

the school, the prison)—all form the correlate of exact procedures of power. We must not imagine that all these things that were formerly tolerated attracted notice and received a pejorative designation when the time came to give a regulative role to the one type of sexuality that was capable of reproducing labor power and the form of the family. These polymorphous conducts were actually extracted from people's bodies and from their pleasures; or rather, they were solidified in them; they were drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, incorporated, by multifarious power devices. The growth of perversions is not a moralizing theme that obsessed the scrupulous minds of the Victorians. It is the real product of the encroachment of a type of power on bodies and their pleasures. It is possible that the West has not been capable of inventing any new pleasures, and it has doubtless not discovered any original vices. But it has defined new rules for the game of powers and pleasures. The frozen countenance of the perversions is a fixture of this game.

Directly. This implantation of multiple perversions is not a mockery of sexuality taking revenge on a power that has thrust on it an excessively repressive law. Neither are we dealing with paradoxical forms of pleasure that turn back on power and invest it in the form of a "pleasure to be endured." The implantation of perversions is an instrument-effect: it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct. And accompanying this encroachment of powers, scattered sexualities rigidified, became stuck to an age, a place, a type of practice. A proliferation of sexualities through the extension of power; an optimization of the power to which each of these local sexualities gave a surface of intervention: this concatenation, particularly since the nineteenth century, has been ensured and relayed by the countless economic interests which, with the help of medicine, psychiatry, prostitution, and pornography, have tapped into both this analytical multiplication of pleasure and this optimization of the power that controls it. Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another. They are linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement.

We must therefore abandon the hypothesis that modern industrial societies ushered in an age of increased sexual repression. We have not only witnessed a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities; but—and this is the important point—a deployment quite different from the law, even if it is locally dependent on procedures of prohibition, has ensured, through a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities. It is said that no society has been more prudish: never have the agencies of power taken such care to feign ignorance of the thing they prohibited, as if they were determined to have nothing to do with it. But it is the opposite that has become apparent at least after a general review of the facts: never have there existed more centers of power; never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold, only to spread elsewhere.

Michel Foucault TRUTH AND POWER / 1667

From Truth and Power¹

For a long period, the 'left' intellectual spoke and was acknowledged the right of speaking in the capacity of master of truth and justice. He was heard, or purported to make himself heard, as the spokesman of the universal. To be an intellectual meant something like being the consciousness/conscience of us all. I think we have here an idea transposed from Marxism, from a faded Marxism indeed.² Just as the proletariat, by the necessity of its historical situation, is the bearer of the universal (but its immediate, unreflected bearer, barely conscious of itself as such), so the intellectual, through his moral, theoretical and political choice, aspires to be the bearer of this universality in its conscious, elaborated form. The intellectual is thus taken as the clear, individual figure of a universality whose obscure, collective form is embodied in the proletariat.

Some years have now passed since the intellectual was called upon to play this role. A new mode of the 'connection between theory and practice' has been established. Intellectuals have got used to working, not in the modality of the 'universal', the 'exemplary', the 'just-and-true-for-all', but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and sexual relations). This has undoubtedly given them a much more immediate and concrete awareness of struggles. And they have met here with problems which are specific, 'non-universal', and often different from those of the proletariat or the masses. And yet I believe intellectuals have actually been drawn closer to the proletariat and the masses, for two reasons. Firstly, because it has been a question of real, material, everyday struggles, and secondly because they have often been confronted, albeit in a different form, by the same adversary as the proletariat, namely the multinational corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, the property speculators, etc. This is what I would call the 'specific' intellectual as opposed to the 'universal' intellectual.

* * *

Now let's come back to more precise details. We accept, alongside the development of technico-scientific structures in contemporary society, the importance gained by the specific intellectual in recent decades, as well as the acceleration of this process since around 1960. Now the specific intellectual encounters certain obstacles and faces certain dangers. The danger of remaining at the level of conjunctural struggles, pressing demands restricted to particular sectors. The risk of letting himself be manipulated by the political parties or trade union apparatuses which control these local struggles. Above all, the risk of being unable to develop these struggles for lack of a global strategy or outside support; the risk too of not being followed, or only by very limited groups. In France we can see at the moment an

¹Translated by Colin Gordon.

²The German political philosopher KARL MARX (1818-1883) believed that the proletariat within

capitalism embodied the "universal" revolutionary aspirations of the people.

example of this. The struggle around the prisons, the penal system and the police-judicial system, because it has developed 'in solitary', among social workers and ex-prisoners, has tended increasingly to separate itself from the forces which would have enabled it to grow. It has allowed itself to be penetrated by a whole naive, archaic ideology which makes the criminal at once into the innocent victim and the pure rebel—society's scapegoat—and the young wolf of future revolutions. This return to anarchist themes of the late nineteenth century was possible only because of a failure of integration of current strategies. And the result has been a deep split between this campaign with its monotonous, lyrical little chant, heard only among a few small groups, and the masses who have good reason not to accept it as valid political currency, but who also—thanks to the studiously cultivated fear of criminals—tolerate the maintenance, or rather the reinforcement, of the judicial and police apparatuses.

It seems to me that we are now at a point where the function of the specific intellectual needs to be reconsidered. Reconsidered but not abandoned; despite the nostalgia of some for the great 'universal' intellectuals and the desire for a new philosophy, a new world-view. Suffice it to consider the important results which have been achieved in psychiatry: they prove that these local, specific struggles haven't been a mistake and haven't led to a dead end. One may even say that the role of the specific intellectual must become more and more important in proportion to the political responsibilities which he is obliged willy-nilly to accept, as a nuclear scientist, computer expert, pharmacologist, etc. It would be a dangerous error to discount him politically in his specific relation to a local form of power, either on the grounds that this is a specialist matter which doesn't concern the masses (which is doubly wrong: they are already aware of it, and in any case implicated in it), or that the specific intellectual serves the interests of State or Capital (which is true, but at the same time shows the strategic position he occupies), or, again, on the grounds that he propagates a scientific ideology (which isn't always true, and is anyway certainly a secondary matter compared with the fundamental point: the effects proper to true discourses).

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and functions would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

In societies like ours, the 'political economy' of truth is characterised by five important traits. 'Truth' is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement (the demand for truth, as much for economic production as for political power); it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption (circulating through apparatuses of education

and information whose extent is relatively broad in the social body, notwithstanding certain strict limitations); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation ('ideological' struggles).

It seems to me that what must now be taken into account in the intellectual is not the 'bearer of universal values'. Rather, it's the person occupying a specific position—but whose specificity is linked, in a society like ours, to the general functioning of an apparatus of truth. In other words, the intellectual has a three-fold specificity: that of his class position (whether as petty-bourgeois in the service of capitalism or 'organic' intellectual³ of the proletariat); that of his conditions of life and work, linked to his condition as an intellectual (his field of research, his place in a laboratory, the political and economic demands to which he submits or against which he rebels, in the university, the hospital, etc.); lastly, the specificity of the politics of truth in our societies. And it's with this last factor that his position can take on a general significance and that his local, specific struggle can have effects and implications which are not simply professional or sectoral. The intellectual can operate and struggle at the general level of that régime of truth which is so essential to the structure and functioning of our society. There is a battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth'—it being understood once again that by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted', but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true', it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays. It is necessary to think of the political problems of intellectuals not in terms of 'science' and 'ideology', but in terms of 'truth' and 'power'. And thus the question of the professionalisation of intellectuals and the division between intellectual and manual labour can be envisaged in a new way.

All this must seem very confused and uncertain. Uncertain indeed, and what I am saying here is above all to be taken as a hypothesis. In order for it to be a little less confused, however, I would like to put forward a few propositions—not firm assertions, but simply suggestions to be further tested and evaluated.

'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'régime' of truth.

This régime is not merely ideological or superstructural; it was a condition of the formation and development of capitalism.⁴ And it's this same régime which, subject to certain modifications, operates in the socialist countries (I leave open here the question of China, about which I know little).

The essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticise the

(1891-1937).

3. Someone (regardless of profession) who directs the ideas and aspirations of the particular social class to which he or she 'organically' belongs, as described by the Italian Marxist ANTONIO GRAMSCI

4. Foucault reverses Marxist accounts that see "truth" as a superstructural product of the economic base.

ideological contents supposedly linked to science, or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology; but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people's consciousness—or what's in their heads—but the political, economic, institutional régime of the production of truth.

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony,⁵ social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time.

The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology, it is truth itself. Hence the importance of Nietzsche,⁶

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5. A term from Gramsci: the manufactured consent that legitimates a dominant group and unifies a society. Foucault's régime of truth is a form of hegemonic discourse.

6. FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844-1900), German philosopher, who viewed truth as the product of "the will to power." Foucault, following Nietzsche, wants the story of truth to be told in a "genealogical" history that uncovers the struggles among contending forces.

WOLFGANG ISER

b. 1926

Reacting against formalist approaches to literature, notably the New Critical prohibition of considering audience response, American literary criticism in the 1970s began to pay renewed attention to the role of the reader in interpretation. Alongside French poststructuralist approaches that asserted, in ROLAND BARTHES's phrase, the "writerly" nature of reading and psychoanalytic views that studied the psychology of reading, the German "Constance School" was most prominent in advocating the investigation of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, or "the aesthetics of reception." Wolfgang Iser is a leading member of the Constance School, and he focuses particularly on the way in which texts are actively constructed by individual readers through the phenomenology of the reading process.

Born in Germany and trained as an undergraduate at the University of Leipzig and the University of Tübingen, Iser earned his Ph.D. in 1950 from the University of Heidelberg, where he studied with the philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer. Thereafter, Iser held a series of appointments in English literature at the Universities of Glasgow, Heidelberg, Würzburg, and Cologne, settling finally in 1967 in Germany at the newly founded University of Constance as a professor of English and comparative literature. Iser's arrival at Constance, where he joined a research group that included HANS ROBERT JAUSS, proved especially fruitful for the development of his theories of reader response. Since the mid-1980s, Iser has also held an appointment as permanent visiting professor of English at the University of California at Irvine.

The Constance School draws on the philosophical tradition of aesthetics inaugurated in eighteenth-century German philosophy by Alexander Baumgarten, IMMANUEL KANT, and FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER, and it focuses on the affective as well as the formal dimensions of art. The work of the Constance School has also been influenced by philosophical considerations of hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation, developed by FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER (1768-1834), MARTIN HEIDEGGER (1889-1976), and others. In particular, Iser's work draws on the hermeneutic

philosophy of Gadamer and the phenomenological literary theory of Roman Ingarden (1893-1970), which examines the processes of cognition through which we understand literary works.

Iser's early work includes two scholarly studies of English literature, his doctoral dissertation on the eighteenth-century novels of Henry Fielding and a book on the aesthetic views of the Victorian critic WALTER PATER. However, it was not until his inaugural lecture at Constance in 1970, "The Affective Structure of the Text," that he articulated his theory of the interactive nature of the reading experience. This was followed by the two of his books that have most influenced Anglo-American literary studies, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Becker* (1972; trans. 1974) and *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (1976; trans. 1978). *The Implied Reader* studies a series of English novels from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century, showing how "readers take an active part in the composition of the novel's meaning." According to Iser, literary texts provide the foundation for their interpretation, but they also imply the action of the reader. Reading is not passive or static but a process of discovery; a reader questions, negates, and revises the expectations that the text establishes, filling in what Iser calls "blanks" or "gaps" in the text and continually modifying his or her interpretation. Iser's concept of "the implied reader" recalls Wayne Booth's notion of "the implied author," elaborated in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961; rev. ed. 1983). Booth argues that although we might not be able to recover an author's intention to determine meaning (acknowledging the New Critical argument against authorial intention codified in W. K. WIMSATT JR. AND MONROE BEARDSLEY's "Intentional Fallacy," 1946; see above), we can infer intention, particularly bearing on ethical views, from the statements of the narrator. The reader, Iser maintains, can similarly infer from a text directions guiding interpretation. To borrow a phrase from the courtroom, texts ask leading questions.

Expanding on the methods in *The Implied Reader*, *The Act of Reading* offers a more programmatic explanation of the reading experience and the ways in which readers process texts. Iser argues that texts provide "sets of instructions" or a "repertoire" that the reader must assemble, so that interpretation depends on both the text and response. Interpretation does not derive from one or the other, but from their combination and interaction, forming what Iser calls "the virtual text." As Iser describes it, "the text represents a potential effect that is realized in the reading process."

