

Sadiq Jala al-Azm: Edward Said's Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse

Friday 15 November 2024, by [al-AZM Sadiq Jala](#) (Date first published: 1 October 1980).

Al-Azm's nuanced critique of Edward Said's "Orientalism" is one of the most read articles on this website. Al-Azm argues that while Said effectively exposes the essentialist and distorted representations of the "Orient" by Western scholars and thinkers, his own presentation of the origins and development of Orientalism suffers from a similar tendency towards reductive, unilinear conceptions. Al-Azm takes issue with Said's tendency to trace Orientalism's roots back to ancient European thinkers, as well as his interpretation of the relationship between "Cultural-Academic Orientalism" and "Institutional Orientalism." He contends that Said's analysis would be strengthened by a more historically grounded and dialectical understanding of how representations shape, and are shaped by, material interests and power dynamics.

Al-Azm argues that Orientalism in Reverse, a phenomenon where Arabs and Muslims apply essentialist Orientalist concepts to view their own cultures as superior to the West, is just as problematic as classical Orientalism.

- Ontological Orientalism, the belief in a fundamental, unchanging difference between Eastern and Western societies, is reproduced in reversed form by Arab nationalists and Islamic revivalists. This involves using philological analysis and selective interpretation of language to claim the innate superiority of the "Arab mind" or the primacy of Islam as the driving force of history. Ultimately this is a poor imitation of classical Orientalist methods, equally ahistorical and anti-human in its conclusions.

Al-Azm provides examples of Arab thinkers who employ this Ontological Orientalism in Reverse to oppose secularism, socialism, and Western influence in favour of an essentialized view of Islam and Arab identity. The author argues this is ultimately as reactionary and mystifying as the Orientalism it seeks to counter.

Contents

- [PART I. ORIENTALISM](#)
- [Critique of Orientalism](#)
- [Raw reality and its representa](#)
- [The representation of Islam by](#)
- [Karl Marx and the Orient](#)
- [Orientalism and dependency](#)
- [PART II. ORIENTALISM IN \(...\)](#)
- [Arab nationalism and Orientali](#)
- [Islamic revivalism and Orienta](#)

PART I. ORIENTALISM

In his sharply debated book, [1] Edward Said introduces us to the subject of 'Orientalism' through a

broadly historical perspective which situates Europe's interest in the Orient within the context of the general historical expansion of modern bourgeois Europe outside its traditional confines and at the expense of the rest of the world in the form of its subjugation, pillage, and exploitation. In this sense Orientalism may be seen as a complex and growing phenomenon deriving from the overall historical trend of modern European expansion and involving: a whole set of progressively expanding institutions, a created and cumulative body of theory and practice, a suitable ideological superstructure with an apparatus of complicated assumptions, beliefs, images, literary productions, and rationalisations (not to mention the underlying foundation of commercial, economic and strategic vital interests). I shall call this phenomenon Institutional Orientalism.

Edward Said also deals with Orientalism in the more restricted sense of a developing tradition of disciplined learning whose main function is to 'scientifically research' the Orient. Naturally, this Cultural Academic Orientalism makes all the usual pious claims about its 'disinterested pursuit of the truth' concerning the Orient, and its efforts to apply impartial scientific methods and value-free techniques in studying the peoples, cultures, religions, and languages of the Orient. The bulk of Said's book is not unexpectedly devoted to Cultural Academic Orientalism in an attempt to expose the ties which wed it to Institutional Orientalism.

In this way Said deflates the self-righteous claims of Cultural Academic Orientalism to such traits as scholarly independence, scientific detachment, political objectivity etc. It should be made clear, however, that the author at no point seeks to belittle the genuine scholarly achievements, scientific discoveries, and creative contributions made by orientalists and orientalism over the years, particularly at the technical level of accomplishment. [2] His main concern is to convey the message that the overall image of the Orient constructed by Cultural-Academic Orientalism, from the viewpoint of its own technical achievements and scientific contributions to the field, is shot through and through with racist assumptions, barely camouflaged mercenary interests, reductionistic explanations and anti-human prejudices. It can easily be shown that this image, when properly scrutinised, can hardly be the product of genuinely objective scientific investigation and detached scholarly discipline.

Critique of Orientalism

One of the most vicious aspects of this image, as carefully pointed out by Said, is the deep rooted belief - shared by Cultural-Academic and Institutional Orientalism - that a fundamental ontological difference exists between the essential natures of the Orient and Occident, to the decisive advantage of the latter. Western societies, cultures, languages and mentalities are supposed to be essentially and inherently superior to the Eastern ones. In Edward Said's words, 'the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority...' [3] According to this reading of Said's initial thesis, Orientalism (both in its institutional and cultural-academic forms) can hardly be said to have existed, as a structured phenomenon and organised movement, prior to the rise, consolidation and expansion of modern bourgeois Europe. Accordingly, the author at one point dates the rise of Academic Orientalism with the European Renaissance. [4] But unfortunately the stylist and polemicist in Edward Said very often runs away with the systematic thinker. As a result he does not consistently adhere to the above approach either in dating the phenomenon of Orientalism or in interpreting its historical origins and ascent.

In an act of retrospective historical projection we find Said tracing the origins of Orientalism all the way back to Homer, Aeschylus, Euripides and Dante. [5] In other words, Orientalism is not really a thoroughly modern phenomenon, as we thought earlier, but is the natural product of an ancient and almost irresistible European bent of mind to misrepresent the realities of other cultures, peoples,

and their languages, in favour of Occidental self-affirmation, domination and ascendancy. Here the author seems to be saying that the 'European mind', from Homer to Karl Marx and A.H.R. Gibb, is inherently bent on distorting all human realities other than its own and for the sake of its own aggrandisement.

