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ORIENTALISM REDUX: UNHEARD VOICES OF SYRIAN REFUGEES IN *EXIT WEST*

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Abstract

This article seeks to showcase how Orientalism in *Exit West* instrumentalizes and weaponizes refugees as scarecrows to brainwash the West, thus bringing about xenophobic practices, exclusion, othering, segregation and disintegration against refugees in the host countries. The article also shows that external physical borders are all demythologized by magical doors through which refugees gain access to survive their war-torn countries. Yet, it shows that despite crossing these physical borders, there are other internal borders that cannot be crossed- illusory mental borders such as racism, othering, and xenophobia. The article also shows that the allegations that the West claims that it is the caretaker and godfather of humanity, democracy, equity, quality, and egalitarianism are all tiger papers and dead letters when it comes to reality. The article seeks to prove how the West adopts anti-refugee policies through telling textual examples extracted from *Exit West* through the three stages of refugeeism: before, while and after refugees survive from the scourge of warfare in their home countries. This article uses *Exit West* as a case study to reflect on the Syrian refugee crisis being the most recent, widely spread and most painful diasporic experience the world has so far experienced and researched into through refugee literature. The article shows several examples of Said's Latent Orientalism and Manifest Orientalism masterminded by the West against refugees. The article concludes that the world is more like a small village with the countries sprawling like interconnected neighbourhoods that can be impacted by a ripple effect of refugeeism triggered by man-made or natural crises and disasters. The article recommends that the world community needs to adopt friendly-refugee policies to bring the world countries closer at peace.

Keywords: Orientalism, Syrian Refugee Crisis, Othering, Magical Realism, Internal Borders

Introduction

Most refugees are caught between the devil and the deep blue see because refugee crises are further worsened not only by the war-torn countries, but also by xenophobic narrative flawed and riddled with Orientalism that is ubiquitously rife in most of the host countries. *Exit West* (2017) by

Mohsin Hamid is a contemporary novel that dramatizes how refugees flowing from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) war-torn countries along with some Asian conflict-impacted countries in general and Syrian refugees in particular suffer from the whole gamut of othering, exclusion, xenophobia, racism, segregation, disintegration, and intolerance. *Exit West* sets the tone for the dynamics of migration alongside the subtle nuances of the heartrending stories of refugees partially left untold, providing the reader with an in-depth description of how a refugee observes the world and how the world forms a mental image about the influx of refugees as embodied by the two leading characters: Saeed and Nadia throughout the novel. *Exit West* not only tackles migration as a stand-alone theme, but it also turns the spotlight on the intercontinental migratory trajectory of how Saeed and Nadia, representatives of millions of refugees, are catapulted into the West through Magical Doors (MDs), which is a fictional technique through which Saeed and Nadia along with other refugees manage to escape to several host countries in the West, crossing the man-made and mental borders, which Orientalism instrumentalises and weaponizes to cordon off flows of refugees, immigrants and asylees. In *Exit West*, Hamid proves that migration or refugeeism, which is supposed to serve as a solution to refugees, becomes a new stage for more serious long-term phenomenon riddled and flawed with psychosocial, sociocultural, and socio-political discomfort and threat.

Orientalism is a socio-political mindset that tarnishes and reshapes migration and refugeeism through racist and biased practices (Said, 2003). *Exit West* revisits Orientalism and dramatizes and universalizes migrant-and-refugee experience in an Orientalist mind-set milieu. *Exit West* provides realistic snapshots of how sociocultural, psychosocial, and socio-political lives boil and cause victimization of the two leading protagonists who suffer psychological loss, unbelonging and displacement. Inflated by Orientalism, delegitimization yoked together with discursive stigmatization is the raison d'être of the dichotomy of the West and the East. Such a dichotomy is widened by Orientalism that highlights the centrality

of the West while dwarfing the East. Refugees, immigrants and asylees suffer two types of Orientalism: laten and manifest (Said, 2003), which are flagrantly expressed in *Exit West*. *Exit West* revisits Orientalism almost in every sentence; migrant-and-refugee experience is reimagined and universalized in an Orientalist mind-set milieu. Hamid provides realistic snapshots of how sociocultural, psychosocial, and socio-political lives boil and cause victimization of the two leading protagonists who suffer psychological loss, unbelonging and displacement.

