

7 Stereotypes of Others

Christians are right and pagans are wrong.

THE SONG OF ROLAND

East is East and West is West, and never the twain will meet.

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It is only relatively recently that cultural historians have become interested in the idea of the 'Other', with a capital O – or perhaps with a capital A, since it was the French theorists who led the way in discussions of *l'Autre*. It might be more illuminating to think of people different from oneself in the plural rather than turning them into an undifferentiated Other, but since this process of homogenization is so common, cultural historians need to study it. This new interest of theirs runs parallel to the rise of concern with cultural identity and cultural encounters, just one example among many of present preoccupations, such as the debate over multiculturalism, prompting scholars to ask new questions about the past.

In the case of groups confronted with other cultures, two opposite reactions recur. One is to deny or to ignore cultural distance, to assimilate others to ourselves or our neighbours by the use of analogy, whether this device is employed consciously or unconsciously. The other is viewed as the reflection of the self. Thus the Muslim warrior Saladin was perceived by some Crusaders as a knight. The explorer Vasco da Gama, entering an Indian temple for the first time, interpreted a sculpture of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as an image of the Holy Trinity (just as the Chinese, a century or so later, would interpret images of the Virgin Mary as representations of the Buddhist goddess Kuan Yin). The Jesuit missionary St Francis Xavier, encountering Japanese culture for the first time in the middle of the sixteenth century, described the emperor (who had high status but little power) as an oriental 'pope'. It is by means of analogy that the exotic is made

intelligible, that it is domesticated.

The second common response is the reverse of the first. It is the conscious or unconscious construction of another culture as the opposite of one's own. In this fashion, fellow-humans are 'othered'. Thus the *Song of Roland* described Islam as a diabolical inversion of Christianity, and presents an image of Muslims as worshipping an infernal Trinity, composed of Apollo, Muhammad and a certain 'Termagant'. The Greek historian Herodotus presented an image of ancient Egyptian culture as the inverse of the Greek, noting that in Egypt people wrote from right to left instead of from left to right, that men carried burdens on their heads rather than their shoulders, that women made water sitting down instead of standing up, and so on. He also described the Persians and the Scythians as in some ways the antithesis of the Greeks.

In the last paragraphs the term 'image' was used in the sense of an image in the mind and the evidence came from texts. To recover or reconstruct these mental images, the testimony of visual images is obviously indispensable, despite all the problems of interpretation that pictures raise. Where writers can hide their attitudes behind an impersonal description, artists are forced by the medium in which they work to take up a clear position, representing individuals from other cultures as either like or unlike themselves.

Two vivid examples of the first process described above, the assimilation of the other, both come from seventeenth-century Dutch engravings. In one, a Brazilian Indian was fitted out with a classical bow and arrows. In this way the Indians were identified with the barbarians of the ancient world, more familiar to the artist and the viewer alike than the peoples of the Americas. In the other engraving, illustrating an account of the Dutch East India Company's embassy to China, a Tibetan lama was represented as a Catholic priest and his prayer beads as a rosary (illus. 64). The accompanying text goes even further in the direction of assimilation, the English version describing the lama's hat as 'much like a cardinal's, with broad brims', while the French version, aimed at a Catholic audience, also compares the lama's wide sleeves to those of a Franciscan friar and his 'rosary' to those of the Dominicans and Franciscans. The hat represented in the engraving, incidentally, differs from the traditional pointed cap of the lamas, which an Italian traveller of the early eighteenth century, in another attempt to assimilate the unknown to the known, compared to a bishop's mitre. Unlike some other images of distant cultures illustrated here (illus. 3, for example), the engraving appears to have been based on the written text rather than on sketches made from life.



64 Engraving showing a Tibetan ambassador with a 'rosary', from Jan Nieuhof, *L'Ambassade de la Compagnie Orientale des Provinces Unies vers l'Empereur de la Chine...* (Leiden: J. de Meurs, 1665).

In other words, when encounters between cultures take place, each culture's images of the other are likely to be stereotyped. The word 'stereotype' (originally a plate from which an image could be printed), like the word cliché (originally the French term for the same plate), is a vivid reminder of the link between visual and mental images. The stereotype may not be completely false, but it often exaggerates certain features of reality and omits others. The stereotype may be more or less crude, more or less violent. However, it necessarily lacks nuances since the same model is applied to cultural situations which differ considerably from one another. It has been observed, for example, that European pictures of American Indians were often composite ones, combining traits from Indians of different regions to create a simple general image.

In analysing such images, it is difficult to do without the concept of the 'gaze', a new term, borrowed from the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), for what would earlier have been described as 'point of view'. Whether we are thinking about the intentions of artists or about the ways in which different groups of viewers looked at their work, it is useful to think in terms of the western gaze, for example, the scientific gaze, the colonial gaze, the tourist gaze or the male gaze (below, pp. 136ff.).¹ The gaze often expresses attitudes of which the viewer may not be conscious, whether they are hates,

fears or desires projected on to the other. The case for psychoanalytical interpretations of images – an approach to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 10 – receives some of its strongest support from images of aliens, abroad or at home.

Some of these stereotypes are positive, as in the case of the ‘noble savage’, a phrase used in 1672 by the English poet and playwright John Dryden. The image was a classical one which was revived in the sixteenth century and developed alongside its opposite, the image of the cannibal. Pictures, including the woodcuts in the French Protestant missionary Jean de Léry’s *History of a Voyage to Brazil* (1578), illustrated this concept. The high point of the idea of the noble savage was the eighteenth century. It was at this time that the culture of Tahiti, for example, was seen as a survival of the golden age. The inhabitants of Patagonia and Polynesia in particular were viewed by European travellers through the spectacles of the classical tradition as ‘modern exemplars of the austere virtuous lives led in classical times by such peoples as the Spartans and the Scythians’.²

Unfortunately, most stereotypes of others – the Jews as seen by the Gentiles, the Muslims by the Christians, blacks by whites, peasants by townspeople, soldiers by civilians, women by men, and so on – were and are either hostile, contemptuous or, at the very least, condescending. A psychologist would probably look for the fear underlying the hatred and also for the unconscious projection of undesirable aspects of the self on to the other.

It is perhaps for this reason that the stereotypes often take the form of inversions of the viewer’s self-image. The cruder stereotypes are based on the simple assumption that ‘We’ are human or civilized while ‘They’ are little different from animals such as the dogs and pigs to whom they are frequently compared, not only in European languages but also in Arabic and Chinese. In this way others are turned into ‘the Other’. They are exoticized, distanced from the self. They may even be turned into monsters.

The Monstrous Races

The classic as well as the classical example of this process is that of the so-called ‘monstrous races’, imagined by the ancient Greeks as existing in faraway places such as India, Ethiopia or Cathay.³ These races included the dog-headed people, (Cynocephali); those lacking heads (Blemmyae); the one-legged (Sciopods); cannibals (Anthropophagi); Pygmies; the martial, one-breasted race of women (Amazons) and so on. The *Natural History* of the ancient Roman

writer Pliny transmitted these stereotypes to the Middle Ages and beyond. For instance, the reference in *Othello* to the people ‘whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders’ is clearly to the Blemmyae.

The monstrous races may have been invented to illustrate theories of the influence of climate, the assumption being that people who live in places which are too cold or too hot cannot be fully human.⁴ All the same, it may be illuminating to treat these images not as pure invention but as examples of the distorted and stereotyped perception of remote societies. After all, the pygmies still exist and some peoples eat human flesh on certain occasions. As India and Ethiopia became more familiar to Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and no Blemmyae, Amazons or Sciopods could be found, the stereotypes were relocated in the New World. For example, the Amazon river takes its name from the belief that Amazons lived there. Remote peoples were viewed as morally as well as physically monstrous, as in the case of the cannibals believed to live in Brazil, Central Africa and elsewhere.⁵

For a vivid image of cannibalism, expressing and doubtless also spreading the stereotype, we may turn to a famous woodcut which was circulating in Germany about six years after the Portuguese first landed in Brazil in the year 1500 (illus. 65). In the centre of the print



