from experience. He is never safe, and yet he behaves as though security were his daily bread.<sup>30</sup>

To which, as a gloss, we should add her further observation, this time about life in Damascus:

I begin to see dimly what the civilisation of a great Eastern city means, how they live, what they think; and I have got on to terms with them. I believe the fact of my being English is a great help. . . . We have gone up in the world since five years ago. The difference is very marked. I think it is due to the success of our government in Egypt to a great extent. . . . The defeat of Russia stands for a great deal, and my impression is that the vigorous policy of Lord Curzon in the Persian Gulf and on the India frontier stands for a great deal more. No one who does not know the East can realise how it all hangs together. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that if the English mission had been turned back from the gates of Kabul, the English tourist would be frowned upon in the streets of Damascus.<sup>31</sup>

In such statements as these, we note immediately that "the Arab" or "Arabs" have an aura of apartness, definiteness, and collective self-consistency such as to wipe out any traces of individual Arabs with narratable life histories. What appealed to Lawrence's imagination was the clarity of the Arab, both as an image and as a supposed philosophy (or attitude) towards life: in both cases what

Lawrence fastens on is the Arab as if seen from the cleansing perspective of one not an Arab, and one for whom such un-self-conscious primitive simplicity as the Arab possesses is something defined by the observer, in this case the White Man. Yet Arab refinement, which in its essentials corresponds to Yeats's visions of Byzantium where

Flames that no faggot feeds, flint nor steel has lit,  
Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,  
Where blood-begotten spirits come  
And all complexities of fury leave<sup>32</sup>

is associated with Arab perdurability, as if the Arab had not been subject to the ordinary processes of history. Paradoxically, the Arab seems to Lawrence to have exhausted himself in his very temporal persistence. The enormous age of Arab civilization has thus served to refine the Arab down to his quintessential attributes, and to tire him out morally in the process. What we are left with is Bell's Arab: centuries of experience and no wisdom. As a collective entity, then, the Arab accumulates no existential or even semantical thickness. He remains the same, except for the exhausting refinements mentioned by Lawrence, from one end to the other of "the records of the inner desert." We are to assume that if *an* Arab feels joy, if he is sad at the death of his child or parent, if he has a sense of the injustices of political tyranny, then those experiences are necessarily subordinate to the sheer, unadorned, and persistent fact of being an Arab.

The primitiveness of such a state exists simultaneously on at least two levels: one, *in the definition*, which is reductive; and two (according to Lawrence and Bell), *in reality*. This absolute coincidence was itself no simple coincidence. For one, it could only have been made from the outside by virtue of a vocabulary and epistemological instruments designed both to get to the heart of things and to avoid the distractions of accident, circumstance, or experience. For another, the coincidence was a fact uniquely the result of method, tradition, and politics all working together. Each in a sense obliterated the distinctions between the type—*the Oriental, the Semite, the Arab, the Orient*—and ordinary human reality, Yeats's "uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor," in which all human beings live. The scholarly investigator took a type marked "Oriental" for the same thing as any individual Oriental he might encounter. Years of tradition had encrusted discourse about such

matters as the Semitic or Oriental spirit with some legitimacy. And political good sense taught, in Bell's marvelous phrase, that in the East "it all hangs together." Primitiveness therefore inhered in the Orient, *was* the Orient, an idea to which anyone dealing with or writing about the Orient had to return, as if to a touchstone out-lasting time or experience.

There is an excellent way of understanding all this as it applied to the white agents, experts, and advisers for the Orient. What mattered to Lawrence and Bell was that their references to Arabs or Orientals belonged to a recognizable, and authoritative, convention of formulation, one that was able to subordinate detail to it. But from where, more particularly, did "the Arab," "the Semite," or "the Oriental" come?

We have remarked how, during the nineteenth century in such writers as Renan, Lane, Flaubert, Caussin de Perceval, Marx, and Lamartine, a generalization about "the Orient" drew its power from the presumed representativeness of everything Oriental; each particle of the Orient told of its Orientalness, so much so that the attribute of being Oriental overrode any countervailing instance. An Oriental man was first an Oriental and only second a man. Such radical typing was naturally reinforced by sciences (or discourses, as I prefer to call them) that took a backward and downward direction towards the species category, which was supposed also to be an ontogenetic explanation for every member of the species. Thus within broad, semipopular designations such as "Oriental" there were some more scientifically valid distinctions being made; most of these were based principally on language types—e.g., Semitic, Dravidic, Hamitic—but they were quickly able to acquire anthropological, psychological, biological, and cultural evidence in their support. Renan's "Semitic," as an instance, was a linguistic generalization which in Renan's hands could add to itself all sorts of parallel ideas from anatomy, history, anthropology, and even geology. "Semitic" could then be employed not only as a simple description or designation; it could be applied to any complex of historical and political events in order to pare them down to a nucleus both antecedent to and inherent in them. "Semitic," therefore, was a transtemporal, transindividual category, purporting to predict every discrete act of "Semitic" behavior on the basis of some pre-existing "Semitic" essence, and aiming as well to interpret all aspects of human life and activity in terms of some common "Semitic" element.

The peculiar hold on late-nineteenth-century liberal European culture of such relatively punitive ideas will seem mysterious unless it is remembered that the appeal of sciences like linguistics, anthropology, and biology was that they were empirical, and by no means speculative or idealistic. Renan's Semitic, like Bopp's Indo-European, was a constructed object, it is true, but it was considered logical and inevitable as a protoform, given the scientifically apprehensible and empirically analyzable data of specific Semitic languages. Thus, in trying to formulate a prototypical and primitive linguistic type (as well as a cultural, psychological, and historical one), there was also an "attempt to define a primary human potential,"<sup>33</sup> out of which completely specific instances of behavior uniformly derived. Now this attempt would have been impossible had it not also been believed—in classical empiricist terms—that mind and body were interdependent realities, both determined originally by a given set of geographical, biological, and quasi-historical conditions.<sup>34</sup> From this set, which was not available to the native for discovery or introspection, there was no subsequent escape. The antiquarian bias of Orientalists was supported by these empiricist ideas. In all their studies of "classical" Islam, Buddhism, or Zoroastrianism they felt themselves, as George Eliot's Dr. Casaubon confesses, to be acting "like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes."<sup>35</sup>