Iser's version of reader response differs from that of Jauss, who deals with the actual reception of a literary work and how that concrete history tempers our expectations and therefore influences our interpretation. We never see a text on its own, but always in the context of its reception by others. Iser focuses on the individual interactive process—the phenomenology or cognition—of the act of reading, rather than the larger literary-historical concerns that Jauss describes. Iser's investigation of response also differs from that of STANLEY FISH, the most prominent advocate of response criticism in the United States, who locates the meaning of literary texts in the protocols of the interpretive communities to which readers belong rather than in the interaction of text and reader.

Reader-response criticism takes particular aim at the once-dominant dictates of the New Criticism, codified in Wimsatt and Beardsley's "Affective Fallacy" (1949; see above), which dismisses considerations of the reader as "a confusion between the poem and its results." Provocatively turning the tables on formalistic, text-based approaches, Fish claims that the affective fallacy is itself a fallacy, since our readings are always governed not by the text but by the personal assumptions and interpretive protocols that we start with. Iser carves out a compromise position between formalist theories of literature that assume a stable object of study (witness the titles of the best-known books of the New Criticism, CLEANTH BROOKS's *Well Wrought Urn* and Wimsatt's *Verbal Icon*) and more radical reader-based approaches, such as Fish's. Iser carefully qualifies his position, insisting that reading depends on the text and that a

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STEPHEN GREENBLATT

b. 1943

The leading proponent of "New Historicism," Stephen Greenblatt became a key figure in the shift from literary to cultural poetics and from textual to contextual interpretation in U.S. English departments in the 1980s and 1990s. Inspired by MICHEL FOUCAULT's historical investigations of medical and penal institutions and his theoretical understanding of power, the New Historicists see the literary work as a vessel tossed in a social sea of competing interests, antagonistic values, and contradictions. For Greenblatt, literary works are "fields of force, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses."

Greenblatt was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1943 and did his undergraduate and graduate work at Yale University, gaining his Ph.D. in 1969. For more than twenty years, he taught at the University of California at Berkeley, where he was one of the founders of *Representations*, the journal in which much pathbreaking New Historicist work first appeared. He moved to Harvard University in the mid-1990s.

New Historicism, as our selection suggests, begins its quest to be political by denying that any social world is stable and that artworks are separated from the power struggles constituting social reality. The literary work is a player in the competition among various groups to gain their ends, a competition that takes place on many levels. New Historicism accepts Foucault's insistence that power operates through myriad capillary channels; these include not just direct coercion and governmental action but also, crucially, daily routines and language. Because discourse organizes perception of the world by its categorical groupings and because symbols bind social agents emotionally to institutions and practices, conflicts over images resonate throughout the social order. Thus the New Historicist not only pays attention to such discursive disputes in particular texts but also examines how particular texts are addressed to other texts, other discursive orders, in the wider culture. A "cultural poetics" tries to identify the key images—and the values, beliefs, practices, and social structures that those images point toward—of a particular cultural moment. Unlike the old historicist, the New Historicist does not expect that cultural moment to be unified, with the literary text simply reflecting or embodying that unity. Rather, the text is a dynamic interweaving of multiple strands from a culture that is itself an unstable field of contending forces.

Any given text for the New Historicist is an attempted intervention in the ongoing struggle to influence or even dominate the cultural field. The critic's own work intervenes in his or her own present, responding to and striving to alter contemporary configurations of power. To explain how Shakespeare's *Richard II* is implicated in the power struggles of its time is both to write a history of the consolidation of power prior to our moment and to awaken today's reader to the conflicts that define our moment. The New Historicists, again following Foucault, often construct narratives in which dispersed and disputed power becomes more insidious, and dominance grows more dominant. They want to emphasize history's contingencies, its fluidity in any given moment, but they also emphasize how history reveals the growth of forms of power that continuously affect subjects' lives.

The tendency to tell similar historical tales of power's expanding reach, coupled with fairly blunt evaluations of literary works as either complicitous with or resistant to power, has opened New Historicism to criticism. Historians have objected that these literary critics read a few nonliterary texts, juxtapose them with plays or novels, and think they are doing history. But such complaints, even when justified in individual cases, largely miss the point. New Historicism is part of a broader sea change in literary studies—and in history as well. Instead of asking what a particular text means in and of itself, New Historicists ask what it *does* within the ensemble of social relations in which it is embedded. Rather than focusing on the masterpiece or on the

author of masterpieces, these critics attempt to understand the lived social reality of the era being studied. And just as New Historicism and cultural studies were beginning to emerge in departments of literature, history departments also were changing. During the late twentieth century, new prominence was given to both social and cultural history, which shift the historians' gaze away from famous actors or grand historical events to ordinary people and their mundane routines. A whole new relation to texts, which were now being read to gain insight into the society from which they sprang, along with a new definition of the goal of historical investigation, has increasingly blurred the disciplinary lines between English and history. As literary critics have become more familiar with this paradigm, they have grown accustomed to delving as deeply into archives as historians; and some historians have begun to adopt the more linguistically nuanced interpretations of sources characteristic of literary critics.

Greenblatt's work, along with that of Louis Adrian Montrose, Stephen Mullany, Jonathan Dollimore, Catherine Belsey, and numerous other literary critics, has ensured that English Renaissance studies and New Historicism have become inextricably linked. But New Historicists work has also been highly influential in studies of other historical periods, especially nineteenth-century American and British literature. Jerome McGann, for example, though not influenced so directly by Foucault as are members of the *Representations* group, has brought a New Historicist concern with social context to the criticism of British Romantic poetry. By the late 1990s, literary critics seldom explicitly identified themselves as New Historicists, but the emphasis on context over text still prevailed in literary studies.

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For a wide range of critical responses to Greenblatt's work, see Donald Pease, "Toward a Sociology of Literary Knowledge: Greenblatt, Colonialism, and the New Historicism," in *Consequences of Theory* (ed. Jonathan Arac and Barbara Johnson, 1991); Anne D. Hall, "The Political Wisdom of Cultural Poetics," *Modern Philology* 93 (1994); James J. Paxson, "The Green(blatt)ing of America," *Minnesota Review*, n.s., 41-42 (1994); and Simon During, "Post-Foucauldian Criticism: Government, Death, Mimesis," in *Genealogy and Literature* (ed. Lee Quimby, 1995).

Introduction to *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*

"I am Richard II. Know ye not that?" exclaimed Queen Elizabeth on August 4, 1601, in the wake of the abortive Essex rising.¹ On the day before the rising, someone had paid the Lord Chamberlain's Men forty shillings to

1. An attempt against the court of Queen Elizabeth I (1523-1603, reigned 1558-1603) in February 1601, led by Robert Devereux (1566-1601),

the 2d earl of Essex. When the citizens of London failed to come to his small army's aid, Essex and his followers fled; Essex was executed for treason.

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revive their old play about the deposing and killing of Richard II? As far as we know, the play—almost certainly Shakespeare's—was performed only once at the Globe, but in Elizabeth's bitter recollection the performance has metastasized: "this tragedy was played 40 tie times in open streets and houses."²

The Queen enjoyed and protected the theater; against moralists who charged that it was a corrupting and seditious force, she evidently sided with those who replied that it released social tensions, inculcated valuable moral lessons, and occupied with harmless diversion those who might otherwise conspire against legitimate authority. But there were some in the Essex faction who saw in the theater the power to subvert, or rather the power to wrest legitimacy from the established ruler and confer it on another. This power, notwithstanding royal protection, censorship, and the players' professions of unswerving loyalty, could be purchased for forty shillings.

The story of Richard II was obviously a highly charged one in a society where political discussion was conducted, as in parts of the world today, with Aesopian indirection.³ Clearly it is not the text alone—over which the censor had some control—that bears the full significance of Shakespeare's play, or of any version of the story. It is rather the story's full situation—the genre it is thought to embody, the circumstances of its performance, the imaginings of its audience—that governs its shifting meanings. "40 tie times in open streets and houses": for the Queen the repeatability of the tragedy, and hence the numbers of people who have been exposed to its infection, is part of the danger, along with the fact (or rather her conviction) that the play had broken out of the boundaries of the playhouse, where such stories are clearly marked as powerful illusions, and moved into the more volatile zone—the zone she calls "open"—of the streets. In the streets the story begins to lose the conventional containment of the playhouse where audiences are kept at a safe distance both from the action on stage and from the world beyond the walls. And in the wake of this subversive deregulation, the terms that mark the distinction between the lucid and the real become themselves problematical: are the "houses" to which Elizabeth refers public theaters or private dwellings where her enemies plot her overthrow? can "tragedy" be a strictly literary term when the Queen's own life is endangered by the play?⁴

Modern historical scholarship has assured Elizabeth that she had nothing to worry about. *Richard II* is not at all subversive but rather a hymn to Tudor order. The play, far from encouraging thoughts of rebellion, regards the deposition of the legitimate king as a "sacreligious" act that drags the country down into "the abyss of chaos"; that Shakespeare and his audience regarded Bolingbroke as a usurper, "declares J. Dover Wilson, "is incontestable."⁵ But

2. *Richard II* (ca. 1595). The Lord Chamberlain's Men; Shakespeare's theater company.

3. Elizabeth was speaking to William Lambarde the antiquary; see the Arden edition of Shakespeare's *King Richard II*, ed. Peter Ure (1956), pp. lvi-lxii (Greenblatt's note), "Metastasized" grown (a word usually applied to cancers).

4. Aesop's fables make their point by way of story rather than by direct statement.

5. The ambiguity is intensified by the Queen's preceding comment, according to Lambarde: "Her Majesty, 'He that will forget God, will also forget his benefactors; this tragedy was played 40 tie times in open streets and houses'" (Ure, p. lxx) (Green-

blatt's note).

6. The English royal dynasty that begins with Henry VII (1457-1509) in 1485 and ends with Elizabeth I.

7. John Dover Wilson, "The Political Background of Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Henry IV*," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 75 (1939): 47. The condemnation of Bolingbroke is "evident," we are told, "from the whole tone and emphasis of *Richard II*" (p. 48) (Greenblatt's note). Bolingbroke, the name of Henry IV (1367-1415) before he deposed his cousin Richard II (1367-1400; reigned, 1377-99) in 1399. Bolingbroke's violent rise to power is the subject of Shakespeare's *Richard II*.

in 1601 neither Queen Elizabeth nor the Earl of Essex were so sure: after all, someone on the eve of a rebellion thought the play sufficiently seditious to warrant squandering two pounds on the players, and the Queen understood the performance as a threat. Moreover, even before the Essex rising, the actual disposition scene (IV.i. 154-318 in the Arden edition) was carefully omitted from the first three quartos⁶ of Shakespeare's play and appears for the first time only after Elizabeth's death.

How can we account for the discrepancy between Dover Wilson's historical reconstruction and the anxious response of the figures whose history he purports to have accurately reconstructed? The answer lies at least in part in the difference between a conception of art that has no respect whatsoever for the integrity of the text ("I am Richard II. Know ye not that?") and one that hopes to find, through historical research, a stable core of meaning within the text, a core that unites disparate and even contradictory parts into an organic whole. That whole may provide a perfectly orthodox celebration of legitimacy and order, as measured by homilies, royal pronouncements, and official propaganda, but the Queen is clearly responding to something else: to the presence of *any* representation of deposition, whether regarded as sacrilegious or not; to the choice of this particular story at this particular time; to the place of the performance; to her own identity as it is present in the public sphere and as it fuses with the figure of the murdered king. Dover Wilson is not a New Critic:⁷ he does not conceive of the text as an iconic object whose meaning is perfectly contained within its own formal structure. Yet for him historical research has the effect of conferring autonomy and fixity upon the text, and it is precisely this fixity that is denied by Elizabeth's response.

Dover Wilson's work is a distinguished example of the characteristic assumptions and methods of the mainstream literary history practiced in the first half of our century, and a further glance at these may help us to bring into focus the distinctive assumptions and methods exemplified in the essays collected in this volume.⁸ To be sure, these essays are quite diverse in their concerns and represent no single critical practice; a comparative glance, for example, at the brilliant pieces by Franco Moretti and John Traugott⁹ will suggest at once how various this work is. Yet diverse as they are, many of the present essays give voice, I think, to what we may call the new historicism, set apart from both the dominant historical scholarship of the past and the formalist criticism that partially displaced this scholarship in the decades after World War Two. The earlier historicism tends to be monological; that is, it is concerned with discovering a single political vision, usually identical to that said to be held by the entire literate class or indeed the entire population ("In the eyes of the later middle ages," writes Dover Wilson, Richard II "represented the type and exemplar of royal martyrdom" [p. 50]). This vision, most often presumed to be internally coherent and consistent, though

8. The earliest printed versions of individual plays by Shakespeare, the 1st quarto of *Richard II* appeared in 1597, and 2 more in 1598 (the 4th, printed in 1608, contained the deposition scene).

