

Edward Said's *Orientalism* and East / West Disparity*Hamed Halima¹, Dr. Mehiri Ramdane²

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Abstract:

In his foundational text *Orientalism*, Said traces Europeans' imperial tradition in representing the Oriental "other" from ancient times till today. This tradition Said calls "Orientalism", and it was a politically oriented discourse based on binary oppositions that presented East/West as two dichotomous worlds. Although Said's *Orientalism* has been widely criticized for being a monolithic text, it was the cornerstone of the postcolonial thought and discourse. Following the conceptual analysis method, this paper scrutinizes the term "Orientalism", its meaning and history, in order to explain East/ West dichotomy as presented in Edward Said's *Orientalism* and what makes it a rock on the road to postcolonial discourse. The study reveals that to bypass East/ West dichotomy, the other should be empowered to speak for itself.

Keywords: Said's *Orientalism*, East and West disparity, Postcolonial discourse. the image of the Other.

**1. Introduction**

The disparity between the occident and the orient was always a knotty question and a stone on the road to colonialism, what persuaded Said to speak at length, in his seminal work *Orientalism*, about the representation of the non-western world.

In his groundbreaking work *Orientalism*(1978), Edward Wadie Said traces the experience of colonialism and the different ways the Occident followed to represent the "other" from the ancient times till today. According to Said(2003), the orient was "almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes of remarkable experiences. Now it was disappearing; in a sense it had happened, its time was over" (p. 1). Thus, the image of the Orient as an exotic place did not come out of nothing; rather, it was a European constructed image for legitimizing their conquest. The stereotype image of

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the “other”, has given the westerner room to build a body of knowledge that has mainly political and ideological interests. Based on this European false made assumption, the orient had been represented for centuries as a barbarious, exotic place that has no significance. Besides, Orientals, as Said mentioned, “were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined”(Said,2003, p.207). In short, Orientalism is a Western ideology for having authority over the Orient.

In order to understand the crux of Orientalist thought that Said presented in his seminal text *Orientalism*, a close connotation is drawn between the terms Orientalism and ideology. The latter is a byproduct of a colonial ideology embellished to become a mode of discourse. Besides, discourse per se is strongly related to culture /context, since context in its narrow sense is associated with the factors outside the text. The Discourse of Orientalism was a creation of the imperial culture or what is called cultural hegemony, and it is strongly related to history of imperialism. Later on, it penetrated literature to become what is known today as literature discourse. This same discourse has been used for centuries as a powerful tool to establish imperialism, by depicting Oriental people as silent and subaltern other to speak for them.

2. Origins of the Word

The term *Orient* is derived from the Latin word “oriens”(“east rising sun”) and from the Greek Word (“horos, the direction of the rising sun”(Encyclopedia of Islamic Studies”; 2010 p.10). Both terms indicate that the Orient is not the adjacent/ equivalent of the Occident. In its second edition, Oxford English Dictionary (1989) defines the word 'Orient' as being, in addition to “poetic or literary”, “applied to pearls and precious stones of superior value and brilliancy, as coming originally from the East; often a vague poetic epithet: precious, excellent, brilliant, lustrous, sparkling”(p.6).

In his thesis (1991), entitled “*Representations of the East in English and French Travel Writing 1798-1882 with particular reference to Egypt*”, John Spencer Dixon states that the Orient “Since the late eighteenth century has referred less to a definable geographical area than to what has come to be perceived as a continually evolving ideological construct. Its descriptive value has declined, paradoxically, as the West's long involvement with Eastern countries (whether Far East or Near East) has increased”(p.18) . Therefore, the term Orient has a descriptive value, because it refers to an ideological construct rather than a geographical area .

The origin roots of Orientalism dates back to Middle Ages and the time of crusades. The term *Orientalism* had first appeared in France through “the first European explorations and crusades and was used as an artistic influence in currents such as Baroque and Rococo until the end of the XVIIIth century. Orientalism as an independent artistic and literary current emerged during the XIXth century in Europe and while not associated with any particular pictorial style, it is rather its themes, such as the search of exoticism, sensuality and fantasy of the Orient”(Mahault Donzé-Magnier,2017, p.2).

The conceptual analysis of Orientalism has shown that the term was first used as an artistic mode rather than a way of representation. Europeans used such mode to describe a world and a culture they had never dealt with before. Although, orientalism was a subject matter within the artistic works of different painters, sculptors, writers and poets, the absence of an accurate methodology to study the meaning of such canvases and writings made it difficult to see the truth behind their art as a whole, or what was that art made for? Are such artistic works a true representation or have some ideological interests? In short, One may say that orientalism is a branch of knowledge initiated by the west to put control over the east.

