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Michel Foucault's Theory of Discourse in Edward Said's Theory of Orientalism

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Abstract:

Arguably Edward Said's *Orientalism* remains one of the most influential texts in the humanities as a whole. Although the book was published in 1978, it is still recognized as one of the most important books that launch a harsh attack on the West's construction of the Orient. Therefore, despite the huge amount of ink that has been spilt on the discussion of Said's text, it still needs to be thought about and discussed. Relatedly, among the aspects of the book that need to be deeply investigated are the sources from which Said draws inspiration for his analysis of Orientalism. As probably goes without saying, the author of *Orientalism* draws inspiration from a wide range of writers among whom is the French philosopher Michel Foucault. The latter, through his concept of discourse and his theory of power-knowledge, establishes himself as one of the most inspiring figures to Edward Said. It can, therefore, be argued that because Foucault provides the theoretical foundation of Said's analysis of Orientalism as a discourse of power, his seminal book *Orientalism* cannot be fully understood unless Foucault's concept of discourse is made clear. The purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it aims at exploring the main features characterizing Foucault's understanding of discourse. Secondly, it attempts to show how Edward Said reinvests the concept to accuse Orientalism of being biased and unscholarly.

Keywords: Orientalism, discourse, statement, discursive formation, rules, objective knowledge.

Introduction

It is widely accepted that Michel Foucault is one of the most influential theorists in the modern time. He is “a figure to quote, relate to, comment on, modify and criticize.” (Jorgensen and Phillips 12) His theories, despite the debate which they have sparked, have manifestly been echoed and reinvested by various scholars and writers. Edward Said, for example, has found in Foucault's works a useful reservoir of ideas and arguments. As Rubén Chuaqui makes the point, Foucault remains for Said a great inspirer who provides a repertory of insightful ideas and arguments. For instance, “in *Orientalism*, the most widely known text among Said's writings,” Rubén Chuaqui argues, “several Foucauldian concepts are invoked: *archaeology*, *genealogy*, *archive* and, foremost, *discourse*.” (98-99) In brief, it can be argued that Said's analysis of Orientalism cannot be fully understood unless Foucault's concepts, mainly his concept of discourse, are made clear. Therefore, a major aim of this paper is to contribute to facilitating the understanding of Said's seminal work *Orientalism* by exploring Foucault's theorization of discourse and showing how the author of *Orientalism* has reinvested the concept to launch his harsh critique against Orientalism.

Discourse in the Foucauldian Sense

Discourse is a polysemous and loaded word. It is often used in many ways as its meaning differs according to the context in which it is used. Discourse, as Sara Mills makes the point, “has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory, and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined.” (1) In another place, she goes on to say that “discourse, as will be readily observed, cannot be pinned down to one meaning, since it has had a complex history and it is used in a range of different ways by different theorists.” (6) However, the notion of discourse that interests us in this context is the one that appears in Foucault's works, where Said has found a great deal of inspiration.

Relatedly, it is important to note that Foucault's theorization of discourse has moved the attention away from that ordinary conception of discourse as a linguistic concept. For him, discourse is not the equivalent of language, nor does it designate something which language does. “It is not a language plus a subject to speak it,” argues Foucault (69). It is, rather, a way of thinking or talking about something. Traditionally, “the term ‘discourse’ is used as a linguistic concept. It simply means passages of connected writing or speech. Michel Foucault, however, gave it a different meaning.” (Hall 4) That is, by discourse, Foucault has in mind a set of statements that allows the creation of a particular way of seeing and thinking about a given topic. In his own words,

We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation; [...] it is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined.

Discourse in this sense is not an ideal timeless form [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality. (117)

In this passage, Foucault exhibits the main features characterizing his theory of discourse. Relatedly, although discourse does not contain only one statement, but a group of statements, Foucault's basic premise is that they all belong to what he calls "the same discursive formation." That is, they all have some common traits. As Cousins and Hussain suggest, "they [all] refer to the same object, share the same style and support a strategy [...] a common institutional or political drift or pattern." (84-85) These shared traits create a kind of unity between the statements of a particular discourse. Therefore, no matter where they appear, in travel narratives, journalistic texts, scholarly researches, or anywhere else, and regardless of the person who employs them, the statements of a particular discourse always carry the same meaning for the same thing. It is here that Smart Bary maintains that Foucault's notion of discourse reflects

the unity of a group of statements above and beyond books, texts, authors, through time, and independently of the proximity of epistemological validity, scientificity, or truth. It reveals that within a discourse reference is being made to the same thing with the same conceptual full, at the same level. (40)

