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## Travelling theories: Said's theorizing of power and representation and his Arab interlocutors<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

Edward Said's theorization of power, Knowledge and representation travelled to a troubled land in an atmosphere of ideological polarization that persists to the present which made most interpretations and readings of his book *Orientalism* and its main thesis measured by how far they fit into an already existing ideological and intellectual map with the minor exception of Hassan Hanafi's intervention which expanded Said's thesis about knowledge and power in an inventive way.

### 1. Introduction

In the "Afterword" to the 1995 edition of *Orientalism*, Edward Said states that, "*Orientalism* now seems to me a collective book that I think supersedes me as its author more than I could have expected when I wrote it" (330). Said is quite right in his remark. *Orientalism* provoked different responses from different interpretive communities such as Marxists, liberals and Islamists who made different interpretive decisions that were not foreseen by the author himself. The notion of an 'interpretive community' as explained by Stanley Fish will be used here to group those who followed similar interpretive strategies in reading Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In an article entitled, "Interpreting the Variorum" (1976), Stanley Fish explains the notion of an interpretive community in the following manner:

Interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting properties and assigning their intentions. In other words, *these strategies exist prior to the act of reading* and therefore determine the shape of what is being read... (Emphasis added) (*Twentieth Century Literary Theory* 238 ).

This will be coupled with Said's notion of travelling theory. According to Edward Said:

Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel, from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another. Cultural and intellectual life are usually nourished and often sustained by the circulation of ideas.... Having said that, however, one should go to specify the kinds of movement that are possible in order to ask whether by virtue of having moved from one place and time to another an idea or a theory gains or loses in the process in strength and whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation (226)

My purpose in this paper is to see how the idea of power and knowledge discussed in Edward Said's *Orientalism* has travelled

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among Arab critics who adapted it to their own different purposes of critique of the West or attempt to encourage the production of non-dominative knowledge: knowledge divorced from power. So, I will be in the curious position of using Said's travel theory to discuss- as well as the notion of interpretive communities- how Said's ideas regarding the nexus between knowledge and power fared when they travelled to the Arab world which was so ideologically and politically polarized.

Said's controversial book *Orientalism* has provoked a heated debate in the Arab world. It was published in 1978 and was translated into Arabic in 1981 by Kamal Abu Deeb. The debate triggered by the book took place in book reviews, articles and books in which writers put forth their opinion concerning the theses advanced by Edward Said. Said's arguments about the relationship of knowledge and power, his study of Orientalism as a discourse of power and his treatment of Marx as well as other topics received extensive critiques that extended over a period of more than twenty five years.

The Marxist reading of *Orientalism* has used strategies that wrote its Marxist priority into Edward Said's book. In a review article entitled "*Al-Istishraq wa Al-Istishraq Ma'kusa*" (1981) (*Orientalism and Orientalism in reverse*", partially translated in *Orientalism: A Reader*) Sadiq Jalal Al-'Azm, a student of Arab culture educated at Yale, offers a reading of *Orientalism*. The interpretive strategy that marks his reading which would mark almost all Marxist readings is that of looking at Orientalism as an ideology that formed the superstructure of material developments in the West; the argument being that if economic activities underlie all other human activities including the discursive practices of society, then Said has failed to indicate this in his study of Orientalism. This interpretive strategy reads Said against the backdrop of Marx's theory of the primacy of the material over the discursive. To put it more clearly, it is not the intellectual production in the West that made the West misrepresent the East, rather the West's need for new markets.

On the other hand, Said's main inspiration in *Orientalism* is Foucault's discourse theory to which he makes some alterations: he acknowledges the role of individual authors in the formation of discourse (*Orientalism* 23). Al-Azm's reading ignores Foucauldian influences on Edward Said. Al-Azm views Orientalist scholarship as a product of Western imperialism at a certain stage in the development of Western societies. According to this view, Orientalism coincided with the rise of Western imperial expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Therefore, Al-Azm's basic disagreement with Said's view is that Al-Azm supports a material explanation of colonialism in which the economic base defines the superstructure: the intellectual output of Orientalist scholarship. However, Said, much influenced by discourse theory, regards Orientalism as the cause of imperialism and not the result. Here the epistemological framework through which the West represented Islam is taken by Said to be no less important than the Marxist economic in giving rise to imperialism. This point was made clear by Robert Young in his book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995):

*Orientalism* thus challenged the traditional self-devaluation in deference to the economic of orthodox Marxist cultural criticism. And though doubtless the Western expansion into the East was determined by economic factors, Said argued that the enabling cultural construction of Orientalism was not simply determined by them (159).

