

RE-ORIENTALISM AND THE EXOTICIZATION OF PAKISTANI CULTURE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF QAISRA SHAHRAZ'S SHORT STORIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempted to uncover the ways in which Pakistani diasporic writers with special reference to Shahraz's short stories represent the Pakistani people and their culture. This research article investigates Qaisra Shahraz's representations of Pakistani culture and gender through orientalist motifs in the selected short stories: A Pair of Jeans, Perchanvah, The Discovery, and The Elopement. Employing Lau's (2009) theory of re-orientalism, the study explores the dual positionality of Shahraz as both insider and outsider, and how this duality informs her portrayal of a patriarchal, superstitious, and culturally regressive Pakistan in contrast to an idealized West associated with individual freedom, rationality, and modernity. The analysis reveals how Shahraz's narratives reproduce orientalist binaries that align with global market demands for cultural otherness. Through McKee's textual analysis, this article focuses on the ethical complexities of the diasporic representation and questions the potential of literary self-orientalization in Anglophone Pakistani fiction with reference to Shahraz's short stories. In addition to the growing literature on re-orientalism, the paper is a contribution to the politics of cultural translation, authenticity, and narrator voice in postcolonial South Asian literature.

Keywords: re-orientalism, Qaisra Shahraz, cultural representation, diasporic literature, patriarchy, East-West Binary

1. INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial literature is concerned with the effects of colonialism that are still prevalent on cultural identities, the history and development of self and other. It critically questions the way imperial ideologies have come to define the image of the formerly colonized in cultural narratives. A notable example is Edward Said, one of the most prominent postcolonial theorists, who in his influential work *Orientalism* (1978), argued that the East has often been constructed as the binary opposite of the West—irrational, backward, and exotic, thus justifying colonial domination. The metaphor developed by Said concerning Western representation of the East is foundational in postcolonial

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studies, particularly in examining contemporary cultural and literary depiction of the orient. Lau's (2009) concept of re-orientalism deal with the evaluation of the writing of South Asian diasporic writers whose works often imitate the orientalist's style of writing.

Pakistani literature written in English is not completely devoid of the aftereffects of colonization. The Pakistani writers writing in English are actively attempting to impress the British readers and gain access to a wider international readership (Aman & Dodhy, 2022, p. 921). Aman & Dodhy (2022) argue that diasporic writers are used by the West to write about the Orient and their negative image and prove the superiority of the West. They explain that such depiction by diasporic writes distort the image of Pakistan at the global level by narrating their childhood events that they might have faced. These writers are unaware of the current conditions, but are writing as if they are presenting facts. These Pakistani English writers become re-Orientalists by presenting the exotic image of Pakistan and gaining literary awards and foreign recognition.

While previous studies have examined Qaisra Shahraz's short stories from the feminist, cultural materialist, and postcolonial perspectives, little has been done to explore the ways in which her short stories have represented Pakistani culture in re-orientalist fashion. While the themes of patriarchy, gender oppression, and female agency have already been studied, the practices of cultural fabrication for other audiences around the world are often not examined in depth. Likewise, the role of Shahraz in negotiating her insider-outsider status and the influence of repeated patterns of honour, superstition, patriarchy and East-West binaries on other re-orientalist discourses have received less consideration. The diasporic literature is increasingly influencing international understandings of South Asian Muslim societies and it is important to analyze the mediation of, or attempts to represent, cultural identity in these texts. This study deals with the meanings which have been constructed by the selected short stories by Shahraz with the help of certain narrative strategies and re-orientalist patterns of representation, in relation to Pakistani culture. It investigates how Shahraz's short stories *A Pair of Jeans*, *Perchanvah*, *The Discovery* and *The Elopement*, are engaged with themes of patriarchal oppression, honour killing society, and violence through control.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine Qaisra Shahraz's re-orientalist strategies in short stories in depiction of Pakistani culture.
2. To explore how Shahraz navigates her insider-outsider position using narrative techniques.

