Criticism to Edward W. Said's Orientalism

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Abstract

The publication of Edward W. Said's Orientalism marked a momentous intervention in the historiography of Western imperialism and Western representations of the Middle East. Many regarded *Orientalism* as "one of the most influential scholarly books published in English in the humanities in the last quarter of the twentieth century"(Lockman, 2004: 190). The book stormed up a debate in the academic world by accusing the West of having a skewed and condescending view towards the East, particularly in the several ways in which Westerners portrayed and represented non-Western cultures. While *Orientalism* generated sympathy and agreement, it also raised complete rejection. Alexander Lyon Macfie points out this aspect in his book *Orientalism* (2002) as: "Opinion regarding the validity of Said's Orientalism was then mixed. But a pattern of sorts can be detected, based not so much on the nationality and religion of the scholars and intellectuals concerned as on their attitude to history and the modern and post-modern philosophical ideas (deconstruction, truth as illusion, intellectual hegemony, and so on) which frequently influence it" (109). The present paper tries to bring an approach to criticism made towards Edward Said, his influential theory and Said's partial response to those criticism.

Keywords: Orientalism, orient, Occident, Edward W. Said, criticism.

Edward W. Said'in *Oryantalizm*'ine eleştirel bakış

Öz

Edward W. Said'in *Oryantalizm* adlı kitabının yayınlanması ile Batı emperyalizminin Orta Doğu'nun, Batı'daki temsiline ve tarihsel yazılımına önemli bir eleştirel müdahalede bulunmuştur. Pek çoğu *Oryantalizm*i "yirminci yüzyılın son çeyreğinde İngilizcede yayımlanan en etkili akademik kitaplardan biri olarak kabul etmiştir"(Lockman, 2004: 190). Eser, Batılıların batı'ya özgü olmayan kültürler hakkında yazdıkları ve temsillerini eleştirerek, çeşitli şekillerde çarpık ve küçümseyici bakış açısı getirmeleri suçlamasıyla akademik dünyada bir tartışma başlatmıştır. *Oryantalizm*, sempati ve anlayış ile karşılanmakla beraber, aynı zamanda, uzun bir tutarsızlıklar listesi de içerdiğinden, tam bir reddedişi de beraberinde getirdi. Alexander Lyon Macfie, *Oryantalizm* (2002) adlı eserinde bu durumu şöyle açıklamaktadır: "Said' in *Oryantalizm* adlı eserinin geçerliliği o an için karmaşıktı. Fakat alimlerin ve entellektüellerin milliyet ve dinlerinden bağımsız olarak, bunları etkileyen tarihi, modern ve post-modern (yapısal çözümleme, gerçekliğin aldatmacası, entellektüel hegamonya, ve bunun gibi) felsefik fikirlerle ilgili olarak bir örneklem çeşitliliğine de rastlanmaktaydı"(109). Mevcut çalışma Edward Said' e ve etkileyici teorisine olan eleştirileri, ve Said' in bu eleştirilere olan kısmi cevaplarını sunmaktadır.

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Criticism to definitions and structure of Orientalism

One of the main things which trouble critics of Said is that he defines Orientalism in three different ways: there is Orientalism, the academic profession; Orientalism, a way of viewing the world; and Orientalism, a mode of hegemony. Below are Said's three definitions of Orientalism:

> *The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and that applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspect, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism(Said, 2003: 2).*

While the designation may not directly serve academic institutions, it still does so indirectly. The type of this service is explained in the second definition, which relates very closely to the first.

> *Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny and so on. This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx (Said, 2003: 2).*

At last, Edward Said defines Orientalism by the actual political and colonial relations that "the West", as constructed epistemologically based on the above two definitions, conducts itself with the Orient.

> *[This Orientalism] is something more historically and materially defined than either of the two. Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 2003: 3).*

One can see the enormous span of things which Said designates as Orientalism. For Said, all of these things are closely interrelated, especially at the level of constructing and framing knowledge, but even though it was accepted that Orientalism meant different things even before Said wrote his book, his critique still caused the biggest stir around this inclusion of different "kinds" of knowledge. His critics had a particular conception of academic Orientalism as a representative of truths. They were at pains to defend their profession from the inclusion of 'outsiders.' Most of the controversy and criticism centered around two themes: the historical correctness and skill of the Orientalist as one who is licensed to speak, and the impartial objectivity of their representations, an argument which has been weaved around the denunciation of the link to imperialism. The main problem has been an insistence on a strict division of kinds of text.

