Orientalism in the Book of Edward Said: Critical Analysis

Introduction

In the central landmark of the city, Pairs, France, One of the world's largest art museums is located The Louvre Museum. The Louver was first opened on 10 August 1793 the opening did not last long to then be closed in May 1796 due to structural deficiencies at the same time the French Revolution by Napoleon the first was being lead to change the political formula of France. The museum was reopened in 1801 under the control of Napoleon the Louver collections of paintings and arts grow as the military Campaigns successfully were achieved. According to the Louver website, Napoleon appointed the museum's first director, Dominique Vivant Denon in 1802 he renamed the Louver to the Musée Napoleon which translate to the museum of Napoleon. Not only the name of the Louver changed but the arts were also changed to the liking of the new leader Napoleon. Soon the Musée Napoleon was overflowing with the artistic rewards of war as Bonaparte’s Grand Army swept across the continent as Bonaparte was in constant war against Britain. Another major recourse of art to the museum of Napoleon was Napoleon famous Egyptian campaigns from 1798 to around 1810. It was an advantage that was to close off access to the Indies for Britain the enemy of France at the time so Napoleon wanted to grab hold of Egyptian and more eastern lands. This military campaign was accompanied by a team of scientists, botanists, and artists to study these lands and that could be considered as the beginning of the Orientalism movement, as Edward Side says in his book 'Orientalism' in which he believed that this campaign was to ease the opening of the East and make it more accessible for the west. The painting 'Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa' is a great witness of Orientalism and based on it the trio of history, Europe, Tragedy of this painting, and its subject Napoleon Bonaparte will be explored in this paper.

Orientalism: The book of Edward Said

One of the greatest books on identifying what Orientalism is would be the book by Edward Said Orientalism. Based on his book many of the understanding and interpretation of orientalism this paper relied on. So what is Orientalism and what its stand for? The term orientalism by many Oriental scholars as they call them self will answer that is the study by western scholar and research of the oriental. Yet Said's definitions of orientalism seem more close to the truth if one must say. In Said's book, this short sentence 'is the study by western scholar and researchers of the oriental' is explained and I am paraphrasing Said's word here that when Western scholars studied Eastern culture they couldn’t understand it because it's different from their own so they portrayed the east as exotic, enigmatic, and curious judging and romanticizing it without even understanding it, to that said continues saying that the West thought it society was superior to Eastern society and he explain that by saying that Western Scholarship held strong connections to the domineering imperialist societies that produced it, concluding that much Western scholarship was inherently political and intellectually uncertain, in other words, the oriental is identified as the total negation of Europe putting Europe as a standard that the rest of the world should achieve. According to Said that lead to the justification for the Western colonization of Eastern countries as the West panted a picture of the Eastern world that needed civilizing so invasions was framed as salvation. When looking at the painting 'Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa' and knowing the historical event this painting was capturing I can only see how

the words of Said was given a great example to represent. The Egyptian campaign, the greed of colonizing more Western land in attempt to defeat the existing of British as a competitor in the era, the tragic quality the European scholars claimed as property of the West all this is documented in the painting, and the end of history in France.

The history behind the painting: what historical event does the painting documents?

Earlier to the actual events of 1799, the visiting of Jaffa, one must know the history between the subject of the painting Napoleon Bonaparte and his enemy and competitor Great Britain. Starting with the French Revolution which was the direct reasoning this conflict between France and the rest of Europe exist. According to the book 'Campaigns of Napoleon'(1966) by David Chandler the French Revolution of 1789 was a paradigm-shifting event that put all the monarchies of Europe at risk one of them was obviously Great Britain and as a result of this event the French King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette become the prisoners of the revolutionaries, kingdoms around Europe got even more worried which lead to war threaten between the neighboring monarchies send by Prussia and the Holy Roman Empire to France if any harm happens to Louis and Mary Antoinette to which the new French government responded with declared war on Austria the Prussians declared war in response and soon after the allies invaded France the invasion was stopped by French army and as a result the French King and Queen were executed the very next year. The First Coalition a union were a group of European countries such as Britain joined Austria and Prussia against France. At time Napoleon was a general of the army and was responsible in stopping the Coalition attempted to overthrow the Republic and helped install a new government, the Directory, that was the end of the war First Coalition, and Napoleon was seen as a hero in Paris. Only Britain stayed at conflict with France so Napoleon started a new campaign against them in Egypt 1798, he managed to take control of Egypt but was defeated in Jaffa by the ottomans Empire and the British forces in 1799 after the defeat he flee, appended his troops, and returned to France.

Napoleon Bonaparte from a General of the Army to an Emperor of France

After the success that Napoleon Bonaparte had in the Egyptian Campaign the French Armée D'orient, French Army of the Orient was led by his general to siege on the city of Jaffa in attempt to conquer the city from the Ottoman Empire a British ally. The campaign was unsuccessful and it was one of Napoleon strategic defeat due to the importance of Jaffa's location in addition to its imported since it would have positioned him well to challenge Britain's influence in the East. The Army of the orient was defeated on the hand of Ahmad Aljazzar with the help of the British defense by bombarding French army from the sea. After two months of suffering heavy causalities and plague, Napoleon Bonaparte recalled the siege and retreats his Armée D'orient back to Egypt were its said that that Napoleon killed the solder who was suspected of plague, some reports even said he order them to drink poison, it also said that prisoners were stabbed to death in order to save gun powder is a tragic event indeed. Following the unsuccessful campaign five years to be exact on December 2, 1804 Napoleon is the emperor of France the same year when the painting of 'Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa' was demanded by Napoleon to be painted, the painting was a visual documentation of the incident. Now way the change in ranking for Napoleon Bonaparte is important it simply because the painting

captures a moment of the General Napoleon from the eyes or look of the Emperor Napoleon. The painting considered a romantic and sanitized view of what had really happened; it's romantic because the oriental scenery and sitting of the painting and the use of warm colors and sanitized simply for neglecting the information of what happened to solders and prisoners of this campaign. According to Louver website this painting is the first masterpiece of Napoleonic painting this information supports the idea that Napoleon actually realized the influence of art on people almost like the effect of news or social media of modem time and used it as a propaganda to promote himself as divine leader the incident he choose is also interesting why a campaign that he lost in instead of the many he won; the choose he made indicate that it was attempted to collect sympathy and supporters, perhaps to turn this negative incident into something positive, and maybe he tried to alter and change the ugly reality of this battle with this piece of art.

