An Orientalist Reading: Exploring the "Self" in *The Last White Man*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the process of discovering the self in *The Last White Man* by Mohsin Hamid from the standpoint of Orientalism. To achieve the research objectives, it has utilized the theory of Orientalism developed by Edward Said. The goals of the study are to identify the reasons for Anders' self-discovery process as a protagonist from an Orientalist lens; and second, to explain the conflict of the binary opposition of Orientalism that leads to the segregation of races and its impact on the lives of individuals as portrayed in the novel. Drawing on the methodology of qualitative textual analysis, this paper considers the novel's characters in light of Orientalism. Therefore, the findings are the following. Firstly, the novel describes the process of Anders' becoming, his new views on race and identity, which is relevant to Said's concept of the 'Other' in Orientalism. The narrator's process of discovering oneself mirrors the assimilation and the subsequent critical thinking of the Western paradigm, which is a fundamental concept of Orientalism. Secondly, the novel shows how main oppositional pair of Orientalism affects the segregation of races as well as the lives of people. The characters of the novel change physically and probe into the society's norms and races, in accordance with Said's idea of such changes being social constructs. As a result, the concept of power and the norms of society get shifted and this show how the concept of Orientalism has penetrated deeply in the minds of people.

Key Words: Orientalism, Identity, Other

Background of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the process of self-identification in *The Last White Man* by Mohsin Hamid from the Orientalist point of view. Orientalism is a term introduced by Edward Said in his book Orientalism published in 1978, which is the first postcolonial work. According to Said, such an image of the East is presented in the western literature which depicts the East as deceitful, uncivilized, illogical, and vulgar. Edward Said has noted that ،The Orient is almost a European invention" (Said 1978). Said also emphasized that what is presented about the Orient is a representation and not the actual Orient (p. 21). Said (1978) also points out that according to Orientalists the Orient is represented as violent and the villains and they are described as weak, brutal and ridiculous. Thus, White Men of the West are depicted as effective, progressive, and rational (Said 1978, pp. 61-190). The core view of Orientalism is the dualism of the world into the East and the West or the Orient and the Occident. Said, as cited by Zhang, argues that the "Orient" is framed as the 'other' in European literature and travelogues, supporting Eurocentrism and dominance. Colonizers depicted the Orient as inferior, irrational, and static, contrasting it with

Europe's rationality, progressiveness, and activity. This distinction, central to Europe's identity, highlights the unchanging Orient versus the advancing Occident (Zhang, 2002). Said argues that Orientalism constructs the East as static and inferior, reinforcing Western superiority rooted in imperialist ideologies. This hierarchy portrays the Orient as uncivilized and incapable of progress, perpetuating imperialism, racism, and Eurocentric bias (Curtis, 2009). The Orient's perceived backwardness and degeneracy were linked to racial and ethnic roots, framing Orientals as a "fallen race" requiring management, reflecting oppressive attitudes (Said, 1978, pp. 206-207). In terms of the Orientalist literature, the Orientalist literature is the literary works written by the Western authors that highlight the Asian and Middle Eastern societies and cultures. This genre is mostly characteristic of the 18th and 19th centuries, a time of European colonialism and imperialism. These regions were represented as the other, the oriental, the primitive, the barbaric and even the barbarian, a view that was and still is used to support colonizational views. Said's (1978) Orientalism is a postmodern text that looks at the representation of the East in the eyes of the West. Said (1978) notes that Orientalism is a discourse that making the Orient available for its mastering, ordering and dominating by the Occident, which has its roots in imperialism and colonialism. In this case, his analysis is critical on the role literature played in the creation of stereotypes and the legitimation of colonialism.

Problem Statement
The thesis raises a compelling issue by exploring Orientalism and identity in *The Last White Man*, but it risks oversimplifying complex dynamics. It conflates traditional East-West binaries with racial constructs such as Anders' "brownness" without fully justifying this theoretical leap. Additionally, the argument heavily relies on binaries, such as Oriental and Western or brown and white, without addressing postcolonial critiques that challenge such divisions. The concept of internalized Orientalism is introduced but lacks nuance, particularly regarding Anders' agency. It remains unclear whether he resists these stereotypes or fully internalizes them. Furthermore, the thesis does not adequately engage with the novel's socio-political context or Hamid's narrative strategies, which could complicate simplistic dichotomies.

Research Objectives
1. To investigate the causes that lead Anders toward discovering the self from an Orientalist perspective in *The Last White Man.*
2. To analyze the conflict of the binary opposition of *Orientalism* that results in racial segregation affecting individual lives as depicted in the novel.