In addition to definitions, there is a significant amount of dissent about the content of *Orientalism*. The first chapter "The Scope of Orientalism" focuses on Napoleonic expedition and the stereotyping of Muslims and Arabs and provides a historical formation of Orientalism and how it came into being in the following decades. The knowledge brought back from the expedition not only allowed for the European public to cultivate themselves, it also caused the power struggle between the Egyptians and French to emerge as the latter could use the knowledge they had of the former to dominate them (Said, 2004: 560). The rhetoric of power within Orientalism uses knowledge to build domination, which is later translated

into cultural relationship, the intrinsic importance of power being at the core of all social fields of study. Once the construction of Western dominance was established, this knowledge was transmitted from generations to generations resulting in an everlasting cultural domination.

The second chapter "Orientalist Structures and Restructures", Said brings up an approach to the manifestations of Orientalism in the 19th century. To contextualize his argument, Said chooses Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy and Ernest Renan. Renan's work is widely regarded as testifying to the relevance of the epigraph from Benjamin Disraeli: "The East is a career". While Sacy is "the originator, whose work represents the field's emergence and its status as a nineteenth-century discipline with roots in revolutionary Romanticism", Renan's function, as belonging to the second generation, is "to solidify the official discourse of Orientalism, to systematize its insights, and to establish its intellectual and worldly institutions" (Said, 2003: 130). On Renan, Said makes three basic points about his work: "it was racist, this racism conformed it to the Orientalist discourse, and his writings were hugely influential on the discourse of Orientalism"(156). Said writes, "Renan did not really speak as one man to all men but rather as a reflective, specialized voice that took, as he put it in the 1890 preface, the inequality of races and the necessary domination of the many by the few for granted as an antidemocratic law of nature and society" (Said, 2003: 133). Renan's work complemented by those of the French Orientalist Silvestre de Sacy, "constitute a formidable library against which no one, not even Marx, can rebel and which no one can avoid" (Said, 2003: 157).

In the third chapter "Orientalism Now", Said focuses on the transition of power from Britain and French to the United States in the post-Second World War period. Said brings up a significant shift from "an academic to an instrumental attitude" (Said, 2003: 246). He claims that this change is especially obvious in U.S concrete instances of exploitations, aggressions, occupations and interferences around the world and the U.S. role in them. He also introduces "the distinction between the latent and manifest Orientalism in the this chapter – the latent being distinct from purely applied orientalist theories as it rather resides within a general unconscious certainty that the Orient is the way it has been described and pictured by Orientalists personalities: "The distinction I am making is really between an almost unconscious (and certainly an untouchable) positivity, which I shall call latent Orientalism, and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth, which I shall call manifest Orientalism" (Said, 2003: 354 - 355). According to Said, latent Orientalism is comprised of three broad characteristics: Racism, Ethnocentrisms and Sexism (Varisco, 2007: 58). Latent Orientalism therefore resides as an inherent part of the Orientalist discourse within society as it defines the popular vision the West has of the Orient. Such a distinction allows Said to emphasize that modern Orientalism, being manifest in the supremacy of American imperialism, is actually rooted in the latent Orientalism.

Historical criticism of Orientalism

The main argument against Said's account of Orientalism has been one of historical errors. David Kopf in "Hermeneutics versus History" (1980) argues that Said's account lacks historical precision. In particular, he suggests, "Said misunderstands the nature of British Orientalism in India. Far from promoting a Euro - centric view, British Orientalism in the early nineteenth century contributed to the modernization of Hindu culture, the reconstruction of the Hindu religion and the emergence of an Indian national consciousness" (Macfie, 2000: 194). On a related point, Ibn Warraq argues that Said's understanding of 'imperialism' as an entirely negative phenomenon is misleading and facile. He writes that it was the British who contributed to the coming of a renaissance in India and "who restored the

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unity of India and re-established order" (Warraq, 2007: 235). Of special interest to Warraq is Lord Curzon who embodied a progressive understanding of, and compassion for, India that stands in sharp contrast to Said's depiction of imperialists and Orientalists (2007: 238 - 244). Daniel Martin Varisco states that Ghandi used the views of Orientalist scholars to resist British colonial rule (Varisco, 152).

