
Deciphering the Postcolonial Discourse: An Oriental Reading for *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Housseini and *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammad

Latifa ZIANE BOUZIANE ¹

University of Hassiba Benbouali - Chlef- Algeria

TICELET laboratory (information and communication technologies in the teaching of foreign
languages and translation)

Email: zianebouzianelatifa@gmail.com

Received 25/04/2024

Accepted 18/06/2024

Published 01/07/2024

Abstract

Postcolonial literature explores the effects of colonialism and its aftermath, shedding light on the complex relationships between colonizers and the colonized. It challenges dominant narratives, gives voice to marginalized perspectives, and examines themes of identity, power, and cultural hybridity. It also addresses issues of nationalism, representationalism, opposition, ethnicity, and feminism. Postcolonial dialogue in literature refers to the discourse that emerges in the aftermath of colonialism, encompassing various elements such as the reshaping of identities, power dynamics, cultural exchanges, and responses to historical colonial narratives. It is often a space where writers and intellectuals from formerly colonized societies engage with and respond to the legacies of colonialism. A wide range of post-colonial novels has been published during the 1990s and the first years of the 21st century, including *The Kite Runner* by the Afghan-American novelist Khaled Hosseini and *The Parisian* by the British-Palestinian novelist Isabella Hammad. These novels provide insight into the postcolonial experience, offering nuanced portrayals of the impacts of colonization on individuals and societies. This article aims to deciphering the postcolonial discourse in Khaled Housseini's *The Kite Runner* and Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* using oriental lenses. An oriental perspective seems to offer a unique examination of the different experiences of those from oriental cultures, shedding light on the nuanced complexities of postcolonial discourse. Thus, the oriental perspective adds depth and nuance to the analysis of *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammad.

Keyword: Discourse; Hammad; Housseini; Oriental; Postcolonialism; The Kite Runner.

¹ Corresponding author: Latifa ZIANE BOUZIANE, zianebouzianelatifa@gmail.com

Journal of Languages & Translation © 2024. Published by University of Chlef, Algeria.

This is an open access article under the CC BY license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Introduction

Postcolonialism and Orientalism are two critical theoretical frameworks that have significantly influenced the study of literature, culture, and identity. Postcolonialism examines the legacies of colonialism and imperialism on formerly colonized societies, while Orientalism focuses on Western representations of the East and the construction of stereotypes and power dynamics. Postcolonial literature occupies a space brimming with voices that articulate the complex aftermath of colonial hegemony. This article unravels the nuanced postcolonial dialogue present in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*. Khaled Hosseini is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. Born on March 4, 1965, in Kabul, Afghanistan, his family moved to France and then to the United States when he was fifteen, where they sought political asylum. He earned a medical degree and practiced medicine for over ten years. However, Hosseini is best known for his literary works. Hosseini's debut novel, *The Kite Runner*, was published in 2003 and garnered critical acclaim for its poignant exploration of friendship, betrayal, and redemption set against the backdrop of a tumultuous Afghanistan. It became an international bestseller and was adapted into a film and a stage play. Hosseini has been recognized for his humanitarian efforts as well as his literature. He has been a Goodwill Envoy for the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, since 2006 and established Khaled Hosseini Foundation to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. He continues to write and advocate for refugees around the world. Hosseini is one of the contributors to a new emerging literary canon labelled Refugee Literature. Postcolonial literature is currently changing its focus. It is no longer connected with the aftermath of colonialism, but rather with concerns of marginalisation and displacement caused by wars. In this respect, it overlaps with Diaspora studies. Besides Khaled Hosseini; Isabella Hammad deals with diasporic experiences as it is quite reflected in her works.

Isabella Hammad is a talented contemporary British-Palestinian writer best known for her debut novel *The Parisian*. Born and raised in London, she graduated from the university with a degree in English Language and Literature before furthering her education at Iowa Writers' Workshop in the United States, where she earned her MFA. Her first novel, *The Parisian*, is a historical fiction work set during the decline of the Ottoman Empire and World War I. It follows the story of a young Palestinian man who travels to France before returning to his homeland. This widely acclaimed novel showcases Hammad's rich narrative abilities and deep understanding of cultural complexities. It has garnered Hammad significant attention, including being awarded the 2018 Plimpton Prize for Fiction given by The Paris Review. Her contributions to literature and her unique voice are recognized as fresh perspectives in the realm of historical and cultural narratives.

The Kite Runner and *The Parisian* analyse the complexities of postcolonial themes and narratives. They delve into issues such as identity, power dynamics, cultural heritage, and resistance within the context of colonial and postcolonial societies. Through an orientalist lens, this study explores how these seminal works navigate the cultural crossroads and identity struggles in their narrative. By examining the historical contexts and character dynamics within these novels, the study aims to illuminate the enduring echoes of colonial influence and the quest for self-definition in a postcolonial reality.