Research Questions
1. Why does the stereotypical attitude of the West towards the East lead to discovering the self as revealed in the self-realization of Andersin *The Last White Man*?
2. How does the binary opposition of *Orientalism* affect the orientals depicted in the novel?

Significance of Study
The research study is highly relevant to the field of post-colonialism from an Orientalist perspective as it explores the protagonist of *The Last White Man*'s quest for identity. Hamid's protagonists are able to give a voice to millions of underprivileged people of colour struggling to live and be accepted in a society based on prejudice and Orientalism.

Delimitation of Study

This study is concerned with the novel published in 2022, titled *The Last White Man (2022)* by Mohsin Hamid, a Pakistani writer. The process of discovering the self that is embedded in the main character of the text is discussed from the standpoint of Orientalism. The study is actually of qualitative type where the text of the selected work is analyzed with reference to the orientalist approach.

Literature Review

Saad (2023) argued that in *The Last White Man*, the possibility of running off into the imagination that is given by the fiction is depicted. The cure to anti-black racism in *The Last White Man* is a magical sickness that changes the skin color to black is to eliminate the white race. As an isolated black man, Hamid is lucky to describe the confrontation and adversity of being black between those whites while waiting for the white race to become extinct and the only color left is black so that he can escape his traumas. However, according to Clemens (2022), in Last White Man, Anders is described as turning "un doubtable brown" in the first line of the novel. In analysing the production of race that is injected into our existence both for those with dark colour to have hate and ultimately manufactures confusion among the most intimate of relations through our imagination that is used to deploy it with tangible ramifications, Ander's staring at the reflection on the mirror with Brown skin instills a "ferocious" feeling in him and provokes him to strike the mirror because at first he does not accept this change. In the presented research, Kapoor and Naik 2023 argue that *The Last White Man* depicts Blacks' life difficulties in the contemporary world. Hence, a point of interest towards their race is vested in the major characters. On this basis, they suffered segregation and prejudice. The premise of Kapoor and Naik (2023) establishes that the black color promotes hatred and, in the long run, alienation between people. Black skin, unfortunately is awarded the rank of Barbarian, third-class or low-class. Back to the modification and exposure to change, they were able to ponder on what colonization sought to achieve. It deals with the theme of identity crisis of the modern man specially the black man. The word 'black' for many denotes something characterized by psychological trust deficiency along with the sentiments of superiority and affirmative possibilities and amenities in the sociable aspect as well as the shortage of favourable possibilities, amenities & affiliation as Chaman et al (2022). Anam, Ajmal and Sharif (2024) analysed*the last white man* by the novelist Hamid with the help of structuralist narratology theory. This work discusses the novel's plot and characterization, and such aspects of the narrative as the use of titles, the sequence of events, and the choice of a narrator. Ashraf, Mehmood and Naseem (2023) give a postmodernist analysis of Mohsin Hamid's novel. This paper analyzes thematic core, stylistic features and the structure of the novel and pays much attention to the ways each of them reflects characteristic features of postmodernism. According to the authors, *the Last White Man* can be considered to have the features which define postmodern text such as narrative fragmentation, metafiction and the deconstruction of 'Great Narratives' respectively. Manzoor and Singh (2023) discuss racism and identity in relation to Mohsin Hamid's novel titled *The Last White Man*. The work by Manzoor and Singh concern the concept of race and the sense of self as presented in the novel. John et al. (2023) explore the issues concerning change and transformation in the novel by Hamid. In their work, the authors identify how the novel's characters cope with substantial alterations in personal lives and society. According to the authors, the novel represents an exceptional example of considering the problem of the people's and cultures' reaction on the moments of change. They talk about life expectations and transformations as prime topics of the novel with regard to personalities and their affiliations. Hence, this work is relevant in the analysis of process of change at the individual and community levels. Therefore, it underlines the novel's significance when it comes to the issues of metamorphosis in the contemporary world. Edward Said (1978) insisted that "Orientalism is constituted by Western

