

Orientalism in Electronic Media: A Challenge for Muslim World

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Abstract

21th century is an age of Globalization. Today world has become a global village. Media and its influences are spreading all around the world. Western countries are trying to effect Asian countries due to this media. Orientalism is at peak level around the world. Media is fabricating new trends in this regard. This quantitative study tries to investigate all those electronic sources which are playing a vital role in generating Orientalism around the world. Orientalism at root level is effecting in Islamic countries. Cartoons Videogames, Videos, Hollywood and disney movies land is trying to present a dark picture of Muslim world. After 9/11 the Orientalism can be seen in its worst form in all Electronic channels, Social Media and newspapers.

Key words: Orientalism, Media, Cartoons, Challenges, Islam

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1. Introduction

Edward Said was a great literary personality around the world. He was a Palestinian born American professor and scholar. A literary personality and thinker, he wrote many books on literary criticism, musical criticism, and issues of post-colonialism. He was one of the most leading advocates in the U.S who worked for the political rights and independence of the Palestinians at all levels. He was considered ‘the most dominant voice’ for Palestinians. He served as a professor of English at Columbia University. He started his life as a teacher. He gained his popularity from his book ‘Orientalism’, which was published in 1978.

In his book on orientalism he presented how the Western world leads looks East .he presented the real picture of East ,and how they see Arabs .The book, provides a leading path in order to understanding western attitude towards west. This book also gives us a very significant picture on the post-colonial theory. This book has been translated into more than 26 languages, and is an essential part of the reading for many political science courses. As a thinker, he had interests in a variety of topics ranging from politics, literature, music, culture, teaching, and writing. He took an active part in politics. He and served as an independent member of the Palestinian National Council (PNC).

1.1. What is Orientalism?

Orientalism is an well-established structure of thought, a blueprint of making definite generalizations about the part of the world known as the 'East'.

As Edward Said said it:

“Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar(Europe, West, "us") and the strange” (the Orient, the East, "them").

Said give stress that;

“Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imaginary, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (Orientalism 1978:5).

Orientalism can be explained as a framework that includes symbols, signs, language, and images to show the East, and determine how they act differently than the West (Glyn, Meth and Wilis 2009). Due to this reason we can divide the Western culture as "normal", above the "abnormal" Arab culture which, according to the orient, is habitually in need of being helped.

Orientalism without any reason brings millions of people in one simplified image to which it is wrongly assumed applies to all people of the Arab and East.

2. Method

Qualitative methods are used in this study to give in detail evaluation of Arabs descriptions in present-day advertising. However, brief quantitative analysis is presented to provide an understanding of the reputation of Arabs representations in advertising and the degree of reliability with preceding research.

The advertisements are taken from a variety of popular American magazines, journal, T.V and Videos. Special attention is given to read the imagery and text of advertisements to explore the connotations and hidden messages determined in the representations of Arabs and Arabs civilization.

3. Power of Media

In 21st century we cannot neglect the effects of media on society. Today world has become a global village. Media is touching our lives. Media is totally under the control of Western countries especially USA. So, we can say that west is using Media for spoon feeding against Arabs and Muslims all around the world.

4. Islam as Phobia

Islamophobia (meaning “fear of Islam”), which is generating in Western societies after the 9/11.

A German Prof. Heiner Bielefeldt, tells us about the United Nations Special Reporter on freedom of religion or belief.

“The acts of violence committed in the name of religion throughout the world” to the UN Council of Human Rights. At the press conference in the U.N.’s Geneva Office on March 10th, 2015, he warned “Islam phobia is showing an increasing tendency in Europe.”

5. Orientalism in Cartoons

We can see the effects of Orientalism in Muslim Art and Culture. Western painters presented Muslims ugly pictures in the paintings. Arabic and Islamic art does not escape the development of deformation and modification. The Western media presents Arab Muslims in three ways: “Billionaire”, “Bomber”, and “Belly dancer”. The only aim is either to make fun of Arabs’ art, or to eliminate it, or to make it valueless in contrast with the West in Disney’s Orientalism. Aladdin is presented as a highly sexualized belly dancer as its one mode of representing Arab women. Even Princess Jasmine is sexualized in similar way.

6. Orientalism in Video Games

It’s easy to show Muslims as the villains in video games these days. They show Muslims in video games as imbalanced in a way that reflects the storytelling biases of Westerners who don’t follow Islam. And the voices and perspectives of a minority group that consists of more than a billion people around the world are incorrectly represented in these video games.

This presentation covers three main forms of Orientalism which is found in gaming these days. The first form is the hate of the East for the West, as from a fixed Orientalist perspective that can be found in *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time*, which tells a tale of the hate of Middle through the Westernized Prince. The second form of Orientalism commonly found in games is the East's internalization of the Orientalist's craze and its own production of Orientalism.

7. Orientalism in Art

Edward Said argued that the West uses the East as an overturned mirror, imagining them to be everything the West is not. In his book *Orientalism*, he showed us how this superficial binary separating the East and the West traditionally.

European painters of the 19th century showed to ugly pictures of harems and baths to raise an impression of non-European pleasure-seeking. Ingre's 1814 *Grande Odalisque*, presents a concubine lazily lounging about, lightly dusting herself with feathers as she peers over her shoulder at the viewer with absent eyes. The love for pleasure-seeking and indulgent sex are bolstered by hints to opium-induced pleasure offered by the pipe in the bottom right corner. Images like these prompted viewers to imagine the Middle East as a far-away region of sex, and thrilling exotic experiences.

Orientalism is the popular term for the study of Middle Eastern cultures, religion, art and architecture. It originated in the indiscriminate aggregation of all civilizations encountered by Western cultures as they colonized the East. Orientalism initially represented a romanticized interpretation of Eastern cultures. This narrow framework for considering Islamic art has been superfluous for a more complex understanding and interpretation of Islamic art in the 20th and 21th centuries.

Presentations of the Orient as a romantic and glamorous place were prevalent as early as the Renaissance. Italian artists, including Bellini and Rembrandt, painted figures in Oriental dress. After the French expansion and colonization of countries to the East, painters, including Jacques-Louis David and Eugene Delacroix, began appropriating the Orient and its artistic motifs while depicting it as either a place of extreme eroticism, through the idea of the harem, or as a place of extreme violence through works such as "Massacre at Chios." The combination of eroticizing the Orient while presentation of the female as they form came to a height in Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres' "The Turkish Bath".

8. Orientalism in Magazines

In photography Orientalism according to Edward Said,

"expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies."

This definition shows that Orientalism is the way of thoughts that Westerns have about non westerns specially Asians, and Arabs. The compressed ways of thinking that Westerners have about Easterners as Said indicates make them to illustrate the East in a certain way. As we can find many oriented photographs, articles, and statement by Westerners about easterners.

We can see an Afghan girls' image on the cover of Time Magazine with a statement says,

"What will happen if we leave Afghanistan?"

This photograph is an example of Orientalism because of the way that it has been established and the title that it has been given.

9. Orientalism in Movies

Films offers a suitable and easily accessible opportunity to see different stories, people, and their perspectives. With this ease of access into different parts of worlds, there comes the representation of different cultures. The setting that the film makers establish for the film is a key instrument in the presenting of these cultures and societies. Edward Said presented that a feature of Orientalism exists in when the creation or representation of exotic, other lands does not imbue aspects of the society to be portrayed; rather, the filmmakers incorporate elements of other lands which they find most beneficial to their cause. Although the motivation behind the Orientalism in film may not be as transparent as Said's theory of Arabo-Islamic oppression, but rather other purposes, such as generating profits. Yet the

concept of Orientalism remains the same. The filmmakers wrongly portray people, country, customs, and beliefs for their own benefit.

Orientalism is not restricted to a single genre. The inaccurate depiction of societies can be found in a light-hearted comedy just as easily as it could in a suspense-filled drama.

The Sheik and Aladdin are some of the most popular and frequently discussed titles in movie history are presented in orientalism. The politically-charged way in which western artists have represented gender, race, and ethnicity in the cultures of North Africa and Asia is also a part of orientalism. This is the first anthology to address and highlight orientalism in film from pre-cinema fascinations with Egyptian culture through the "Whole New World" of Aladdin. Eleven illuminating and well-illustrated essays utilize the insights of interdisciplinary cultural studies, psychoanalysis, feminism, and genre criticism. Other films discussed include The Letter, Caesar and Cleopatra, Lawrence of Arabia, etc.

American Sniper is also a part of orientalism. Chris Kyle, the soldier whose life is depicted in the film, killed over 150 Iraqis, including children, throughout the war. The opening scene of the film transitions between Kyle killing one of these children, and an animal, one of many comparisons made between animals and Iraqi lives throughout the movie.

Kyle wrote a best-selling memoir describing his actions in Iraq, which was filled with disturbing statements. Kyle calls the Iraqi people a "despicable evil" and refers to them as "savages" throughout the memoir. Kyle said his killing did not bother him, that he "loved what [he] did," that his murders were "fun and that he only wished he "had killed more."

10. Orientalism in Dressing (Hijab)

Orientalism is a technique used to depict the orient (Middle East) as an extremist while the occident (Western world) is translated as superior and rational.

Orientalism is a way of seeing from the orientalist's approach. Those who believe in the work of an orientalist so easily began to feel hatred towards the Islam. Those who do not understand the true meaning of Islam see the Hijab as a symbol of oppression for women in contrast to women who wear the Hijab see it as a way of liberation and self-expression.

Many ill-mannered aptitude against Hijab interrupt the process of expression and liberation causing it to be something negative. Recently, a Muslim women age 37 and a mother of six children was shot outside her home in Fremont, CA for wearing the Hijab. Such cases as this show that hatred towards terrorism can lead to violence aimed at a specific religion. This creates an alarming environment for those who wear the Hijab, causing many people to hide their culture and religion and absorb into the popular culture.

11. Conclusion

At the end we can conclude that orientalism is a negative attitude of West in which they present East as uncivilized, sexual, lusty and revolutionary. Edward said was the first man who presented the true picture of western attitude towards Muslims. 21th century is an age of media and globalization. orientalists are using wrong use of media and presenting an ugly pictures of middle east. Now it is the need of the time that Muslims countries should show the world true picture of these orientalists. Muslims should try to gain latest knowledge of technology so that they can justify their true role in the world.

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