Ian Buruma's and Avishai Margalit's co-authored work *Occidentalism – A short History of Anti-Westernism* whose title clearly refers to Edward Said's groundbreaking text *Orientalism* is a critical reflection on the origins of anti-Western views and on the forms they have taken. While Said's *Orientalism* focuses on widespread beliefs and assumptions about the Orient, *Occidentalism* scrutinises commonly held, negative associations with the West. The work can thus be seen as a kind of response to *Orientalism* by inverting the direction of the gaze.

The authors provide a very accessible overview of a topic, which bears great relevance for the area of English Studies in the twenty-first century considering the increasing frequency with which anti-Western stances have been presented in Anglophone writing over the previous few decades. This tendency can mainly be explained by some repercussions of the processes of migration and globalisation, which reveal Britain's cultural and political closeness to the United States, seemingly marking it as the epitome of what is regarded as Western.

Although the main aspects of *Occidentalism* remain sketched due to the brevity of the work, Buruma and Margalit provide examples of each of them, thus achieving to put them into a historical context.

By doing so they point out how deeply intertwined the ideas we think of as Western or Eastern in fact are and that Occidentalism cannot rightfully be regarded as an exclusive, original product of the East.

Hostility to the city is an aspect of Occidentalism, which reached a shocking climax on 11 September 2001 in the attack on New York and on what the city stood for, namely trade, capitalism and cosmopolitanism. New York has thus become the modern Babylon. Many Arab intellectuals who are adverse to the city have found inspiration in pan-German ideals: German Romantic thinkers in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries stressed that Germany was the countryside of poets, artisans and peasants. Among those thinkers, Johann Gottfried von Herder was an enthusiastic folklorist, who was convinced that nations were organic communities that developed best in their home territory. These communities allegedly harbour ed a unique spirit, which guaranteed the observation of human virtues.

Similarly, the Japanese borrowed anti-Western and anti-urban ideas that were upheld by the German nationalists of the 1920s and 1930s and applied them to Japan. Such ideas were those that conceived liberal democratic states as unnatural, rationalistic and racially mixed as well as being too lenient and soft
One of the prevalent characteristics of Occidentalism, which are mentioned by Margalit and Buruma, is the aversion to the mind of the West. The latter is completely immersed in science and reason but is without a soul. Once again, German Romanticists first enunciated this lament in the West and enlarged the role of the soul. Schelling is mentioned, who put great emphasis on society as being an organic entity with shared aims as opposed to a random accumulation of separate individuals. This mood hit a nerve in the Russian soul, which led to the adaptation of German Romantic ideas in Russia. Especially rationalism and reasonableness were sharply attacked by the Slavophiles. They denounced rationalism as the expression of Western arrogance and imperialism, whereas they saw reasonableness as a clear sign of mediocrity.

Mediocrity indeed is another attribute Occidentalis deeply despise, as it is in direct opposition to the concept of the self-sacrificing hero. Occidentalis believe in the importance of the grandeur of a people, a nation or a religion. They see this grandeur undermined by civilization, freedom and peace, which all lead to Komfortismus. This term describes the bourgeois set of mind that is characterised by a preoccupation with material goods and physical comfort. A comfortable life is predominantly passive and is not prone to engage in adventures or in fights for higher ideals.

In Germany in the latter half of the nineteenth-century, distaste for mediocrity led to the focus on military discipline, self-sacrifice and heroism, which was made known to the public through German heroic propaganda. This propaganda contained the idea that Germany was different and culturally distinct from the West. Higher ideals and self-sacrifice figured largely.

One group that used these ideas in the Eastern world were radical Hindus in the 1920s by mingling them with a modern version of their own religious practices. By trying to impose discipline and obedience on everyone, they attempted to forge a ‘new man’. Similar to the German National Socialists, race became a prevalent factor of the nation to them. In a similar vein, Bin Laden used a military vocabulary that is comparable to that of the National Socialists.

Another dimension of Occidentalism, which has frequently surfaced in recent years, is hostility to the faithless person. The Western world is portrayed as addicted to materialism, which has taken it away from faith. Adherents to some forms of Islamism, which is the main religious source of Occidentalism today, even think of the West as savage and barbarous.

Occidentalis who argue in a religious vein tend to do so in Manichean terms. This means that everything around them is seen in black and white. The West, worshipping the false god of materialism, thus becomes totally evil, whereas genuine believers are seen as good and pure.
Buruma and Margalit successfully counterbalance Islamism, which contains Occidentalist views, with a Muslim critique of the West that does not become Occidentalist.

In addition, the authors of this work demonstrate that Occidentalism has a long history, which has at least partly originated in the West. Many cases have been mentioned in which Western Occidentalist ideas have been adopted in the East and been transformed into something new, which has led to a new Occidentalist take on things by taking local historical factors into account. Furthermore Occidentalism provides an insight into how Western-style modernity and Occidentalist revolt have often occurred in the same place, in the same establishment and in the minds of the same people. It has thus succeeded in not falling back on Manichean terms and views. Instead, it resolutely rejects them by presenting a more complex and ambivalent scenario around Occidentalism.

This brief but nevertheless enlightening glance at Occidentalism and the context of its emergence leaves the reader with a desire to delve deeper into this area. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit have awakened a curiosity to engage more with a theme, which has become of central importance in our world today. In addition, the work has emphasised the necessity of abstaining from simplistic views, which more often than not lead to one-sided assignments of blame.

**KEYWORDS:** Manichean, Komfortismus, Anti-Westernism, self-sacrifice, Islamism, soul, anti-urban

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