1.3 Research Questions

Q.1 How do Qaisra Shahraz's short stories show re-orientalist strategies in the depiction of Pakistani culture?

Q.2 In what ways does Shahraz navigate her insider-outsider position through narrative techniques?

With the help of the theoretical framework based on the works of Lau and postcolonial criticism applied to the work of Shahraz, this paper is also placed in the context of research discussing the diaspora, cultural translation, and literature ethics. It adamantly claims that re-orientalism cannot be understood passively as a simple repetition of the colonial discourse but rather as an active, market based form of representational activity that has important implications on the cultural representations of South Asian cultures on the world stage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Re-Orientalism in Pakistani Diasporic Fiction

The concept of re-orientalism, first articulated by Lisa Lau (2009), has become a critical tool to interrogate the self-representations of South Asian diasporic authors. Diasporic writers often replicate orientalist frameworks in the process of cultural translation and they want to meet the Western expectations in terms of offering difference, exoticism, and cultural differences (Lau, 2009). These writers assume a dual position as cultural "insiders" and "outsiders," making them powerful literary agents in shaping the global image of the Orient (Lau, 2009). Upston (2010) terms this duality as "ambivalent authorship" because the diasporic writer critiques and reaffirms culture stereotypes simultaneously. This framework has been used recently in South Asian literature. Sikandar et al. (2022) examine Shamsie's *Home Fire*, arguing that its depiction of religion and culture in the novel essentialize the East in such a way that appeals to liberal Western audiences. Similarly, IhsanUllah & Ahmad (2022) suggest that Khaled Hosseini's portrayal of Afghanistan in *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* reflects a re-orientalist tendency, depicting Afghan people as culturally deficient and emotionally exaggerated. Saleem (2017) coins a very specific term, "marketing Otherness", in order to criticize the tendency of the diasporic Pakistani fiction to create a commodity, cultural difference, which is thus based on the orientalist motives.

Collectively, these studies question not only who speaks on behalf of the East but also how the East is positioned within global literary circuits.

Several critics of Pakistani Anglophone literature have brought to light the use of orientalist tropes, particularly among diasporic writers who shape their narratives to conform to Western publishing market expectations. It is evident in the experts' opinions. Raja (2018) evaluates the statement as the burden of representation of Pakistani culture to the western audience. While taking into discussion Hamid's novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, Raja (2018) deals with the discussion of the author's representation of disquieting aspects of Pakistani culture as a cultural critic, which is fascinating to a global audience, but an act of betrayal from Pakistani readers to neglect the rich side of Pakistani culture. Raja (2018) asserts that a writer living in Islamabad cannot consider himself as a true representative of Chitral. These diasporic writers' work culminated in orientalist stereotypes, and they misrepresented Pakistan as a place of terror and insecurity to the western audience. A recent study by Karim (2023) investigates this misrepresentation of Pakistani culture in *The Wasted Angel* by Nadeem Aslam. Karim (2013) debates the re-orientalist discourse from the perspective of Lau's theory of re-orientalism.

Together, these analyses reveal that how diasporic, writers either consciously or unconsciously, become a part of fabricating literary representations of Pakistan that correspond to orientalist expectations.

2.2 Critical Perspectives on Qaisra Shahraz's Fiction

Few studies have explored Shahraz's fiction through the lens of re-orientalism. Abbasi et al. (2023) examine gender representation in Shahraz's novel *The Holy Woman*, evaluating that her female characters are often surrounded by patriarchal structures, either as a critique of systemic oppression or as narrative devices that reproduce it. While Faheem (2022) evaluates the same novel through the lens of Marxism, focusing on how class dynamics and power structures shape female agency. Roifah (2023) and Fatima et al. (2022), explores the role of narrative in gendered hierarchies of obedience and domination. Fatima et al. (2022), using a cultural materialist lens, evaluates that *A Pair of Jeans* presents clothing as a symbolic battlefield between Eastern morality and Western individualism. While Roifah (2003) highlights the linguistic structures of obedience within the Pakistani British household society, Fatima et al (2022) focuses on the significance of clothing in the material world.

