

# MERIA

## STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND EDWARD SAID: TAKING STOCK OF ORIENTALISM

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*Since the publication of Orientalism in 1978, Edward Said's critique has become the hegemonic discourse of Middle Eastern studies in the academy. While Middle Eastern studies can improve, and some part of Said's criticism is valid, it is apparent that the Orientalism critique has done more harm than good. Although Said accuses the West and Western researchers of "essentializing" Islam, he himself commits a similar sin when he writes that Western researchers and the West are monolithic and unchanging. Such a view delegitimizes any search for knowledge--the very foundation of the academy. One of Said's greatest Arab critics, Syrian philosopher Sadiq Jalal al-Azm, attacked Said for the anti-intellectualism of this view. Since German and Hungarian researchers are not connected to imperialism, Said conveniently leaves them out of his critique. Said also ignores the positive contribution that researchers associated with power made to the understanding of the Middle East. Said makes an egregious error by negating any Islamic influence on the history of the region. His discursive blinders--for he has created his own discourse--led him before September 11, 2001 to denigrate the idea that Islamist terrorists could blow up buildings and sabotage airplanes. Finally, Said's influence has been destructive: it has contributed greatly to the excessively politicized atmosphere in Middle Eastern studies that rejects a critical self-examination of the field, as well as of Middle Eastern society and politics.*

The study of the Middle East, or "Oriental studies," as this discipline was once referred to in the past, has faced increasing criticism since the 1960s by scholars both in the region and from the West. Indeed, in any comparison of the accomplishments of Middle Eastern studies with developments in the writing of European and American history, the former is found wanting, particularly in the area of methodology and in the subjects studied.<sup>1</sup> There are several reasons for Middle Eastern studies' relative stagnation; some have to do with the nature of historical sources in the Middle East, and others have to do with the development of the discipline, which had its beginnings in the philological tradition as a branch of

learning that was not integrated in the wider discipline of history.

Leading the charge of critics have been Edward Said's writings, and above all *Orientalism* (1978).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, academic scholarship on the Middle East has been profoundly altered by this book. Its success was a combination of several processes, including a great enthusiasm for the Third World in the American academy, increased criticism of America's policies following the Vietnam War,<sup>3</sup> and generational as well as ethnic changes in the research community--expressed mostly by the entrance of many new researchers of Middle Eastern origin to Western and especially U.S. institutions. Edward Said expressed the bitterness of academics

toward previous research approaches and the United States itself.

According to Martin Kramer, the Orientalism critique gave these researchers an apparent advantage over their Western colleagues, since they were, presumably, free from the limited Western ethnocentric perspective and could interpret and examine it in a more reliable way. This orientation was reinforced by the collapse of the modernization theory, which was perceived rightly as a reflection of an empirically flawed Western ethnocentric perception, and the rise of other theories in the field of social sciences, such as the dependency theory, which blamed most Third World problems on Western imperialism. Moreover, the development of historical and social science research proved that the traditional, philological method had been found wanting, and, at times, even misleading.<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this article is to analyze and put in perspective some of the debates which resulted from Said's book and its hegemony in the American academy, as well as to point out some of the negative results which arose from this criticism.

Said's starting point is that the existence and development of every culture compels the existence of a different and necessarily competitive "other" or "alter ego." Therefore, as part of a process of constructing its self-image, Europe created the Middle East (the "Orient") as the ultimate "other," as a counter-image in all possible aspects. The Middle East (the "Orient") and the West (the "Occident") "correspond to no stable reality that exists as a natural fact," but are merely products of construction. Still, "[t]he relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of

hegemony."<sup>5</sup> "Orientalism" --once a school of art but since turned Said's neologism for this unique combination of knowledge and power--is simultaneously the source of perception and its product, since it is strongly related to European identity as superior to all non-European peoples and cultures, and to the oppression of the Middle East by the Europeans.

Said defines Orientalism in several ways: 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.'" This distinction, which Said argues can be traced from the days of Homer and Aeschylus in ancient Greece and up to the present, emphasizes the supremacy of the West versus the inferiority of the East. Second, it is a field of academic research that includes everyone who writes and teaches about the Orient. Third, Orientalism is a "corporate institution for dealing with the Orient" beginning in the eighteenth century. In short, Orientalism is seen "as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."<sup>6</sup>

According to this perception, the Middle East is static, unchangeable, and cannot define itself. The West, therefore, through Orientalism, took it upon itself to represent the Orient and by that means to open it to exploitation. The very essence of Orientalism is to take control of the Orient and take away from it any ability to speak for itself. European science first started to "represent" when it began to "classify, to type the world and its inhabitants into the stronger and the weaker, backward and advanced, superior and inferior types." Said maintains, therefore, that it is the *idées reçues* and prejudices that determine the representation. Hence the knowledge

created by the representation is "never raw, unmediated, or simply objective."<sup>7</sup>

Said describes Orientalism as a discourse, a definition he takes from the French philosopher-historian Michel Foucault. According to Foucault's definition, discourse is a system of thought that governs the knowledge one may obtain. This knowledge, which is inspired and oriented by the discourse, is a paraphrase of ideas and preconceived notions.<sup>8</sup> A discourse is the result of interaction between knowledge and power, which are connected to each other in a never-ending circle. Foucault thinks that knowledge is power and that it is the way of gaining power:

No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of communications, record, accumulation and displacement, which it itself is a form of power and which is linked, in its existence and functioning, to the other forms of power. Conversely, no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge. On this level, there is not knowledge on one side and society on the other, or science and the state, but only the fundamental forms of knowledge/power.<sup>9</sup>

Scholarly exercises in analysis and research, purported to be objective, are "founded in and aid in the maintenance of a certain system of dominative social relations and political practices."<sup>10</sup> In the words of Foucault, "one is only in the truth by obeying the rules of a 'discursive police' that must be reactivated in each one of these discourses. The discipline is a

principle of control and the production of discourse. It establishes the limits of discourse by the play of an identity which takes the form of a permanent reactualization of rules."<sup>11</sup> Said argues 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." He continues: "Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that...no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism."<sup>12</sup>

Said, like Foucault, denies the concept of knowledge and scholarship for its own sake; according to his method, knowledge is always connected to political, sociological, economic and other power systems. It is formed by interactions with political power (such as colonial or imperial institutions), intellectual power (such the dominant sciences, and among them comparative philology), and with cultural power.<sup>13</sup>

With these ideas as the foundation of his thought, knowledge ("Orientalism") and power (imperialism) are presented as two central themes in all of Said's books and articles on the Middle East and on Middle Eastern studies. The first is the European interest in Islam, which resulted not from curiosity but rather from the fear of a powerful monotheistic competitor in the cultural and military field. This combination of fear and animosity lasts until today: Said argues that he had "not been able to discover any period in

