

Austen in Pakistan: Colonial Glorification and Imperialist Assertion in Austenistan

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: August 16, 2020 Accepted: October 08, 2020	<i>The common perception associated with rewritings of English literature is its aspiration to repudiate the colonial disparagements and criticisms to honour the dishonoured and objectified indigenous cultures to attain the pre-colonized cultural purification. However, when these rewritings examine through a critical lens, exhibit a damaging process of self-othering or re-Orientalizing. Therefore, the present study is centered upon Lisa Lau and Ana Cristina Mendes's Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics: The Oriental Other Within(2014)re-orientalist to analyze the anthology Austenistan(2018) to unveil the re-orientalist elements contributing to the essentialist representation of Pakistan (Orients) and hence, serving imperialist agenda under the guise of South-Asian literature. A qualitative analysis of the text has been done. The result reveals that the writers through the presentation of their country as backward, corrupt, gender stereotypes, partial truths and exoticism they have self-othered themselves.</i>
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1. Introduction

Colonialism is both a discourse and a practice having conflicting elucidations and interpretations from the colonizers and the colonized sides. For colonizers, this colonialism is the European struggle for the enlightenment of the uncivilized races of Asia, Africa and America by introducing these places to the technological development and the sophisticated culture of Europe. But contrary to this, colonized nations negated this notion by calling colonialism as a European practice of annexation and exploitation of the American, Asian and African regions under the ideology of imperialism which aimed for capitalistic expansion. These colonized nations contradicted the optimistic representation of colonialism by the Europeans through the discourse of post-colonialism. Post-colonial movement from colonized nations challenged colonialism and its stereotypical agendas of racism, patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism through multiple platforms and strategies and one of them is literature. The emergence of postcolonial literature has helped to recover the voices of those marginalized. It has also enabled the writers to put forward their perspectives and ideas, consequently empowering their narrative. In this way, the theory has provided a ground for the empire that has a colonial experience to write back for what they believe in and subsequently negate the false stereotypes about them.

Among post-colonial literature, rewriting of English literature is a "powerful method of dramatizing the oppositional relationship between the colonizer and colonized" (McClinton, 2001). As English literature was part of the many ways in which "western colonial powers such as Britain asserted their cultural and moral superiority while at the same time devaluing indigenous cultural products" (McLeod, 2000). In other words, at the unconscious level English literature has led to the establishment of binaries which is civilization, humanity against savagery, native, primitive to maintain control of the natives (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002). Thus, many writers including western and postcolonial fiction writers borrowed ideas from English texts that are considered as "the „canon“ of English literature: the writers and their work which are to be believed to be of particular, rare value for reasons of aesthetic beauty and moral sense" (McLeod, 2000). These rewritings are an endeavor to dismantle the hierarchical positioning by opposing them and giving importance to their own space, culture and values.

Although post-colonial English rewritings were produced to decolonize the colonial mentality of the colonized people and to highlight their indigenous cultural values and morals. But the critical study of this post-colonial literature shows that it is promoting the hidden agendas of power institutions by glorifying colonialism and asserting imperialism. Instead of negating the western notions of Orients, it is reinforcing them. Post-colonial writers are seemed now majorly involved in the production of "the Orient" by themselves which has been identified and designated as "re-orientalism". Earlier orientalism has been done by the imperial powers or Europeans or westerners to define and differentiate themselves from rest of the world as Edward Said pointed out in his book *Orientalism* (1979). Said maintains "the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as

its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said, 1979). The cultural construct of orientalism was part of West’s strategy and imperial discourse.

This faulty approach present in the postcolonial writings is addressed by Lisa Lau and Anna Christina Mendes in their collaborative work *Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics: The Oriental Other Within* (2014). They have described re-orientalism in the words: “„Orientals” are seen to be perpetrating Orientalism no less than „non-Orientals” and, moreover, perpetrating certain and selected types of Orientalisms

... 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 & Mendes, 2014). In other words, the oversimplified erroneous assumptions made by the literary figures known as authentic” South Asians in their writings are constructing a false image in the minds of western reader.