1. Postcolonialism and Orientalism : Literature Review

Postcolonialism and Orientalism are critical frameworks through which scholars examine the power dynamics and cultural representations that emerged from the encounter between the West and the non-Western 'Other'. Postcolonialism, a term coined by historians and literary theorists, refers to the study of the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands (Ashcroft,

Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2006). It is concerned with the enduring impact of colonial rule on former colonies in the period following the decline of colonial empires.

Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said in his seminal 1978 work, examines how the West has historically perceived and represented Asian and Middle Eastern societies as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and at times dangerous 'other' (Said, 1978). Said's critique centers on how these depictions have served to justify colonial and imperialist ambitions, perpetuating a skewed understanding of Eastern cultures that have echoed in art, literature, and academia.

Both Post-colonialism and Orientalism delve into themes such as identity, race, representation, and voice—challenging the reader to consider narratives from multiple perspectives. They advocate for decolonizing knowledge and critique the Eurocentric epistemological framework that has dominated global discourse for centuries. By Delving further into this literature review, one can explore various facets of these theories drawing on the works of leading scholars in these fields to understand not only their theoretical foundations but also their contemporary relevance.

1.1 Deconstructing Postcolonial Theoretical Framework

Post-colonial studies have emerged as a vital field of inquiry that seeks to deconstruct colonial narratives, challenge “eurocentric” perspectives, and amplify marginalized voices. Scholars such as Edward Said have played a pivotal role in critiquing “western” representations of the Orient and exposing the power dynamics inherent in Orientalist discourses. Post-colonial theorists emphasize the importance of decolonizing knowledge, reexamining history from multiple perspectives, and promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity. (Said, 1987)

On the other hand, Orientalism as a concept introduced by Said has sparked debates about the ways in which the East has been exoticized, essentialized, and misrepresented in Western discourse. By analyzing Orientalist texts and images, scholars have highlighted the role of power, hegemony, and othering in shaping Western perceptions of the East. Orientalism has been critiqued for perpetuating stereotypes, reinforcing colonial hierarchies, and limiting the agency of non-Western cultures. (Ashcroft et al, 2007)

Recent scholarship has sought to bridge the insights of Said’s Orientalism, exploring the intersections between colonial legacies, cultural representations, and identity politics. By engaging with diverse literary, historical, and cultural texts, researchers have uncovered the complexities of post-colonial identities, hybridity, and resistance to dominant discourses. This interdisciplinary approach has enriched our understanding of the interconnectedness of global narratives and the ongoing impact of colonial histories on contemporary societies.

Post-colonialism and Orientalism offer valuable frameworks for analyzing the power dynamics, cultural representations, and identity formations in a post-colonial world. By critically examining colonial histories, challenging Orientalist stereotypes, and amplifying marginalized voices, scholars can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable understanding of diverse cultures and societies.

1.2. Edward Said’s Orientalism

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism, as outlined in his seminal work *Orientalism* published in 1978, examines the Western construction of the East as the "other" and the power dynamics inherent in Western representations of Eastern cultures. Said argues that Orientalism is a form of cultural imperialism that perpetuates stereotypes, exoticizes the East, and justifies Western

dominance over Eastern societies. (Said, 1978) According to Said, Orientalism is a mode of discourse that positions the East as a passive, exotic, and inferior counterpart to the dynamic, rational West. Western representations of the East, shaped by Orientalist perspectives, often serve to reinforce colonial hierarchies and justify imperialist interventions.

Said's theory of Orientalism highlights the role of knowledge production in shaping perceptions of the East and the ways in which Western scholarship, literature, and media have contributed to the construction of Orientalist stereotypes. By deconstructing Orientalist narratives, Said aims to challenge hegemonic Western discourses and empower marginalized voices from the East to reclaim their agency and representation.

The oriental perspective offers a unique lens through which to examine these works, as it brings to light the specific experiences and perspectives of individuals from Oriental cultures, shedding light on the nuanced complexities of postcolonial discourse. An oriental perspective adds depth and nuance to the analysis of postcolonial narratives.

1.3. The Concept of Postcolonial Discourse in Literature

Understanding postcolonial discourse in literature is crucial for comprehending the historical, cultural, and political contexts from which postcolonial works emerge. Postcolonial literature often examines the lasting impact of colonialism on formerly colonized countries and their people. By engaging with these texts, readers can gain insights into the struggles for identity, power, and autonomy that continue to shape postcolonial societies.

As Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) explain in their seminal work "Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts," postcolonial discourse challenges the Eurocentric literary canon and offers alternative perspectives that emphasize the agency of colonized peoples. The study of postcolonial literature involves unpacking the complex relationships between colonizers and colonized, often highlighting how language itself becomes a tool of control and resistance.

An example can be found in the works of Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe, who employs English in a way that incorporates African oral traditions to tell stories from an Igbo perspective. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) provides an indictment of colonialism by portraying its disruptive effects on indigenous cultures, as noted by Gikandi (2001), who acknowledges Achebe's role in reshaping African literature. Achebe's novel dismantles stereotypical depictions of African cultures by presenting a complex portrayal of Igbo society prior to and during British colonial rule, thus, Achebe is considered as a prominent voice in postcolonial literature. Additionally, Bhabha (1994) introduces the concept of "hybridity," suggesting that postcolonial cultures are neither fully detached from nor completely subsumed by colonial influences but instead occupy a third space where new cultural forms emerge. This perspective is crucial for understanding how identities are negotiated in postcolonial literature.

Postcolonial dialogue can also be seen in the work of the founding father of Postcolonial Studies; Edward Said. In his seminal work *Orientalism* (Said, 1978), he analyzes how Western literature and intellectual thought have historically constructed a distorted image of "The Orient," facilitating its subjugation through knowledge production and cultural representation. Furthermore, Spivak's question, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Spivak, 1988), deeply interrogates how postcolonial discourse often overlooks the voices of those who are doubly marginalized by imperialism and by their position within their own society's power hierarchies. In recent times, literary works like Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (Adichie, 2006) continue to explore postcolonial themes by delving into the effects of colonialism on personal and national identities during the Nigerian Civil War.

To critically engage with postcolonial texts, it's essential to recognize how representations of race, ethnicity, gender, and class contribute to broader discourses on power and resistance. Understanding these elements within literature not only enriches interpretation but also fosters a more nuanced appreciation of global literary traditions. Thus, exploring postcolonial literature through these scholarly perspectives enables readers and writers alike to understand the multifaceted impacts of colonial history on contemporary narratives and their relevance to ongoing discussions about culture and identity.

2. Overview about *The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini (2003) is set in Afghanistan that spans from the final days of the monarchy to the post-Taliban near present. It is a powerful and emotionally gripping novel that explores themes of friendship, betrayal, redemption, and the impact of historical events on personal lives. Set against the backdrop of a changing Afghanistan, the story follows the protagonist, Amir, a boy from Kabul whose closest friend is Hassan, his father's young Hazara servant. As Amir navigates his complex relationship with his childhood friend, Hassan, and grapples with guilt and the consequences of past actions. This pivotal event during their childhood deeply affects their lives and sets Amir on a journey for atonement.

Hosseini's narrative skillfully weaves together personal and political turmoil, capturing the reader's attention with its vivid descriptions and poignant storytelling. The novel delves into the complexities of Afghan society, the effects of war and conflict, and the enduring bonds of loyalty and love.

At its core, *The Kite Runner* is a tale of redemption and atonement, as Amir seeks to make amends for his past mistakes and find forgiveness. Through Amir's journey, the novel explores themes of class differences, cultural divides, and the enduring impact of childhood trauma. Hosseini's evocative prose and compelling characters have resonated with readers worldwide, making *The Kite Runner* a bestseller and a critically acclaimed work of contemporary fiction.

3. Overview about *the Parisian*

The Parisian by Isabella Hammad is a historical novel set against the backdrop of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Palestinian nationalism. It chronicles the life of Midhat Kamal, a young Palestinian from Nablus who is sent to France to study medicine in 1914. Set against the backdrop of World War I and the subsequent political upheavals in the Middle East, the novel is a sweeping tale of love, identity, and the struggle for national independence.

The book explores Midhat's identity struggle between his life in France, where he is known as 'The Parisian,' and his loyalty to his native land as he returns to a changed Palestine in the midst of political upheaval. As Midhat returns to a homeland under British mandate, he navigates his emergent identity against the complexities of family expectation and political turbulence. The narrative spans over several decades and continents, exploring the intersections between personal ambition, historical events, and the quest for identity.

4. The Postcolonial Discourse in *The Kite Runner* and *The Parisian*

It is important to understand the historical and cultural contexts that influenced the work. For example, in *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini explores the lasting impact of colonialism on Afghan society through the experiences of the novel's protagonist, Amir. Similarly, Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* examines the complex relationship between French and Arab cultures in the aftermath of World War I.

When analyzing postcolonial themes in literature, it can be helpful to examine how the author uses language and imagery to convey the complexities of colonialism and its aftermath. For example, Hosseini's use of Persian idioms and cultural references in *The Kite Runner* serves to underscore the lingering effects of colonialism on Afghan culture.