9. A close reader who focuses exclusively on the text as an autonomous whole. See, for example, JOHN GROVE RANSOM and CLEAVATH BROOKS (above).

1. An anthology of critical essays on English Renaissance literature.

2. Moretti, "A Huge Eclipse": Tragic Form and the Deconstruction of Sovereignty"; and Traugott, "Creating a Rational Rinaldo: A Study in the Mixture of the Genres of Comedy and Romance in *Much Ado About Nothing*."

BARBARA CHRISTIAN
1943-2000

occasionally analyzed as the fusion of two or more elements, has the status of an historical fact. It is not thought to be the product of the historian's interpretation, nor even of the particular interests of a given social group in conflict with other groups. Protected then from interpretation and conflict, this vision can serve as a stable point of reference, beyond contingency, to which literary interpretation can securely refer. Literature is conceived to mirror the period's beliefs, but to mirror them, as it were, from a safe distance.

The new historicism erodes the firm ground of both criticism and literature. It tends to ask questions about its own methodological assumptions and those of others: in the present case, for example, it might encourage us to examine the ideological situation not only of *Richard II* but of Dover Wilson on *Richard II*. The lecture from which I have quoted—"The Political Background of Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Henry IV*"—was delivered before the German Shakespeare Society, at Weimar, in 1939. We might, in a full discussion of the critical issues at stake here, look closely at the relation between Dover Wilson's reading of *Richard II*—a reading that discovers Shakespeare's fears of chaos and his consequent support for legitimate if weak authority over the claims of ruthless usurper—and the eerie occasion of his lecture ("these plays," he concludes, "should be of particular interest to German students at this moment of that everlasting adventure which we call history" [p. 51]).

Moreover, recent criticism has been less concerned to establish the organic unity of literary works and more open to such works as fields of force, places of dissension and shifting interests, occasions for the jostling of orthodox and subversive impulses. "The Elizabethan playhouse, playwright, and player," writes Louis Adrian Montrose in a brilliant recent essay, "exemplify the contradictions of Elizabethan society and make those contradictions their subject. If the world is a theatre and the theatre is an image of the world, then by reflecting upon its own artifice, the drama is holding the mirror up to nature."³ As the problematizing of the mirror metaphor suggests, Renaissance literary works are no longer regarded either as a fixed set of texts that are set apart from all other forms of expression and that contain their own determinate meanings or as a stable set of reflections of historical facts that lie beyond them. The critical practice represented in this volume challenges the assumptions that guarantee a secure distinction between "literary foreground" and "political background" or, more generally, between artistic production and other kinds of social production. Such distinctions do in fact exist, but they are not intrinsic to the texts; rather they are made up and constantly redrawn by artists, audiences, and readers. These collective social constructions on the one hand define the range of aesthetic possibilities within a given representational mode and, on the other, link that mode to the complex network of institutions, practices, and beliefs that constitute the culture as a whole. In this light, the study of genre is an exploration of the poetics of culture.

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3. "The Purpose of Playing: Reflections on a Shakespearean Anthropology," *Helio*, n.s., 7 (1980): 57 [Greenblatt's note].

"How does one respond to a language that is tonality, dance, to these voices without mutilating them and turning them into logical progressions, mere intellectual concepts? How does one shimmy back to forms that soar beyond philosophical discourse or jargon?" Writing in "Being the Subject and the Object: Reading African-American Women's Novels" (1990), Barbara Christian poses a series of questions that interrogate not only the utility of theory to the project of African American literature but also the very nexus of literature and philosophy that has occupied literary criticism and theory since PLATO banished the poets from his ideal Republic (see above). While Plato preferred the "truths" of philosophy to the lies of the poets, Christian would seem to agree with SIR PHILIP SIDNEY that literature is superior to philosophy because it offers more dynamic and complex representations of the world. At the same time, Christian rejects the beliefs of "neutral humanists" who would characterize literature as pure expression or as a disinterested search for truth. Because she speaks for an African American literary tradition that has been devalued and excluded from the Western literary canon, she is sensitive to the roles that power and privilege play in determining literary value. The complex interplay between an appreciation of literature as "hieroglyph"—"a figure which is both sensual and abstract"—and a realist's understanding of the politics of literary work characterizes Christian's critical writing.

Born on St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, Christian attended a Catholic mission school and went on to earn an A.B. cum laude from Marquette University in 1963, from Columbia University she received an M.A. in 1964 and a Ph.D. with distinction in 1970. From 1971 until her death in 2000, she taught English, African American studies, and women's studies at the University of California at Berkeley, where she was the first black woman to receive tenure. She served on the editorial boards of several journals, including *Feminist Studies* (1984-92), *Black American Literature Forum* (1985-90), *Sage* (1987-89), and *Contentions* (1990-2000). Her scholarly honors include the 1994 MELUS award for her contributions to ethnic studies.

In our selection, "The Race for Theory" (1988), Christian deplores the influence that contemporary theory has exerted over the study of literature, especially the study of African American literature. "Theory," by which she means primarily the post-structuralist theories of JACQUES DERRIDA, popularized in the 1980s by such Yale Critics as PAUL DE MAN, purportedly attempts to fix ideas, to prescribe a "set method" for interpreting literary texts. She thus equates theorists with philosophers. But critics—especially critics of the "energetic emergent literatures" by women, African Americans, and third world writers—need to read without preconceived ideas, remaining open to the complex intersections of language, class, race, and gender. More negatively than BELL HOOKS, Christian questions why the elitist jargon and opaque style of postmodern theory, with its proclamation of the death of the author, should become prominent at the same moment when the works of black men and women are just gaining recognition. But unlike hooks, who sees in postmodernism a means of exploring black experience without becoming mired in reductive notions of authentic blackness, Christian fears that theory, because of its abstracting tendencies, will lead to precisely the kinds of monolithic formulations about authenticity that marred the U.S. Black Arts Movements and black cultural nationalism of the 1960s.

Christian identifies herself with an earlier twentieth-century tradition of African American literary critics, who were keenly interested in the practice of literature. Though not immersed in the abstract logic of Western philosophy, these critics—including ZORA NEALE HURSTON, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and LANGSTON

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- 4 For Mackinder, see Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1984), pp. 102–3. Conrad and triumphalist geography are at the heart of Felix Driver, 'Geography's Empire: Histories of Geographical Knowledge,' *Society and Space*, 1991.
- 5 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951; new ed., New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 215. See also Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1981).
- 6 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi tr. (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 37.
- 7 See especially Foucault's late work, *The Care of the Self*, Robert Hurley tr. (New York, Pantheon, 1986). A bold new interpretation arguing that Foucault's entire *œuvre* is about the self, and his in particular, is advanced in *The Passion of Michel Foucault* by James Miller (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1993).
- 8 See, for example, Gérard Chaliand, *Revolution in the Third World* (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1978).
- 9 Rushdie, 'Outside the Whale,' pp. 100–1.
- 10 Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979), pp. 175–9.

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Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare.

Jacques Lacan,
'The Line and Light', *Of the Gaze*

It is out of season to question at this time of day, the original policy of conferring on every colony of the British Empire a mimic representation of the British Constitution. But if the creature so endowed has sometimes forgotten its real insignificance and under the fancied importance of speakers and maces, and all the paraphernalia and ceremonies of the imperial legislature, has dared to defy the mother country, she has to thank herself for the folly of conferring such privileges on a condition of society that has no earthly claim to so exalted a position. A fundamental principle appears to have been forgotten or overlooked in our system of colonial policy—that of colonial dependence. To give to a colony the forms of independence is a mockery; she would not be a colony for a single hour if she could maintain an independent station.

Sir Edward Cust,
'Reflections on West African Affairs . . . addressed to the Colonial Office', Hatchard, London 1839

The discourse of post-Enlightenment English colonialism often speaks in a tongue that is forked, not false. If colonialism takes power in the name of history, it repeatedly exercises its authority through the figure of farce. For the epic intention of the civilizing mission, 'human and not wholly human' in the famous words of Lord Rosebery, 'writ by the finger of the Divine'¹ often produces a text rich in the traditions of *trompe l'œil*, irony, mimicry, and repetition. In this comic turn from the high ideals of the colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects, mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge.

Within that conflictual economy of colonial discourse which Edward Said² describes as the tension between the synchronic panoptical vision of domination—the demand for identity, stasis—and the counter-pressure of the diachrony of history—change, difference—mimicry represents an *ironic* compromise. If I may adapt Samuel Weber's formulation of the marginalizing vision of castration,³ then colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference of recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power; intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both 'normalized' knowledges and disciplinary powers.

The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing. For in 'normalizing' the colonial state or subject, the dream of post-Enlightenment civility alienates its own language of liberty and produces another knowledge of its norms. The ambivalence which thus informs this strategy is discernible, for example, in Locke's Second Treatise which *splitters* to reveal the limitations of liberty in his double use of the word 'slave': first simply, descriptively as the locus of a legitimate exercise of power. What is articulated in that distance between the two uses of the absolute, imagined difference between the 'Colonial' State of Carolina and the Original State of Nature.

It is for this area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double, that my instances of colonial imitation come. What they all share is a discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*) does not merely 'rupture' the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a 'partial' presence. By 'partial' I mean both 'incomplete' and 'virtual'. It is as if the very emergence of the 'colonial' is

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dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition *within* the authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace.

A classic text of such partiality is Charles Grant's 'Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain' (1792),⁴ which was only superseded by James Mills's *History of India* as the most influential early nineteenth-century account of Indian manners and morals. Grant's dream of an evangelical system of mission education conducted uncompro-misingly in English was partly a belief in political reform along Christian lines and partly an awareness that the expansion of company rule in India required a system of 'interpellation' – a reform of manners, as Grant put it, that would provide the colonial with 'a sense of personal identity as we know it.' Caught between the desire for religious reform and the fear that the Indian might become turbulent for liberty, Grant implies that it is, in fact the 'partial' diffusion of Christianity, and the 'partial' influence of moral improvements which will construct a particularly appropriate form of colonial subjectivity. What is suggested is a process of reform through which Christian doctrines might collude with divisive caste practices to prevent dangerous political alliances. Inadvertently, Grant produces a knowledge of Christianity as a form of social control which conflicts with the enunciatory assumptions which authorize his discourse. In suggesting, finally, that 'partial reform' will produce an empty form of the *imitation* of English manners which will induce them [the colonial subjects] to remain under our protection,⁵ Grant mocks his moral project and violates the Evidences of Christianity – a central missionary tenet – which forbade any tolerance of heathen faiths.

The absurd extravagance of Macaulay's *Infamous Minute* (1835) – deeply influenced by Charles Grant's *Observation* – makes a mockery of Oriental learning until faced with the challenge of conceiving of a 'reformed' colonial subject. Then the great tradition of European humanism seems capable only of ironizing itself. At the intersection of European learning and colonial power, Macaulay can conceive of nothing other than 'a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect'⁶ – in other words a mimic man raised 'through our English School, as a missionary educationist wrote in 1819, 'to form a corps of translators and be employed in different departments of Labour.'⁷ The line of descent of the mimic man can be traced through the works of Kipling, Forster, Orwell, Naipaul, and to his emergence, most recently, in Benedict Anderson's excellent essay on nationalism, as the anomalous Bipin Chandra Pal.⁸ He is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized, is *emphatically* not to be English.

The figure of mimicry is locatable within what Anderson describes as 'the inner incompatibility of empire and nation.'⁹ It problematizes the signs of racial and cultural priority, so that the 'national' is no longer

naturalizable. What emerges between mimesis and mimicry is a *writing*, a mode of representation, that marginalizes the monumentality of history, quite simply mocks its power to be a model that power which supposedly makes it imitable. Mimicry *repeats* rather than *re-presents* and in that diminishing perspective merges Decoud's displayed European vision of Sulaco as

the endlessness of civil strife where folly seemed even harder to bear than its ignominy . . . the lawlessness of a populace of all colours and races, barbarism, irremediable tyranny . . . America is ungovernable.¹⁰

Or Ralph Singh's apostasy in Naipaul's *The Mimic Men*:

We pretended to be real, to be learning, to be preparing ourselves for life, we mimic men of the New World, one unknown corner of it, with all its reminders of the corruption that came so quickly to the new.¹¹

Both Decoud and Singh, and in their different ways Grant and Macaulay, are the parodists of history. Despite their intentions and invocations they inscribe the colonial text erratically, eccentrically across a body politic that refuses to be representative, in a narrative that refuses to be representational. The desire to merge as 'authentic' through mimicry – through a process of writing and repetition – is the final irony of partial representation.

