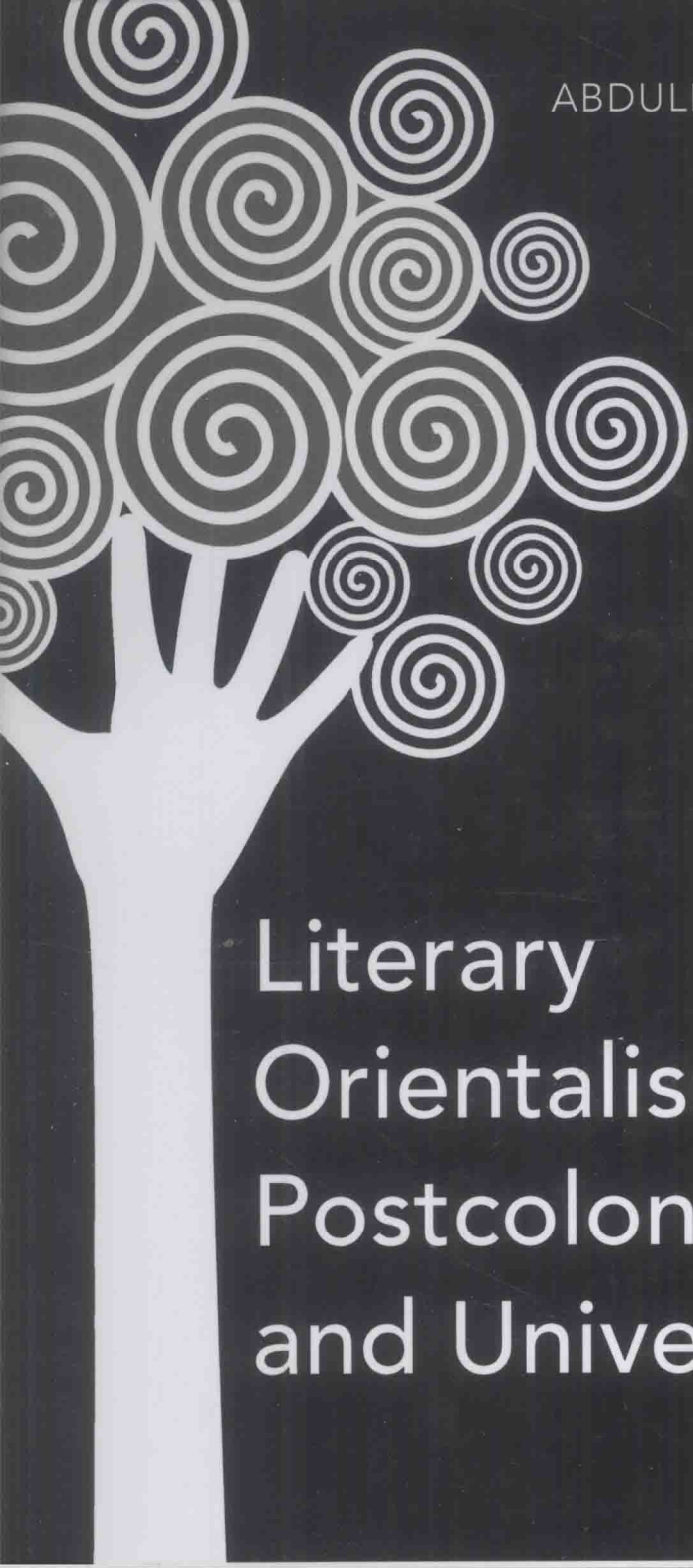

ABDULLA AL-DABBAGH

Literary Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Universalism

POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES 9

Abdulla Al-Dabbagh

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Written over a period of nearly two decades, these ten essays may be grouped into three categories: The first five essays deal with literary orientalism. In the next five, two deal with what may be called literary postcoloniality, and three deal with the effects of contemporary globalism and universalism on literature and language.

In the first group, I deal with such issues as the theory of orientalism and literary orientalism, Edward Said's contributions, the manifestations of literary orientalism in English literature, the impact of the oriental tradition on such literary phenomena as the picaresque, courtly love, and the western novel.

In the second group, I discuss the theory of postcolonial literature, the shortcomings of contemporary postcolonial discourse, the fallacies of Eurocentric scholarship, and the modern Universalist perspective on issues of language and literature.

