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# The Controversial Receptions of Edward Said

## A Sociological Analysis of Scientific Citations

by Mohamed Amine Brahim *and* Clarisse Fordant

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### 1. Introduction

Far from having an idealistic vision of knowledge, contemporary sociology has shown the often complex issues that underpin the legitimization and consecration of theoretical references [Lamont 1987]. Our article proposes to introduce a framework to understand the theoretical and epistemological stakes that participate in the international circulation of ideas, in the specific form of the citation. In order to do this, we have chosen to concentrate on references to Edward Said (1935-2003).

Professor of comparative literature at Columbia University from 1963 to 2003, Said is one of the most well-known and talked about contemporary academics and intellectuals. His works, some of which have been translated into more than thirty-five languages, continue to spark debate even today. Said owes his renown in part to one of his first books, *Orientalism*, published in the United States in 1978 and quickly translated into French in 1980. Some see in this breakthrough book the inauguration of “Postcolonial Studies.” According to Maxime Rodinson, Said’s critique of western representations of Middle Eastern, Asian, and North African societies was “something similar to a shock” [Rodinson 1993a], notably within the European orientalist milieu. However, studies that examine the reception of Edward Said within the space of Francophone social and human sciences and that use a socio-historical approach are rare. Therefore, we have studied the citations of his work within texts

written by academics and researchers and published in French and Francophone journals between 1980 and 2014.

The process of Edward Said's induction into the intellectual canon goes hand in hand with the formation of a Francophone space in which his work is widely interpreted and critiqued. Guided by a willingness to understand the many uses of his intellectual and scholarly works, we have concentrated more on the academic portion of this space<sup>1</sup> and on the scholarly articles that cite him; the content of which constitutes a reliable indicator, which allows us to situate the degree to which Edward Said is recognized and the type of acknowledgements granted to him.

Since Edward Said published his most well-known book, *Orientalism*, at the end of the 1970s, and since he transcended national and disciplinary borders through his polymorphous work and commitments, what are the social properties of the academics in human and social sciences who draw upon his texts in the context of their own research and cite the work of the Palestinian-American intellectual and professor of literature in their articles published from the 1980s until today? In what disciplinary spaces did they deploy saidian theories and from what positions did they engage in these circulations? How had they assimilated and adapted or conversely, criticized and rejected arguments most often described as simultaneously erudite, pioneering, and subversive? And how did they stage this appropriation or rejection in the proof that they present in their articles?

Attentive to the relational and socially situated nature of references and citations drawn on in these scientific articles – these being considered here as socially significant acts [Heilbron 2002] –, firstly we are interested in the modes of circulation of Said's ideas and their stakes in order to understand the different ways in which his works found themselves appropriated and interpreted, or quite the opposite, criticized and placed at a distance in the construction of theoretical frameworks and research programs.<sup>2</sup> We are especially looking to qualify and quantify the evolution of references to Said's works. This study aims to clarify the evolution of Said's reception as well as the scientific stakes that underlie the act of citing, and we will attempt to situate the theoretical and disciplinary communities within which these references circulate. We do this in order to understand the effects and sites of Said's consecration within the different fields that participate in his scientific reception on

<sup>1</sup> A much more extensive study of this space of reception, going beyond the academic world, could be imagined in future research.

<sup>2</sup> Our approach is inspired by a series of research works focusing especially on the reception of the SHS. See in particular Sapiro [2004]; Heilbron, Guilhot, and Jeanpierre [2009]; Sapiro and Bustamante [2009]; Heilbron [2010].

an international scale as well as the different oppositions in which these citations and their authors find themselves caught.

## 2. Citing Said in the Francophone Academic Space: A Significant Act?

Traditionally, the analysis of academic references hinges on the study of intellectual spaces and their stakeholders. This type of research bears the mark of theoretical research programs in the sociology of science. With this in mind, the conceptualizations associated with citations are commonly directly related to global approaches to the scientific field. The first attempt at interpretation of the scientific citation is attributable to Merton, a pioneer in the field of sociology of sciences. According to him, the citation can be understood as the expression of scientific gratitude; one cites texts that contributed to the progress of one's own research work [Merton 1973]. In other words, the citation contains symbolic value for the scientific community and is thus a part of a much larger system of recognition [Hagstrom 1965; Gilbert 1977; Moravcsik and Murugesan 1975; Zavisca and Sallaz 2008]. Bourdieu [1976] also detects a symbolic return in this type of exchange, the reflection of a relational model of acquisition of recognition and intellectual capital. The authority of the authors cited reinforces the article's value because it is initially a way of asserting the scientific relevance of a given researcher; often, well-known texts that already have an established, legitimate reputation are cited. In this context, the way a scholar cites reflects the specific *effects of presentation*<sup>3</sup> linked to theoretical considerations but also to intellectual positioning [Boltanski 1975]. Similarly, one can see a deep connection between the uses of references and the different cycles of academic careers. For example, it would be in the interest of an author who begins his career to cite references that allow him to be recognized by his peers [Wouters 1997].

Alongside this sociological research, we have seen a large number of bibliometric studies having to do with measuring citations [Zavisca and Sallaz 2008]. Bibliometric studies are used in two major ways, namely to evaluate individual and collective actors of the academic field (authors, scientific journals, institutions, etc.) and to map themes and networks of circulation built by scientific references, the aim being to accurately describe the networks that contribute to the structure and dynamics of research in terms of co-citations [Gingras 2010], exchange of knowledge [Chalaye and Largeron 2008] or content [Debailly 2013].

<sup>3</sup> "The effects of presentation" refer to a set of ways of introducing a given text that Luc Boltanski examines in the context/framework of prefaces to philosophy books. Citations are also a part of the device that involves introducing a book by cross-referencing it with other books.

These bibliometric analyses certainly contributed to shedding light on the motivations behind the act of citing. Indeed, this type of research understands the utility, influence and contribution of an article to the scientific community in close relationship with its number of citations. However, more than the simple quantification of scientific occurrences, we plan to analyze the reception of Said through a sociology of citations [Stinchcombe 1982]. This immediately raises a number of concerns. To what extent does the citation as a symbolic good have an influence on the academic field? What social value can we grant scientific publications? It is obvious that an article attracts media attention to research and makes it known among a community of peers. The importance of the “literary product” in scientific activity no longer needs to be proven. In fact, articles are involved in the symbolic universe of a given researcher: articles allow for the diffusion and approval of research results within the community of peers. However, the theoretical references that articles contain as well as the author’s disciplinary affiliation participate in the definition of an epistemic community within which research output and its producers fit. Therefore, articles reflect a two-fold social function: first, as an introduction, because they give a glimpse of the possibilities offered by the academic market, hence the necessity to consult them regularly; and also as a final product in order to maintain one’s position, one’s competitiveness in the same market [Law 1989].

