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Orientalism, a Thousand and One Times: A Tale of Two Perspectives

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Abstract

There has been no way to absolve Orientalism *from ferocious debate. Scholars have been drawn from several quarters of the world to Edward Said's oeuvre when it first appeared almost fifty years ago.* Orientalism *has since become an oft-occurring, if not a dominant work segueing into every postcolonial (or otherwise) conversation that unfurls. Said presents in* Orientalism *a mode of thought quite complex in its essence; its emphasis offers an overwhelming, unsettling sense of the detail and a complexity capable of halting one in haste. The very best of Said's work has stood the test of time, but the many-hued reception has, so far, not only prevented any effective convergence, but also allowed* Orientalism *to lose its complex argument and dissolve into simplification. This article gives insight into two different perspectives (the Algerian and the Jordanian) on Said and* Orientalism*, and on this basis offers a reassessment of* Orientalism*'s main argument to refocus its energy and locate Said vis-à-vis Orientalism. It also discusses the pitfalls of "newly" emerging Orientalist thoughts, and instead of departing from the concept of Orientalism as Said defines it, it proposes to reconfigure and modulate it to fit the current circumstances, providing the foundation for a new concept: Warientalism.*

Keywords

Edward Said, *Orientalism*, re-Orientalism, Warientalism, postcolonialism.

Introduction: Postcolonialism and the Crisis of Aphasia

> The Orient is a re-presentation of canonical material guided by an aesthetic and executive will capable of producing interest in the reader.[1]
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> The modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalizing.[2]

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[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 177.

[2] Ibid., 325.

Can postcolonialism speak? Attempts to define this concept are legion, making it live a talkative, one could even say an *overemphasized* career. Given the current state of academic studies, there is not much to be found in the limelight of postcolonialism by way of rectification. Postcolonialism has raised complex, perhaps irresolvable issues of definition, as has been discussed by Mishra and Hodge in their essay "What is Post(-)colonialism?" and Huggan in his review "Postcolonialism and its Discontents." Mishra and Hodge's essay examines the matter engagingly and gives a clear answer in the negative as, for them, postcolonialism has secured postmodern characteristics. It is, they say, "as defiant as oppositional postcolonialism but without political independence or autonomy."[3] For Mishra and Hodge, the postcolonial effort has splintered and been pressed into "postmodern postcolonialism" which has "an increasing alliance with the postmodern at the level of theory."[4]

The clothes donned by postcolonialism today, in comparison to the traditional one, are made of smokescreen criticism that follows a "strategic" methodology in its confrontation with structures of power—in the shape of Spivak's conciliatory phrase of positive, "strategic essentialism."[5] The inquietude surrounding postcolonialism's affiliation to colonialism, and the symmetry and unsubtle complicities existing between them are confronted with a lenient ilk of criticism (if it can be called criticism at all) characterized by ambivalence, exaggerated caution and absence of "forthrightness" which emanate from apolitical quietism, "'objectivity' and 'scientific' impartiality."[6] The oppositional criticism first pledged by the postcolonial enterprise has been outflanked at last by the obduracy of an imperial script and privileges. Today's postcolonial criticism proposes to "strategically" challenge (yet it promotes) structures of power. It is leashed, and indeed allowed so long as it does not substantially oppose (which it does not) and promotes more significantly than it opposes.

Contemporary scholars have contributed significantly (and often unconsciously) to mapping this shift in postcolonialism's energy which is today unhoused of its erstwhile opposition and forced to relocate to a new abode with a *strategic* location. Postcolonialism, which has promised

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[3] Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-)colonialism," in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Longman, 1993), 289.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1987), 205.
[6] Edward Said, *Covering Islam* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 23.

upon its inauguration to be oppositional, has indeed ended up being overtaken by the still available "residual"—to summon Raymond Williams—and self-perpetuating elements from the past. It has entered a new phase where challenging the structures of power seems to easily slide into resembling a promotion of them. Postcolonialism's comic resistance, in other words, resembles a speck, an opposition small and soft enough to remain unvoiced. And because small and soft, it is ineffective; it is easily subsumed in what Williams calls "dominant" explicated to be an ideology "in the interest of the dominance of a specific class. It is a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present. What it offers in practice is a sense of predisposed continuity."[7]

The once "troublemaking" and *saboteuse* energy of postcolonialism has strayed from its founding motives initially based on oppositional, anti-colonial and resistant promises aimed in the first place to "historicize and denaturalize gendered and racialized rationalizations of cruelty and injustice"[8] without the Western telos. Today, postcolonialism ails from a crisis of aphasia, eventually reneging on the above promises. And its postcolonial figures likewise run the risk of becoming (if not already) "translators"—or to employ a wonderfully resonant phrase here—"comprador intelligentsia,"[9] equivalent to a modern-day bourgeois class in Fanon's sense, a *déjà-vu* scene in history which offers the possibility to repeat itself in a smooth and *consensual* way. Today's postcolonialism is "postcolonial" "only in name,"[10] a postcolonialism *in absentia*. It is reduced to an inoffensive caricature which is at pains to make a point, and what it posits in the order of the day strikes one as wondering "why the 'post'?" and as concluding that it cannot speak except with a solemn voice-over in the background.

In the very conduct of his investigation, Huggan, *contra* Mishra and Hodge's anti-colonial definition of postcolonialism, adopts a gentle view on the matter. Although he criticizes postcolonial writers, in "Postcolonialism and its Discontents," and their works as "provid[ing] appealing exoticism for a readership starved, in today's receding postmodern world, of the visible signs of cultural difference"[11]—a

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[7] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 116.
[8] "*ReOrient*: A Forum for Critical Muslim Studies," *ReOrient* 1, no. 1 (2015): 7.
[9] Kwame Appiah, "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern," in *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), 119.
[10] Tahrir Hamdi, "Edward Said and Recent Orientalist Critiques," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 35, no.2 (2013): 140, doi: 10.13169/arabstudquar.35.2.0130.
[11] Graham Huggan, "Postcolonialism and Its Discontents," *Transition* 62 (1993): 131.

marketing of exoticism called "re-Orientalism" in today's postcolonial jargon, a point to come back to momentarily—he believes that "postcolonialism [still] remains a useful conceptual framework for the practice of (radical) critique."[12] In another article of his, entitled "Postcolonial Studies and the Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity," Huggan's discussion on postcolonialism draws a wrong conclusion, making a *faux-pas* of sorts when he proposes to put Said and Spivak on the same plane, saying, "The disciplinary protests of Said and Spivak are based on what might be called a sense of strategic oppositionality."[13] Huggan's article thrives on the ambiguity of this all-too-brief remark, and is indeed oblivious to Said's oppositional and anti-system position which is radically different from what he calls "strategic oppositionality" quintessentially Spivakian, being diplomatic in its energy of opposition as it nods to negotiation with power which Said *utterly* opposes.

There is no way one can deal with Said's *oeuvres* without dabbling in politics. Said's political position, although it undergirds an anti-colonial stance by the sheer weight of his works' troubling truths, does not afford to take on the radical bent of anti-colonialism posited by Fanon (characterized by "violence") as a way of resistance to colonialism and fulfillment of "liberation." Said returns to the logic of resistance in the form of a Fanonian scenario, but not quite. This is certainly due to his position as a Palestinian first—seen as "dangerous" by the West—and an intellectual who crudely "speaks truth to power" second—which has attracted considerable intellectual disparagement. Said could not indeed adopt such a staunch, radical perspective on resistance, but could only uphold an intellectual and quite eloquent notion of it in a sharp contrast, and with more subtle tonalities, embodied in "secular criticism"—a concept dear to Said—which is yet equally stark in opposition, and could only gesture to radical, anti-colonial, liberationist figures, such as Fanon and "Yeats [among others] as a point of reference."[14] The Fanon-Said complicity is of the most commonly held dislikes, and a more suitable combination (in comparison to Huggan's association of Said with Spivak). Said has elected to take up the colonial problem where Fanon had left off saying in a 1992-interview that Fanon's thesis is "an

[12] Ibid., 132.
[13] Huggan, "Postcolonial Studies and the Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity," *Postcolonial Studies* 5, no. 3 (2010): 268, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1368879022000032784.
[14] Tahrir Hamdi, "Yeats, Said and Decolonization," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 51, no. 2 (2015): 229, doi: 10.1080/17449855.2014.973119.

unfinished project."[15] And having reverberate in mind Fanon's impact, and for that matter W. B. Yeats's[16] and Blake's (as shall be examined later on), on Said's intellectual trajectory enables one to have a better, more focused understanding of *Orientalism*'s oppositional and counter-narratival energy, a key in itself to carving out Said's untamed, political position *different* from Spivak's, whose argument, obscure enough, is oppositional yet conciliatory, meeting Said's logic only halfway. This article offers insight into two perspectives (the Algerian and the Jordanian) on Said and *Orientalism*. Taking its force from writing "in all directions,"[17] called "writing forward,"[18] it proposes to lift off the covers of Said's *Orientalism* to reconsider its main argument and refocus it, and discusses adversarial currents to its oppositional pulse, pervading today's diasporic, domestic and even international sphere, yet about which little is known: Re-Orientalism and Warientalism, which will occupy me later in this analysis.

