



Wo er anknüpft, findet er verflochtene Türen!

Ahasver wandert durch die Welt!

Er betritt nicht mit gewöhnlicher Kleidung, sondern mit einer dunklen, aus Leder gefertigten, und er trägt die merkwürdige Maske mit einem roten Kreuz auf der Stirn. Die Maske ist für ihn nicht nur eine Maske, sondern eine Art Schutz vor den bösen Blicken der Menschen.

Er wandert, und die Welt um ihn herum ist ihm fremd. Er geht durch die Straßen der Städte und durch die Wälder der Dörfer, und er sieht die Menschen mit ihren verschiedenen Gesichtern und ihren verschiedenen Tugenden und Laster.

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Deutschland ist diesen Vandalen die Maser vom Gesicht.

Er wandert durch die Straßen der Städte und durch die Wälder der Dörfer, und er sieht die Menschen mit ihren verschiedenen Gesichtern und ihren verschiedenen Tugenden und Laster.

Die Welt kann sich der Gleichheit Erkenntnis nicht verschließen.



sizable remnant remains, and in the Middle East, where Islamic fundamentalists have imported an earlier Christian anti-Semitism to fortify their enmity toward Israel. The particular logic in each case eventually comes to seem almost superfluous: Enough of contemporary politics is sufficiently catastrophic to support most paranoia and conspiracy theories. By the end of his chronicle, even Wistrich questions the ultimate value of his project: What is the sense, he wonders, of applying the historian's rational craft to a history of irrationality?

Arts & Letters

CULTURE AND IMPERIALISM. By Edward W. Said. Knopf. 380 pp. \$25

Critics in the tradition of Matthew Arnold imagine culture to be above the selfish and sordid calculations of politics, a disinterested realm of sweetness and light. Where a social historian would record, for example, that the Greeks practiced slavery, the Arnoldian critic would note how in their culture and art the Greeks fashioned so noble an image of the individual soul that, in the long run, it constituted an argument against slavery.

Said, a professor of literature at Columbia, rejects notions of "high" culture and its essentially benign effects. In his earlier and highly influential book *Orientalism* (1978), he argued that Western writers had created a fictional Middle East, one that served to justify France's and England's imperialistic policies in the region. In *Culture and Imperialism* the suspect on trial is no longer simply the Orientalist but modern Western literature itself. When literary mandarins such as Arnold or T. S. Eliot specify the best that society has known and thought, they are actually, in Said's view, ennobling certain "codes of intellectual and moral behaviour" at the expense of other codes: theirs, in other words, at the expense of those of the oppressed and non-Western. Eliot is thus an imperialist, a literary Cecil Rhodes.

More specifically, Said charges, it is no accident that during the heyday of imperialism the novel "achieved eminence as the aesthetic form." The sense of narrative that 19th-century fiction fostered made the disjointed colonial conquests seem themselves part of an ongoing, necessary narrative, while specific novels, from Dickens's *Great Expectation* to Kipling's *Kim*, defined "us" and "them" in ways that created a rationale for the former gov-

the first single-volume overview of Jew-hatred throughout history.

"Although I loathe anti-Semitism," wrote Harold Nicholson satirically in 1945, "I do dislike Jews." Jews have proved, it seems, rather easy to dislike. After the Diaspora, Jewish exiles—with their prohibitions against intermarriage, their dietary laws, and their doctrine of election—met with distrust wherever they ventured in the Mediterranean world. But pagan "anti-Semitism" (to apply the term generically) hardly differed from other kinds of xenophobia common to the ancient world. Christianity, with its need to distinguish itself from its parent religion, came up with a novel accusation: The Jews had murdered God. This charge, elaborated with salacious and sensational details and drummed into the European populace for centuries, gave anti-Semitism a radically different character. It became theological, *metaphysical*; it no longer even required the presence of Jews. If, during the 18th century, the Enlightenment and French Revolution finally ended legalized discrimination and ghettoization, they paved the way for something worse. Once anti-Semitism was based on pseudoscientific theories of racial pollution, Christians gave up their campaign to convert the Jews. "The Nazis took over all the negative anti-Jewish stereotypes in Christianity," Wistrich writes, "but they removed the escape clause."

Fifty years after the Holocaust, anti-Semitism is again rearing its head, in Poland and Romania, where almost no Jews now live, in Russia, where a

erning the latter. Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene, and V. S. Naipaul might have exposed the evils of colonialism, but Said finds these "reformers" little better than the imperialists they criticized. Conrad's and Greene's fiction still presents a "Western view of the non-Western world," Said writes, that "is so ingrained as to blind [them] to other histories, other cultures, other aspirations."

This kind of argument—which owes a debt to Michel Foucault's linkages between power and knowledge—has become standard fare in the years since *Orientalism* was published. A reader might want less to question it than to wonder why a literary critic has so obviously checked literature at the door. Said discusses a novel no differently than he does a Verdi opera or a film such as *Apocalypse Now*. Since only extractable messages interest him, novels could just as well all be op-ed pieces in the *New York Times*. Said also tends to focus not on the best but on the worst work of an author and, in it, on some minor point. So in a chapter intriguingly titled "Jane Austen and Empire," he deigns to analyze only *Mansfield Park* and, in that, only a few passing references to Sir Thomas Bertram's having been a planter in Antigua, without ever considering the structure, language, characters, or irony of the novel. Does a person come to resemble, finally, that which he most violently opposes? It would seem so. Having so long unmasked Western literature as propaganda, Said writes literary criticism that is itself barely distinguishable from ideological polemics.



CATULLUS. By Charles Martin. Yale. 197 pp. \$30
THE POEMS OF CATULLUS. Translated by Charles Martin. Johns Hopkins. 181 pp. \$35
THE NORTON BOOK OF CLASSICAL LITERATURE. Edited by Bernard Knox. Norton. 866 pp. \$29.95

Who was the first Modernist poet? Ezra Pound? T. S. Eliot? Martin, a critic and translator, suggests an earlier candidate—Gaius Valerius Catullus, a Roman of the first century B.C. Catullus is the only surviving poet from a group known as "the modern ones" (the *neoterics*), a group of Roman bards who sought to throw off the prevailing Homeric yoke and explore new metrical patterns and shorter lyric forms. Even Catullus's subjects—adultery, homosexuality, licentiousness—surprise readers today, who seldom expect such candor in ancient verse. (In fact, as Martin observes, such racy topics were relatively familiar to literate Romans.) Catullus, who was born in Verona but spent most of his brief life (84?–54 B.C.) in a Rome approaching the zenith of its powers and sophistication, has long been regarded as a guilty pleasure among classicists. Repressed by Christian authorities, his work came close to disappearing altogether. After centuries in which he was only a name, a single manuscript of his surfaced in the 14th century in his native Verona, where it was recopied before vanishing forever.

Beyond mere prurience, what is the secret of Catullus's appeal for such 20th-century poets as Pound and Yeats? Catullus sought to explore the kind of truth that exists in everyday life, to release verse from the constraints of the epic. He created short, witty poems, sometimes on deliberately trivial subjects, teasing out his message through irony and innovative perspective. Consider this miniature poem (one of the few possible to quote in its entirety in a stodgy periodical):

I hate & love. And if you should ask how I can do
 both,
 I couldn't say; but I feel it, and it shivers me.

Catullus reveals the same complicated emotions, expressed in conversational tone, whether embarrassing a friend into returning a stolen napkin, attacking a bitter enemy with biting sarcasm, or wooing some object of his affections, notably the married female lover to whom he gave the name Lesbia. The very juxtaposition of Catullus's words and—in a larger sense—of the poems themselves