

Orientalism Study Guide

Orientalism by Edward Said

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Plot Summary

Orientalism by Edward W. Said is a critique of the study of the Orient and its ideology. Said examines the historical, cultural, and political views of the East that are held by the West, and examines how they developed and where they came from. He basically traces the various views and perceptions back to the colonial period of British and European domination in the Middle East. During this period, the United States was not yet a world power and didn't enter into anything in the East yet. The views and perceptions that came into being were basically the result of the British and French. The British had colonies in the East at this time; the French did not but were trying to acquire some.

The beginning of the study of Orientalism is traced to the early eighteenth century and focused on language. This early study consisted of translating works from the Oriental languages into European languages. The colonial rulers could not rule properly, it was believed, without some knowledge of the people they ruled. They thought they could acquire this knowledge from translating various works from the native language into their own. The Orient existed to be studied and that studying was done by Westerners who believed themselves to be superior to the "others", which is how they described the East. They were basically the opposite of the East and considered to be active while the Orient was considered to be passive. The Orient existed to be ruled and dominated.

The Orientalist scholars did not distinguish among the countries of the region. The term "Oriental" was used to describe the Middle East and Near East and Far East. All of these different cultures were basically lumped into one for the purposes of study. The reason for the study was political also. The focus is on language and literature and the study in the area of philology where the already written texts and other works were translated as a means of studying the culture. The misrepresentations of the Orient and the various aspects of the Orient led to confusion and misinterpretation by the scholars and politicians.

Said points out the errors in the ways of these early Orientalists. He questions the claim that the Orient was biologically inferior to the European and thus required domination. Said wants the study to focus on the human experience of the cultures and societies. He points out the errors in many of the earlier studies. The Orientalists, and therefore the Europeans, did not understand the Muslim or Oriental and were afraid, based on their fears. Their studies propagated these fears and persisted until a certain level of understanding was reached. This occurred after World War I when the study of the Orient shifted from Europe to the United States and became part of the area studies of various social science departments at universities. The Orient should be viewed for itself and its own cultures and societies and not viewed in the concept of Western perspective. Said's perspective basically led to a difference in the way the Orient was approached in studies, which led the field into a more modern approach.



Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Knowing the Oriental

Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Knowing the Oriental Summary and Analysis

The book opens with a comment by Arthur James Balfour from June 13, 1910 on dealing with the problems in Egypt. Questioning the British role in Egypt, he discusses before the House of Commons how the problems are different than dealing with problems closer to home. There is apparently some dissension in the House of Commons as to what exactly the British role is. Was it necessary for the British to be in Egypt? Balfour uses the terms Oriental in describing the people of Egypt as he tries to justify the British occupation of Egypt and comments that none of the Oriental peoples have ever had their own government - they have always been dominated by despots. He doesn't consider letting the Egyptian speak for himself. As much as he admires the greatness of the Orientals, he continues to think they have to be represented by colonial occupation.

It is Balfour's concept of British supremacy based on the British knowledge of Egypt that is used to justify the occupation. "Balfour nowhere denies British superiority an Egyptian inferiority; he takes them for granted as he describes the consequences of knowledge" (Chap. 1, p. 32). Balfour comes across as implying that the British know what is best for the Egyptians, better than the Egyptians themselves know what is best for them. The two themes that dominate here are knowledge and power. Balfour and the British know what is best for the Egyptians and have the power to impose it on them. The supremacy comes from the knowledge of the civilization from its beginning and following it through to its end. This supremacy is why Balfour does not even question the British superiority and the Egyptian inferiority. He assumes it is so just as he assumes that the Egyptians think that it is good for them to be occupied by a colonial power. The British are doing the Egyptians good by occupying their country and dominating them. The Egyptian should want and be thankful for the British occupations.

When the right to occupy and rule are questioned by Parliament, then the British authority to rule is being undermined. The British, after all, know and understand the Egyptian because they know their history. This brand of supremacy and logic doesn't really make sense, to feel that one's government has the right to dominate a people just because they know their history, yet this is the logic that was used in the Orient. The Oriental race that the British didn't understand was subjugated to their dominance because of British superiority. Balfour felt that he had a right to speak for the Egyptian.

Lord Cromer was also vocal about the Orientals and of what he had to deal with in India and then for twenty-five years in Egypt. Cromer believes that he has used all of the available information in governing Egypt and that he did a good job. The Orientals were, to Cromer, the people he ruled over in British territories. He sees them as being the



opposite of the European in their thinking and actions. Cromer, like Balfour, accepts a demarcation between East and West and both believe that the Orient is something to be studied and ruled. Cromer thinks he did a good job ruling the Orient during his tenure. His view, like Balfour's, is not the result of any feelings of smugness or personal superiority; rather, it is just an indication of the thinking of the time.

Cromer is speaking of his time in India and Egypt and he refers to the Orientals as subject races. Cromer, like Balfour, see the situation as one in which the knowledge of the subject race has given him the power to dominate. The act of domination then requires more knowledge to make profitable management possible. The proper method is to understand the limitations of the people they rule and to find a way to strengthen the bond between the ruler and the ruled. Cromer considered himself to be very knowledgeable because he had served in both India and Egypt.

The Oriental is contained by a dominating framework. Thus, Orientalism then becomes defined as that mechanism that rules, imprisons, studies, judges, etc. This concept of Orientalism then evolved and developed over time. This is the framework of thinking that both Balfour and Cromer inherited and had to function in. Both believed that they had done a good job, given the situation and Cromer's contempt for the Orientals, which is evident in his two-volume work called *Modern Egypt*, where he makes some very unkind comments about them. The Orientals are different than the Europeans. They live differently within their own culture and society and much of this is more or less created for them by the knowledge of the Orient that is acquired by the Westerner.

During this period the two great world powers are the British and the French. These two countries dominated a large part of the Earth, and this gave Balfour and Cromer the power and the authority to make the kinds of comments that they made. The nineteenth century was the period of European expansion, with the British and the French being the strongest. They viewed the Orient, the area that is now the Middle East, as problematic.

The study of the Orient consisted of translating various works from their native Oriental language into a Western language so others could study the work. Knowledge of the Orient was increased during the rule of Napoleon, who was very interested in the Orient even though the French had no colonies there. It became very prestigious in the nineteenth century to be an Orientalist, as many societies promoting the study of Orientalism sprung up around Europe. The Orientalists were more or less constrained in what they could say and do, because thinking was confined to the differences existing between the East and the West, what was strange and what was familiar. The result of the approach is to polarize the thinking as the Easterner becomes more Eastern and the Westerner becomes more Western.

Henry Kissinger's views on dealing with other nations and cultures are discussed. There must be a polarity between the United States and the rest of the world. Kissinger sees foreign policy in terms of what is called binary opposition. There are two opposing styles, called prophetic and political, and he views the world as consisting of two groups: developed and developing nations. These two styles feed off of each other and



Kissinger feels that the United States can more easily deal with the developing nations than with the developed nations. Kissinger also sees the difference in cultures causing a problem area for the West and that the West tries to dominate and control due to its superior knowledge.



Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental

Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Imaginative Geography and Its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental Summary and Analysis

Orientalism is viewed as a field of study almost like a university has departments that represent fields of study. This means that there are things within Orientalism that some people want to study and these things can be geography, culture, and language. These subjects made Orientalism popular as an academic discipline. This came about as a result of the Council of Vienne in 1312, which established a series of chairs in various subjects at numerous universities. This basically began the area of Orientalism as an area of intellectual and academic study. The Orient became an area that was acceptable to study.

Orientalism constituted a broad and encompassing area of study, much broader than most other areas. Islamic law, Chinese dialects, Indian culture, and Egyptian history were all a part of the broad field called Orientalism. It contained all things Oriental. An opposing field called Occidentalism developed, deepening the "us" and "them" mentality of the time. What was not European but Eastern was contained in the field called Orientalism. What was not Oriental but European or Western was contained in the area called Occidentalism. This is basically the description of Orientalism as an academic field of study. Most Orientalists studied languages.

A scholar names Jules Mohl created a record of every European scholar who did any work that in any way touched upon Orientalism during the years 1840 to 1867. Mohl recorded everything of interest that took place in the field of Orientalism during this period of time, as this period resulted in increased interest in the Orient and in increased writing on the Orient. The scope of Orientalism broadened. At this point in time, Paris was the center of the study of Orientalism. The attitude that set up a difference between Orientals and Europeans exists only in people's minds. This is the "our" and "theirs" mentality that designates a difference between the two groups, and they both stake out claims on their own space. The lines drawn here are arbitrary, and the "us" group is the only group that has to draw the lines. It doesn't matter if the "them" group acknowledges or accepts the lines, and they don't have to make lines of their own. The lines of distinction exist once the "us" group makes them. Modern Orientalists don't often refer to themselves as such. This changed in the years following World War II.



