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A Re-Orientalist Gaze: Stereotyping Cultural Identity in The Namesake and Exit West

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Abstract

This study investigates the stereotyping complexities of cultural identity conflicts within the chosen literary texts – *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri and *Exit West* by Moshin Hamid – which portrays the image of East in negative terms. Re-orientalism is explored through the lens of Lisa Lau and Ana Cristina Mendes. It focuses on Eastern cultures which challenges the stereotypical image of the Orient created by the West. It highlights the ongoing tension between identity and the East's own cultural reality. Re-orientalism posits that even diasporic Eastern authors might unintentionally implemented stereotypical views of the East as backward and contrast it with the rational and developed West. This study examines that Lahiri and Hamid's portrayal of the East rely on oversimplified cultural distinctions, exaggerate differences, and ultimately position the East as 'Other' to the West. It is antithesis of Said's 'Orientalist' perspective that West created a monolithic idea of the Orient and lumping with diverse cultures into a single entity in opposition to the West. These perspectives help to unearth the identity and cultural issues of the East. It unearths the re-orientalist perspective through the characters struggle – with their heritage and traverses migration – and disclosed the dynamics of representation and identity construction. This study concludes to a more comprehensive perception of contemporary Eastern literature and scrutinized the complexities of cultural and identity problems within a globalized world.

INTRODUCTION

This study explores Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) and Moshin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) through the perspective of re-orientalism which supports the literary works' themes of cultural identity. The characters in *The Namesake*, Ashima, Ashoke, and the protagonist Gogol in Lahiri's work, and Nadia and Saeed in Hamid's *Exit West* illustrate the diasporic Eastern cultural identity. The collection of masterpieces are examined through the Lisa Lau's critical perspective on re-orientalism. Lau describes this concept as the on-going distortion of exotic non-western cultures from the viewpoint of the Occident. It takes consideration of the ways in which the (West) Occidents¹ stereotypical ways to (mis)represent the cultural identity and ways of the life of (East) Orients. Lau captured vision from *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said. *Orientalism* (1978) draws an unfair distinction between the Occident and the Orient in order to investigate Western stereotypes about the Orient. In the regions of the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa, negative and derogatory portrayals of the East are used to support colonialism and imperialism. Yana Maliyana (2013) investigates Edward Said's Orientalism and the Representation of the East in *Gardens of Water* by Alan Drew which corresponds with Said's idea of Orientalism resulting in a binary struggle between an inferior East and a superior West. This study emphasizes that the concept of orientalism depicts the Occident as a superior and leading force, while at the same time demonstrates the Orient as being under progressed and subservient. This period demonstrates that one component is perceived as superior to the other and it's a fundamental aspect of thinking shape by Eastern influences. In *Beginning Postcolonialism*, John McLeod (2000) exposes that "Orientalism constructs binary divisions. The binary distinction Orientalism draws between the Orient (the East) and the Occident is fundamental to its worldview" (p. 51). It is evident that Orient and Occident are depicted as completely contradictory concepts. Orientalism creates an erroneous division between the East and the West. As per Said, Orientalism builds the East as the Occident's visualized change alter ego². The West defines by its twist reflections not by the East's own complex depth. Furthermore, McLeod (2000) examines

Orientalism was the stereotype of the Orient's peculiarity. The Orient is not just different; it is oddly different - unusual, fantastic, and bizarre. Westerners could meet all manner of spectacles there - wonders that would beggar belief and make them doubt their Western eyes (p. 55).

Academic experts from the East are crucial in upholding and preserving the balance of power among the Western and Eastern regions. Although they characterize Eastern communities as unchanging, illogical, enigmatic, and indolent, they viewed the Western world as a civilization-enriching and forward-moving society. There's a worrying imbalance of power between the Western and Eastern regions and the Western side often abuses the Eastern one too. The people and civilizations of the East are frequently marginalized and cast aside as Others. This marginalization results in many kinds of abuse and upsets the balance of power internationally. Said claims that "this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like" (p. 203). Western countries have

¹ Edward Said in his work of *Orientalism* (1978) fabricates a dichotomy between Orients (East) and Occidents (West) (p.9).

² John McLeod in his writing *Beginning Post-colonialism* (2000) Edward Said assembles the idea that Orientalism constructed the other self (p.52).

a long history of presenting Eastern peoples in a constrain and static manner. Instead of being true representation these depictions are the result of the authors' subjective observation and interpretations. This absence of objectivity implied Eastern societies are seen through a limited focal point neglecting to catch the rich variety and intricacy of their real factors. Re-orientalism focuses on the depiction of writers who have ties to the East and the manner in which they represent the East.