The first essay, in this collection, "Orientalism, Literary Orientalism and Romanticism", was published in *New Comparison,* 22, 1996, 139-155. The second essay, "The Oriental Roots of the Picaresque", was published in *New Comparison*, 13, 1992, 56-62. The third paper, "Orientalism and Literary Translation", was published in *Dirasat*, 22 (A), 1995, 21-31. The fourth essay, "The Oriental Sources of Courtly Love", was delivered at the International Medieval Congress (*Familia* and *Domus*), University of Leeds, UK, 9-12 July, 2001, and was published in the *International Journal of Arabic/English Studies,* 3: 1&2, 2002, 21-32. The fifth essay, "The Orient, the Other , and the Novel", was delivered at the 15th International Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA), held at the University of Leiden, Holland, August 16-22, 1997, and was published in the *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies,* 7, 2006, 191-198. The sixth essay, "Going Native: Conrad and Postcolonial Discourse", was published in *English Language Notes,* 59, 2002, 71-88. The seventh essay, "Modern Universalism and the Myth of Westernness", was published in *The Comparatist,* 27, 2003, 5-20, and was delivered in a shorter version as "The Myth of Westernness and the Future of Literary Studies" at the 16th International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) Congress, held in Pretoria, South Africa, 13-19 August, 2000. The eighth essay, "Globalism and the Universal Language: Some Lessons from the Past", was delivered at the "Globalism—Reaction and Interaction" conference, held at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences , United Arab Emirates University, Al-Ain, UAE, 23-24, March, 2003 and was published in *English Today,* 21, 2, 2005, 3-12. The ninth essay, "Language, Truth, and Logic in the Age of

Globalism and the Discourse of Civilizations", was delivered at the 12th international conference of the Arab-US Association of Communication Educators, AUSACE, held at Zayed University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 27-31 October, 2007, and is scheduled to be published in the *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*. The tenth essay, "Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Anti-Colonialism: A Closer Look at the False Rhetoric of Freedom", was delivered at the 2008 European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, EACLALS, "Try Freedom", held in Venice, Italy, 25-29 March, 2008. I would like here to express my deepest gratitude to the journals that have accepted my papers and to the audience in the conferences, where some of them were delivered, for their comments and observations.

I would like here to thank the Editor-in-Chief of *Dirasat* for his permission to reprint "Orientalism and Literary Translation", the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Arabic/English Studies* for his permission to reprint "The Oriental Sources of Courtly Love", "The Orient, the Other , and the Novel", and "Language, Truth, and Logic in the Age of Globalism and the Discourse of Civilizations", the Editor-in-Chief of *English Language Notes* for his permission to reprint "Going Native: Conrad and Postcolonial Discourse", the Editor-in-Chief of *The Comparatist* for his permission to reprint "Modern Universalism and the Myth of Westernness", and the Editor-in-Chief of *English Today* for his permission to reprint "Globalism and the Universal Language: Some Lessons from the Past".

I would like to dedicate this book to my family, without whose support it could never have been written. I would like to thank Professor John Burt Foster, Jr., for his encouragement and expertise, as editor of *The Comparatist*, in publishing my essay, "Modern Universalism and the Myth of Westernness". My thanks also go to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, in the University of the United Arab Emirates for supporting the publication of this book. Finally, I would like to thank my students over the years in the seminar on literary orientalism that I regularly taught in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, for their participation in discussing the ideas expounded in these essays.

Contents

Chapter 1

ORIENTALISM, LITERARY ORIENTALISM AND ROMANTICISM[1]

The Origins of Orientalism

Many researchers explain the term "orientalism" in its general and scientific sense, and not in its ideological and specific sense.[2] In other words, they take the term to cover all oriental studies and not any particular tendency within them. For this reason, they trace the origins of orientalism back to traditional philology, which was interested primarily in research into ancient writings. These researchers believe that philological studies, which consisted of the collection of ancient writings and the establishment and interpretation of the true texts, appeared both in the West (where they corresponded to the Hellenistic period) and in the East (where they corresponded to the time of the Han Empire). Therefore, in spite of the fact that orientalism, as a term, became widely used only in the nineteenth century, it goes back, in practice, to Antiquity and it continues with no radical change in its tasks, however widened in scope, until the end of the Middle Ages.