Sadik Jalal al-Azm in his essay "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse" (2000) finds Orientalism to be a political book and accuses Said of doing what Said himself has been trying to say the West has done: essentialising the Other (Macfie, 2000: 217). This Other for Al-Azm is a real, objective, existing identity for a group that is in conflict with the West, which can only be understood if a particular Western identity is assumed to have preceded the argument that produced it. This is something which Said denies outright, for just as the Orient is not really there as some fixed identity that exists in and of itself, so is the Occident or the West. Both of them are man-made through the binary division, which is essential in the West's conception of its identity. Still, we can see from the very first paragraph Al-Azm' s view of Orientalism as something, which is used politically to denote two conflicting groups as he refers to European colonialism:

> In his sharply debated book, Edward Said introduces us to the subject of 'Orientalism' through a broadly historical perspective which situates Europe's interest in the Orient within the context of the general historical expansion of modern bourgeois Europe outside its traditional confines and at the expense of the rest of the world in the form of its subjugation, pillage, and exploitation (Al-Azm, 2000: 217).

Al-Azm also notes some Arabs' tendency to do what he called "Orientalism in Reverse,"—better known as Occidentalism—which is a tendency to think in binary division again, only giving privilege to "the Orient" over "the Occident" (Al - Azm, 231). For that purpose, he cites the example of an unnamed "prominent man of thought and politics in Syria" (231) who arrived at a reverse - Orientalist opinion: seeing the East as morally superior to an essentialized West understood in this Syrian man of thought's opinion by comparing his own analysis of the root of the word "Man" in Arabic to a single quotation from Hobbes (231). The view that Orientalism-in- reverse is 'something else' other than, and opposed to, Orientalism implies that Al- Azm takes Orientalism to be dealing with particular, pre-existing and unquestionable identities that are naturally different and conflicting as the starting point of his discourse, which is what Said calls the "style of thought" in his second definition of Orientalism quoted earlier. One of these forms of identity essentializes the other, and the other essentializes the former. The oppositional thought of Al- Azm shows his commitment to a mode of representational knowledge in which West-written history is the unquestionable starting point for discussion. For him, what Orientalists do is a very necessary representation and what Said is doing is misrepresenting the Orientalist.

Emmanuel Sivan includes Al-Azm and Nadim al-Bitar among the most important Arab critics of Said in his review "Edward Said and his Arab Reviewers." Macfie summarizes their views as follows:

> Al-Bitar wondered how Said, in a few short years, could have read the 60,000 or so books about the Arab East, published in the period 1800-1950. Al-Azm wondered why Said did not restrict his account of orientalism to the modern period. Both agree that Said's study of orientalism is ahistorical and unscientific. It is not based on a close examination of the evidence (Macfie, 2000: 128).

This focus again reflects these scholars' conception of Orientalism as the historical study of the objective Orient, *Orientalism* as Said's attempt to represent it, and their insistence on a particular form of knowledge, especially text written in the West, since the "evidence" required by the two scholars cited

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here is books and the written history of the past. This shows clearly how the writing of these scholars focuses on the question of representation. The oppositional thought of Al-Azm shows his commitment to a mode of representational knowledge in which West-written history is the unquestionable starting point for discussion. For him, what Orientalists do is a very necessary representation and what Said is doing is misrepresenting the Orientalist.

Similarly, Michael Richardson's "Enough Said" (1990) assumes that Said is defending a real Orient out there (Richardson, 2000: 211). In discussing "the more substantial question raised by Said's critique which is the nature of reciprocity between subject and object" (210). Richardson insists on a real, objective Orient, which Said wishes to defend in the light of this binarism. He tries to defend anthropological methods under attack by Said' s critique and also by Johannes Fabian's Time and the Other (213), which, based on Said, relocates the sense of sight, thus threatening the anthropological gaze. His insistence on essentialized conflicting sides shows in his comment on Time and the Other: "Fabian has made the critique even more vague by focusing not upon a definable group of people that could be called Orientalists but by taking up the question of how a perceptual category (time) and a particular sense (sight) have been utilized ideologically by the West, particularly in anthropology, against its Other" (213). Richardson only sees the Orient as an entity that needs to represent itself to the West, but only in accordance with the West' s understandable norms of representations, which for Richardson are only the academic norms he is trying to defend. Richardson's classical views on representation are clear in his rejection of "the so-called 'postmodern condition', founded in a dubious Nietzschean subjectivism" (214). He tries to prove the concept of discursive reality wrong, once by taking it too far, and once by suspecting the entire post-modern tradition, as something, which is opposed to factual written history. Richardson says, "it is only academic literary critics (whose work is by definition concerned primarily with representation) who would mistake a representation for the thing it represented," which is more or a less a paradox given his views on Nietzsche. Richardson attempts to challenge Said's premise that the Orient is a construction by saying that if it is "only a conceptualization of the subject's mind, it can never be a question of the former acting upon the latter" (211), thus removing the representation from the question of complicity with imperial projects. With this, he is trying to protect the work of the Orientalists as true descriptive representations. Indeed, if the Orient is an imaginary construction, then the "truths" which Orientalists produce are entirely suspect. Richardson asks, "by what right can Said stand as a representative of the Orient?"(211).

