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**Orientalism in the Context of Postcolonial Studies  
Edward Said as a Case Study**

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**Abstract:**

The Orientalist perspective is based on positioning the East in contrast to the West, where the West is assumed to represent progress, rationality, and civilization, while the East is viewed as backward, obscure, and mired in ignorance and superstition. Orientalism is not limited to the academic or political fields, but extends to literature and art, where Orientalist literature often portrays a distorted image of the East. These representations, which depict Eastern peoples as the “Other,” have contributed to reinforcing Western identities as “civilized” and “cultured.”

In this context, postcolonial studies emerge, aiming to break this unjust binary stereotyping. It suggests that the East should not be understood through the Western lens, but must be reinterpreted according to its own cultures and history. Through objective studies, it seeks to rewrite history from an alternative perspective—one that allows for the recovery of marginalized cultures and proposes a re-representation of the East through literature, art, cinema, and social science. One of the prominent figures in these studies is the critic Edward Said, who is the cornerstone of this approach.

**Keywords:**

Postcolonial studies Orientalism Edward Said; cultural identity; Re-representation.

**Introduction:**

Postcolonialism is a historical and intellectual period that emerged after the end of Western colonialism in many countries around the world. It is defined by its epistemic representation through postcolonial theory, which is one of the most prominent literary and critical theories with a cultural and political character, as it links cultural

discourse with the real political problems facing the world. These studies also seek to deconstruct and dissect the differences between East and West, focusing on the different intellectual patterns that describe each side's view of the other.

Postcolonial theory begins with an attempt to expose the Western ideologies that have entrenched the concept of centrality and undermine their premises. This theory relies on methodologies for deconstructing Western cultural concepts using critical tools introduced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who used the concept of "deconstruction".<sup>1</sup> To expose the philosophical and metaphysical foundations upon which Western culture was founded. In this context, it is noted that postcolonial thought devotes great attention to the issue of marginalizing Western culture and considering it a universal standard that dominates other cultures.

From this perspective, it appears that the major intellectual works of Western Europe and the United States have imposed their dominance on philosophy and literary criticism throughout much of the world, especially in regions previously under colonial domination. Furthermore, the concept of "white mythology" proposed by Derrida, which emerged from the research of Robert Young "By writing white myths, writing history and the West"<sup>2</sup> It has been a major support for the postcolonial offensive against Western cultural hegemony. Postmodernism is noted for its rejection of Western grand narratives and intellectual patterns.

In this context, postcolonial thought addresses issues such as identity, power, representation, and the other, and raises questions about how colonial history affects the present, and how formerly colonized societies can rebuild themselves away from Western domination. Among the most prominent thinkers who contributed to this field are Edward Said, who helped define and develop the concept of Orientalism, in addition to Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha and others, who focused on criticizing colonial ideologies and engaging with the colonial past.

This period witnessed a wave of criticism directed at analyzing the methodological origins of colonial discourse and evaluating the post-colonial situation. This criticism was characterized by two aspects:

- First, it was issued by traditional thinkers who lacked the necessary analytical tools and critical rules.

While in the second part, a different critique emerged that relied on modern methodologies, and a number of modern intellectuals emerged. Their writings sought to advance discussions related to post-colonial projects; among these thinkers are Gayatri Spivak and, Bill Ashcroft "Homi Bhabha" and "Edward Said", whose presence forms the basis of our approach.

### **Firstly: Edward Said's Project in Cultural Criticism:**

Edward Said's cultural and intellectual significance extended beyond the realm of media and politics to influence several important fields of scholarship, such as anthropology, art history, and postcolonial discourse studies. Edward Said is considered the first founder of what is known as "postcolonial literature," although Frantz Fanon was the first herald of this field, particularly through his influential work "The Wretched of the Earth," in which he highlighted the suffering of colonized peoples and the impact of colonialism on shaping the cultural and political identities of enslaved nations. However, Edward Said clearly contributed to the development of this field of knowledge through his critical and intellectual approaches.

In his book *Orientalism*, published in 1978, Said offered a sharp critique of Western colonial discourse, which depicted the East as an exotic, backward, and often distorted region. This book became a cornerstone of postcolonial studies. Said viewed Orientalism as not merely a scientific or cognitive study of the East, but rather a tool of colonial domination that contributed to the construction of an opposing image of the West, thus legitimizing the continued exploitation of the East. In his book *\*Culture and Imperialism\** (1993), Edward Said continued his exploration of the impact of imperialism on non-Western cultures, examining how literature and the arts in Europe contributed to shaping colonial consciousness. He also noted that Western literature was not merely a representation of reality, but a tool for crafting perceptions of the "other," which contributed to strengthening and justifying colonial positions.