It seems to me that this manner of construing the origins of Orientalism simply lends strength to the essentialistic categories of 'Orient' and 'Occident', representing the ineradicable distinction between East and West, which Said's book is ostensibly set on demolishing. Similarly, it lends the ontological distinction of Europe versus Asia, so characteristic of Orientalism, the kind of credibility and respectability normally associated with continuity, persistence, pervasiveness and distant historical roots. This sort of credibility and respectability is, of course, misplaced and undeserved. For Orientalism, like so many other characteristically modern European phenomena and movements (notably nationalism), is a genuinely recent creation - the product of modern European history - seeking to acquire legitimacy, credibility and support by claiming ancient roots and classical origins for itself. Certainly Homer, Euripides, Dante, St. Thomas and all the other authorities that one may care to mention held the more or less standard distorted views prevalent in their milieu about other cultures and peoples. However, it is equally certain that the two forms of Orientalism built their relatively modern repertoires of systematic conventional wisdom by calling upon the views and biases of such prestigious figures as well as by drawing on ancient myth, legend, imagery, folklore and plain prejudice. Although much of this is well documented (directly and indirectly) in Said's book, still his work remains dominated by a unilinear conception of 'Orientalism' as somehow flowing straight through from Homer to Grunbaum. Furthermore, this unilinear, almost essentialistic, presentation of the origins and development of Orientalism renders a great disservice to the vital concerns of Said's book, namely, preparing the ground for approaching the difficult question of 'how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian or non-repressive and non-manipulative, perspective, and for eliminating, in the name of a common humanity, both 'Orient' and 'Occident' as ontological categories and classificatory concepts bearing the marks of racial superiority and inferiority. It seems to me that as a logical consequence of Said's tendency to view the origins and development of Orientalism in terms of such unilinear constancy, the task of combating and transcending its essentialistic categories, in the name of this common humanity, is made all the more difficult.

Another important result of this approach bears on Said's interpretation of the relationship supposedly holding between Cultural-Academic Orientalism as representation and disciplined learning on the one hand, and Institutional Orientalism as expansionary movement and socio-economic force on the other. In other words, when Said is leaning heavily on his unilinear conception of 'Orientalism' he produces a picture which says that this cultural apparatus known as 'Orientalism' is the real source of the West's political interest in the Orient, ie, that it is the real source of modern Institutional Orientalism. Thus, for him European and later on American political interest in the Orient was really created by the sort of Western cultural tradition known as Orientalism. [6] Furthermore, according to one of his renderings, Orientalism is a distribution of the awareness that the world is made up of two unequal halves - Orient and Occident - into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philosophical texts. This awareness not only created a whole series of Occidental 'interests' (political, economic, strategic etc) in the Orient, but also helped to maintain them. [7] Hence for Said the relationship between Academic Orientalism as a cultural apparatus and Institutional Orientalism as economic interest and political force is seen in terms of a 'preposterous transition' from 'a merely textual apprehension, formulation or definition of the Orient to the putting of all this into practice in the Orient...' [8] According to this interpretation Said's phrase 'Orientalism overrode the Orient' [9] could mean only that the Institutional Orientalism which invaded and subjugated the East was really the legitimate child and product of that other kind of Orientalism, so intrinsic, it seems, to the minds, texts, aesthetics, representations, lore and

imagery of Westerners as far back as Homer, Aeschylus and Euripides! To understand properly the subjugation of the East in modern times, Said keeps referring us back to earlier times when the Orient was no more than an awareness, a word, a representation, a piece of learning to the Occident: [10]

'What we must reckon with is a large and slow process of appropriation by which Europe, or the European awareness of the Orient, transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic, and even military.' [11]

Therefore Edward Said sees the 'Suez Canal idea' much more as 'the logical conclusion of Orientalist thought and effort' [12] than as the result of Franco-British imperial interests and rivalries (although he does not ignore the latter).

One cannot escape the impression that for Said somehow the emergence of such observers, administrators and invaders of the Orient as Napoleon, Cromer and Balfour was made inevitable by 'Orientalism', and that the political orientations, careers and ambitions of these figures are better understood by reference to d'Herbelot and Dante than to more immediately relevant and mundane interests. Accordingly, it is hardly surprising to see Said, when touching on the role of the European Powers in deciding the history of the Near Orient in the early twentieth century, select for prominent notice the 'peculiar epistemological framework through which the Powers saw the Orient', [13] which was built by the long tradition of Orientalism. He then affirms that the Powers acted on the Orient the way they did because of that peculiar epistemological framework. Presumably, had the long tradition of Cultural-Academic Orientalism fashioned a less peculiar, more sympathetic and truthful epistemological framework, then the Powers would have acted on the Orient more charitably and viewed it in a more favourable light!

Raw reality and its representatives

When Said is thinking and writing along these lines, it is hard to escape the strong impression that for him representations, images, words, metaphors, idioms, styles, universes of discourse, political ambiances, cultural sensitivities, highly mediated pieces of knowledge, extremely rarefied truths are, if not the very stuff of reality, then certainly much more important and informative substitutes for raw reality itself. If Academic Orientalism transmutes the reality of the Orient into the stuff of texts (as he says on page 86), then it would seem that Said sublimates the earthly realities of the Occident's interaction with the Orient into the etherial stuff of the spirit. One detects, therefore, a strong and un-warranted general anti-scientific bias in his book. This fact comes out most clearly in his constant inveighing against Cultural-Academic Orientalism for having categorised, classified, tabulated, codified, in-dexed, schematised, reduced, dissected the Orient (and hence for having distorted its reality and disfigured its particular mode of being) as if such operations were somehow evil in themselves and unfit for the proper understanding of human societies, cultures, languages etc.

Yet Said himself admits readily that it is impossible for a culture, be it Eastern or Western or South American, to grasp much about the reality of another, alien culture without resort to categorisation, classification, schematisation and reduction - with the necessarily accompanying distortions and misrepresentations. If, as Said insists, the unfamiliar exotic and alien is always apprehended, domesticated, assimilated and represented in terms of the already familiar, then such distortions and misrepresentations become inevitable. For Said:

'...cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to

be.' [14]

He even finds 'nothing especially controversial or reprehensible' about the domestication of an exotic and alien culture in the terms of reference of another culture, because 'such domestications of the exotic take place between all cultures, certainly between all men.' [15] In fact Said elevates this to a general principle which emanates from 'the nature of the human mind' and which invariably governs the dynamics of the reception of one culture by another. Thus, 'all cultures impose corrections upon raw reality, changing it from free-floating objects into units of knowledge', because 'it is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness'. [16]

In fact, at one point Said goes so far as to deny entirely the possibility of attaining 'objective truth' about other cultures, especially if they seem exotic, alien and strange. The only means for approaching and receiving them are those of reduction, representation and schematisation with all the attending distortions and falsifications which such operations imply and impose. According to Said:

'...the real issue is whether indeed there can be a true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they are re-presentations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. If the latter alternative is the correct one (as I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is eo ipso implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the "truth", which is itself a representation.' [17]

If, as the author keeps repeating (by way of censure and castigation), the Orient studied by Orientalism is no more than an image and a representation in the mind and culture of the Occident (the representer in this case) then it is also true that the Occident in doing so is behaving perfectly naturally and in accordance with the general rule - as stated by Said himself - governing the dynamics of the reception of one culture by another. Accordingly the Occident in trying to deal (via its Orientalism) with the raw reality of the Orient does what all cultures do under the circumstances, namely:

1. domesticate the alien and represent it through its own familiar terms and frames of reference;
2. impose on the Orient those 'complete transformations' which Edward Said says cultures are prone to effect on each other so as to receive the strange, not as it is but as it ought to be, for the benefit of the receiver;
3. impose upon the raw reality of the Orient the necessary corrections needed to change it 'from free-floating objects into units of knowledge'; and
4. follow the natural bent of the human mind in resisting 'the assault on it of untreated strangeness'.