3. History of Orientalism

The cultural interest in the Orient in 19th century Europe developed from a long history dating back to the 7th century since the foundation of Islam, and particularly, when Muslims fighting’s in the name of Islam had reached Spain and parts of France. To Christians, at that time, Islam was not only regarded a force to be reckoned with; rather, it was a lasting challenge. In this regard, Said (2003) writes that “Islam became an image ... whose function was not so much to represent Islam in itself as to represent it to the medieval Christian.”(p.7). Europeans regarded prophet Mohamed as the Christ-like figure or the Christ imposter; an image that shows their lack of knowledge of Islam.

In his article “*Orientalism Past and Present: An Introduction to Postcolonial Critique*”, Tobias Hübinette(2003) claims that “During the renaissance i.e. intellectual awakening they were made to rethink about the Muslims and their faith consequently, many people, scholars as well as laymen, embarked upon acquiring knowledge from Muslim institutions and individuals in Spain and the fertile crescent. Travelers wrote travelogues and scholars produced academic and thus began the tradition of studying the east, which is known as orientalism”(p.7).This means that Orientalism as a phenomenon and a mode of representation is never new, rather, it dates back to renaissance Europe, it appeared particularly as a field of scholarship to gain

profound knowledge about the people of the east, their characteristics, way of life, culture, language, and to study Islam and Muslims in particular.

In *Encyclopedia of Islamic Studies*, (2010) “Orientalism is thus the net result of a historical vision of Islam rooted in the Christian European imagination, Islam could only be viewed as monolithic, scornful of human life, unchanging, uncreative, and intrinsically factitious”(p.10). Researches show that the history of Orientalism dates back to the very beginning of Islam and Judeo-Christian hostility. The era between (732-804) had marked a revival of learning languages in Europe. Hebrew was the first Asian language studied, in early Middle Ages, in western monasteries .

In the mid of 13th century, and at Crusades time in particular, Arabic was the second language that needed to be mastered to gain knowledge about Islam. Besides, one of the main aspects of Orientalism is related to the western misrepresentation of Islam. This means that neither Islam is new to the west, nor the west was unfamiliar to this Islamic world. According to historians, an aggressive negative attitude had been developed during the time of John of Damascus. Therefore, “ the concept of Islam was distorted by him when he expected that Muhammad (PBHU) a propagator of paganism”(*Encyclopedia of Islamic Studies*,2010, p.30). John of Damscus was the first to criticize and misrepresent Islam as a false religion and prophet Muhammed(PBUH) as an atheist. This first misrepresentation of Islam had inspired many other Europeans after him, hence, a number of literature produced by such orientalist who portrayed an ugly image about Islam.

From 15th century to 19th century onward, many books had been written to misrepresent Islam and the Islamic world. In this regard, one may cite the Italian poet Dante. The latter had blamed prophet Muhammed, in his *Devine Comedy*, as being responsible for the bifurcation of Christianity. Moreover, many prose writers such as Goethe made efforts to express biased thoughts against Islam.

Since that time, the Orient has been a mythical, looming presence and it has always been regarded the “Other” that Edward Said wrote about in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. According to Jeffery Howe (2004) “Throughout the centuries, Westerners have maintained a distorted view of Orientals. Images from *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, published in the 16th century, include drawings of foreign men with heads on their chests, men with dog faces and Cyclopes figures”(p.2). Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the subsequent colonizations of the Near East is perhaps the defining moment in the Western perception of the Near East. In their invasion, Napoleon and his companions arrived in the Near East convinced with the idea of their own

superiority and authority; hence, they were named Orientalists. This supposed European superiority is what justified the colonization of the East and the Islamic land.

Taking this Orientalist artistic and historical tradition as a research basis, Edward. W. Said was able to generate his groundbreaking text *Orientalism* in 1987, in a book bears the same title, transforming it into a genuine theory and postcolonial discourse of oppression. Both *Orientalism* and the other following works represent Said's vehement commitment to speaking truth to power. The book intends to unveil the truth behind the grave misrepresentation, oppression and ignorance both imperialism and the colonial discourse performed over the Orient and colonized people centuries ago. Said's Orientalism had a huge impact not only on cultural studies and the field of comparative literature; rather, it also affected the interpretation of the Orient. Hence, the theory attempted at redefining/reframing the Orient, by providing ample comprehension of historical facts.

