Occidentalisms. Images of 'the West' in Egypt

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

"You cannot investigate all these answers to the question of the West, evaluate them, and then refuse to point out the weaknesses and strengths of each answer. You should make it clear as to who is right." 'Usâmah was not pleased. The Azhari student who had come to assist me in my research was disappointed when I told him what kind of results I expected from my research into Occidentalisms. 'Usâmah's expectation was that my research would not merely catalogue contemporary Egyptian understandings of the West, but also correct the mistakes, provide insights into the nature of Western civilization and thus finally enable the reader to lay an old yet pressing matter to rest: what is the West?

While the present thesis may be useful for an Egyptian audience eager to find new ways to think of the West, this is not its main topic or objective. This book simply is not concerned with the West, rather it is concerned with how the West is perceived and constructed in Egypt. It starts from the premise that images are subjective and therefore diverse, hence the plural noun in its title: Occidentalism*s*.

'Usâmah's reaction made me understand that I should make it more clear that the study of Occidentalism is a descriptive and analytical endeavour, not a prescriptive one. His reaction also illustrated the importance attached to 'understanding the West' in present-day Egypt. The ferocity with which Egyptian intellectuals discuss, dismiss or extol the West, is a clear sign that the West is a topic of importance. This alone would be sufficient reason to research the ways in which this topic is treated in public debates. A wider look that transcends the Egyptian intellectual scene yields equally forceful motivations for the present research: since the end of the Cold War international relations have come under new strains that often involve 'the West' actively or passively. Media reports on relations

between the West and the Muslim world tend to give the impression that the latter is overwhelmingly and incurably hateful towards the first, which can easily lead to irrational fear or even hatred in a tit-for-tat manner. In such a situation it may be helpful to advance a more discriminating approach to understanding how the West is perceived.

While Western discourse concerning 'the Orient' in whatever shape or form has been the object of much academic scrutiny which is often traced back to Edward Said's *Orientalism*,[1] much less attention has been paid to the manners in which not the East, but the West is perceived and constructed. As this study will hopefully show, this relative lack of academic interest is unfortunate and requires to be addressed. While perhaps unsatisfying to some, there is merit in 'mere' description of the world around us. If the present book is accepted as a good start of a process of cataloguing contemporary Egyptian understandings of the West, I would feel that it was worth the trouble of writing it. This is however not the end of my ambition. So far, the study of images, identity and alterity has focused on European or more broadly, Western settings. The study of Occidentalism in Egypt could provide more diverse material to be used in understanding how images, identities and alterities are created and used in general, thus contributing to more broadly applicable theories. The need to understand how people imagine themselves and their Others is, I believe, a universal need. Limiting myself to just the two countries closest to me, the Netherlands and Egypt, one finds that there is a striking similarity in that in both countries a public debate is entertained where questions of identity and alterity are of central importance.

[1] Edward Said *Orientalism* Vintage Books: New York 1994 (1978).

1. Occidentalism

There is a certain ironical twist in the quantitative discrepancy between studies of Orientalism and studies of Occidentalism. Many of the studies into Western images of the East tend to criticize these Western images for being Eurocentric. Yet looking at the sheer mass of publications on Western images – when compared to the modest number of studies into non-Western images – we must conclude that also in this field of image studies, there is a certain preference for studying a Western actor, rather than a non-Western actor. Therefore one could argue that the plethora of studies of Western images of the Orient, when compared to the infant status of the study of Occidentalism, betrays an ironic Eurocentrism, reminding researchers engaged in the study of Occidentalism, of the ease with which one tends to forget the subjectivity of one's position.

Studies of Occidentalism are as diverse as they are few, and as a result even the meaning of Occidentalism is contested. 'Occidentalism' is the main topic in little over a dozen publications available in European languages. The major Arabic publication in this field is Hasan Hanafi's *Introduction to the Study of Occidentalism*,[2] but we will find in our discussion of Hanafi's work that his use of the term has mostly remained peculiar to him. To his credit however, we should note that he was the first to engage with the term.[3] The earliest publication after Hanafi's *Introduction* is Xiaomei Chen's article on Occidentalism as a counter-discourse employed by Chinese opposition circles, which was consequently expanded into a monograph published in 1995.[4] Chen's work will be discussed shortly, for now it will suffice to say that to Chen, Occidentalism is a discourse of imagining and constructing the West. Also published in

[2] Hasan Hanafi *Muqaddimah fi 'ilm al-istighrâb* Al-Dâr al-Faniyyah: Cairo 1991.
[3] This does not mean that he coined the term, as the term itself had already been used by Said 1994, p. 50.
[4] Xiaomei Chen "Occidentalism as Counterdiscourse: 'He Shang' in Post-Mao China" *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 18 (1992) pp. 686-712; -- *Occidentalism. A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland 2002 (1995).

1995 is James Carrier's study of the problem of stereotyping and essentializing the West in anthropology.[5] Starting from Said's analysis of Orientalism as a Western discourse of 'othering' the East through essentialization, Carrier couples this notion with Western essentializations of the West ('Occidentalism'), and with Eastern essentializations of the West ('ethno-Occidentalism') and Eastern essentializations of the East ('ethno-Orientalism'). While Carrier, an anthropologist, does use the term Occidentalism in its meaning of '(stereotypical) images of the West', the actors responsible for these Occidentalisms are themselves Westerners, and more specifically Western anthropologists. In other words, Carrier's concern is with anthropology and the way in which Occidentalism influences the work of anthropologists. It is remarkable to see that when attention is finally paid to Orientalism's 'opposite', the typical actor here is still Western. When the non-Western acts, in this case by stereotyping East or West, this action is described by simply adding a prefix: 'ethno-'. The preferred description would be in my opinion to refer to (auto-)Orientalism and (auto-)Occidentalism, thereby avoiding the impression that Western actions are necessarily the standard against which other actions are qualified.

If Carrier's terminology is questionable, his description of the process of imaging and imagining is to the point, especially for the attention he pays to questions of power. While there is a formal symmetry in the model of selving and othering, Carrier warns that there is no substantive symmetry, because of an unequal distribution of power: the West is more free to construe an image of the Other than the Other is free to construe an image of the West, for Westerners are better positioned to 'correct' for instance a Melanesian essentialization of the West than the other way

[5] James Carrier (ed.) *Occidentalism. Images of the West* Clarendon Press: Oxford 1995.

around.[6] This question of power and in particular how it relates to influencing images of the West is one of the questions this research is concerned with.