Said's *Orientalism*: Perceptions from the Classroom

A question that rises on first glance at the title of this article might be "What else could possibly be said about Said's *Orientalism*?" This tells much of the reader's wish to see *Orientalism* as a resolved issue or—with a more impact in French—as *affaire classée* because gauged *dépassée*. Criticism of Said's works is admittedly diffuse and far-ranging, and studies on *Orientalism* particularly fill many library shelves, yet there being many reasons for *Orientalism* to still linger for a while—which shall be tackled in due course. For the moment, I shall bring up one particular reason which is: what has most often been said about Said's *Orientalism* accords well with a "scholarly" style and "academic" mode of thought—which have come to imply "objective" and "neutral" today—Said wonderfully dubs "professional."[19] This study deems it significant to still warrant attention to some essential points that have been tackled in a brief fashion, even hidden from consideration by a "professional" sleight of hand, or how Said puts it "with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated,"[20] to influence

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[15] Mathieu Courville, "Genealogies of Postcolonialism: A Slight Return from Said and Foucault back to Fanon and Sartre," *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 36, no. 2 (2007): 221.
[16] For a more detailed study, see Hamdi, "Yeats, Said and Decolonization."
[17] Hamdi, "Edward Said and Recent Orientalist Critiques," 146.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xv.
[20] Said, "Orientalism Once More," *Development and Change* 35, no. 5 (2004): 871.

Orientalism's reception, and even vilify Said's humanistic and secular approach (*contra* Raymond Schwab's) sustained by "intellectual exchange . . . [and] a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods."[21] Said's humanism is collective, contrapuntal and worldly, one that is aware of politics and the complexity of reality, and is *not* centred on "received ideas and approved authority."[22]

One cannot postpone discussion of how Said's *Orientalism* is still being received (and my focus here is on the Algerian and the Jordanian perspectives on the matter). Nor would it be intellectually responsible of me if I were to discuss Said's work without allowing some critical insights into them. This is not to say that *Orientalism* is no more serviceable; on the contrary, it is still *quite* relevant and dignified in both the literary and political fields. But if we are to attain something higher, we need to "make it new" in a Poundian way, as discussing matters of literature, politics or any other without enabling beginnings (as he himself cautions when he says "I keep coming back—simplistically and idealistically—to the notion of opposing and alleviating coercive domination"[23]) never gets one very far. It will require bulky volumes to discuss the reception of Said and his works as etched in the literature of Algerian and Jordanian informants, review and assess their exact value, which is not the focus of this article. Rather, it gives a brief insight into two different perspectives, as perceived by myself as a student in the following two academes. Let me impose here a little biography.

In the department of English of Algeria's Mouloud Mammeri University, where I was raised (from the age of BA to MA) in a structuralist tradition regarding the treatment of theories, there is a profound engagement with Said's works, and much interest especially in *Orientalism* could be detected in Said's *many* enthusiasts, yet which in many ways is critically disinterested. There is a consensus as to how to use Said's works, and the reception has taken what appears to be a united stand and one-directional flow. Students, and professors for that matter, are admiring of, at times even besotted with Said's works, so much so a way is almost always found to include Said in any discussion, an influence which has even penetrated the linguistic branch. This is certainly because of his works' amateurish (in the Saidian sense) and multidisciplinary character, but mostly because of their powerful counter-narratival and anti-colonial energy that "opens the way not

[21] Ibid., 874.
[22] Ibid., 878.
[23] Said, "Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations," *Race & Class* 32, no. 1 (1991): 16.

only for people without history to write their history but in the process to also have the potential to redefine the nature of the historical."[24] Said's works give voice to the subaltern, and owing to this quality, they are used *paradigmatically*, as collected by testimony from an Algerian Professor of African Literature. We will though retain only one example among many others: the PhD dissertation titled *Rudyard Kipling, Edward Morgan Forster, William Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad: The British Imperial Tradition and the Individual Talent*;[25] it bears out this very paradigmatic rationale. The deployment of Said's works is limited to using them as a paradigm, a frame of reference that helps analyze postcolonial issues, *not* as materials for critical debunking or theoretical beginnings, hence the non-inclusion in this article of published testimony to Algerian perspectives on *Orientalism*/Orientalism (except Bennabi's), as there is a crucial sparsity on the matter.

The paradigmatic mode of thought the Algerian philosopher Malek Bennabi attacks in his "The Algerian Perspectives: Orientalism;" he remarks, "A society that does not fabricate its own guiding ideas, cannot manufacture. . . . It is not with the ideas imported or imposed on its mind by an external agent of excitement . . . that a society can build itself."[26] What the paradigmatic logic can indeed hope to make is but little headway, and Bennabi exhorts the Algerian reader to take a move with a pulse of a beginning sort to re-new old paradigms of thought, create and begin again *de novo*, and on fresh grounds, a "process of emancipation and enlightenment that . . . frames and gives direction to the intellectual vocation."[27] The preoccupation of Bennabi's essay is with opposition to passive and neutral ways of seeing the world as "to read and write texts cannot ever be neutral activities,"[28] and the need to turn from one way to another *to create*, one which is difficult but works wonders.

At the University of Jordan, where my experience as a PhD student unfolds, Said and his works have likewise experienced a pronounced boom, and the impact of his works is equally strong, yet the reception of which has winding and variegated paths. The perspectives on Said set themselves at variance, his works are indeed commented upon, and

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[24] "*ReOrient*: A Forum for Critical Muslim Studies," 7.
[25] Mouloud Siber, "Rudyard Kipling, Edward Morgan Forster, William Somerset Maugham and Joseph Conrad: The British Imperial Tradition and the Individual Talent" (PhD. diss., Mouloud Mammeri University, 2012).
[26] Malek Bennabi, "'The Algerian Perspectives': Orientalism," *Islamic Studies* 33, no. 1 (1994): 23.
[27] Said, "Orientalism Once More," 869.
[28] Said, "Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations," 15.

criticism encouraged to a certain degree. "Edward Said on Jerusalem"[29] by Professor Tawfiq Yousef and Nisreen Yousef of Middle East University, and the various works by Professor Tahrir Hamdi of Arab Open University are examples of how Said fuels discussion on politics, literature, and postcolonial issues. In consonance with Bennabi, and in a revisionist vein, Professor Samira al-Khawaldeh of the University of Jordan offers a critique of Said's *Orientalism* in "Writing Against the Grain: Walter Scott's *The Talisman,*" and gives her impression as to students being "under his [Said] influence,"[30] one that impinges on their perception, intellectual reactions, and personal opinions. An immoderate influence that consequently impacts on the current state of criticism to which we now turn.

The Critic at Home

The root of today's critical ills is the desperate clinging to the principle of accumulation, the watchwords of "objectivity" and "neutrality," the taking-for-granted and the *fear* to disagree for fear of exclusion. Insupportable limitations frustrate the redemptive promise of criticism and new beginnings, which must be eliminated if a critic is at last to come to a state of essential freedom and creativity, one where the critic finds himself at home. Yet the above situation is difficult to counter due to a crucial paradigmatic factor in the systemic practice, called otherwise "disciplinary matrix,"[31] which is a vehicle of a certain ideological fiction, specific to the study of literature, theory, criticism, and to research conduct, one that prescribes (and surveils) what to engage and what to disengage, what to regard and what to disregard as unimportant, obvious, irrelevant, or simply as a matter of little *scholarly* consequence. Or as it is generally said in the case of academic journals (as the "disciplinary matrix" is there applied *too*), a matter that does not fall within a "particular" scope. This "disciplinary matrix" induces what Bennabi terms "lethargic paralysis"[32] conducive to an intellectual stagnation and bankruptcy, and it operates through teaching students to write *objectively*, *scientifically*, follow *neutrally* and contribute *cumulatively* to the piling of systemic constructs. This sort of positivism is "to be

[29] Tawfiq Yousef and Nisreen Yousef, "Edward Said on Jerusalem," *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 7, no. 12 (2017): 1489–1501, doi: 10.17265/2159–5836/2017.12.001.
[30] Samira al-Khawaldeh, "Writing Against the Grain: Walter Scott's *The Talisman*," *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* 14 (2013): 137.
[31] Thomas Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 297.
[32] Bennabi, "'Algerian Perspectives,'" 22.

understood to include all investigations that implicitly or explicitly hold on the dream of producing a neutral, transparent, and predictive knowledge, more or less discreetly packaged in disciplinary categories or thematic that are supposed to have an independent validity,"[33] but that paradoxically do not have as linked to a system.