European or American history since the Middle Ages in which Islam was generally discussed or thought about *outside* a framework created by passion, prejudice and political interests."<sup>14</sup>

The second theme is the relationship between the "Orientalists" and the systems of power and control. According to Said, the self-image of the Orientalists as researchers seeking scientific truth was a subterfuge, obscuring a seedy story of collusion with power and accepting the idea of Western supremacy. By "representing" the Orient as static and degenerate--according to Said, Orientalists never analyze, describe or depict, they only "represent"--Orientalism presents the justification for Western imperialism to dominate the Orient. Moreover, Orientalism produces and carries out services for imperialism in various ways such as scientific discovery, philological restoration, psychological analysis, landscape description, and sociological description. None of the Orientalists, even the most skillful ones, can escape the corruptive effect of power on knowledge. For instance in the United States, "political imperialism governs an entire field of study, imagination and scholarly institutions." He adds further that "[m]uch of the information and knowledge about Islam...that was used by the colonial powers...derived from Orientalist scholarship," and that "many Islamic specialists were and still are routinely consulted by, and actively work for, governments whose designs in the Islamic world are economic exploitation, domination, or outright aggression..."<sup>15</sup> Loyal to the concept of discourse, Said does not distinguish between the study of the Middle East as a research discipline (what he terms "Orientalism," or what was once

commonly known as Oriental studies) and depicting the Middle East (which he terms the Orient) in popular literature or in art. On the contrary, Said gives academic research a crucial role in distributing the Orientalist paradigms and claims that Orientalist research gave validity and inspiration to the popular cultural Orientalism of poets, authors, travelers, and painters.<sup>16</sup>

Following the concept of the tight connection between Orientalism and imperialism, Said focuses on Britain, France, and the United States, as "Britain and France dominated the Eastern Mediterranean from the end of the seventeenth century," and the United States inherited the role of the imperial hegemon since World War Two. He explains that he will not refer to "the important contributions of Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain and Portugal," because they were influenced mostly by what was happening in Britain and France.<sup>17</sup> While doing so, Said accuses the practitioners of traditional Middle Eastern studies, and even the most outstanding among them, of basic hostility toward Islam. Never, he determines, has any Orientalist identified with the Arabs culturally or politically. Having placed Orientalism's power as an essential part of Western culture, Said sweepingly determines that "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was...a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric."<sup>18</sup>

#### **THE DEBATE OVER ORIENTALISM**

During the 1980s, Said's Orientalism critique became a nearly sacred doctrine in the American academy. Even so, the book engendered not a few criticisms which focused on three main issues: the validity of the main arguments raised by Said, primarily those related to the nature of

Middle East studies as a research field; methodological problems; and the negative consequences of his arguments. It should be mentioned that among the critics were not only those his book attacked but also scholars praised by him, such as Maxime Rodinson and Albert Hourani, or researchers who presented different political opinions, among them even Arab intellectuals. This makes it harder to claim that the motive for criticism was merely of a personal or national sort.

The critics did not deny that Western culture and scholarship in the past has included ethnocentric, racist, or anti-Islamic components, but argued that these had been greatly exaggerated, to the point of being made universal. Out of more than 60,000 works on the Middle East published in Europe and the United States, he chose only those needed in order to prove his case that there was a discourse which he termed Orientalism. In order to arrive at this conclusion he ignored much evidence critical to the historical documentation of research and literature, material which would have supported the opposite position.<sup>19</sup> His choices, as Kramer writes, rejected "all discrimination between genres and disregarded all extant hierarchies of knowledge." This was particularly true regarding Said's deliberate conflation of Middle Eastern studies as a research discipline and the popular, artistic, or literary perspective of the Orient. It also disregarded the key question of which were the field's main texts and which were those purely on the margins.<sup>20</sup>

This approach led Said to ignore several leading researchers who had a decisive influence on Middle Eastern studies. For example, there is his almost complete ignoring of Ignaz Goldziher's work--which made an undeniable contribution to the

study of Islam--since his persona contradicts Said's claims. Said chose to attack Goldziher's criticism of anthropomorphism in the Koran as supposed proof of his negative attitude toward Islam, while Goldziher himself felt great respect for Islam and had even attacked Ernest Renan for his racist conceptions.<sup>21</sup> Malcolm Kerr, for example, criticized Said's ignorance of the role and importance of Arab-American Middle East researchers, who played an important role in the field and could not easily be labeled anti-Arab or anti-Islamic. Reina Lewis and Joan Miller argued that Said ignored women's voices which, they maintained, contradicted the monolithically masculine representation which Said wished to present.<sup>22</sup> Said's selectivity enabled him to paint scholarship of the Middle East as an essentialist, racist, and unchangeable phenomenon, whereas the evidence he ignored would have proven that the Western understanding and representation of the Middle East--especially of the Arabs and Islam--had become quite rich and multi-faceted over the years.

Many scholars and literary figures were actually enamored with the residents of the Middle East, and the "Orientalist discourse" was not nearly as dominant as Said would have his readers believe, as few examples among many would show. British literary figures and activists, like Wilfred Scawen Blunt, actively sought to improve the lot of the Arabs. Traveler and M.P. David Urquhart promoted Ottoman Turkey as a partner for Christian Europe. Marmaduke Pickthall, a famous convert to Islam and a translator of the Koran, looked to Turkey for the formation of a modernist Islam. Finally, Cambridge Persian scholar E.G. Browne wrote in favor of the Iranian revolution of 1906-1911 and published

articles against Curzon. These examples demonstrate the existence of discourses on the Middle East other than that characterized by Said.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, a number of researchers have demonstrated that though Islam was perceived as Europe's enemy in the Middle Ages, even then it had already gained respect and appreciation in the fields of science and philosophy, to the point of even idealizing it as a philosopher's religion.<sup>24</sup>

A prominent example of the complexity of the Western perspective on Islam is the attitude of the Enlightenment movement in the eighteenth century, which Said perceives as the parent of modern Orientalism. True, some attacked Islam as a part of their rational, secular perception which criticized unenlightened religiosity--parallel arguments were simultaneously made by them against Christianity and Judaism. Moreover, at times it was clear that their criticism of Islam was actually a camouflaged criticism of Christianity. Yet, other contemporary writers viewed Islam as a rational religion closer to the ideas of the Enlightenment than Christianity. They saw it as a religion balanced between a commitment to morality and an acknowledgement of the basic needs of man, as opposed to Christianity's distorted attitude toward sex. There were among them, too, people who spoke admiringly of Islam and its tolerance of minorities, and juxtaposed it with Christian fanaticism.

