

The Author Responds

Bernard Susser

Doshisha Women's Junior College

Researching and writing the Orientalism article was a valuable experience for me; I am very pleased that it has in turn stimulated *JALT Journal* readers to contribute their thoughts on the issues I raised.

Professor Stapleton objects to my use of Said's (1978/1994) "Orientalism" as a framework to critique ESL literature on Japan, claiming that it "tends to condemn legitimate tools of inquiry because of the results they have produced" (p. 79). However, if such "legitimate tools" frequently produce bad results, it may be time to send them in for repair.

Stapleton's main example is my casting doubt on "Japan's collective nature" (p. 79). My paraphrase of Befu's (1980) title, "A critique of the group model of Japanese society" somehow serves to "smother all discussion" (p. 79). However, given my statement that "groups certainly play an important part in Japanese society and education" (Susser, 1998, p. 57), Stapleton retreats to a different position, that I am questioning the "legitimacy of the construct" of the "degree of collectivity" (p. 80). He gives no specific quotation to substantiate this accusation. I agree with Sugimoto (1997), who accepts constructs such as "collectivism" and "individualism" but questions the way they have been used to describe Japanese society (pp. 2-13). Further, in their study of American and Japanese day-care centers, Fujita and Sano (1988) found that "the Japanese teachers do not interpret independence in the same way as the American teachers" (p. 85). In short, the construct itself is, if not illusive, at least elusive.

The quotation from Landes suggests that Said denounces the "pursuit of distinctive characteristics as 'essentialist'" (cited in Stapleton, p. 80). My understanding of Said is just the opposite: that essentializing is the act of ignoring "distinctive characteristics" (Susser, 1998, p. 53). I have criticized several works particularly because they ignored "distinctive characteristics" in favor of sweeping generalizations (for further examples, see Stapleton 1997, 1998).

Stapleton's next point is my "objection to the mere mention of Confucianism" (p. 80). However, my objection is to its incorrect use as a trope for "the mysterious Orient." Equally objectionable is the term "Socratic" used as a synecdoche for Western teaching methods.

Finally, Stapleton accuses me of advocating "censorship" (p. 80) by urging journal editors not to publish material which treats Japan within an Orientalist discourse. For example, if a manuscript purporting to explain "The Role of Confucianism in Japanese Education" (Stapleton, 1995) uses "Confucianism" as a cliché and does not refer to a single specialized work on Confucianism in Japan (e.g., Kassel, 1996; Maruyama, 1974; Nosco, 1984; Rubinger, 1982), it should be returned for rewriting after substantial research. Stapleton calls this "censorship," but I call it "editorial responsibility" and "the maintenance of scholarly standards."

James A. Scott's first critique is that the characteristics of othering, stereotyping, representing, and essentializing are not the same as Said's definition of Orientalism. This is true. As I pointed out in my article (pp. 50-51), Said does not give a clear definition of Orientalism; this has been noted by others (e.g., Clifford, 1988, pp. 259). The four characteristics I use in my article are derived from my interpretation of Said's argument, heavily documented with citations from his book.

Scott's second point is that I have not done a statistical sampling of the literature so cannot say that the articles I cited form a discourse. This is a unique idea; Said presents no quantitative analysis and nothing like this is mentioned in the discourse studies cited in my article. Further, the works I cited were merely egregious examples of stereotypes that could be multiplied indefinitely. For example, Scott might have a hard time finding 40 works on the Japanese character that do *not* cite the proverb "the nail that stands out gets pounded down" as evidence of the group's power in Japan.

One does not need Orientalism to criticize stereotypes, essentializing, or factual errors. I used this construct because Said's point is that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The constant repetition and cross-citation of clichés about Japan invest them with "a kind of intellectual *authority*" (Said, 1978/1994, p. 19; emphasis added) that obstructs our work as EFL teachers in Japan.

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