

Questions regarding the text

1. What do we understand as „orient“ (geographical – cultural – historical – religious – anthropological)? How much of that is „real“, how much „constructed“? Which commonalities are there between near and middle east, India, China, Japan?
2. Does Said deliver a definition of the orient? Why?
3. What does „Orientalism“ tell about the Orient– and about „us“?
4. In how far do we construct culture when doing cultural studies? Can representation work w/o stereotyping?
5. What are these contrasting examples for, for what is „the other“, the *definitio ex negative*, needed? Who draws use from that? Can such a stereotyping also serve both sides?
6. How far back does the dichotomy occident–orient reach, what are the fundamentals of this relation, has it always been like that, in how far has it changed, what are changing factors?
7. Which role does religion play, which economy, which colonialization?
8. Who speaks – who can or may speak for themselves? (cf. Spivak's question „Can Subaltern Speak?“)
9. Which concept of civilization lies behind „Orientalism“? (cf. „White Man's Burden“)
10. In how far are Said's findings orient-specific, are they transferable to other situations?

Quotations

1. “Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has much less to do with the Orient than it does with ‘our’ world.” [12]
2. “For Orientalism brings one up [...] to realizing that political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination, and scholarly institutions – in such a way as to make its avoidance an intellectual and historical impossibility.” [13f]
3. “my whole point is to say that we can better understand the persistence and the durability of saturating hegemonic systems like culture when we realise that their internal constraints upon writers and thinkers were productive, not unilaterally inhibiting.” [14]
4. “Psychologically, Orientalism is a kind of paranoia.” [72]
5. “That Islam outstripped and outshone Rome cannot have been absent from the mind of any European past or present.” [74]
6. “Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction between ‘the Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” [2]
7. “It is perfectly possible to argue that some distinctive objects are made by the mind, and that these objects, while appearing to exist objectively, have only a fictional reality. A group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and its immediate surroundings and the territory beyond, which they call ‘the land of the barbarians.’ In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’ is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary. I use the word ‘arbitrary’ here because imaginative geography of the ‘our land – barbarian land’ variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for ‘us’ to set up these boundaries in our own minds; ‘they’ become ‘they’ accordingly’, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from ‘ours.’ To a certain extent modern and primitive societies seem thus to derive a sense of their identities negatively. A fifth-century Athenian was very likely to feel himself to be nonbarbarian as much as he positively felt himself to be Athenian. The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways. Yet often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is ‘out there,’ beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own.” [71]
8. “Humanists have too often confined their attention to departmentalized topics of research. They have neither watched nor learned from disciplines like Orientalism whose unremitting ambition was to master *all* of a world, not some easily delimited part of it such as an author or a collection of texts. However, along with such academic security-blankets as ‘history,’ ‘literature,’ or ‘the humanities,’ and despite its overreaching aspirations, Orientalism is involved in worldly, historical circumstances which it has tried to conceal behind an often pompous scientism and appeals to rationalism. The contemporary intellectual can learn from Orientalism how, on the other hand, either to limit or to enlarge realistically the scope of his discipline's claims, and on the other, to see the human ground [...] in which texts, visions, methods, and disciplines begin, grow, thrive, and degenerate. To investigate Orientalism is also to propose intellectual ways to for handling the methodological problems that history has brought forward, so to speak, in its subject matter, the Orient. But before that we must virtually see the humanistic values that Orientalism, by its scope, experiences, and structures, has all but eliminated.” [109f]

The White Man's Burden

(Rudyard Kipling)

Take up the White Man's burden–
Send forth the best ye breed–
Go, bind your sons to exile
To serve your captives' need;
To wait, in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild–
Your new-caught sullen peoples,
Half devil and half child.

Take up the White Man's burden–
In patience to abide,
To veil the threat of terror
And check the show of pride;
By open speech and simple,
An hundred times made plain,
To seek another's profit
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden–
The savage wars of peace–
Fill full the mouth of Famine,
And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
(The end for others sought)
Watch sloth and heathen folly
Bring all your hope to nought.

Take up the White Man's burden–
No iron rule of kings,
But toil of serf and sweeper–
The tale of common things.
The ports ye shall not enter,
The roads ye shall not tread,
Go, make them with your living
And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden,
And reap his old reward–
The blame of those ye better
The hate of those ye guard–
The cry of hosts ye humour
(Ah, slowly!) toward the light:–
“Why brought ye us from bondage,
Our loved Egyptian night?”

Take up the White Man's burden–
Ye dare not stoop to less–
Nor call too loud on Freedom
To cloak your weariness.
By all ye will or whisper,
By all ye leave or do,
The silent sullen peoples
Shall weigh your God and you.

Take up the White Man's burden!
Have done with childish days–
The lightly-proffered laurel,
The easy ungrudged praise:
Comes now, to search your manhood
Through all the thankless years,
Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,
The judgment of your peers.

C-a-f-f-e-e

C-a-f-f-e-e, / trink nicht so viel Caffee! /
Nicht für Kinder ist der Türkentrunk, /
schwächt die Nerven, macht dich blaß
und krank / Sei doch kein Muselman, /
der ihn nicht lassen kann! [C-a-f-f-e-e /
don't drink too much coffee / not for
children is the Turkish drink / weakens
nerves, makes you pale and sick / don't
be a Muslim then / who not desist it
can] (folk song, Bach melody)

Edward Said. *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*. London: Penguin, 1978/1995.

Rudyard Kipling. “The White Man's Burden”. *McClure's Magazine* 12, Feb. 1899.