

ABSTRACT

Edward Said's *Orientalism* may be regional in its approach but its implications certainly are not. Its focus on colonial discourse and how the western influence "produced and codified knowledge" makes his theory global and applicable to all non-western, non-European, and non-white cultures. Shaped by large political concerns, *Orientalism* as a field of knowledge is a product of colonial/imperialistic designs. This essential relationship between scholarly discourse and imperialism can be seen underlying any literature produced under the western-European-white consciousness. Western-European-white has throughout history and around the globe acted as the norm, marginalizing every non-European as alien and unacceptable. Taxing the 'Other' as inferior as against the superior western 'Self' has been the custom of not only the consciousness that produced the 'Orient', but Afro-American representation in literature has also been subject to this kind of 'othering'. The Orient then is a code also used to suggest the Far East and the treatment of others who are culturally not white and Western imperial/colonial. It is a signifying practice that frames the colonized as objectified entities. Conditioned by the existing cultural linguistic structure, The Harlem Renaissance too, could not cut itself lose of borrowed phrases and stereotyping. Its celebration of the exotic Africaness only

succeeded in making it a structure of repetition. The literature produced thereby, was akin to what the westerners saw and perpetuated in the Orient. Despite its individualistic deportment and overt resilience, the New Negro could not transcend the Western discourse of representation. Much of the energy of Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* comes of the exoticism and sexuality of the Afro-American. Issues of sexuality, male domination and female suppression are just what makes Afro-American literature fall in the premises of colonial signifying practices. My contention, therefore, would be to illustrate how Said's *Orientalism* explains the existence of and supports the representation of Afro-Americans in literature and how literature produced *by* Afro-Americans is akin to any post-colonial literature produced under the European consciousness.