Oriental narratives or a Western script?
Self-Orientalism, the orient and the oriental
- a discourse analysis of three contemporary historical novels.
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1. Introduction

*Orientalism* refers to the idea of the socially constructed “West” and “East” and the particular discourse that mediates this relationship (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p.38). The concept was central for Edward Said (1978) and Said believed that the relationship between the Orient and the West was a relationship of power, of domination and of hegemony (Said, 1978, p.5). The West constructed the idea of “the Orient” via multiple media such as art, economy, academics, poetry and novel-writing, (Ibid, p.15), where the orientalist discourse set boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed (Ibid, p.233).

Said and other post-colonial scholars often criticize orientalist discourses as a means and justification for imperialism used by the West. The idea that this discourse between West and East affects and changes the East from within is often overlooked. However, post-colonial scholars touch upon this when they speak of relationships between the colonized and the colonizers. Authors such as Thong (2014, p.11) suggest that if a colonized would accept the worldview of the colonizer, it would be seen as “colonization of the mind” where the colonizers influence dominates and changes how the colonized thinks or acts. The scholar Chasteen (2001) explains colonial control with hegemony and states that “It [Hegemony] is a steady preponderance rather than an iron rule. Though it may seem “soft” this form of political power is resilient and does devastating damage to people at the bottom. When they accept the principle of their own inferiority and, in the old fashion phrase ‘know their place’, they participate in their own subjugation” (Chasteen, 2001, p.69).

As even Said uses the concept of hegemony and concludes that it is “cultural hegemony at work” that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength it needs (Said, 1987, pp.5-7), it is not impossible to argue that the Orient could eventually accept, believe or internalize the Western idea of the Orient as inferior, underdeveloped or dangerous. Conclusively, this would mean that the Orient might participate in their own subjugation. By believing and acting within the Western constructed and orientalist worldview the Oriental might participate in a self-fulfilling prophecy: If the Oriental accepts the idea of the Orient as inherently inferior, aberrant, underdeveloped and in need of Western guidance or control, the Orientals might not strive for things such as equal power, development, or the right to define oneself. They might not even feel entitled to any of those things.
Contemporary extensions of the concept Orientalism, such as Self-Orientalism, includes an analysis that looks at more than just western institutions and scholarship. Self-Orientalism examines the idea that the Orient itself participates in the construction, reinforcement and circulation of orientalist discourse. Yan and Santos (2009) for instance describes Self-Orientalism as either a way of striving for modernity and equality with the West or as a practice by the Oriental because his or her own knowledge is already so heavily influenced by Western conceptions (Yan & Santos, 2009, p.298).

This study will therefore instead of examining Western orientalists, examine the way in which the Orient is described to the Occident by people with roots in the Middle East. Three literary works by Middle-Eastern authors will be examined. A critical discourse analysis will be used in order to examine ways in which the authors present their region.

The historical fictions are as follows; *The Hakawati* by Rabih Alameddine (2008), *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini (2009) and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa (2010). These three novels are all published by American publications and the authors are part of the Middle Eastern diaspora. By not writing in their native language and by aspiring for a Western publication - an assumption in this study is that their target audience is the Western literary reader.

1.1. Purpose and Research Question

The aim of this study is to examine the ways in which different elements of Said’s concept of Orientalism are used by people with roots in the Middle East when constructing images of their region.

My research question is:

What constructions of the Orient are expressed in the literary texts of *The Hakawati* by Rabih Alameddine, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa and how are they related to concepts of Self-Orientalism and Orientalism?
2. Theory

This section will provide a brief overview of post-structural thought and post-colonial theory as well as a more extensive enquiry of research on Orientalism. Influential scholars of post-colonial theory such as Said, Spivak and Bhabha will be reviewed. Furthermore, the relevant reconfigurations of Said’s theory of Orientalism will be discussed, namely that of Self-Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism. More recent work on Self-Orientalism from Yan and Santos (2009) and Feighery (2012) will be brought forth.

2.1. Post-Structuralism

Structuralism in the mid-20th century supported the idea that human behavior and culture was to be understood by means of a fixed structure. Concepts such as reason, truth and accuracy was seen as central tenants of modern progress (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, pp.201 f). In the late 20th century however, post-structuralism came as a countermovement for these ideas where concepts such as - modernity, rationality, reason, truth and accuracy - were heavily criticized.

Post-structuralism instead emphasized the other sides of modern rationality – its peasants, female and colonized victims and lay the foundation for post-colonialist theory (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p.200). Where structuralism had aspired for a universal rationality of reason, poststructuralism considered the idea of “reason” as a biased and incomplete form of knowledge. Some poststructuralist philosophers interpreted reason “as a mode of social control” and meant that it acted via disciplinary institutions” such as schools, prisons, psychiatric clinics and so on.

2.2. Social Constructivism

Social constructivism suggests an anti-essentialist perspective on the world. The knowledge of the world is thus accessible through categorizations in which it is our subjective knowledge and representations that shape what we know of reality, but does not reflect reality. The world as we perceive it is then argued to be a social construction with a character which is not pre-given or determined (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, pp.4 f).
2.3. Post-Colonial Theory

For many the emergence of postcolonial theory began with Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), which worked as one of the first sustained applications of previous modes of critical analysis, by for instance Foucault and Gramsci (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, pp.34 f). Many intellectuals from the former colonial powers, who had primarily been educated in the West, had begun to reveal a number of conflicting experiences in critical discourse, which would come to be known as post-colonialism and exist in several disciplines, such as literature, history, sociology and development studies (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, pp. 208 f).

As Said emphasized on the idea that the West has via art, literature, politics, and other different elements of social life, created a paternalistic and fictional depiction of The East (Said, 1978). The West is represented as masculine, democratic, rational, moral, dynamic and progressive whereas its eastern counterpart is presented as voiceless, female, sensual, despotic, irrational and backward (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p.39). Said claims that the imbalance of power is what ensured and ensures the West’s ability to create a mis-presentation of the Middle East (and other eastern regions). Orientalism then operates in the service of the West’s hegemony over the East primarily by producing the East discursively as the West’s inferior “Other” (Said, 1978, pp.7 f).

Nevertheless, post-colonial scholars such as Bhabha (1983; 1949) were among the first to write ideas about a more complex relationship between the Oriental and the Occidental. Unlike Said who has focused on framing the Occidental and the metropolitan culture as powerful and deliberate, Bhabha’s work has attempted to move beyond the analysis of colonial relations as binary (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p.115). Bhabha has in his research included the identity formation of the Occidental as well as psychological effects and the operations of the unconscious, where colonial relations thus become more nuanced. The relationship between the two are then structured by multiple and contradictory believes (Ibid, p.116-117). He also discusses how the occidental’s formation of identity depends on how he or she may identify the Oriental. Concepts such as “Britishness” or “Englishness” could not have been created without contact with alien culture and thus for the conception to see oneself as modern, rational or even “developed” according to Bhabha, could not occur without seeing the other as distinctly different in relation to oneself.

Spivak however, does not in the same way as Said or Bhabha create a general or specific postcolonial theory, but instead she focuses on cultural and critical theory where she challenges
the fundamental convention of academic discourse (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p.74). Spivak also
brings forth ideas of postcolonial feminism and is skeptic over an easy fit between the aims
and assumptions of First and Third World feminist agendas (Ibid, p.77). Spivak attempts in
her work to be deconstructive and focuses on various manifestations of counter-discourse for
example in visual and verbal media (Ibid, pp.75 ff). Spivak also tends to focus on recognizing
some positive effects of imperialism (without undersetting the destructive impact as well).
Her vision of how Western domination affects the world is thus more complex than that of
Bhabha and Said (Ibid, p.75).

