

# Edward Said's Controversial Work *ORIENTALISM* and the American Orientalism

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**Abstract:** *The first figure that pops up in my mind whenever I think about Orientalism is Pr. Edward Said and his ground-breaking book "Orientalism", which was published in 1978. The point I want to make here by focusing on Said's work is that one can read hundred of books; but if he did not select the right books to read, he won't learn that much. "Orientalism" is hence the kind of books one cannot do without, along the process and the shaping of his intellectuality. To trace back Orientalism in history is a kind of tough task that this encompassing concept did exist practically in the other nations' writings apart from UK and France. The purpose of this essay though is not to repeat what Said stipulated in his encircling intellectual and literary corpus. It intends rather, to point out a variety of ways in which Orientalism can be of great help to the study of historical, political and cultural concerns. Orientalism, so to speak, is a rich source, which can satisfy the scholars' large array of academic needs. My concern in this paper is to shed light on its meaning as a heavily-loaded concept and the new horizons it has inaugurated so far; without skipping the limitations the critiques levelled against it.*

**Keywords:** Orientalism, American Orientalism, Intellectuality, culture

## 1. Introduction

It goes without saying that dealing with a thorny phenomenon and a complicated concept such as Orientalism is a real challenge and a daring enterprise. Of course, whenever I think about Orientalism the first figure that pops up in my mind, is Pr. Edward Said and his groundbreaking book *Orientalism*, which was published in 1978. One can read hundred of books without advancing in his literary or intellectual career; for instance when we see some Europeans or American or Arabs reading fictional books, one feels to what extent he is left behind in this good and fruitful habit, which is reading. The point I want to make here is that one can read hundred of books; but if he did not select the right ones, he won't make any important change or advance in his life or career. Orientalism is the kind of books one cannot do without, along with the process and the shaping of his intellectuality. I dare say so because sometimes when I want to read the *Muqaddimah* or Prolegomena ("Introduction") written by Abdurrahman Ibn Khaldoun (1332-1406), I find myself criticised by some friends under the pretext this is history and it is an old and boring book. The idea I come up with while reading this sort of books is that there are two types of writings; the first ones are books which are short-lived productions; whereas the second ones are books which outlived their time of publication and even their authors' lives. *Orientalism*, so to speak, is one of the second types. Additionally, Said's deep influence was so panoramic to embrace many other fields besides Humanities, "Edward Said's influence quickly extended to other fields in the humanities and social sciences--film studies, art history, music studies, area studies, anthropology, and the like." (Siddiqi)

To trace back the history of this concept is a kind of tough task in the sense that the concept did exist practically in the other nations' writings apart from UK and France. In other words talking about Orientalism we cannot discard the other Europeans in their studies and concern about the orient. I am going to leave the proponent of this concept to shed

light on his understanding of it. In the very beginning of his pioneering book *Orientalism*, Said states that the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic things, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences...the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture *Orientalism* expresses and represents that part culturally and ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles. Said (1978: 1-2)

The purpose of this essay is not to repeat what Said said in his encompassing intellectual and literary corpus. It intends rather, to point out a variety of ways in which Orientalism can be of great help to the study of historical, political and cultural concerns. Orientalism, so to speak, is this spring that is supposed to quench the thirst of scholars in conducting their research, each in his or her domain or speciality. My concern in this paper is to clarify its meaning as an encompassing concept and the wide horizons it has opened so far; without leaving out the limitations based on the critiques levelled against it. Let us start now with Said trying from a number of quotes of his to understand Orientalism; then we move to talk about Said's *Orientalism* viewed from his critics' lenses; afterwards, I will provide a brief synopsis about American beginning of Orientalism, and finally I will supply a conclusion.

## 2. Said's Orientalism

Said tries to decipher the different facets of Orientalism he wants to advance is that by Orientalism I mean several things, all of them, in my opinion interdependent. The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches writes about, or researches the Orient--- and this applies whether the person

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is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist--- either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. Said (1978: 2)

In the same line of thought, he (1978: 2) points out to fix the meaning of Orientalism for the readers from the outset that 'Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident".'

