



## Orientalist Perspectives: Othering the Muslims in the Reluctant Fundamentalist

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### **Abstract**

Using Orientalism as a framework, this research investigates how Muslims are portrayed in the novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* written by Mohsin Hamid. This paper analyzes the process by which narratives establish and demolish assumptions associated to Muslim identities within the context of the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001. The essential concepts of Edward Said are an integral part of this investigation. By conducting an analysis of the experiences and relationships of the novel's protagonist, Changez, the objective of this essay is to demonstrate the novel's critique of Western views of the East and its challenge to simple representations of Muslims. The investigation lays a strong emphasis on the ways in which Hamid challenges Orientalist beliefs through the use of literary approaches. As a consequence of this, a portrayal of Muslim identity that is rich in several aspects and defies being categorized in a straightforward manner is presented. The findings of this paper offer a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary literary responses to Orientalism, as well as the various issues that Muslims face in a society that is becoming more and more globalized.

**Keywords:** *Muslims; Orientalism; Representation; The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

### **Introduction**

Orientalism, as understood in the fields of art history, literature, and cultural studies, refers to the act of imitating or portraying various characteristics of the Eastern world, also known as the "Orient", by Western authors, designers, and painters. Orientalist art was a focal point of academic art in the nineteenth century. A comparable preoccupation with Eastern themes also impacted Western writing. Orientalism has been used extensively in academic discourse to characterize a Western attitude of superiority towards nations in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. According to Said, "the West" oversimplifies and caricatures these nations as backward and undeveloped, which leads to an inaccurate portrayal of Oriental culture that can be used for imperialist purposes. Said argues that the notion of Western culture being mature, logical, adaptable, and superior is implied in this fiction (Karnadi 2022). Orientalism is a way of looking at the East as opposed to the West, or the Orient as opposed to the Occident. It was from the Middle French word "orient" that the English word "Orient" was borrowed. The

term *oriēns*, which comes from the Latin *Oriēns*, may imply several things: the area of the world located in the east, the sky where the sun rises, the east itself, the rising sun, and many more. But when applied to the field of geography, its meaning changed (Said 1978, 364).

The cultural critic Edward Said reinterprets the word Orientalism in his 1978 book of the same name. He uses it to characterize an enduring Western practice in art and academics that entails prejudiced Western perceptions of Eastern cultures. By drawing on Michel Foucault's examination of discourse—specifically, the connection between knowledge and power—and Antonio Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony, the Orientalism thesis critiques the academic discipline of Oriental studies. Scholars like Fouad Ajami and Bernard Lewis, who Said criticized, persist in applying an outsider's viewpoint to the study of Arabo-Islamic civilizations (Xypolia 2011).

Additionally, Said (1978) stated that "The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined", and the topic of erudite Orientalists "is not so much the East itself as the East made known, and therefore less fearsome, to the Western reading public" (60). Building on Foucault's ideas, Said argues for a view of culture that recognizes how dominant forms have a tendency to assimilate or suppress alternative forms that exist outside of them, in order to exert control over them. Said expands on this theory in his work *Orientalism* (1978), where he presents a meticulous examination of how Western society has constructed the cultural image of the orient under the pretense of scholarly research. Said argues that Orientalism, which represents the perception of foreign cultures, is actually a method of defining and exerting control over them. Said asserts that Orientalism, despite its apparent focus on describing and defining a foreign culture, actually serves as a means for European culture to define itself by contrasting it with the oriental culture, which is portrayed as having fundamentally different characteristics (Edgar & Sedgwick 2002).

Said highlights that the increase in Orientalist research occurred simultaneously with the era of extraordinary European expansion, spanning from 1815 to 1914. However, it is important to note that Orientalism, in its many forms, started to place restrictions on the way people thought about the Orient. Even renowned literary figures like Gustav Flaubert, Gerard de Nerval, and Sir Walter Scott had limitations in their ability to fully comprehend and articulate their experiences and observations of the East. Because "Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (Orient, the East, "them")" (Said 1978, 43). The reason for this outcome may be attributed to the intellectual achievements of Orientalist discourse, which were utilized by the extensive hierarchical structure of imperial authority to further its own goals.

The discourse emerges from the concept of the Orient, which is a product of an imagined geography. A simple way to define European identity is through the idea of an Orient. The dichotomy between the West and the Orient has resulted in several sub-divisions and has influenced the perspectives of authors, travelers, soldiers, and statesmen throughout history, starting with the times of Alexander the Great and Herodotus, become "the lenses through which the Orient is experienced, and they shape the language, perception and form of the encounter between East and West" (Said 1978, 58). The shared thread that binds these experiences is the collective perception of something distinct, referred to as the Orient. The process by which we develop our perception of the "other," referred to as the Orient, in a binary and stereotyped manner may be explained using the metaphor of theater. The concept of Orientalism, when viewed as an academic discipline, implies a constrained area. In contrast, the concept of depiction adopts a dramatic perspective, where the Orient serves as the stage that encompasses the entire East. Said (1978) proclaims:

On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be, not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe. (63)

These particular visuals symbolize something that would otherwise be too vague to comprehend. Additionally, there are characters who adhere to specific conventional traits. Therefore, Orientalism:

shares with magic and with mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are because they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter. (Said 1978, 70)

Orientalism may be understood as a manifestation of radical realism in which a particular characteristic of the Orient is defined and encapsulated by a single term or expression, “which then is considered either to have acquired, or more simply be, reality” (Said 1978, 72). It was the most concerted effort to combine academic knowledge with political ambitions. This illustrates that every form of information is inherently influenced and empowered by political circumstances. Napoleon effectively validated the planned and tactical advantage of knowledge by using French scholars to gather information about the Quran and Islamic society. The potency and unmatched prolific potential of Orientalism ultimately arose from its focus on textuality, which included interpreting reality based on information derived from existing written texts. Orientalism may be described as a complex compilation of works that claimed to directly address their subject matter, but in reality, they were really influenced by and expanding upon previous literature.

Orientalism can be best comprehended via a Foucaultian perspective as a type of discourse that embodies the exertion of power and knowledge. Said contends that in order to fully comprehend the importance of Orientalism as a discourse, it is essential to have a thorough comprehension of its nature as a highly organized discipline through which European culture was able to control and even create—“the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period” (Said 1978, 3).

Colonial discourse refers to the body of information and beliefs that shape the context in which colonization occurs. Thus, “Colonial discourse”, according to Hulme’s definition, comprehends all kinds of discursive production related to and produced in colonial situations, from the Capitulations of 1492 to *The Tempest*, from Royal Orders and edicts to the most carefully written prose” (Mignolo 1989, 333). While the discourse of the colonizers shapes it, the colonized also adopt this discourse to perceive themselves. For example, Africans may adopt the colonial viewpoint that characterizes them as intuitive and emotional, thereby setting them apart from the rational and unemotional Europeans. It generates a profound internal conflict in the minds of the colonized individuals due to its contradiction with other forms of information regarding the world.

Academics, institutions, and governments all give orientalism a stamp of authority when it comes to speech. That the discourse is associated with truth is guaranteed by the authority that gives it prominence and status. The Orientalist discipline eventually generates a discourse that encompasses both knowledge and reality “whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it” (Said 1978, 94). The foundation for this otherness is a division between the Orient and the Occident that is more a result of human creation than a natural phenomenon (Said 1985, 2). The formation of things such as the Orient relies heavily on the geographical imagination. To differentiate between Eastern and Western cultures, it is necessary to maintain strict limits. Consequently, by employing this method, they may effectively Orientalize the area.

A fundamental aspect of Orientalism is the power dynamic between the Occident and the Orient, where the advantage overwhelmingly lies with the former. The power mentioned is closely linked to the process of constructing knowledge about the Orient. The occurrence is a result of the understanding and categorization of subject races or Orientals, which facilitates their efficient and lucrative control; “knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control” (Said 1978, 36). Through the use of knowledge gathered about the Orient, the Orientalist discourse portrays the Orient and its people as inferior and reliant on the Occident.

