Is There a Correspondence Between "Orientalism" and The Orient? – Said, Dyson and Sen

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Abstract

The study of cultural encounters has thrown up many important methodological and theoretical issues. Besides, these studies often rely on certain underlying socio-political and economic theories too. The objective of this paper is to unravel some of these issues and theories which underscore a very important area of cultural study, namely, the study of West's cultural encounter of the Orient and the Western characterization of the Orient. Some of the cultural studies of this genre are obdurate and provocative, that is, the views of William Jones or Edward Said's Orientalism. The paper (a) first states Said's views. (b) then attempts to posit an alternative to Said's Orientalism (i) implicit in Dyson's book *A Various Universe* and (ii) inherent in the issues raised by Amartya Sen. The paper finally demonstrates that Said's Orientalism is based on inappropriate methodological and theoretical assumptions and incongruous theories in the light of the studies outlined in (b).

Keywords: alternative approach, cultural encounters, unified field theory of cultural encounters

The study of cultural encounters involves a complex set of relations that obtain among the historical-social–political–economic, ethical, aesthetic, religious and scientific-technological dimensions of the relevant cultures, necessitating an interdisciplinary approach. The first section of the paper discusses the nature of the interdisciplinary research that is required for such studies, with particular reference to the theories of *literary criticism* and *colonial history*. The second section highlights two specific approaches to the study of cultural encounter: one in terms of constructing a "grand theory" invoking such philosophical thesis as *essentialism* to justify it, as developed by Edward Said and the other, an alternative approach, to the study of cultural encounter in terms of analyzing a corpus of literary work, namely, "Indian Journals". This section considers the latter alternative as an antithesis to the abstract essentialist theorizing and grounds it in favor of narrative, detail and diversity. The section that follows delineates three features of this alternative framework in Ketaki Kushari Dyson's *Various Universe*. The next section discusses Amartya Sen's work demonstrating that for him Said's Orientalism is based on inappropriate methodological and theoretical assumptions and incongruous theories. This section extends Sen's threefold categorization of Western attitudes and presents the various other shades arising out of Dyson's more historically sensitive account. These categories make us skeptical about Edward Said's claim for the linear causal relation leading to the thesis that Orientalism helped produce European imperialism. Finally, the concluding section emphasizes the fact that the study of cultural encounter cannot rest entirely on the cult of the victim and that the response to the "Other" may not necessarily imply hostility.

Received Views on the Relationship between Literature, Cultural Studies and Social Sciences

Received views in the study of cultural encounters and cultural characterization construe literature and other social science disciplines as polar opposites on the ground that literature is concerned with the study of fictional texts and, therefore, forfeits the right to truth claims, unlike the social sciences which are concerned with the questions of ascertaining accuracy, reliability, objective facts and the deployment of 'scientific method'. Nevertheless, cross-fertilization of these disciplines had been taking place for some time, resulting in the opening of new vistas and fruitful projects.

For example, in the nineteenth century the association of literature and history bound by a shared common past yielded many nationalist projects. This amounted, as Ernest Gellner (1983) has shown, in retrieving and reconstructing a national past through the production of standardized, homogenous, centrally sustained high cultures so as to legitimize the nation state. Moreover, historians were interested in the features of historical texts as narratives. Since prose fiction was the most influential literary genre in the nineteenth century, historians saw many realist novels mirroring historical narratives.

In the twentieth century the most exciting works in literary theory and criticism were concerned with historicizing the production and reception of literary texts. Initially, it appears that the rise of Modernism as a new literary movement led literature to drift away from social sciences, with greater attention being paid to the literariness and self-referentiality of texts and less upon their correspondence with an external social reality. Parallel movements in literary theory, such as Formalism or New Criticism, frequently concentrated on the text itself, and its relationship to the reader, rather than upon its relationship to a larger social world.

Eventually in a new configuration, however, Literature moved closer to Social Sciences. In Literary and Cultural Studies, the rise of Postcolonial, Poststructuralist and Subaltern Studies

movements has again raised the question of the relationship of literary texts to the communities in which they are produced and consumed. The answers to the questions relating to the nature of this relationship clearly require knowledge of the social sciences.

The Study of Cultural Encounters and Interdisciplinary Research
The range of documents that fall within the purview of the literary theorists mentioned above were previously considered the province of historians, political scientists, economists and other social scientists. They include non-fictional historical and other social scientific documents: diary entries, autobiographies, journals, facts of economic transactions or even registers of births and deaths. The literary theorist examines, for example, how historical texts narrativize recorded data, and shape it according to unconscious ideological and narrational presumptions. In Hayden V. White's view (1975), the historian is not so much a discoverer of implicit patterns as a creator of new narratives, and as a result, can be regarded as one engaged in literary work.

These trends in interdisciplinary approach have been increasingly applied in our understanding of the Western attempt at comprehending the peoples, societies and cultures in the non-West during the colonial period and beyond. Thus Orientalism or "Third World literature" emerged as categories (Ahmad, 1992) Indeed these trends have spawned a whole cottage industry of scholarly and critical studies, particularly in the metropolitan West, but increasingly in the homelands of the Third World itself. It was a time when the literary critics were busy putting imperialism into cultural studies while the historians went about putting culture into studies of imperialism

Two Approaches: "Unified Field Theory" of Cultural Encounters versus the Genre in English Literature, namely, "The Indian Journal" and Their Analysis

One of the most dominant views relating to West-East cultural encounters, versus a brand of Orientalism, was espoused by Edward Said (1995) in his book with the same title, and his followers. A considered judgment on this brand of Orientalism would raise several methodological issues relating to the prospect of one culture attempting to understand and making judgments about another, a passion for grand universalizing, relationship between knowledge and power, questions of ethical and cognitive relativism, incommensurability, and hermeneutics of suspicion and faith.