Said (1978: 3) in the third aspect of Orientalism he puts forward this definition for it,

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, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. I have found useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse... My contention, is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage---and even produce---the orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Said (1978: 3)

Said (1978: 4) goes further to elucidate the American Orientalism, by stating the following,

My point is that Orientalism derives from a particular closeness experienced between Britain and France and the Orient, which until the early nineteenth century had really meant only India and the Bible lands. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the end of World War II France and Britain dominated the orient and Orientalism; since World War II America has dominated the orient, and approaches it as France and Britain did. Out of that closeness, whose dynamic is enormously productive even if it always demonstrates the comparatively greater strength of the Occident (British, French, or American), comes the larger body of texts I call Orientalist. Said (1978: 4)

Said in his all-embracing introduction to his work Orientalism has left no stone unturned to bring all kind of aspects of Orientalism to a spotlight and herewith he (1978: 5) clarifies the sort of relationship between the Occident and the Orient, '(T)he relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony...'

Furthermore, Said (1978:6) does not let the ideas he advances at loose; on the contrary, he brings more evidence to make his point. Amongst his arguments, he alludes, for instance, to G. Flaubert and his 'Orientalized' Egyptian woman. Talking about hegemony, he argues that Flaubert and thus many Orientalists do not give free vent to their characters or protagonists to express themselves. It means indeed that the author, Flaubert in this case, puts the words in the Kuchuck Hanem's mouth; which means '(H)e spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess (her) physically but to

speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental." Additionally, Said by the end of the same page, he sets out to elucidate Orientalism by the following, Orientalism... is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. the Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied---indeed, made truly productive---the statement proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture. Said (1978, 6)

Undoubtedly, Said has supplied the tiniest details about Orientalism to shape it into this clear, encompassing and complex concept. It is this multifaceted discourse that subsumes what is political, cultural, institutional, and so on, it is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts...also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly, discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (...) world... Said (1978, 12)

More importantly, Said makes clear from the beginning the implication of the Orientals' expectations from the works of Orientalists. Simply put, Said (20-1) does not look in his analysis for the truth when he talks about exteriority; but he looks rather for how the Orientals are represented. He argues that the language itself is not transparent, as a means of 'a highly organized and encoded system'. To conduct an analysis of the Orientalists' productions and writings the analyst tackles '... style, the figure of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original.' In Orientalism, Said does acknowledge the fact that in the very shaping of his conceptualization, he benefited from Michel Foucault in his use of discourse and Gramsci in his use of hegemony. Borrowing from Michel Foucault, Said embarks on individual texts as a separate body; but also as a contribution to the complex collective formation which is Orientalism. Quite aware of the monumental task to write about Orientalism from a purely independent perspective, Said (1978: 24) acknowledges from the outset this insurmountable challenge. This is owing to the fact that there are two influential factors that intervene in impeding this fully accomplished task: these two are knowledge and power. Out of humility, Said (1978: 25) 'hopes' as it goes in his own words is 'to illustrate the formidable structure of cultural domination and, specifically for formerly colonized peoples, the dangers, and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or upon others'. Doing his best 'to maintain a critical consciousness', and to be an independent literary critic and an intellectual, he admits the fact that he cannot, by any means, detach himself from being 'constituted himself as an oriental'.

To delve deeply into understanding literature and society is not feasible to be achieved separately; on the contrary, we have to keep both of them together if we want indeed to make sense out of them.

### 3. Said perceived through the lenses of his critics

His personal, national-Palestinian and American rich experiences have made of Edward Said a very specific intellectual, activist, and writer. Sometimes, one may think why this turmoil vis-à-vis this author and not the other? The answer may be possibly approached in two different ways. First, there are some authors who 'follow the flow' or the lines of thought of society; and in this way the 'official' intellectuals close friends to the decision-makers, almost all of them are happy with this type of authors-spokesmen. But when the problem has to do with an 'obstinate' author in the positive implication like Said, his opponents or critics check on him meticulously whether he is within the norms and standards of society or he is attuned to a different waveband. If proved so he is going to pay that high with a cutting criticism to be levelled against him; or to be ignored intentionally to discard the attention of readership and society as a whole from him. The 1991 gulf war triggered more importance and studies on Said and turned hordes of translators and critics towards Said, the scholar and the intellectual. Authors from all walks of life and from different scholarships, literature, culture, anthropology, ethnography and so on, found in Said's works their satisfying knowledge about the Orient. Parallel to this, the Arab-Israel 1967 war was considered a turning point in Said's career. Admittedly, the Palestinian cause and identity were the impetuses that triggered his appetite towards his concern with the identity, the exile and the other. The Palestinian issue was taken as an umbrella to critique Said for not holding skills of specialist to approach this thorny political problem.