Thus, Edward Said's project in cultural critical studies is one of the most influential in the field of postcolonial studies. This is due to the development of fundamental intellectual visions that contributed to the deconstruction of colonial discourse and the critical analysis of the cultural and political hegemony imposed by the West on former colonies. From these visions, the pillars of Edward Said's project can be updated, as follows:

### **1. Orientalism as a colonial discourse:**

In his famous book "Orientalism" (1978)<sup>3</sup> Edward Said laid the foundation for understanding how the West shapes its image of the East through Orientalist discourse. Said considered "Orientalism" not merely a scholarly study of the East, but rather a cultural and political discourse that exercises power by representing the East and presenting it as a backward and underdeveloped region, thus justifying colonial domination over it. This discourse, according to Said, shapes the West's understanding of Eastern cultures and influences Western policies and ideologies toward non-European peoples.

### **2. Western centrality and cultural hegemony:**

Through his critique of Orientalism, Edward Said demonstrated how Western knowledge about the East has always been linked to power, with the East portrayed as an "other" exploited by the West. Said worked to deconstruct this dominant discourse by highlighting how Western knowledge is neither neutral nor objective, but rather imbued with power and control. This reflects how knowledge systems are produced and implemented in ways that reinforce cultural and political hegemony.

### **3. Cultural criticism and representations:**

Edward Said not only criticized direct colonialism, but also addressed how cultural discourses shape identities and how literature and the arts can be tools of domination or resistance to colonialism. In his book *\*Culture and Imperialism\** (1993), he showed how Western literature and media helped shape stereotypes about colonized peoples and discussed the interaction between culture and imperialism in Western history.

### **4. The organic intellectual and "exile":**

Edward Said believed that the intellectual must be critical of authority, and that in exile they can fulfill this role most effectively. In exile, the intellectual is removed from the center of power, giving them the ability to critique social and political reality without submitting to the pressures of the existing system. Edward Said believed that

the organic intellectual must be an expression of the interests of the marginalized and colonized, and that they must not adhere to prevailing theories or ideologies, but rather have an independent and resistant voice. Hence, the moral, educational and cultural character of the effective organic intellectual emerges.<sup>4</sup>

### **5. Colonial Criticism and Postcolonial Analysis**

Edward Said is considered a key thinker in the development of postcolonial theory, providing tools for understanding the long-term effects of colonialism and how these effects persist even after political independence. He expanded this concept in his various works, highlighting the interplay between culture, politics, and economics in the postcolonial context.

### **6. Identity and historical memory**

One of the core issues in Said's project is the concept of identity. He pointed out how colonialism destroyed the indigenous identities of colonized nations and imposed new Western identities, and that it is important to understand how identities are formed in colonial and postcolonial contexts. He also addressed the issue of historical memory, particularly in the context of societies that suffered the effects of colonialism, and the necessity of preserving collective memory to resist attempts to erase history.

Edward Said's project of cultural criticism is a prominent intellectual project that has had a profound impact on the field of postcolonial studies. He contributed to the development of fundamental concepts that helped deconstruct colonial discourse and analyze the cultural and political hegemony imposed by the West on former colonies.

Edward Said's project in critical cultural studies represents an attempt to understand and deconstruct the colonial hegemony imposed by the West through cultural and cognitive discourses. His work has contributed to reshaping modern critical literature by providing tools for analyzing the impact of cultural and cognitive colonialism on colonized societies. His ideas have been a cornerstone of the development of postcolonial studies, as they represent a profound critique of ideologies that reinforce Western superiority and re-represent the East according to a distorted image that contributes to the continuation of hegemony.

## **Secondly -The cognitive references and philosophical backgrounds of Edward Said's project:**

### **1- Social upbringing and psychological identity formation:**

Said grew up in a Palestinian environment steeped in the colonial reality imposed by the British and then Israeli occupations. This context became the primary catalyst for his intellectual approach, which rejected the restrictive dualism imposed by Westerners on colonized peoples. Said championed the slogan of "abolishing dualities" and emphasized the need to overcome the challenges created by this dualism between the "West" and the "East." He considered this dualism to be one of the tools of colonial cultural hegemony.

Like most postcolonial thinkers, Edward Said grew up and lived in the West, writing in its language and through its Western cultural experience, even though he held a Palestinian identity. Said saw himself as a global citizen rather than someone



tied to a fixed nationality or local identity, which gave him an intellectual flexibility that helped him deal with the epistemological and cultural challenges imposed by his status as an immigrant and exile. This position, which Said described as "internal exile," gave him the ability to engage with the West while simultaneously deconstructing its discourses and exploring its colonial dimensions.

Said lived in a state of internal fragmentation. He was a Palestinian living in the West and writing about the East, while simultaneously seeking to express the tragedies of his people and their identities torn apart by colonialism. This personal fragmentation, which he described as an inevitable product of the colonial period and its philosophy, was a central focus of his thought. Like many immigrant thinkers, Said viewed himself as a representative of the colonizer without actually representing it. He carried within him what he called the "colonial gene" (the cultural and political heritage) he inherited from his Palestinian experience.