Lau (2009) makes the case in *The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals*: consider individuals from Asian cultural backgrounds might be a part of the propagation of these misconceptions. This demonstrates that the Eastern ideas are not only generate by the West but can also be enhance by it. Nonetheless, the emphasis of re-orientalism is precisely on the peculiarity of deception starting from within or overlapping with people from the Orient. Lau explores the idea of re-orientalism in relation to South Asian literature that has been dispersed across different regions. This trend questions the usual power structures of orientalism which depict the East as the West's representation. In her analysis, she suggests that South Asian authors involve in diasporic writing contribute to the formation of Orient (South Asia) concept as an Other even though they do so from a perspective that appears to be from within. The increase popularity of these writers in comparison to their nondiasporic peers in recent years lends credence to this claim. Lau goes on to point out three crucial strategies used by certain writers from the diaspora that add to the potentially harmful consequences of re-orientalism. One such strategy involves the reliance on familiar themes or cultural cliches that are often found in South Asian literary works. Secondly, they could employ a tactic called tantalization which grabs the reader's attention with its exotic or exaggerate depictions possibly reinforcing cliched views of South Asia. Lastly, Lau examines the negative aspects of their narratives showing how authors often depict stereotypical South Asian themes and rely on exoticism presenting a narrow and frequently negative perspective on South Asian life ignoring the region's intricate complexity. Re-orientalism is also important for today's analysis of postcolonial cultural production according to Lau and Mendes (2011). It provides a rich foundation for exploring the limitations of cultural self-formation and opposition in a South Asian context as well as the challenges and conflicts inherent in postcolonial cultural output. Re-orientalism proposes a deeper understanding of the intricate relationships between power structures and the creation of cultural identities after colonialism. This study examines the selected works from an orientalist perspective through power dynamics and cultural development. In the opinion of Lau and Mendes "Re-orientalism provides a fertile conceptual territory for exploring the pressures and contradictions of postcolonial cultural production, and exploring the limits of cultural subversion in a South Asian context" (p. 3). This study scrutinizes into the notion that nations in the East continue to view the West as more advanced. The concept of re-orientalism emphasizes the persistent impacts of Western supremacy. Therefore, in analyzing the chosen texts *The Namesake* and *Exit West* this investigation seeks to comprehend the methods of West (often inaccurately) portrays the Orient and interacts with re-orientalism to uncover the complex process of developing cultural identity.

British-Pakistani author Moshin Hamid (1971-) renowned for his perceptive and provocative writings. He starts his career with his first work *Moth Smoke* (2000) which tells the tale of Daru, a young banker who lost his job and is now trying to figure out where he fits in a society that is changing quickly in Pakistan. He is also entangled in a secret romance with his closest companion Ozi's spouse due to this he confronts the numerous troubles in his life. He also falls into the dark realm of substance abuse and alcoholism. In his second work *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) the narrative revolves around personal experiences amidst worldwide turmoil. Changez, a Pakistani prodigy in the financial sector shares his life story with an unnamed American. Beneath his facade of achievement Changez struggles with the

repercussions of 9/11 and the evolving perceptions of Muslims in America. He struggles to find a sense of belonging in a society that appears to be uncertain about his identity. His emphasis on the connectivity of the world is further cemented by his latest work *Exit West* (2017) addresses issues related to movement and the connection among cultures from the Orient and the Occident. Hamid explores issues of travel, cultural interchange, displacement, benefits and challenges of living in a universe with porous boundaries via his writing which is informed by his worldwide experiences. Nadia and Saeed two of Hamid's love interests escape a city destroyed by conflict by use of enigmatic portals that take them to different parts of globe. Nadia and Saeed undergo a rigorous move across countries. This reflects a deeper reality: we move through time constantly leaving behind people we once knew. "...for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind" (Hamid, 2017, p. 94). Both protagonists sever ties with their previous lives and culture roots. They've lost everything after relocating to the Western hemisphere. They experience a sense of being out of place and disconnect in London. "From Dark London, Saeed and Nadia wondered what life must be like in light London" (p. 84) Every day, their lives undergo transformations as they adapt to new cultures and surroundings. Hamid describes the feelings of change, loss, and displacement that Nadia and Saeed experience as well as *Exit West* portrays a universe where enigmatic portals enable immediate worldwide relocation. He suggests that Nadia and Saeed face a variety of cultures and struggle with the disappearance of known places and identities.

Conversely, Jhumpa Lahiri (1967) is an English American creator brought into the world in London however brought up in the United States by a Bengali foreigner; her work investigates the complexities of social and transient encounters. Her first book *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) is a compilation of short tales about Indian Americans caught between two cultures. Nine stories tell about emotional journeys of characters who struggle with issues of cultural identity, belonging, displacement, and communication gaps in America. The main narrative centers on Mr. Kapasi a tour guide with dreams of becoming a diplomat. He forms a connection with Mrs. Das an Indian-American woman dealing with issues in her marriage. Their short meeting highlights themes of loneliness, remorse, and the on-going cultural gaps that exist even among individuals with common ancestry. Lahiri skilfully portrays the life of an immigrant maintaining a balance between traditional values and contemporary influences while uncovering the silent battles that occur in the everyday lives of people. *The Namesake* (2003) centers around the Ganguli group of Bengali settlers who battle to offset their practices with the real factors of bringing up American conceive kids. Moreover, Gogol faces difficulties with his name in the United States. His father selects his name after the most renowned Russian writer Nikolai Gogol who is his number one essayist. After the train accident Ashoke survives thanks to this. Ganguli family migrants from India to the America look for better open doors yet face the complicate difficulties of offsetting their Bengali legacy with American assumptions. Lahiri explores themes of familial attachment as well as the difficulties of migration, solidification, and cultural identity via her heart-breaking story. In the *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) Ruma—a Bengali-American lady who relocates to Seattle with her spouse and son—is portrayed. This type of behaviour indicates a rift between her and her father and she is still grieving the death of her mother. It also highlights the difficulties she has in communicating at difficult times cultural divides among generations and the complexities of her family connections.