Findley's lengthy article on Ahmed Midhat is the first European discussion of Occidentalism to take us to the Middle East.[7] Inspired by Chen, Findley shows us how a late 19th century Ottoman traveler to Europe creates an image of the West on his own terms, but governed by universal rules of selving and othering. Findley traces the development of what he terms an Occidentalist counter-discourse, which was to become an important component of anticolonial nationalism.[8] A second work on 19th century Occidentalism is Mohamed Tavakoli-Targhi's *Refashioning Iran*.[9] Here we have a critique of the standard historiography of the modernization of the world as a consequence of (or even synonymous with) Westernization, thus assuming that before contacts with the West were established, the non-West (whichever part of it) was not experiencing a significant dynamic of its own. Seeking to break away from de-historicizing implications of Westernization theories that are "predicated upon the temporal assumption of non-contemporaneity of European and non-European societies",[10] Tavakoli views "modernity as a global process that engendered various strategies of self-fashioning". Said's latest critic, Varisco, has noted in his review of *Refashioning Iran* that this book should first of all be read as a critique of Said, more specifically Said's blindness to or disinterest in Oriental agency in shaping their European Others.[11] The

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[6] Op. cit. p. 10.
[7] Carter Vaughn Findley "An Occidentalist in Europe. Ahmed Midhat meets Madame Gülnar, 1889" *The American Historical Review* Vol. 103, Nr. 1 (Feb. 1998) pp. 15-49.
[8] Op. cit. p. 17.
[9] Mohamed Tavakoli -Targhi *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism and Historiography* Palgrave MacMillan: Hampshire & New York 2001.
[10] Op. cit. ix-x.
[11] Daniel Martin Varisco "Review of Mohamed Tavakoli-Targhi *Refashioning Iran* 2001" *H-Net Reviews* September 2002. http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=221631031770217 (viewed August 18, 2008).

next publication on our topic of inquiry is Snodgrass' study of 19th century Japanese strategies of identity and alterity in relation to European dominance. Similar to Tavakoli, Snodgrass engages with Said as she seeks to show that the non-Westerner played a constitutive role in Orientalism and indeed entertained an Occidentalism.[12] She argues that the Oriental did have agency in shaping his identity and alterity. I would argue with Snodgrass that "Orientalism is after all not (…) a particularly Western sin but a case study of the more general process of the way one culture forms images of another."[13] In defining Occidentalism, Snodgrass takes care not to suggest that this could be a genuine mirror image to Orientalism, because of the differences in the extent to which the two discourses are backed up by economic, cultural, political and military power.[14] The most recent work on Occidentalism (the present excluded) is Wagner's Ph.D. research on the identification of the West in Japanese and Malaysian novels.[15] Wagner points at the ambiguity of the term Occidentalism in that it often refers to either Westernization (emulative Occidentalism) or to anti-Westernism (Occidentalism as anti-hegemonic discourse). Given her background - comparative literature, from a post-colonial perspective, Wagner cannot but engage with Said. Some may oppose the use of the term Occidentalism, pointing out that 1. Said's Orientalism was and is a uniquely European phenomenon borne out of the European propensity to categorize the world according to binary oppositions, and 2. Orientalism's sine qua non was and is its enabling and supporting of imperialism, which has no counterpart in

[12] Judith Snodgrass *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism and the Columbian Exposition* University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, N.C. etc. 2003.
[13] Op. cit. p. 11.
[14] Op. cit. pp. 273f.
[15] Tamara S. Wagner "Emulative Versus Revisionist Occidentalism: Monetary and Other Values in Recent Singaporean Fiction" *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* Vol. 39, Nr. 2 (2004) pp. 73-94; --, *Occidentalism in novels of Malaysia and Singapore, 1819-2004* Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston 2005; --, "Occidentalism: Edward Said's Legacy for the Occidentalist Imaginary and its Critique" Silvia Nagy-Zekmi (ed.) *Paradoxical Citizenship: Edward Said* Lexington Books: Lanham 2006.

'Occidentalism'. Without negating the importance of the difference in power relations (cf. Carrier, Snodgrass), Wagner argues that Said would not oppose to her endeavours and makes the case for a serious study of Occidentalism:

> "In one of his last interviews, (..) Edward Said stressed the need to expose the Occident as well as the Orient as cultural constructs: "I say even the notions of the Occident and the Orient are ideological fictions and we should try to get away from them as much as possible." In this, he significantly retracted his earlier caution that "no one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to Orientalism called Occidentalism." (Said, Orientalism 1978 p. 50) As postcolonial theories have been variously redefined, disputed, and drawn into new debates over the last decades, the study of Orientalism has nevertheless become counterpoised by important, yet largely undirected, gestures towards the analysis of a discourse that can very aptly be termed Occidentalism."[16]

It should be clear from the discussion above that most studies of Occidentalism are not concerned with the Muslim Middle East. That is the more surprising since studies concerned with Orientalism are, in the tradition of Edward Said, typically focused on this region. It is then a timely endeavour to conduct a study of Occidentalism in Egypt, but not before one remaining publication on Occidentalism is discussed.

The book that hasn't been mentioned so far is in fact the most widely distributed work on Occidentalism, to the extent that it has informed the popular understanding of the term.[17] This is unfortunate. *Occidentalism* was

[16] Wagner 2006 p. 145.
[17] See for example the wikipedia definition for Occidentalism: "The term Occidentalism usually refers to stereotyped and sometimes dehumanizing views on the so-called Western

published in 2004, two years after its authors had published an article in the *New York Review of Books*.[18] In the article, the Anglo-Dutch Sinologist Ian Buruma and the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit defined Occidentalism as an anti-Western ideology shared by a number of aggressive, irrational death cults, notably Nazism, Japanese nationalism and other contemporary fascisms, the regime of Pol Pot and, in a milder form, Marxism in general. According to the authors, what the world is witnessing today in radical Islamic violence is a re-incarnation of that old, irrational hatred of the West. Eventually, the thesis laid down in the article was developed into a book, the full title of which was *Occidentalism - The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies*.[19]

In a sense, the authors understand Occidentalism to be a reversed Orientalism-according-to-Edward Said. Occidentalism is based on the perceived need to distance oneself from the Other, in order to claim a sense of superiority. In the case of Occidentalism, that Other is the West. So what does the Occidentalist view make of the West? Margalit and Buruma identify four overlapping animosities at work in Occidentalism. First, there is the dismissive attitude to The City, understood to be a rootless agglomeration of arrogant and cold materialists, as opposed to rural men, who are firmly in tune with nature and tradition, whose blood and sweat have mixed with the soil of the land, which they plough and know as their own. Secondly, Occidentalism is opposed to 'the mind of the West', in particular against its science and rationalism. Thirdly, there is the disgust with the bourgeoisie, understood to be a collection of mediocre men of no

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world (..). The term was popularized by Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit (..)". http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occidentalism (viewed March 27, 2008).

[18] A. Margalit & I. Buruma "Occidentalism" *New York Review of Books* Vol. 49 Nr. 1 (2002); I. Buruma & A. Margalit *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies* Penguin Press: New York 2004.

[19] The following discussion of Margalit & Buruma's book is based on my review published in Dutch in *Eutopia* Nr. 7 (May 2004) pp. 91-94; and in English on www.risq.org/article356.html (viewed June 4, 2008).

principle but the quest for profit and comfort. Lastly, there is the hatred directed against the "Infidel". (This last element is new to the book: in the article the fourth element of Occidentalist hatred was reserved for feminism.) Having thus identified their concept of Occidentalism, the authors then forage through history on a search for conflicts, violence, and ideologies that exemplify one of more of these animosities. This, in a nutshell, is the theory and the method of Margalit & Buruma's Occidentalism - and both spell trouble.

