

Department of Modern Languages

School of International and Public Affairs



Negotiating Intellectual Smugness from the Meta-Narrative of *Orientalism* to the Alternative Strategies of Hispanic and Self-Orientalism: Edward Said via Severo Sarduy

Lecture by Dr. Julia Kushigian

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Over three decades have passed since Edward Said published *Orientalism* (1979), where he locates West and East as opposite ends on an axis of meaning that stresses what the East is not and cannot be. In his polemical rewriting of the grand narrative of the East, the Orient becomes a site ironically inhabited by the dominant West's most persuasive but passive cultural contestants. Yet even as Said critiques the West's dominant role of cultural translator over the Other, he leaves little room for counter-narratives. Said's configuration of Orientalism cannot do justice, for example, to Hispanic Orientalism's strategic advantage for engaging spiritual and human knowledge of the Other, which has endured more than a millennium. Hispanic Orientalism reveals a discursive power of openness, wherein East and West are in a constant state of contact, flux and renovation. Self-Orientalism, emerging from Hispanic Orientalism, challenges meaning through a negotiation of relationships in varying public and private power domains. Self-Orientalism couches clashes and doubts in public, social terms of debate, dialogue, and exchange that are dependent upon the negotiation of difference and breaking the bonds of intellectual smugness by way of dialogic improvisations.

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