With the advent of the Renaissance[3], again both in the East and in the West, philological studies entered a new stage which consisted of the substitution of criticism for hermeneutics, i.e. the replacement of exegesis by the intellectual analysis of the content of the ancient texts, which now began to be offered in the light of the new, humanist philosophy of the Renaissance. As for more modem times, these studies were only partly a continuation of Renaissance philology. Although the humanist spirit of the Renaissance remained, the fundamentals of this spirit changed with the adoption of the rationalist philosophy that has become the principal guide in all spheres of knowledge since the Enlightenment.

Thus, oriental studies assumed their present form in the beginning of the nineteenth century, but their origins go back to earlier times. And here—in this Golden Age of Orientalism—there were instances, among the orientalists, of genuinely disinterested desire for knowledge and a true respect for the peoples of the East amounting at times to veneration, in accordance with the ancient formula of *ex oriente lux*.[4] Although there is no

doubt that the modem era in orientalism, i.e. the last hundred years or so, coincided with a wide colonialist, and later imperialist, expansion, it is not fair to the genuine researchers in oriental studies to attribute their efforts solely to the requirements of this expansion.[5] And although large segments of twentieth-century orientalism acquired a clear, imperialist character, the genuinely scientific side of it remains, in essence, a continuation and a development of the studies of the nineteenth century.

Three Views of Orientalism

The main conceptual foundations of the view of orientalism described in the previous section are the absence of an absolute separation between East and West, between orientalism (as a western, intellectual trend) and oriental studies in the general, comprehensive sense and, finally, between oriental studies and the linguistic, literary and cultural studies to which they must belong in their assumptions and methodology, regardless of the inevitable specificities of environment and economic, social and cultural conditions. These conceptual foundations also include a regard for historical stages and the stages of the development of human thought, such as the Classical era or the Renaissance or the Enlightenment, as world epochs not confined solely to the East or to the West. This entails a more comprehensive analysis of literary systems and the attempt to discover in them general trends and phenomena.

There is a second view of orientalism that stems from a standpoint that is totally different from that of the first view. This claims that there is a radical and absolute separation between East and West, and that oriental studies do not belong to any general frame, but must draw their concepts and methods of analysis from the absolute specificities of the East, whether these be historical or philosophical, religious or national. The studies of the orientalists (and this means what foreigners, and westerners in particular, write about the East) are false and unacceptable principally because of their origin, and they do not contain anything except deliberate distortion intended to insult and to antagonise.

The third view of the Orient and of orientalism has the same standpoint as the second view, but draws diametrically opposite conclusions. It also believes in the radical and absolute separation between East and West, latent in Kipling's "never the twain shall meet"; it also claims that oriental studies must draw their ideas and conclusions from the absolute historical and intellectual specificities of the East, devising for that purpose a series of terms and concepts, some of the most famous of which are: the oriental or

the Asiatic mode of production (i.e. the inability of the East to accomplish an industrial revolution), oriental despotism (i.e. the inability of the East to achieve democracy),[6] the essential spirituality of the East and the absence of a Renaissance or an Enlightenment movement or a rationalist philosophy in the East (i.e. the inability of the oriental to think logically). From all this, it reaches a conclusion which is the exact opposite of the first view and which claims that the works of the orientalists (i.e. the non-eastern researchers) provide the *only basis* for understanding the East since the oriental is incapable of scientific study (he does not understand himself and has to be understood through others).

Edward Said's Theory

One of the richest and most controversial works on this subject and on East-West cultural relations is Edward Said's *Orientalism.*[7] If we leave aside the various sharp observations and the numerous pieces of interesting information that the book abounds in and concentrate our attention on its conceptual foundations, we find that Said's view seems, initially, to be new to a certain extent. Said claims that the main aspects of orientalism must not be regarded as scientific investigations, but "as a set of structures inherited from the past, secularized, redisposed, and re-formed by such disciplines as philology"; these in turn become "naturalized, modernized, and laicized substitutes for (or versions of) Christian supernaturalism", and orientalism and oriental studies are no more than the new texts and ideas through which "the East was accommodated to these structures".[8] To this "structuralist" understanding of orientalism, Said adds a psychological dimension, derived from such contemporary French thinkers as Foucault and Lacan, when he describes orientalism in his introductory chapter as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience" since the Orient is Europe's "cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other".[9]

Said's theory, then, in spite of the new colouring provided by the terminology derived from structuralism and existential psychology resembles, in essence, the second view of orientalism described in the previous section. This is because it comes to regard the whole of orientalism as, inevitably, a distortion. Said's is an absolutist, ahistorical viewpoint which regards the orient as an abstract category and cannot distinguish between the different orientalists or the various stages of orientalism. And although the weakness of Said's theory appears most glaringly in his

treatment of the European writers and thinkers who were truly sympathetic to the East, especially in the romantic movement and in the first half of the nineteenth century generally, the root of its falsehood is its lack of the historical dimension that is necessary for the understanding of orientalism as an extensive cultural movement.