practices, which enable the existence of the Orient in the discourse on it" (p. 22). Nicha (2012) conducted a research article "Orientalism and Post-colonialism: Two movies were chosen for the analysis according to the concept of Orientalism and the continuation of imperial power over the East through knowledge and Hollywood stereotypes regarding the Arab world and people have been used to adjust the audience's perception. The two movies "The Sheik" and "Rules of Engagement" show the contrast of the Western powers asserting their control over Orientals while the latter portraying the Arabs in the use of modem weaponary, combat gears, communication equipments, and atomic devices. In the movie The Sheik, the west is represented, in the colonized form while the Arabs are represented in the same manner in the Rules of Engagement as terrorists. Another literature research work is Chandio and Waseem's (2021) "Examining the Representation of Muslim Woman in Ayesha Malik's Novel "Sofia Khan is not obliged" from Orientalist Lens". In this context, the plot of Sofia Khan is the response to how Muslim women are portrayed in Western societies which as innocent, weak and compliant. To know how Sofia overpowers the so-called westernized stereotyped image of Muslim women who are certain, self-sufficient, powerful, and vocal, a theoretical framework of Orientalism is selected for analysis. Thus, Orientalism is informed by a problematic European perspective when it comes to understanding Islam. As such, Said provided the basis for studying Orientalism with the background of colonial discourse. This he pointed out was political because he noted that the depictions of the oriental society painted by the west were political and not accurate accounts of reality. In Said's opinion, Orientalism invented a clear-cut division of 'civilized-exotic' (the West) and 'savage-sensual' (the Orient). These binaries framed colonial perceptions and the related policies. Through Said's interpretations, he incited more discussions and motivated subsequent works of post-colonial criticism that concentrated on the manner in which colonized cultures were depicted in western discourses. His work also shows how one needs to look at the STRUCTURAL bias and power relations imbedded in the theater representation (Said 1978). Bayouli's study examines Elizabethan drama's Orientalist depictions, exploring stereotypes, cultural fascination, and England's political and economic influences. Literary Orientalism is an area of interest that has been studied by Aldowkat (2018) through a research study. It was proposed to reveal the East-West exchange of literature in the selected works of the late eighteenth century and early and mid-Victorian era. Al-Shamiri and Sprinker critique Saïd's *Orientalism*, highlighting its overgeneralizations and suggesting its reevaluation for modern postcolonial studies. Abdulkasimovna (2020) focused her research on the topic of Orientalism in early English Romantic literature with special regard of the Arabian Nights One Thousand. Xiang (2018) critiques how East Asian culture and philosophy are approached in Western sinology, comparative literature, and philosophy, highlighting the dominance of Enlightenment paradigms like rationalism and empiricism. De Gruchy (2000) examines Waley's influence on Japanese literature, while Hassan (2008) and Ward (2004) explore Orientalism's impact on literature.

Research Methodology
Theoretical Framework
Orientalist Theory of Edward Said is used as a theoretical foundation to this study. Orientalism described by Said (1978) is the central theoretical concept. For the most part, it analyses the manner in which the 'West' has epistemologically produced and discursively unredirected the 'East', specifically the Middle East and Asia, in terms of color, cultural and superior intelligence. Accordingly, the book propounds the basic principles of how the Westerners have tainted their visions of the Orientals. Said noted that following the same perception, a dualism was created of East and West, to justify Europeans settling in other areas of the world. Through understanding Orientalist tropes, stereotype, power relations depicted in the novel, the investigation looks into

how the Orientnalism impacts the process of the hero's self-identification as well as the identity discourse. Thus, the purpose of this research paper is to analyse the Orientalist impressions in defining the self in *The Last White Man* by Mohsin Hamid. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) explores the hostile depiction of the East in Western literature, linking literature to politics through existentialist, epistemological, and Lacanian structuralist viewpoints. He examines the historical context of Orientalism, emphasizing Western imperialism and the lack of cultural encounters between the East and West, notably revisiting Napoleon's Egyptian invasion. For the presentation of the historical events of orientalism or modern orientalism, Chapter 2 of the book is titled Orientalist Structures and Restructures. It also describes it through the mentioning of the tools of the works of scholars, writers and artists. This article provides a description of the studies on the Muslim Near East conducted by the English and French scholars up to the outbreak of the World War I with references to the works of the French orientalist Sylvestre de Sacy and the works of the English orientalist Edward Lane. It attempts at informing the readers how orientalists have influenced the way western world perceived the Arab Middle East and vice versa (Said, 1978). Chapter 3, "Orientalism Now," examines colonialism's modern form, focusing on British and French expansion into the Orient (1870-WWII), and argues that colonial power shifted from Europe to the U.S.

ResearchDesign
The research is qualitative. In qualitative research, focus is made on experiencing the world in terms of where people live, work, play and think (Punch,2013). The research is particularly a synthesis of Content and Textual analysis; it looks at hidden meanings inherent within narrative structures, dialogue, and topical areas concerning self and Orient.

Data Collection Method
In conducting this study, the means of obtaining data is through close reading. In its original conception, close reading is a method of conducting a detailed and thorough analysis of a piece of literature (North, 2013).

Textual Analysis
This research employs textual analysis to explore the language, symbols, and narrative strategies in the novel, focusing on themes of identity and Orientalism. It examines the East-West dichotomy, its impact on characters like Anders, and how Orientalist discourse shapes cultural portrayals, racial segregation, and the negotiation of divided identities.