The ideological fiction that ensues from secondary materials' treatment of *Orientalism* is but one striking and easily demonstrable example. And Ashcroft's "Representation and its Discontents" stands out as a particularly telling case study, where all it has taken the author is an article to tell in full what *Orientalism* is about and propose an *Orientalism* in miniature, with a sustained strategy of an "objectively" and "neutrally" toned argumentation constructed with precaution, which aims to downplay and critically chastise in a *cool* way. Ashcroft, who emphasizes strategically in italics that *Orientalism* is just an "*argument,*"[34] has, in a brief and unfair rendering of the work, reduced the complex "argument" to an issue of representation in such a manner as to believe that *that* is all what *Orientalism* can offer. An argument, he *postmodernly* suggests, "can be interpreted in different ways."[35] Ashcroft is an example of a contemporary reader of *Orientalism* that does not attend to a *complex,* anti-system argument with the care and complexity that it deserves and puts the matter with the sharpness of drastic simplification. Said's argument is *no* literature nor is it postmodern literature for that matter. And an argument, by all logic, cannot be "interpreted in different ways;" it is focused and straightforward, and can either be attacked or defended. It *can* be "interpreted in different ways" if it is *too* complex to be grasped, as in the case of the Derridean philosophy for instance which many take the liberty of "interpreting in different ways" and whose very logic condones this kind of interpretation on the part of the reader. Said's *Orientalism* does not yield to systemic satisfaction and its ability to disconcert is, I believe, responsible for its being, along with his other works, reformulated, or as Ashcroft puts it "interpreted."

Another case springs to mind. That journal which has been considered at first to publish an initial version of this article, and to which a reviewer replied, "Despite the perennial interest of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, we felt regretfully that this essay did not offer a substantive enough new contribution to the long-running debates around the book, which the journal has already [mark here the

[33] "*ReOrient*: A Forum for Critical Muslim Studies," 6.
[34] Bill Ashcroft, "Representation and Its Discontents: Orientalism, Islam and the Palestinian Crisis," *Religion* 34, no. 2 (2004): 114, doi: 10.1016/j.religion.2003.12.003.
[35] Ibid., 115.

reviewer's choice of words] *covered in depth over previous years.*"[36] "Covering in depth" is never an absolute activity; there is always something left to be said and covered. This is the reason why the initial version of this article was written; it was written with the aim of *critically* reviewing what has been said about Said's *Orientalism* because, in my judgment, there were many aspects of Said's work that *have not been* covered. The reason of the rejection, I assume, has nothing to do with the "originality" of the work but with the *disruptive* character of it. The kind of "new contribution" the reviewer talks about in their reply is one that should not aim to *disrupt* what has been said or "covered in depth;" it should be new yet in accord with what has been said, meaning it should be framed and supervised by the references built over years as a result of the "covering in depth" practice. These secondary references have the potential to prescribe how a primary material should be read.

The above is of course to sustain a *status quo* whose main enemy is not a beginning one should say, as the matter turns out to be not that simple, but a constant and repetitive procession of *beginnings* which bid farewell (with critical return) to earlier schemes of action and modes of thought that have been countered by systemic absorption. When a beginning is enacted as an energy of resistance, it rests at a point in time not in a way that the energy perishes but it will need another beginning to be operative still, which, without it, will eventually *perish* either by being interpreted (as done by Ashcroft and other entrepreneurs) or *second-handedly* (but powerfully) reevaluated as done by many journals. Beginnings are Said's resistance and anti-system procedure which could, however, not retain their strength and preserve their anti-systemic energy, and which have eventually stopped after Said's *death*. A *Nakba* sort of thing for *Orientalism* and Said's reputation, which marks off a sudden rupture in the production of resistant beginnings and anti-colonial discourse in the Saidian way and allows post-mortem revision that runs even smoothly with Said removed from the equation. If a system which is "worldly," as Said explains, allows a beginning, it is only because a systemic solution exists to counter *that* beginning as the latter exists within the system and *not* without. And even though the absorption does not happen right away, it will end up happening eventually as power always updates its strategies and ways of operation. What constitutes Said's resistance is mainly his overwhelming sum of *beginnings* which have been enacted *repeatedly*, giving hard times for the system to frame and counter, hence his works (as successive beginnings)

[36] Emphasis added.

being ill-received. Beginnings are only potent when they are enacted in a motion like that of a turning wheel, and, only then, can they be called resistance in the full sense, yet which is still *temporary*.

A beginning on its own posits itself indeed as temporary since it does not (cannot) promise an ever-quite-stable resistance. Its resistance *cannot* be contained and stabilized as it can be reformulated (providing the beginner does not retaliate in another series of beginnings, because of death in Said's case for example). Or in Ashcroft's term *interpreted* by another hand (other than that of Said) one that is framed and supervised by power in such a way as another argument can be built out of *that* interpretation that subtly edits *Orientalism*, strikes a breach in the way it is read and received, and prescribes how it should be read. Such can displace the content of the original source, alters it in a way that it shears away from its original content, and conveys another meaning (that proves even *more* powerful if the original source is not read, which *is* common). The consequence is the foundation of a new *Orientalism* born out of a sum of secondary materials, or second-order texts that swamp the reader with new readings and estrange them from the real facts, one that is interpreted, re-evaluated and implanted in ideological discourses and practices. The new version lays a solid and immovable foundation for Said's work, an enterprise aimed at a specific vocation, one that spells and defines, relegating Said's primary material to an ancillary role. It is still possible though to discern a salutary and invigorating quality in the reception and treatment of *Orientalism*. But pro-Said critics who have given Said and his works substantial grounds and comprehensive, faithful treatment of his works to revive their anti-system flame are equally absorbed or, to use a better term, *silenced* through a decorum established and limits imposed (of coverage and publication for example, among other strategies). And what is specially to be noted is that despite some competent critics' observations on this condition, the state of affairs has remained *intact*.

The answer to the foregoing question posits thus itself quite simply: nothing that has been said, or published on *Orientalism*, is ever sufficiently said or automatically to be trusted. This article takes to task (and among other tasks) a revisiting of Said's *Orientalism*, which has "lent itself to increasing misrepresentation and misinterpretation,"[37] to counter the claim that, most of the time, conditions one to think that since one knows the basics, the latter no longer merit thorough scrutiny. The belief that *Orientalism* is enough known to be understood (and many have not yet understood it) is in itself an insult to the book's complex

[37] Said, "Orientalism Once More," 869.

argument. It inflicts injuries on a significant number of its essential points built strenuously over years to attend to the exigencies of a complex reality, yet which have been easily appropriated and ungratefully received as per the demands of the now quite pervasive climate of *over*simplification. The re-oriented version of *Orientalism* is a *reprise* of the original *Orientalism,* a facile version that does not fit the facts, and what is more, one that is damaging—because insidious—of Said's argument, and deflects one from looking to see what the real facts are, and the real views held. *Orientalism* and how its arguments operate have ceased—unless one has something "original"—being a feature that elicits scrutiny and conscious, *independent* questioning as it has been deemed well and sufficiently defined.

Refocusing Said's *Orientalism*

> The scope of Orientalism exactly matched the scope of empire, and it was this absolute unanimity between the two that provoked the only *crisis* in the history of Western thought about and dealings with the Orient. And this crisis continues until now.[38]

> The world is more crowded than it ever has been with professionals, experts, consultants, in a word, with *intellectuals* whose main role is to provide authority with their labor while gaining great profit.[39]

The fate of *Orientalism* has been gloom-ridden. Similar to the vortex of change which has uprooted postcolonialism from its obligation, winds of change have begun to blow over Said's *oeuvre* which is exaggeratedly *interpreted* (and all the more misinterpreted). The logic foregrounded by *Orientalism* has been reinstated and ended up being understood as one pleases. One can indeed note a disconnect between Said's original view on Orientalism and what is being unfurled in academic quarters today. And here is the crux of the matter: there being a notorious absence of rigour and fairness in writing about *Orientalism* and decoding it in student circles (and a large cadre of professors and intellectuals for that matter), making one dodge the central nub of it. The disconnect in question manifests as a discursive tendency frequently adopted which shows incautious (and voracious) use of the concept of Orientalism to gesture *defensively*, and with peremptory objection, to any negative description (even when there is none, and when the negative description is an interpretation which has a part of "reality" in it) of Orientals in

[38] Said, *Orientalism*, 104; emphasis added.
[39] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, xv.

particular and Easterners in general, made either by foreign, domestic or diasporic authors, and because they do not cater to one's taste are easily flicked away as "Orientalist." The complexity upon which such a claim as "Orientalist" or "not Orientalist" should be founded is, in the main, swept away, and the critique of Orientalism has gone so far as to don a McCarthyistic uniform. The simplistic conclusions in question (often made in a hurry) and the misinterpretations they create (doing disservice to the complexity of *Orientalism* first, as a book, and second, as a discourse) disturb effective understanding of Said's *oeuvre*, reign unchallenged and start being easily herded under the rubric of stability and agreed-upon framework in today's discussions and analyses of texts. Here, one cannot but agree with Huggan who remarks to the point, "*Orientalism*, in short, will continue to be read: meticulously, selectively, sometimes carelessly. Sometimes, I suspect, it may be referenced by those who have not read it at all."[40] The issue of misinterpretation at hand calls forth a reconsideration of Said's *Orientalism* to take corrective measures.

