

## The Reverse Orientalism in Novel *Chicago* by Alaa Al Aswany

**Kamal Baghjeri**

Associate Professor, Arabic Language and Literature, Al-Farabi College,  
University of Tehran, Qom, Iran  
kbaghjeri@ut.ac.ir

### **Abstract**

Following the publication of the book *Orientalism* and the new and controversial definition presented by Edward Said for this term, a new field of study emerged under the title “Postcolonial Studies”. From the perspective of Said, Orientalism is a type of Western thinking regarding the cultural product to establish dominance and possess power and control over the East, by creating ontological binaries between East and West, with the aim of placing the West in the position of the “superior self” and the Eastern individual in the position of the “backward other,” thus providing the West with a justification for dominance over the non-Western world under the banner of “the necessity of delivering the message of civilization to the East.” In contrast, since the late twentieth century until now, a counter movement has emerged in Eastern countries, which the Syrian thinker “Sadiq Jalal al-Azm” referred to as “reverse Orientalism,” seeking to invert the foundations of Orientalism through an ontological separation, similar to Orientalism, to position the West as the subject and the other. Accordingly, this study aims to reveal the aspects of reverse Orientalism in the novel *Chicago* through an in-depth postcolonial reading of its narrative elements. One of the most important findings of this study is that novel “*Chicago*” practiced reverse Orientalism in its stark form by placing American society, as the subject, in the position of the uncivilized other; this was achieved through the mechanisms of “narrative elements” and “representing a distorted image of American characters.”

**Keywords:** Orientalism, Reverse Orientalism, Self and other, *Chicago* (Novel), Alaa Al Aswany.

(Received: 20 May. 2025; Accepted: 17 Jul. 2025)