What I have called mimicry is not the familiar exercise of *dependent* colonial relations through narcissistic identification so that, as Fanon has observed,¹² the black man stops being an actional person for only the white man can represent his self-esteem. Mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask: it is not what Césaire describes as 'colonization-thingification'¹³ behind which there stands the essence of the *présence Africaine*. The *menace* of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourses also disrupts its authority. And it is a double-vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object. Grant's colonial as partial imitator, Macaulay's translator, Naipaul's colonial politician as playactor, Decoud as the scene setter of the *opéra bouffe* of the New World, these are the appropriate objects of a colonialist chain of command, authorized versions of otherness. But they are also, as I have shown, the figures of a doubling, the part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire which alienates the modality and normality of those dominant discourses in which they emerge as 'inappropriate' colonial subjects. A desire that, through the repetition of *partial presence*, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority. It is a desire that reverses 'in part' the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer's presence. A gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze which, as Foucault describes it, liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man's being through which he extends his sovereignty.¹⁴

I want to turn to this process by which the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the

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observed and 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence. But not before observing that even an exemplary history like Eric Stokes's *The English Utilitarians in India* acknowledges the anomalous gaze of otherness but finally disavows it in a contradictory utterance:

Certainly India played no central part in fashioning the *distinctive* qualities of English civilisation. In many ways it acted as a disturbing force, a magnetic power placed at the periphery tending to distort the natural development of Britain's character . . . 15

What is the nature of the hidden threat of the partial gaze? How does mimicry emerge as the subject of the scopoc drive and the object of colonial surveillance? How is desire disciplined, authority displaced?

If we turn to a Freudian figure to address these issues of colonial textuality, that form of difference that is mimicry – *almost the same but not quite* – will become clear. Writing of the partial nature of fantasy, caught *inappropriately*, between the unconscious and the preconscious, making problematic, like mimicry, the very notion of 'origins', Freud has this to say:

Their mixed and split origin is what decides their fate. We may compare them with individuals of mixed race who taken all round resemble white men but who betray their coloured descent by some striking feature or other and on that account are excluded from society and enjoy none of the privileges.¹⁶

Almost the same but not white: the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction. It is a form of colonial discourse that is uttered *inter dicta*: a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed; a discourse uttered between the lines and as such both against the rules and within them. The question of the representation of difference is therefore always also a problem of authority. The 'desire' of mimicry, which is Freud's *striking feature* that reveals so little but makes such a big difference, is not merely that impossibility of the Other which repeatedly resists signification. The desire of colonial mimicry – an interdictory desire – may not have an object, but it has strategic objectives which I shall call the *metonymy of presence*.

Those inappropriate signifiers of colonial discourse – the difference between being English and being Anglicized; the identity between stereotypes which, through repetition, also become different; the discriminatory identities constructed across traditional cultural norms and classifications, the Simian Black, the Lying Asiatic – all these are metonymies of presence. They are strategies of desire in discourse that make the anomalous representation of the colonized something other than a process of 'the return of the repressed', what Fanon unsatisfactorily characterized as collective catharsis.¹⁷ These instances of metonymy are the nonrepressive productions of contradictory and multiple belief. They cross the boundaries of the culture of enunciation through a strategic confusion of the metaphoric and metonymic axes of the cultural production of meaning. For each of these instances of 'a difference that is almost the same but not quite' inadvertently creates a crisis for the cultural priority given to the *metaphoric* as the process of repression and

substitution which negotiates the difference between paradigmatic systems and classifications. In mimicry, the representation of identity and meaning is rearticulated along the axis of metonymy. As Lacan reminds us, mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization or repression of difference, but a form of resemblance that differs/defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory 'identity effects' in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no 'itself'. And that form of *resemblance* is the most terrifying thing to behold, as Edward Long testifies in his *History of Jamaica* (1774). At the end of a tortured, nephophobic passage, that shifts anxiously between piety, prevarication, and perversion, the text finally confronts its fear: nothing other than the repetition of its resemblance 'in part':

(Negroes) are represented by all authors as the vilest of human kind, to which they have little more pretension of resemblance than what arises from their exterior forms (my italics).¹⁸

From such a colonial encounter between the white presence and its black semblance, there emerges the question of the ambivalence of mimicry as a problematic of colonial subjection. For if Sade's scandalous theatricalization of language repeatedly reminds us that discourse can claim 'no priority', then the work of Edward Said will not let us forget that the 'ethnocentric and erratic will to power from which texts can spring'¹⁹ is itself a theater of war. Mimicry, as the metonymy of presence is, indeed, such an erratic, eccentric strategy of authority in colonial discourse. Mimicry does not merely destroy narcissistic authority through the repetitious slippage of difference and desire. It is the process of the *fixation* of the colonial as a form of cross-classificatory, discriminatory knowledge in the defiles of an interdictory discourse, and therefore necessarily raises the question of the *authorization* of colonial representations. A question of authority that goes beyond the subject's lack of priority (castration) to a historical crisis in the conceptuality of colonial man as an *object* of regulatory power, as the subject of racial, cultural, national representation.

'This culture . . . fixed in its colonial status', Fanon suggests, '[is] both present and mummified, it testified against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal.'²⁰ The ambivalence of mimicry – almost but not quite – suggests that the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal. What I have called its 'identity-effects', are always crucially split. Under cover of camouflage, mimicry, like the fetish, is a part-object that radically revalues the normative knowledges of the priority of race, writing, history. For the fetish mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it deauthorizes them. Similarly, mimicry rearticulates presence in terms of its 'otherness', that which it disavows. There is a crucial difference between this *colonial* articulation of man and his doubles and that which Foucault describes as 'thinking the unthought'²¹ which, for nineteenth-century Europe, is the ending of man's alienation by reconciling

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him with his essence. The colonial discourse that articulates an *interdictory* 'otherness' is precisely the 'other scene' of this nineteenth-century European desire for an authentic historical consciousness.

The 'unthought' across which colonial man is articulated is that process of classificatory confusion that I have described as the metonymy of the substitutive chain of ethical and cultural discourse. This results in the *splitting* of colonial discourse so that two attitudes towards external reality persist: one takes reality into consideration while the other disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire that repeats, rearticulates 'reality' as mimicry.

So Edward Long can say with authority, quoting variously, Hume, Eastwick, and Bishop Warburton in his support, that:

Ludicrous as the opinion may seem I do not think that an orangutang husband would be any dishonour to a Hottentot female.²²

Such contradictory articulations of reality and desire—seen in racist stereotypes, statements, jokes, myths—are not caught in the doubtful circle of the return of the repressed. They are the effects of a disavowal that denies the differences of the other but produces in its stead forms of authority and multiple belief that alienate the assumptions of 'civil' discourse. If, for a while, the ruse of desire is calculable for the uses of discipline soon the repetition of guilt, justification, pseudoscientific theories, superstition, spurious authorities, and classifications can be seen as the desperate effort to 'normalize' *formally* the disturbance of a discourse of splitting that violates the rational, enlightened claims of its enunciatory modality. The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry*—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to *menace*—a difference that is almost total but not quite. And in that other scene of colonial power, where history turns to farce and presence to 'a part', can be seen the twin figures of narcissism and paranoia that repeat furiously, uncontrollably.

In the ambivalent world of the 'not quite/not white', on the margins of metropolitan desire, the *founding objects* of the Western world become the erratic, eccentric, accidental *objets trouvés* of the colonial discourse—the part—objects of presence. It is then that the body and the book loose their re-presentational authority. Black skin splits under the racist gaze, displaced into signs of bestiality, genitalia, grotesquerie, which reveal the phobic myth of the undifferentiated whole white body. And the holiest of books—the Bible—bearing both the standard of the cross and the standard of empire finds itself strangely dismembered. In May 1817 a missionary wrote from Bengal:

Still everyone would gladly receive a Bible. And why?—that he may lay it up as a curiosity for a few pice; or use it for waste paper. Such it is well known has been the common fate of these copies of the Bible. . . . Some have been bartered in the markets, others have been thrown in snuff shops and used as wrapping paper.²³

Notes

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Language Association Convention in New York, December 1983. I would like to thank Professor Spivak for inviting me to participate on the panel and Dr Stephen Feuchtwang for his advice in the preparation of the paper.

- 1 Cited in Eric Stokes, *The Political Ideas of English Imperialism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 17–18.
- 2 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 240.
- 3 Samuel Weber: 'The Sideshow, Or: Remarks on a Canny Moment', *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 88, no. 6 (1973), p. 1112.
- 4 Charles Grant, 'Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain', *Sessional Papers 1812–13*, X (282), East India Company.
- 5 *Ibid.*, chap. 4, p. 104.
- 6 T.B. Macaulay, 'Minute on Education', in *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. II, ed. William Theodore de Bary (New York, Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 49.
- 7 Mr Thomason's communication to the Church Missionary Society, 5 September 1819, in *The Missionary Register*, 1821, pp. 54–5.
- 8 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, Verso, 1983), p. 88.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 88–9.
- 10 Joseph Conrad, *Nostromo* (London, Penguin, 1979), p. 161.
- 11 V.S. Naipaul, *The Mimic Men* (London, Penguin, 1967), p. 146.
- 12 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London, Paladin, 1970), p. 109.
- 13 Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1972), p. 21.
- 14 Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon tr. (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press), p. 153.
- 15 Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1959), p. xi.
- 16 Sigmund Freud, 'The Unconscious' (1915), SE, XIV, pp. 190–1.
- 17 Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 103.
- 18 Edward Long, *A History of Jamaica* (1774), vol. II, p. 353.
- 19 Edward Said, 'The Text, the World, the Critic', in *Textual Strategies*, ed. J.V. Harari (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 184.
- 20 Frantz Fanon, 'Racism and Culture', in *Toward the African Revolution* (London, Pelican, 1967), p. 44.
- 21 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York, Pantheon, 1970), part II, chap. 9.
- 22 Long, *A History of Jamaica*, p. 364.
- 23 *The Missionary Register*, May 1817, p. 186.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Q There are several questions that arise out of the way you perceive yourself ('The post-colonial diasporic Indian who seeks to decolonize the mind'), and the way you constitute us (for convenience, 'native' intellectuals):

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photographs (by Jean Mohr). Said also co-edited (with Christopher Hitchens) and contributed three essays to the collection *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* (1988), which attacks stereotypes of Arabs (as terrorists, for instance).

Said has performed as a concert pianist and has written an occasional column on music for the *Nation*; *Musical Elaborations* (1991) gathers his writings in this area. *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) is a capstone of his investigation into literary and cultural representations of imperialism. *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Raith Lectures* (1994), a succinct and accessible survey of the role of the intellectual, culminates in Said's call for an independent intellectual who "speaks truth to power." Several later collections gather his diverse commentary on politics in the Middle East: *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994* (1994); *The Pen and the Sword: Conversations with David Barsamian* (1994), *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (1998), and *End of the Peace: Oslo and After* (2000). *The Edward Said Reader*, edited by Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (2000), presents a range of selections covering his career. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2001), a companion to *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, gathers his later critical essays. *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999) is an illuminating biographical account, covering Said's early life in Palestine and Cairo through his college years at Princeton University.

From almost the beginning of his career, Said has attracted a large body of criticism. A special issue of the theory journal *Diacritics* 6 (1976) is devoted to *Beginnings*; it also contains an illuminating interview with Said. In *Intellectuals in Power: A Genealogy of Critical Humanism* (1986), Paul A. Bové analyzes Said's relation to the humanistic tradition. Jim Merod, in *The Political Responsibility of the Critic* (1987), sees Said rather than such more academically oriented figures as Fredric Jameson as an exemplary politically engaged critic. *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (1988), by the anthropologist James Clifford, contains a noted critique of *Orientalism*. In *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (1990), Robert Young assigns Said a central role in establishing postcolonial studies. John McGowan, in *Postmodernism and Its Critics* (1991), explores the problem of freedom in Said's concept of exile. *Edward Said: A Critical Reader*, edited by Michael Sprinker (1992), contains an excellent selection of essays examining the range of Said's work, as well as an informative interview with Said.

The Marxist critic Aijaz Ahmad, in his *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (1992), severely criticizes Said's relation to postcolonial studies, taking him to task for his focus on the humanistic Western tradition and for his liberal politics. That attack was followed by a special issue of *Public Culture* 12 (1993) debating Ahmad's and Said's merits. Bruce Robbins, in *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, and Culture* (1993), analyzes Said's ambivalent views toward professionalism. In "Jane Austen and Edward Said: Gender, Culture, and Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 21 (1995), Susan Fraiman criticizes Said's lack of attention to gender and to texts by women. Jeffrey Williams, "Edward Said's Romance of the Amateur Intellectual," *Review of Education* 17 (1995), surveys Said's career, arguing that his claim for the amateur independent intellectual contradicts his own position as an eminent professional literary critic. Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia's *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity* (1999) is a useful overview. *Edward Said and the Work of the Critic: Speaking Truth to Power*, edited by Paul A. Bové (2000), gathers a range of essays on Said and two interviews with him. Timothy Brennan, "The Illusion of a Future: *Orientalism* as Traveling Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000), provides a retrospective account of the influence of *Orientalism*, arguing that it critiques rather than follows Foucault.