The representation of Islam by the West

One of the examples given by Said is of particular interest:

'The reception of Islam in the West is a perfect case in point, and has been admirably studied by Norman Daniel. One constraint acting upon Christian thinkers who tried to understand Islam was an analogical one; since Christ is the basis of Christian faith, it was assumed - quite incorrectly- that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity. Hence the polemic name "Mohammedanism" given to Islam, and the automatic epithet "imposter" applied to Mohammed. Out of such and many

other misconceptions “there formed a circle which was never broken by imaginative exteriorisation... The Christian concept of Islam was integral and self-sufficient”; Islam became an image – the word is Daniel’s but it seems to me to have remarkable implications for Orientalism in general – whose function was not so much to represent Islam in itself as to represent it for the medieval Christian.’ [18]

The significance of the above argument lies in the fact that Said nowhere carries it to its logical conclusion in the light of what he had stated to be generally true about the reductive dynamics of the reception of one culture by another. As he knows very well, the reception of Christianity by Islam in the East differs little from the account given above. To make this point I shall present the gist of the above quoted passage with the following alterations:

‘One constraint acting upon Muslim thinkers who tried to understand Christianity was an analogical one; since Mohammed was no more than the Messenger of God it was assumed – quite incorrectly – that Christ was to Christianity as Mohammed was to Islam, namely, a plain Messenger of God or ordinary prophet. Hence the polemics against His incarnation, sonship, divinity, crucifixion, resurrection, and the automatic epithet of “forgers” applied to the first guardians of the Holy Scriptures. Out of such and many other conceptions “there formed a circle which was never broken by imaginative exteriorisation... the Muslim concept of Christianity was integral and self-sufficient.” Christianity became an image | the word is Daniel’s but it seems to me to have remarkable implications for how one culture receives another in general – whose function was not so much to represent Christianity in itself as to represent it for the medieval Muslim.’

In the light of these critical remarks it should become clear: (a) why Said deals so harshly with Marx’s attempts to understand and interpret Oriental societies; (b) why he deals so much more kindly with the Macdonald-Gibb view of Islam; and (c) why he deals so charitably and sympathetically with the mystico-theosophical extrapolations bred by Massignon’s brand of Orientalism.

Said criticises and exposes the falsity of the sort of declarative assertions made by the Macdonald-Gibb variety of Orientalism about Islam and the Muslims. He attacks them for being abstract, metaphysical and untrue. Here is a sample of such assertions:

1. ‘It is plain, I think, and admitted that the conception of the Unseen is much more immediate and real to the Oriental than to the Western peoples.’
2. ‘The essential difference in the Oriental mind is not credulity as to unseen things, but inability to construe a system as to seen things.’
3. ‘The difference in the Oriental is not essentially religiosity, but the lack of the sense of law. [19] For him, there is no immovable order of nature.’
4. ‘It is evident that anything is possible to the Oriental. The supernatural is so near that it may touch him at any moment.’
5. ‘Until recently, the ordinary Muslim citizen and cultivator had no political interests or functions, and no literature of easy access except religious literature, had no festivals and no communal life except in connection with religion, saw little or nothing of the outside world except through religious glasses. To him, in consequence, religion meant everything.’ [20]

The trouble with such affirmations does not lie only in their falsity, abstractness and metaphysical character. Certainly neither Macdonald nor Gibb were simple victims when making these declarations of the ‘epistemological framework’ built by the traditions of Orientalism, as Said

intimates. In fact one can argue convincingly that in a certain very significant 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 other university in the Muslim world for that matter).

What Said fails to bring out is the fact that the affirmations of the Macdonald-Gibb brand of Orientalism are really declarative only in a very narrow sense. They masquerade as fully and genuinely declarative statements of permanent fact only to conceal a set of broad directives and instructions on how Occidentals should go about dealing with and handling the Orient and the Orientals, here and now. These directives are necessarily of a general nature and hence require a variety of 'operational definitions' to turn them into useful practical steps taken by such an assorted lot as Western missionaries, teachers, administrators, businessmen, army officers, diplomats, intelligence experts, politicians, policy-makers etc. For example, such people are guided by these implicit directives and instructions to allow for and take advantage of the fact that religious beliefs, tribal loyalties, theological explanations and so on still play a much more decisive role in the life of contemporary Oriental societies than they do in modern Western ones.

The very limitation of the declarative scope of the Macdonald-Gibb type of affirmations betrays not only their practical function and immediate relevance to actual situations, but also the profoundly ahistorical frame of mind and thought out of which they emanate. They pretend that the Unseen was always (and always will be) more immediate and real to the Orientals than to the Western peoples past, present and future. Similarly, they pretend that the idea of an independent lawful order of nature was always and will for ever be more real, concrete and firmly established to the Occidental's mind and life than it could ever be in the consciousness of Oriental human beings. The simple historical fact that at one time, say before the break-up of Christendom, the Unseen was as immediate and real to Occidentals, is not permitted to disturb the seemingly Olympian factual serenity of the Macdonald-Gibb pseudo-declaratives.