Were these theses about linguistic, civilizational, and finally racial characteristics merely one side of an academic debate amongst European scientists and scholars, we might dismiss them as furnishing material for an unimportant closet drama. The point is, however, that both the terms of the debate and the debate itself had very wide circulation; in late-nineteenth-century culture, as Lionel Trilling has said, "racial theory, stimulated by a rising nationalism and a spreading imperialism, supported by an incomplete and mal-assimilated science, was almost undisputed."<sup>36</sup> Race theory, ideas about primitive origins and primitive classifications, modern decadence, the progress of civilization, the destiny of the white (or Aryan) races, the need for colonial territories—all these were elements in the peculiar amalgam of science, politics, and culture whose drift, almost without exception, was always to raise Europe or a European race to dominion over non-European portions of mankind. There was general agreement too that, according to a strangely transformed variety of Darwinism sanctioned by Darwin

himself, the modern Orientals were degraded remnants of a former greatness; the ancient, or "classical," civilizations of the Orient were perceivable through the disorders of present decadence, but only (a) because a white specialist with highly refined scientific techniques could do the sifting and reconstructing, and (b) because a vocabulary of sweeping generalities (the Semites, the Aryans, the Orientals) referred not to a set of fictions but rather to a whole array of seemingly objective and agreed-upon distinctions. Thus a remark about what Orientals were and were not capable of was supported by biological "truths" such as those spelled out in P. Charles Michel's "A Biological View of Our Foreign Policy" (1896), in Thomas Henry Huxley's *The Struggle for Existence in Human Society* (1888), Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* (1894), John B. Crozier's *History of Intellectual Development on the Lines of Modern Evolution* (1897-1901), and Charles Harvey's *The Biology of British Politics* (1904).<sup>37</sup> It was assumed that if languages were as distinct from each other as the linguists said they were, then too the language users—their minds, cultures, potentials, and even their bodies—were different in similar ways. And these distinctions had the force of ontological, empirical truth behind them, together with the convincing demonstration of such truth in studies of origins, development, character, and destiny.

The point to be emphasized is that this truth about the distinctive differences between races, civilizations, and languages was (or pretended to be) radical and ineradicable. It went to the bottom of things, it asserted that there was no escape from origins and the types these origins enabled; it set the real boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed; it forced vision away from common, as well as plural, human realities like joy, suffering, political organization, forcing attention instead in the downward and backward direction of immutable origins. A scientist could no more escape such origins in his research than an Oriental could escape "the Semites" or "the Arabs" or "the Indians" from which his present reality—debased, colonized, backward—excluded him, except for the white researcher's didactic presentation.

The profession of specialized research conferred unique privileges. We recall that Lane could appear to be an Oriental and yet retain his scholarly detachment. The Orientals he studied became in fact *his* Orientals, for he saw them not only as actual people but as monumentalized objects in his account of them. This double per-

spective encouraged a sort of structured irony. On the one hand, there was a collection of people living in the present; on the other hand, these people—as the subject of study—became "the Egyptians," "the Muslims," or "the Orientals." Only the scholar could see, and manipulate, the discrepancy between the two levels. The tendency of the former was always towards greater variety, yet this variety was always being restrained, compressed downwards and backwards to the *radical* terminal of the generality. Every modern, native instance of behavior became an effusion to be sent back to the original terminal, which was strengthened in the process. This kind of "dispatching" was precisely the *discipline of Orientalism*.

Lane's ability to deal with the Egyptians as present beings and as validations of *sui generis* labels was a function both of Orientalist discipline and of generally held views about the Near Oriental Muslim or Semite. In no people more than in the Oriental Semites was it possible to see the present and the origin together. The Jews and the Muslims, as subjects of Orientalist study, were readily understandable in view of their primitive origins: this was (and to a certain extent still is) the cornerstone of modern Orientalism. Renan had called the Semites an instance of arrested development, and functionally speaking this came to mean that for the Orientalist no modern Semite, however much he may have believed himself to be modern, could ever outdistance the organizing claims on him of his origins. This functional rule worked on the temporal and spatial levels together. No Semite advanced in time beyond the development of a "classical" period; no Semite could ever shake loose the pastoral, desert environment of his tent and tribe. Every manifestation of actual "Semitic" life could be, and ought to be, referred back to the primitive explanatory category of "the Semitic."

The executive power of such a system of reference, by which each discrete instance of real behavior could be reduced down and back to a small number of explanatory "original" categories, was considerable by the end of the nineteenth century. In Orientalism it was the equivalent of bureaucracy in public administration. The department was more useful than the individual file, and certainly the human being was significant principally as the occasion for a file. We must imagine the Orientalist at work in the role of a clerk putting together a very wide assortment of files in a large cabinet marked "the Semites." Aided by recent discoveries in comparative and primitive anthropology, a scholar like William Robertson Smith could group together the inhabitants of the Near Orient and write

on their kinship and marriage customs, on the form and content of their religious practice. The power of Smith's work is its plainly radical demythologizing of the Semites. The nominal barriers presented to the world by Islam or Judaism are swept aside; Smith uses Semitic philology, mythology, and Orientalist scholarship "to construct... a hypothetical picture of the development of the social systems, consistent with all the Arabian facts." If this picture succeeds in revealing the antecedent, and still influential, roots of monotheism in totemism or animal worship, then the scholar has been successful. And this, Smith says, despite the fact that "our Mohammedan sources draw a veil, as far as they can, over all details of the old heathenism."<sup>38</sup>

Smith's work on the Semites covered such areas as theology, literature, and history; it was done with a full awareness of work done by Orientalists (see, for instance, Smith's savage attack in 1887 on Renan's *Histoire du peuple d'Israel*), and more important, was intended as an aid to the understanding of the modern Semites. For Smith, I think, was a crucial link in the intellectual chain connecting the White-Man-as-expert to the modern Orient. None of the encapsulated wisdom delivered as Oriental expertise by Lawrence, Hogarth, Bell, and the others would have been possible without Smith. And even Smith the antiquarian scholar would not have had half the authority without his additional and direct experience of "the Arabian facts." It was the combination in Smith of the "grasp" of primitive categories with the ability to see general truths behind the empirical vagaries of contemporary Oriental behavior that gave weight to his writing. Moreover, it was this special combination that adumbrated the style of expertise upon which Lawrence, Bell, and Philby built their reputation.