In order to understand the true motifs behind West/ East disparity and European misrepresentation of the East, one should first scrutiny Said's theory Orientalism to discern its underlying meaning and structure.

4. Said's Theory *Orientalism*

As a theory, Said's Orientalism (1978) had stormed up a debate criticizing the western imperialism, for having a distorted view towards the East and the representation of non-Western cultures. Many critics ; such as Lockman, regarded Orientalism as ““one of the most influential scholarly books published in English in the humanities in the last quarter of the twentieth century”(Fikrat Guvan,2019, p.1).

By Orientalism, Said refers to “the collection of stereotypes, distortions, myths, and fantasies which the Occident (the West) has imposed in order to dominate the East”(Shabanirad & Marandi, 2015,p.22). In this sense, the book studies the different means by which the Occident has “Orientalized” the Orient to build knowledge about it, and to use such knowledge as dogma to serve imperial interests. Although Said's view of Orientalism has been criticized as monolithic or indivisible, Said has been able to find out many variations and modes in the ways Europeans have constructed the Orient in their discourse. In his most general division, he has distinguished between academic, general and corporate Orientalisms. Hence, Said provided three different definitions that are still irritating his critics. For him, Orientalism is: (1) an academic profession; (2) it is also a way of viewing the world; and (3) Orientalism is a mode of hegemony. Here are Said's three definitions of Orientalism:

The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and that applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspect, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.(Said, 2003, p. 2)

In this first definition, Orientalism appears as a discipline in the western academia circles or institutions/ Researchers had been adapted in different fields such as sociology, history, or anthropology, ...etc. Yet, Said has acknowledged in this first definition the vagueness of Orientalism as a term, as well as the different . Nevertheless, Said negative connotations that might be drawn. In his book, *Imagining the Other*, Jukka Juhki (2006) states that “ Said believes that academically Orientalism still lives on as congresses are held and books are written with the Orient as their focus and the Orientalists as their authority. Doctrines and theses are still being produced with the Orient or the Oriental as their subject”(p. 3). She carried on saying, “I would dare to question whether, thirty-seven years after the publication of *Orientalism*, “the Oriental” is the subject of any thesis. Nevertheless, the stereotypes still live on, even in scientific discourse, let alone popular culture”(p.23). In this regard, the second definition has closely explained Said’s view of Orientalism as a mode of thinking:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny and so on. This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx. (Said, 2003,p. 2)

The above definition shows that Orientalism is merely a byproduct of stereotype collections, myths and fantasies Europeans had taken as a basis that conducts them(the occident) with the Orient. In both academic and general Orientalism, Said suggests that there is a sort of exchange that has been disciplined or even regulated. However, in his third definition, Said’s

orientalism appears as historically and materially defined than the previous two meanings:

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said, 2003,p. 3).

Thus, Said suggests that corporate Orientalism is the way Europe has ruled the orient by using power. In her article, “Representations of the East: Orientalism in Emily Eden’s Travel Writing”, Amalie Due Svendsen(2018) claims that “The West was ‘always in a position of strength’, and this position was justified by the perception of the Orientals as ‘irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”’ in contrast to the ‘rational, virtuous, mature, “normal”’ Europeans (p.40). These characteristics shape the image of an underdeveloped and uncivilized East, a constructed knowledge of the Orient, which has helped legitimize Western dominance and colonization. As it appears, Said’s three definitions of Orientalism indicate that it is not an innocent mode of thought, rather, it is full of prejudiced negative and antagonistic views about the orient. Orientalism is considered a long established western endeavor based upon the standardization of the western values, by presenting them as lucid ones. Such view, in particular, marks the starting point in the critique of Orientalism.

5. Orientalism and Post-colonial Discourse

Before digging deeply within postcolonial discourse, it is worth referring firstly to the notions of “Colonial and colonialism” by considering them the corner stone of the colonial discourse. The notion *Colonial* can be “identified with a process of military and political sovereignty over the colony”. It is the act of practicing power and control over foreign territories. Whereas, Colonialism appears as “ an ideology of colonial power that operates to impose control over colonized nation in the field of language in addition to literary and cultural representations”(Elmatiri, 2019,p.1). Although, the concept of colonialism is closely related to imperialism, since both of them imply power and domination, the impact of imperialism never ends with end of colonial domination. However, it lasts forever influencing the culture of the colonized people as well as their way of thinking. Thus, Imperialism determines the discourse between the colonized country and the dominant empire.