If one could speak of a hero when dealing with a book such as Orientalism, then Massignon emerges as the most favoured candidate for that role. This towering French Orientalist is praised for having surpassed all others in the almost impossible task of genuinely and sympathetically understanding Oriental Muslim culture, religion and mentality. Due to his profound humanism and compassion, Massignon, we are told, accomplished the feat of identifying with the 'vital forces' informing Eastern culture and of grasping its 'spiritual dimension' as no one else did before or since him in the West. [21]

But, in the final analysis, is not Massignon's presumed identification with the 'vital forces' and 'spiritual dimension' of Eastern culture simply a personalised, idealised and reiterated version of the classical Orientalist representation of an Orient 'overvalued for its pantheism, spirituality, longevity and primitivity', [22] a representation which Said has debunked so masterfully? Furthermore, we infer from the discussion of the meaning and importance of Massignon's work that he nowhere abandoned the cardinal assumption (and original sin, according to Said) of all Orientalism, namely, the insistence on the essentialistic separation of the world into two halves: an Orient and an Occident, each with its inherently different nature and traits. It is evident, then, that with

Massignon, as with the work of any other Orientalist attacked by Said, Orient and Occident remain fundamental ontological categories and classificatory schemes with all their attending implications and applications.

We learn from Said's book: (a) that Massignon's Orient is completely consonant with the world of the Seven Sleepers and the Abrahamic prayers; [23] (b) that 'his repeated efforts to understand and report on the Palestine conflict, for all their profound humanism, never really got past the quarrel between Isaac and Ishmael; [24] (c) that for him the essence of the difference between East and West is between modernity and ancient tradition; [25] (d) that in his view the Islamic Orient is always spiritual, Semitic, tribalistic, radically monotheistic and not Aryan; [26] (e) that he was widely sought after as an expert on Islamic matters by colonial administrators; [27] and (f) that he was of the conviction that it was France's obligation to associate itself with the Muslims' desire to defend their traditional culture, the rule of their dynastic life and the patrimony of believers. [28]

Now, the question to which I have no ready answer is, how can the most acute and versatile contemporary critic of Orientalism praise so highly an Orientalist who obviously subscribes to the entire apparatus of Orientalism's discredited dogmas?

Karl Marx and the Orient

The picture which emerges in Said's book concerning Marx's attitude towards the East runs more or less as follows: [29] Through his analyses of British rule in India, Marx arrived at 'the notion of an Asiatic economic system' (ie, the famous Asiatic mode of production) which acted as the solid foundation for a sort of political rule known as 'Oriental despotism'. At first, the violent destruction and transformation of India's traditional social organisation appalled Marx and shocked him as a human being and thinker. His humanity was moved, and sympathy engaged, by the human miseries and suffering attendant upon such a process of transformation. At this stage of his development Marx still identified with downtrodden Asia and sensed some fellowship with its wretched masses. But then Marx fell under the sway of Orientalist learning, and the picture quickly changed. The labels of Orientalism, its vocabulary, abstractions and definitions came to dominate his mind and emotions.

According to Said, Marx - who initially recognised the individuality of Asia - became the captive of that formidable censor created by the vocabulary, learning and lore of Orientalism. He cites what supposedly happened to Marx's thought as an instance of how 'non-Orientalist's human engagements are dissolved [and] then usurped by Orientalist generalisations'. The initial sympathy and gush of sentiment experienced by Marx disappeared as he encountered the unshakable definitions built up by Orientalist science and supported by the Oriental lore that was supposed to be appropriate to it. Briefly, the case of Marx shows how 'an experience was dislodged by a dictionary definition'. [30]

This is now Said sees the metamorphosis which led Marx to the view (highly objectionable to Said) that Britain was making possible a real social revolution in India, by acting as the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. In this instance Britain is viewed by Marx as acting simultaneously as an agency of destruction and regeneration in Asia. Said unambiguously traces this mature view of Marx to Orientalism's pseudo-learning and fancies about the East, especially in its 19th century messianic and romantic variety. For him Marx forms no exception to all the Europeans who dealt with the East in terms of Orientalism's basic category of the inequality between East and West. Furthermore, he declares flatly that Marx's economic analyses of Asia are perfectly suited to a standard Orientalist undertaking.

I think that this account of Marx's views and analyses of highly complex historical processes and situations is a travesty. Undoubtedly, Marx, like any other creative genius, was greatly influenced by the lexicographical learning, dictionary definitions, abstractions, representations, generalisations and linguistic norms prevalent in his time and milieu. But only Said's excessive fascination with the verbal, textual and linguistic could lead him to portray Marx's mind as somehow usurped and taken over (against his better judgement and nobler sentiments) by the vocabulary, lexicography and dictionary definitions of the Orientalist tradition in the West! With Said one stands at times on the verge of regression into belief in the magical efficacy of words.

Marx's manner of analysing British rule in India in terms of an unconscious tool of history - which is making possible a real social revolution by destroying the old India and laying the foundations of a new order - cannot be ascribed under any circumstances to the usurpation of Marx's mind by conventional Orientalistic verbiage. Marx's explanation (regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with it) testifies to his theoretical consistency in general, and to his keen realism in analysing specific historical situations. This is evident from the fact that 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. These were often cast by him in the guise of 'unconscious tools' of a history unfolding itself in stages and sometimes in inscrutable and unpredictable ways. 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. One only needs to recall those vivid passages in the *Communist Manifesto* where Marx portrays the modern European bourgeoisie in the double role of destroyer and creator: destroyer of the old inherited Europe, maker of its liberal present and usher of its proletarian future. Like the European capitalist class, British rule in India was its own grave-digger. There is nothing particularly 'Orientalistic' about this explanation. Furthermore, Marx's call for revolution in Asia is more historically realistic and promising than any noble sentiments that he could have lavished on necessarily vanishing socio-economic formations.

I shall cite another example related neither to Orientalism nor to Asia or the realm of politics. This is how Marx described the dual role of usurer's capital in the destruction of 'small-peasant and small-burgher -production' and in the making of modern industrial Europe. [31]

On the one hand:

'[T]his usurer's capital impoverishes the mode of production, paralyses the productive forces instead of developing them... It does not alter the mode of production, but attaches itself firmly to it like a parasite and makes it wretched. It sucks out its blood, enervates it and compels reproduction to proceed under ever more pitiable conditions. Hence the popular hatred against usurers...'

On the other hand:

'Usury, in contradistinction to consuming wealth, is historically important, inasmuch as it is in itself a process generating capital... Usury is a powerful lever in developing the preconditions for industrial capital in so far as it plays the following double role, first, building up, in general, an independent money wealth alongside that of the merchant, and, secondly, appropriating the conditions of labour, that is, ruining the owners of the old conditions of labour.'