"What matters here is that Asia speaks through and by virtue of the European imagination, which is depicted as victorious over Asia, that hostile "other" world beyond the seas" (Chap. 1, p. 56). The ancient dramas and literature portray Europe as powerful and educated, while Asia is portrayed as the opposite. These traits are carried through the literature of the time. Both areas have set themselves off from the other since ancient times. Another aspect of this early literature is the notion that the Orient is dangerous. The Orient is experienced differently than the West is, and this has to do with things like the Crusades, Marco Polo, and Islam. Marco Polo's quest for a trade route brought the two cultures into conflict as Christianity came into contact with Islam. This is the way in which the Orient is experienced during this time, and this is what shaped the perception of the Orient.

The difference between East and West grows with time. Islam is viewed as a fraudulent form of Christianity. This is the way Islam appears to Westerners, with Mohammed being a fraudulent Jesus Christ. As Islam spread across the area, Europe reacted with awe and fear and did nothing to stop the spread. This was the growth of the Ottoman Empire that lasted until the end of the seventeenth century. The Turkish domination of the Middle East lasted until the end of World War I when the Arab revolt took place, with the assistance of the British and the French, but this was to come later.

The Christian opinion of Islam was shaped by the poetry and arts of the time, as well as the superstitions and whatever was learned about the religion and the people. The Europeans feared Islam because they didn't understand it. They viewed it as a danger to Christianity and Western civilization. This situation is studied by R.W. Southern, who concluded that the West did not acquire a body of knowledge about Islam and the East; the West just refines its ignorance of the region. The West never took the time or interest to learn about Islam or what it stood for, nor tried to understand the cultures of the Middle East. The field of Orientalism didn't expand its knowledge or develop its scope; it just redefined its misconceptions. In the fourteenth century, it is believed that Islam is a heretical version of Christianity and that Arabia is a place for heretics. The Orient is almost viewed as something that is attached to Europe but is on the fringes of Europe.

After Southern, the work of Barthelemy d'Herbelot is credited with expanding the knowledge of Islam and the East. D'Herbelot's work is based on art, theology, history, geography, and science, and remains the standard reference until the nineteenth century. His division of history into two periods, the pre and postdiluvian periods, and two types, the sacred and the profane, allows D'Herbelot to discuss the Islamic history in detail and to look at the different periods. "All the *Bibliothèque orientale* did was represent the Orient more fully and more clearly; what may have been a loose collection of randomly acquired facts concerning vaguely Levantine history, Biblical imagery, Islamic culture, place names, and so on were transformed into a rational Oriental panorama, from A to Z" (Chap. 1, p. 65).

Mohammed is made a non-threatening character of the Orient. This kind of thing is referred to as an image of the Orient, which means that they stand for large, diffuse entities. The didactic quality cannot be detached for the rest of the experience. The



printed page is bringing the reader an ordered judgement of the material. The reader can't reach the Orient without passing through the Orientalist and his grids and codes. When one is looking for information on the Orient, one looks to the Orientalist, not to Westerners. A three-way relationship thus develops between the Orient, the Orientalist, and the Western user of the Orient. Orientalism is outside of Western society. Truth now depends on learning and judgement and not on the material. The corrections placed on the raw reality are what change it into units of knowledge.

Most cultures perceive other cultures in terms of what they ought to be, not in terms of what they are, and this is true of Europe's perception of the Orient. The Orientalist is always trying to turn one thing into something else. This is the process of conversion that is taught and that has its own following in terms of traditions, periodicals, vocabulary, etc. It is pointed out that even Dante mentions Mohammed as Maometto, and most Westerners consider Mohammed to be an imposter of Jesus Christ. The subject of Orientalism is dubbed a form of radical realism.



Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Projects

Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Projects Summary and Analysis

This section examines the operational aspects of Orientalism and how wrong it can be. The line drawn between the East and the West had profound effects upon Europe even though it was the West that was encroaching on the East and not the opposite. The term Orientalism is the term used to designate the Western approach to the East as well as the collection of thoughts, dreams, and images the West has of the East. Both were forms of Western encroachment upon the East.

From the early days, Islam was close to Christianity both geographically and culturally. Islamic lands were close to Biblical lands, and even in the 1500's, Islam threatened European Christianity. The term Orient was taken to mean the Islamic world until about the eighteenth century. India was not viewed in the same vein as the Islamic states were. India was never seen as a threat to Europe as Islam was. The European views toward Islam and the East began to change in the days of Napoleon, who conducted campaigns in Egypt. This activity began to lift the veil of mystery from the East as more about the Islam and the Orient became known.

Prior to this time, the only attempts to do this had been by Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron who tried to balance Christianity and Brahmanism with Jansenism. He presented the Orient to Europe in terms of its languages, civilizations, and texts. He was succeeded by William Jones, who was a lawyer by practice. The Indians had received home rule seven years before Jones arrived, and Jones helped in some of the Sanskrit translations.

Napoleon had always been attracted to the Orient and wanted to take Egypt. He had studied the Orient in his youth and was well-read before he arrived there. He also used scholars to manage his dealings with the locals. Napoleon eventually won over the Moslems in Egypt. Egypt is basically the center of the continents when it comes to Africa, Asia and Europe. The view changed to viewing Oriental history as world history. After Napoleon, the Orient was experienced differently and in more modern terms. Attitudes changed during the Suez Canal crisis of 1956.

"To the West, Asia had once represented silent distance and alienation; Islam was militant hostility to European Christianity. To overcome such redoubtable constants the Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges who disinterred forgotten languages, histories, races, and cultures in order to posit them - beyond the modern Oriental's ken - as the true classical Orient that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient. The obscurity faded to

be replaced by hothouse entities; the Orient was a scholar's word, signifying what modern Europe had recently made of the still peculiar East" (Chap. 1, p. 91-92).



Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Crisis

Part 1, The Scope of Orientalism: Crisis Summary and Analysis

A textual attitude is what developed regarding Orientalism and there are two factors that contributed to it. First of all, people are confronting a subject that is unknown and threatening. People then fall back on what they have read about the subject. A second reason has to do with the fact that it appears to be successful. In this situation, reality is determined by what the reader has read. It is basically the books that made the Orient possible. The textual approach was put into practice with Orientalism.

The views of Orientalism, which had begun to change in the late 1800s, continued to change during the 1900s. Orientalism came to have two traits known: first, the linguistic importance of the Orient to Europe and the West led to a scientific self-consciousness, and second, that there would always be a tendency for people to try to divide, subdivide, and redivide the subject of Orientalism because the Orient itself doesn't change. It is during the 1900s that the Europeans came to know the Orient as their views toward Islam changed. There is nothing in any of the texts about Islam that can explain what has occurred in the Middle Eastern countries during the twentieth century since Partition.

The Orient gained its political independence from the West by the 1950s, and confronted with a growing Third World, the Orient now faced a challenge. It could go on as always, as if nothing had happened, or it could try to adapt its old ways to the new. This is hard for the Orientalist who thinks that nothing ever changes. The third alternative was the most unpopular as it was doing away with Orientalism altogether, which is why it wasn't even considered.



Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Redrawn Frontiers, Redefined Issues, Secularized Religion

Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Redrawn Frontiers, Redefined Issues, Secularized Religion Summary and Analysis

Many Europeans looked to the East as a form of regeneration and rejuvenation of their own European society. Many viewed a study of India as a way to rid their own culture of its materialism. These views are presented in the works of Gustave Flaubert who explains the situation in terms of two clerks, both members of the bourgeoisie, one of which inherits money that allows them to retire their jobs. The clerks' names are Bouvard and Pecuchet. Flaubert has them moving through the different areas of learning, since they are just doing whatever they want and living on their inheritance. They have less than successful results in their endeavors. The satire is rather humorous as the two try different things, having global and reconstructive visions. Revisionism is a part of the romantic era.

At this time it was thought that the materialism and mechanism of the European culture could be broken by a study of India and Indian culture. Flaubert is the one who drew attention to the human flaw in this regeneration of Europe by India project.

During this period the Orient was being expanded beyond the Islamic. This was due to Europe's involvement in exploring the rest of the world. There was more travel and exploration with other civilizations as well as more scientific reporting and quests for utopias. This was the era of the various India companies that were active in various parts of the world. A major element of the eighteenth century that was leading the way to modern Orientalism in what is called historicism, or the idea that all cultures are bound by a spirit or a national idea.

Four elements are described to define the institutional and intellectual foundations on which Orientalism depend. These are expansion, historical confrontation, sympathy, and classification. There could be no Orientalism without these four elements because before this, Islam and the East were judged in terms of Western standards. Those studying the Orient had to bring it into modern times with its own language and mores, and these four elements led to the development of modern Orientalism. The greater the encroachment on the Orient in the 1800s, the greater the Orient's gain in public confidence. Orientalism became a field in its own right with its own experts. "The more Europe encroached upon the Orient during the nineteenth century, the more Orientalism gained in public confidence. Yet if this gain coincided with a loss in originality, we should

not be entirely surprised, since its mode, from the beginning, was reconstruction and repetition" (Chap. 2, p. 122).



Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan: Rational Anthropology and Philological Laboratory

Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan: Rational Anthropology and Philological Laboratory Summary and Analysis

The nineteenth century study of Orientalism is carried on by Silvestre de Sacy, who is considered to be the founder of modern Orientalism. Sacy was born in 1757 and schooled at a Benedictine abbey where he learned Arabic, Syriac, Chaldean, and Hebrew. He went on to teach languages and became a professor at the College de France and did a lot of translations for official purposes. His work is considered to be scholarly because it is the first that is based on a methodology that draws a link between scholarship and public policy. Sacy's work is a three volume compendium on Orientalism, and he also has other work on Arab grammar and writings as well as other pieces.

Sacy is considered the father of modern Orientalism since he presented a system of organized texts and practices. Sacy's writing is directed toward students, and his first student was his son. The other characteristic of Sacy's writing is the intentional repetition. The author believes that no matter how difficult the subject is, it can be made clear and capable of being understood by its method of presentation, and Sacy's method is to enclose himself with his student and to seal out the rest of the world. Because of this, Sacy was selected to work on the *tableau generale* with a team of writers. This was carried out under Napoleon's reign. This, and the *tableau historique*, were an attempt to classify human knowledge, and they mark the first time that any such attempt was made.

In addition to the above, there is also Sacy's theory of fragments which is basically the belief that the Orient must be presented in a series of pieces. There is no such thing as taking a body of work or a concept in its entirety. The Orient is presented by a series of fragments, and this was the popular approach to Orientalism that prevailed in Europe. The pieces are fed to the student, making it unnecessary for the student to have to read a huge amount of works. The work of Sacy greatly affected Orientalism, as every major entity in the nineteenth century stems from Sacy.

Sacy is followed by Ernest Renan, who sees Orientalism in terms of philology, which is the study of literature. The science of philology results in languages being classified into

families. Sanskrit became recognized as an entity in its own right as the language of India. He studied the Semitic and introduced the study of Semitic languages into Orientalism. The links made are important for Renan, but resulted in him basically denying the culture the right to generate itself, except within the realm of philology.

Renan basically developed Orientalism into a cohesive body of knowledge. He solidified and systematized its insights and provided a basis for its worldly and intellectual institutions. He adapted Orientalism to the field of philology since he was a philologist before he became interested in the area of Orientalism. Philology is seen by Renan as being linked to the natural sciences and as being a way of providing a view of the system of all things and how they all fit together. To Renan, philology is the most difficult and at the same time the most precise of all disciplines. As the nineteenth century begins, philology is being credited with leading to the development of comparative grammar and the classification of languages into families. This results in the rejection of the divine origin of languages which are what had been believed up until this time. He believes that the Semitic languages are not live languages.



Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Oriental Residence and Scholarship: the Requirements of Lexicography and Imagination

Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Oriental Residence and Scholarship: the Requirements of Lexicography and Imagination Summary and Analysis

Renan is considered to have taken a rather scientific approach to Orientalism in that the cultural generalizations are now becoming scientific statements. Sacy and Renan made Orientalism a modern topic. "What we can say is that the two work together in support of each other. What Renan and Sacy tried to do was to reduce the Orient to a kind of human flatness, which exposed its characteristics easily to scrutiny and removed from it its complicating humanity. In Renan's case, the legitimacy of his efforts was provided by philology, whose ideological tenets encourage the reduction of a language to its roots; thereafter, the philologist finds it possible to connect those linguistic roots, as Renan and others did, to race, mind, character, and temperament at their roots" (Chap. 2, p. 149-150).

The Orient is still viewed as being unequal to Europe. The Orient and Europe are still being balanced against each other in terms of opposites, such as polytheism versus monotheism. It is from this inequality that the profession of Orientalism grew as they piecemealed together pieces of the Orient. This is the job of the Orientalist.

Caussin de Perceval is another Orientalist who authored a three volume study. At this time, Mohammed is portrayed in different ways by different scholars. Caussin portrays him as central to the history of Islam and as the reason that the Arabs are cohesive as a people. Mohammed made the Arabs a people through the political instruments of Islam, not through any spiritual instrument. He views Islam as more political than spiritual. Mohammed is viewed as a man and an appropriate part of Islam. Carlyle portrays Mohammed as a man and the author of the book called the *Koran*, and not as a legend. The purpose of both authors is to show that the Orient should not be a cause of alarm since the European is so superior to the Oriental: this is the inequality doctrine again. Both are trying to show the Europeans that they do not have to fear Islam or Orientalism.

Karl Marx also looked briefly at the economics system of Asia when he examined the role of British rule in India. He believes that this led to a social revolution due to the human depredation it introduced into the system. There was the element of torture and



cruelty that led to the depredation. It is the torture and the torment of the Oriental that leads to social revolution that will at the same time both destroy and regenerate the Asian society.

This period saw several other contributions to the philology of Orientalism. Living in the Orient and travel there by Europeans led to knowledge based on personal experience by several writers. This is the first category of consciousness of this period as the writers used their residency there as a form of scientific observation. The second classification is similar to the first but the writer doesn't lose his individual consciousness and style to the definitions of the Orientalists. The third classification is a trip to the Orient based on an urgent need by the writer. Each of these three categories is still European in its approach even though many of the authors lived among the natives and practiced their customs.

Another writer of the time is Edward William Lane, who wrote *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, and tries to obtain impartial impersonality among the three types mentioned above. His book establishes him as an authority on Orientalism and his work becomes institutionalized with it. Lane lived among the Egyptians as one of them and adopted their customs and habits, which some say means that he lost his objectivity. He has a friend who takes him into a mosque and helps him pass himself off as a Muslim. Lane tries to make Egypt very visible for his readers.



Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Pilgrims and Pilgrimages, British and French

Part 2, Orientalist Structures and Restructures: Pilgrims and Pilgrimages, British and French Summary and Analysis

Westerners reduce Oriental life into a series of detailed items when they write and study them and try to portray them in Western prose. They try to base their work on their actual experiences while they are in residence in the Orient. All of the work of the time takes its shape from the author traveling to the Orient. Many of the threats perceived have to do with sex and hygiene. All of these are perceived as threats by the West whether they were actual threats or not.

At this time in the nineteenth century, the Orient consisted of India for the British subject because Indian was a British possession. For the Frenchmen, there were no Oriental possessions, only a string of French defeats from the time of the Crusades to the time of Napoleon. Most of the French travelers to the Orient were interested in the Crusades or the Bible. They researched the Dead Sea, Phoenicia, and Judea but they had no colonies in the Orient, which put them in a different position than the British were in. They had presence in the region as the British did.

"Here we notice how all the pilgrims, but especially the French ones, exploit the Orient in their work so as in some urgent way to justify their existential vocation. Only when there is some additional cognitive purpose in writing about the Orient does the outpouring of self seem more under control" (Chapter , pg. 170). They are not the conquerors of the Orient even though some of them dream of France being so. Chateaubriand fancies Napoleon as the last of the pilgrims to make the trip to the Orient. Even though there were some semblances of European civilization in the Orient, most of it was Oriental. Chateaubriand believes that the Orientals, especially the Muslims, must be taught about liberty. In actuality, this liberty is nothing but a form of his own release from the Orient.

The British and the French have two different views. Sacy, Lane and Chateaubriand were all basically rewritten by those who followed them. Those who follow them don't necessarily experience the Orient the way the earlier writers did and it doesn't bother them. The Orient is basically a place that the European has the right to dominate and rule over, according to Lamartine. Flaubert's work on the Orient was very complete, as was his vision of the Orient. Flaubert is looking for the lively colorful Orient. Flaubert is fascinated by Oriental women and their self-sufficiency because he makes an association between the Orient and sex. The Orient is a place to find sexual

experiences that could not be had in Europe. In spite of everything, Flaubert refuses to become a part of what he sees. His point of view is that the more you concentrate on the Orient, the less you grasp of it as the pieces go together by themselves.

By 1850 every major European university had an Oriental Studies department with developed curriculums in one or more area of studies. This meant travel and study grants and publications. This led to more attention being paid to the Orient by the world powers. Travel books and other books on the Orient were very popular.