Translating Myself and Others (2022) is an anthology of Lahiri's expositions investigating interpretation and its effect on her career as a writer. She puts her English-to-Italian translation abilities to the test. Her book explores the ways in which language shapes identity and the difficulties that come with it providing a novel perspective on grief and transformation. Therefore, the studies conducted on the selected texts *The Namesake* and *Exit West* yield valuable insights for examining the idea of re-orientalism as proposed by Lisa Lau. These texts

uncover the intricate nature of the immigrant experience, cultural environments, the exploration of displacement, and the challenges faced in maintaining cultural identity. In *The Namesake* the journey of the Ganguli family showcases the diverse cultural identities and experiences of immigrants. Ashima and Ashoke the characters maintain harmony between Indian and American cultures. However, his child Gogol dismisses their Bengali legacy. They face challenges adapting to a new way of life at the start when family of Ganguli move to America from India. “Ashima has been consuming this concoction throughout her pregnancy a humble approximation of the snack sold for pennies on Calcutta sidewalks and on railway platforms throughout India spilling from newspaper cones” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 7). Ashima yearns for a unique type of Indian street food a dish that is usually sold on the streets and train stations in Calcutta. She faces numerous challenges in the United States, struggling to maintain her previous way of life and feeling a deep sense of missing out. She longs for the bustling Calcutta’s street the noise of car horns and the aroma of spices that filled the thick air. Ashima’s desire for her native land disrupts the concept of a stable Orient. She feels out of place during her pregnancy recalling her past feelings of nostalgia. This brings to light her deep emotional ties to a specific place and culture. Additionally, she feels inadequate and as though she’s reverting back to her childhood state. Ashima’s restricted English abilities impede her self-reliance and underscore the challenges encountered by immigrants who grapple with language obstacles. Despite these challenges the Ganguli family also manages to create a new life for themselves. This deep desire represents her quest for solace and a bond with her native land while she navigates through the physical and cultural shifts she’s going through in the United States.

Their son Gogol Ganguli also feels disconnect from his heritage.. “He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure that it has nothing to do with who he is that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 67). He feels under pressure to adapt to American culture and rejects his Bengali name. He claims that his name Gogol is not even an American name and he dislikes the way it is spoken. “Pet names aren’t meant to be made public in this way” (Lahiri, 2003, p. 36). His internal difficulties over his cultural identity are shown in his feeling of embarrassment about his nickname and his sense of loss of identification with his Bengali name. In addition, to battling his name which is a continual cause of confusion and alienation in the American setting he deals with the challenges of having two distinct cultural identities in the country. Lahiri’s *The Namesake* uses a re-orientalism strategy to challenge the cliché of the immigrant success tale. She depicts the challenges of integration without hesitation. Gogol’s battle with his Bengali identity and Ashima’s seclusion highlight the challenges and aid in adaptation to a prevailing American society. It carries cultural crossings and symbolizes the experience of being torn between two different cultures which is a prevalent issue for people. Through Gogol’s excursion Lahiri investigates the traps of social personality for offspring of outsiders and spotlights on the difficulties of legacy. The novel undermines the fantasy of easy osmosis and satisfaction by depicting the profound strain and feeling of misfortune experienced by workers. Lahiri defines success as the process of achieving a balance between personal development and cultural continuity. Gogol embraces his Bengali heritage alongside his American identity just as the Ganguli family does.

Although, *Exit West* adopts a unique approach by bringing in Nadia and Saeed who reside in a city not named on the brink of turmoil.. The “cities teetering at the edge of the abyss young people still go to class in this case an evening class on corporate identity and product branding but that is the way of things with cities as with life for one moment” (Hamid, 2017, p. 7). The city is home to a diverse range of cultures serving as a small-scale representation of those who have been displaced and it shed light on the unusual blend of everyday life and impending danger. It portrays how in a city, young individuals continue with their everyday activities such as attending classes and running errands even when confront with possible catastrophes. This

regularity aids in preserving a feeling of normalcy and could be viewed as a method to cling to a sense of familiarity during chaotic times. Nadia and Saeed are placed in a city known for its overwhelming variety of traditions and languages. This metropolitan climate portrays the clamour of societies where people from dissimilar foundations have been uprooted from their dwellings. Both writers explore the complex relationships between cultural identity and being uprooted. Hamid reconsiders movement as an extraordinary encounter that “Geography is destiny, respond the historians” (Hamid, 2017, p. 12). They are forced to relocate to other nations when their comfortable place becomes risky. Finding a secure place to reside is important but Saeed and Nadia are unaware of the past of the locations they could reach through magical portals. They are transported to strange locations via the enigmatic magical doors where they are forced to adjust and blend in. “Whispering silently from its door frame that such dreams were the dreams of fools” (Hamid, 2017, p. 45). These enigmatic doors serve as portals throughout the novel are given life by the author. A mixture of anxious tension and exhilaration about the unknown tends to occur when someone thinks about utilizing the door. The entrances that light up the image of getting away appear to have their own purpose engaging in the individual’s emotions and blurring the line between optimism and dread. It demonstrates a deeper comprehension of cultural identity that is not limited to a specific place but rather shaped by the relationships and encounters we have throughout our lives.