Resentment against 'the city' is not an uncommon phenomenon, especially outside the cities there exists – alongside other, more positive appreciations, the notion that cities are places where violence, corruption, prostitution and generally unorthodox behaviour are rife, and where 'anything goes'. Yet it is difficult to see how and why Margalit and Buruma understand this anti-urban sentiment to be an element of Occidentalism. To them, it is significant that Maoist terror, directed against the cities and seen as the ultimate victory of the rural over the urban, was also directed against the West. The West is then partly identified as an urban phenomenon. Presumably, that is how anti-urbanism is considered by Margalit & Buruma to be an ingredient of Occidentalism.

The aversion against the 'mind of the West' consists of a hostility against the Enlightenment-borne phenomena of modern science and rationalism. Here the authors incriminate all romanticists who regret the *Entzauberung der Welt*, as potential Occidentalists. Elsewhere, T.S. Elliot's *Choruses from 'The Rock'* is cited, where Elliot's annoyance with the godlessness of the ever-growing city of London, suddenly becomes suspect. By the same token, Dostojevski's representation of a scientist West is drawn into the odious sphere of Occidentalism. These notions (and dismissals) of a rigidly rationalist, soulless West are not far from radical Islamist views of the West – according to Margalit and Buruma.

Leaving the bourgeoisie aside for the sake of brevity, we are left with discussing the hatred of the Infidel. Here, Margalit and Buruma do not shrink from heading straight for the Lord. Think of Babylon, Sodom and Gomorra, the urban abodes of unbelief that so famously met with the wrath of God. It bears no surprise that the jealous God does not care for those who deny Him, but it is not clear why Margalit and Buruma bring Him to the fore. Perhaps it is in order to show that this anti-urban component of Occidentalism is as old as the bible. In any case, Osama bin Laden is evidently keen on fighting people he refers to as infidels, which completes the Occidentalist circle. Occidentalism, then, is the hatred of a West, perceived to be a perverted, soulless and weak bastion of urban unbelief. The authors contend that the present anti-Westernism that emanates from 'a significant proportion of the Muslim world' fits this definition.

So is all criticism of the West and things Western Occidentalism? Is every romantic, every anti-capitalist and every fundamentalist an Occidentalist? The authors warn that this is not so. The difference lies in the presence or absence of bitterness and rancour. For resentment and rancour, so the authors suggest, lead to the dehumanisation of the West. In other words, Occidentalism is not simply a critical mode of thought, but a hatred that does not acknowledge its Western enemy's humanity. [20] This aspect is crucial in order for Margalit and Buruma to label something 'Occidentalism', for it makes the difference between a composed critique and an irrational blind hatred. Ostensibly, it is according to this criterion that Occidentalism does cover Nazis, Japanese nationalists, Islamic radicals and Dostojevski, but not T.S. Elliot or God.

This theory of an anti-Western ideology of hatred is not very solid, partly because the authors appear to have selected their material in order to suit their theory, rather than the other way around. What counts as 'the

[20] Buruma & Margalit 2004 pp. 10f.

West' to Margalit and Buruma remains quite vague throughout the book: in one place they let capitalism and liberal democracy take the place of the West, in another, the United States are representative. Then there are the examples from the biblical past, where Babylon appears to function as some sort of 'proto-West', under attack by an Occidentalist God.

What the authors have done, is simply to scan history for defiant responses to a whole array of developments which they associate with their own ephemeral notion of Westernness. Reactions to urbanisation, imperialism, growing wealth, Enlightenment, capitalism, secularism - they all fit into the repository of Occidentalism. The authors have thus created a hopelessly wide heading. That is a pity, for Occidentalism in the sense of 'imaging and imagining the West' is an interesting area for research, of growing importance, in need of serious scholarly engagement. It is therefore all the more regrettable that the aforementioned studies into this field have apparently been lost on Margalit and Buruma, for nothing suggests that they have taken note of them. But what then, is the use of Margalit and Buruma's deviant Occidentalism? Potentially, it is of great political use. After all, all criticism of America, the West and modernity can now be filed under one and the same heading: the dangerous, dehumanising and irrational hatred of the West. Although Margalit and Buruma warn against such abuse of their argument, this warning does not convince. For they too belittle the more concrete grievances people might hold against the West:

> " [A]nti-Americanism is sometimes the result of [American] support of (..) say, Israel (..) or of whatever goes under the rubric of 'globalisation'. Some people are antagonistic to the United States simply because it is so powerful, (..) or resent the U.S. for helping them, or feeding them, or protecting them, in the way one resents an overbearing father. But whatever the U.S. government does or does

> not do is often beside the point. [Occidentalism refers] not to American policies, but to the idea of America itself.[21]

The notion that 'essentially', (Muslim) anti-Westernism has no link to concrete Western policies, is not new. Bernard Lewis wrote exactly the same in his article "The Roots of Muslim Rage".[22] As I have argued before, it could be dangerous to think that one's enemies live in an impermeable bubble of irrational hatred, where one's own actions remain unnoticed.[23] In opposition to Margalit & Buruma's endeavour, one of the objectives of the present research is to describe and explain the ways in which the West is perceived and constructed, in such a way as to make these images intelligible rather than seemingly mystical.

So far, the literature I have mentioned is concerned with theorizing Occidentalism as a concept. There is another kind of literature of relevance to this research that does not theorize as much as it directly engages with the question how the West is imagined in the Arab world, without discussing the concept of 'Occidentalism'. These studies can be divided in studies in which the focus lies on Arabic literature on the one hand, and studies in which the onus is on what we might call 'public discourse', on the other. There are relatively many publications of the first kind, mostly focussing on how the West is an important topic in modern Arabic fiction. I would like to limit myself to mentioning the most recent such publication, namely Rasheed El-Enany's *Arab Representations of the Occident.*[24] Enany

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[21] Op. cit. p. 8.
[22] Bernard Lewis "The Roots of Muslim Rage" *Atlantic* Nr. 266 (1990) pp. 47-54, 56, 59-60. However, Margalit & Buruma's position in relation to Lewis is not so straightforward, witness Buruma's devastating critique of Lewis in *The New Yorker* "Lost in Translation: the two minds of Bernard Lewis" June 14, 2004.
[23] Woltering 2004.
[24] Rasheed El-Enany *Arab Representations of the Occident. East West Encounters in Arabic Fiction* Routledge: London etc. 2006.

provides a historical overview of how the West has been imagined and how it has functioned in modern Arabic novels and poetry. Enany argues that Arab literary history shows a general development in which the West was initially, in the pre-colonial phase, perceived as a source for inspiration and emulation. The colonial phase is then predictably marked by signs of duress: the encounter with the Western Other cannot be seen separately from the West's imposing on the Arab world. The postcolonial phase is initially characterized by pride borne out of the early nationalist enthusiasm in the young Arab nation-states. This is followed however by the second postcolonial phase, which sets in as of 1967 and is marked by the sense of being 'humbled'. The final two chapters are concerned with the reception of America, and the work of woman authors in the Arab world and their literary representations of the West. Though he avoids the term Occidentalism, Enany suggests that the topic of his study could be seen as a reversed Orientalism. The difference however, is great:

> "If Orientalism, according to Edward Said, provided the conceptual framework, the intellectual justification for the appropriation of the Orient through colonialism, the representations of the West I have studied in this book would, by contrast, seem to suggest in my view a different story; one not of appropriation but of *emulation*. And if Orientalism was about the denigration, and the subjugation of the other, much of the Occidentalist images explored here will be seen to have been about the idealization of the other, the quest for the soul of the other, the desire to become the other, or at least to become like the other."[25]

[25] Op. cit. p. 7.