According to Said, knowledge about the Orient is created by those in power and shapes the perception of the Orient, the people from the Orient, and their culture. An integral part of the Occident's process of establishing and reinforcing its own identity is the formation of the Orient as the other. (Mambrol 2022)

When studying the Orient, it has consistently been analyzed from a Western perspective, as shown through the concept of Orientalism. Said argues that the Westerner viewed the Oriental as sharing some characteristics with the West. The basic aim of the Orientalist is to continually alter the situation of the Orient. This undertaking is pursued for personal motives and to safeguard his own cultural legacy (Said 1978, 67).

The Orientals are seen as things to be studied and understood, and the dehumanization of these peoples is exacerbated by the very definition of the word Orient. Objectification in this context is the belief that the Orient is fundamentally uniform and unchanging, whereas the Occident is dynamic and has a history of taking action. Furthermore, the Orient and its people are commonly perceived as inert and lacking active engagement in the subjects of study (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 2008).

However, this structure has a clear political aspect since Western knowledge inherently has political implications. Although it may appear divergent, proposes Said, “from saying that all academic knowledge about India and Egypt is somehow tinged and impressed with, violated by, the gross political fact—and yet that is what I am saying in this study of Orientalism” (Said 1978, 11). Said's ability to make this statement stems from his firm belief in the worldly nature of speech: “no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances” (Said 1978, 11). Contrary to what Dennis Porter (1983) claims, the idea that political and military power shape, mark, or infringe upon academic knowledge does not mean that the dominating influence of Orientalist speech will not work by consensual agreement. The concept of knowledge is inherently tied to the act of representation, which involves transforming abstract ideological ideas into tangible forms by assigning specific symbols to symbolize them. The inherent power inside these representations cannot be separated from the workings of political coercion, despite being a distinct form of power that is more nuanced, pervasive, and less apparent.

Imperialism exhibits a power disparity not only in its overt manifestations, such as its "coercive political, economic, and military justifications" (Said 1978, 12), but similarly, and primarily, in the realm of folk exchange. The cultural domain is where one may observe the prevailing hegemonic agenda of Orientalist studies, which is employed to promote the objectives of imperialism. Said's technique is based on what he refers to as textualism, which enables him to perceive the Orient as a product of written texts. The text's associations within Orientalist discourse necessitate its portrayal of the West as a locus of authority and a distinct center separated from the other as the subject of understanding and, eventually, subjugation. His focus is not on analyzing the concealed content of the Orientalist text, but rather on demonstrating the manner in which the Orientalist...“makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West” (Said 1978, 10).

The concept of depiction is fundamental in comprehending the discourses in which knowledge is formed, since it raises doubts about the feasibility of achieving an accurate representation, as argued by Said (1978, 272). Said (1978) states that “we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, inter-woven with a great many other things besides the ‘truth’ which is itself a representation” (72). Said refers to the assumption that representations in books accurately reflect the real world as a textual attitude. Due to the Orientalist writing's ability to provide a sense of familiarity and closeness to a distant and exotic world, these writings are highly regarded and considered more significant than the objects they aim to depict. Said asserts that these writings have the ability to not only generate information but also shape the actual veracity they seem to depict (Said 1978, 94). Hence, the written works are accountable for fabricating and delineating the actuality of the Orient.

Said's purpose extends beyond the simple documentation of Orientalism's excesses (which he accomplishes with great effectiveness). Instead, he emphasizes the necessity of an alternative and improved approach to research. He acknowledges the presence of several independent researchers who are actively involved in generating such information. He emphasizes the importance of remaining vigilant in combating the prevalence of the Oriental discourse. The solution for Said is to exist "sensitive to what is involved in representation, in studying the Other, in racial thinking, in unthinking and uncritical acceptance of authority and authoritative ideas, in the socio-political role of intellectuals, in the great value of skeptical critical consciousness" (Said 1978, 327). The primary duty of the academic is to reject the allure of the religious standpoint held by individuals involved in the Orientalist speech tradition, and to prioritize a secular inclination to speak truthfully to those in positions of authority, to interrogate and to challenge.

