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Questioning Neo-Orientalism: A Study of Diverse Bicultural Responses of Emigrants in Tariq Ali's *Iranian Nights*

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	This research paper is the study of different structures of Neo-Orientalism and their opposite responses in the characters of *Father* and *Son* by application of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The dawn of modern age has brought with it new discourses of Orientalism based upon power structure (power/knowledge) where the physical colonization is not the only tool of colonization. In this phase, Islam and Islamophobia has become the new Orient, new ghost, which is generalized and reinforced by Western means of image production. Similarly, the power structures of Orientalist discourses are more hidden, complicated and powerful. They are like the air; easy to breathe and difficult to recognize. The paper questions bicultural identity of emigrants within Neo-Oriental propaganda produced in West and emigrants' traumatic experience as a result. The paper further enhances Franz Fanon's concept of "nervous conditions" by locating it within Neo-Oriental discourse since "nervous conditions" are not only confined to colonial violence. This paper stretches the concept of "nervous conditions" beyond simple colonial rule, nervousness and national revolution. The paper takes "nervous conditions" to the dilemmas of hybrid Muslim emigrants in West by defining them as "Natives" and highlighting new forms of colonial discourse in West in terms of Image production of Islam by commenting at the same time on the term "Post-Colonialism." "Is the post really post?"

Introduction

The paper deals with two different responses towards Neo-Orientalism in the Characters of *Father* and *Son*. *Father* gives his response by unconscious acknowledgement and reinforcement of the discourse of Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism while *Son*'s response lies in his reactionary comeback to staunch Islamic

roots. My thesis statement is this that both of them are suffering from "nervous conditions" in their own way (Sartre 19).

Franz Fanon's concept of "nervous conditions" usually refers to a form of an unconscious anxiety, illness or an actual physical disorder. At one level it means to acknowledge Western discourse of Orient/Occident, superior/inferior consciously or unconsciously through ideological state apparatuses. On other level, it means the repressed psychic condition which "Native" furies out in the form of violence. The book looks at what it might feel like to be colonized – to be the "native" in a colonial system. In play's context, (I take it as) what it is to be a Muslim emigrant, suffering from mental colonization and traumas, and to live in West among Orientalist discourses according to which the Neo-Orient/Muslims are fundamentalists. His idea is to imply that the political and social situation the "Native"/emigrants find themselves in have a very real and penetrating influence on their lives – an effect which can be seen in their attitudes. The concept suggests that being native/Muslim emigrant is complex and the identity of being native/Muslim emigrant is not fixed but rather a process of coming to terms with a conflicting environment.

Black Skin, White Masks by Frantz Fanon, is a learning of the psychology lying in ideology of difference and inhumanity innate in conditions of colonial domination. He applied psychoanalysis to elaborate the spirits of dependency and inadequacy that Black people experience in a White world. That the alienated self-view of the Black Subject who has misplaced his native origin and had embraced the culture of the Mother Country, produces an inferiority complex in the mind of the Black Subject, who tries to appropriate and imitate the culture of the colonizer. Such behavior, more and less, reflects in the educated black people who want to acquire status within the world of the colonizer/West, by acquiring an education abroad and by the perfection of the language of the colonizer. "The Negro and Psychopathology", presents brief, deep psychoanalyses of colonized black people. The basic idea of Fanon is to highlight the inability of black people to fit into the norms (social, cultural, racial) established by white society. As a normal Negro child, the idea when it enters into the colonizer's white world becomes abnormal. Native becomes anything opposite to normal. In a white society, an extreme psychological response originates from the unconscious and unnatural training of black people, from early childhood, to associate "blackness" with "wrongness". That such unconscious mental training of black children is effected with comic books and cartoons. This cultural media is fixed in the mind of black and white child equally. Western society represents black people as villains. Moreover, when children like Ahmed are exposed to such images of villainous black people, the children experience a psychological trauma, which becomes a scar inherent to their individual psyche. This is called the early-life suffering of what Fanon calls "psychopathology" in blacks/browns.