This dual identity made Said a different kind of intellectual: a critical voice representing the marginalized and oppressed, writing from the margins to reveal the impact of colonialism on the colonized subject. His writings, both in "Orientalism" and "Culture and Imperialism," show how he sought to deconstruct this colonial discourse presented by the West about the Orient and to reconstruct the colonized subject that the West had sought to distort and subjugate.<sup>5</sup>

The fragmentation and alienation from his national identity that Edward Said experienced may have been a result of the intellectual influences he was exposed to from an early age, which accompanied his name throughout his life. The name "Edward Said" was composed of two culturally incongruous parts, reflecting the internal tension that Said experienced throughout his life. The name "Edward" referred to the British prince who ruled at the time, at a time when Britain occupied both Egypt and Palestine, the two places where Said and his family lived. "Said," on the other hand, was an Arabic name, expressing Palestinian identity, which was associated with the colonized and marginalized under Western colonial hegemony.

This hybrid dimension in the composition of his name posed an existential intellectual challenge for him. Edward Said lived in a complex environment that combined colonial Western culture with a colonized Arab identity, which led him to constantly question his identity. This fragmentation between different cultures and experiences formed the starting point for further questions about identity, a dilemma that later manifested itself in his critical writings. Edward Said, this young man whose name bore a cultural and geographical contradiction, faced complex questions about himself, which were repeatedly posed to him: "Are you American?", "But 'Said' is an Arab name," "You don't sound like an American," "You are, after all, an Arab," "But what kind of Arab are you?", and "Are you a Protestant?"<sup>6</sup>

These questions, which were posed to him over the years, reveal the internal conflict he experienced between his Palestinian identity on the one hand, and his belonging to Western culture on the other. These questions represented an affirmation of the rift that Said experienced between being part of the colonized Arab world and being part of the colonizing West. This hybrid situation formed a fundamental source of his critical thought, as he worked to attempt to answer these questions and reconcile the contradictory identities that defined his cultural and intellectual existence. This

problematic perspective may have been far removed from direct political issues at that time, as Edward's childhood and early youthful consciousness belonged more to a world of vague feelings and subjective experiences than to the world of consciousness resulting from colonial ideology, which he later discussed in his intellectual works. Throughout his childhood and youth, his influences from the environment in which he grew up were a mixture of contradictory feelings, as he lived between Western and Eastern cultures, without being able to definitively define his identity at that stage.

There is no doubt that this stage formed the basis of his later thought, especially in his analysis of the experience of exile, which he considered a fundamental model for the immigrant and marginalized intellectual. Edward Said used his own experience of exile as a framework for understanding the role of the intellectual in confronting the Western center. In one of his statements, Said claims: "Exile for the intellectual—in this metaphysical sense—is a state of restlessness, a state of movement, of never settling down and never letting others settle down. You cannot return to one of your first states in your homeland, perhaps the most stable state, just as you can never—unfortunately—arrive in your new homeland or your new state.

This profound description of exile perfectly reflects the intellectual and psychological state Said experienced throughout his life, which helped shape his critical outlook. For him, exile was not merely a geographical location, but a permanent mental and psychological state of instability. He found in this complex state a model for the intellectual who did not fully belong to any of the cultures or homelands among which he lived. This experience of living in "nowhere" and "non-identity"<sup>7</sup>One of the main motivations that drove him to research how to deconstruct the discourses of cultural domination produced by colonial empires, and how to reconstruct colonized identities under these complex conditions.

As a boy, Edward Said felt no sense of belonging to a real or imagined community, as his family supported this hybrid reality. His father hated Jerusalem because it reminded him of death, while he was ambitious for life, admired the American lifestyle, and was interested in commerce. His mother, on the other hand, was educated, spoke English, and preferred to live in Arab countries. This disparity between his parents' cultural and geographical inclinations helped reinforce the state of fragmentation that Said experienced in his early years, as he did not feel he truly belonged to any of the cultures or groups in which he was raised. This is what established in his orientation the value of the hybrid place.<sup>8</sup>And its impact on identity, as expressed by the post-colonial critic Homi Bhabha.

But this state of dispersion did not last long, as it was later necessary for Said to face the truth. In 1937, he discovered that he belonged, in a vague and undefined way, to a group with its own lost homeland and national heroes. As Said recalls in one of his autobiographical passages: "Thanks to my aunt Nabiha, I first experienced Palestine as a history and a cause through the anger and condemnation that the suffering of the refugees aroused in me. His aunt, who played a major role in stimulating his political and cultural awareness, represented a window for him to understand the Palestinian cause from a profoundly human and emotional angle, which made him directly affected by the tragedy and suffering of the Palestinian refugees—these 'others' whom she had brought into my life."<sup>9</sup>

This experience helped shape Edward Said's "nationalist" awareness outlook, which gradually took shape after he lived in exile and felt a sense of loss of his homeland, opened the way for him to address issues of identity and diaspora, themes that would later become central to his intellectual work.