Another pillar of Foucault's theory is that discourse creates a set of rules as preconditions for statements in order to be recognized as meaningful and legitimate. This is exactly what he means by saying that discourse contains "a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined." Put differently, although there may be several ways to produce statements about a particular topic, not all of them can belong to the same discursive formation. Therefore, not all of them can be regarded as true or meaningful. Sara Mills, in this context, stresses that

discourses are not simply groupings of utterances, grouped around a theme or an issue, nor are they simply sets of utterances which emanate from a particular institutional setting, but discourses are regulated groupings of utterances or statements with internal rules which are specific to discourse itself. (48)

Similarly, Gordon points out that Foucault refers to discourse as "an identifiable collections of utterances governed by rules of construction and evaluation which determine within some thematic area what may be said, by whom, in which context, and in what effect." (xvi) For Foucault, by setting these rules, discourse determines the parameters of what can be thought and understood. Therefore, we are not free to think the way we like because we always tend to

conform to the dominant discourse. "We are not free to just say anything," argues Foucault (216). To put it differently, when we want to talk about something, we find ourselves confronted with, if I may say, a repertoire of pre-existing statements and ideas that prevent us from talking about that thing in a kind of free and creative way. Since, to borrow from Foucault, "all manifest discourse is secretly based on an 'already-said'" (25), we are obliged to think within the limits set by what has already been said. Thus, discourse, claims Foucault, "links individuals to certain types of utterance while consequently barring them from all others." (226) To put it more explicitly, what is said before about an object always influences the manner in which that object is viewed. For example, the ideas of previous scholars can serve as a template for the coming ones, who most of the time draw on the formers to construct their views and opinions. Therefore, it can be claimed that no one can write a completely original work in the sense that one, being conscious or not, always draws one's inspiration from previous works. Accordingly, the work one produces becomes just a set of fragments borrowed from others. To argue this point, Roland Barthes maintains that "the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture [...] the writer can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture, his sole power is to mingle writings, to counter some by others." (53) Barthes goes so far as to claim that his "book itself is but a tissue of signs, endless imitation, infinitely postponed." (Ibid) In the same line of argument, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o maintains:

Over the years I have come to realise more and more that work, any work, even literary creative work, is not the result of any individual genius but the result of a collective effort. There are so many inputs in the actual formation of an image, an idea, a line of argument and even sometimes the formal arrangement. The very words we use are a product of a collective history. (x-xi)

It is in this light that Foucault asserts that the knowledge which scholars seem to produce is but the result of discourse. In other words, discourse inspires and controls what they say about a particular object. Hence, the knowledge which they produce is indeed just a reformulation of already existing ideas and notions. Put differently, scholars, according to Foucault, are not the real producers of knowledge. They are, instead, no more than holders of the knowledge which discourse produces.

Just to be clear, discourse, as Foucault understands it, is systematic and rule-governed. This explains why, instead of focusing on individuals and the views they have of the external world, he puts more emphasis on the rules governing discourse. These rules are what determine how the world is talked about and understood. In this respect, Foucault says:

I tried to explore scientific discourse not from the point of view of the individuals who are speaking, nor from the point of view of the formal

structures of what they are saying, but from the point of the rules that come into play in the very existence of such discourse. (xiv)

Indeed, Foucault goes so far as to admit that he himself is the product of the dominant discourse. He is consciously or unconsciously submitted to its rules and conditions. That is, Foucault is aware that what he has to say about a particular object is by all means said in conformity with the discourse within which he works. In his own words,

There may well be certain similarities between the works of the structuralists and my own work. It would hardly behove me, of all people, to claim that my discourse is independent of conditions and rules of which I am very largely unaware, and which determine other work that is being done today. (Ibid)

Building on what is mentioned so far, it can be said that discourse can, indeed does, construct the society's rhetorical codes. That is, it defines what people can say and what they can not say in a given society. To illustrate this, let us take a real life example. Since the prevailing discourse in the United States, this is obvious in the media and popular press, depicts Muslims as terrorists, Americans, at least to a large extent, tend to form a unified view of Muslims as terrorist and violent people. Indeed, what Americans think of Muslims is constrained and shaped by the prevailing discourse. The same argument is echoed by Zachary Karabell, who makes the following suggestion:

Ask American college students, in the elite universities or elsewhere, what they think of when the word 'Muslim' is mentioned. The response is inevitably the same: gun-toting, bearded, fanatic terrorists hallbent on destroying the great enemy, the United States. (xxvi)

Put differently, in a society like the United States, where such discourse dominates, it is inconceivable to think of Muslims as tolerant and peaceful people. To think of them in terms of peace and tolerance means to be outside the dominant discourse, and to be outside the dominant discourse means what you think is meaningless, thus, beyond reason and comprehension.

