



Call for Papers — Issue 2, *The Jerusalem Circle*

Orientalism from the Perspective of the Orient

The term Orientalism entered intellectual discourse in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in the wake of Edward Said's enormously influential book. Its appearance bore great promise for those who hoped that the West would at last hear the Orient in its own voice — no longer the voice of the West issuing from the throat of the Orient. Before long, however, it became clear that the discourse on Orientalism was to a large extent an internal conversation of the West with itself: a polemic between those who had represented the Orient from the colonial standpoint and the critics of that standpoint — critics who themselves operated from within the Western intellectual sphere.

What began as a brilliant exposure of the West's biased gaze upon the Orient, and of the ways in which a hierarchical relationship between West and Orient had become entrenched in Western consciousness, gradually turned into a "corrective" mechanism that proved to be biased in its own way. Instead of freeing the Orient from the images the Western discourse had imposed upon it, there emerged at times a "corrective" Western discourse that filtered the ideas, images and voices from the Orient, determining which were worthy of being heard and which not. Serious and profound ideas sought to present an alternative to the prevailing lens and to offer a different way of seeing — one meant to advance tolerance, peace, coexistence, and a bridge between religions and cultures. Yet these were pushed aside by the monopoly of the particular critical lens that Edward Said and his successors had fitted for us.

Said, whether he intended it or not, served as a catalyst for a binary discourse — bitter and suspicious — of oppressor and oppressed whose consequences we still witness today. Thus, in his idea of "Mediterraneanism," Albert Camus criticized the totalitarianism of "liberating" European ideologies and celebrated the richness of the diverse life around the Mediterranean — yet he was pushed to the margins. The celebration of togetherness in Jacqueline Kahanoff's Levantine vision — which saw the possibilities latent in dialogue and cultural plurality in this cradle of religions — was likewise made to yield its place to a violent, dichotomous discourse. Elie Kedourie, the Baghdadi intellectual, regarded the importation of nationalism into the region as an obstacle that threatened the region's peace, and dared to see imperialism as a brake upon nationalism — yet he remained the concern of only a handful of intellectuals.



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The critical lens, revolutionary in its day, which sharpened dynamics that had remained hidden until its appearance, imperceptibly became a filtering lens as well: cultures, ideas, and movements from the Orient came to be judged against a new standard whose source remained in the West. Those that did not conform to the principles of the “corrective” Western discourse — or that could not be conveniently classified by them — were left outside the critical discourse on Orientalism. In this sense, the critique of Orientalism risked reproducing the very gesture it had set out to dismantle: the West remained not only the one who describes the Orient, but also the one who selects, from among the Orient's voices, those deemed worthy of a hearing.

Such examples, and many others, naturally raise a series of questions that are worth reexamining. First, we must ask what the intellectual and political benefits of this filtering are. What is the historical, political, and philosophical background against which it flourished? To what extent does Orientalism serve as a tool for the critique of colonialism, and to what extent does it serve colonialism itself? In what ways is our political imagination constrained by the Western perspective on the Orient — itself a product of the critique of Orientalism? What might be gained, intellectually and politically, from listening to the voices that were silenced? In other words, what might a reading of the Orient make possible once it no longer passes through the filtering mechanisms of Western discourse? And what would such a reading mean — both for the Orient and for the West itself?

The undertaking is urgent, and it carries great hope. The present political and social crises, together with the crises within Western academia, demand a break with the West's accepted frameworks of thought — frameworks that claimed to advance tolerance and peace among peoples and failed. The renewal of the Western standpoint can no longer come from the same sources, institutions, and thinkers that have shaped Western thought in recent decades. The aim is to broaden the discourse, to update the Western perspective, and to enrich it.

The forthcoming issue of *The Jerusalem Circle — Orientalism from the Perspective of the Orient* — seeks to give presence to voices not yet heard, to widen the boundaries of the discourse on the Orient, and to challenge the Western frameworks that police it. In doing so, it may open the possibility of an intellectual encounter that does not subordinate the Orient in advance to the categories through which the West has grown accustomed to reading it. We invite other perspectives on Orientalism, arising from intellectual traditions that have found insufficient expression in ordinary academic discourse, and that hold the power to enrich one another.



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The hopes vested in such a fruitful encounter are great. Alliances with diverse thinkers from across the Middle East — thinkers who have not until now found a shared platform on which to articulate thought freed from the dichotomies the West imposed — will foster the development of new conventions of discourse. These, in turn, will lead to a renewed intellectual and political imagination and open new frameworks for advancing life, prosperity, and peace.

The journal will publish research articles following blind peer review, as well as essays, original book reviews, and works of music and visual art, from the diverse perspectives of the social sciences and the humanities.

Submission Guidelines

- Articles: up to 6000 words
- Book reviews and essays: up to 3500 words
- Submissions may be sent in Hebrew or English (each article will be published with an extended abstract in the parallel language).
- Proposals should be sent to yotam@jerusalem-circle.org.il by 15 November 2026.

To read the first issue, visit the Jerusalem Circle website: <https://jerusalem-circle.org.il/en/>