The above quotation already hints at the conclusion to Enany's study. Enany states that "with few exceptions, Arab intellectuals, no matter in which period, have never demonized the European other or regarded him in sub-human terms."[26] With regard to the present research, it will be of interest to see to what extent Enany's postulation holds up in the face of our analyses of contemporary non-fictional texts.

Finally, mention must be made of research in the field of images of the West in Arabic non-fiction texts. In this area, few publications stand out. Noureddine Afaya's *l'Occident dans l'imaginaire arabo-musulman*[27] endeavours to answer the question 'what the West means to Arabs and Muslims'. Afaya works from the understanding that there are two main modes of thought in the 'Arabo-Muslim' world: Islamist and liberal.[28] By analysing texts from the Arab world (in particular those of Muhammad Abduh and Taha Hussayn) he describes various images of the West in the Arab world in general. By not limiting himself to a specific time-period or specific part of the Arabo-Muslim world, it becomes hard for Afaya to focus his findings. Consequently, Afaya's work is more of an essay than the product of systematic research. Secondly, the Lebanese political scientist Nassib Samir El-Husseini, working from Canada, published an interesting study entitled *l'Occident Imaginaire –La vision de l'Autre dans la conscience politique arab*e.[29] He provides a very rich overview of images and themes regarding the West in the Arab world. According to El-Husseini there are multiple images of the West, varying from a 'mythological West' to an 'idealised West' and a 'rejected West'. Elaborating upon the

[26] Op. cit. p. 9.
[27] Noureddine Afaya *l'Occident dans l'imaginaire arabo-musulman* Toubkal: Casablanca 1997.
[28] 'Liberal' here has a very broad meaning; it can be used to refer to freemarket idealism but also to Marxist convictions: in this vein it is used nearly synonymously with 'secular'.
[29] Nassib Samir El-Husseini *l'Occident Imaginaire. La vision de l'Autre dans la conscience politique arabe* Presses de l'Université du Québec: Sainte-Foy 1998.

multiplicity of images will naturally also have its proper place in this study, but in addition to this I have attempted to use my findings to produce a description of the processes behind these various images and the purposes the images serve. Knowledge of the process of image-making and an understanding of how images serve certain purposes combine into a more thorough comprehension of the meaning of the images, in this case, of images of the West. This takes us to the theoretical literature that is concerned with notions of 'Selving' and 'Othering'.[30]

2. Theories, approaches & methodologies

A complicating factor in this research is that it touches upon a number of interrelated, but distinct academic fields, each with its own methods, idiom and theories. The theory that lies at the base of this study draws mainly on imagology, a subdiscipline in literary studies, and discourse analysis, mainly developed from a social science point of view. I do not in principle favour imagology over discourse analysis or vice versa. Rather, I have made thankful use of both approaches. The nature of the research is such that it necessitated adaptations of existing approaches. Imagologists and discourse analysts may therefore recognize sections from their fields, but differently shaped.

Imagology

From the 1950s onwards, literary stereotypes of national identities began to be systematically studied in European comparative linguistics. To this day, it has remained mostly a European, more in particular French and German

[30] Before proceeding to the next section, one last work on Occidentalism needs to be mentioned. Couze Venn works on postcolonial theory and authored *Occidentalism: Modernity & Subjectivity* (Sage: London 2000). Venn's understanding of Occidentalism is rather comparable to 'Westernization' in the sense of the emergence of the modern West, or the process of Europe evolving into 'the West' as a hegemonial power, p. 80. Venn's use of the term Occidentalism in this manner is unique to his own work, and is of no direct relevance to the present study.

enterprise. This field of study, known as *imagology* or *image studies*, is concerned with the portrayal of national identities in literary (fictional) texts. Imagology is almost entirely concerned with European literature. Apart from discerning the images of national identities, imagologists are interested in gaining insight in the genesis of such images. Imagology does not try to establish the truth of the image. It is not up to an imagologist to study the extent to which one author was right in portraying some nation in a certain manner. Rather, an imagologist is interested in the textual background to such portrayal. In the words of the Dutch imagologist Joep Leerssen:

> "In actual practice this means that, in studying national stereotypes and alleged 'national characters' or national reputations, an imagologist is not concerned with the question *whether that reputation is true*, but *how it has become recognizable*. That interest (not in 'truthfulness' but in 'recognizability') means that images are studied, not as items of information about reality, but as *properties of their context*. If somewhere we read that the British are individualists, the first question we ask is not: 'is that true?'; rather, the questions are all about the (con)text, e.g.: Who is saying this? What audience is the author addressing? Why is it important for this author to make this point? What are the political circumstances at the time this text was written? How does the author attempt to convince the reader of the validity of his claim? How does this image of British individualism fit into the text as a whole … ?"[31]

[31] From Joep Leerssen's website dedicated to imagology: http://cf.hum.uva.nl/images/info/leers.html (viewed May 4, 2008). The most elaborate overview of theory and practice of imagology is Manfred Beller & Joep Leerssen (eds.) *The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey* Rodopi: Amsterdam, New York 2007.

Broadly speaking, this imagological approach is employed in the present study. Yet some aspects will be different because for one thing, the circumstances of this research are different. Studying British images of Irishness or French stereotypes of Germans may at first sight appear quite similar to studying Egyptian images of the West. To a large extent it is. But the accumulated findings of imagologists refer all to images of a European nation created by members of another European nation. Although the underlying logic of imaging the Other may well follow universal rules of identity & alterity politics, the present study is dealing with an actor (Egyptian authors) and an object (the West) that have a history not readily comparable to any history among European nation-states. In addition, the whole concept of 'the West' is rather more problematic than the concept of the British, the Irish or the Egyptians. It is at this point that the field of discourse analysis becomes of interest.