Edward Said's question about the issue of identity began from the aspects of the conflict in his school in America through the saying (six against one), a phrase that refers to Israel's suffering in confronting six Arab armies. His perspective on this issue actually began with the defeat of (sixty-seven), so Edward came out of the framework of those simple entanglements and visions to a deep intellectual framework that was more evident in Edward Said's feeling of security in exile and the search for a familiar place. He stated that he used to take with him on any trip he took, even if it was within the same city, a bag stuffed with more things than he needed. If he himself attributed this to the depression of urban travel, then his feeling of security is what explains such a feeling.<sup>10</sup>

## **2- Edward Said between Foucault's Thought and Gramsci's Philosophy:**

Edward Said was greatly influenced by the ideas of Western philosophers such as: Michel Foucault<sup>11</sup> and Antonio Gramsci. Their ideas formed a major pillar in Said's interpretation of power and resistance. Foucault's thought, which focused on analyzing how power is exerted through social and cognitive structures, had a strong influence on Said. In his work, Foucault discussed the concept of "power and knowledge," and how this power permeates all aspects of social life, allowing power to reshape identities and control people through discourse.

On the other hand, Edward Said was influenced by the philosophy of Antonio Gramsci, who introduced the famous concept of "cultural hegemony." Gramsci believed that hegemony was imposed not only through military or political force, but also through the cultural influence exercised by intellectuals and dominant classes. In this context, Said viewed colonialism as primarily a process of cultural hegemony, in which cultural and cognitive systems were adapted and directed to serve the interests of the colonial powers. Therefore, for Said, resistance required first deconstructing this colonial discourse and reconstructing the identities of the colonized peoples.

Edward Said is considered one of the most prominent postcolonial thinkers who critically addressed the discourse of the East in Western thought. Through his works, such as "Orientalism" and "Culture and Imperialism," in which he revealed how the West produced a distorted image of the East, which contributed to strengthening colonial domination and its cultural justification. He is also considered a pioneer in the field of postcolonial criticism, as Said acknowledges that there were thinkers before him who addressed the same topics related to the discourse of the East, saying in this context: "What I did in the book *Orientalism* was done by the owners of intellectual projects carried out for similar motives. those that feed into critical anti-Orientalist analysis." In this statement, Edward Said acknowledges the influence of thinkers who preceded him, such as the French philosopher Michel Foucault, and thinkers who discussed issues of power and knowledge, in addition to thinkers from the Arab world who preceded him in raising questions about the West's domination of the East. Such as Talal Asad's presentation<sup>12</sup> To the anthropological self-fascination in the work of two key theorists, and Eric Hobsbawm in his new formulation of the idea of heritage



invention.<sup>13</sup> But Edward Said differs from them in his method, as he presented a critical analysis that highlights the ways in which the West created a cultural and ideological discourse that contributed to shaping stereotypes about the East.

Thus, it can be said that Edward Said was part of a broader intellectual movement that sought to uncover the cultural and political dynamics governing relations between East and West, but he added his own touches by linking them to colonialism, culture, and identity in the context of the modern era.

### **3- Antonio Gramsci's Thought in Edward Said's Writings:**

In a letter sent by Gramsci<sup>14</sup> From prison on December 7, 1931, he said: "Intellectuals must contribute to the process of shaping popular consciousness and work to replace the prevailing ideas in society promoted by the ruling classes: 'The concept of the state, which is usually conceived as a political society in the sense that the state is a dictatorship or a coercive apparatus used to control the masses according to a certain type of production and economy, and not as a balance between political society and civil society, by which I mean the domination of one social group over the entire nation, exercised through so-called private bodies such as the church, the trade unions, or the schools, because it is above all in civil society that intellectuals exercise their influence...'"<sup>(15)</sup>

This thesis highlights Gramsci's fundamental idea that intellectuals are the decisive factor in supporting or resisting cultural hegemony. In the colonial context, intellectuals in colonized societies were the force that determined how to rebuild national consciousness and struggle against Western cultural hegemony. Organic intellectuals are part of the "historical human mass."<sup>16</sup> They represent a group of social actors working together to achieve social and political change. They come from the working classes and work to develop collective consciousness and struggle against prevailing cultural and political hegemony. They constitute the main driving force behind social change, unlike traditional intellectuals, who support the continuation of the status quo and maintain ideologies that reinforce the dominance of the ruling classes. This conception of "peaceful hegemony" reflects Gramsci's belief in the ability of intellectuals to challenge cultural hegemony by working within social institutions, enabling them to bring about gradual and sustainable change towards building a more just society, as they serve as a link between the infrastructure and superstructure of society. Edward Said drew on this philosophy, basing the idea of the intellectual on the concept of challenging and deconstructing dominant ideologies, especially those associated with colonialism and Western hegemony. In Said's view, the intellectual is not merely a bearer of knowledge or education, but rather someone committed to critical awareness and working to expose unjust political and social relations, especially those that contribute to the perpetuation of injustice and domination. He also believes that the intellectual must be in a position of "exile" or "torn" between multiple cultures. This gives him the ability to view the world from two perspectives: from that of the dominant authority and that of the colonized or marginalized. For example, Edward Said himself lived as a Palestinian in exile, which enabled him to critique Western identities and cultures from a position not subject to them.