Hamid explores the more general issues of relocation cultural interchange and the changing nature of identity in a world growing more interconnected through the use of this fantasy premise. According to the study’s findings identity fluidity is a key element that illustrates how migration changes who we are. *Exit West* presents migration as a journey that dissolves established cultural borders and cultivates the creation of new constantly changing identities through the characters Nadia and Saeed. In both works characters, Ashoke, Ashima, Gogol, Nadia and Saeed face different problems in their lives. In *Exit West*

Saeed and Nadia romanticize the East and perpetuate Orientalist stereotypes by emphasizing the exotic aspects of displacement. Their continuous passage through enchanted portals undermines the concept of a fixed and unaltered East. Hamid’s narrative goes beyond the basic subject of migration. As they acclimate to their new surroundings characters like Nadia and Saeed eagerly pursue hope and desire rising above victimhood. Individuals such as Nadia and Saeed transcend being victims actively seeking optimism and ambition as they adapt to their new surroundings.

In *The Namesake* Ashoke and Ashima start off with perfect views of their Bengali background which might suggest a belief in a re-orientalist viewpoint. However, their difficulties in adjusting to life in America and their changing sense of self question this idea. Gogol experiences the pressure to conform to American norms yet he faces difficulties in reconciling with his Bengali heritage. These characters illustrate more than just the basic East vs. West conflicts; they also highlight the challenges of cultural shifts and the mobility of identity. The characters of Ashoke, Ashima, and Gogol in *The Namesake* and Nadia and Saeed in *Exit West* each scuffle with issues of identity and cultural disparities while delving into the notion of re-orientalism.

Problem Statement

This research examines the stereotyping of cultural identity and the re-orientalist lens in the selected literary works of Mohsin Hamid’s *Exit West* and Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake*. Through a subtle reliance on well-known tropes and market-driven representations the study explores these narratives despite originating from South Asian authors may contribute to developing the Orient as the cultural “Other” using Lisa Lau’s theory of re-orientalism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section sets the background of this research. Lisa Lau introduces re-orientalism a concept focuses on the aspects of hybridity, power relations, and resistance. The concept of hybridity pertains to the fusion or integration of cultural identities, specifically when people or groups navigate their existence within multiple cultural domains. (Power imbalance) centers on the enduring and historical disparities in power between the West and the East. Re-orientalist literature frequently examines how conventional orientalist stories reinforce these power dynamics by depicting the East as mysterious or lesser. It is called subversion when someone challenges or undermines a set of accepted beliefs. This can be seen in literature when writers deliberately challenge Orientalism's stereotype representations. The characters and situations in subversive works challenge traditional expectations and provide diverse cultural experiences. Additionally, re-orientalism emerged in the late 20th century, building on Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism* (1978). In his writings he unveils the dominant framework of European conversation showing that Occident builds a singular Orient as naturally foreign, primitive, uncouth, and subordinate. "Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial style"(Said, 1978, p. 1). This biased story depicts the Asians view and represent themselves in the globalized world marginalizes Eastern viewpoints and creates a tight framework. This perspective in Said's work describes the construction of the West as an identity and its power that is different from the East and is often little revealed. Though Western views of the East have changed over time and are impacted by particular historical and cultural settings the concept of orientalism is not static. "Simply say that Orientalism is a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule is justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact" (Said, 1978, p. 39). European conceptions of the Asians are frequently inaccurate due to their reliance on antiquated preconceptions. As a result, it is more difficult to fully comprehend one another's cultures. These factors illustrate the dominance of the Western nations and highlight their superiority and strength. However, this dominance extends beyond surface level as Western countries have exerted significant economic and military influence. They could influence worldwide commerce and control it with their authority. Their cultural creations and concepts spread across the globe possibly eclipsing different perspectives. Even the creation of knowledge leans towards a Western perspective. Lau (2009) manifests that how stereotypes and frequently inaccurate depictions of South Asia by the West have long been an issue in Western colonial literature as well as certain modern works. She also highlights South Asian authors who have moved away from their homeland and now live elsewhere, which is not merely another perspective on Eastern culture. "..... It is predominantly the diasporic writers who are the creators and keepers of the global literary image of South Asian culture and this trend looks set to continue" (Lau, 2009, p. 572). Writing from a historical perspective is a distinctive perspective offered by the backgrounds of diasporic writers and the opportunities they've had to influence the portrayal of South Asia in literature. Literature gives them a significant influence in shaping the perception of South Asia. Lau argues that writers from Oriental or this face a serious situation where they have to navigate between being insiders and outsiders. They come from a cultural insider perspective yet their viewpoint could be influenced by unconscious European biases leading them to feel like outsiders who are also representing their own culture. According to re-Orientalism same power relations may still be found in South Asian literature today and Eastern cultures are frequently romanticize and characterize as strange, mystical, and too traditional. Thus, Lisa Lau and Ana Cristina Mendes re-orientalist Scholars examine: "how re-Orientalism is deployed, made to circulate and perceived by cultural producers and consumers within the specific context of South Asian identity politics" (p. 1). Lau and Mendes present a traditional and uncivilized image of Eastern civilizations, making them appear distinct from one another. Both scholars investigate