Discourse analysis

Any definition of discourse analysis[32] will probably be challenged by most scholars involved in it. Compared to imagology, discourse analysis is rather more all-encompassing of both written and spoken language, focusing on the social relevance of linguistic behaviour of human beings. Drawing on Van Dijk's understanding of discourse analysis, we can see how the gaze in discourse analysis proceeds from the text into social reality and vice versa: "We are (…) interested in the actual processes of decoding, interpretation, storage, and representation in memory, and in the role of previous knowledge and beliefs of the readers in this process of understanding."[33] It is this interest that leads one to pay attention to what is *not* said or written, seeking to expose that which is left implicit. Of great relevance to discourse analysis (again, following Van Dijk's approach) is the theoretical

[32] Also: *Critical* discourse analysis (CDA), stressing its character of social activism.
[33] Teun A. van Dijk *Racism and the Press* Routledge: London etc. 1991, p. 47.

assumption that the manner in which people interpret language behaviour is steered by 'ideologies' that function as 'frameworks of interpretation'.[34]

Discourse analysis is of interest to this research for various reasons. Contrary to imagology, it is based on working with non-fictional material, specifically with texts as produced in the news media: media texts feature prominently in this research. Its insistence on not merely describing but also explaining aspects of a text is crucial to this research, in which I seek to provide insights into the rationale behind the presence and absence of certain images of the West. To this end, the abovementioned concept of 'ideologies' needs to be explicated. In order to do this, it is imperative to discuss the Foucaultian concept of discourse as employed by Said.

On discourse: ideology & power

This study is an analysis of how the West is perceived in Egyptian public discourse. In order to analyze these perceptions we have no alternative but to go to what is declared in writing or speech in Egyptian society. In studying the statements concerned with the West, I discern a number of ideological backgrounds from which actors produce their statements, namely Islamism, liberalism, and leftist-nationalism.[35] These viewpoints have - to some extent - an internal consistency. As a consequence, the statements that are produced from each ideologically framed viewpoint fall within certain limits of what is deemed acceptable according to the ideology in question. In other words, there is a certain ideological range, a cognitive area the boundaries of which cannot be crossed without negating the basis upon which the ideology is built. This description of ideology may remind many a reader of the concept of discourse as variously defined by Foucault and – notably for this study- Edward Said.

[34] Op. cit. pp. 36ff.
[35] More on these viewpoints on p. {25ff.}.

By far the most influential work on ideologically charged images of 'the Orient', is Edward Said's *Orientalism*. His criticism of the academic field that studies 'the Orient' was based on the notion of discourse, much in the Foucaultian sense of the word.[36] Discourse is here to be understood not as a collection of texts describing a given object, but rather *constituting* that object.[37] In Said's view, 'the Orient' was and is an invention of Orientalism, which has little to do with real life in North Africa, the Middle East or Asia. Said further argued that this discourse should be understood as having a crucial relationship to power. The accomplished Orientalist is invested with academic authority, and is therefore regarded as able to declare what is the Orient. But Said also argued that the discourse of Orientalism (or: the practice of the discipline in general) was - consciously or not - subservient to colonial interests. Orientalism explained/declared not the Orient for its own purposes, but with the purpose of legitimizing the imperial order, an order which it had made possible to begin with. While there are differences between my research and Said's *Orientalism*, both studies are concerned with the relationship between discourse and power.

Another author whose work is instrumental in clarifying the use of both ideology and discourse in this study, is Xiaomei Chen. Her publications on Occidentalism[38] cover a research very similar to that of the present study. She has studied Chinese representations of 'the West', and discerned various discourses. In particular, she finds that there is an official discourse of Occidentalism, as well as an anti-official discourse of Occidentalism. On the one hand, there is the image of the West as pictured by state-authorities following Maoist orthodoxy. Unsurprisingly, these images are rather negative, as the West is presented as a hopeless realm of exploitation, deprived of righteousness and progress. On the other hand,

[36] Michel Foucault *L'Archéologie du savoir* Gallimard: Paris 1969.
[37] Michiel Leezenberg "Edward Said, Michel Foucault en de Islam" *Eutopia* Issue 6 (Dec. 2003) pp. 73-77.
[38] Chen 1992; 2002.

there are the images of the West as set forth by critics of the regime. These images are exactly the opposite of the official Occidentalism: the West is praised and its culture is portrayed as the example for China. China itself is portrayed as decayed. This second imaging of the West, Chen argues, should be understood as a counter-discourse, where a certain appreciation of 'the West' is crafted by dissidents who employ this appreciation in their rejection of the oppressive regime. The images are however not 'really' about the West, they merely constitute a way of thinking of the West that serves to prop official or anti-official ideology. Neither the official nor the dissident Occidentalism have anything to do with attempts to convey what life in Western Europe or America is actually like, they have everything to do with an internal, Chinese struggle for power.

There are a few problems with the theoretical approaches of the authors discussed above. To varying degrees, they claim that discourse is an intellectual vessel from which it is hard or even impossible to escape. As Said put it in *Orientalism* "a European or American studying the Orient … he comes up against the Orient as a European or an American first, as an individual second"[39] That European or American was (is?) trapped in the discourse of Orientalism: "I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism."[40] This is what one would call discursive determinism. This becomes highly problematic when we realize that Said also claimed that Orientalism's 'descriptions' of the Orient had in fact nothing to do with 'the real Orient', or in other words, the discourse was not influenced by reality. The discourse of Orientalism was shaped by necessities, desires and interests on the part of the imperialist-colonialist culture that dominated the regions under study. Thus an image of the Orient was shaped that served the desire to see justification of colonial rule over

[39] Said p. 11.
[40] Op. cit. p. 3.

the natives, who were in everything the opposite of the producers (and consumers) of Orientalism. In other words, the Oriental was lazy, dangerous, sensual (to the point of being perverted), and in need of guidance (more specifically, in need of foreign domination).

Said's insistence on the lack of correspondence between the reality of the Orient and the postulations of Orientalist discourse is not in tune with Foucault or Chen. Foucault and Chen stick more to an understanding of discursive determinism that keeps silent about reality. Discourse has its own 'reality' and they ignore the (lack of) correlation with the truth, either because the truth cannot be known, or because one is interested in the interpretation of a discourse, not in the interpretation of reality. However, by shutting out the possibility of an impact of experiences from reality on discourse, Foucault, Said and Chen exclude a likely explanans for the changes in the content of discourse.

In a most enlightening article in *Critical Inquiry*,[41] Douwe Fokkema analyses the use of discourse by Foucault, Said and Chen. I would argue alongside him for a less deterministic approach to discourse. Of course discourse as a habitual mode of interpretation disciplines the production of texts, speech, and even thought. But discourses nevertheless change over time, and although Foucault recognized this, he never explained how this happened. As will be argued in this study, experiences in real life can and do make crucial contributions to the course of development of discourses. If we do not allow for concrete experiences shaping the way people think, there is no hope for understanding how and why people change their minds.

3. An integrated approach

If the previous pages have served to refer to earlier studies of Occidentalism and the various approaches that are at our disposal, the following pages

[41] Douwe Fokkema "Orientalism, Occidentalism and the notion of discourse: arguments for a new cosmopolitanism" *Comparative Criticism* Vol. 18 (1996) pp. 227-241.

should clarify what kind of approach is adopted in this research, and what is meant by the various terms used in this book, such as discourse, ideology and Occidentalism. The aims of this research necessitate a selective amalgam of both imagology and discourse analysis. The method and the theory adopted in this study make use of both approaches.