Part 3, Orientalism Now: Latent and Manifest Orientalism

Part 3, Orientalism Now: Latent and Manifest Orientalism Summary and Analysis

Said restates his purpose in the book and in the previous chapter in the opening page to the third chapter. His purpose in the first chapter was to define the scope of thought and action meant by the word Orientalism. He used the British and French experiences to help define this term and to explain the confrontation of Westerners with the Orient. In the second chapter, Said was interested in defining modern Orientalism. Here he discussed various authors and their works. "My principal operating assumptions were - and continue to be - that fields of learning, as much as the works of even the most eccentric artist, are constrained and acted upon by society, by cultural traditions, by worldly circumstance, and by stabilizing influences like schools, libraries, and governments; that both learned and imaginative writing are never free, but are limited in their imagery, assumptions, and intentions; and finally, that the advances made by a 'science' like Orientalism in its academic form are less objectively true than we often like to think" (Chap. 3, pp. 201-202). Said says that he is trying to find and define what makes Orientalism a coherent subject matter.

Said says that most people assume that latter generations of scholars improve on the work of earlier generations of scholars and that this is how learning takes place and the discipline moves forward. What has taken place is that the authors have built up the number of works in the field and formulated the perspectives and ideological biases that are unique and suited to the field. The Orient is presented by a system of representations in Orientalism and this is the positive doctrine that the West has concerning the Orient. The author says that he realizes that many of his assumptions are controversial as most people assume that learning moves forwards and gets better as time goes on.

Said feels that Orientalism is the result of political activities and forces. He calls it a school of interpretation in which the Orient is based on civilization, people, and localities. The nineteenth century marked a period when there was a great deal more travel from West to East than from East to West. Both were studying the culture of the other even though there were various agencies and institutions of the West that have no counterpart in the East. Islam dominated both the East and the West during the period from the eighth to the sixteenth century. The power then shifted westward until the late twentieth century, then shifted East again.

Said makes a distinction between what he calls latent Orientalism and manifest Orientalism. He calls latent Orientalism an unconscious positivity while he refers to manifest Orientalism as views that have been given about Oriental society, literature, language, history, and sociology. The material covered in Chapter Two falls into the



realm of manifest Orientalism where change occurs. The durability and stability factor is found in latent Orientalism. Most of the differences are in personal style and not in content. All writers have seen the Orient as something that needed attention.

Racial inequality is factor in the study of the Orient, especially when they tried to give it a biological basis. To this they added Darwinism, in that the European-Aryan race was considered to be advanced and the Oriental-African race was considered to be backward. The Orientals weren't viewed as people, but as problems to be solved or taken over. In addition to this, latent Orientalism favored and encouraged the male conception of the world and their views of women as a part of the male power fantasy. The Oriental, when given a choice between the English or the French system, will choose the French system because it is more practical and easier to work with. It makes more sense to the Egyptian.

According to Cromer, there were certain factors that played into the relationship between the East and the British. First of all, the British were not going to give up their claims on the East. The second factor had to do with the fact that inter-marriage between the British and Easterners was not considered to be desirable. The third factor had to do with the fact that the British presence in the East had a lasting effect on Oriental society. By the early 1900s, Oriental studies departments were being considered to be a necessity. Many parts of the Middle East and Orient were parts of the British Empire so the British were in these places.

During the period of the early twentieth century, there were two ways in which Orientalism basically delivered the Orient to the West. The first way was by modern learning. The universities, professionals, and their various societies and organizations shaped what Said calls latent Orientalism. Everything was focused on the self-preservation of latent Orientalism. The Orientalism remained outside of the Orient which remained outside of European society. Tension eventually developed between this latent Orientalism and the manifest Orientalism of the travelers, statesmen, and others, which led to a convergence between the two. An example of this is the role of the Orientalist as a government advisor. This was evident in the aftermath of World War I when the Ottoman Empire was done away with.

One of these Orientalists was T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia. Lawrence and other people of this genre were not academics. They were the ones who benefited from academic study of the Orient. Britain was active in the Orient with their colonies and possessions. The French did not have any colonies there, although they were influential in Syria.



Part 3, Orientalism Now: Style, Expertise, Vision: Orientalism's Worldliness

Part 3, Orientalism Now: Style, Expertise, Vision: Orientalism's Worldliness Summary and Analysis

The British and other Europeans were set apart from the Orientals by skin color. The Egyptians and other Arabs, Africans, and Indians were darker in color than the Europeans. Being white in the colonies meant acting and speaking in a certain way, according to certain rules and customs. They got themselves into a "theirs" and "ours" kind of mentality, where "theirs" became a function of "ours". Everything that was done was done in a way that kept the Oriental subservient to the White and allowed the White man to study the Oriental.

The state of the Arab is primitive in definition and in reality. The Orientalists believe that the Orientals are biologically inferior to the Europeans. If their language is different, then so too are the biological factors. It was believed that these differences between the races were distinctive and that these were the boundaries on which races, nations, and civilizations were built.

"On the one hand, there was a collection of people living in the present; on the other hand, these people - as the subject of study - became 'the Egyptians,' 'the Muslims,' or 'the Orientals.' Only the scholar could see, and manipulate, the discrepancy between the two levels. The tendency of the former was always towards greater variety, yet this variety was always being restrained, compressed downwards and backwards to the radical terminal of the generality. Every modern, native instance of behavior became an effusion to be sent back to the original terminal, which was strengthened in the process. This kind of 'dispatching' was precisely the discipline of Orientalism" (Chap. 3, p. 234). To the white man, the Muslim clothes himself in religious dress and conducts his social and political life in these terms. The Westerner views this as a form of cover.

T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, is also an Orientalist. He represents the Orient in terms of disenchantment and mourning. He portrays the Arab revolt in terms of his experiences during the Arab revolt and this becomes the history of the revolt. Barres, who writes after Lawrence, views the Arabs as people who live and evolve by their own standards. They have a society steeped in family traditions. Both authors have different views. In Lawrence's framework, the Oriental needs the white man for guidance; in spite of this, there is less discrimination by the British than by the French.

There is a shift in Orientalism from the academic to what Said calls the instrumental. The Orientalist's view of himself has changed. He no longer sees himself as belong to



some elite group that has its own traditions and rituals. After World War I there was a difference in the relationship between the Orient and the West as the various Oriental countries began to demand independence. This caused a change in the relationship between East and West. The problem was the European view of the Orient. Orientalism is connected with politics and the intervention of the West cannot be denied as the West lets the Orient think it is an equal in the marketplace. For this the East suffers, and in doing so, threatens Europe.



Part 3, Orientalism Now: Modern Anglo-French Orientalism in Fullest Flower

Part 3, Orientalism Now: Modern Anglo-French Orientalism in Fullest Flower Summary and Analysis

Until the World War II years, the Orientalist was considered a generalist who dealt in summational statements. By making a statement about one aspect of the Orient, the Orientalist was commenting on the Orient as a whole. The difference between the East and the West is confirmed by Islamic law. The Orient is entrusted to the Western keeper who dominates it. According to 1931 author Gibb, the Orient needs to be studied since it makes people more aware of the issues that are important in the study of culture. He views the Orient as more challenging in his time than in earlier times as the West is watching its influence over the colonies wane. Orientalists try to understand the Oriental culture as a whole as it continues.

The Islamic Orientalists are not a part of Islam. They are estranged from it and because of this feel that they are superior to European culture. Islam was considered as representative of the entire Orient, and it was a factor to fear since it represented the opposite to Christianity. These beliefs resulted in a cultural crisis during the years between the first and second world wars. This meant that Orientalism didn't develop in the same way as other disciplines did since its cultural alienation was preserved. The existence of new data did not result in revisions to the body of Orientalism as it did in other disciplines. They somehow gave the existing abstractions validity since they all assumed that Islam worked in the manner in which the Orientalists claimed it did.

Islamic Orientalism remained aloof and separate from other religions. It was always assumed that modern Islam would be nothing more than a rehash of the old version of Islam and there was nothing that changed this view. This led to a sharpening of the differences between the Orient and the West. Islam remains somewhat backwards in its ideology in that it insulates itself from developments in other areas. The Islamic Orientalist made it clear that he was opposed to change, to working and to understanding a relationship between the East and the West and to the transition into modernity of its own men and women. The Islamic Orientalists want to remain separate and apart from the West to prevent the East from becoming like the West. Gibb claimed to be speaking for the natives when he expressed these views.

There were two different schools of thought as portrayed by Gibb and Massignon. These two authors represented British and French Orientalism, respectively. Massignon and the French emphasized the vital forces that identified and shaped Eastern culture. Massignon became a voice in Islamic-French relations and politics and believed that scholarship alone was not enough to penetrate the world of Islam. The starting point for Massignon is the existence of the three Abrahamic religions. Islam is the one of these, the religion of Ishmael and the religion of resistance and mysticism. The other



two are Christianity and Judaism. This is the escape of people from the limiting constraints of the Sunna, or the orthodox community.

Massignon became a support of the Arabic people, especially after Partition in 1948. He blames the West for the attacks on Islam, and views Europe and France and contemporary realities as existing alongside Islam. The French saw the Orient as a place to recover their lost spirituality and traditional values. As far as the Oriental person, he wasn't capable of understand or appreciating himself, especially in light of what the European did to him. The Muslim lost his sense of religion and philosophy. Because of this, the French felt a need to help the Muslim defend his traditional culture. Massignon feels that Islam has been mis-represented by the West.