In his highly renowned and widely criticized book *Orientalism*, Edward Said embarks upon describing the long European tradition of “ coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in European

Western experience'(Jouhki,2006, p.11). Said calls this tradition "Orientalism", shedding light mainly on nineteenth century French and British Orientalism, and early twentieth century American one. Said's analysis of the Orientalist discourse has been drawn on various academic and non-academic sources. His theory has influenced many scholars who have continued to probe and form theories examining the Orientalist phenomenon. In fact said was "a part of a more critical conjuncture in the 1980s that was facilitated by theoretical developments in post-structuralism, neo-Marxism, and deconstructionism and feminism, where the Enlightenment topic of subject-formation prevailed"(Bhatnagar, 1986,p.3).

As a discourse, *Orientalism* functions as an example of the postcolonial predicament of both Asians and Westerners. In the works of western scholars, the west has whether implicitly or explicitly appeared superior over the rest of the world. In order to make the occident appear superior and possible, such scholars "produced a discourse that evolved into a kind of imaginary binary ontology"(Juhki,2006,p. 12). Unfortunately, this binary ontology is surprisingly still strong today in spite of all the reasons that might make the two parts less distinguishable.

In his book, Said draws a picture on the colonial discourse and its implications. Orientalism shows how the colonial hegemony is implied within texts and discourses. It is regarded as "a contrapuntal reading of the imperial discourse about the non western other. It indicates that the western intellectuals were in the service of the hegemonic culture" (Shabanirad & Marandi,2015,p. 1). For this reason, Said acquired worldwide appreciation as the innovator of the postcolonial discourse. His ideology has influenced different fields of study such as social studies, history, anthropology, history and literature.

In the field of literary criticism, postcolonial theory concerns with the decentralization of western culture and its values. It provides critique over the ideologies of colonial domination such as Eurocentrism . As a theory, Post- colonialism was originated with the publication of Said's groundbreaking text *Orientalism* in 1978, with all respects to the theoreticians such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi and Homi Bhabha who pioneered the field of cultural studies assuring "the relationship between the cultural products of the former colonies and the culture of the metropolis."(Bertens,2001,p. 200). Albeit this study focuses on Said's *Orientalism*, it is worth mentioning that the ultimate objective of those critics is fighting against the dominant western ideology, values, modes of thoughts and perceptions. Such imperial ideologies allowed westerners to impose their

values, language and culture, constructing by that a false image over the Orient and Orientals. these values and perspectives had divided the world into a civilized, humanized West and an exotic, barbarian East.

Postcolonial theory also interests in studying cultural displacements and their effects on the identity of the displaced migrant people. For Bertons(2001), “postcolonial theory takes such displacements, and the hybrid cultural forms to which they lead, as vantage points that allow us to expose the internal doubts and the instances of resistance that the West has suppressed in its steamrolling globalizing course and to deconstruct the seamless facade that the combination of imperialism and capitalism has traditionally striven to present (p.200). In this perspective, one understands that postcolonial theory interests in studying the relationship between the colonizer and its previous colonized people. It studies the colonial oppression, ways of resistance, postcolonial migration to the west, as well as the hybrid cultural exchanges , the result of the interaction between the two cultures (the colonizer and the colonized).

In his approach to examine the western discourse on the orient, Said relied on a convincing volume of British and French scholarly texts, travelogues, official reports written by colonial officers, poetry and fictional narrative, to come up with one result that such texts had constructed an imaginative image to build knowledge about the orient, its history and culture. This particular approach seems helpful as it shows the unity of the orientalist discourse. In constructing his theory Orientalism, Said acknowledged his debt to both the post-structuralist Michel Foucault and the Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Although Said’s combination of two distinctive fields of study can be considered to a big extent challenging, but one can say that such combination is one of the main reasons that make *Orientalism* a phenomenon.

Using Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse as a methodology for his study, Said(2003) contends that, “Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient-dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (p.3). Michel Foucault’s analysis of knowledge and power paradigms is the foundational rock in Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. According to Michel Foucault , discourse implies “ a compilation of knowledge and thoughts regarding a common subject through similar methodology and present power relations as well as how it is talked about and perpetuated (Foucault,1972,p. 32). Thus, power and knowledge are enclosed through discursive elements. The Foucauldian

concept of discourse, therefore, is priceless for constructing Said's theory. Without embracing Foucault discourse of Power/ Knowledge, the examination of the systematic discipline of Orientalism would never be possible.