From Orientalism

Introduction

1

On a visit to Beirut during the terrible civil war of 1975-1976 a French journalist wrote regretfully of the gutted downtown area that "it had once seemed to belong to . . . the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval."¹ He was right about the place, of course, especially so far as a European was concerned. The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. Now it was disappearing: in a sense it had happened, its time was over. Perhaps it seemed irrelevant that Orientals themselves had something at stake in the process, that even in the time of Chateaubriand and Nerval Orientals had lived there, and that now it was they who were suffering; the main thing for the European visitor was a European representation of the Orient and its contemporary fate, both of which had a privileged communal significance for the journalist and his French readers.

Americans will not feel quite the same about the Orient, which for them is much more likely to be associated very differently with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly). Unlike the Americans, the French and the British—less so, the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss—have had a long tradition of what I shall be calling *Orientalism*, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. In contrast, the American understanding of the Orient will seem considerably less dense, although our recent Japanese, Korean, and Indonesian adventures² ought now to be creating a more sober, more realistic "Oriental" awareness. Moreover, the vastly expanded American political and economic role in the Near East (the Middle East) makes great claims on our understanding of that Orient.

It will be clear to the reader (and will become clearer still throughout the many pages that follow) that by Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion, interdependent. The most readily accepted designation

¹ Thierry Desjardins, *Le Martyre du Liban* (Paris: Plon, 1976), p. 14 (Said's note); François-René Jonisme de Chateaubriand (1768-1848), French writer and statesman; Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855), French poet and journalist; he wrote an

account of a journey to the Middle East, *Le Voyage en Orient* (1851).

² That is, the Pacific Theater of World War II (1941-45), the Korean War (1950-53), and the Vietnam War (1964-75), respectively.

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for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. Compared with *Oriental studies* or *area studies*, it is true that the term *Orientalism* is less preferred by specialists today, both because it is too vague and general and because it connotes the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European colonialism. Nevertheless books are written and congresses held with “the Orient” as their main focus, with the Orientalist in his new or old guise as their main authority. The point is that even if it does not survive as it once did, Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and the Oriental.

Related to this academic tradition, whose fortunes, transmigrations, specializations, and transmissions are in part the subject of this study, is a more general meaning for Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction³ made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident.” Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, “mind,” destiny, and so on. *This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx.*⁴ A little later in this introduction I shall deal with the methodological problems one encounters in so broadly construed a “field” as this.

The interchange between the academic and the more or less imaginative meanings of Orientalism is a constant one, and since the late eighteenth century there has been a considerable, quite disciplined—perhaps even regulated—traffic between the two. Here I come to the third meaning of Orientalism, which is something more historically and materially defined than either of the other two. Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*,⁵ to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover,

3. That is, a difference in their essential being and how they are known.

4. Said names writers not generally viewed as treating the “Oriental”: Aeschylus (525–456 B.C.E.), Greek tragedian; Hugo (1802–1885), French Romantic poet, novelist, and dramatist; DANTE ALIGHIERI (1265–1321), Italian poet; and

MARX (1818–1883), German economic, social, and political philosopher.

5. Books published in 1969 and 1975, respectively, by FOUCAULT (1926–1984), French philosopher and historian of ideas, who explores the connections among knowledge, discourse, and power.

so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity “the Orient” is in question. How this happens is what this book tries to demonstrate. It also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.

Historically and culturally there is a quantitative as well as a qualitative difference between the Franco-British involvement in the Orient and—until the period of American ascendancy after World War II—the involvement of every other European and Atlantic power. To speak of Orientalism therefore is to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise, a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant,⁶ the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental “experts” and “hands,” an Oriental professorate, a complex array of “Oriental” ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use—the list can be extended more or less indefinitely. My point is that Orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the Bible lands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II France and Britain dominated the Orient and Orientalism; since World War II America has dominated the Orient, and approaches it as France and Britain once did. Out of that closeness, whose dynamic is enormously productive even if it always demonstrates the comparatively greater strength of the Occident (British, French, or American), comes the large body of texts I call Orientalist.

It should be said at once that even with the generous number of books and authors that I examine, there is a much larger number that I simply have had to leave out. My argument, however, depends neither upon an exhaustive catalogue of texts dealing with the Orient nor upon a clearly delimited set of texts, authors, and ideas that together make up the Orientalist canon. I have depended instead upon a different methodological alternative—whose backbone in a sense is the set of historical generalizations I have so far been making in this Introduction—and it is these I want now to discuss in more analytical detail.

II

I have begun with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either. We must take seriously Vico's⁷ great observation that men make their

6. The countries bordering the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea from Turkey to Egypt, including present-day Syria, Lebanon, and Israel.

7. GIAMBATTISTA VICO (1668–1744), Italian philosopher and historian.

own history; that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities—to say nothing of historical entities—such locales, regions, geographical sectors as “Orient” and “Occident” are man-made. Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other.¹

Having said that, one must go on to state a number of reasonable qualifications. In the first place, it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality. When Disraeli said in his novel *Tancred*² that the East was a career, he meant that to be interested in the East was something bright young Westerners would find to be an all-consuming passion; he should not be interpreted as saying that the East was *only* a career for Westerners. There were—and are—cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West. About that fact this study of Orientalism has very little to contribute, except to acknowledge it tacitly. But the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as career) despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a “real” Orient. My point is that Disraeli’s statement about the East refers mainly to that created consistency; that regular constellation of ideas as the pre-eminent thing about the Orient, and not to its mere being, as Wallace Stevens’s³ phrase has it:

A second qualification is that ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied. To believe that the Orient was created—or, as I call it, “Orientalized”—and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination, is to be disingenuous. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and is quite accurately indicated in the title of K. M. Panikkar’s classic *Asia and Western Dominance*.⁴ The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be “Oriental” in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could be*—that is, submitted to being—*made* Oriental. There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert’s encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself; she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *She* spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was “typically Oriental.” My argument is that Flaubert’s situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated

instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled.

This brings us to a third qualification: One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away. I myself believe that Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridical discourse about the Orient (which is what, in its academic or scholarly form, it claims to be). Nevertheless, what we must respect and try to grasp is the sheer knitted-together strength of Orientalist discourse, its very close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions, and its redoubtable durability. After all, any system of ideas that can remain unchanged as teachable wisdom (in academies, books, congresses, universities, foreign-service institutes) from the period of Ernest Renan’s in the late 1840s until the present in the United States must be something more formidable than a mere collection of lies. Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture.

Gramsci⁵ has made the useful analytic distinction between civil and political society in which the former is made up of voluntary (or at least rational and noncoercive) affiliations like schools, families, and unions, the latter of state institutions (the army, the police, the central bureaucracy) whose role in the polity is direct domination. Culture, of course, is to be found operating within civil society, where the influence of ideas, of institutions, and of other persons works not through domination but by what Gramsci calls consent. In any society not totalitarian, then, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*, an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West. It is hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength I have been speaking about so far. Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe,⁶ a collective notion identifying “us” Europeans as against all “those” non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter.

In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flex-

8. An 1847 novel whose hero leaves 19th-century England for the East, by Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881). English politician and novelist.
9. American poet (1879–1955); one of his poems is titled “Of Mere Being.”
1. K. M. Panikkar, *Asia and Western Dominance*

(London: Allen and Unwin, 1959) (Said’s note).
2. Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), French novelist; his travels in Egypt and the Orient are recounted in his letters, and his novel *Salammbô* (1862) is set in ancient Carthage (in modern-day Tunisia).

3. French historian (1823–1892), who wrote on the Oriental origins of Christianity.
4. ANTONIO GRAMSCI (1891–1937), Italian Marxist whose concept of cultural hegemony has been

highly influential.
5. Denys Hay, *Europe: The Emergence of an Idea*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968) (Said’s note).

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ible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand. And why should it have been otherwise, especially during the period of extraordinary European ascendancy from the late Renaissance to the present? The scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in, or thought about, the Orient because he *could be there*; or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part. Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe, for instances of economic and sociological theories of development, revolution, cultural personality, national or religious character. Additionally, the imaginative examination of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was an Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections. If we can point to great Orientalist works of genuine scholarship like Silvestre de Sacy's *Chrestomathie arabe* or Edward William Lane's *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, we need also to note that Renan's and Gobineau's⁶ racial ideas came out of the same impulse, as did a great many Victorian pornographic novels (see the analysis by Steven Marcus of "The Lustful Turk").

And yet, one must repeatedly ask oneself whether what matters in Orientalism is the general group of ideas overriding the mass of material—about which who could deny that they were shot through with doctrines of European superiority, various kinds of racism, imperialism, and the like, dogmatic views of "the Oriental"—as a kind of ideal and unchanging abstraction?—or the much more varied work produced by almost uncountable individual writers, whom one would take up as individual instances of authors dealing with the Orient. In a sense the two alternatives, general and particular, are really two perspectives on the same material: in both instances one would have to deal with pioneers in the field like William Jones,⁷ with great artists like Nerval or Flaubert. And why would it not be possible to employ both perspectives together, or one after the other? Isn't there an obvious danger of distortion (of precisely the kind that academic Orientalism has always been prone to) if either too general or too specific a level of description is maintained systematically?

My two fears are distortion and inaccuracy, or rather the kind of inaccuracy produced by too dogmatic a generality and too positivistic a localized focus. In trying to deal with these problems I have tried to deal with three

main aspects of my own contemporary reality that seem to me to point the way out of the methodological or perspectival difficulties I have been discussing, difficulties that might force one, in the first instance, into writing a coarse polemic on so unacceptably general a level of description as not to be worth the effort, or in the second instance, into writing so detailed and atomistic a series of analyses as to lose all track of the general lines of force informing the field, giving it its special cogency. How then to recognize individuality and to reconcile it with its intelligent, and by no means passive or merely dictatorial, general and hegemonic context?

III

I mentioned three aspects of my contemporary reality: I must explain and briefly discuss them now, so that it can be seen how I was led to a particular course of research and writing.

1. *The distinction between pure and political knowledge.* It is very easy to argue that knowledge about Shakespeare or Wordsworth⁹ is not political whereas knowledge about contemporary China or the Soviet Union is. My own formal and professional designation is that of "humanist," a title which indicates the humanities as my field and therefore the unlikely eventuality that there might be anything political about what I do in that field. Of course, all these labels and terms are quite unnuanced as I use them here, but the general truth of what I am pointing to is, I think, widely held. One reason for saying that a humanist who writes about Wordsworth, or an editor whose speciality is Keats,¹ is not involved in anything political is that what he does seems to have no direct political effect upon reality in the everyday sense. A scholar whose field is Soviet economics works in a highly charged area where there is much government interest, and what he might produce in the way of studies or proposals will be taken up by policymakers, government officials, institutional economists, intelligence experts. The distinction between "humanists" and persons whose work has policy implications, or political significance, can be broadened further by saying that the former's ideological color is a matter of incidental importance to politics (although possibly of great moment to his colleagues in the field, who may object to his Stalinism² or fascism or too easy liberalism), whereas the ideology of the latter is woven directly into his material—indeed, economics, politics, and sociology in the modern academy are ideological sciences—and therefore taken for granted as being "political."

Nevertheless the determining impingement on most knowledge produced in the contemporary West (and here I speak mainly about the United States) is that it be nonpolitical, that is, scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisan or small-minded doctrinal belief. One can have no quarrel with such an ambition in theory, perhaps, but in practice the reality is much more problematic. No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the

9. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850), English Romantic poet.

2. That is, hard-line authoritarianism, similar to that of the oppressive Soviet regime (1924-53) of Joseph Stalin (1879-1953).

1. John Keats (1795-1821), English Romantic poet.

6. Joseph Arthur, comte de Gobineau (1816-1882), French diplomat and author of *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853-55). The French Orientalist Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838) published his *Arab Chrestomathy* in 1806; Lane (1801-1876), an English scholar of Arabic, published his *Account* in 1836.

7. Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Bantam, 1967), pp. 200-219. [Said's note].

8. English philologist and judge (1746-1794); he was the first to observe the close resemblance of Sanskrit to Greek and Latin.

mere activity of being a member of a society. These continue to bear on what he does professionally, even though naturally enough his research and its fruits do attempt to reach a level of relative freedom from the inhibitions and the restrictions of brute, everyday reality. For there is such a thing as knowledge that is less, rather than more, partial than the individual (with his entangling and distracting life circumstances) who produces it. Yet this knowledge is not therefore automatically nonpolitical.

