



Two Styles, One Time (Literary Form, the Denial of Coevalness, and the Plural East in Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* and Twain's *The Innocents Abroad*)

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ABSTRACT

This essay argues that the Orientalism of nineteenth-century travel writing is carried by literary form, and it demonstrates the claim comparatively. The denial of coevalness — the placing of the observed in a time other than the observer's, in Johannes Fabian's term — is by now a recognized feature of the genre; this essay asks at what level of the text it is produced. Reading two stylistically antithetical narratives — Charles Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888), written in a deliberately archaic, biblically inflected prose, and Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), written in a brisk American vernacular — it shows that both, by opposite formal means, deny the East a present coeval with the observer's. Doughty's scriptural register transposes Arabia into biblical time through diction, syntax, and tense; Twain's modern, ironic voice fixes the East as belated and unprogressive. That two such different styles converge on the same temporal distancing indicates that the effect is a property of the genre's forms — the eyewitness posture, the ethnographic present, the spectacle frame — rather than of individual prejudice. Reading with Said, Fabian, Bhabha, Pratt, and Spivak, the essay further argues that the same close attention to style exposes what those forms suppress: an East differentiated by region, tribe, and sect, in which Eastern voices themselves perform acts of distancing. Beneath the single binary the forms inscribe, the texts preserve the outline of a multiply centered Orient — a finding that connects nineteenth-century travel writing to current world-literary debate about centers and peripheries.

Keywords: Orientalism, Travel Writing, Literary Style, Coevalness, Ambivalence, World Literature.



Introduction

Travel writing sits at the meeting point of literature, history, and cultural politics. For Western readers it long served as a primary means of imagining distant places, and the East above all, yet its descriptions are rarely the neutral reports they claim to be. The traveler assumes the authority of the eyewitness, presents interpretation as observation, and in doing so circulates cultural hierarchy as plain description. This is the mechanism Edward Said named when he showed that Western representations of the East form a structured discourse bound up with power (Said, 1978).

One of the most durable forms that hierarchy takes is temporal. The East, even when observed in the present, is consistently pictured as belonging to an earlier age — what Johannes Fabian, writing of anthropology, called the denial of coevalness, the placing of the observed in a time other than the writer's own (Fabian, 1983). That category is by now well established in travel-writing studies, recognized as central to the genre (Ní Loingsigh, 2019) and already traced through late-Orientalist travel by Ali Behdad, who reads it as a politics of time at work even in apparently sympathetic accounts (Behdad, 1994). This essay takes the established concept as its starting point, not its discovery.

What remains open is a question of level. The temporal othering is usually analyzed as a matter of theme or attitude: what a given writer believes about the East. Less examined is where in the text it is actually produced. If it were a function of attitude, it should vary with the writer's sympathies; if it is a function of literary form, it should persist even across writers whose sympathies are opposite. That is a claim one can test.

Hence the comparison at the centre of this essay. Charles Doughty and Mark Twain share almost nothing as writers: Doughty is reverent, immersive, and archaic, Twain satirical, touristic, and vernacular. Yet their narratives of the nineteenth-century East converge on the same denial of coeval time. Reading their maximally opposed styles against each other, the essay argues that this temporal othering is produced by literary form rather than authorial attitude, and that the same close attention to style discloses, beneath the binary the forms assert, an East that is internally plural. The aim is to relocate the analysis of literary Orientalism from theme to form, and to connect it to current world-literary thinking about centers and peripheries.

This relocation matters on two levels, methodological and field-specific. Methodologically, it moves the question of literary Orientalism off theme and the author's attitude and onto form and time: style, on this account, is where the ideology actually operates. By demonstrating this comparatively, through two writers whose only shared feature is the effect their opposite styles produce, it offers a model that other pairings and periods can test.