Data Analysis and Discussion
This inversion works against the power relation that Said (1978) talks about. Orientalism is the practice by which the Western world dominates the Eastern one through the process of establishing the latter as different and thus inferior. But in the "*The Last White Man*", the process of identity of Anders highlights a change. It presents a situation where the current power relations and the definition of identity are put into question. Thus, the concept of Orientalism described by Said allows the author to note this shift. Thus, the main aspects of Said's argument are reflected in the portrayal of Anders' conflict with his identity, his belonging, and other people's perception of him. It demonstrates how much the Orientalist views are still present in the formation of the identity and the self. "Once returned to his own home, Anders wondered whether the rifle actually made him safer, for he felt he was all alone, and it was better to be nonconfrontational than to stand up to trouble, and he imagined that somehow people were more likely to come for him if they found out he was armed, even though they would not find out, even though so many folks were armed,

he just had this sense that it was essential not to be seen as a threat, for to be seen as a threat, as dark as he was, was to risk one day being obliterated" (p.16). This passage from *The Last White Man* characterizes a turning point in Anders' process of self-identification. It is in a context that he reflects on the need to defend himself, especially by the possession of a rifle, against the background of social norms and phobias. Based on the theory of Orientalism as developed by Edward Said (1978) to describe the process of looking at the 'other' from the western perspective, the following reasons can be seen as the causes of Anders' self-awakening. This is seen in the contemplation of the rifle as a means of protection for Anders as against the society's expectation. This is the case because Orientalism generates a binary opposition whereby the 'Other' is considered a danger. Anders, who also changed into someone who is regarded as the 'Other,' thinks that carrying a weapon would mean becoming more of a threat. In this case, the rifle is nothing more than a means of self-defense; it transforms into an image of how people perceive him. The fear of being 'wiped out' is thus not only physical but also social and cultural, or better, representational. This shows the paradox of visibility and vulnerability that is something that Anders fears, namely being seen as a threat. According to Said (1978), the orient was not only misunderstood but was looked at with apprehension in the western world. In the same way, Anders feels that with his darkened skin, he is more exposed to other people's gaze. He is caught in a dilemma: This shows that, he feels protected with a gun, but at the same time he may seem like a threat to others. This is in conformity with the Orientalist's perception that made the 'Orient' a mysterious and at the same time horrifying place. Anders' internal struggle represents the general public misconceptions and fear of the other. Societal stereotyping has a direct relation with Anders' thought process about being armed and its effects on his social status. According to Said (1978), it's not only the scholarly discourse that played a role, but social representation as well. Anders' fear of being 'obliterated' can be interpreted to be as a consequence of the internalization of such cultural views. As seen, his worry is not only for the bodily assault but also for his status as well as the way the society perceives and comprehend him. This concern shows how the attitude of the society can influence the personal identity of an individual. "Anders knew he would soon lose his father, and that impending loss seemed more concrete now, more real, not like air but like a door or a wall, something you could bang against, bang into, and of course children know they will lose their parents, they know it from early on, but most are able to believe that that particular present will not come, that it is years away..." (p.198). This passage also shows a part of Anders' personal development, especially his preparation for the loss of his father. When analyzed within the framework of Edward Said's Orientalism (Said, 1978), this process reveals the factors that led to Anders' self-identification. The physicality of the loss he is expecting, the cultural perception of this cross-cultural phenomenon, the role of family ties, the stages of denial and acceptance of the loss and the psychological effects of the impending loss form the parts of Anders' growing personal identity. By following this journey of Anders, the author depicts the themes of individual development and the process of coming to one's self in the world where the social paradigms and cultural relationships dominate. In the quotation Anders is faced with the future death of his father, portrayed not as an idea but as something real as the door or a wall that is about to be knocked down. Said (1978) shows how Orientalism produced the East as an 'Other' and frequently, this was done by referring to concrete objects. Also, Anders's experience of loss is not abstract: it has a tangible quality and it makes him face the fact of change. This realization drives him to the process of self-identification, which is closely connected with the changes in his personal life. Losing a parent is a common phenomenon that has been felt by almost everyone; however, it is perceived in various ways depending on the culture of the people. Said (1978) explains that Orientalism tended to distort Eastern cultures by applying the Western perception on them. Nevertheless, the experience that Anders has is typical but at the same time specific to the cultural and social background. The plot of the film describes the hero's personal development based on