Magical Realism has first come into play into children's literature as a vehicle of innovative amusement, entertainment and fun to take children to fantasy where the sky is the limit; everything is possible and against the laws of logic: "magical realism provides a perfect means for children to explore the world through their imaginations without losing a connection to what they recognize as the real world" (Bowers, 2004: 100). Later, Magical Realism becomes key to many of the twenty-first century about refugees and migrants and the diasporic stories left untold.

Ironically enough, the magical doors that let Saeed and Nadia reach their destination(s) are juxtaposed with invisible borders, which shut Saeed and Nadia out. Magical realism is a literary idiomatic oxymoron of two opposite terms in literature when the real world displays an undercurrent of magical fantasy. Seen from a more literary yet critical perspective, novels now use literary techniques to make reality and magic work in tandem:

> Magical realism has become the most popularly used one of the three terms, referring to a particular narrative mode. What the narrative mode offers is a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy, expressed in many postcolonial and non-Western works of contemporary fiction by, most famously, writers such as Gabriel García Márquez and Salman Rushdie. It is this aspect that has made it most pertinent to late twentieth-century literature. (Bowers, 2004: 1).

In Hamid's *Exit West*, magical realism is best showcased by the magical doors, which dramatize the cadence of the narrative trajectory, building up more unbearable yet sympathetic suspense for refugees:

> The effect doors had on people altered as well. Rumors had begun to circulate of doors that could take you elsewhere, often to places far away, well removed from this death trap of a country. Some people claimed to know people who knew people who had been through such doors. A normal door, they said, could become a special door, and it could happen without warning, to any door at all (Hamid, 2017: 41).

In *Exit West*, the baseless allegations made by Orientalists against refugees, asylees and immigrants are debunked, exposed, and laid bare by MDs. Although most refugees survive in the host countries, they become – over the course of time – hybridized in their values and practices. Saeed and Nadia alongside other refugees prove that man-made and mental borders are illusory because they are made by Orientalism. This article seeks to examine the impact of Orientalism on refugees, immigrants and asylees, who suffer from othering, exclusion, xenophobia, disintegration, and racism. The article seeks to prove that man-made and mental borders made between the East and the West are all illusory because floods of refugees manage to escape their war-torn countries to the host countries through MDs. This article also seeks to reveal how refugee crises are used as scarecrows by the West to sow seeds of xenophobia, racism, exclusion, and othering. Based on the textual samples are couched in direct and indirect connotations, this article seeks to reveal how Orientalism dehumanizes refugee crises in general and the Syrian refugee crisis in particular. Again, it seeks to show how refugees, asylees and immigrants are instrumentalized and weaponized by the West to widen the sociocultural and sociopolitical gap between the West and East through xenophobic practices. Through Magical Realism, this article seeks to prove that refugees, asylees and immigrants demythologize the man-made physical and mental borders set between countries. With this in mind, *Exit West* proves that the world is becoming more like a small village with interconnected neighborhoods, where people cannot live in silos, shut off from each other, cordoned off when impacted by war-torn countries, man-made or natural crises and disasters. The article also seeks to prove that the West being indoctrinated with orientalism adopts anti-refugee policies that delegitimizes the right to seek asylum when they are impacted and plagued by the evil and scourge of warfare.

Methodology

The theoretical bedrock of this article is based on *Orientalism* by Said (2003) supported by Magical Realism (Strecher, 1999; Hart and Ouyang, 2005; Aldea, 2011; Issifou, 2012; Can, 2014; Sandín and Perez, 2012; Warnes and Sasser, 2020). The article adopts a descriptive and analytical research methodology of selected textual samples of *Exit West*. The descriptive in-depth analyses of the textual samples are chronologically extracted from *Exit West* to represent the three subsequent stages: before, while and after refugees, asylees and immigrants struggle with crossing the man-made and mental borders. This also includes telling examples of manifest and latent practices of Orientalism expressed against refugees in general and Syrian refugees in particular. I will defend my argument that it is Orientalism that makes man-made and mental borders push away migrants and refugees from the West.