An important factor in shaping the complex perspective of Oriental studies in the nineteenth century was the entry of Jewish researchers into the field. They brought a deep knowledge of Judaism to a comparative study of Islam. Unlike some Christian researchers of Islam, they had no missionary approach or nostalgia for the Crusades or much interest in the political

aspects of the contemporary "Eastern Question." For these Jewish scholars, Islam did not represent the same kind of religious challenge to Judaism that it did to Christianity, and therefore they were free of most of the prejudices that tripped up many Christian scholars. On the contrary, many Jewish researchers evolved an almost romantic approach toward Islam. They emphasized its tolerant attitude toward the Jews, as opposed to Medieval Europe and the rising anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century. Some of them tended to portray Jewish history in Muslim lands as a continuous golden age.<sup>25</sup> They stood somewhere between the two worlds, as Jews with histories both Middle Eastern and European, contrary to Said's portrayal of unflagging European ethnocentrism. It was thus convenient for Said to leave them out of his one-dimensional portrayal of the Orientalist discourse. Middle Eastern Jews present a problem for the Saidian Orient-Occident dichotomy. He deals with this by pointedly connecting "Oriental Jews" with Palestinians when writing of Israeli (i.e., Western) discrimination. That the Jewish concept of peoplehood spans the West *and* the East is perhaps too threatening to the dichotomy so central to his theory.<sup>26</sup>

The argument that the Occident (or actually Europe prior to the twentieth century) primarily defined itself in opposition to the Orient may be questioned as over-simplifying and essentialist. According to Keith Windschuttle, Europeans identify themselves as joint heirs of classical Greece and Christianity, each tempered by the fluxes of medieval scholasticism, the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment, and modernism. In other words, Western identity is overwhelmingly defined by historical references to its earlier

selves rather than by geographical comparisons with others. To claim otherwise is to deny the central thrust of Western education for the past one thousand years.<sup>27</sup>

Conversely, the argument that Islam was the ultimate "other" in Western culture, may be challenged as well. Christian theology and doctrine emerged to a large degree as an antithesis to Judaism. Likewise, in popular culture the image of the Jew was much more frightening than that of the Muslim. It can be argued that the number of explicit anti-Jewish tracts--theological or political--throughout western history was probably higher than those devoted to Islam. The point here is not made to win the race of victimhood, but rather to argue that the picture of defining the "self" and the "other" in European culture was much more complex than the one Said presented; the "Orient" was not necessarily the defining "other" of the Occidental self.

In the final analysis, then, contrary to what Said would have his readers believe, his idea of "Orientalism" is exaggerated and fails to encompass the entirety of how the West understood and conceived Islam; just as it cannot be said that because of anti-Semitism, all of European thought was hostile toward Jews, is it not true that the West viewed the Middle East in a closed circle of interpretation disconnected from other historical developments. New ideas that surfaced in intercultural contact undermined a priori assumptions time after time. Prejudices and stereotypes were endemic but never shaped into an unchangeable united discourse on the Middle East. In reality, academics who led the discourse often took the lead in undermining prejudices. Said, concluded Bayly Winder, did to Western scholars of

Islam exactly what he accused them of doing to the Middle East.<sup>28</sup>

Said's disregard of the scope and complexity of research on Islam and the Middle East motivated Rodinson to comment that Said was not familiar enough with the main body of scholarly research on the Middle East.<sup>29</sup> However, Said's disregarding of his scholarship does not appear to result from a lack of familiarity, but rather from a political agenda, and the proof of this is that he continued to make his arguments regarding the monolithic character of Middle Eastern studies years after publishing this criticism.

In order to demonstrate the nature of scholarship as an instrument of domination Said excoriates scholars of the Middle East for dividing into categories, classifying, indexing, and documenting "everything in sight (and out of sight)."<sup>30</sup> Does this, asks the Syrian philosopher Sadiq Jalal al-Azm, imply something vicious or is it simply characteristic of all scientific academic work, essential for a proper understanding of human societies and cultures altogether?<sup>31</sup> Thus, Said's condemnation of the generalizations made by Western scholars of the Middle East and his insistence that they study the Arabs and Muslims as individuals made some of his Arab critics wonder if this meant that it was impossible or unnecessary to study collective entities. If the inclusion of Marx in Orientalism comes from his lack of attention to individual cases, added James Clifford rhetorically, perhaps it is simply impossible to form social or cultural theory, and perhaps there is no room for research fields such as sociology?<sup>32</sup>

Said's over-generalized and non-historic conception of "Orientalism" is at its most radical when he writes that "every European, in what he could say about the

Orient, was a racist, and imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric."<sup>33</sup> According to Nikki Keddie, who was praised by Said and who found positive points in his book, this argument generally encourages people to believe Westerners have no right to study the Middle East and insists that only Muslims and Arabs can investigate correctly Middle Eastern history.<sup>34</sup>

Even the doyen of Middle Eastern scholarship of the Middle East, Albert Hourani, a Christian Arab like Said, shared the feeling that the book might lend support to a Muslim counter-attack based on the idea that no one understands Islam better than Muslims.<sup>35</sup> While Said denied that this was his intention,<sup>36</sup> the actual text of the book and the conclusion of many readers belie this assertion. Moreover, disqualifying all researchers who come outside the examined group--in every area of the world--would put an end to all serious academic research. It also neglects the fact that outside researchers may have certain advantages, since as an outsider the scholar might be free from the myths or preconceptions which insiders share.

Said also raises a doubt as to whether anyone can study (in his words, "represent") any subject in any manner other than in an entirely subjective way, which is determined by the culture of the scholar-observer. He believes that the unknown, the exotic, and the foreign have always been perceived, assimilated, and represented in these terms. This leads him to doubt that any scholarship can even come close to the truth, or in his words, "whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any or all representations, because they *are* representations," are so intertwined with the institutions, language, and culture of the representer to render the truth impossible.<sup>37</sup>

The obvious conclusion from this argument, as Winder and al-Azm show, is that according to Said, "Orientalism" is inevitable since such distortions are inevitable. If one accepts this argument, however, as al-Azm suggests, this only means the West was merely doing what all cultures must do: examine other cultures through the concepts and frameworks it already holds.<sup>38</sup>

If this is true, Winder explains, that everyone who sees the "other" distorts it, then the West is no different from other cultures, including Islamic culture, which also has a distorted perspective of the "other." If indeed, Winder wonders, Said demands that Westerners should be better, does he not accept that they have a certain supremacy, a certain mission that makes them superior? Or should different criteria apply to the West simply because it was more "successful" than other societies? Thus, Said himself is promoting a clearly "Orientalist" perspective, accepting and forgiving the "weakness" of Middle Eastern society. "Westerners," claims Winder, "are not better, but Western science, including 'Orientalism,' is self-bettering in that it is self-corrective."<sup>39</sup> By determining that all "representations" of the other are by definition distortions, Said is saying that people can only study themselves, that only Muslims can properly "represent" Islam.