Whether discussions of literature or of classical philology are fraught with—or have unmediated—political significance is a very large question that I have tried to treat in some detail elsewhere.³ What I am interested in doing now is suggesting how the general liberal consensus that “true” knowledge is fundamentally nonpolitical (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not “true” knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced. No one is helped in understanding this today when the adjective “political” is used as a label to discredit any work for daring to violate the protocol of pretended suprapolitical objectivity. We may say, first, that civil society recognizes a gradation of political importance in the various fields of knowledge. To some extent the political importance given a field comes from the possibility of its direct translation into economic terms; but to a greater extent political importance comes from the closeness of a field to ascertainable sources of power in political society. Thus an economic study of long-term Soviet energy potential and its effect on military capability is likely to be commissioned by the Defense Department, and thereafter to acquire a kind of political status impossible for a study of Tolstói’s⁴ early fiction financed in part by a foundation. Yet both works belong in what civil society acknowledges to be a similar field, Russian studies, even though one work may be done by a very conservative economist, the other by a radical literary historian. My point here is that “Russia” as a general subject matter has political priority over nicer distinctions such as “economics” and “literary history,” because political society in Gramsci’s sense reaches into such realms of civil society as the academy and saturates them with significance of direct concern to it.

I do not want to press all this any further on general theoretical grounds: it seems to me that the value and credibility of my case can be demonstrated by being much more specific, in the way, for example, Noam Chomsky has studied the instrumental connection between the Vietnam War and the notion of objective scholarship as it was applied to cover state-sponsored military research.⁵ Now because Britain, France, and recently the United States are imperial powers, their political societies impart to their civil societies a sense of urgency, a direct political infusion as it were, where and whenever matters pertaining to their imperial interests abroad are concerned. I doubt that it is controversial, for example, to say that an Englishman in India or Egypt in the later nineteenth century took an interest in those countries that was never far from their status in his mind as British colonies. To say this may seem quite different from saying that all academic

3. See my *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983) [Said’s note].
 4. Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), Russian novelist.
 5. Principally in his *American Power and the New*

knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact—and yet *that is what I am saying* in this study of Orientalism. For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer.

Put in this way, these political actualities are still too undefined and general to be really interesting. Anyone would agree to them without necessarily agreeing also that they mattered very much, for instance, to Flaubert as he wrote *Salammô*, or to H. A. R. Gibb as he wrote *Modern Trends in Islam*.⁶ The trouble is that there is too great a distance between the big dominating fact, as I have described it, and the details of everyday life that govern the minute discipline of a novel or a scholarly text as each is being written. Yet if we eliminate from the start any notion that “big” facts like imperial domination can be applied mechanically and deterministically to such complex matters as culture and ideas, then we will begin to approach an interesting kind of study. My idea is that European and then American interest in the Orient was political according to some of the obvious historical accounts of it that I have given here, but that it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically along with brute political, economic, and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that it obviously was in the field I call Orientalism.

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

⁶ Published in 1947; Gibb (1895–1971) was an English scholar of Arabic language and history.

(as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do). Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is—and does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world.

Because Orientalism is a cultural and a political fact, then, it does not exist in some archival vacuum; quite the contrary, I think it can be shown that what is thought, said, or even done about the Orient follows (perhaps occurs within) certain distinct and intellectually knowable lines. Here too a considerable degree of nuance and elaboration can be seen working as between the broad superstructural pressures and the details of composition; the facts of textuality. Most humanistic scholars are, I think, perfectly happy with the notion that texts exist in contexts, that there is such a thing as intertextuality, that the pressures of conventions, predecessors, and rhetorical styles limit what Walter Benjamin once called the "overtaxing of the productive person in the name of . . . the principle of 'creativity,'" in which the poet is believed on his own, and out of his pure mind, to have brought forth his work.⁷ Yet there is a reluctance to allow that political, institutional, and ideological constraints act in the same manner on the individual author: A humanist will believe it to be an interesting fact to any interpreter of Balzac that he was influenced in the *Comédie humaine*⁸ by the conflict between Geoffrey Saint-Hilaire and Cuvier,⁹ but the same sort of pressure on Balzac of deeply reactionary monarchism is felt in some vague way to demean his literary "genius" and therefore to be less worth serious study. Similarly—as Harry Bracken¹ has been tirelessly showing—philosophers will conduct their discussions of Locke, Hume, and empiricism² without ever taking into account that there is an explicit connection in these classic writers between their "philosophic" doctrines and racial theory, justifications of slavery, or arguments for colonial exploitation.³ These are common enough ways by which contemporary scholarship keeps itself pure.

Perhaps it is true that most attempts to rub culture's nose in the mud of politics have been crudely iconoclastic; perhaps also the social interpretation of literature in my own field has simply not kept up with the enormous technical advances in detailed textual analysis. But there is no getting away from the fact that literary studies in general, and American Marxist theorists in particular, have avoided the effort of seriously bridging the gap between the superstructural and the base levels in textual, historical scholarship; on another occasion I have gone so far as to say that the literary-cultural establishment as a whole has declared the serious study of imperialism and culture off limits.⁴ For Orientalism brings one up directly against that question—

that is, to realizing that political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination, and scholarly institutions—in such a way as to make its avoidance an intellectual and historical impossibility. Yet there will always remain the perennial escape mechanism of saying that a literary scholar and a philosopher, for example, are trained in literature and philosophy respectively, not in politics or ideological analysis. In other words, the specialist argument can work quite effectively to block the larger and, in my opinion, the more intellectually serious perspective.

Here it seems to me there is a simple two-part answer to be given, at least so far as the study of imperialism and culture (or Orientalism) is concerned. In the first place, nearly every nineteenth-century writer (and the same is true enough of writers in earlier periods) was extraordinarily well aware of the fact of empire: this is a subject not very well studied, but it will not take a modern Victorian specialist long to admit that liberal cultural heroes like John Stuart Mill, Arnold, Carlyle, Newman, Macaulay, Ruskin, George Eliot, and even Dickens⁵ had definite views on race and imperialism, which are quite easily to be found at work in their writing. So even a specialist must deal with the knowledge that Mill, for example, made it clear in *On Liberty* and *Representative Government* that his views there could not be applied to India (he was an India Office functionary for a good deal of his life, after all) because the Indians were civilizationally, if not racially, inferior. The same kind of paradox is to be found in Marx, as I try to show in this book. In the second place, to believe that politics in the form of imperialism bears upon the production of literature, scholarship, social theory, and history writing is by no means equivalent to saying that culture is therefore a demeaned or demigrated thing. Quite the contrary: my whole point is to say that we can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realize that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were *productive*, not unilaterally inhibiting. It is this idea that Gramsci, certainly, and Foucault and Raymond Williams in their very different ways, have been trying to illustrate. Even one or two pages by Williams on "the uses of the Empire" in *The Long Revolution* tell us more about nineteenth-century cultural richness than many volumes of hermetic textual analyses.⁶

Therefore I study Orientalism as a dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires—British, French, American—in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was produced. What interests me most as a scholar is not the gross political verity but the detail, as indeed what interests us in someone like Lane or Flaubert or Renan is not the (to him) indisputable truth that Occidentals are superior to Orientals, but the profoundly worked over and modulated evidence of his detailed work within the very wide space opened up by that truth. One need only remember that Lane's *Manners and Customs*

7. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), p. 71 [Said's note], BENJAMIN (1892–1940), German literary and cultural critic.

8. *The Human Comedy*, the title given to the totality of his short stories and novels by the French novelist Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850); most portray contemporary French society and many are linked by recurring characters.

9. A debate on comparative anatomy in 1830 between the prominent French zoologists Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772–1844) and Georges

Cuvier (1769–1832).

1. American philosopher (b. 1926).

2. The view, held by British philosophers John Locke (1632–1704) and DAVID HUME (1711–1776), that all knowledge derives from sensory

experience.

3. Harry Bracken, "Essence, Accident, and Base," *Hermathena* 116 (winter 1973): 81–96 [Said's note].

4. In an interview published in *Diacritics* 6, no. 3 (fall 1976), 38 [Said's note]. The terms *superstructure* and *base* allude to the Marxist view that all aspects of a society—literature, arts, politics, and

90 on—depend on its economic form of production.

5. All major Victorian writers and thinkers: Mill (1806–1873), philosopher and social reformer, who published *On Liberty* in 1859 and *Considerations on Representative Government* in 1861; MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822–1888), poet and critic; Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), historian and essayist; John Henry Newman (1801–1890), prelate

and theologian; Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), historian and statesman; John Ruskin (1819–1900), art critic; Eliot (pen name of Marian Evans, 1819–1880), novelist; and Charles Dickens (1812–1870), novelist.

6. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp. 66–67 [Said's note]; WILLIAMS (1921–1988), British Marxist literary critic.

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of the *Modern Egyptians* is a classic of historical and anthropological obiter because of its style, its enormously intelligent and brilliant details, not because of its simple reflection of racial superiority, to understand what I am saying here.

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

2. *The methodological question.* In a previous book I gave a good deal of thought and analysis to the methodological importance for work in the human sciences of finding and formulating a first step, a point of departure, a beginning principle.⁷ A major lesson I learned and tried to present was that there is no such thing as a merely given, or simply available, starting point; beginnings have to be made for each project in such a way as to *enable* what follows from them. Nowhere in my experience has the difficulty of this lesson been more consciously lived (with what success—or failure—I cannot really say) than in this study of Orientalism. The idea of beginning, indeed the act of beginning, necessarily involves an act of delimitation by which something is cut out of a great mass of material, separated from the mass, and made to stand for, as well as be, a starting point, a beginning; for the student of texts one such notion of inaugural delimitation is Louis Althusser's idea of the *problematic*, a specific determinate unity of a text, or group of texts, which is something given rise to by analysis.⁸ Yet in the case of Orientalism (as opposed to the case of Marx's texts, which is what Althusser studies), there is not simply the problem of finding a point of departure, or problematic, but also the question of designating which texts, authors, and periods are the ones best suited for study.

It has seemed to me foolish to attempt an encyclopedic narrative history of Orientalism, first of all because if my guiding principle was to be "the European idea of the Orient" there would be virtually no limit to the material I would have had to deal with; second, because the narrative model itself did

not suit my descriptive and political interests; third, because in such books as Raymond Schwab's *La Renaissance orientale*, Johann Fück's *Die Arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts*, and more recently, Dorothee Metlitzki's *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England?* there already exist encyclopedic works on certain aspects of the European-Oriental encounter such as make the critic's job, in the general political and intellectual context I sketched above, a different one.

There still remained the problem of cutting down a very fat archive to manageable dimensions, and more important, outlining something in the nature of an intellectual order within that group of texts without at the same time following a mindlessly chronological order. My starting point therefore has been the British, French, and American experience of the Orient taken as a limit, what made that experience possible by way of historical and intellectual background, what the quality and character of the experience has been. For reasons I shall discuss presently I limited that already limited (but still inordinately large) set of questions to the Anglo-French-American experience of the Arabs and Islam, which for almost a thousand years together stood for the Orient. Immediately upon doing that, a large part of the Orient seemed to have been eliminated—India, Japan, China, and other sections of the Far East—not because these regions were not important (they obviously have been) but because one could discuss Europe's experience of the Near Orient, or of Islam, apart from its experience of the Far Orient. Yet at certain moments of that general European history of interest in the East, particular parts of the Orient like Egypt, Syria, and Arabia cannot be discussed without also studying Europe's involvement in the more distant parts, of which Persia and India are the most important; a notable case in point is the connection between Egypt and India so far as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain was concerned. Similarly the French role in deciphering the Zend-Avesta, the pre-eminence of Paris as a center of Sanskrit studies during the first decade of the nineteenth century, the fact that Napoleon's interest in the Orient was contingent upon his sense of the British role in India: all these Far Eastern interests directly influenced French interest in the Near East, Islam, and the Arabs.

Britain and France dominated the Eastern Mediterranean from about the end of the seventeenth century on. Yet my discussion of that domination and systematic interest does not do justice to (a) the important contributions to Orientalism of Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, and Portugal and (b) the fact that one of the important impulses toward the study of the Orient in the eighteenth century was the revolution in Biblical studies stimulated by such variously interesting pioneers as Bishop Lowth, Eichhorn, Herder, and Michaelis.² In the first place, I had to focus rigorously upon the British-

9. Raymond Schwab, *La Renaissance orientale* [The Oriental Renaissance, French] (Paris: Payot, 1950); Johann W. Fück, *Die Arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts* [Arabic Studies in Europe from Its Origins through the Twentieth Century, German] (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1955); Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). [Said's note.]