Citations are therefore involved in the norms that structure the content of articles. Bibliographic sources are as much conditioned by the author’s work and social properties, as by the public it is addressed. The use of certain theoretical references often refers to implicit rules of production [Ben Romdhane and Lainé-Cruzel 1999]. This “standardization” can be compared to what Roger Chartier singularly calls “the order of books” [Chartier 1992]; and which would be a scientific sociability that emerges from this type of reading: readers and authors are equally conscious of the rules of production of scientific articles and thus of the references they contain [Barry 1993]. The citation, for the author who is citing, reflects his/her appropriation of the norms of the scientific community, which is founded on the idea of accumulating knowledge and of specific terms and conditions of validation, as for the author cited the citation is a form of recognition in the scientific field. Consequently, citations must be understood as sequential units in a researcher’s career. It becomes an important dimension of the socialization of authors in the sense that it constitutes the reflection of an epistemic community [Haas 1992] to which they want to, or can belong.

## 2.1. *A Historicized Approach to Citing Edward Said*

Concerning Edward Said's reception, our interest focused on the Francophone citational space that we wanted to give an account of. We have had the privilege of using the *Web of Science* database which includes almost 9,000 journals available online by subscription. The database offers, among other things, a large array of journals in their entirety, chosen according to explicitly defined criteria.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, we have supplemented the corpus with publications found in the Francophone databases *Cairn* and *Persée*, since the French language journals were underrepresented in *Web of Science*. The organization of this space relies on the inventory of articles mentioning Edward Said and published between 1980 and 2014 in the journals from these three portals. The qualitative analysis of the content of the 245 articles inventoried allowed us to identify the positive and negative judgements [MacRoberts and MacRoberts 1984] of Edward Said's works and identify his scholarly and intellectual works as they were cited in these articles.

The coding of the different types of citation (according to three modalities: positive, negative or neutral) relies on a subtle analysis of the content of inventoried articles. The positive modality distinguishes the articles containing a favorable or laudatory value judgement of Said's works. This positive modality lets us find the articles that draw on Said's texts in a theoretical framework proposed by the citing author about the specific object of his/her study and/or using a theory argued by Said. For example, the theories proposed in *Orientalism* can be considered as "sharp criticism" and thus reading the books is "indispensable" [Dupuis 2005, 102]. Elsewhere, the figure of Said can be presented as "tutelary" while his "unprecedented" texts opened up areas of inquiry for further research whose avenues should be explored [Murphy *et al.* 2012, 57-58.] The negative modality serves to identify articles containing a critical or disapproving value judgement of Said's theories.

These negative judgements can be quite isolated. Thus some authors say in a few words that they prefer the works of Anouar Abdel-Malek to Said's, whose work is nothing but a "simple denunciation of the West's misdeeds" [Wallerstein 1999, 173], or that it is necessary to "nuance the excessively homogeneous image of the West given by Edward Said" [García-Arenal 1999, 698]. The neutral modality identifies the articles that have no value judgement concerning Said but that cite one of his texts, generally within their bibliography or simply in a footnote [Guerlain 1996, 107; Nasr 1997, 67].

<sup>4</sup> "Established scholars select the journals to be covered in cooperation with users, publishers and members of editorial boards. Selection criteria include publication frequency, compliance with international presentation conventions and a peer review committee" [Archambault *et al.* 2006, 331].

This content analysis notably showed that the evaluation is positive in 46% of the population, indifferent for 35.7% and negative for 9.8% of the authors studied. In the 1980s the indifferent appreciation of Said's works is the least common judgement type. In the 1980s an indifferent reaction towards Said's work is the least commonly found opinion among his critics. Citations devoid of any value judgement seem less and less possible over the course of this period, a sign of the controversial nature of *Orientalism*, his most cited book throughout the period studied here until the 2010s. In comparison, quotes from his first, more theoretical books *Beginnings: Intention and Method* and *The World, the Text and the Critic* respectively published in 1975 and 1983 appear much smaller in number. Indeed, Edward Said's first opus, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, published in 1966 is only translated in French forty-two years after its original release, in 2008. Of all his books, this is the longest it took for any of them to be translated into French. At the beginning of the period studied here, in the 1980s, two other books in the trilogy that began with *Orientalism*, were published in English: *The Question of Palestine* [1980b] and *Covering Islam* [1981]. Both books, belatedly translated into French in 2010 and 2011, were cited more often in their original versions. *The Question of Palestine* was the least cited of the trilogy during the period studied here.

The second most cited of Said's books: *Culture and Imperialism* is published in its original version in 1993 and edited in French in 2000. This opus, most often cited in its original version, wins over even more support among the authors than *Orientalism* with 60% of citations having a positive connotation versus 53.42% for the latter. While Said published other texts in the 1990s such as *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* in 1994 (published in French in 1996) and later on his autobiography *Out of place. A Memoir* in 1999 (published in French in 2002), this period was characterized by a greater frequency of negative and indifferent citations and the general trend of positive citations decreased.

The 2000s are effected by Said's death in 2003 but also, in the space of citations, by the growth of positive citations and a much higher rate of indifferent citations. Finally, the analysis of articles published between 2010 and 2014 shows a substantial increase in positive citations but also negative ones, with a fall in indifferent citations. After many posthumous homages made to Said over the course of the 2000s, his work appears once again to polarize critics starting as soon as the early 2010s. However, depending on Said's academic and intellectual publications and their French translations, the number of articles citing two or more of Said's texts rises from the 1980s to the 2010s, proof of an increased critical acceptance of his work by the authors quoting him.

### 3. Graph Projections of the Citational Space of Edward Said

The main goal of this paper is to understand the social meaning and impact of these citations and to analyze them as a social process. This exercise forces us to compare references to Said to the social properties of the authors quoting him. The act of citing reflects authors' positions in their respective academic fields. Consequently, the citation reveals a trace of professional activity during which a certain amount of closeness to other actors is expressed on the basis of their social properties but also through their intellectual and professional trajectories. In fact, citations establish a link between the author being cited and the author citing, who takes a stance on the texts he/she quotes from.

