

Occidentalism – A Short History of Anti-Westernism by Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit.
Atlantic Books 2004.

This excellent and valuable short book represents a superb rejoinder to the concept of Orientalism coined by the late Edward Said.

The authors trace the development of anti-westernism, and particularly the creation of the negative stereotypes of the West that play such a major role in the ideology and actions of so many enemies of Western life and society today.

In the course of six chapters, Buruma and Margalit present a commendably detailed historical survey of their subject, and convincingly explain the development of Occidentalism in Western culture, particularly in Russia and Germany, which has played a part in the creation of the Islamic Occidentalism that demonizes western nations and their values and is deemed to pose such a threat.

Their final chapter is a mixture of optimism and pessimism as they look to the future and consider the implications of combining Occidentalism with political power, and the likely response of the West to such a scenario.

This is not a book on the finishing of which the reader will sleep better, but s/he will undoubtedly be better informed.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh