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***Forms of Representation in the Works
of Edward Said***

A Thesis Submitted

By

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To

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Abstract

Said's postulations have a constitutive influence on Post-Colonial criticism. Being a practicing critic, an academic in one of the most renowned universities in the United States (Columbia University), and an active intellectual in both the Arab and the American intellectual scenes testifies to the instrumental role he played and still plays in shaping critical orientations concerning the representation of the Arabs/Palestinians/ Muslims in and by the West. This thesis undertakes the discussion of Said's views concerning representation as an activity involved in all cultural practices. The first chapter addresses Said's views concerning the misguided representation of the Orient(als) in Western culture and the entailing translation of Orientalist discourse into political, economic and military domination. The second chapter deals with the dimension of resistance to imperialist domination, the emergence of nationalist consciousness and its fundamental impact on resistance cultures as it appears in Said's works. The third and final chapter investigates two main strains in Said's postulations: the first is the role of criticism as an activity informing and informed by the society in which it is practiced; and the second is the intellectual's function and position in society.

List of Abbreviations of Works by Edward Said Cited in the Thesis

<i>After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives</i>	<i>After the Last Sky</i>
<i>Beginnings: Intention and Method</i>	<i>Beginnings</i>
<i>Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World.</i>	<i>Covering Islam</i>
<i>Culture and Imperialism</i>	<i>Culture</i>
<i>The Question of Palestine</i>	<i>Question</i>
<i>The Politics of Dispossession The Struggle: for Palestinian Self Determination</i>	<i>Politics</i>
<i>Representations of the Intellectual: the 1993 Reith Lectures</i>	<i>Representations</i>
<i>The World, the Text, and The Critic</i>	<i>WTC</i>
“Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler.”	“Identity, Authority”
“Identity, Negation and Violence”	“Identity, Negation”

“Intellectual Exile:
Expatriates and Marginals”

“Opponents, Audiences,
Constituencies and Community”

“Representing the Colonized:
Anthropology’s Interlocutors”

“Intellectual Exile”

“Opponents, Audiences”

“Representing the
Colonized”

Preface

What is the relationship between literature and the world? A question that has for long preoccupied my mind. Not only that, but also it acted as the impetus that set me on choosing a broad area of study such as that of cultural and socio-criticism. It was also behind selecting the oeuvre of an intellectual, that of Edward W. Said, whose continued endeavor to give the Arabs a voice in the West and whose works that reflect the relationship between the Arab and the Western worlds in such a knowledgeable manner, I find very admirable. We may differ or agree with him on any of his postulations, nevertheless, we respect his sincere critical and intellectual efforts at making both worlds meet.

Said was an attractive choice because his works explore the areas where politics are present in intellectual activities; that is to say, the areas where politics enter cultural studies in significant ways, dictating or determining not only the slant of interpretations, but also the interpreter's individual attitude of mind and his self-image. On the other hand, a considerable part of his writing is dedicated to investigating the attitude of opposition assumed by the critic/intellectual. As such, he insightfully reflects on the impact and extent of such forms of resistance/ opposition during the time of colonization and in modern democratic societies such as that of the United States; he conducts his analyses without losing sight of comparing the position of Western intellectuals to that of the intellectual in societies in the "Third World," particularly Arab countries.

On the whole, Said has been a prominent figure in studying the connection between cultural and literary theories of Orientalism, post-colonialism and the socio-political scene; and in investigating the powerful bearing that such theories have on the relationships between the United States, as a leading power from the West/North, and the Arab countries and the Middle East in general. This thesis, therefore, sets out to situate Said as a representative figure of Arab/American intellectuals within the American intellectual scene;

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and to examine his postulations on the issue of representation in light of all the aforementioned elements.

The thesis comprises an introduction, three chapters and a conclusion. Both the first and the second deal with Said's ideas, and analyses of forms of representation of the non-West- especially the Arabs and Palestinians- as encountered in Orientalist works and Western cultural production in general; also addressed is the issue of native resistance to colonization and the role that representation played in decolonization. The third chapter, however, tackles Said's conceptualizations on the nature of criticism and its role in the world; that is in addition to Said's model of the intellectual as an actual practitioner of criticism and an influential presence in society.

The introduction moves along three axes: the first gives a brief outline of the concept of representation, the second situates Said within this context in light of the two major influences on his work- that of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. The third axis attempts to examine Said's position regarding the issues he addresses by closely looking at his use of personal pronouns; the investigation of Said's use of pronouns acts as a larger linguistic framework within which he is situated. Chapter one addresses the part of Said's work that deals with his ideas on the manner in which Western culture affected and was affected by hegemonic political and social notions about the self and the other. Particular focus is laid on Said's views concerning Orientalism both as a cultural phenomenon and a scholarly discipline and its impact- which Said contends still resonates until this moment- on the representation of the Arabs/Muslims/Palestinians. Chapter two, investigates the notions that Said later develops in his career about the role played by resistance in the achievement of independence from colonization. A considerable part of the argument is devoted to Said's representation of the issue of Palestine, and another part deals with his perceptions of the positive and negative impact of nationalism-