Together, these three scholars were among the first big post-colonial thinkers and they laid the
basics of a theory which would be summarized by others, for instance Prakash (1994), as “a
radical rethinking of knowledge and social identities authored and authorized by colonialism
and Western dominance” (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p.209). In conclusion, Peet & Hartwick in
their work *Theories of development* summarizes Post-Colonial theory as a complex area of
writing and research. “It forms one of the mainsprings of renewed (post-structural and anti-
Eurocentric) criticism of the key Western concepts of progress and development.“ (Peet &

2.4. *Orientalism* (1978)

Said believed Orientalism to be a fundamentally political doctrine (Said, 1978, p.204) where a
lot of his criticism targets Orientalists and Orientalist scholarship. Said often categorized the
Orientalist’s actions as deliberate, as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having
authority over the Orient, where “every interpretation, every structure created for the Orient,
then is a reinterpretation of rebuilding it” (Ibid, p.158). It is also done via practices that are
deeply implicated in the operations and technologies of power for example Western
scholarship and institutions (Ibid, p.35). However, he criticized the notion that Orientalism
was only a rationalization of colonial rule, since this would ignore the extent to which
colonial rule already had been justified before (Ibid, p.39).

Although Said examined a variety of sources, he also critically observed the work of many
writers such as Hugo, Goethe, Nerval, Flaubert, Fitzgerald, Burton, Scott, Byron, Lawrence

As Said acknowledges that the Orientalists are often Westerners, he asserts that it is wrong to
assume that a Westerner cannot have an inner sense of what the Orient is all about. He states
that Orientalism is not about an “insider” perspective or an “outsider” perspective, but the role of power of the discourse and construct of the world (Ibid, p.322).

My whole point about this system is not that it is misrepresentation of some Oriental essence – in which I do not for a moment believe – but that it operates as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual and even economic setting. In other words, representations have purposes, they are effective much of the time, they accomplish one or many tasks (Said, 1978, p.273).

Said thus also claim that “My hope is to illustrate the formidable structure of cultural domination and, specifically for formerly colonized people, the dangers and temptations of employing this structure upon themselves or others” (Ibid, p.25).

2.4.1. The Orientalist

In Orientalism Said brings forth the idea of “the Orientalist”, the interpreter, the exhibitor, the mediator, the representative (and represented) expert. (Ibid, p.284). The Orientalist could mean a politician or a scholar, or a traveler, as long as the Orientalist was framed “expert” on the Orient. The job of this Orientalist in society was then to interpret the Orient (Ibid, p.222) and transfer his knowledge to the West.

The aims of the Orientalist could be multiple things but often he or she aspired to restore the region from present barbarism, to its former classical greatness (Ibid, p.86) or aspired to transport the Orient to modernity (Ibid, p.121). Said stated that “The modern Orientalist was, in his view, a hero rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished. His research constructed the Orient’s lost languages, mores, even mentalities” (Ibid, p.121). The Orientals he studied became in fact his Orientals, since he reduced his objects of study from being actual people to monumentalized objects (Ibid, p.233).

Highlighted by Said, was that everyone who were to write about the Orient still had to locate themselves vis-à-vis the Orient, which would of course affect the narrative voice he adopts and the type of structure of the Orient he builds for instance (Ibid, p.20). Furthermore, the Orientalist always remained outside the Orient (Ibid, p.222). He could also imitate the Orient without the opposite being true (Ibid, p.160) where another assumption was that the Orientalists know things by definition that Orientals cannot know on their own (Ibid, p.300).
2.4.2. Depictions of the Middle East - Four Dogmas

Although “the Orient” refers to a large part of Eastern countries such as India, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, Said focuses mainly on the Islamic world of the Middle East. As Said multiple times concluded that the oriental was often depicted as voiceless, female, sensual, despotic, irrational and backward he stated that contemporary Arab society seemed to fulfill all of the four “Dogmas”¹ Orientalism rested upon (Ibid, pp.301 ff):

First, he concluded that there is a constructed systematic and absolute difference between the West and the Middle East where the Oriental region is aberrant, underdeveloped and inferior to the more rational, developed, humane and superior West.

Secondly, abstractions about the Orient, particularly texts representing a classical Oriental civilization was referred to as preferable to the direct evidence drawn from modern Oriental realities.

Thirdly, the Orient was seen as eternal, uniform and incapable of defining itself; which meant that a highly general and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint was assumed to be inevitable, scientifically objective even.

Lastly, the forth dogma states that the Orient is essentially something to be either feared or controlled (by pacification, research and development, or outright occupation).

Said concludes that:

> If Arab society is represented in almost completely negative and generally passive terms, to be ravished and won by the Orientalist hero, we can assume that such a representation is a way of dealing with the great variety and potency of Arab diversity, whose source is, if not intellectual and social, then sexual and biological (Said, 1978, p.311).

2.4.3. Culture and Imperialism

There are some changes in Said’s ideas when one compare Orientalism with one of his later works called Culture and Imperialism (1993) which are worth noticing. Highlighted by Moore-Gilbert (1997), the later Said pays more of his attention to non-Western forms of cultural production, which was almost wholly ignored in Orientalism (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p.62). In Culture and Imperialism Said also suggests that the contemporary world is

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¹ A dogma in this context refers to a settled or established opinion, belief or principle about the Middle East. Another way of writing the word “dogma” in plural is “dogmata”, but as Said himself writes “dogmas” this study will use Said’s conjugation.
approaching a common culture (Said, 1993) where Western scholarship try to aspire to this culture (Ibid).

Another difference which can be found between *Culture and Imperialism* and *Orientalism* is in relation to the question of resistance to the dominant where Said in more detail discusses the role of decolonization (Ibid).

### 2.5. Neo-Orientalism/New-Orientalism

After 9/11 scholars have been aspiring to coin a concept referred to as Neo-Orientalism (or New-Orientalism), which explores the twenty-first century’s style of representations of the Middle East and ways in which they perhaps have changed from the classical Orientalism brought forth by Said and other scholars (Altwaiji, 2014, p.313). New ways in which representations of the Orient has been developed is according to Altwaiji (2014) the stereotyping of Arabs as “terrorists” and symbols of aggression as well as the exclusion of regions such as India, Iran and Turkey from the Neo-Orientalist map. Altwaiji concludes that “The War on Terror” fostered the “us” and “them” between the Middle East and the West (Ibid, p.314). The view of Arab culture is often then intertwined with a dangerous “Islamic culture” (Ibid, p.316). Altwaiji states that “Islam is looked at as a dependent variable that explains the level of Arabic antagonism from Western values” (Ibid, p.316).

Tuastad (2003) suggests that the “terrorist stigma” is explained by a form of “new barbarism” where explanations of political violence omit the political and economic interests as well as the context when describing violence and instead presents violence as a result of traits imbedded in Arabic culture (Tuastad, 2003, p.591).

### 2.6. Self-Orientalism

Self-Orientalism proposes that the Orient itself participates in the construction, reinforcement and circulation of orientalist discourse (Dirlik, 1996; Ong 1999; Zhang, 2006). It is perceived that Self-Orientalism occurs when the Oriental would use the Western style of thought and stereotypes in terms of self-definition or “a modus of Orientalism practiced by the Oriental Other itself” (Komel, 2014, pp.528 ff). In the work of Feighery (2009) he explains image creators of the Middle East as writing from “an Occidental Script” (Ibid, p.269).