For the study of these particular texts, it brings Doughty's notorious style and Twain's vernacular into a single analytic frame, where they have usually been treated apart,



and it puts the well-established category of coevalness to a specific new use. For the wider field, by recovering the differentiated East that the texts' language registers beneath their binary form, it links nineteenth-century travel writing to a central problem of world-literary studies: whether literary relation is best mapped from a single metropolitan centre outward to its peripheries, or as a field of multiple, mutually relativising centres. The essay's wager is that this plurality of centres is legible not only in contemporary or non-Western writing but already within the canonical Orientalist archive, once that archive is read at the level of the sentence.

The essay proceeds accordingly. It first establishes style as its object, then reads each writer's register in turn — Doughty's archaism, Twain's vernacular — before drawing out the convergence on which the formal claim rests. It isolates the grammatical seat of the temporal effect in tense, and examines Doughty's embedding of Arabic as a formal device in its own right; it then turns to the conventions of authority and knowledge through which the forms operate, the points at which those forms destabilize themselves, and, finally, the internally plural East that close reading recovers from beneath the binary. Throughout, the analysis stays at the level of the sentence.

Coevalness and the Critical Tradition

Travel writing has long been understood as a constructed and ideological form rather than a transparent record, and the study of it is now an established field with cross-disciplinary reach (Hulme & Youngs, 2002). Carl Thompson treats the genre as at once a mirror and a maker of cultural attitudes, capable of entrenching stereotype and of opening intercultural understanding, often in the same text (Thompson, 2011). That double capacity underlies both the scholarship and this study.

The strand most relevant here concerns time. Said's account of Orientalism implies a temporal hierarchy — the Orient observed in the present but pictured as backward — and Johannes Fabian gave the mechanism its name, the denial of coevalness, along with the term "allochronic" for the discourse that performs it (Fabian, 1983). The concept has since become a keyword of travel-writing studies, treated as central to how the genre constructs its Other (Ní Loingsigh, 2019), and Behdad has shown it operating across late-nineteenth-century Orientalist travel as a politics of time (Behdad, 1994). The temporal reading of Orientalist travel writing is thus a developed area of study.

Scholarship on the two texts examined here is correspondingly developed. Doughty's deliberately archaic style, a graft of Elizabethan and biblical syntax and transliterated Arabic onto English, has been studied since the work's reception and anatomized in the standard collection of essays on the book (Tabachnick, 1987); more recently, critical discourse analysis has read his Orientalism at the level of evaluative vocabulary, linking his lexical choices to themes of Oriental inferiority, barbarity, and untrustworthiness (Alzahrani, 2018). Twain's Orientalism in *The Innocents Abroad* has been actively reexamined. Mutluay Çetintaş, for instance, reads Twain's Ottoman



chapters alongside Ubeydullah Efendi's near-contemporary account of the United States. She analyses both through the tourist's gaze — drawing on Boorstin's distinction between the tourist and the traveller and on Urry and Larsen's account of the culturally framed gaze — and through Stuart Hall's mapping of the West-and-the-Rest binary, so that her comparison restores a second, eastward direction to a gaze usually treated as one-way (Mutluay Çetintaş, 2024). Tellingly, she reads several of the same Constantinople passages examined below — the catalogue of beggars and cripples on the bridges of the Golden Horn, the crowd of the Grand Bazaar — but reads them for the attitude they express and the gaze they enact, where the present essay reads them for the grammar of enumeration that produces the attitude in the first place.

Each of these approaches works at a level other than form: the coevalness tradition at the level of theme and attitude, Alzahrani's discourse analysis at the level of the word, Mutluay Çetintaş at the level of the gaze and of a single author set against a counterpart. What remains open is whether the temporal othering is a property of literary form as such — a question that can only be tested by holding stylistically opposite texts together and asking whether they converge. That comparative-stylistic test is this essay's contribution, together with the reading it makes possible: that close attention to style discloses a differentiated, multiply centered East, in line with the post-Orientalist and world-literary criticism that has questioned the single Orient of the classical binary (Dabashi, 2009).

