

Identity Crisis in Orientalist Thought

أزمة الهوية في الفكر الاستشراقي

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Abstract:

Orientalism is epitomized by the Western view of the Eastern other. . Edward Said's book, "Orientalism," is considered a decisive turning point in understanding the self from the perspective of Western colonialism, which seeks to impose its ideologies with the aim of despising the Muslim Easterner. . Edward Said drew from the Eastern tributary, imbued with the spirit of Islam and the principles of faith, and the Western tributary, filled with schemes to control the "other" and devalue it . His book was a deconstruction of the Western Orientalist vision. Therefore, we sought to define the concept of "Orientalism" and the mechanisms of its use by Orientalists, employing a critical, analytical, and comparative approach to reveal the reality of the Easterner and how it is represented by the Western colonizer. How did Arab thinkers view Orientalism and Orientalists? How did Edward Said define Orientalism? And what are the Western mechanisms for promoting biased Orientalist thought?

Keywords: identity, orientalism, ideology, thought, political.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The “other” has formed a focal point of tension in self-understanding and a decisive turning point in shaping the features of the ego according to standards that dispel everything that would protect identity and establish its foundations. Islam has formed a complex in front of the other that explores the orient from a Eurocentric perspective, mainly through orientalist writings and ideologies that questioned its constants, morals, abilities and reality as confirmed by history. Edward Said didn't gain prominence in the global intellectual, literary and critical arena except through his book “Orientalism”, that included tools of Western psychoanalysis, drawing on the ideas of the pioneers of western modernity such as Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci and F. Nietzsche using the western discourse against the western colonialist one.

2. The position of Arab Thinkers on Orientalism

Edward Said was not the first to write on western orientalism or the first to seek to reveal its dimensions and its stated or implicit goals; what distinguishes his study is his ability to diagnose dilemmas through radical criticism of the mechanisms of control built into narrative discourse in literature, politics and ideology.

Many Arab thinkers touch upon the concept of orientalism by exposing the plans of orientalists. Their position can be reduced to two central directions:

2.1 Complete Rejection of Orientalism

This concept formed an exploratory movement that helped in reinforcing the colonial movement of the eastern countries by the west in the first half of the twentieth century, and its primary purpose was to present Islam as a threat to the Christian west, and therefore it should be erased.

The crusades didn't actually target the economic structure, and this what we find in Malek Ben nabi, Mohamed El Bahi and Abdellatif Tibaoui. Mohamed EL Bahi rejected the efforts of orientalism that hold a grudge against Islam and Muslims, and that seeks to undermine religious constants by describing the Quran as inauthentic and that it is nothing more than an extension of the Christian and Jewish religions. Al Taybawi also criticized Louis Massignon for trying to annex Islamic Sufism to Persian and Indian Sufism, questioning the Islamic origins of Sufism. He also criticized Franz Rosenthal and Montgomery Watt regarding the historical influence of the Jewish and Christian beliefs on the Quran as a book, and Islam as a doctrine.

This was confirmed by MalekBennabi, who opposed orientalism in all its forms , whether the form that played a political intelligence role in identifying the East and distorting its image as a justification for the occupation , or the one that showed a fake innocence depicting the orient as contemptuous and backward.Both forms have the same purpose.

Orientalism, according to Malek Ben nabi, is a plot that the west weaves against the east, even if he sympathizes with Islam and Muslims in his studies by mentioning their virtues, legacy and civilization, the orientalist's ultimate goal is to distort the Oriental's identity. "It's also worth mentioning that, under these circumstances, the Islamic world has begun to suffer the shock that Western culture has inflicted on it... This shock has caused, among a number of Muslim intellectuals, almost a paralysis in their cultural immunity system, until the compound of inferiority led them to turn away in the face of the creeper. And they threw their weapons in the field, as if they were the remnants of a defeated army at the moment when the conflict began to rage between the Islamic and Western society, this type of intellectuals began to search for their salvation by wearing Western clothing" (nabi, 1969)

2.2 Supporters of the analytical tendency

This trend is represented by Muhammad Arko, Anwar Abdel Malik, Hisham Jaait, and Abdullah Al-Aroui; Their response was less intense with the Orientalists. Their criticism focused on the Orientalists' approaches and the contrast of their perspectives, which were based on the superiority of the West versus the inferiority of the East. Abd al-Malik criticized the philological approach on which the Orientalist discourse was based upon, by paying attention to literal connotations and isolating them from their historical context and reality. As for Muhammad Arko, he studied the Orientalist methodology, or as he refers to as basic Islamism, which includes the Western discourse on Islam. This discourse had a profound impact on revitalizing Arab-Islamic thought, along with Massenius, Duslan, and Grunge...who pulled important texts from long oblivion, and paved new ways for researching some of the neglected issues and dialects that were uncovered by Arab researchers.