Like Burton and Charles Doughty before him, Smith voyaged in the Hejaz, between 1880 and 1881. Arabia has been an especially privileged place for the Orientalist, not only because Muslims treat Islam as Arabia's *genius loci*, but also because the Hejaz appears historically as barren and retarded as it is geographically; the Arabian desert is thus considered to be a locale about which one can make statements regarding the past in exactly the same form (and with the same content) that one makes them regarding the present. In the Hejaz you can speak about Muslims, modern Islam, and primitive Islam without bothering to make distinctions. To this vocabulary devoid of historical grounding, Smith was able to bring the cachet of additional authority provided by his Semitic studies.

What we hear in his comments is the standpoint of a scholar commanding *all* the antecedents for Islam, the Arabs, and Arabia. Hence:

It is characteristic of Mohammedanism that all national feeling assumes a religious aspect, inasmuch as the whole polity and social forms of a Moslem country are clothed in a religious dress. But it would be a mistake to suppose that genuine religious feeling is at the bottom of everything that justifies itself by taking a religious shape. The prejudices of the Arab have their roots in a conservatism which lies deeper than his belief in Islam. It is, indeed, a great fault of the religion of the Prophet that it lends itself so easily to the prejudices of the race among whom it was first promulgated, and that it has taken under its protection so many barbarous and obsolete ideas, which even Mohammed must have seen to have no religious worth, but which he carried over into his system in order to facilitate the propagation of his reformed doctrines. Yet many of the prejudices which seem to us most distinctively Mohammedan have no basis in the Koran.<sup>39</sup>

The "us" in the last sentence of this amazing piece of logic defines the White Man's vantage point explicitly. This allows "us" to say in the first sentence that all political and social life are "clothed" in religious dress (Islam can thus be characterized as totalitarian), then to say in the second that religion is only a cover used by Muslims (in other words, all Muslims are hypocrites essentially). In the third sentence, the claim is made that Islam—even while laying hold upon the Arab's faith—has not really reformed the Arab's basic pre-Islamic conservatism. Nor is this all. For if Islam was successful as a religion it was because it fecklessly allowed these "authentic" Arab prejudices to creep in; for such a tactic (now we see that it was a tactic on Islam's behalf) we must blame Mohammed, who was after all a ruthless crypto-Jesuit. But all this is more or less wiped out in the last sentence, when Smith assures "us" that everything he has said about Islam is invalid, since the quintessential aspects of Islam known to the West are not "Mohammedan" after all.

The principles of identity and noncontradiction clearly do not bind the Orientalist. What overrides them is Orientalist expertise, which is based on an irrefutable collective verity entirely within the Orientalist's philosophical and rhetorical grasp. Smith is able without the slightest trepidation to speak about "the jejune, prac-

tical and . . . constitutionally irreligious habit of the Arabic mind," Islam as a system of "organized hypocrisy," the impossibility of "feeling any respect for Moslem devotion, in which formalism and vain repetition are reduced to a system." His attacks on Islam are not relativist, for it is clear to him that Europe's and Christianity's superiority is actual, not imagined. At bottom, Smith's vision of the world is binary, as is evident in such passages as the following:

The Arabian traveller is quite different from ourselves. The labour of moving from place to place is a mere nuisance to him, he has no enjoyment in effort [as "we" do], and grumbles at hunger or fatigue with all his might [as "we" do not]. You will never persuade the Oriental that, when you get off your camel, you can have any other wish than immediately to squat on a rug and take your rest (*isterih*), smoking and drinking. Moreover the Arab is little impressed by scenery [but "we" are].<sup>40</sup>

"We" are this, "they" are that. Which Arab, which Islam, when, how, according to what tests: these appear to be distinctions irrelevant to Smith's scrutiny of and experience in the Hejaz. The crucial point is that everything one can know or learn about "Semites" and "Orientals" receives immediate corroboration, not merely in the archives, but directly on the ground.

Out of such a coercive framework, by which a modern "colored" man is chained irrevocably to the general truths formulated about his prototypical linguistic, anthropological, and doctrinal forebears by a white European scholar, the work of the great twentieth-century Oriental experts in England and France derived. To this framework these experts also brought their private mythology and obsessions, which in writers like Doughty and Lawrence have been studied with considerable energy. Each—Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, Doughty, Lawrence, Bell, Hogarth, Philby, Sykes, Storrs—believed his vision of things Oriental was individual, self-created out of some intensely personal encounter with the Orient, Islam, or the Arabs; each expressed general contempt for official knowledge held about the East. "The sun made me an Arab," Doughty wrote in *Arabia Deserta*, "but never warped me to Orientalism." Yet in the final analysis they all (except Blunt) expressed the traditional Western hostility to and fear of the Orient. Their views refined and gave a personal twist to the academic style of modern Orientalism, with its repertoire of grand generalizations, tendentious "science" from which there was no appeal, reductive formulae. (Doughty again,

on the same page as his sneer at Orientalism: "The Semites are like to a man sitting in a cloaca to the eyes, and whose brows touch heaven."<sup>41</sup>) They acted, they promised, they recommended public policy on the basis of such generalizations; and, by a remarkable irony, they acquired the identity of White Orientals in their natal cultures—even as, in the instances of Doughty, Lawrence, Hogarth, and Bell, their professional involvement with the East (like Smith's) did not prevent them from despising it thoroughly. The main issue for them was preserving the Orient and Islam under the control of the White Man.

A new dialectic emerges out of this project. What is required of the Oriental expert is no longer simply "understanding": now the Orient must be made to perform, its power must be enlisted on the side of "our" values, civilization, interests, goals. Knowledge of the Orient is directly translated into activity, and the results give rise to new currents of thought and action in the Orient. But these in turn will require from the White Man a new assertion of control, this time not as the author of a scholarly work on the Orient but as the maker of contemporary history, of the Orient as urgent actuality (which, because he began it, only the expert can understand adequately). The Orientalist has now become a figure of Oriental history, indistinguishable from it, its shaper, its characteristic *sign* for the West. Here is the dialectic in brief:

Some Englishmen, of whom Kitchener was chief, believed that a rebellion of Arabs against Turks would enable England, while fighting Germany, simultaneously to defeat her ally Turkey. Their knowledge of the nature and power and country of the Arabic-speaking peoples made them think that the issue of such a rebellion would be happy: and indicated its character and method. So they allowed it to begin, having obtained formal assurances of help for it from the British Government. Yet none the less the rebellion of the Sherif of Mecca came to most as a surprise, and found the Allies unready. It aroused mixed feelings and made strong friends and enemies, amid whose clashing jealousies its affairs began to miscarry.<sup>42</sup>

This is Lawrence's own synopsis of chapter 1 of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. The "knowledge" of "some Englishmen" authors a movement in the Orient whose "affairs" create a mixed progeny; the ambiguities, the half-imagined, tragicomic results of this new, revived Orient become the subject of expert writing, a new form of Orientalist discourse that presents a vision of the contemporary

Orient, not as narrative, but as all complexity, problematics, betrayed hope—with the White Orientalist author as its prophetic, articulate definition.