Discussion

The outbreak of protracted wars across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has shown how the West dehumanizes, delegitimizes, weaponizes and instrumentalizes refugee crises. The mindset of the West is much impacted and masterminded by Orientalism, which seeks to use refugees, asylees and immigrants as scarecrows to fuel exclusion, xenophobia, othering and racism. Posited by Said (2013), with hate, racism, discrimination, bigotry, hubris, and hegemony coming into play, uneasiness snowballed into the mindset of people: "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological

distinction made between the Orient and the Occident" (Said, 2003: 2). It stands to reason that Orientalism is not an individual's outcry against refugees and immigrants; rather, it is a public outcry that stiffens and inures them to hardships. We need to understand that Orientalism as exemplified in Hamid's *Exit West* is one more wedge hammered into refugees and immigrants although the entire world is engulfed by the same sky and carpeted with same earth as Saeed and Nadia bring this into their casual discussion: "The same sky, but at a different time" (Hamid, 2017: 34). However, it is the man-made ruthless system that dehumanizes peoples and makes up barbed-wire borders albeit porous to cordon off nationalities based on prejudices that feed on Orientalism.

Orientalism fuels xenophobic practices that widen the existing gap between the West and the East, thus bringing about othering. Simply put, Orientalism insidiously injects anti-refugee discourse drummed up for by far-right politicians, who provide unfounded fear of why refugees should be denied access to the West.

In *Exit West*, Orientalism creeps over the diasporic communities of the refugees and immigrants in the West and is thus either couched in *Latent Orientalism* or *Manifest Orientalism*. The mindset that assumes the East and Eastern people are backward, superstitious, etc. is latent while the physical precautions like the conditions in refugee camps and statements by politicians etc. are manifest. Simply put, Latent Orientalism makes up the unconscious ideologies used to define the Orient by the Occident, which over the course of time permeated the Western literature, history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, language, culture and so forth (Said, 2003: 206). Latent Orientalism invidiously portrays the Orient as being riddled and flawed with superstitions, myths, barbarism, petrification, and fossilization, which can be interpreted only by Westerners. Latent Orientalism can be best showcased by the recurrent themes drummed up for by the West, such as Islam, Imperialism, Colonialism, and the like (Karl-Heinz, 2012). In Hamid's *Exit West*, a telling symbolic example of manifest Orientalism can be well sensed by the following quotation:

Nadia's lemon tree did not recover, despite repeated watering, and it sat lifeless on their balcony, clung to by a few desiccated leaves. It might seem surprising that even in such circumstances Saeed's and Nadia's attitudes towards finding a way out were not entirely straightforward (Hamid, 2017: 52).

The failure for a lemon tree to grow by Nadia in the transitional stage of refugeeism foreshadows the discontinuity of the emotional relationship of Saeed and Nadia in the West; their identity which they developed back in their home country will not outlive their dreams.

Latent Orientalism is displayed in academia by literati and literary production; hence it becomes another layer of societal dichotomy. For Güven (2019), Latent Orientalism – as described by Orientalists – means that the Orient is within a general unconscious certainty. This explanation is based on Said's distinction between Laten Orientalism and Manifest Orientalism (Said, 2003: 354 - 355). Said further spells out that Latent Orientalism refers to untouchable and unconscious considerations; while Manifest Orientalism refers to views staked out about Oriental community, including behavioral attitudes, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth.

Unlike Latent Orientalism, Manifest Orientalism is best reflected in Dark London and light London. The greenery and beauty of London and the West are off-limits comfort to the refugees and immigrants; they are dumped into such poorly graveled with no green spaces to feast their eyes on after their treacherous journeys from their impacted home countries. This is a strong sign of manifest Orientalism that Said (2003) emphasizes, and it will be further discussed and exemplified. Manifest Orientalism is displayed through the actions adopted by the West (Europeans and Americans) about the East when the West and the East are engaged in direct contact (Said, 2003). When public politics, economics, policies, business and commerce between the West and the East are mutinously examined, Manifest Orientalism comes into play. Manifest Orientalism feeds on ideological

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assumptions made up and put into action by imperial administrators, key businesspeople, and politicians along with missionaries that creep in the East (Karl-Heinz, 2012). Hamid's *Exit West* is rife with telling examples of Manifest Orientalism through everyday actions, intentions, responses, reactions, and discriminatory categorization blatantly displayed by the government of the Western countries. To meticulously apply Manifest Orientalism to Hamid's *Exit West* and later generalize it to the Syrian refugee crisis, Manifest Orientalism has even started before Saeed and Nadia stepped into the treacherous refugee journey into the chimera; the West being a mythical paradise. The man-made borders across the world countries are the most mendacity Orientalism has fabricated; the West seeks to cordon off the East – hence the Middle East, North Africa, and Much of Asia – and shut them off from any development, advancement or otherwise expressed. When refugees manage to reach in the West through magical doors, the mindset of the natives triggered by Manifest Orientalism comes into play to maintain such illusory borders between the West and the East.