the loss of his father and the impact of cultural values on his perception of grief. "…like himself, to act undeniably like himself, but this was more difficult than he had imagined, impossible really, for what was more unlike oneself, more awkward, than trying to be oneself, and it was throwing him off, this artificiality, but he had no idea what to replace it with, and so he began instead to mirror the others around him, to echo the way they spoke and walked and moved and the way they held their mouths, …" (p.210). This quote is indicative of the major themes in Anders' process of self-realization. The desire for the expression of the true self, feeling oppressed by an assigned identity, the effects of conformity, the role of observation, and the search for acceptance are all parts of Anders' process of identity development. This journey is a rather general representation of the process of an individual's integration into society and the impact that social norms have on one's self-identification. Thus, influenced by these factors, Anders' search for identity represents the process of gaining one's self-identity in a world that is governed by cultural norms and expectations. Anders is faced with the challenge of 'being himself' which he finds to be a rather daunting and, in fact, inconceivable challenge. The already mentioned Said (1978) describes the situation when 'Orient' is seen by the 'Occident', and the true essence of the culture is overshadowed by the exotopia. Likewise, Anders faces the issue of individualism versus conformity and the pressure of other people's opinions. This conflict denotes a universal battle where people search for their identities and attempt to embrace them in societies that may not approve of such identities. Anders feels pain and awkwardness in his attempt of being a genuine person. Said (1978) explains that Orientalism produced a fabricated version of the 'Orient' which was not always accurate. Similarly, Anders' struggle to define himself is also depicted as awkward, which is an indication of the uneasiness associated with the process of being categorised. This is the phenomenon known in literature as the 'paradox of self-discovery,' which means that when one is in a process of deliberately trying to be him or herself, he or she may often end up feeling even more 'uneasy' in his or her skin. Due to the lack of free and real self-identification, Anders starts reflecting others' behavior. Said (1978) has observed that Orientalism generally resulted into imitation of the western culture by the eastern societies. Anders' imitation of others is a form of mimicry, and he becomes a perfect example of this as he tries to fit in the society. His actions depict the aspect of conformity in the society in the pursuit for individuals' identity. Anders always feels like people are watching him and he is an outsider which affects his self-esteem. Said (1978) further explains the Orientalist episteme where the East was always being Watched and Described by the West. The feeling of observation and criticism of others became the main notion of the self-identity of the protagonist, Anders. This external observation defines his behavior and cognition because he has to conform to what he perceives to be the general population's standards. "There was a dark-skinned cleaning guy at the gym, he worked nights, and Anders had always been nice to him, but the cleaning guy had started to look at him in a new way after Anders changed, and Anders had not liked it, but it got him thinking, and he had realized that the cleaning guy was the only guy at the gym who never exercised there, and he was such a small guy, and was he hired because of that, because he was small, in a place where it was important to be big, and did he have a family, bad where he came from, or was he alone, and why had Anders never asked him these things"(pp 67-68). Analyzing Anders' experiences and reflections of *The Last White Man* clearly shows the process of self- discovery using Said's (1978) Orientalist discourse. This process includes rediscovering communication with others, identifying the effects of external appearance, comprehending the system of ranks, familiarizing with various people, moving from fake relationships to real ones, reflecting on oneself, and having a desire to learn. Anders' changing viewpoints and his increasing acceptance of the world around him prove that personal change is possible when people are conscious of social expectations and cultural stories. This analysis shows that one needs to open up one's view and accept people's experiences in the process of identity development. Anders' change allows him to reconsider his treatment of the cleaning guy. Said