Although originally "Orientalism" denoted a composite area of scholarship comprising philology, linguistics, ethnography, and the interpretation of culture through the discovery, recovery, compilation, and translation of Oriental texts, Said gave it a different meaning by inducting imperialism into literary studies and building a grand theory of cultural encounter based on his perception of the Westerner's construction of the "Orient". While most scholars came to accept the multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural approaches, Said went on to provide a theoretical framework to this emerging field of "colonial discourse," couched in theoretical terms borrowed from French philosophers and thinkers.

Some Features of Said's "Unified Field Theory' of Cultural Encounters
Said's central thesis is that there exists a persistent Eurocentric prejudice and arrogance against Arabo-Islamic people and their culture, and an aggressiveness necessitated by the colonial expansion of the European powers and their imperialist agenda. Said's main focus is on how within the time-frame of the late eighteenth century till today, English, French, and American scholars have approached the Arab societies of North Africa and the Middle East.

However, Said extends his examination beyond the works of recognized German, Russian, Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese "Orientalist" academics, and includes literature, journalism, travel books, and religious and philosophical studies to produce a broadly historical and anthropological perspective. This suggests, as Dyson (2002) points out, that Said intends to convert his thesis into a "…'unified field theory' of cultural encounters, applicable wherever West met non-West" supported by the ideology of imperialism and a monolithic orthodoxy of the relationship of exploiter and exploited. Such a grand unified theory of cultural encounter is termed by Said "Orientalism", although, as Dyson notes in the Preface to the 2002 edition of her book, the credit for the magnification of "Orientalism" into a grand theory goes in a large measure to Said's followers. In fact, Dyson herself makes certain remarks about Said in her new preface (Dyson, 2002, pp. xii – xiv).

Twenty-four years after the first publication of Said's *Orientalism* and despite his own admission that his work was not original, Said is now a cult figure and widely regarded as the founder of the postcolonial movement in literary criticism and cultural studies, and multiculturalism in politics. Indeed, *Orientalism* stimulated a great deal of interest and was followed by several other publications. It is now such a standard refrain within cultural studies that the thesis of *Orientalism* usually goes unquestioned, resulting in the failure to see the inapplicability of many of his ideas, especially in the Indian scene. Nevertheless, supporting Said to the exclusion of other scholars has become politically correct.

Many, including Aijaz Ahmad, have drawn our attention to the awesome and gnawing power that Western academia wields in subjugating and silencing dissenting voices, especially if they belong to individuals outside Western academic institutions. One may discern in this muting and marginalization the very signature of the breach of 'epistemic sovereignty'.

Said's Grand "Unified" Theory and its French Sources
Said's grand "unified" theory drew its sustenance from French sources, which he synthesized and elaborated. Said derived two important ideas from these sources:

(i) The concept of *"essentialism"*, which interprets a historically specific phenomenon in terms of a transhistorical conceptual construction, law of history or essences of cultures. Essentialism is a mode of representation of things based on a belief in the real, true essences, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity.

In the context of colonization, essentialism amounts to the reduction of the indigenous people to an "essential" idea of what it means to be African, Indian, Arabic, or ascribing characteristics or essences such as the Celtic spirit, négritude, or Islam, thus simplifying the task of intercultural comparison and colonization.

(ii) The ideas of Anwar Abdel Malek, a French socialist and one of the eminent Muslim academics working in Europe in the 1960s, enunciating the then Parisian versions of Freudian and Marxist theory. Abdel Malek indicted all Orientalists as "Europocentric," having a constitutive otherness and essentialist character, being obsessed with the past and failing to pay enough attention to Arab scholars.

Abdel Malek claimed that this *essentialist* image of the Orientalists finds its manifestation through an ethnist typology and would eventually result in racism. Said claims that the doctrine of essentialism led Orientalists to define the Arab peoples and Islamic culture in terms of certain *essential characteristics*: sensuality, tendency to despotism, aberrant mentality, habit

of inaccuracy, and backwardness. These characteristics were ascribed to the *totality* of Oriental cultures and often understood in negative terms. For Said this tendency to resort to such descriptions of oriental cultures provided justification for colonialism and imperialism or even ordinary politics.

Alternative Approach to Studying Cultural Encounter: Dyson's Book and Its Sources

In order to delineate Dyson's approach to the study of cultural encounter it would be necessary to contrast and critically review the approach she does not subscribe to, viz., that of Said. Incidentally both the books of Dyson and Said were first published in 1978. The books appeared at a time when disciplinary boundaries between literature and history were breaking down, giving rise to hybrid disciplines, such as, cultural studies, colonial, postcolonial literature. Interdisciplinary research, at least one type of it. These areas were meant to establish linkages between literature, on the one hand, and history, anthropology, political science, economics, philosophy and cultural studies, on the other.

Dyson's book contains many elements which urge us to re-think, compare and contrast, and critically examine the validity of this much-debated theory on cultural encounters between the Occident and the Orient. The documents surveyed in Dyson's book may provide a test case for a theory of cultural encounters between the Orient and the Occident, such as Said's version of Orientalism, and may suggest *an alternative framework* for the study of cultural encounter, although the author has made no deliberate attempt either to formulate one or to spell it out in explicit terms. Instead of suggesting a grand theory of cultural encounters between the West and the East or invoking any philosophical thesis, such as *essentialism*, to justify it, Dyson's book provides the reader with a perspective on a corpus of literary work – published journals and memoirs – written by men and women of British origin during their stay at different times in India between 1765 and 1856.