65 'The island and people which were discovered by the Christian king of Portugal or his subjects', German woodcut showing Brazilian cannibals, c. 1505. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich.

we see fragments of a mutilated human body hanging from a branch, while the savage at the extreme left tucks into a human arm. This example throws some light on the process of stereotyping. The statement it makes is not exactly false. Some of the Brazilian Indians, the adult males of the Tupinambá for example, whose customs were described in detail by some European travellers later in the sixteenth century, did eat some human flesh, notably that of their enemies, on some ritualized occasions. But the print gives the false impression that human flesh was normal everyday food for all the Indians. It helped to define the inhabitants of a whole continent as 'cannibals'. In this sense it made a contribution to what has been called the 'man-eating myth', to the process in which one culture (not always the western) dehumanizes another by claiming that its members eat people.

Today, readers may find it difficult to take the idea of the monstrous races seriously, to recognize that our ancestors believed in their existence or at least in the possibility of their existence somewhere. Such scepticism is somewhat paradoxical, given the many current images of aliens from outer space, which should perhaps be seen as the ultimate displacement of Pliny's stereotype. Come to that, we continue to view groups culturally distant from ourselves in stereotyped terms. An obvious example is that of the 'terrorist', a term which currently conjures up an image of extreme and mindless violence. If these 'terrorists' – Irish, Palestinian, Kurdish, and so on – are redescribed as 'guerrillas', they recover their human faces together with intelligible motives, not to say ideals. Images of Muslim terrorists in particular have become common in films, especially in the 1990s, following the decline of the Communist 'other' after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. 'Terrorism' is associated with equally ill-defined pejorative terms such as 'fanaticism', 'extremism' and, more recently, 'fundamentalism'. These hostile images of Islam are linked to what is often described as the 'orientalist' mentality.

Orientalism

In the last twenty years of the twentieth century, the concept of 'orientalism', once a neutral term employed to describe western specialists on the cultures of the Near, Middle and Far East, became a pejorative one.⁶ Its change in meaning is largely due to one man, the literary critic Edward Said, and his book *Orientalism*, first published in 1978. Said described his kind of Orientalism as 'the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient' which developed in the west from the late eighteenth century onwards. Alternatively, he referred to it as a 'discourse',

or (quoting the British historian Victor Kiernan) as ‘Europe’s collective daydream of the Orient’, or as ‘a western style for dominating ... the Orient’ against which the Occident defined itself.⁷

Said worked with texts, deciding not to discuss the cultural stereotypes of what he called ‘the Oriental genre tableau’, but his ideas can be – and have been – used to analyse the paintings of the Middle East by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867), Théodore Géricault (1791–1824), Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), and Delacroix, as well as by English, German, Italian and Spanish artists.⁸ It would not be difficult to assemble a substantial corpus of western paintings of the Middle East which are filled with stereotypes and focus on sex, cruelty, idleness and ‘oriental luxury’ – harems, baths, odalisques, slaves and so on. The Ingres painting *Odalisque with Slave* (illus. 66) is fairly typical of the genre, giving a western spectator a sense of entering a harem and so of viewing the most intimate secrets of an alien culture.

These visual images illustrate, or at any rate they run parallel to western literary stereotypes of the Orient, such as Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* (1721). Indeed, we know that some artists turned to literature to help with ‘local colour’, as Ingres turned to the letters from eighteenth-century Istanbul written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Ingres transcribed some of the letters, including the passage in which Lady Mary describes her visit to a Turkish bath, in preparation for painting his *Bain Turc* (1862–3).⁹



66 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *Odalisque with Slave*, 1839/40, oil on canvas mounted on panel. Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, MA.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographs of scenes from Middle Eastern life taken by Europeans for a European audience perpetuated some of these stereotypes.¹⁰ So did films, notably *The Sheikh* (1921), in which the leading role of Ahmed Ben Hassan was played by the Italian-American actor Rudolph Valentino, as if to American WASP eyes all olive-skinned men were interchangeable. The long life of the stereotypes as well as their multiplication suggests that these examples of collective fantasy or the 'imaginary' responded to the voyeuristic desires of viewers.