A response to the above-buttressed claims is here in order. The first argument that can be adduced is: it is, as Said claims, illegitimate on the part of foreign authors, scholars, journalists and experts—called "communities of interpretation"[41]—to make negative descriptions of the Orient which affect the dignity of the human being (and on this point Said could not have been more precise) on account of their being located outside of it and not being acquainted with it to the point of having full knowledge of it, and on account of the discourse employed being inhumane aiming to subjectivize the significant other. It is, however, quite legitimate for domestic authors to refer to negative aspects of their societies on account of personal experiences and legitimate grievances as citizens or residents based on personal views which do not serve any structure of power. This is without being gestured to as "Orientalist," a formula in this case clumsily used (perhaps abused), which is inappropriate to such circumstance as Said's *Orientalism*, where questions of representation in fact loom large, has *never* referred to an Eastern sort of Orientalism applied by those who usually fall prey to it (i.e. Orientals as Orientalists). This is only one index of a certain dissonance that has influenced how *Orientalism* is received and understood. The second argument concerns foreign authors. Here, the accent is on writers, scholars, journalists and experts who come from

[40] Graham Huggan, "(Not) Reading Orientalism," *Research in African Literature* 36, no. 3 (2005): 135, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3821368.
[41] Said, *Covering Islam*, 33.

outside the Orient to study it. Let no misunderstanding be: Said, in *Covering Islam*, deals with a special case of foreign authors who can legitimately report on the Orient or the East, and the evidence stands out here starkly,

> The correspondents of most of the major American newspapers and television networks struggle heroically to fulfill an unremitting duty to bring back a story. Yet, usually they do not know the language of the area they cover, they have no background in the area, they are removed after a short tour of duty even after beginning to make important contributions. No matter how gifted the individual, he or she cannot hope to report places as complex as Iran or Turkey or Egypt *without some training and a lengthy term of residence in the place*.[42]

The passage carries such an indication as that which legitimizes the narrativization of stories by foreign writers on the proviso that one has "some training and a lengthy term of residence in the place" they narrativize, be it the Orient, the East or any other place. This is as long as it is a personal interpretation, a representation of the place which does not propose to water down the complexities of "unmanageable reality"[43] difficult to deal with, and which is unmonitored by imperial structures which make it "not interpretation in the usual sense but an assertion of power."[44] Such recentering opens up a troubling vista of numerous complexities, which relegates the third diasporic category to a later stage.

The complexity of society, culture and history animates Said's argument in *Orientalism*, which he analyzes by bridging the gap between the Marxist "base" and "superstructure," an analytical method based on "correspondence" Williams dubs "homology." The latter is "an analysis of a social process which is grasped from the beginning as a *complex* of specific but related activities."[45] Williams is among the first to take this move; he closely links "homology" to "mediation," a concept Said uses[46] yet prefers his *oppositional* "secular criticism" to it, which is "a worldly self-situating, [and] a sensitive response to the dominant culture"[47] and an analysis of the complex "realities of power and authority."[48] Said

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[42] Said, *Covering Islam*, 101; emphasis added.
[43] Ibid., 45.
[44] Ibid., 142.
[45] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 105; emphasis added.
[46] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xxiii.
[47] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 15.
[48] Ibid., 5.

defines the Orientalist discourse as "not an inert fact of nature,"[49] but a hermeneutic, yet epistemological value conferred upon the Orient as a "given," an essential key to understanding it given that its ontological reality has been difficult to decipher. The Orientalist discourse comes in to suggest a revision of the Orient by way of "knowledge," one that is *over*simplified, suits an "inferior" position and serves "power." This knowledge-power combination forms a "structure of feeling," a concept by Williams again (renamed by Said "structure of attitude"[50]), called also "strategic location,"[51] a position Orientalists take to locate themselves *vis-à-vis* the Orient, which has become over centuries a deep-seated attitude "*distribut*[ed] . . . into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts."[52] Williams calls this "typification" being "a constitutive and constituting process of social and historical reality, which is . . . expressed in some particular 'type' [i.e. texts, representations, illustrations etc.]."[53] A "structure of reference"[54] is in this way formed, called otherwise "strategic formation,"[55] many Orientalists have built on over centuries to nurture an accumulation of knowledge characterized by "internal consistency"[56] and a certain authoritarianism which precludes opposition. This Orientalist tradition Said resists by suggesting an oppositional, resistant and creative method he calls "beginning" embodied in his *Orientalism*'s counter-narratival energy which involves "an act of delimitation by which something is cut out of a great mass of material."[57]

There is an adherence to a mythical (mis)interpretation which delights in the claim that Said opposes Orientalist texts altogether. One strand of Said's *Orientalism* (likely to be met with impulsive objection) is a cogent defense of Orientalism itself. Said does not blame Orientalism as an interpretation (knowledge)—although he casts a cold, skeptical eye on it being a matter of approximate hermeneutics. On the contrary, he designates it as *okay*, as long as it remains an interpretation, a "*re-presence*"[58] unmonitored by imperial structures, and which does not pretend to a systemic "presence." After all, Said himself says, "All

[49] Said, *Orientalism*, 4.
[50] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxiii.
[51] Said, *Orientalism*, 20.
[52] Ibid., 12.
[53] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 102.
[54] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxiii.
[55] Said, *Orientalism*, 20.
[56] Ibid., 22.
[57] Ibid., 16.
[58] Ibid., 21.

knowledge that is about human society, and not about the natural world, is historical knowledge, and therefore rests upon judgment and interpretation."[59] What he attacks rather is the interpretation's (i.e. knowledge's) affiliation to power as, for him, "structure[s] of cultural domination"[60] "impose corrections [by way of knowledge] upon raw reality [which becomes radical realism], changing it from free-floating objects into units of knowledge,"[61] and the Foucauldian knowledge-power dyad has significantly helped Said to "mediate" and critically lay bare this complexity. He continues, "The things to look at are styles, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original."[62] The focus should be on the aesthetic machinery, or what is called in the introductory part to this article "an aesthetic and executive will," [63] rather than on the rough measures of representation which is universally and inescapably approximate whether performed by Easterners or Westerners. Aesthetics best tells of a textual attitude where a "positional superiority"[64] finds itself expressed in the "contemporary present,"[65] which pretends to account for complexity and establishes an epistemological "presence" and "political vision of reality"[66] wherein "the Oriental is *contained* and *represented* by dominated frameworks."[67]

This leads us to Blake's vision of serious wit which ranks high in Said's critical thought. Said has inherited the poetic mode and oppositional office of Blake. In the following two poems, Blake reveals a matrix, out of which Said has developed his vision of opposition. In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,"[68] a satirical critique of Swedenborg's argument for the institutionalization and concretization of the spirituality of religion,[69] Blake argues that religion (knowledge) should remain spiritual (without power), and argues for the free play of, and a

[59] Edward Said, *Covering Islam*, 154.
[60] Said, *Orientalism*, 25.
[61] Ibid., 67.
[62] Ibid., 21.
[63] Ibid., 177.
[64] Ibid., 7.
[65] Ibid., 142.
[66] Ibid., 43.
[67] Ibid., 40.
[68] William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," in *Blake's Poetry and Designs*, ed. Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979), 81–102.
[69] Robert Rix, "'In Infernal Love and Faith': William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*," *Literature and Theology* 20, no. 2 (2006): 107–25, doi: 10.1093/lithe/frlo14.

libertine form of knowledge. Blake opposes the making of the spiritual into a system or codex (i.e., making knowledge power); the spiritual, for him, should not be contained in a watertight compartment lest it become indoctrination. Blake calls this systematization, in his poem "London," "mind-forg'd manacles."[70] The Blakean unorthodoxy is espoused early on by Said, in *Beginnings*,[71] yet which is referred to clearly (in Blakean terms) in *Orientalism*, where Said says, "Systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions—mind-forg'd manacles—are all too easily made, applied, and guarded."[72] It is reiterated in "Orientalism Once More" where he adds while explaining his approach, "By humanism I mean first of all attempting to dissolve Blake's mind-forg'd manacles so as to be able to use one's mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure."[73]

The question of whether Orientalism is a lie has also burrowed deep in contemporary consciousness. Said responds in the negative, "One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths."[74] The issue is not one of mendacity, nor is Orientalism "false in some crudely empirical sense, rather it was part of a discursive system of 'power-knowledge.'"[75] There is ample evidence in Said's *oeuvre* which sufficiently analyzes the situational and historicist role of Orientalism. And here Skenderovic and Späti relevantly qualify Orientalism as "a complex, ambivalent matter rather than monolithic discourse,"[76] and "can be understood as a multilayered construct that conflated negative with positive sentiments, and thereby occasionally romanticized the 'Orient'."[77] Hence Said's insistence on *contrapuntality*. The above very point is expatiated in this passage,

> The very power and scope of Orientalism produced not only *a fair amount of exact positive knowledge* about the Orient but also *a kind of second-order knowledge*—lurking in such places as the "Oriental" tale, the mythology of the mysterious East, notions of Asians inscrutability. . . . One happy result

[70] William Blake, "London," *Poetry Foundation*, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43673/london-56d222777e969.
[71] Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975).
[72] Said, *Orientalism*, 328.
[73] Said, "Orientalism Once More," 874.
[74] Said, *Orientalism*, 6.
[75] Adam Shatz, "'Orientalism,' Then and Now," *The New York Review of Books,* May 2019, available at https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/05/20/orientalism-then-and-now/.
[76] Damir Skenderovic and Christina Späti, "From Orientalism to Islamophobia: Reflections, Confirmations, and Reservations," *ReOrient* 4, no. 2 (2019): 133.
[77] Ibid., 130.