These previous studies are valuable contribution in highlighting the different themes in Shahraz's short stories. However, these studies stop to interrogate why Shahraz's narratives constantly center on themes such as subjugation, misconception, and cultural rigidity. While Roifah (2023) and Fatima et al (2022) provide analytical insights to Shahraz's short stories, their

analysis is built on the narration as an apparent window into Pakistani culture without questioning the gaze behind these representations. This paper seeks to fill that gap by examining Shahraz's fiction through the framework of re-orientalism.

Although existing studies on Qaisra Shahraz mostly examines themes of patriarchy, female oppression, cultural conflict, and diasporic identity, inadequate attention has been paid to how her short stories construct Pakistani culture through re-orientalist representation. Moreover, insufficient scholarly attention has been given to Shahraz's negotiation of insider-outsider positionality and the ways recurring representations of honour, superstition, patriarchy, and East-West binaries contribute to re-orientalist discourse. Therefore, the present study addresses this gap by employing close textual analysis through Lau's (2009) concept of re-orientalism to examine how selected stories represent Pakistani culture within diasporic literary contexts.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Said (1978), in his book *Orientalism*, presented his critique of Western orientalist discourse. It is called "academic traditions", where Western writers present non-white people with the concept of degradation, inferiority, and oppression. Mehmood & Janjua (2017) explain that "Orientalism is a literary discipline with political and ideological constructions" (p.4). Said (1978) argues that Orientalism is the creation of "imaginative geography," where the West is the center and the marginal part belongs to the East.

Lau (2009) draws her concept of 're-Orientalism' from Said's (1978) notion of Orientalism. Lau (2009) explains that the South Asian writers Orientalize their own people and become outsiders. This study is based on two main elements of Lau's (2009) re-orientalist discourse. First is the tendency to 'generalize' or 'totalize' representation of Eastern cultures even from an insider perspective, which is discussed in the misrepresentation of Pakistani culture and Pakistani people. Second is the concept of the self-positioning of the diasporic writers as the 'cultural translators', who, ironically, remain outsiders to the culture they represent. Diasporic writers have a tendency of projecting a view that their home country is oppressive, subordinate, superstitious and backward and as such satisfies the demands of the Western audience. This concept is applicable to Shahraz's selected short stories. Though part of her early life was rooted in Pakistan, her adult years have been largely spent in Manchester. Her works often highlight themes like inequality, gender oppression, and cultural conservatism in Pakistani society. Meanwhile, her fiction represents an opposite portrait of the West being rational, enlightened and progressive. This narrative trend mirrors what Lau (2009) describes as a

strategic duality authors affirming insider status to gain narrative legitimacy while simultaneously offering eroticized, outsider representations that align with global market expectations.

This paper deals with the perpetuation of orientalism by diasporic writers as re-orientalists through Lau's (2009) notion of re-orientalism. The researchers examine how Shahraz's short stories first achieves snippets of authenticity from the western audience as an insider. Then, how her stories depict the exotic image of Pakistani culture and their people to make herself an outsider. The representational structures of her stories serve to position the West as cultural incarnation of freedom, and intellectual as opposed to the uncivilized, uneducated, oppressed, and backward people of Pakistan. These narrative choices emphasize the wider subtleties of literary market pressures and the politics of diasporic cultural translation.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study uses McKee's textual analysis as a research method. Belsey (2005) suggests textual analysis as a research method in English and cultural studies, "which involves close encounter with the work itself" (p.160). McKee (2003) explains that textual analysis investigates how texts makes sense of the world through representation, storytelling technique, language and symbolic patterns instead of simply replicating reality. McKee (2003) further discusses that analysis emerge through frequent textual and ideological patterns recognizable inside the text. In this way, the present study looks at how Shahraz' short stories create meanings concerning the issue of patriarchy, honour, superstition, gender relations, and East-West dichotomy through the use of the technique of framing, characterization, linguistic markers and spatial representation. The following interpretive framework allows the study to highlight the re-orientalist meanings which are constructed and consolidated in an ongoing series of representational patterns within the stories that have been selected.