Moreover, Said believes that the intellectual must be critical of major institutions such as the state, corporations, the media, and all forms of power that influence the individual and society. The intellectual must strive to uncover the truth, even if this truth is painful or uncomfortable for the authorities in power.

Said distinguishes between traditional intellectuals who work within the frameworks imposed by authority, and organic intellectuals who challenge this authority and work to dismantle the structures that contribute to its sustainability. This is where acculturation with Antonio Gramsci lies.

#### **4- The Theme of Discourse between Michel Foucault and Edward Said:**

Select "Michel Foucault Michel Foucault "Clearly, three fields of ontology are possible: a historical ontology in terms of our relationship to truth, which produces the establishment of ourselves as cognitive subjects; a historical ontology of ourselves, in terms of our relationship to fields of power, where we are as subjects who influence others; and a historical ontology of our relationship to truth that allows us to be ourselves as moral subjects."This is the plan that Foucault follows, through his investigation of the fields of experimental sciences, punitive practices, and practices of desire.<sup>17</sup>

On this basis, Michel Foucault built the term "discourse" from a set of linguistic and cognitive patterns that determine how knowledge is produced and distributed in society. For him, "discourse" is not limited to mere speech or writing, but also includes all forms through which meaning and power are produced in culture, such as scientific systems, institutions, and social practices. In this context, Foucault distinguishes between "discourse" and traditional "language," considering discourse more than just a means of communication; it is a form of cognitive and social organization that reflects and reproduces power relations. In other words, discourse is not viewed as a neutral tool, but rather as a practice that expresses the interaction between power and knowledge. For Foucault, discourse is the field in which truth or social reality is constructed, determining how we understand things and organize society.

Through this concept, Foucault links discourse to power, as knowledge is not produced in isolation from power, but rather is part of a network of power relations. Consequently, every discourse carries within it power relations and contributes to shaping identities and social norms. Discourse also determines what is considered "truth" in a given era, restricting what can be said or thought, while suppressing or excluding other voices or ideas.

Therefore, according to Foucault, "discourse" is considered a tool for understanding how knowledge is produced in various fields (such as medicine, science, politics, education, etc.), and how this knowledge is related to power in shaping social and cultural reality.

Michel Foucault believes that the term discourse cannot be bound to achieve a single meaning. He attributes this to the complex history of the term and its uses in a series of different approaches. He says: "Instead of gradually reducing the loose meaning of the word 'discourse,' I believe that I have added some meanings to treat it sometimes as a general field for all cases, other times as distinctive or specific to them, and a

third time as an organized practice that accounts for a number of them—references—<sup>18</sup>.

If we consider Foucault's definition of the term "discourse," we can observe how this term creates a series of meanings that greatly expand its concept. In his first definition, Foucault introduced the term "discourse" in a broader and more comprehensive sense, considering it "the public domain of all situations." That is, all statements and texts that carry meaning and have an impact on social or political reality are considered discourses. This broad definition allows for an expansion of the understanding of discourse to include all types of linguistic interactions that contribute to shaping reality. In examining this term in the context of Foucault's thought, it is useful to note how the concept of discourse is not limited only to written or spoken texts, but also includes social and political practices that contribute to the construction of identities and ideologies.

Foucault used this definition generally in his early works, particularly in his theoretical discussions of the concept of discourse, where he aimed to analyze how these statements affect the formation of meanings and identities, and how discourse is not just words or texts, but rather a set of rules and patterns that frame thought and behavior in societies.

Edward Said took the concept of "discourse" from Foucault and applied it to Orientalist texts, using this concept to examine how the West constructs distorted images of the East. Said also benefited from updating intellectual categories in Foucault's thought, such as knowledge and power, and how discourse and representation are not merely means of expression, but rather tools of domination and influence. What was theoretical in Foucault's work became practical in Said's work, particularly in his treatment of institutionalized colonial discourse, where he argued that these discourses were part of the process of constructing cultural and political hegemony.

Despite the acculturative benefits of their thought, the most notable difference between Foucault's thought and Said's lies in the fact that Foucault's theories do not necessarily lead to direct resistance, while Edward Said emphasized the necessity of resistance to the colonial system through understanding and analyzing these discourses. Said sought to direct criticism toward the West's cultural and political dominance over the East, and he believed that this understanding could lead to resistance to this dominance. This is what distinguishes his work from that of Michel Foucault.

Edward Said emphasizes the close relationship between linguistic and textual structures and social and existential reality. For him, literature in our contemporary world carries various dimensions, including aesthetics, history, and society, making it a vital element for understanding cultural and political reality. Therefore, Said believes that critical theory must take these dimensions into account when dealing with literary texts, because they do not represent mere aesthetic expressions, but rather reflections of a specific social and societal reality.