Of course,

any position adopted towards the social world orders and organizes itself from a certain position in the world, that is to say from the viewpoint of the preservation and augmentation of the power associated with this position [Bourdieu 1988, 38].

However, the aim here is to identify a sub-space of scholarly producers and products mentioning Edward Said's work, that is both linguistically and geographically situated. Through statistics and geometry, Multiple Correspondance Analysis lets us map out social spaces and describe the relationships formed between individuals and groups of individuals, depending on their properties [Duval 2013]. MCA therefore lends itself to the description and interpretation of this original data about the scholarly citations of Edward Said's work.

The vast majority of authors only wrote one article in which Said's texts are cited. Only eleven authors published two articles or more. For the MCA presented here, only the most recently published article of authors publishing multiple article has been taken into account. Prosopographical data has been compiled about 235 authors from the articles collected, whose university career paths (the discipline of their PhD, the institution that awarded their PhD, the country where that institution is based), their professional situation at the time the article was published (discipline, institutional affiliation, country of residence), their current professional situation (status, discipline, institutional affiliation, country of residence), their country of origin and their gender are known. This MCA therefore focuses on 235 authors, 6 active variables<sup>5</sup> (gender, country of origin, country of residence at the time of the

<sup>5</sup> The variables kept as active are among the least redundant. The variables concerning the country of the current institution, the country and the discipline of the PhD were not taken into account since these results were so similar to the variable having to do with the country of the institution at the time of the article. Whereas the variable relating to the country of origin and the country of residence at



article, discipline at the time of the article, current job and the type of citation) and 23 active modalities.<sup>6</sup>

There are a total of 88 women and 147 men among the 235 authors, that is to say respectively 37.4% and 62.6% of this population. The historians, political scientists and sociologists form three homogenous groups: respectively 20.4%, 7.2%, and 6%. In order to reduce the number of modalities, we regrouped the disciplines into larger categories. Thus philologists as well as specialists in literature and languages were grouped together in the category “literature,” which makes up 36.6% of the population. The specialists of Cultural Studies, French Studies, English Studies, Theater Studies, Musicology, and Film were regrouped under the name “Cultural Studies,” which is to say 6.4%. Anthropologists and ethnologists were grouped together as “anthropology” and represent 5.5% of the population. The modality “others” regroups disciplines who had the lowest numbers (demography, law, psychology, economy, etc.) and counts for 11.9% of the population.

At the time of the publication of the article, 53.6% of authors were affiliated with an institution located in a Western European country (France, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, etc.), 32.8% worked for an institution based in a North American country (Canada and the United States), and 7.7% were employed at an institution outside of North American and Western Europe (Australia, Lebanon, South Africa, China, etc.). The authors’ countries of origin were also taken into account. 48.1% of authors come from Western Europe, 18.3% from North American countries (Canada, United States) and 25.1% from countries outside of these two regions (Algeria, Italy, India, Egypt, etc.). We did some research on the authors’ current job titles, whether these employments were precarious or stable, and whether they were in research, higher education or in another sector. Authors were therefore divided up among five categories depending on their status: stable position in higher education (68.1%), precarious position in higher education (6.8%), stable position in research (11.9%), precarious position in research (5.1%) and professional situation outside of higher education and research (4.3%).

The information about the aforementioned variables, used in a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), allowed us to better situate the citing authors in the space

the time of the article show similar results, it seemed interesting to activate the first in order to take into account the situations of displacement and migration.

<sup>6</sup> A variation of the ACM has been used, which allows us to exclude the modalities that do not interest us, the no replies concerning the discipline at the time of the article: 6%; the country of residence at the time of publication: 5%; the country origin: 8.5%; current job: 3.8%; judgement of Said’s work: 8.5%.

of Human and Social Sciences where they published their works. Our interpretation focuses first on a factorial analysis.

The value of axis 1 is 0.3382, which amounts to 11.71% of the total variance, while axis 2, with a value of 0.2440, contributes 8.45%. This equates to a cumulative contribution of 20.16% in the variance of the projected cloud. For the interpretation of the first factorial plan, we consider a total of 23 active categories, those that contribute around or over 4.35% (1/23) of the total variance.<sup>7</sup>

For axis 1, nine modalities are kept whose accumulated input/contribution to its variance amounts to 83.8%. The variables relating to the critique of Said's work and to the country of residence at the time of the publication of the article are those that contribute the most to axis 1. Axis 1 opposes authors from Canada and the United States, living in North America, specializing in literature at the time of publication and who use references to Said's books in a relatively positive way on the left, and authors from Western Europe living in Western Europe, specializing in history and political science at the time of publication and whose judgement of Said tends to be negative, on the right. Ten modalities were kept for axis 2, which contributes 90.9% to its variance.

The variables having to do with the authors' country of origin and their sexual identity contributed the most to axis 2. At the top are the authors from countries outside of North America and Western Europe and who live in these countries at the time of the publication of their articles; women; specialists in Cultural Studies; and authors with precarious jobs in higher education and research. Below are the authors whose activities are no longer related to teaching or research; specialists of other disciplines besides history, literature, political science, sociology and Cultural Studies; men; and scholars from North America.

<sup>7</sup> When their contributions are regrouped, the modalities are signaled by an asterisk in the tables.

TAB. 1. *Interpretation of Axis 1*

Variables	Relative contribution to the variable	Modalities	Relative contribution	
			To the left	To the right
Type of citation	12.8	Negative		9.9
Country of residence at time of article's publication	28.1	North American country	15.7	
		Western European country		12.0
Discipline at time of article's publication	15.2	History + Political science*		7.3
Current professional position	19.0	Literature	3.9	
		Stable position within research field		13.5
Country of origin	22.6	North American country	12.0	
		Western European country		9.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>97.8</b>		<b>83.8</b>	