The idea of Self-Orientalism has emerged in disciplines such as tourism research, where recent work from the scholars Yan and Santos (2009) and Feighery (2012) analyses
homegrown promotional videos from tourism agencies and examines the way in which the Oriental presents the Orient.

As Yan and Santos examines a promotional tourism video of China, they conclude that a rural historical Oriental environment is shown vis-à-vis a complete modern landscape and infrastructure which ignores contemporary rural parts of China or tourists that are not Western. Thus, the video creates a role of “self” which is the Western audience. Yan and Santos state that “The once victims are now using Orientalism in the new global power dynamics for self-empowerment” (Yan & Santos, 2009, p.310).

However, as Yan and Santos proposes that this particular case seems as a strategy from the Chinese Organization to try to evoke a rosy orientalist fantasy of China’s past as well as pursue modernity (Ibid, 2009, p.298), the two propose that the literature of Self-Orientalism includes two approaches that situate Self-Orientalism. The first is the theory of Dirlik (1996) and the second the theory of Duara (1995).

Dirlik proposes that the East has been heavily influenced by Western conceptions, where orientalist knowledge has been so internalized and self-inscribed by the East, that it is next to native from Western propositions (Dirlik, 1996). Ideas in the East then becomes inseparable from Western ideas. (Yan & Santos, 2009, p.298) and the “Occidental script” which Feighery (2012) mentions would be a taught script that the Oriental would consider his or her own.

The second approach that situate Self-Orientalism is that of Duara (1996) where Duara proposes that it is a profound consequence of the Orient striving for modernity. Duara mentions that: “Those representations, as they speak of desires and yearnings of seeking equality with the West, posit reflexively at its own cultural premise, hence invoking Self-Orientalism” (Duara, 1996, p.298). In this case, the act of Self-Orientalism would be intentional. The motivation would be to pursue modernity and the acceptance of the West in order to achieve it.

Feighery (2012) states that Self-Orientalism is “An outcome of the East’s representation and expression of itself from the eyes of the West and with the image the West has fictionalized for it” (Feighery, 2012, pp.271 f). The Self-Orientalism that occurs in the tourism video of “Welcome to my Country” also shows a tourism video of the Middle East as a fantasy of exotic rural Jordan together with different signs of modernity such as large luxurious hotels. The tourists in this video, is just as the one examined by Yan and Santos, only Western.
According to Feighery, adapting ones’ video to the “Occidental Gaze” and exotifying the region is the way in which perceptions of “Arabness” is amplified further (Ibid, p.281).

Feighery (2012) does not, in the same way as Yan and Santos (2009) propose motivations for Self-Orientalism but Feighery does imply that the context of an emerging global power dynamic affects the Oriental’s chances of representing themselves “truthfully” (Feighery, 2012, p.281). If this would suggest he agrees with Duara or Dirlik is hard to tell.

2.6.1. Investigating Self-Orientalism

The way in which Self-Orientalist material is examined is through the framework of Said and other postcolonial scholars. For this study, the four dogmas in which Said proposes Orientalism rests upon will be used as a tool for studying the novels.

Since all books have been published after 9/11 it is also not impossible to assume that perhaps these books can include some Neo-Orientalist thought without the classical orientalist conceptions. Islamic antagonism and an image of Arabs as dangerous terrorists, without any regard to context or economic or political interest will be of particular importance here.

However, this terrorist stigma can be imbedded into the fourth dogma which stipulates that the Oriental and the Orient is something to be feared or controlled.

3. Method

The methodological way in which the analysis will be made is via a critical discourse analysis (CDA) as well as Said’s four dogmas.

The following text will aim to explain what a discourse analysis is as well as discuss the critical discourse analysis of Fairclough. Furthermore, the way in which Said’s four dogmas will be used as well as a brief overview of other methodological practices that has been used for the study will be presented.

3.1. Discourse analysis

A discourse is explained by Foucault (1972) as a “body of knowledge” which is composed of particular ways of talking and seeing, of different forms of subjectivity, and power relations. Foucault’s explains the discourse in the following way:
We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation. [Discourse] is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form […] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history […] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality (Foucault, 1972, p.117).

The way in which we describe our world does thus not neutrally reflect the world or our identities and social relations. Instead the way in which we discuss our realities play an active role in creating and changing them (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.1; Bergström & Boréus, 2005, p. 305).

Jørgensen and Phillips describes a discourse as “a form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world – including knowledge identities and social relations – and thereby in maintaining specific social patterns” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.7).

The concept of discourse is thus also largely related to power, since power is responsible both for creating our social world and for the particular ways in which the world is formed and can be talked about (Ibid, p.14).

For instance, Said’s work in Orientalism mentions power in his discourse analysis, since the imbalance of power between the West and the East, is what has given the West the power to overthrow the voice of the Oriental.

3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis/CDA

The critical discourse analysis (CDA) is particularly concerned with the relationship between discourse and power – where the analysis lays particular focus on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of social reality (van Dijk, 2001, pp. 363).

The critical discourse analysis proposes that power relations in society are discursive and that discourse is both historical and ideological. A link between text and society is here more heavily mediated. The discourse analysis then is not only, as Foucault framed it, analyzing the different discursive formations, but the analysis itself is both interpretive and explanatory, thus becoming a form of social action (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Fairclough and Wodak suggests that the CDA is “…a social practice and a dialectal relationship between particular discursive events and the situation, institution and social structure that frame it” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p.258).
Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis is somewhat different than the traditional discourse analysis of for instance Foucault. The difference between Fairclough and poststructuralist discourse theory is, expressed by Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) that the former discourse is not only seen as constitutive but also constituted. Discourse is then an important form of social practice which both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations including power relations, and at the same time is also shaped by other social practices and structures outside of the discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.65). A critical discourse analysis thus contributes to the construction of social identities, social relations and knowledge and meaning (Ibid, p.67).

3.3. Analytical Framework

As previously mentioned, with the use of Said’s four dogmas, the aim of this study is to analyze the way in which these four themes may appear in the novel. What will be looked upon is mainly the construction of characters, their relationship to the West and the Orient as well as the characters’ relationship with other Orientals.

For the discourse analysis, technical tools which are also included in the method is the program “Kindle for PC”. Recurring themes, words and events can be retrieved via the program’s search function.

3.3.1. The way in which the four dogmas will be used

The first dogma is what Said explained as the idea that there is a constructed systematic and absolute difference between the West and the Middle East where the Oriental region is aberrant, underdeveloped and inferior to the more rational, developed, humane and superior West. Here, the way in which the West and the East is described as different in the novels will be looked upon. Passages from where the characters talk about the West, explain their experiences in the West or compare their own culture to the Western will be of most importance. Furthermore, how much of these differences seem to be explained or told as systematic or absolute are of value. Lastly, if the region is framed as aberrant, underdeveloped or inferior from the main characters’ point of view will also be examined for the discourse analysis.

The second dogma speaks about abstractions about the Orient where particularly texts representing a classical Oriental civilization was referred to as preferable to the direct evidence drawn from modern oriental realities. Classical Oriental civilization here refers to
civilizations from older Oriental empires. (Said, 1978) If the authors insinuate that “it used to be better” and seem to frame it as if this period was during the role of empire or from their nations historical past, the novel might cohere with some of the thoughts which Said highlights. Also, the way in which the contemporary realities of the characters’ respective home region will be investigated.

