

**WRITING FROM THE SHADOWLANDS:
HOW CROSS-CULTURAL LITERATURE
NEGOTIATES THE LEGACY OF EDWARD SAID**

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the impact of Edward Said's influential work *Orientalism* and its legacy in respect of contemporary reading and writing across cultures. It also questions the legitimacy of Said's retrospective stereotyping of early examples of cross-cultural representation in literature as uncompromisingly "orientalist".

It is well known that the release of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 was responsible for the rise of a range of cultural and critical theories from multiculturalism to postcolonialism. It was a study that not only polarized critics and forced scholars to re-examine orientalist archives, but persuaded creative writers to re-think their ethnographic positions when it came to the literary representations of cultures other than their own. Without detracting from the enormous impact of Said, this thesis isolates gaps and silences in Said that need correcting. Furthermore, there is an element of intransigence, an uncompromising refusal to fine-tune what is essentially a binary discourse of the West and its other in Said's work, that encourages the continued interrogation of power relations but which, because of its very boldness, paradoxically disallows the extent to which the conflict of cultures indeed produced new, hybrid social and cultural formations.

In an attempt to challenge the severity of Said's claim that "every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric", the thesis examines a number of different discursive contexts in which such a presumption is challenged. Thus while the second chapter discusses the 'traditional' profession-based orientalism of nineteenth-century E. G. Browne, the third considers the anti-imperialism of colonial administrator Leonard Woolf. The fourth chapter provides a reflection on the difficulties of diasporic "orientalism" through the works of Michael Ondaatje while chapter five demonstrates the effects of the dialogism used by Amitav Ghosh as a defence against "orientalism". The thesis concludes with an examination of contemporary writing by Andrea Levy that appositely illustrates the legacy of Said's influence.

While the restrictive parameters of Said's work make it difficult to mount a thorough-going critique of Said, this thesis shows that, indeed, it is within the restraints of these parameters and in the very discourse that Said employs that he traps himself. This study claims that even Said is susceptible to "orientalist" criticism in that he is as much an "orientalist" as those at whom he directs his polemic.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Chapter one

Said, Bhabha and the Dynamics of “Orientalism”

Chapter two

The Orientalist Views of E. G. Browne

Chapter three

Leonard Woolf: A ‘Conscious’ Imperialist?

Chapter four

Michael Ondaatje and the Burden of Culture

Chapter five

Amitav Ghosh: Writing the Orient From Within

Conclusion

Bibliography

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE	
SAID, BHABHA AND THE DYNAMICS OF “ORIENTALISM”	12
CHAPTER TWO	
THE ORIENTALIST VIEWS OF E. G. BROWNE	66
CHAPTER THREE	
LEONARD WOOLF: A ‘CONSCIOUS’ IMPERIALIST?	130
CHAPTER FOUR	
MICHAEL ONDAATJE AND THE BURDEN OF CULTURE	181
CHAPTER FIVE	
AMITAV GHOSH: WRITING THE ORIENT FROM WITHIN	244
CONCLUSION	
HOW ANDREA LEVY WRITES “THE WEST”	291
BIBLIOGRAPHY	313