Sir Hamilton Gibb is taken as representative of the British view. He taught at Oxford and Harvard and considered himself to be an insider when he came to the Orient. For Gibb, the Orient was something to be studied within the framework of a university. It was a scholarly endeavor. In the post-World War II years, Gibb pushed for an expansion in the Oriental Studies departments of universities. This was fitting with its new role for use in national policy. Gibb sees the Muslim's problem as a lack of law, not as being due to his religion. The tension between Islam and everyday experience is created by the role of Islam as a compelling Oriental fact.

Gibb and Massignon are two Orientalists that dominate the field in the post World War I period until the 1960s. Their views are presented in short articles, essays and books; during their time, the forms of writing were transformed to encyclopedia, anthology, and personal record. Committees of experts came into being to replace the authority of the individual. Gibb and Massignon are the last of the European Orientalists. After them, the field was taken over by the American Social Studies departments. Bits and pieces of what was once called Orientalism are now parts of different disciplines and departments within universities.

Part 3, Orientalism Now: The Latest Phase

Part 3, Orientalism Now: The Latest Phase Summary and Analysis

The world has changed since the World War II years, and so has the power structure among nations. England and France are no longer as dominant as they were and the Arab world is more important in terms of politics and economics. There are a variety of representations that are used that are the subject of this part of the chapter. The first that can be defined are popular images and social science representations. These have to do with how the Arab is represented in terms of dress. This refers to the Arab robes, headgear, and sandals. Add a camel to this picture and this is the Arab caricature that is accepted in the West. After the 1973 war, the Arab was tied more to oil and gas.

"For the Jew of pre-Nazi Europe has bifurcated: what we have now is a Jewish hero, constructed out of a reconstructed cult of the adventure-pioneer - Orientalist (Burton, Lane, Renan), and his creeping, mysteriously fearsome shadow, the Arab Oriental. Isolated from everything except the past created for him by Orientalist polemic, the Arab is chained to a destiny that fixes him and dooms him to a series of reactions periodically chastised by what Barbara Tuchman gives the theological name 'Israel's terrible swift sword'" (Chap. 3, p. 286). The Arab is portrayed with his oil wells and as being sadistic, devious, and a low life form. Behind all of everything portrayed with the Arabs is the threat of jihad and fear on the part of the West.

Monroe Berger was hired to write a report in 1967 about the Middle East. He is considered to be an expert on the area. He describes the area as not now being nor likely of being in the future a center for cultural achievement. He views the area as not being one of political power and not likely to become one in the near future. The area does have a large number of the traits that usually attract academic study, but Berger does not feel that this will limit the number of people who will want to study and teach in the area. Berger does not recognize the political significance of the Middle East. He more or less echoes the rhetoric of earlier times.

Berger represents the transition of Orientalism from a philological discipline to a specialty area in social science. The American contribution is in how the discipline is approached: the social scientist applies the science of his discipline to the Orient. The United States never passed through the period of the philological study. The modern study of the East does not even remotely resemble the study that took place up until the time of Gibb and Massignon, which concentrated on learning the language and the studying based on philology. The Oriental was supposed to be represented by the Orientalist and was not supposed to represent himself.



A second representation has to do with the policy of cultural relations. From the mid-1800s on, the framework of Oriental studies was political. US interest and activity in the area of the Middle East intensified in the years following the end of World War I. In 1950, Mortimer Graves began what was called a cultural relations policy, the purpose of which was to obtain a copy of every publication in a Near Eastern language that had been published since 1900. This led to the development of the modern model for research on the Middle East. This led to the establishment of the Middle East Institute, which came into being in May 1946, and this in turn led to the establishment of other organizations and groups that engaged in research on the Middle East.

Gustave von Grunebaum produced a work on Orientalism that focused on Islam as a holistic culture. His work is characterized by the same set of negative generalizations that spanned his entire career. Von Grunebaum's work is critiqued by Abdullah Laroui, a Moroccan historian and political theorist. Laroui says that von Grunebaum talks about one Islam that changes within itself, no matter what adjectives he uses (i.e., there is no difference between classical Islam and medieval Islam). Modern Islam remains faithful to itself, according to Laroui, which means it has turned away from the West. Yet, the only way Islam can modernize itself is to re-interpret itself from a Western point of view, which is impossible.

They discuss the difference between the "hard" and "soft" schools of Orientalism. The "soft" school is the traditionalist view, where a few manuscripts are used to derive the history, religion, and culture of the Orient. The "hard" school is the modern American approach of area studies with its use of research and paradigms. In spite of this, the various dogmas regarding Orientalism still exist today. They are that there is a difference between the East and West with the East being inferior to the West. A second dogma has to do with information, and abstraction from texts is preferred to those based on experience. A third dogma is that the Orient cannot define itself with the use of a highly developed vocabulary from the West. A fourth dogma is that the Orient is to be feared and controlled. These dogmas have never been disputed or overcome, no matter who is doing the studying of the Orient.

Another representation is the simplicity in the presentation. The Semites do not have the same desirable qualities that the Europeans have. Orientalism cannot develop by itself. It is built on a set of myths that set the Oriental as the opposite of the Westerner and trapped in his own weakness. Professor Gil Carl Alroy, a political scientist, writes an article about the Arab view toward peace and statehood. He says that Arabs are bent on a bloody revenge, incapable of peace, and having a conception of justice that is the opposite of justice. He doesn't feel that Arabs can be trusted.

It is pointed out that there is a difference between the Oriental and the Orientalist. The Orientalist writes about the Oriental. The Oriental is portrayed as passive and in need of study. It is agreed that the Middle East must be studied in order to gain a better understanding of how it functions and how its groups function. The Oriental is tied up in the family. Cooperation is based on family units, which does away with the belief in passivity. Oriental political behavior is tied up with hatred of the Israelis, and in revolution, which is denoted by the word *thawra*. Thawra denotes a rising up like a



camel rises up off of the ground. Some, like Vatiotis, feel that the Arab cannot attain the revolution he claims to profess belief in until the Middle Eastern states control their own destiny.

The fourth representation has to do with Orientals and Orientalism and the fact that Orientalism is discredited on an intellectual basis. The Oriental is different from the way he is portrayed by the Orientalist. The Orientalist who did the writing and propagated the views were Westerners, not Easterners. Today the situation is a little different, with Arab money and influence well felt in the United States. This is what Said calls the new imperialism. Today, many Arab students go to Europe or the United States to study. This makes some Orientals feel superior to their own people.

Said concludes by raising the issue of an alternative to Orientalism. His purpose is not to propose a new system of beliefs to replace the existing system. He points out the shift in the emphasis to area studies and the fact that he just tries to raise questions. He goes on to point out that today there are many scholars in the various areas of what used to be known as Orientalism that are making valuable contributions to their areas.



Afterword

Afterword Summary and Analysis

This section was written after the publication of the book. In it, Said explains how he wrote the book and how it was received, with separate editions in America and the United Kingdom. The reception was mostly positive and encouraging and the book has since been translated into more than a dozen different languages. The success of the book has exceeded the author's expectations, since when he wrote the book he didn't have much interference or interest from the outside world. The publication of the book generated a lot of interest from different countries as the author raised a lot of relevant questions about the flaws in the study of Orientalism.

Said says that one of the criticisms of the book is that it is anti-West and that the West is an enemy of Islam and that Orientalism and the West have basically violated Arabs and Islam. Said is accused of supporting Islamic fundamentalism for the way he criticized Orientalism. The author does not agree with these criticisms since he took care in his definitions throughout the book. He also avoided defending the Arabs and Islam throughout the book. In spite of this, some view the book as a defense of Arabs and Islam.

Said claims that the terms Orient and Occident have no specific geographic locations. Since human beings make human history and history contains the struggle over territories, then history also contains the battle over historical and social meaning. Connecting the two struggles is a job for the scholar. Building the identities of Oriental and Occident results in building opposites or others as the Western scholars set up identities that were the opposite of their own. Problems come because people refuse to accept the fact that these identities are built and not natural. "Part of the resistance and hostility generated by books like *Orientalism*, or after it, *The Intervention of Tradition*, and *Black Athena*, is that they seem to undermine the naive belief in the certain positivity and unchanging historicity of a culture, a self, a national identity. *Orientalism* can only be read as a defense of Islam by suppressing half of my argument, which I say (as I do in a subsequent book, *Covering Islam*) that even the primitive community we belong to naturally is not immune from the interpretive contest, and that what appears in the West to be the emergence, return to, or resurgence of Islam is in fact a struggle in Islamic societies over the definition of Islam" (Afterword, p. 332). Said's book pointed out the errors of the earlier Orientalists, which is why many claim that he supported fundamentalism. The Orientalists basically don't accept the early versions of Islam and consider them to be fraudulent. The Islamic true believer is supposed to accept these views on faith, and not to demand proof. The critic who interferes with or questions these basic views of Islam is considered to be dangerous by the faithful. The book *Orientalism* points out these facts about the early Orientalists, which is why some felt that Said supported fundamentalism.