For Said, "the present is a mirror to the past, and it would be absolutely gullible to study it ignoring the role played by the colonialists in forming this present. Consequently, Said asserts that, "both histories of the colonizer and the colonized are inextricably interrelated and cannot be studied from a unilateral point of view"(Hamadi,2014,p. 41).

Said believes that the contrast between the West and the East is cloaked within the Orientalists' discourse of difference. According to Juhki(2006), Orientalists' discourse produced a false image of the orient, "in its representations, the Orientalist discourse remolds the exotic and strange Orient into a manageable, controllable, and intelligible phenomenon that can be categorized, conceptualized and defined. Knowledge of the Orient subordinates it. The reality of the East has been endless in complexity, so Orientalism has had to reduce it to characters, constitutions and types of a definite order"(p.45).

The Orientalists discourse of contrast allows the west to become dichotomous to the rest; hence, it produced two contrasted entities such as "the Civilized; rational west" vis a vis " the exotic, irrational East". According to Hamadi(2014), "Said... diagnoses Orientalism as a discourse which invents or orientalises the Orient for the purposes of imperial consumption" (p.40). The discourse of Orientalism, in fact, has opened doors, for discovering the different systematic ways of oppression the colonizer had been implemented to legitimize its superiority not only over the orient, but to dominate the whole world. In his analysis of the orientalist discourses, Said followed a humanist standpoint, because he believes that the better understanding of the conflict within orientalism necessitates to bring all the domains of research together. In this regard, Said (2003)claims "in order to break the chains of the mind, which restrain from a reasonable historical reflection, one must consider injustices and suffering through a broader historical, cultural and socio-economic reality"(p.13).

Said has been widely criticized and blamed for his reliance on Foucault discourse. A critic like Bhatnagar (1986) suggests that Said's work is " a mere duplication of Foucault's project to make Western man rigorously self-conscious about the furthest limits of his discourse,"(Jouhki,2006,p. 46).

According to El Matiri(2019), "Foucault, Discourse includes all social communicative acts and simultaneously it is influenced by society. Foucault's

critique of discourse arises from the hope to develop a more accurate account of human condition in Western society”(p.3). For this same reason, Bhatnagar has criticized Said as being one of the post-structuralist thinkers who are against any search for “a real origin”. In this sense, one understands that Bhatnagar (1986) regards both Foucault and Said’s projects as essentialist. For him, western narrative texts had produced a formal image about the history and the identity of the western man. For this reason, he asserts that, “Western identity is fabricated into coherence. “Western man” is thus posited as the beginning and the end of all knowledge which is grandly named Humanism”(Jouhki,2006,p.46).

In examining Orientalists narrative texts, Said neither intends to find out“the real Orient” , nor he looks for the one existed before colonialism; instead, he focuses on the Orient constructed as a Western discourse. Based on Foucault’s analysis, the Orientalist discourse relies mainly on the paradigms of power and knowledge. Hence,the rhetoric of power within orientalism depends on the use of knowledge to dominate. In his examination, Said focused attention on the description of “the Other”. He suggests that, when humans are confronted with something that present a threat to them, they rely on their previous experiences to interpret their actual situation. Thus, the travelogues and literary texts about the orient do not necessarily correspond to its real image, but it holds a kind of authority. It has been used to show power either in preparation to colonialism against “the Orient”, or to justify their inner fears. Hence, it presents to readers a false and fantasized image about the orient.

Moreover, the colonizer has imposed a language and culture full of power and rationality to dominate the orient. In so doing, the imperialist has ignored and even distorted the language, the history and the cultural values of the oriental people to manipulate and exploit them in the fond reason of civilizing and enlightening them. The main objective of Said’s analysis of Orientalism resides in showing how the power of exercising western domination has disguised itself in the language of truth, knowledge, values and rationality. According to Said (2003), “Such language is all the more effective because of its “naturalness, authority, professionalism, assertiveness, and anti-theoretical directness”(p. 216). In this perspective, Said presented Napoleon’s conquest of Egypt as a rhetoric of power. The consequences of exercising power and knowledge over Egyptians led to cultural exploitation. In spite of the struggle between Egyptians and the French, The knowledge the French imperial constructed from its expedition to Egypt had not only allowed him to distort the history of Egyptians, but also to dominate them.