Essam Fawzi, another Marxist critic, makes a slightly different reading of *Orientalism*. He takes Said to task for ignoring the concept of ideology in his critique of Orientalist scholarship. Very much like Al-Azm, Fawzi views Orientalism as an ideology that justifies imperialism. He explains that, "The imperial West did not produce scientific knowledge about Oriental societies. The reason for this is that it had no need for this kind of knowledge in the process of the exploitation of dependent societies"

(*Al-Maddiyyah At-Tarikhiyyah bayn Al-Istishraq wa Ta'wil An-Nusus*) Historical Materialism between Orientalism and the Interpretation of Texts 479). According to Althusser, the main purpose of ideology is in “‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (*Lenin and Philosophy* 116). Drawing on this concept, Essam Fawzi sees Orientalism as an ideology that is directed to the Western citizen in order “to justify the domination of other societies and the creation of conflicts between him and the Eastern citizen with a view to hiding class conflict in the West and obliterating the liberating tenor of the struggle of Eastern societies” (*al-Maddiyyah At-Tarikhiyyah* 485). According to Fawzi this is achieved via a system of interpellation through which the ideology of Orientalism turns Western individuals into subjects who can recognize the following: (1)- The difference between us and them. (2)-What is good, right and just: the colonisation of the East. (3) What is available for the execution of the plan of subjugation and justification of the politics of imperialism at each stage of aggression on the East (*al-Maddiyyah At-Tarikhiyyah* 485).

In the estimation of Fawzi, ideological interpellation is considered a frontline defence of imperialism. The Western economic expansion outside its borders has placed new demands on the ideological apparatus. Thus, it needs to qualify individuals to enter the process of imperial production and occupy subject positions in subjugating the colonised countries and convincing them of the legality of imperialism. This Orientalist discourse is used as well to manipulate the Orientals themselves by convincing them of their inferiority and their need to imitate Europe, which further asserts the centre-periphery relationship between a dependant Orient and an imperial West (485). Furthermore, Fawzi opines that the absence of the concept of class struggle as an analytical tool in Edward Said’s study of Orientalism made him view all Western texts as Orientalist and thus presented Europe as one homogenous whole. For Fawzi, Said found no problem in lumping writers such as Gibb, Massingnon and Marx in the basket of Orientalism ignoring that these people belong to different classes which were in conflict with each others. The main interpretive strategy used here prioritizes the Marxist class conflict concept over the discursive of Orientalism. That is why Said’s *Orientalism* is criticised for what it denies more than for what it asserts.

For Said, though, Orientalism did not *just* justify imperialism and colonialism but, in a way, made them possible in the first place. Thus before planning to invade Egypt Napoleon read Comte de Volney’s *Voyage en Egypte et Syrie* (1787). De Volney explained that any military campaign against Egypt would have to get over three obstacles: the British, the Ottoman Porte and the Muslims themselves. According to Said, Bonaparte clearly refers to De Volney in his reflections on the Egyptian Expedition (*Orientalism* 81). The point is that Orientalism has sort of provided a clear plan as to how to deal with these three problems and thus enabled colonialism. According to Said, “The point in all this is that for Napoleon Egypt was a project that acquired reality in his mind, and later in his preparation for its conquest, through experiences that belong to *the realm of ideas and myths culled from texts*” (Emphasis added) (*Orientalism* 80). Thus the Orientalist scholarship has been essential to conducting the military campaign against Egypt.

Another important issue is that of Said’s critique of Marx. Although Said tackled Marx in about only three pages in passing, Marxists fixed on them. For the Marxist interpretive community defending Marx seems to have been a priority that made them challenge Said’s reading of Marx and offer a reading that sought to defend Marx.

First, Said’s reading of Marx: Perhaps Said is the first critic to accuse Marx of falling a prey to Orientalist conceptions of the Orient. At first, says Said, Marx condemned England’s destruction of the old Indian subsistence economy in favour of market

economy which played havoc with the old Indian social system and brought misery and destitution to millions. But then Marx changed his attitude as he came under the ‘police action’ of Orientalism. Said puts it as follows:

The vocabulary of emotion dissipated as it submitted to the lexicographical police action of Orientalist science and even Orientalist art. *An experience was dislodged by a dictionary definition* (Emphasis added) (*Orientalism* 155).

Thus Marx’s human sympathy with the Indians’ plight was displaced as it encountered the Orientalist limitation on what can be said about the Orient. Marx saw England’s move as necessary for the final transformation towards Marxist socialist economy, the despair it brought about notwithstanding. Marx argued that,

England, it is true, in causing a social revolution in Hindustan, was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in her manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfil its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was *the unconscious tool of history* in bringing about that revolution (Emphasis added) (Karl Marx “The British Rule in India” (1853) quoted in *Orientalism*, 153).

According to Marx, by destroying the old tribal system in India, which supported despotism, England’s move has had the effect of delivering the Indians from despotism. Such a reading of Marx as having been influenced by Orientalism has touched off counter readings that sought to defend Marx. Al-Azm takes Marx’s view to be totally ‘theoretically consistent’ with his theory:

... Marx always tended to explain historical processes in terms of social agencies, economic struggles, political movements, and great personalities, which simultaneously played the role of destroyers and creators. ... There is nothing specific to either Asia or the Orient in Marx’s broad theoretical interpretations of the past, present and future. On this score his sources are thoroughly ‘European’ in reference and owe nothing to Orientalist learning (“Orientalism and Orientalism in reverse” 227).