Hassan's favorite book by far was the *_Shahnamah_*, the tenth-century epic of ancient Persian heroes. He liked all of the chapters, the shahs of old, Feridoun, Zal, and Rudabeh. But his favorite story, and mine, was "Rostam and Sohrab," the tale of the great warrior Rostam and his fleet-footed horse, Rakhsh. Rostam mortally wounds his valiant nemesis, Sohrab, in battle, only to discover that Sohrab is his long-lost son." (Hosseini, 2003:.23).

In *The Kite Runner*, the postcolonial discourse is evident through the exploration of power dynamics, cultural representations, and the impact of colonial legacies on Afghan society. The novel delves into themes of oppression, identity, and the complexities of postcolonial experiences in a changing world.

Similarly, Hammad's use of French and Arabic phrases in *The Parisian* highlights the cultural hybridity that emerged in the wake of colonialism. The quotation "ya'tik al_afieh" (Hammad,2019:.157) is an example of how the novel embraces its cultural aspects. The extract is an Arabic phrase that means "May you stay in good health". This term emphasises the Arabic language's significance to the community's culture and identity. Moreover, "ya tayrin taayir fis-sama' al-aali; sallim al-hilu al- aziz al-ghali"(Hammad,2019:.15). It is a well-known song in the Syrian culture, sung by the main character of the novel which highlights Syrian and Lebanese traditions of culture. These statement is a prevalent expression in *The Parisian* that highlights the Arabic language's status as a cultural emblem, emphasising the power relations between dominant and marginalised cultures. The use of Arabic in the work creates a counter-narrative to the dominant French culture that exists in Paris.

Another important aspect of deciphering postcolonial dialogue is considering the power dynamics at play. In both novels, the characters grapple with issues of power and oppression, both on a personal and a societal level. Hosseini's portrayal of the corrupt and oppressive regime in Afghanistan, for example, serves as a commentary on the ways in which colonialism continues to shape the country's political landscape.

You're preaching to the choir, Amir," he said. "But the fact is, take current immigration laws, adoption agency policies, and the political situation in Afghanistan, and the deck is stacked against you."... "I don't get it," I said. I wanted to hit something. "I mean, I get it but I don't get it. (Hosseini, 2003:.297)

Similarly, Hammad's portrayal of the complex relationship between the French and Arab characters in *The Parisian* sheds light on the power dynamics that emerged in the wake of colonialism. "Thank you, Patrice, for that lesson," said Frédéric, with a jolly smile. The damage was done. Midhat wished he had not spoken" (Hammad, 2019:. 82). Midhat's statements demonstrated his inferiority issue towards Doctor Molineu, as evidenced by his apology and sorrow for sharing his views.

Overall, deciphering the postcolonial discourse in literature requires a nuanced and critical reading of the text, as well as an understanding of the historical and cultural contexts that shaped it. By paying close attention to the author's use of language and imagery, as well as the power

dynamics at play, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the complex issues that postcolonial literature seeks to address.

4.1. The Impact of Colonialism on Afghanistan in *The Kite Runner* and Palestine in *The Parisian*

In Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, Afghanistan's history is deeply intertwined with various forms of foreign intervention and influence. The narrative provides a personal account of life in Afghanistan before the Soviet invasion through the lens of Amir, a young Afghan boy from Kabul. Colonialism's impact in Afghanistan may not be direct colonization as experienced by many other countries, but rather a form of neocolonial influence due to geopolitical interests. This lingering influence is seen in the way social hierarchies are structured, how ethnic groups interact, and how characters like Amir deal with personal guilt and redemption against the backdrop of a country grappling with its turbulent history. Through Amir's description the reader feels the reflected impact of colonialism.

Long before the Roussi army marched into Afghanistan, long before villages were burned and schools destroyed, long before mines were planted like seeds of death and children buried in rock-piled graves, Kabul had become a city of ghosts for me. A city of harellipped ghosts (Hosseini, 2003:114).

The Parisian, by Isabella Hammad, tells the story of Midhat Kamal during the last years of Ottoman rule and through the French mandate in the post-World War I era. Palestine's historical context is elucidated through Midhat's journey from Nablus to France and back again as it explores personal identity against the vast changes brought about by colonialism. The novel unpacks complex political dynamics, including nationalism and identity formation within a colonized society. It touches upon how Palestinians negotiate their sense of self in reaction to foreign rule and ideological impositions. Midhat's failure to meet the colonisers' expectations of him is a kind of resistance to their harsh authority. Midhat's schooling exemplifies the colonisers' aspirations. Claiming him as “educated in the Euro-centric syllabus of the mission school he attended French English, Mathematics, History, but his education had not been wholly embraced” (Hammad,2019:.76). Midhat's schooling is viewed as an example of coloniser aspirations, which he does not completely accept.