According to Donze Magnier(2017) “Once the construction of Western dominance was established, this knowledge was transformed into a dogma, transmitted from generations to generations resulting in an everlasting cultural domination” (p.14). Furthermore, Foucault believes that discourse works to make individuals seem to have certain amount of power, especially when their productivity is determined by discourse. In this regard, Bahtargnar claims(1986)

Foucault’s intention is an analysis of power not from its universal and universalizing origins but its origins in the other it represses and outlaws. The specific forms of resistance define and describe the specific configurations of power. To speak of power from the position of resistance to it, to valorize the perceptions of the resisting people or group is to take up a combative and subversive position against its influence. (Jouhki,2006,p.35)

Thus, discourse is not a simple term used to exchange communication, rather, it has a powerful material effect to the extent that discursive elements underlie power and knowledge. In short, power is initiated within the field of struggle. For this reason,, resistance can only be constructed through discourse. Thereof, one understands that the same discourse that produces power, it undermines through resistance.

Additionally, Said owes debt to Foucault original contribution to the materialist conception of discourse. He regards that power of discourse is related to certain social institutions . The latter operates as a vehicle for ideology and suitable, hence, for constructing Orientalists discourse. According to Jouhki(2006), “In Orientalism, the growth of institutional sites has led eventually to the habit of “infinite self-reference,” as Said calls it”(p.48). Additionally, language plays a primordial role in bringing opposites together as natural. “Language gives permission and it “legislates and perpetuates discriminations of otherness and sameness” in a given society” (p.126). Said extends this idea of differences to speak the difference between the Orient/the Occident.

The Foucauldian discourse analysis also allows Said to tackle culture. He considers it a sort of organized disciplines governed by power and knowledge. Thus, Said’s method in Orientalism aims at unveiling the discourse of the dominant culture to destroy its oppressive system. Even though the Western discourse about the Orient is associated with knowledge and power, Said is certain that their discourse breeds hegemony and aims at subordination. For this reason, Gramsci’s Marxist approach *Cultural*

hegemony plays a primordial role in constructing Said's Orientalism. It allows him to understand the ideology and the culture behind the colonial discourse.

Drawing on Gramsci theory, Said asserts that the colonialist used culture to embed certain thoughts in the minds of the orientals in a way that allow them view his invasion legitimate and even to serve their benefits. Culture is, in this regard, used as an influential tool to control the minds. Orientalism as a tradition performs cultural control, that's why Said sates (2003), "cultural domination is maintained, as much as by Oriental consent as by direct and crude economic pressure"(p.124). In his words, Said confirms that both domination and hegemony took part in subjugating Orientals.

Said (1978) regards that "the literary texts and the historical accounts of the West as valuable representations of the ways in which hegemony works" (El Aidi,2017,p. 6). Since literature is the mirror of the society, these texts have reflected the colonizer's true culture and identity. This also means that the views and the stories orientalists constructed about orientals are directed to subdue their minds, and influence them both psychologically and mentally to absorb the idea that the colonizer came to their benefits in order to enlighten and civilize them. In this sense, Said asserts (2003) that "like any set of durable ideas, Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals as well as those called Occidental, European, or Western; in short, Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine. (p.42). In this view, Said mentions such an important thing as he used the expression "a set of durable ideas". This expression refers to the extents that might such ideas get to, when Orientals have assimilated them. In so doing, Said intends to refer to "the long-lasting effect of Orientalists ideas on Orientals"(El Aidi,2017,p.7). Such ideas are in fact not only durable but also dangerous once they become a kind of dogma, a characteristic that never ends with end of colonialism. Thus, one can say that Said considers Orientalism as an ideological weapon directed against Orientals to put a durable control over them.

6.Said's Orientalism and The image of "the Other"

The notion *representation* can be understood as "a presentation drawn up not by depicting the object as it is but by re-presenting it or constructing it in a new form and/or environment"(Salazar,2014, 172). The fabricated representations of travel writers, military officials, poets and artists is what created Orientalism discourse to reflect European anxieties about the preoccupation of the East . In Said's view(2003), "The idea of representation

is usually based on a notion of being faithful to the original. However, representation is largely interwoven with many other things besides 'truth'. It is defined not just by inherent common subject matter, but also by a common history, tradition, and universe of discourse that exists within a particular field" (pp.272-273).