The previous paragraphs have tried to show that an analysis of the western images of the Middle East in Said's terms is indeed enlightening. All the same, this approach obscures as well as illuminates. Western attitudes to 'the Orient' were no more monolithic than the Orient itself, but varied with the artist and the genre. Delacroix and Géricault, for instance, both expressed enthusiasm for the cultures of North Africa. Distinctions are in order. To complicate matters still further, it is possible to find what might be called 'oriental orientalists'. The owner of Ingres' *Bain Turc* was the Ottoman diplomat Khalil Bey, while Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), a Turkish artist who had studied in Paris with Gérôme, painted scenes from his own culture in the western style. It would seem that the modernization of the Ottoman Empire required viewing it through western or at any rate westernizing eyes.

Another important distinction to make is between a 'romantic' exoticizing style and what has been called the 'documentary', 'reporting' or 'ethnographic' style, to be found in some nineteenth-century painters of the Middle East as in the earlier work of John White in Virginia (illus. 3) or John Webber (1752–1798) in the Pacific, who was chosen by Captain Cook to accompany him on his third voyage in order 'to preserve, and to bring home' images of 'the most memorable scenes of our transactions'. Examples of this ethnographic style, the equivalent of the 'eyewitness style' discussed above (Introduction) include *Two Seated Women* by Delacroix (illus. 1), the drawing of the Ottoman sultan going to the mosque (illus. 2) by the French artist-reporter Constantin Guys (1802–1892), and the *Street Scene, Damascus* (illus. 67) by Alberto Pasini (1826–1899), including horsemen, street traders, veiled and turbaned figures and an impressive house jutting into the street, the windows covered by latticework so that the women within could see out while themselves remaining invisible.¹¹

Even scenes like these, despite their strong 'reality effect', need, like later photographs, to be utilized with care as evidence of social life in the Muslim world in the nineteenth century. Artists often used



67 Alberto Pasini, *Street Scene, Damascus*, oil on canvas. Philadelphia Museum of Art.

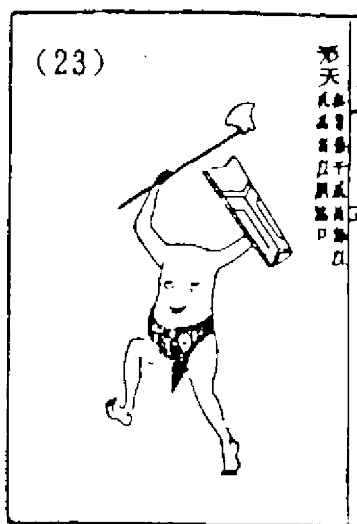
Jewish female models because the Muslim women were inaccessible. Sometimes they admitted what they were doing, as in the case of *A Jewish Wedding in Morocco* (another work by Delacroix), but on other occasions they did not. The identity of the women in *Two Seated Women* has often been discussed. They may be Jewish, but the details of their costume suggest that they are indeed Arab Muslims, confirming the tradition that a French acquaintance of the artist's, an engineer working at the port of Algiers, persuaded one of his staff to allow Delacroix to draw his women from life.¹² Another problem of the documentary image is its focus on the typical at the expense of the individual. What is considered to be typical of a given culture may be the result of years of observation, but it may also be the fruit of hurried reading or of pure prejudice.

What Said christened or rechristened 'Orientalism' is a special case of a much wider phenomenon, the stereotyped perception of one culture by another, or of individuals from one culture by individuals from another. Northern European images of the South, especially of Spain and Italy, not all that different – especially when Andalusia or Sicily was the setting – from images of the Orient, might be described as examples of 'Meridionalism'. Images of the far North of Europe, including Lapland and Finland, might be described as 'Borealism'. European images of Africa developed in parallel to images of the Orient. In North and South America, artists represented black slaves in a more or less stereotyped manner.