Literature Review

In reviewing literature, the most important work is of Edward Said. Orientalism has been changing its shapes from the beginning of time. The means of production has changed the modes of image production but the face is the same. There is an Orient and an Occident. The relationship between Orient and Occident has been the same. It is based upon power and knowledge. But the identity of Orient and

Occident is not fixed. In different times Orient and Occident has been different. Therefore, the enactment/reflections of Orient/Occident and hegemony can be seen in emigrants' case in Tariq Ali's *Iranian Nights*. The same structures are repeated over and over in different forms. Edward Said says:

Islam remained forever the Orientalist's idea (or type) of *original* cultural effrontery, aggravated naturally by the fear that Islamic civilization originally (as well as contemporaneously) continued to stand somehow opposed to the Christian West. (Said, 237)

These images/stereotypes of primitive Muslims as violent one are blurred reality on mass media which psychologically disturbs Orient and causes him not only to acknowledge Western culture as superior one as in the case of *Father* but in some cases provokes them to the edge of violence and terrorism as it is in the case of *Son*. The play deals with these two responses. These Neo-Orientalist discourses cause frustration in East and West alike. They place them against each other.

Franz Fanon was the first one who discussed psychological trauma of colonized people [and in my case emigrants in the same conditions as colonized people]. He discussed the psychological and psychiatric effects of dehumanizing effects of colonization in two different psychological conditions. One is the repressed state of mind of the culturally dislocated colonized [in my case *Son*] that leads him to the use of violence. This violence is justified since it is the only way through which they unfold their traumatic mind. In *The Wretched of the Earth*'s first chapter, "Concerning Violence", wherein Fanon talks about colonial and its post-colonial legacies, for which violence is a means of catharsis and liberation from being a colonial subject. Use of violence is based upon Native's sense of claiming his culture, his land, his identity and his manhood. This is also true in case of fundamentalists. Ahmed's attempt to use violence is based upon his sense of physical and mental hegemony he experiences by West and claims his own identity and manhood. Sartre says:

Civilians come to take over his land and force him by dint of flogging to till the land for them. If he shows fight, the soldiers fire and he's a dead man; if he gives in, he degrades himself and he is no longer a man at all. Shame and fear will split up his character and make his inmost self fall to pieces. (Sartre, 15)

The other important work of the related field is of Mimicry and Man from *The Location of Culture*. Mimicry is, then, "the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which "appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses a threat to both 'normalized' knowledge and disciplinary powers. (Bhabha 86) […] Mimicry is at once resemblance and menace. The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority. And it is a double vision that is a result of what I've described as the partial representation/recognition of the colonial object. (Bhabha, 88) *Father* of *Iranian Nights* is a mimic man with his consent.

Immigrant's experience is the new form of colonial legacy because of the nature of relationship between East and West where the colonization has changed its form from physical to mental and economic colonization. If colonization is a reality, Immigration is too. According to "Changing Attitudes toward Immigration in Europe, 2002-2007: A Dynamic Group Conflict Theory": "Immigration is one of the most important and influential social processes taking place in many countries, mainly in Europe and North America, at present" (Meuleman, 357).

Feldmeyer in his "Immigration and violence: The Offsetting Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Latino Violence" tries to highlight friction between immigrants and host country. He talks about different examples from history where "immigrations today and throughout history have contributed a diverse and rich set of cultural norms, values, and practices. […] immigration poses many problems for both the hosting society as well as for the immigrants" (717).

Kimbro's "Acculturation in Context: Gender, Age Ate Migration, Neighborhood Ethnicity, and Health Behavior" talks about some of the problems emigrants bring with them or they produce as a result of cultural clash: "Typical problems may be crime, violence, mental health issues, poverty, welfare and health among others. Much academic literature is devoted to the difficulties immigrants have in coping with acculturation (1148).

Stronik and Lalonde in their article "Bicultural Identity Conflict in Second-Generation Asian Canadians" try to connect the experience of immigration directly with the experience of Identity and violence as a result.

Arends-Toth and Van de Vijney's article: "Cultural Differences in Family, Marital, and Gender-role Values among Immigrants and Majority Members in the Netherlands" also talks about the biracial conflict not only in groups but between the family members. The majority of bicultural conflict studies have described a broad range of conflicts associated with simultaneous membership in two distinct cultural groups: conflicts between values, behaviors, and expectations of heritage and mainstream cultures. (163)

Pargeter ticks on the right point in "North African Immigrants in Europe and Political Violence" where unfortunately one possible trajectory may be joining radical groups which promote political violence and the use of terror as part of establishing a new identity (735). This new identity differs both from the original culture as well as from the host culture.