A Framework of Five Tools

The argument draws on five tools, each addressing a different level at which travel writing does its work. Edward Said's Orientalism supplies the premise that Western representation of the East is a structured discourse inseparable from power, producing the Orient as an object of knowledge and control (Said, 1978). Said establishes that the patterns are systematic but is less precise about the mechanism by which a text places the East outside the observer's world. For that mechanism the essay turns to Johannes Fabian, whose denial of coevalness names the temporal distancing at issue and whose term "allochronism" describes the resulting discourse (Fabian, 1983). Fabian distinguishes the intersubjective time that an encounter actually shares with its subjects from the typological time of the written account, which sorts peoples onto a developmental scale; allochronism is the substitution of the second for the first. That distinction matters here because the generalizing present analyzed below is the grammatical form typological time takes: the tense in which a people is described not as encountered but as classified. Transposed from ethnography to travel writing, a transposition the field has already made, Fabian's category lets the analysis locate Orientalist temporality in tense, register, and diction, which is where this reading concentrates.



Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence accounts for the instability within that discourse: the authority a colonial text claims is undermined by the encounters on which it depends, so contradiction is a condition of the form rather than an exception to it (Bhabha, 1994). Mary Louise Pratt's notion of the contact zone names the material setting — spaces of radically unequal encounter — in which these representations are produced (Pratt, 1992). Gayatri Spivak's question of whether the subaltern can speak bears with particular force on the essay's closing argument. The difficulty she identifies is not merely that subaltern voices go unrecorded but that they cannot be heard as their own within a representational apparatus that has already set the terms; even speech that is transcribed is reframed and translated by the one who transcribes (Spivak, 1988). This both enables and complicates the reading offered here: when Doughty records a Bedouin proverb or embeds an Arabic word, the plurality his prose registers reaches the reader only through his framing, so the multiply centered East recovered below is glimpsed in the text's own language rather than spoken in its subjects' voices. Said and Fabian explain why Orientalist form is so consistent and how it sets its object in another time; Bhabha accounts for the instability within it, Pratt for the unequal ground on which it operates, and Spivak for the politics of voice that close reading makes visible and cannot resolve.

The reading that follows is comparative and stylistic, taking prose style as its primary object. Its corpus is two primary texts: Charles Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888) and Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* (1869). The two were chosen precisely because their styles are antithetical: Doughty's immersive, scripture-inflected archaism against Twain's brisk, satirical vernacular. That contrast makes their convergence on a single temporal effect analytically decisive, since a result that holds across maximally different styles cannot be attributed to style's surface or to either writer's temperament. Close reading attends to register, diction, syntax, and tense as the means by which each text enacts the denial of coevalness; the framework's concepts are then used to interpret what the formal analysis surfaces. Quotations are cited by chapter, and by Preface, for Twain, whose pagination varies across editions, and by volume and page for Doughty from the 1888 first edition.

Style as the Object of Analysis

The two texts could hardly be further apart as writing. Doughty composed *Arabia Deserta* in a deliberately artificial idiom, grafting Elizabethan and biblical syntax, Chaucerian diction, and transliterated Arabic onto English in revolt against what he took to be the degraded prose of his century. T. E. Lawrence called the result "a bible of its kind," and scholarship has long treated it as the book's central artistic problem (Tabachnick, 1987). Twain wrote in the opposite direction: the loose, comic, present-tense vernacular of an American newspaper correspondent, built on deflation and exaggeration for a mass readership. The usual procedure reads such styles as surface and their politics as content. This essay reverses that order, treating style itself as the site where the ideological work is done and asking what each register does to the East



it describes. In both cases the answer is a version of what Fabian terms allochronism: the placing of the observed in a time not shared with the observer (Fabian, 1983).