The short stories such as *The Elopement*, *Perchanvah*, *The Discovery*, and *A Pair of Jeans* are chosen because they repeatedly address themes at the heart of re-orientalist discourse, such as the issue of patriarchal control, cultural conservatism, honour-based social structures, and diasporic identity negotiation. Close reading and re-reading of the texts is conducted to provide a means to identify the repeated thematic and narrative patterns. Special focus is drawn to language characteristics of cultural authenticity, characterization, emotional framing, spatial representation, symbolic contrast and the construction of gendered identity.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The politics of representation in diasporic literature has always been a challenging, particularly when diasporic writers want to translate the lived experiences of their homeland to Western audiences. Shahraz's short stories, written from a diasporic point of view, focus on the difficulties and inconsistencies inherent in the act of cultural negotiation. By means of Lau's (2009) re-orientalism as a framework, this study examines how Shahraz's short stories reproduce orientalist binaries that often represent Pakistani culture as static, patriarchal, and exotic. Although Shahraz sometimes breaks these essentialist tropes in her fiction, the narrative movement is in line with the process of commodification of the otherness of other cultures to be consumed by a Western reader. This paper includes Shahraz's short stories such as *A Pair of Jeans*, *Perchanvah*, *The Discovery* and *The Elopement*, examining the language, symbols, and characterization to analyze the reoriented presentation of Pakistani culture. The analysis probes how linguistic, gender subtleties, situations, and narrative voice contribute to the reproduction and occasional subversion of orientalist discourse within these short stories.

4.1 Language, Cultural Markers, and the Performance of Authenticity

Diasporic writers try to give an impression of authenticity to their statements while representing Pakistani culture by using the native language in their writings. It is apparent in Shahraz's short stories, like in *A Pair of Jeans*, *Perchanvah*, and others. In *A Pair of Jeans*, Mariam's anxiety is shown before meeting her fiancé due to her attires which reflects the pressure of Pakistani cultural performance and cultural presentation decency. When she changes from jeans into a shalwar kameez before entering the house, the act signifies more than fashion; it becomes a ritual of cultural conformity. This narrative links female identity to communal honour and modesty. This scene suggests that female identity is tied to communal honour and modesty. The contrast between Mariam's private comfort in Western clothing and her public presentation of Eastern modesty creates a binary individual freedom and cultural constraint. Additionally, Shahraz's use of untranslated cultural markers such as "sharif", "izzat", (Shahraz 2013, 43-47) in *A Pair of Jeans*; and other short stories underpins her insider authority while at the same time showing Pakistani culture through identifiable orientalist codes for Western readers by presenting these concepts as fixed cultural truths instead of contextualizing them historically and socially. These terms work as Lau's (2009) notion of "snippets of authenticity," where diasporic writers employ culturally specific language to establish legitimacy while simultaneously making cultural difference consumable for Western audiences. The narrative does not

contextualize these concepts historically or socially but presents them as fixed cultural traits of Pakistani culture which can be aligned with re-orientalist modes of representation.

Similarly, the representation of Kaniz Bibi's visit to the Pir and her belief that supernatural forces control fertility are told with noticeable narrative distance. The story calls her belief irrational instead of considering the social and cultural context. By isolating the superstition as evidence of cultural backwardness, the narrative fails to explore the emotional and social conditions that produce such dependence on spiritual practices. Lau (2009) explained that these "diasporic writers have a wish to claim that they have the best of both worlds.... gain credibility by having authentic accounts to impart" (p.585). The strategy of cultural authentication is evident in the above-mentioned stories too, where cultural specific details construct the image of Pakistani society for Western readership. Likewise, Saleem (2017) assessed this strategy of representation as the "marketing otherness" where diasporic writers generalize and sensationalize particular aspects of Pakistani culture.