1 Legenda: Contribution as a % of variables and modalities kept for interpretation of axis

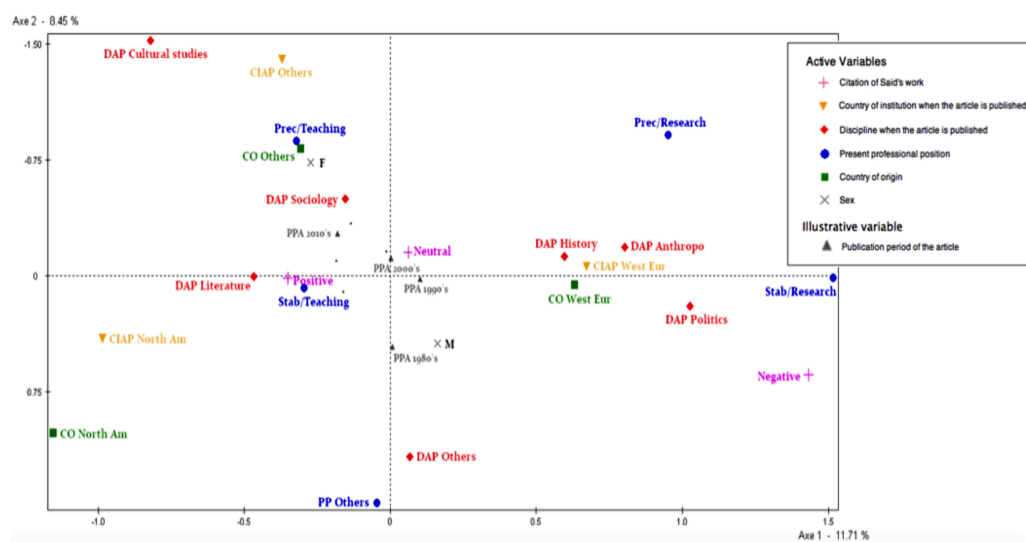
*Source:* Authors' Elaboration

TAB. 2. *Interpretation of Axis 2*

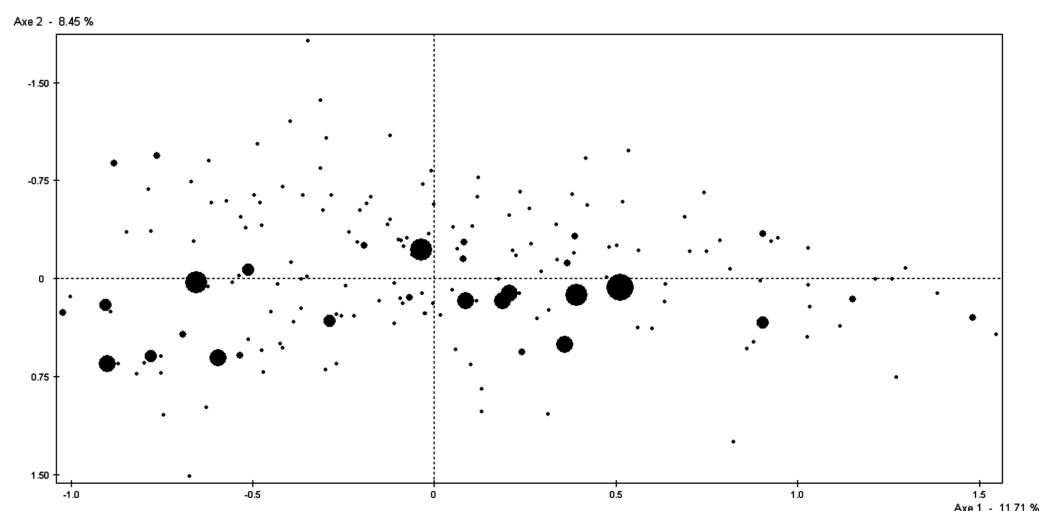
Variable	Relative contribution to the variable	Modalities	Relative contribution	
			To the left	To the right
Country of residence at time of article's publication	14.1	Countries outside North America and Western Europe	10.3	
Discipline at time of article's publication	22.8	Cultural Studies	10.1	
Current professional position	13.0	Other disciplines		11.1
		Precarious position within higher education + Precarious position within research field*	6.4	
		Activities outside higher education and research field		6.3
Country of origin	24.7	North American country		13.0
		Countries outside of North America and Western Europe	11.6	
Sex	22.0	Women	13.8	
		Men		8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>96.7</b>		<b>90.9</b>	

2      Legenda: Contribution as a % of variables and modalities kept for interpretation of axis

Source: Authors' Elaboration



GRAPH. 1. The Citational Space of Edward Said  
Cloud of 23 active modalities on a factorial map 1-2  
*Source:* Authors' Elaboration



GRAPH. 2. Authors  
Cloud of 235 individuals. Point size is proportional to the amount of superposition  
*Source:* Authors' Elaboration

In most cases, women are more likely to use positive or indifferent citations, while men have the tendency to have a negative opinion of Said's works. Authors from and living in North America at the time of publication of their articles most often cite Said positively, unlike authors from and living in Western Europe, who are more inclined to use negative or indifferent citations. Literary and Cultural Studies

specialists are more prone to express a value judgement (whether positive or negative, although it is most often positive) about Said's work. Conversely, political scientists and sociologists are the most disposed to use a negative or indifferent citation from one of Said's texts. However, whatever the exact nature of their job, the authors currently teaching at the university level were the most inclined to use a positive citation. In order to complete this overview it seemed relevant to analyze more closely four sub-spaces of Said citation based on oppositions exposed by the MCA which are summarized with the help of the following diagram.