Among the more sympathetic portrayals of African Americans were a series by Eastman Johnson (1824–1906), a northerner – he was born in Maine – who supported the abolition of slavery. His best-

known treatment of the subject, *Negro Life at the South*, was painted in 1859, on the eve of the American Civil War. This scene of the slaves relaxing after their labours – a man playing a banjo, mothers playing with children, a young man sweet-talking a pretty girl – was described at the time as a pictorial equivalent of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel had appeared seven years earlier, in 1852). It was praised as an authentic representation of 'the affections, the humor, the patience and serenity which redeem from brutality and ferocity the civilized though subjugated African'. More recently, Johnson's images of African Americans have been described as 'nonstereotypical'. Yet *Negro Life at the South* is composed of stock poses and attributes – the banjo for instance – associated with the slaves. I would prefer to say that the figures are in a relatively gentle and sympathetic manner stereotyped.¹³

Non-European images of Europeans as 'the other' also bear eloquent testimony to cultural stereotyping. The Chinese as well as the Europeans had visions of monstrous races, as some seventeenth-century woodcuts suggest (illus. 68), including one figure uncannily like the classical Blemmyae (a case of cultural diffusion or independent invention?). A sixteenth-century Japanese bottle (illus. 69), like a number of painted screens made a few years later, shows the Portuguese with their breeches blown up like balloons, suggesting that the clothes of the Europeans – like their big noses – were viewed as particularly exotic. African images of the Portuguese made similar points (illus. 70). In this sense we may speak of 'Occidentalism', even



68 Woodcut of a monster, from Wu Renchen, *Shan-Hai-Jing. Guang. Zhu.*



69 Powder flask with a Japanese image of Portuguese people, 16th century. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisboa.



70 Nigerian (Benin) bronze plaque showing two 16th-century Portuguese men. Private collection.

if it was never what Said calls a 'corporate institution' in the service of political and economic dominance.¹⁴

Within the west, xenophobia was often expressed by images presenting the people of other nations as monstrous or verging on the monstrous. Hogarth's *Calais Gate* (c. 1748), for instance, draws its power from the tradition of English stereotypes of the French. The emaciated Frenchmen remind the viewer that poverty and absolute monarchy were closely associated in British minds, while the jolly fat friar gazing at the meat, his plump hand to his breast, evokes the negative image of popery and what eighteenth-century Protestant



71 John Tenniel, "Two Forces", cartoon, from *Punch*, 29 October 1881.

intellectuals used to call 'priestcraft'.

Again, in nineteenth-century English and American cartoons, the Irish were often represented as ape-like, or, drawing on the science fiction of the age, as something like a new Frankenstein, a monster, called into existence by the British, which now threatened them. In some ways these images recall the tradition of personifying rebellion or disorder (one of the simian Irishmen drawn by the cartoonist John Tenniel in illustration 71 wears a hat inscribed 'Anarchy'). All the same, their xenophobic thrust is unmistakable.¹⁵

The Other at Home

A similar process of distinction and distancing operates within a given culture. Men have often defined themselves against their image of women, claiming for instance that 'men don't cry'). The young define themselves against the old, the middle class against the working class, the north (whether in Britain, France or Italy) against the south. These distinctions are embodied in images, so that it may be useful to speak of the 'male gaze', for instance, or the 'urban gaze'. Certain artists specialized in producing images of the Other, like David Teniers the younger, who painted witches, peasants and alchemists, another favourite target for the satirists of the time.¹⁶

These distinctions are at their most visible in polemical images, religious or political, but there is no sharp line between polemical caricature and unconscious distortions, since the caricaturist both appeals to and reinforces existing prejudices. This point may be illustrated from representations of Jews in paintings and prints in Germany and elsewhere from the Middle Ages onwards (since Jewish culture is anti-iconic, it is not normally possible to compare these representations with self-images of Jews or Jewish images of Gentiles). A recent study by the American historian Ruth Mellinkoff notes how the Jews were 'othered' in medieval art. They were represented in yellow, for instance, wearing peaked or pointed hats and making vulgar gestures, such as sticking out their tongues. They were frequently shown as physically, and so as morally, close to the devil. Their sub-humanity was demonstrated to viewers by associating them with swine in the recurrent image of the *Judensau*.¹⁷