This paper argues, in light of Lau's (2009) statement of authenticity, that diasporic writers impress the western audience to achieve their own reliability as cultural the representative by highlighting noticeable cultural differences of Pakistani culture in the western world. Therefore, they hold a dual position: while claiming insider authority through cultural awareness, they also work as outsider who interpret cultural practice for Western readers. Shahraz's diasporic position is clear through her narrative intervention of Pakistani culture. Her use of Urdu vocabulary and domestic customs refer to her insider cultural knowledge. However, her selection of these cultural elements through descriptive narration represents Pakistani society to Western readers predominantly through themes of patriarchy, honour, and repression. This dual positioning allows Shahraz to function simultaneously as cultural insider and cultural translator, a strategy that is dominant to Lau's construction of re-orientalism.

4.2 Gendered Binaries and the Construction of Patriarchal Violence

The rigid gendered roles and masculine violence represented through binaries such as male supremacy over female, or tradition and modernity approximate a deeper re-orientalist tendency to streamline gender dynamics in South Asian societies for a Western readership. It is evident in *The Elopement*, through the elopement of Rubiya. When she uses her personal choice of elopement, she is not appreciated for her agency. Her act is condemned as it disrupts communal stability and moral order. Through this scene, female identity is linked with communal honour. Father's anger with

control and intimidation creates an image of patriarchal masculinity. This narrative framing exaggerates the binary by restricting possibilities for resistance as shown in the case of Rubiya. Her desire of personal choice of marriage and love is represented socially dangerous and a threat to family honour. The narrative risks patriarchy to a fixed cultural condition attached to Pakistani society instead of presenting it historically or socially layered. As a result, female suffering becomes central to emotional logic of the story, inspiring Western readers to comprehend Eastern culture through images of domination and control. The association of female mobility with shame and fear as compared to the male authority reflects what Lau (2009) calls re-orientalist gender representation.

In Shahraz's short stories men are presented as violent, conservative and emotionally restrained. In *The Discovery*, it is stated how Jamil felt after walking in on his wife and her former lover on the verge of reconnecting and it is called descending into rage: "How many men had she charmed with her appearance... I discovered this there, guess what?" (Shahraz 2013, 109). This shows a husband's suspicion, possessiveness and masculinity. His response displays his anger and humiliation and fails to communicate with his wife. The narration highlights his envy and hostility. Consequently, the concept of masculinity is linked to dominant and surveillance and a traditional orientalist image of Muslim male is created. The female character, on the other hand, is presented as emotionally fragile and socially constrained. This difference intensifies the gendered binary between male domination and female suffering.

Though Shahraz's short stories criticize patriarchal violence, the repetition of these representational structures in multiple short stories intimidates essentializing Pakistani society oppressive toward women. Moreover, by positioning patriarchy exclusively within Eastern traditions, Shahraz's stories may exempt Western contexts from scrutiny, thereby constructing a binary moral geography: the East as repressive and the West as liberating. This binary position not only simplifies the gender question but also consider the Western reader as the morally superior observer, connects the re-orientalist economy of narrative consumption described by Lau (2009). Shahraz's tendency to dramatize women's suffering without offering discursive complexity thus raises questions about the intended audience and the marketability of female trauma in diasporic literature.

4.3 Superstition and the Pathologization of Cultural Belief

Shahraz's narration frames belief system as irrational and backward. It is evident in *Perchanvah* where Kaniz Bibi's unwavering faith in spiritual

possession and her dependence on a pir to ensure her daughter-in-law's pregnancy is rendered without nuance or empathy. "Kaniz Bibi had just looked upon her pir, she was dying to see her grandchild" (p. 58). The narration explains the visit of Kaniz Bibi to Pir and her dependence on him. However, it does not show her loneliness, fear, and grief. Rather than exploring how such rituals may offer psychological comfort or reinforce communal belonging, belief is presented as irrational madness, reinforcing colonial narratives of the mystical and illogical East. Shahraz creates this effect through characterization and narrative distance. This narrative interpretation supports re-orientalist modes of representation that interpret cultural practices as the spectacles of mysterious otherness for global audiences.