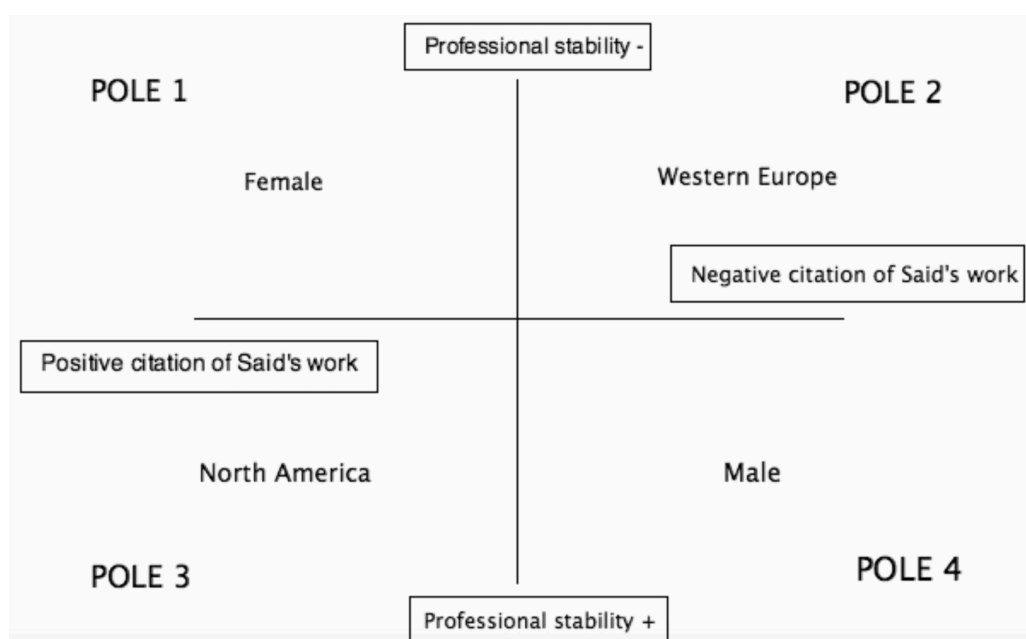


DIAGRAM 1. Four Sub-Spaces of Said Citation

Source: Authors' Elaboration

In addition to the oppositions produced by the different properties of this group of authors, it is important to mention that each pole corresponds to different periods of Said's reception. Pole 4 includes European authors who published between 1980 and 1990; in contrast with pole 2 whose citations come from texts published in the 2000s. Pole 3 is the reflection of the first reception of Said in North America, while pole 1, much more international, includes a large number of publications from 2010.

### 3.1. Pole 3: Literary Studies and the Positive Reception of Edward Said

□The actors in pole 3 are mostly North Americans; they are characterized by the positive opinion they have of Said's work. These authors who were living in North America at the time of publication of their article, are significantly more inclined to

positively cite Said's work than the authors living in Western Europe: 59.1% versus 42.61%. Most of them are academics specialized in literature and influenced by post-colonial theorists. One can observe that the most cited book in this pole is *Orientalism*, which is incorporated into an approach which aims to expand both geographically and thematically the field of literary field. The authors related to this axis often pay particular attention to the relationship between history and literature, rediscovering the close connections between the colonial civilizing mission and cultural production (Vumbi-Yoka Mudimbe).

In this pole, Said's promoters are at first mostly researchers eager to combat legitimism by transposing analytical methods from Literary Studies onto objects of study deemed unworthy such as popular fiction (Sherry Simon, Marie Vautier). This posture encourages them to prioritize interdisciplinarity by "borrowing" theories and using them outside of the arts and drawing on tools often from the social sciences. References to Said help with the analysis of the influence of politics in literary production (Édouard Morot-Sir). Most of them incorporate an analysis of Francophone literary works (Laura Klein) into their articles with the goal of distancing themselves from a Eurocentric approach to literature.

These academic dynamics refers to specific developments in Literary Studies in the United States. Starting in the 1980s comparatists figure among the first researchers to invest in the deconstruction of colonial discourse. Among them, we find those who work on Anglophone African literatures. In this context, the project of building national literatures up as the embodiment of independence soon fades; African writers make more and more claims about their rootedness both in their native cultures but also in a cosmopolitan modernity by reappropriating the English language [Chirambo et Makokha 2013]. The term "Postcolonial" is proposed at the end of the 1980s to describe this hybridity claimed by African writers, while avoiding the term "post-independences" which could suggest that these movements had failed [Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1998]. It is also a question of showing that similarities exist on the cultural map between societies that experienced colonial domination or who came into existence because of it. In this perspective, the saidian project is especially appealing. It offers a certain amount of balance between academic production and political commitment at a time when the expectations raised by the period of independence movements began to subside.

This introduction of Said into literature happens through a significant thematic, theoretical and methodological recentering. It implies the introduction of a new object of study into Literary Studies, personified by "colonial discourse." This goes hand in hand with a renewed analytical method, which aims to identify the enunciatory structures of this discourse. In order to do this, the study of texts and documents that

shape colonial domination is given priority. This critical scientific enterprise takes on a political meaning in the elaboration of a counter-discourse giving the excluded and marginalized a place in the colonial order (Maureen Murphy, George Steinmetz, Paul Anis, Emmanuelle Sibeud).<sup>8</sup>

The analysis of articles that fit in this pole attests to a certain amount of plurality in the cultural areas studied here and a theoretical borrowing similar to French theorists (Foucault, Derrida, etc.). The emergence of the study of postcoloniality as a sub-field of Literary Studies takes place at the same time as the construction of particular theoretical equipment. In this context Said is used both as a reference but also as a model; authors espouse the same approach as him. They try to dismiss/get rid of the idea of a literature freed of social determination (Paul Robberecht). This “textualism” that dominates American critics in the 1970s is the subject of much criticism by Said [Said 2004]. The quotes from *Orientalism* are also used to implement this paradigm by returning the text, as well as the representations that are ascribed to it, to their historical contexts (imperial and colonial history, and so on). It is this approach that prevails in pole 3 and that can explain a more positive reception than in other poles. Said becomes a valid institutional referent and a legitimate figure in Literary Studies.

The citations resulting from this American reception are fairly positive. They show that Said benefits from a steadier reception than other poles. His institutionalism in certain disciplines bestows upon him a certain amount of legitimacy. The professional stability of the majority of authors who cite him shows that this approach became institutionalized in the United States, unlike in France where it became only marginally visible.

### 3.2. Pole 4: The Controversial and Critical Reception of Edward Said

Unlike pole 3, a critical vision of Edward Said is prevalent in pole 4. The negative citation of Said's work is practiced by 69.57% of authors from Western Europe (essentially from France, Switzerland and Spain), versus 13.04% of authors from North America and 17.39% of authors from other countries. These citations participate in a controversial reception. The reference to Said becomes subject to criticism and debate more than a contribution to the research's thesis. Given that most of the authors are from Western Europe, we can suppose that this geographical distance marks a certain amount of detachment, as opposed to the context of the first reception of his work in an Anglophone space. The symbolic cost of criticism is reduced since the authors are at a distance from the most immediate stakes such as those

<sup>8</sup> See for example Sibeud [2004].



raised by saidian theory in the United States [McCarthy 2010, 124]. In this way, *Orientalism*, cult book abundantly mentioned in our corpus, must be understood, among other things, as a response to the rise in area studies in the American academic field since the 1970s [Brisson 2009].<sup>9</sup> Said sees in these new disciplinary fields a kind of continuity of colonial orientalism that remains much more historically rooted in the United States than in Europe.