If discourse, as Foucault thinks, constrains our perceptions and views, can't we say that our knowledge of the world is not necessarily true or objective? In response to such question, Foucault insists that our knowledge of the world does not necessarily reflect the world as it is, but as it is understood within the frames set by discourse. By implication, therefore, our understanding of the world is absolutely not a pure reflection of reality, but a mere creation of discourse. In Foucault's opinion, Sara Mills affirms, "discourse does not simply translate reality into language; rather discourse should be seen as a system which structures the way that we receive reality." (55) Therefore, far from being a mirror reflecting the real image of the world,

discourse is, as Foucault contends, “a violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them; and it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity.” (229) Accordingly, it can be said that universal truth and objectivity in Foucault's theory of discourse are just illusions. For our perceptions of material objects can never be objective or disinterested. They are always “filtered through discursive structures which assign particular meanings and effects to them.” (Mills 56) Therefore, it can be argued that discourses do not just describe objects, but construct them. They, Foucault insists, “systematically form the objects of which they speak [...] discourses are not about objects, they don't identify objects, they constitute them and in doing so, they conceal their own invention.” (49)

The last point that should be made about Foucault's theorization of discourse is that although Foucault believes that discourse, instead of depicting material objects, constructs them, one should not assume that he denies the existence of such objects. Foucault's fundamental premise is that objects do have physical and material presence in the world, yet they are outside discourse meaningless. It is only through discourse that they acquire meaning. For Foucault, Sara Mills argues, “objects exist and events occur in the real world but we apprehend these events within discursive structures and we are not always aware of the way that discourse structures our understanding.” (56) Thus, it can be said that Foucault's main concern is to discover the source of meaning. He does not aim to see whether things exist or not, but to find where the meaning people assign to material objects comes from.

The Foucauldian Sense of Discourse in Said's *Orientalism*

As has been referred to previously, Michel Foucault remains for Edward Said a great inspirer who provides a repertory of insightful ideas and arguments. In this light, to borrow from Valerie Kennedy, one can claim that “without Foucault's concepts of discourse and of discursive formations, his discussions of the relationship between power and knowledge, and his views that representations are always influenced by the systems of power in which they are located,” (25) Said's Seminal book could not have seen light. And to justify his reliance on Foucault, Said claims that “Orientalism expresses and represents that part [the Orient] culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.” (2) Therefore, as said makes the point, Foucault's concept of discourse is indispensable for any good analysis of Orientalism. In his own words,

My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – – and even produce – – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.
(3)

Relatedly, to explain how much Foucault's discourse theory is clearly re-invested by Said, it is sufficient to examine the latter's definition of Orientalism. Like Foucault, who defines discourse as a particular way of talking about a particular object, Said defines Orientalism as a specific way of talking and representing the Orient. It is, Said argues, "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience." (1) This "way of coming to terms with the Orient" reflects the "common sense" in Europe and the United States. Therefore, it is not surprising that although Said examines the writings of different scholars belonging to different places, Foucault's notion of discourse allows him to study Orientalism with a great deal of unity and coherence. As Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin put it, Said explores the writings of

an array of nineteenth century French and British novelists, poets, politicians, philologists, historians, travelers, and imperial administrators: the voyages and travel narratives of nineteenth century French authors such as Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Nerval, and Flaubert; the Indian journalism of Karl Marx; the writings of the first modern Orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy and of the French nineteenth century philologist Ernest Renan; the adventure tales of Richard Burton and T.E Lawrence; the speeches of Alfred Balfour; and the cables of British colonial governors in Egypt like Lord Cromer. (64)

However, he treats all this group of texts as a monolithic and unified discourse on the Orient. Indeed, as Dennis Porter argues,