Said is this kind of author who is a real intellectual and 'trouble-maker' or terrorist in the decision-makers' words. Uncountable theses have been accomplished on his writings and even on his personality as an Arab, Palestinian and American. He was tackled by a plentiful body of writers and intellectuals as a 'controversial' intellectual in the world today. Ashcroft, and Ahluwalia (2001: viii) state that Said's important position as an established author and intellectual stems from two sources of scholarship: first, from 'his foundational place in the growing school of post-colonial studies, particularly his book *Orientalism*;' second, from 'his insistence on the importance of the 'worldliness' or material contexts of the text and the critic.' Said's reputation was indeed cemented among readers by this trilogy *Orientalism*, *Covering Islam and The World*, *The Text*, and *The Critique*. Moreover, besides Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Said is considered the originator, par excellence, of the colonial discourse theory. Thus the two authors, Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, affirm that Said's literary and intellectual enterprise 'can not be understood properly without a perception of his view of the Worldliness of the text and the function of criticism and of the intellectual.' In trying to give his intellectual perspective this kind of international dimension, Said makes a demarcation between

filiation and affiliation in his conceptualization of the worldliness of the text. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001:25) make it clear that '[W]hile filiation refers to lines of descent in nature; affiliation refers to a process of identification through culture.' Methodically, even if Said is generally influenced by F. De Saussure and R. Barthes he strikes his own path into criticism and intellectual enterprise. The former writers reveal that it does not make sense to separate the text from its cultural context into which it is produced and from its relationship to power, While Said agrees that we should resist the assumption that the text is limited to the book, he goes further to say that to treat literature as an inert structure is to miss the important fact that it is an act located in the world. To treat the text as merely a structure of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic, say, is to divorce the text from, which is a cultural production, a cultural act, from the relations of power within which it is produced. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001:18)

Our modern era has known a tremendous achievement in the domain of technology and academia; but, what remains lingering to underline with caution is that the academia has seen an escalation and inflation of degrees that we scarcely find a place for true authority in literary criticism and intellectualism. The critic Said is defending and preaching is not the one who is living within his head, but he is someone who is an amateur of sharing with his national and international community all issues of political concern, and hence his advocacy of the worldliness of the text. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia unveil the truth about this in the following quote,

[B]ut there is no question that the world, and its link to the text and the critic, is crucial to his perception of the value of intellectual work. His view of the critic's role is a radical attack on the creeping ivory-tower specialization which has come to characterize academic criticism, and which removes it more and more from the political realities of contemporary society. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001:29)

Said provides his 'venue for the critical work'. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia simplify Said's critical position by stipulating:

Said's refusal of both the rarefied world of pure textuality and ideologically impacted world of political dogma is the ground of his effort to go beyond the basic forms of criticism: practical criticism, literary theory, appreciation and interpretation and literary theory. But the essence of Said's critical spirit is the refusal to be locked into a school, ideology or political party and his determination not to exempt anything from criticism... Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001:34)

In his amateurish criticism and his 'telling the truth to power' and his resistance to any political party or faction, Said has taken his distance to perceive and view clearly through his lenses the political issues, and to avoid all kind of extremisms. If we dare to talk about the Palestinian issue, he had critical political positions vis-à-vis Oslo Peace Accord. He refused to be a minister in the Palestinian authority; and even worse he criticised bitterly the corrupted PLO and Yasser Arafat's authority. Hamas, in its turn, was not immune from his critical eye, eloquent tongue and magic pen.

Another concept adds more richness in Said's intellectual liveliness is the concept of 'exile'. Well-connectedly with worldliness, Said enhances exile as an impetus to be a critic of the world, instead of limiting himself within the confines of one's local belonging. In this manner, he puts forward a perspective of plural vision. His exile then fans the flames of loss; and at the same time, it is a necessity to prove his mettle for 'true critical worldliness'. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001:42) deal with the significant relationship between Said's desolate past and present cultural empowerment. This tight tensional ambivalence is only the safety valve for 'the invalidity of the text's ownership by nation or community or religion...' that is to say the worldliness of the text. For Said, exile is this binary tool that gives in one hand the possibility 'to develop the capacity of free-ranging criticism'; and on the other hand, it is a free path towards shaping one's intellectual capacity and informing one's 'cultural and 'political theory', far beyond any national or partisan influence.

