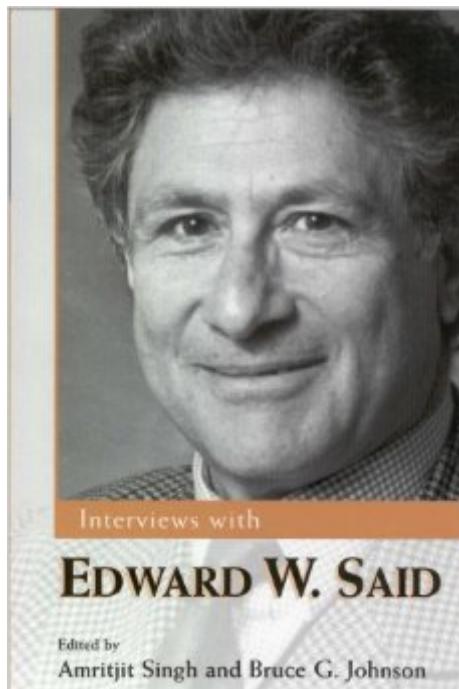


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Interviews With Edward W. Said (Conversations With Public Intellectuals)



Synopsis

Edward W. Said has been a controversial and influential figure in and around the U.S. academy for well over three decades. His work has played a foundational role in the development of postcolonial studies, even as his books- such as *Orientalism* (1978), *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983), and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)-have contributed to a radical transformation of literary studies. In *Interviews with Edward W. Said*, the first collection of interviews with this powerful intellectual, Said reveals the displacements and conflicts in his Palestinian background, and the energies and concerns that have made him a shaper of public discourse. Covering encounters from 1972 to 2000, the book provides, for both the specialist and the general reader, an engaging introduction to Said's wide and disparate oeuvre and his insights that have made a considerable impact on the practices of many disciplines, including literature, anthropology, political science, international studies, peace studies, history, sociology, and music. Since the late 1970s, through his literary writings, Said has established a reputation as a towering and paradoxical figure whose work has evolved theory, but who has, at the same time, challenged the damaging effect of various critical methods and schools on our ability to respond to the "complex affiliations binding the texts to the world." In the interviews gathered here, Said's formidable capacity as a public speaker is evidenced as he discusses the evolving issues that surround the still ambiguous political fortunes of his native Palestinians. Not only is Said a major public intellectual on the U.S. scene today, but also he has elaborated in his speeches, writings, and interviews on how one can be a responsible public person and what it means to be one. In almost all his interviews, Said's passion and occasional rage mark the probity and complexity of his positions on a variety of topics. In 1999, he told an interviewer that he was "still a militant intellectual . . . my tongue is very sharp, and . . . I give and trade blows with people . . . who disagree with me, I mean that's part of the deal . . ." While in some interviews Said comes through as feisty and argumentative, in others his wit and urbanity allow for a charming persuasiveness. In a 1995 interview, Said stated: "I am invariably criticized by younger post-colonialists . . . for being inconsistent and untheoretical, and I find that I like that. Who wants to be consistent?" Delightful and edifying, this book will serve as a rich resource on Said's thoughtful personality and his often provocative views on both personal identity and historical experience.

Amritjit Singh is a professor of English at Rhode Island College and co-editor of *Postcolonial Theory and the United States*, published by University Press of Mississippi in 2000. Bruce G. Johnson, a doctoral candidate at the University of Rhode Island, teaches courses in writing and African American studies at Rhode Island College.

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