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Postcolonial studies and Edward said's prespective "Critical approach to vision and method"

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Abstract:

This paper undertakes an analytical examination of Edward Said's intellectual contributions, with particular emphasis on the multifaceted dimensions of his work and the enduring value they represent. Widely regarded as a foundational figure in postcolonial studies, Said's influence became especially pronounced following the publication of his seminal text, *Orientalism* (1978).

This study, therefore, discusses the distinguished position of said's postcolonial Studies and evaluates his efforts by raising a series of questions: Why was Said the only to write about orientalism? Then why was Mohamed Annani's translations considered as the closest and the most adequate? How does Edward Said perceive "knowledge and discourse"? What are the main critiques amid his work according to us?

Keywords: undertakes, Orientalism, study, efforts, considered.

Introduction:

Orientalism has emerged as a result to the West's keen interest in countries beyond the seas; therefore, this topic became an important area of intellectual debate within literary circles. In this article, we will attempt to examine the position of Palestinian scholar Edward Said and the role he played in laying the foundations for what became known as 'postcolonial studies'. We will focus on his efforts to stand up against the systematic campaign to distort the character of the Oriental by the Western Orientalist establishment, which placed him in a position of inferiority and disregarded his existence. This prompted the researcher to take it upon himself to counter this campaign by attempting to expose that condescending Orientalist view that seeks to obliterate Arab-Islamic cultural identity.

Research problematic:

This leads to ask: What is the concept of "postcolonial studies"? What are the characteristics of "postcolonial" discourse? Why focus on Edward Said in particular, rather than others who have written about Orientalism? What is the reason behind considering the translation of Muhammad Anani as the closest and the most accurate? What is this Palestinian thinker's view of Orientalism as discourse and knowledge? What are the most effective ways to stand on equal footing with the other as a cultural partner rather than as someone who is different from the Arab self?

Research objectives: This study seeks to highlight the efforts made by Palestinian researcher Edward Said by examining his status and position in the field of postcolonial studies, and to shed light on some aspects of Orientalism through his view of this discourse, which allowed him to occupy a fundamental position in it. It also examines how he defended the Oriental character accused of inferiority.

Research methodology: The nature of this topic necessitates an analytical approach, accompanied by a critical reading that contributes to—rather than diminishes—the understanding of what this researcher has articulated. It is essential to evaluate these intellectual efforts, particularly those pertaining to Said's response to the aggressive campaign waged by Western Orientalist institutions aimed at undermining the character of the Oriental and portraying him as inherently inferior.

The plan adopted: To answer such questions, the methodological plan followed axes that we consider to be of utmost importance, namely :

1. The concept of 'postcolonialism' theory.

2. Edward Said and the journey of searching for identity concerns.
3. Discourse and knowledge as power according to this researcher's view.
4. Criticisms of his critical view as we see it.

1. The FIRST TOPIC: The concept of 'postcolonialism':

'Postcolonial' studies have focused on exposing and denouncing colonial discourse and its cultural and intellectual baggage, attempting to reveal it using the mechanisms and tools of Western discourse through immigrant writings. The aim was to familiarize Arab critics with these studies. They became preoccupied with this type of discourse in the early 1980s, when they encountered it through the work of Palestinian researcher Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism*, and translated the meaning of this term for us.

Specialized books state:

"Postcolonial theory refers to another type of analysis, based on the assumption that traditional colonialism has ended and that a phase of domination, sometimes called the colonial phase, has ended and created different conditions that require a specific type of analysis." (Al-Bazghi & Al-Ruwaili, 2000, pp. 91-92)

Therefore, this theory is a reading of critical thought in its treatment of the East, through a critical approach in all its cultural, political, and historical dimensions. It analyzes colonial discourse in all its intellectual and methodological components, with the aim of deconstructing, reconstructing, and undermining it, in order to explore the hidden cultural and institutional assumptions that control this central discourse.

Thus, 'postcolonialism' is a critical theory that analyzes colonial discourse and reinterprets history from the colonizer's point of view. It emerged in the cultural scene of Anglophone countries, i.e., countries that speak English and consider it their official language, particularly the United States of America. This theory has been associated specifically with Columbia University. It was founded by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whom Robert Young calls "the holy or prominent trinity of postcolonial theory." The book *Orientalism* was a seminal work for this theory, influencing all postcolonial critics. It came from the former colonies at the hands of intellectuals from the East, yet centered in America and Europe. (Shahbha, 2007, p. 24)

Notably, researcher Ania Loomba highlights that the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines the Roman term *colonia* as "farm" or "settlement," referring to Romans who established themselves in foreign territories while maintaining their original nationality. Such settlements were inhabited by groups of people who formed communities closely tied to their country of origin. These communities, composed of settlers and their descendants, remained defined by their enduring relationship with the mother country.