From this perspective, Said considered that literary texts are not isolated from social and political contexts, but rather are part of the process of shaping collective identity and cultural struggle. He advocated for the necessity of analyzing literary

texts from a critical perspective that goes beyond mere aesthetic evaluation to include an understanding of the role of these texts in building and shaping social and cultural awareness. Thus, literature serves as a tool for understanding reality and shaping the future.

Edward Said's first book *Orientalism* having exposed the mechanism of colonial domination and contributed to defining the goal of postcolonial theory by analyzing how the West constructs distorted images of the East, his second book, "Culture and Imperialism,"<sup>19</sup> It represents the next applied and critical stage of his career. In this book, Said took a deeper look at the colonial heritage, highlighting how culture was linked to imperialism and how literature and the arts were part of the machinery of colonial domination.

Through "*Culture and Imperialism*" Said focused on studying the impact of colonialism on shaping national cultures and local identities, and how imperialism was not merely an economic or political practice, but also a cultural process aimed at reshaping the collective consciousness of colonized peoples. Thus, the book represented an important contribution to understanding the role of culture in consolidating colonial hegemony and, at the same time, a step toward understanding how to resist this cultural hegemony through textual critique and deconstruction of colonial discourses.

Kamal Abu Deeb says in the introduction to Edward Said's book "Comments on Orientalism": "If Edward Said's book *Orientalism* changed the face of scientific research on the West, the Islamic world, and the Third World in general, then in his penultimate book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said completes the central argument he discussed in *Orientalism*."<sup>20</sup>

Edward Said's studies of postcolonial culture in his two books constitute a comprehensive study of how culture contributes to the entrenchment of colonialism and, at the same time, how literature and thought can resist this cultural colonialism. Said offered a critical view of imperial culture and emphasized the importance of understanding the relationship between culture and politics in postcolonial contexts, making his work a cornerstone of critical postcolonial theory.

### **5- Edward Said and the Criticism of Orientalism:**

The Western knowledge of the East in all fields is called "Orientalism," and it transcends the academic realm to encompass all fields of knowledge, such as social, political, economic, and religious. This type of Orientalist knowledge also encompasses the intellectual and ideological practices that represent the West toward the East, as well as the patterns of behavior, values, and morals that are portrayed or imposed. Through *Orientalism*, certain stereotypes and concepts of the East are formed, often portraying it as underdeveloped, steeped in tradition, and ignorant. This reinforces Western dominance over Eastern peoples by imposing these concepts within epistemological, political, and ideological frameworks; in other words, Orientalist scholarship is a study of the non-European world that focuses on the qualities and characteristics that distinguish this world from the European one. This scholarship contributes to the portrayal of the East as a different world, replete with characteristics that make it appear separate from the West. Consequently, Eastern reality is distorted through these studies, examined and analyzed from multiple

perspectives by Western specialists, who contribute to the formation of a distorted and erroneous image of the East, reinforcing cultural and political differences between East and West.

The West's monopoly on this knowledge is not due to some kind of civilizational debate or constructive interaction between civilizations. Rather, the Orient is studied as a constant subject for the European self, which strives, using Western methods, to encompass and understand it. The importance of Orientalism is growing at the present time in light of the ongoing conflict between East and West, whose methods change and evolve over time. The intellectual scene has recently witnessed intellectual discussions reflecting the emergence of the Other, who rethinks his current situation and his past, by analyzing the causes of his decline and the paths of his progress. This calls into question all the knowledge accumulated about his world.

Hence, Orientalism has become the subject of critical examination, with many thinkers seeking to analyze its internal structure, revealing the methods and foundations upon which Orientalist studies are based. One central point is analyzing the conditions that produced Orientalist discourse, as well as the circumstances that prevented this discourse from achieving true objectivity, allowing for the formation of distorted images of the East and obscuring the complex truths about it. Claude Levi-Strauss says about this: "We have become in dire need of criticizing this Western knowledge and reviewing the foundations on which it was built, especially since many of these studies were based on racial theories that have been surpassed by the humanities and social sciences."<sup>21)</sup> Strauss adds a sarcastic look at this knowledge that did not take into account its scientific facts manifested in the biological theory, saying: "In general, it has become clear that culture is what creates race and not the other way around. This is one of the lessons learned from anthropology, but the most important of these lessons is the lesson that works to expose cultural centralism and the colonial consequences that resulted from it."<sup>22)</sup>

Edward Said has worked to uncover the profound connections between Orientalist knowledge and Western centrality, highlighting the epistemological and ideological elements that constitute Orientalist discourse. He has highlighted that this discourse, in its final form, is nothing more than an analysis of the image of the "Other," an Other who can be simply defined as the non-white, non-European human being. In other words, Orientalism can be considered a particular vision created by the West for itself through the reflection of the image of the Other, who is portrayed as different and separate.