Doughty: Archaism as Allochronism

Doughty's denial of coevalness is accomplished before he describes anything, in the very grain of the language. The book opens not in the desert but in Damascus, with an old friend's question, and the prose is already scriptural: the narrator walks "in that long street of Damascus which is called Straight," toward orchards "full of the sweet spring as the garden of God," and is asked what could move him to take such journeys "into the fanatic Arabia" (Doughty, 1888, vol. 1, p. 1). Almost every element performs temporal distance. "The street which is called Straight" is a verbatim borrowing from the Book of Acts — the street of Paul's conversion — so that the reader's first coordinate in the East is a first-century site of Scripture rather than a nineteenth-century city. "The garden of God" carries the same charge from Genesis. The diction reinforces it: the archaic past "haild," the second-person "thee," and the inverted, periodic syntax all belong to the register of the Authorized Version, not to 1888. Framed as the remembered speech of a friend, the sentence reads less like reportage than like a passage of the King James Bible, and its cumulative effect is to relocate Arabia into biblical time before a single Bedouin has appeared. The reader does not travel to a contemporary place and then learn it is "backward"; the reader meets the East as already ancient, coeval with the Patriarchs and not with the Victorian observer.

This is not local colour reserved for the opening. The same biblically inflected, archaic idiom — paratactic, periodic, thick with Elizabethan diction and inverted syntax — governs the prose throughout the book; it is Doughty's constant medium rather than an effect switched on for the desert, and that very consistency is what scholarship has long identified as the work's central stylistic fact and its central difficulty (Tabachnick, 1987). Precisely because the archaism is everywhere and not a costume put on for Arabia, its temporal consequences attach to whatever the prose touches: the idiom that would sound antique turned upon a London street is the same idiom that, turned upon the desert, makes Arabia scriptural. Where critical discourse analysis has located Doughty's Orientalism in his evaluative vocabulary — the lexical markers of inferiority and barbarity (Alzahrani, 2018) — the temporal work described here operates above the lexicon, in syntax and register themselves. The much-remarked difficulty of the style is therefore not ornament but argument: allochronism realized as grammar.

Twain: Vernacular Modernity as Allochronism

Twain reaches the same destination from the opposite pole of style. His instrument is the modern American present — colloquial, brisk, faintly impatient — and that voice installs the narrator as the very embodiment of the contemporary against which the East is measured and found belated. The mechanism is most visible where the judgement is flattest: of the Galilee villages he remarks that "Palestine is not changed



any since those days, in manners, customs, architecture, or people" (Twain, 1869, ch. 48). The colloquial "not changed any," the blunt declarative finality, and the four-item list that disposes of a civilisation in a breath together turn the region into a museum exhibit for a tourist's inspection. And the unspoken measure of "changed" is the modern world the narrator carries with him. Elsewhere the temporal axis is made explicit and comic, as when Twain stages a state occasion as a meeting between "the highest modern civilization, progress, and refinement" and a people "by nature and training filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive, superstitious" (Twain, 1869, ch. 13). The antithesis is structural, almost diagrammatic; "unprogressive" is the load-bearing word, fixing the East outside the forward motion of history that "progress" claims for the West.