Arco's study of Orientalism was close to appeasement, exclusion of tension, and praise for the role of the Orientalists coupled with a feeling of Eastern indebtedness to them, even if he often took a cautious and critical position of it, which led some Arab thinkers to reject this position, his students, Anwar Abdel Malik and others.

This is what we find with Muhammad al-Mazoui, who launched a fierce campaign against their positions, which appears in his book, "Reason between History and Revelation about... Theoretical Nihilism in the Islamisms of Muhammad Arko", in which he presented a radical critique of the Arconian project, which he describes as an essentially ignorant project" (Mouhamed, 2017, p. 28), and it is also "an absurd, subversive project in the fullest sense of the word" (Mouhamed, 2017, p. 74) This project honors the Orientalist legacy that is based on the philological approach on the basis that these studies are capable of demolishing beliefs and "its adoption of a rational, liberal view of the Qur'an, revelation, and prophecy" (Mouhamed, 2017, p. 25)

Al-Mazawghi believes that Arkoun's positions towards the Islamists and those who follow them are based on hatred. This is evident in his saying, "The Islamists, in all their factions, are the symbol of unpatriotism, treason, opportunism, and terrorism" (Mouhamed, 2017, p. 63), and this means to Al-Mazawghi, that Arkoun, with his critical stances on Orientalism and his philosophical approaches that destroy the foundations of Islam and its beliefs, stands on their side and supports them. Thus he is a secular sycophant himself and those who follow his approach.

3. Edward Said and colonial consciousness

Edward Said was born in West Jerusalem in November 1935 in a Christian family, his father was a Palestinian businessman and an American citizen, while his mother was born in Nazareth of Christian Lebanese and Palestinian descent. He lived moving between the Talbiyah neighborhood in West Jerusalem and the Zamalek neighborhood in Egypt. After his high school studies, he left Egypt in 1951 and joined Princeton University in the United States in 1953 to obtain a Bachelor of Arts, completing his studies at Harvard University from 1958 to 1963. He did not return to Palestine until the year 1992 with his wife and two children to check his family's home and his mother's home.

The book "Out of Place" represents an autobiography that reveals the self's alienation from itself in the man's character, which he expressed with a kind of sarcasm resulting from paradoxes that are difficult to connect culturally, economically, and socially, and that has been formulated in the form of dualities between existence and nothingness, the ego and the other, and between... Identity and otherness, conformity and difference. These paradoxical pairs that marked Said's biographical analysis between the Palestinian Arab origin and his Western consciousness that embraced his youth and culture, are what later formed his strict critical stance on the colonial Orientalist institution. The manifestations of the colonial consciousness appear in Edward Said's personality in the following manifestations:

3.1 The problem of the name and the identity complex

The name constitutes an ethnic and cultural affiliation and a basic determinant of identity, and this is the first slide in the path of identity, which constituted for him a personal ordeal that preceded him into existence and continued to exist with him. The ordeal extended for more than fifty years for him to get used to his name, "Edward", which was not common in the society to whom he belonged, "This clumsy English name that placed like a yoke on the shoulders of "Said," the net Arabic family name (Said, 2000, p. 25)". His name formed a conflicting relationship between the origin and the name and between the name and the family surname, one of which was pure Arabic and the second was English. Here the man is positioned in the gap between the two identities. This hybrid nominal structure made him a stranger in his original homeland, Palestine, and a stranger in his modern homeland, the USA. And this what constitutes a split in the heterogeneous nominal structure that contains a conflict in cultural and political connotations in a colonized country. He used to declare, "During the years of my attempts to combine my proud English name with its Arabic partner, I would bypass Edward and emphasize Said, depending on the circumstances, and sometimes I would do the opposite, or I would pronounce the two names together so quickly that the listener would get confused. The only thing I couldn't stand, even though I had to endure it, was the mixed and destructive reactions I was receiving Edward? Said?" (Said 2000, p. 25-26).

