

# Summary

The overarching theme of the 157th *NZ* issue is “«Orientalism» and Orientalism Today”. It is an attempt to rethink the influence of Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism on the development of the humanities and political sciences, as well as to discuss the political and ideological aspects of the way Said’s critique of colonialism is perceived in the context of the ongoing wars in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

The issue opens with a discussion, organized by *NZ* and moderated by philosopher Igor Kobylin, called “*Edward Said, Post-Colonialism, and Decolonization Today*”. Here, the participants – anthropologist and scholar of Central Asian Studies Sergei Abashin, literary historian Kirill Ospovat, historian Evgeny Savitsky, and *NZ* editor-in-chief Kirill Kobrin – touch upon most of the topics that are subsequently explored in the other materials of the 157th issue:

- Historical, cultural and political contexts of the writing and publication of Edward Said’s “*Orientalism*” and his subsequent works;
- “*Orientalism*”: its role in the emergence of Postcolonial Studies in Western academia, and its place in today’s theories and practices of decolonization;
- The concept of Orientalism, Said’s political activism, and the Palestinian question as seen against the backdrop of the ongoing war in the Middle East;
- Last but not least, the Russian aspect of the critique of Orientalism, colonialism and imperialism, the fate of Said’s books

in Russia, and the debate over Russian Orientalism.

The last of the above-mentioned topics is further developed by Oleg Larionov in the POLITICS OF CULTURE section. His essay “*After the Disaster. «Internal Colonization» Revisited*” focuses on the first and only (at least to date) attempt to apply the lens of Orientalism to the history and culture of the Russian Empire. The focus here is Alexander Etkind’s book “*Internal Colonization*” (2011), which offers an original, albeit controversial, interpretation of Russia’s colonial history. Larionov gives a brief overview of responses to Etkind’s book, both enthusiastic and sharply critical; he pays special attention to how “*Internal Colonization*” reads today, after February 24, 2022.

On a related note, Alexei Levinson’s newest contribution to his regular column SOCIOLOGICAL LYRICS is an essay entitled “*Towards the End of Judeophilia*”, that brings up two of our topical issues – the Middle East and Ukraine. Basing his analysis on sociological data, Levinson reflects on the way the attitude of Vladimir Putin’s regime towards Russian Jewry and the “Jewish problem” as such has been changing, as well as the fact that, after two decades of official “Judeophilia”, Russian Jewry may soon face (if it has not already) a serious political (and existential) choice.

The second block the 157th *NZ* issue is called “*Orientalism and «Orientalism» from the Eastern Perspective*”. It examines the reception of Said’s ideas in those parts of the world that were the “target” of the Western concept of Orientalism and colonial expansion. Translator Maxim



Zhabko prepared a selection of excerpts from two exceptionally significant works written by Arab theorists, that represent, as it were, “the other side” or “the victim of Orientalism” (i.e., the Arab World and Islam).

The cultural and political scientist Muhammad al-Da’mi analyses several instances of Western responses to Arab-Muslim history – and discovers behind the façade of modern Orientalism a deliberate spreading of the “fear of Islam and the East”, which was characteristic of the European Middle Ages. The political theorist and activist Mahdi Amel subjects Said to Marxist criticism – for taking into account neither the aspect of class struggle, nor even Marx’s actual views on Western European colonization of the East (let alone his views on Russia). Interestingly, nowadays another theorist from a former eastern colony, Vivek Aslam Chibber, continues to produce Marxist criticism of Said’s concept. Chibber’s views were examined in the opening discussion.

Another text in this section stands out among the rest: it is an essay entitled “*Edward Said in East Asia: Several Cases of Reception*”, written specially for *NZ* by the Japanese cultural historian, translator and prominent cultural figure Inuhiko Yomota. This genre is not very familiar for our readers: historical and cultural reflections on how and why Said’s Orientalism was perceived differently in South Korea, China and Japan are mixed here with the author’s personal recollections of Said, who supervised Yomota’s dissertation at Columbia University.

The third collection of materials in this *NZ* issue explores the problem of the relationship between Edward Said’s texts and various cultural and political aspects of modernity. It opens with a translation of the Scottish political

theorist and essayist Tom Nairn’s response to Said’s book “*The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969–1994*” (1994). Nairn endeavours to identify the essence of Palestinian nationalism (as seen through the works of Edward Said), arrive at a definition for it, and see what distinguishes it from other “nationalisms”. The author also makes space in his text for a discussion with those who harshly criticised Said’s concept – first and foremost with the British sociologist and anthropologist Ernest Gellner.

This section also contains a translation of an article by the German scholar of Islamic cultures, translator and essayist Stefan Weidner, which was based on his talk at the opening of the festival “A New Divan” at the Barenboim-Said Academy of Music in Berlin in 2019. Weidner attempts to reconcile Said and Goethe, seeing them as the embodiments of two different approaches to the West’s “obsession” with the Near and Middle East. Here, the theme of nationalism previously raised by Nairn arises again: Weidner believes that nationalism was brought to the Near and Middle Eastern world by Western political practices (and the corresponding colonial way of thinking), which then led to devastating consequences for these regions.

Finally, the CASE STUDY section, containing Anna Gorskaya’s article “*No Claims to Purity*”, also falls under the overall theme of the 157th *NZ* issue. Gorskaya introduces the readers to the Kazakhstani artistic group ORTA Collective, whose projects span theater, visual art, engineering, video and film, music, as well as social research and philosophy. ORTA have launched a long-term art project called “Spectacular Experiments

on "The Great Atomic Bombreflector" at the "La MaMa" experimental theater club in New York. According to Gorskaya, the project fully represents Soviet Kazakhstan's colonial experience, as embodied in the history of the nuclear test site in Semipalatinsk.

Beyond the scope of the main theme of the 157th issue is Tatiana Vorozheikina's piece for her regular column THE REVERSE

OF THE METHOD, once again focusing on Venezuela, which continues to grapple with a severe political crisis. The issue concludes with the NEW BOOKS section, where we can single out Andrei Gelianov's detailed response to Jon Greenaway's book *"Capitalism. A Horror Story"*, and NZ editor Andrei Zakharov's review of Andrei Teslya's *"Eight Lectures on Slavophilia: An Intellectual History"*.