Both texts delve into how societies have been shaped by colonization - Afghanistan through its power vacuums that foreign influencers sought to fill, shaping its modern conflicts; Palestine through direct control which sought to redefine borders and identities. These works highlight complexities such as fragmented identities, dislocation, and cultural dissonance experienced by individuals within colonized societies. They explore postcolonial themes such as the struggle for self-determination, conflict between traditional values and imposed modernity, and the quest for personal redemption amidst national upheaval.

The relevance of postcolonial dialogue when analyzing these texts lies in understanding how historical events have led to current societal structures and personal identities. It facilitates a deeper appreciation of both narratives by framing them within their specific socio-historical contexts while also showcasing universal themes tied to colonial legacies that many postcolonial societies can empathize with.

4.2. Postcolonial Themes in *The Kite Runner* and *The Parisian*

In Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*, characters navigate complex social hierarchies and personal relationships that reflect the broader postcolonial themes present in both novels.

In *The Kite Runner*, the relationship between Amir, a Pashtun boy, and Hassan, his Hazara servant's son, is at the epicenter of the novel's exploration of social divisions. Amir's struggle with loyalty and his quest for redemption is underscored by the power dynamics inherent in their relationship. The kite-flying competition presents a metaphor for control and freedom with Amir 'cutting' free from his moral failings as he witnesses Hassan's rape without intervening (Hosseini, 2003). His guilt reflects the broader turmoil in Afghanistan while also commenting on personal responsibility post-colonialism.

Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* features Midhat Kamal navigating between two worlds: his native Nablus and post-World War I France. This duality highlights power dynamics as Midhat wrestles with colonial attitudes towards the Arab world. He oscillates between asserting his identity and assimilating to French culture as seen in exchanges with various French characters who often exoticize or belittle him (Hammad, 2019). Through these interactions, Hammad dissects the legacy of colonialism on individual identity.

Both novels suggest that postcolonial societies grapple with entrenched hierarchies. Through their characters' interactions—Amir's betrayal of Hassan and Midhat's resistance to colonial influences—the novels critique the lingering impact of imperialism on personal relationships and societal structures.

4.3. The Role of Orientalism in Shaping Postcolonial Discourse in *The Kite Runner* and *The Parisian*

Orientalism has significantly influenced the formation of postcolonial discourse, and this is evident in both *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini and *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammad. Orientalism, as defined by Edward Said, is a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said, 1978) This concept becomes a lens through which the East is viewed and often leads to stereotyping and misrepresentation of Eastern societies. Orientalism plays a significant role in shaping postcolonial discourse, reflecting the complex dynamics between Western perceptions and Eastern identities.

In *The Kite Runner*, the role of Orientalism in shaping postcolonial discourse can be observed in the way Afghan culture is portrayed against the backdrop of Western perceptions. The novel provides insight into Afghani customs, religious practices, and social hierarchies.

Afghans cherish customs but abhor rules." This emphasizes a sense of cultural tradition — a tradition that many Afghans will hold onto, even when they are no longer in Afghanistan. The hating of rules brings to mind the saying, "The only rule is 'there are no rules.'" This foreshadows the fighting and insurgency that will rock the nation for many years. (Hosseini, 2003:41)

Overall, there is also a distinct contrast drawn between life in Afghanistan and life in Western countries like the United States, where some characters seek refuge and asylum. This contrast can perpetuate certain stereotypes associated with the East as traditional or backward compared to the progressive West.

America was different. America was a river, roaring along, unmindful of the past. I could wade into this river, let my sins drown to the bottom, let the waters carry me

someplace far. Someplace with no ghosts, no memories, and no sins. If for nothing else, for that, I embraced America (Hosseini, 2003:114).

The Kite Runner explores the intricate relationship between Afghanistan and the West. The Western perception of Afghanistan as a place of perpetual conflict and otherness is palpable throughout the narrative. This is evident when Amir reflects on his struggling relationship with his homeland and how it is seen through an American lens. Hosseini writes, "Afghans always say 'flighty' for Americans... we don't need policemen to police our borders" (Hosseini, 123). This quote encapsulates how Afghan identity is constructed in relation to Western ideals, highlighting a form of internalized Orientalism where Afghan characters navigate their self-worth through Western validation.

Similarly, in *The Parisian*, Isabella Hammad delves into the intersections of Palestinian identity under British colonial rule. The protagonist Midhat Kamal's experiences in France and Palestine illustrate the tensions between self-identification and external labeling. Hammad writes, "In France, he would be known first as an Oriental before anything else" (Hammad, 45). This statement underscores how Orientalist stereotypes influence personal identities and reinforce colonial power structures.