Theoretical inconsistencies in orientalism

The role of intellectuals and academics is central throughout Said's critique of Orientalism. Said builds his entire deconstruction on the Western tradition of writing, and on theories, which are also generally characterized as Western. For this, he bases his work on ideas from Nietzsche (representation and the thing-in-itself), Foucault (discourse, power/knowledge, episteme and truth regimes), Gramsci (cultural hegemony), and Derrida (deconstruction). In rejecting the conflation between representation and truth, the tradition, which Said follows, is Nietzschean. Giving the example of a painting, which is normally conceived as a fixed image representing a fixed object, Nietzsche concludes "the human intellect allowed appearance to appear, and projected its mistaken conceptions onto the things" (Nietzsche, 2000: 38). This is based on the belief that the thing-in-itself always exists in the state in which it is depicted. Nietzsche considered such a conception to be erroneous, because "the appearance has come to being gradually, and will continue to be evolving, and can therefore not be a representation of an essence that created it. It is our minds, our intellect, that gradually create the appearance" (38). Hence, all representations are already misrepresentations by the sheer idea that they represent a thing.

Orientalism claims to be representing the Orient, but in doing so, it is only representing its own conception of what must be outside the construction of the ideal West. The Orient, which Orientalists claim to represent, and travel literature claims to depict, is therefore empty of essence: "Perhaps we will recognize then that the thing -in- itself deserves a Homeric laugh, in that it seemed to be so much, indeed everything, and is actually empty, that is, empty of meaning" (38).

Said owes to Antonio Gramsci the idea of cultural hegemony, which is "exercised in society by the ruling class"(41). For Gramsci, the intellectuals of society function as:

> the 'officers' of the ruling class for the exercise of the subordinate function of social hegemony and political government of the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the direction imprinted on social life by the fundamental ruling class, a consent which comes into existence 'historically' from the 'prestige' (and hence from the trust) accruing to the ruling class from its position and its function in the world of production (Gramsci, 2000: 40).

Gramsci is here treating the knowledge of intellectuals as, literally, a "production" (Gramsci, 2000, 39), albeit indirectly. The role of the intellectual in shaping public opinion is due to their mediation in the process, between the social fabric and the "super- structures of which the intellectuals are in fact the 'officials'" (39). For Said, the persistence of the spontaneous acceptance of the binary world view of the opposition West versus East builds in the scholarly world on protecting the hierarchies which maintain, for the public, the imaginary sense of binarism. These concepts of prestige, trust, and the relation between the ruling class and the intellectual are also discussed by Foucault as he elaborates on the close relation between power and knowledge, and the power regime in his works such as the Archaeology of Knowledge (1969), Civilization and Madness (1964), and interviews published in Power/Knowledge (1980). A. L. Macfie summarizes Nietzsche and Gramsci' s views as follows:

> According to Foucault, until the period of the Renaissance people had assumed that language reflected reality (objects, things). But in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries language came to be seen, not as a reflection of reality, but as a transparent 'film', dissociated from it. As a result it became possible to identify words and statements not as signs, representing objects and things, but as events, floating in a space, field or episteme. In this strange world, knowledge became not so much a matter of fact as the outcome of a struggle for power, in which events and discourses, vehicles of 'economies of power', created new 'networks' and 'regimes' of knowledge – regimes which would themselves survive only until such time as new ones arose, capable of taking their place. Truth, therefore ... was not outside power or lacking in it (Macfie, 2000: 41).

Said builds on Foucault's concept of discourse and truth regimes as described by Foucault, which means that power allows particular things to pass as unquestionable truths, to argue that there is nothing inherent or fixed about the Orient or the Occident or West, and that the idea of the unitary West or Western subject is built upon a contrast to its imaginary Other, the Oriental, which is depicted as inherently inferior and less capable. This is something, he says, has been accepted throughout Europe's history, and has both allowed, and been allowed to survive by power regimes.

