

Framed: The Politics of Stereotypes in the News

By: Al Jazeera English

From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through the refining fire of the Orientalist work.

Edward Said, a Palestinian intellectual, literary theorist, historian of the colonial narrative - Said explained how colonialism works, not just through armies, but through literature; not just through conquest, but through anthropology; not just through oppression but justified through narrative. He showed how the West painted a picture of the East. Snake charmers, belly dancers, thieves, the exotic, the sensual, the depraved.

Said saw it in 19th century Western literature and *you* can see it across modern culture: switch on the news, read the newspapers, look at the images. What stories are you being told? Us versus them. The rational versus the irrational. Civilization versus barbarism. Africans: corrupt despots, starving victims. Latin Americans: drugs lords, football players, dictators. Arabs: terrorists, misogynists. Asians: Software engineers, religious fanatics.

How does it feel to be fixed, captured, framed? Think of Orientalism as a lens. Use it when you read the media.

Spot the stereotype.

Decode the fiction.

Unlearn the myth.