Jane Austen is one of the celebrated novelists and „canon” of English literature. She is not only a great novelist but also a representative of feminist tradition in the English literature. She was aware of socio-political predicaments of her time and highlighted them in her novels. Her aesthetic strategies enabled her to criticize the patriarchal English society in which women’s lives were restricted and dependent on men. Women were not as educated as men. Society did not allow women to have jobs. They did not have any mean to own or earn money. Moreover, they were not called respectable names e.g. spinster. Austen criticized these norms of society where women were supposed to follow a so-called social decorum to comply with society. To cut it short, Austen both overtly and covertly, wrote about the predicaments faced by women of her society, with limited rights, independence and earning opportunities.

Likewise, *Austenistan* (2018) edited by Laleen Sukhera is a collection of short stories written by seven Pakistani women who have ethnic, cultural, or geographical ties to Pakistan. They took motivation from Jane Austen and endeavored to bring Austen to the local setting. This idea of bringing Austen to the local setting and celebrating her itself reflects the imperial hegemony over post-colonial writers. All the seven stories are an adaptation of Austen’s canonical novels. Although the authors of the stories are from the colonial side and claimed to highlight the issues of women in Pakistan like Austen did in her writings but instead of doing that, they are themselves immersed in generalizing, stereotyping, and mobilization of the colonial ideologies. This mobilization of colonial ideologies and distorted representations of Pakistan, its culture, values and women refer to the presence of the traces of colonial notions in the texts that claim to negate the colonial ideologies through their narratives. So, the present study aims to identify the re-orientalist elements present in the text and to analyze those elements in order to reveal the essentialist representation of Pakistani society in the text *Austenistan* (2018).

In *Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics: The Oriental Other Within* (2014), Lisa Lau and Ana Cristina Mendes argues that the ground that postcolonial theory has provided for the empire to write back is, unfortunately, affected by the colonial spell which it seeks to avoid. The extended periods of the colonial subjugation have been engrossed into the minds of the writers and therefore some of the elements in their writings replicate and mimic the ideas of colonizers e.g. stereotypical, dogmatically generalized images of East which is termed as orientalism, thus making their texts as not anti-oriental but rather a succession of orientalism in the form of re-orientalism (Lau & Mendes, 2014).

Lau (2014) maintains that there is a certain fixation of themes which only focuses on the “particularized promotions of only very select aspects of the orient at the expense of a more holistic representation of the „Orient”. This theory “critiques the relationship between East and West where the West continues to visit the East as tourist and in touristic mode, i.e. with a lack of engagement or, at least, engaging only at superficial levels, and where well-positioned members of the East act as tourist guides rather than flatly refuse to trade in such terms” (Lau & Mendes, 2014). Therefore, considering Lau and Mendes’s notion of re-orientalism, this research intends to explore the elements that account for the re-orientalism in the text *Austenistan* (2018).

1.1. Thesis Statement:

Austenistan (2018) is an anthology edited by Laleen Sukhera which claims to glorify the legacy of Jane Austen by rewriting her stories in the Pakistani context and highlighting the same subjects and experiences in the contemporary world. However, the text has exclusively focused on the elite class which is just a small section of Pakistani society. The writers while narrating the stories of the elite class have made sweeping statements and presented falsified facts about the whole Pakistani society that serve imperialist agenda. The text not only glorifies *English* literature and literary writers but also adds to the glorification of colonialism itself by representing the „Orient” as uncivilized and unprogressive even though the colonized have gained freedom.

1.2. Research objectives:

The objectives of this research are:

- 1.2.1. To identify the re-oriental elements present in *Austenistan* that glorify colonialism and depict the „Orient” as still uncivilized and mentally enslaved of their colonial masters.
- 1.2.2. To analyze how the authors by deploying re-oriental elements constructing the essentialist representation of Pakistani society.

1.3. Research Questions:

- 1.3.1. What are the re-oriental elements present in the text that glorify colonialism and depict the „Orient“ as still uncivilized and mentally enslaved of their colonial masters?
- 1.3.2. How the authors through the deployment of re-oriental elements are constructing the essentialist representation of Pakistani society?