In a review article entitled “*Al-Istishraq ‘Ariya*” (Orientalism Exposed) (*al-Karmel* 1985), Hadi Al-‘Alawi who was among the early reviewers of Said offers a different reading of Marx’s position. According to Al-‘Alawi, “Marx spoke in the name of international proletariat purging his discourse of its Western vocabulary in favour of an international comprehensive logic” (188). By presenting Marx in this way, Al-‘Alawi tries to exonerate him from accusations of being Eurocentric and of being influenced by Orientalism which is a European tradition.

In *Marx fi Istishraq Edward Sa‘id* (1986) (Marx in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*), Mahdi ‘Amel, a Marxist critic, accuses Said of distorting Marx’s text by interpreting Marx’s conception of the Orient as influenced by messianic and romantic ideas (117). ‘Amel observes that Said ignored the fact that Marx’s ideas work according to dialectical materialism which is not concerned with the individual dimension but with dialectics of history. Said’s *Orientalism* is apparently an occasion for ‘Amel to assert the validity of Marxist theory. The destruction of the old Indian way of life by England was according to Marx a necessary step towards the socialist transformation in spite of the human suffering it involved. This is why ‘Amel accuses Said of criticising Marx according to moral criteria which ‘Amel sees as irrelevant in this context.

Essam Fawzi, a fellow Marxist offers a less dogmatic reading. He seems to be the only Arab Marxist who admits that in dealing with the Orient, Marx was influenced by Orientalist writings:

not because he was yet another Orientalist as some European intellectuals but because until that moment and concerning that subject in particular, Marx did not break free from his Hegelian past. An evolutionary historicist Hegelianism that classify human societies within an ascending civilizational ladder...has dominated Marx's [thinking] (*Al-Maddiyyah At-Tarikhiyyah* 487).

This evolutionary hierarchy placed capitalist Western societies at the top of the ladder and the Oriental societies at its bottom: primitive, barbaric, and inferior. In this way, Fawzi blames Marx's Orientalist statements on his Hegelian past and therefore exonerates him from Said's criticism in a subtle way.

In a long review essay, 'Afif Farrag, finds a problem with Edward Said's treatment of Marx. He states that whenever Marx is mentioned in *Orientalism* he is there to be criticised. He notices that, "in spite of the revisions he made to *Orientalism*, his hypercritical position towards Marx and Marxism remained the same starting from *Orientalism* to *Culture and Imperialism*" (*"Al-Maqhur Yousadim Jush Al-Kalimat"* 73) (*The Oppressed Fights Armies of Words*). He argues that "By insisting on turning Marxism into yet another episode in the chain of Western cultural hegemony, Said leaves no great hope of the possibility of the rise of an anti- imperial culture in the West" (73). The Marxist reading of Said's interpretation of Marxism tries to suggest that Said may not be well acquainted with Marxism. Here, the interpretive strategy followed focuses on relaying instances of Marx's critique and condemnation of Western exploitation of other Non-Western peoples such as the Red Indians in America and British slave trade in an attempt to exonerate him. Farrag follows that ad hominem strategy of accusing Said of ignorance of Marxism. He puts questions to Said which are meant to reveal Said's inadequate knowledge of Marxism and thus undermine his critique of Marx: "Is Said ignorant of Marx's condemnation of the Christian Puritanical hypocrisy which accompanied the accumulation of capital in America?" The answer is presumably in the positive. This reading has followed the same interpretive strategy which sought to interpret Said's *Orientalism* against the grain of Marxist theory. It has succeeded largely to consolidate the contention that Said's treatment of Marx and Marxism is reductive and reflects a blatant ignorance of Marxism. What is at stake here is the rescuing of Marx and Marxism from the severe criticism of Said. That is where critiquing Said turns into an ideological campaign to defend Marxism. This reading simply denies Said's disclaimer that:

In part, of course, Marx was concerned with vindicating his own theses on socioeconomic revolution; but in part also he seems to have had easy resource to a massed body of writing, both internally consolidated by Orientalism and put forward by it beyond the field that controlled any statement made about the Orient (*Orientalism* 155).

The important point is that there is a misunderstanding of Said's notion of the function of criticism. Said has espoused what he termed 'critical consciousness'. This critical consciousness which epitomises his concept of criticism is sceptical of any totalitarian theory and of all orthodoxies. For Said, Marxism was no exception. True to his poststructuralist influences, Said suspected all grand narratives and put everything in question. If Marxism demanded "solidarity before criticism", Said took criticism so seriously as to demand criticism before everything else:

But on the important matter of a critical position, its relationship to Marxism, liberalism, even anarchism, it needs to be said that criticism modified in advance by labels like "Marxism" or "liberalism" is, in my view, an oxymoron. The history of thought, to say nothing of political movements, is extravagantly illustrative of how the dictum "solidarity before criticism" means the end of criticism (*The World, the Text and the Critic* 28).