Dyson explains what light the journals of this period shed on the Indo-British cultural encounter. It also gives a glimpse of the diverse professional backgrounds and mindsets of the writers of these journals, the significance of these documents as records of observation, introspection and self-revelation as well as the historical, economic, political, sociological and cultural ambience that framed their perceptions and shaped their attitudes. Against the stereotypical colonial image of Indo-British relationship as "exploited – exploiter", Dyson, based on the contents of the journals, upholds a more realistic and objective characterization of the encounter as a combination of arrogance and benevolence, wealth drain and development, exploitation and mutual enrichment, ethnocentric prejudices and tolerance, warmth, acceptance of cultural pluralism, intellectual curiosity characterized by the Enlightenment, despotism and liberalism, and people fired by an impulse to build, restore and conserve rather than destroy.

This certainly is in stark contrast with the thesis of Western essentialist characterization of the Orient as is evidenced by the statement:

> The writers of the journals share in these intellectual oscillations and tensions" and show "the complexity of responses and reactions, how mutually entangled the attitudes are…It may be fairly said that there is hardly an opinion or attitude expressed in these works of which the antithesis is also not expressed somewhere else in the corpus.
> (Dyson, 2002, pp. 26–29)

Of course, the diversity of attitudes towards India and Indians articulated by the writers of these journals is the result of their varied academic and professional backgrounds and the distinct mindsets they evolved and cultivated. The professions of the journal writers ranged from being military personnel, civil servants, political officers, scientists and missionaries to women of distinction and sensitivity. They obviously came from different backgrounds: some with strong academic training and scholarly disposition, having been educated in the best private schools and most renowned British universities; some with artistic impulse and love for nature; some with a background of strong religious affiliation and zeal; some with military mission; some with commercial motives and political assignments.

They also represented a variety of mindsets – Evangelical, Conservative, Romanticist, Utilitarian, tolerant-rationalist-humanist of the Enlightenment era and Oriental scholars. As a result, one observes the particular nuances, predilections and antipathies in their views although "all the authors wished to be accepted as portrayers of realities as beheld by them..." (Dyson, 2002, p. 33).

Supporting the views of Arthur Ponsonby, a 20th century scholar who studied the diary genre and preferred the writings of obscure people to those of celebrities, Dyson says:

> We are compelled to consider what may be regarded as reliable, realistic description and what as the accretion of fancy, what is a simple factual error and what a more serious misunderstanding of a conceptual or categorical nature, what in a given situation, are the European preconceptions and what the Indian realities, why failure in communication occurred, and so on. Such scrutiny, though cast in a literary framework, may supplement the findings of professional historians and sociologists. *All too often the attitudes of a handful of prominent men, usually politicians or thinkers, are regarded as all-important, and the views and feelings of 'intelligent laymen', including women, are neglected or bypassed. Yet it is in the latter that the real texture of opinion in a period is often most picturesquely conveyed…* (Italics Added)
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> (Dyson, 2002, p. 33)

Perhaps these multiple portrayals of Indian reality help us to conceptualize what India culture stands for and explain the title of the book, "A Various Universe". Bound by certain basic themes, (the most important being the fact that these journals and memoirs of the British diaspora in India "are records of first-hand experiences of India"), these works, however, legitimately constitute a distinct genre in English literature, namely, "the Indian journal". Dyson's unique contribution consists in demonstrating how an interdisciplinary approach can be brought to bear on records of Indian experience left by the British people revealing elements of *Indian identity*, and the social, economic, political, intellectual and cultural history of India and those of the British in India.

An Alternative Framework

As I have already mentioned, there is no conscious attempt in Dyson's book towards an alternative framework or theory for the study of cultural encounter to Said's *Orientalism*, and a formulation of this may not have been her intention. Based on her own remarks in the book, however, one can envisage a competing alternative framework. I wish to spell out three important features of this framework here in order to put her work in perspective.

The Most Important Feature of this Alternative Framework is the Claim that when we Survey other Cultures We Must, as Richard Rorty Suggests, Look for New Genres – Genres which Arise in Reaction to, and as an Alternative to, the Attempt to Theorize (i.e. "Abstraction by Essentialization") about Human Affairs
Following Milan Kundera, Rorty argues that the novel could be a characteristic genre serving this function, because it helps us to develop an antithesis of structure, abstraction and essence in terms of narrative, detail, diversity, and accident.

Said's Foucauldian Connection
In contrast Said drew inspiration from the writings of the French philosopher and social critic, Michel Foucault on "text" and "discourse." (i) "Texts", according to Foucault, should not be regarded as having an independent semantic structure, but rather as being systematically related to a "discourse" with implications in a hierarchy of power relations. Said accepted this theory of meaning and "textuality" from Foucault that views "texts" being ensconced within concrete social and ideological constraints and their production involving an engagement with these constraints with their political and cultural dimensions. (ii) Said made extensive use of Foucault's notion of *discourse*. "Discourse" is the ideological framework within which scholarship takes place. This led Said to claim that within a discourse all representations are imbued with the language, culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. Hence there can be no "truths," only formations or deformations. In Said's opinion Europeans cannot rise above the limitations of the prevailing discourse, which renders of necessity every European, in what he could say about the Orient a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.

The issue relating to the specification of "the dialectic between objective determination and individual agency in the theorist's own production" has been raised by Aijaz Ahmad. He says:

> The characteristic feature of contemporary literary radicalism is that it rarely addresses the question of its own determination by the conditions of its production and the class location of its agents. In the rare case where this issue of one's own location – hence of the social determination of one's own practices – is addressed at all, even fleetingly, the stance is characteristically that of a very poststructuralist kind of ironic self-referentiality and self-pleasuring.
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> Ahmad, A. (1992, pp. 6–7)

Dyson and the "Indian Journals"
Unlike Said, Dyson chose as a suitable genre the "Indian journals" authored by British men and women, who "… were intelligent witnesses to a very interesting period of Indian history, and … were participants in an absorbing cultural encounter" (Dyson, 2002, p. xi). This is consistent with Rorty's suggestion that one should look for a suitable literary genre as an apt means for studying cultural encounters, rather than building "One True Description" in the form of a theory that claims to exhibit the underlying pattern behind apparent cultural

heterogeneity and complexity of a given humanity, nation, country or even an entire geographical region. Arthur Ponsonby in his *English Diaries* (1923, pp. 36–37) says:

> Anything which contributes to a knowledge of humanity, not only prominent humanity, but humble humanity, ought not to be ignored by historians, or indeed by philosophers and psychologists.