Said's accusation that Marx subscribed to the basic Orientalist idea of the superiority of the West over the East seems to derive plausibility only from the ambiguity underlying his own discussion of this matter. That 19th century Europe was superior to Asia and much of the rest of the world in terms of productive capacities, social organisation, historical ascendancy, military might and scientific and

technological development is indisputable as a contingent historical fact. Orientalism, with its ahistorical bourgeois bent of mind, did its best to eternalise this mutable fact, to turn it into a permanent reality past, present and future. Hence Orientalism's essentialistic ontology of East and West. Marx, like anyone else, knew of the superiority of modern Europe over the Orient. But to accuse a radically historicist thinker such as Marx of turning this contingent fact into a necessary reality for all time is simply absurd. The fact that he utilised terms related to or derived from the Orientalist tradition does not turn him into a partisan of the essentialistic ontology of East and West any more than his constant use of such pejorative epithets as 'nigger' and 'Jew' (to describe foes, class enemies, despised persons, and so on) could turn him into a systematic racist and antisemite. No doubt, the typical messianic romantic vision was an essential part of Marx's historicism. But Said errs greatly in attributing this vision to the later influence of Orientalism. For the messianic and romantic aspect of Marx's interpretation of human history was with him from the beginning, and it encompassed the West long before he extended it to the East.

Orientalism and dependency

I would like to end this section of my critique by drawing attention to a rather curious view and an enigmatic passage which occur towards the end of Said's book and right after his sharp critique of the contemporary Area Study Programmes which have come to replace the traditional departments and disciplines of Orientalism in Western universities and particularly in the United States of America. Said makes the following observation and judgement:

'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.' [32]

If I understand this passage correctly, Said finds the intellectual, political and cultural dependence of the Arab world on the United States quite acceptable; what he deplores is only the manner in which this dependence manifests itself at present. There are basically two standpoints from which we can view this position. The first emanates from a 'soft' and liberal interpretation of the meaning and implications of dependence; while the second flows from a 'hard' and genuinely radical understanding of the nature and consequences of this relationship.

According to the 'soft' interpretation Said seems to be: (a) simply taking note of the well-known fact of the superiority and supremacy of the United States *vis à vis* its satellites; and (b) hoping that, given greater American comprehension and appreciation of the realities of the Arab world, the lamentable aspects of the satellite relationship can be ameliorated. Such a development would greatly enhance the chances of greater political maturity, cultural independence and intellectual originality in the Arab world. In other words, the objective is not for the Arab world to shake off its dependence altogether, but to alter and improve its circumstances, terms and modus operandi, in the direction of a more genuinely equal and balanced relationship. As a result Said blames the United States and not the satellite for an unsatisfactory and deplorable condition relating to 'the specific form of the satellite relationship'. More precisely, he blames the American Middle-East experts who advise the policy-makers because neither of these two have succeeded in freeing themselves from the system of ideological fictions created by Orientalism. He even warns these experts and their masters that unless they look at the Arab world more realistically and try to understand it without the abstractions and fanciful constructions of Orientalism, America's investment in the Middle East will have no solid foundation on which to lean. He says:

'The system of ideological fictions I have been calling Orientalism has serious implications not only

because it is intellectually discreditable. For the United States today is heavily invested in the Middle East, more heavily than anywhere else on earth: the Middle East experts who advise policymakers are imbued with Orientalism almost to a person. Most of this investment, appropriately enough, is built on foundations of sand, since the experts instruct policy on the basis of such marketable abstractions as political elites, modernization, and stability, most of which are simply the old Orientalist stereotypes dressed up in policy jargon, and most of which have been completely inadequate to describe what took place recently in Lebanon or earlier in the Palestinian popular resistance to Israel.' [33]

All in all, Said's position here departs little from the conventional wisdom of the liberal establishments of the West in general and of the United States in particular.

The 'hard' and radical interpretation of the meaning and consequences of dependence has been developed and widely publicised by such scholars and social thinkers as Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, Pierre Jalee, Claude Julien, Samir Amin and Arghiri Emmanuel. According to their account, dependence is structurally incapable of generating any sort of ties save those of the intensified exploitation, pillage and subjugation of the satellite by the centre.

According to this view, Said's vague thoughts on the subject can only foster additional illusions concerning the nature of the satellite relationship and generate dangerously false expectations about its possible implications and actual applications. The essence of the illusion lies in Said's perilous assumption that the lamentable aspects and manifestations of the satellite relationship can be satisfactorily reformed and improved to the ultimate benefit of both the Arab world and the heavy American investment in the Middle East. For the radical view of dependence holds that the satellite relationship leads to the further development of the already profound underdevelopment of the satellite itself. Hence its inevitable conclusion that salvation for the Arab world will remain an unattainable goal until the relationship of dependence is definitively and unambiguously smashed. From this also derives its inevitable criticism of Said for ending his book on a distinctly classical Orientalist note:

1. by not finding the satellite relationship between East (the Middle East) and West (America) lamentable as such;
2. by giving good advice to American policymakers and their Middle East experts on how to strengthen the basis of their investment in the area and on how to ameliorate the conditions of 'the specific satellite relationship', by ridding themselves of misleading Orientalist fictions and illusions; and
3. by forgetting that should American experts and their masters listen to his advice the Orient will find an even more formidable enemy in American imperialism than it already has.

PART II. ORIENTALISM IN REVERSE

One of the most prominent and interesting accomplishments of Said's book, as mentioned before, is its laying bare Orientalism's persistent belief that there exists a radical ontological difference between the natures of the Orient and the Occident - that is, between the essential natures of Eastern and Western societies, cultures and peoples. This ontological difference entails immediately an epistemological one which holds that the sort of conceptual instruments, scientific categories, sociological concepts, political descriptions and ideological distinctions employed to understand and deal with Western societies remain, in principle, irrelevant and inapplicable to Eastern ones. This epistemological assumption is epitomised in H.A.R. Gibb's statement to the effect that applying 'the

psychology and mechanics of Western political institutions to Asian or Arab situations is pure Walt Disney.’ [34] It is also shown in Bernard Lewis’ declared belief that ‘recourse to the language of left-wing and right-wing, progressive and conservative, and the rest of the Western terminology... in explaining Muslim political phenomena is about as accurate and as enlightening as an account of a cricket match by a baseball correspondent.’ [35] In other words, the vast and readily discernible differences between Islamic societies and cultures on the one hand, and European ones on the other, are neither a matter of complex processes in the historical evolution of humanity nor a matter of empirical facts to be acknowledged and dealt with accordingly. They are, in addition to all that, a matter of emanations from a certain enduring Oriental (or Islamic) cultural, psychic or racial essence, as the case may be, bearing identifiable fundamental unchanging attributes. This ahistorical, anti-human and even anti-historical ‘Orientalist’ doctrine, I shall call Ontological Orientalism.