10. Napoléon Bonaparte (1769–1821), general and emperor of France (1804–15), who campaigned in Egypt (1798–99) in an attempt to damage Britain's

trade with India. The Zend-Vesta: the Vesta, a book of sacred writings from eastern Iran (begun ca. 600 B.C.E., fixed in form ca. 4th–6th c. C.E.) that collects the teachings of the religious leader and prophet Zoroaster.

2. Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791), German theologian; Robert Lowth (1710–1787), English grammarian and biblical translator; Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827), German biblical scholar and professor of Oriental languages; Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), German critic and philologist.

7. In my *Beginnings: Invention and Method* (New York: Basic, 1975) [Said's note].

8. Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster

(New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), pp. 65–67 [Said's note]. ALTHUSSER (1918–1990), French Marxist philosopher.

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French and later the American material because it seemed inescapably true not only that Britain and France were the pioneer nations in the Orient and in Oriental studies, but that these vanguard positions were held by virtue of the two greatest colonial networks in pre-twentieth-century history: the American Oriental position since World War II has fit—I think, quite self-consciously—in the places excavated by the two earlier European powers. Then too, I believe that the sheer quality, consistency, and mass of British, French, and American writing on the Orient lifts it above the doubtless crucial work done in Germany, Italy, Russia, and elsewhere. But I think it is also true that the major steps in Oriental scholarship were first taken in either Britain and France, then elaborated upon by Germans. Silvestre de Sacy, for example, was not only the first modern and institutional European Orientalist, who worked on Islam, Arabic literature, the Druze religion, and Sasanid Persia; he was also the teacher of Champollion and of Franz Bopp,³ the founder of German comparative linguistics. A similar claim of priority and subsequent pre-eminence can be made for William Jones and Edward William Lane.

In the second place—and here the failings of my study of Orientalism are amply made up for—there has been some important recent work on the background in Biblical scholarship to the rise of what I have called modern Orientalism. The best and the most illuminatingly relevant is E. S. Shaffer's impressive "*Kubla Khan*" and *The Fall of Jerusalem*,⁴ an indispensable study of the origins of Romanticism, and of the intellectual activity underpinning a great deal of what goes on in Coleridge, Browning,⁵ and George Eliot. To some degree Shaffer's work refines upon the outlines provided in Schwab, by articulating the material of relevance to be found in the German Biblical scholars and using that material to read, in an intelligent and always interesting way, the work of three major British writers. Yet what is missing in the book is some sense of the political as well as ideological edge given the Oriental material by the British and French writers I am principally concerned with; in addition, unlike Shaffer I attempt to elucidate subsequent developments in academic as well as literary Orientalism that bear on the connection between British and French Orientalism on the one hand and the rise of an explicitly colonial-minded imperialism on the other. Then too, I wish to show how all these earlier matters are reproduced more or less in American Orientalism after the Second World War.

Nevertheless, there is a possibly misleading aspect to my study, where, aside from an occasional reference, I do not exhaustively discuss the German developments after the inaugural period dominated by Sacy. Any work that seeks to provide an understanding of academic Orientalism and pays little attention to scholars like Steinhil, Müller, Becker, Goldzher, Brockelmann, Nöldke⁶—to mention only a handful—needs to be reproached, and

I freely reproach myself. I particularly regret not taking more account of the great scientific prestige that accrued to German scholarship by the middle of the nineteenth century, whose neglect was made into a denunciation of insular British scholars by George Eliot. I have in mind Eliot's unforgettable portrait of Mr. Casaubon in *Middlemarch*. One reason Casaubon cannot finish his key to *All Mythologies* is, according to his young cousin Will Ladislaw, that he is unacquainted with German scholarship. For not only has Casaubon chosen a subject "as changing as chemistry; new discoveries are constantly making new points of view"; he is undertaking a job similar to a refutation of Paracelsus because "he is not an Orientalist, you know."⁷

Eliot was not wrong in implying that by about 1830, which is when *Middlemarch* is set, German scholarship had fully attained its European pre-eminence. Yet at no time in German scholarship during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century could a close partnership have developed between Orientalists and a protracted, sustained national interest in the Orient. There was nothing in Germany to correspond to the Anglo-French presence in India, the Levant, North Africa. Moreover, the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual, the way Egypt and Syria were actual for Chateaubriand, Lane, Lamartine, Burton,⁸ Disraeli, or Nerval. There is some significance in the fact that the two most renowned German works on the Orient, Goethe's *Westöstlicher Divan* and Friedrich Schlegel's *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*,⁹ were based respectively on a Rhine journey and on hours spent in Paris libraries. What German Oriental scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques gathered from the Orient by imperial Britain and France.

Yet what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture. This authority must in large part be the subject of any description of Orientalism, and it is so in this study. Even the name *Orientalism* suggests a serious, perhaps ponderous style of expertise: when I apply it to modern American social scientists (since they do not call themselves Orientalists, my use of the word is anomalous), it is to draw attention to the way Middle East experts can still draw on the vestiges of Orientalism's intellectual position in nineteenth-century Europe.

There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain

3. German philologist and Sanskrit scholar (1791–1867). Druze: a Muslim sect (founded in the early 11th c.) whose members live mainly in the mountains of Lebanon and southern Syria. Sasanid Persia: an empire (224–651) founded by Artaxshir I, who made Zoroastrianism the official religion. Jean-François Champollion (1790–1823), French founder of Egyptology, who deciphered the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone.

4. E. S. Shaffer, "*Kubla Khan*" and *The Fall of Jerusalem*.

5. German philologist and Biblical Criticism and Secular Literature, 1770–1880 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) [Said's note].

6. Robert Browning (1812–1889), English poet, SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772–1834), English Romantic poet and critic; his works include "Kubla Khan" (written 1797, published 1816).

7. Except for the Hungarian Goldzher (who also wrote in German), all those named are German.

Heymann Steinhil (1823–1899), philologist; Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), philologist and scholar of Hinduism and Buddhism; Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933), politician and scholar of Islamic civilization; Ignaz Goldzher Brockelmann (1868–1956), scholar of Semitic languages and Arabic literature; and Theodor Nöldke (1836–1930), scholar of Semitic languages and Arabic history.

7. George Eliot, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life* (1871–72) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), p. 164 [Said's note]. Paracelsus, pseudonym of Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493–1541), German physician and chemist who was obsessed with alchemy.

8. Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890), English explorer and linguist who made a pilgrimage to Mecca in disguise and translated *Arabian Nights* (1885–88), *Alphonse de Lamartine* (1790–1869), French Romantic poet, historian, and statesman.

9. On the *Language and Wisdom of India* (1808) by the German Romantic critic Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829). *West-östlicher Divan* (1819), a volume of lyric poems by the German poet and dramatist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832).

ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces. Above all, authority can, indeed must, be analyzed. All these attributes of authority apply to Orientalism, and much of what I do in this study is to describe both the historical authority in and the personal authorities of Orientalism.

My principal methodological devices for studying authority here are what can be called *strategic location*, which is a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and *strategic formation*, which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large. I use the notion of strategy simply to identify the problem every writer on the Orient has faced: how to get hold of it, how to approach it, how not to be defeated or overwhelmed by its sublimity, its scope, its awful dimensions. Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself vis-à-vis the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text—all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf. None of this takes place in the abstract, however. Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of the Homer!) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient *affiliates* itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself. The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences, and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore constitutes an analyzable formation—for example, that of philological studies, of anthologies of extracts from Oriental literature, of travel books, of Oriental fantasies—whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it strength and authority.

It is clear, I hope, that my concern with authority does not entail analysis of what lies hidden in the Orientalist text, but analysis rather of the text's surface, its exteriority to what it describes. I do not think that this ideal can be overemphasized. Orientalism is premised upon exteriority; that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. He is *never* concerned with the Orient except as the first cause of what he says. What he says and writes, by virtue of the fact that it is said or written, is meant to indicate that the Orientalist is outside the Orient, both as an existential and as a moral fact. The principal product of this exteriority is of course representation: as early as Aeschylus's play *The Persians* the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar (in Aeschylus's case, grieving Asiatic women). The dramatic immediacy of representation in *The Persians* obscures the fact that the audience is watching a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Orientalist has made into a symbol for the whole Orient. My analysis of the Orientalist text therefore places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invis-

1. Homer's *Iliad* (ca. 8th c. B.C.E.) takes place at Troy, in northwestern Asia Minor (present-day Turkey).

2. A tragedy originally staged in 472 B.C.E. that

able, for such representations as *representations*, not as "natural" depictions of the Orient. This evidence is found just as prominently in the so-called truthful text (histories, philological analyses, political treatises) as in the avowedly artistic (i.e., openly imaginative) text. The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *fante de mieu*,³ for the poor Orient. "Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden,"⁴ as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

Another reason for insisting upon exteriority is that I believe it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not "truth" but representations. It hardly needs to be demonstrated again that language itself is a highly organized and encoded system, which employs many devices to express, indicate, exchange messages and information, represent, and so forth. In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *presence*, or a representation. The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend, on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real thing* as "the Orient." Thus all of Orientalism stands forth and away from the Orient: that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, "there" in discourse about it. And these representations rely upon institutions; traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient.

The difference between representations of the Orient before the last third of the eighteenth century and those after it (that is, those belonging to what I call modern Orientalism) is that the range of representation expanded enormously in the later period. It is true that after William Jones and Anquetil-Duperron,⁵ and after Napoleon's Egyptian expedition, Europe came to know the Orient more scientifically, to live in it with greater authority and discipline than ever before. But what mattered to Europe was the expanded scope and the much greater refinement given its techniques for receiving the Orient. When around the turn of the eighteenth century the Orient definitively revealed the age of its languages—thus outdating Hebrew's divine pedigree—it was a group of Europeans who made the discovery, passed it on to other scholars, and preserved the discovery in the new science of Indo-European philology. A new powerful science for viewing the linguistic Orient was born, and with it, as Foucault has shown in *The Order of Things*,⁶ a whole web of related scientific interests. Similarly William Beckford, Byron,⁷ Goethe, and

3. For want of anything better (French).

4. "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (German). *Eighteenth Brumaire* was published in 1852. This quotation is also the epigraph of the entire book.

5. The reference is to Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805), French scholar of Oriental languages who translated the Avesta into French in 1771.

6. Published in 1966 (titled *Les Mots et les Choses*, or *The Words and the Things*).

7. George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824), English Romantic poet whose works include such "Eastern tales" as *The Giaour* (1814); Beckford

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Hugo restructured the Orient by their art and made its colors, lights, and people visible through their images, rhythms, and motifs. At most, the "real" Orient provoked a writer to his vision; it very rarely guided it.

Orientalism responded more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West. Thus the history of Orientalism has both an internal consistency and a highly articulated set of relationships to the dominant culture surrounding it. My analyses consequently try to show the field's shape and internal organization, its pioneers, patriarchal authorities, canonical texts, doxological ideas, exemplary figures, its followers, elaborators, and new authorities; I try also to explain how Orientalism borrowed and was frequently informed by "strong" ideas, doctrines, and trends ruling the culture. Thus there was (and is) a linguistic Orient, a Freudian Orient, a Spenglerian Orient, a Darwinian Orient,⁸ a racist Oriental—and so on. Yet never has there been such a thing as a pure, or unconditional, Orient; similarly, never has there been a nonmaterial form of Orientalism, much less something so innocent as an "idea" of the Orient. In this underlying conviction and in its ensuing methodological consequences do I differ from scholars who study the history of ideas. For the emphases and the executive form, above all the material effectiveness, of statements made by Orientalist discourse are possible in ways that any hermetic history of ideas tends completely to scant. Without those emphases and that material effectiveness Orientalism would be just another idea, whereas it is and was much more than that. Therefore I set out to examine not only scholarly works but also works of literature, political tracts, journalistic texts, travel books, religious and philological studies. In other words, my hybrid perspective is broadly historical and "anthropological," given that I believe all texts to be worldly and circumstantial in (of course) ways that vary from genre to genre, and from historical period to historical period.

Yet unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining impact of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism. The unity of the large ensemble of texts I analyze is due in part to the fact that they frequently refer to each other. Orientalism is after all a system for citing works and authors. Edward William Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* was read and cited by such diverse figures as Nerval, Flaubert, and Richard Burton. He was an authority whose use was an imperative for anyone writing or thinking about the Orient, not just about Egypt: when Nerval borrows passages verbatim from *Modern Egyptians*, it is to use Lane's authority to assist him in describing village scenes in Syria, not Egypt. Lane's authority and the opportunities provided for citing him discriminately as well as indiscriminately were there because Orientalism could give his text the kind of distributive currency that he acquired. There is no way, however, of understanding Lane's currency without also understanding the peculiar features of his text; this is equally true of Renan, Sacy,

Lamartine, Schlegel, and a group of other influential writers. Foucault believes that in general the individual text or author counts for very little; empirically, in the case of Orientalism (and perhaps nowhere else) I find this not to be so. Accordingly my analyses employ close textual readings whose goal is to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution.