In this research I aim to get to know and understand the ways in which 'the West' is perceived and how images of the West are related to certain ideologies in contemporary Egypt. I have decided to pursue this goal by analysing a limited body of non-fiction texts. I have selected writings by Egyptian authors of various ideological persuasions. Writings belonging to particular ideological discourses in Egypt will be analysed in their relation to each other (within the discourse and between the discourses). I am not particularly interested in the extent to which statements about the West are true or false, but rather in the rationale behind them, the motivations for them, and the extent to which they deviate from or corroborate with other statements in one discourse or another. This does not mean to imply that I believe that the validity of statements (or 'reality, 'truth') cannot be known, and it certainly does not mean that I believe reality ('real facts') about the Other has little to nothing to do with the way in which people think of this Other.

The method of analysis adopted here will take the reader beyond the text's surface. Statements such as 'Egypt must adapt to the modern world' or 'democracy is heresy' are not interpreted in isolation. They are not simply classified as pro- and anti-Western respectively. Neither have I automatically classified them as 'pro-modern' and 'anti-democratic'. Rather, the context (of the text and the discourse) is taken into account before a concluding interpretation of the text is given. 'Freedom', 'democracy' or 'the West' are words that to their users can have a variety of meanings, and those meanings do not always appear at the surface. For example, 'freedom' can mean being free from foreign domination, but it can

also mean licentiousness, 'feminism' can be interpreted as women's emancipation or as a doctrine that says women should have lots of sex with many different men before and after marriage. Similarly, when it comes to possible meanings of 'the West', I am not so much interested in what a text declares at the surface, but rather in the meanings behind what is apparent.

My understanding of Occidentalism is straightforward and universal: Occidentalism is both the activity of constructing an image of the West, and the result of this activity (the image itself). Anyone can engage in this activity. In order to distinguish between Western Self-images and (non-Western) images of the West (i.e. the West as Other), I would suggest referring to Western Occidentalism as 'auto-Occidentalism'. I do not presume Occidentalism to have a specific content, be it positive or negative. I do presume it to be stereotypical, in the sense that I presume it to stand in a dialectical relationship with images of the Self. (In the case of auto-Occidentalism, the relationship is with images of the Other.) In other words, I seek out images in which the West has taken the place of the typical Other. As is well known, images of the Other will always be connected to the image of one's Self. Although this means that the image is always a distortion from reality, I will argue that the image is *never* entirely detached from reality. Real experiences of real facts are ingredients for images of Orient, Occident, British or Egyptian alike. To image, reality is an essential (though not sufficient) precondition.

Post Cold War

This research is focused on the period after 1989. While I was still preparing the proposal that lies at the basis of this research, there was this perceptive friend who was unhappily surprised with the fact that I had chosen the fall of the Berlin Wall to be such a determining event in the research. Possibly suspecting me of entertaining an unseemly Eurocentric point of view, he

asked “Why don’t you select a date that is closer to the Egyptian experience?” Then, as now, my answer is as follows.

The ‘Iron Curtain’ was not only a physical barrier which prevented the population of the Eastern block from leaving Communist utopia. Rather, it symbolised the division of the world in the Capitalist West and the Communist East. It is true that a vast proportion of the world population was part of neither West nor East: the so-called Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) counted 47 member states at its first conference in 1961 (most prominently Egypt, Yugoslavia and Indonesia), and ever more states joined the NAM in the decades that followed. Yet the conflict between the great powers was of equally defining importance to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), for it was this conflict which made the establishment of the NAM feasible. The criteria for a state joining the Movement consisted mainly of conditions assuring that the aspiring member state is (politically, militarily) neutral ‘in the context of Great Power conflicts’. It is then fair to say that the whole world was caught up in the logic of the conflict between West and East. For decades, the two great powers, one referring to itself as ‘the (free) West’, the other claiming to consist of a collection of Communist ideal states, have made impressions on people the world over. In Egypt, as everywhere else, those impressions forced people to make images of the sender of those impressions. While making those images, people necessarily thought in the context of the conflict between the great powers. As that conflict ended in so graphic a manner with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the revolutions throughout Eastern Europe in 1989, the context in which images of the West had been crafted until then, changed drastically, in Egypt as much as anywhere else.

Three ideological contexts

It is difficult to categorize the intellectual landscape in Egypt. The long-established lack of political freedoms has stifled the proliferation of credible

political opposition parties. The lack of press freedoms smothers the display of intellectual debates which otherwise could be monitored freely. Cultural and political life in Egypt and the wider Arab world appears to be in a state of confusion which can be traced back to the Arab defeat against Israel in 1967[42] and suffered another blow with the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar system. The convulsions spawned by the attacks of September 11, 2001 have only exacerbated regional instability.[43] A conventional division employed both within and outside the Arab world is between 'Islamist' and 'secular' discourses.[44] Others have opted for a more distinguishing categorisation comprising Islamic, leftwing, nationalist and liberal trends.[45] I was tempted to follow the dichotomous division in Islamist and secular discourses (or 'trends' or 'currents' as some would have it), because the various secular discourses do not publish nearly as much on 'the West' as does the Islamist discourse. The relevant works of Marxists, nationalists and liberals combined, do not even match the amount of relevant Islamist works. I did not want to write a whole separate chapter on liberal views of the West, then another on leftist views, if the material to base any analysis on, was too scarce. However, in the end I have decided not to lump all the secular discourses together. As time went by, I found

[42] E.g. Fouad Ajami "The End of Pan-Arabism" *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 57 Nr. 2 (Winter 1978) pp. 354-374 argues how the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 was the prelude to the emergence of realist 'state logic' instead of ideology; Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' states that since 1967 Egypt has no official political ideology, see: *Contemporary Arab Thought. Studies in post-1967 Arab intellectual history* Pluto Press: London 2004, p. 83.

[43] E.g. George Tarâbîshî (*Al-Marad bi-al-Gharb* Dâr Petrâ: Damascus 2005) speaks of a 'collective neurosis' of the cultural and political elite in the Arab world; Ibrâhîm Mansûr (*Al-Izdiwâg al-thaqâfî wa uzmah al-mu'âradah al-Misriyyah* Mîrît: Cairo 2006) concerned himself with 'cultural ambiguity' in Arab society at large, specifically engendered by the lack of a connection between elite groups and the common populations; Al-Sayyid Yassîn (*Al-Dîmûqrâtiyyah wa hiwâr al-thaqâfât* Mîrît: Cairo 2007) engages with what he terms 'the Arab cultural crisis'.

[44] E.g. Afaya 1997; Nadje al-Ali *Secularism, gender and the state in the Middle East: the Egyptian women's movement* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2000.

