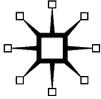


Edward Said and the Question of Subjectivity

EDWARD SAID AND THE QUESTION OF
SUBJECTIVITY

PRASAD PANNIAN

palgrave
macmillan



EDWARD SAID AND THE QUESTION OF SUBJECTIVITY

Copyright © Prasad Pannian 2016

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2016 978-1-137-54864-1

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission. No portion of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission. In accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, Saffron House, 6-10 Kirby Street, London EC1N 8TS.

Any person who does any unauthorized act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First published 2016 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

The author has asserted their right to be identified as the author of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of Nature America, Inc., One New York Plaza, Suite 4500, New York, NY 10004-1562.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

ISBN: 978-1-349-55936-7

E-PDF ISBN: 978-1-137-54359-2

DOI: 10.1057/9781137543592

Distribution in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world is by Palgrave Macmillan®, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pannian, Prasad, 1974—

Edward Said and the question of subjectivity / Prasad Pannian.
pages cm

Summary: "Edward Said and the Question of Subjectivity explores the articulated and implicated notions of subjectivity in the writings of Edward Said, one of the forthright public intellectuals of our times. The work further analyses the shift in his intellectual trajectory towards a new humanism and dwells on his interface with certain western Marxist thinkers"— Provided by publisher.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Said, Edward W.—Criticism and interpretation. 2. Said, Edward W.—Political and social views. 3. Subjectivity. I. Title.

PN75.S25P36 2016

801'.95092—dc23

2015024529

A catalogue record for the book is available from the British Library.

In memory of
T. K. Ramachandran and V. M. Jayachandran

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	ix
by H. Aram Veeseer	
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
Introduction Edward Said and the Politics of Subjectivity	1
1 Orient, Occident, and the Constitution of Subjectivity	11
2 The <i>Subject</i> in Overlapping Territories and Intertwined Histories	41
3 Politics of Exile, Act of Memory, and Recuperation of the <i>Subject</i>	67
4 Intellectuals as <i>Subjects of Action</i> in the Age of New Humanism	93
5 A Shift in Intellectual Trajectory: The Marxist Connection	127
Conclusion Toward a Saidian Paradigm	161
<i>Notes</i>	167
<i>Works Cited</i>	183
<i>Index</i>	195

Foreword

Prasad Pannian's excellent book lends new support to the idea that Edward Said was our foremost intellectual champion of humanism. Pannian joins the many contemporary scholars who celebrate Said's mid-career turn away from the intricacies of literary theory and his return to more traditional forms of political action and literary study. Pannian contributes valuably to this celebration by emphasizing Said's many uses of the topic of subjectivity. Exploring Said's ideas about the construction of the self, Pannian convincingly demonstrates that subjectivity was a pervasive theme in Said's work. No one has tabulated more thoroughly than Pannian the astounding variety of guises in which individual will and intention appeared across the whole scope of Said's thought, writing, activism, and self-representations. Pannian offers guidance to those who wonder just how Said reversed his initial advocacy and then summarily disposed of Barthes and Foucault—thinkers who led a generation to believe that the author and the human subject were no longer effective as categories of literary analysis. Pannian gives us a new account of this reversal by emphasizing Said's ideas about colonialism and its aftermath, about exilic marginality fundamental to authorship, about the role of the intellectual, and about Marxist humanism. This will be a useful book for scholars who wish to pursue this very particular and extremely influential bandwidth of Said studies.

The structure and organization of the book are rational and systematic. The author analyzes the topic of subjectivity in four successive chapters. These chapters are thematic. In Chapter 1, subjectivity is considered as a factor in Said's major work, *Orientalism*, and in Western constructions of the non-Western subject. In Chapter 2, the focus shifts to *Culture and Imperialism* and Said's work as a critic of ideology. A theorist of postcolonial subjectivity, Homi Bhabha, is paired in this chapter with Louis Althusser, a theorist of ideological formations of the subject. While this comparison is clearly essential to any understanding of postcolonial subjectivity, Pannian alone has been canny enough to give it full, concentrated attention. In Chapter 3, the classic Said theme of exile comes in for consideration. Here, Pannian argues how Said ascribes to exile an almost

ontological importance. The primary texts reviewed in this chapter include Said's memoir and personal essays. In Chapter 4, Pannian turns to another classic Said *topos*, the identity, nature, and function of the postcolonial or exiled intellectual. He derives Said's thinking from theorists well known to Said scholars but gives the topic his own spin. In Chapter 5, the author explores Said's connection to Marxism. The argument here rests on Said's favorable remarks about a string of Frankfurt school theorists along with Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams. As it is impossible to argue that Said was himself a Marxist, the author settles for explaining that Said was sympathetic to certain Marxist-humanist themes. The conclusion summarizes the chapters.