The various arguments of Francophone critics addressed to Said most often condemn a subjective and sometimes essentialist, arbitrary vision of the West as well as orientalist knowledge and discourse produced there. They often criticize Said for depicting a dangerous relationship, because it is too static between the West and the East, between the dominated and the dominants or between civilization and colonization. This controversial reception happens for the most part in France. The polemical reception generally comes from men; it is worth noting that within this pole there is a strong ascendancy of political scientists, a discipline where there are twice as many men than women in the population studied here. This disciplinary anchorage is revealing because the majority of studies on the Arab world, beginning in the 1980s, are associated with this disciplinary field. Islamic and Arab Studies went through deep changes beginning in the 1950s. Since the Nineteenth century, traditional orientalism has made up most of the research on the Muslim world: recommending a philological methodology, it is replaced by approaches from the social sciences [Rodinson 1993b].

This deep transformation could suggest an explanation of this fairly critical reception of Said through two main factors.

First, as a discipline, orientalism was already called into question by a whole generation of researchers from the Arab world. This criticism goes hand in hand with a serious reorganization of the French academic field: the Faure reform, which reorganized the university after May 1968, marks the end of the monopoly by classic orientalism symbolized by the Sorbonne. Three departments of Arab Studies are created (University of Vincennes in Saint-Denis, The New Sorbonne University, and Paris-Sorbonne University), which allowed for a pluralization of approaches and of subjects studied [Brisson 2008]. In this context, the criticism of Said seems external to a debate that has been evolving for a number of years.

Secondly, far from being a homogenous “bloc” of scholars serving colonization, French orientalist are perceived as a fairly heterogeneous group [Sellam 2006]. Despite challenges to Arab and Islamic Studies, academia seems aware of the existence of Orientalists that are respectful of their subject matter and concerned about produ-

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that despite the fact that they also exist in France, area studies are much more autonomous and less anchored in the social sciences.

cing neutral scientific knowledge.<sup>10</sup> The fear of a simplistic interpretation of academic orientalism as the “intellectual arm” of colonial domination over Muslim populations is an important concern for these researchers [Pouillon and Vatin 2011].

Furthermore, with access to stable university jobs, most of the protagonists of pole 4 are less likely to go against the hierarchies of the academic field. Besides, their position encourages them to maintain a certain amount of respect for the predecessors who trained them. Saidian criticism becomes thus incompatible with the partisan operating logics that characterize Arab Studies in France.

The analysis of research themes that come from this pole makes apparent that several articles are meant to present an epistemological and methodological reflection on Arab Studies and Islamology (Arkoum). In order to do this, Said’s approach becomes a counter example: the necessity of criticism is not rejected but its discourse seems much too ideological to be valid in a scientific approach (Olivier Roy). For them, saidian theory is a simple pseudo-scientific reaction to the upheavals that the Muslim world endurs (Carré).

It should also be noted that there is a rather large number of articles that rekindle interest in the heritage of French orientalist. It is clear that these specific types of studies often question the heuristic value of Said’s theories (David Fajolles). It appears that this type of research takes place in a plurality of disciplines.

Pole 4, in opposition to pole 2, seems to represent a more legitimate faction of those citing Said in France. The authors that are grouped together around this niche of the citational space stake their claims in issues that are very similar to Said’s (Islam, the Arab world). Paradoxically, these authors seem to detect in his work a challenge to their approach to transforming classic orientalism. These political and theoretical biases seem to have a negative effect.

### 3.3. Pole 1: Academic Precarity and Thematics of Resistance

Pole 1 is characterized by the diversity of authors’ profiles. Indeed, a considerable number of authors had personal and professional trajectories outside of North America and Western Europe. This pole is structured around the social sciences, and more specifically around Sociology and Cultural Studies. One notices that half of the authors worked in this domain of Cultural Studies at the time of publication are from countries outside of North America and Western Europe (53.33 % versus 14.3 % and 33.33 %) and the percentage of women is three times greater than men: 12.5 % versus

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to notice that even Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* offers a rather positive take on several contemporary French Orientalists such as Jacques Berque and Maxime Rodinson.

3.55%. This mainly feminine group is characterized by relatively precarious employment in higher education. Within this heterogeneous group emerges a constant of the space studied here: the marginalized academic careers are associated with women. This trend seems to be the result of a gendered socialization that favors in particular men in academia [Passeron and De Singly 1984].

The geographic decentering of the large poles of saidian reception (France, United States) is reflected in the use of this reference. Citing happens in several different ways: unlike at other poles, it is difficult to notice a specific judgement of Said's work. The diversity of citing logics shows that a reception organized around weighty academic issues did not take place. It is however reasonable to suppose that the multiplicity of interpretations is due to the plurality of the authors' countries of residence. In this pole one can distinguish a sub-group of Australian researchers (Agnes Hafez-Ergaut, Anthony Reid, Bryan S. Turner, Kathryn Lay-Chenhab). The vast majority of these Australian researchers teach in French Studies and, for the most part, cites Said positively. Since the 1980s they have shown a certain amount of interest in questions of alterity in the imaginary of the West: in this context, the saidian analytical apparatus allows them to have a theoretical foundation that complements their analysis.

The institutional exteriority of the actors in pole 1 in relation to the large centers of saidian reception manifests itself through a greater amount of mobility of academic knowledge. A large number of these authors who come from the global South attended Western European or North American universities. As surprising as it may seem, Said's Francophone reception took place at first in the Global North. Defending the decolonization of knowledge, his texts are marginally cited by academics from the Arab world (Mohammed El Ayadi, Tahar Memmi) or from Africa (Sylvère Mbondobari). More generally, social determinants that favor the marginalization of authors working in non-western spaces, must be approached systematically. The distribution of scientific production at a global level is often associated with extremely unequal structural dynamics [Therborn 2006]. The geographic distribution of sites of scientific production is frequently concentrated in the Global North. This western tropism reflects academia's eurocentrism, which despite its tendency of embracing internationalization and globalization, continues to leave its mark on scientific activity [Heilbron, Guilhot, and Jeanpierre 2009].

Concerning Said's reception, this unequal distribution can initially be explained by the still deeply national patterns of circulation flows of scholarly ideas: Edward Said is a professor in the United States, it seems normal that his work first garners attention in this specific national space. Despite its emancipatory goals, saidian theory does not avoid scientific power relations: knowledge production in the South is often marginalized in sites of consecration in the North. The historical relationship between

the disciplinary centers and the peripheries that import these traditions also structures our object of study.

The pole 1 is thus composed of actors academically dominated on an international scale and this domination has an effect on the themes of the articles.