Based on the above, this researcher was surprised by this definition, which completely ignores other non-settlers, as it contains no hints or references to encounters between peoples or to conquest, domination, and control over the lands of others. (Loomba, 2013, p. 17) Here, we can conclude that there is a lack of historical credibility, which presupposes the mention of the second party in the colonial equation, namely the owners of the land seized by the invaders. As for the Australian critic Bill Ashcroft, in his definition, he believes that these studies seek to examine the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies. In this definition, the critic linked the colonizer to the colonized and showed the extent of the latter's influence on the cultural structure of indigenous societies. (Ashcroft & Griffiths, p. 168) We therefore ask the following question: What are the characteristics of this discourse?

1.1. First requirement : Characteristics and objectives of postcolonial studies discourse:

Perhaps one of the most prominent characteristics of this type of discourse lies in the fact that it is considered one of the most important literary and critical theories; with a political and cultural character, as it links discourse to political, social, and other issues in the world. It examines, at the same time, the East/West dichotomy in the context of military, civilizational, scientific, and cultural conflict.

"Postcolonial criticism aims to expose Western ideologies and undermine their central tenets, as advocated by Jacques Derrida and others." (Culler, 2010, p. 125) Analyzing everything produced by Western culture as intentional discourse is one of the tasks of this critique, as this discourse carries within it colonialist tendencies towards peoples outside the Western system.

Postcolonial theory represents both a historical and critical movement, driven by a political motive that seeks to confront and dismantle colonialism on multiple fronts—material, historical, intellectual, cultural, political, educational, and beyond. It transcends geographical boundaries and temporal limitations, disseminating its ideas and messages across time and space through a semi-coherent body of plays, poetry, films, and novels. These cultural texts serve as expressions of resistance to colonialism in its various forms and manifestations. From this vantage point, it becomes pertinent to pose the following questions: What is Edward Said's position within the field of postcolonial studies? And what was the nature of his intellectual journey in pursuit of identity?

2. THE SCOND TOPIC : Edouard Said and the quest for identity:

The life of the Palestinian researcher have been segmented into two worlds: Arab/Eastern and American/Western. However, he was able to coexist with both worlds, and at the same time create his own world, which he documented in his book entitled *Out of Place*.

Edward Said was born in 1935 in Palestine, which was his source of inspiration and his stolen homeland. He spent his childhood in its alleys, but soon moved to Egypt with his family due to the Zionist invasion of Palestine in 1948. This event prompted him to emigrate from his homeland and created a great rift and sadness in his being. He expressed the pain he experienced on several occasions, saying: "The longer we stayed in Cairo, the more I dreamed of Palestine, even

though living in Palestine was painful because it was temporary and transient, as time later proved.” (Edward, 2008, p. 3)

His father's American citizenship enabled him to travel to the United States at an early age to obtain citizenship. Upon his arrival, he continued his university studies at Princeton University, where he obtained a bachelor's degree in literature in 1957. He continued his higher education at Harvard University, obtaining a master's degree in 1960. At the same university, he completed his studies, culminating in a doctorate in 1964. After a successful academic career, he worked as a professor at Columbia University and as a visiting professor and lecturer at several international universities.

He acquired a complex personality between all these shores, and this hybrid personality accompanied him throughout his life, prompting him to ask many questions that remained unanswered, especially in light of the life of travel and exile he lived. Therefore, we ask the following question: How did Edward Said utilize Foucault's work? Was it Foucault to provide him with the methodological recipe for criticizing Orientalist discourse and revealing the relationship between knowledge and power?

2.1.First requirement : A Review of His Work (Orientalism):

His book, written in 1978, is one of the most important works that continues to be the subject of controversy in many academic circles around the world and cultural forums because of its value, which has made it a major turning point in our understanding of Oriental studies and our concept of Orientalism in general. The book have been translated into dozens of languages, and as far as its translation into Arabic is concerned, there has been much debate about which of the two translations is better: the 1981 translation by Kamal Aboudeeb or the 2006 translation by Mohamed Anani.