According to Lau (2009), such depictions are deemed as being "totalizing and misleading" (p.584), particularly when generalize across the entire communities. To Shahraz, it turns out that Kaniz Bibi is a caricature-ignorance, arrogant and emotionally unstable. This depiction not only delegitimizes traditional belief systems but also implicitly links wisdom and advancement with the West, thereby re-inscribing the civilizational binary central to Orientalist thought.

Nevertheless, Shahraz's critique of superstition cannot be discharged wholly, as she may also be revealing the social pressure surrounding fertility. The narrative's emphasis on irrational belief directs readers' attention to Pathologization of cultural belief instead of social issues.

4.4 Spatial Politics: Home, Exile, and the Imagined Nation

Spatial binaries create the differences between the East and the West. It is evident Shahraz's stories. One of the characters Mariam, In A Pair of Jeans, thinks about the difference between the two: "Pakistan was so far from Britain; it was another place... not a matter of what was the right thing to do convention-wise, but the time for right action" (Shahraz 2013, p. 55). This narration explains the geographical and ideological conflict between the two worlds. The narration demonstrates England as a place of choice, freedom, and self-realization. On the other hand, Pakistan is depicted as a place of social limitations.

This contrast is especially noticeable in the domestic spaces. Mariam is at ease in her jeans in her day-to-day surroundings and changes into a different outfit before going to the Pakistani house. The house then becomes a metaphorical place of cultural discipline and women's conduct is regulated by traditional norms. Identity is not a fluid or negotiable concept, but rather a spatial division that establishes oppositions such as modernity/conservatism, freedom/restriction, and individual/community control.

The narrative also depicts Britain as an emotionally and intellectually liberal place. Characters such as Mariam and her mother are either given more agency and flexibility in western settings or are restricted to structures of honour and social judgment in Pakistan. Characters based on Pakistan such as Begum and Kaniz are confined within patriarchal structure, while Fatima and Mariam are presented with agency from the West, placing the East as temporally behind. This spatial configuration helps to produce what Upstone (2010) calls "temporal orientalism", whereby the cultures of the East are depicted as a "time lag", or "time lagging", behind the progressive West. The nation of Pakistan is thus seen not just as a geographical area but as a symbolic one of tradition and repression. This underscores Lau's (2009) argument that diasporic writers often maintains a physical and ideological distance from their cultures of origin.

4.5 Narrative Patterns and the Commodification of Cultural Difference

Shahraz creates Pakistani culture through frequent narrative themes of honour, shame, patriarchal authority, and female suffering. It is evident in *The Elopement* through the story of Rubiya. Her personal choice of marriage is juxtaposed to the fear of shame and honour of family. It creates a story of moral tragedy, highlighting themes of honour-bound daughter, the angry father, and the helpless mother. Similarly, In *Discovery*, Jamil finds a letter during cleanliness, which describes the love affair of his wife. This matter is exaggerated and Rubiya has to leave her house because Jamil is angry and harsh. This misrepresentation shows the image of eastern male characters as aggressive and irrational. This depiction is the mysterious illustration of anger and threats from eastern characters. Male characters are portrayed as dominant, uncivilized and without any understanding as they are shown cruel. Rubiya and her mother as female characters are shown oppressed, humiliated, and powerless. The representation of the sanctity of the honour code exhibits the culture more important than people in the Pakistani society. This shows Lau's (2009) concept of stereotypes that South Asian societies are weighed down by honour codes and gender-based violence. Father is portrayed as angry and strict man who does not give freedom to his daughter while mother is depicted powerless who cannot help her own daughter. The eastern female characters are shown powerless. They suffer as a result of the anger of their male counterparts. On the other hand, the image of England seems to be glorified through characters such as Fatima, Mariam's mother in *A Pair of Jeans*. It is shown that Fatima is a powerful woman and she does not comment or does not react with anger to her daughter's Western clothing. This

contradictory picture, momentarily, depicts the East as less knowledgeable, uncivilized and exotic as compared to the enlightened and progressive the West.