Thirdly, Said stipulated that the Orient was seen as eternal, uniform and incapable of defining itself; which meant that a highly general and systematic vocabulary for describing the Orient from a Western standpoint was assumed to be inevitable, scientifically objective even. Here, what will be searched for is if characters in the novel accept or agree with the idea that they themselves as Orientals are incapable of defining who they are or their own home region as well as if it is somehow phrased as if Western definitions of the orient are to be preferred.

Lastly, the forth dogma states that the Orient is essentially something to be either feared or controlled (by pacification, research and development, or outright occupation). In the novels, important things to search for are the times in which characters are depicted as dangerous or fearful as well as if the Middle East is depicted as such. Finally, if the novels somehow phrase that the characters are in need of being controlled or contained.

3.4. Methodological discussion

The use of material has been selective. In regards to the selection of material, these three books have been chosen based on the different regions of the Middle East their authors portray. Furthermore, the choice of using authors from the diaspora who has targeted a Western audience has been deliberate for two reasons. First, in order to avoid complications of reading material which has been translated into English. Second, an assumption has been made, that when the authors write about their characters’ experiences of being part of the diaspora one might find more material to asses from the novels in regard to the relationship between the West and the East. The year of publication for the novels are also chosen to be after 9/11 in order to examine the way in which these novels may relate to the theory of Neo-Orientalism.

But why choose literary texts at all? What can fiction tell us about the real world? As both the theory and the method in this study make social constructivist assumptions of how ideas and discourses shape our reality, studying novels cannot be seen as irrational. In these fictional texts we will discover stories which aims to tell the reader about the contemporary Middle
East. Although the characters are unreal, they are built and constructed based on what the authors deem are real experiences in the Middle East. The choice of using literary texts in order to analyze orientalist discourses is also in accordance to the material used by Said, since he evaluated literature as well as other medias.

4. Material

The discourse analysis will include the work of Khaled Hosseini, Rabih Alameddine and Susan Abulhawa. All of the above authors are born in countries in the Middle East but moved to the United States and became US citizens. For Abulhawa and Hosseini, the novels that are to be examined in this study are their first publication.

All three novels are aspiring to be historical novels, each focusing on retelling fictional experiences of military conflict in the Middle East as well as experiences of being part of the diaspora. Each author focuses on different countries and conflicts from the Afghan-Taliban war to the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Lebanese civil war.

4.1. Book 1; “The Hakawati” by Rabih Alameddine

*The Hakawati* is mainly a story of a young man named Osama and his trip from Los Angeles to his father’s deathbed in Beirut. However, the author is creative with his storytelling and writes about a variety of different stories with various different characters, as he tries to combine old stories and contemporary. He, for instance, includes and modifies some stories from *A Thousand and One Nights* and Arabian poetry, but also write about the creation of Israel and of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and political upheavals of the Lebanese civil war. Although military conflict is mentioned in Alameddine’s work it does not dominate the book (Adams, 2008). The main character, Osama, has been in conflict with his father since he left Lebanon when he had shortly after his mother died chosen to return to his life in the US disobeying his father’s wish that he would stay. Osama had reached the US on a scholarship when he was young, studying at the UCLA to then become an engineer. Osama stayed in Los Angeles, but often revisited his family in Beirut.

The first printing of the book sold over 40.000 copies and was published by Knopf Alameddine, 2008). According to the New York Times, one of the strengths in the novel is that it “expands our narrow vision” (Adams, 2008), but is according to researcher Zuzanna
Tabackova a failure in storytelling which “literary pursuits subvert orientalist discourse” fails in this attempt (Tabackova, 2015).

4.2. **Book 2; “The Kite Runner” by Khaled Hosseini**

The novel *The Kite Runner* is the most well-known of the three novels and is an international bestseller. Hosseini’s book was also made a motion picture with the same name. The story is primarily a story about Amir, a young boy from Afghanistan who escapes Kabul and runs from the conflict he had with his childhood friend Hassan in order to move to America. As the novel follows Amir’s growth from a rich Afghan boy into an Afghan-American, the lost relationship between his servant’s son Hassan and Amir is the primary focus in the novel. Hassan’s origin as a Hazara in contrast to Amir’s Pashtun heritage is important for the story, since Hazaras are a marginalized group in Afghan society.

4.3. **Book 3; “Mornings in Jenin” by Susan Abulhawa**

Abulhawa’s novel *Mornings in Jenin* was first published as *The scar of David* by Bloomsbury publishing in the United States in 2006. The story follows a whole Palestinian family’s story through multiple generations, their journey from being villagers into refugees in Lebanon and the US. Most of the story is about the girl Amal, who grows up in a Palestinian refugee camp in Jenin and then moves to America on a scholarship (Abulhawa, 2010). The Guardian summarizes her work as “…a brave, sad book that tells the story of a nation and a people through tales of ordinary lives lived in extraordinary circumstances. Unsensational, at times even artless, it has a documentary feel that allows events to speak for themselves, and is all the more moving for it.” (Barr, 2011).

Abulhawa has herself also written about the topic of Orientalism in Al-Jazeera, suggesting that Western authors “steal the voice of marginalized communities” when they write about Oriental societies, criticizing the work of for example “Kathryn Stockett’s *The help* which is a best seller of African American domestic workers in the 1960s and Michelle Cohen-Corasanti’s debut novel, as well as the novel *The Almond Tree* where the Jewish-White American has written a story set in the conflict between Israel-Palestine from the Israeli point of view (Abulhawa, 2013).
5. Analysis

The analysis is categorized in four sections where three sections are dedicated to each individual novel and the last section will compare and contrast all three novels simultaneously. The analysis of the novels will show how constructions of the Middle East relates to Said’s four dogmas and in what specific ways the author depicts the Orient and the Orientals.

5.1. “The Hakawati”

5.1.1. Systematic difference

In *The Hakawati* difference between the West and the East is mentioned. Osama describes in the novel how his relatives mockingly tells him to describe life and work in “the great city of Los Angeles” and asking him how many tranquilizers he has taken or if he has gained weight (Alameddine, 2008, pp.24 f). When returning to Lebanon, the author describes Osama’s Beirut and Lebanon as part of “his world” (Ibid, p.25), but also later in the book Osama insinuate that he doesn’t quite belong as well.

One of the themes that occurs in the novel seems to be the specific relationship their parents seem to have with Western culture and modern European ambitions. According to Osama’s grandfather, which is “The Hakawati” in the novel, Osama’s parents were “too modern” (Ibid, pp.181 f.) which conflicted with what he deemed to be part of an Arabic beauty, showing that Western ideas of modernization would somehow conflict with the Arabic culture. Osama’s father was for instance not interested in Lebanese storytelling and their family’s heritage of “Hakawatis” (Ibid, p182). He also disliked old Arabic cafés, suggesting they were for gamblers, drunkards and swindlers” (Ibid, p.132). Osama’s mother on the other hand highly objected to Osama playing the Arabic instrument of “the Oud” and instead wanted Osama to play another instrument, perhaps the piano.