(1978) elaborated on how Orientalism resulted to limited thinking of the 'Other'. Likewise, Anders also starts to realizes the changes in the cleaning guy's attitude that was reflected towards him and starts to realize that he had not been very kind to the guy before. This shift in perspective can be viewed as a becoming process for the character as the questioning of the society's norms and prejudices is the key to self-improvement. The shift in the cleaning guy's perception of Anders captures the importance of the physical appearance in the society. According to Said (1978), Orientalism mostly relied on physical characteristics to explain cultural superiority of one race over the other. This phenomenon is evident in the film, where Anders comes to comprehend that his physical change has an impact on the social relations. This process of self-identification encompasses the learning of the role that one's physical appearance plays in determining the treatment and reception by others.. "Anders' pale father was the only pale person present, the only pale person left in the entire town, for there were by that point no others, and then his casket was closed and his burial was occurring and he was committed to the soil, the last white man, and after that, after him, there were none" (p.109). This text from the novel is actually depicting some of the important features of Anders' journey. This excerpt from *The Last White Man* depicts a particular moment in Anders' life, which is meaningful and charged with symbolism in the context of his search for identity. The death of his father, which marks the end of dynastic rule, and his awareness of being one of the last of his kind, underlines isolation, difference, metamorphosis, and the necessity for the self's reforging. Thus, the background of Anders' story describes the process of self-identification in the world where one's appearance, biography, and heritage determine a person. This paper, anchored on the Orientalist discourse of Edward Said, aims to examine the elements of Anders' self-awakening. Anders' father's funeral symbolizes his identity shift, highlighting themes of isolation and otherness, as he redefines himself in a changing town. Thus, the focus on Anders's father as the only white person reveals the effect of appearances on identity. Said (1978) has pointed out that Orientalism relied on the physical differences in order to demarcate the cultures. In the novel, this physical change of Anders's father creates a symbol of identity which in turn affects Anders's perception of his self and position in the society. "Anders had decided he would talk to him, finally after all these years, he would stop being nice to him, which was not really being nice to him, it was just treating the dark-skinned cleaning guy like a puppy, a dog, that you give a couple pats to, and call out good boy, and instead Anders would talk to him, and see what he had to say, not because Anders was better than before, but because the way Anders saw stuff was not the same, because the cleaning guy could probably tell Anders a few things, and Anders could probably stand to learn" (p.83). It is actually possible to identify key aspects of Anders' transformation in this passage and especially his choice to interact with the guy. Anders' decision to talk to the guy gives an insight of his transformation process as he seeks to discover who he is. These include change of interaction from the superficial to the significant, identification of personal change, appreciation of other people's experiences, defiance of the social order, emergence of empathy, realization of true relationship and breaking free from societal norms. Thus, it is essential to note that self-improvement should be associated with the ability to accept the society and other people in it, which this journey shows, insisting on the fact that everyone should be appreciated for who they are rather than the roles they have. Significantly, Anders' decision to approach the cleaning guy reflects the process of transitioning from the level of small talk to the level of communication. Said (1978) explains that Orientalism resulted in rather superficial and stereotyped relations between the West and the 'Orient'. Anders' earlier behavior toward the cleaning guy, which was rather to treat him like a pet, is also indicative of this shallowness. This desire to have a meaningful discussion is a clear deviation from the previous episodes' focus on labels and roles, suggesting a greater level of understanding and appreciation for people's identities. Anders can admit that he has changed his point of view. According to Said (1978), it is crucial to acknowledge people's development and change of vision when it comes to

the perception of the other. Such realization that he has changed in his perception is important in the process of Anders' character development. He realises that his earlier conduct was wrong and accepts the new change of being more friendly and polite. When analyzing the novel by Mohsin Hamid titled *The Last White Man* and viewing it through the lens of Edward Said's Orientalism theory, it is possible to gain certain insights on the concept of identity and social norms. Orientalism by Said published in 1978, states that the West has always had the tendency to perceive the Orient as the opposite of the self, thus the other, by virtue of this, they share a master servant relation. In the novel, switching of the white characters' skin color to brown can be perceived as the inversion of the given black and white categories that question the principles of the white supremacy.. "One morning Anders, a white man, woke up to find he had turned a deep and undeniable brown…He was overtaken by emotion, not so much shock, or sorrow, though those things were there too, but above all the face replacing his filed him with anger, or rather, more than anger, an unexpected, murderous rage. He wanted to kill the colored man who confronted him here in his home, to extinguish the life animating this other's body, to leave nothing standing but himself, as he was before" (pp.3-5). As the above extract shows, the change of the character Anders's skin colour from white to brown causes a traumatic change. This moment in the novel can be used to show how the themes of Orientalism as a binarized structure and its effects on the segregation of races can be introduced into the characters' lives. Said's concept of Orientalism (1978) is used to uncover how the novel depicts the process of identity, race and the acceptance of prejudice norms in society. Thus, the personal struggle for recognition and the process of change of the protagonist is also the reflection upon the race and prejudice in the society. Anders' change encompasses his personality and identity, and ANthrope transforms him into a social outcast. Said claims that the identity is mostly formed through its Other; the West creates its own identity based on the images it has of the East (Said, 1978). Anders, who has been part of the master group, now finds himself to occupy the position of the other side of the divide. This change challenges his view of self and self placement in society, he is now in a position where he is not part of the ruling race. Thus, the novel addresses the problem of the formation of the racial identity and the extent to which this process is rooted in people. The transformation also has implications in society as can be seen from the theme of racism. According to Said, because of this construction of the orient by the west, policies and attitudes emerge that isolate and exclude the societies of the orient (Said, 1978). This process of 'whitening' of characters to be transformed into brown-skin color may be viewed as the author's attempt to convey the idea that such barriers do not exist in reality. But it also shows the prejudices and the phobias that are a foundation of these barriers. The response of the society to the events in the novel from rejection to aggression are real life consequences of race and cultural differences. Said's Orientalism can help to decode the logic of these processes, which is why it highlights the fact that race and culture are not real but are constructed and that power regulates their construction. Thus, the racially-shifted main character of Hamid's novel challenges readers to look at the world and at themselves with fresh eyes by exposing such problems as racism and prejudice. Thus, the novel does not present the reader with a single story of an individual's change but offers a reflection on the afterlife of Orientalism and its consequences for race and segregation. "Oona's mother resisted the notion that violence was happening, or that substantial violence was happening, and said that if there was violence it was because there were paid aggressors on the other side, saboteurs, and that they were trying to kill both our defenders and our people in general, and they were sometimes killing their own kind, to make us look bad, and also because some of their own kind supported us, and they killed them for that, and that the main point was separation, it was not that we were better than them, although we were better than them, how could you deny it, but that we needed our own places, where we could take care of our own, because our people were in trouble, so many of us in trouble"(pp.52-53). This excerpt, particularly the part where Oona's mother is talking, is an example of Orientalism as described by Edward