These authors seem in most cases aware of the power relations that are inherent in their respective positions. They call into question the hegemony of Western researchers and their *academic territories* (Pratima Prasad, Lucie Bernier). It appears that a link exists between the approaches used regarding research and the willingness to subvert the researcher's traditional authority. This is visible as much in the form as in the content of texts. The inclusion of autobiographical material shapes an inclusive approach that aims to share the analytical authority with the actors studied (Trudy Louise Agar). These questions become more and more obvious when research projects focusing on groups who have been socially undervalued (Ratiba Hadj-Moussa). This questioning also takes place through alternative interpretations of classics in theater, literature, painting, etc., established as part of the canon of legitimate culture (Mladen Kozul, Domenica Newell-Amato). With their multiple thematic projects, Said's books serve as an analytical tool. Nevertheless, despite this willingness to resist the centripetal force of Western Europe and of North America within this sub-space remains significant. This hegemony manifests itself through a predominance in the corpus we studied of a set of references taken from French American and Canadian journals, these three countries accounting for 86.6% of the journals in our corpus.

### 3.4. *Pole 2: Theoretical Renewal and the Neutral Use of Edward Said*

Pole 2 is characterized by greater normalization of references to Edward Said. The fact that the critique of his work is above all indifferent shows that authors no longer have to justify the use of Said's theories. Citing seems to be a sign of both ostentation and conformity given that the author is named regardless of the fact that his texts are not essential to the theoretical arguments or in the definition of a research topic. Paradoxically, the referent Edward Said seems to be the incarnation of an established norm: citing him proves to be indispensable when treating certain subjects (orientalism, colonialism, etc.). Mentioning Said without actually integrating or discussing him reflects the status of an established academic reference without necessarily being consecrated. Taking more of an interest in the attributes of those citing, the presence of two disciplinary groups: history and anthropology. Actors in this pole are most often employed in Western Europe. Currently half of the authors

hold a precarious position in research and at the time of publication of their articles these authors were specialists in history and anthropology and they lived in Western Europe (most often France and the UK).

Mainly located in France, they participate in a paradigmatic revival of colonial history. Beginning in the 1980s, witness the loss of momentum of systematic explanatory schemas for societies of the global South [Dulucq et Zytnicki 2005]. The historical and anthropological study of colonized spaces seems considerably strengthened [Liauzu 2004]. Marxist and/or third-worldist interpretative frameworks, which provided long lasting global interpretative schemas, gradually disappear from the academic field in France [Brauman 2015]. This decline takes place in conjunction with the beginning of a history written from the non-European poles of research. These new dynamics also occur during the reception of the works of intellectuals from the Global South, who are often employed by American universities. The American institutional logics which give priority to Cultural Studies [Mattelart and Neveu 2008] gave these researchers a niche, notably with the development of Colonial and Postcolonial Studies [Mahé 2004].

It is through the importing of new theoretical references that one sees the first mentions of Said in History and Anthropology in France. Created in another context and in response to other societal demands, the core questions of Postcolonial Studies infiltrate surreptitiously into French colonial historiography starting in the 1990s.

If one takes a closer look at different questions addressed by the authors of this pole, a decentering in relation to the questions of traditional historiography appears. This is the case, for example, in political history when academic takes an interest in diasporas, minorities, identity building, while studying marginalized figures (Nadia Baghdadi) or social and cultural history, when scholars attempt to expose social practices neglected by researchers until recently (Schéhérazade Qassim Hassan).

Adding to this thematic and theoretical shift, the renewal of generations in all likelihood participated in the introduction of Edward Said into the academic field. This is made visible notably by the presence of actors who have a precarious professional situation. Investing more in research than in teaching, they are often at the beginning of their careers. These new incomers/players in the French academic field orient their research through/by/while stimulating/enabling new leads and approaches. They address questions as varied as gender in a non-European context (Julie Boukobza), reflections on memory (Zahia Rahmani), or even the practices of ethnic minorities (Marie-Antoinette Hily). Often inspired by questions initially posed by Michel Foucault (marginality, confinement, deconstruction of knowledge, etc.) they find a logical continuity of foucauldian analysis in Said's work (Éric Fassin).

It can be reasonably hypothesized that their newly acquired position pushes them to take an interest in Said's work in order to distinguish themselves from their predecessors. This theoretical reorientation is also due to an undeniable gap at once presumed and resulting from their precarious professional status. Their positioning as importers of Postcolonial Studies helps them have a certain amount of legitimacy in several research domains (colonialism, gender studies, and so on). Nevertheless, Said does not play a central role in these dynamics. The use of his work remains sporadic and linked to other related references. The actors implicated in the creation of the label "postcolonial theories" in the Francophone sphere (particularly in France), cannot ignore such a symbolically powerful referent. The fact remains that Said's major work, *Orientalism*, often refers to concerns removed from those of these researchers. This could explain the fact that in this pole, only an indifferent use of Said exists.

#### **4. The Structure of a Citational Space of Edward Said: A Game of Oppositions**

The Francophone citational space of Edward Said is a research topic whose own area and temporality are both circumscribed by the academic fields of reception. These reappropriations show the importance of social and historical factors in scientific production. These different social and historical determinism of saidian theory makes it possible to explain the disciplinary polarizations that characterize each pole of the MCA. More than just a simple theoretical choice, the act of citing Said is implicitly structured by the social and institutional organization of national fields. This is transcribed in the correlation between the authors' properties and the way certain references are utilized. The strategies of citing that follow appear as the same amount of modalities whose implicit aim is to maximize one's recognition in academia. The MCA enables a visualization of the structural opposition [Lebaron 2013, 106], which results from the various theoretical uses of Said. It is by looking at these contradictions that one can understand the structural constraints that the authors we studied must face.