Some of these associations recur in other contexts. In the cartoons produced during the French Revolution, for instance, King Louis XVI was sometimes portrayed as a pig. Also pig-like are the fat and villainous capitalists in the paintings of Georg Grosz (1893–1959), for instance, or Diego Rivera. Less crude and perhaps less conscious

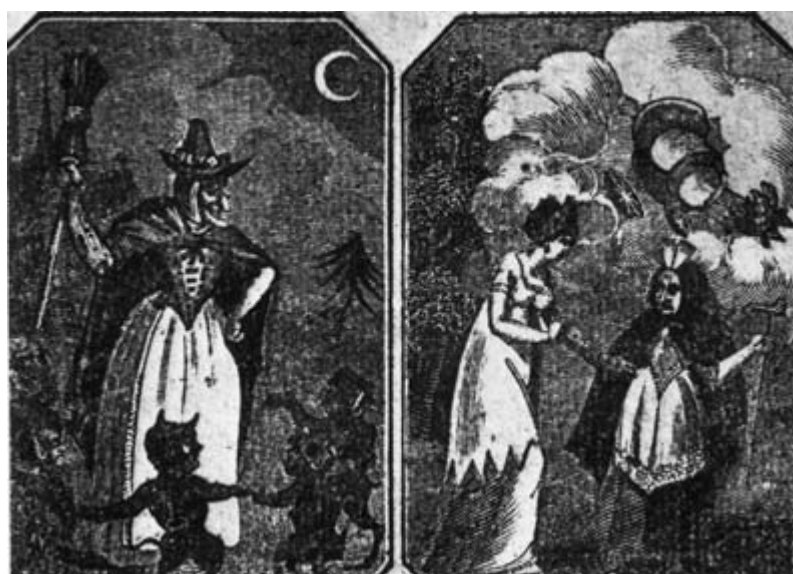
distortions may be found in many images of women – products of the male gaze – which represent them as alien, whether as seductive or repulsive. Images of prostitutes are the most obvious example of alienating stereotypes. On the seductive side, one thinks immediately of Manet, whose famous *Olympia* clearly evokes the image of the odalisques of the Orient. On the opposite side, one thinks of Edgar Degas (1834–1917), whose images, emphasizing the women’s least attractive features have been described as ‘brutal and brutalising’, or of Grosz, who caricatured the women of the town as rapacious harpies.¹⁸

A still more extreme case of the male ‘othering’ of the female is the image of the witch, usually ugly, and often associated with animals such as goats and cats as well as with the devil. A woodcut by the German artist Hans Baldung Grien, for instance, represents a witch as a naked woman flying through the air on the back of a goat. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, witches were coming to be represented more frequently in the act of cooking or eating babies. This accusation recurs in texts of the time but this change in the visual image of the witch may have come about in part as a result of what might be called ‘contamination’ from the images of cannibals in Brazil and elsewhere discussed above. Literary and visual images sometimes develop independently or semi-independently of one another. The final metamorphosis of the witch, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was into a crone in a pointed hat with a broomstick (illus. 72), surrounded by small devils, the image which has endured to this day in popular imagination.¹⁹

As in the case of the accusation of eating babies, levelled against Jews and witches alike, the pointed hat in this woodcut, like the woman’s hooked nose, illustrates the migration of stereotypes. The hat may no longer evoke images of Jews, but it once did. The evidence for this assertion includes the law promulgated at Buda in 1421 that anyone arrested for the first time on a charge of witchcraft was obliged to appear in public wearing a so-called ‘Jew’s hat’. In early modern Spain, heretics arrested by the Inquisition were obliged to wear similar hats. The confusion between witches and Jews is a revealing one, testifying to a general idea of the Other and to what has been called ‘a general visual code expressive of sub-humanity’.²⁰ Dehumanization is surely the point of the association of other groups with animals – apes, pigs, goats, or cats – in images and also in verbal insults.