In "*Aqliyyah Ta'amuriyyah*" (*Nizwa* January, 1999) (*Paranoid Mentality*), Turki 'Ali Ar-Rabi'u launches a counter attack against the Marxist reading of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. First, he considers the Marxist discourse around Edward Said as issuing from

a paranoid mentality. He argues that, “by making a connection between Orientalism and Marxism in its homogenizing view of the Orient, Said has dared break the taboo and went so far as to prevent others from the pleasure of applying Marxism to Arab reality”(4). According to Ar-Rabi’u, these Marxists -he mentions Sadiq Al-‘Azm, Mahdi ‘Amel and Nadim Al-Bitar - aimed at: (1) justifying Marx’s authoritarian attitude towards the Orient by accusing others of being ignorant of Marxism. (2) accusing Said of being subjective and unscientific:

The representatives of this discourse have stood up against the viewpoint that connects between Orientalism and Marx’s authoritarian attitude for fear that the Arab reader would be drawn to these kinds of writings (1).

The Marxist misreading of Said did not stop at that: at the end of section one of his long review article, Sadik J. Al-Azm quotes a passage from *Orientalism* on which he builds his rather vitriolic attack on Said:

The Arab world today is an intellectual, political, and cultural satellite of the United States. This is not in itself something to be lamented; the specific form of the satellite relationship, however, is (*Orientalism* 322).

Al-Azm interprets Said’s passage as though Said was giving advice to American policy makers and therefore accepts the satellite relationship between America and the Arab world but rejects the form of that relationship. A very superficial reading will definitely reach that conclusion; but given Said’s general anti-imperialist attitude and his condemnation of the intellectuals’ keeping too close a relationship with policy makers (*Orientalism* 326), it is absurd to suggest that Said was giving advice to policy makers in order to enable them to dominate and subordinate more efficiently the Arab world. Given Said’s search for non-coercive and non-dominative knowledge, i.e. which does not seek to dominate others, it is a total misreading to suggest that Said’s statement was meant as a piece of advice to American policy makers.

In another instance, Al-Azm tries to defend Orientalism. In *Orientalism* Said explains that Orientalism tends to view the Orientals in great collectivities about whom it issues “unarguable declaratives” (*Orientalism* 276). He gives examples from contemporary Orientalism:

And so it is throughout the work of the contemporary Orientalist: assertions of the most bizarre sort dot his or her pages, whether it is a Manfred Halper arguing that even though all human thought processes can be reduced to eight, the Islamic mind is capable only of four, or a Morroe Berger presuming that since the Arabic language is much given to rhetoric Arabs are consequently incapable of true thought (*Orientalism* 310).

Said makes similar comments on Duncan Black Macdonald, an American Orientalist, who argued that “the conception of the Unseen is much more immediate and real to the Oriental than to the western peoples.” (qtd. in *Orientalism* 276). Al-Azm however, disagrees with this saying that these are generalisations that hide behind them broad directives “on how Occidentals should go about dealing with and handling the Orient and the Oriental here and now” (“Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse” 224). To make his point, he himself makes a few generalisations about the Muslim mind. He explains that “In fact one can argue convincingly that in a certain very insignificant sense”,

- (1) It is true that in general, the Unseen is much more immediate and real to the common citizens of Cairo and Damascus than it is to the present inhabitants of New York and Paris;
- (2) It is true that religion ‘means everything’ to the life of Moroccan peasants in a way which must remain incomprehensible to present day American farmers;

(3) It is true that the idea of an independent inviolable lawful order of nature is in many respects much more real, concrete and firmly established to the minds of the students of Moscow University than it is to the minds of the students of al-Azhar University (or any university in the Islamic world) (224).

Yet Al-Azm volunteers no evidence or statistics for his assertions. The truth of one assertion or another in this situation is the function of the Orientalist's power vis-à-vis the Oriental and does not derive from any claims to truth or evidence. In this case, it is convincingly argued that:

In any case, to assert the truth of Orientalist descriptions is to sidestep the central theme of the book which calls into suspicion any 'fact' about the Orient given the conditions under which knowledge was produced. (Lata Mani 13).

The Arab Liberals' Reading:

The Arab liberals read Said's critique of Orientalism as an attack on an ideal West from which they derive most of their ideas about progress and enlightenment which they see as the way out of the stagnation of the Arab reality at the present time. That is why the interpretive strategies they followed sought to reassert what they considered to be 'Western values' like academic objectivity. One argument they used is that knowledge in general is moving towards improvement and therefore Said's characterisation of Orientalism as inert and blind to the human reality of the societies it studied cast doubt on the contention that with the passage of time, Orientalism – a science in their view- will redress its wrongs. This becomes clear in their consolidated attempts to exonerate Orientalist scholarship from its imperial connections. For starters, the question of the association of knowledge or particularly Orientalist scholarship with political power is a major theme in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Let Said speak for himself,

I myself believe that Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a verdict discourse about the Orient (which is what, in its academic or scholarly form it claims to be) (*Orientalism* 6).