Said criticizes the approach taken to Orientalism. The subject is not just a study of the people, culture, and history but it is viewed from above. This view obscures the whole concept of historical change. The study should be a study of the reality, not just a study of languages, people, and societies. There has to be some foundation or basis that contributes to stability. Jabarti views the situation as a historical experience which led to other historical experiences and situations. It is more demanding and useful to study the historical dynamics of this kind of situation. Viewed in this way, Islam is portrayed as innocent and aggrieved and Orientalism can be viewed as anti-Western.

A second problem faced by Said and his book is the outbreak of war in the Middle East in the 1980s and the Islamic revolution in Iran. Said did not predict any of these events and wasn't really prepared for any of them. The belief, according to Said, was that since the Orientals couldn't represent themselves, they had to be represented, to paraphrase Marx. Said views his book as an attempt to make inroads into learning and to go beyond the limitations. Arabs viewed his book as an attempt to counter the Western beliefs about the Middle East and to answer some of what they feel is Western hostility. Many educated Arabs viewed *Orientalism* as an educated and appropriate response to the West for their views and hostility.

The Islam presented by Said in the book comes from the existence of interpretations both in and out of the Islamic world. There needs to be a communication between equals. Said feels that the presentation of the situation in terms of Oriental versus Occidental is the cause of many problems. It leads to opposition and confrontation between the East and the West. Orientalism exists for the Westerner. The Westerner is the intended reader of the literature not the Oriental. Everything about Orientalism was designed for the Westerner, not for the Easterner. The author, who was born and raised in the Middle East, and educated and taught in the United States, views himself as crossing the East-West line in promoting the type of learning and study that he promotes in *Orientalism*.

Said recommends that people look at the Arab environment when they view the issue of Palestine. He encourages people to look at the realities of the situation in terms of Israel and Palestinian history. The only way to settle the issue is for the Arabs and Israel to negotiate a settlement. This is the only way to stop the suffering by both sides in the region. The Afterword is the only place in the book where this issue is raised, although he does discuss the issue in other works that he has written. His book, claims Said, is not a proclamation of Arab nationalism but an attempt to stimulate others to study the issue. He tries to point out the proper approach to take and that they should avoid the pitfalls of the past approaches that led to the misconceptions and misrepresentations.

The purpose of *Orientalism*, according to Said, was to study the critique used in Orientalism and to point out the errors that led to the problems in misconception and misrepresentation. Said's purpose was not to portray and affirm the warring parties. Arabs view the work differently than non-Arabs do, which may be a manifestation of the frustration of the Arab at the lack of democracy in the region. Said wants academics and intellectuals to break out of the confinement of Orientalism and produce works that emphasize the historical experience of the Arabs. Other regions have done this as a

result of his work, but not the Arab world where the book is viewed as either for or against the West.

The Orientalists themselves responded to Said's book, even though Said claims that they weren't his intended audience. Said tried to show the effect on other areas of the approaches taken in the field. The term Oriental was just about derogatory with the Oriental being viewed as different and looked down on. The Orientalist is the person who studied the Orient in terms of language and histories. Both eschewed neutrality and had connotations attached to the usage.

Bernard Lewis tries to discredit Said's work by saying Said's critique of Orientalism was meaningless. He published his own series of essays in which he claims that Muslims don't like change or modernity. Said uses several pages in the Afterword to respond to Lewis. Lewis, Said claims, doesn't discuss the differences between Muslims or Muslim societies and traditions. He basically supports the original Orientalists their approaches and their conclusions. Said considers Lewis to be more political than intellectual, and Lewis refuses to deal with the issue that the study of Orientalism was tied to European colonialism.

Said points out that since the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States and others have portrayed Islam as a world of evil associating it with terrorism and violence. This same period has seen a movement toward fundamentalism in many of the Arab countries. There have been wars and conflicts in many countries not considered to be a part of the Third World, like Bosnia. The United States still remains a power in the world, more so than Europe. Nationalism became an important factor once the Soviet Union was gone as different cultures tried to gain autonomy. This, according to Said, counters the interdependence that is necessary between the cultures, as in the United States. It is also contrary to one of the themes of the book that leads to the superior-inferior situation.

There is now a clash between the old ideals as portrayed in Orientalism and the new ideas regarding academics and intellectuals. The world is more global than it used to be with national borders becoming less important in economics and other areas and multiculturalism become more important throughout the world. Said's book was a new way of viewing Orientalism and working through its conflicts in that it is trying to bridge the gap that separates East and West in an attempt at doing away with the conflicts that existed within the field. This resulted in the re-reading of many cultural works to see what was missed in them and led to a reinterpretation and reinvestigation of some of their premises and assumptions. This re-examination is what Said wanted.



Characters

Edward W. Said

Silvestre de Sacy

Arthur James Balfour

Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer

Henry Kissinger

Jules Mohl

R.W. Southern

Barthelemy d'Herbelot

Gustave Flaubert

Ernest Renan

Caussin de Perceval

Edwin William Lane

T.E. Lawrence

Sir Hamilton Gibb

Louis Massignon

Bernard Lewis



Objects/Places

Egypt

Egypt, a country in Africa, was a colony of Great Britain and is considered to be a part of the Orient, since its people are Middle Eastern.

East

The East is a part of the world that is considered to contain the Orient, from the British point of view. The Eastern ways and cultures are foreign to the British who consider the orientation to be the opposite of their own.

West

The West is considered to be Europe and the United States and is considered to be superior to the East, which contains the colonies.

Developed Countries

The developed countries, in the Kissinger analysis, are considered to be the United States and Europe.

Developing Countries

The developing countries, or Third World countries, are China, Indochina, Africa, the Near East, and Latin America.

The Orient

The Orient, to the British, extended from China to the Mediterranean, and includes people speaking languages like Sanskrit, Zen, and Arabic.

India

The study of India is recommended by Gustave Flaubert as a solution to a Europe that is too materialistic. It is believed that a study of the Indian culture will cure Europe of its materialism and lead to a regeneration and rejuvenation of the Western culture.

Great Britain

Great Britain is a European colonial power of the time. Unlike the French, the British have actual colonies in the Orient and feel that they have a proper role to play in the area. The British subjects feel that have to act and speak in a certain way when they are among Oriental people, who they feel are inferior and must be subservient.

France

France is another European country that has Orientalists. But the French are not a colonial power in the Orient, even though they would like to be.

Occident

Occident is a term that Said uses to denote the Britain and the West and Western culture.

United States

The United States is where the study of Orientalism eventually became centered and dispersed in different area studies in the social sciences area.

Themes

Approach to Study

One of the most important themes of this book has to do with how to approach an area chosen for study. There are different ways to study different things and this book looks at the approaches that have been taken to the study of Orientalism. Orientalism is the name given to the study of the area that is deemed inhabited by Orientals, which includes the Middle East, the Near East, and the Far East with this whole area of the world lumped into one category called Oriental, or East.

Most of the approach to the study of Orientalism focused on language. In the early days of the eighteenth century, no other approach was known but for scholars to learn the different languages and to translate the native works into Western languages. They thought that this was the way to study the culture. The use of philology, or the study of the texts that existed, constituted the study of the Orient with its people, cultures, societies and history. This method of study continued for as long as the European domination of the area continued. This approach led to misconceptions and misrepresentations about the various people and the various cultures, but the approach offered no way to correct the problem.

After World War I, the approach to the Orient and the study of Orientalism changed and the focus shifted from Europe to the United States. In the United States, what was known as Orientalism became broken into different areas that fell under the aegis of different areas of the social science disciplines. The approach to the study of the subject also changed somewhat. The European view of superiority isn't as obvious in the modern study of the field.

Superiority vs. Inferiority

The whole approach to the Orient by the eighteenth century scholars was one of superiority. The Europeans believed that the West was superior to the East or Orient that was inferior. They believed that the Oriental existed to be studied, ruled, and dominated by the West. The prevalent belief was that the Orientals couldn't study or rule themselves, and the Europeans looked for a biological basis for this belief. This theme of superiority runs through the book.

Much of this view came from not being a part of the culture they were trying to study. The European held themselves apart from the Orientals, even those who spent time in residence in the Orient. They did not become a part of the culture or truly experience the culture, but instead remained above it. Their way of approaching the study of the Orient was to learn the language and translate native works into their own language. They made judgments about the concepts they came across instead of viewing them in the context of the society in which they occurred and were experienced. Most of what



the Orientalist preached came out of their fear of the Oriental, mostly the Muslim, and much of this fear is based in ignorance and lack of understanding. The approach to studying Orientalism did not allow for the Orientalist to experience the culture, which is why they maintained their view of superiority.