Obviously, Ontological Orientalism is thoroughly ideological and metaphysical in the most pejorative senses of these terms. Furthermore, Said spared no effort in his book to expose this fact.

Ontological Orientalism is the foundation of the image created by modern Europe of the Orient. As Said has shown, this image makes more genuine and instructive revelations about certain European states of affairs, particularly about expansionary projects and imperial designs, than it does about its supposed object. But nonetheless this image has left its profound imprint on the Orient’s modern and contemporary consciousness of itself. Hence Said’s important warning to the subjects and victims of Orientalism against the dangers and temptations of applying the readily available structures, styles and ontological biases of Orientalism upon themselves and upon others.

I would like to contend that such applications, not only did take place but are continuing on a fairly wide scale. Furthermore, falling in the temptations against which Said has warned engenders what may be called Orientalism in Reverse.

In what follows, I shall discuss this contention in terms of a specific instance of this reversed Orientalism, namely Ontological Orientalism in Reverse, as I propose to call it.

To explain, I shall refer to two instances: the first drawn from the well-known phenomenon of secular Arab nationalism, the second from the recent movement of Islamic revival.

Arab nationalism and Orientalism in Reverse

A prominent man of thought and politics in Syria published about two years ago a series of articles in which he proposed to study certain ‘basic’ words in the Arabic language as a means to attaining ‘genuine knowledge’ of some of the essential characteristics of the primordial ‘Arab mentality’ underlying those very words. [36] Upon noting that the word for ‘man’ in Arabic (*insàn*), implies ‘companionship’, ‘sociability’, ‘friendliness’, and ‘familiarity’ (*anisa, uns, anıs, etc*), he triumphantly concluded that the implicit view held by the ‘primordial Arab mind’ says that man has a natural tendency to live with other men, or, as he himself explained, ‘the primordial Arab mind innately possesses the philosophical idea that man is by nature a social being.’ Then our author made the following telling comparison:

‘The philosophy of Hobbes is based on his famous saying that “every man is a wolf unto other men”, while, on the contrary, the inner philosophy implicit in the word *insàn* preaches that “every man is a brother unto other men”.’

I submit that this piece of so-called analysis and comparison contains, in a highly condensed form,

the entire apparatus of metaphysical abstractions and ideological mystifications so characteristic of Ontological Orientalism and so deftly and justly denounced in Said's book. The only new element is the fact that the Orientalist essentialistic ontology has been reversed to favour one specific people of the Orient.

It should be evident that one of the significant features of Ontological Orientalism in Reverse is the typical Orientalist obsession with language, texts, philology and allied subjects. It simply imitates the great Orientalist masters – a poor imitation at that – when it seeks to unravel the secrets of the primordial Arab 'mind', 'psyche' or 'character' in and through words. In other terms, it has obediently and uncritically adopted what Said pejoratively called the Orientalists' 'textual' [37] attitude to reality. In the above instance of so-called analysis and comparison that I have cited, one can easily see the panglossian and even quixotic character of the attempt to capture something about such a complex historical phenomenon as the cultural, mental and psychic life of the Arabs, past and present, by literally applying what has been learned from Orientalist books and philological analyses.

This reversed Orientalism sins doubly because it tries to capture the essence of the 'Arab mind' by learning how to analyse Arabic words and texts from the words and texts of the master Orientalists. Like a platonic work of art, its textual attitude becomes twice removed from the original reality.

Thus Orientalism in Reverse presents us with variations on Renan's racist theme as derived from his philological analyses and linguistic speculations. But the novel element is the conclusion of Orientalism in Reverse that comparative philological and linguistic studies prove the ontological superiority of the Oriental mind (the 'Arab mind' in this case) over the Occidental one. For, have we not shown that the sublime idea of the 'brotherhood of man' is innate and original to the 'primordial Arab mind', while Hobbes' base idea of 'the war of all against all' is innate and original to the 'primordial European mind'?

In classical Orientalist fashion, the essence of the 'Arab mind' is explored by an Arab thinker through language only and in hermetic seclusion from such unwelcome intrusions as socio-economic infrastructures, politics, historical change, class conflicts, revolutions and so on. This primordial Arab 'mind', 'psyche' or 'essence', is supposed to reveal its potency, genius and distinguishing characteristics through the flux of historical events and the accidents of time, without either history or time ever biting into its intrinsic nature. Conversely, the series of events, circumstances and accidents forming the history of such a people as the Arabs can never be genuinely understood from this point of view, without reduction, through a series of mediations and steps, to the primary manifestations of the original unchanging nature of the Arab 'mind', 'psyche' or 'essence'.

Here I shall cite another example. Said points out correctly that:

'The exaggerated value heaped upon Arabic as a language permits the Orientalist to make the language equivalent to mind, society, history, and nature. For the Orientalist the language speaks the Arab Oriental, not vice versa.' [38]

Orientalism in Reverse follows suit I not only faithfully but also more recklessly and crudely. Thus, another Syrian author wrote the following on the unique status of the Arabic language and the wonders it reveals about the 'primitivity' of the Arab and his language:

'After having studied the vocal characteristics of every letter of the Arabic language I proceeded to apply their emotional and sensory connotations to the meanings of the words starting with those letters, or at times ending with them, by means of statistical tables drawn from the dictionaries of the Arabic language. After carefully examining the marvellous results yielded by this study it

appeared to me that the originality of the Arabic language transcends the limits of human potentialities. I thought then, that no logical and reasonable explanation of this miracle of a language can be supplied except in terms of the category of the primitivity of the Arab and his language.' [39]

In perfect Renanian fashion this notion of the primitivity of the Arab and his language is made to define a primary human type with its inimitable essentialistic traits out of which more specific forms of behaviour necessarily flow. This is very explicitly and roughly I hence candidly and honestly I stated by still another Syrian ideologue in the following manner: 'The essence of the Arab nation enjoys certain absolute and essential characteristics which are: theism, spiritualism, idealism, humanism and civilisationism.' [40]