The geography of Lebanon (and in this case old Lebanon in the Hakawatis’ stories) was also described as early as the first page, somewhat exotifying the region as part of a distant land;

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2 “A hakawati is a teller of tales, myths, and fables (hekayāt). A storyteller, an entertainer. A troubadour of sorts, someone who earns his keep by beguiling an audience with yarns. Like the word “hekayeh” (story, fable, news), “hakawati” is derived from the Lebanese word “haki,” which means “talk” or “conversation.” This suggests that in Lebanese the mere act of talking is storytelling.” (Alameddine, 2008, p. 36).
A long, long time ago, an emir lived in a distant land, in a beautiful city, a green city with many trees and exquisite gurgling fountains whose sound lulled the citizens to sleep at night (Alameddine, 2008, p.1).

However, none of typical signs of “difference” that occur in the novel between the West and the East is absolute and systematic in the way in which Said describes the first dogma. That the West is rational or developed or more humane and superior than the Orient cannot be seen in the novel as well as the Orient is not presented as aberrant, undeveloped or inferior.

5.1.2. Classical Oriental Civilization

As this dogma is presented by Said as “texts representing classical Oriental civilization as preferable to the direct evidence drawn from modern realities” (Alameddine, 2008, pp.300 f), how the Hakawati’s stories are presented throughout the book creates a dilemma, because of the way in which one can interpret them. For instance, the story of Baybars, the fourteenth sultan of Egypt as well as the story of the slave girl Fatima are both fictional stories (within the fictional story) developed alongside the main character Osama’s story. Those stories are romanticized as a “Hakawati” heritage, part of the stories that Osama was told from his grandfather and which he will retell to the next generation. Where Osama uses less romantic ways in describing contemporary Beirut for instance:

The red—the red was off. Paler than I would want. The reds of my Beirut, the home city I remember, were wilder, primary. The colors were better then, more vivid, more alive (Alameddine, 2008, p.8).

Instances from the classical oriental stories show a much more vivid expression of the Middle East. The following quote from the storyline of Baybars express this for instance:

Before them, Baybars’ pavilion stood as big as a city. Its colors and design were utterly new to them. White lines divided the tent like a quilt. Abstract shapes ran amok in some sections—triangles in olive green, squares in burnt umber, cones in pale lilac, circles in sky blue, ellipses in brown, swoops of yellow ocher. Other sections showed images of the great hunt—russet lions brought down by golden spears, black warriors on white stallions encircling a herd of wildebeest. And the guests looked on in stunned silence. The guests sat in the pavilion, and it still looked unpeopled. Baybars welcomed them all and ran outside and called for Othman. “Who told you to invite all these gentlemen, and how will we be able to feed and honor them?” (Alameddine, 2008, p.190 f).

One important aspect to highlight is that the idea of the second dogma rests upon two assumptions. The first is that the present Orient is disappointing and ruined whereas the
second assumption is that previous empires and Oriental societies were the greater and much better examples of the Orient than contemporary evidences. As the novel might suggest and take pride in older empires with the “Hakawati” stories, it might also confirm the idea of contemporary Orient as disappointing or ruined since the main character, on his last trip to Beirut from LA, states that he is disappointed in the city that he used to know and that it is not as lively or colorful as it used to be.

5.1.3. Internal, Uniform and Incapable of Defining itself

Now, unlike the second dogma, this particular dogma is very easy to address since nowhere in the novel is this insinuated. When the regions are described and retold from the main character’s perspective (or any other character’s), all of these sections are examples of the Orient defining itself. Although many sections highlight heritage and tradition as part of Arabic principles and aspirations, the Oriental society is also explained as in transition. It changes between the years, people within change and the characters are far from uniform and incapable of change.

5.1.4. Fearful or in need of control

Fear of the Orient is not described in the novel, and the instances in which the Orient is described as “scary” is only when Lebanon is experiencing military conflict, where a taxi driver for instance says:

Everyone leaves now, but no one returns. If I were you, I wouldn’t have come back, not even for a wedding. (Alameddine, 2008, pp. 352 f).

What Said describes in this dogma is that the Orient is essentially something to be feared or controlled. Here, what is to be feared is bombings of Israeli’s or violence for instance. The idea that it is “the Orient” that is fearful does not shine through.

However, other Lebanese individuals in the novel outside of the main character’s family are not often described as harmless.

One thing that ought to be mentioned, is the role the Lebanese diaspora at his college seem to have. They are explained as aggressive, cheating and provoking the Americans at the college. The other Lebanese scorn Osama for living in a dorm and not with his countrymen (Ibid, pp. 329-339) and Osama explained to her sister that he didn’t belong with the other Lebanese (Ibid, pp.322 f). One excerpt from the book might highlight Osama’s sentiments even further:
Iyad banged his hand on the table and yelled triumphantly. All the Americans stared at our table with disapproving eyes. I turned my back, moved my chair slightly, hoping that anyone who looked our way would think I wasn’t part of the group. Two Americans, engineering students, nodded at Iyad as they passed by. He completely ignored them. When he was with the group, which was more often than not, he showed disdain toward all non-Lebanese. He had once called his American girlfriend his sperm depository while she was sitting in his lap as he played cards. The group spoke Lebanese, even or maybe especially around people who didn’t understand the language. They would have been speaking English or French had they been in Lebanon, but in America, they spoke Arabic. We were all misfits (Alameddine, 2008, pp. 329 f).

As the other Lebanese in L.A. are more aggressive and meaner, the idea of the Orientals as dangerous or in need of control still persists, especially since their group dynamic at the college is framed as the norm for the Lebanese diaspora whereas it is Osama who does not fit in and feels ashamed of their behavior. This makes Osama the exception to the rule, where the rule is still depicted in the novel as there.

Another thing important to mention is one particular character in the novel, namely Elie. Elie’s relationship with Osama is that he is Osama’s sister’s husband, though he is only her husband for a few hours before he leaves with his troops and does not return. Elie has been their acquaintance since childhood and he is the one important character in the novel who is depicted as wholeheartedly wicked. There are several occurrences where Elie has long monologues where he expresses war-prone, anti-American and Pan-Arabic sentiments, from early childhood into his later years. The one who at childhood was a troublemaker, punched and pushed people, eventually ended his years as a military man fighting in the Lebanese civil war. The reason for him to be drawn to military conflict was explained in the novel as if it was a born trait. The idea that he was born meaner, or with a twisted mind where context, political interests or economic interest was omitted from his story is much associated with the antagonism against Arabs and the “terrorist label” which Tuastad (2003) speaks of. As Elie was expressed by other characters as “monkey wrench” (Alameddine, 2008, p.147), “killer”, “bastard with half a brain” (Ibid, p.345) and “good-for-nothing fake-idealist bastard” (Ibid, p.480), Elie becomes the only example in the novel of a person that takes part in fighting within the region suggesting that the ones who fights in military conflicts must be inherently twisted to some degree.
5.2. “The Kite Runner”

5.2.1. Systematic difference

In the beginning of the novel, the West, and mostly America, was explained as fashionable, where many watched American movies, wore American clothing and listened to American music. As Amir came from a wealthy family, driving Mustangs, taking part in large social events and abide to fashion was pre-given. And described by Amir:

In Afghanistan, owning anything American, especially if it wasn’t secondhand, was a sign of wealth (Hosseini, 2009, pp. 65 f).

Furthermore, on Amir’s only trip back to Pakistan and Afghanistan, the characters in the novel who had not set a foot on American soil still explained America in idealistic ways. For instance, telling Amir that “I see America has infused you with the optimism that has made her so great. That’s very good.” (Ibid, p.186).

However, many of the Afghan diaspora did not think as highly of America as they did before their arrival, Amir’s father being one of them. When Amir and his father moved to America most of what Amir had learned changed. He explained that “Baba loved the idea of America. It was living in America that gave him an ulcer (Ibid, p.116). As Amir adapted to the cultural norms in the place where they stayed, studied creative writing and aspired to spend the rest of his life in America, his father was finding it more difficult to endure their time there.