the potential involvement of writers from the Eastern diaspora in these dynamics. While some individuals may unknowingly reinforce Western expectations; others may undermine them through the use of satire re-orientalism basically challenges the idea that the East and the West are mutually exclusive. It promotes providing appropriate guidance to grasp cultural portrayal and recognizing the continuous intricacies of authority, self-identity, culture, and the historical impacts of colonialism. “Re-Orientalism throws light on the issues of taken-for-granted premises and perceptions and, as such, also deals with issues of misrepresentations, limited, partial and skewed representations, which may even amount to distortions, inauthenticities and Orientalisms in a variety of guises” (p 8). They explore the reality that individuals from the East may occasionally succumb to the lure of adopting Western perceptions of the East even when these perceptions diverge from reality. Furthermore, they argue that even in the post-colonial period Western literary works often continue to feel different because they reflect Eastern culture. This otherness can take many forms such as the maintenance of preconceptions the unfamiliarity with Eastern traditions and practices and the reduction of Asian societies to homogeneous groups.

Moreover, re-orientalism delves into the dynamics of power and examines the ongoing impact of colonial perspectives on South Asian literary stories. The research centers on the idea that Eastern societies are often depicted as passive recipients of Western impact, lacking the capacity to act or to voice their own perspectives. This imbalance of power is also reflected in ideas that Westerners act as interpreters of Eastern culture reinforcing a sense of superiority over the West. Further, the assertion voice itself is probably and subtly biased framing Asian studies via a Western lens. The influence of Western nations in shaping Eastern narratives has diminished the habit of creating exclusive and frequently misleading portrayals of the East. The researcher highlights that in re-orientalism the power that embodies a cultural narrative is not always a distinct separation between those within and outside and the defining features of Orientalism become less defined. Furthermore, this establishes a power structure in which insiders and outsiders alike can contribute to the creation and maintenance of particular narratives. Asian societies are often viewed as peculiar and static highlighting their divergences from Western norms. This study focuses on the portrayal of insider and outsider characters in the two elected literary texts of Lahiri and Hamid.

Davis (2012) explores the complexities of identity and shows resilient that how Eastern cultures are still marginalized and have their voices silence in Western societies. Nayar (2015) examines the constant focus of Orientalism on the savage simplicity of the East provide Europeans with a reason to believe in their own cultural superiority and their right to rule over the vulnerable peoples of Africa or Asia. The West frequently rationalize its military campaigns in the East by claiming a noble purpose of spreading enlightenment, progress, and rational thought to what it considered underdeveloped regions. Yet, this story concealed a more personal motive. The chosen works *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri both discuss the difficulties of maintaining cultural identity in a world that is becoming more interconnected. Where people are constantly moving and exchanging ideas. Lahiri focuses on the experience of immigrants emphasizing the conflict between the demands of assimilating into a new society and clinging to inherited cultural narratives. When compared to the reality of migration this focus highlights the shortcomings of pre-established cultural conceptions.

Salunke (2016) examines the notion of isolate feeling isn't solely a short-lived feeling among the Indian diaspora. It's also a continuous element of their existence even for individuals who experience a feeling of fitting in in their new homes. This also shows that immigrants encounter cultural conflicts within an unfamiliar system. Boynukara & Karagoz (2019) examine South Asian diasporic authors in greater depth through the lens of re-orientalism focusing on their works reflect issues related to cultural identity and representation. Some of the authors examine the difficulties posed by their heritage's social and cultural norms. Ashima, Gogol's mother is unable to adjust to life in the United States, as this research reveals. She never emerges

from her old recollections of her life and her loved ones. In addition, her son Gogol continues to be entangle in his dual identities; he refuses to accept his true name which causes him difficulties in life.

Randa & Anwar (2017) investigate that Nadia and Saeed the youthful couple at the center of *Exit West* by Moshin Hamid puts their faith in the whirlwind of change, which drags them into a continuous battle to keep their shrinking identity while falling under the powerful pull of the new cultural settings they encounter. Bilal (2020) explains in detail the conditions that force individuals to migrate from the Global South to the Global North by following the complicate path of two passionate lovers Nadia and Saeed who are from a city in the Global South that is engulf in turmoil. Ali *et al* (2022) *Diaspora and Transnational Identities in Exit West* by Moshin Hamid. His work follows the experiences of Asian refugees who fled their home countries in search of better opportunities for their future. The researcher discovers that Nadia and Saeed the two protagonists are having trouble communicating in a foreign language and feel misinterpreted. This relates to the difficulties face by numerous migrants who could have trouble picking up new languages adjusting to foreign social mores and cultural conventions and finding a way to balance their need to fit in with their need to belong.

