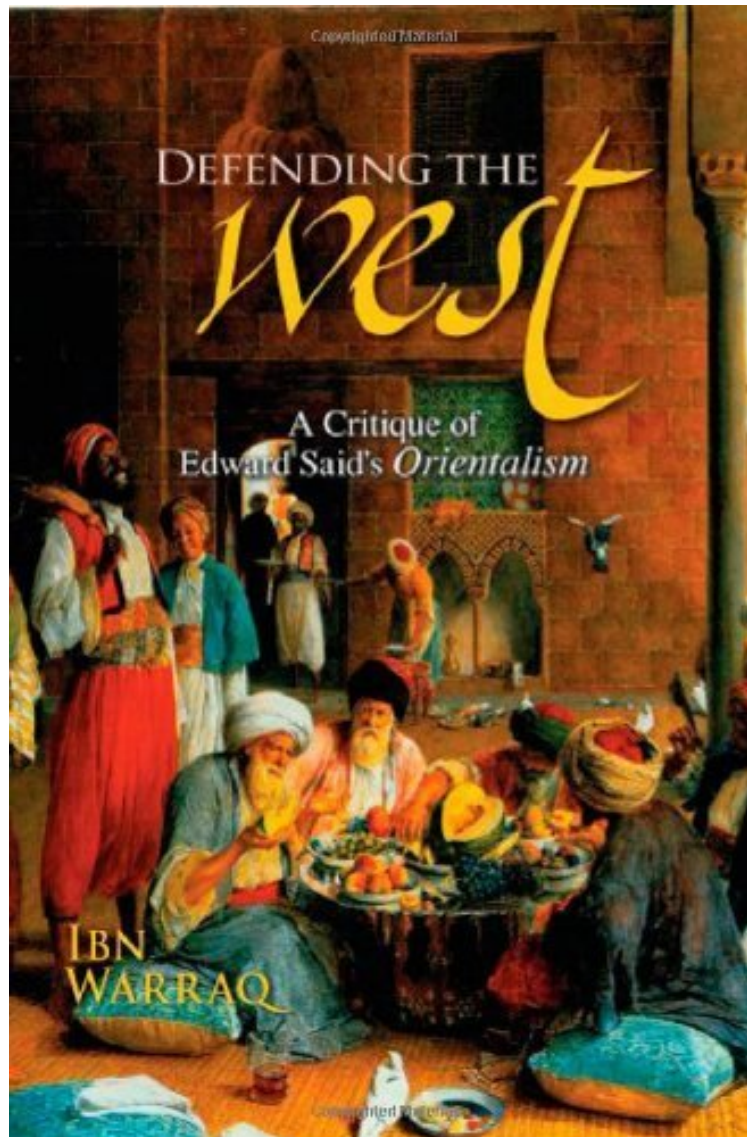


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## Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism: A Critique of Edward Said's 'Orientalism'

Von Ibn Warraq

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Von Ibn Warraq : Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism: A Critique of Edward Said's 'Orientalism' before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism: A Critique of Edward Said's 'Orientalism':

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen8 von 13 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich.

Masterpiece of erudition eloquence Von Peter Uys *Defending The West* is a detailed and devastating critique of Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism* as well as an articulate defense of western scholarship, values and civilization. First published in 1978, *Orientalism* was eagerly embraced by those intellectuals engaged in undermining and denigrating western achievements. The book rubbished the work of occidental scholars from classical antiquity to the British French ones of the 20th century, reducing their contributions to "narratives" aimed at asserting the superiority of the west. Many great historians, linguists, anthropologists artists are falsely accused of colonialism, imperialism and racism in Said's propagandistic text. Ibn Warraq dissects Said's claims from multiple perspectives. For example, Said reduced the term 'orientalism' in three ways: First by geographically narrowing its scope to the Middle East North Africa, in the second place by ignoring the prominent work of German other European Orientalists and thirdly by restricting the field of study to the Islamic cultures of the aforementioned region, for all intents purposes ignoring ancient cultures like those of the Berbers, Chaldeans, Copts, Druze, Jews, Mandaeans, Nubians Zoroastrians. The first pretends that no other oriental cultures exist; the reason for the second was no doubt that Germany never had colonies in the circumscribed region on account of the monumental contribution of German Orientalists. The third betrays a disturbing chauvinism and political motivation on the part of Said. Said's writing is indeed politicizing rhetoric of an accusatory, resentful nature. As Ibn Warraq proves with hundreds of examples, the text of *Orientalism* is rife with contradictions, obscurantism, intellectual dishonesty and gross errors of fact, like the statement that Britain France controlled the Eastern Mediterranean during the closing years of the 1600s! Said never mentions Islamic Imperialism from the 7th century onwards, whether it be Arab, Ottoman or Mughal, nor its effects on Africa, Europe, India and the vanished Buddhist cultures of Central Asia. Contrary to Said's thesis, western scholars were driven by a quest for knowledge, made a beneficial contribution to expanding the corpus of knowledge and in many cases were instrumental in the rescue and revival of cultures on the verge of extinction. Without exception, they respected the peoples cultures that they investigated as also demonstrated by Robert Irwin in *For Lust Of Knowing*. Quoting from Arabic writers like Al-Maqdisi Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Warraq shows that the same cannot be said of oriental scholars. The author argues that the west has an admirable record in its appreciation of the cultures of Asia and proves it by an in-depth survey of how the east is presented in western art, literature music. To mention a few, Austen Layard, Henry Rawlinson, William Jones and Max Miller discovered and restored to various local peoples their forgotten heritage in which they took pride. Ibn Warraq easily refutes Said's misrepresentations by proving that writers from Hesiod Herodotus to Kipling, artists like Delacroix, Decamps Cordier and musicians like Mozart celebrated the orient and affirmed the positive humanity of its people. While praising occidental rationalism, universalism and self-criticism, Ibn Warraq warns that these qualities are being subverted and used to undermine the west. The first may deteriorate into sterile scientism, the second can lead to a loss of rootedness and the third often turns into self-loathing. It was French intellectuals that first embraced Edward Said, people like Foucault who hailed the Ayatollah Khomeini as a great liberator. Today, characters like Michael Moore, Robert Fisk, John Pilger Noam Chomsky are prime purveyors of this mindset. Academia is vulnerable to ideological and financial corruption; universities and think-thanks alike. Departments of Middle Eastern Studies and organizations like The Carter Center have been the recipients of huge amounts of Middle Eastern petrodollars. Martin Kramer exposes the negative impact of Said's work in *Ivory Towers On Sand*. And yet, amongst the most courageous defenders of the West at this time, there are individuals born in Africa, the Middle East and India, like Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Nonie Darwish, Brigitte Gabriel, Kanan Makiya, Fouad Ajami, Dinesh D'Souza and Ibn Warraq himself. Combining consummate erudition with eloquent argumentation, *Defending The West* is a joy to read and an estimable reference source.