The Parisian, directly engages with Orientalist notions through its Palestinian protagonist who travels to France before World War I. The novel showcases how Eastern identities are navigated and often challenged in Western societies. Kamal confronts a myriad of Orientalist stereotypes as he attempts to forge his identity within colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Both novels also reflect on how these Orientalist portrayals affect personal relationships and societal structures. In *The Kite Runner*, Baba's disdain for Russians compared to his admiration for everything American epitomizes this complex internal struggle. Hosseini elaborates, "Baba would roll his eyes and wave his hand through the air... 'They may be ruthless killers but at least they have principles'" (Hosseini, 89). The dichotomous us-versus-them mentality exacerbates postcolonial tensions within the narrative. *The Parisian* further examines these themes through Midhat's assimilation struggles in French society, where he battles against prevailing Orientalist prejudices while grappling with his own cultural heritage. Hammad reveals this conflict: "His sartorial choices were often questioned...as if to emphasize his foreignness" (Hammad, 102). These experiences foreground the nuanced ways in which postcolonial identities are negotiated amid lingering colonial legacies.

Both novels contribute to postcolonial discourse by challenging Orientalist narratives. They portray complex characters and nuanced cultural situations that move beyond simple binaries of East vs. West or colonizer vs. colonized. By highlighting individual experiences against larger social and political forces, Hosseini's and Hammad's works enable readers to critically engage with postcolonial legacies shaped by Orientalist thought. Through storytelling, readers engage with perspectives that reveal how lived experiences intersect with broader postcolonial themes such as displacement, identity formation, and resistance to oppression. Each narrative underscores how Orientalism is not merely an academic concept but rather something that deeply affects individuals on personal levels—thereby advocating for a more balanced understanding that challenges Orientalist stereotypes.

The Kite Runner and *The Parisian* delve into the role of Orientalism in shaping postcolonial discourse by illustrating how characters navigate their identities within frameworks created by Western dominance. These narratives highlight that even amidst efforts to reclaim their own stories, the shadow of Orientalism persists, challenging characters to redefine themselves against historically ingrained perceptions.

5. *Oriental Reading of The Kite Runner*

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini offers a compelling portrayal of Afghanistan, from the fall of the monarchy, through the Soviet invasion, to the rise of the Taliban. The East is depicted as a land of stark contrasts; rich in culture and tradition yet plagued by political turmoil and social strife. Through the character of Assef, Hosseini captures the distracted picture of the orient.

He stood up, paced around the sofa once, twice. Sat down again. He spoke rapidly. "Door to door we went, calling for the men and the boys. We'd shoot them right there in front of their families. Let them see. Let them remember who they were, where they belonged." He was almost panting now. "Sometimes, we broke down their doors and went inside their homes. And... I'd... I'd sweep the barrel of my machine gun around the room and fire and fire until the smoke blinded me." He leaned toward me, like a man about to share a great secret. "You don't know the meaning of the word 'liberating' until you've done that, stood in a roomful of targets, let the bullets fly, free of guilt and remorse, knowing you are virtuous, good, and decent. Knowing you're doing God's work. It's breathtaking (Hosseini, 2003:.237).

Hosseini's narrative humanizes its Eastern characters, escaping Western stereotypes by presenting complex individuals navigating the intersections of personal and national identities amidst historical upheavals. Through the eyes of Amir, readers see a nuanced East where loyalty and betrayal, honor and disgrace coalesce under the shadows of societal expectations.

The study by Pungkaswani et al.(2021) delves into the concept of Orientalism in Khaled Hosseini's novel through the lens of Edward Said's theory. The novel portrays the West (represented by characters like Assef and Russia) as superior and the East (represented by characters like Hassan and Afghanistan) as inferior, reflecting historical and cultural tensions (Pungkaswani et al., 2021).

The characters in the novel challenge Orientalist perspectives by humanizing Afghan culture and characters, offering a nuanced depiction beyond Western preconceptions. The narrative also examines the enduring effects of colonial interventions on Afghan society, highlighting the complexities of cultural identities and power dynamics in a postcolonial context.

I remember the two of us walking through Lake Elizabeth Park in Fremont, a few streets down from our apartment, and watching boys at batting practice, little girls giggling on the swings in the playground. Baba would enlighten me with his politics during those walks with long-winded dissertations. "There are only three real men in this world, Amir," he'd say. He'd count them off on his fingers: America the brash savior, Britain, and Israel. "The rest of them--" he used to wave his hand and make a phht sound "--they're like gossiping old women (Hosseini, 2003:.105).