Different values and practices was always explained as “Afghan ways” or “American ways” where they were seemed disconnected from one another. As the Afghans stayed in the US, they believed in holding on to Afghan traditions, never identifying themselves as even remotely American.

This difference between West and East was in instances described as absolute and systematic. For instance, when Amir and his wife Soraya realized they were unable to have children, adoption never came up as a question. For example, Amir was told that;

Bachem, this adoption . . . thing, I’m not so sure it’s for us Afghans.” Soraya looked at me tiredly and sighed. Now, if you were American, it wouldn’t matter. People here marry for love, family name and ancestry never even come into the equation. They adopt that way too, as long as the baby is healthy, everyone is happy. But we are Afghans, bachem (Hosseini, 2009, pp.172 f).

This quote highlights much of what occurs in the novel. “We are Afghans” closed the matter, suggesting that it was impossible to adjust or change the key aspects of the Afghan way of
life. The difference was described as absolute, however, the systematic difference between West and East did not typically explain the Orient as aberrant, undeveloped or inferior. Instead, the examples were conflicted. In some instances, American practices were what Amir preferred and in other instances the opposite.

5.2.2. Classical oriental civilization

The love for the past that is often mentioned is not drawing attention to classical Oriental civilization but are instead phrased in a nostalgic manner. The characters remember their childhood memories for instance, where what is romanticized and framed as “the better society” is the one before the war.

As Amir’s father often thought of home, Hosseini wrote different passages such as this example:

He [Amir’s father] missed the sugarcane fields of Jalalabad and the gardens of Paghman. He missed people milling in and out of his house, missed walking down the bustling aisles of Shor Bazaar and greeting people who knew him and his father, knew his grandfather, people who shared ancestors with him, whose pasts intertwined with his (Hosseini, 2009, p.119).

When Amir then returns to Afghanistan he contemplates how the place is nothing like he remembered it. He notices that children aren’t playing in the streets anymore, he mentions that joy seems to have left the land and he pays attention to how the buildings have decayed. As his travel companion is sleeping he reflected on his different impressions from their first day in Kabul:

Farad’s snoring soon echoed through the empty room. I stayed awake, hands crossed on my chest, staring into the starlit night through the broken window, and thinking that maybe what people said about Afghanistan was true. Maybe it was a hopeless place (Hosseini, 2009, p.246).

Here, Amir seems to accept the notion of contemporary evidences of the Orient, or namely Afghanistan, as “hopeless”, much in similarity to the theory of Said that contemporary evidences of the Orient might be inferior to those of elder civilization. However, he does not compare present day evidences of Kabul with the classical Oriental past which Said underscore. Instead it is clear that he compares contemporary evidences with the ones from his childhood.
5.2.3. Internal, Uniform and Incapable of Defining itself

When Amir insinuates he might agree to the Western definition of Afghanistan as a hopeless place, would this also mean he suggests that the Orient is incapable of defining itself? No. Since this is the only place in the novel where discussions of Western definitions of the Orient occurs, the only conclusion that should be made is that Amir is pondering over the idea to accept one Western definition of the Orient, but not suggesting that Oriental societies are incapable of defining themselves. This becomes clearer when we, alongside this one quote see Amir, as well as his friends and family frequently define what Afghan society means to them and what it means to others. Since Amir also does not give a clear reply to which answer he might consider to be true, (to accept or to not accept the Western definition of Afghanistan as a hopeless place) one cannot suggest that he means the Orient is incapable or ought to not be allowed to define itself.

5.2.4. Fearful or in need of control

The first and foremost thing to be feared in the novel, is the Taliban. His uncle explained that they had at first cheered when the Taliban came to power since that it was “Peace at last.” But then concurred “But at what price?” (Hosseini, 2009, p.185). The Taliban were explained as monsters and savages and self-righteous monkeys who wouldn’t let people be human. For instance:

Amir agha, Alas the Afghanistan of our youth is long dead. Kindness is gone from the land and you cannot escape the killings. Always the killings. In Kabul, fear is everywhere, in the streets, in the stadium, in the markets, it is a part of our lives here, Amir agha. The savages who rule our watan don’t care about human decency (Hosseini, 2009, p.200).

Here, evil is recognized as the Taliban. Amir’s father also said:

Piss on the beards of all those self-righteous monkeys. They do nothing but thumb their rosaries and recite a book written in a tongue they don’t even understand. God help us all if Afghanistan ever falls into their hands (Hosseini, 2009, p. 248).

Both quotes highlight how the Taliban and religious fighters were framed. The Taliban’s ideology, the people associated with them and the people that were part of the Taliban are all collectively explained as mad, and part of the craziest and foulest of people one could involve oneself with.
In this novel, we have one evil character that fits this description. His name was Assef and his father were friends of the family. The first time Assef is introduced in the novel he is depicted as a savage and a bully. As other children in the area fear getting beaten up by his brass knuckles, Amir acknowledges early on in the book, that Assef must be somewhat insane.

Amir explained Assef as:

… he was the embodiment of every parent’s dream, a strong, tall, well-dressed and well-mannered boy with talent and striking looks, not to mention the wit to joke with an adult. But to me, his eyes betrayed him. When I looked into them, the facade faltered, revealed a glimpse of the madness hiding behind them (Hosseini, 2009, p.90).

Assef’s madness began being described in the book with Assef’s obsession with Hitler. In the beginning Assef is also particularly mean to Hassan because Hassan is a Hazara, saying Hassan’s race pollutes his motherland. After a confrontation where Hassan protected Amir and threatened Assef with a slingshot, the between conflict ends with a rape scene in which Assef rapes Hassan.

In the end of the novel Assef will have evolved into a Taliban, and a highly ranked one. He will be the one in charge of a Hazara massacre as well as hold the belated Hassan’s young son as prisoner and become an avid rapist of young children, collecting them at an orphanage in return for money. Assef explained a Hazara massacre which he led by telling Amir:

“But there are things traitors like you don’t understand.” “Like what?” Assef’s brow twitched.
“Like pride in your people, your customs, your language. Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage.” “That’s what you were doing in Mazar, going door-to-door? Taking out the garbage?” “Precisely.” “In the west, they have an expression for that,” I said. “They call it ethnic cleansing.” “Do they?” Assef’s face brightened.

Dialogues like the one previously shown is ways in which Assef is more and more turned into a morbid creature which one can less and less sympathize with. Amir somewhere spoke of Assef and stated that “There are bad people in this world, and sometimes bad people stay bad” (Hosseini, 2009, pp.292 f).

In the novel, Assef’s fate seemed to have been written in stone. The Taliban and Assef are framed as people who are evil and unchangeable. What motivates them is not money but a combination of a crazy ideology and values that only belongs to a mad man.
Here, we see much of what Altwaiji (2014) and Tuastad (2013) mentioned, where Arabs are framed as “terrorists” and violent aggressors and the Orient as a dangerous and morbid place where political and economic interests are omitted from the story. Instead the Taliban are the embodiment of evil, incapable of ever being good.

5.3. “Mornings in Jenin”

5.3.1. Systematic difference

The difference between the Orient and the Occident is at times explained as a battle between two different worlds, at least for the main character in the novel. Upon her arrival to the US Amal regarded westerners as protected, shielded from pain and suffering and oblivious to a different aspect of looking at the world. She uses terminology such as “emotionally cushioned” and at times suggest that them being oblivious is a sign of deliberate ignorance (Abulhawa, 2013, p.169).