If we carefully utilize the cognitive tools presented by Said, we can say that Orientalism is not merely a discourse that reflects facts or realistic outcomes, but rather is essentially a creation and representation of reality. Orientalism does not reflect direct facts; rather, it presents perceptions or "representations" of the Other, through which Western hegemonic forces, institutions, and interests are realized. Thus, Orientalism becomes a tool for imposing power and influencing how the East is viewed by the West, reinforcing the distortion of facts and the formation of false stereotypes; it is a new creation of the other or a reproduction of him on the level of perception and representation; which makes Orientalism a subject of knowledge while its subject, which is the East, is a subject of reality with which it has no connection of



correspondence or reflection. Rather, Edward Said goes further than that when he confirms that the structure of Orientalism is nothing but a structure of lies or myths that will go down the drain if the truth related to it is revealed.<sup>23</sup>

In this context, a series of theoretical and procedural contradictions arose, as Said refuted the idea of Orientalism by deconstructing it and returning each statement to its philosophical and historical context. This began by defining it in its broad sense as Europe's interest in the East by placing it in a specific historical context. In this broad sense, Orientalism constitutes a complex and growing phenomenon branching out from a more comprehensive historical process, one of the most important manifestations of which was the movement of European colonial expansion. By virtue of the function for which it arose, it was transformed into a rapidly growing institution, an institution that has its intimate connection to vital economic, commercial and strategic interests that serve it and interact with it.<sup>24)</sup>

Orientalism is a knowledge of the East, and this is something Said does not deny. However, according to him, it is a knowledge of the East that places it in the classroom for the purposes of precise analysis, study, simulation, discipline, or judgment. The reader of the definitions of Orientalism in Edward Said's critical cultural thought finds that the sum of these definitions does not go beyond three basic classifications:

- **Academic significance:** An Orientalist is anyone who studies, writes, or researches the East in a specific or general aspect and in every field from anthropology to philology.
- **General comprehensive meaning** Orientalism is a style of thought based on an ontological and epistemological distinction between the East and the West. This distinction has been accepted by poets, artists, philosophers, novelists, theorists, politicians, economists, and administrators.
- **Active meaning between academic and general definition** Here it means the joint institution for dealing with the East, to issue reports about it, approve opinions about it, interpret it, settle in it, and rule it, that is, as a method for controlling the East and possessing sovereignty over it.<sup>25)</sup>

It is clear that Edward Said began to analyze the Orientalist vision of the East, expressing the image resulting from colonial possession. Orientalism is a mentality ((mentality) if the expression is correct, and it is not a specialty because specialists did not create or develop it.<sup>26)</sup>

Edward Said's critique of Orientalism has led to much debate about how marginalized voices can be effectively, smoothly, and abundantly incorporated into social studies, free from the very machinery of Western thought.

## Conclusion

At the end of our study, we summarize the key findings as follows:

- Orientalism served as a means of justifying the enslavement and exploitation of Eastern peoples by portraying them as "uncivilized" or "primitive." This perception

reinforced the idea that the West was the center of culture and civilization, while the East was a backward periphery in need of guidance and control.

- Postcolonial studies challenge these power dynamics by exposing how Western-produced knowledge has been used to shape and sustain structures of domination.

- Within the framework of postcolonial studies, Orientalist discourse undergoes critical deconstruction, revealing how literature, art, and historical narratives have contributed to constructing an artificial image of the "Orient." These representations are not objective or scientific but are instead part of a colonial strategy designed to justify Western hegemony and perpetuate the notion of its superiority.

- As Edward Said articulated, Orientalism is not merely an academic study of the East but a discourse employed by the West to legitimize and maintain its colonial power.

- In his critique of Eurocentrism, Said highlights how Western thought has shaped the image of the East as mysterious, backward, and uncivilized—essentially the antithesis of the rational, progressive West. The East is depicted as resistant to change, bound by tradition, and in conflict with modernity.

- Said's analysis asserts that Orientalism does not reflect an objective reality but is instead a "construction"—a set of representations, mental images, and misconceptions formulated by the West about the East.

- He further argues that Orientalist scholarship was never a neutral academic pursuit but rather an ideological project serving Western interests.

- A key contribution of Edward Said's work is the idea of resistance. He calls for the deconstruction of Orientalist discourse and the exposure of the ideological foundations upon which these stereotypes rest. He also insists that the East must reclaim its own voice, free from Western-imposed narratives.

- Postcolonial studies can play a crucial role in reconstructing knowledge about the East by examining its cultural and historical contexts on their own terms, rather than reducing it to a mere "other."

#### **- Footnotes and references:**

<sup>1</sup>Jamil Hamdawi: Post-colonial theory, Al-Aloka Network, at the link:<http://alukah.net>

<sup>2</sup>Saad Al-Bazie and Megan Al-Ruwaili: A Guide for the Literary Critic, Arab Cultural Center, Beirut, Lebanon, 3rd ed., 2002, p. 158.

