

Gobbet:

(source 4)

This is a video that aims at explaining the concept of Orientalism by Edward Said (1995). It is part of a BBC series of video, 'The A-Z of -isms', that intends to help better understand "some of the world's most important ideas" (BBC, 2019). The BBC, or British Broadcasting Corporation, is one of the most important news and information source worldwide (Sambrook, n.d.), so it is usually a source trusted by most. Other videos of this series tackle the themes of Darwinism, Capitalism, Feminism, Populism or even questions about fake news. All of these are about three minutes long, making them an easy, simple, short watch. The BBC has worked on this specific video with the help of Professor Evelyn Alsultany. Alsultany is an Associate Professor in the Department of American studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. She is one of the leading experts on the history of representations of Arabs and Muslims in the United States (Alsultany, n.d.). Her help becomes clear in this video that focuses especially on Orientalism about Arabs.

Clearly, the whole series wants to explain complicated concepts in no more than three minutes so it is unavoidable that those concepts are somewhat simplified. Two links to Said's lectures on the subject are provided for the more curious audience which overall makes the whole page a good source of information. The video itself explains the origin of the concept and the etymology of the word well. It also tries to show the difference between orientalism and stereotyping, explaining how the former comes from a "much broader set of power relations" (Somethin' Else, 2018). It also states that orientalism is created by the people considered knowledgeable or in power. As you can see several important points are made in the video but first, let us try and focus on the visual side of the video. Real pictures are only used twice and show Edward Said and later on Donald Trump. All of the other humans appearing are faceless, very generic and simple bodies. As I said earlier, this could be linked to the attempt to simplify the idea of orientalism so that it can be explained in a short amount of time, to attract more audience, making it more catchy and 'fun' to watch. Another reason for this choice of graphics could be the fact that this is the explanation of a theory. So without showing any faces or photos of real people, it does not become personal and stays in the realm of theory instead of showing a more direct application to the world, with for example journalistic photographs. This, unfortunately, also distances the viewer from the problem. Instead of questioning themselves, their own prejudices, and behaviors, it is very easy for viewers not to feel concerned about orientalism. This is also emphasized because there are no 'everyday' examples shown in the video. The only examples are about the news and Trump. However, one of the key aspects of orientalism is that it is "collectively maintained" (Said, 1985:141-143). This video does not show how orientalism is engrained in our own everyday lives, or within intellectual's, scholar's discourses (because Trump is definitely not an intellectual). It is not shown how orientalism can be found in

everyone's lives, in the movies we watch or the food we eat, and many other aspects.

All in all, this video is a simplified explanation of the concept of orientalism, it provides information on the origin of the concept and some vague examples of its application. However, I would like to argue that it does not truly defy the 'West versus East' dichotomy, hence it still nurtures an 'us' and 'them' discourse which is what is harmful about orientalism in the first place. Nothing is really said about 'othering' in general, there is no mention that the distinction made between the 'west' and the 'east' is based on a completely false and absurd assumption that there is an 'us' and a 'them'. The last sentence of the video: "orientalism remains powerful because it shapes, not just how people in the West view the East, but also how they view themselves." (Somethin' Else, 2018) clearly uses the 'us' and 'them' type of vocabulary in a paternalizing way, which one could argue only reinforces the problem of orientalism. Just as James Clifford noted that Said's book, for all the power of its criticism still "sometimes appears to mimic the essentializing discourse it attacks" (Clifford, 1980:210), I would like to argue that this BBC video, to a certain extent, does the same.

Moreover, the video presents this whole theory and does not provide the viewer with any example of criticism about orientalism. For the reasons I have explained above, I believe the statements in this video are not completely objective, which in itself is not a problem. However, by not providing or not even mentioning any sort of criticism of this theory, the video seems to pretend to provide its audience with an objective explanation. For example when explaining the difference between orientalism and stereotyping it would have been very easy to add that today there are other 'stereotypings' that also reflect a "much broader set of power relations" (Somethin' Else, 2018). Stereotyping of the First Nation people in the USA, or any group of indigenous people in Latin America, is a sort of stereotyping that is based on the same principles as Orientalism, a stereotyping created and based on specific (usually colonial) power relations. I do not know whether this lack of criticism is intentional, nonetheless, it is very easy to interpret it as a dismissing of other types of discriminations happening in the world, usually to smaller groups of people, or at least not as big as the Muslim population today.