2. Re-Orientalism and Colonial Glorification:

Dismantling the colonial denigration of the indigenous people and cultures is the major concern of post-colonialism and the highly effective medium to accomplish this objective is the literature produced by the ex-colonized writes. Thus, the emergence of postcolonial theory has proved to be a landmark in the history of literature of colonized nations as it has provided agency to the subalternized, allowing them to challenge the exploitative and discriminative practices (Rukundwa & Van Aarde, 2007) of the colonizers. By negating the stereotypical notions introduced by the colonial masters, postcolonial writers have attempted to demonstrate the dignity and the independence of the formerly objectified indigenous people and their cultures. However, as soon as the direct colonial rule was lifted from the colonies, the British Empire shifted its agenda from “dominant to hegemonic colonialism... [through which the dominated subject adopted the] European language, and subsequently European values, beliefs, etc.” (Janmohamed, 1984).

Linda Hutcheon (1989) points out in her article that postcolonial literature is also influenced by the imperial vision along with its strong political motivation (p. 150). Similarly, complying with Linda’s views, Anne McClintock (1992) takes a rather powerful stance against the term “postcolonial” which according to her “is haunted by the very figure of linear development (colonialism) that it sets out to dismantle” (p. 85). Thus, according to McClintock, postcolonialism records the very same binary structures that were presented by colonialism. However, the difference only exists at the point that colonial structures formed binaries based on power, and post coloniality form binaries based on time. Along with that, she also critiques the notion of “postcolonial” term from the viewpoint that it aligns indigenous cultures around an epoch that was governed by Eurocentrism instead of aligning them according to their distinguishing characteristics. In this way, it does not let them break away from their colonial past, rather reinforces their history upon them that had “a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time” (p. 86).

Moreover, postcolonial fiction writers are accused of exaggeration, typecasting, stereotyping, exoticizing, pandering to western tastes, demands and expectations, selling out, having mercenary motives, playing to the gallery, to more sophisticated misrepresentations of totalizing, essentializing, subalternism, marginalizing and, most recently of all, re-Orientalizing (Lau & Dwivedi, 2014).

Similarly, writers like Sara Suleri, Gayatri Spivak saw the self-contradictory nature of all resistant writings. Spivak pointed out this paradox of postcolonial literature when she criticized the intellectuals who must understand that their privilege is their loss. That is, as soon as one has gained the platform to speak for the oppressed, one does not represent them anymore. She termed this burden of representation as a kind of epistemic violence because it negates the heterogeneity of the dispossessed. There is necessarily an element of essentialism which raises a question mark against its veracity (Saleem, 2017).

The Namesake is an Anglophone postcolonial novel analyzed in the light of re-orientalism by placing particular emphasis on the contrasting borders between American and Indian cultural patterns. The conception of re-orientalism may be said to come into view once it is recognized that the first generation Indian immigrants, especially women, plainly embody the central attributes of the Oriental culture whereas the second generation immigrants stand for the modern, open minded and advanced insights that belong to the Western civilization. Lahiri seems to depict a marked account of the divided world that comprises the Western civilization in which the reader repeatedly witnesses the dominance of freedom, tolerance, women who lack patriarchal restrictions and who have self-determination on the one hand and the Oriental visions which Indian traditions are an integral part and in which patriarchal domination, prejudice, intolerance and resistance to the new and modern ideas abound (Boynukara, 2019).

The chronology through which the postcolonial author „arrives“ on the global scene is also to be accounted for: from the representations of Orientals by Europeans, then by Orientals themselves and finally by the multicultural-cosmopolitan postcolonials (diasporic authors), is itself a well-established literary trajectory. The point is, the move of the postcolonial from endorsement to resistance (in the colonial period), to cultural nationalism and nation-building to, finally, an engagement with the globalized postcolony determines in indeterminate ways, the production of post-colonial literatures. The postcolonial increasingly writes for the global because the postcolonial is situated in a space beyond the geo-cultural borders and in a translated/translatable context (Nayar, 2018).