Since the ontological knowledge of the Occident about the Orient is of this copious and high quality, it goes without saying that this knowledge-power about the target nation is meant to dominate, to control, to supervise and to exercise power and authority over it. And this is the implication that was 'demonstrated by Prime Minister Arthur Balfour's defence of Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1910, when he declared that: 'We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know any other country...' (2001:59) And it is this knowledge called academically Orientalism that makes it possible to control Egypt, to colonise it and to exert power on it. By extension, this strategy applied on Egypt, as a rich, long and great civilisation, is the same one to be used to 'tame' the other countries and colonise them subsequently. One may wonder or even resent the very use of the verb 'tame', but anyways I am going to explain myself. I do indeed mean it, because the invading empires like France and Britain and USA later, they consider the other as exotic, wild and virgin like an animal; what they mean by their cultural and military interference is but to tame the other shrew and to make 'it' a submissive slave to the arrogant lord and owner. Their equipment that enables them to achieve it is this orientalist discourse, by means of which Said did his utmost to unveil the reality of the occident's colonization of the orient. In the same line of thought, Napoleon did adopt the same policy and strategy to invade Egypt by '[his] most conscious marriage of academic knowledge and political ambition'. (2001: 61)

Said has been made the attractive and fertile topic of hostile critiques like 'Dennis Porter and Bernard Lewis. While Porter rejected Said's thesis on the grounds that it was both an ahistorical and an inconsistent narrative..., Lewis mounted one of the most vitriolic attacks on Said.' (2001: 72) The last critic's hostile reaction may be, because of his blind affiliation and alliance with Israel and USA because of his double nationality, American and Israeli, and owing to 'Said's treatment of Lewis's work on Islam as an explicit example of contemporary Orientalism...' (2001: 72) Lewis's hostility and harshness on Said tend to be more personal: 'Lewis questioned Said's professional qualifications (in terms of what degrees he possessed) and his ability to speak of Islam, his knowledge of Arab history and of Orientalist

disciplines. As a representative of 'specialist' academic scholarship, Lewis views Said's 'amateurism' as an unforgivable failure rather than a liberating strength. Critically, Lewis substantially ignored the specific criticisms levelled by Said at Orientalist practices.' (2001: 72) Said, in retaliation to these two and others, sets out that the fact of criticising him, they are but reproducing the orientalist representations. M.Bayoumi and A.Rubin, affirm that

Said is routinely vilified in much of the popular press. He has been dubbed a "professor of terror" and "Arafat's man in New York." His Columbia University office has been ransacked, he has received numerous death threats, and the New York City Police Department once considered his life in enough peril to install a "panic button" in his apartment. Yet he remained wedded to his principles and unswayed by authority... (2000: xii)

This cited quotation and many others shed more light on the kind of intellectual Edward Said is; to what extent he is fully committed to his cause, the Palestinian cause. Immediately after the two authors aforementioned make clear Said's commitment,

For Said, his life has been a commitment to two things: an incorruptible, unassailable belief in the dignity of all people and human justice for everyone, and a lifelong pursuit in the rigors of scholarship to excavate, uncover, review, and interpret all facets of human experience, particularly those that are overlooked by any structure of authority. With these commitments, Said's oppositional stance becomes not merely a radical posture but a manner of living. M.Bayoumi and A.Rubin (2000: xiv)

What makes Said also different in his commitment is the way he perceives 'exile'. For him, the latter is not that negative detachment from his homeland; on the contrary, it is this aura of inspiration that covers all his production; it is this ambivalent awareness of the 'here', the hosting New York and American culture, and the 'there' the nostalgic lost land and culture in Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon, etc. Exile becomes a sort of pleasure. He succeeds in making out of it an energizer that generates all his energy enthusiasm and determinism. In the same regard, M.Bayoumi and A.Rubin quote Noam Chomsky's testimony on Said,

[He] described Said's intellectual contribution in this manner: "His scholarly work has been devoted to unraveling mythologies about ourselves and our interpretations of others, reshaping our perceptions of what the rest of the world is and what we are. The second is the harder task; nothing's harder than looking in the mirror... M.Bayoumi and A.Rubin (2000: xv)