Said and its effects on racism. The dialogue depicts ignorance and prejudice towards people of other cultures as seen in Said's Orientalism. Said (1978) explains how the Western part of the world has always looked at the Eastern part of the world as completely different and inferior. Oona's mother also has a similar thought when she differentiates between 'us' and 'them' where 'them' refers to the black people. This clear distinction echoes the logic of Orientalism that is based on dichotomy, "us" and "them", which often results in discriminating the other. The words Oona's mother uses are filled with fear and suspicion and these are two of the main strategies that Said outlines for constructing the 'Other'. Her subscription to conspiracy theories and aggressors reveals the ability to consider the 'Other' as not only the opposite, but also the enemy. This view is in accord with Said's assertion that Orientalism is not just the way of thinking but the practice that has actual consequences: people feel fear and hatred towards the Other. The concept of the superior race and the imperative of the divide seen in Oona's mother is crucial. According to Said, Orientalism entails the function of claiming that the 'Other' is inferior and therefore deserves subjugation (Said, 1978). This is the attitude that makes one group of people feel superior to the other hence justifying segregation and discrimination. This Orientalist outlook is evidenced in Oona's mother's statement that they are 'better' than the dark people and require separate areas. The change in appearance of white people to black skinned people threatened the identity and life of Oona's mother which explains her reaction. Said has pointed out that Orientalism means that people define themselves by negation of the 'other' (Said, 1978). These transformational challenges to the identity bring about defensive and aggressive responses in people. Thus, her statement that their very being is at stake if they do not act speaks volumes of their fear of losing the elite status in the society. The passage shows how Orientalism's oppositional form leads to the physical and metaphorical separation of races and the reinforcement of prejudices and phobias. Thus, the novel depicts how the Orientalist viewpoint affects the characters' and their community's beliefs and behaviours through Oona's mother's dialogue. The fear of the 'Other,' the assertion of superiority, and the justification of segregation are all elements that are in sync with Said's theory of Orientalism, stressing the endemic nature of these constructs in determining the attitudes and responses of people towards those who are different. Thus, the narrative can be seen as challenging these prejudices and as an appeal to people to be more tolerant of the otherness. "Men pushing themselves as hard as they could push themselves, not exercising, but training, and perhaps not even training, but fighting, fighting the gravity the world exerts on all those who walk up on it, exerts seemingly equally, though in actuality not equally, not equally at all" (p.71). This excerpt can be discussed with reference to the concepts of Said's Orientalism, namely, the theme of Orientalism's binary opposition and its role in shaping racially separated lives of characters. This is a symbol for the fight against the confines and the prejudice of the society. The characters are portrayed as struggling with gravity – a force that affects people, though not Everyone, in the same Way, which Represents oppression. Said in his book, Orientalism published in 1978, explains how Orientalism as a cultural and political system creates boundaries for the East by the West, thus defining the capability and potential of the Orient. In the novel, this fight against the forces of society can be seen as the battle against the control of Orientalist prejudices and the confinement of people's identities by race. "Anders had decided he would talk to him, finally after all these years, he would stop being nice to him, which was not really being nice to him, it was just treating the dark-skinned cleaning guy like a puppy, a dog, that you give a couple pats to, and call out good boy, and instead Anders would talk to him, and see what he had to say, not because Anders was better than before, but because the way Anders saw stuff was not the same, because the cleaning guy could probably tell Anders a few things, and Anders could probably stand to learn" (p.83) This excerpt shows that he has a complete change of attitude with regard to the dark-skinned cleaning man. In light of the analysis of the previous heading, the interaction he had with him was treating him more like an object, a pet. This change in his attitude is a move from an Orientalist