The defeat of narrative by vision—which is true even in so patently storylike a work as *The Seven Pillars*—is something we have already encountered in Lane's *Modern Egyptians*. A conflict between a holistic view of the Orient (description, monumental record) and a narrative of events in the Orient is a conflict on several levels, involving several different issues. As the conflict is frequently renewed in the discourse of Orientalism, it is worthwhile analyzing it here briefly. The Orientalist surveys the Orient from above, with the aim of getting hold of the whole sprawling panorama before him—culture, religion, mind, history, society. To do this he must see every detail through the device of a set of reductive categories (the Semites, the Muslim mind, the Orient, and so forth). Since these categories are primarily schematic and efficient ones, and since it is more or less assumed that no Oriental can know himself the way an Orientalist can, any vision of the Orient ultimately comes to rely for its coherence and force on the person, institution, or discourse whose property it is. Any comprehensive vision is fundamentally conservative, and we have noted how in the history of ideas about the Near Orient in the West these ideas have maintained themselves regardless of any evidence disputing them. (Indeed, we can argue that these ideas produce evidence that proves their validity.)

The Orientalist is principally a kind of agent of such comprehensive visions; Lane is a typical instance of the way an individual believes himself to have subordinated his ideas, or even what he sees, to the exigencies of some "scientific" view of the whole phenomenon known collectively as the Orient, or the Oriental nation. A vision therefore is static, just as the scientific categories informing late-nineteenth-century Orientalism are static: there is no recourse beyond "the Semites" or "the Oriental mind"; these are final terminals holding every variety of Oriental behavior within a general view of the whole field. As a discipline, as a profession, as specialized language or discourse, Orientalism is staked upon the permanence of the whole Orient, for without "the Orient" there can be no consistent, intelligible, and articulated knowledge called "Orientalism." Thus the Orient belongs to Orientalism, just as it is assumed that there is pertinent information belonging to (or about) the Orient.

Against this static system of "synchronic essentialism"<sup>43</sup> I have called vision because it presumes that the whole Orient can be seen panoptically, there is a constant pressure. The source of pressure is narrative, in that if any Oriental detail can be shown to move, or to develop, diachrony is introduced into the system. What seemed stable—and the Orient is synonymous with stability and unchanging eternity—now appears unstable. Instability suggests that history, with its disruptive detail, its currents of change, its tendency towards growth, decline, or dramatic movement, is possible in the Orient and for the Orient. History and the narrative by which history is represented argue that vision is insufficient, that "the Orient" as an unconditional ontological category does an injustice to the potential of reality for change.

Moreover, narrative is the specific form taken by written history to counter the permanence of vision. Lane sensed the dangers of narrative when he refused to give linear shape to himself and to his information, preferring instead the monumental form of encyclopedic or lexicographical vision. Narrative asserts the power of men to be born, develop, and die, the tendency of institutions and actualities to change, the likelihood that modernity and contemporaneity will finally overtake "classical" civilizations; above all, it asserts that the domination of reality by vision is no more than a will to power, a will to truth and interpretation, and not an objective condition of history. Narrative, in short, introduces an opposing point of view, perspective, consciousness to the unitary web of vision; it violates the serene Apollonian fictions asserted by vision.

When as a result of World War I the Orient was made to enter history, it was the Orientalist-as-agent who did the work. Hannah Arendt has made the brilliant observation that the counterpart of the bureaucracy is the imperial agent,<sup>44</sup> which is to say that if the collective academic endeavor called Orientalism was a bureaucratic institution based on a certain conservative vision of the Orient, then the servants of such a vision in the Orient were imperial agents like T. E. Lawrence. In his work we can see most clearly the conflict between narrative history and vision, as—in his words—the "new Imperialism" attempted "an active tide of imposing responsibility on the local peoples [of the Orient]."<sup>45</sup> The competition between the European Powers now caused them to prod the Orient into active life, to press the Orient into service, to turn the Orient from unchanging "Oriental" passivity into militant modern life. It would be important, nevertheless, never to let the Orient go its own way or

get out of hand, the canonical view being that Orientals had no tradition of freedom.

The great drama of Lawrence's work is that it symbolizes the struggle, first, to stimulate the Orient (lifeless, timeless, forceless) into movement; second, to impose upon that movement an essentially Western shape; third, to contain the new and aroused Orient in a personal vision, whose retrospective mode includes a powerful sense of failure and betrayal.

I meant to make a new nation, to restore a lost influence, to give twenty millions of Semites the foundation on which to build an inspired dream-palace of their national thoughts. . . . All the subject provinces of the Empire to me were not worth one dead English boy. If I have restored to the East some self-respect, a goal, ideals: if I have made the standard rule of white over red more exigent, I have fitted those peoples in a degree for the new commonwealth in which the dominant races will forget their brute achievements, and white and red and yellow and brown and black will stand up together without side-glances in the service of the world.<sup>46</sup>

None of this, whether as intention, as an actual undertaking, or as a failed project, would have been remotely possible without the White Orientalist perspective at the outset:

The Jew in the Metropole at Brighton, the miser, the worshipper of Adonis, the lecher in the stews of Damascus were alike signs of the Semitic capacity for enjoyment, and expressions of the same nerve which gave us at the other pole the self-denial of the Essenes, or the early Christians, or the first Khalifas, finding the ways to heaven fairest for the poor in spirit. The Semite hovered between lust and self-denial.

Lawrence is backed in such statements by a respectable tradition stretching like a lighthouse beam through the whole nineteenth century; at its light-emanating center, of course, is "the Orient," and that is powerful enough to light up both the gross and the refined topographies within its range. The Jew, the worshipper of Adonis, the Damascene lecher, are signs not so much of humanity, let us say, as of a semiotic field called Semitic and built into coherence by the Semitic branch of Orientalism. Inside this field, certain things were possible:

Arabs could be swung on an idea as on a cord; for the unpledged allegiance of their minds made them obedient servants. None of

them would escape the bond till success had come, and with it responsibility and duty and engagement. Then the idea was gone and the work ended—in ruins. Without a creed they could be taken to the four corners of the world (but not to heaven) by being shown the riches of the earth and the pleasures of it; but if on the road . . . they met the prophet of an idea, who had nowhere to lay his head and who depended for his food on charity or birds, then they would all leave their wealth for his inspiration. . . . They were as unstable as water, and like water would perhaps finally prevail. Since the dawn of life, in successive waves they had been dashing themselves against the coasts of flesh. Each wave was broken. . . . One such wave (and not the least) I raised and rolled before the breath of an idea, till it reached its crest, and toppled over and fell at Damascus. The wash of that wave, thrown back by the resistance of vested things, will provide the matter of the following wave, when in fullness of time the sea shall be raised once more.