The discourse of Orientalism has never given the realistic image of Orientals. Rather, it is more or less a romantic discourse that is far from being objective, because it served at legitimizing western imperialism and aims at subordination. This discourse has always represented the Orientals as Eastern / Oriental "Other". The Orientalist discourse has an important implication, wherein it has helped to define Europe. The image of the strange, barbaric oriental other has reinforced the European culture and identity. In this regard, Linda Colley(1992) claims that, national identity is defined by the meeting with other cultures and the confrontation with otherness, "we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not" (Svendsen,2018,p. 62)

As a mythical creation, the orient is appeared through a series of imaginative representations and stereotypical images in the writings of orientalist to serve European imperialism. In Said's words(1978),"the creation of a series of stereotypical images, according to which Europe (the West, the 'self') is seen as being essentially rational, developed, humane, superior, virtuous, normal and masculine, while the Orient (the East, the 'other') (a sort of surrogate version of the West or the 'self') is seen as being irrational, backward, despotic, inferior, depraved, aberrant and feminine sexually"(Shabaniard,2015, 23). Thus, one understands that these series of representations of the " Orient " contributed to a big extent in creating a dichotomy between the West/ ' the self' and the Orient/ " the other", a dichotomy that served in extending European hegemony over the East, as a whole.

Said Orientalism has opened many avenues for approaching the different forms in viewing the orient. According Said (2003), "an Oriental world emerged [which was] governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections." (p.2). These desires and projections created the taste for exotic, imperial projection and a long lasting separateness between the two worlds.

In order to expose the possible types of orientalist writings, Said first distinguished between latent and manifest orientalism. Manifest Orientalism is defined as "the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, whereas latent Orientalism has been more "a stable, unanimous and durable mode of thought". In this perspective,

manifest orientalism signifies the difference in “forms and personal styles”, whereas latent orientalism refers to the unconscious constructed thoughts, what emphasized “the Orient’s separateness, “ its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, [and] its supine malleability”. (Said,2003,p.38)

By distinguishing between manifest and latent Orientalism; Said shows that the difference in “manifest Orientalism, lies between Orientalist writers, their personal style and form of writing is explicit, but the basic content of their writing, as Jouhki asserts(2006), “the separatedness of the Orient, its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability,” has reflected the more or less unified latent Orientalism” (p. 24). Thus, latent orientalism resulted to race classification, what divided the world into backward and advanced cultures and Societies.

For centuries, the west has “spoke for” and “represented the Orient”to put control over it. By negating its voice, the Orient appeared as a silent and static entity that lacks wisdom and civilization. For this reason, the Orient and Oriental people have rarely seen or looked at, instead, they have been *seen through*. Due to ethnocentrism of Europeans, according to Said(2003), Orientals “were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined”(p.207). In short, they were seen as “silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist” (p.208).

The representation of the silent orient started in 18th c fascination with The Arabian Nights or The Thousand and One Nights. This text was translated into French by Antoine Galland in 1704–1717, and thereafter translated many times into English in the 19th century . It was the key towards western representation of the orient as a place of exoticism, a place of mystery and romance. It emphasized the lost past classical oriental grandeur vis a vis the contemporary orient’s barbarism. The imaginative nature of orientalist depictions is obviously expressed in Linda Nochlin’s article, *The Imaginary Orient*. In this article, Nochlin reveals (1989)“the false and mystified representations of the Ottoman culture by Orientalist paintings, exemplifying painters like Jean-Léon Gerome, Eugène Delacroix, Nochlin declares that these ‘picturesque’ representations of the East were productions of the western imagination, while searching “an actual place to be mystified with effects of realness, like a fantasy space or screen”(A brief History of Orientalism,n.d,p.10). In his canvas *The Snake Charmer*, Gérome portrays “a young boy holds the snake while an old snake charmer plays off to the left. The audience is huddled together against the

wall”(Bloom,2004,p.34). The mystery Gérôme creates in this work lies in the location of the viewer. It drives the viewer to watch the whole scene from the backside of the boy. In this regard Bloom claims that “We are negated to watch the scene from the back, only seeing the backside of the boy and the show” (p.34). Linda Nochlin(1989) writes, “Gérôme is not reflecting a readymade reality but, like all artists, is producing meanings. (Bloom,2004,p.15). Moreover, the tiled wall behind the audience signifies the deterioration of the walls; hence, it refers to the deterioration of the entire Muslim society and civilization. The false representation of the Orient appeared in the body of fiction written by William Thackeray, the Brontë sisters, Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad, and Rudyard Kipling.