Aijaz Ahmad in "Between Orientalism and Historicism" (1991) critiques Said's focus on text "facilitates a reading of history not from the basis of material production, but from its systems of representations" (Macfie, 2000: 285). According to Ahmad, Said's view of Orientalism is ahistorical for two reasons: the first is counting on a non-material, non-linear understanding of history. The second, upon adopting Said's view for argument's sake, is that by foregrounding literature Said defines his object of study in ways, which are incompatible with one another. The contradiction which Ahmad refers to is between Said's general and specific definitions of Orientalism quoted at the beginning, since by doing that, Said defines two different starting points for the tradition which he studies: one of them is roughly around

the end of the eighteenth century (Ahmad, 2000: 288), the other is European antiquity with Homer's Iliad and Aeschylus' The Persians (287). By stating an earlier beginning of Orientalism, Said, according to Ahmad, accepts a humanist approach to history while his indebtedness to Foucault betrays the anti-humanist, Foucauldian, approach to history. Ahmad says that the problem with Said here is that he "tries to occupy theoretical positions which are mutually contradictory" (Macfie, 2000: 285). Nevertheless, in both cases Ahmad persists in his insistence on a particular mode of knowledge and history - reading, which for him is characteristic of Western academia. Ahmad therefore believes that Said has foregrounded the concept of discourse in order for him to use it as a defense against the misrepresenter of Oriental history (Ahmad, 2000: 293).

Ahmad also refers to one of the theoretical difficulties in Said's work which is "he has never been able to work out his relationship with the two slightly older intellectuals of his generation, Foucault and Derrida, whose work has influenced him the most" (290). This, along with the span and fluidity of Said's definition for his object of knowledge leads Ahmad to the confusion of having to see Said either as a political writer or a theoretical writer (294). In one way or another, to be understood, Said must fit within a category, and ultimately Ahmad sees Said to be "riven between his anti - Westernist passion and his Foucauldian allegiance" (291). Ahmad gives precedence to the "Western archive of knowledge" (291) - that is, West-written history - as the true narrative which must therefore precede the discourse which Said is trying to deal with for "his anti-Westernist passion" (291). In both sides of Ahmad's argument (historicism and disciplinarity), one can see his attempt to preserve a mode of knowledge that depends on categorization and field division, and preserving the catalogue of Western text, which has produced that knowledge. Nevertheless, requiring Said to conform to one particular mode or another, i.e. wholesale - Foucauldian (anti-humanist) or the opposite, or a mode of writing or scholarly field (political, historical, etc.), is what we are here considering as a particular mode of knowledge, with breaks in the borderlines of the epistemic field being seen as an act of violence to one's own conception of self, as an academic in this case.

Bernard Lewis in *Islam and the West* (1993) argues that Orientalism, the academic profession of enquiry into the lives of the Orientals, cannot as a whole be criticized, especially not by someone who is not an Orientalist himself. "The most rigorous and penetrating critique of Orientalist, as of any other, scholarship has always been and will remain that of their fellow scholars, especially, though not exclusively, those working in the same field" (Lewis,1993: 268). Lewis automatically dismisses critiques made by non-Orientalists simply for this reason. It is why he does not consider Said to be a scholar at all, and for the same reason, he dismisses non - Orientalist Marxist critiques as coming from unqualified individuals, unlike their Orientalist counterparts whose criticism is much more welcome. "Most of these critics are not themselves Orientalists ... it means that they do not possess the Orientalist skills, which are exercised with little difference by both Marxist and non-Marxist Orientalists" (257). This establishes the Orientalist as a category of qualified people who can or possess the skills and tools, which give them the right to speak about and for the Orient. Lewis refuses to accept Said as a scholar, which contrasts with his respect for other people' s academic titles, such as Dr. Abdel-Malek (256) and Professor Zakaria (267), whom he accepts as scholarly simply because of their restriction to "known scholarly language" (256). The major part of Lewis's attack on Said took the form of showing how Said got historical facts wrong, such as predating the rise of Arabic studies in France and ignoring German scholarship (258).

Fred Halliday in "Orientalism and Its Crisis" (1993) argues he is wedded to a classical view of history (Halliday, 1993: 145), where there are truths, there are actual Orientals and that what Orientalist does is find these truths and represent them. Halliday claims that the choice of the name 'Orientalism' itself

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is a form of hegemonic claim, overgeneralized, and made by Said simply due to most of the knowledge and text produced by early Orientalists having been produced within an imperialist context. Halliday says there is no reason to reject any kind of knowledge simply because of the context in which it has been produced, and he gives the example of robbing a bank, where in order to achieve that aim, one would need an actual map and plan based on real knowledge which would enable them to perform the task at hand (148). This and similar claims, however, completely mix between the geographic and statistic knowledge produced about the land, its strategic map, the distribution of natural resources in it and the description of the peoples and their traditions on the one hand as scientific observable data, and the poetics in which this kind of knowledge is reproduced, where identities of Self and Other are presumed even before any of that writing takes place, or the way in which the scholar or researcher is thought of as having full capacity for accessing and producing that kind of knowledge. This all falls under the same category of generalizations. Said never condemns the objective or linguistic knowledge of the researcher or the philologist, but the idea that he is now believed to have full access, and full capacity to make the kind of generalized judgments that are then used to justify the continuity of colonization as a civilizing mission. It is a power regime that transforms the words of the scholar, thanks merely to his or her title, into truth.