On this point, many readers believe that:

“Mohammed Anani's translation is the most successful in clarifying the ideas of the original book, noting that the translator adopts an approach of interpretation and clarification of the meanings of the book and the ambiguities and obscurities it contains.” (Kareem, 2007, p. 124)

Unlike what Aboudeeb did, where inspiration begins in his translation and he tends to adopt a strict approach to Arabization, even in other books he translated for the same author, especially the book *Culture and Imperialism*. We can cite as evidence of this the translator's Arabicization of the term “strategies” with the word “istikhabatab.” (Suleiman, 2014, p. 185)

However, it is important to acknowledge that the widespread popularity and circulation of this book are, in part, attributable to the academic stature and influence of its author. Edward Said was recognized as one of the most distinguished professors at Columbia University—an institution consistently ranked among the top five universities in the United States. This prestige is further underscored by the fact that over one hundred of its alumni have been awarded the Nobel Prize, enhancing the credibility and reach of Said's scholarship. Its annual budget is equivalent to that of several Arab countries combined. (Wikipedia)

For this reason, the book has been the subject of a huge number of studies as a result of Western interest in Eastern countries. The subject of Orientalism took up most of the author's time, but he persevered with it until it grew and matured, making it easier for him to deal with it in the laboratory of his imagination.

His critical approach is based on solid foundations, which he laid through a careful and thoughtful reading of the Orientalist institution, which includes a vast number of studies on the East and the West, and to overcome the epistemological barrier represented by the impossibility of comprehending all these studies. This researcher realized the importance of investing in the methodological tools relied upon by modern humanities and social sciences. To define his broad subject (Orientalism), he approached his thesis as a “discourse,” handling Orientalism as a tightly knit and highly organized discursive system, created by a set of discursive rules that highlight the relationship between the political establishment in the West and the production, distribution, and organization of knowledge, a process that is barely visible to the naked eye, but rather hidden behind discursive tricks and the laws of discourse itself.” (Lounis, 2018, p. 76) Here we ask: What is this researcher's view of the idea of foresight as discourse and knowledge?

3.THE THIRD TOPIC : Discourse and knowledge as power according to Edward Said's vision:

This researcher drew on Foucault, who gave a new understanding to Orientalism as a discourse that views knowledge as power, which seeks to dominate by producing oppressive mechanisms, which isolate the other and relegate them to the realm of the unthinkable, reducing them to nothing more than pitiable individuals do. In his work, this thinker revealed the rhetorical tricks that created an Occidentalized Eastern world, an Eastern world that the West sought to represent because it could not represent itself, according to their own words. Here, we see the threat to the cultural security of this Eastern world, which the West considered to be devoid of personality/identity.

Edouard Said paid attention to the concept of “discourse” and worked on it methodologically, especially since Foucault links discourse to desire and power. He refers to this relationship in many of his works, stating: “Discourse appears to be a simple thing on the surface, but the forms of prohibition that accompany it quickly reveal its connection to desire and power.” (Said, 1995, p. 39) Discourse is defined as:

“the set of perceptions that constitute the cognitive space of an individual or human group in a specific historical, social, and political context.” (Le Bon, 2002, p. 82)

In this sense, discourse is almost identical to the Marxist definition of ideology as non-scientific perceptions or concepts that obscure objective reality.

Therefore, it was the knowledge of the East provided by Orientalism that enabled Europe to extend its imperial influence over the East. From this, Edward Said concludes that “Orientalism is a Western method of controlling, appropriating, and dominating the East. ” (Wikipedia)

However, we would like to point out an important caveat, which is that the absolute condemnation of Orientalism based on the saying that all knowledge is power, and that Europe's knowledge of the East through Orientalism led to its domination, is a generalization that is flawed. It is difficult to accept that all the excavations carried out by Orientalists, their deciphering of ancient civilizations and languages, and their transcription of historical manuscripts, for example, were merely a distortion of those languages and civilizations, and that their tremendous efforts and great risks to their lives were motivated by colonial interests and even imperial expansion?

4.THE FOURTH TOPIC : Criticism directed at his critical view, as we see it:

His work (Orientalism) is a critical masterpiece in the style of Edward Said, who deconstructs and simplifies complex concepts and issues in a theoretical manner, then illustrates them with examples from reality. His criticism is free from the abstract criticism that usually accompanies the issues he discusses and talks about. For example, critics felt that the Arabic translation did not do justice to the original text, which led to a misunderstanding of the apparent meaning of the text, resulting in a translation that did not serve its intended purpose.