The White Tiger by Aravind Adiga seems a perfect instance of Liu’s prescription for new art’s proper project. Yet as he participates in the promotional circuit, carefully negotiating his position, Adiga is evidently quite aware of the fact that in order for new work to continue to circulate as „original“ and „innovative“, people’s struggles have to become writers’ stories: the repressed have to return and seemingly authentic traumas have to

be located and then translated into literature. In this context or, more accurately, given heightened self-consciousness about this context, what Liu calls a „dark kind of history“ appears to be less what all good art should strive to be and more a material that contemporary writers annex for themselves ironically and haltingly, with increasing difficulty, or decreasing conviction and convincingness, in part because of the existence of extensive markets for texts that present themselves in this light, and in part because of pervasive critiques of there-Orientalizing modes these markets may invite (Lau & Mendes, 2014).

3. Research Methodology:

The present paper is qualitative descriptive research based on textual analysis of *Austenistan* (2018) a collection of short stories written by seven female authors which is edited by Laleen Sukhera. The stories have been analyzed using Textual Analysis by Alan McKee. He defines text as “something that we make meaning from” and by dint of textual analysis, “most likely interpretations” can be established (McKee, 2003). Through the application of the Lau and Mendes’s framework to the investigation of the selected texts, this paper will point out the re-oriental elements that draw its association with colonial agendas.

Colonial Glorification and Imperialist Assertion:

Said’s *Orientalism* (1979) gives a detail insight into how western colonial powers of Britain and France have represented their colonies including North Africa and middle eastern countries. The data will be analyzed on the basis of all those certain stereotypical assumptions about the cultural difference that Orientalism constructs.

1. Primitiveness and Backwardness:

To make Indian barbaric people (Orient) civilized and progressive which *remained unchanged for centuries*, European imperial powers intruded with their rhetoric of civilization and supremacy. Because West was considered as the place of historical progress and scientific development, then the Orient was deemed remote from the influence of historical change. The Orient was often considered as „primitive“ or „backwards“. For a Westerner, it was not simply travelling in space from one place to another but for them, it was also travelling back in time to an earlier world. So, “Orient exists as a timeless place, changeless and static, cut off from the progress of western history” (McLeod, 2000). This western notion that Orient is degenerate and backward is upheld rather than being challenged. East and Orient is re-Orientalized by the author Maliha S Lone in her story “The Fabulous Banker Boys” which is the rewriting of *Pride and Prejudice* (1994). Instead of raising the issues of contemporary women which the book apparently claimed to do so, is depicting Pakistan as backward and less developed country by saying:

“Born to a comfortable landowning family, from a dusty town in rural Punjab that had remained unchanged for centuries” (Lone, 2018, p. 02).

2. Totalizing Representation of Women as “Oppressed”:

Lone is propagating “the western stereotypes of Indian women being bound in perpetual servitude” (Lau, 2009). In her short story, Lone has constructed a negative image via sweeping generalizations and statements not only about women but also the men. For instance:

“No man likes a headstrong and blunt wife... I must teach her at least appear more subservient and pliant” (Lone, 2018, p. 05).

In the modern Pakistani world, where women are getting an education, moving ahead in their lives, are not subservient anymore. They are vocal, headstrong and outshining in every field of life. West has always portrayed themselves as savior of the world. For them, Orient men are patriarchs and barbaric so they have become self-proclaim representatives of eastern women. They disseminated the notion that Orient women are bound within the patriarchal system and these women need to be saved from the local men. It is their mission against them to set Orient women free from the cage of Orient males. Western reader has a common perception that men in the east are treating women like trash. They do not consider their women human but rather, below human. Following the western perception, Jameela (a character from the story) talks about her sister’s husband and the sort of words she has used to speculate the very idea of slavery. She says:

“Anwar, Aneela’s lord and master, owned a supermarket known for its array of imported, or smuggled (depending on who you asked), goods” (Lone, 2018, p. 8).

Here, the binary that has been constructed by the author is of mastery and slave which is perpetuated by westerners into Orients. The author not only self-perpetuating this notion but also distorting the image of men showing them as patriarchs and corrupt people. Through this one character, western or an ordinary reader will think that a Pakistani society is in general like this.

3. Assumptions about Pakistani Customs and Cultures:

The writers of all the stories have focused on the elite class of Pakistani society. This small section of the society is portrayed with all its evils and corruption. From extravagant and lavish weddings to public display of drinks and bars is giving a perception that all Pakistanis are like this.