### **Discussion**

In the 1970s, Edward Said emphasized the historical dominance of the West in representing and speaking on behalf of the East. He said that the East's identity has been shaped, to some extent, by the West. Re-orientalism, as proposed by Lau (2009), suggests that the orient has increasingly taken control of its own image. However, it still relies on Western references and uses Western standards in its efforts to define itself. Furthermore, in a subtle and potentially deliberate manner, modern depictions of the East still revolve around Western perspectives, perpetuating the existing power dynamics of the Orientalist divide and promoting the dominance of the Western powers. Nevertheless, authors may nevertheless recover the practical and communicative significance of popularly promoted exoticisms, such as portraying Muslims as terrorists, even as they continue to perpetuate orientalist perspectives. The theory of re-orientalism analyzes the influence of these disruptive methods of communication in relation to the negotiation of identity, exploring how they affect the process, according to (Lau and Mendes, 2011), "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" (1).

Hamid's work, released in 2007, takes a combative posture, influenced by the post-9/11 suspicion towards Muslims. This is a novel approach to engaging with the English-speaking audience, mostly in Western societies, by addressing the phenomenon of othering within Western identity frameworks. This involves highlighting the distinctions and challenging the harmful stereotypes associated with individuals who are perceived as potential terrorists. This position represents a complete reversal from the previous trend of South Asian authors in the postcolonial era, who used to create and maintain a unique style for Western readers, particularly in their fiction, according to Shivani (2006), "goes out of its way to avoid creating any sense of discomfort or awareness of historical complicity in its Western audience" (3). The novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* employs a disconcerting concept of "reverse racial profiling" (Banita 2010, 243), when the racial minority participates in profiling in response. Hamid's works, along with those of Aravind Adiga and Indra Sinha, use a boldly confrontational approach in their intentionally raw storytelling, which can even be seen as accusatory and harsh at times.

Hamid's novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, is a prime example of these qualities: the prose is ominous and malevolent, relying on an untrustworthy narrator whose voice is dominant, and it keeps its secrets hidden rather than treating the reader as a trusted companion. Currently, he splits his time between, America, Pakistan and Greece and Italy. In an article for *The Guardian*, he expressed his thoughts (2014), "[m]y life has come full circle, geographically speaking. Twice." Changez, the protagonist of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, shares similarities with the author Hamid. Both were born and reared in Lahore and received their education at Princeton. During an interview with Michelle Blankenship, Hamid compared the geographical aspects of Changez's universe to his own. Changez perceives a need to choose between Pakistan and America, whereas Hamid, on the other hand, does not

wish to align with either side but instead embraces, according to McCartney (2013), “American and Pakistani, all mixed up.” Hamid's perspective is more subtle compared to his character. He states that “I believe that I have written from a standpoint that is simultaneously critical of and affectionate towards America. I aim for readers to see my fondness and recognize that my purpose is not to downplay the genuine suffering caused by September 11, but rather to reconcile fragmented aspects of my environment and my own identity that have become more and more split” (cited in Blankenship, 2007, 3). Hamid's explanation carries a disclaimer, which is a soothing tone that is noticeably lacking in the narrative, as the work is intentionally non-apologetic. Hamid's remark of reconnection and acknowledgment of pain appears to be his attempt to maintain open lines of contact, which stands in stark contrast to the satisfaction Changez derives from witnessing the massacre of nine/eleven tragedy on television: “Yes, despicable as it may sound, my initial reaction was to be remarkably pleased [...] I was caught up in the symbolism of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees” (Hamid 2007, 73). Several years following the Blankenship interview, a more assertive approach may be observed in Hamid's writings about drone warfare in Pakistan. He admits that his education in America has left him deeply unhappy with the country, in Hamid words, “partly because the US's bellicose excesses in foreign policy become more visible the closer you are to where American bombs are hitting the ground” (2014, 78).