Chomsky is likely praising the intellectual and ambivalent position of Said in the sense it enables the Americans and the westerner as a whole to view themselves in the mirror, since the one who is describing and portraying them, is well-versed in both cultures, the occidental and the oriental ones. He is, so to speak, an authority, in a balanced way, to speak out of a plural vision he developed from different

cultural backgrounds he was stemming from and exposed to. The June War, 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the Palestinian cause as a whole, were the political inspirations that shaped Said's writing and triggered his first works that would be later crowned with his masterpiece 'Orientalism'.

Still, in their introduction to *The Edward Said Reader*, M. Bayoumi and A. Rubin rehearse some critiques levelled against Said,

The contemporary Orientalist guild and its defenders responded fiercely to Said's polemic. Leon Wieseltier wrote that Orientalism issued "Little more than object canards of Arab propaganda." In riposte published in *The New York Review of Books*, Bernard Lewis accused Said of "poisoning" the field of "Oriental" studies. Calling Said "reckless," "arbitrary," "insouciant," and "outrageous," Lewis recounted how Said, along with other Arab, Muslim, and Marxist critics, had "polluted" the word "Orientalism." Said, Lewis argued, had attempted to denigrate the work of well-intentioned, disinterested Orientalists; he had politicized an innocent scholarship. M. Bayoumi and A. Rubin (2000: xxiv)

Bernard Lewis and Irving Howe and many others try to vilify Said, mainly when he adopts his contrapuntal methodology in approaching the oriental texts especially, in his critique of Jane Austen '...Said was demeaning Austen's literary value; he was [rather] urging readers to develop a critical awareness of the European novel's relations to the colonial enterprises and imperial projects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Despite the critics' attacks on him, Said got his due world-wide as a well-established author and an international political intellectual who is entirely involved in and committed to the Palestinian cause.

Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001:78) point out that Robert Young in his *White Mythologies* (1990) and James Clifford (1988) in their critique of Said's *Orientalism* hinge on the fact that his premises in critiquing the Occident on the Western anthropological Human Sciences, and the tools of a Western theoretical tradition and his appropriation of the dominant forms and cultural discourses of theirs. Side by side with the previous critique, Mona Abaza and George Stauth argue in their critique of Said's *Orientalism* assumed that Said's methodology is 'reductionist' and his 'discourse is a kind of one-way street from the powerful of the weak. This means that Said denies a 'long history of productive cultural exchange (2001:79)

Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001:117) set out to elucidate that Said constructed himself a victim to make a journey in his academic and scholar project; and being Palestinian, this feeling of loss and exile empowered and energised him intellectually and academically.

Windschuttle, Keith (1999: 30) rehearsed the same critique leveled against his work *Orientalism*, in the sense he was reductionist and limited by not covering the other Orientalists, like the Germans, the Russians, the Italians, the Spanish and the Portuguese. Most of the attacks against Said were not a surprise for him; simply because he had expected them years before, and mentioned them in the

introduction of his controversial work *Orientalism*. As a response to those who criticised his writing about all this array of politics, which are not his cup of tea; he was supposed to write about issues in humanities, he (1978: 14) replied to this by the following: '... there will always remain the perennial escape mechanism of saying that a literary scholar and a philosopher, for example, are trained in literature and philosophy respectively, not in politics or ideological analysis.' Admittedly from the start, Said acknowledged that the attempt to write an encyclopedic narrative history of *Orientalism* is something beyond reach. (1978: 16) As usual, Said's expectations about the critics' reactions to his intellectual production hold true,

... a large part of the Orient seemed to have been eliminated—India, Japan, China, and other sections of the Far East—not because these regions were not important (they obviously have been) but because one could discuss Europe's experience of the Near Orient, or of Islam, apart from its experience of the Far Orient. Said (1978: 17)

Similarly, he anticipated his responses to those who blamed him for not including the other European and Asian Orientalists by saying the following:

[I]n the first place, I had to focus rigorously on the British-French and later the American material because it seemed inescapably true not only that Britain and France were the pioneer nations in the Orient and in Oriental studies, but these vanguard positions were held by virtue of the two great colonial networks in pre-twentieth-century history; the American Oriental position since World War II—I think, quite self-consciously—in the places excavated by the two earlier European powers. Then too, I believe that the sheer quality, consistently, and mass of British, French, and American writings on the Orient lifts it above the doubtless crucial work done in Germany, Italy, Russia and elsewhere. But I think it is also true that the major steps in Oriental scholarship were first taken in either Britain and [or] France, then elaborated upon by Germans. (1978: 17-8)

As a matter of fact, the other Orientalists like Germans were not involved militarily in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Generally, he acknowledged the limitations of his work as a history of writings on the Orient, besides '...the whole complex problem of knowledge and power. These are tasks left embarrassingly incomplete in this study.' (1978: 24) Well aware of the different critiques that may be directed against him, and conscious of the diverse limitations of his challenging work, he is quite in the know that he is himself 'personally involve[ed] in having been constituted as, "an Oriental." (1978: 26)

Windschuttle (30) criticised Said in the very use of his history, '[A]part from Foucault's grandiose hypothesis that knowledge always generates power, Said provides no support at all for his contention that "colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism" because he fails to cite evidence that the actual causal sequence that led to the annexation of any of the territories occupied by England or France in the nineteenth century... Windschuttle mentioned a very interesting detail when Said involved himself as an Oriental and a victim, in his argumentation on *Orientalism*,

Coming from any grown man, such wallowing in victimhood would be bad enough, but from a tenured full professor at Columbia University in New York City—that is, from one of the most materially and occupationally privileged human beings on the planet, who enjoys the added indulgence of being permitted to make whatever criticism he fancies of the country that sustains him—it is simply embarrassing. Windschuttle (1999, 30)

Orientalism, so to speak, was used by the Orientalists as a shield to reassure themselves against the fear or the threat that can represent the Orient for them,

Said emphasises the traditional nature of Orientalism, which has been so powerfully embedded in Western thinking about the Orient from ancient Greece onward that it constitutes an unquestioned habit of mind. When it comes to Asia, in effect, the West wears a set of blinders called Orientalism. At points, Said contends that there is no real or actual "Orient"; it is merely a mythical discourse invented by Europeans on the basis of their hereditary fear of the Arabs and especially of Islam. Swanson (2004, 107)

Despite the Orientalism secular orientation, Christianity stands firmly in the very making and shaping of Orientalists' productions, 'Said apparently sees one of the key links between Orientalism and Christianity to be the dualistic, Us/Them nature of orientalist thinking...' Swanson (2004, 108)

Despite their attacks, the critics do not help it sometimes to use Said's line of thought and argumentation as it is the case here in this citation that goes so far to describe Hinduism as an Oriental-British construct,

[W]hile criticizing Said's "rather monolithic and ahistorical" view of Orientalism, Majeed nevertheless argued that even Hinduism was a European construct. "In some ways the [British] Asiatic Society initiated the integration of the vast collection of myths, beliefs, rituals, and laws into a coherent religion, and shaped an amorphous heritage into the faith now known as Hinduism. (McInnes)

Said's 'Orientalism' did not escape even the Arabs' critical eyes. Herewith Fuad Zakaria argued that Orientalism was misused to pave the way for 'Obscurantism and tyranny', 'The Egyptian philosopher Fuad Zakaria joined other Arab scholars in denouncing Said as "unscientific and arbitrary", questioned whether he was serious, and accused him of denigrating all that was secularist and modernizing in Arab culture. Obviously, any Arab who allowed that there might be some point in this or that Western criticism could be accused of falling into the delusions of Orientalism.(2)... Said's "recklessness has opened doors to obscurantism and tyranny", Sayyid says.(3) The venerable International Congress of Orientalists took flight and changed its name to the International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa. Orientalism was coming to mean Western pseudo-knowledge that was imperialist, racist, ethnocentric, and "profoundly anti-empirical.' (McInnes)