A tall mirrored bar, upon which bottles of Black Label, Grey Goose, and French table wine were proudly displayed, had a throng of early-bird drinkers in front of it, loath to end their happy hour anytime soon. The bartenders in their starched white uniforms already appeared a sozzled as well, mixing drinks for the guests while sneaking shots for themselves behind the bar (Lone, 2018, p. 13).

Alcohol consumption in Pakistani society is both religiously and culturally prohibited. Only a class of rich brats might do it for the sake of looking cool in private. But here the problem is that this description of alcohol consumption at wedding does not represent the true picture of a Pakistani wedding. Pakistani culture has never promoted such type of things. It may happen behind the closed doors by a few people of the elite class in their parties but not the way it is represented at a wedding event. She has turned a wedding event into a bar or club party where everyone is drunk even the teenagers. This practice is common in West and other imperialistic states and author's tone seems very impressed with it. She is eager to glorify this idea of Asians as „drunkards“ by calling teenagers as *early-bird drinkers* instead of condemning it. She has in some way or the other tried to advertise the capitalistic agenda that with alcohol intake, we can have „happy hour“. Sadly, not a single Pakistani can relate to it. Because it is the essentialist representation not the true description of a Pakistani wedding. At another instance, she maintains:

Fuelled by their heavy drinks, they were leaping with such exuberance that the dance floor trembled (Lone, 2018, p. 17).

4. Exoticized Oriental Females:

The second story “Begum Saira Returns” is the adaptation of Austen's novel *Lady Susan* (1871). The rewriting of this story has been done in a way that misrepresents a widow in the Pakistani context. Begum Saira is the protagonist of the story who is a widow and exploit other men by shamelessly flirting and seducing them. The author to represent a woman who is headstrong, brave and does not represent herself to the social constructs within which women are expected to live, sketched an image of a woman who is only running after men and interested in seducing them. To construct a feministic representation of a Pakistani woman, she has re-Orientalized her by applying “liberal Western values.” In addition to this, Saira has always reached for what she has wanted shamelessly, a character trait that is so rare as to be almost invisible in Pakistani female protagonists. The exotic and detailed description of Begum Saira's dress and body has made her character as more of a whore than a widow of respectable stature.

She wore an electric blue silk sari elegantly draped over a neon-yellow cropped blouse, custom-tailored by a hot young designer called Maheen K.A taupe Kashmiri shawl hung at her elbow, and a forest green Fendi dangled from her wrist. Emerald teardrop earrings hung from her lobes as a matching row of teardrops ran across the delicate tan skin of her neck. Her wavy, shoulder length hair had been blowdried stiff and sat like a dome above her, with sideswept bangs across her forehead ... the golden dori tying her necklace together at the back of her neck snaked its way down to the middle of her back, where the hem of her sari blouse ended to reveal a sultry slice of flesh just above the waist-level folds of her sari (Alley, 2018, p. 28).

The vague morality of her character complies with the western assumptions of the Oriental female. „The exoticized Oriental female, often depicted nude or partially-clothed in hundreds of western works of art during the colonial period, was presented as an immodest, active creature of sexual pleasure who held the key to myriad of mysterious erotic delights“ (McLeod, 2000). This western notion of orientalism is reinforced by the writer which can be seen in the following lines.

“Saira's lips had pulled into a thin smile at essentially being called a slut, albeit not directly” (Alley, 2018, p. 45).

The author has completely overshadowed the moral values of Pakistani culture with “liberal western values” and their idea of agency. Lila Abu-Lughod in her article “Orientalism and Middle East Feminist Studies” claims that: „... we have to ask what Western liberal values we may be unreflectively validating in proving that “Eastern” women have agency, too” (Pouillon & Vatin, 2015). When Saira was home alone, his lover Ghalib and expected husband of her sister come and she just simply let her values and morals go especially when doing so could hurt a loved one (her sister with whom he was going to marry).

“One end of her shawl fell off her shoulder, revealing a glimpse of cleavage. Hurriedly, she picked up the shawl to cover herself, but she saw in Ghalib's eye a look which confirmed to her that her sister was the furthest thing from his mind” (Alley, 2018, p. 56).