> of this is that an estimable number of important writers during the nineteenth century were Oriental enthusiasts: It is perfectly correct, I think, to speak of a genre of Orientalist writing as exemplified in the works of Hugo, Goethe, Nerval, Flaubert, Fitzgerald, and the like. What inevitably goes with such work, however, is a kind of *free-floating mythology* of the Orient, an Orient that derives not only from contemporary attitudes and popular prejudices but also from what Vico called *the conceit of nations and of scholars*.[78]

There is much to be seen and much confusion to dispel in this episode of *Orientalism*. By "fair amount of positive knowledge," Said means knowledge unadulterated by power, unprocessed by politics and free from the binds of imperial strictures. Yet, "the role of [this] positive knowledge," as he puts it, "is far from absolute. Rather, 'knowledge'—never raw, unmediated, or simply objective—is what the . . . attributes of Orientalist representation . . . *distribute*, and redistribute."[79] There is in fact a thin membrane between "knowledge" and "power," one that makes transference from its "positive" state to one negative easily attained, and makes "knowledge that is non-dominative and non-coercive"[80] effortlessly re-inscribe into "a setting that is deeply inscribed with the politics, the considerations, the positions, and the strategies of power."[81] And it is through this transference, or should one say *interference* (which Said calls "crisis" in the introductory quote to this section), that Orientalism has become a "science of imperialism"[82] with "worldly, historical circumstances which it has tried to conceal behind an often pompous scientism and appeals to rationalism."[83]

Said's counter-hegemonic critique of Orientalism takes a stubbornly historical and political curve in his analysis. There is no escaping politics (i.e., power) and history (i.e., knowledge)—and Said's *oeuvres* bear an unmistakable stamp of this certainty—which both (i.e., politics and history), when entwined, offer to show up with a set of problems of ambiguity and complexity type. Be that as it may, this is no reason to believe that there is no history to be gleaned from Orientalist texts (and any other text) which all are situational as "words and texts are so much of the world that their *effectiveness*, in some cases even their use, are

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[78] Said, *Orientalism*, 52–53; emphasis added.
[79] Ibid., 273–74.
[80] Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," in *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2001), 200.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid., 203.
[83] Said, *Orientalism*, 110.

matters having to do with *ownership, authority, power, and the imposition of force.*"[84] Bennabi's statement here is particularly relevant which says, "The orientalist work must be considered, first, as a work whose value could not be denied from a scientific point of view. Sometimes, it even merits pure homage when it represents . . ., in addition to its intellectual quality, an undeniable moral quality—that of an authoritative and disinterested testimony."[85] This makes one of Linda Hutcheon's famous remarks germane to Orientalism's condition: Orientalism "is fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical and inescapably political."[86]

The Question of Palestine adds up by way of illustration to the above argument. It erects evidence of Orientalist texts being used as historical traces from the past to assert Palestine's presence. *The Question of Palestine* has indeed inherited a tenacious evidential legacy from Orientalist texts which have permitted its argument to be deeply rooted in the past and history as "every idea or system of ideas [Orientalism here] exists *somewhere*, is mixed in with historical circumstances, is part of what one may very simply call reality."[87] This historical "reality" one can detect by way of criticism or "critical consciousness" crucial to analyzing the "infinity of traces"—to use here Gramsci's serviceable phrase—left in this case by Orientalist texts, and which Said has proposed to do in an effort to "compile an [historical] inventory."[88] This is caught in the following passage,

> No matter how backward, uncivilized, and silent they were, the Palestinian Arabs *were* on the land. Read through any eighteenth- or nineteenth-century account of travels in the Orient—Chateaubriand, Mark Twain, Lamartine, Nerval, Disraeli—and you will find chronicled *there* accounts of Arab inhabitants on the land of Palestine.[89]

Said claims, by reference to Orientalism, that Zionism has drawn on "the entrenched *cultural* attitude toward the Palestinians deriving from age-old Western prejudices about Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient"[90] as a way to eradicate the ontological presence of Palestinians by epistemologically "re-presencing" them (if one can allow the use of the

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[84] Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic*, 48; emphasis added.
[85] Bennabi, "'Algerian Perspectives,'" 20.
[86] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 4.
[87] Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1980), 56.
[88] Said, *Orientalism*, 25.
[89] Said, *Question of Palestine*, 9; emphasis added.
[90] Ibid., xiv.

neologism) in a way that presents Palestinians as paradoxically "absent." This paradox can be best understood in Said's jibe which says, "The Orient is all absence, whereas one feels the Orientalist and what he says as presence, yet we must not forget that the Orientalist's presence is enabled by the Orient's effective absence."[91] While they condemn Orientalism harshly, Said's works do not dismiss Orientalist texts' historical potential as unserviceable, as Said uses Orientalist texts to (a) prove that the latter have been corrupted by structures of power to serve an imperial end, and to (b) procure evidence of the "made-absent" past of Palestine and Palestinians, whose presence yet again "had been the subject of numerous travel accounts, most of them famous, by Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Flaubert, and others,"[92] which Said consults as a repository of a "historical reality" that has, according to him, been suppressed.[93] It is the historical and political insights Said gives which have rendered *Orientalism* and his other *oeuvres* the "bugbear" of his intellectual nemeses (Bernard Lewis is one) as, first, they give insights into history without "apolitical impartiality" and, second, do not pander to the whims of power's *over*simplification, but confront the complexity of reality head-on and, to use Said's famous catchphrase, "speak truth to it." To receive thus *Orientalism* as merely Said's negative criticism of Orientalism does not do service to his *contrapuntal* vision, and the positive notes Said makes on Orientalist texts as historical texts, called by Bennabi "apologetic"[94] Orientalism, and as a receptacle of an "infinity of traces"—to summon Gramsci once again—should not be dismissed as unimportant since they contribute to understanding Said's intellectual position. These "infinity of traces," which have a potential to "mov[e] us away from subjects of reflection of the present and plung[e] us in the delights of the past"[95] and salvage historical facts from loss, have, however, incurred a process of unlearning.

One example of how "unlearning" is processed, and strikes the reader as oblivious to significant details is Fikret Güven's review article "Criticism to Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*," where the author says that "Said fails to consider the historical development of imperial culture, since he is tremendously focused on literary works and never really examines the contextual history of the period he examines."[96] This is

[91] Said, *Orientalism*, 208.
[92] Said, *Question of Palestine*, 70.
[93] Ibid., 218.
[94] Bennabi, "'Algerian Perspectives,'" 5.
[95] Ibid., 12.
[96] Fikret Güven, "Criticism to Edward W. Said's *Orientalism,*" *Journal of Language and Literature Studies* 15 (2019): 426, doi: 10.29000/rumelide.580700.

other evidence of how *Orientalism* is ill-received and misunderstood, of a reliance on secondary materials and *not* on the book itself (which is what the article does by way of reviewing, not critiquing, past critiques of Said's *Orientalism*), which obscures what Said's *Orientalism* has in view. Such an aptitude of unsaying the said also often targets Palestine's contribution to the realization of *Orientalism* (and Said's other works) as an anti-colonial narrative, and to the formation of Said as an intellectual and critic. These facts often go unsaid, *deliberately* ignored by today's postcolonial "cult of the certified expert"[97] who, in a "postcolonial" way, "appl[ies] many of Said's ideas to all parts of the globe with the exception of a deafening silence on Palestine."[98] The process of unlearning aims to *rectify*. It aims to render *Orientalism* (and Said's other works) the product of "power," which is an easy enough thing now that Said is not here to retort, and make it a Western product by attenuating its anti-colonial energy and nerve-racking details. It aims to *re-orient* by scholarly consensus the content of Said's works by way of (mis)interpreting them and hiding some important details by an act of suppression (to be understood as "not covering" some important details in academic discussions). And what better way to do that than to produce secondary materials that promise the hurried reader a simple version of Said's works as already exposed.