Where Doughty sacralises, Twain deflates, and the deflation has its own grammar. Magdala is "thoroughly ugly and cramped, squalid, uncomfortable, and filthy," the adjectives piling without pause into bathos, and its inhabitants are "abject beggars by nature, instinct and education" (Twain, 1869, ch. 48), the rising tricolon converting a present condition of poverty into a permanent, inborn essence. The same reflex governs his landscapes — "the God-forsaken barrenness and desolation of Syria," so absolute that a Syrian, he jokes, would "go wild with ecstasy" at the mere sight of greenery (Twain, 1869, ch. 44) — and his crowds, dissolved into "a swarm of uncouth Arabs" by a single collective noun (Twain, 1869, ch. 44). The register is the precise reverse of Doughty's: modern where Doughty is ancient, mocking where he is reverent. Yet the temporal effect is identical. Vernacular modernity is not the opposite of biblical archaism in its results; it is another route to the same denial of coeval time. A third device completes the vernacular's repertoire: the comic catalogue. Twain's most characteristic sentence is the rapid inventory that piles disparate items into a single chain, and in the Constantinople chapters this list-making becomes the engine of the othering. Crowding the streets, he writes, are "beggars, who beg forever"; "wonderful cripples, distorted out of all semblance of humanity"; "vagabonds driving laden asses"; "porters carrying dry-goods boxes as large as cottages"; and "peddlers of grapes, hot corn, pumpkin seeds, and a hundred other things, yelling like fiends" (Twain, 1869, ch. 33). The grammar of the catalogue performs the reduction: by stringing persons, animals, and merchandise along one chain of semicolons, the sentence levels them to a single plane, so that beggars, asses, and pumpkin seeds become interchangeable items of spectacle. The Grand Bazaar is rendered the same way: a swarm of "dirt, beggars, asses, yelling peddlers, porters, dervishes, high-born Turkish female shoppers, Greeks, and weird-looking and weirdly dressed Mohammedans" (Twain, 1869, ch. 33), a series in which human categories and refuse share one grammatical rank and difference registers only as an accumulating heap of the curious. At its limit the catalogue becomes a freak-show inventory, ranking the city's beggars as one might grade exhibits — "the very heart and home of cripples and human monsters" — and itemising a "three-legged woman" and a man whose ruined face is "the color of a fly-blown beefsteak" (Twain, 1869, ch. 33). The enumerating



eye that collects and grades these bodies is the same eye that dismisses St. Sophia as "the rustiest old barn in heathendom" (Twain, 1869, ch. 33): in each case the vernacular reduces what it surveys to one more entry in a list, and the listing is itself the act of mastery. The device repays attention because Doughty enumerates too — his Preface promises the very "soil of Arabia smelling of sàmn and camels" (Doughty, 1888, vol. 1, Preface) — yet where Doughty's inventory reverently preserves and names, each term a distinction kept, Twain's catalogue contemptuously levels and equates; the same formal act of listing, charged with opposite affect, issues in the same result, the East gathered into a collection and held before the surveying Western eye.

Tense and the Ethnographic Present

If the denial of coevalness is a matter of form, its deepest formal seat is tense. Fabian's allochronism is, at bottom, grammatical: the device by which writing lifts the observed out of the shared moment of encounter and into a timeless characterisation is the generalising, habitual present: the tense of "the Arab is," "the people here are," "their ways are." It is a present that does not report what happened once but asserts what is always the case, and in doing so it removes its object from history. Both writers fall back on it.

In Twain the ethnographic present does its work through the verdict and the type. "Palestine is not changed any" is grammatically a statement about an unchanging present that absorbs the past into itself; "abject beggars by nature, instinct and education" predicates a timeless essence in the copula, so that what the traveller saw on one afternoon becomes what these people simply are. Doughty reaches the same tense by way of the proverb. Reporting a local saying that any inhabitant of Maan, asked who the sheykh is, will answer that he himself is the one (Doughty, 1888, vol. 1), he casts a single social observation in the gnomic, conditional, habitual mood — a thing said; a stranger who might ask; the answer that would come — so that a trait becomes a standing characteristic, true at no particular moment because held to be true at all. The proverb form is allochronism in miniature: it makes the Maanite's pride a fixed attribute of his kind rather than an act in coeval time. What the adjective does locally — freezing a quality into an essence — the habitual present does structurally, across whole descriptions. Tense, more than vocabulary, is where the temporal othering is most deeply lodged, which is why it survives translation between Doughty's archaism and Twain's slang: both, when they generalise, generalise in the timeless present.