The ignorance that stems from fear has been, as Edward Said rightly says, the basis of the European view of the East, from the Crusades and during the Middle Ages. What Said fails to recognise at all is that this basis is really the first stage in the growth of the orientalist movement and of the view towards the East which develops during the Renaissance and passes through the Enlightenment to reach its peak in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The orientalist movement in its deforming, antagonistic, modem sense that is closely linked to the colonialist movement did not begin until the last decades of the last century, as orientalism entered its declining phase. As for the twentieth century, it is necessary to divide it into two principal channels: one is distorting, hostile and devoted to serving the aims of imperialism in a wider and stronger form than before; the other rests on scientific foundations and aims at discarding all distortions by inheriting and developing the best that the earlier orientalists had achieved. All these different stages and tendencies, however, do not represent for Said, in the final analysis, anything but a distorting image of the East that extended linearly from the Crusades to modem times.

Literary Orientalism

One of the positive aspects of Said's book is his interest in literary orientalism and his treatment of writers who portrayed the East and the Orientals as part of the orientalist movement along with philologists, archaeologists and students of religious and social structures. And although we have, for some time, had studies on the reflections of the East in western literature,[10] these studies are still at a rudimentary stage of research, with the theoretical and intellectual dimensions of the topic still awaiting a new comprehensive formulation.

The field is truly wide and perhaps the bulk of the available information will not be collected for some time. It covers, for example, all the stages of English literature from Chaucer to modem times, and no doubt it is not difficult to discover similar influences in other western literatures.

A number of the great Elizabethan dramatists wrote plays dealing with the East. These include Kyd, Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher and, of course, Shakespeare. *Othello* is one of the masterpieces of literary orientalism, and it played, together with *Antony and Cleopatra,* a major role in creating the model for the general tendency of similar works in western literature.

The oriental tale had a decisive impact on the rise of the English novel in the eighteenth century. As Martha Conant says, in a seminal study to which we shall return, "the *Arabian Nights* was the fairy godmother of the English novel".[11] The truth of this statement becomes clear also from the fact that we can hardly find any great novelist of the next century, the real age of the flowering of the novel, who did not read the *Arabian Nights* and who was not influenced by it. This oriental influence was also apparent in the numerous fictional attempts of the eighteenth century, the most celebrated of which were Beckford's *Vathek,* Johnson's *Rasselas* and Goldsmith's *A Citizen of the World.* From another direction, Ibn Tufail's *Hayy Bin Yaqdhan* had a similar influence, if not so far-reaching, on the rise of the novel and on subsequent intellectual development (particularly on Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and the whole Rousseauist concept of the Noble Savage).

The third great period in English literature which came under a strong, oriental influence was the romantic period. The oriental tale and the influence of the translations of the *Arabian Nights* may be regarded as factors that paved the way to romanticism. Orientalism, in this era, becomes a literary phenomenon clearly seen in the works of a number of its greatest writers, such as Goethe, Hugo, Pushkin, Gogol, Walter Scott and Byron. We shall argue later on that orientalism is a fundamental, inseparable part of the romantic movement, and that the extension of the literary map beyond the limits of Greco-Roman civilisation—to absorb, principally, the cultures and literatures of the East—becomes one of this movement's essential tasks. In English romanticism, Byron expressed this tendency best in his advice to Thomas Moore, author of the famous oriental poem, *Lalla Rookh,* to "stick to the East; the oracle Stael told me it was the only poetical policy".[12] One of the works of this period, Walter Scott's *The Talisman,* which deals with the Crusades, is one of the great achievements of the orientalist novel and one that provided a valuable model in this field.

