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Hybridity, Acculturation, and Cultural Fragmentation in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*: A Postcolonial Reading through Said's Orientalism

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Abstract

*Postcolonialism is a critical and cultural theory that investigates how Western and non-Western nations interacted during colonization, emphasizing the process of 'othering' that sustains Western dominance and justifies imperialism. This study adopts a qualitative postcolonial literary approach, drawing on Edward Said's Orientalism to analyze Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* as a contemporary reflection of these dynamics. Through close contextual reading, the study highlights contradictory images of 'self' and 'other' in characters and narrative voice. It explores how European colonialism influences the cultural identities of Palestinian intellectuals, especially the tensions between the colonizer's culture and the marginalized colonized's. The analysis employs thematic coding of self/other binaries and discourses of civility, race, religion, and domination to systematically interpret the text, situating *The Parisian* in Mandate Palestine while considering both imperial and Palestinian perspectives. By foregrounding intersecting postcolonial perspectives, the study shows how Hammad represents the role of colonialism in shaping cultural identity, underscores her connection to her cultural heritage and history, and exposes the cultural, economic, social, and political domination imposed by Western colonization.*

Keywords: *Acculturation; Arab intellectual crisis; Colonialism; Cultural difference; Hegemony; Identity; Orientalism; Othering; Postcolonialism; The Parisian*

Introduction

Orientalism Unveiled: The Dynamics of the East-West Interaction

The East–West interaction has undergone considerable mutations throughout history and, over the last two centuries, has taken on an increasingly strategic and interventionist character. Western powers have persistently explored the Arab and Muslim world to understand the 'exotic' region, secure geopolitical advantage, and gain access to one of the world's richest resource zones: the Middle East. This sustained interaction has generated a body of knowledge about non-Western peoples profoundly shaped by the desire for occupation and colonization—pressures many Eastern scholars and thinkers have resisted. Recognizing these dynamics is crucial for understanding current East-West relations and their lasting impact. A corresponding consciousness of the need for an interaction with the West, that neither submits to Western claims of superiority nor internalizes Western assumptions about non-Western races and nations, has arisen. In his prominent book, *Orientalism*, Edward Said, the Palestinian-American critic, articulates the intellectual stakes of this consciousness: 'Modern thought and experience have

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taught us to be sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the Other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas, in the socio-political role of intellectuals, in the great value of a skeptical critical consciousness' (327). In his interview with Sut Jhally, "Edward Said: On *Orientalism*," Said comments on Western misrepresentations of the East through false images: "I used the occasion to look at the image of the Arabs in the media, popular literature, and cultural representations going back to the Middle Ages. This was the origin of my book *Orientalism*" (166). Said's interest in Orientalism springs from media images during the Arab–Israeli war of 1973: "how the Arabs are cowardly, and they don't know how to fight, and they are always going to be beaten because they are not modern" (2). This contradiction between his experience, as an Arab, and Western depictions of the Arab in art and literature—"Those representations of the Orient had very little to do with what I knew about my own background in life. So, I decided to write the history of that" (2–3)—further motivated his project. As an "Arab-Western intellectual," Said is caught between the Arabs' interaction with the West, an "Arab embodiment of the main object of desire of the whole Arabic culture, the West. Hence, they can safely embrace him without inviting accusations of betraying their identity or alienating themselves from their culture" (Hafez 170–1).

Published in 1978, *Said's Orientalism* is a landmark that helped crystallize postcolonial studies. For Said, postcolonial criticism examines how colonized peoples defend their culture, identity, language, and history, and seek to see the world through their own eyes rather than through those of the colonizers. *Orientalism* examines the relationship between East and West and its intersections with literature, criticism, culture, politics, philosophy, and economics. One of Said's central concerns is to expose the role of Orientalism in shaping Western knowledge of the East and the effects of this knowledge on Western–Eastern interaction. Recognizing this influence can deepen our understanding of cultural representations and their power. 'Orientalism' denotes a Western style of perceiving, representing, and managing the 'Orient' as the 'Other.' Willa Al-lawama observes that 'By integrating postcolonial theory with traditional theories of identification politics, [Said] advanced contemporary understandings of identity by emphasizing how representations shape our perceptions of ourselves and others' (3270).

Said's critique of Orientalism is vital for Postcolonial resistance, as it reveals how Western representations have historically justified exploitation, encouraging marginalized peoples to challenge and deconstruct these narratives to reclaim their identities and histories. Said's central thesis in *Orientalism* is that it was the fame, allure, and culture of the Orient that originally sparked political, economic, and military interest in colonial domination, setting the caravels sailing across the seas in search of trade and conquest. In other words, it was the initial interest in culture that materialized into political power, domination, and eventual colonization of the Orient. (24)

The theoretical framework of the current paper engages Arab interaction with the West—Arab intellectual crisis, cultural difference, racism, otherness, superiority, universality, colonization, prejudice, and Western hegemony—through Said's *Orientalism*. Said offers several definitions of "Orientalism". One refers to the academic field and institutional discipline devoted to Oriental studies (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 11). A second highlights a style of thought premised on essential distinctions between "East" and "West." A third emphasizes the historical and material dimension of Orientalism as a social institution consolidated from the late 18th century onward (3). In its most concise form, Orientalism names Western hegemony over Eastern regions, cultures, and peoples: "Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). This definition reveals how knowledge, representation, and domination intersect

in the construction of the Orient. The Orient/Occident relationship is thus institutionalized through knowledge: description and representation become forms of rule. In "Orientalism: The Making of the Other," Shehla Burney notes that "The Orient was painted as the very antithesis, the binary opposition, the contrasting image of the Occident" (24). Praveen similarly states: "The Orient is everything that the Occident is not" (48). The Orient/Occident relation is structural, asymmetrical, and hegemonic, not merely a matter of cultural difference: "Orientalism promotes the clear-cut distinction and gulf between Occident, i.e., Europe, the West, 'us') and strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 43). The Orient/Occident relationship is thus discursively constructed as a binary of self/other, "us" and "them," underpinning political and cultural hierarchies. Elaborating on this concept, Moosavinia et al. argue: "The Self and the Other can be translated to the Occident / Orient, us /them, The West /the rest, center/margin, metropolitan/colonial subjects, vocal/silent. In all these cases, Western literary and cultural canon defines 'its other' in relation to itself, the other is an alien and alter ego, to and of the self, as the inferior reflection of Europe" (105). According to Patricia Almarcegui:

Orientalism obliged binary thinking, or, in other words, the assumption that Westernism also existed. In this way, the West was considered a homogeneous entity lacking in heterogeneity. Neither was Westernism the answer to Orientalism. As the anthropologist James Clifford, one of the most lucid critics of Orientalism, stated, Said dichotomized and, therefore, essentialized what had always been a continuum: East and West. (138)

Said asserts that Orientalism is less an authentic discourse about the East than a sign of Western power: "I myself believe that Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is as a veridic discourse about the Orient, which is what, in its academic or scholarly form, it claims to be" (6). Moosavinia et al. expound Said's attribution of Orientalists' and European administrators' ability to enforce colonial supremacy to this knowledge: "Influenced mostly by Foucault and less Gramsci, he elucidates how the West constructed Orient in various works such as travelogues, historical accounts, state and official archives and novels. For Said, Orient and Oriental do not exist, however, the Westerners construct and counterfeit the Orient" (104). Additionally, Almarcegui argues:

For centuries, knowledge of the East came from the works of travelers who shared their experiences with the world. The journey enabled recognition of the heterogeneity and complexity of geography from diverse, non-specialized viewpoints, such as those of geographers, merchants, writers, and diplomats. As he himself stated in 1991, travelers could cross frontiers, span territories, abandon fixed positions, and, as a result, create hybrid and polymorphic discourses. (139)

Knowledge in the human sciences is never produced from a neutral position; each text emerges from specific historical, political, and social circumstances: "For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances" (Said, *Orientalism*, p.11). Orientalism cannot, therefore, be seen as purely objective knowledge. Western interest in the East is politically motivated and embedded in wider cultural and intellectual formations. Culture, politics, and Orientalism thus operate in a mutually reinforcing nexus:

My idea is that European and then American interest in the Orient was political according to some of the prominent historical accounts of it that I have given here, but that it was the culture that created that interest, that acted dynamically

along with brute political, economic, and military rationales to make the Orient the varied and complicated place that it obviously was in the field I call Orientalism. (Said, *Orientalism*, 12)

Said identifies two principal aspects of Orientalism: the academic discipline and a diffuse repertoire of images and fantasies. He writes:

Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice. But in addition, I have been using the word to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabularies available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line. These two aspects of Orientalism are not incongruent, since, by their use, Europe could advance securely and unmetaphorically upon the Orient. (73)

Said is primarily concerned with French and British encounters with Arab and Islamic cultures. He studies the relationship between Orientalism as an academic field, imperialism in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the rise of American power in the 20th century (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 19). To that end, he analyzes literary, scientific, political, and historical texts, insisting that they are all "worldly and circumstantial": "my hybrid perspective is broadly historical and 'anthropological,' given that I believe all texts to be worldly and circumstantial in (of course) ways that vary from genre to genre, and from historical period to historical period" (23). Texts, for Said, are symptomatic of the social and historical conditions that produce them.

From a geopolitical standpoint, Said notes that although the British and the French formed colonies in many regions of the East, the Middle East was distinctive for its cultural and religious complexity. In contrast to India, where colonial authority was more easily naturalized, the Near East posed a more enduring challenge: "But it was in the Near Orient, the lands of the Arab Near East, where Islam was supposed to define cultural and racial characteristics, that the British and the French encountered each other and 'the Orient' with the greatest intensity, familiarity, and complexity" (41). The Arab-Islamic world, therefore, became a principal site of conflict between Western interests and local resistance.

The relationship between knowledge and authority is a core concern of Said's *Orientalism*. Said argues: "Once again, knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control" (36). Colonization is supported by cultural power and self-confidence: "For even as Europe moved itself outwards, its sense of cultural strength was fortified" (117). Modern Orientalism is inseparable from imperialism: "To say simply that modern Orientalism has been an aspect of both imperialism and colonialism is not to say anything very disputable" (122–23). The epistemic relation between "Orientalist" and "Oriental" is structured by power: "There is a source of information (the Oriental) and a source of knowledge (the Orientalist), in short, a writer and a subject matter otherwise inert. The relationship between the two is radically a matter of power, for which there are numerous images" (308). Hence, knowledge production both presupposes and consolidates colonial domination.

At the heart of Orientalism, Said locates an entrenched hierarchy: "If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction" (42). Orientalists rely heavily on inherited representations: "The East was homogenized and treated as a concept that could be analyzed and understood. It constituted a static and invariable space, while the West was dynamic and variable" (Almarcegui

138).

Said portrays Orientalism as a cumulative archive: a chain of texts to which any Westerner must return to "know" Islam or the Arabs, creating an "indefinite circle" of authority (66–67). This discourse, he notes, was "exploited by political interests in the twentieth century" (53). The aim was to "overcome" Asia's perceived strangeness and hostility: "To overcome such redoubtable constants, the Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by scholars, soldiers, and judges" (91–92). Orientalists thus claimed to distill an "essential" model of the Orient, resistant to historical change: "The impact of colonialism, of worldly circumstances, of historical development: all these were to Orientalists as flies to wanton boys... never taken seriously enough to complicate the essential Islam" (105). The "Oriental" emerges as a homogeneous abstraction, detached from the complex historical, social, and political conditions that shape actual lives: "The East was not a motionless passive object by nature but rather a human creation. Through generations of intellectuals, artists, writers, and Orientalists, the West had produced its image of the East" (Almarcegui 138).

Acculturation, Assimilation and Cultural Difference: Arab Intellectual Crisis

Said's critique also touches on assimilation and acculturation. *The Oxford Dictionary* defines assimilation as "The absorption of a minority group into a majority population, during which the group takes on the values and norms of the dominant culture." *The Cambridge Dictionary* defines acculturation as "The process of changing so that you become more like people from a different culture, or making someone change in this way." John W. Berry defines acculturation as "the process of group and individual changes in culture and behaviour that result from intercultural contact" (*Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures* 1). In John W. Berry's *Acculturation: A Personal Journey across Cultures*, acculturation is defined as "the process of group and individual changes in culture and behaviour that result from intercultural contact" (1). Berry treats acculturation as the broad, value-neutral process of cultural and psychological change that occurs when individuals or groups come into contact with another culture, including possible changes on both sides. Within this wider process, assimilation is only one possible acculturation strategy, where people adopt the norms and behaviour of the dominant or host culture while discarding or greatly reducing maintenance of their original culture (30–32). Iman Ibrahim notes that "Said's concept of East/West acculturation reflects the negative original sense of the term where acculturation is motivated by hegemonic purposes and based on Self/Other hierarchy" (22). She adds that "in all of Said's examples, acculturation is a conflict as the empire's culture is forcefully imposed and resisted both physically and ideologically, and the national culture is revived to displace it" (27), while also recalling medieval instances of more positive acculturation and assimilation between European and Arabic cultures, particularly through translation and scientific exchange (28–35).