Said asserts the unified character of Western discourse on the Orient over some two millennia, a unity derived from a common and continuing experience of fascination with the threat from the East, of its irreducible otherness. He is thus led to claim a continuity of representation between the Greece of Alexander the Great and the United States of President Jimmy Carter. (62)

How is it possible, it is legitimate to ask, that such a big number of Orientalists as Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Nerval, Flaubert, Karl Marx, Sylvestre de Sacy, Ernest Renan, Richard Burton, T. E. Lawrence, Alfred Balfour, Lord Cromer and the list may continue appear in Said's study to adopt the same views and attitudes towards the Orient, whether it is Syria, Egypt, India, or any other Oriental land? Said's answer to this question is quite simple. The unity of the Orientalist views of the Orient, he claims, is due to the fact that Western scholars construct their images of the Orient with respect to each other. That is, they often refer to each other in their texts. And by doing so, they keep repeating the same views of the Orient. According to Said, "Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent,

some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies.” (20) The Orient, in this sense, becomes, Said says,

[...] less a place than a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these. Direct observation or circumstantial description of the Orient are the fictions presented by writing on the Orient, yet invariably these are totally secondary to systematic tasks of an other sort. (177)

It can, thus, be argued that Orientalism is a self-referential system in the sense that Western scholars most of the time tends to echo each other in what they say about the Orient. This is to imply that the same set of images is repeated across different texts, giving, thus, Orientalism its unified character. It is, may be, in this light that Said talks about “a textual attitude” (92) that every writer has to adopt whenever he talks about the Orient.

To illustrate his argument that “Orientalism is after all a system of citing works,” (23) Said offers many concrete examples. He shows, for instance, how d'Herbolot, through his *Bibliothèque Orientale*, which was written in 1697 made the Orient easily known by almost all Western scholars. The *Bibliothèque*, Said maintains, became an inevitable bible for anyone studying the Orient. This reference was so interesting that it

diverted the attention of “Orientalists” from studying Oriental sources; instead consulting Western scholarship about the Orient became the common practice. In a way it generated a textual and schematic attitude which became widespread in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. (18)

In the same line of argument, Said notes the authoritative status of Edward William Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, written in 1836. Like the *Bibliothèque*, Lane's book was an indispensable reference. For, it gave credibility and value to whoever used it. In Said's words, Lane “was an authority whose use was an imperative for anyone writing or thinking about the Orient.” (23) Thus, it is not surprising that his book was cited by such important figures as, among others, Richard Burton, Nerval and Flaubert. In this respect, it is important to note that although the book originally describes the Egyptians, it was referred to in texts about other people, like the Syrians or Indians, on the assumption that the Orientals are all

the same regardless of the place where they exist. Accordingly, Said accuses Orientalism of creating an ahistorical image of the Orient, as if the Orient was immobile and placid.

Additionally, Silvestre de Sacy, the father of modern Orientalism, Said assumes, creates a way of thinking about the Orient in the sense that “his works virtually put before the profession an entire systematic body of texts, a pedagogic practice, a scholarly tradition, and an important link between Oriental Scholarship and public policy.” (124) This body of texts which Sacy produced defines the parameters through which the Orient has to be viewed. Put differently, thanks to Sacy’s works, the Orient becomes canonized, or, as Said says,

Sacy’s work canonizes the Orient; it begets a canon of textual objects passed on from one generation of students to the next. And the living legacy of Sacy’s disciples was astounding. Every major Arabist in Europe during the nineteenth century traced his intellectual authority back to him. (129)

This “canon of textual objects” inspires and orients everyone talking or writing about the Orient. Every Westerner reproduces the Orient within the limits imposed by Sacy’s texts. In Said’s words, “Each Orientalist re-created his own Orient according to the fundamental epistemological rules [...] supplied and enacted by Sacy. Just as he was the father of Orientalism” (130)

Bearing these examples offered by Edward Said in mind, one can legitimately claim that “Orientalist writers often had very little first-hand experience of people and places in the East.” (Saddiqi 66) They were, instead, content with repeating some previous knowledge on the Orient. Indeed, Said goes so far as to claim that even though they did have first-hand experience in some cases, their views of the Orient were limited by the already-said about the Orient which he calls Orientalism. At this very point, one can easily note a great deal of similarity between Said’s approach to Orientalism and Foucault’s notion of discourse. Put in a more explicit way, like Michel Foucault, who believes that discourse determines what can be thought and said about a particular object, Edward Said asserts that Orientalism defines what is thinkable and sayable about the Orient. Therefore, according to Said, no Westerner can talk about or write about the Orient in a kind of free and creative way. In his opinion, “no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism.” He goes on, “because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action.” (3) Said insists that because of Orientalism, nobody can address the Orient freely. Since Orientalism, as he argues, is “a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought,” (42) “a limited vocabulary and imagery [...always] impose themselves” on whoever wants to describe the Orient and its people (60).