Yet even though it includes an ample selection of writers, this book is still far from a complete history or general account of Orientalism. Of this failing I am very conscious. The fabric of as thick a discourse as Orientalism has survived and functioned in Western society because of its richness: all I have done is to describe parts of that fabric at certain moments, and merely to suggest the existence of a larger whole, detailed, interesting, dotted with fascinating figures, texts, and events. I have consoled myself with believing that this book is one installment of several, and hope there are scholars and critics who might want to write others. There is still a general essay to be written on imperialism and culture; other studies would go more deeply into the connection between Orientalism and pedagogy, or into Italian, Dutch, German, and Swiss Orientalism, or into the dynamic between scholarship and imaginative writing, or into the relationship between administrative ideas and intellectual discipline. Perhaps the most important task of all would be to undertake studies in contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative, perspective. But then one would have to rethink the whole complex problem of knowledge and power. These are all tasks left embarrassingly incomplete in this study.

The last, perhaps self-flattering, observation on method that I want to make here is that I have written this study with several audiences in mind. For students of literature and criticism, Orientalism offers a marvelous instance of the interrelations between society, history, and textuality; moreover, the cultural role played by the Orient in the West connects Orientalism with ideology, politics, and the logic of power, matters of relevance, I think, to the literary community. For contemporary students of the Orient, from university scholars to policymakers, I have written with two ends in mind: one, to present their intellectual genealogy to them in a way that has not been done; two, to criticize—with the hope of stirring discussion—the often unquestioned assumptions on which their work for the most part depends. For the general reader, this study deals with matters that always compel attention, all of them connected not only with Western conceptions and treatments of the Other but also with the singularly important role played by Western culture in what *Vico* called the world of nations. Lastly, for readers in the so-called Third World,¹ this study proposes itself as a step towards an understanding not so much of Western politics and of the non-Western world in those politics as of the *strength* of Western cultural discourse, a strength too often mistaken as merely decorative or "superstructural." My hope is to illustrate the formidable structure of cultural domination and, specifically for formerly colonized peoples, the dangers and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or upon others.

The three long chapters and twelve shorter units into which this book is

(1759–1844) English travel writer and art collector who also wrote the Gothic novel *Vathek*, an *Arabian Tale* (1786).

8. Expressing praise to God in established ways.

9. That is, an Orient as perceived through the lenses of the psychological theory of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Austrian founder of psychoanalysis; the historical theory of Oswald Spengler

(1880–1936), German historian who argued in *The Decline of the West* (1918–22) that cultures grow and decay in a natural cycle (the East having given way to the West), which he believed was itself in its last stage; and the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin (1809–1882), English naturalist.

1. The "underdeveloped" countries, many of them former colonies, now dominated by highly industrialized "first world" (largely Western) nations in a global economy.

divided are intended to facilitate exposition as much as possible. Chapter One, "The Scope of Orientalism," draws a large circle around all the dimensions of the subject, both in terms of historical time and experiences and in terms of philosophical and political themes. Chapter Two, "Orientalist Structures and Restructures," attempts to trace the development of modern Orientalism by a broadly chronological description, and also by the description of a set of devices common to the work of important poets, artists, and scholars. Chapter Three, "Orientalism Now," begins where its predecessor left off, at around 1870. This is the period of great colonial expansion into the Orient, and it culminates in World War II. The very last section of Chapter Three characterizes the shift from British and French to American hegemony; I attempt there finally to sketch the present intellectual and social realities of Orientalism in the United States.

3. *The personal dimension.* In the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci says: "The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory." The only available English translation inexplicably leaves Gramsci's comment at that, whereas in fact Gramsci's Italian text concludes by adding, "therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory."²

Much of the personal investment in this study derives from my awareness of being an "Oriental" as a child growing up in two British colonies. All of my education, in those colonies (Palestine and Egypt) and in the United States, has been Western, and yet that deep early awareness has persisted. In many ways my study of Orientalism has been an attempt to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals. This is why for me the Islamic Orient has had to be the center of attention: Whether what I have achieved is the inventory prescribed by Gramsci is not for me to judge; although I have felt it important to be conscious of trying to produce one. Along the way, as severely and as rationally as I have been able, I have tried to maintain a critical consciousness, as well as employing those instruments of historical, humanistic, and cultural research of which my education has made me the fortunate beneficiary. In none of that, however, have I ever lost hold of the cultural reality of, the personal involvement in having been constituted as, "an Oriental."

The historical circumstances making such a study possible are fairly complex, and I can only list them schematically here. Anyone resident in the West since the 1950s, particularly in the United States, will have lived through an era of extraordinary turbulence in the relations of East and West. No one will have failed to note how "East" has always signified danger and threat during this period, even as it has meant the traditional Orient as well as Russia. In the universities a growing establishment of area-studies programs and institutes has made the scholarly study of the Orient a branch of national policy. Public affairs in this country include a healthy interest in the Orient, as much for its strategic and economic importance as for its traditional exoticism. If the world has become immediately accessible to a

Western citizen living in the electronic age, the Orient too has drawn nearer to him, and is now less a myth perhaps than a place crisscrossed by Western, especially American, interests.

One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of "the mysterious Orient." This is nowhere more true than in the ways by which the Near East is grasped. Three things have contributed to making even the simplest perception of the Arabs and Islam into a highly politicized, almost raucous matter: one, the history of popular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West, which is immediately reflected in the history of Orientalism; two, the struggle between the Arabs and Israeli Zionism,³ and its effects upon American Jews as well as upon both the liberal culture and the population at large; three, the almost total absence of any cultural position making it possible either to identify with or dispassionately to discuss the Arabs or Islam. Furthermore, it hardly needs saying that because the Middle East is now so identified with Great Power politics, oil economics, and the simple-minded dichotomy of freedom-loving, democratic Israel and evil, totalitarian, and terrorist Arabs, the chances of anything like a clear view of what one talks about in talking about the Near East are depressingly small.

My own experiences of these matters are in part what made me write this book. The life of an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly in America, is disheartening. There exists here an almost unanimous consensus that politically he does not exist, and when it is allowed that he does, it is either as a nuisance or as an Oriental. The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny. It has made matters worse for him to remark that no person academically involved with the Near East—no Orientalist, that is—has ever in the United States culturally and politically identified himself wholeheartedly with the Arabs; certainly there have been identifications on some level, but they have never taken an "acceptable" form as has liberal American identification with Zionism, and all too frequently they have been radically flawed by their association either with discredited political and economic interests (oil-company and State-Department Arabists, for example) or with religion.

The nexus of knowledge and power creating "the Oriental" and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter. Yet it is an intellectual matter of some very obvious importance. I have been able to put to use my humanistic and political concerns for the analysis and description of a very worldly matter, the rise, development, and consolidation of Orientalism. Too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent; it has regularly seemed otherwise to me, and certainly my study of Orientalism has convinced me

2. Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks: Selections*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 324 [Said's note].

3. A political movement, originating in central and eastern Europe in the late 19th century, to reestablish and maintain a Jewish national state in Palestine.

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(and I hope will convince my literary colleagues) that society and literary culture can only be understood and studied together. In addition, and by an almost inescapable logic, I have found myself writing the history of a strange, secret sharer of Western anti-Semitism. That anti-Semitism and, as I have discussed it in its Islamic branch, Orientalism resemble each other very closely is a historical, cultural, and political truth that needs only to be mentioned to an Arab Palestinian for its irony to be perfectly understood. But what I should like also to have contributed here is a better understanding of the way cultural domination has operated. If this stimulates a new kind of dealing with the Orient, indeed if it eliminates the "Orient" and "Occident" altogether, then we shall have advanced a little in the process of what Raymond Williams has called the "unlearning" of "the inherent dominative mode."⁴

1978

4. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958), p. 376 (Salt's note).

MONIQUE WITTIG

b. 1935

When the French writer and radical lesbian theorist Monique Wittig concluded "The Straight Mind," her 1978 presentation at the Modern Language Association convention in New York, with the statement that "lesbians are not women," she was greeted with stunned silence. Not all feminists, or all lesbians, were ready to abandon a division between the sexes that has seemed so natural and inevitable. Most feminists, as Wittig notes in "One Is Not Born a Woman," "still believe that the basis of women's oppression is biological as well as historical." But for a lesbian like Wittig to refuse to be heterosexual means that she refuses to become a "man" or a "woman"—a central figure in the debate between those feminists who see "woman" as a transhistorical and eternal essence (see, for instance, HELENE CIXOUS) and those who believe that the idea of "woman" is a social construct (see, for instance, JUDITH BUTLER). Although Wittig is better known for her fiction than her theoretical writing, her fiction frequently blurs the distinction between literature and theory. Feminists have read her second novel, *Les Guerillères* (1969), which describes a postholocaust world where Amazon fighters attempt to create a new society, as an important and inspiring source of theory about language and women's writing.

Wittig was born in Alsace, France, and studied Oriental languages, literatures, history, and philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. She won the Prix Médicis for her first novel, *L'Opoponax* (1964). Her political views were shaped by the left-wing French intellectual milieu of Paris in the 1950s and 1960s; her participation in the May 1968 student-worker uprisings partly inspired *Les Guerillères*. Active in the French women's movement from its inception, Wittig was a co-founder of the *Mouvement de libération des femmes* (MLF, the Women's Liberation Movement), the founder of the *Féministes Révolutionnaires* in 1970, and an active member of *Gauches rouges* (Red Dykes) in 1971. In 1976 she relocated to the United States, though she continued to explore her materialist theories of lesbianism as a member of the Parisian

Marxist-feminist editorial collective *Questions Feministes* from 1977 until 1980. She received a Ph.D. in literary languages from the Sorbonne in 1986, and she has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Southern California, Yassar College, Duke University, New York University, and the University of Arizona. Wittig served from 1980 to 1991 on the advisory board of *Feminist Issues*, where she published many of her influential essays, including our selection, "One Is Not Born a Woman" (1981).

With a nod toward the best-known work of France's most famous feminist, SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, "One Is Not Born a Woman" rejects biological explanations for inequalities and differences between the sexes. The "immediate given," "the sensible given," even those physical features that appear to constitute the standard categories of sex or race are not, in fact, the result of direct physical perception, as we might intuit; rather they are "mythic constructions," which "reinterpreted physical features . . . through the network of relationships in which they are perceived." For this reason, Wittig is critical of feminist speculations about prehistorical matriarchies in which women were the creators of civilization (see, for instance, PAULA GUNN ALLEN). This approach, she argues, only further imprisons women within the category of sex. From a lesbian vantage point, matriarchy and patriarchy are equally oppressive because equally heterosexist.

All "naturalizing" explanations for the differences between men and women, according to Wittig, presume that the foundation of sex difference is heterosexuality, which she redefines as a tacit, unquestioned, and forced social contract. Because lesbians are not dependent on men, they cannot be "real" women; but because they lack economic, ideological, and political privilege, they cannot be men. Like ADRIENNE RICH, Wittig argues that the very existence of lesbians—a class of individuals who are "not-woman, not-man"—refutes the naturalized division between the sexes that supports institutionalized heterosexuality, thereby exposing the artificiality of the ruling sex/gender system. For this reason, "One Is Not Born a Woman" became a foundational text both for gay and lesbian studies and for queer theory in the 1990s.

The Marxist analysis of class offers, for Wittig, at least a starting point for a non-essentialist feminism in which socioeconomic relations, rather than biological necessity, provide the common ground for political struggle. The Marxist model, however, is not without problems of its own, and Wittig identifies two. First, Marx's analysis of the proletariat (industrial workers) as a class itself depends on an already naturalized sexual division of labor that obscures the class conflict between men and women (constituted not as natural categories but on the basis of their different relations to the economic foundations of society). The subordination of women cannot simply be subsumed under the class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; it must rather be understood as an independent, if related, historical development. Second, Marxism has failed to develop a model of subjectivity that might enable women and other oppressed groups to constitute themselves as individual historical subjects. While Marxism allows for class consciousness, it has rejected as idealist the "transcendental subject" of Western philosophy. Wittig sets feminism the difficult task of defining the individual subject of feminist struggle in materialist terms, though she is less clear about how to coordinate the various—sometimes conflicting—class identifications that women have (different races, social classes, nationalities). Just as Marxism occludes the different investments of men and women in economic class, feminism runs the risk of obscuring the different ways in which women of different races and classes experience gender. Yet despite its problems, Wittig's challenging essay remains a central document in the essentialism debate within feminism that has continued since the 1980s.

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