Lewis also notes Said's insistence on targeting scholarly figures more than he targets political ones. Indeed, what Said is attacking after all is a mode of knowledge for which the central, trusted position of the scholar is key. The defense of this mode of knowledge in Lewis is apparent is his giving Western scholarship precedence over everything. For him, it is the norm of knowledge, which must be followed. Anything outside the language known within the particular scholarly field in question is offensive and not worthwhile. Criticism is only accepted from within:

> Scholarly criticism of Orientalist scholarship is a legitimate and indeed a necessary, inherent part of the process. Fortunately, it is going on all the time - not a criticism of Orientalism, which would be meaningless, but a criticism of the research and results of individual scholars or schools of scholars (Lewis, 1993: 268).

The criticism, which Lewis allows only follows the known traditions of Orientalist text and does not challenge the hegemony of the scholar. It never crosses the borderlines of the idea of the academic field. Beyond that point, criticism becomes "meaningless." Lewis finds Said's writing to be "not merely false but absurd. It reveals a disquieting lack of knowledge of what scholars do and what scholarship is about" (258).

The insistence on material and object reality can also be seen in John M. MacKenzie' s *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (1995). He argues that while the East was indeed a construction, as noted by Oscar Wilde long before Said did (MacKenzie, 1995: 328), the construction process was mutual, but only in that the need for a market instigated a process of "natural selection" that lead to the formulation of the 'appropriate' East (4). This was done through an interaction of the European taste and demands, and commodity production. Here, the East became what the West wanted to buy - out of its own volition, one must be inclined to presume. One must also be inclined to presume that the West had the upper hand for the East to naturally evolve into Western commodity. This commodity is nevertheless both material and sexual in nature, and serves to assert to the constructed West its own conception of itself. While MacKenzie wants to re - assert the presence of the Orient as an essential reality, he also wishes to bypass that the construction of an Other is a binary discourse that is not rooted in a material reality (MacKenzie, 1995: 5). By arguing for a natural selection process, MacKenzie is emphasizing the objective nature of two separate and clashing identities, while also confirming the power and hegemony of one

onto the other. Representing the other side then is a matter of studying the material, objective and natural development of another people. His historical emphasis on material cultural manifestations disavows completely the nature of perception or the premises of intrinsically opposing identities.

Said also fails to consider the historical development of imperial culture, since he is tremendously focused on literary works and never really examines the contextual history of the period he examines. MacKenzie in "The British Empire: Ramshackle or Rampaging? A Historiographical Reflection" (2013) argues that a specific challenge for British imperial historiography as "the history of empire as a whole and the many histories of individual territories and regions of that empire" (MacKenzie, 1993, 100). This writing of imperial history resulted in its separation at times from its own components such as "reciprocal effects" and "inter-imperial influences among empires" and also in the study of British imperial history "in isolation" (2013, 100), and that "the challenge is to combine the view from above with that from below. It is also vital to place empire within the context of geo-political global forces…it is surely equally important to take into account a variety of other perspectives" (2003, 104). MacKenzie argues "my conviction remains that a full understanding of the British Empire can only be gleaned from making connections across centuries and continents, as well as among disciplines, and theoretical and analytical positions" (MacKenzie, 2013, 106), which would also include writing "a cultural history of the British Empire which has never been written" (113). MacKenzie argues when written this history "should also deal with the material remains of empire, as well as in the visual, the musical, the arts in general, and the intellectual" (114). A new history of empire is needed along with "a myriad of local consequences, comparative insights" and a reversed-gaze, which again can only be achieved by breaking down the boundaries among academic disciplines (116).

On the other hand, early modern perceptions about Europe and Europeans were shaped by complex, contingent factors and cannot be reduced to a simple paradigm. Kumkum Chatterjee and Clement Hawes in *Europe Observed: Multiple Gazes in Early Modern Encounters* (2008) suggest that the term " 'Europe' and its identification as a geographical, political, and cultural entity were relatively modern" (Chatterjee and Hawes, 2008, 3). The later spread of Christianity in northern Africa and Mesopotamia complicated the interchangeable use of 'Christendom' and 'Europe'. Therefore, terms like 'Europe,' 'Europeans,' 'Christendom,' and 'Christians' are ambivalent. By questioning these terms, authors argue that during the encounters between Europeans and non - Europeans there was "a reasonably equal exchange of gazes" (18) and through those gazes and observations, the Europeans were by no means the unquestioned masters and were sometimes "the weaker party" in the early modern period (2). Europe was characterized with "poor personal hygiene to a defective social conscience, to religious hypocrisy," and as providers of "inferior commodities" (2008, 2).

