

A high-contrast, black and white portrait of a man, likely Edward Said, looking directly at the camera. The image is heavily stylized, with the subject's face and hair rendered in stark white against a solid black background. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of the face and the texture of the hair. The man has dark, slightly wavy hair and a serious expression.

Orientalism

Critique of orientalism

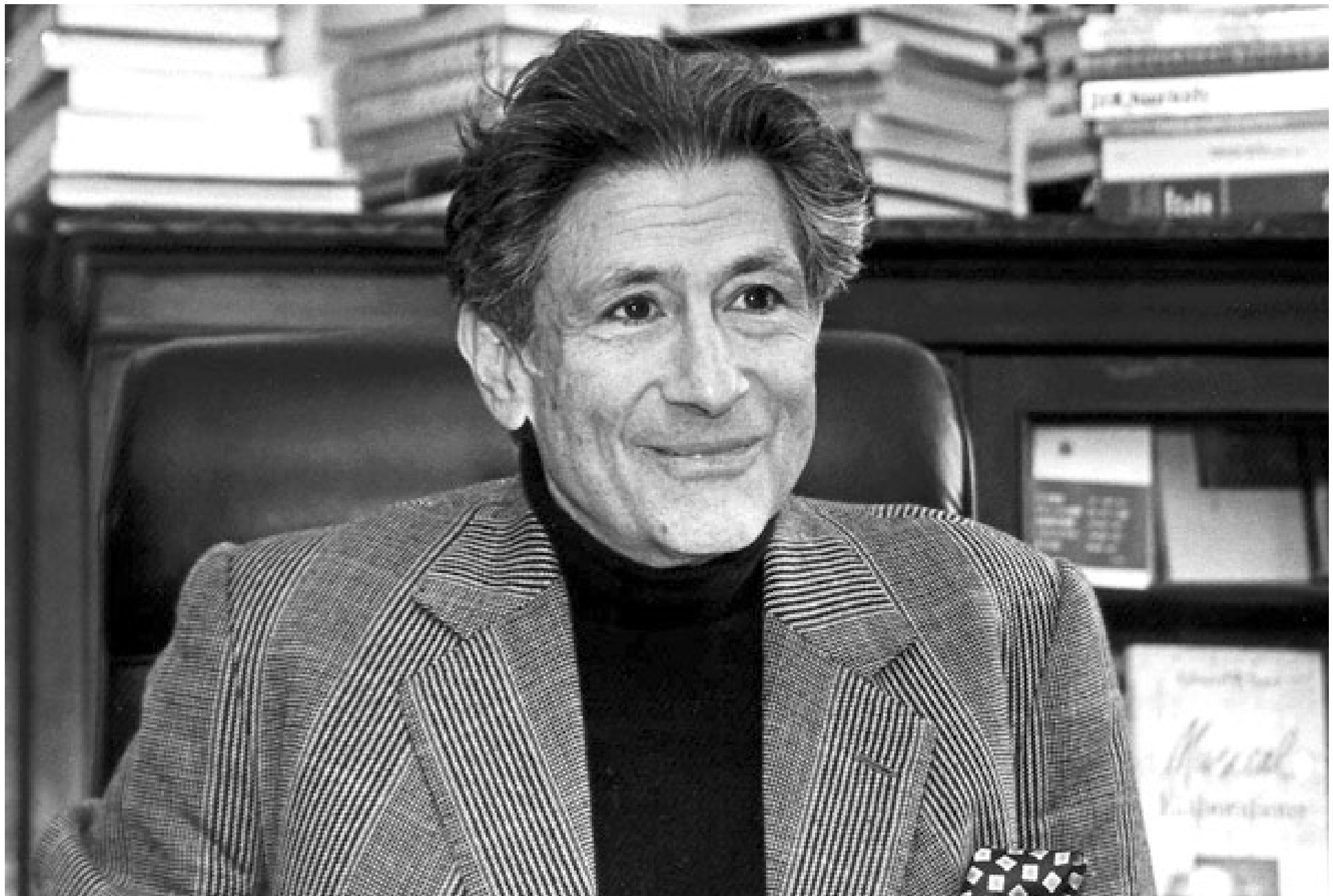
- Oriental studies at the beginning was a part of philology
- In Europe the use of „Orient" marked the eastern Mediterranean
- In the USA almost exclusively more distant regions
- In the context of colonialism term Near or Middle East started to be used
- Gradually the term "Orientalist" appeared to be broad too much, such specialization clearly included too many specific branches
- Orientalists began to be philologists, historians and sinologists, indologists, arabists...
- 1973 - 29th International Congress of Orientalists in Paris decided to leave the label "Orientalism"