In addition to all assaults instigated against Said, some of them said that he is making use of the same methods

borrowed from the West to criticise them and the East alike. Said's taste in Music was purely Western; thus his comment on Oum Kalthoum was a sort of Orientalist comment, "Said's childhood judgment is rather similar to the way Western listeners, well-versed in Western classical music, used to comment upon music from the Middle East. It resembles very much an 'Orientalist' stereotypical prejudice about Arabic music, and Oriental music in general. (3) Edward Said, a Palestinian by birth, was raised by parents who were ardent lovers of Western music. It was this kind of music, and not Arabic music, that he was made familiar with, although he was introduced by his mother's brother to some of the repertoire of the *oud* at family gatherings in Lebanon. Said's family did not possess Arabic recordings, but had a collection of discs with Western classical music (mainly Beethoven, Mozart, Rossini, some Bach, Wagner, and Richard Strauss)" (Zeeman). (De Groot)

Somewhere else after his maturity, Said comes back to change his position vis-à-vis the Arabic Music and to evaluate Music in general as the only stronghold that stands as a shield of resistance against the acculturation and commodification, and why not of the entire pouring of it into a new artistic and cultural mould, 'Said concludes: "For me, as somebody who cares so deeply about music, a very important part of the practice of music is that music, in some profound way, is perhaps the final resistance to the acculturation and commodification of everything" (Barenboim and Said 168). (De Groot)

In his huge Orientalism enterprise to shape his intellectual project, Said does not content himself with reading or analyzing only the European writers, mainly French or British, but he embarks on 'Complement[ing] his readings of European texts with discussions of writers who did in fact "Write back" to Empire: Fanon, Césaire, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, C.L.R. James, George Antonius and many others. He describes the literary efforts of these writers as "the voyage in," which he characterizes as "an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work." (Siddiqi) More importantly and after underlining Said's critique of Foucault's Euro-centrism Siddiqi described Said critical and intellectual arsenal as a commitment and a defensive fortification against any kind of non-sense and un-reason, "In a consummately modernist vein, he views the wielder of the pen as a bulwark against the tide of non-sense and un-reason" (Siddiqi)

In dealing with USA as an unconditional ally of Israel and a new Empire coming to the fore after the World War II, he finds out that Humanism is a fortification against Euro-centrism and a harness to control 'the critical and transformative potential of cultural differences.' (Siddiqi)

Said's 'Orientalism' does not escape the wielding pens of the western criticism. And we wonder whether the author does not touch the core of the issue by stimulating all this large array of assaults on him personally, and likewise on his writings. Here again, we meet another critic pushing forward his attack,

Said illustrated his thesis with highly selective quotations, concerning a very narrow range of East-West encounters.

And while pouring as much scorn and venom as he could on Western portrayals of the Orient, he did not trouble himself to examine any Eastern portrayals of the Occident, or to make any comparative judgments whatsoever, when it came to assessing who had been unfair to whom. Had he done so he would have been forced to describe a literature in Arabic that is either entirely Westernized in the manner of Cairo's Naguib Mahfouz (who narrowly escaped death at the hands of a knife-wielding Islamist in 1994, and is now increasingly censored), or that, having turned its back on Western culture, retreats into "the shade of the Koran," as recommended by the late Muslim Brotherhood leader, Sayyid Qutb... Scruton (2006)

Feminists, in their turn, do not make the exception in criticising Said for not tackling and covering the female writers, but very few of them like Jane Austen in *Culture and Imperialism*,

In *Culture and Imperialism* Said does write a textual analysis of imperialism and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. But such in-depth critical engagement with a woman writer's text or any woman writer's or woman critic's text is extremely rare in his scholarship in large. Usually he would just mention briefly a few feminist scholars or women writers—very small in number—such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sara Suleri, Nadine Gordimer, and so forth, in passing without engaging with their thoughts substantively. Yang (2006)

Yang finds a way to defend Said in the harsh and critical life he led in the West by the following response, What is the relationship between the Saidian humanism and race? Perhaps we can historicize his lack of acknowledgement of feminist humanism in his days in the 1950s when he was trained, in the 1960s when he started, and in the 1970s when Orientalism and his other important works were being produced. And maybe we can also historicize the fact that back in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and even in the 1980s, critical race theory or the critique of race was not yet acknowledged as one of the central parts of the criticism's engagement with Western humanism in particular. But the Orientalist discourse, as we all know, is by all means a racialized, gendered, sexualized, and worlded colonial intellectual legacy. Yang (2006)