By critiquing and challenging Orientalist narratives, the novel invites readers to question Western representations of the East and consider the agency and struggles of marginalized voices in a world shaped by colonial legacies.

The bit about Israel used to draw the ire of Afghans in Fremont who accused him of being pro-Jewish and, de facto, anti Islam. Baba would meet them for tea and rowt cake at the park, drive them crazy with his politics. "What they don't understand," he'd tell me later, "is that religion has nothing to do with it." In Baba's view, Israel was an island of "real men" in a sea of Arabs too busy getting fat off their oil to care for their own. "Israel does this, Israel does that," Baba would say in a mock-Arabic

accent. "Then do something about it! Take action. You're Arabs, help the Palestinians, then!"(Hosseini, 2003:.105).

Postcolonial approaches, as discussed by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2002), offer insights into the effects of colonization on culture and societies, providing a framework for analyzing narratives like *The Kite Runner*. The novel's exploration of themes such as friendship, betrayal, and redemption resonates with postcolonial literature that addresses issues of identity, independence, and cultural heritage (Pungkaswani et al., 2021). Furthermore, the study draws on the historical context of Afghanistan's turbulent past, including the Soviet intervention and the rise of the Taliban regime, to analyze how external influences shape the narrative of power dynamics and oppression in the novel (Pungkaswani et al., 2021). By employing a descriptive qualitative method, the researchers analyze selected passages to highlight instances of orientalism and its impact on character development and plot progression (Pungkaswani et al., 2021).

Orientalism in *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini underscores the significance of postcolonial theory and Orientalism in understanding the themes of superiority and inferiority, cultural representation, and historical context within the novel. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on power dynamics, identity, and representation in literature, particularly in the context of postcolonial narratives.

6. *Oriental Reading of The Parisian by Isabella Hammad*

Isabella Hammad's novel *The Parisian* provides an insightful exploration of Orientalism as depicted by Edward Said. The novel delves into the complexities of cultural representations and power dynamics between the East and the West. Hammad's vivid portrayal of the protagonist's experiences in Paris and his cultural identity resonates with Said's critique of Orientalist stereotypes and the construction of the "other."

The novel examines Palestine's multifaceted identity during the Ottoman Empire's decline and the subsequent British Mandate. Hammad articulates a critique of Orientalism by showcasing Palestinians' cultural richness and intellectual vibrancy against Western preconceptions that often render the East as exotic or backward. As political movements swell around him, Midhat's life is interwoven with themes of national identity, colonial influence, and the quest for self-determination.

Throughout the novel, Hammad skillfully navigates the intersections of history, politics, and personal identity, offering a compelling analysis of Orientalism. The characters and their interactions serve as a lens through which readers can examine the pervasive influence of Orientalist ideologies in shaping perceptions of the Middle East. She reflects how the protagonist is highly influenced by the Western culture by describing him "locked in an old colonial formula where subjects imitated masters as if in the seams of their old garments they hoped to find some dust of power left trapped" (Hammad, 2019:.543).

In terms of Orientalism, one could argue that the novel challenges the stereotypical depiction of Eastern identities by providing a nuanced portrayal of its protagonist—a practice that goes against the grain of Said's Orientalism. When approaching the novel from this perspective, it is essential to highlight the way Hammad portrays the complexities and internal conflicts within her characters; "thoughts bloomed in French in his mind" (Hammad, 2019:.46). This technique allows for an interpretation beyond simple binaries of East and West, or the colonizer versus the colonized.

Hammad (2019) delves into Midhat's identity crisis as he navigates different cultures, which is reminiscent of Said's notion that Orientals are often depicted as "Others," with exotic and backward traits (Said, 1978). "He loved this country; he loved her lines of rationalism, the sciences that put a veil on the unknowable" (Hammad, 2019: 179). However, Midhat's character defies reductionist Western perceptions by exhibiting depth, intellectuality, and evolving self-awareness.

The analysis pays attention to how *The Parisian* deconstructs these orientalist stereotypes by presenting its characters as complex individuals rather than caricatures. The reader may explore scenes where Midhat negotiates his identity between being seen as an exotic curiosity in France and his return to a homeland undergoing colonial upheaval.

Hammad's nuanced portrayal challenges essentialist notions of the East, inviting readers to interrogate their own preconceptions and biases. By weaving together personal narratives with broader historical contexts, "The Parisian" illustrates the enduring relevance of Said's paradigm of Orientalism and its impact on cultural discourses.