There is also a counter argument to this research in Liht and Savage's "Identifying Young Muslims Susceptible to Violent Radicalization: Psychological Theory and Recommendations.": "Based on terrorism research, it is also possible to suggest that establishing a new identity and developing identification with radical groups are -in most cases- not enough to lead to political radicalism or terrorism (15). Studies on political radicalism and terrorism have indicated that, in most cases, terrorists do not operate on their own initiative (18).

The above researches on Islam, terrorism and emigrants provide the basic link between bicultural experience, identity, and psychological conditions of the

immigrants. The researches about the Immigrants and Islam are particularly objective and do not mention West's own contribution is physical and emotional abuse of the emigrants. In many researches merely statistics of terrorism are justified. The above research discusses the "nervous conditions" of colonized people only. This paper enhances the concept of nervousness beyond colonial context and questions on the reliability of the term Post-Colonial.

Material and Methods

This research paper is using soft data in the form of articles, reviews, books, theoretical works of critics, psychologists, online data bases, and the photographs of actors from Bandung Production of *Iranian Nights*. In this paper, terrorism is not simply wrong notion of a religious group or particularly Islamic group which sentimental and ethnic groups' articles talk about. This research paper will explore identity in extremism on individual psychological level. This topic is the mixture of many paradigms such as politics and sociology but this paper brings all the paradigms to ultimately psychological ground since psychological paradigm covers all the other paradigms as a matter of fact. There is a constant zoom in and zoom out of both characters. It is very difficult to apply one theory on a broader topic, but a framework of Edward Said's *Orientalism* fits to the whole topic.

The transformation from Caliph-as-Mullah to Caliph-as-*Father* is based upon difference of role and setting. The setting is the journey from East to West, from confinement to freedom. The idea of this change in setting is based upon the difference between East and West. The false consciousness which acknowledges East as confinement and West as freedom reflects itself in writer/Father/Caliph's false consciousness according to which "East is East and West is West." They consciously and unconsciously acknowledge this Orientalist discourse. Before transforming into *Father*'s role, Caliph sings a song which reflects Orientalist discourse. The song strongly creates the binary of East/West based upon superior/inferior:

> Oh but I weary
> Of my tyranny
> Forcing this woman to sing to me
> I weary of holy purity
> In a land of Third World poverty—
> I'll go to the West and be free
> Yes I'll join the immigrants
> I'll put on Western pants
> I'll enter England illegally
> I'll no longer be a king
> I'll have nothing
> Nothing at all. I'll be
> An Easter in the West—
> I'll sweat, I'll save, I'll do my best
> As Americans say, suck it and see
> I'll live in Bradford, Yorkshire
> I'll drink a lot of English beer
> And I will raise a family

Of heroic sons, proud of me
Free of prejudice, free of poverty
True sons of liberty. (Ali n. Pag)

At this stage, *Father* is convinced that he will be able to totally reinvent himself, merely by changing his context from East to West: Father, poor rural man believes that West will educate him. He believes this "new self" will now be able to assert itself because he has left the "old self" behind him. His understanding of West is an attempt to come to term with his own self. He associates something better and good with his new own self. He struggles to come to make sense of his life in the various contexts he finds himself in. He attempts to understand who he truly is. The story from East to West is the story of unfolding identity.

The song carries the emigrant's burden and the Orientalist discourse of East/West, inferior/superior, prison/liberty. *Father* reflects all the fathers who have acknowledged colonizer's structures without knowing them. He is nervous as he is not able to recognize the politics of colonial structures and education in the West. So out of ignorance, *Father* "enjoyed his beer and said his prayers. […] His wildest dream came true. The older boy brilliant at Maths went to King's College Cambridge" (Ali n. Pag). Fanon says that the colonized Natives/[Emigrants] cannot truly choose between their own indigenous culture and that of the European because in order to survive "they must have both. Two worlds (…) the status of native/Muslim Emigrants is a nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler among colonized people/Emigrants with their consent" (Sartre 18) What Sartre is trying to say here is that it is the colonizer/West that introduces the "nervous condition" by importing a foreign culture, but then who also maintains that feeling of insecurity. In other words, the settler has an interest in promoting the instability of the native/Emigrant. The settler would naturally want to retain control over the colonized people/Emigrant. At the same time the Emigrants may begin to accept the culture of the West in order to ensure their existence and this causes further fragmentation of identity and further psychological unease or "nervousness" amongst the Emigrants. This uneasy response can be seen in *Father* and *Son*'s character. Sartre's idea that some colonized people consent to their "nervous condition" is clearly illustrated by the character of *Father*. He, admires Western culture. He reflects his ideas about West when he says: "I gave you the key to an enlighted world, you have thrown it away. And now you shout and scream murder and death and 'Kill the poet'" (n. Pag).