The interpretive strategy followed by two Arab liberal critics namely, Fouad Zakaria and Hazem Saghiya disagrees with Said's emphasis on the relationship of knowledge and power in the production of Western discourse on the Orient. From the start, both critics pursue the aim of undermining Said's thesis sometimes by arguing that Said was reductive in his treatment of Orientalism. Some other times by simply using ad hominem arguments that question their opponents' motives.

In a lengthy article entitled, "*Naqd Al-Istishraq wa Azmat Ath-Thaqafah Al-'Arabiyyah* (the Critique of Orientalism and the Crisis of Arab Culture) (1986) four years after the publication of the Arabic translation of *Orientalism*, Zakaria poses an interesting question: "Why do contemporary secular Arab critics fix their critique of the West on its use of distortion of the Orient for the sake of domination?" (61)

For an answer to this question, Zakaria resorts to "a kind of sociological and psychological analysis of the movement of contemporary critics of Orientalism." This analysis in his view deserves to be called "A Pathological Study of Contemporary Critique of Orientalism." This pathological study attempts a sociological and psychological analysis of the Arab intellectual who has a life-long familiarity with the West. Here he singles out two secular critics of Orientalism: Edward Said and Anouar Abdel-Malek. According to Zakaria, these critics in their enthusiasm to defend their origins and resist their belated affiliation to their societies and as a result of their being away from their homeland for long, present an "illusionary Orient." They espouse a

romantic and exotic vision of it (69). This “psychological analysis” is based on an impressionistic approach rather than analytical and therefore Zakaria is not obliged to give evidence for his impressions.

In 1995, Hazim Saghiya devoted a whole book entitled *Thaqafat al-Khuminiyyah* (Khomeinist Cultures) that deals not only with Said’s *Orientalism* but also with others who attack the Orientalist tradition. He overtly relays critical positions by Orientalists. He charges that:

The opponents [of Orientalism] in this way exaggerate what is related to power in knowledge in return for absorbing what is related to knowledge in power. Thus, they reduce the ability of knowledge to form the moral world in which power is exercised. They reduce what history can effect including the history of knowledge itself (16).

Very much like Zakaria, Saghiya lumps under the anti-Orientalist camp, all the critics of Orientalism with Edward Said as a figurehead. His reading of Said basically seeks to undermine *Orientalism*’s major thesis of the association of Orientalist scholarship and Western imperial venture. Saghiya sees Western knowledge as normative. He writes, “[we] should learn from Europe the way a student learns from his teacher” (40). This statement more than any other reveals Saghiya’s frame of reference which is the West. For him, it seems, to attack Orientalist scholarship is to attack the West which is the source of ‘true’ knowledge. The West for Saghiya stands for the norm, the standard by which the advance or lack thereof of Muslims is measured. This is clear in Saghiya’s enumeration of the virtues of colonialism as against the claims of the natives. For him, “European colonialism has introduced to its colonies besides its many wrongdoings and transgressions, the knowledge and tools which these peoples used in fighting and undermining it [colonialism]” (28). Saghiya’s critique rises mainly out of a desire to exonerate Orientalism which has formed his intellectual atmosphere. In an attempt to discredit Said’s critique of Orientalism, Saghiya associates Said’s *Orientalism* with Iran’s Islamic Revolution:

It was not without significance that Edward Said’s *Orientalism* stunned the region [the Arab region] as though it was part of the Islamic revolution [in Iran].... From its specific field of study and its outstanding academic efforts, *Orientalism* shares the Khomeinist Revolution’s blaming of everything on the Other [i.e. The West] (*Thaqafat al-Khuminiyyah* 67).

Hazim Saghiya’s reception of *Orientalism* tows the line set by Western critiques of Said and, to say the truth, he is a good example of how the spreading influence of Orientalism among some Arab scholars affected negatively the reception of Said in the Arab world.

On the other hand, Fouad Zakaria, uses another strategy, that of trying to elevate Orientalist knowledge to the status of an objective science. He draws an analogy between the development of space science in the atmosphere of cold war rivalry between the USA and Russia and the development of Orientalist scholarship. Space science was no less factual for its development in an atmosphere of rivalry. Likewise, Zakaria seems to suggest, Orientalist scholarship is no less factual because it aims at domination (51). Yet disciplines of knowledge advance and revise their assumptions concerning their subject sometimes giving up unverified and indefensible theses. Not Orientalism. Orientalism has a history of enduring hostility to its subject-matter as well as enduring distortion of the history of the Arabs and Muslims. Aziz Al-Azmeh, professor of philosophy at Kuwait University, gives credence to this view of Orientalism:

Orientalist scholarship has produced much writings of which by far the greatest amount is, conceptually, so systematically misleading and misdirected as to be worthless. The contribution of Orientalist scholarship to learning is very meagre in relation to the relatively long time



it has existed....Orientalist discourse, we have seen, is a repetition of motifs and their constant rediscovery through the simple techniques of Oriental scholarship....("The Articulation of Orientalism" 398).