Martha Conant says that "the *Arabian Nights* [...] is a treasure-house of stories perhaps unsurpassed in literature", rightly adding that historians of fiction have not fully recognised the role of the oriental tale in providing the element of plot to the European novel. Doubtless, the development of studies of literary orientalism in the field of fiction will modify the prevailing view of the rise of the European novel and of the novel as an international form.

The clear influence of the eastern setting on the works of the great writers of the eighteenth century, the age of the rise of the European novel, like Voltaire, Montesquieu, Johnson, Goldsmith and others, is firm proof of the importance of the oriental dimension in the formation of this new art. Again as Martha Conant says, "by the time *Zadig* appeared, the European critic of manners and thoughts in the guise of an Oriental had become a conventional type in the oriental tale" [13]

Critics call these works tales with an eastern frame or tales of pseudo--orientalism, because they use eastern characters and settings for their own purposes that may have little to do with the East. Although superficially correct, this observation ignores, in my opinion, an essential aspect of this oriental tendency in eighteenth-century writers and thinkers during the age of Neo-classicism and Enlightenment in Europe, which may, when fully investigated, force us to re-appraise the very concepts of Neo-classicism and Enlightenment themselves.

One of the best ways of dealing with this issue may be through scrutinising the contradiction that Martha Conant herself falls into. She is quite right in saying that the "orientalism and pseudo-orientalism of the eighteenth century" paved the way for the use of oriental material by the romantics, and in citing as evidence the well-known and significant influence of Beckford's *Vathek* on the early works of Byron and the spell cast by the *Arabian Nights* on Scott and Wordsworth early in their childhood. From the romantics to the great realist novelists, and by way of Scott's historical novels, this influence continued to be clear and acknowledged by Dickens, Thackeray, Meredith and others.

At the same time, it is clear that Conant feels somewhat embarrassed by the orientalist phenomenon. Her insistence that this orientalising tendency is part of the romantic movement, and that the history of the oriental tale in the eighteenth century might be considered as an episode in the development of English romanticism, reveals her belief that orientalism, in essence, does not suit the spirit of Classicism and Enlightenment rationalism which were exclusively linked, according to conventional wisdom, with Greco-Roman civilisation. But this is contradicted by the numerous examples given in her own book. There is no evidence that the classical and Enlightenment ideals of Johnson, Goldsmith, Beckford, Voltaire or Montesquieu in any way hindered their orientalising tendency. Even writers most representative of neo-classicism like Addison or Pope did not escape the oriental influence, and Pope, as Conant herself acknowledges, had contemplated writing what he called "a wild Eastern tale", just as Johnson and Goldsmith were later to do. There is also the additional fact that these tales first achieved popularity,

not in England, but in France, the true homeland of the ideals and principles of Classicism in that age.

Therefore, it is not correct to say that the oriental tale, which predates romanticism by more than a hundred years, was an expression of the romantic spirit. It is also incorrect to say that the writers of that age - all men of the Enlightenment and of Classicism—were somehow rejecting their ideas or suppressing their true beliefs in writing those tales.

It seems to me a more accurate explanation to say that those writers and thinkers had assimilated the oriental dimension and could portray it in their tales and philosophic writings in a way that harmonised well with their literary and intellectual attitudes. And if we feel any *disharmony* here, then what needs to be reconsidered are our *own* explanations for the spirit of that age and for the concepts of Classicism and Enlightenment. In other words, the view of the eighteenth century as totally self-enclosed and exclusively tied to Greco-Roman culture is false, and the rationalist foundations set up in that age enabled the writers and thinkers to understand and portray many "strange" or "unusual" experiences including the field of the Orient, and of Eastern literatures. These foundations gave rise to the works of orientalist scholarship and translation that appeared in such profusion in precisely this epoch. Only from this perspective can we regard the products of that time, like the oriental tale, as a prelude to romanticism which was truly the era of the great flowering of literary orientalism.

Orientalism and Romanticism

In 1800, Friedrich Schlegel declared that the highest forms of romanticism were to be looked for in the East. Thirty years later, in the period which marks the end of romanticism in European literature, Victor Hugo summarised this great turning towards the East by saying: "Au siècle de Louis XIV on était helleniste, maintenant on est orientaliste".[14]

It is surprising that this oriental dimension of romanticism has not been given the attention it deserves, even though orientalism is a basic element of romanticism and not merely an external aspect of it that can be set alongside the yearning for the Middle Ages or the search for the exotic.