Kurzbeschreibung This is the first systematic critique of Edward Said's influential work, *Orientalism*, a book that for almost three decades has received wide acclaim, voluminous commentary, and translation into more than fifteen languages. Said's main thesis was that the Western image of the East was heavily biased by colonialist attitudes, racism, and more than two centuries of political exploitation. Although Said's critique was controversial, the impact of his ideas has been a pervasive rethinking of Western perceptions of Eastern cultures, plus a tendency to view all scholarship in Oriental Studies as tainted by considerations of power and prejudice. In this thorough reconsideration of Said's famous work, Ibn Warraq argues that Said's case against the West is seriously flawed. Warraq accuses Said of not only willfully misinterpreting the work of many scholars, but also of systematically misrepresenting Western civilization as a whole. With example after example, he shows that ever since the Greeks Western civilization has always had a strand in its very makeup that has accepted non-Westerners with open arms and has ever been open to foreign ideas. The author also criticizes Said for inadequate methodology, incoherent arguments, and a faulty historical understanding. He points out, not only Said's tendentious interpretations, but historical howlers that would make a sophomore blush. Warraq further looks at the destructive influence of Said's study on the history of Western painting, especially of the 19th century, and shows how, once again, the epigones of Said have succeeded in relegating thousands of first-class paintings to the lofts and storage rooms of major museums. An extended appendix reconsiders

the value of 18th- and 19th-century Orientalist scholars and artists, whose work fell into disrepute as a result of Said's work. Pressestimmen "Ibn Warraq's critique of Said's thought and work is thorough and convincing, indeed devastating to anyone depending on Saidism. It should force the Saidists to acknowledge the sophistry of their false prophet." Middle East Quarterly, reviewed by A.J. Caschetta "Ibn Warraq has written a brilliant and luminous book of cultural analysis and intellectual history. He reminds us of so many precious things in the West - and of it - that are worth upholding in the face of critics who enjoy Western liberties and denigrate them at the same time. This is more than a demolition of Edward Said's Orientalism: In its own right, it is an exquisite inquiry into the great ideas at play in our world." Fouad Ajami, professor at The Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, and author of The Foreigner's Gift "For decades Edward Said enjoyed the best that Western academic life had to offer - international celebrity, plaudits, honors and fame beyond the wildest dreams of most professors - while constantly bashing the history, values, and policies that have made this privileged existence possible. In Defending the West the eminent intellectual Ibn Warraq exposes with razor sharp precision the hypocrisy of Said's writings as well as the perverted academic culture that has made his great success possible. With this important new book Ibn Warraq has once and for all dispatched Orientalism to the dustbin of history." Efraim Karsh, head of Mediterranean Studies, University of London, and author of Empires of the Sand and Islamic Imperialism: A History Kurzbeschreibung This is the first systematic critique of Edward Said's influential work, Orientalism, a book that for almost three decades has received wide acclaim, voluminous commentary, and translation into more than fifteen languages. Said's main thesis was that the Western image of the East was heavily biased by colonialist attitudes, racism, and more than two centuries of political exploitation. Although Said's critique was controversial, the impact of his ideas has been a pervasive rethinking of Western perceptions of Eastern cultures, plus a tendency to view all scholarship in Oriental Studies as tainted by considerations of power and prejudice. In this thorough reconsideration of Said's famous work, Ibn Warraq argues that Said's case against the West is seriously flawed. Warraq accuses Said of not only willfully misinterpreting the work of many scholars, but also of systematically misrepresenting Western civilization as a whole. With example after example, he shows that ever since the Greeks Western civilization has always had a strand in its very makeup that has accepted non-Westerners with open arms and has ever been open to foreign ideas. The author also criticizes Said for inadequate methodology, incoherent arguments, and a faulty historical understanding. He points out, not only Said's tendentious interpretations, but historical howlers that would make a sophomore blush. Warraq further looks at the destructive influence of Said's study on the history of Western painting, especially of the 19th century, and shows how, once again, the epigones of Said have succeeded in relegating thousands of first-class paintings to the lofts and storage rooms of major museums. An extended appendix reconsiders the value of 18th- and 19th-century Orientalist scholars and artists, whose work fell into disrepute as a result of Said's work.