Four perspectives of Orientalism's critique

- Orientalism as hegemonic system used to maintain the identity (Edward Said)
- Orientalism as a tool of imperialism, created to promote the colonization and enslavement of a part of the "Third World" (Anwar Abdulmalik)
- Orientalism as a way of understanding and interpreting Islam and Arab nationalism (Abdullatif Tibawi)
- Orientalism as a justification for a set of beliefs, attitudes and theories affecting geography, economics and sociology of the Orient (Bryan Turner)

Edward Said – *Orientalism*, 1978

- The most effective criticism
- Orientalists - heirs of narcissistic European tradition of writing, through writing they have "created" orient
- process of creation of a stereotypical images → West („WE“) is rational, developed, humane, superior, trustworthy, active, creative and masculine, while the East („THEM“) is seen as irrational, backward, cruel, oppressive, weird, passive and feminine...
- concepts such as "Arab mentality", "oriental psyche" or "Islamic Society,, are only fantasies
- This together (consciously or not) created system for dominance, the enforcement authority over the Orient
- Said was inspired by Foucault, among others (epistemological structure within a discourse)
 - social system creates a culture that exercises control over what can and what can not be said (every society has such policy)



Edward Said (1935-2003)

Anwar Abdulmalik – *Orientalism in Crisis*, 1963

- Positive elements of Arab and Islamic Studies (Asad Yousuf Dagher)
 - The study of ancient civilizations
 - collections of Arabic manuscripts in European libraries
 - Publication of numerous important works
 - Lessons on the method for Eastern scientists
 - Organization of specialized congresses
 - Editing studies (often inadequate and incorrect from a linguistic point of view, but precise in method)
 - raising national (eastern) awareness and activating the movement of scientific renaissance
- This scholarship, however, is permeated by postulates, methodological traditions and historical-philosophical concepts that reduce the scientific value of the work

- similar political-philosophical position of differently motivated groups of researchers („neutral“ and „colonial“)
- Both groups consider Orient and Orientals as "object" of study, characterized by otherness
- This object is passive, inactive, non-autonomous, non-sovereign
- Often taking steps to ethnic typology or characterization (step to racism)
- Eurocentrism (ethnocentrism) in the humanities, social sciences
- The scientific works of the Orient were mostly ignored

Abdullatif Tibawi – *English-Speaking Orientalists*, 1963

- The hostility of the Christian world against Islam
- 19th century - Christian missionaries in close union with academics
- Few Orientalists managed to show a sense of scientific objectivity
- Fixed ideas about Islam
- Complete misunderstanding of the nature of the Qur'an – Western scholars interpret it not as the word of God, eternal and uncreated, but as a mere human composition, comprising elements of Christianity and Judaism

Bryan S. Turner, *Marx And the End of Orientalism*, 1978

- Orientalism as a "syndrome of beliefs, attitudes and theories that infects not only the classic work of Islamic studies, but also large areas of geography, economics and sociology."
- This syndrome is derived from the basic arguments:
 - Social development is always result of the internal characteristics of the society
 - Historical development of society is either evolutionary progress or gradual decline
 - All social institutions are expressions of the primary essence
- These arguments allow dichotomy:
 - The essence of the West allows dynamic progress towards democratic industrialism
 - Islamic society is either stagnant or in decline ever since its inception

- Middle Eastern societies are then defined on the basis of what they lack:
 - Middle-class, city, political rights, revolution...
- These missing features are then used to explain why the "Islamic civilization" failed in capitalism, in creating modern personalities, in the transition to secular society
 - The criticism (different approach) is based on the argument that the emergence of global centers of capitalism has changed the conditions for the development of the peripheries
 - Capitalism perpetuates pre-capitalist modes of production, preventing the transformation of "traditional" society into the "modern".