Arabic Inside English: Authentication and Exoticism

Doughty's most singular formal device is the embedding of transliterated Arabic within his English. The book sets a sustained vocabulary of Arabic terms — sheykh, kella, wasm, sàmn, and many more — directly into its English sentences, glossing them, where it glosses them at all, only once, so that the edition appends a glossary of Arabic words to help the reader keep pace. The device performs two opposite



operations at once. It authenticates: the writer who handles the local words as his own claims an intimate, first-hand knowledge that no armchair authority could counterfeit, and so reinforces the eyewitness and encyclopedic authority examined below. And it exoticises: the untranslated or half-glossed word leaves a residue of difference on the page, a mark of the unassimilable that fixes the East as a place whose very names resist the reader's language. The Preface itself supplies a specimen. In the very sentence that announces the book's aim, Doughty plants the Arabic *sàmn* (clarified butter) untranslated in his English, explained nowhere in the line that carries it and left to the glossary the edition appends (Doughty, 1888, vol. 1, Preface). The word at once authenticates and estranges: it certifies a writer so at home in the desert that its everyday kitchen-word is his, while leaving on the page a residue the reader cannot absorb without turning to the back matter, where the East waits pre-annotated. In Doughty the two operations are inseparable, which is why his prose can feel at once the most knowing and the most foreign of Victorian travel books.

Yet the same device, read against the grain of the binary, does something the binary cannot accommodate. The Arabic terms are not interchangeable tokens of "the East"; they encode fine internal distinctions — between kinds of dwelling and rank, between the raid and the feud, between degrees of kinship and tribe — that the English opposition of "civilised" and "primitive" flattens into one undifferentiated Orient. The lexicon that exoticises also preserves a densely structured, internally various social world, naming differences that the form's binary works to erase; in this respect the embedded Arabic anticipates the argument made below. Temporally, too, the device compounds the allochronism: glossed again and again through biblical and patriarchal analogy, the Arabic words arrive already aged, their strangeness folded back into the scriptural time the register has established.

The Convergence, and What It Demonstrates

The convergence is what matters here. If a writer who venerates Arabia in the language of the Bible and a writer who mocks it in the slang of the newspaper both end by placing it outside coeval time, the temporal othering cannot be a function of either man's attitude, since reverence and ridicule produce the same result. It must instead belong to the forms through which both write: the eyewitness posture that makes the traveler the measure of the real, the descriptive present that freezes the observed into type, the framing of encounter as spectacle. This is what it means to call Orientalism a system rather than a sentiment (Said, 1978); Fabian specifies the system's temporal engine, and the Doughty–Twain contrast supplies the demonstration that the engine runs on form. The genre does its work regardless of its practitioners' sympathies.

The Forms of Authority and of Knowledge

This work rests on two formal conventions. The first is the rhetoric of the eyewitness. Twain makes it programmatic in his Preface, whose stated purpose is to show the reader the East "with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who traveled in those



countries before him," and where he insists "I have seen with impartial eyes" (Twain, 1869, preface). The claim to direct, unmediated sight is precisely what licenses partial judgment to pass as transparent fact; impartiality is asserted as a formal guarantee, not demonstrated. The second convention is the inventory. Doughty announces in his Preface the aim of setting down "some parcel of the soil of Arabia smelling of sàmn and camels" (Doughty, 1888, vol. 1, Preface), and the book delivers an exhaustive catalogue of geology, tribe, dialect, and custom. To render the East thus fully knowable — surveyed, classified, contained within a Western text — is to assert a form of possession over it, the union of knowledge and power Said locates at the centre of Orientalism (Said, 1978). The confessional eye and the encyclopedic catalogue are formal conventions first of all.

Where the Forms Crack: Ambivalence

Because these effects are produced by form, they are also destabilized by form. Twain's chief instrument, irony, cannot be aimed only outward: the same satiric reflex that demeans the East repeatedly turns on the American travelers themselves and culminates in the concession that travel is "fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness" (Twain, 1869, conclusion), a sentence in open tension with the contempt elsewhere. Doughty's immersive idiom carries its own counter-pressure: a method built on living among the Bedouin keeps admitting their humanity, most memorably in the desert woman who shelters the exhausted, friendless traveler as if he were her own kin (Doughty, 1888, vol. 1). Far from being lapses in otherwise consistent texts, these are the predictable instability of forms that must depend on the very people they distance — the ambivalence Bhabha describes, in which colonial discourse undermines the authority it asserts (Bhabha, 1994). So the instability appears in the same formal features that produce the othering.