[45] Abu-Rabi' 2004; Abu-Rabi' in this regard follows examples set by Mahmûd Amîn al-'Âlim *Al-fikr al-'Arabî bayna al-khusûsiyyah wa al-kawniyyah* Cairo: Dâr al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabî 1996 and Fahima Charaffedine *Culture et idéologie dans le monde arabe* Harmattan: Paris 1994.

more and more liberal, Marxist and nationalist material of relevance to the research, and the differences between for instance the Marxist Galâl Amîn and the liberal Ridâ Hilâl[46] were simply too big to allow me to treat them under one and the same secularist heading. My categorisation is threefold: an Islamist discourse, a liberal discourse and thirdly a leftist-nationalist discourse. I have been troubled with this latter hyphenated discourse, as I was tempted to follow Abu-Rabi‘ in his fourfold categorisation mentioned above. Yet as has been observed by Abu-Rabi‘, these discourses are not mutually exclusive.[47] I have found that the leftist and the nationalist discourse are often hard to distinguish. This is not strange given the Nasserist period in Egyptian politics, in which socialism and Arab nationalism were combined. Indeed, in my research material, I have found the two to cohabitate a single discourse comfortably, and have therefore opted for the hyphen. Special emphasis will be placed on the differences and similarities between the images as constructed within the different discourses, for the differences and similarities can tell us what is the strength of the discourse in shaping the image, and help us understand the way in which the image was created.

The material

There are countless books and articles that contain images of the West. A short reference to Western ‘double standards’ in an op-ed about weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is relevant to this research, as is a discussion of perceived ‘crusaderism’ in Washington, or a text using globalization and westernization synonymously. Obviously it is impossible to read or even collect all the relevant material. The material used in this research should be seen as a sample. While working with texts has the advantage that the material is available for scrutiny by others, and remains

[46] More on Galâl Amîn and Ridâ Hilâl in chapter III of this thesis.
[47] Abu-Rabi‘ p. 89.

uninfluenced by the research, there is the danger of bias in the selection of the texts. To compensate for this, I have turned to a third party to collect material on my behalf. This third party is the small company called Mahrusa, an independent provider of media services that has catalogued newspaper articles published in Egyptian and Arab regional newspapers going back to the 1980s. I requested three volumes of newspaper articles on the topic of Egyptian, Arab and/or Islamic cultural and political relations with the West, Europe or the United States. This amounted to over 300 mainly op-ed articles. I specifically requested that the newspapers from which the selection was to be drawn, would cover the various political points of view, thus including leftist, nationalist, liberal, and Islamist outlets. Not only did this yield a collection of articles over which I had exerted no bias, it provided me with articles many of which I could never have found myself, for newspaper archives in Egypt leave much to be desired. However, while I have exerted no bias over the collection made by Mahrusa, there may be a bias on the part of Mahrusa's cataloguing and subsequent selection. Partly in order to spread any possible bias, I have in addition to Mahrusa's collection, collected material myself. I added these articles to the corpus of texts, partly found on the websites of Egyptian newspapers (e.g. *Al-Ahrâm*, *Al-'Arabî*, *Al-Usbû'*, *Al-Masrî al-Yawm*, *Al-Sha'b*, see bibliography for URL-addresses) and Arab satellite channels (*Al-'Arabiyyah* and *Al-Gazîrah*), partly in the media archive of the American University in Cairo (AUC).

In addition to the newspaper articles I have analyzed around forty books published after 1989, written by Egyptian intellectuals of the various ideological persuasions, along with a few works written by non-Egyptians which have had an impact on intellectual discussions in Egypt (Shâkir Nâbulsî and George Tarâbîshî). Nearly all of these books were found in bookshops or at bookstalls in Cairo during my sojourns there in the winter of 2005 and the summer of 2007. Three authors are particularly well

represented in this collection: Galâl Amîn, Ridâ Hilâl and Muhammad ‘Imârah. I have taken these authors as representative of the leftist-nationalist, liberal and Islamist discourse respectively, and they will be treated in depth in order to get a deeper understanding of how the images of the West play a role in their work and respective ideologies. A private meeting with Galâl Amîn helped to further understanding of his work. It was not possible to meet with Muhammad ‘Imârah or Ridâ Hilâl, in the latter case because he disappeared in August 2003, and has most unfortunately not been seen or heard of since.

Hasan Hanafî has so far only been mentioned cursorily, and here is where I would like to explain why. He was the first to publish a lengthy study of what he called *istighrâb* or Occidentalism. Hanafî’s work on Occidentalism is part of a large project in which the Egyptian philosopher aims to establish the intellectual foundations for a progressive Islamic revival. This project, entitled ‘heritage and renewal’ (*al-turâth wa al-tagdîd*), entailed 1) a reassessment of the reception of the Arab-Islamic tradition, 2) a reassessment of the reception of Western tradition, and 3) the establishment of a new frame of mind that is geared to cope with contemporary reality. The first of these three pillars was dealt with in *Heritage and Renewal. Our position towards the old heritage*, published in 1980.[48] Shortly afterwards was the publication of the first and last issue of a journal entitled *Al-Yasâr al-Islâmî*, or ‘the Islamic Left’. The Islamic Left is still the ‘ideology’ associated with Hanafî. Then in 1991 Hanafî published his *Introduction to the Science of Occidentalism*.[49] This work has received much attention in both the Arab world as well as in Europe. In order not to cause any confusion, it should be made clear in advance that Hanafî’s use of the term

[48] Hasan Hanafî *Al-turâth wa al-tagdîd. Mawqifunâ min al-turâth al-qadîm* Manshûrât Magd: Cairo 2002 (1980).
[49] Hanafî 1991.

Occidentalism is rather different from the uses discussed so far. Hanafî calls for the establishment of an academic field that is concerned with studying 'the West', hence Occidentalism, analogous to Orientalism.

According to Hanafî, the Arab world (and even more broadly speaking, the 'Third World') suffers a hermeneutical captivity resulting from Western imperialism. The West automatically considers itself the measure of all things, and it is itself the chief-measurer. It does not allow others to measure it, nor does it allow for measures other than its own to be used. Over the past two centuries, the Arab world has in fact come to adopt – either willingly or under duress– the Western gaze upon its Self and the world, which make it impossible for the authentic Arab and Islamic traditions to play their parts in the present. Hanafî's intention with Occidentalism is to challenge the status quo by reversing 'the gaze'. "Occidentalism is the other side of Orientalism, its counterpart, or better still its opposite. While Orientalism is the vision of the (Eastern) Self as glanced through the (Western) Other, Occidentalism aims to untie the double historical knot between Self and Other (..)"[50] In other words, Occidentalism as an academic discipline would transform the West from being a student into being an object that is studied. It would break the standard of the West as a seemingly universal viewpoint. Hanafî's call for recognition of the multiplicity of points of view, or the relativity of Western concepts, seems to befit the postmodernist agenda of multiculturalism and cultural relativism. Yet surprisingly, Hanafî argues against postmodernism as a fallacy.[51] I have asked Hanafî as to how he reconciles his rejection of postmodernist thought with his call for Occidentalism which must be understood as a form of cultural relativism. Hanafî turns out to be somewhat ambivalent in relation to the relativistic approach. He argues for relativism

[50] Op. cit. pp. 29f.
[51] E.g. Hasan Hanafî "Hârî Pûtar Gharbî .. wa Hânî Gawhar 'Arabî" *Al-'Arabî* August 18, 2007.

in relation to the Western tradition, but rejects it when it threatens to touch on the Arabic-Islamic heritage.[52] This and other real or seeming contradictions have troubled various commentators of Hanafî's work, most recently, and most ferociously, George Tarâbîshî.[53] While both Hanafî and Tarâbîshî will be mentioned later on in this book, it should be clear from this point on that Hanafî's employment of the term Occidentalism is different from the way it has been employed since, and different from how it is employed in the present study.