The novel can be described as falsely polyphonic as it presents multiple voices such as Wainwright, Jim, and Erica. Additionally, the form used in the novel does not involve genuine disclosure or divulgence of information, but rather aims to establish a sense of trust and secrecy, ultimately leading to novel-as-hoax. The work highlights the delicate balance the Pakistani narrator must maintain while giving personal information or confessing, taking into account the expectations and preferences of a Western audience, according to Hamid (2007), “[t]he confession that implicates its audience is — as we say in cricket — a devilishly difficult ball to play. Reject it and you slight the confessor; accept it and you admit your own guilt” (70). Hamid faces a challenging dilemma with the confessional form: he must avoid distancing the audience, yet he also needs to assert his otherness, which may inadvertently alienate them. The tone of Changez is crucial in Hamid's portrayal of the Pakistani viewpoint, which is characterized by defensiveness and a sense of being unjustly treated. In the novel, the main character explains to the American that both Pakistan and America were once colonies of England. Therefore, it is logical to assume that speaking with an English accent can still be linked to wealth and influence in both countries. Changez's discourse panache is intentionally crafted to connect with many sources of influence: past colonial dominance, social status, Western instruction or affiliation.

Changez belongs to a privileged social stratum in Pakistan. Despite the decline in his family's authority, his instructive upbringing and societal rank position him among the privileged higher strata in a highly stratified society. The tension and uncertainty surrounding his own identity, especially in America, arise from his inability to effectively handover his privileged position to the Western culture. However, his sophisticated conducts and language do provide him with some societal advantage. Changez is more expected to relate to his socioeconomic class on a global scale. While he identifies as Pakistani, it will not necessarily mean that he represents all Pakistanis. This phenomenon is also sometimes characterized as re-orientalism. Although the authority of portrayal might have shifted back to the Orient, it is still subject to manipulation by a select group of individuals, as well as by those who have significant Western affiliations. According to Singh (2010), The re-orientalism of Changez is moderated by the double experience of being both dominated and persecutor. On one hand, he belongs to the once colonized and the Global South. On the other hand, he is part of the fortunate high class in a very ranked community. Hamid likewise recognizes that Changez's exaggerated graciousness is intended to be threatening. Furthermore, its “courtly anachronism and formality” reinforces prevailing stereotypes about Muslims in typical Western culture (154).

The author suggests that Changez's unique vocabulary, characterized by its formal rigidity, potential threat, and association with the past, aligns stylistically with common misconceptions about

Muslims and Islam. This implies that Hamid may have been catering to public expectations. Interestingly, in another part of the talk, Hamid describes this behavior as "false politeness" (cited in Yaqin, 2008, p. 46). This term subtly distinguishes it from being excessively formal or overly polite, aligning with the author's deliberate intention to emphasize certain common Western clichés and stereotypes. Hamid desires to capitalize on this vulnerability of the general public, or at the very least, reveal its limitations. Morey highlights the recurring motif throughout the narrative that Changez consistently assumes different personas, such as an American, a self-made success story, or an intriguing outsider, according to inescapable circumstances, "he lives with the knowledge that his identity is constructed in the gaze of others" (Hamid 2007, 144).

Changez's unique vocal expression, characterized by its cultural implications of a privileged social upbringing, can be described as a re-orientalist speech. It represents a figure that has received a Western education and is currently adopting a certain individuality to cater to a Western audience. The performance is not entirely fraudulent or disingenuous, but rather expresses anger and indignation at being placed in the role of an exhibit or spectacle. The stylization of his form is deliberately crafted to ensure that the reader cannot easily forget the framework. The novel's narrative consistently employs performative mimicry, portraying Pakistanis in the US as continually obliged to behave in a certain manner due to their perpetual awareness of being observed from Western perspectives and analyzed by the West using orientalist scrutiny, resulting in a perpetual sense of being marginalized.