The interaction between Eastern and Western intellectual traditions is characterized by ambivalence, swinging between feelings of inferiority and superiority. Edward Said points out that Eastern students who study Orientalism in Western institutions often internalize its concepts. Upon returning home, they reproduce these ideas with a sense of superiority. "Such a system of reproduction makes it inevitable that the Oriental scholar will use his American training to feel superior to his people because he can 'manage' the Orientalist system; in his relations with his superiors, the European or American Orientalists, he will remain only a 'native informant'" (Said, *Orientalism* 324). He remarks: "The predicted result of all this is that Oriental students (and oriental professors) still want to come and sit at the feet of American Orientalists and later to

repeat to their local audiences the clichés I have been characterizing as Orientalist dogma" (323–24). This captures a dual structure of inferiority: Eastern scholars feel inferior to Western authority, yet claim superiority over their own societies through their access to it.

Said observes that there is a broader intellectual acquiescence in Orientalist images and doctrines, reinforced by political, economic, and social exchanges: "So if all told there is an intellectual acquiescence in the images and doctrines of Orientalism, there is also a potent reinforcement of this in economic, political, and social exchange: the modern Orient, in short, participates its own Orientalizing" (325). Cultural domination is maintained not only by direct pressure but also by consent: "There are all kinds of other indications of how the cultural domination is maintained, as much by Oriental consent as by direct and crude economic pressure from the United States" (324). The success of Orientalism, Said argues, lies in its adaptation to the intellectual climate of "the new imperialism": "the accommodation between the intellectual class and the new Imperialism might very well be accounted for as one of the special triumphs of Orientalism. The Arab world today is an intellectual, political, and cultural satellite of the United States" (322–23). He notes that educational and cultural institutions in the East frequently reproduce colonial structures, generating alienation as local needs diverge from imported frameworks (222–23).

For Said, the crisis in Western thought about the Other stems from the tight alignment between Orientalism and empire: "The scope of Orientalism exactly matched the scope of empire, and it was this absolute unanimity between the two that provoked the only crisis in the history of Western thought about and dealings with the Orient. Furthermore, this crisis continues now" (104). Knowledge produced under such conditions is inevitably politicized, and Eastern societies must approach it with critical vigilance, acknowledging its partial insights while remaining aware of its hidden agendas. Said is particularly struck by the persistence of Orientalist notions in academic and governmental studies of the modern Near East and by the relative silence of Arab and Islamic scholars in challenging them:

The extraordinary thing is that these notions persist without significant challenge in the academic and governmental study of the modern Near Orient. Lamentably, there has been no demonstrable effect if there has been a challenging gesture at all made by Islamic or Arab scholars' work disputing the dogmas of Orientalism; an isolated article here or there, while necessary for its time and place, cannot possibly affect the course of an imposing research consensus maintained by all sorts of agencies, institutions, and traditions. (301)

Herein lies the need to cultivate sustained critical engagement instead of offering merely intermittent objections.

Cultural difference represents another primary focus of postcolonial critique. Said notes a persistent analogy that distorts European understanding of Islam: "One constraint acting upon Christian thinkers who tried to understand Islam was an analogical one; since Christ is the basis of the Christian faith, it was assumed—quite incorrectly—that Mohammed was to Islam as Christ was to Christianity" (60). Such assumptions efface doctrinal and historical specificity. Said stresses that cultural differences play a constitutive role in human relations but rejects the idea that difference necessarily implies hostility: "My aim, as I said earlier, was not so much to dissipate difference itself, for who can deny the constitutive role of national as well as cultural differences in the relations between human beings, but to challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen, reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things." (353) Said recognizes that cultures are historically specific and genuinely different. However, he rejects the essentialized binaries—such as civilized/barbaric,

West/East, and colonizer/colonized—that imperial ideology uses to define these differences in ways that justify domination. While acknowledging the reality of cultural differences, Said also rejects the rigid binaries imposed by imperial discourse, which create strict hierarchies between the "self" and the "other."

In his discussion of 19th-century European thought, Said references Gustave Flaubert's *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, which signals "the degeneration of knowledge and the inanity of human effort" (113). The ambitions of the 19th century were built on 18th-century Enlightenment ideals, originally European yet universalized through imperial power. Said surveys intellectual changes in the 18th and 19th centuries (114), including romanticism's challenge to rationalism via recourse to Indian spirituality: "It was Indian culture and religion that could defeat the materialism and mechanism (and republicanism) of Occidental culture" (115). This recourse to "the East" reveals not a universal solution but a response to specifically Western crises. Islamic traditions, for instance, do not separate mind and spirit in the same way, highlighting different civilizational trajectories. Differences in purpose also mark Eastern and Western travel. While Eastern travelers often go to the West to learn from and marvel at advanced technology and institutions, Western travelers go East with very different aims. Said remarks:

A vast number of pages on the Orient exist, and they, of course, signify a degree and quantity of interaction with the Orient that is quite formidable. Still, the crucial index of Western strength is that there is no possibility of comparing the movement of Westerners eastwards (since the end of the eighteenth century) with the movement of Easterners westwards... Moreover, the Eastern travelers in the West were there to learn from and marvel at an advanced culture; the purposes of the Western travelers in the Orient, as we have seen, were of a quite different order. (204)

This asymmetry exemplifies how power dynamics shape mobility and perception.

Racism, Otherness, Colonization, Prejudice, and Western Hegemony:

Racism, otherness, and universality are central to Said's analysis. In many Oriental texts, Asia appears as a childlike space lacking voice; Europe speaks for it and manages its resources (Said, *Orientalism* 57). The European representation of "the Muslim, Ottoman, or Arab" functions as a mechanism of control: "The European representation of the Muslim, Ottoman, or Arab was always a way of controlling the redoubtable Orient, and to a certain extent, the same is true of the methods of contemporary learned Orientalists" (60). The West relies on simplified and repetitive images of the East, supported by little evidence (71–72). Asia matters not in itself but "as Asia's use to modern Europe" (115). Said notes the claim that Arabs count only as "biological beings; institutionally, politically, culturally, they are nil, or next to nil" (312). Balfour and Cromer, he observes, typically cast "the Oriental" as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'; thus, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (40).

Commenting on Eurocentrism, Said quotes the view that "a white middle-class Westerner believes it is his human prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it, just because by definition 'it' is not quite as human as 'we' are" (108). The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is thus "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Said defines the Orient/Occident relation as structural, asymmetrical, and hegemonic, rather than merely a matter of cultural difference. "Otherness" becomes a mechanism for racism and exclusion: the non-Western world is cast as backward and

inferior, the Other relegated to a "second degree" of humanity, while the white subject claims full humanity and governing authority: "Because he, unlike the Oriental, is a true human being" (108). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said notes that "Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, or Western, or Oriental" (xxv).

Orientalist discourse also universalizes the European experience. European history becomes the history of the world; Western norms are projected as universal standards (Said, *Orientalism* 86). What Westerners say and teach about the Orient is "all in basic ways connected to and supplied by the prevailing cultural and political norms of the West" (67–68). Said traces the link between Orientalism and formal colonialism: "when the often dilatory, abstract, and projective aspects of Orientalism were about to take on a new sense of worldly mission in the service of formal colonialism" (205). Orientalism provided the conceptual tools and expert knowledge necessary to administer colonial rule. While acknowledging that some Orientalists preserved ancient languages and occasionally sympathized with the East, Said asserts that "Yet—and here we must be very clear—Orientalism overrode the Orient" (96).

In "A Study of Edward Said's 'Orientalism' and Homi K. Bhabha's 'The Other Question'," Ambesange summarizes these critical stakes:

Said's critique focused on how knowledge creation contributes to the construction of the 'Other,' which strengthens the dynamics of colonial authority. By examining the ambivalence and hybridity inside colonial discourse, Bhabha expands on Said's observations. He contends that colonial power is unstable and riddled with contradictions. However, Said's work remains foundational for understanding how Western perceptions of the East reinforced prejudice and provided justification for colonial dominance. (47)

Said extends his critique of power into the domain of science and knowledge, observing a hidden "will to power" behind ostensibly neutral scientific inquiry: "In short, such a scientist does not recognize in his science the egoistic will to power that feeds his endeavors and corrupts his ambitions" (Said, *Orientalism*, p. 116). He notes the alliance between Orientalist ideas and grand philosophical theories of civilization and human history:

Yet, Orientalist ideas could ally with general philosophical theories (such as those about the history of humanity and civilization) and diffuse world-hypotheses, as philosophers sometimes call them. In many ways, the professional contributors to Oriental knowledge were anxious to couch their formulations, ideas, scholarly work, and contemporary observations in language and terminology whose cultural validity derived from other sciences and systems of thought. (205–6)

Said points to the paradox of a discourse that invokes humanism and liberalism while justifying violence. Commenting on Kipling, he remarks: "Behind the White Man's mask of amiable leadership, there is always the express willingness to use force, to kill and be killed" (226). Humanism, Darwinism, and liberalism become vehicles for imposing a European model of civilization, cloaked in claims of scientific and moral superiority. Orientalism shifts from a scholarly field to a tool of imperial governance (246), a code for interpreting and managing both Europe's Others and, at times, itself (253–4).

Orientalist discourse attributes specific traits of particular figures or contexts to the entire East: Oriental information "is related to classification and racism," and such ideas "get repeated and

re-repeated. They represent a decision about the Orient, not by any means a fact of nature" (277). Orientalists write "with the authority of a nation" and "the unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force" (307). However, Said also insists that the universal authority of Orientalism can be challenged: "The worldwide hegemony of Orientalism and all it stands for can now be challenged if we can benefit properly from the general twentieth-century rise to political and historical awareness of so many of the earth's peoples" (328). He warns that intellectual systems and ideological superstitions are easily created and sustained by power (328). In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said extends his critique of Orientalism as a cultural phenomenon and calls for a critical consciousness that questions rather than reproduces hegemonic narratives (341–42). Patricia Almarcegui argues that: "The Arab uprisings have changed the imaginative geography of the East. In their beginnings, they managed to sweep away negative images, prejudices, and stereotypes nurtured over the centuries. For the first time, they discredited the Orientalist clichés about the inability of Arabs and Muslims to sustain democratic systems" (141).

ANALYSIS

The analysis of *The Parisian* is anchored in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, with particular emphasis on cultural power, representation, and the binary of superior versus inferior identities. While Said's framework provides a foundational lens, the current research also considers how the novel's specific narrative strategies expand or challenge these concepts, ensuring an intricate application of postcolonial theory. Hammad's novel enacts Said's thesis that the West's capacity to define the East is grounded in structural power imbalances that shape cultural identity, as illustrated in the protagonist's experience, where the interplay between imagination and reality, representation and lived existence becomes a site of persistent struggle. Western scholarship and pseudo-scientific inquiry are shown to be central in manufacturing and perpetuating stereotypes, and the novel appears both as a critique of and, at points, a participant in this discursive tradition.

The critique of the Arab intellectual crisis and the call for more deliberate engagement with Western thought serve as an important interpretive lens for reading *The Parisian*. The study stresses the importance of critical reception and the interrogation of inherited ideas, urging a move beyond unreflective reproduction of Orientalist frameworks, particularly in the portrayal of how Midhat and those around him negotiate the dual imperative of drawing on Western advances while striving to sustain Eastern spiritual and cultural values. The novel mirrors a broader Arab intellectual predicament, in which identity is fractured by attraction to Western achievements and by a lingering sense of marginalization and exclusion. The analysis underscores the need for more balanced interaction that resists simple binaries of domination and weakness and instead fosters critical self-awareness and more nuanced engagement with the West.

Spatial Identity and Cultural Difference

This paper examines Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019), which vividly portrays the life of her grandfather, Midhat Kamal, a Palestinian who travels to France in the early 20th century to study medicine and finds himself in a perpetual struggle to reconcile his fragmented identity. Hammad is a postcolonial author re-writing colonial history from a Palestinian perspective. Through an analysis grounded in Edward Said's critical frameworks, particularly Orientalism and representations of otherness, the paper examines how the novel stages themes of identity, cultural difference, acculturation, assimilation, stereotypes, and colonization. It traces the protagonist's struggle to negotiate his divided self, illustrating how Western hegemony and misconceptions

about Arab identity operate at both the personal and social levels, thereby enriching the narrative's understanding of postcolonial dynamics.

The novel follows Midhat Kamal's interactions with Europeans and their culture and then his return to Nablus, where, after living according to French culture and lifestyle, he struggles to adapt to the local people and customs. It dramatizes an identity torn between two worlds and registers the disorientation of moving between them. Hammad addresses social, political, historical, and cultural issues to highlight the ongoing importance of Palestinian identity during the upheavals of World War I and the Great Arab Revolt. The novel foregrounds alienation, cultural identity, otherness, Occident–Orient relationships, racial superiority, and class conflict. This paper, therefore, analyzes cultural differences between these two worlds, the forms of cultural assimilation embodied by the protagonist, and representations of Arabs in the narrative and characters, guided by Edward Said's concepts.