The British writers of the journals do provide an array of narratives and details. Their preoccupations were varied: "interpreting India to the West", indulging in "self-revelation", capturing in permanent form "intrinsically fugitive experiences", making "observation as well as introspection"(often in the form of Romantic diaries containing "delights in reminiscences or recording rapt nature descriptions"), venting "intense emotions and obsessions" as well as frustrations, articulating "earnestly held convictions,…sensibilities, already moulded to an extent by one cultural setting,…receiving further impressions in an alien and exotic environment" (Dyson, 2002, pp. 3–4).

Following Dyson, I shall identify only a few reportage of encounters between the British and the Indians, representing varied aspects of Indian life and documenting reliable social information.

Views on Indian Culture
At a deeper level the journals contain many invaluable insights, reliable social information, as well as useful data about cultural encounter. On the important issue of Hindu-Muslim relationship, the journal writers observed two conflicting tendencies: on the one hand, "the tendency for the two communities to assimilate, for example, in paying homage at the same shrines and in participating in each other's festivals". In short, whatever is regarded as holy by others, they approach with reverence. On the other hand, hostilities between two communities living side by side were quite common and the reason for this could be something that is intrinsic to the religious doctrines themselves and customs or practices. Although the tension between the two religious communities existed from earlier times and was not created by the British, the journals do establish that the British used these hostilities as opportunities to intervene, arbitrate and consolidate their position in India.

Self-Reflection and Critiquing the British Community
The writers of the journals, while revealing astute observations about human affairs and reflecting the generally accepted values, also exercised their function as critics of the British community by applying both analytical thinking and moral criteria to forms of behaviour and actions of their own people as well as that of the Company. Major Edward Caulfield Archer was outspoken in his criticisms of the policies of the Company and the unfair means often used by the British while expanding their power. William Huggins represented the best of humanism and libertarianism. He disapproved of the British policy of annexation of new territories by despotic force and deplored the double-speak of continuing with territorial acquisition.

Reflections on Indians and the British in India and their Attitudes
Based on his wide-ranging contacts with Indians during his extensive travels and official duties, Sleeman developed a warm involvement, total rapport, and genuine intimacy with people of every hue. He refused to fit all people into the groove of *Asiatic character* within the stereotypes of narrowness, meanness, vacillation, cringing, opportunism, and so forth. Sleeman maintained that Indian behaviour, individual and social, was explicable in precisely the same terms as other human behaviour elsewhere.

Rural Economy and Indian Development
As an indigo planter, William Huggins was able to acquire extensive knowledge of problems related to a wide range of issues, such as land tenure, agriculture, rural manufactures, the relationship between peasants, money-lenders, landlords, farmers of rent and other village officials, social and religious practices, the pride of caste and family ties, and so on. According to him the artificial right to own land, often used as an instrument of oppression, had to be converted into a social contract for the betterment of the peasants.

William Henry Sleeman had intimate knowledge of the ways the rural society of India worked and admired village self-governance. He was concerned over the way British institutions were damaging the traditional values of Indian rural society and distorting people's conduct, teaching them "the value of a lie". While condemning useless and oppressive institutions, Sleeman was anxious to preserve useful and humane ones.

Land of Contradictions and Inconsistencies
Thomas Skinner reports that people are "very charitable"; "it seldom happens that the poor go away hungry while visiting a house", yet there is poverty and callousness. He also observed the regional variations in manners and a tendency "to pass slightly over many necessary rites when away from home" resembling the proverb "When in Rome, do as they do in Rome".

On Women and the Rise of "Spirit of Enquiry"
Miss Emma Roberts, the daughter of "a lady of some literary pretensions", moved within the literary circles of London, Calcutta, and Bombay, and engaged in literary and journalistic activity in both Britain and India. She was aware of the changing times: "The native papers, published in Calcutta" were discussing the question of women's education: "emancipation must follow as a matter of course". "A spirit of enquiry is now awakened in the minds …which cannot fail to lead to very important results." The more gloomy and dismal conditions of women have been reported by James Forbes: child marriages and the harsh life of the widows.

The details from the journals of the British men and women, as seen above, indeed represent a diversity of perspectives and disparate perceptions of India and the people of India. The presence of these multiple viewpoints militates against the ascription of a straitjacket attitude to the Westerner as exploiter, entertaining an uncontaminated Eurocentric prejudice, always displaying arrogance towards Indians and exhibiting a necessarily aggressive stance against "the Other" arising out of these attitudes.

The Second Feature of Dyson's Alternative Framework: Eschewing Construction of "… 'Unified Field Theory' of Cultural Encounters, Applicable Wherever West met Non-West"
Aijaz Ahmad has noted this phenomenon of the obsession with "theory" in literary studies. He says: "The notable development in literary studies, as these have evolved in all the English-speaking countries over the past quarter-century or so, is the proliferation, from a great many critical positions, of what has come to be known simply as 'theory'" (Ahmad, 1992).

Nancy Cartwright, one of the most well-known philosophers of science, states that the idea of a unified theory that claims to model all situations is a myth since "…we live in a dappled world, a world rich in different things, with different natures, behaving in different ways" (Cartwright, 1992, p.1).