"Could," "would," and "if" are Lawrence's way inserting himself in the field, as it were. Thus the possibility is prepared for the last sentence, in which as manipulator of the Arabs Lawrence puts himself at their head. Like Conrad's Kurtz, Lawrence has cut himself loose from the earth so as to become identified with a new reality in order—he says later—that he might be responsible for "hustling into form . . . the new Asia which time was inexorably bringing upon us."<sup>47</sup>

The Arab Revolt acquires meaning only as Lawrence designs meaning for it; his meaning imparted thus to Asia was a triumph, "a mood of enlargement . . . in that we felt that we had assumed another's pain or experience, his personality." The Orientalist has become now the representative Oriental, unlike earlier participant observers such as Lane, for whom the Orient was something kept carefully at bay. But there is an unresolvable conflict in Lawrence between the White Man and the Oriental, and although he does not explicitly say so, this conflict essentially restages in his mind the historical conflict between East and West. Conscious of his power over the Orient, conscious also of his duplicity, unconscious of anything in the Orient that would suggest to him that history, after all, is history and that even without him the Arabs would finally attend to their quarrel with the Turks, Lawrence reduces the entire narrative of the revolt (its momentary successes and its bitter failure) to *his* vision of himself as an unresolved, "standing civil war":

Yet in reality we had borne the vicarious for our own sakes, or at least because it was pointed for our benefit: and could escape from this knowledge only by a make-belief in sense as well as in motive. . . .

There seemed no straight walking for us leaders in this crooked lane of conduct, ring within ring of unknown, shamefaced motives cancelling or double-charging their precedents.<sup>48</sup>

To this intimate sense of defeat Lawrence was later to add a theory about "the old men" who stole the triumph from him. In any event, what matters to Lawrence is that as a white expert, the legatee of years of academic and popular wisdom about the Orient, he is able to subordinate his style of being to theirs, thereafter to assume the role of Oriental prophet giving shape to a movement in "the new Asia." And when, for whatever reason, the movement fails (it is taken over by others, its aims are betrayed, its dream of independence invalidated), it is *Lawrence's* disappointment that counts. So far from being a mere man lost in the great rush of confusing events, Lawrence equates himself fully with the struggle of the new Asia to be born.

Whereas Aeschylus had represented Asia mourning its losses, and Nerval had expressed his disappointment in the Orient for not being more glamorous than he had wanted, Lawrence *becomes* both the mourning continent and a subjective consciousness expressing an almost cosmic disenchantment. In the end Lawrence—and thanks not only to Lowell Thomas and Robert Graves—and Lawrence's vision became the very symbol of Oriental trouble: Lawrence, in short, had assumed responsibility for the Orient by interspersing his knowing experience between the reader and history. Indeed what Lawrence presents to the reader is an unmediated expert power—the power to be, for a brief time, the Orient. All the events putatively ascribed to the historical Arab Revolt are reduced finally to Lawrence's experiences on its behalf.

In such a case, therefore, style is not only the power to symbolize such enormous generalities as Asia, the Orient, or the Arabs; it is also a form of displacement and incorporation by which one voice becomes a whole history, and—for the white Westerner, as reader or writer—the only kind of Orient it is possible to know. Just as Renan had mapped the field of possibility open to the Semites in culture, thought, and language, so too Lawrence charts the space (and indeed, appropriates that space) and time of modern Asia.

The effect of this style is that it brings Asia tantalizingly close to the West, but only for a brief moment. We are left at the end with a sense of the pathetic distance still separating "us" from an Orient destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its permanent estrangement from the West. This is the disappointing conclusion corroborated (contemporaneously) by the ending of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, where Aziz and Fielding attempt, and fail at, reconciliation:

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want."

But the horses didn't want it—they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there."<sup>49</sup>

This style, this compact definition, is what the Orient will always come up against.

Despite its pessimism, there is a positive political message behind its phrases. The gulf between East and West can be modulated, as Cromer and Balfour knew well, by superior Western knowledge and power. Lawrence's vision is complemented in France by Maurice Barres's *Une Enquete aux pays du Levant*, the record of a journey through the Near Orient in 1914. Like so many works before it, the *Enquete* is a work of recapitulation whose author not only searches out sources and origins of Western culture in the Orient but also redoes Nerval, Flaubert, and Lamartine in their voyages to the Orient. For Barres, however, there is an additional political dimension to his journey: he seeks proof, and conclusive evidence, for a constructive French role in the East. Yet the difference between French and British expertise remains: the former manages an actual conjunction of peoples and territory, whereas the latter deals with a realm of spiritual possibility. For Barres the French presence is best seen in French schools where, as he says of a school in Alexandria, "It is ravishing to see those little Oriental girls welcoming and so wonderfully reproducing the *fantaisie* and the melody [in their spoken French] of the Ile-de-France." If France does not actually have any colonies there, she is not entirely without possessions:

There is, there in the Orient, a feeling about France which is so religious and strong that it is capable of absorbing and reconciling all our most diverse aspirations. In the Orient we represent spirituality, justice, and the category of the ideal. England is powerful there; Germany is all-powerful; but we possess Oriental souls.

Arguing vociferously with Jaurès, this celebrated European doctor proposes to vaccinate Asia against its own illnesses, to occidentalize the Orientals, to bring them into salubrious contact with France. Yet even in these projects Barres's vision preserves the very distinction between East and West he claims to be mitigating.