Not unexpectedly it follows that this absolute essence of the Arab nation is also the implicit bearer of a civilising mission affecting the whole world. Given the decline of the West at the end of the twentieth century the Orient is supposed to rise under the leadership of the Arab nation and under the banner of its mission civilisatrice to guide humanity out of the state of decadence to which Western leadership has brought it. For, the 'western essence' produced such unmistakable signs of decadence as: 'mechanism, darwinism, freudianism, marxism, malthusianism, secularism, realism, positivism, existentialism, phenomenism, pragmatism, machiavellism, liberalism and imperialism', all of which are worldly doctrines manifesting 'a purely materialist essence.' [41]

In contrast, 'The human universe' (i.e., man, humanity, the world, life, civilisation) is today awaiting its appointed encounter with 'the nation bearing that mission and chosen to lead it out of its impasse'. Furthermore: 'No matter how tragic the condition of the Arab nation may be at present there is not a shred of doubt that this nation alone is the promised and awaited one, because it alone acquired perfectly, ages ago, all the ideal constituents, characteristics and features of a nation. Accordingly, it has come to possess, in a uniquely deep-rooted manner, all the various ideal human traits, excellences and virtues which render it capable and deserving of carrying out the lofty mission for which it was chosen...'. [42]

I turn now to the second instance illustrating what has been defined as Ontological Orientalism in Reverse.

Islamic revivalism and Orientalism in Reverse

Under the impact of the Iranian revolutionary process, a revisionist Arab line of political thought has surfaced. Its prominent protagonists are drawn, in the main, from the ranks of the left: former radicals, ex-communists, unorthodox marxists and disillusioned nationalists of one sort or another. This nebulous political line found an enthusiastic response among a number of distinguished Arab intellectuals and writers, such as the poet Adonis, the progressive thinker Anwar 'Abd al Malek and the young and talented Lebanese critic Ilias Khoury. I would add also that its partisans proved themselves quite prolific, utilising various forums in Lebanon and Western Europe to make their views, analyses and ideas known to the reading public. Their central thesis may be summarised as follows: The national salvation so eagerly sought by the Arabs since the Napoleonic occupation of Egypt is to be found neither in secular nationalism (be it radical, conservative or liberal) nor in revolutionary communism, socialism or what have you, but in a return to the authenticity of what they call 'popular political Islam'. For purposes of distinctness I shall refer to this novel approach as the Islamanic trend.

I do not wish to dispute the above thesis of the Islamanics in this presentation. Instead, I would like to point out that the analyses, beliefs and ideas produced by the Islamanic trend in defense of its

central thesis simply reproduce the whole discredited apparatus of classical Orientalist doctrine concerning the difference between East and West, Islam and Europe. This reiteration occurs at both the ontological and epistemological levels, only reversed to favour Islam and the East in its implicit and explicit value judgements.

A prominent feature in the political literature produced by the Islamanic trend is its insistence on replacing the familiar opposition of national liberation against imperialist domination by the more reactionary opposition of East against West. [43] In the West, the historical process may be moved by economic interests, class struggles and sociopolitical forces. But in the East the 'prime mover' of history is Islam, according to a recent declaration by Adonis. [44]

Adonis explains himself by openly admitting that in studying Arab society and its internal struggles:

'I have attributed primacy to the ideological-religious factor because in Arab society, which is built completely on the basis of religion, the modes and means of production did not develop in a manner leading to the rise of class consciousness. The religious factor remains its prime mover. Consequently, its movement cannot be explained by means of such categories as class, class consciousness, economics, let alone economism. This means that the struggle within Arab society has been in the main of an ideological-religious nature.' [45]

Adonis' sweeping conclusion is naturally enough, to 'do away with class struggle, oil and economics,' [46] in order to arrive at a proper understanding of Oriental (Muslim, Arab, Iranian) social dynamics.

In other words: ideas, beliefs, philosophical systems and ideological superstructures are sufficient to explain the 'laws of motion' of Oriental societies and cultures. Thus, an enthusiastic Islamanic announced that 'the Iranian Revolution reveals to us with the greatest emphasis... that the laws of evolution, struggle and unity in our countries and the Orient are other than and different from those of Europe and the West.' [47] A third Islamanic assured us that 'all this permits Khomeini to translate his simple Islamic ideas into a socio-political earthquake which the most perfect and sophisticated theoretical/philosophical systems failed to detonate.' [48] Accordingly, the latest advice of the Islamanics to the Arab Left is to rearrange their priorities in such a way as to stand them on their head: 'to give ultimate importance to the cultural and ideological factors which move the masses and to proceed to reformulate scientific, economic and social truths on this basis'. [49]

According to an Orientalist such as H.A.R. Gibb (and others) this stable, unique, self-identical Islamic totality regulates the detailed workings of all human, cultural, social and economic phenomena subsumed under it. Furthermore, its coherence, placidity and inner strength are primarily imperilled by such foreign intrusions as class struggles, economic interests, secular nationalist movements democratic ideas, 'Westernised' intellectuals, communist parties, etc. So, it is hardly surprising to see Adonis doing two things:

First, opposing 'nationalism, secularism, socialism, marxism, communism and capitalism' [50] à la Gibb et al., on account of the Western source of these ideas and their corrosive influence on the inner structures of Islam which keep it oriental. [51]

Secondly, interpreting the Iranian Revolution in terms of a simple emphatic formula: 'Islam is simply Islam', 'regardless and in spite of politics, the class struggle, oil and economics.' Here, Adonis is presenting as ultimate wisdom the barren tautology of Ontological Orientalism, so well brought out in Said's critique: 'The Orient is the Orient'; 'Islam is Islam'; and, following the illustrious footsteps of such Ontological Orientalists as Renan, Macdonald, Von Grunebaum and Bernard Lewis, Adonis and the other Islamanics imagine that they can comprehend its essence in isolation from the

economics sociology, oil and politics of the Islamic peoples. As a result they are anxious to secure Islam's Orientalist ontological status not only as the 'prime mover' of Islamic history, but also as the alpha and omega of the 'Islamic Orient'. In the Islamic world nothing really counts save Islam.

It is noteworthy that the favourite metaphor of the Islamians is derived from the basically fixed, unprogressive, uninnovative cyclic movement of the oceans. Islam, they say, is once again in high tide after the low ebb of past generations and even centuries. I submit that this Islamic view of Islam is in essence, and in the light of its logical consequences, no different from the metaphysical preachings of Ontological Orientalism. In other words, Islam is paraded before us in much the same way as H.A.R. Gibb saw it, as a monolithic unique Oriental totality ineradicably distinct in its essential nature from Europe, the West and the rest of humanity.