The Plural East the Prose Betrays

Close reading discloses one further thing the binary forms suppress. For all that the texts oppose a single East to a single West, their language keeps registering an Orient internally divided. Doughty's opening is the clearest case: the phrase "the fanatic Arabia" is not the narrator's but his Damascus friend's (Doughty, 1888, vol. 1, p. 1), an Eastern, urban, Levantine voice marking the Bedouin interior as fanatical, an act of othering performed within the East. The book's ethnographic detail everywhere distinguishes town from desert, and one tribe or sect from the next; Twain too separates Damascene, Galilean, and Bedouin even as his rhetoric flattens them. Recent criticism that reads Twain alongside an Ottoman traveler's account of the West points the same way, restoring a second direction to a gaze usually treated as one-way (Mutluay Çetintaş, 2024). The forms present a single Orient, though the prose keeps registering several. Here Spivak's question becomes unavoidable — which East is represented, and whose voice is heard as it is (Spivak, 1988) — and here the analysis opens toward the larger claim that beneath the inherited binary these texts preserve, almost despite themselves, the outline of a multiply centered East.



Form, Not Attitude: The Stakes of the Reading

This reading is as much about method as about the two books. The denial of coevalness is already a familiar category in travel-writing studies (Fabian, 1983; Ní Loingsigh, 2019), and Behdad has traced its workings in late-Orientalist travel (Behdad, 1994). The contribution here is therefore not the concept but its localization. The Doughty–Twain contrast demonstrates that the temporal othering is produced by literary form rather than authorial attitude: reverence and ridicule, the biblical and the vernacular, arrive at the same denial of coeval time, so the operation must belong to the genre's forms rather than to the writers' opinions. Naming that operation with Fabian and locating it in register and tense gives Said's general thesis a specific, demonstrable point of attack at the level of language (Said, 1978; Fabian, 1983). This is the essay's principal contribution: to show, comparatively and at the level of style, that the Orientalism of travel writing is a formal effect.

Two objections are worth answering, and doing so sharpens the claim. The first is that a reading so concerned with register risks dissolving politics into mere stylistics, treating as ornament what is in fact ideology. The reply is that the argument asserts the opposite: style does not decorate a politics formed elsewhere; it is the medium in which the politics is enacted. The denial of coevalness is not illustrated by Doughty's archaism and Twain's vernacular; it is performed by them, in the choice of tense, allusion, and diction, which is why it can be read nowhere but in the sentences. The second objection is methodological: that two texts cannot establish a structural claim. But the inference here does not rest on the size of a sample; it rests on the logic of a contrast. The two narratives function not as instances drawn from a population but as a controlled opposition, in which nearly every variable — temperament, nationality, register, attitude toward the East — differs, while only the effect is held constant. When a result survives that degree of difference, it cannot be attributed to the surface features that differ; it must belong to what the texts share, which is the form of the genre itself. Its conclusion is therefore offered as a demonstrated mechanism inviting wider testing, not as a statistical generalization.

The same formalism explains the instability the texts cannot suppress. Ambivalence, on this account, reflects no hidden decency in the author but follows structurally from forms that must draw on the proximity and humanity they work to deny, which is why it surfaces alike in Twain's self-directed irony and in Doughty's records of Bedouin care (Bhabha, 1994). It is close formal reading, finally, that exposes the limit of the binary the texts inherit. Their forms oppose one East to one West; their language, attended to closely, keeps registering an Orient differentiated by region, tribe, and sect, and even records Eastern voices performing their own acts of distancing. The Damascene who warns against "the fanatic Arabia" speaks not from outside the Orient but from one of its centres about another.