If one pushes Zakaria's analogy to its logical conclusion, one would normally expect Orientalist scholarship to have improved to a great extent the image of the Arab and Muslim in the West. Yet this is not the case. According to Said, "Of itself, in itself, as a set of beliefs, as a method of analysis, Orientalism cannot develop. Indeed, it is the doctrinal antithesis of development. Its central argument is the myth of the arrested development of the Semites" (*Orientalism* 307).

According to Zakaria, Edward Said is selective in dealing with Orientalism. Said, contends Zakaria, applies his thesis about the relationship between Orientalist scholarship and imperial expansion to British, French and later American Orientalism to the exclusion of German, Italian and Russian Orientalism. Zakaria raises the question: How was European civilization able to produce a different type of Orientalism where expansionist ambitions and academic considerations were not mixed up? This, according to Zakaria, means that there can be an Orientalism that is free of hegemony which casts shadows of doubt on Edward Said's thesis. Hegemony is not then a defining feature of Orientalism (Zakaria 49). However, this can be countered on two accounts: the first is that Said did not claim that he would attempt an encyclopaedic work of every Orientalist utterance. Said explains, "It seemed to me foolish to attempt an encyclopaedic narrative history of Orientalism (*Orientalism* 16). The second point is that Edward Said's thesis about the relationship of knowledge and power can still hold true of German and other Orientalist traditions. In an excellent article entitled, "Orientalism in the Arab Context" As'ad Abu Khalil, Professor of political science at California University, argues this point well:

What Said about classical Orientalism applies to writers in different countries and cultures, and some German and Dutch Orientalists were as tied to colonial projects and administrations as were the authors featured in *Orientalism*. The Dutch scholar-administrator Snouk Hurgronje and Carl Heinrich Becker are two examples. Becker was an enthusiastic preacher of German colonization of Africa who believed in the "undeniable inferiority of the black races" (Van Ess 47).

He further elaborates,

Confirming the thesis of Said, Becker urged that "we must put up with the fact that there is an eternal difference between East and West. Hurgronje and A. J. Wensinck (another Dutch scholar) were at pains to deny any originality to Muhammad's mission (102).

The same can be said of Russian Orientalism which is a derivative of European Orientalist tradition:

Russian Orientalism appeared as the theoretical explanation and justification of colonial politics of the Russian empire in Central Asia. The positive contribution of Russian Orientalism to Islamic studies cannot be denied.... But it is clear that Russian Orientalism from the beginning was planned to be the theoretical basis of the politics of the assimilation and Christianization of the Muslim peoples of the Russian empire (Goulmara Baltanova "Western Orientalism and Islamology on the way to understanding Islam" 64).

It can be added that the Russian Orientalist Barthold who established the *Mir Islama* magazine was assigned the task of doing research that serves the interests of Russia in Central Asia by the Russian government.( Mahmoud Zaquzuq, *Al-Istishraq wa Al-Khalfiyyah Al-Fikriyyah Lil-Sira' Al-Hadhari* (Orientalism and the intellectual background of civilisational conflict 45)).

This characterisation of Orientalism absolves it of its political and colonial connections. The reason for this is that Zakaria presents it as a passive reflection of an already present distortion in the Islamic world not as an active enterprise on behalf of Western expansionism. That is where the real misunderstanding of *Orientalism* starts. Zakaria views the question of Orientalist knowledge and image-making as separate from the question of power.

Even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that the distinction between *dar al-Harb* and *dar al-islam* colours Muslims view of the Other, they lack the power to put their view into effect which is not the case with Orientalism. Orientalism assisted by imperial power and state institutions could disseminate its distorted discourse of the Other. This point is made clear by Lata Mani and Ruth Frankenberg:

Importantly, it is within the context of a specific set of unequal economic social and political relationships between the West and East that Western descriptions are produced. It is these relationships that lend them strength and endurance. Until this world-historical context changes it does not make sense to speak of a “reverse Orientalism” (“The Challenge of Orientalism” 13 ).

This focus on Said’s characterisation of Marx as influenced by Orientalism tended to distract reviewers from the main issues dealt with by Said Such as the critical consciousness which he has preached and of which his critique of Orientalism has been a brilliant model. The Arab left’s reception reflected as well a misreading of discourse theory on which Edward depended in his study of Orientalism. They often dealt with the issue of knowledge as separate from that of power. Sadiq Jalal Al-Azm’s and Fouad Zakaria’s contributions to the debate over *Orientalism* were leading in that they raised questions that were to be raised again and again by other leftist critics of Said.