The novel creates a detailed atmosphere that draws readers into the protagonist's lived experience as he navigates shifting configurations of culture, belonging, and selfhood. Midhat's growing self-awareness is intimately connected to bodily experience and the search for a place to belong; his alienation is environmental as much as psychological. His identity is continually constructed and tested through memory, displacement, betrayal, and the desire to belong, and the narrative links interior feeling to external conditions. The author maps how personal feelings intersect with historical events and geographical displacement. *The Parisian* stages identity as a layered, spatially contingent process in which the protagonist's body functions as both archive and instrument of historical forces. Midhat's growing awareness of his singular body parallels his movement through shifting geopolitical terrains. In 'As Much as I belong: Space, Affect, and Identity in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*,' Éva Pataki writes:

The Parisian instantly draws readers into its unique atmosphere and the protagonist's inner world, taking them on an emotional journey alongside Midhat, who experiences a wide array of sensations, feelings, and emotions while navigating life and conflict-ridden France and Palestine in the 1910s–1930s. ... through the process of becoming aware of his own body and its peculiarity, he realizes that no one else should be Midhat, or that Midhat should be no one else. (pp. 40–41)

Hammad illustrates the close interrelation between the politics of place and power. Nabulsi society appears superficially homogeneous yet is profoundly diverse once examined from within. Place acquires a double nature: the 'subjective' resides in memories, nostalgia, trauma, and desires—how personal stories and emotions are entangled with landscape and daily life; the 'objective' lies in structures of power, tradition, and colonial legacy—how place is organized and experienced through laws, customs, hierarchies, and ideological narratives. Place, therefore, embodies and perpetuates relations of dominance and resistance, exclusion and belonging, and reveals the community as a dynamic field of ongoing negotiation and contestation. In 'Mapping Spaces, Identities, and Ideologies in *The Parisian*,' Fadwa Kamal Abdel Rahman observes: 'By depicting those parallel worlds, the text dissects the Nabulsi society and reveals the heterogeneity that underlies its superficial homogeneity. ... [The novel] underscores both the subjective experiential sense of place and the objective analytical and ideological sense of how place materializes the fabric of immanent relations of power' (104). Space represents the passive inscription of power, underplaying the small but persistent practices of negotiation and subversion. Colonial law, religious institutions, and economic arrangements are literally built into streets, houses, and public buildings in the novel. The novel spatializes power, while

qualifying it with attention to how characters re-signify those same spaces through use, memory, and resistance.

Identity Struggle, Cultural Difference, and Dynamics of Acculturation and Assimilation:

Identity struggle is one of the novel's central issues. It is evident in the protagonist's detachment at multiple levels, both within and beyond the character of Midhat Kamal, as he struggles to reconnect with his environment, his country, and its people after living in Paris. His view of belonging appears in the statement: "I became myself here, in this country, and for that reason I cannot represent anything. I belong here as much as I belong in Palestine" (Hammad 175). In "A Novel Whose Hero is a Man Divided", Benfey argues that "Like Palestine itself, Midhat remains divided". As Palestine is fractured by colonial rule, competing national projects, and internal political divisions, Midhat's personal identity crisis is an allegory of a colonized land torn between powers and visions of its destiny. Midhat's divided identity is associated with the division of Palestine as a whole, and France becomes his second home. Midhat's inability to reconcile his multiple selves is not just an individual weakness but a symptom of living in a colonized, politically fragmented space. By contrast, the French priest who lives in Nablus experiences the inverse movement; he identifies more strongly with being Palestinian than French: "Antoine had a sensation of returning. Jerusalem was strange, France even stranger; Nablus was his home" (445).

The protagonist's detachment is further clarified when "He had tried what they wanted. He did not belong to Nablus. This life, this system, it was not for him" (240). The absence of belonging to his home country and culture reveals that Midhat cannot forget his life in France upon his return; "All he wanted was to disappear, to go back in time.

Midhat the Levantine ... now thoroughly estranged: the figure of the Parisian Oriental as he appeared on certain cigarette packets in corner stores ... He had fallen so easily into the compromise available in Paris, this type, by an embrace of otherness that at first he had admired in Faruq but which now appeared in his mind a skewed, performed version of what it was really like to be in a place but not of it, not to know it truly. (187)

The present was a bare rock without shelter. In the past, all pain was finished, everything was known, nothing could hurt him any longer (358). This quotation stresses his obsession with the past, especially Paris, and emphasizes the powerful influence of European culture on Midhat, activated through memory. The frequent use of flashbacks, evident in the narrative's time jumps, becomes a literary device that dramatizes the protagonist's fragmented mind. His sense of inferiority and superiority also shapes his identity crisis: "The fact was, Laurent remained Midhat's superior in every way. Laurent, whom he had started to resent, and even—yes, even to hate... Perhaps it was only the idea of. The idea of a person who so exceeded him in virtue, as well as in intellect, and in manner and culture, and even in appearance" (119). This quotation reveals how Midhat elevates Laurent, regarding him as superior in almost every respect. In "Palestinian and Part of a New Pantheon", Khatib notes that "despite the tumult going on around him, Midhat is more preoccupied by his inner life than the surrounding political activity." This statement suggests that his attention is drawn inward rather than toward external events. Regarding the duality of his identity between East and West, Rhodes observes that "Hammad shows us how the same person can represent the Orient to the Occident, and the Occident to the Orient." This indicates that Midhat assumes multiple roles, embodying different perspectives on East–West interactions.

The novel vividly portrays diverse traditions, manners, and attitudes through both European and Palestinian settings. Acculturation in *The Parisian* appears as a process that affects individuals and groups, referring to reciprocal cultural influence without necessarily erasing originality, whereas assimilation entails full integration into a receiving culture. These dynamics are evident in Midhat's experience in France and in the ways Arab activists organize politically in Paris and in Palestine, advocating for independence and negotiating the pressures of colonial modernity. While Midhat feels estranged in Paris and Nablus, Antoine considers Nablus his home, illustrating the paradox of cultural attachment and contrasting identities that reinforce the novel's exploration of cultural difference. Within this field of unequal interaction, both figures claim to serve their respective countries. Midhat hopes to benefit his country by obtaining an education. Meanwhile, the French priest indirectly serves imperial interests by providing his citizens with information on local customs and developments in Nablus. This dynamic underscores the thin line between Orientalism and colonization, prompting the audience to critically consider how cultural exchanges can perpetuate power imbalances and control.

