

DEAR READER,

ANOTHER NAIL IN THE COFFIN OF ORIENTALISM

For me personally writers fall into two categories: either good or bad. Of those who fall into the first category I read their whole oeuvre. Those dropping into the second one remain non-existent. Elif Şafak definitely belongs to the first category. During the past months I have been reading her whole oeuvre, including her latest novel *Honour*. With much pleasure I must admit.

Her novels show a fine mix of components that make her writings outstanding: an intriguing plot, well-researched background, mystical threads, etc. With a female perspective of course, though she is masterfully avoiding all the pitfalls of feminism. Her oeuvre earned a well-deserved place in my library and I can only urge every lover of literature to consider her works.

Next to the literary values the oeuvre of Elif Şafak exhibits, it is worth mentioning another dimension of it, namely its role in destroying the whole fabric of *Orientalism*, a phenomenon best analysed and presented by the scholar Edward Saïd. Orientalism is a product of a definite period of the Western world (though having roots in much earlier periods as well), whose influence is still felt today. It has transformed somehow, it adjusted itself to the current era, it has become more 'politically correct', but in essence it remained the same.

The validity of an idea can only be examined in the light of another idea. The grip of a pseudo idea-system can only be loosened by the power of a real and clear one. In countering the negative aspects of Orientalism the works of genuinely oriental, world-class writers like Salman Rushdie in UK, Orhan Pamuk in Turkey, Gao Xingjian and Amin Maalouf in France, and Kader Abdollah in the Netherlands are invaluable. Elif Şafak joins their ranks in this respect and especially through her novels *The Bastard of Istanbul*, *The Forty Rules of Love* and *Honour* she ensures that the coffin of Orientalism gets a couple of extra nails.

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