In an article commemorating Mahdi ‘Amel, a critic of Said’s *Orientalism*, Hassan Hanafi –after offering a staunch defence of Said- proposes the establishment of a new science called ‘Occidentalism’. He refers to Said’s *Orientalism* and credits it with being the starting point of his project:

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* is one of the starting points of the “science of Occidentalism in which the old dialectic is reversed: the West is studied from the perspective of the Orient, and the West is returned to its normal borders and is turned into an object of study after it had been a studying subject. (*An-Nazariyya wa Al-Mumarasah fi Fikr Mahdi ‘Amil*, 424)

This project found its clearest expression two years later in his book *Muquaddima fi I’lm Al-Istighrab* (1991) (Introduction to the science of ‘Occidentalism’). This book constitutes one of the positive responses to Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. For Hanafi, ‘Occidentalism’ is the only antidote against Westernisation, which threatens to sweep us off our feet. ‘Occidentalism’ aims at the study of the West by the East, turning the West into an object of study instead of being the subject of study. It aims as well to reverse the old order whereby the West was a subject of study and the East an object of study. ‘Occidentalism’ should be seen as part of the decolonisation process by which the colonised countries surmount their inferiority complex towards the West.

Moreover, ‘Occidentalism’ appears as we read further into the book to be one way of keeping Westernisation at bay. According to Hanafi, Westernisation is equal to ‘alienation’ from the self. Using western history and culture as the theoretical and referential framework to understand Arab-Islamic character is a kind of theoretical and methodological Westernisation. In this vein, he attacks Hichem Djait’s study of Arab and Islamic character by continually referring to Western culture and history (44).

To pre-empt accusations of ‘Orientalism in Reverse’ made earlier by Sadiq J. Al-Azm, Hanafi makes distinctions between ‘Occidentalism’ and Orientalism: firstly Orientalism developed at a time of colonial expansionism of a victorious West whereas ‘Occidentalism’ comes at a time when Arab peoples are defeated and at the stage of self-defence. This reveals the real difference between ‘Occidentalism’ and Orientalism. Orientalism is associated with power and serves a hegemonic and a dominant West. Orientalism is a will-to-power. ‘Occidentalism’, on the other hand, lacks this attachment to power and therefore serves no dominative purposes similar to those served by Orientalism. It serves as a kind of self-defence. Moreover, “Orientalism appeared in the past laden with the ideologies of scientific research methodologies or political trends dominant during the nineteenth century” whereas “Occidentalism” appears within different scientific methodologies such as linguistic methodologies, analysis of lived experience and ideologies of national decolonisation” (30).

Besides, Orientalism was not neutral but was replete with methodologies expressing the European consciousness whereas the consciousness of the ‘Occidentalists’ now is closer to being neutral because they do not seek to dominate others but seek to be set free from the captivity of the other (31).

Hanafi criticises the West’s attitude towards culture; it claims that its culture is universal and it encourages what it calls acculturation, which is a way of cultural exchange but in reality intends, as Hanafi puts it, to eliminate indigenous cultures in order to replace them with Western culture. This sets Western culture as a universal model to be imitated by other civilisations. If the natives want to achieve ‘progress’, they must follow in the footsteps of the West. This led to the elimination of the specificity of the non-European peoples and their independent experiences and led to the West’s monopoly on creating new experiments and other patterns of progress (36).

The task of ‘Occidentalism’ is, according to Hanafi, to end the centre-periphery binarism on the level of culture and civilisation. As long as Western culture is the centre and non-western cultures are the periphery the relationship will go in a one-way direction with non-Western cultures at the receiving end. The West is the eternal teacher and the non-West is the eternal pupil. That is why one aim of ‘Occidentalism’ is to redress the balance between the West and ‘the rest’. Hanafi comments that this is not wishful thinking. ‘Occidentalism’ as a new science attempts to find an alternative vision different from that of the Western consciousness through a revisionist attitude towards Western concepts and attitudes. Here Hanafi gives examples of these concepts and his revisionary rethinking of them (38). The first such an example is ‘geographical discoveries’ or ‘geographical explorations’. According to Hanafi, this concept reflects a racist and subjective view of the world. It is as if the world is explored into existence by the West which means that it does not ‘exist’ until it is ‘discovered’ by Europe whereas in fact the non-West exists whether it was discovered or not by Europe (39). It is clear now that Hanafi’s ‘Occidentalism’ aims at decentring Europe and marks his rejection of the West as a model to be imitated, hence his advocacy of the new science of ‘Occidentalism’. Overall, does ‘Occidentalism’ propose an epistemological break with the West?

Furthermore, Hanafi deplores the fact that some outstanding Arab scholars study the self from the perspective of the other where European history and Western culture are the only theoretical and referential frameworks, as if the self can only understand itself through invoking the other as a standard of judgement. Hanafi reiterates his position which aims at studying the other from the perspective of the self and thus effecting what can be called a paradigm shift in the study of the self and of the Other. “The end of Orientalism and the beginning of Occidentalism” says Hanafi, “means exchanging roles for a third time in the subject-object relationship between the Self and the Other” (“From Orientalism to Occidentalism” (396)). Yet this exchange of roles is