In our experience this has led to a crippling timidity amongst non-Muslim or non-Arab students. While it is good scholarship to control for bias, Said's influence has made students chary of writing about Islam and the Arabs from a point of view not necessarily shared by the objects of their research. They give more weight to an Arab or Islamic viewpoint and are fearful of developing an opinion of their own.

**ORIENTAL STUDIES AND IMPERIALISM**

Said's selectivity drove him to ignore the important intellectual achievement of the German and Hungarian scholars of the Middle East. According to his argument, "the major steps in Oriental scholarship were first taken in either Britain and France [*sic*], then elaborated upon by Germans."<sup>40</sup> There is no historical basis for this argument. The main reason for his ignoring research in these countries is that an accurate assessment of it would have undermined his central argument that Orientalism was integrally linked to imperialism as an expression of the nexus between knowledge and power, and therefore that Orientalists wished to gain knowledge of the Orient in order to control it. To support his claims, Said even back-dated the development of British and French imperialism in the Middle East to the seventeenth century, which is clearly a historical error. Considering German leadership in Oriental studies, it is unlikely that they took much from British and French scholars.

No doubt, agrees Bernard Lewis, some of the scholars of the Middle East served imperialism or gained from it. Yet as an explanation of academic research of the Islamic world as a whole, this argument is flawed. If the effort to gain power through knowledge is the main or only motive, why did the study of Arabic and Islam in Europe begin hundred of years before Western imperialism in the Middle East had appeared even as an ambition? Why did these studies blossom in European countries that didn't take part in the European domination effort? Why did scholars invest so much effort in trying to decipher or study the monuments of the ancient East which had no political value and were

forgotten even by the local people? The importance of the German and Hungarian scholars was tremendous in terms of their contribution to Middle East scholarship, even though they were not residents of countries with any imperialist interest in the region, and therefore the connection between power and knowledge did not exist in this case, sums up Lewis.<sup>41</sup> Said also ignored the fact that many scholars opposed imperialism, and therefore the connection he creates between their academic works and imperialism is forced.

Edmond Burke, like Said, criticizes Oriental studies scholars who at the start of the twentieth century dealt with minor issues: "studies on obscure manuscripts, folk traits, rural sufism and popular religion," instead of dealing with topics he considered to be more important, such as study of the national movements that developed in the region.<sup>42</sup> Yet again, if these scholars were so "impractical," then obviously their studies had to do more with a search for knowledge rather than an effort to help imperialism. Ironically, if they had been as Said and Burke would have them, they would have focused on precisely the issues Burke criticizes them for ignoring. It appears then that many of Said's "Orientalists" actually pursued knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Said cannot have it both ways, complaining that scholars of Islam and the Middle East dealt with the trivial and at the same time asserting they were agents of imperialistic domination.

In addition if there were any researchers who participated in an "academic effort to embalm Islam," to use Said's words, these were the Germans, but this was not because of imperialism. This was rather due to their more comprehensive approach to the study of cultures, which they applied to their own

society as well. It is very likely, writes Emmanuel Sivan, that if the Germans had been involved in the imperialist effort, they would have been more conscious of Islam being a living and dynamic tradition. Actually, the British and the French, who imitated the Germans, could not afford to be pure classicists because of their country's imperialist demands. They studied Islam as a living civilization. Sivan concludes that the reality of the situation was much more complicated and ironic than that presented by Said.<sup>43</sup> While Said disregarded German Middle Eastern studies scholars because they were not connected to imperialism, if he had taken the time to examine their work, he would have discovered that many saw Islam and the Middle East in all its variety, without essentializing.<sup>44</sup>

Al-Azm raises another issue, namely, the problematic cause and effect connection that Said makes between Orientalism as a cultural-social phenomenon and imperialism. It is impossible to avoid the impression, al-Azm remarks, that for Said the presence of observers, administrators, and intruders in the Middle East--such as Napoleon, Cromer, and Balfour--had become inevitable and actually was caused by literary and intellectual Orientalism. Therefore, according to Said, we can understand better the political inclinations and the aspirations of European imperialists if we turn to literary figures, among them Barthélemy d'Herbelot and Dante Alighieri, rather than if we actually explore strategic and economical interests.<sup>45</sup>

Another difficulty in Said's approach of connecting academic research to imperialism lays, according to Halliday, in the assumption that if ideas come to the world in circumstances of domination or even directly in the service of the dominator, they are not valid. Yet

according to Halliday, trying to subdue a land requires producing as accurate an image as possible of it. For example, French ethnographers serving French imperialism in North Africa did not necessarily produce worthless research, as Said would have his readers believe. On the contrary, in order for the studies of those academic researchers to serve the French, they had to be accurate. "To put it bluntly," writes Halliday, "if you want to rob a bank, you would be well advised to have a pretty accurate map of its layout...."<sup>46</sup>

An ironic twist to the connection between political establishments and scholarship was visible after Martin Kramer's fierce attack against the American academy for identifying with Said's Orientalism critique. Kramer argued that Middle Eastern studies were so compromised by Said's world view that they should no longer receive U.S. government aid. Said's supporters, who in the past had attacked the connection between academic research and the political establishment, were quite alarmed at the notion. In effect they were arguing that the large amounts of monies their institutions took from the government did not undermine their intellectual independence, even as many of them characterized U.S. policy as imperialistic. Clearly, they do not really believe that a connection with the political establishment, even an "imperialistic" one, has any effect on their own research. Yet if that is so, then government funding does not necessarily influence academic discourse. If this is true of today, it might well be true of the past as well, despite Said's critique.

**"REPRESENTATION" AND HISTORICAL TRUTH**

Said's focus on Orientalism as a discourse of power, and apparently his background as a literary critic (and not as a historian), led him to argue that the "things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original." In other words: "The phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and the Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient...despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real Orient.'"<sup>47</sup> This approach, which is largely influenced by the post-modern discourse popular in the field of literary criticism-Said's primary expertise-leads him to ignore the possibility that representation includes reliable and precise information as well. He never analyzes profoundly or refutes the Middle Eastern studies literature, he merely argues over its style and motives.