#### 4. The American Orientalism

Historically, the American's Interest in the Orient started in the period of American Civil War (1861-1865) when they set out to 'Europe and the Middle East on new oceangoing steamers. They produced the highly popular images that go on view tomorrow in "Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930" at the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. The exhibit shows the pull of images of the Orient - considered the Middle East, North Africa and part of the Mediterranean by Americans at that time. The art - its "noble dreams" and "wicked pleasures" - provided hot new items for the American rich who favored the exotic over the home-grown." (Shaw-Eagle 1)

More importantly, among the First Americans to be close to the Orient founding basically their perspectives upon the

stereotypes they learned from the Europeans, we find the painter John Singer Sargent,

Important artists such as John Singer Sargent and Frederick Edwin Church visited the area early. Sargent traveled extensively in Morocco, Egypt and Palestine and painted his dramatic "Fumee d'Ambre Gris (Ambergris Smoke)" in 1880. He portrayed a Moroccan woman immersing herself in the pungent smoke created by burning ambergris... as a drug or an aphrodisiac. But she is neither sexually appealing in her tentlike dress and huge shawl, nor vulnerable, but instead a powerful and haunting figure. (Shaw-Eagle 1)

In one of his recorded video on YouTube, Edward Said states that, 'Britain and France had directed occupied parts of the Middle East, the US experience is less direct. There has never been full US occupation of the Middle East'. On the one hand the American Orientalism is more based on the abstract, and less direct than the French or the British one. Besides, the American Orientalism is more politicised. American Orientalism related to the Jewish cause as an absolute ally of Israel to recognise the state of Israel 11 minutes after the declaration of its state in 1948. What is the vision of American Orientalism later is but to demonise the Muslims, the Arabs and the Palestinians as terrorists and a threat to their civil and democratically Israel, and of course to USA and Europe. The use of Media controlled by commercial and political interests to portray the Muslim and the Arabs (Friday April, 27th, 2012 at 18:55 PM)

Admittedly, Orientalism was historically the concern of French and the British empires since simply they preceded the American one in history. Besides the Arab-Israel's conflict was the source of the big powers' interest in the Middle-East; hence, the American Orientalism started, though the USA intellectual preferred to be called the expert in the Middle East instead of Orientalists. The unconditional alliance of USA with Zionism has involved the Americans in the Muslim and Israel conflict, thus their concern with the Orient.

Orientalism is far from a perfect piece of work, but it has a central integrity to it that kindles new avenues of research and reflection...Said emphasizes the relationship of knowledge and discourse to power. He rejects Orientalism not simply because it misrepresents the real Asia but because that misrepresentation has led to the colonial, imperial oppression of many Asians in general and Arab peoples in particular. (Swanson)

Said's Orientalism has become a classic in the study of the Western relationship with the others; but, so to speak, it is still carrying fresh and valid insight and methodology in the study and analysis of this relationship.

#### 5. Conclusion

A man and career like Said and *Orientalism* are but to create frankly all kind of interests either from proponents or opponents of this new line of thought and discourse. In their pragmatic capitalism, the Americans look for inspiring stories about the Caliph Harun Errachid's Baghdad. In the same regard, Susan Nance embarks on clarifying what the

Arabs of the Arabian Nights represent for the Americans: "The people and cultures of the Muslims world were not just a figment of the American imagination or a blank screen onto which people projected "imperial desires" but real, active places, peoples, and traditions that intervened into global history whether Americans like it or not." (Nance, 11)

Susan Nance goes further to explain the American inspiration by and fascination with the Muslims and Arab culture, "Such consumer interest in the Eastern world was possible because before the 1965 Immigration Act brought large numbers of Africans and Asians to the United States, many people welcomed easterners to the country as exotic visitors." (Nance, 12)

Additionally, Shaw-Eagle argues that 'With the turn of the century and the beginning of consumerism, Orientalism took on a different flavor but continued as the effective sales tool of its inception.' (Shaw-Eagle 1) Orientalism was triggering a new business for the Americans that look permanently for making money and fame.

Despite the to and fro of critics about Said and his work Orientalism, we cannot miss someone who acknowledges Edward Said huge contribution in humanities; and even in bringing to the surface all these intellectual productions. Lingyan Yang is one among others (2006) who acknowledges Said's long list of intellectual and literary contributions that are obviously mentioned in the following citation: 'also the repertoire of the critical vocabulary that he himself inaugurated, like Orientalism, politics of the dispossession, affiliation and filiation, worldliness, critical consciousness, humanism rethought, etc...'

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