In the context of assimilation, Awajan states that "Hammad represents Midhat as an Arab who looks up to the West and Westerners, especially France and the French" (75). This view presents Midhat as an assimilated character who seeks to imitate French people and culture. She also adds that Hammad "presents Midhat as having characteristics that are common stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims. Hammad adopts the Western perception of Arabs" (76). Awajan thus suggests that Hammad's perspective is influenced by Western views, which shape the character's portrayal. Commenting on the protagonist's adopting of the culture of colonial power, Holly Williams notes: "The fact that he's adopted the ways of a country that is a colonial oppressor in their region becomes prickly, however". The colonized are often drawn to the ways of the colonizer, revealing how power relations influence other cultures and nations. The strength/weakness antithesis thus conditions the interaction between East and West. Said elaborates on this process of cultural transformation:

The problem is not that conversion takes place. It is perfectly natural for the human mind to resist the assault on it of untreated strangeness; therefore, cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformations on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be... This process of conversion is a disciplined one: it is taught, it has its own societies, periodicals, traditions, vocabulary, rhetoric, all in basic ways connected to and supplied by the prevailing cultural and political norms of the West. (67–68)

This quotation underscores the essential connection between Orientalist discourse and dominant Western standards and clarifies the need for critical cultural and intellectual engagement.

Symbols in the novel also illustrate the East–West conflict. Moore examines the passage in which Hammad writes that "Nabulsis spent their lives close to their graves, at nature's mercy, and sought antidotes to the world's pain in the vapours of ritual. Here in Europe, the trains always ran on time, the streets were paved perpendicularly, one did not feel the earth" (Hammad108). Moore comments: "Midhat, an 'awed' interloper, sees the library as telos of rationalism and progress, revealing the stagnancy of his provincial city in Palestine. Nablus, enmeshed in cyclical, supernatural, and mythical time, is a site suitable neither for Bildungsroman-like growth (hence his departure), nor for enlightenment" (17). Even though Moore refers to examples such as the Khalidiyya library opening "almost two decades before Midhat in *The Parisian* confronted 'La France intellectuelle'" (19–20), the portrayal of Nabulsis as ignorant aligns with Oriental

discourse, which characterizes Eastern peoples as uneducated and uncivilized.

Orientalism, Representation, and Stereotypes

Writers from formerly colonized societies use fiction, poetry, memoir, and other artistic forms of expression to challenge colonial stereotypes, deconstruct colonial myths, and offer alternative perspectives. This reclamation is also an act of resistance that can inspire a feeling of empowerment. By rejecting the 'silencing and misrepresentation,' postcolonial literature exposes the violence of historical erasure and offers new, more objective narratives for future generations. It becomes a tool for cultural and psychological decolonization, as well as for national and personal re-identification.

Postcolonial literature at large tries to re-read and re-write the history of colonialism and imperialism through the perspective of the colonized, who were almost entirely silenced in the Western version of history. Refusing the silencing and misrepresentation of the colonized peoples by the colonizers in accordance with their interests, postcolonial literature enables the colonized to speak and to construct an authentic and dignified self. (Çulhaoglu 151)

The above quotation highlights the counter-hegemonic role of postcolonial literature and the power dynamics it reveals through the reclaiming of voice. One of the main themes *The Parisian* is cultural difference. Edward Said asserts that Orientalism ignores the consideration of difference of the Orient due to its weakness, connecting the role of power in articulating the interaction between East and West: "Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine wielded over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness" (204). This view suggests a connection between the process of dealing with other cultures and the status of culture in terms of its power and weakness. It influences the Orient, such as Midhat Kamal, in desiring to imitate the stronger, the European, in this case. It also emphasizes the importance of balanced interaction grounded in the equality forces across different aspects of interaction, such as culture, politics, and economics. Illustrating the relationships among social, religious, and cultural differences, Jamashed argues that "religious differences began to act as a metaphor for... cultural differences and widened the existing social divide and cultural dichotomy" (1689).

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said attributes the "difference" in Orientalist discourse to the gap between Western imagination and Eastern reality. Western representations construct a romantic, textual Orient that clashes with the actual modern East, which fails to satisfy their expectations and desires. As Said notes, Europeans nostalgically prefer the imagined Orient, since "memory of the modern Orient disputes imagination" and reveals that the East is "not at all like the texts" (99–101). They also distinguish between a "bad Orient," associated with North Africa and Islamic Middle Eastern countries, and a "good Orient," linked to classical cultures like India (99), a division grounded in racial, religious, and cultural clichés that refuses to acknowledge the real Orient.

The Parisian addresses issues of East–West relations, emphasizing Orientalism and stereotypes through scenes with the French priest and Molineu, highlighting persistent characterizations, perspectives, and plot elements that reinforce these themes. Regarding Orientalism and cultural interaction, the novel underscores clear differences in travel purposes between Westerners and Easterners. Midhat travels to Paris to study medicine, whereas the French priest lives and works in Nablus as an Orientalist observer. Edward Said notes: 'the Eastern travelers in the West were there to learn from and to gape at an advanced culture; the purposes of the Western travelers in

the Orient were, as we have seen, of quite a different order' (204). This quote highlights contrasting intentions underlying East–West contact.

Orientalist attitudes toward the Other surface when one French speaker says, "I am thinking about this specifically with relation to the Muslims." "Islamic civilization." "The Muslim is a deviation from the onward progression. That's the sort of thing you might say." Frédéric released a clumsy gust of laughter" (83). This view casts Muslims and Islamic civilization as deviations from a supposed Western norm. Midhat is shocked to discover that his host has been studying him: 'He reversed his steps. Near the edge of the desk was an open notebook. The page was titled in large letters: 'Notes Préliminaires—Midhat Kamal' (129). He realizes that he has been treated as an object of study: 'He had thought his difference no difference' (131). These words can highlight the dehumanizing effects of such attitudes. Edward Said argues that when Western scholars did notice living Eastern peoples and ideas, they did not treat them as independent thinkers. Instead, they treated them either as mute figures to be given meaning by the Western expert or as raw cultural material to be used in the scholar's own, supposedly superior, interpretations. Eastern people "were perceived either as silent shadows to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him, or as a cultural and intellectual valuable proletariat for the Orientalist's grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as superior judge, learned man, powerful cultural will" (208). In *The Parisian*, "Midhat accidentally discovers, to his horror, that Molineu has a scholarly interest in him, has in fact taken him into his house as a sort of human guinea pig, to see how a young Muslim might assimilate to European civilization" (Benfey). Such procedures function as experiments in acculturation and control.