Similarly, Mishayl Naek's protagonist Emaan from her story also sounds like a vapid and highly spoilt character. Naek's story “Emaan Ever After” is an adaptation of Austen's *Emma* (1816). Emaan has all the characteristics of a rich spoilt kid. She drinks, smoke, had boyfriends and stubborn. She is divorced and living with her father and making bad life decisions. The author has shown a liberal attitude towards contemporary Pakistan and validating western values.

Here is a dating decision every single girl over a certain age has to make. You can't keep up the virginal ingénue pretence post thirty (particularly post-divorce), but there is a fine line between sophisticated and slutty. I've been good for long enough to cross it tonight ... the last time I had no strings-attached-sex was the previous December season, when a nice American wedding guest allowed me on an anonymous physical release. With someone local, wondering if the town will find out about your one-night stand can really kill your orgasm. I take a deep breath and throw my izzat to the wind. He takes my hand to lead me out (Naek, 2018, p. 72-73).

Super wealthy women are portrayed as lustful and seducing who are above thirty age and still have no sensibility. They all are running after men even though they are independent. For instance, “*the length and breadth of high society, that Kamila Mughal, the proud, beautiful publisher of the glossy society magazine, Pink*”(p. 83) seems only interested in finding a man to live her life with. These females are just representing the tiny one per cent of Pakistan’s ultra-rich community but not all the women of Pakistan. Not one or two, all seven stories are about super-wealthy women.

5. Deliberate Explanation of Luxurious Lifestyle:

Orients have always been described in terms of femininity. “East as a whole is feminized, deemed passive, submissive, exotic, luxurious, sexually mysterious and tempting while the west becomes „masculine” – that is, active, dominant, heroic, rational, self-controlled and ascetic”(McLeod, 2000). Similarly, the authors of all the stories have used unfamiliar words to make it exotic and feminized for the western reader. A person’s wardrobe from the top to the bottom is described in terms of which brands they are wearing, right down to which perfume they smell like. One can see the unhealthy obsession of authors with international brands itself says a lot. Most of the stories like “The Mughal Empire” is only seemed like a paid platform for the promotion of these international brands of first world countries. This proves the presence of colonialist thinking according to which the colonizers are powerful because they hold the capital.

Here, she had bought Erum luxuries that most girls could not only dream of: handbags from Hermès, Chanel, Bottega Veneta and Prada; shoes for every possible occasion in an assortment of styles and colours from Manolo Blahnik, Christian Louboutin, Jimmy Choo, Saint Laurent, Roger Vivier and Dior; lingerie from Rigby and Peller, Agent Provocateur and La Perla, and a designer wardrobe from some of the finest stores on Sloane Street (Gauhar , 2018, p. 85).

Moreover, the use of native words and description of cultural commodities not only create exoticism but also authenticate the picture of east portray by an eastern writer. But being a feminist writer, they themselves are presenting the women as commodities. Protagonists are being objectified to make them desirable.

Jahan was wearing a white gharara spangled with silver-gold ganga-jamni embroidery from her mother’s trousseau, channeling a Mughal princess from a period drama. Elisha was pretty in a pale pink kurta pajama with a delicate ruby jewellery set in yellow gold, her dark, lustrous hair swishing at her waist. Khadija and Leena were vibrant in lemon and lime, traditional mehndi colours, with matching glass bangles tinkling on their slim wrists (Lone, 2018, p. 11).

“The Autumn Ball” sketches a tale of a woman in a slightly unhappy marriage, whose desire to dance keeps getting thwarted by her bore of a husband. This story again talks about the non-significant issue “her desire to dance”. The story also talks about the diasporic experience of Maya who comes back to Pakistan after a long time with her husband. „The sense of looking back or referencing a distant place, of being strangers in a strange land whether they are in the East or West” has given rise to the partial truths and inaccuracy.

“As time passed, they felt the country had changed beyond recognition and rather than home, it began to feel like a scary, violent foreign place which most of their relatives and friends had chosen to leave... In England, she’d never quite shaken that feeling of being too Pakistani to be British. She wondered now if she was desi enough for Pakistan”(Warnasuriya, 2018, p. 115).