3.2 Language Problem

It was not only the name that disturbed Edward Said, for it was also a hybrid of language. "What I do know is that the two languages have always been present in my life, each echoing the other, and each of them can claim absolute priority, without actually being the first language. I attribute the source of this initial confusion to my mother, who I

remember speaking to me in both English and Arabic though she had been writing to me in English all her life.” (Saeed, 2000, p. 25)

The child, Edward, did not comprehend the truth of his belonging among the contradictions that were conflicting in his being. This linguistic duality constituted a conflict in self-awareness, while it was in the process of formation through its historical, social, and religious context. His mother is Palestinian, so she does not abandon Arabic. This is his father’s problem as well and this what leads to his unstable identity, which is inextricably linked to the repercussions of the colonial project and its tragic results that strike at the core of the ego. Language is the home of being, as Heidegger put it, and the individual cannot achieve his self in its absence or disorder, and this rupture in the linguistic construction of the man’s personality creating a rupture in his sense of belonging, as language carries culture, politics, and ideology.

3.3 The problem of Geographical and Cultural Belongingness

The stages that Edward Said lived through stood as an obstacle between him and his awareness of his geographical, ideological, religious, cultural, social, and linguistic affiliation. He spent his life gathering the unity that had been separated by his various journeys and belongings. His father’s insistence captured his imagination that he was American. A false imagination that erases the past and origins. However, his Eastern origins did not bring him existential reassurance and did not answer the question of identity. His parents did not have any customs or inheritance to impart to their children. And he never forgot the difference, which reached the point of contradiction between the ancient Palestinian neighborhood of Talbiyah and the Egyptian neighborhood of Zamalek, On the social, demographic, ethnic, cultural, and religious levels between them, “The Zamalek neighborhood was an ideal image

for the manifestation of Western centralism and the tyranny of imperial hegemony.” (Saeed, 2000, p. 47)

The Arabic language was a sign of poor standards at the Cairo School for American children. At Victoria College, “Rule number one says: English is the school language. Anyone caught speaking other languages is subjected to severe punishment” (Saeed, 2000, p. 231). The inclusion of the colonizer’s language and imposing it by force and criminalizing the use of the national language, Arabic, is one of the deadly elements of the colonial practice that aborts every intellectual renaissance. Based on the bitter experience that the man went through in losing his identity between the Arab and Western countries, he stood against Western colonial thought and the perpetuating Western centralism at the expense of other cultures. It also presents itself as a humanitarian project and the only option and ideal model that the rest of the world should follow in its footsteps. The books “Orientalism” and “Culture and Imperialism” are considered the basic entry point that translates Edward Said’s position on Orientalism and the repercussions of this concept on the Eastern awareness of itself, identity and colonial consciousness.

4. The significance of Orientalism according to Edward Said

Said begins his book *Orientalism* by deepening this concept and linking it to its backgrounds and goals. The West has resorted to studying Eastern life, its religion, customs and traditions in order to identify its areas of strength and weakness with the aim of subjugating and humiliating it. “Orientalism is the collective institution for dealing with the East, or in other words, it is a Western method for dominating and reconstructing the East.” (Said, 2006, pp. 45-46). The West’s purpose was not to introduce and learn about the East and its historical roots as much as it was a means of control. And here, it is the turn of Orientalism and its priests to study extensively about Islamic countries and provide

appropriate advice to the colonial masters, which will ensure that they oppress Muslims, humiliate them, and continue to control them. (Ali, 2000, p. 57)

Said believes that the West distinguished between the West and the East geographically, and this was blessed by the clergy, politicians, philosophers, writers, and economists. Orientalism is the cultural arm for managing the affairs of the East and controlling it, and this geographical division was discussed in their novels by writers such as Gustave Flaubert and the politicians in their tendentious speeches with Belfort and Lord Cromer, who talk about the East as if they were the official spokesmen for the countries of the West. The language used by Cromer and Balfour portrays the oriental in the form of something to be judged (as it happens in court) or something one studies and describes as in a course of study or something one disciplines (as in school or prison) (Said, 2006, p. 97)

5. Islam and Orientalist discourse

As for religion, Edward Said emphasized that the Orientalists had created a distorted image about Islam and Muslims in the Western imagination. Islam is a symbol of danger and threat to the world and to the West in particular, and it is a terrible competitor to the Christian religion and to the Western world. Then he looks at it. "With a very distinct type of hostility and fear, Islamophobia" (Birnar, 1994, p. 35).