In this context, the researcher affirms the critical movement's particular focus on French and English Orientalism. However, some critics, while acknowledging this emphasis, have reproached Edward Said for omitting mention of certain Orientalists whose works demonstrated sympathy toward Arab culture and Islam. For instance, Said does not reference the French Orientalist Gustave Le Bon (Al-'Azam, 1981, p. 102), known for his favorable views of the Arabs, nor does he acknowledge English figures such as Arnold Toynbee, who wrote about the Prophet of Islam with a tone of admiration and respect. (Al-'Azam, 1981, p. 102) Additionally, Said overlooks individuals like Thomas Carlyle, who actively challenged Orientalist claims—such as the assertion that Islam is merely a derivative of Christianity—and instead praised Islam's spiritual depth and its profound resonance with its followers, contrasting it with what he described as the superficiality of Christianity.

However, in our opinion, he did not mention the Orientalists who worked in the fields of knowledge and scientific study of Eastern civilization, nor did they have any connection with official Orientalist circles. They have provided valuable intellectual services, particularly in the context of researching, deciphering, and disseminating Arab heritage, and even criticizing it scientifically, free from any bias. Among these Orientalists were those who spent their lives and money on researching manuscripts or deciphering symbols. (Le Bon, 2002, p. 69)

Therefore, we believe that failing to differentiate between scholars whose thinking differs from the mainstream, and not even mentioning those who are well-known on the grounds that it is impossible to make a complete generalization, is -in our opinion- an injustice and a crime against scientific research, especially since this researcher devotes space to famous writers who deviated from the prevailing view of their time regarding the East and Easterners, such as Goethe and others. (Le Bon, 2002, p. 69) This criticism, raised by a group of critics of Edward Said's work, is perhaps the most famous and most resistant to refutation, no matter how much this researcher tries to defend his selection criteria when he states:

“We can study the relationship between Islamic or Arab Orientalism and modern European culture without mentioning every Orientalist who has ever appeared on this earth.” (Said, 1995, p. 43) This is what has been achieved in reality.

However, this researcher was not spared criticism, as prominent figures such as Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*, Homi Bhabha, and Spivak, among others, discussed his thesis and ideas and responded to them. Edward Said took note of these criticisms and responded to them in his subsequent writings, such as *The Pen and the Sword* and *Culture and Imperialism*, as mentioned above. However, his name will remain engraved in the annals of what has become known as “postcolonial studies” in letters of gold that are difficult for those who came after him to surpass.

5. CONCLUSION:

Based on the above, it can be said that: Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism*, was more of a writer committed to delivering a political or moral message than a critic of purely literary subjects. Because of this, he touched the hearts of his fellow Arabs, regardless of their primary or secondary affiliations. It is time to look at the most important conclusions reached through this study, the most important of which were:

- 1- Edward Said is considered one of the pioneers who laid the foundations for the field of “postcolonial” studies, following the publication of his seminal work *Orientalism* in 1978, as well as *Culture and Imperialism*, which are considered open texts and fertile ground for thinkers who came after him.
- 2- The opinion of some nationalists on this researcher who defends Arab nationalism; he committed himself to performing a social mission rather than being a critic on a purely literary subject that requires science to take precedence over everything else.
- 3- The success of the book *Orientalism* is due to the rigorous approach taken by the author with great professionalism, as he did not classify his subject into different types or forms, as had been done by previous scholars in this field of knowledge.
- 4- The author was content to present it in one go and judge it absolutely. Were it not for these reasons, the text would not have emerged from the shelves of limited circulation books into the realm of open discourse.
- 5- The author sought to confront Western culture by exposing and revealing its threats to the cultural security of Arab Islamic peoples who suffered from the scourge of Western colonialism, which was paved by Orientalists through their various writings.
- 6- According to many thinkers, Edward Said's writings are considered an open text that can be used and exploited in every cultural and political catastrophe that occurs or may occur in the world.

Prospects that this study could open up:

At first glance, readers of Edward Said's book *Orientalism* will find that it is written in a highly abstract philosophical style, making its content difficult for the general public to understand, especially in the context of the author's intended answers behind the lines. The valuable and lengthy questions at the end of the book are written in difficult language that relies on suggestion. We therefore propose holding an international or national forum to discover new interpretations through research papers.

The research papers for this scientific forum is to be published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal in recognition of the scientific efforts of their authors.

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