The image production of Islam by the West/Neo-Orientalism has altered the reality of Eastern and Western alike. At one hand emigrants like father has begun to see image of "mullahs" from Western point of view according to which all the mullahs are primitive, fanatic and hypersexual.

The other response to Neo-Orientalism can be seen in *Son*'s character who returns to his own indigenous beliefs by rejecting the Western one when he sees the violence of West both in terms of violent images of Islam and people's response towards it. This point is the point of decision for him. According to Sartre, "West seeks to dehumanize them. Everything will be done to wipe out their traditions, to substitute our language for theirs and to destroy their culture without them ours" [In case of emigrants] (14). As Ahmed is not able to locate himself anywhere in Western culture, he returns back to his own religious roots although fundamental one.

According to Fanon, it is colonizer's violence on Native's traumatic mind which he tries to balance through the use of violence which later turns into national liberation movements. In the context of Ahmed, it is this guilt and hatred of abuse on the part of West which becomes a cause of his fundamentalism. He admits that the fundamentalism is based upon resentment about the reality of emigrant's identity and reality of English citizen's identity. It is the ideology of difference that is the cause of his fundamentalism. It has caused extreme racist response in common people from common hatred to strong acts of violence. He is also "nervous" and tries to balance this nervousness by the use of threat.

As explained in the above example, Neo-Orientalism is based upon power. It evokes the white man's burden so he may tease Orient/Ahmed if it may not educate him. The effect of Neo-Orientalism is two sided. It prepares hatred for each other and keeps the foundation of endless battle of ideologies.

Neo-Orientalist response in England causes Ahmed to think extremely categorically. This response both in East and West reinforces the idea of categories, boundaries and sectors. The clash of these responses is against each other. The clash of these responses ends in extreme nationalism and ethnicity as he says: "These islands must convert to Islam. Their religion is dead atrophied. Corrupt. "Only a Godless religion could make woman a priest" (Ali n. Pag). When Ahmed talks about Islamic community, he annihilates any other human relationship with any other group based upon humanity or courtesy.

Ahmed sees the part of his own history absent from the books he reads in his college. This is the violence he sees happening to him. The "Culture", "civilization" and "enlightenment" are the concepts which are not belongings to West. These concepts are the result of collective human efforts over centuries. All people contribute to it regardless of class, race and gender. Ahmed finds them as pack of lies adding nothing to his own identity. He cannot digest the idea of enlightenment because in these enlighted books he is portrayed as opposite to enlightenment. Inability of West to provide space for him to locate himself is the cause of Identity crises and his "nervous conditions." The idea of these books is created by one sided reality not at all based upon co-existence and negotiation. Therefore, he burns those books and decides to write his own by the use of violence. When the source of knowledge is based upon power, the negotiation fails which Ahmed has realized.

The Neo-Orientalist response causes the conflict between family, communities and cultures equally. How the characters see themselves and others and how their opinions of themselves influence their behavior and their actions. In this play, there is a greater focus on the specific personal relationships formed by different nervous responses between people of the same family.

The war of stereotypes is going on with the ideological war between the *Father* and *Son*. *Son*'s stereotype of West as merely a Godless country and the *Father*'s image of mullahs as "ignorant, corrupt and hypocritical" (Ali n. Pag). Both responses are invoked as the reaction to Neo-Orientalism and as the result to traumatic moments [Son's beating and father' experience of seeing village's Mullah with the goat] of their life. These opposite responses and different versions of reality create an unbridgeable

gap between *Father* and Ahmed. Hence, Opposite Orientalist response creates a binary within the Orient which is more complicated and are in conflict. For example:

Scheherezade. There they stood. Father and Son. Father more angry than Son. Son more angry than Father. The father grieving. The son hating. Shocked, at a loss. Cripped by a rage beyond their control. The gulf between them grew and grew. Helpless in decision they denied they were father and Son. (Ali n. Pag)