Edward Said wrote the book "Covering Islam," or to be more precise, "Media Covering of Islam," in which he describes the positions of American media professionals and their dealings with the event of the occupation of the American embassy in Tehran 1979, the hostage-taking, the prejudices shown by these media professionals against Shiite Islam, and the biased media generalizations in their dealings with Islam, which exposed the American mentality and decision-makers and their perceptions of the Islamic world in light of compressed reductions and short-sighted extrapolations. From the incident at the embassy, Iran was judged, and from Iran, it was Judging Shiite Islam and from Shiite Islam to Islam in

general. Because the reactions to the events in Iran did not occur in a vacuum, behind the borders of the public's cultural awareness lay the long-standing position towards Islam, the Arabs, and the East in general, which I was and still called it Orientalism...hence came the recurring caricature of Muslims as oil suppliers, terrorists, and finally as blood-thirsty Gogh masses." (Said, 2005, p. 74)

Edward Said deepened the gap that the West wanted to create between the Oriental and its religious truth in what he called the permanent shock of Islam in the context of insulting the religion, the Qur'an, and the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him. The Messenger "Muhammad" was considered in the literature of Orientalism as a "prophet of false revelation," and this was confirmed by Said through what he reported from Norman Daniel, the Prophet Muhammad had become in the eyes of Westerners an example of "immorality, and perversion, and a complete system of various betrayals" (said, 2006, p. 62) and this is what he resorted to, Thomas Carlyle, who considered the Qur'an to be "a confused, tedious mixture, crude, endless repetition. Boring verbiage, complexity, and, in short, crude, prosaic, and intolerable stupidity." (said, 2006, p. 152) .

Muslim Orientals were not spared the contemptuous view that the Westerner calls it in the global imagination, and he described it as sexual immoral degeneration, which is expressed in the Arabic novel "One Thousand and One Nights," which depicted the oriental woman as uninhibited, traitorous, and a symbol of love and sex arousal.

6. Mechanisms of colonial Orientalism

6.1 Orientalism and the complicity of knowledge

Edward Said sought to undermine liberal rationalism that claims humanity and seek to establish rational political practice. This is what H. Kliment talked about in his book "The Ten Lies of Globalization," including presenting liberal practice as the only and ideal option for all countries of the world, but in reality it's nothing more than "the ideology of the West to

confront non-Western cultures" (Huntington, 1999, p. 159). Edward Said concluded, through analyzing and deconstructing the colonial Orientalist discourse, that the goal of the West is to exclude the other through the stereotype that portrays the Oriental as "Irrational, immoral, childish, and backward, while the Westerner is portrayed as rational, virtuous, mature, and sound." (Said, 2006, p. 78).

The Western discourse, in its academic form, was lined with tendentious intentions directed against the Eastern colonialists. The Orient that the West talks about in its linguistic discourse does not reflect the reality of the Orient as much as it reflects the mechanisms of contempt that it wanted to attach to it. Thus, language was used as a means to introduce the Oriental from a Western perspective, language couldn't depict the real image of the Orient, but rather the image that was drawn for him by Orientalism. The bond of language and Orientalism and the bond of knowledge and power connects the European or Western politician to the Western Orientalists like a bow with connected links" (Said, 2006, p. 106)

This is similar to Michel Foucault, who believes that the concept of power is no longer limited to state institutions, agencies, and constitutions, but rather it harnesses even knowledge to justify its actions and convey its ideas. So language as speech is transformed into a mechanism in the service of power that justifies Western colonialism over the East. Discourse according to Foucault "The subject of the struggle to obtain power is not only a reflection of political conflicts, but rather the theater in which desire is invested. It is itself the orbit of desire and power" (Michel, 2012, p. 66).

