

Abstract

Edward Said is known to many readers mainly as the author of *Orientalism*. He is often judged and evaluated on this basis. He is regarded as an Occidentalizer and anti-Western scholar by some and celebrated by others as a true defender of East, Arab-Muslim, in particular. Indeed, these views are both invalid and incomplete. Such views do not do justice to Said's repertoire. In order to understand Said's concept of Occident-Orient dichotomy in his work, we need to focus on his oeuvre, from *Beginning to Orientalism*, through *Culture and Imperialism*, *The Question of Palestine*, to *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. Accordingly, the thesis is patterned to examine the development of Said's thought – from critique in its formative stage into dialogism and emancipation in its maturity.

Located within the framework of cultural relativist approach, the present study is a discursive exploration of the Middle East conflict in the light of Said's concept of Occident-Orient dichotomy, its consequences for the study of the Middle East and its influence on the critical and cultural activity of the Arab intelligentsia. It explores, from an Arab perspective, the debate as it has progressed and investigates some of its implications.

The thesis discusses Said's concept in the eleven select texts, namely, *Orientalism* (1978); *The Question of Palestine* (1979); *Covering Islam* (1981); *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983); *Culture and Imperialism* (1993); *The Politics of Dispossession* (1994); *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994); *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999); *Reflections on Exile* (2001); *Culture and Resistance* (2003); and *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (2004).

This study develops a critical reading based on a developmental and consequential analysis of Said's thought. It assesses and evaluates his treatment of the concept of dichotomy as consisting of three parts. First, the disestablishing process which describes Said's questioning of the existing common assumptions and theories prevalent in the field of East-West studies; second is the deconstructing process which includes reading historical experiences and cultural formulations or "fabrications", analyzing and comparing them so as to find out reconciliatory elements; and third is his injection of alternatives. Founded on the idea of cultural relativism, however, the study reads Said's work in two different ways: on one hand, as a test-case of what effective intellectual activity can be and, on the other, as a response to the dangers of dichotomous, binary thinking.

The thesis consists of six main chapters besides an introduction and a conclusion. The Introduction outlines the general trajectories and avenues of the thesis. The First Chapter offers a purview of Edward Said's intellectual and critical range. The Second Chapter discusses, particularly from a Western intellectual perspective, the philosophical and cultural history of perception of the concept of Occident-Orient dichotomy. The Third Chapter elucidates the role played by Said's theoretical and critical values in highlighting the methodological misconceptions applied by the Orientalists/colonialists. The Fourth Chapter takes up the question of Palestine as a case in point in the course of the devastating colonial legacy and Orientalist enterprise. The Fifth Chapter discusses Said's humanistic approach to human calamities and dichotomous thinking. The Sixth Chapter traces Said's contribution to the making of Arab secular criticism that came to be voiced in the global circles. The thesis ends with the Conclusion, summing up the argument and suggests areas for further investigation and analysis.

Having said that, one must go on to state a number of reasonable qualifications. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and is quite accurately indicated in the title of K. M. Panikkar's classic *Asia and Western Dominance*.² The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century. In a sense the two alternatives, general and particular, are really two perspectives on the same material: in both instances one would have to deal with pioneers in the field like William Jones, with great artists like Nerval or Flaubert. And why would it not be possible to employ both perspectives together, or one after the other? Edward Said's *Orientalism: the orient created by the occident*. 1. Said describes Orientalism as being an occidental theory based on the perspective the West has of its oriental counterpart. This social construction is based on a fantasized perception of the Orient influenced by a perceived superiority of the West over its former colonies and other "exotic" cultures as well as an inaccurate cultural perspective transmitted through clichés: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic." In *History of the Arab people*, Albert Hourani addresses the construction of the Arabo-Muslim world. He puts forward the exchanges between the Occident and the Orient under a radically different light than Said did. Start studying Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Learn vocabulary, terms and more with flashcards, games and other study tools. -western produced/perspective -asia, China, Japan, near east, India -not an objective reality -no boundaries -romance and exotic fantasies -an idea. 1808 Map of the World. - new world v old world -inconsistent -projections. 2 principle elements.