CVSP 204 General Lecture
on Edward Said's Orientalism (1978)
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Your Eyes

From the book "Sheik Babba of Isphan" by James Morier was illustrated by Cyrus Leffoy Baldridge and published in 1937 by Random House.

A. Renaissance Man
B. Controversial Figure
C. Born in Jerusalem, PhD (Harvard U), member of PNC, battle against leukemia

II. Works and Legacy

A. Author of over 20 books


III. Major Literary-Historical Events in the Orientalist Tradition

A. Compilation and translation of the The 1001 Nights into French by Antoine Galland (1704-1717)
B. Discovery of Sanskrit by William Jones in Bengal in 1786
C. Until the middle of 18th C, Orientalists were Biblical scholars, students of Semitic languages, of the Koran at European universities
D. 1832: The term ‘Oriental Renaissance’ is coined by Edgar Quinet

IV. The Book: Orientalism

A. Its Intellectual Inheritance
Two major thinkers have influenced Edward Said’s conception of orientalism:

1. French philosopher Michel Foucault: notion of discourse, dialectical relationship between power and knowledge
2. Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci: hegemony

B. Its Intellectual Progeny

1. Orientalism inaugurates postcolonial studies, is translated into over 36 languages
2. Historical and personal reasons for writing the book: 1967 war, anti-Arab sentiment in the US, negative images in the media

C. Connections/Parallels to Nietzsche, Freud, and Mann

1. Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*: binary pair of West-East: West enjoys a “foreground valuation”; Western mind is an extra simplification apparatus when viewing the Orient
   - “The Orient was Orientalized”
2. Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents*: the East = playground for European collective id to exercise its erotic and aggressive fantasies
   a. Paintings of sexual lasciviousness and excess (handout)
3. Mann: Orient is the conceptual equivalent of Venice for Gustav von Aschenbach in *Death in Venice*
   a. the East = workplace for colonial administrators, soldiers, academicians
      - “East is a career”
   b. main actors in orientalism: French and British cultures and empires (from the beginning of the 19th C until the end of WWII) and the US (after WWII)
      - “The Orient is less a place than a topos”

D. Main Definitions of Orientalist Discourse

1. “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’ ”
2. “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient”
3. “a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts”
**E. Structure of Orientalist Discourse**

1. Orientalism is divided into 3 mutually reinforcing components:
   
   a. Academic  
   b. Imaginative  
   c. Historical/Material

2. Orientalism has two facets/faces:

   a. Latent (doctrinal, unchanging, unconscious, related to content)  
   b. Manifest (modern, changing, conscious, related to form, style, and genre/medium)

Said argues that no matter how different the manifest aspect of any orientalist cultural artifact is, the ideological infrastructure is always the same, i.e., West is superior to East.

3. The internal consistency of Orientalism is always higher than any correspondence between the Orientalist representation and the real Orient

   > “Orientalism overrode the Orient”

4. Two methodological devices to study Orientalist authority:

   a. strategic location: relationship between author and text: EXTERIORITY produces ‘AUTHORITY’ over the Orient(al)  
   b. strategic formation: relationship between texts, principle of affiliation, intertextuality, accumulative and citationary nature of orientalism as a system of representations

**F. Overview of Chapters**

The book is divided into 3 chapters:

1. The Scope of Orientalism  
2. Orientalist Structures and Restructures  
3. Orientalism Now

**G. Reception of Orientalism**

1. Praise: Talal Asad, Paul de Man  
2. Criticism: Bernard Lewis, Ibn Warraq, Daniel Martin Varisco  
3. Typical Points of Critique:

   a. Ahistorical reading of Orientalist texts  
   b. No consideration of the factor of gender
c. No consideration of the factor of social class
d. Orient was not Europe’s only or even most important Other: internal ethical Others (e.g. Scots, Irish, Welsh in the English case)
e. Said left impact of orientalism on Orientals themselves unexamined

V. Conclusion

3 Questions to raise in class: since 1978,

1. What does representing another culture even mean in the context of 21st-century globalism, in which the world is often described as a global village because of high-speed travel, mass migrations, and other forms of mobility?

2. Is the internet – the social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter – a means of enhancing or reducing intolerance towards members of ‘other’ cultures, religions, political beliefs, etc?

3. Hypothetically, if you had the chance to be someone whom you see as being very different from you in cultural terms, would you want to be that person for 24 hours? Who would this other person be and what would you try to accomplish on this day?

Thank You!