Re-Orientalism and Warientalism

After having met it so often without wanting to, it is now to the concept of re-Orientalism, concerned with the diasporic category, one must look at to make a point. Said, as foregrounded in the epigraph to this article, has then boded well for the future, a time when Oriental authors (be they authors based in their own countries or relocated abroad) will revive the old specters of Orientalism, cater to a neo-Orientalist sort of trend and, to reformulate his quote, "participate in their own Orientalizing."[99] Before proceeding to the definition of this latest academic buzzword that is re-Orientalism which is quite clear in its designation of Orientals as "Orientalists," a word is yet again in order. As mentioned earlier, Said never intended his concept of Orientalism for Orientals, the use of which in this way can result in a misunderstanding of his work, but only adumbrates indirectly the emergence of the concept of re-Orientalism (without referring to it as such) proper to

[97] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, 77.
[98] Tahrir Hamdi, "Edward Said, Postcolonialism and Palestine's Contested Spaces," *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies* 16, no. 1 (2017): 9, doi:10.3366/hlps.2017.0150.
[99] Said, *Orientalism*, 325.

Orientals in "Figures, Configurations and Transfigurations" where he remarks,

> The world system map, articulating and producing culture, economics and political power along with their military and demographic coefficients, has also developed an institutionalised tendency to produce out-of-scale transnational images that are now in the process of *re-orienting* international social discourses and processes.[100]

As can be deduced from this passage, Said has predicted a re-orientation of "international social discourses," and so far re-Orientalism can be understood to be a re-oriented version of Orientalism, a re-orientation which still begs a question as to what direction. Said has used the concept of "re-orienting" by way of prediction, but has not elaborated on it, the comprehensive treatment of which finds its deployment well before Said mentions it in this essay, before he publishes his *Orientalism* and even *Beginnings.* In *Season*, Tayeb Salih predicts the emergence of this re-oriented version of Orientalism (though he does not mention the "re-orienting" appellation) through Mustafa Sa'eed, an intellectual who uses *intentionally* self-orientalization as a means to seduce Western women for his own purposes, and take revenge on the British colonizer. How the protagonist describes the deployment of this technique accords well with a process of re-orienting. He says,

> My store of hackneyed phrases [Orientalist stereotypes] is inexhaustible. I felt the flow of conversation firmly in my hands, like the reins of an obedient mare: I pull at them and she stops, I shake them and she advances; I move them and she moves subject to my will, to left or to right.[101]

The puppet-mastery hereby described gives mention to an "orientating" of the woman; it gives one to imagine how Sa'eed's process of re-orienting operates, a strategy which decides whether the woman goes "left" or "right." This re-orienting energy has taken a strategic turn in Salih's novel, one that is a signal of a "turning away from an Orientalizing gaze, and as such, it can be seen as belonging to the family of concepts and critiques associated with decolonial thinking and its call

[100] Said, "Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations," 8.
[101] Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies (New York: New York Review of Books, 2009), 34.

for the delinking from the Western episteme,"[102] but this is as viewed by Salih in his time.

The re-orienting technique (as the one used by Mustafa Sa'eed) has, however, been derailed from the "decolonial" mission (or revenge as defined in the novel) that it has promised to accomplish at first, making itself over time lax, indulgent and "okay" with inheriting prepossessions and strategies of Orientalism, and its anti-colonial strategy slides into a different form of strategy, one that is *colonial.* And as defined by Rath, this strategic re-orientation has thus become "the new social, political and economic faces of the old Orientalist attitudes,"[103] and "the perpetration and practice of Orientalism by Orientals" themselves,[104] which metaphorically (and not just so) amounts to feeding the Western Orientalist discourse with an Eastern spoon. Similarly, Mahmut Mutman, in "From Orientalism to Islamophobia," although he does not mention re-Orientalism, categorizes it (perhaps unintentionally) into Neo-Orientalism, and defines it as a discourse unleashed by

> native writers [of the Orient who] claim to correct stereotypes and misunderstandings and give the reader a realistic sense of how it feels to live in an Islamic society. Further, they are not only authentic natives but also educated and culturally refined people who have a mastery of Western culture and literature and the ability to produce literary writing. These aspects position them in a *uniquely privileged way*: while they have a "feel" of the culture and religion as insiders, they also have the necessary critical distance to it as culturally refined authors and intellectuals.[105]

While Dwivedi, from a Fanonian perspective, believes in "Urban India Re-Orientalised" that re-Orientalism (in India) has started with English-educated, elite groups, implying that it is a neo-colonial and bourgeois ideology in Fanon's sense (but refrains from gesturing to it as such), Lau prefers to see it as a "partial" empowerment of the East. She says in

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[102] "*ReOrient*: A Forum for Critical Muslim Studies," 5.

[103] Sura Rath, "Post/past-'Orientalism' *Orientalism* and Its Dis/Reorientation," *Comparative American Studies: An International Journal* 2, no. 3 (2004): 342, http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1477570004045596.

[104] Lisa Lau, "Resisting Re-Orientalism in Representation: Aman Sethi Writes of Delhi," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 54, no. 3 (2018): 373, http://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2018.1461984 .

[105] Mahmut Mutman, "From Orientalism to Islamophobia," in *Orientalism and Literature,* ed. Geoffrey P. Nash (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 258; emphasis added.

"Introducing Re-Orientalism: Theory and Discourse in Indian Writing in English,"

> Re-Orientalism theory takes as its starting point the salient fact that by the 21st century, the East has increasingly seized the power of representation; however, this representation is not exempt from being partial and skewed, and, moreover, it is still Western-centric and postcolonial.[106]

The emergence in the diasporic and domestic spheres of this "residual"—a Williams-inspired term—re-Orientalism, which keeps a firm foothold in Orientalism, is an index to old imperial ideologies being reinstated, imposed otherwise to fit in the Global context of marketing and consuming difference and culture, a "residual" ideology which "has been effectively formed in the past, but is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present."[107] Few of the main reasons that constrain diasporic (and domestic authors for that matter) to dabble in re-Orientalism and accept it as a framework are some Western accolades given in a "uniquely privileged way," to reiterate Mutman's phrase, such as success, inclusion, publication and recognition in Western societies among others. Re-Orientalism gives diasporic artists and Orientals, interested in embarking on a bourgeois career, a passport to inclusion in the echelons of privilege, and is a key to cordoning off economic privileges and reassigning social titles. As a new imperial agenda has unfolded and "the old paradigms [have become] dead or defunct,"[108] Orientalism, which once justified colonial rule (and still does),[109] has bifurcated into a new branch (re-Orientalism) yet which stems from the old Orientalism. It manifests conspicuous parallels in ideas and ways of operation with Orientalism but is situated on a higher plane of value. It wears the garb of Orientalism but takes care of a particular Oriental *clientèle* interested in "strategically" re-Orientalizing themselves. To reformulate Minoli Salgado's Said-inspired question and relocate it at a more crucial angle, "If all those who write about the Orient must locate themselves in relation to it, from what position are re-Orientalists speaking?"[110] The answer is certainly not "strategic" in an anti-colonial sense.

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[106] Lisa Lau and Om Prakash Dwivedi, *Re-Orientalism and Indian Writing in English* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2.
[107] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 122.
[108] Rath, "Post/past-'Orientalism' Orientalism and its Dis/Reorientation," 355.
[109] Said, *Orientalism*, 39.
[110] Minoli Salgado, "The New Cartographies of Re-Orientalism," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 46, no. 2 (2011): 200, doi: 10.1177/0021989411404988.

There is space here to take the above argument further afield. The problem re-Orientalism poses (among others) is the "strategic" epithet usually attached to it (also called "negotiation"[111]), a Spivakian energy generally taken to be positive when it is in reality *negative*. While Salgado believes re-Orientalism to be a complex *negotiation* of cultural difference where "the diasporized subject" is both victim and perpetrator,[112] Lau developing an argument similarly in-between explains that the discourse of re-Orientalism "comment[s] on, challenge[s], change[s], but occasionally also reinforce[s] some of these Orientalism practices."[113] There is no doubt: reinforcement is there. But its opposition proves misleading, perhaps even chimerical. The "oppositional" force of re-Orientalism appears to break under the weight of the discourse's internal contradictions as there can be no such thing as a challenge within a continuous tradition that reinforces the *status quo*, where any opposition rubs shoulder with tradition, and is in consequence immediately *absorbed*. To put the matter circumspectly, such "strategy" (as it is generally called) cannot *be*, simply because the promotion side of the discourse is given more prominence than its opposition side; no sooner is the "resistance" of re-Orientalism voiced than it falls to silence. While Said proposes, as Rath puts it, "to take us away from that idea/abstraction of the Orient to a concrete reality of the place, from a fuzzy *conception* of the east to a clearer *perception* of it"[114] as a connoisseur of the place and in an oppositional fashion, re-Orientalism as counter-*Orientalism* sets out *volte-face* to correct the Saidian trajectory using this time Orientals as leading *actants* in the Orientalist saga, who promote "strategically," and in a quite masochistic way, their own orientalization.