It also said that this painting captured the beginning of orientalism the present of the Islamic architecture, the Arab men wearing different cloth than the French, and the sitting of a mosque all these were represented by a western point of view. All these details, analysis were supported by the description of the painting at the Lover website:

The picture depicts General Bonaparte visiting plague-stricken French troops in the courtyard of a Jaffa mosque being used as a military hospital. The scene took place in March 1799 during the Syrian campaign. Bonaparte, in a shaft of daylight - ignoring the doctor trying to dissuade him - touches a sore on one of the plague victims with his bare hand. One of the officers watching has a handkerchief over his mouth. On the left, two Arabs are handing out bread to the sick. On the right, a blind soldier is trying to approach the general-in-chief. In the foreground, in the shadows, the dying men are too weak to turn towards their leader. The painter is implying that Bonaparte's virtue and courage justify the horrors of war. Gros has given him the luminous aura and gestures of Christ healing the lepers in religious paintings.

Napoleon as Christ like figure was not an accident or by chance, these two images have the many similarities just by looking at them side by side, the hand gesture, the surrounding of ill people, and the implicating healing abilities to both figures. Napoleon advocate himself as powerful as god in doing so he proves that this was planned since it indicates that he realized the connection to many and rooted mindset of connect god to the rulers and kings.

Europe, History, Tragedy: Napoleon, End of History, Plague

in the painting the three component of Europe, history, tragedy is represented each with element or elements of the painting, for instant Europe is clearly represented by the subject of the painting Napoleon as he was the central of the painting the most important and the standard that is set so other can try and must inspire to be the exact, then there is the opposite the antonym of Europe in the painting and according to orientalists the Arabs the Middle Eastern represented in the image they are the negation of Napoleon, History the simple definition is the documentations of past events if we take this simple definition and applied it on the painting then yes the painting is a very creative form for documenting this incident, but then there is the History 'The End of History' a political and philosophical term that supposes a particular, mainly the west, political, economics, or social system may develop that would constitute the end point of human sociocultural evaluation and the final form of humanity to reach a perfect system that it cannot be improved anymore the painting captured the end of history for that time and to be

more specific in Europe if we took a look at Napoleon as leader of French Revolution and the republican of France at the time were France was known as the republican of France with its adjust consecution the rest of European countries were kingdoms with traditional political and social system. Tragedy an event in which causes great suffering, loss, and misfortune the painting captures the tragic events of plague that caused great misery, cost, and hardship the other philosophical and orientalist definition would be the empathy this quality many orientalists argues that it’s a quality of the West and all element of it, society, religion, and politics everything eastern have the quality of tragic now the painting shows a very empathic Napoleon to the point he risk his own life to put himself in the others positions it is the exact seen that Napoleon is compared the Christ another type of tragedy the painting and it subject Napoleon represent is the tragedy that as in Greek or Shakespearean plays and there is elements that is specific to this type of drama such as the tragic hero were the main character must suffer because of inevitable fate in addition to that the character is that it hails from the elite stratum of society and hold a high position of nobility and prestige, as the subject of this tragic painting Napoleon is a tragic hero were all the element of a tragic hero are available in Napoleon the noble family, a high ranking, and the inevitable fate of losing to Britain and exiled by them out of his land France even his ending and death is like most tragic endings were the king is send away and is punished in loneliness tell death.

The conclusion of Napoleon Bonaparte: The Exile

The French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte dominated European politics for ever a decade. He dictated the faith of nations and wined and humiliates countless enemies. But in the end, Napoleon was exiled by the British after losing the battle of Waterloo in 1815. He was exiled to St. Helena because he was deemed too dangerous to stay in Europe. In 1821 he died far from his land he wished to be buried in Paris but the British government would not allow his body to leave St. Helena years later he would be exhumed and moved to Paris but until then he was buried on the island that had become his prison. The tragic hero of the story 'Bonaparte Visiting the Plague Victims of Jaffa' the painting, had concert his tragic ending sealing the story of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Conclusion

As readers, of any text wither is historical, political, religious, or philosophical we always doubt, we question its truth by doubting it and seeking evidence and proof for the certainty of the words one is reading. One the artistic way of documenting any event wither it real or fictional the art of writing, but what if the history is documented in other form of art painting for instant. When first looked at the painting of the visiting 1799 I had a surface look and I did not see anything except what was obvious to the naked eye. Well this look certainly now has changed it felt like reading a text and I was looking for evidence to support the theory it claims so now after reading many analysis of the painting, reading historians about both Napoleon Bonaparte and the battle of 1799, and the tragedy of plague I can no longer only see what is only obvious, in the painting I see the documentation of the very beginning of orientalism, Europe and two of the its qualities end of history and tragedy, the end of history in the republic of France were its social, economic, and political system was improved to sit the standards for Europe at the time, the tragic quality as napoleon seek to changed Europe for the best but his destiny was already fixed and indeed ended on a very tragically note. Finally, I can see that politics from Napoleon time to this day have not changed much the same use of propaganda to gain popularity, the use of god and

people faiths wither to promote or to incite against it, and that power is the real ruler in this world.

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