As Amal, at first, aspired to fit in and belong, she felt as if her appearance and accent was an obstacle to build sustainable relationships with the Americans. When she had stayed in the US longer she explained how she “selfishly tuned the world out”:

I deliberately avoided political discussions, did not write to the people who loved me, and let myself be known as “Amy”— Amal without the hope. I was a word drained of its meaning. A woman emptied of her past. The truth is that I wanted to be someone else. And that summer at Myrtle Beach, I was Amy in a bathing suit, lounging on the sand as far away from myself as I had ever been. It took me days to find a suitable swimming suit (Abulhawa, 2013, p. 178).

Amal was conflicted and often felt shame for ignoring the customs and traditions which, perhaps, her being rested upon. She was also afraid that being “Amy” as she called her American self, meant she lost track of who she was, that trying to fit in meant that she wasn’t herself but only a façade of who she was. That America left no room for her to be different in the way that she was and she forever belonged to the Palestinian nation where her “Arabness” was her anchors to the world (Abulhawa, 2013, p.179).

On her trip to Lebanon to meet her brother and his pregnant wife Fatima, Amal confessed to Fatima about relationships she had had with American men in the United States to which she received the response:

“Amal, I believe that most Americans do not love as we do. It is not for any inherent deficiency or superiority in them. They live in the safe, shallow parts that rarely push human emotions into the
depths where we dwell. I see your confusion. Consider fear. For us, fear comes where terror comes to others because we are anesthetized to the guns constantly pointed at us. And the terror we have known is something few Westerners ever will. Israeli occupation exposes us very young to the extremes of our own emotions, until we cannot feel except in the extreme. The roots of our grief coil so deeply into loss that death has come to live with us like a family member who makes you happy by avoiding you, but who is still one of the family. Our anger is a rage that Westerners cannot understand. Our sadness can make the stones weep. And the way we love is no exception” (Abulhawa, 2013, p. 193).

The difference between the West and the East is explained as a matter of experience, where the two places have become different worlds because of the way in which the people within them live. In the Middle Eastern world here, tragedy and suffrages explains to affect who they are to the core and change the way they live, regard the world and love.

5.3.2. Classical oriental civilization

What Amal had learned about classical oriental civilizations was from the storytelling of the old patriarch in the refugee camp, Haj Salem.

The former prideful land and beautiful region are in some passages described as decayed. The greens and beauty of the land they had once owned before Israeli invasion, was told to perish and rot by Israeli care.

When Amal passes by Jerusalem for the last time as a child, she thinks to herself:

   Every inch of it holds the confidence of ancient civilizations, their deaths and their birthmarks suppressed deep into the city’s viscera and onto the rubble of its edges. The deified and the condemned have set their footprints in its sand. It has been conquered, razed, and rebuilt so many times that its stones seem to possess life, bestowed by the audit trail of prayer and blood. Yet somehow, it exhales humility. It sparks an inherent sense of familiarity in me— that doubtless, irrefutable Palestinian certainty that I belong to this land. It possesses me, no matter who conquers it, because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors. Because it knows the private lust that flamed the beds of all my foremothers. Because I am the natural seed of its passionate, tempestuous past (Abulhawa, 2013, p. 140).

The way in which the Oriental past is described is together with family, love and relationships. Civilizations were never referred to as better in the way that Said stipulates the second dogma, but instead it is mentioned as a time when there was peace for its people, where people were happier. The present contemporary civilizations are described as decayed, because the people’s hopes are. Cities are ruined, humans are killed, joy is taken from them,
but in a way Amal’s reflections on the civilizations, show that the society is somewhat prideful and eternal, that regardless of the amounts of Palestinians suffrages, what Amal deems once was magnificent is still within them.

5.3.3. Internal, Uniform and Incapable of Defining itself.

The West’s attempt to define the East is addressed on multiple occasions in the novel, starting from the 1967 war to contemporary time where much criticism is targeting Western Media and Western institutions for modifying the real occurring events in the novel. The day in which Amal’s baby cousin died in her arms is the day the UN had “established” that the armed conflict had never targeted civilians.

Amal’s daughter, for instance, who was born in the US also expresses her anger of the way in which the region is depicted:

You would think the logistics of stopping terror, i.e., an intact building and a police force, might occur to the president of the United States. But nooo. Not our Dubya. He says ‘terror’ so much I’m beginning to think it’s a medical condition. Some kind of incurable verbal tic. Terrorterrorterrorterror!” she said in overwrought frustration (Abulhawa, 2012, p. 292).

Here, in this novel, the East is then not only portrayed as capable of defining itself but furious with ways in which the West define the Orient and they aim to address issues related to wrongly depicted Western conceptions.

5.3.4. Fearful or in need of control

There are two evils in Mornings in Jenin. The first is Israeli occupation. As the novel includes many passages where members of the PLO describes the Israelis as monstrous beings, the Israelis aren’t fully depicted as purely evil. The novel consist of stories from Ari, a Jewish childhood friend to Amal’s father as well as stories from Ismail - the brother Amal and Yousef had that had been abducted by Israelis and raised as an Israeli. The novel thus aspires to include an Israeli perspective of the conflict, even if Palestinian tragedy is what is highlighted. The “evil” that then occurs, is less about the Jewish men committing evil deeds, but instead it is framed as the powers that motivate and “brainwash” the young men who were trapped in a fate forced to be killers. The second evil, are what the book says of the warriors on the Palestinian side. As Amal’s brother Yousef and father Hasan, alongside many others of the friends and family of Amal takes part in the fighting, they aren’t explained as murderers or evil warriors, but other Palestinian warriors were. The difference between evil and good for the Palestinian warriors is expressed as when individual cross the path to accepting what they
call “aspiring or celebrating martyrdom” and seems framed as if when the Palestinians deliberately choose that they want to die while fighting. One quote can highlight this further:

Toughness found fertile soil in the hearts of Palestinians, and the grains of resistance embedded themselves in their skin. Endurance evolved as a hallmark of refugee society. But the price they paid was the subduing of tender vulnerability. They learned to celebrate martyrdom. Only martyrdom offered freedom. Only in death were they at last invulnerable to Israel. Martyrdom became the ultimate defiance of Israeli occupation. “Never let them know they hurt you” was their creed (Abulhawa, 2013, p. 108).

As the men are the warriors in the book, the author Abulhawa purposely omits telling the story of Amal’s conflict between good and the bad, where Amal and martyrdom is mentioned for only a brief second. As Yousef was described in the beginning as never being one who celebrated martyrdom, a quote from the book says “there was a time in her youth when Amal aspired to martyrdom. I can explain this, but it would break the glass cover on your heart, and there’s no fixing that.” (Abulhawa, 2013, pp.108 f).

“I can explain this, but it would break the glass cover on your heart, and there’s no fixing that” is a quote from the Arab poet Jalal al-din Rumi, which was first mentioned in the novel when Amal’s father read to her in the early mornings in Jenin (Abulhawa, 2013, p.104). The second this quote occurs is found here above and the other two occurs in passages when Amal does not tell her daughter about parts of what had happened to her family in the past in fear of hurting her (Ibid, p.247; Ibid, p.255). This quote here, regarding Amal’s relationship with martyrdom in her youth, seems addressed to the reader, but it is hard to tell if it truly is. Either way, what is suggested is that there is a story to tell, but chosen not to be told.