Additionally, Moore connects the work of the priest Antoine and Dr. Molineu, noting "Père Antoine, a Catholic priest and Professor of Oriental Studies, who – echoing Dr Molineu's endeavour – is compiling an ethnography of Nablus" (18). This quotation suggests a traditional Orientalist approach in which colonized populations are analyzed to govern them more effectively. Said describes how such knowledge circulates: "Knowledge no longer requires application in reality; knowledge is what gets passed on silently, without comment, from one text to another. Ideas are propagated and disseminated anonymously; they are repeated without attribution; they have literally become *idees reçues*. What matters is that they are there, to be repeated, echoed, and re-echoed uncritically." (116)

When Midhat asks Molineu, "Do you think I am not, you think I am uncivilized?" (134), he associates this study with attempts to civilize supposedly primitive peoples. Said observes that "behind each statement there resonated the tradition of experience, learning, and education that kept the Oriental-colored to his position of object studied by the Occidental-white, instead of vice versa" (228). The Palestinian women's description of the priest reinforces this dynamic: "'He wears a long gown and asks questions,' one woman remarks. 'Yes, he asks questions,' Madame confirms. 'They all ask questions. They all want to know how we live'" (276). Such inquiry becomes an Orientalist tool for colonial purposes. When the priest meets an English officer, the officer remarks, "I have brought my report" (442), signaling collaboration between Orientalist knowledge and colonial administration.

Hammad emphasizes that the priest's tools resemble weapons of war: "His secret weapons were, of course, the hospital and his priesthood. Christian or not, everyone in this place trusted a holy man" (444). Knowledge and care thus facilitate influence and exploitation. Nevertheless, Antoine also acknowledges the gap between theory and reality: "the Palestine Oriental Society has been rather foolish. I have often heard them claim the Arabs have no public opinion. They picture them as a crowd of morons ruled by their elites" (447). This view of Antoine aligns with Edward

Said's remarks on the disparity between texts and reality: "None of the innumerable Orientalist texts on Islam, including their summa, *The Cambridge History of Islam*, can prepare their reader for what has taken place since 1948 in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, or the Yemen" (109).

Hammad introduces Jamil as an embodiment of resistance: "Jamil was debating in the nationalist clubs, making speeches, writing petitions, amassing allegiance, employing connections across the Jordan River to collect arms from the Bedouin" (399). His actions counter Orientalist clichés that portray Arabs as passive or ignorant. Jamil is a model of cultural and political resistance, parallel to the protagonist's alienation, and showcases the plurality of Palestinian responses to colonialism. Potgieter argues that "Antoine's ill-informed research, as well as Frédéric Molineu's desire to analyze Midhat, an exotic Oriental to his eyes, could be viewed as astute commentary on the West's tendency to produce knowledge about other cultures based on misguided, often racist assumptions" (3). False assumptions permeate Western discourse, which, shaped by an Orientalist perspective, distorts reality and misguides intercultural relations, especially when the Orient itself later reproduces such knowledge.

In portraying Midhat's relationships with French women, the narrative shows a character who is often more concerned with pleasure than with research. Awajan notes that "Midhat himself is presented as an Arab who only thinks of women and feels inferior to the French and other Europeans around him" (76), reinforcing stereotypes that depict Arabs as preoccupied with women and money. Eleni Zaras similarly describes how he "plays up his foreignness for its charming effect on the Parisian women" (63). Unfolding the contradicted aspects of the protagonist's fragmented identity Hammad writes: "At one moment he was the student of history, meeting acquaintances after class in barrooms and cafés; at another he was the companion of women, with a gentle manner and easy laugh; then he was the mysterious lover; then the debater; and then he was the Arab" (166) These cultural and epistemological dimensions frame Midhat's relations with French women and underscores how Orientalist clichés about Arab men are reproduced from both sides. Midhat is a powerful illustration of what Edward Said calls "the modern Orient", who "participates in its own Orientalizing" (325), emphasizing that Orientalist images and stereotypes are often internalized in the Eastern world under Western cultural hegemony.

Colonization: The Postcolonial "Other" and Hybridity

Midhat's status as the Other is a central theme of the novel, marking him as outside the dominant culture, never fully accepted nor assimilated. In colonial and postcolonial contexts, racial, cultural, and linguistic barriers intensify this exclusion and feed his sense of displacement. His diasporic identity is neither wholly Palestinian nor authentically French, but forged in the negotiation and collision of both. Midhat suffers physical and emotional exile; his longing for 'the sound of the sea, the smell of the olive trees' underscores his dislocation and the consequences of occupation. Colonization is closely related to Orientalism; together they ally Palestine, cooperating for their own interests while disregarding those of the local people:

Midhat struggles with the questions of identity and belonging. Through his experiences and relationships in France, he understands the complexities of the world around him. Overall, Midhat Kamal is a complex character who struggles with the challenges of living in an unfamiliar culture. ... he deals with the diasporic experience in France and how he is treated as the 'Other.' (Al Zou'bi 31)

One explicit example of colonization appears in the judicial system, where the British prevented Palestinians from using their own courts: "In any case, there was nothing to be done: the British were preventing Islamic courts from dealing with land disputes, even though they had not yet set up their own judicial system" (Hammad 234). Hammad illustrates how colonizers impose their own legal frameworks and treat Jews and Palestinians differently, discriminating against the native population. Sahar, a Palestinian national activist, captures the dilemma of the objectification and marginalization of the Palestinian majority: "We might be the majority, but we are treated as a minority" (Hammad 382). Sahar's words underscore the paradox of living under occupation, where the demographic majority does not translate into political power.

Hani Murad, one of the most politically engaged figures in *The Parisian*, functioning as a foil to the more hesitant, romantic Midhat, comments on colonial discourse: 'how adept the British always were at naming: they bombed Jaffa, and named it urban renewal. They arrested a nationalist and named him a criminal, and naturally, Palestinians were all known as Muslims' (Hammad 516). Colonial power thus manipulates language and media against the natives in order to enforce stereotyping them. Hani embodies an outward-looking, historically engaged consciousness, against which Midhat's flâneur-like drift and aesthetic self-fashioning appear ambivalent and, at times, evasive.