Robert Irwin's book For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies (2006) is a defense of the knowledge offered by Orientalism. Irwin's consideration of Said's Orientalism as a political intervention in defense of a group against the cultural hegemony of another reveals the representational thought of Irwin.

> *What does his book say? In a nutshell, it is this: Orientalism, the hegemonic discourse of imperialism, is a discourse that constrains everything that can be written and thought in the West about the Orient and more particularly about Islam and the Arabs. It has legitimized Western penetration of the Arab lands and their appropriation and it underwrites the Zionist project (2006: 3).*

Irwin admits the unfavorable representation of the Orient (Arabs in particular) in Western media that has continued throughout time and especially after September 11 and the American "war against

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terrorism," which, according to him, continues from a tradition of "outrageously bad press in American newspapers as well as on television" (281). His conviction is that "the Middle East crisis of 1973 provoked Said to research and write Orientalism" (281) and that this has been the sole reason why Said had written his book. It is therefore a defense of a misrepresented real object. As we have seen from the extract above, for Irwin, Said's work discussed Orientalism as a "discourse of imperialism." The rest of Irwin's book focuses on the friction between two ends of a binary opposition, with a somewhat clear focus placed on Christian Europe on the one hand, and the Islamic East on the other-understandably so, since Irwin's understanding of Orientalism, in his own words, counts on his "early immersion in both the Bible and in Latin texts, which proves to be useful in understanding the origins and formation of Orientalism" (2). We can see again how Irwin's education in particular fields affects the way he views the situation with Said's Orientalism, as he reflects it upon his expertise in Christian/Islamic conflicts between past nations and other political crises. His kind of history is also understood in terms of binaries and conflicts.

While recognizing the many flaws and faults in Said's original thesis, the work still continues to stimulate new projects today as scholars test the thesis of Orientalism. One of the most recent additions is Daniel Martin Varisco' s *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (2007). In his book, Varisco tries to take academia away from the debates on *Orientalism* and to urge scholars to get back to scholarship that rejects the binary - thinking that Said rhetorically opposed but intellectually promoted (2007: 1). Varisco identifies one of the major problems with Said's theory of Orientalism as being very restrictive, as it does not permit for individuality within a body of work to be distinguished from the rest. Said remarks that while he does agree with Foucault on a lot of part of the discourse, he would also advocate for an individual close reading of certain texts to determine their prevalence within the Orientalist movement (Varisco, 2007: 45). This however, is a limitation when it comes to asserting Orientalism as a discourse of its own as it forces Said to "flip-flop on who is a good orientalist and who is bad" (Varisco, 2007: 46). Furthermore, Varisco argues that the idea that the domination of the West essentially managed and produced the Orient is not only quite vague, it is also very much inaccurate as indicated by the absence of actual ground management in countries like China, Japan and most of the Middle East, an impression of superficial domination in time exemplified by the fall of the colonial powers after the second World War (Varisco, 2007: 55-56). Varisco ultimately critiques the way Said perceives Latent Orientalism by asserting that the way it is described by Said in Orientalism is written in a rhetorical style so careful with the word it uses that it almost becomes void of any singular sense (2007: 57). This indicates that finding work where Latent Orientalism is very much difficult, as, the 'latent' characteristics of Orientalism are so broad and fixed in time that their specific application is difficult to properly discern: "The latent tendencies must transcend rather than define a specifically Orientalist discourse" (58). Ultimately, because the Orientalist discourse is so restrictive and authoritative as to its exact components implies that Said's critique of it is in turn confined within its own limitations.

Said's critique of the Orientalist discourse is very much, in itself limited by its own discourse characteristics. The way, he constructs his notion of the Orient is problematic because it not only secedes much of the Asian continent's population from being considered by the theory, it also implies that the Orient is a definitive geographical space from which a particular image can be extracted, whether that image is true or not: "It does seem to me that the Orientalism I was speaking of contains a unique set of attitudes, a kind of virulence and persistence that I haven't seen elsewhere" (49), this implies that what Said wishes to critic, this assumed dichotomy of the Orient, is indeed what he uses to justify his argumentation (49). Secondly, Said's method in both his rhetoric and discourse is so broad that it is difficult to separate what can be considered 'Orientalist' and what can't, resulting in "polemical excess,

which might as well be an 'Orientalism in reverse', 'Occidentalism by detour', or even 'reverse-Euro centrism" (62).