Dangers

Any research into the creation and use of images is in danger of producing skewed results for the simple reason that the researcher tends to over-represent the more dramatic, the more extreme imageries, for the simple reason that these images are most apparent, most easily found. For example, when researching images of Catholicism in America, most of the readily available material will be found to have been written from either a decidedly pro- or anti-Catholic viewpoint. The researcher will recapitulate discussions in the American media around the time of the election of president Kennedy (the first Catholic US president), and most of the relevant articles for this research will be critical of the prospect of a Catholic president, calling into question the supposed problem of any Catholic's 'dual allegiance'. The more factual reports on Catholics and the Catholic church in America are simply not as interesting for the research: it is rightfully assumed that there is a near infinite amount of factual reporting on the topic, but what the researcher is looking for is something else, namely *engagement* with Catholic reality, be it against or in favour of the object, but not indifferent to

[52] Interview held in Cairo, dd. September 19, 2007.

[53] George Tarâbîshî (2005); other critiques of note are Nasr Abû Zayd "Al-Turâth bayn al-ta'wîl wa al-talwîn. Qirâ'ah fî mashrû' al-yusâr al-Islâmî" *Alif* Nr. 10 (1990); Thomas Hildebrandt *Emanzipation oder isolation vom westlichen Lehrer? Die debatte um Hasan Hanafis "Einführung in die Wissenschaft der Okzidentalistik"* Klaus Schwarz Verlag: Berlin 1998.

it. Perhaps another example is due. When researching the image of America in Dutch political and cultural discourse, the research is in danger of leading itself almost exclusively to those politicians and commentators who have outspoken views of America: socialists (e.g. SP) and conservative pseudo-liberals (such as Geert Wilders) will provide fiercely negative (imperialist!) and jubilantly positive (defender of freedom!) images respectively. The mainstream is in danger of being ignored in the research because the mainstream politicians and commentators are not so concerned with America to let it play an important role in their discourse. Some of the criticism of Edward Said's Orientalism was directed at Said's selection of texts, which excluded for instance all German scholarship on the Orient. To the extent that this criticism was justified, it may be explained by the problem I am describing here: German scholarship on the Orient was largely descriptive and factual, with a heavy focus on linguistics. This would yield few results for any study into images of the Orient, when compared to the French and British focus on 'cultural analysis' (*avant la lettre*). In addition, - and apart from Said's inability to read German - Said may have been discouraged from adding German Orientalism to his workload for the reason that Germany did not entertain an Oriental imperialist policy for Said to link to German Orientalist scholarship.

The risk of producing skewed results is similarly present in a research into Occidentalism. In this research the risk partly hailed from the fact that it is mainly Islamists who write directly about the West, publishing works with wonderfully transparent titles such as 'Islam and the West', 'Islam and the Other' or 'Western Civilization and Islam'. While these publications were found without too much trouble, I had to go out and exert a genuine effort to find publications dealing with the West written by intellectuals from other trends: nationalists, leftists or liberals. (This excludes Ridâ Hilâl and Galâl Amîn, whose works were known to me from the early stages of the research.)

Another danger to the research, related to the one mentioned above, is when we focus exclusively on the one image of our interest. When we only look at how the West is described, and disregard the context, we run the risk of misrepresenting the images. All media have a certain style, certain conventions: these must be made clear along with the images we find in this media. When we find a newspaper article saying that the West is a pestilence ravaging the youth, this may seem at first glance rather alarmist. Yet, when we look further and find that this newspaper also has headlines that run "Egyptian Government is spreading cancer in the country!", then we may more readily assume that the article about Western pestilence befits the style of the newspaper, and its image of the West is to some extent governed by this newspaper's agitative style. One could compare with Islamophobic articles in English tabloids: they do not have the same meaning as when they would be published in any of the broadsheets. This risk of misrepresentation has been taken into account in this research. I have tried always to provide the context of any publication, not only in terms of ideological background (which in any case is a central element of the analysis) but also questions of style of the publication (or author) as well as the time frame in which a certain text was published.

The following chapter is concerned with how 'the West' has been understood and portrayed in modern Egyptian history since the French invasion of 1798 until the end of the Cold War. Works of key authors such as Al-Gabartî, Al-Tahtâwî, Muhammad 'Abduh, Sayyid Qutb and Gamal Abdel Nasser, are re-read with an eye on the representations of the West in these texts. This provides material with which to compare my ultimate findings diachronically, to the extent that it will enable to recognize topoi, stereotypes and rhetorical strategies that result from the analysis of contemporary texts. The chapter is therefore not intended to be an entirely novel interpretation of Egyptian intellectual and ideological history, but

should nevertheless be informative in its particular arrangement and foci on specific authors and works. The analyses are presented chronologically and placed within their historical context. In so doing, the chapter traces the development of the meaning of 'the West' in Egypt, and presents the reader with an understanding of Egyptian positions vis-à-vis the West that goes beyond the commonplace and scarcely illuminating description of Arab views of the West as being 'ambiguous'. It is argued that from this reading of modern Egyptian intellectual history five major constructions of the West, or 'Occidentalisms' emerge. These Occidentalisms refute the idea - at least for as far Egypt is concerned - that the Islamic world has been consistently dismissive of (or at least reticent in) adopting Western immaterial culture. The Occidentalisms, as typical representations of the West, may also be of use in understanding the various ways in which the concept of the West is imagined in Egypt and elsewhere in the Arab world since the end of the Cold War.

Chapter III is geared to present Egyptian post-Cold War texts that relate to the West in whatever shape or form. After a short introduction the three aforementioned ideological backgrounds are treated separately, in each case leading up to a discussion of one of its protagonists. That means that the discussion of leftist-nationalist discourse culminates in an inquiry into the works of Galâl Amîn, followed by a discussion of Islamist discourse on the West that leads up to an analysis of the writings by Muhammad 'Imârah, and finally the liberal discourse is engaged with, epitomised by an assessment of books written by Ridâ Hilâl. While Chapter III is largely descriptive, chapter IV examines the findings in depth, by drawing parallels between times and places, by differentiating between text and society, and most importantly by focussing on the element of power in explaining various phenomena in Egyptian Occidentalism. This eventually provides a thorough understanding of the differences and similarities between Occidentalism and Orientalism. Finally, the main findings of the research

are summarized in the conclusions. By the end of this thesis it should be clear among other things that Occidentalisms, or images of the West, come in highly varied shapes and are influenced by both ideology and real facts on the ground, and that therefore anti-Western sentiment should not be explained without having recourse to Western policies.