In highlighting Jamil's dedication-'Jamil was unmarried, and had devoted the last fifteen years of his life to 'the Cause,' rallying support for a boycott of the Mandate and its institutions' (392), Hammad underscores the importance of active resistance and collective effort in confronting colonial power. Jamil functions as a representative of active cultural and political resistance. His response to colonialism is not characterized by withdrawal or elitist detachment; on the contrary, he is a committed nationalist who finds purpose and meaning in the struggle for independence. He moves beyond café talk and elite discussion, participating unswervingly in the revolt where 'fellahin appear as the true leaders of the fight,' and his death in the hills with peasant fighters marks him as part of a grassroots liberation movement rather than the hesitant notables' politics. Jamil's active engagement represents collective resistance.

Whereas Jamil represents sacrifice and collective struggle, Midhat is unable to transform his hybrid experience into political practice. The two characters demonstrate divergent responses to British rule and Zionist colonization: Jamil's immersion in the national cause, on the one hand, and Midhat's melancholic, semi-colonial mimicry, on the other. The novel juxtaposes peasants' and lower-class Palestinians' active involvement in the revolt with elites who "only talk". Jamil and Sahar, who leads a women's march that crosses class and religious lines, complicate this binary by showing segments of the educated class willing to align themselves bodily with popular resistance. Jamil embodies a counter-model available to someone like Midhat: a form of masculinity and modernity grounded in solidarity with fellahin, street protest, and armed struggle—responses that directly challenge colonial authority while standing beside, rather than above, other responses such as diaspora debates in Parisian salons, elite hesitancy, or private adaptations to colonial rule, illustrating the multifaceted nature of Palestinian resistance.

Analyzing Antoine's behavior and colonial dynamics, Potgieter connects the character to European colonization: "His character trajectory reads like a distillation of the colonial conceit shown by the British and French, whose constant interference in the Middle East causes much of the conflict" (2). In this respect, Antoine's can be regarded as an illustration of how imperial projects and Orientalist ideology reinforce each other in the novel's depiction of Palestine. Orientalist discourses continue to shape how Palestinian voices are treated in Western and Israeli media and politics, often rationalizing repression and exclusion, especially during times of

conflict. They normalize a fundamental asymmetry, representing Palestinians as objects to be managed rather than political subjects with equal standing. The Israeli Arab education system has been critiqued for excluding Arab and Palestinian culture, failing to address their social or political needs, and imposing a curriculum that advances a "superior" Western (Jewish-Israeli) perspective while sidelining the "inferior" Other (Arabs). This reflects a broader orientation within state policy to treat Arab culture as secondary or threatening marginalizing Arab history and identity in education and legislation, portraying Palestinian resistance as irrational or "backward" instead of legitimate political opposition, and making security policies and peace negotiations contingent on Western perceptions of Arab behavior rather than on equal recognition of Palestinian agency and rights.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on Edward Said's conceptualization of Orientalism as a dominant discourse that transforms knowledge into a tool of oppression, this study examines Eastern-Western relationships, focusing on how these structures shape stereotypes, influence self-perception and perceptions of the "Other," and inform Arab intellectual consciousness in its interactions with the West. The analysis of *The Parisian* illustrates how Hammad illustrates these abstract dynamics through characters, settings, and everyday interactions. Midhat's divided identity, his fluctuation between identification with and resistance to French culture, and his disorientation are interpreted not merely as psychological crises but as tangible effects of a discourse that assigns him a predetermined, racialized position.

Additionally, Said's argument that representations are historically contextualized facilitates a close reading of European characters' "civilizing" gestures, exoticizing gazes, and casual racism, which serve as textual expressions of a broader colonial archive. Simultaneously, Palestinian voices and spaces emerge as counter-narratives that challenge Orientalism's claim to epistemic authority. By employing key Saidian concepts—knowledge/power, the cumulative archive of Western images of the East, and the structural imbalance between "us" and "them"—the study translates postcolonial theory into a detailed examination of how narrative voice, focalization, and spatial description articulate acculturation, cultural fragmentation, and resistance. This analysis reveals that Midhat's fractured identity is not only a personal struggle but also emblematic of the broader Arab intellectual crisis outlined by Said.

The study emphasizes the necessity for critical awareness to counter misunderstanding and misrepresentation, arguing that deep structural flaws characterize the process of acculturation between the East and the West. It explores the theoretical framework of Orientalism and the reception of Western culture among Arab intellectuals, as articulated by Said, using *The Parisian* to foreground issues of identity, cultural difference, assimilation, and acculturation. The paper highlights the harm caused by Western misrepresentation of the East and the troubling tendency of some Eastern individuals to internalize and perpetuate these distorted images within cultural hegemony, which arises from unequal power dynamics where the dominant culture imposes its categories on the less powerful. In this context, *The Parisian* serves as a poignant literary exploration of East-West interactions, emphasizing identity crises, cultural assimilation, and the far-reaching impacts of Orientalism and colonization on Arab consciousness. By analyzing Midhat Kamal's detachment, transformation, and return, the study calls for more nuanced discussions of the cultural interactions shaping Arab intellectual life and identity, advocating for a more self-aware engagement with the West in line with Said's critical discourse.

A postcolonial reading of *The Parisian* reveals how its thematic concerns intersect with broader postcolonial debates, underscoring the novel's significance for understanding contemporary postcolonial struggles. The text engages with key issues—identity crisis, cultural difference, acculturation, assimilation, Orientalism, and colonization—that are central to cultural and postcolonial studies. As a postcolonial subject, Midhat navigates an identity fragmented between East and West, with the narrative tracing his alienation, detachment, and hybridity. After a period of assimilation into French culture, his return to Nablus leaves him suspended between conflicting cultural worlds, unable to achieve a coherent sense of belonging. Cultural differences are dramatized through travel and displacement: the Arab protagonist journeys to Europe in pursuit of education, while the European presence in the East is linked to colonial and political projects. To bridge theory with cultural implications, the study demonstrates how these contexts shape the novel's portrayal of postcolonial identity and Orientalism, emphasizing power relations and political upheaval in Palestine and critiquing the motivations behind such movements. It highlights the divergent aims—Easterners seeking knowledge and self-improvement, Westerners often seeking control and domination—and the social, intellectual, and political fault lines created by colonial occupation.

Acculturation and assimilation in *The Parisian* are depicted as sources of psychological and social strain. The analysis shows how the novel's treatment of these processes exposes complex postcolonial cultural dynamics: Midhat adopts elements of Western culture but never fully integrates them, resulting in an unresolved in-betweenness that marks his development with feelings of rootlessness and instability. The text also contrasts Midhat's estrangement with a French priest's identification with Palestine, reversing expected cultural allegiances and highlighting the paradoxes of belonging and loyalty in a colonial context. The novel offers a sustained critique of Orientalist discourse and its impacts on identity and representation.

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