Sonya Rehman’s “Only the deepest Love” brings up several important issues i.e. Gay husband, abusive landowner’s son, privileged and spoiled students, family abuse, second marriages and their effects on children. All these issues are not handled properly. A single short story was not enough to deal with all the contemporary issues. The author’s lack of sensitivity towards the controversial issue of being gay in Pakistani society is condemnable.

6. Superficial Standards of the Orient:

Re-orientalists draw a contrast between both the worlds. They represent their world as the same western readers assume. The contrast between the relationship of the female protagonist’s father with her Pakistani mother and with her step western mother reflects the fixed typical stereotypes. Eastern men are attracted towards the first world women and that West is the center of happiness. Orient is doomed, lustful and coward. It lacks all the morals. His father was violent when he was with her mother. But when he got married to the Occident woman, he became happy and civilized. This also presents that colonized depends upon the colonizer for his happiness. His father could not have found contentment and peace if he was not helped by the colonizer to fulfill his needs and desires. To quote:

A picture of him and Rebecca ... he looked fit, his arms toned, and his skin glowing with a golden tan. He had a head full of thick white hair, his left cheek with that familiar, handsome dimple. He was a picture of contentment and had his arm draped over his young English wife’s shoulders... They both looked like they were laughing at some big, grand joke, in unison. Sparkly teeth, sunny first-world happiness... Rebecca had taken a trip to Pakistan to intern as a reporter and experience „exotic” Pakistan while she was at it. They’d fallen in love in the newsroom during daylight hours while my father beat my mother black and blue in the evenings (Rehman, 2018, p. 139).

Stories are seemed heavily dependent on clichés or slang phrases to make them contemporary. Superficial standards when it comes to arranging a marriage or fixing a date, by placing those with a better outward appearance, money and stature at a pedestal is not an overarching truth of today. Each of the stories is based in Pakistan. One gets the cultural sense of the east. From extravagant weddings to Bhangras and Ball dances, the subtle bits and pieces of Pakistan's sociocultural dogmas provide the reader with a blurred picture of Pakistani society which is pretty much like Indian or Western but it does not reflect the Pakistani lifestyle, values, Muslim women and so on. A distorted image has been constructed to please the western reader and benefit from it and hence re-Orientalizing.

I was left to the mercy of the fickle Pakistani beau monde and greeted with inquisitive questions, snide remarks, and cruel snickers. I was handed a box of Xanax by well-meaning matrons and a taveez by my masseuse to ward off the envious eyes that undoubtedly caused my fiancé's errant ways. I was advised to lose a few more kilos, as if my slight love handles were to blame (Sukhera, 2018, p. 152).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that all the male protagonists are foreign return. Female protagonists all are crushing on tall, handsome, rich, posh, foreign-returned, successful men. "*Siraj Khan ... he's a lawyer, works at some fancy law firm, lives in London, has a fabulous flat in Notting Hill, both his parents are dead*". Not a single local man is taken into consideration. This reinscribes the assumption that Orientalism makes about the oriental male. According to orientalism, the oriental male is not „manly“ enough. He is a „grotesque parody of the (itself stereotyped) „gentler“ female sex. Even though the male protagonists are Overseas Pakistanis and are not mentioned as European or White men, but their preferences for modern methods and disregard for local culture validates their strong belongingness to the colonial ideologies. They are given importance because they have lived their lives out of Pakistan which gives them a superior hand on the other. Writers have made the readers internalize the superiority of the foreigners by showing them the true helpers of the protagonists and the inferiority of the natives by depicting them as cruel and patriarchs. This speaks about the imperial hegemony which is persistent throughout the anthology.

4. Conclusion:

The whole discussion validates the existence of the re-oriental elements in the text. Application of Lau's re-orientalist approach to analysis shows that instead of questioning and challenging the western notions and assumptions about orients, the writers are themselves consciously or unconsciously playing their part in consolidating, reinforcing and normalizing them. These women writers have reintroduced the elements of exoticization into seemingly self-reflexive rewritings. The presence of such re-oriental elements in the post-colonial writings are major source of preserving and securing the grand colonial narratives that exterminate the actual function of postcolonial literature. The overlapping and mystification of the binaries such post-colonial texts show that amalgamation of western and indigenous culture is a hindrance in a way of attaining the cultural, social and political autonomy and the freedom from colonial hegemony.

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