The point being made is that no matter how faithful the Orientalist tries to be in his description of the Orient, he, Said asserts, always ends up distorting its true image due to the limitation imposed by the Orientalist discourse. In other words, being “a set of structures inherited from the past”, but “not a sudden access of objective knowledge about the Orient,” (122) Orientalism creates the possible ways of thinking about the Orient. Anybody who, thus, chooses to address the Orient outside these ways, which are often taken for granted, results in the production of “nonsensical knowledge”. Put differently, although the Orientalist can express his views on the Orient in many different ways, for the sake of gaining trustworthiness and credibility, he or she has to conform to the dominant discourse of Orientalism, or as Said says, to “that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the divining line.” (73) Accordingly, “only a limited number of statements provided the lenses through which the Orient was experienced, and [...] shaped the language through which the encounter between East and West took place.” (58) This is to imply that Orientalism does not just distort and misrepresent the Orient, but also constructs certain undebatable facts about it. Thus, any representation of the Orient in order to be accepted as realistic and true, it has to be compatible with these facts. Said's argument is that

Orientalism as a systematic “knowledge” is not just depicting the reality of the Orient “falsely” but it creates generally accepted truths about the Orient which Europeans think, research and administer. The European mind considers or takes for granted certain types of statement, certain types of theories as correct, such as the “Oriental character,” “Oriental despotism,” “Oriental sensuality etc. (Çırakman 12)

Since these statements are undebatable and are taken for granted, it comes as no surprise that they are frequently used in European and American texts on the Orient. Put differently, the more these statements appear in a text, the more credible the text becomes. This explains their widespread use in almost all Western texts on the Orient, whether they are monographs, novels, plays, travel narratives, or academic researches.

Orientalism, in this sense, Said suggests, is no more than “a sort of consensus: certain things, certain types of statement, certain types of work have seemed for the Orientalist correct.” (202) That is to say, whether a statement on the Orient is false or true does not necessarily depend on the reality of the Orient, but rather on its conformity with the Orientalist discourse. This is to mean that the more a statement conforms to and confirms the taken-for-granted statements on the Orient, constructing, thus, what Michel Foucault calls “a discursive formation”, the truer the statement becomes. This way, Orientalism “constitutes the sum of possibilities open to any European thinking on the Orient.” (Childs and Fowler 163) By implication, the Orientalist is not the producer of knowledge, but the bearer of the knowledge which the discourse of Orientalism produces.

Just to be clear, according to Edward Said, all texts on the Orient operate within the limits set by Orientalism. Therefore, what these texts say, one can argue, is not necessarily a faithful translation of the reality of the Orient. In this context, Said remarks that “[the language used to describe the Orient] is not even trying to be accurate.” (34) Thus, the Orient it describes, to quote him again, “is not the Orient as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized” (104) by the discourse of Orientalism, which guides the Orientalist towards choosing specific statements in his or her portrayal of the place and its people. To illustrate the argument being made, Said affirms that “what [Western] discourse considers to be a fact – that Mohammed is an imposter [...] is a component of the discourse, a statement the discourse compels one to make whenever the name Mohammed occurs or [is mentioned].” (33) This means that the correctness of such statement as “Mohammed is an imposter” does not stem from the fact that the prophet is really an imposter, but from the fact that this is the only way to describe him within the Orientalist discourse. To portray the prophet differently means to run against the dominant discourse (Orientalism). And to run against the dominant discourse means to be outside the “true”. Orientalism, in this sense, can be said to have more authority than what it talks about or describes. In Said’s words, “people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.” (93) Therefore, to ascribe value and force to what one says about the Orient requires a kind of conformity with what previous texts tell. For, as Said says, “the value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient [...] relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend on the Orient as such.” (21)