mentality which Said defined as a Western way of thinking that results in stereotyping and dehumanization of the other (Said, 1978). This is evidenced by Anders' realization and decision to have a real conversation as a way of breaking from these Orientalist trends. Anders' realization that the cleaning guy can in some way improve him shows that there is a erasure of orientalist notions. Said explains that Orientalism is a way of producing such arrogance on the part of the West with regard to the East (Said, 1978). In the novel, Anders' desire to learn from a man he once considered to be his inferior shows that he is moving away from the hierarchical thinking that underpins Orientalism, and therefore challenging the binary opposition of Orient and Occident.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the excerpts from *The Last White Man* some findings can be made regarding the causes of Anders' self-discovery and the role of Orientalism. Anders' process of coming to terms with himself is defined to a large extent by his relations with other characters. His transition from one dimensional friendships to actual friendships is a sign of his understanding of the richness of the human connection. This transformation in his social interaction is a significant part of his personal growth since it pushes him to move beyond the superficial and consider the world from others' perspectives. Self-discovery of Anders is a very distinctive process, which is characterized by a remarkable shift in his own world view. This change is not only the change of perception of others but also the change of his perception of himself and the world. The elements of introspection and self-awareness are critical to the development of Anders' character. They help him free himself from the existing prejudice and Let him look at the world and people with more compassion. Thus, the movie is a clear representation of the American dream and the general theme of defying the social order; This decision to openly interact with people of different classes and races is an indication of the protagonist's refusal to accept the social norms that define who is important and who is not. This aspect of his journey underlines the necessity of the critical thinking and the fight against the constraints of society that define the scope of one's perception and compassion. It is thus possible to identify empathy as one of the principal forces that define Anders' process of self-identification. His gift of knowing how to listen and put himself in other people's shoes transforms into an important resource to define himself. This is what makes him capable of forming closer bonds and to have a clearer perception of the world and the people in it. The concept of Orientalism is not directly referred to in the events of the novel but can be considered as a backdrop of Anders' change. The way he starts perceiving people around him is the process that can be associated with the need to shift from the orientalist worldview, which reduce the other to a stereotype. He is transitioning toward a more culturally sensitive and tolerant outlook on the world and people's identities. The self-identification process of the protagonist in relation to the dynamics in his life as well as his relationship with other characters and the world around him, stress the process of personal and interpersonal development and its complexity. It is therefore clear that the narrative of the man is an effective depiction of the fact that, personal identity development is a life long learning process that is influenced by events and people that one meets. It suggests that one should always be ready to change one's perception and be ready to face one's own prejudice. In addition, Anders' experience can also be related to the loss of a person and the influence of this loss on the process of self-identification. The death of his father and the understanding of his position in a changed society force him to face himself and his identity in a different way. This confrontation with the themes of loss and change serves as the turning point of Anders's character development as he is forced to face the reality and question his values and role in life. It is a reminder of how people's lives and the events in them can affect one's process of self-identity and development. In relation to the second research question, the novel demonstrates how race is a social construct and that the characters' race is not set in stone. The physical

alterations that the characters of the story go through in terms of their race show that race is a social construct as stated by Said. This shift makes the main characters question their own and each other's identities, which reflects the fact that racial perceptions are conditioned by society. The novel portrays how racism affects people's minds and their interactions with others. Orientalism is evident in characters' relations and perceptions, as it reveals the subordinated position of the colonized subject. Switching the skin color of characters from white to brown is an allegiance to the processes of breaking these norms and hierarchies, it shows how change of colors can challenge the existing power and social relations. The novel shows the psychological fight against conformity and prejudice of the society. It is evident that people are fighting against various oppressors that depict unfair society and inequality. This struggle is a symbol of the fight against the stereotyped perceptions of the Orient, and depicts the difficulties that people encounter in the society that adheres to these views. It is a book that raises the hope of a change in the society and the defeat of the segregation system of the blacks and whites. Thus, the characters start questioning themselves and the race barrier, and at least try to communicate with each other. This change shows that liberating people from Orientalism and its lenses is a twofold process of personal and social awareness and metamorphosis. The Last White Man is a novel that portrays how a person should try to comprehend the other side of the fence when it comes to race and culture. Due to the characters' interactions and the focus on understanding and friendship across the color line, the novel underlines the importance of the character development and tolerance of different people. This conclusion corresponds with Said's criticism of Orientalism, which promotes a society in which diversity of culture and race does not turn into a restriction of interaction and learning but into a rich source of knowledge.

Recommendations for the Future Scholars

Future researchers should examine how the characteristics of society, specifically socio-economic statuses affect the formation of identity. They should also consider how the issue of class and the economic reality affect the characters' sense of self and place in the community. Future scholars should be posited to unravel the hidden agenda of the characters' thinking and actions. Explain how childhood memories, dreams, and the individual's subconscious help shape themselves and their relationships.

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