Cartwright argues that these differences can be accounted for in terms of alternative approaches typified by their own individual theoretical concepts, models, experimental and observational techniques, which are characteristic of each domain.

In her book, Cartwright refers to the work of Sudhir Anand and Ravi Kanbur on Sri Lanka's welfare programme in which they criticize Amartya Sen for not adopting a causal relation that holds among designated quantities *across all developing countries*. Instead, Sen adopts a hypothesis representing *different causal mechanisms for different countries*. Cartwright has shown that Sen is right in his approach. Rather than treating the abstract models as vehicles of truth, one should treat *the macro-level theories* as merely expository devices for *understanding the specific socio-economic structures* and *causal mechanisms* true in a given society.

Said's Linear Causal Relation: Orientalism Helped Produce European Imperialism

Said validates his causal claim by deriving it from Foucault's idea of epistemic sovereignty and the idea that knowledge necessarily serves political ends (*Discipline and Punish)*: the idea of epistemic sovereignty, similar to political sovereignty, amounts to the claim that there exists a nexus of knowledge and power in which the former served the latter; that academic disciplines do not simply produce knowledge but also generate power. Using Foucault in the particular case of Oriental discourse, Said asserts that no more glaring parallel exists between knowledge and power in the modern history of philology than in the case of Orientalism, although it appears to be an objective, disinterested, and rather esoteric field.

In order to buttress his thesis Said provides some supposedly historical facts. With regard to the products of philological work carried out by some Orientalist scholars around his time Lord Curzon, a Viceroy of India, said the following:

> Our familiarity, not merely with the languages of the people of the East but with their customs, their feelings, their traditions, their history, and religion" [had provided] "the sole basis upon which we are likely to be able to maintain in the future the position we have won.

Said adduces this as evidence for the claim that Orientalism led to imperialism. Said concludes that:

> the metamorphosis of a relatively innocuous philological subspecialty into a capacity for managing political movements, administering colonies, making nearly apocalyptic statements representing the White Man's difficult civilizing mission.

John MacKenzie, in his book *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (1995), has brought out in the open the ahistorical nature and other weaknesses of Said's views. He argues that the West and its various 'Others', far from being mutually exclusive, "were locked into processes of mutual modification" (MacKenzie, 1995, p. 209). The journals studied by Dyson also bear this out. Contrary to Said's claim, many journals show that rather than necessarily promoting ethnocentric, theological, and racial prejudices, Oriental Studies was regarded as an academic subject worthy of attention and respect, and was one of the first fields within European scholarship instrumental in overcoming such prejudices by opening the Western mind to the whole of humanity. This is especially true of those who subscribed to Curatorial Orientalism (see below) or were close to it.

In order to establish a causal relationship between Oriental Studies and imperialism, merely invoking Foucault's extravagant thesis that knowledge always generates power is not enough. The alleged causal relationship makes an empirical claim for which we need to provide an analysis of the impact of Oriental Studies on the thoughts and reasons of the imperial decision-makers at the time they actually entered upon Europe's Oriental adventures. Moreover, we are required to produce evidence that colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism and had a bearing on the actual causal sequence that led in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to the annexation of the Indian territories occupied by the imperial forces. Such analysis based on historical data is simply missing in Said's *Orientalism*. Of course, a complex set of historico-politico-socio-economic factors together with Magisterial Orientalism (see further below) was responsible for British expansion and imperial takeover, but in this nowhere did Philology figure as sufficient cause of imperial conquest.

Finally, some of the historical data alluded to by Said in support of his claim are inaccurate and fail to support the causal relationship. For example, the quotation cited above from the speech of Lord Curzon, who did acknowledge the importance of the work of the Orientalist scholars in helping to manage the Empire in India, was delivered in the House of Lords in 1909, four years after he returned to England from India, and about twenty-five years after the peak of Britain's imperial expansion. Lord Curzon's speech was in fact meant to support the funding of the London School of Oriental Studies for which he was recruited in the school's founding committee. The speech should be construed more as providing *ex post facto* justification based on hindsight rather than expressing the aims, motives and objectives of imperial decision-makers and their conquests at the beginning of British incursion in India.

Dyson's Multiple Causal Mechanism

Instead of looking for a unified theory in our study of cultural encounters, we need to pay close attention to the specific attitudinal, socio-historico-economic structures and causal mechanisms in a given society. Dyson's detailed survey and analysis of the journals reveal the multiplicity of attitudes and mindsets of the British, and describe the "interplay" of these which "formed the fabric of British thought in India…"(Dyson, 2002, p. 24). Surely, this variety of responses cannot be cast into a monolithic orthodoxy of the relationship of exploiter and exploited. (Dyson, 2002, p. 24) In the light of this, Said's one-sided fixation on the thesis of Orientalism appears less convincing than the economic-socio-historico-political *explanations of imperialism* investigated by Dyson and the recent historians, invoking multiple causal mechanism for the explanation of the ultimate triumph of colonial power in India appear to be plausible.

A great deal of new research on Indian economic and social history over the past decades based on empirical data on trade relations, investment, military considerations, rivalry with other colonial powers, protecting British financial interests from nationalist challenges, and so forth, lead us also to quite different conclusions, other than what Said would like us believe, about the explanations of the ultimate triumph of colonial power in India. Many historians, who studied the intervening period, the so-called interlude, between the fall of the Mughal empire and the expansion of British conquest, with which Dyson is mainly concerned, *depicted it less as a period of imperial transition than as a period of maturing,* as an era of long-term transformations and success in the field of education, modernization, local self-government, formation of social order, emergence of certain type of Asian capitalism, and an era in which autonomous growth and indigenous forces of change continued to flow strongly.