How will we be able to form for ourselves an intellectual elite with which we can work, made out of Orientals who would not be deracinated, who would continue to evolve according to their own norms, who would remain penetrated by family traditions, and who would thus form a link between us and the mass of natives? How will we create relationships with a view towards preparing the way for agreements and treaties which would be the desirable form taken by our political future [in the Orient]? All these things are finally all about soliciting in these strange peoples the taste for maintaining contact with our intelligence, *even though this taste may in fact come out of their own sense of their national destiny.*<sup>M</sup>

The emphasis in the last sentence is Barres's own. Since unlike Lawrence and Hogarth (whose book *The Wandering Scholar* is the wholly informative and unromantic record of two trips to the Levant in 1896 and 1910<sup>51</sup>) he writes of a world of distant probabilities; he is more prepared to imagine the Orient as going its own way. Yet the bond (or leash) between East and West that he advocates is designed to permit a constant variety of intellectual pressure going from West to East. Barres sees things, not in terms of waves, battles, spiritual adventures, but in terms of the cultivation of intellectual imperialism, as ineradicable as it is subtle. The British vision, exemplified by Lawrence, is of the mainstream Orient, of peoples, political organizations, and movements guided and held in check by the White Man's expert tutelage; the Orient is "our" Orient, "our" people, "our" dominions. Discriminations between elites and the masses are less likely to be made by the British than by the French, whose perceptions and policy were always based on minorities and on the insidious pressures of spiritual community between France and its colonial children. The

British agent-Orientalist—Lawrence, Bell, Philby, Storrs, Hogarth—during and after World War I took over both the role of expert-adventurer-eccentric (created in the nineteenth century by Lane, Burton, Hester Stanhope) and the role of colonial authority, whose position is in a central place next to the indigenous ruler: Lawrence with the Hashimites, Philby with the house of Saud, are the two best-known instances. British Oriental expertise fashioned itself around consensus and orthodoxy and sovereign authority; French Oriental expertise between the wars concerned itself with heterodoxy, spiritual ties, eccentrics. It is no accident, then, that the two major scholarly careers of this period, one British, one French, were H. A. R. Gibb's and Louis Massignon's, one whose interest was defined by the notion of Sunna (or orthodoxy) in Islam, the other whose focus was on the quasi-Christlike, theosophical Sufi figure, Mansur al-Hallaj. I shall return to these two major Orientalists a little later.

If I have concentrated so much on imperial agents and policymakers instead of scholars in this section, it was to accentuate the major shift in Orientalism, knowledge about the Orient, intercourse with it, from an academic to an *instrumental* attitude. What accompanies the shift is a change in the attitude as well of the individual Orientalist, who need no longer see himself—as Lane, Sacy, Renan, Caussin, Miiller, and others did—as belonging to a sort of guild community with its own internal traditions and rituals. Now the Orientalist has become the representative man of his Western culture, a man who compresses within his own work a major duality of which that work (regardless of its specific form) is the symbolic expression: Occidental consciousness, knowledge, science taking hold of the furthest Oriental reaches as well as the most minute Oriental particulars. Formally the Orientalist sees himself as accomplishing the union of Orient and Occident, but mainly by reasserting the technological, political, and cultural supremacy of the West. History, in such a union, is radically attenuated if not banished. Viewed as a current of development, as a narrative strand, or as a dynamic force unfolding systematically and materially in time and space, human history—of the East or the West—is subordinated to an essentialist, idealist conception of Occident and Orient. Because he feels himself to be standing at the very rim of the East-West divide, the Orientalist not only speaks in vast generalities; he also seeks to convert each aspect of Oriental or

Occidental life into an unmediated sign of one or the other geographical half.

The interchange in the Orientalist's writing between his expert self and his testimonial, beholding self as Western representative is pre-eminently worked out in visual terms. Here is a typical passage (quoted by Gibb) from Duncan Macdonald's classic work *The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam* (1909):

The Arabs show themselves not as especially easy of belief, but as hard-headed, materialistic, questioning, doubting, scoffing at their own superstitions and usages, fond of tests of the supernatural—and all this in a curiously light-minded, almost childish fashion.<sup>52</sup>

The governing verb is *show*, which here gives us to understand that the Arabs display themselves (willingly or unwillingly) to and for expert scrutiny. The number of attributes ascribed to them, by its crowded set of sheer appositions, causes "the Arabs" to acquire a sort of existential weightlessness; thereby, "the Arabs" are made to rejoin the very broad designation, common to modern anthropological thought, of "the childish primitive." What Macdonald also implies is that for such descriptions there is a peculiarly privileged position occupied by the Western Orientalist, whose representative function is precisely *to show* what needs to be seen. All specific history is capable of being seen thus at the apex, or the sensitive frontier, of Orient and Occident together. The complex dynamics of human life—what I have been calling history as narrative—becomes either irrelevant or trivial in comparison with the circular vision by which the details of Oriental life serve merely to reassert the Orientalness of the subject and the Westernness of the observer.

If such a vision in some ways recalls Dante's, we should by no means fail to notice what an enormous difference there is between this Orient and Dante's. Evidence here is meant to be (and probably is considered) scientific; its pedigree, genealogically speaking, is European intellectual and human science during the nineteenth century. Moreover, the Orient is no simple marvel, or an enemy, or a branch of exotica; it is a political actuality of great and significant moment. Like Lawrence, Macdonald cannot really detach his representative characteristics as a Westerner from his role as a scholar. Thus his vision of Islam, as much as Lawrence's of the Arabs, implicates *definition* of the object with the *identity* of the

person defining. All Arab Orientals must be accommodated to a vision of an Oriental type as constructed by the Western scholar, as well as to a specific encounter with the Orient in which the Westerner regrasps the Orient's essence as a consequence of his intimate estrangement from it. For Lawrence as for Forster, this latter sensation produces the despondency as well of personal failure; for such scholars as Macdonald, it strengthens the Orientalist discourse itself.

And it puts that discourse abroad in the world of culture, politics, and actuality. In the period between the wars, as we can easily judge from, say, Malraux's novels, the relations between East and West assumed a currency that was both widespread and anxious. The signs of Oriental claims for political independence were everywhere; certainly in the dismembered Ottoman Empire they were encouraged by the Allies and, as is perfectly evident in the whole Arab Revolt and its aftermath, quickly became problematic. The Orient now appeared to constitute a challenge, not just to the West in general, but to the West's spirit, knowledge, and imperium. After a good century of constant intervention in (and study of) the Orient, the West's role in an East itself responding to the crises of modernity seemed considerably more delicate. There was the issue of outright occupation; there was the issue of the mandated territories; there was the issue of European competition in the Orient; there was the issue of dealing with native elites, native popular movements, and native demands for self-government and independence; there was the issue of civilizational contacts between Orient and Occident. Such issues forced reconsideration of Western knowledge of the Orient. No less a personage than Sylvain Levi, president of the Societe asiatique between 1928 and 1935, professor of Sanskrit at the College de France, reflected seriously in 1925 on the urgency of the East-West problem:

Our duty is to understand Oriental civilization. The humanistic problem, which consists, on an intellectual level, in making a sympathetic and intelligent effort to understand foreign civilizations in both their past and their future forms, is specifically posed for us Frenchmen [although similar sentiments could have been expressed by an Englishman: the problem was a *European* one] in a practical way with regard to our great Asiatic colonies. . . .