This is also where the reading speaks to a debate beyond travel studies. Recovering a plural, internally divided East from beneath a binary form connects directly to a question recent world-literary criticism keeps returning to: is cultural relation best



mapped as a single centre with its peripheries, or as a field of many centres that relativise one another? The post-Orientalist critique has argued that the unitary Orient is itself the artifact of a Western optic rather than a feature of the world (Dabashi, 2009); the present reading locates the same insight at the level of the sentence, showing that even the canonical texts of the Orientalist archive preserve, in their language if not their rhetoric, the outline of that plural map. Twain's separation of Damascene, Galilean, and Bedouin, however contemptuous, is still an admission that the East is many places. Read for what their forms suppress, these books become unexpected witnesses against the single Orient they were once taken to confirm.

Naming that plural map is the essay's final ambition, and here the reading enters a live methodological dispute. The dominant accounts of world-literary relation have tended either to retain a single centre or to recast the question as one of circulation. The first keeps a metropolitan core from which forms radiate outward to a periphery, as in Moretti's adaptation of world-systems theory to the novel, where the literary field is at once one and radically unequal (Moretti, 2000). The second treats world literature as writing that lives beyond its culture of origin and gains in translation, as in Damrosch's influential account (Damrosch, 2003), a confidence in translation that Apter has since contested by foregrounding the untranslatable (Apter, 2013). Against the assumption of a single centre, this reading supplies evidence from an unlikely quarter. The canonical Orientalist travel book — the very genre that did most to manufacture a unitary East — proves, read closely, to record a multiplicity of centres, each Eastern locality positioned against the others by voices internal to the region. What this essay calls a plurality of centres (*ta'addud al-marākiz*) is therefore not merely a normative proposal about how world literature ought to be mapped but a descriptive fact recoverable even from the archive of the single Orient, provided the analysis descends to the level of style. [If *ta'addud al-marākiz* appears in your earlier published work, cite it here to mark the through-line.] The contribution is in this sense double: a method — close stylistic reading — and the finding that the method yields, the plural centres legible beneath the binary form.

These conclusions rest on two canonical nineteenth-century Anglophone narratives, and that limited corpus is a deliberate condition of the method: the argument depends on holding two maximally contrasting styles against each other, which a larger and more uniform sample would blur. The formal approach proposed here invites extension — to other registers and periods, and to the travel writing of those whom Doughty and Twain described — as a way of testing whether the link between literary form and the denial of coevalness holds beyond these cases, and of showing further how the genre's language works against the single Orient its conventions assert. Such work might also be paired with the lexical discourse analysis of Orientalist vocabulary, with which it is complementary (Alzahrani, 2018), and carried into contemporary and digital travel media, where whether the denial of coevalness persists or is transformed remains an open question.



Conclusion

This essay has read Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* and Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* as a study in form. Its central finding is that two writers of opposite sensibility and opposite style produce the same denial of coeval time to the East, and that this convergence locates the Orientalist effect in the genre's literary forms rather than in individual prejudice. The denial of coevalness, an established category in the field, is here shown to be a matter of register and tense, demonstrable through stylistic contrast.

The argument's corollaries are that ambivalence is a formal consequence of those same conventions, surfacing wherever the text must depend on what it distances, and that close stylistic reading discloses, beneath the binary the forms assert, an East internally differentiated and multiply centred. By relocating the study of literary Orientalism from theme to form, and by connecting these nineteenth-century texts to the world-literary argument for a plurality of centres, the essay offers both a method other pairings can test and a reading that returns to the travelers' own language the complexity their forms work to deny.

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1. Editorial note — remove before submission: (1) Several sources below were integrated to position the argument; read each in full before citing — do not submit any source unread. (2) Confirm the bibliographic details flagged in red brackets, and supply the two Doughty page numbers for the passages still cited by volume only (the Maan proverb and the desert-woman passage). (3) This draft uses APA; convert to the citation style your target journal requires (often MLA or Chicago in literary studies).
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