Theoretical Framework

Lisa Lau in her work on re-orientalism emphasizes the interplay between representation and commodification. Lau is a prominent figure in postcolonial scholarship and departmental head of human geography at Keele University in London has focused her efforts on various areas including postcolonial studies, gender studies, diaspora, urban studies, and South Asian literature. Lau is at the forefront of the re-orientalism theory, which emerged in the 21st century. This theory draws from the idea of Orientalism introduced by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978). In this work, Said aims to challenge the notion of Western academic institutions as having a deep grasp of Asian cultures, pointing out the historical imbalance where Western representations of the East (Orient) often simplifies and stereotypes them as inferior or exotic. He does this by thoroughly dismantling the common stereotype of the exotic Orient. *Orientalism* alludes to the manner in which Western societies build and address the Eastern or Oriental social orders. This development is much of the time in light of generalizations and lays out a feeling of Western prevalence and authority over the East. The East is frequently portrays as exotic, backward, and in need of Western intervention or governance in Orientalism's dichotomy of the West and the East (the Occident). The Foucauldian interpretation of imperial rhetoric by Edward Said says that European imperialism used the cultural construct of Orientalism to portray the East exotic, irrational, dangerous, and mysterious - to create a positive self-image of the West. As Said articulates Europe's (or the West's) distinct image, thought, personality, and experience have all been shaped by the Orient. (Said, 2003, pp. 1-2). As a result, Orientalism became ingrained in Western culture and addressed the culture's internal contradictions. Orientalism which has taken a distinct course in recent decades continues to influence both mainstream and formal cultural and identity frameworks.

Lau (2009) observes that "Orientals are seen to be perpetrating Orientalism's no less than 'non-Orientals' and moreover perpetrating certain and selected types of Orientalism" (Lau, 2009, p. 2). She takes it a step up claiming that these authors from the South Asian diaspora wield a considerable amount of influence in molding the perception of the 'Orient' although they might be viewed as foreigners in the West they still play a major role in influencing how Western viewers understand their cultures. Though the reasons for this are still up for discussion, Lau implies that some Asian writers may have deliberately employed the extreme 'Orient' vs. 'Occident' dichotomies. Furthermore, Lau's reorientalism is seen by South Asian Anglophone authors as nothing more than the perpetuation of totalization which imposes the norms, values, and worldview of a certain class on the diverse majority. Her most significant contribution (2011) *Introducing ReOrientalism: A New Manifestation of Orientalism*. She examines how Orientals

are involved in this “West constructs the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’, re-Orientalism is based on how cultural producers with eastern affiliations come to terms with an orientalized East, whether by complying with perceived expectations of western readers, by playing (along) with them or by discarding them altogether.” (Lau and Mendes, 2011, p. 3). It is abundantly translucent that the West developed an ideology known as Orientalism. This is more than just studying the East; it is also contrasting the West to make it appear superior. Furthermore, Lau examines the numerous movies, television series, and films in Bollywood that touch upon the theme of re-orientalism. For instance, TV series like Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and *The Kumars at No. 42* tell the story of Gibreel Farista and Saladin Chamcha, two Indian men who by some miracle escape an aircraft accident over the English Channel. Gibreel a renowned actor, possesses extraordinary survival skills. Strict radicalism cultural impediments and the fantastical components utilized in portraying Mecca as falling into a re-Orientalist trap. It is a British comedy series that tracks the lives of the Kumar family who are immigrants from India residing a countryside area of London. The program gives the clashes and changes in culture a light-hearted spin. This structure investigations the both chosen texts of Lahiri and Hamid investigating the Eastern and Western cultural and identity conflicts in which ways both works characters confront the re-orientalist look at last test oversimplified understandings of social personalities inside a globalized world. This study aims to provide a deeper comprehension of how these chosen works go beyond the two-way divide and shift our understanding of both Eastern and Western identities through the use of re-orientalism. Re-orientalism recognizes that although the West continues to shape Eastern narratives, Eastern voices now have greater agency due to the changing power relations between the two regions. This theory investigates the ways in which racism and race impact social structure and identity development. This concept explores the methods by which racism and racial identity affect the structure of society and the formation of personal identity. When they go to America and London characters like Ashima and Ashoke, Gogol, Nadia, and Saeed encounter similar circumstances leading them all to scuffle with their cultural identities.

METHODOLOGY

This research is grounded in qualitative analysis drawing on textual information drawn from literary texts of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*. Textual Analysis method helps to identify that the selected works reflect a re-orientalist gaze particularly in their stereotyping of cultural identity. This framework is grounded in post-structuralist hypothesis which emphasizes the multiplicity of meanings the inherent instability of language, and the rejection of fixed or singular interpretations. The goal of the study is to show that these selected works show cultural and identity struggles in different ways often from a re-orientalist perspective. Critical theory and literary studies scholar Catherine Belsey is well-known for her support of French theory in text analysis particularly structuralism and post-structuralism. Catherine Belsey (1940-2021) is an academic renowned for contributions to critical theory, literary studies and for her promotion of French theory particularly structuralism and post-structuralism in the analysis of texts. Textual analysis method is a core research tool in the humanities that differs from conventional research methods such as surveys it probably scrutinizes into particular methods employed to analyze and interpret texts. At the centre of Belsey's methodology is the understanding of intertextuality. She argues, “textual analysis then means engaging with the text itself but always with awareness that the text is not a self-contained entity. Rather, it is an intertext a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Belsey, 2002, p. 157). This methodology elaborates that these contemporary literary works *The Namesake* and *Exit West* response the subvert dominant stereotype cultures and narratives.