Regional historians, such as Muzaffar Alam, Chetan Singh, Iqbal Husain, Kumkum Chatterjee, and others, have shown how political economy in Bengal, Mughal Punjab, Awadh, Rohilkhand, Bihar, Marwar, Karnataka interacted with changing urban and rural societies to form territories. These formations developed into social forces sometimes with the patronage of the Mughals, but more often within expanding circuits of trade harnessing and channelizing the buoyant production and commercial system that flourished under the loose Mughal regime or areas where the Mughal writ had never run. These regional studies have shown that the fall of the Mughals may not have been as catastrophic as it was conventionally portrayed. It is because the eighteenth century has been discovered as an age of social and cultural creativity, and in places, efflorescence. The Mughal empire did not collapse leaving disorder behind, rather, it gave way to regional formations of power which developed under its administration and on its periphery.

Of course, shored up by Indian revenues, Britain's political domination and military power were in ascendancy. Undoubtedly, Britain derived large advantages from, what some historians termed, "drain of wealth," which started with Bengal's revenue yielding ₤3 million at the time of Clive around 1765 and rising to ₤22 million by 1818. Besides, the character of Indian economy changed from a primarily self-subsisting one to its integration with the world market serving the needs of the colonial master: exporting raw materials, such as cotton, opium etc. and importing finished goods, such as Manchester textiles. Nevertheless, a form of indigenous capitalism (the underlying currents of petty commodity production, marketing), during, what William Sleeman calls the "Age of the bania," helped to frustrate the more grandiose economic plans of the British. C.A. Bayly says:

> Zamindar entrepreneurs denied labour to planters; European business houses rarely penetrated beneath the intricately layered network of Indian merchants and financiers; village magnates fought off the colonial state's attempts to extract the wealth of the rural elites in the style of Meiji Japan… the first half of the nineteenth century was a crucial period of the formation, by hammer and blows from outside, of the Indian peasantry. But ultimately, the resilience of country people is what must be emphasized…peasants continued to adapt in a creative way to their environment…The resistance movements throughout the nineteenth century were directed against more privileged groups of Indians as often as the British. In their turn, even the tribal, the low-caste farmer or the poor Muslim weaver created political strategies to protect their livelihood and communities… All attested to the vitality of the societies of the Indian subcontinent which survived, adapted and consolidated through the great changes which accompanied the twilight of the Indian state…
>
> (Bayly, 1998, pp. 204_206)

These eighteenth-century political and economic innovations, as well as social and cultural change, may indeed comprise the onset of Indian modernity and nationality, before colonialism. Dyson's detailed study of the journals demonstrates the existence of the multiplicity of regional cultures, social groups and relationships, and reflects the responses of the British men and women with different mind-sets to these. Surely this variety of responses cannot justify a monolithic orthodoxy of the relationship of exploiter and exploited.

The Third Feature of Dyson's Alternative Framework Emphasizes the fact that the Study of Cultural Encounter Cannot Rest Entirely on the Cult of the Victim and on the Thesis that the Response to "the Other"

Said's Thesis

This again contradicts Said's thesis. Said claims that the construction of the identity of every culture involves establishing opposites. Thus, Orientalism helped define Europe's self-image. Orientalism led the West to see Islamic culture as eternal, uniform, and incapable of defining itself, hence as static in both time and place. In contrast Europe was viewed as a dynamic, innovative, expanding culture, superior both culturally and intellectually. Thus, the West can assume the role of the spectator, the judge and jury of every facet of Oriental behavior.

In order to justify his thesis, Said fell back on the idea of "the Other" (*outrui*) or alterity originally developed by the French thinker, Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas emphasizes the lack of reciprocity, unlikeness, asymmetry and incommensurability between the Stranger (*L'Etranger*), the Other (*outrui*) and oneself (*le chez soi*), as the former disturbs or ruptures the being at home with oneself. This idea is based on the epistemological assumption of a persistent school of thought in western philosophy and psychology, especially the Structuralist, Freudian and Marxist theories, rather than on historical facts. According to Levinas the need for an "Other" is based on an epistemological assumption and built into human nature at both the individual and collective levels: an individual's self-concept emerges only when one recognizes himself as separate from and different from others. Cultures need to go through an analogous process, and hence must identify themselves through an alter ego. Moreover, Levinas interprets the Western tradition, especially its politics and ethics, as an attempt to appropriate, comprehend, master, contain, dominate, suppress, or repress what presents itself as "the Other". This violent alterity of "the Other" is manifested in imperialism and colonization.

Arbitrary Choice of Logic and Flawed Historical Grounds

The underlying epistemological assumption of the thesis of "the Other" is flawed both on conceptual and historical grounds. Conceptually, as Derrida, Hannah Arendt, Alasdair MacIntyre and Richard J. Bernstein have pointed out, the idea of "the Other" appeals to the *logic* of "either / or", rather than "both / and". From their writings one can formulate the following line of argument that strongly denounces Said's arbitrary choice of this logic. They maintain that acknowledging the radical or irreducible alterity of "the Other" does not mean that the relationship between "I" or "we" and its "other" is asymmetrical or the terms of this relation represent windowless monads completely impenetrable to each other – after all an asymmetrical relation is still a relation.

The thesis that cultural identity necessarily depends on a comparison with "the Other" is flawed on *historical grounds* too. A perusal of the history of Western culture for the last one thousand years would indicate that Europeans did not primarily draw their identity based on a contrast with other cultures. It was derived instead from their own heritage, historical references to their earlier selves, although occasionally there were attempts to distinguish themselves from the barbarians of the world. Europeans primarily identify themselves as joint heirs of classical Greece and Christianity, each tempered by the fluxes of medieval scholasticism, even the Arab influence on the European Renaissance, the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Modernism.