The book is the recurrent motif in the later part of the play. It invokes two different kind of response in *Father* and *Son*. *Father* takes book symbolically. It is a signifier which refers to enlightened world of West. It is his naivety based upon poverty that he does not take book as anything other than Western, knowledge or Enlightenment. To claim West as a place of Enlightenment is not only based upon racism but the very idea reinforces the idea that West is the enlightenment. By acknowledging West as the place of Enlightenment, he misses his own history where West borrowed[1] from East. All kind of knowledge is not superior. Everything which comes from the West is not superior. Father is naïve and is "nervous" For example:

Father. My son, I am ashamed when I see you on television burning books. I grew up in Mirpur, illiterate, unread, desperate for knowledge. I worked fourteen hours a day and many nights to give you something I never had. So proud, at school your teacher said, "your boy is brilliant at maths," so proud when you got your scholarship to Cambridge. […] I gave you the key to an enlightened world, you have thrown it away. And now you shout and scream murder and death and 'kill the poet.' (Ali n. Pag)

Son also takes it as something which solely belongs to heathen. He takes it as pack of lies in which he is ridiculed as ridiculous creature. He takes it as a part of history from which he is entirely absent. He takes book as an attack on his culture and religion. Different reality of books for the major characters can be seen in the following example. For example:

Son. A book burns and the unbeliever run in fear.
Father. A book burns and we are all ashamed. (Ali n. pag)

In order to compensate for humility and the insult imposed upon him by West from cultural violence to strong physical violence, he uses violence or perhaps the threat of violence since the hierarchy of East and West is based upon violence. As West does not understand language of negotiation he uses language of Force. He believes as Fanon says, Native retains his respect through use of violence. It is the violence through which he tries to decolonize himself both physically and mentally [in case of immigrants he frees himself from the influence of West]. But the example proves that the use of threat reinforces all kind of stereotype according to which Arab is a land of magic carpets and is a place of oppression. For example:

A few threats, and the Enlightenment is forgotten. Their intellectuals flop to the floor in pools of jelly. Sorry Mr. Black Man, sir, we didn't mean to offend your religion, sir. Your Book is great, sir, much better this punk poet. If we stop printing

his verses will you promise to go back to your corner and do whatever it is you do with your religion? We like it really. Feel free to fly around on your magic carpet. Free speech. They cut their tongues out. God is great! God is great! (Ali n. Pag)

Father and Son's response is different due to different reasons. One reason for *Father*'s naivity to not understand politics of Western education is due to his poor village background. For him, so he is doubly influenced by West and has rationalized Oriental and Neo-Oriental discourse. Furthermore, his childhood dilemma of seeing village mullah with the goat does not make him reconcile to his religious culture. And he also contributes to the idea of mullah as hypocritical one. The part of experience that *Father* has seen is absent from *Son*'s life. So, it is easy for him to reconcile to roots without being doubtful of any indigenous practice. So, he easily accepts the version of Islam he is taught. 3rdly, difference between the two responses is of age. Where father, because of his age, reconcile to the situation inspite of his humiliation by abusing Ahmed reacts to it because of his age. He has no childhood trauma which may shock his sense of mullah and Islam. Their version of reality may be good or bad but these are the reality through which they see.

If we look at Bandung production of *Iranian Nights* the selection of the characters for the role and their appearance is very important. In this production character's appearance describes their thought. Since Father's thought is crippled by the Orientalist discourse he is portrayed as cripple dwarf. Son's appearance is primitive like mullah, so, he also thinks primitively in terms of fanatic mullahs.

Appearance is Thought

Is *Father*'s unfolded journey of identity is the autobiography of Tariq Ali in the form of father's own acknowledgement of Western superiority and Orientatlist discourse? The writer himself has this false consciousness. Tariq Ali's politics of Islam is itself complicated. He stated in *Islam, Empire, and the Left: Conversation with Tariq Ali*:

"I grew up an atheist. I make no secret of it. It was acceptable. In fact, when I think back, none of my friends were believers. None of them were religious; maybe a few were believers. But very few were religious in temperament."

Conclusion

Present Orientalist structure has changed the shape of simple Orient/Occident binary. It has created binary within Orient with its endless conflict. The relationship of binary within the Orient is much more complex then original Orient/Occident relationship. The paper concludes that narrative of Orient/Occident also comes from Orient itself since recurrent generalization of mullah by *Father* and the writer himself reflects Orientalist discourse. A close inspection of political structures of Neo-Orientalism and relocation of Franz Fanon's "nervous conditions" within immigrant's situation questions on the term Post-Colonialism. It proves that term is much political and complicated than it seems.

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