The Namesake privileges modern literature and demonstrate the American culture to create a extensive framework of intertextual references. Futhermore, she says “My contention is that textual analysis is indispensable to research in cultural criticism” (Belsey, 2002, p. 158). Similarly, *Exit West* engages with the magical realism genre and the wider discourse on global migration. By making these intertextual connections the research will reveal that these literary works contribute to or challenge prevailing orientalist representations. There are similarly other regions where the magical realism in *Exit West* may be perceived differently depending on how readers themselves have experienced migration and displacement. This approach acknowledges that the stereotyping cultural identity in *The Namesake* and *Exit West* could be uniquely so accentuating the fluidity and multiplicity of meanings embedded in the texts.

Analysis

This section analyses the chosen texts *The Namesake* and *Exit West* through the perspective of Lau’s re-orientalism. Her concept examines about the complexities and cultural identities that are depicted and highlighting the stereotypical and reductive representations that align with a re-orientalist gaze in both contemporary literary works. Re-orientalism recognizes the shortcomings of orientalist views which often portray the Orient as unchanging, exotic, and subordinate to the Occident. This study looks into how authors Hamid and Lahiri both challenge and reinforce orientalist stereotypes within their reorientalist narratives. It illuminates the challenges of cultural identity that are often inaccurately represented in a globalized society. Additionally, it reveals the issues of feeling out of place, displacement, the pressure to assimilate, cultural conflicts, and the emergence of identity crises.

Re-Orientalizing in *The Namesake*

In this section, Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Namesake* evaluates for its representation of the immigrant experience of the Ganguli family which contributes to a complex and at times biased portrayal of cultural identity. The narratives explores the lives of the Gangulis an immigrant Bengali family who live in the USA and they face various challenges which include cultural dislocation, generational conflict, and the negotiation of identity. Besides, Lahiri shows the idea of re-orientalism from the perspective of Lisa Lau. *The Namesake* investigates on Western societies which forces their assumptions on Eastern societies by making an uneven story. It also looks at how Eastern cultures try to impose their cultural identity in a way that sometimes supports and challenges it. Ashima presents an alternative viewpoint at the outset. She as of late has shown up in the America which is absolutely awkward and yearns frantically for her life and family back in Calcutta. She has to deal with difficulties brought on by language barriers and cultural differences. While she feels detachment during the time of pregnancy at that moment “she is alone, cut off by curtains from the three other women in the room” (2003, p. 2). She even communicates with different moms in the American clinic when she brings forth her most memorable youngster. At The strange medical environment and cultural contrasts make Ashima long for the support and comfort of her relatives back in India. In many societies women are traditionally expect to receive care from their mothers or other female relatives during childbirth. This relates to a longstanding habit in Asian civilizations which Eastern cultures adhere to religiously due to the awareness of their identity and rituals. Among the well-known writings of South Asian authors Lahiri’s *The Namesake* stands out. It explores the challenges of cultural identification by following the journey of an Indian immigrant family to America. Lahiri does a fantastic job of capturing the relationship between the family’s customs and the cultural influences of the West.

Stereotypical conflicts in *The Namesake*

The complex idea of cultural identification for the immigrants in *The Namesake* is explained in this section. It offers a thorough examination of stereotypical cultural identification struggles and like Gogol’s battle with his name and identity reflects Lahiris own experience as the son of Bengali immigrants who rise in America. This issue is always being resolved among

history and the present day. “He hates thta his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to so with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Ryssian” (2003, p. 91). Gogol, Ashima’s son emphasizes identity complexity even more. The son of the Gangulis may find it difficult to immigrate to the United States with such a diverse collection of customs. His battle to fit in and produce his own personality comes from the profound importance connected to names in his way of life. Names hold the heaviness of male centric genealogy, foundation and even orientation possibly directing life’s way. His quest for identity is not unique; many recent immigrants face the same dilemma, struggling to reconcile their heritage with their new surroundings. “Pet names aren’t meant to be made public in this way” (2003, p. 59). Gogol dislikes his name because it constantly brings back memories of a history he doesn’t fully understand. In his American world it strikes a dissonant tone. He yearns to be Nick a moniker that within its American context seems to fulfill him. This reflects Lahiri’s own encounters. Ashima has also struggled in an atmosphere that is mostly Western feeling that her name Jhumpa is inappropriate. Similar to Gogol breaking his name Lahiri experiences a mismatch between her American surroundings and her Bengali name Jhumpa. She has talked about purposefully making it sound more like June while she was in school attempting to convey a desire to blend in. *The Namesake* echoes Lahiri’s personal experience of never quite feeling completely at home in either society during her tightrope walk.

Re-Orientalizing in *Exit West*

This part of the examination draws from *Exit West* by Moshin Hamid, focusing on themes such as displacement, identity, migration and the quest for finding one’s position in an interconnected world all designed to stimulate reflection. It inspects through the setting of re-orientalist focal point uncovers and evaluate of conventional depictions of the deception of East and West. In *Exit West* the protagonists’ lives are twisted by misrepresentation, which takes center stage. Hamid utilizes this subject to investigate how society, media, and even transients themselves view and depict displaced people. These misperceptions don’t simply influence outcasts viewpoints they additionally influence Nadia and Saeed’s inside healthy identity and having a place and the falling or unidentified city at the beginning of *Exit West*. “It might seem odd that in cities teetering at the edge of the abyss young people still go to class..... but that is the way of things, with cities as with life, for one moment we are pottering about our errands” (2017, p.01). It deeply illustrates the conflict among constant presence of death and the on-going existence of life. Despite our awareness that our lives will eventually come to an end both individuals are chasing their professional goals and simply living out their lives until the unavoidable event of death comes. It emphasizes the transient quality of our existence, highlighting our ability to endure, seek significance, and discover the purpose and moral values of our lives. Hamid elaborates more concerning that the city look like “the end of the world can be cozy at times” (2017, p. 49). It draws attention to how inclusive war is which is seen in how it minimizes the unique social and political realities of areas ravaged by conflict. That displays the clear sign of conflict somewhere nearby. But in reality it shows that one day there is always we confront the potential connection, comfort and hope in our lives.