Thus, in classical Orientalist fashion (reversed, however), Adonis affirms condescendingly that the peculiar characteristic of the Western essence is 'technologism and not originality'. He then proceeds to enumerate the major features distinguishing Western thought on account of that inherent trait. According to him these are: system, order, method and symmetry. On the other hand, 'the peculiarity of the Orient', for him, 'lies in originality' and this is why its nature cannot be captured except through 'the prophetic, the visionary, the magical, the miraculous, the infinite, the inner, the beyond, the fanciful, the ecstatic' etc. [52]

Accordingly, it should come as no surprise if the revolutionary struggles and sacrifices of the Iranian people amount, in the eyes of the Islamians, to no more than either 'a return of Islam' (the high tide metaphor) or to a manifestation of the innate Islamic opposition to non-Islamic peoples and influences (the East-West contradiction) as Bernard Lewis will have us believe. [53] Similarly, the Islamians would seem to be in full accord with Morroe Berger's conclusion that 'for modern Islam neither capitalism nor socialism is an adequate rubric.' [54] But why? The reason, as pointed out by Said, is that according to Ontological Orientalism (both in its reversed and original versions) it really makes no sense to talk about classical, medieval or modern Islam; because Islam is always Islam. Islam can withdraw, return, be in low ebb or high tide, but not much more than that. And since so-called 'Modern Islam', according to Ontological Orientalism Reversed, is really no more than a reasserted version of the old Islam, Adonis finds no embarrassment in advising the Iranian revolution about its present and future problems in the following archaic and theological jargon.

'It is self-evident that the politics of prophecy laid the foundations for a new life and a new order. It is also self-evident that the politics of the imâmate or wilâya is correct guidance by the politics of prophecy, or rather it is the same as the politics of prophecy by inspiration and without full identification. For, every imâmate or wilâya belongs to a particular age, and every age has its particular problems. Thus, the importance of the politics of the imâmate and even its legitimacy lie in the extent to which it is capable of ijtihâd to comprehend the change of modes and the newly arising realities under the correct guidance of the politics of prophecy.' [55]

Similarly, is it not this kind of conservative Orientalistic logic which underlies the recent Iranian debate on whether the 'Islamic Republic' may be described as democratic? The official Islamic line, which prevailed, argued that 'Islam' can not accept any additional qualifiers since it cannot be but Islam. In other terms, just as it makes no sense to speak about classical, medieval or modern Islam considering that Islam is always Islam similarly, it makes no sense to talk about an Islamic republic being democratic, considering that the Islamic republic is always Islamic and cannot be anything else. Hence, Khomeini's statement in one of his many interviews about the Islamic republic: 'The term Islam needs no adjective, such as democratic, to be attributed to it... The term Islam is perfect, and having to put another word right next to it is, indeed, a source of sorrow.' [56]

Ontological Orientalism in Reverse is, in the end, no less reactionary, mystifying, ahistorical and

anti-human than Ontological Orientalism proper.

Sadik Jalal al-'Azm

Beirut, Autumn 1980

6 Ibid, p24.

P.S.

* Sadiq Jalal al-Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse." (1981) Khamsin No.8: 5-26.
Reprinted in Alexander Lyon Macfie, Ed. Orientalism: A Reader New York: New York University Press, 2000. 217-238

Footnotes

[1] Orientalism, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978.

[2] Said recounts the achievements of Academic Orientalism on p96.

[3] Orientalism, p42.

[4] Ibid, p50.

[5] Ibid, pp 56, 62, 68.

[6] Ibid, p12.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid, p96.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid, p202-203.

[11] Ibid, p210.

[12] Ibid, p91.

[13] Ibid, p221.

[14] Ibid, p67.

[15] Ibid, p60.

[16] Ibid, p67.

[17] Ibid, p272.

[18] Ibid, p60.

[19] In other words, a natural order governed by invariable laws.

[20] Ibid, pp276-279. (Emphasis added by Edward Said.).

[21] Ibid, pp265-270.

[22] Ibid, p150.

[23] Ibid, p267.

[24] Ibid, p270.

[25] Ibid, p269.

[26] Ibid, p271.

[27] Ibid, p210.

[28] Ibid, p271.

[29] Ibid, pp153-156.

[30] Ibid, p155.

[31] Capital, vol III, Chapter 36.

[32] Orientalism, p322.

[33] Ibid, p321.

[34] Ibid, p107.

[35] Ibid, p318.

[36] Georges Saddikni, 'Man, Reason and Synonyms', al-Ma'rifa, Damascus, October 1978, pp7117. Mr Saddikni was until very recently a member of the Ba'th Party's National (pan-Arab) Command and head of its Bureau for Cultural Affairs. He was Syria's Minister of Information for many years.

[37] Orientalism, p92.

[38] Ibid, p321.

[39] Hasan Abbas, 'The Arabic Letters and the Six Senses', al-Ma'rifa, October, 1978, pp1401141

The crucial conclusion of this line of reasoning runs as follows:

'Thus, Arabic letters become transformed from here vocal containers filled with human sensations and emotions to the quintessence of the Arab, of his 'asabiya, spirit and even of the constituents of his nationality.' [[Ibid, p143.

[40] Isma'il 'Arafi, Qital al-'Arab al-Qawmi, published by the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, Damascus, 1977, p70.

[41] Ibid, p145.

[42] Ibid, pp147-148.

[43] Anwar 'Abd al-Malek re-emphasised recently his conviction that the main feature of our times is the continuing 'civilisational confrontation between the Orient and the Occident' (Arab Studies Quarterly, vol I, no.3, Summer 1979, p180).

[44] 'Islam and Political Islam', An-Nahar Arabe et Internationale, Paris, January 22, 1979, p64. Republished in Mawàqif, Beirut, no. 34, Winter 1979, pp149-160.

[45] Mawàqif, No. 34, p155.

[46] Ibid, p152.

[47] Wa'lid Nuwayhed, al-Safir, daily newspaper, Beirut, December 19, 1979, Editorial page.

[48] Suhail Kash, al-Safir, January 3, 1979.

[49] Sa'd Mehio, al-Safir, January 20, 1979.

[50] Mawàqif, no. 34, pp147/148.

[51] Orientalism, p263.

[52] Mawàqif, no. 36, Winter 1980, pp150-153.

[53] Orientalism, p107.

[54] Ibid, p108.

[55] An-Nahar Arabe et Internationale, Paris, February 26, 1979, p24. See also Mawàqif, 34, p 158.

[56] Al-Safir, October 10, 1979.