The superficial reading of Kipling’s *Kim* (1900), for instance, looks like an adventure story of a young boy scout to India. However, the contrapuntal reading of the novel shows the impact of colonization. “The novel contains much more than the story of an Irish orphan, raised among natives in Lahore, who wanders all over India being a Tibetan lama’s disciple and a British intelligence agent at the same time.(Kleinhofa, 2021,63). For Said, “classical ‘colonial’ text, oversaturated with imperial ideology”, because Kipling shows no possibility of any anti-imperial resistance; the presence of empire seems natural, unquestionable, and eternal as the existence of air and water” .(Kleinhofa,2021,p. 63). The representation of the oriental other also pervades the works of many Victorian writers as Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, Oscar Wilde, and Robert Louis Stevenson, among many others. It can be found in the works of many North American icons such as Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, Henry James, and Thomas Hardy.

Additionally, Said’s *Orientalism* (2003) demonstrates that the Orient was feminized in European representation, as it portrayed as irrational feminine“ passive, exotic, sexually alluring, submissive, (pp. 182-220), “silent and supine” (p. 138). Whereas the West appeared rationally masculine, dominant, self controlled and able to possess the East. This representation, has drawn an similarity between the western marginalization of the East the silence of woman under the patriarchal system. The image of the silent, exoticized Oriental female often depicted naked or partially clothed in many western works of art, conveying the sense of a barbaric active creature for sexual pleasures. Such image appeared in Flaubert’s experience with the Egyptian courtesan Kuchuck Hanem. When Flaubert slept with the courtesan, as Said notes, he wrote a letter to his friend Louise Colet saying that, “the oriental woman is no more than a machine; she makes no distinction between one man and another man”. (Said, 1978, p.187).

By describing her as silent, passive and inferior, Flaubert provides a typical model of what is the Oriental woman. According to Said (2003), Kuchuck “never spoke of herself, never represented her emotions, presence or history. He spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was typically Oriental ". In this regard, Ensieh shabaniard asserts that “Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled”(p.24).

In colonial discourse, woman representation often collude with patriarchal values. In her essay “Can the Subaltern speak?”, Gayatri Spivak(1989) argues that the representation of marginalized people is linked to “positioning: socioeconomic, gendered, cultural, geographic, historical, and institutional” . She also contends that “the image of the silent and powerless woman “ cannot escape othering” (Salazar,2008, p. 173). This means that Oriental women are double colonized, since they are victims of both imperial ideology and patriarchal systems and traditions. The image of the silent woman refers, therefore, to the inequality between the Orient and the Occident that based the binary opposition of power and knowledge. The focal point in western representation of the orient holds two different meanings. In the first meaning, representation means “speaking about” or “ representing it” in the sense of making a portrait about it. Yet, the second meaning holds a dangerous hypothesis, in which “speaking for the orient” means politically representing it, because it is unable to do so. Therefore, the disparity between the Orient and the Occident comes out of the hypothesis of speaking for the orient , and the image of silent woman refers to the Orient per se, the silent subaltern or the Other as created by the west to dominate it and speak thereby for it.

7. Conclusion

Orientalism as defined by Said remains an outstanding theory to understand the past relations between the Orient and the Occident that created the present disparity. The conceptual analysis of Orientalism reveals that the term was first used as an artistic mode rather than a way of representation, Europeans used it to describe worlds and cultures they had never come across before. Since that time, the Orient has been a mythical, silent world , and it had been labeled the “Other”. In order to dig within the imperial tradition of representing the Orient, Said embraced Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse, that constructed upon Power/Knowledge, as a methodology for his

research, wherein he proved that their discourse breeds hegemony and aims at subordination. His study also shows that the colonialist used culture to implant certain thoughts in the minds of the orientals in a way that allow them perceived his invasion as legitimate. Liberating the East from colonial dependencies necessitates a change in the way of thinking, or as Ngugi puts it “Decolonizing the minds”, challenging the dominant ways orientals follow in viewing and introducing themselves, and the ways orientalist used to represent them.

The diagnosis of the orient misrepresentations demonstrates that the Orient was also feminized in European representation; it is portrayed as irrational feminine, silent and sexually attractive. Whereas, the West appeared rationally masculine and dominant. The image of the silent and powerless woman is another proof of “Othering” the East to speak for it. In order to bypass of the misrepresentation of the oriental other and defy East/West dichotomy, the oriental other should be empowered, mindest should be altered, Orientals should have their authentic voice to communicate their own problems, speak for and represent themselves, and, hence, they could be able to end their single story.

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