In accordance with Michel Foucault, Said asserts that Orientalism as a discourse imposes certain rules and conditions for knowledge on the Orient to be accepted as true and meaningful. In Said’s words, “what is thought, said, or even done about the Orient follows (perhaps occurs within) certain distinct and intellectually knowable lines.” (13) Indeed, Said takes a similar line in his *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, claiming that Orientalism is no more than “a new habit of thought, a set of rules to dominate truth, to make truth as an issue secondary to the successful ordering and wielding of huge masses of actual present knowledge.” (291) Therefore, no text on the Orient can be part of the Orientalist “discursive formation” unless the rules imposed by Orientalism are fully obeyed. Among these rules which Said lists in his book are what he calls the “four dogmas” of Orientalism which must be respected in any text on the Orient:

One is the absolute and systematic difference between the West, which is rational, developed, humane, superior, and the Orient, which is aberrant, undeveloped inferior. Another dogma is that abstractions about the Orient [...] are always preferable to direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities. A third dogma is that the Orient is eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself; therefore it is assumed that a highly generalized and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint is inevitable and even scientifically “objective.” A

fourth dogma is that the Orient is at bottom something either to be feared [...] or to be controlled. (300-301)

The main point to get hold of here is that any description of the Orient running against these dogmas will not be recognized as true and meaningful. For, within the discourse of Orientalism, these dogmas are what ascribe to the Orient its correct and acceptable meaning. The implication is that although a great deal of texts have been written on the Orient, all of them, Said claims, provide a consistent and unified image of the Orient, constituting what he calls "an analyzable formation." (20) In other words, because these texts are quite consistent with themselves, they can be analyzed as a unified entity, that is, as a discourse on the Orient. In this respect, Said acknowledges that his method of analysis is to "employ close textual readings whose goal is to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution." (23-24) Somewhere else in his book, Said writes that one of his principal methodological devices for studying authority is "strategic formation, which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large." (20)

Building on what has been discussed, it can be argued that Said draws widely on Foucault's concept of discourse in his analysis of Orientalism. However, if one examines *Orientalism* deeply, one can easily detect some differences in the theoretical insights of the two men. For instance, Foucault insists to imprison the individual writer in a subordinate position. He or she is not able to act freely, neither is he or she allowed space to form his or her views independently. In brief, the individual writer, as Foucault believes, has no role in what he or she says because it is always determined by discourse. Contrastingly, Said believes that the role of the individual writer can sometimes be significant. Thus, he leaves a room for what he calls "the play of a personal – or at least non-Orientalist – consciousness." (158) In contrast to Foucault, Said asserts that the individual writer is not dead, but influential and self-controlling. To put it in the words of James Clifford,

Unlike Foucault, for whom authorial names function as mere labels for discursive statements, Said's authors may be accorded psychohistorical typicality and are often made through their texts to have representative Orientalist experiences. [...] Said's descriptions of Orientalist discourse are frequently sidetracked by humanist fables of suppressed authenticity. (269)

Therefore, although Said expresses his indebtedness to Foucault, he disagrees with him on this point:

unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of texts constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism. (23)

To illustrate his view that the individual writer is self-conscious and in total control of himself or herself, Said shows how Gerard de Nerval's carnet for the voyage he made to the Orient "supplies us [...] with two perfect texts for understanding how his Orient untied itself from anything resembling an Orientalist conception of the Orient, even though his work depends on Orientalism to a certain extent." (183) In addition to Gerard de Nerval, Louis Massignon, who can be clustered among French Orientalists, exhibits, through his writings, a kind of dissimilarity from French Orientalist texts. In the words of Said, Massignon's "personal style, [in addition to his] individual genius, may finally supersede the political restraints operating impersonally through tradition and through the national ambience." (271)

Conclusion

To sum-up, as the above analysis demonstrates, the influence of the French philosopher on Edward Said is clear and explicit. Indeed, Foucault's concept of discourse is so fundamental in shaping Said's analysis of Orientalism that it is difficult to understand Said's thesis without a prior knowledge of Foucault. However, although Said finds in Foucault's work a repertory of insightful ideas and arguments, the author of *Orientalism* is often attacked for his misuse of Foucault. This misplaced appropriation of Foucault is due to Said's liberal views which don't harmonize with Foucault's discourse analysis as Foucault is a radical critic of humanism. For example, unlike Foucault, who believes in the death of the subject, Said, humanist as he is, is willing to grant the Subject independence and agency. If Foucault insists to view the individual as a helpless prisoner of discourse, Said, on the contrary, is of the opinion that the human subject is self-controlling and self conscious.

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