The Grotesque Peasant

For another case study of images of the other at home we may turn to



72 An early 19th-century woodcut showing a witch.

urban representations of the inhabitants of the countryside. From the twelfth century onwards, western images of shepherds and peasants often represented them in a grotesque manner, thus distinguishing them clearly from the higher-status people who would view these images. Some vivid examples from fourteenth-century England can be found in the pages of the famous Luttrell Psalter. The spread of such negative representations of peasants in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, giving them short fat bodies and vulgar gestures, suggests that the cultural distance between the town and the countryside was increasing along with urbanization.²¹

Some of the most memorable of these images occur in the paintings of Pieter Brueghel the Elder, himself a town-dweller and a friend of humanists, and suggest that they were supposed to be seen as contributions to a tradition of urban satire.²² The famous *Peasant Wedding Banquet* (illus. 73) may at first sight appear to be an example of the 'art of describing' (Chapter 5), but a number of small details suggest a comic or satiric intent. There is the child in the foreground, for instance, wearing a hat too large for him; the man at the end of the table burying his face in the jug; and perhaps the man carrying the dishes, with a spoon in his hat (probably a sign of vulgarity in the sixteenth century, like the pencil behind the ear in Britain a generation ago). This comic tradition was carried on in the seventeenth century in the images of peasant fairs and of peasants in inns dancing,



73 Pieter Breughel the Elder, *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, c. 1566, oil on canvas. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

drinking, vomiting and fighting. It would be a mistake to homogenize a tradition which had space for individual variations. As one critic suggests, ‘The paintings of Adriaen Brouwer and the later works of Adriaen van Ostade present very different images of the peasantry – the one brutish and uncivilized, the other prosperous and rather stupidly self-satisfied’.²³ All the same, the negative visual tradition was both widespread and powerful.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this tradition was gradually replaced by another. The peasant – like the ‘savage’ – was ennobled or idealized (see above). Alternatively, as in the case of some ‘orientalist’ painters (above) the gaze of the artist was neither idealizing nor grotesque, but ethnographic, concerned with the faithful reporting of both costumes and customs (the Spanish term to describe this kind of painting or literature was *costumbrista*).²⁴ The ethnographic gaze can also be discerned in many nineteenth- and twentieth-century photographs of workers, criminals and mad people, although it was generally less objective and less scientific than its practitioners believed. The photographers – the middle class taking photographs of workers, the police taking photographs of criminals and the sane taking photographs of the insane – generally concentrated on traits

which they considered to be typical, reducing individual people to specimens of types to be displayed in albums like butterflies. What they produced were what Sander Gilman calls 'images of difference'.²⁵ The parallel with westerners producing images of 'the' Bedouin or the Sikh will be obvious enough. The explorer David Livingstone asked his brother Charles, who was taking photographs, to 'secure characteristic specimens of the different tribes'.²⁶ In some ways the opposite of the vision of the monstrous races, the scientific gaze, attempting objectivity, can be almost equally dehumanizing.

Images of the other, packed with prejudices and stereotypes, appear to undermine the idea that the evidence of pictures is worth taking seriously. But as usual we need to pause and ask ourselves, evidence of what? As evidence of what other cultures or sub-cultures were really like, many of the images discussed in this chapter are not worth very much. What they do document very well, on the other hand, is a cultural encounter, and the responses to that encounter by members of one culture in particular.

At a deeper level, these pictures may have even more to tell us about the West. Many of the images examined here have represented the other as the inversion of the self. If the view of the other is mediated by stereotypes and prejudices, the view of the self implied by these images is still more indirect. Yet it offers precious testimony if we can only learn how to read it. Ruth Mellinkoff's remark about Northern Europe in the late Middle Ages surely has a much wider application. 'One way of penetrating the core of this society and its mentality is to ask how and where it established the borders of who was in and who was out.' What people in a given place and time view as 'sub-human' tells us a good deal about the way in which they see the human condition.²⁷