As the narrative unfolds, Hammad exposes the intricacies of power and representation, illustrating how Orientalism continues to permeate societal attitudes and influence the construction of knowledge about the Middle East. The novel invites readers to critically engage with these complex dynamics, compelling them to reevaluate their understanding of cultural and literary representations. Hammad's skillful narrative and engagement with Orientalist themes make *The Parisian* a thought-provoking and significant work that contributes to the ongoing discourse surrounding Orientalism and its implications in contemporary society claiming "the Arabs have no public opinion. They picture them as a crowd of morons ruled by their elites" (Hammad, 2019: 478).

In the context of Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*, Said's perspective influences the analysis by highlighting the novel's departure from traditional storytelling norms. Hammad's work, set in interwar Palestine and France, presents a narrative that defies the fragmented and discontinuous nature typical of Palestinian literature. Unlike many Palestinian novels that revolve around themes of exile and displacement, *The Parisian* is grounded in a specific time and place (Nablus) and focuses on the life of its protagonist, Midhat Kamal, against the backdrop of turbulent historical events.

There were things to look forward in Nablus: his cousins, his grandmother, the family at the diwan. But there would also be boredom, and deference to views not his own. The hours on the ship were therefore a time to meditate on the notion of duty, and on his place in that constellation of purpose and tradition which had for the last five years in France been suspended, when with a freedom born of a strangeness he had bypassed the laws of family and dallied in the alleyways of chance and rapture. (Hammad, 2019: 204).

Conclusion

Both *The Kite Runner* and *The Parisian* offer nuanced perspectives on postcolonial themes, though they approach this dialogue from different historical and cultural contexts. *The Kite Runner* (2003) is set in Afghanistan, a country with a long history of colonial conquests and political upheaval. Hosseini uses a deeply personal narrative to explore the effects of this history on his characters' lives. His writing style is emotional and evocative, often using the protagonist's guilt and redemption arc to address the broader socio-political changes occurring in Afghanistan. In contrast, *The Parisian* (2019) focuses on the life of a young Palestinian man in the early 20th century, offering insight into the Ottoman and British colonial impacts on Palestinian society. Hammad

employs a more sweeping narrative scope and a historical fiction approach. Her prose is rich and descriptive, with a focus on the intricate details of her characters' interactions within their transforming society. In terms of similarities, both novels examine themes of displacement and the search for belonging. The treatment of these themes illuminates how postcolonial environments shape personal narratives, family relationships, and cultural identities. The overarching influence of postcolonialism on both novels prompts readers to consider how individuals are caught between their personal histories and the larger historical forces at play.

Postcolonial dialogue is an intellectual discourse that engages with, and responds to, the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism. It involves analyzing and understanding the effects of colonization on colonized countries and how this has shaped their culture, history, and identity post-independence. This discourse is not only confined to the historical past but also reflects on how colonial legacies continue to affect present-day societies. Hosseini's novel portrays the relationship between the East and the West, and how stereotypes and perceptions influence character interactions. Afghanistan is depicted in the novel, including its cultural traditions, societal norms, and historical context. The analysis reveals how characters navigate their Afghan heritage and Western influences, and the complexities of cultural hybridity. Moreover, the influence of colonial legacies, social hierarchies, and the impact of historical events on characters' lives. Hammad's novel can be examined for traces of Orientalist perspectives by looking at how characters, settings, and cultural practices associated with the East are represented.

In both novels, the East is more than a mere backdrop; it is integral to character development and plot progression. The regional settings enable an exploration into how Eastern societies grapple with internal divisions and external forces. Through intricate storytelling, both authors challenge simplistic representations by offering layered views into how individuals within these societies perceive themselves—and are perceived—amidst ongoing social and cultural transformations.

Bibliography

- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. William Heinemann Ltd.
- Adichie, C. N. (2006). *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Alfred A. Knopf.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2002). **The Empire Writes Back**. Routledge.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2006). *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Gikandi, S. (2001). **Reading Chinua Achebe: Language & Ideology in Fiction**. James Currey.
- Hammad, I. (2019). *The Parisian*. Jonathan Cape.
- Hosseini, K. (2003). *The Kite Runner*. Riverhead Books.
- Pungkaswani, T., Rulyanti, M., & Putra, D. A. (2021). Orientalism in the Kite Runner Novel by Khaled Hosseini. *Literary Criticism*, 08(01), 15-20.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271-313). University of Illinois Press.
- Young, R. C. (2001). *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article according to the APA:

ZIANE BOUZIANE. L (2024), Deciphering the Postcolonial Discourse: An Oriental Reading for *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Housseini and *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammad, *Journal of Languages & Translation*, 04 (02), Laboratory of information and communication technologies in the teaching of foreign languages and translation, Hassiba Benbouali University of Chlef, Algeria, pages.105-118.