By packing between covers all the relevant arguments on Said's theory and practice of subjectivity, Prasad Pannian has written an insightful study that fills a long-neglected gap in Said studies. This is an important book for any scholar who wishes to understand the New Humanism as well as the unique relationship of Edward Said to the compelling and many-sided topic of subjectivity.

H. Aram Veeseer, Professor, City College of New York and Graduate Center, CUNY

Author of *Edward Said: The Charisma of Criticism* (Routledge, 2010).

Acknowledgments

There are a number of colleagues, friends, relatives and students who I would like to place on record my gratitude for their consistent support and encouragement over the course of writing this present book. As the list is too long, I shall name only a few in this limited space.

It is my privilege to be able to thank:

Late T. K. Ramachandran for his abiding inspiration through the thick and thin of my many years of research and writing. He guided me with the breadth and depth of his vast knowledge and always with that touch of the humane.

M. V. Narayanan for his untiring support, steady encouragement and incisive observations on the style and content of my manuscript.

Patrick Provost-Smith for carefully reading my drafts and offering his inestimable insights and helpful comments.

Harold Aram Veerer for always encouraging me with his inspiring words and authoring a wonderful foreword to this book

Gauri Viswanathan, Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, Arif Dirlik, and Kenneth Surin for reading my final draft and fortifying my confidence with their enthusing words.

Lewis Gordon, Pramod Nayar, Nissim Mannathukkar, Shilpaa Anand, and Asha Salahudheen for reading my drafts and offering their constructive comments and suggestions.

Brigitte Shull, Ryan Jenkins, Paloma Yannakakis, and Jeff LaSala, the brilliant editors at Palgrave Macmillan for offering their invaluable suggestions on the form and content of my manuscript.

Darryl Liroux, May Telmissany, and Stephanie Schwartz for inviting me to present my paper at the international conference: "Counterpoints: Edward Said's Legacy" jointly organized by Ottawa University & Carlton University, Canada and for their generous hospitality during the winter of 2008.

Paul A. Bove, Timothy Brennan, Udaya Kumar, G. Gopa Kumar, E. V. Ramakrishnan, P. P. Raveendran, T. T. Sreekumar, K. Sachidanandan, and B. Rajeevan for their motivation and appreciation.

M. K. Riaz, E. V. Fathima, K. Sabarinath, O. P. Shyma, Creston Davis, Aldrin, and Adityan for their invaluable support, love, care, and affection.

Bhavana and Virginia for patiently assisting me in proofreading and indexing the final draft of my book.

Bindu Balan for being a strong pillar of support and care, for nagging me to work on a daily basis, and for meticulously proof reading the drafts.

Shalini Moolechalil, for carefully reading and offering her insightful comments on my drafts, tracking down relevant journal articles, and holding me as a dear friend during the toughest times in my career.

Students of English and Comparative Literature at Central University of Kerala for offering their critical comments during my course sessions on “Edward Said and his Protocols.”

Fellow participants of the 2012 Critical Theory School at the Birkbeck Institute for Humanities in London. I was more than fortunate at Birkbeck to participate in the seminar sessions offered by some of the ablest minds in critical theory and philosophy such as Etienne Balibar, Slavoj Zizek, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Costas Douzinas, and Drucilla Cornell. I offer my deep gratitude to all of them for shaping my arguments in the manuscript.

Fellow participants of the 2013 session of the School of Criticism and Theory (SCT) at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, who have also been tremendously supportive and encouraging. I particularly thank Ian Baucom, Amanda Anderson, Jane Bennet, Achelle Mbembe, Catherine Malabou, and Akeel Bilgrami for all the conversations and discussions we had over the course of an intense six-week program on critical theory.

Fellow participants of 2014 FCT Theory/Praxis course at Jaipur, Prafulla Kar, R. Radhakrishnan, Mohamed Mehdi, and Panchali Ray for the many hours of conversations that we had.

My late father-in-law, mother-in-law, Rajmama, and Vinodettan for their love, fondness, and support.

My dear Achan and Amma, the best minds I have ever had, for standing by me for what I am, and always wishing the very best for me. I could never find words enough to express the depth of my fondness for them!

My sisters, brothers-in-law, Nayan, Nirupam, Parvan, and Neehar for their patience, affection, and smiles.

My dear Sapna for her infinite care in “monitoring” my work, offering her sharp comments, giving me her invaluable love, support, and encouragement—all while being the busiest of mothers to our triumvirs.

My darling MONsters, Niranjan, Chethan, and Jeevan, for their presence in our lives. Without them I am greatly diminished!

* * *

Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK and Chris Humphrey for giving me permission to use the arguments of my own chapter “Edward Said and the Politics of Subjectivity” published in the volume *Counterpoints: Edward Said’s Legacy*, edited by May Telmissany and Stephanie Tara Schwartz.