Western response

Bernard Lewis – *The Question of Orientalism*, 1982 – primarily criticism of Said

- The Orient is reduced to the Arab part of the Middle East
- It does not deal with Orientalism in German-speaking countries and Russia (Soviet Union)
- The book contains wrong historical facts
- Arbitrary selection of Orientalists and their work
- Study of Islam in Europe started at the end of the Middle Ages, and dealt with not conquered, but with conquering world (rejection of imperialist motivation)
- The book is a manifestation of efforts to blame the West for all national, cultural, religious, social and economic problems
- To explain western science as a tool of dominance is incorrect - the study of Arabic and Islam began centuries before "counter-attack", it flourished in countries without a colonial past

Bernard Lewis
(1916 -)



Donald P. Little , *Three Arab Critiques of Orientalism*, 1979

- Answer to the texts Abdulmalik, Tibawi and Said
- Tibawi would prefer if non-Muslims did not studied Islam - "those who stand outside the religious system can never capture the importance of the experience of those within" - religious experience is intuitive, therefore it can not be understood by scientists using analytical and critical methods
- In Abdulmalik's view Western neo-Orientalism (2nd half of the 20th century) remains exploitative and imperialistic
 - In contrast, the main feature (in the opinion of Abdulmalik) of the socialist science (especially Soviet) is alleged effort „to contribute creatively to the development of the fundamental problems of Orient's people struggle for their nationalist and social liberation and escape from their economic backwardness“

→ Little argues that behind the Oriental Studies in the Soviet Union were very often practical reasons, moreover, the Muslims had been treated with far less respect

- Said does not distinguish between different approaches or even professions dealing with the East → inappropriate generalization
- Said uses Freudian literary analysis too much (really suitable method for analysis of Oriental studies?)*

- **Michael Richardson**, „*Enough Said*“, 1990
 - Said's interpretation of Orientalism is "obviously idealistic"
 - In judging the works of Orientalists Said gets in a power relationship similar to that of which he accuses orientalists
 - It is natural that we create the concept of "the other". Said's criticism is a mystification in an already complex field
 - "His own conceptualization of Orientalists is a pure example of Orientalism,,
- **Simon Leys**, *The Burning Forest*, 1988:

"Orientalism probably could not be written by anyone other than aggrieved Palestinian scientist with very limited knowledge of European academic tradition."

Fred Halliday, *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation*, 1996

- Middle East can not be treated either as different or as a uniform region, must be seen as a set of diverse societies facing problems of economic development and political change
- Orientalism in Said's perspective has almost metaphysical power to penetrate very different eras and genres of expression - therefore it loses analytical or explanatory potential
- The claim that Europe showing any special hostility towards Arabs has no historical justification
- The theory of the existence of a permanent, transhistorical hostility towards the Orient, the Arabs, the Islamic world is a myth - even though many people in the region and in the West find it useful to maintain it *

- Another problem is the methodological assumption that creates a relationship between the origin of ideas and their validity - Said implies that the ideas produced in the context of dominance, or directly in its (colonial) service, are therefore incorrect (invalid)
 - The fact that a particular discoveries or ideas were produced by specific in-groups or by specifically motivated individuals, says nothing about their validity
- The very fact of attempt to control some country will include the production of the most accurate picture possible
- It is very problematic assumption that the criticism of discourse in the literature may equally be applied within the discourses of social sciences

- West not only produces its myths, but also interferes with myths of those "controlled"
- 1962 Jamal Al-e Ahmad - "Gharbzadegí" - the term for foreign influences, the source of all evil
 - But there is also situation „Sharqzadegí" - uncritical reproduction of myths about the region in the name of anti-imperialism, nativism, solidarity, understanding, etc.
- Simplifying and incorrect generalizations are not at home only in the West - Middle Eastern media (not only them):
 - "West" denotes a single, rational, antagonistic force
 - A flat rejection of ideas and culture that is (even only supposedly) Western
- When it comes to Islam itself, no one else lasts more on the notion that it is single, decisive, eternal, only "orthodox" interpreted... than the Islamists (fundamentalists)

Halliday adds:

- Avoid etymological reductionism - or explaining the policy in terms of the meaning of words or explaining the meanings of words in today's discourse on the basis of references to their classical roots (false etymology is often misused for political purposes)
- It is impossible to understand Islam as something given, stable. One may observe randomness and diversity of "Islamic beliefs" and their relationship to definable factors such as states, classes, ethnic groups, etc. (dogma is used and interpreted for various purposes)
- Many phenomena identified as specifically Islamic: dictatorial states, tribal regimes, fragile democracy, intolerance to minorities or to dissent are not the domain only of dar al-Islam. And the same goes for religious fundamentalism.
- Islam explains very little of what is happening in Muslim countries, even if the local politicians decide to use „Islamic“ dictionary