Halliday, as a positivist scholar who believes that historical reality is the important factor and not simply representation, doubts whether the discourse criticism in literature can be used for social sciences as well and questions whether historical research can be treated like literary analysis. Halliday even argues that Said's basic approach is similar to those whom Said accuses of "Orientalism," since both put a priority on what is termed (in different theoretical frameworks) ideology, discourse, or political culture.<sup>48</sup>

Lewis is most severe in his criticism of Said's epistemological conception, which is influenced by Michel Foucault and which

draws on post-modernist ideas. According to Said's approach, says Lewis, every discourse is an expression of a motive to rule, and all knowledge is distorted. Therefore, absolute truth does not exist or is not attainable. Thus, the truth is not important and even the facts are not important, nor is the evidence. Most important is the approach--the motives and intentions--of those who use knowledge.<sup>49</sup>

An example of this problematic aspect of the Orientalist critique, which ascribes far more importance to the researcher's inclinations than to the empirical basis of his findings, is to be found in the complaint of Palestinian researcher Hisham Sharabi about Lewis himself. Sharabi attacks Lewis for saying that German nationalism had affected the Arab political arena in the 1930s and 1940s more than patriotism in its British or French form. He then takes Lewis to task for his claim regarding the influence of pro-Nazi and Fascist movements in the Arab world in the 1930s and 1940s. Sharabi is angered because Lewis quotes the Syrian politician Sami al-Jundi, who wrote in his memoirs: "We were racists, we admired Nazism, read the books and the sources from which its ideas derived." Nowhere does Sharabi refute Lewis's arguments or demonstrate that he distorts reality or misquoted al-Jundi. He is angry because Lewis seemingly quotes this passage that presents the Arabs in an unfavorable light "with satisfaction."<sup>50</sup>

**THE ESSENTIALIST DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THE ORIENT AND THE OCCIDENT**

There is a contradiction between two central arguments in Said's approach. On the one hand, he writes that Orientalism created the Orient and that it is merely a "construction" of the Orientalists which

does not exist in reality. On the other hand, throughout his book, he repeats the premise of an unchanging relationship between a West that was hostile as far back as ancient Greece, and a victimized Orient, as if these two entities were indeed historical realities. The result is that Said himself establishes a false dichotomy between East and West. He depicts the West and the East in the same essentialist and ahistorical manner which is unchanging across time and against which he rails.

While critical of the Western media's treatment of Islamic countries and its ignoring of the role of the imperialist powers in forming the painful history of the region, at the same time, Janet Afary sees Said's criticism as a "mirror image of the colonialist discourse which he dissects." According to her, Said's *weltanschauung* is "Manichaeic...in which the West represents the dominant male and the East--the subservient female locations." In so doing, he ignores such matters as "[e]thnic complexities, class, and gender divisions..." and "the problematic role of religion and its unhappy coexistence with democracy."<sup>51</sup> In his description of the Orient as helpless under the Orientalists, or in his own words, "it is perhaps true that Islam has produced no very powerful visual aesthetic tradition,"<sup>52</sup> Said himself surrenders to the very Orientalist discourse which he excoriates for presenting Islam as inferior. If he had an awareness of such architectural marvels as the Dome of the Rock, the mosque of Ibn Tulun, or the truly spectacular Islamic metal, ceramic, and glassware on exhibit around the world, he might not have made such an assertion. He also states that there is a lack of good libraries in the Middle East, which is surely not the case.<sup>53</sup>

By attempting to impute such rigid roles and natures to the West and the East, Said not only underestimates the contributions of Islamic societies, but also commits the sin of "essentialism" which he so reviles. Joel Kraemer noted that it is impossible to attribute ancient Greek philosophy and science to an essential West and remove it from the Middle East. The works of Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy and Galen spoke to the hearts of the three main civilizations of the Middle Ages--Arab-Muslim, Byzantine, and Latin--each in its own special way. The Arab role in absorbing and assimilating the scientific and philosophical Greek classics and then transferring them to Europe is known to all. Yet this historical phenomenon does not interest Said at all, for it contradicts his fixation on the dichotomous contrast between cultures. Islamic civilization grew and blossomed in a direct and intimate link to the other civilizations in the Mediterranean basin. Many scholars of Islam therefore deliberated the question whether to see it as a part of the European cultural sphere or that of the Middle East. Most of them believed that it stood alongside European culture, sharing one degree of closeness or another; not in opposition, but as a neighbor.<sup>54</sup>

#### **THE CENTRALITY OF ISLAM**

No doubt, one of the main failures of classical Oriental studies was the perception of Islam--defined by its tradition and classic texts--as an independent variable in history and as the dominant explanation--and sometimes the only one--of historical phenomena in the Middle East. This attitude resulted from the perception of human history as

based on civilizations defined by culture and religion, and from the idea that the right way to learn religion was through religious texts and languages.<sup>55</sup> Said is absolutely right when saying that the emphasis on the classical texts resulted in an essentialist perception of Islam as static, unchangeable, and backward compared to Europe, and in an over-estimation of Islam as the only source of each and every phenomenon in the Middle East. Said goes even further and claims that the essentialist perception brought Oriental studies scholars to use texts, such as the Koran, in order to explain different aspects of contemporary Arab society.<sup>56</sup>

But an important explanation for this mistaken perception of a frozen Islam eludes Said, even though he correctly pointed out the phenomenon. The idea of a frozen Islam, argues Robert Irwin, often resulted from the scholars' overestimation of their sources. Yet here, even if they were wrong, their problem came from paying respectful attention to Muslim perceptions and not ignoring them. For instance, many European philologists accepted without objection the arguments of the Arab grammarians themselves that the Arab language was an unchanging one. A similar approach can be seen in Lewis's article on Ottoman observers, which accepts their observations on the decline of their empire as an undisputed historical fact rather than as a product of a then-current pessimistic *weltanschauung*, or of the bitterness of those who had identified their loss in political and social struggles as the alleged decline of the empire as a whole.<sup>57</sup> In these cases and others, even when the classical Oriental studies scholars were wrong, they were not

arguing from a position of scorn or condescension toward the people they were studying, but rather accepting ideas that originated with the members of the studied culture.

For his part, however, working from within his Orientalist critique, Said reaches a radically different conclusion, which entirely removes Islam from having any role whatsoever in the shaping of the region's history. In his review of *Orientalism*, Kerr agrees that not everything can be explained through Islam, but wonders whether Said takes into account that Islamic doctrine both claims and aspires to deal with all aspects of life, while stressing that man's spiritual purpose is not separate from his temporal one. How does Said view phenomena such as Ayatollah Khomeini or the Muslim Brothers, he asks.<sup>58</sup>

Said's tendency to underestimate the importance--if not to erase the influence--of religion and history on the modern Middle Eastern prompted a number of Arab critiques of his work. These writers, mostly leftists who had fought to bring social changes in their countries, failed in their struggle against various beliefs and concepts, such as discrimination against women, precisely because their fellow citizens believed that such ideas were Islamic. The paradox, as Sivan showed, is that Arab leftist scholars, who carried out field studies in the Middle East, reached conclusions that were not far from those of the Middle Eastern studies scholars identified by Said with racism and imperialism.<sup>59</sup>

By ignoring the importance of religion in the region, Said and others critical of "Orientalism" fall into an internal contradiction. They attack "Orientalism" as a discourse which formulates consciousness

and leads to action, while simultaneously ignoring the Islamic discourse and its influence on the development of perceptions which can lead to actual deeds. One of the outcomes of this contradiction is the common claim by the critics of "Orientalism" that there is no connection between violence and religion. Without disregarding the importance of the deep social, economic, and political roots of terrorism, it is clear to anyone who lives in the Middle East that the religious discourse and weltanschauung has a profound impact on the politics and society of the region. Ignoring the religion of Islam, claims Kramer, caused Said and his supporters to profoundly misunderstand the rise of Islamism as a significant political power in the Middle East since the 1980s. A perfect example of this ignorance is Said's dismissing in the period before the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks "speculations about the latest conspiracy to blow up buildings, sabotage commercial airliners and poison water supplies" as "highly exaggerated stereotyping."<sup>60</sup>