Dyson claims that attention to details is necessary to get to the texture of reality. In spite of the colonial connection and the exploitation that went with it and despite many divisive tendencies

that the West and the "Orient" exhibit, the Indo-British encounter as revealed by Dyson's detailed research definitely offers us a model which shows that with more intellectual and spiritual resources different cultures are capable of dealing with the problem of the "other" as they learn how to become more tolerant and open-minded. Dyson's work offers a more hopeful model for cultural encounter than Said's *Orientalism*.

Further Criticism of Said's Thesis

Said's *Orientalism* has many critics. Amartya Sen, in his two articles, entitled "India and the West" (Sen, 1993) and "Indian Traditions and the Western Imagination" (Sen, 1997), differed with Said about his views on "Western characterization of the Orient" only in Said's terms.

Said's Orientalism is Based on Inappropriate Methodological and Theoretical Assumptions and Incongruous Theories

As Sen points out, Said is not so concerned with "the correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, as with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient". But then "a dissimilarity of perceptions has been an important characteristic of Western interpretations of India" and unless "one chooses to focus on the evolution of a specific conceptual tradition (as Said, in effect, does) "internal consistency" is precisely the thing that is terribly hard to find in the variety of Western conceptions of India." (Sen 1997, p. 3)

Sen's Threefold Categorization of Western Attitudes and its Extension

Sen, then, goes on to distinguish at least three different, contrasting and competing approaches to understanding India: the *magisterial*, the *curatorial*, and the *exoticist*. Sen does not claim any definitive and exhaustive status to his threefold categorization of the Western approaches to the understanding of India: "other categories can be proposed that are not covered by any of the three. Also, established approaches can be reclassified according to some other organizing principle." (Sen 1997, p, 3). What concerns Sen more is the overall effect of these Western conceptions on the self-perception of the Indians themselves. He argues that while the *magisterial* conception originating in India's colonial past makes Indians pay continued deference to what is valued in the West, an exaggerated emphasis on the *exoticist* approach has been responsible for focusing more on the mystical and the anti-rationalist aspect by Westerners at the expense of almost total neglect of the rationalist, humanist, and less religious parts of the Indian intellectual tradition concerned with a form of life here and now. (Sen, 1993, p. 9).

One can see a multiplicity of Western understandings of the Orient and the possibility of multiple categorization in Dyson's book. In order to see the validity of this multiple categorization, we may keep Sen's threefold classification also in mind and observe that a historically sensitive approach, such as Dyson's, would find various shades between Sen's three categories, sometimes crisscrossing and overlapping, depending on the journal writers' earlier background and mindset that shaped her/his perception of India and Indians.

A schematic representation of the spread of these categories with detailed explanations has been given Figure 1.

Figure 1
Schematic Representation of Categories
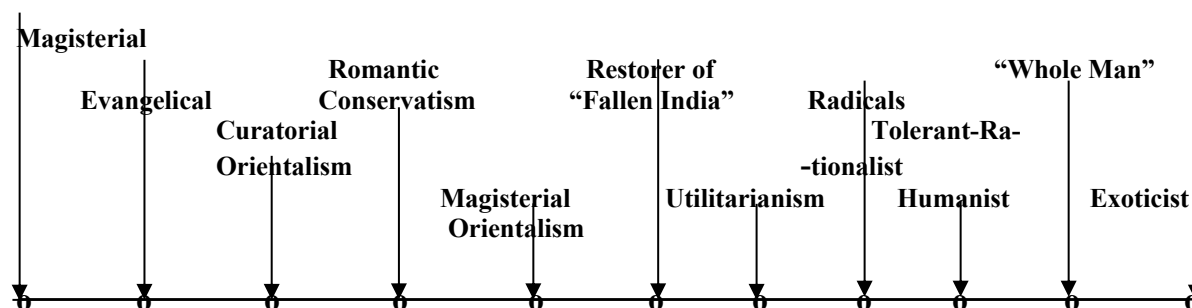
Let us explain and elaborate the three categories suggested by Sen along with the various shades of categories in between as can be found in Dyson's more historically sensitive work.

Magisterial Category

So-called by Sen, because it "relates to the exercise of imperial power and sees India as a subject territory from the point of view of its British governors"; trying to bring a rather barbaric nation under the benign and reformist administration of the British empire. This attitude is best exemplified in James Mill (in his *History of British India*, 1817) and Lord Macaulay (in his *"Minute on Indian Education", 1835*). Among the journal writers whom Dyson studies, the strongest articulation of this attitude can be found in Victor Jacquemont and the Marquess of Hastings, especially the Marquess' passages on Hindu inferiority.

Evangelical Category

Characterizing those who had a "monomania" for salvation through the Christian faith, undertook a self-righteous crusade for missionary activities in India, and showered "savage scorn" on all religious groups in India, especially Hindus and Muslims. Perhaps the best person illustrating this category would be Henry Martin.

Curatorial Approach: A Brand of Orientalism Represented by Sir William Jones

In Sen's terms this approach is the most "catholic", does not look for "the strange" or what has the most "exhibit value" in the culture, is not necessarily "weighed down by the impact of the ruler's priorities," and is relatively free "from preconceptions."

In 1783 a brilliant young Englishman, William Jones, arrived in Calcutta and was appointed judge in Calcutta. Jones became the first Western scholar to recognize the relationship of Sanskrit, the classical language of India, to Latin and Greek in Europe, and to suggest a common linguistic ancestor. As a result of this discovery, the attention of many European scholars was drawn to the vast literature in the Sanskrit language, and hence much of the recondite lore of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and other ancient Hindu writings became objects of study in the West. Under his editorship the publication of the *Asiatik Researches* left India with a legacy of systematic research and regular publications and with a wealth of knowledge about her past.