In conclusion, even though, this video provides some information about orientalism and the origin of the theory, it only gives a very narrow view of the whole theory and ideas around orientalism. It might be informative for people who have never heard the concept before, but I think, it definitely lacks nuance and complexity, as well as more engagement. The visual content tries too hard to show the theory in an objective and neutral manner instead of bringing the theory 'closer' to the people. And actually, it is, to some extent, paternalizing the 'East'. In my opinion, this video does not contribute at all to solving problems created by orientalism and other 'otherings', if anything, it nurtures them even more.

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Blogpost:

Dance yourself to existence!



Décadance, by Ohad Naharin and performed by the Batsheva Dance company-Young Ensemble. (Batsheva, 2015)

The arts are a very important tool in political contexts, for governments or authorities to spread their ideologies as propaganda or for people with different ideas as resistance or protest. In this post, I will focus on dancing and suggest that dancing because it engages the human body, is a very powerful tool of resistance. Obviously, dance can also be used to control bodies, to force bodies to conform. After *Black Swan* came out (2010), ballet definitely got know for being an extremely demanding discipline, in which bodies have to conform and be controlled in order to achieve the perfect shape, form, and movement. One could actually draw many comparisons between the practice of ballet and training practices in the army. Uniforms are used in both, pushing ones' physical abilities to the limits, marching or moving in sync as a group, usually strict and demanding teachers, etc. This links to Foucault that I will mention later on in this post. However, what I would like to show and express here is not how bodies are controlled through dance but on the contrary, how they are liberated thanks to dance. To do so, I want to focus on a movement language created by the dancer and choreographer Ohad Naharin: *Gaga*.

Before getting into *Gaga*, let me give a very brief overview of some key idea about power and how the body is used as a form of social control. Michel Foucault is a French philosopher who wrote extensively on this subject. For us today, his idea of the 'docile body' is key (Foucault, 1977). The docile body is a subjected body, the power on the body is exercised in everyday practices, such as our bodies' movements, their place



Last Work, by Ohad Naharin and performed by the Batsheva dance company. (The New York Time Style Magazing, 2015)

within a space, and awareness of time. Concrete examples are: sitting down in front of a desk at school, 'prison-like' compartmentalized structures in hospitals, factories, and schools, or even our eating patterns or the shaving of body hair. Foucault argues that all of these become habits and constitute a "political technology of the body" (Foucault, 1977), that's purpose is to subject bodies so that they become "productive bodies" more easily.

The Gaga movement is a form of dance that aims to help dancers, or anyone, gain more self-awareness through their bodies. Naharin says, in Gaga "we change our movement habits by finding new ones. We go beyond our familiar limits" (Naharin in Gaga Movement, 2019). Gaga is teaching and promoting an active search to break habits on a daily basis. It defies spatial limitations, which is a key element in creating docile bodies, by letting bodies move around freely and be more aware of the body's place within a space and in relation to other bodies. In a Gaga session, there are no mirrors, unlike most ways of teaching dancing in

gaga the aim is to focus on how the movements feel and be aware of the bodies presence and its place in space. Another particularity of Gaga is that there are no breaks in one session, so this 'time organization' and distinction between leisure time and work time is also being deconstructed. It is all about experiencing and playing with texture, speed, form, dynamics, understatements, and overstatements, but most importantly about listening to one's body. "Listen to your body before you tell it what to do"(Naharin, 2016). Listening to one's own body



Ohad Naharin leading a Gaga session, (Gaga Movement Language, 2017)

is in itself already a form of resistance in a world where a very Cartesian way of thinking, with a strong distinction between the mind and the body, is still dominating. Gaga is not about inflicting a difficult or painful task on the body but about moving in accordance *with* the body.

Power is not possessed by anyone, it is exercised. So let's exercise our powers and dance! It is my firm belief that a regular practice of dancing, and especially a movement language like Gaga, is an act of resistance against the 'subjected docile body' that we inflict upon ourselves.

Word count:800 (+3 images)

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