



Review Paper

## Postcolonialism: Edward Said & Gayatri Spivak

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### Abstract

*Postcolonialism is a term largely used to refer to all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the time of Colonization to our own time. Postcolonialism means ongoing issues and debates between East and West since the colonial process started. It attempts to examine and analyse the aftermath of colonization ; that of restoring the identity of the Independent oriental nations by removing misconceptions about the orientals. It includes literature of the nations such as – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Pakistan, Jamaica and more countries which were once colonized by British. These countries are also called Third World Countries. Marxism and Poststructuralism have been a major influence on the thinkers from Fanon to Gayatri Spivak. Postcolonialism tries to decenter/deconstruct the Eurocentrism or Eurocentric beliefs.*

**Keywords:** Postcolonialism, Orientalism, Subaltern, Hegemony, Power, Discourse, Identity, Race, Colonizer/colonized, White/black, Europe/Third world countries.

### Introduction

This paper will focus towards Edward Said's concept 'Orientalism' and Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'subaltern'. Drawing my interest in Said, Foucault, and Gramsci this paper examine how the western texts have represented the East , the Orient or the Subaltern characters. The texts referred in this paper are informed by my reading of them in postgraduate courses and reflect my area of interest. Thus the selected texts should not be treated as paradigmatic of postcolonialism or orientalism. The texts referred in this paper are: The Tempest by William Shakespeare Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe .The Outsider by Albert Camus, Heart of the Darkness by Joseph Conrad, A passage to India by E.M. Foster. All the above texts have been analyzed in the light of theories of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak as well as postcolonialism. Basically Postcolonialism involves the following points: Edward Said's concept of 'Orientalism' & Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'Subaltern'. Analyzing texts produced by the writers who belong to the countries which were once colonized by British'. Reading texts produced by those who have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism<sup>2</sup>. Rereading the texts produced during colonialism in the light of theories of colonial discourse.

### EDWARD SAID: Orientalism

"Knowledge is not innocent it is always operated by power" this Foucauldian notion informs Edward Said's book *Orientalism (1978)*<sup>1</sup> . Orientalism is a term applied to 'the orient' as discovered, observed and described, in a sense, 'invented' by Europe and the West. In literary context it refers to the

discourse by the West about the East, in all fields, such as, literary, sociological, and so on, which have no counter point in the east. This discourse aggregates to a "textual universe". It refers to the attitudes of the west towards the east; to the occident looking in/on/at the east and, explains and interprets it<sup>3</sup>.

**Origin:** In the Middle Ages the east became of increasing interest to the west-it was remote, inaccessible and exotic. Most of the speculation of such study gained importance because of travelers' tales and stories. For instance, Marco Polo (c.1254-1324) is the prime example of an author who began to introduce the east to the west with his immensely popular book of travels, which was translated into many European languages. Sir John Mandeville, the supposed author of famous travel book also found in many European languages. The increasing Islamic empire threatened Christianity and led to the crusades, thus bringing east nearer to west. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 was virtually the end of Christianity. The expansion of Ottoman Empire threatened the west even more. The west became fearful of this matter of urgent military necessity. The travelers' accounts began to proliferate. Vasco-da-gama discovered India, provided material for the west to write about the east and fantasize about it. 'Arabian Night's' Entertainment' or '*The One Thousand and One Nights*' by Antoine Galland, appeared in 1704 and 1717. Adventurous travelers went far beyond the prescribed itineraries or boundaries of the Tour. By 18<sup>th</sup> century, Sir William Jones considered as earliest British orientalist who translated many works from Arabic and Persian which influenced the oriental themes of romantic poets. Napoleon had interest in preserving the knowledge about the east. He funded

# Postcolonialism Edward Said Gayatri Spivak

**Scott C. Dulebohn**



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