One of the greatest objections to Edward Said's *Orientalism* is that he regards romantic orientalism as just another rung in the ladder of western distortion and misunderstanding of the East, all the way from Aeschylus to Bernard Lewis. In the process, great imaginative writers like Scott and Goethe and great thinkers like Schlegel and Marx, who sympathised and

identified with the East and contributed greatly to its understanding, are thrown overboard. In general, Said emphasises the negative aspects of romantic orientalism to make it fit within his frame of hostile, western orientalism. As we said earlier, Said reduces orientalism to an abstract category or a "set of structures inherited from the past", as he expresses it in his Foucaultean terms, and insists on not distinguishing between different orientalists and different stages of orientalism; when there was a break in the development of orientalism between he early and middle nineteenth century (the Golden Age of orientalism) and the modern, orientalist movement (antagonistic and colonialist in essence) that began in its final decades. Romantic orientalism did not pave the way for hostile orientalists like Renan, Gobineau or Bernard Lewis. On the contrary, it was the culmination of all the previous positive trends from the Renaissance until the end of the eighteenth century, and the great advance in the scientific investigation of the East.

Edward Said's sympathetic identification with the East, which is the essential element of romantic orientalism, has roots in the previous epochs, especially in the works of great writers like Shakespeare and Goethe, just as it extends to the works of post-romantic writers like George Eliot and Flaubert, Gogol and Tolstoy. This turning to the East appears not only in the early romantic literatures like German or English, it also covers the late romantic literatures like Russian (Pushkin), French (Hugo) and American (Emerson and Thoreau). We have already quoted Hugo's thesis on Hellenism and Orientalism, but we must not forget that it was Emerson who said that "all philosophy, of East and West, has the same centripetence" and that "there is no remedy for musty, self-conceited English life made up of fictions, hating ideas—like Orientalism, that astonishes and disconcerts English decorum. For once there is thunder he never heard, light he never saw, and power which trifles with time and space".[15]

In reality, this great turning to the East covered not only the Romantic Movement, but extended over the whole of the nineteenth century in something resembling an intellectual renaissance. Looking at romanticism within the perspective of this wide, intellectual movement that Raymond Schwab has called the Oriental Renaissance lends it new dimensions and deeper meanings. And here Edward Said's role in drawing attention to this orientalist and his major work, *La Renaissance Orientale,* must be pointed out, in spite of their totally opposed conclusions.[16]

Said describes Schwab as an *"orienteur* rather than an *orientaliste,* a man more interested in a generous awareness than in detached classification". This is what qualifies him to study the unique phenomenon

that he calls the second Renaissance which, unlike "the classical Renaissance [that] immersed European man within the confines of a self-sufficient Greco-Latin terrain, deposited the whole world before him".[17]

Edward Said describes *La Renaissance Orientale* as the peak of Schwab's literary research. He calls it an encyclopedic work that begins from the study of the phenomenon of European awareness of the Orient "and the movement of integration by which Europe received the Orient into the body of its scientific, institutional and imaginative structures" to the positive changes that this new knowledge of the East brought about.[18] The book then deals with "case histories" and personal testaments of more than forty different thinkers and writers who were influenced by the East, and with the social and cultural relations of which these influences were a part. After that, the book leaves the area of scientific institutions and social *salons* for the field of imaginative writing and literary orientalism, discussing in detail the influence of the Orient on the works of great French writers like Lamartine, Hugo, Vigny, Michelet, Leconte de Lisle, Baudelaire and others. The book also deals with those writers in whose works the East had different reflections, leading generally to division and opposition instead of the previous sympathetic identification, and these include, primarily, Gobineau (author of the doctrine of the inequality of races) and German and Russian writers.

According to Schwab, "the coincidence of the advent of Romanticism and Orientalism in the West, gave the former its complex dimension and led it to the reformulation of human limits".[19] In spite of Schwab's relative neglect of the economic and political factors in the orientalist movement, his elucidation of it as an intellectual movement makes his work a unique, orientalist effort, because it is built on a comprehensive, humanist outlook and because Schwab regards the Orient, however strange and unfamiliar it may at first seem, as complementary to the West and *vice versa.*

The theme of *La Renaissance Orientale* is no less than "the reeducation of one continent by another" (and this re-education includes the areas of religion, linguistics, archaeology, philosophy, art, science and literature). In its stimulating and comprehensive treatment of this wide topic, the book becomes in its turn a part of those great works that "arrange and re-arrange a particular culture's sense of its own identity".[20]