Culture has also been exploited to impose the categories of Orientalism that creep into the subconscious and in turn create the pejorative and disparaging view of the Orient. Here, Edward Said employs Antonio Gramsci's concept of soft and cultural hegemony and the organic intellectual who engaged in the game of indiscriminate consumption of the other's culture, which has handed over its fate to him by calling it whatever he wants without the

slightest desire to resist. Why should he resist it if it spreads civilization in his land? This is what Gramsci referred to in the form "Hegemony". There is hegemony through force, and there is also hegemony that does not use force, but rather infiltrates the mind and occupies it. It uses language, discourse, texts, and culture in order to convince the subaltern of his backwardness and inferiority. Edward Said sought to deconstruct colonial and post-colonial discourse to reveal the underlying Orientalist ideas and its concealment of the West's reality and its purposes in these writings.

6.2 The Novel and Western imperialist thought

Through his deconstruction of Western discourse, Said concluded by accusing the various means that paved the way for control and imposition of imperialism. Even the novel form was not innocent, as it included in its essence complicity with Western imperialism. The book "Culture and Imperialism" by Edward Said (1993) is considered an interrogation of the Western novel in its imperial form, which revolved around Western centralism and its ability to impose control as a model of greatness that denies and controls the other. "The novel is the most recent of the major literary forms, and its emergence is the most traceable to history... The novel and imperialism have embraced each other to a high degree." The novel is an inclusive, integrative, almost encyclopedic cultural form. (said, Culture and Imperialism, 2014, p. 139) .

The novel "Robinson Crusoe" by Daniel Defoe reveals the legitimacy of colonialism in non-Western countries that do not have the mechanisms of development and are characterized by inactivity, idleness, and brutality. The white race is inherently superior to other races. Thus, the novel that witnessed the emergence of traditional colonialism established absolute distinction between the Western self and the other, and this is what also appears in the novels of Albert Camus, who was born in Algeria and rebelled against the Algerians through

his longing for a quiet homeland that sheltered the black feet. Through the novel, the Orientalists sought to adjust language to establish mechanisms of control in a way that was compatible with Western colonialism and its requirements. The novelistic aesthetic was objectified and directed ideologically to serve tendentious ideas that consider the oriental to be an incapable human being unable to keep up with the movement and development that the Western man has known. It also defines him as that man who is guided by his instincts and driven by the blind imitation of the developed Westerner, who imposes his own ideas and depicts the image that the oriental should take of himself as a follower and embodiment of the stereotype that rejects all change.

7. Conclusion

In his book « Orientalism » and « Culture and Imperialism », Edward Said resorted to the deconstruction of colonial discourse, which used language as a means in conveying its ideas, laden with a burden of hidden hatred for the oriental “ other”, through political and media discourses, even the novel was not spared from expressions about what is stored in the essence of the white man regarding the oriental man he used the westerner language to expose the imperialist thought and colonial policy carried in the writings of the Orientalists relying on post-modern philosophers such as J. Derrida, Gramsci, and Foucault. In undermining the Western ideology directed to the orient, therefore, caution must be taken against the plans that are being hatched against the Arabs, or even Muslims.

This is what American politicians expressed in their declared and hidden speeches in transferring the focus of ideological conflict from the capitalist West and the socialist East to the Christian North and the Islamic South.

The Western political custom, represented by the United States of America, does not believe in the existence of international relations dominated by tolerance, security, and stability. It is necessary to search for a party to the conflict through which friend and enemy can be

determined. There can be no concept of friendship except through identifying the common enemy, and this is what Francis Fukuyama explained in His book “The End of History and the End of Mankind”, in which he expressed the conflict between the East and the West, emphasizing the victory of the West. Samuel Huntington, in his book “The Clash of Civilizations”, moved the focus of the conflict to the Christian North and the Islamic South, considering Muslims the absolute evil that must be guarded against in the new international order, and this is the starting point of Islamophobia and the fabricated events that condemn Muslims and present them in a stereotypical image that must be guarded against as the enemy of the future. Thus, the Orientalists expressed their position on Islam and Muslims, and this requires us to rearrange our political and intellectual agendas to face a new wave of aggression no less ferocious than the colonial aggression.

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