One of Said's major purposes was to confront this approach and point out its errors and the misconceptions and misrepresentations that it led to and propagated.

Evolution of a Discipline

Another theme of the book is the evolution of the discipline; in this case, Orientalism. The approaches taken in academic studies are not stagnant; they change with the times and this is one of the facts that become obvious with the evolution of the study of Orientalism. The study began with the study of languages during the early eighteenth century. The scholars who were proficient enough in the languages would translate native works into their own Western languages and learn about the culture and society in this way. This was the direct result of European colonialism. There was a need for the European rulers to know something about the people who inhabited the colonies that they ruled.

The study of the discipline was based on philology or studying the different texts about Orientalism. The Orientalists, even though he might spend some time in residence in the Orient, did not experience the culture or society as an Oriental. They experienced the culture from above, as a Westerner, so they did not experience the society or the culture.

The close tie between the evolution of the study of this discipline and world events is very obvious with Orientalism. After the end of World War I, when there was a shift in the power structure of the world and the hold on the colonies loosened, the shift in emphasis for the study of Orientalism went to the United States. This meant that what was known as Orientalism had its pieces disseminated among the various areas of the social science departments. The evolution of the study of the discipline was directly a factor of a change in the world power structure.



Style

Perspective

Edward Said was an academic in the field of literature that was interested in Palestinian affairs and the study of Orientalism. Having been raised in that part of the world, Said had a natural interest in the field and became active in the field of Orientalism because of the approach taken to the study of the field and to the misconceptions that it led to. He didn't like what he was seeing coming out of the field. He was a faculty member at Columbia University in humanities.

The intended audiences for the book are the academics involved in the study of the area and those who study the output or the effects. Said is basically saying to them that their approach is wrong. Because of the errors in their approach, they reach erroneous conclusions, and these conclusions are the source of misconceptions and misrepresentation about Islam and the rest of the Orient. This was the source of the fear and the hatred - its basis was in ignorance and the fact that the approach taken in the study of Orientalism sets the Arab up as the opposite of the Westerner.

The book *Orientalism* was well accepted and well read. The critics and academicians listened to Said's criticism and took him seriously, which is part of the reason for the book's success in more than a dozen languages.

Tone

The tone of the book is more or less objective, since the author is pointing out the problems inherent in the study of a subject, and is pointing them out with the objectivity of a researcher. Said describes the approach to the study of Orientalism in the eighteenth century, explains what was involved in it, and cites various authors and scholars to support his position. He points out the flaws in the conclusions that are reached from what he sees as a faulty approach in the study of Orientalism. The book is written in the first person, with the narrator being the author.

This objective tone prevails throughout the book. The objective tone, without emotion on the part of the author, lends credibility to the author. It makes it easier for the reader to see the point the author is trying to make, and for the reader to accept the author's criticisms and statements. The lack of emotion in Said's analysis makes it easier to accept Said's point of view even though Said makes it clear that he grew up in the Middle East. The author also takes a logical approach, which makes it easy to see how he arrives at the conclusions that he does. It also makes it easier for the reader to agree with and accept Said's conclusions.

Structure

The structure of the book is a little strange. There are the sections of Acknowledgements, Preface, and the Introduction. After that the main part of the book is divided into three chapters and an Afterword, Notes, and Index. Each of the three chapters has a title and then has four titled parts to each chapter. If Said had labeled the chapters as books then the main part of the book would have consisted of three books with four chapters in each book, which would be basically the same thing with each division being a complete idea.

The material, for the most part, is chronologically presented, beginning with the state of Orientalism in the eighteenth century during the colonial era. There is some backtracking, but most of the material has to do with the works of others and how the field of Orientalism began, what it consisted of, and why, with the work of other being used as an example. Said points out the problems as he comes across them in his discussion of the subject.

The Afterword completes the book as Said discusses his reasons for writing the book and how the book was received and why. The Afterward, added after the publication of *Orientalism*, more or less completes the book by discussing the criticisms and Said's response to the criticisms. The addition of the Afterword seems to leave the reader with a feeling of completeness after reading the book. The breadth of Said's research is evident by the pages of notes that are included.



Quotes

"My idea in *Orientalism* is to use humanistic critique to open up the fields of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the short bursts of polemical, thought-stopping fury that so imprison us in labels and antagonistic debate whose goal is a belligerent collective identity rather than understanding and intellectual exchange." Preface, p. xxii

"The worldwide protests before the war began in Iraq would not have been possible were it not for the existence of alternative communities across the globe, informed by alternative news sources, and keenly aware of the environmental, human rights, and libertarian impulses that bind us together in this tiny planet. The human, and humanistic, desire or enlightenment and emancipation is not easily deferred, despite the incredible strength of the opposition to it that comes from the Rumsfelds, Bin Ladens, Sharons, and Buses of this world. I would like to believe that *Orientalism* has had a place in the long and often interrupted road to human freedom." Preface, pp. xxix - xxx

"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." Introduction, p. 2

"In a quite constant way, Orientalism depends for its strategy on this flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand... 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" Introduction, pp. 7-8

"The argument, when reduced to its simplest form, was clear, it was precise, it was easy to grasp. There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power. That Balfour and Cromer, cultural and racial essences was not at all an indication of their particular viciousness. Rather it was an indication of how streamlined a general doctrine had become by the time they put it to use - how streamlined and effective."

Chap. 1, p. 36

"A line is drawn between two continents. Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant. Aeschylus represents Asia, makes her speak in the person of the aged Persian queen, Xerxes' mother. It is Europe that articulates the Orient; this



genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries." Chap. 1, p. 57

"There were the Bible and the rise of Christianity; there were travelers like Marco Polo who charted the trade routes and patterned a regulated system of commercial exchange, and after him Lodovico di Varthema and Pietro della Valle; there were fabulists like Mandeville; there were the redoubtable conquering Eastern movements, principally Islam, of course; there were the militant pilgrims, chiefly the Crusaders. Altogether an internally structured archive is built up from the literature that belongs to these experiences. Out of this comes a restricted number of typical encapsulations; the journey, the history, the fable, the stereotype, the polemical confrontation. These are the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception, and form of the encounter between East and West." Chap. 1, p. 58

"*Orientalism* is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient; Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discover, and practice. But in addition I have been using the word to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line." Chap. 1, p. 73

"Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis, for example, urged upon their countrymen, and upon Europeans in general, a detailed study of India because, they said it was Indian culture and religion that could defeat the materialism and mechanism and (republicanism) of Occidental culture. And from this defeat would arise a new, revitalized Europe; the Biblical imagery of death, rebirth, and redemption is evident in this prescription." Chap. 2, p. 115

"The specific Orientalist techniques - lexicography, grammar, translation, cultural decoding - restores, fleshed out, reasserted the values both of an ancient, classical Orient and of the traditional disciplines of philology, history, rhetoric, and doctrinal polemic. But in the process, the Orient and Orientalist disciplines changed dialectically, for they could not survive in their original form. The Orient, even in the 'classic' form which the Orientalist usually studied, was modernized, restored to the present; the traditional disciplines too were brought into contemporary culture." Chap. 2, p. 121

"Orientalism belonged therefore to European scholarship, but its material had to be re-created by the Orientalist before it could enter the arcades alongside Latinism and Hellenism. Each Orientalist re-created his own Orient according to the fundamental epistemological rules of loss and gain first supplied and enacted by Sacy. Just as he was the father of Orientalism, he was also the discipline's first sacrifice, for in translating new texts, fragments, and extracts subsequent Orientalists entirely displaced Sacy's work by supplying their own restored Orient." Chap. 2, p. 130

"Philology, he goes on to say, is both a comparative discipline possessed only by moderns and a symbol of modern (and European) superiority; every advance made by



humanity since the fifteenth century can be attributed to minds we should call philological." Chap. 2, p. 132

"Both Caussin and Carlyle, in other words, show us that the Orient need not cause us undue anxiety, so unequal are Oriental to European achievements. The Orientalist and non-Orientalist perspectives coincide here. For within the comparative field that Orientalism became after the philological revolution of the early nineteenth century, and outside it, either in popular stereotypes or in the figures made of the Orient by philosophers like Carlyle and stereotypes like those of Macaulay, the Orient in itself was subordinated intellectually to the West." Chap. 2, p. 152

"We are immediately brought back to the realization that Orientalists, like many other early-nineteenth-century thinkers, conceive of humanity either in large collective terms or in abstract generalities. Orientalists are neither interested in nor capable of discussing individuals, instead artificial entities, perhaps with their roots in Herderian populism, predominate. There are Orientals, Asiatics, Semites, Muslims, Arabs, Jews, races, mentalities, nations, and the like, some of them the product of learned operations of the type found in Renan's work. Similarly, the age-old distinction between 'Europe' and 'Asia' or 'Occident' and 'Orient' herds beneath very wide labels every possible variety of human plurality, reducing it in the process to one or two terminal, collective abstractions." Chap.X, p. 154-155

"It is correct to say that in *Orientalizing the Orient*, Lane not only defined but edited it; he excised from it what, in addition to his own human sympathies, might have ruffled the European sensibility. In most cases, the Orient seemed to have offended sexual propriety; everything about the Orient - or at least Lane's Orient-in-Egypt exuded dangerous sex, threatened hygiene and domestic seemliness with an excessive 'freedom of intercourse,' as Lane put it more irrepressibly than usual." Chap. 2, p. 167

"Flaubert's work is so complex and so vast as to make any simple account of his Oriental writing very sketchy and hopelessly incomplete. Nevertheless, in the context created by other writers on the Orient, a certain number of main features in Flaubert's Orientalism can fairly be described. Making allowances for the difference between candidly personal writing (letters, travel notes, diary jottings) and formally aesthetic writing (novels and tales), we can still remark that Flaubert's Oriental perspective is rooted in an eastward and southward search for a 'visionary alternative,' which 'meant gorgeous color, in contrast to the grayish tonality of the French provincial landscape.'" Chap. 2, p. 185

"In Chapter One, I tried to indicate the scope of thought and action covered by the word Orientalism, using as privileged types the British and French experiences of and with the Near Orient, Islam, and the Arabs. In those experiences I discerned an intimate, perhaps even the most intimate, and rich relationship between Occident and Orient. Those experiences were part of a much wider European or Western relationship with the Orient, but what seems to have influenced Orientalism most was a fairly constant sense of confrontation felt by Westerners dealing with the East." Chap. 3, p. 201



"In Chapter Two my focus narrowed a good deal. I was interested in the earliest phases of what I call modern Orientalism, which began during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth. Since I did not intend my study to become a narrative chronicle of the development of Oriental studies in the modern West, I proposed instead an account of the rise, development, and institutions of Orientalism as they were formed against a background of intellectual, cultural, and political history until about 1870 or 1880." Chap. 3, p. 201

"The Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning. Western consciousness and later, Western empire. If this definition of Orientalism seems more political than not, that is simply because I think Orientalism was itself a product of certain political forces and activities. Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities." Chap. 3, pp. 202-203

"In the classical and often temporally remote form in which it was reconstructed by the Orientalist, in the precisely actual forming which the modern Orient was lived in, studied, or imagined, the geographical space of the Orient was penetrated, worked over, taken hold of. The cumulative effect of decades of so sovereign a Western handling turned the Orient from alien into colonial space. What was important in the latter nineteenth century was not whether the West had penetrated and possessed the Orient, but rather how the British and French felt that they had done it." Chap. 3, p. 211

"Underlying these categories is the rigidly binomial opposition of 'ours' and 'theirs,' with the former always encroaching upon the latter (even to the point of making 'theirs' exclusively a function of 'ours'). This opposition was reinforced not only by anthropology, linguistics, and history but also, of course, by the Darwinian theses on survival and natural selection and - no less decisive - by the rhetoric of high cultural humanism." Chap. 3, p. 227

"'We' are this, 'they' are that. Which Arab, which Islam, when, how, according to what tests: these appear to be distinctions irrelevant to Smith's scrutiny of and experience in the Hejaz. The crucial point is that everything one can know or learn about 'Semites' and 'Orientals' receives immediate corroboration, not merely in the archives, but directly on the ground." Chap. 3, p. 237

"At its best, Massignon's vision of the East-West encounter assigned great responsibility to the West for its invasion of the East, its colonialism, its relentless attacks on Islam. Massignon was a tireless fighter on behalf of Muslim civilization and, as his numerous essays and letters after 1948 testify, in support of Palestinian refugees, in the defense of Arab Muslim and Christian rights in Palestine against Zionism, against what, with reference to something said by Abba Eban, he scathingly called Israeli 'bourgeois colonialism.'" Chap. 3, p. 270

"Within this field, which no single scholar can create but which each scholar receives and in which he then finds a place for himself, the individual researcher makes his



contribution. Such contributions, even for the exceptional genius, are strategies of redisposing material within the field; even the scholar who unearths a once-lost manuscript produces the 'found' text in a context already prepared for it, for that is the real meaning of finding a new text. Thus each individual contribution first causes changes within the field and then promotes a new stability, in the way that on a surface covered with twenty compasses the introduction of a twenty-first will cause all the other to quiver, then to settle into a new accommodating configuration." Chap. 3, p. 273

"The Orient and Islam have a kind of extrareal, phenomenologically reduced status that puts them out of reach of everyone except the Western expert. From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist's work." Chap. 3, p. 283

"A typical page of his on the Islamic self-image will jam together half-a-dozen references to Islamic texts drawn from as many periods as possible, references as well to Husserl and the pre-Socratics, references to Levi-Strauss and various American social scientists. All this, nevertheless, does not obscure von Grunebaum's almost virulent dislike of Islam. He has no difficulty presuming that Islam is a unitary phenomenon unlike any other religion or civilization, and thereafter he shows it to be antihuman, incapable of development, self-knowledge, or objectivity, as well as uncreative, unscientific, and authoritarian." Chap. 3, p. 296

"Lewis's polemical, not scholarly, purpose is to show, here and elsewhere, that Islam is an anti-Semitic ideology, not merely a religion. He has a little logical difficulty in trying to assert that Islam is a fearful mass phenomenon and at the same time 'not genuinely popular,' but this problem does not detain him long. As the second version of his tendentious anecdote shows, he goes on to proclaim that Islam is an irrational herd or mass phenomenon, ruling Muslims by passions, instincts, and unreflecting hatreds. The whole point of his exposition is to frighten his audience, to make it never yield an inch to Islam. According to Lewis, Islam does not develop and neither do Muslims; they merely are, and they are to be watched, on account of that pure essence of theirs (according to Lewis), which happens to include a long-standing hatred of Christians and Jews." Chap. 3, p. 317

"In the one part of the Orient that I can speak about with some direct knowledge, the accommodation between the intellectual class and the new imperialism might very well be accounted one of the special triumphs of Orientalism. The Arab world today is an intellectual, political, and cultural satellite of the United States. This is not in itself something to be lamented; the specific form of the satellite relationship, however, is." Chap. 3, p. 322

"It is that a predatory West and Orientalism have violated Islam and the Arabs (note that the terms 'Orientalism' and 'West' have been collapsed into each other.) Since that is so, the very existence of Orientalism and Orientalists is seized upon as a pretext for arguing the exact opposite, namely, that Islam is perfect, that it is the only way (al-hal al-wahid),



and so on and so on. To criticize Orientalism as I did in my book, is in effect to be a supporter of Islamism or Muslim fundamentalism." Afterward, p. 331

"In such a turbulent context *Orientalism's* fate was both fortunate and unfortunate. To those in the Arab and Islamic world who felt Western encroachment with anxiety and stress, it appeared to be the first book that gave a serious answer back to a West that had never actually listened to or forgiven the Oriental for being an Oriental at all. I recall one early Arabic review of the book that described its author as a champion of Arabism, a defender of the downtrodden and abused, whose mission was to engage Western authorities in a kind of epic and romantic *mano-a-mano*. Despite the exaggeration, it did convey some real sense of the West's enduring hostility, as felt by Arabs, and it also conveyed a response that many educated Arabs felt was appropriate." Afterword, p. 335

"It is therefore not surprising that the field of Islamic and Arabic Orientalism, always ready to deny its complicity with state power, had never until very recently produced an internal critique of the affiliations I have just been describing, and that Lewis can utter the amazing statement that a criticism of Orientalism would be 'meaningless.'"

Afterword, p. 344

"After all, *Orientalism* is a study based on the re-thinking of what had for centuries been believed to be an unbridgeable chasm separating East from West. My aim, as I said earlier, was not so much to dissipate difference itself - for who can deny the constitutive role of national as well as cultural differences in the relations between human beings - but to challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things. What I called for in *Orientalism* was a new way of conceiving the separations and conflicts that had stimulated generations of hostility, war, and imperial control. Afterword, p. 50



Topics for Discussion

How does Balfour justify the British occupation of Egypt?

What does it mean for Orientalism to be a field of study?

How did Silverstre de Sacy change the study of Orientalism?

What is philology and what does it mean for the study of Orientalism?

In what way does Dante present Mohammed? What is the name he uses for Mohammed?

Why is Mohammed considered to be an imposter?

Explain the difference between latent Orientalism and manifest Orientalism. What are the implications of each?

After the publication of *Orientalism*, Said is accused of being a fundamentalist Islamic. What were the basis for these charges? How did Said refute them?

Why do critics claim that Islam cannot change and cannot modernize itself? What are the implications of these criticisms?

Said's book was well received and well accepted after its publication. What were some of the reasons for this?