

AN INTELLECTUAL'S LEGACY

Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation, edited by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010. xiii + 512 pages. Index to p. 548. \$65.00 cloth. \$29.95 paper.

Reviewed by Neville Hoad

This anthology is a wide compilation of perspectives on the life and work of Edward W. Said—scholar, humanist (in the broad sense), and public intellectual—as we approach the tenth anniversary of his premature death. Divided into three sections entitled “On Colony and Aesthetics”; “Palestine, Israel and Zionism”; and “The Intellectual at a Crossroads,” each section begins with an interview by an interlocutor of Said’s, respectively Gayatri Spivak, Daniel Barenboim, and Noam

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Chomsky. These interviews, to a significant extent, serve to set up key terms and ideas in the sections that follow. The anthology, as a whole, is framed by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom’s introduction expressing “the hope that this volume will problematize more than commemorate his contribution,” (p. 16) and by Joseph Massad’s opening essay, which ends with the moving injunction: “Affiliating with Edward Said is then an affiliation with the place he created, the principles that guided his life, and the causes for which he fought” (p. 46).

Denise deCaires Narain offers the following extract from *Culture and Imperialism* as an epigraph to her essay: “There is no Archimedean point beyond the question from which to answer it; there is no vantage outside the actuality of relationships among cultures, among unequal imperial and non-imperial powers, among us and others; no one has the epistemological privilege of somehow judging, evaluating, and interpreting the world free from the encumbering interests and engagements of the ongoing relationships themselves. We are, so to speak, of the connections, not outside and beyond them” (p. 121). Reading through the anthology, one is struck not just by the reach and range of Said’s intellectual inquiry and political interventions, but by the depth and variety of critical responses to this work. The essays investigate the trajectory and circulation of Said’s work and its implications and ramifications for literary and cultural studies, aesthetics, politics, secular criticism, universal humanism, and nationalism, to name some of the more salient themes. The ongoing and uneven circulation of these questions drives almost every essay in the anthology.

Timothy Brennan and Michael Wood both make powerful arguments for the centrality of the idea of the literary to the trajectory of Said’s intellectual production, establishing Said’s significance not just in the founding of a field that came to be called postcolonial studies, but also in the transformation of comparative literature and world literature. Brennan concludes: “In the past decade, as postcolonial studies have evolved into the study of world literature, his arguments appear finally to have carried the

day, thanks to the way his scholarship has substantially, if not visibly, transformed comparative literature" (p. 117).

The second section, "Palestine, Israel and Zionism," tracks the ongoing impact of Said's writings on the Palestinian question in multiple, and occasionally competing, epistemological traditions. Jacqueline Rose risks the melancholia of the second-person address in an imagined ongoing conversation with Said about the psychic structure of Zionism or what Said called "'the immense traumatic effectiveness' of the Israeli nation-state" (p. 318). Ilan Pappé investigates the uptake of Saidian critique on post-Zionist intellectual production and political activism in Israel, and Ella Shohat describes the checkered history of the Hebrew translations of selected texts of Said and analyzes Said's Israeli reception through his conception of "traveling theory."

The essays in the third section recoup, reinvigorate, and sometimes transform Said on a range of issues, inter alia, style, exile, and humanism. Lecia Rosenthal discusses Said's writings on Freud, Beethoven, and Adorno: "What interests me here is the characterization of late style as an 'obsessive' return to problems that have not been resolved" (p. 480). Many of the essayists respond to the recursive relation between ideas and tropes of repetition and originality, of intransigence and elaboration across Said's intellectual production. Michael Wood provides perhaps the most succinct description: "Humanism is a failing dream of a full utterance. But it fails, ultimately, by the highest standards. Along the way it has many modest successes—and all the more successes because it knows its own incompleteness" (p. 62).

Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation moves well beyond the tonalities of tribute and commemoration while managing to hold them in place. The anthology marks a sustained engagement with the writings of one of the most important humanists and public intellectuals of the second half of the twentieth century, honoring his memory through recapitulating something of Said's own restlessness, critical energy, and deeply self-reflexive political engagements.