Normalcy and the threat of violence coexist uncomfortably in this society on the brink. Misrepresentation of characters like Nadia and Saeed is the main focus of the *Exit West*. With regards to reorientalism the two characters defy the part of distortion through the enchanted entryways. The true nature of the new realities is brought to these magical doors by themselves. The obscure idea of these objections charge hypothesis and a feeling of secret. The *Exit West*’s characters Nadia and Saeed may be distorted and biased by this mystery. This search acquires a significant comprehension of the intricacies of dislodging and personality in our globalized world.

Stereotypical Conflicts in *Exit West*

This section investigates the challenges that Saeed and Nadia from *Exit West* have fixed cultural identities based solely on their origins in the East (Orient) or West (Occident). Instead, it argues that their experiences are more fluid and complex and blurring the lines of this traditional binary. Through the enchanted doorways which stand in for a different world and continuously uproot the protagonists, the concept of a unique culture and identity restricted to a certain location is undermined. Lau (2011) investigates in her work the same similarity about culture and identity crisis in *The Satanic Verses* of Rushdie through re-orientalism lens this concept demonstrates that how West constructs the stereotypical image of East. Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* goes beyond the confines of a conventional migration story to provide a profound investigation of identity, dislocation, and the everlasting power of love. It starts with a striking picture of a metropolis on the verge of war where the persistent human spirit clinging to normalcy coexists with the constant danger of bloodshed. Analysis of Moshin Hamid's upcoming novel *Exit West* delves into the intricacies of cultural identity in a society where people are always on the move. Migration is shown as worldwide phenomena that challenge the East-West dichotomy.

Geographic boundaries are broken down by the fantastical aspect of the characters Nadia and Saeed migrating through magical doors. Individuals from different foundations escape anonymous risks that featuring the rising above the double resistance. The loss of their homeland, loved ones, and sense of belonging is something that both Nadia and Saeed struggle with. They have to deal with the stress of moving into new places and the constant look for a new place where they can settle down. As the consequence supernatural entryways the two characters transport across the boundaries make a perplexing encounter. Nadia essentially sums up her personality as being fiercely independent and adaptive; she seems to enjoy the frequent migration easily interacting with people from all backgrounds and taking use of the chances each new place presents.

However, Saeed who is more anchored in family and culture faces displacement. He longs for security and a link to his native country. His desire for his father and a return to a sense of normalcy may indicate that he comes from an Eastern background which is more culturally conservative. This connection to the past can prompt struggles under the surface. Saeed's sentimentality conflicts with the truth of dislodging, constraining him to defy the possibility of a lost home. The novel underlines the consistent ideas that tight spot individuals together a pursuit of wellbeing having a place and association. This focus has the potential to bridge cultural gaps and foster understanding between cultures. Exposure to diverse cultures and constant movement could have homogenizing effects. The two characters Nadia and Saeed move away from their customary practices or dialects too raising worries about social weakening. On the other hand, it focuses primarily on the possibility of intercultural understanding. Individuals who are given the opportunity to expand their perspective and value the complexity of human existence tend to exhibit diverse opinions and lifestyles.

CONCLUSION

This research has analyzed the complex nexus between cultural identity and the pervasive power of Western views in diasporic literature using *The Namesake* and *Exit West* in the context of Lisa Lau's theory of re-orientalism. Lau drawing on Edward Said's foundational work Orientalism uncovers the way the West continues to stereotype and idealize Eastern cultures perpetuating a symbolic order in which the East is made exotic, lower, and uncivilized, and the West rational, progressive, and hegemonic. Using Catherine Belsey's method of textual analysis this article has explored that Jhumpa Lahiri and Mohsin Hamid engage with and at times resist re-orientalist tendencies. In *The Namesake* Lahiri's portrayal of Gogol's identity crisis highlights the pressures of cultural assimilation and the complexities of hybrid identity. In *Exit West*

Hamid's deployment of magical realism and alternating narration is a symbolic exploration of migration but the reduction of refugee experiences into the metaphor of magical doors threatens to idealize displacement.

Though both writers critique and complicate reductive Western depictions of Eastern identity neither entirely avoids the lure of re-orientalist framing. Their stories crafted for international readerships sometimes use recognisable tropes and narrative strategies that are geared towards the expectations of markets. The texts therefore inhabit a complicated position challenging and reproducing at the same time some stereotypes. Through this doubled intervention, *The Namesake* and *Exit West* illustrate the intricate negotiations diasporic writers make in the global literary market advancing the general debate regarding the stereotyping of cultural identity under the re-orientalist perspective.

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