Said's response to criticism and concluding remarks

Critics have found Said's Orientalism a stumbling block in the way to initiate a process of engagement with the Other without Orientalism's binaries. As criticism mounted against Orientalism's limiting tendencies, in response, Said states that even if binaries of "us" and "them" are removed, we cannot help to fall into equally other differentiations such as East – West, North – South, have – have not and so on. It would be counterproductive to assume that these binaries do not exist. Robert Young in *White Mythologies* (1990) questions this limiting aspect of Orientalism and the lack of alternatives to the phenomenon it critiques. More importantly, Young argues, how could Said separate himself from the "coercive structures of knowledge that he is describing" when his education, teaching, and stay in the West exposed him to the same discourse of discriminatory power (Young, 1990: 127). Young tries to make the point that if Said could discursively move out of the limiting influences of Western discourse, other writers might also enable themselves to do so by following the principles that Said advocates.

After some harsh criticism after September 11, Said indicated the same limiting tendencies in his 2003 preface to Orientalism, where he repeats that *no one* in the West seemed to be free from the opposition between "us" and "them" after the Cold War and the first Gulf War. The consequence was a sense of "reinforced, deepened, hardened" manifestations of Orientalism (Said, 2003: 334-5). Yet, Orientalism has alternatives in the form of strategies that Said suggests in his writings. He tries to explore some positive outcomes and goals in theorizing Orientalism. He did not want, as he writes, to perpetuate the "hostility between two rival political and cultural monolithic blocks," but to reduce the terrible effects of the discourse (Said, 2003: 335). Though not establishing it as his manifest purpose, he indicates that he was happy that people in America, Britain, English - speaking Africa, Asia, Australia and the Caribbean interpreted the book "as stressing the actualities of what was later to be called multiculturalism, rather than xenophobia and aggressive, race-oriented nationalism" (Said, 2003: 335). This means that writers in the West could leave behind the restraining discourse of Orientalism if they rejected Orientalism's conflictive binaries and empathized with the realities of the multicultural and international space.

When Said critiques what is involved in representation and studying the Other, he does come up with alternative and fairer ways with which the West might engage with the Other. According to him, those alternatives are to avoid racial thinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas. Intellectuals should realize their proper sociopolitical role, the great value of skeptical critical consciousness and of "human freedom and knowledge" (Said, 2003: 327). This possibility of moving outside of the discourse of Orientalism to engage with the Other can be seen in many places in Said, who believes that there are instances in scholarship that are "not as corrupt, or at least as blind to human reality" (Said, 2003: 326). In Said's view, such instances of scholarship occur in the works of Clifford Geertz, Jacques Berque and Maxime Rodinson. These works are "discrete and concrete," and methodologically self-conscious to free themselves from "the rituals, preconceptions, and doctrines of Orientalism" (Said, 2003: 326). Other scholars and intellectuals might free themselves similarly if they try to "complicate and/or dismantle the reductive formulae and the abstract but potent kind of thought that leads the mind away from concrete human history and experience and into the realms of ideological fiction, metaphysical confrontation, and collective passion" (Said, 2003: xxiii). Said calls for humanism as the answer, which he believes is the only and "final resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history" (Said, 2003: xxix). Rather than draw upon the "the

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manufactured Clash of Civilizations" Said calls for the "slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow" (Said, 2003: xxix). Such working relationship can be realized due to advances in modern cultural theory, which believes in the universal principle that "cultures are hybrid and heterogeneous," and that "cultures and civilizations are so interrelated and interdependent as to beggar any unitary or simply delineated description of their individuality" (Said, 2003: 347). To conclude, in order alleviate and overcome enormous amount of human suffering and misery, the security of the world requires the acceptance of global multiculturalism and diversity while promoting commonalities. Otherwise, there will be more calamities, more death, and more despair. The media and politicians can facilitate multiculturalism and commonalities or increase polarization. Therefore, the Western media and politicians must provide real dialogue and debate rather than ideological posturing, polemical divisiveness, and polarization. For a peaceful future, understanding and cooperation among the political, spiritual, and intellectual authorities are necessary. Otherwise, clashes are the great threat to world peace and a mutual ground of understanding while reconciliation is the safeguard against conflicts. This will be one of the challenges of the coming years for critical communication scholars to track politics and media in the interaction between the West and Islam.

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