

A. Short answer questions (30 possible points)

Select *two passages* from Edward Said and *two passages* from Tayeb Salih. Briefly, in about 5 sentences, respond to the questions about these passages.

Edward Said

1. My objection to what I have called Orientalism is not that it is just the antiquarian study of Oriental languages, societies, and peoples, but that as a system of thought it approaches a heterogeneous, dynamic, and complex human reality from an uncritically essentialist standpoint; this suggests both an enduring Oriental reality and an opposing but no less enduring Western essence, which observes the Orient from afar and, so to speak, from above. This false position hides historical change.
 - a. Define "essentialism" as Said uses it in this passage.
 - b. How might "historical change" challenge an essentialistic reading of the "Orient"?
2. My aim, as I said earlier, was not so much to dissipate difference itself – for who can deny the constitutive role of national as well as cultural differences in the relations between human beings – but to challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things. What I called for in *Orientalism* was a new way of conceiving the separations and conflicts that had stimulated generations of hostility, war, and imperial control.
 - a. Explain how Said's discussion of "difference" in this passage relies on the notion of the dialectic.
 - b. How does Said's project in *Orientalism*, as it is described in the last sentence of this quote, draw on Nietzsche's critique of the dialectic?
3. I have begun with the assumption that the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*, just as the Occident itself is not just *there* either. We must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities – to say nothing of historical entities – such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made.
 - a. How does this statement support Said's central strategy in *Orientalism*: applying Foucault's insight that "all knowledge is political" to relations between Europe and the Islamic world?

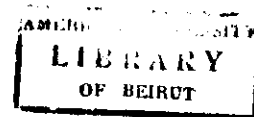


Tayeb Salih

4. "Yes, that's me. My face is Arab like the desert of the Empty Quarter, while my head is African and teems with a mischievous childishness."
 - a. Who is speaking in this passage?
 - b. Who is he speaking *to*?
 - c. What is the significance of his statement? In particular, why does the speaker suggest that he is "empty" and "childish"?

5. Over there is like here, neither better nor worse. But I am from here, just as the date palm standing in the courtyard of our house has grown in *our* house and not in anyone else's. The fact that they came to our land, I know not why, does that mean that we should poison our present and our future? Sooner or later they will leave our country, just as many people throughout history left many countries.
 - d. Who is speaking in this passage?
 - e. Who is he talking *about*?
 - f. To whom should the speaker's comments be compared, and why?

6. "For a moment I imagined to myself the Arab soldiers' first meeting with Spain: like me at this instant sitting opposite Isabella Seymour, a southern thirst being dissipated in the mountain passes of history in the north."
 - g. Who is speaking in this passage?
 - h. Explain the significance of the historical context that the speaker gives for his actions.



Part II: Essay (70 possible points). Answer *one* of the essay questions below. In writing your response be sure to give specific examples where you can, drawn from the texts we read in the course.

Be sure to give yourself enough time to answer this question thoroughly. You will be graded not only on the thoroughness of your answer, but also on your synthesis of the various authors' thought, the originality of your argument, and your reformulation of the ideas you have been exposed to. Essays which simply summarize the author's thought and lack synthesis will not receive as many points as more synthetic ones.

1. How does the structure of Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* frustrate our expectations as readers? (Talk in particular about how Salih plays with the structure of the classic detective novel.) How does Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* frustrate our expectations as theatergoers? (Talk in particular about how Beckett manipulates character, dramatic structure, and/or time.) *Why* do these two authors play with classical literary forms: how do these experimental literary works illustrate a late modern understanding of the possibility of finding meaning in human life?
2. How did Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* anticipate some of the central arguments that Edward Said would make in *Orientalism*? In light of Salih's manipulation of "orientalist" themes, would you say that Mustafa Sa'eed is a hero (or an anti-hero)? Does *Season of Migration to the North* have a "hero," and if so, who?