The role that Amal’s brother Yousef plays in the novel is also of great importance for analyzing the fourth dogma. So far, the martyr Arab is none of the main characters. When Amal’s father died in 1967, he was never associated as one of the martyrs. The dangerous and fearful Oriental is depicted as a lost soul who has turned to martyrdom when darkness clouded his judgement. However, when Yousef acknowledges that his wife Fatima and his two children have been massacred he loses control and Amal later discovers that he had been responsible for the suicide attack at the Lebanese embassy. When Amal is shown a picture of Yousef by the CIA she thinks “It was Yousef’s face, but nowhere in his features could I find the brother I had known all my life” (Ibid, p.237).

Amal summarizes Yousef’s path to becoming a martyr by stating:
He was denied, imprisoned, tortured, humiliated, and exiled for the wish to possess himself and inherit the heritage bequeathed to him by history. His own heart he devoted to one woman only, for whom his grief shook the earth and spilled the blood of those who stood on it (Abulhawa, 2013, p.239).

A passage written from Yousef’s perspective tells us:

A storm brews inside me. I do not sleep and I cannot see the sun. Demonic wrath bubbles in my veins. May it lurk after I am gone. May you taste its vinegar. I seek vengeance, nothing more. Nothing less. And I shall have it. And you shall see no mercy (Abulhawa, 2013, p.242).

Yousef’s path to martyrdom is thus explained in the novel as a process. Yousef was explained as inheriting a defiance in his character from an early age from having watched his grandfather ignore the Israeli borders. When joining the PLO, he said to Amal “I’m going to fight. It’s my only choice. They have scripted lives for us that are but extended death sentences, a living death. I won’t live their script. (Abulhawa, 2013, p.119) The only thing that kept Yousef sane and away from “celebrating martyrdom” was that he loved his wife and family.

The novel brings a twist in the last few pages of the book, telling the reader that Yousef actually never was the man that drove into the American embassy in Lebanon. He refused in the last minute, took the blame and decided to live a life in solitude instead. The love for his wife was what described him from realizing he was in the wrong.

Here, the fourth dogma that speaks of the Oriental as fearful and dangerous persists somewhat in the way in which these characters have been depicted. The character that was described as loving and kind experienced circumstances which turned them evil or mad for celebrating martyrdom. Someone even as good as their brother Yousef was first framed as someone who could become a martyr. But, at the end of the novel they take that statement back, framing the main character as someone who could impossibly do such a horrid thing as a terrorist attack, because he was good. This suggests, that again, we see the topic of violence and the Orient as almost intertwined. The main characters however are framed as exceptions.

5.4. Conclusion

Out of the four dogmas in which Orientalism rests upon, the forth dogma, which stipulated that the Orient is essentially something to be feared or controlled, stood out more than the other three. What could be derived from the three novels are that the Orientals participating in violent conflict were depicted in two different ways. The first, showed the dangerous Arab as
a diabolical mad man who was fundamentally evil from birth. The second, was a lost man who had turned mad, a man who had lost his will to live or to care because of tragedy bestowed upon him. For Hosseini and Alameddine, characters were depicted as evil from “the get go” where their fates were almost written in stone because “Sometimes bad people stay bad” (Hosseini, 2009, pp.295 f). For Abulhawa, the perspective was different, where the dangerous Arab was much instead described as a man who had turned insane, where series of consequences in which people fought in order to stay good eventually might mean that they can lose themselves and start aspiring or celebrating martyrdom. All three authors ensured that their main characters abstained completely from political violence, showing the main character as an innocent exception much easier to sympathize with. The example from Mornings in Jenin where Abulhawa abstains from telling a story where the main character might “celebrate martyrdom” clearly showed that when it came to the topic of political violence or terrorism, they were carefully ensuring that the main characters were not associated with it.

The second dogma, which stipulates that classical Oriental civilization is preferable to contemporary is a theme which does occur in the novel. The main characters shed light in their novels on the contemporary regions as decayed, destroyed, less vivid or disappointing. Though the authors expressed nostalgia and romantic feelings to their past, by confirming contemporary examples as non-preferable contemporary examples of the region a reader might interpret that the statement would suggest that classical Oriental civilization should be preferred, although the authors might have never expressed it in that manner. In regards to Alameddine’s The Hakawati classical civilization is much romanticized.

In regards to the third and the first dogma, these are not as much emphasized, and in the cases of the forth dogma it even includes critique of the specific orientalist discourse around the dogma.

The first dogma, which states that there is an inherent, systematic difference between the Occident and the Orient, in which the Orient is inferior and aberrant, does not appear much in the novels. However, the role of difference between the East and the West appears, in some cases they go as far as suggesting that the West and the Orient are two different worlds, in which they are opposites. That the difference is inherent and unchangeable, is explained in The Kite Runner but not in Mornings in Jenin or in The Hakawati. The regions are also not depicted as inferior or aberrant, suggesting that this dogma, although difference is emphasized cannot be interpreted as coherent with the way in which Said framed the dogma.
In regards to the third dogma, interesting discoveries can be made, since the discourse regarding this dogma somewhat oppose what Said suggests. The third dogma, which states that the Orient was seen as eternal, uniform and incapable of defining itself never occurred. Instead, in *Mornings in Jenin* for instance, the criticism of Western media’s way of writing “untrue truths” or speak of terrorism as a medical disease spreading in the Middle East were emphasized and critically addressed.

In conclusion, we see that the fourth dogma seems to play the biggest role in the reinforcement of orientalist discourses. However, we also see constructed discourses which oppose and speak against Orientalism, such as the case for the third dogma.

5. Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the ways in which different elements of Said’s concept of Orientalism are used by people with roots in the Middle East when constructing images of their region. My research question was:

What constructions of the Orient are expressed in the literary texts of *The Hakawati* by Rabih Alameddine, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa and how are they related to concepts of Self-Orientalism and Orientalism?

In conclusion, the authors have managed to construct an image of the dangerous Oriental which exacerbate and confirm the already existing orientalist discourses. However, the authors’ relationship to Orientalism is harder to interpret, especially when in regards to one dogma, they can exacerbate orientalist discourses, and in another dogma, wholeheartedly criticize and work to aspire to diminish orientalist discourses. Self-Orientalism thus seems to occur alongside the idea of aiming to deconstruct Orientalism.

One thing to note is that the authors’ motivations for their actions are hidden. It is impossible to tell if the authors are purposely recreating orientalist discourses in this manner for the sake of modernity and becoming published or if the Oriental indeed has internalized Western influences and worldviews. It is also difficult to speak of the authors role in the construction of the regions. This analysis has focused on examining how Self-Orientalism has appeared in the novels, but have not looked at the specific authors’ voices or self-definitions. Instead, this study has examined the appearance of orientalist discourses in the literary texts. Furthermore, it could be of interest to discover how people, such as Abulhawa, Hosseini and Alameddine,
who have roots in the Orient but now live in the West would define themselves and their voice. If their works have included Orientalist discourses, does that make them Orientalists? What role does the diaspora have in the construction of the Orient and who do they speak for? And how does Self-Orientalist discourses affect the people in the Orient?

All of these unanswered questions are related to topics of Orientalism and Self-Orientalism. Although some of these topics may have been addressed in other disciplines, constructed theories regarding self-Orientalism have potential to expand and develop. This paper should be considered as an attempt to increase the interest in addressing self-orientalist discourses and its effects on development, the orient and the oriental.
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