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# Othering

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In its most postmodern conception, *other* refers to the subjugation of an identity through a relationship of power. Another term used to signify foreignness or alienation of the other or the condition of otherness is difference.

Othering Involves:

- morality
- rationality
- color and rights

Edward Said is the scholar that known for reviving this term.

## FOUCAULT

In *The Subject and Power*, Michel Foucault's analysis of power relations and subjectivity are often noted to illustrate how individuals and groups identify themselves. Foucault also suggests that the end results of power "are linked with knowledge" (781). As he outlines his methodology, he underscores how the reading of power and subjectivity are often interpreted and assigned to individuals and groups which create unfortunate inequalities. The individual's subjectivity is restrained, repressed, inhibited and decentered which "imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize" (781). In this reading, to *other* one's subjectivity has a political consequence which is tied up in oppression and inequality.

## GOLDBERG

-“My concern is to see how, in fact, racial exclusions have been affected, what their rations are to these other forms of exclusion, how they have been legitimated and may disturbingly be justified in terms of the historically prevailing conception of moral subjectivity” (p. 283).

-Irony of Enlightenment and having so much of an effect in modernity: “The moral formalism of modernity establishes itself as the practical application of rationality, as the rational language and the language of rationality in its practical application. Modernist moralism is concerned principally with a complete rationally derived system of self-justifying moral reasons logically constructed from a single basic principle” (p. 300).

-Normative Gaze

## SAID

For Said, othering refers to the act of emphasizing the perceived weaknesses of marginalized groups as a way of stressing the alleged strength of those in positions of power. Othering can be done with any racial, ethnic, religious, or geographically-defined category of people.

- “Any account of Orientalism would have to consider not only the professional Orientalist and his work but also the very notion of a field of study based on a geographical, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit called the Orient” (p. 15)

- “And with these distinctions go values whose history, if one could unearth it completely, would probably show the same measure of arbitrariness” (p. 19).

- Example of a group of people living on a few acres of land will set up boundaries between their land and that of its surroundings. “In other words, this universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs” is a way of making geographical distinctions that can be entirely arbitrary” (p. 19-20).

-In early 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, understand of one kind of Oriental culture, Islamic was ignorant but complex (p. 20)

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-Example of the Bacchae where the chorus is singing about the Europeans victory over Asia, the hostile "other" world beyond the seas. Here to Asia are given feelings of emptiness, loss, and distaster that seem thereafter to reward Oriental challenges to the West; and also to lament that in some glorious past Asia fared better, was itself victorious over Europe (p. 21).

## WEST

-“Cultural Differences are not things that exist independent of social context and power relations; they are rather signs of struggle, interpretations of human tendencies practices... (p. 1).

-“Social categorization is not monologically determined, although it sometimes appears so; that is people can work to change the perhaps rigid and narrow definitions of social categories by drawing on their categorical or group and individual experiences as well as by working from principled, theoretical stances (p. 4).

- “That is, while race represents a politics of difference, a kind of ideology of difference , it is nonetheless enacted in order to reproduce “the same,” to keep “us” and “them” in (our/their) place(s). Hybridity as a deliberate strategy that seeks to frustrate pristine racial categories represents a threat to that reproduction, to that sameness, to its formidable and fictional power” (p. 18).

-“Believing that we can end social strife and racial tension by focusing on our similarities , by merely accommodating and celebrating our differences, not only discourages analysis of how people have been and continue to be defined negatively on the basis of their differences, but it also militates against our understanding of the weight and depth of differences, how differences are socially instituted and affectively inscribed into people’s emotions, bodies, and minds beyond superficial levels of appearance (p. 32).

-“Many whites are not accustomed to black anger, especially collective black anger and, consequently, are unable to understand it in any kind of political sense; a common response is to dismiss it as dangerously irrational (p. 97).

-“Taking the tensions of social difference as starting points for interrogation of social and political issues imperative. To do this, however, it is important to attempt to meet the challenges that anger presents. Meeting these challenges must include rigorous theoretical and historical analyses of social and political issues in order to supplement the authority of students personal experiences concerning matters of cultural difference (p. 98).

## References

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