#### **EMPATHY AND SYMPATHY**

As an alternative to Orientalism, Said correctly maintains that researchers should feel empathy toward those they are studying. Indeed, empathy is truly a useful heuristic device. Yet he goes far beyond this by demanding that scholars demonstrate actual sympathy and political support for the objects of their study: "I doubt that there can be any substitute for a genuinely engaged and *sympathetic*--as opposed to a narrowly political or hostile--attitude to the Islamic world," he wrote, and complained elsewhere that "no person academically involved with the Near East--no Orientalist that is--has ever in the United States culturally and politically identified

himself wholeheartedly with the Arabs."<sup>61</sup> Apart from the fact that this is empirically wrong, it is against the most basic principles of scholarship. As Winder says, "identifying with" is not an acceptable criteria for research and scholarship.<sup>62</sup> It is worth asking if Said himself would demand that scholars of Zionism, which he opposed with all his might, adopt the same stand that he demands of scholars of the Middle East.

Louis Massignon is one of the few scholars who merits Said's praises. He emphasizes Massignon's deep empathy for Islamic mysticism, his nuanced description, and broad scope. Yet while Said thinks it is sufficient to note Massignon's style and sympathy, argues al-Azm, he fits into Said's Orientalist stereotype. Precisely because he stressed there being a timeless "spiritual dimension" of Eastern culture, Massignon argued that the East and the West were distinguished by the difference between tradition and modernity. If so, what makes Massignon so unique? It seems that the reason is not his methodology, but his persona as a "tireless fighter on behalf of Muslim civilization," his support of the Palestinian refugees, and his "defense of Arab Muslim and Christian rights in Palestine," according to Said.<sup>63</sup> While Said attacks scholars who are connected to power centers in the West, he does not reject the involvement of academics in political struggles. On the contrary, for Said it is a virtue, as long as they are on right side, with views that match his own.<sup>64</sup>

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES**

Said's *Orientalism* did have a salubrious effect to the extent that it brought into greater relief the influence of discourse on academic writing, particularly with respect to the analysis of the "other." Many

scholars did need to be reminded of the humanity of their subjects, and their empathy needed to be strengthened. Moreover, there is no doubt that much of Middle Eastern studies was outdated and in need of serious revision, particularly in view of new developments in historical research as well as in such social science fields as sociology and anthropology.

That said, overall Said's book had a negative impact. It was gladly accepted by Islamist circles in the Middle East which saw it as a pro-Islamic, anti-Western document. The book provided a confirmation from the "inside" of their long-held suspicions toward Western researchers for being, so to speak, agents of their countries, as well as the view that Western research is part of a scheme to ruin Islam's reputation. Later, Said claimed that this factor was the aspect of the book's reception that he most regretted. He added that *Orientalism* could be understood as a defense of Islam only if half his argument were ignored. The answer to this self-justification is that if so many people "misinterpret" a certain essay, the misinterpretation is probably embedded in the contents and arguments made by it. Kramer argues that it was possible to ignore half of the argument since the book's tone carried the message that the Islamists understood.<sup>65</sup>

Another problem, noticed mostly by Said's Arab critics, is that his arguments also served as ammunition for Islamists and Arab nationalists to counter any criticism of the status quo in the Arab world as Arab Orientalism. Kanan Makiya<sup>66</sup> wrote that the book "unwittingly deflected from the real problems of the Middle East at the same time as it contributed more bitterness to the armory" of young Arabs.<sup>67</sup> Whether or not Said so intended, according to Sivan, he

provided major assistance to intellectual trends of apologetics in the Arab world which blamed all its problems on outsiders.<sup>68</sup> This factor made it harder to improve politics and life in the Arab world and thus damaged the interests of the Arabs themselves. Said attacked Fouad Ajami and Kanan Makiya as writers who do not sympathize with the Arabs. He described Makiya--who exposed the oppression of Arabs and Muslims by Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq--with contempt as a "native informant" who serves the interests of American policymakers.<sup>69</sup> For Said, Fouad Ajami is "a second-rate scholar who has written one collection of essays...and a very bad history of Musa Sadr."<sup>70</sup>

There is a paradox in the fact that a large part of Said's supporters joined with the Islamists or with supporters of the status quo by rejecting any criticism of the Arab world as "Orientalism." It is equally ironic that it is Arab leftists who often criticize their society and raise arguments similar to those of Elie Kedourie, who is denigrated as an "Orientalist" by Said and his supporters. This kind of agreement, of a conservative intellectual like Kedourie and radical Arab critics attacked by Said raise the question of who is helping the Arabs in the long run--those willing to sincerely engage with crises plaguing Arab society, or those who whitewash them by saying that criticism represents a distorted Western approach?<sup>71</sup>

Said's criticism contributed to the further politicization of Middle Eastern studies, which was already quite politicized by the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nikki Keddie noted that in the field the word "Orientalist" is thrown around in a general derogatory sense, directed against those who adopt "the wrong" approach on the conflict or who are perceived as too conservative. She stated

that for many people the word substitutes for thought and enables people to dismiss certain scholars and their works. "I think that is too bad," she said. "It may not have been what Edward Said meant at all, but the term has become kind of a slogan."<sup>72</sup>

No less severe is the contribution of *Orientalism* to creating an almost McCarthyist atmosphere in the American academy, one that chokes debates and arguments. Haideh Moghissi, an Iranian scholar, feminist and activist, complained that "fear of Orientalism is haunting studies of the Middle East, and particularly the study of women's experience in various Middle Eastern and Islamic societies. It is used to discourage critical thinking and self-criticism..."<sup>73</sup>

Henry Munson criticized the fact that many American researchers are so determined to refute any negative stereotypes of Islam that they tend to idealize everything that is Muslim, including radical Islamist movements. According to him, many tend to ignore key features of radical Islamism, ranging from anti-Semitic conspiracy theories to the threat of those movements to human rights. Munson added that those who think Kramer exaggerated in estimating Said's influence on Middle Eastern research in the United States need to acknowledge the fact that a scholar who dares discuss discrimination against the Baha'is in Iran, slavery in Sudan, or the Islamist persecution of intellectuals in Egypt stands in danger of being called an Orientalist, a Zionist, or an agent of American imperialism.<sup>74</sup>