The Talisman and *A Passage to India*

One of the great works of literary orientalism is Walter Scott's historical novel, *The Talisman,* which occupies a prominent place in the Romantic Movement and in the development of the European novel. The sympathetic identification with what is supposed to be hostile, which appeared in high literary form in works like *Othello* and *Antony and Cleopatra* and, later, in the oriental tale of the eighteenth century and in the works of the romantic poets and thinkers, acquires a concrete, historical dimension in this novel, which treats, in the new style of literary realism, historical events that revolve around a principal character who, for many centuries, was regarded by the European West as a great symbol of the hostile East.

Salahadine al-Ayubi had previously appeared in English literature, particularly because of his relationship with Richard the Lionheart, the leader of the largest European Crusade. The portrayal of this Islamic leader had been, as expected, distorted and hostile, from its first appearance in the fourteenth-century poem entitled "Richard the Lionheart" that portrayed Salahadine as a hateful coward and extremely ugly.[21]

Thus Salahadine continued to symbolise the Islamic enemy in all ages. Of the writers who followed the same path were John Lydgate and Joshua Sylvester, who accused Salahadine of treachery, cruelty and tyranny. But although English writers were particularly hostile to Salahadine, a positive side to his character gradually emerged after the sixteenth century in the writings of Painter and Greene. The picture, however, remained distorted, and English writers continued to be influenced by religious bigotry and Crusader sentiments until the appearance of Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* which opposed all that had preceded it in restoring historical truth and presenting a sympathetic, indeed glorifying, image of Salahadine.

But the great *literary* portrayal of Salahadine and his historical confrontation with the Crusaders is Walter Scott's novel, *The Talisman.* Here, we will not go into the details of this novel (familiar to readers and cinema-goers alike). What we want to point out is the *reversal* of the previous, hostile image, and the great success that the novel achieved in its total and *objective* representation of Salahadine and the Muslims, which corrected, in the minds of ordinary people and intellectuals, the previously distorted and hostile picture. Thus, it performed a great service both to the East and to historical actuality.

E. M. Forster's novel, *A Passage to India,* occupies a prominent place among the modem works of literary orientalism. It continues along the same

lines as such great literary works as *Othello, Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Talisman* in its sympathetic identification with the East and its resistance to hostile—and misleading—concepts and portrayals. The novel, dealing as it does with the years immediately following the First World War, creates a contemporary, political framework within which colonialism and racism are confronted directly and in an artistically effective manner. There is no doubt that Forster's position, at such a time, was courageous, and that the novel as a whole is a potent condemnation of the British, colonialist rule in India. And although written from a liberal, one may say bourgeois-humanist viewpoint, it is, in that respect, in the tradition of the greatest literary works from Shakespeare to Tolstoy, and far removed from modem distortions and falsifications. One of the novel's strong points is that Forster recognises the importance of this viewpoint in its historical context and, thus, understands at the same time its modem limitations.

Romantic Orientalism: The Cases of Scott and Goethe

The Talisman is, first of all, a great testimony to Scott's thoroughgoing research and his uncompromising respect for historical truth. The novel is the first work in English, and perhaps in any European language, that presents an accurate picture of those renowned episodes from the Crusades. Preceded only by Gibbon's treatment in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* the *Talisman* is also a good example of how romantic orientalism built upon, and advanced, the achievement of the Enlightenment in this field. Scott's unprejudiced understanding of, and sympathetic identification with, the historical and outwardly antagonistic figure of Salahadine continues, in literary terms, the model already established by Shakespeare in *Othello.* And it was a historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper, not a literary critic, who stressed that Scott's novels "made a revolution not only in literature but in the study of history", that Scott was a "historic innovator" in much the same manner as figures like Montesquieu, Herder and Hegel, and that Scott, "more than any other writer, forced the transition from an eighteenth-century philosophy of history—the philosophy of Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Robertson—to a nineteenth-century philosophy of history—the philosophy of Macaulay, Carlyle, Ranke".[22]

Technically, *The Talisman* is one of the best-constructed of Scott's works. It has a tight plot that succeeds very well in combining dramatically the political theme with the romantic love story. The main characters are all subtly drawn, the scenes are full of action and chivalric heroism carries the