Hamid explicitly states that this work not only aims to examine America in order to reciprocate the scrutiny, but also accomplishes this goal with precision "still stubbornly Pakistani eyes, or eyes that reflected the place that I came from" (Yaqin, 2008, p. 45), Changez, a fellow of Pakistan's aristocracy with admission to Western schooling, conducts an aggressive examination of America and its society. Is Hamid implying that re-orientalism is partly caused by the expectations of the intended audiences? While the film attempts to connect Pakistan and the US, the novel portrays them as ultimately unable to bridge, despite early friendliness. In the beginning of the story, Changez introduces the motif of South Asians "authentic insiders" (or the "native informant") and social "emissaries" (Narayan 1997, 142), he presents themselves to the American as a guide and intermediary, facilitating communication and understanding between their respective cultures. Changez, in a playful manner, provides assistance with a confident and stylish gesture, while also disregarding the American's need to remain hidden or secretive. From the beginning, the American is shown as potentially menacing, with a slightly ominous appearance, while also highlighting Changez's status as a "lover of America" (Hamid 2007, 1). Subsequently, this is revealed to be insincere, considering the character's subsequent disappointment with the United States and decision to leave.

Hamid relies on the assumption that the Western reader would readily embrace Changez as a narrator to lead them through the predominantly foreign Pakistani society. Hamid recognizes and manipulates the growing fascination with South Asian literature in English that emerged after 9/11. He highlights the problematic nature of orientalism, where there is an imbalance of knowledge between the Western world and the East. In this situation, the East is well-informed about the West, while the West has limited knowledge about the East. Within the narrative, he showcases his extensive familiarity with the city of New York: "I emerged from the 6 train onto Seventy-Seventh Street, in the heart of the Upper East Side. The area [...] felt surprisingly familiar, although I had never been there before; I realized later that I owed my sense of familiarity to the many films that had used it as a setting" (Hamid 2007, 48), demonstrating that while America is recognizable to individuals from other countries and Pakistanis, Pakistan is predominantly new territory, in several aspects, and exceedingly alien to the United States people.

In the novel, Hamid introduces a major character who challenges the concept of orientalism. However, while the character strives to reclaim authority and portrayal of the West from Western perspectives, the depiction of Pakistan nonetheless perpetuates problematic stereotypical views. Hamid is

providing a perspective on America to Americans and the Western world in general, from the viewpoint of individuals who may feel that they have been mistreated and deceived by America, namely those who have been disenchanted with the system. Consequently, the storyline is replete with a sense of fear and imminent peril, characterized by a heightened state of tension and a palpable undercurrent of violence. In this novel, the absence of significant events is notable, since the only occurrences are a supper, a chat, and a stroll back to the hotel. However, there is a very powerful sense of underlying threat. A notable absence of action is implied, mostly through the peculiar stillness. However, the critical tone and voice of the narrator also play a key role in conveying meaning.

### **Conclusion**

Mohsin Hamid's novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* explores the complex identities and experiences of Muslims following the 9/11 attacks. Hamid examines themes of solitude, existential confusion, and clashes between different cultures by means of the main character, Changez. His portrayal is multifaceted, challenging and reinforcing certain Orientalist tropes. The story presents a complex portrayal of Muslims, showcasing the inner struggles faced by Muslim individuals as well as the exterior influences exerted by Western civilizations. Changez's transformation from an eager young man pursuing the American Dream to a disillusioned critic of Western imperialism highlights the conflicts between assimilation and cultural loyalty. This change highlights the enduring Orientalist perception of Muslims as the constant "Other," whose allegiance and identity are continuously doubted.

One of the ways in which Hamid subverts the established Orientalist clichés is by providing Changez with a voice that is able to communicate his views and personal experiences effectively. It is because of this that readers are able to move beyond the simple and sometimes unflattering depictions of Muslims that are seen in Western literature and television. Changez's profound introspection and exceptional ability to narrate captivate the reader, prompting them to reevaluate their preconceived notions and see the unique attributes and compassionate nature of Muslim people. Overall, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is a noteworthy novel that contributes to the discussion on Orientalism and the portrayal of Muslims. Hamid's portrayal of the protagonist skillfully challenges and finally rejects the rigid divisions imposed by Orientalist ideology, leading to a deeper and more empathetic comprehension of Muslim identities. This novel not only exposes the inherent limits and prejudices of Orientalist ideas, but also promotes a more diverse and inclusive representation of Muslims in literature and other disciplines.

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