<sup>3</sup>- Edward Said: Orientalism ed. Pantheon Books.USA.1978.

<sup>4</sup>- Ammar Belhassen: Literature and Ideology, National Book Foundation, Algeria, 1st ed., 1984, p. 52.

<sup>5</sup>Bill Ashcroft et al., Empire Writes Back: Postcolonial Literatures (Theory and Practice), Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, Postcolonial Studies: Key Concepts, translated by Ahmed Al-Ruby, National Center for Translation, Cairo, Egypt, first edition 2010p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>- Ibrahim Khalil and others: Mirrors of Literary Taste: (Studies and Testimonies), Dar Al-Funun, Khalid Shoman Foundation, 1st ed., n.d., p. 30.

<sup>7</sup>- Bill Ashkar, Fatt et al.: The Empire Responds to Writing: Postcolonial Literatures, Theory and Practice, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>8</sup>- Homi K. Bhabha: The Location of Culture. Routledge UK 1994.

<sup>9</sup>- Ibrahim Khalil and others, *Mirrors of Literary Taste: Studies and Testimonies*, previous reference, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> - The same reference, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>-Michel Foucault (October 15, 1926 – June 25, 1984) was a French philosopher and sociologist, considered one of the most prominent thinkers of the twentieth century. His works were pivotal in the development of contemporary philosophy, particularly in the fields of political philosophy, sociology, history, and cultural criticism.

See: Foucault, Michel "Discipline and Punishment." Translated by Mahmoud Nazim, Al Farabi Publishing House, Beirut, Lebanon, 2003.

<sup>12</sup>- Talal Asad is a renowned social and cultural thinker and historian, and a leading figure in the fields of anthropology and cultural studies. Born in Jerusalem in 1947, he is of Palestinian origin. He has established important theories in the study of Islam and Islamic culture and has had a significant impact on academics, particularly in the analysis of cultural and political identities in the Arab world. See:UK2003. *Modernity and Islam* University of California Press: Talal Asad

<sup>13</sup>- Said Edward, *Comments on Orientalism*, translated and edited by: Subhi Hadidi, Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Beirut/Lebanon, first edition, 1996, pp. 54-55.

<sup>14</sup>-Gramsci (Antonio) (1891-1937) was a prominent Italian politician and philosopher, born in Ales, Sardinia, and died in Rome. He emigrated to Turin, where he completed his university studies in philosophy, history, and literature. In 1913, he joined the Socialist Party and quickly became a leader of the party's left wing. After the disturbances of 1917, he served as the party's general secretary. He participated in the factory council movement and worked early in his career as a journalist. In 1919, he founded L'Ordine Nuovo (The New Organization), an Italian magazine representing the left wing of the Italian Socialist Party.

See: The Arab Encyclopedia, *General Organization for the Book* Damascus, Syria, Volume Thirteen R1st ed., p. 798.

<sup>15</sup>- Antonio Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*, 1979 AD. Quoted from: Abdullah Kbar, *The Academic Intellectual and the Problem of Identity*, Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, Special Issue Identity and Social Fields in Light of Socio-Cultural Transformations in Algerian Society, University of Ouargla, Algeria, no publication information, p. 389.

<sup>16</sup>- Ammar Belhassen: *Literature and Ideology*, National Book Foundation, Algeria, 1st ed., 1984, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup>- Mr. Ould Abah, - Mr. Ould Abah, *History and Truth in Michel Foucault*, Beirut, Dar Al-Muntakhab Al-Arabi for Studies and Publishing. Distribution, 1st ed., 1994, pp. 84, 85.

<sup>18</sup>- See: Sarah Mills, *Al-Khattab: Nizwa Magazine, a Cultural Quarterly*, issued by the Oman Establishment for Press, Publication and Advertising, ed. Saif Al-Rahbi, No. 58, p. 122.

<sup>19</sup>- Edward Said: *Culture and Imperialism*: (Alfred A. Knopf) USA 1993.

<sup>20</sup> - Said Edward, *Comments on Orientalism*, Translated and edited by: Subhi Hadidi, Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Beirut/Lebanon, 1st ed., 1996p. 29.

<sup>21</sup> - Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Race and History*, translated by: Salim Haddad, University Foundation for Studies, Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1982, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>- The same reference, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup>- Said Edward, *Orientalism (Knowledge. Power. Construction)*, Translated by: Kamal Abu Deeb, Arab Research Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon, 6th edition, 2003.p. 41.

<sup>24</sup>- Said Edward, *Orientalism (Knowledge, Power, Construction)*, p. 71.

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<sup>25</sup> - Said Edward, Orientalism (Knowledge, Power, Construction), pp. 38-39. See also: - Al-Mabrouk Al-Mansouri, Contemporary Religious Studies (From Western Centralism to Cultural Relativism), Imad Al-Ghazali Publishing, 1st ed., 2010, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> - Edward Said, Covering Islam, translated by: Samira Naim Khoury, Arab Research Foundation, 1983 AD, pp. 47-48.