Shahraz's characters are stereotypically presented with violence and aggression. It is exposed by different male and female characters. Begum is standing at the window when she listens to her husband. His voice is narrated as "supremely autocratic" "Her heartbeat had automatically quickened (Shahraz 2013, p.47). The autocratic term describes the impact of voice on female character's heartbeat and creates the atmosphere of threat and fear for the female counterpart.

Husband is shown as a dominant figure of the family and Begum is depicted as an oppressed woman. Likewise, it is revealed in the narration of Jamil too in the short story *The Discovery*. "How many men she had attracted with her look... Guess what I found there?" came with anger and bitterness. Rubiya leaves her home at night 2 o'clock and imagines "horror look of parents" (Shahraz 2013, p.110). The recurring representational patterns make Pakistani culture understandable through accustomed re-orientalist frameworks centered on subjugation, emotional excess, and social strictness. The writer extends the re-Orientalist stance to the violent nature of characters and it is connected with people who are residing in Pakistan. Whereas, Fatima, the mother of Mariam, who resides in England, does not get angry with her daughter when she sees her in western dress in front of her in-laws. She is presented as civilized and educated. IhsanUllah & Ahmad (2022) agree with this study in calling re-Orientalism as a practice to eroticize eastern culture "in relation to gender roles and power dynamics" (p.867).

There is nothing wrong with the critiques of patriarchy or constrained social norms as they are social issues; However, the dominant representational structures of the stories where masculinity, control, repression, suffering of women in Pakistani societies, lack of personal freedom are observed consistently that they begin to function as the primary markers of Pakistani identity. These representational structures narrow the cultural image presented to the readers. Additionally, such representation reduces Pakistani society into country of trauma and oppression. These stories ignore the normal social plurality, emotional negotiation, and rich cultural innovations. Rather these stories highlight the extreme and stereotype images or social conflict. Consequently, the cultural complexity is disposed to be lost amidst the repeated scenes of repressive or social conflict, thus perpetuating the familiar Orientalist assumptions about Muslim societies and South Asian cultures.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated Shahraz's short stories through Lau's (2009) theory of re-orientalism with the help of textual analysis. The findings show that Shahraz's short stories reveal Pakistani society through repeated dominant images of honour code, patriarchy, superstition, and gender-based violence. These representational structures frequently position the East as culturally rigid, less educated, and socially oppressive while the West is constructed as culturally advanced, educated, and liberal.

The analysis further indicates that these stories follow certain narrative strategies to create meaning such as spatial contrasts, narrative distance, characterization, and linguistic markers of authenticity. Additionally, these stories reveal recurrent binaries between freedom and restriction, and masculinity and femininity. This tendency of representation is aligned with Lau's (2009) concept of re-orientalist framework. By focusing on oppressed society, patriarchal authority, powerless women, these narratives risk narrowing Pakistani identity into an oppressive country.

As the study adopted the textual analysis, Alan's McKee's interpretative approach helped to examine the construction of meaning through language, characterization, narration, and repeated symbols in Shahraz's short stories. This methodology allowed the study to explore re-orientalist meaning through the internal narrative mechanisms of the texts.

This research contributes to existing discussions on re-orientalism, diasporic literature, and postcolonial representation. The relationship between re-orientalism and feminism in South Asian Literature can also be further explored by future researchers to investigate gendered representation in diasporic narratives. In addition, Shahraz's short stories can also be analyzed stylistically for comprehending the patterns of discursive choices through which meanings are constructed for different themes and perspectives. Such inquiries would improve the critical discussion around postcolonial literature and re-orientalist frameworks in diaspora writing.

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