##### **4.1. Gender Opposition**

Our analysis has shown that gender has a structuring effect on the space of citations. This results from the subordinate position held by women in the scientific field. Women are mostly precariously employed. Quite the opposite, men are more present in the most stable professional pole. This difference between the genders can

be connected to the authors' judgements of Said. In this regard, women tend to use saidian theory more approvingly. Among the inventoried articles, there are a little more than fifteen articles dealing directly with sex, gender, women and feminism, all written by women who today hold stable jobs in Literature or in Cultural Studies in North American universities. These articles were generally published during the 2000s and include a citation of Said's work with either a positive connotation (52.9%) or a neutral one (47.1%). The vast majority of these articles (15 out of 17) examine questions about sex, gender and feminism in light of other issues such as the colonial and postcolonial question (for example, Sharoni & Passevant [1994]; Clerfeuille [2012]). The distribution channels for these articles are varied but one in particular worth mentioning is the French journal, *Nouvelles Questions féministe*, founded in 1981 by Simone de Beauvoir, Christine Delphy, Claude Hennequin, and Emmanuèle de Lesseps, which from 2004 to 2008 published articles from a dozen of authors citing Said, three of which appeared in a 2006 special issue "Sexism, Racism, and Postcolonialism."<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.2. *Disciplinary Opposition*

A potential opposition can be identified between the different disciplinary fields. While specialists in literature seem to react positively to Said, the most critical pole remains the one that includes the majority of political scientists. These trends show that the intellectual references fall within disciplinary boundaries. The existence of a sub-field in Francophone literature, in which the postcolonial question is essential, allows Said to have a much more positive reception than in disciplines where the methodology and theoretical corpus are already established as is the case with political science. The reception of a text is therefore subject to the creation of communities of researchers: these academics often share the same dispositions in terms of an intellectual good's symbolic value [Collins 2009, 20].

<sup>11</sup> See *Nouvelles Questions Féministes* 25(3), 2006. It is worth noting that the majority of female contributors to this special issue work in the United States, even Danielle Haase-Dubosc, who is French. The publication of this special issue and the selection of the articles are editorial symptoms of the recent (and controversial) importation of postcolonial and intersectional theories, developed in Anglo-Saxon countries in the 1980s, into the French academic space.

### 4.3. *Geographical Oppositions*

The last type of opposition concerns regional dynamics. There is a certain amount of polarization noticeable between Western Europe and North America. Said seems to be understood in a much more critical way in Western Europe than he is in North America. The geographical distance weighs on this analysis: the contextual issues that underlie the production of a book seem to be ignored. Indeed, the regional rootedness of the intellectual reception is “generates misunderstandings” [Bourdieu 2002]. We are thus in the presence of foreign readers in the American academic field with an unconventional understanding of Said. This distance can be interpreted in terms of the academic disciplines: the differentiated evolution of orientalism and of area studies in France and in the United States is an organizing element of this geographical opposition.

This structural opposition seems to reflect the contextual nature of the scientific citation. Said himself mentions the expression “Traveling theory” [Said 1983] when describing the movement with which ideas and theories travel between people, situations, and eras. It is this type of circulation that models our ways of understanding an author. Books often attach themselves to existing theoretical debates, which opens the way to multiple interpretations. Scientific publications do not avoid these logics of reception. They circulate in “normed” spaces within which forms of interest can be expressed, particularly in references that are cited there. Articles and the stances that are taken within them give authors the occasion to implicitly affirm their own positions in the academic field. They must be, consequently, understood as symbolic goods [Bourdieu 1977] whose contents galvanize or confirm established social relationships.

## 5. **For a Transnational Sociology of Scientific Citations**

Transnational and multidisciplinary, the Francophone space of citations of Said represents a concrete model of the plurality of receptions that an author can lay claim to. The establishment of such a space encourages us to use the appropriate tools which allow us to understand it [Passeron and Revel 2005, 42]. This unique case should constitute the corner stone of a global initiative having to do with reception studies and which remains to be elaborated.

Our heuristic approach emphasizes two important avenues to be explored theoretically and methodologically.

First and foremost, Said’s work allowed us to structure a sociological reflection on the act of citing. Indeed, scientific publications are themselves a mode of



observing different social dynamics as they are produced by the academic world. This practice mixes both statistical research that describes the global structures of the citational space, but also an archeology of articles; the aim being to accurately define the meaning of “*textual bricolage*” [Milard 2012] that underlies this scientific production. This double analysis allows for the reconstruction of Said’s disciples and, by the same token, his anchoring in different citational poles [White, Grossetti, and Godart 2011]. Each publication refers to/reflects the connection/relationship between the author and his potential audiences, mostly made up of his peers. In that respect, consequently, citations can be perceived as operators of academic sociability. In this context, each pole of reception marks a specific positioning with respect to a given theme. The reference analyzed depending on the researcher’s career sheds light on more general social issues. Purely bibliometric studies struggle to take into account this social dimension to the extent that often citations are used to substantiate an intellectual relationship. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore qualitative research that participates in a better understanding of the type of citation as well as its meaning in the field of reception; which therefore shows the benefits of undertaking a sociology of the citation.

Furthermore, the case of Said allows us to examine the different measures that guarantee the circulation of ideas whereby the spaces of reception are ranked and intellectual borders are built. The sociological gaze fixed on this citational space authorizes us to see to what extent the American and French centers of reception have an organizing effect on the rest of the national fields. For peripheral actors, their integration in these dominant academic networks most often remains dependent on their adoption of imposed themes. The effects of a power struggle cannot neither be described as exchanges nor merely as influence [Sapiro 2009]. Not only do they effect the modes of circulation of ideas as symbolic goods, but they leave a mark on the content of scientific results. This pushes us to adopt a more reflective posture concerning the social mechanisms of scientific production on an international scale. It is within this context that our prosopographical and bibliometric analysis of the space of citations of Edward Said presents a concrete and representative study of scientific production, producers and products depending on the constraints weighing on their interdisciplinary and transnational circulation.

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## The Controversial Receptions of Edward Said

### A Sociological Analysis of Scientific Citations

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**Abstract:** Professor of comparative literature at Columbia University from 1963 to 2003, Said is one of the most well-known and talked about contemporary academics and intellectuals. His works, some of which have been translated into more than thirty-five languages, continue to spark debate even today. Said owes his renown in part to one of his first books, *Orientalism*, published in the United States in 1978 and quickly translated into French in 1980. Some see in this breakthrough book the inauguration of *Postcolonial Studies*. According to Maxime Rodinson, Said's critique of western representations of Middle Eastern, Asian, and North African societies was "something similar to a shock" [Rodinson 1993a], notably within the European orientalist milieu. However, studies that examine the reception of Edward Said within the space of Francophone social and human sciences and that use a socio-historical approach are rare. Therefore, we have studied the citations of his work within texts written by academics and researchers and published in French and Francophone journals between 1980 and 2014.

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**Keywords:** *Intellectual; Postcolonialism; Bibliometrics; Correspondence Analysis; Reception Studies.*

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