An additional complication creeps in. The discourse of re-Orientalism in its purely hackneyed Orientalist forms brings to mind the Fanonian concepts of "middle-class" and "bourgeoisie." Re-Orientalism is what might then be called a bourgeois ideology enjoyed by a class of Oriental authors, artists, intellectuals, scholars and others who dabble in a re-orientalization of themselves and their communities to delight in the pleasures offered by Capitalism as a reward, or as Said refers to them in the introductory quote to this discussion as "*intellectuals* whose main role is to provide authority with their labor while gaining great profit."[115]

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[111] Lau and Dwivedi, *Re-Orientalism and Indian Writing in English*, 20.
[112] Salgado, "The New Cartographies of Re-Orientalism," 208.
[113] Lau and Dwivedi, *Re-Orientalism and Indian Writing in English*, 4.
[114] Rath, "Post/past-'Orientalism' *Orientalism* and Its Dis/Reorientation," 344.
[115] Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, xv.

Such is more prominently called by Julien Benda "*la trahison des clercs*" being, to reformulate Said's words in "Orientalism Once More," "a symptom of how genuine humanism can degenerate into"[116] a *re-oriented* version of humanism. Re-Orientalism here concerns only those Orientals who speak a language in their works that is conscious of its intention of serving power. Those Orientals (domestic or diasporic, meaning those who have lived for an amount of time in the East or the Orient) who do not intend their descriptions or representations to undignify humanity and be used as a means to a Capitalist, imperial end can simply not be referred to as re-Orientalist as their residence in and acquaintance with the place, and the absence of "positional superiority"—to use Said's concept once again—legitimize their descriptions and representations. In such a deployment of the Saidian concept of Orientalism as that of Waïl Hassan in his conclusion to *The Retreat of Cultural Translation* where the author discusses diasporic writers such as Salom Rizk (an Arab-American diasporic writer born in Ain Arab in Lebanon and who has lived there for some time) and where he refers to Rizk as "Orientalist,"[117] there is a loud call for revision. Said, as it has been stated earlier, has never meant his concept of Orientalism to designate those Orientals who "orientalize" themselves. In this case, "re-Orientalist" would be more appropriate.

Said's concept of Orientalism altered drastically these last years, and "the Orientalism of today, both in its sensibility and in its manner of production, is not quite the same as the Orientalism Edvard Said discussed."[118] There has been a large panoply of Orientalisms over centuries, each one completing the other as forms of *systemic* beginnings: from traditional Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism, to "strategic" re-Orientalism, to the "justified" Orientalism of the Bush administration, to the "welcoming" and "cooperative" Orientalism of the Obama administration. These iterative forms of the Orientalist discourse only prove power is assiduous and renews itself, each time making sure its entrance is the one most memorable and effective. Yet, the imperial discourse of the Trump administration, inaugurated in the not too distant past, is unprecedented in the whole of the history of imperial (and Orientalist) discourses.

Anti-system critic Rose McGowan plainly defines this discourse in an interview with *London Real*, underscoring that, under Donald Trump's

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[116] Said, "Orientalism Once More," 877.
[117] Waïl S. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 111.
[118] Shatz, "'Orientalism,' Then and Now."

administration, "power" has revealed its true intention. She defines "power" by putting it in tautology with Trump's, and explains, "This [Trump's power] is what this [*real* power] is. This is the face of what this [real power] looks like, and this is how it behaves, and this is how it talks like, and this is what it looks like, and this is what it sounds like, and this is what it feels like."[119] She goes on to say that Trump makes it "really plainly obvious what *it* [power] is, what the "it" is. . . ."[120] The "power" McGowan describes is a crudely imperial discourse which presents itself with "honesty" (to be understood as *freely* and *plainly* exposed), which portends the possibility of a "slippery slope" given its unrestricted, *total* freedom of operation, one that does not stop when the other's begins. This threatening condition finds eloquent description in a serious speech at the 2017 Golden Globes when receiving the Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement. Responding to Trump's mocking by way of "criticism" a disabled reporter, activist and actress Meryl Streep said,

> There was one performance this year that stunned me. It sank its hooks in my heart. Not because it was good. There was nothing good about it. But it was effective and it did its job. It made its *intended audience* laugh and show their teeth. It was that moment when the person asking to sit in the most respected seat in our country imitated a disabled reporter, someone he outranked in privilege, power, and the capacity to fight back. It kind of broke my heart when I saw it. I still can't get it out of my head because it wasn't in a movie. It was real life. And this instinct to humiliate, when it's modeled by someone in the public platform, by someone powerful, *it filters down into everybody's life, because it kind of gives permission for other people to do the same thing* [i.e., slippery slope]. Disrespect invites disrespect. Violence incites violence. When the powerful use their position to bully others, we all lose. . . . We need the principled press to hold power to account, to call him on the carpet for every outrage.[121]

On this reliance, a case study stands out. The case of American historian Richard Landes proves Streep's words on the risks of a "slippery slope" quite right: Trump's total freedom "filters down into everybody's life, [and] kind of gives permission for other people to do

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[119] London Real, "How Donald Trump Helped Me – Rose McGowan | London Real," Youtube video, April 11, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnYV_LqZhoo, 1:51–2:02.
[120] Ibid., 2:59–3:25.
[121] Devant Mes Médias, "Meryl Streep: Discours aux Golden Globes 2017 contre Donald Trump," Youtube video, January 11, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_BqMemwy-E, 3:22–4:54; emphasis added.

the same thing." And the positing of Landes' "argument" does certainly not command itself as reasonable.

Besides putting the word *Palestinian* in quotation marks of identity-obliteration, Landes, in "'Celebrating' Orientalism," (mark here a second example of the quotation marks of belittlement) *says,* referring to Arab Muslim cultures, that "honor-shame cultures have immense difficulty tolerating freedom of speech, of religion, of press, and an equally hard time dealing with societies that do,"[122] claiming that Orientalism as a "freedom of speech" and "criticism," or as he puts it *kalām al-nās,* are unaccepted by Said and the Arab and Muslim world because of "honor and shame issues." Landes says that the "honor-shame" complex in the Arab Muslim world is one cause of their not accepting criticism on the part of others, and *not accepting* others. What is more, he says that because of this "susceptibility," certain issues are not mentioned, and here Landes does not scruple to pronounce, "because doing so belittles Arabs and Muslims and hurts their feelings."[123] Here one may take leave to voice doubts, and may well breathe a sigh of relief in passing. What Landes does not understand is that criticism (or as he puts it *kalām al-nās*) is *allowed*, but criticism of others (especially when one does not know them or understand them) is *not* allowed under the banner of dignity, freedom, respect of differences, pride and values of human beings, and freedom of speech is *allowed*, but not one that causes harm, and is unaware of its limits. Such values as dignity, honor, respect and shame are *highly* respected in Western societies, and Landes, it is assumed, speaks for *himself*, and for *his* "freedom of speech," one that is careless of limits; it is one *total* and pernicious precisely because, as Streep puts it, "it kind of gives permission for other people to do the same thing." Landes' criticism and unconcern with "hurting the feelings" of others give anyone to think (when reading Landes' attack in a *kalām al-nās* way) that the historian shows no opposition to a potential obliteration of respect, dignity, pride, honor and shame, and one is even inclined to suppose that he is by no means against it.

Landes adds, "[A]ny contrasts between the cultures of the democratic West and those of the Arabs and Muslims—certainly any that put the latter in a poor light—were ugly examples of invidious xenophobia directed at an inferior "them,""[124] which is as true as any attempt to put America in a poor light is labeled "anti-American," West "anti-Western terrorism," Israel "anti-Semitic" (and notice here not

[122] Richard Landes, "'Celebrating' Orientalism," *Middle East Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2017): 2.
[123] Landes, "'Celebrating' Orientalism," 5.
[124] Ibid., 4.

anti-Zionist but anti-Semitic), women "misogynic" and LGBTQA+ "hater" etc. Landes's words appear to promote what Said calls "rhetoric of blame," instead of bridging the gap between different cultures, nations, races, and religions and other significant differences, and promoting a sense of community and international peace, and does not appear to be cognizant that, to borrow Streep's terms again, "Disrespect invites disrespect. Violence incites violence." His "Orientalist" discourse (if it can be called Orientalist at all) does not contain ideological asides; it is ideology *per se*. The discourse employed is not based on "knowledge" but on some *kalām al-nās* 'knowledge.' It is a criticism that serves an imperial end and aims to dignify one at the expense of the other without objection (and here it is a major problem) to "hurting their feelings." Landes does not mark a difference between "freedom of speech" and "disrespect" and even on some occasions sounds like he uses them interchangeably, which is *not* an American and Western way of seeing things, and, therefore, he does not put West in antithesis to East but himself in antithesis to the Arab and Muslim world. Landes has ended up giving the once *scientific* Orientalism of olden times (in comparison to his discourse) an immature turn. The "enterprise" he has undertaken to build an 'argument' to counter and belittle Said's *Orientalism* cannot be taken seriously, as it has ended in a ludicrous failure, and his *postmodern* search for a strong argument was clearly a quest and never a finding.