These peoples are the inheritors of a long tradition of history, of art, and of religion, the sense of which they have not entirely lost and which they are probably anxious to prolong. We have

assumed the responsibility of intervening in their development, sometimes without consulting them, sometimes in answer to their request. . . . We claim, rightly or wrongly, to represent a superior civilization, and because of the right given us by virtue of this superiority, which we regularly affirm with such assurance as makes it seem incontestable to the natives, we have called in question all their native traditions. . . .

In a general way, then, wherever the European has intervened, the native has perceived himself with a sort of general despair which was really poignant since he felt that the sum of his well-being, in the moral sphere more than in sheer material terms, instead of increasing had in fact diminished. All of which has made the foundation of his social life seem to be flimsy and to crumble under him, and the golden pillars on which he had thought to rebuild his life now seem no more than tinsel cardboard.

This disappointment has been translated into rancor from one end to the other of the Orient, and this rancor is very close now to turning to hate, and hate only waits for the right moment in order to turn into action.

If because of laziness or incomprehension Europe does not make the effort that its interests alone require from it, *then the Asiatic drama will approach the crisis point.*

It is here that that science which is a form of life and an instrument of policy—that is, wherever our interests are at stake—owes it to itself to penetrate native civilization and life in their intimacy in order to discover their fundamental values and durable characteristics rather than to smother native life with the incoherent threat of European civilizational imports. We must offer ourselves to these civilizations as we do our other products, that is, on the local exchange market. [Emphasis in original]<sup>53</sup>

Levi has no difficulty in connecting Orientalism with politics, for the long—or rather, the prolonged—Western intervention in the East cannot be denied either in its consequences for knowledge or in its effect upon the hapless native; together the two add up to what could be a menacing future. For all his expressed humanism, his admirable concern for fellow creatures, Levi conceives the present juncture in unpleasantly constricted terms. The Oriental is imagined to feel his world threatened by a superior civilization; yet his motives are impelled, not by some positive desire for freedom, political independence, or cultural achievement *on their own terms*, but instead by rancor or jealous malice. The panacea offered for this potentially ugly turn of affairs is that the Orient be marketed for a Western consumer, be put before him as one among numerous

wares beseeching his attention. By a single stroke you will defuse the Orient (by letting it think itself to be an "equal" quantity on the Occidental marketplace of ideas), and you will appease Western fears of an Oriental tidal wave. At bottom, of course, Levi's principal point—and his most telling confession—is that unless something is done about the Orient, "the Asiatic drama will approach the crisis point."

Asia suffers, yet in its suffering it threatens Europe: the eternal, bristling frontier endures between East and West, almost unchanged since classical antiquity. What Levi says as the most august of modern Orientalists is echoed with less subtlety by cultural humanists. Item: in 1925 the French periodical *Les Cahiers du mois* conducted a survey among notable intellectual figures; the writers canvassed included Orientalists (Levi, Emile Senart) as well as literary men like Andr  Gide, Paul Valery, and Edmond Jaloux. The questions dealt with relations between Orient and Occident in a timely, not to say brazenly provocative, way, and this already indicates something about the cultural ambience of the period. We will immediately recognize how ideas of the sort promulgated in Orientalist scholarship have now reached the level of accepted truth. One question asks whether Orient and Occident are mutually impenetrable (the idea was Maeterlinck's) or not; another asks whether or not Oriental influence represented "un peril grave"—Henri Massis's words—to French thought; a third asks about those values in Occidental culture to which its superiority over the Orient can be ascribed. Valery's response seems to me worth quoting from, so forthright are the lines of its argument and so time-honored, at least in the early twentieth century:

From the cultural point of view, I do not think that we have much to fear *now* from the Oriental influence. It is not unknown to us. We owe to the Orient all the beginnings of our arts and of a great deal of our knowledge. We can very well welcome what now comes out of the Orient, if something new is coming out of there—which I very much doubt. This doubt is precisely our guarantee and our European weapon.

Besides, the real question in such matters is to *digest*. But that has always been, just as precisely, the great specialty of the European mind through the ages. Our role is therefore to maintain this power of choice, of universal comprehension, of the transformation of everything into our own substance, powers which have made us what we are. The Greeks and the Romans showed us

how to deal with the monsters of Asia, how to treat them by analysis, how to extract from them their quintessence. . . . The Mediterranean basin seems to me to be like a closed vessel where the essences of the vast Orient have always come in order to be condensed. [Emphasis and ellipses in original]<sup>51</sup>

If European culture generally has digested the Orient, certainly Valéry was aware that one specific agency for doing the job has been Orientalism. In the world of Wilsonian principles of national self-determination, Valéry relies confidently on analyzing the Orient's threat away. "The power of choice" is mainly for Europe first to acknowledge the Orient as the origin of European science, then to treat it as a superseded origin. Thus, in another context, Balfour could regard the native inhabitants of Palestine as having priority on the land, but nowhere near the subsequent authority to keep it; the mere wishes of 700,000 Arabs, he said, were of no moment compared to the destiny of an essentially European colonial movement.<sup>55</sup>

Asia represented, then, the unpleasant likelihood of a sudden eruption that would destroy "our" world; as John Buchan put it in 1922:

The earth is seething with incoherent power and unorganized intelligence. Have you ever reflected on the case of China? There you have millions of quick brains stifled in trumpery crafts. They have no direction, no driving power, so the sum of their efforts is futile, and the world laughs at China.<sup>56</sup>

But if China organized itself (as it would), it would be no laughing matter. Europe's effort therefore was to maintain itself as what Valéry called "une machine puissante,"<sup>57</sup> absorbing what it could from outside Europe, converting everything to its use, intellectually and materially, keeping the Orient selectively organized (or disorganized). Yet this could be done only through clarity of vision and analysis. Unless the Orient was seen for what it was, its power—military, material, spiritual—would sooner or later overwhelm Europe. The great colonial empires, great systems of systematic repression, existed to fend off the feared eventuality. Colonial subjects, as George Orwell saw them in Marrakech in 1939, must not be seen except as a kind of continental emanation, African, Asian, Oriental:

When you walk through a town like this—two hundred thousand inhabitants, of whom at least twenty thousand own

literally nothing except the rags they stand up in—when you see how the people live, and still more, how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe that you are walking among human beings. All colonial empires are in reality founded upon that fact. The people have brown faces—besides they have so many of them! Are they really the same flesh as yourself? Do they even have names? Or are they merely a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff, about as individual as bees or coral insects? They arise out of the earth, they sweat and starve for a few years, and then they sink back into the nameless mounds of the graveyard and nobody notices that they are gone. And even the graves themselves soon fade back into the soil.<sup>58</sup>

Aside from the picturesque characters offered European readers in the exotic fiction of minor writers (Pierre Loti, Marmaduke Pickthall, and the like), the non-European known to Europeans is precisely what Orwell says about him. He is either a figure of fun, or an atom in a vast collectivity designated in ordinary or cultivated discourse as an undifferentiated type called Oriental, African, yellow, brown, or Muslim. To such abstractions Orientalism had contributed its power of generalization, converting instances of a civilization into ideal bearers of its values, ideas, and positions, which in turn the Orientalists had found in "the Orient" and transformed into common cultural currency.

If we reflect that Raymond Schwab brought out his brilliant biography of Anquetil-Duperron in 1934—and began those studies which were to put Orientalism in its proper cultural context—we must also remark that what he did was in stark contrast to his fellow artists and intellectuals, for whom Orient and Occident were still the secondhand abstractions they were for Valery. Not that Pound, Eliot, Yeats, Arthur Waley, Fenollosa, Paul Claudel (in his *Connaissance de l'est*), Victor Segalen, and others were ignoring "the wisdom of the East," as Max Müller had called it a few generations earlier. Rather the culture viewed the Orient, and Islam in particular, with the mistrust with which its learned attitude to the Orient had always been freighted. A suitable instance of this contemporary attitude at its most explicit is to be found in a series of lectures given at the University of Chicago in 1924 on "The Occident and the Orient" by Valentine Chirol, a well-known European newspaperman of great experience in the East; his purpose was to make clear to educated Americans that the Orient was not

as far off as perhaps they believed. His line is a simple one: that Orient and Occident are irreducibly opposed to each other, and that the Orient—in particular "Mohammedanism"—is one of "the great world-forces" responsible for "the deepest lines of cleavage" in the world.<sup>59</sup> Chirol's sweeping generalizations are, I think, adequately represented by the titles of his six lectures: "Their Ancient Battleground"; "The Passing of the Ottoman Empire, the Peculiar Case of Egypt"; "The Great British Experiment in Egypt"; "Protectorates and Mandates"; "The New Factor of Bolshevism"; and "Some General Conclusions."

To such relatively popular accounts of the Orient as Chirol's, we can add a testimonial by Elie Faure, who in his ruminations draws, like Chirol, on history, cultural expertise, and the familiar contrast between White Occidentalism and colored Orientalism. While delivering himself of paradoxes like "le carnage permanent de l'indifference orientale" (for, unlike "us," "they" have no conception of peace), Faure goes on to show that the Orientals' bodies are lazy, that the Orient has no conception of history, of the nation, or of *patrie*, that the Orient is essentially mystical—and so on. Faure argues that unless the Oriental learns to be rational, to develop techniques of knowledge and positivity, there can be no *rapprochement* between East and West.<sup>60</sup> A far more subtle and learned account of the East-West dilemma can be found in Fernand Baldensperger's essay "Oil s'affrontent l'Orient et l'Occident intellectuels," but he too speaks of an inherent Oriental disdain for the idea, for mental discipline, for rational interpretation.<sup>61</sup>

Spoken as they are out of the depths of European culture, by writers who actually believe themselves to be speaking on behalf of that culture, such commonplaces (for they are perfect *idees regues*) cannot be explained simply as examples of provincial chauvinism. They are not that, and—as will be evident to anyone who knows anything about Faure's and Baldensperger's other work—are the more paradoxical for not being that. Their background is the transformation of the exacting, professional science of Orientalism, whose function in nineteenth-century culture had been the restoration to Europe of a lost portion of humanity, but which had become in the twentieth century both an instrument of policy and, more important, a code by which Europe could interpret both itself and the Orient to itself. For reasons discussed earlier in this book, modern Orientalism already carried within itself the imprint of

the great European fear of Islam, and this was aggravated by the political challenges of the *entre-deux-guerres*. My point is that the metamorphosis of a relatively innocuous philological subspecialty into a capacity for managing political movements, administering colonies, making nearly apocalyptic statements representing the White Man's difficult civilizing mission—all this is something at work within a purportedly liberal culture, one full of concern for its vaunted norms of catholicity, plurality, and open-mindedness. In fact, what took place was the very opposite of liberal: the hardening of doctrine and meaning, imparted by "science," into "truth." For if such truth reserved for itself the right to judge the Orient as immutably Oriental in the ways I have indicated, then liberality was no more than a form of oppression and mentalistic prejudice.

The extent of such illiberality was not—and is not—often recognized from within the culture, for reasons that this book is trying to explore. It is heartening, nevertheless, that such illiberality has occasionally been challenged. Here is an instance from I. A. Richards's foreword to his *Mencius on the Mind* (1932); we can quite easily substitute "Oriental" for "Chinese" in what follows.

As to the effects of an increased knowledge of Chinese thought upon the West, it is interesting to notice that a writer so unlikely to be thought either ignorant or careless as M. Etienne Gilson can yet, in the English Preface of his *The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, speak of Thomistic Philosophy as "accepting and gathering up the whole of human tradition." This is how we all think, to us the Western world is still the World [or the part of the World that counts]; but an impartial observer would perhaps say that such provincialism is dangerous. And we are not yet so happy in the West that we can be sure that we are not suffering from its effects.<sup>62</sup>

Richards's argument advances claims for the exercise of what he calls Multiple Definition, a genuine type of pluralism, with the combativeness of systems of definition eliminated. Whether or not we accept his counter to Gilson's provincialism, we can accept the proposition that liberal humanism, of which Orientalism has historically been one department, *retards* the process of enlarged and enlarging meaning through which true understanding can be attained. What took the place of enlarged meaning in twentieth-century Orientalism—that is, within the technical field—is the subject most immediately at hand.