inevitably connected to a shift in power. Hanafi seems to subscribe to the view that knowledge and power are interrelated and that the politicisation of knowledge is inevitable. In other words, 'Occidentalism' is a will-to-freedom from the presence of the Other in the self. Instead of always seeing ourselves reflected in the mirror of the Other we should study the Self by referring to earlier Selves. A reference here to Edward Said's travelling theory maybe useful in understanding Hassan Hanafi's reading of *Orientalism*. Said's thesis on the relationship of knowledge and power goes through a kind of degradation through Hanafi's espousal of a discourse of power reminiscent of that of Orientalism. Said, of course, was trying in *Orientalism* to lay bare the dialectic of power and knowledge which is at the core of Orientalist scholarship. Yet he did not preach Occidentalism. Despite the many disclaimers by Hassan Hanafi, Occidentalism threatens to turn itself into yet another 'Orientalism'. Hanafi explains that, "the passage from Orientalism to Occidentalism is in fact a shift in the balance of power" (406). He relates knowledge and power in an inevitable union that changes hands only and thus rules out the possibility of knowledge "outside power". This can be accounted for through the concept of travelling theory. When theory travels to distant lands and is embedded in a tradition different from its lands of origin it goes through a kind of degradation that is "a theory can move down, so to speak, become a dogmatic reduction of its original version" (*The World, the Critic, and the Text* 239). The difference between Said's New York and Hanafi's Cairo or between Said the humanist and Hanafi the nationalist accounts for this. Whereas Said is the quintessential humanist who looks for non-dominative and non-coercive knowledge, Hanafi is a committed nationalist who lives in a Middle East that is still largely under American hegemony and is thus espousing a more militant discourse that aims at decolonisation. Hanafi explains:

Occidentalism is a discipline constituted in the Third World in order to complete the process of decolonisation. Military, economic and political decolonisation would be incomplete without scientific and cultural decolonisation In so far as colonised countries before or after liberation are objects of study, decolonisation will be incomplete ("From Orientalism to Occidentalism" 396).

One of the results of Eurocentrism which 'Occidentalism' aims at combating is that Europe has annexed all civilisations to its history. It has as well denied the roles played by ancient civilisations such as Chinese, Indian, Persian and ancient Egyptian civilisations (41).

Hanafi stresses the fact that, for Arabs, Islamic civilisation is not the Middle Ages. Islamic civilization follows a trajectory of its own spanning fifteen centuries. The Middle Ages in Europe were the Golden Ages in the Islamic world and vice versa: the Modern Ages in Europe are the Middle Ages in the Islamic world.

Hanafi explains that Europe has destroyed local cultures after learning and collecting data about them, then implanted European culture as a substitute culture, which is called 'acculturation' in anthropology. The intentional distortion of the 'discovered' peoples' cultures and the classification of peoples into primitive and civilised, advanced and backward, found its justification and based itself in theories of race prevalent during the nineteenth century in Europe. The plundering of the wealth of non-European peoples and the transportation of its peoples to the Americas constitute the biggest plunder in world history whereby African 'slaves' were transported to America. The science of 'Occidentalism' aims at putting an end to the myth that the West represents humanity whereby Western history becomes world history. One more interesting aspect of 'Occidentalism' is that it aims at contributing to general humanistic study by studying the West.

“It is high time that rejection of Orientalism goes beyond the level of rhetoric and simple enmity to an accurate science”, says Hanafi. This proves, albeit indirectly, that Edward Said’s Orientalism was a rallying cry which encouraged more critics to attack Orientalism. From this, we sense the influence of *Orientalism*. Hanafi’s drive to develop a new science of “Occidentalism” comes as an attempt to move criticism of Orientalism into the realm of active scholarship. (*Muqaddima fi ilm al-Istighrab*, 54)

Hanafi’s Occidentalism is different from Orientalism; it is not ‘Orientalism in reverse’ because it lacks the power that made Orientalism spread itself. It differs from Orientalism in two substantial aspects: the first is that Occidentalism according to Hanafi will study Europe in its historical context not as inert object which means that Occidentalism doesn’t essentialise the West. The second is that it acknowledges the contribution of Western civilisation. Yet there is no guarantee that Occidentalism will not go through the seductive degradation of knowledge which Said warned against. The status of both writers is different: Said was an exiled professor interested in a deconstructive attempt to dislodge Western skewed representations of Arabs and Muslims. Said is more discursive and Hanafi is a left-leaning professor who is closer to concepts of revolution than Said who is far more interested in the discursive world of power betraying his Foucauldian affiliations. Hanafi is more interested in constructing a new anti-colonial discourse that would help decolonization through the production of counter knowledge. A less radical interpretation of Said follows.

As I have tried to show in this paper, Edward Said’s theorization of power, Knowledge and representation travelled to a troubled land in an atmosphere of ideological polarization that persists to the present which made most interpretations and readings of his book *Orientalism* and its main thesis measured by how far they fit into an already existing ideological and intellectual map with the minor exception of Hassan Hanafi’s intervention which expanded Said’s thesis about knowledge and power in an inventive way. Yet, that is exactly what Said discussed in travelling theory and how “having moved from one place and time to another an idea or a theory gains or loses in the process in strength and whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation (226).

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