An expression of this phenomenon can be seen in an article in the *New York Times* about a book suggesting a new reading of the Koran based on Syro-Aramaic sources. What is disturbing is that the author felt he had to write under a pseudonym and had

difficulties finding a publisher, even though several leading scholars saw him as a trailblazer. The reason, explains the newspaper, is not just the fear that radical Islamist circles see him as a second Salman Rushdie, but fear of the Western academy. The *Times* quoted a scholar at an American university: "Between fear and political correctness, it's not possible to say anything other than sugary nonsense about Islam." Like the author of the new book on the Koran, he asked that his name be withheld, and referred to possible violence, within the context of the reluctance on U.S. campuses to criticize other cultures.<sup>75</sup> The fact that scholars fear presenting the fruits of their research lest they be accused of "Orientalism" demonstrates clearly that there is a crisis in Middle Eastern studies.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the positive contribution of *Orientalism* in increasing the awareness of scholars to cultural biases and the importance of discourse in shaping research, the harm the book wrought was no less great. Apart from unfounded historical generalizations on the development of Middle Eastern studies in the West, on "representing" Islam in the West, and on Middle Eastern society itself, even to the point of adopting essentialist approaches which he himself attacked, there are several methodological failures in the book which cast a shadow over Said's writing. Amongst these one can point to the unspoken demand that the scholar identify with the object of his research as a precondition for research aptitude; giving preference to matters of presentation (or, in Saidian terms, "representation") over aiming at empirical and historical truth; and ignoring Islam as a significant cultural discourse, a key factor in the formation of

Middle Eastern politics and society. The principle problem in Said's criticism is its contribution to the exaggerated politicization of Middle Eastern studies and transforming it into a hegemonic discourse which silences all self-criticism, for self-criticism is the essence of all academic research.

As we reflect back on more than a quarter century since the publication of *Orientalism*, it seems that Arab intellectuals in the Middle East are more self-critical than ever before. The Internet, an opening up of the press, and satellite television have increased the amount of public space for airing opinion. Self-criticism in the Middle East is flourishing.<sup>76</sup> For many years, Middle Eastern studies in the West has suffered from a kind of self-censorship that threatened to destroy "the free spirit of inquiry, discovery, and expression which has inspired and guided the whole modern movement of scholarship and science."<sup>77</sup> It is our hope that the opening up of debate in the Middle East--be it with respect to women's issues, Islam, democracy, or peace with Israel--will serve as an example, loosening up the stifling effect that Said had on Middle Eastern studies scholarship in the Western academy.

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*reflect on the influence of Said's Orientalism throughout their years of studying and teaching about Islam and the Middle East. They hope it will be useful to students and teachers alike. This is a revised and expanded version of an article which appeared in Hamizrah Hehadash, Vol. 45 (2005).*

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For example, a look at the thousands of books and articles covering all aspects of the French Revolution, from gender relations to politics of memory, could only make Middle Eastern studies scholars envious of their fellow academics.

<sup>2</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> An example of the influence of this process in a research field close to that of the Middle East is the rise of the Revisionist trend in Cold War studies, which mostly blamed the conflict on the United States.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*, (Washington, D.C.: Vintage Books, 2000), pp. 32-33.

<sup>5</sup> Edward W. Said, "East Isn't East: The Impending End of the Age of Orientalism," *Times Literary Supplement*, February 3, 1995, p. 3; Said, *Orientalism*, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 2-3, 12, 41-42, 70, 202-03; Fred Halliday, "Orientalism and its Critics," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1993), pp. 148-49.

<sup>7</sup> Edward W. Said, "The Intellectual Origins of Imperialism and Zionism," *Gazelle Review of Literature on the Middle East*, No. 2 (1977), p. 48; Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of*

*the World* (New York:Random House, 1981), p. 41; Said, *Orientalism*, p. 273.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), pp. 27-28, quoted in Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (New York: Routledge, 1980), p. 125.

<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, "Théories et institutions pénales," *Annuaire du Collège de France*, 1971-1972, p. 283, cited in Sheridan, *Michel Foucault*, p. 125.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Sprinker, "The Use and Abuse of Foucault," *Humanities in Society* Vol. 3, No. 1 (1980), p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Sprinker, "The Use and Abuse of Foucault," p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12; Said, *Covering Islam*, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Said, "East isn't East"; Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 59-60; Edward W. Said, "Islam through Western Eyes," *The Nation*, March 26, 1980, original emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 14; Said, "East Isn't East."

<sup>16</sup> Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Said, "Islam through Western Eyes"; Said, *Orientalism*, p. 204.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Conjuring with Islam," *New York Review of Books*, May 27, 1982, p. 28; Emmanuel Sivan, "Edward Said and His Arab Reviewers," in Emmanuel Sivan (ed.), *Interpretations of Islam: Past and Present*, (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1985), pp. 134-35, 137.

<sup>20</sup> Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 209; Joel Kraemer, "Three Saidian Fallacies," paper presented at the Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies Conference, "Knowledge, Power and Society," January 1994; L. I. Conrad, "Ignaz Goldziher on Ernest Renan: From Orientalist Philology to the Study of

Islam," Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, 1999), pp. 137-80.

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm H. Kerr, "Review of 'Orientalism'," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1980), pp. 544-47; Jane Miller, *Seductions: Studies in Reading and Culture*, (London: Virago, 1990); and Reina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), cited in Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwaila, *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 83.

<sup>23</sup> Geoffrey Nash, "Revisiting Pro-Muslim British Orientalists," *ISIM Review*, Vol. 16 (Autumn 2006), p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, p. 29; Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, (Seattle: Washington University Press, 1987), pp. 45 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 13 ff; Alastair Hamilton, "Western Attitudes to Islam in the Enlightenment," *Middle Eastern Lectures*, Vol. 3 (1999), pp. 69-87; Robert Irwin, "Oriental Discourses in Orientalism," *Middle Eastern Lectures*, Vol. 3 (1999), pp. 87-110.

<sup>26</sup> Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 29.

<sup>27</sup> Keith Windschuttle, "Edward Said's 'Orientalism' Revisited," at [www.newcriterion.com/archive/17/jan99/said.htm](http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/17/jan99/said.htm).

<sup>28</sup> Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, p. 29; R. Bayly Winder, "Orientalism: Review Article," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1981), pp. 615-19.

<sup>29</sup> Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, p. 131.

<sup>30</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 86.

<sup>31</sup> Sadik Jalal al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," Jon Rothschild (ed.), *Forbidden Agendas: Intolerance and Defiance in the Middle East* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1984), p. 354.

<sup>32</sup> James Clifford, "Review of *Orientalism*," *History and Theory*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (1980), p. 218.

<sup>33</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 204.

<sup>34</sup> Keddie, cited in Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> For interviews with Nikki Keddie and Albert Hourani see Nancy Elizabeth Gallagher, *Approaches to the History of the Middle East*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1994), pp. 41, 144-145.

<sup>36</sup> Said, "East Isn't East."