Many significant contributions in translation of classical Sanskrit texts and related publications by Charles Wilkins, Horace Hayman Wilson, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, and Carl W. F. von Schlegel followed. Their efforts brought about an "Oriental Renaissance" in the West and cultural revolution in India and reinforced the conviction that the British and Indian interests could be reconciled.

Romanticist Conservatism

Those who combined within themselves, on the one hand, a "Linnaean impulse, nature-Romanticism" and knowledge of the Oriental response to nature, and, on the other, a clamour for the conversion of India sunk in barbarism. They made passionate plea for changing India altogether and believed that the British were involved in India for three reasons: proliferating British commerce, ensuring Indian political stability, and the propagation of Christinity.

Magisterial Orientalism of Warren Hastings

The British hoped to find in the priestly interpretations of some fundamental religious texts the legitimacy and authority for the personal laws of various Indian communities. When British authority was installed in Bengal under Warren Hastings, its first priority was to unravel the labyrinth of local custom and legislation by studying the ancient shastras in order to develop a set of legal principles that would assist them in adjudicating disputes within Indian civil society. They realized that for this task the knowledge of Sanskrit and other languages of their subjects would be the key to dominion. For this purpose several institutions were established: an oriental college at Fort William for the training of civil servants, a printing press at Calcutta, a Sanskrit college at Benares, and in 1784, the establishment of the famous Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Restorers of "Fallen India"

The proponents of this view subscribe to the following: they were secretly proud of India's past and of British Orientalist research. They were too conscious of the duties of a beneficial imperial government, Britain's special obligation to India, and the necessity of making amends for the injuries done to Indians by the British.

Utilitarianism: T. B. Macaulay, Lord Dalhousie

It was represented by those who were dissatisfied with static Indian institutions and social structure. They suggested a program of reforms, which had at its heart the doctrine of improvement in terms of legislation and greater power of government. They subscribed to the belief that society could be changed by effective law and a strong centralized government. T. B. Macaulay and Lord Dalhousie were able to execute radical utilitarian policies. Their initiative were responsible for establishing the infrastructure of a modern state: (a) railways (b) telegraph (c) universities.

Radicals: The Marquess of Hastings

The Marquess of Hastings was imbued with a sense of purpose in establishing new institutions, and still more such dispositions, as will promote the happiness of the vast population of this country.

Tolerant-Rationalist-Humanist of the Enlightenment Era

Maria Graham's journals reflect a mind "moulded by the tradition of the Enlightenment, distinguished by …urbanity, and intellectual interests, particularly her curiosity about Indian philosophy and religion, and her shrewd comments on the British communities. She wanted India to rise to her "former grandeur and refinement".

"Whole Man" With the Elizabethan Spirit Combining the Best of the East and the West

Piercing the veil of mystery and exclusion that hung over much of India and rejecting the theory that the Indians were inferior in civilization to the Europeans and needed to be civilized by the British, William Henry Sleeman took the approach of empathetic understanding, affection and loyalty to "the people of this fine land"; showed evidence of intense sympathy, happiness and

anguish for every individual; and upheld the belief in the essential equality and universality of human nature.

The Exoticist Approach

According to Sen, the "exoticist category" concentrate(s) on the wondrous aspects of India" focuses on what is different, strange in the country that, as Hegel put it, has existed for millennia in the imagination of the Europeans.

Many journals are full of accounts of fantastic Indian achievements and objects: unique religious practices and beliefs, (e.g. a deity like *Kali*, Hindu mythologies or *Sufism*) or objects of culture (such as Indian iconography, dance forms like the cabaret aspect of the *nautch*, musical instruments, exotic dresses and ornaments of the aristocratic as well as tribal men and women).

Conclusion

The extension of Sen's threefold categorization and the collage of British perceptions and the viewpoints, implicit in their "Indian journals" may lead us to conclude that we are now in a position to look at the British-Indian cultural encounter from a better perspective. The historical data about the evidence on racial prejudice, cultural arrogance, and the philosophy of imperialism that may cause embarrassment to the British balance the data relating to the evidence on social, moral, and religious resurgence in India of the period which makes Indians proud such that there is no scope for one group to rejoice at the expense of the other at the net result.

The "hegemonic Saidian cult" has taught many to "denigrate the "Orientalist" interests of such men," push such "excellent scholarship into the margins" and be dismissive of their contributions in promoting cultural understanding by endorsing an approach to the study of cultural encounter based entirely on the cult of the victim, and the thesis that the response to the "Other" necessarily implies hostility. The alternative point of view articulated by Dyson and Sen (i) demonstrate the *grounds* for the one-sided fixation and strident tone that can be found in Said's *Orientalism* and (ii) provide evidence that cultural encounters need not necessarily imply discordant posturing. Imperial tyranny and cultural conceit notwithstanding, many, including Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi, refused to malign Western people and culture, although they bitterly fought the British administration.

Which model do we adopt? Do we adopt the one that offers us a chance to deal with the "other" with empathy, or do we adopt a model that forecloses the possibility of reconciliation? For the model that we adopt will certainly influence the outcome of our efforts. I think towards the end of his life Said did realize that the model he had earlier offered had somehow failed the Palestinians, that it was not altogether the best one for Palestinians to work with, in order to achieve what they wanted to achieve. Dyson's book and Sen's work may counter Saidian tendencies by demonstrating that the British indeed had a pluralist understanding of India as revealed by their narratives.

The multiplicity of British attitudes towards India as discussed above – Sen's threefold categorization and the various shades of Sen's three categories arising out of Dyson's more historically sensitive account – makes us skeptical about Said's claim for the linear causal relation: that Orientalism helped produce European imperialism.

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