Due to an *intentionally* unsubtle and excessive deployment of "symbolic violence,"[125] defined by Pierre Bourdieu as a "gentle, disguised form which violence takes when overt violence is impossible,"[126] Landes' language has come close to matching a language of challenge, conflict, superiority and struggle for mastery, which confirms Dabashi's statement that "today, Arabs and Islam are no longer subjects of knowledge and understanding, but objects of hatred and loathing."[127] Yet, despite Landes' anticipating the reader's gesturing to him as "Orientalist," and despite his insisting by way of anticipating objection that his comment be not Islamophobic, Landes cannot be called an Orientalist full stop, as "we are no longer in the field of Orientalism as Said understood and criticized it."[128]

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[125] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice,* trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 133.
[126] Ibid., 133.
[127] Hamid Dabashi, "Edward Said's Orientalism: Forty Years Later," *Aljazeera*, May 2018, https://aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/edward-orientalism-forty-years-180503071416782.html.
[128] Ibid.

Salient in our time is thus a kind of discourse whose chief aspects are crudity and boastfulness, one that speaks in the name of (and for) *power*. It presents itself with deliberate outrage and hyperstoic hostility to human values and dignity and matters more to win in victory the feeling of superiority than to impart the beauty of unity. Because it has been *authorized* and given full rein by Trump's power, it starts being naturalized, even "humanized," and permitted as a trend that can affect human behaviour. I introduce hereby the concept of *Warientalism* which refers to an ideology of *power* that has lately sprung forth full-grown and proves portentous. Warientalism is a discourse unclothed of knowledge and based exclusively on *power*. The power-knowledge contract which has served imperialism for centuries is today, under Warientalism, null and void. The Warientalist discourse does not rely on knowledge; it rather invents its own "knowledge" to rely on, a gossipy, tabloid-like form of "knowledge" which suits its zealous assertions and very paradoxical directives, and supplants demonstration. Knowledge, under Warientalism, is *no more* (and to which, in comparison, traditional Orientalism, very much scientific and academic, looks much more benign).

Warientalism speaks in terms of personal pronouns *not* ideas or arguments, and habitually brandishes unapologetic, *ad hominem* attacks. This discourse is easily recognizable; it is characterized by informality, quasi-simplicity, a gossipy form of "knowledge" (i.e., *kalām al-nās*), brusqueness and warlike diligence. Under the Warientalist climate of today, officially inaugurated by Trump (and this does not mean that it has not existed before; it simply means it is more pervasive today, probably more than it ever has been) and buttressed by his minions (Landes is one), power appears in its most true and crude form. It presents itself as the only option, and with the honest assertion that one has no choice but make do with the state of affairs. The above is summarized by Trump's counterpart Hilary Clinton who declared in a speech,

> Donald Trump's ideas aren't just different; they are dangerously incoherent. They aren't even really ideas, *just a bizarre rants, personal feuds and outright lies.* He is not just unprepared; he is temperamentally unfit to hold *an office that requires knowledge*, stability and immense responsibility. This is not someone who should ever have the nuclear codes because it's

> not hard to imagine Donald Trump leading us into a war just because somebody got under his very thin skin.[129]

The supra discourse of Warientalism carries no self-reproach; it is *unapologetic*. And the undue confidence and bellicose temperament that accompany the expression of its superiority can make one rub their eyes in disbelief. This is due to its excessive deployment of "symbolic violence"—to use Bourdieu's famous phrase again. Yet the tones (not overtones) of condescension inherent in it often betray the symbolism of it all. Its "symbolic violence" slides often into verbal violence and is even tempted by *physical violence*. And if a possibility of the latter presents itself, a Warientalist attitude ensures it is not missed. Warientalism, as the name suggests, is a conspiratorial and *warlike* discourse; it challenges peace and teases conflict, often escalating closer to war *sans peur et sans reproche*.[130] It exudes that undue confidence of being able to lead to a state of war with braveness and aplomb, and whose uncontrolled "might is right" drives may often lead to. This discourse, characterized by its blatant thirst for power, does not only target the Orient: it is *intra/international* in coverage targeting unapologetically anyone, any one group, any nation or ideology that goes against Trump's (and other like-minded individuals' or groups') fundamentals, such as his definition of "democracy," "peace,"[131] power, and "freedom" characterized by paradox, distortion, and (surprisingly enough) an absence of borders. It cannot be denied: when targeted against the Orient and Orientals, Warientalism is *Orientalist*, yet because it is unapologetic, it can hardly be called that. Traditional Orientalism, once "apologetic"—to recall Bennabi once again—and comparatively more decent, has gone wrong and out of control, becoming *unapologetic*, an attitude briefly defined in this article as Warientalist and which poses the world a fresh puzzle.

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[129] PBS Newshour, "Hillary Clinton: Trump's Foreign Policy would Endanger America," Youtube video, June 2, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6m_0fOkQ3E, 3:43–4:41; emphasis added.

[130] The recent escalation of tensions between the United States and Iran is only one example.

[131] Donald Trump's vision for a "comprehensive" peace agreement between Palestine and Israel, called "peace plan," is but one example of how "peace," monitored by power, can present itself paradoxically without a peaceful intention. As part of Trump's "peace" strategy, the naming of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel is also to be noted. Yousef and Yousef explain, "Aided by the US threats to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, Israel seems undeterred in its transient policy to Judaize Jerusalem. The plan is nothing else than to dispossess Palestinians and turn them into a numerical minority. . . ." Yousef and Yousef "Edward Said on Jerusalem," 1494.

Conclusion

Orientalism has received a star in the academic "walk of fame," used without restraint, deployed oftentimes without it being applicable and most of all used without it being understood. This article has proposed to locate Said *vis-à-vis* Orientalism and Orientalist texts and reconsider the main lines of *Orientalism*. It has also discussed the pitfalls of the discourse of re-Orientalism and given form to a new discourse called Warientalism. *Orientalism* has been allowed more interpretive leeway when it has invited none. Said makes no bones about his intentions: they are very much clear. *Orientalism* is a straightforward *argument* cognizant of the complexity of reality meant to be understood, defended or attacked, *not* interpreted. The matter may be stated categorically as follows: without cognizance of the complex argument Said voices in *Orientalism* regarding Orientalists, Orientalist texts, and Orientalist discourse, the reader does not read Said's *Orientalism* but some other version that is *not* Saidian at all.

The (neo)colonial and bourgeois inclination that attends the ideology of re-Orientalism is, in this article, offered a dismissive view. The rationale underpinning the drive of re-Orientalism is recycling the old habits of Orientalism and marketing cultural difference; re-Orientalism reinforces the *status quo* more than it opposes it. The now exaggerated deployment of re-Orientalism in diasporic works (novels, films and others), as a safety-net to secure bourgeois positions, sidesteps the connections this ideology entertains with imperial structures; re-Orientalists turn a conscious blind eye to these connections and indulge in the use of the epithet "strategic" to anticipate objections and legitimize their practice. Re-Orientalist works contribute to producing "structures of feeling" which are "specifically related to the evidence of forms and conventions––semantic figures—which, in art and literature, are often among the very first indications that such a new structure is forming,"[132] adding in the process to the stockpile of imperial *status quo*. While Orientalism has been about the Manichean East-West relationship studied in its complexity in Said's *Orientalism,* re-Orientalism has blurred this dichotomy and "does not reproduce the hierarchy between the West and the Rest;"[133]and the same goes for Warientalism. If Said had been alive, he would have reserved his most withering contempt for the concept of re-Orientalism and made mincemeat of it. And it would probably have inspired another angry *Orientalism*, or perhaps *Re-*

[132] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 133.
[133] "*ReOrient*: A Forum for Critical Muslim Studies," 5.

Orientalism to unleash. One can be reminded here of Said's gift for hitting the nail on the head of power, or as he puts it "speaking truth to it." The last but one word must be his, "Whether to put intellect at the service of power or at the service of criticism, community, and moral sense. This choice must be the first act of interpretation today, and it must result in a decision, not simply a postponement."[134]

As a final word, my position is on this matter contrapuntal: while we should quite admire Said's works, we should be just willing at the same time to be critical of them lest they become dogmatic. Said must be used as an *élan* or *point d'appui* not only as a frame of reference or paradigm for the sake of beginnings which cannot be framed lest they be monitored. The persistent enterprise should be to make the old new not by distorting it but by defamiliarizing the familiar, by a refreshed way of looking upon it through criticism that "enable[s] empowering beginnings that would overturn the present order and herald the coming victory"[135] as "today, a close and critical reading of Said's seminal masterpieces requires an even more radical dismantling of the [Western and] European project of colonial modernity and all its ideological trappings."[136] As Bennabi says, "At the most decisive turning point of its history, it is not the dearth of means that puts in danger the existence of any society, but a default of its ideas."[137] And if what has been said strikes the contemporary ear and eye as deluded or outworn, that may be the index of their relevance to an age of a more profound intellectual dereliction than Said knew.

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[134] Said, *Covering Islam*, 164.
[135] Tahrir Hamdi, "The Arab Intellectual and the Present Moment," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2019): 76.
[136] Dabashi, "Edward Said's Orientalism."
[137] Bennabi, "'Algerian Perspectives,'" 11.