<sup>37</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 67, 272 (emphasis in original). It is curious, therefore, that Said claims a few sentences earlier (p. 272) that "Islam *has* been fundamentally misrepresented in the West," since once cannot misrepresent something that is, by Said's definition, incapable of being properly described (or "represented"). Emphasis in original.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," p. 355.

<sup>39</sup> Winder, "*Orientalism*," p. 618, quoting Francis Peters; al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," p. 54.

<sup>40</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>41</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism," in Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 117-18; Edmund Burke, III, "Orientalism and World History: Representing Middle Eastern Nationalism and Islamism in the Twentieth Century," *Theory and Society* Vol. 27, No. 4 (1998),

p. 490. For a similar approach on the part of Said's Arab critics, who are partners in his protest against Western imperialism, but who distinguish between this and academic research, see Sivan, "Edward Said and His Arab Reviewers," p. 137.

<sup>42</sup> Burke, *Islam and the West*, p. 493.

<sup>43</sup> Sivan, "Edward Said and His Arab Reviewers," p. 141.

<sup>44</sup> See Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), pp. 147-48. See also Baber Johansen, "Politics, Paradigms and the Progress of Oriental Studies: The German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft) 1845-1989," *The Arab World in Scientific Research* (MARS), (Winter 1994), pp. 79-94.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," p. 353.

<sup>46</sup> Halliday, "Orientalism and its Critics," p. 159-60; see similar arguments also in al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," pp. 355-56; Sivan, "Edward Said and His Arab Reviewers," p. 140.

<sup>47</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 5, 21. Emphasis in original.

<sup>48</sup> Halliday, "Orientalism and its Critics," pp. 150,160.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism," p. 115.

<sup>50</sup> Hisham Sharabi, "The Scholarly Point of View: Politics, Perspectives, Paradigms," in Hisham Sharabi (ed.), *Theory, Politics and the Arab World*, (New York: Routledge 1990), pp. 14-15.

<sup>51</sup> Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Said, *Covering Islam*, p. 61.

<sup>53</sup> Said, *Covering Islam*, p. 53; Said, *Orientalism*, p. 323.

<sup>54</sup> Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*.

<sup>55</sup> Bernard Lewis falls into this trap in his otherwise excellent book, when he refers to the simultaneous invasion of China, India, Africa, and Europe by the armies of "Islam," as if they were some kind of unified body acting in concert (Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong: Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 6).

<sup>56</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 52; Edward W. Said, "Arabs, Islam and the Dogma of the West," *The New York Times Book Review*, October 31, 1976, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Irwin, "Oriental Discourses in Orientalism," pp. 98-99; Bernard Lewis, "Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 1 (1962), pp. 71-87.

<sup>58</sup> Kerr, "Review of 'Orientalism'," p. 545.

<sup>59</sup> Sivan, "Edward Said and His Arab Reviewers," pp. 148-51.

<sup>60</sup> Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, pp. 44-60; Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), p. 11 (revised edition).

<sup>61</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, p. 27; Said, "Islam Through Western Eyes"; see also his complaint that "so many researchers of Islam, including Bernard Lewis, see themselves obliged to attack Arabs and Muslims" (Said, "East Isn't East", p. 5). Emphasis in original.

<sup>62</sup> Winder, "Orientalism," p. 618.

<sup>63</sup> For Said's words on Massignon see Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 268-70; al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," p. 359.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Said, *MERIP Report*, No. 171 (July-August 1991), pp. 16, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, pp. 46-47. For instance, Islamist activists who

backed Ayatollah Khomeini's death sentence *fatwa* against *Satanic Verses* author Salman Rushdie, quoted Said's essays as proof for the arguments against Rushdie, even though Said himself came to the author's defense. For Islamist criticisms of Orientalists, see William Brinner, "An anti-Orientalist Egyptian Author," in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (ed.), *Muslim Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 1996), pp. 247-65. The article makes note of attacks on Jewish scholars.

<sup>66</sup> Kanan Makiya is the author (under the pseudonym Samir al-Khalil) of *Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), which is a severe indictment of Saddam Hussein's regime.

<sup>67</sup> Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny and Uprising in the Arab World*, (New York: WW Norton, 1994), p. 318

<sup>68</sup> For a broader discussion on this issue see Emmanuel Sivan, "The Controversy over Orientalism," *Alpaim*, Vol. 14 (1997), pp. 45-48.

<sup>69</sup> Said, *MERIP* interview. It is interesting that Said, who demands that scholars of the Middle East be empathic and sympathetic, takes an abusive language himself towards his objects of research. For instance he describes P.J. Vatikiotis as an "utterly ninth-rate" scholar, a style which Rodinson described as "a bit Stalinistic"; Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, p. 38.

<sup>70</sup> Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995), p. 308.

<sup>71</sup> For example of Said's whitewash, see Danny Postel, "Islamic Studies Young Turks: New Generation of Scholars Deplores Problems of Muslim World and

Seeks Internal Solutions," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 13 (September 2002), p. 14a. Postel shows how many liberal Muslim thinkers raise questions regarding the crisis in Islam. The questions are similar to those which were raised in Lewis, *What Went Wrong?*.

<sup>72</sup> Keddie, quoted in Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, p. 37. Amy Singer, a graduate student in Middle Eastern history at Princeton in the early 1980s, remarked that debate about the book greatly polarized the students and faculty, an atmosphere that she considered to be intimidating, and at times silencing. See Amy Singer, "On Facing 'Orientalism' in Graduate School," paper delivered at a conference on "Knowledge, Power, and Society," Moshe Dayan Center, Tel Aviv University, January 17-19, 1994. Today, Singer believes that some positive things emerged from the entire "event," but that the balance sheet is rather mixed. Personal communication.

<sup>73</sup> Haideh Moghissi, *Populism and Feminism in Iran*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p.8.

<sup>74</sup> Henry Munson, "Intolerable Tolerance: Western Academia and Islamic Fundamentalism," *Connection*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1996), pp. 99-117; Henry Munson, "Between Pipes and Esposito," *ISIM Newsletter*, No. 10 (July 2002), p. 8. See a similar argument in Charles P. Freund, "2001 Nights: The End of Orientalist Critique," *Reasononline*, December 2000, <http://www.reason.com/0112/cr.cf.2001.shtml>.

<sup>75</sup> Alexander Stille, "Scholars Are Quietly Offering New Theories of the Koran," *New York Times*, March 2, 2002. As far as we can tell, the pseudonymous author of the book (originally published in German in

2002), "Christoph Luxenberg," has yet to find a publisher in English.

<sup>76</sup> See Barry Rubin, *The Long War for Freedom: The Arab Struggle for Democracy in the Middle East*, (New York: Wiley Press, 2005).

<sup>77</sup> Bernard Lewis, "The State of Middle Eastern Studies," *American Scholar*, Vol. 48 (Summer 1979), p. 381.