The natives aided by their respective governments, or the other way around squeeze the refugees and immigrants and box them into enclosures as if they were tertiary people or animals purposed for export abroad again or for servitude at home or on farm:

> From dark London, Saeed and Nadia wondered what life must be like in light London, where they imagined people dined in elegant restaurants and rode in shiny black cabs, or at least went to work in offices and shops and were free to journey about as they pleased. In dark London, rubbish accrued, uncollected, and underground stations were sealed. The trains kept running, skipping stops near Saeed and Nadia but felt as a rumble beneath their feet and heard at a low, powerful frequency, almost subsonic, like thunder or the detonation of a massive, distant bomb (Hamid, 2017: 79).

The stark discriminatory policies against refugees and immigrants are glaringly flagrant and blatant. The practices displayed shamelessly lay bare and expose their alleged and hollow civilizations they brag about. Unsurprisingly, London has become two: Light London and Dark London given the influx of refugees and immigrants into the West. Such ethnic and racial segregation now becomes glaringly explicit with basic services, such as electricity, water, roads, food and the like either frequently cut off or much below the demand. This is all in Dark London. In contrast, Light London is full of energy and life dynamics because it is mostly inhabited by natives.

Manifest Orientalism is repeatedly shown in Hamid's *Exit West* to deliver clear-cut messages shrouded with deeply seated and ingrained hate against refugees and migrants. Symbolically, the refugees and migrants are portrayed like animal scavengers that go on the prowl, searching for shelter and food in areas that do not offer such everyday life needs. Hamid brings into the scene an actual fox desperately looking for something to eat but all in vain; it grabs a diaper, which is again another example of how Orientalism annoys the refugees' olfactory sensitivity and dehumanize their feelings. Even the possible and impossible journey of the fox to scour and scavenge the area is not definite, which is very much like the refugees who can or cannot make it to the West even through magical doors. This is strongly linked to how Orientalism gnaws away at refugeeism in three stages: before, while and after refugees, asylees and immigrants slip into the West host countries.

Before Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees, asylees and immigrants are forced to slip through borders, *Exit West* sets the tone and stage for the home country with a multitude of migrants and refugees socially, psychologically, politically, and emotionally lost in a crowded city. The tone used seems to suggest that other cities in the wider vicinity are expected to experience civil wars; cities in this part of the world are normal to be unsettled. With the camera of the internal borders zooming in on and panning across the young generation, as represented by Saeed and Nadia, is dramatized of

being flowing crowds of backward mindset. This misrepresentation is purposefully overgeneralized to create an aggressive reaction in the host countries. This is also an internal border drawn up by Orientalism to classify the communities of IDPs, asylees, immigrants and refugees as othering in their poor culture, education, and values which cannot assimilate into the West. In *Exit West*, clothing is described as being black pieces that cover everything, which is unusual in the West. This foreshadows the flagrant unwelcome which most IDPs, asylees, immigrants and refugees are met with.

> In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war, a young man met a young woman in a classroom and did not speak to her. For many days. His name was Saeed, and her name was Nadia, and he had a beard, not a full beard, more a studiously maintained stubble, and she was always clad from the tips of her toes to the bottom of her jugular notch in a flowing black robe. (Hamid, 2017: 7).

Clothing is intentionally but unfairly attached to migrants and refugees is blackness represented in Nadia's black robe. Symbolically, blackness suggests the potential gloomy future of refugees in the host countries. With Nadia clad in black, this is meant that the refugee communities in the host countries are very much like black sheep being edged out and excluded. Ironically enough, nuns and monks wear black and white cloths out of humility, modesty, and unpretentiousness. In a similar vein, Saeed who grows a stubble for studiousness rather than religiosity is meant to be an internal border against migrants and refugees who have strong religious beliefs and hold onto their Islam. Setting the stage and tone for Orientalism against refugees while still at home is an efficiently proactive policy. The West produces a new East to be inculcated into a new West, turning the natives of the West into marionettes and parrots that talk and act as indoctrinated. Such early preparation helps Orientalism to produce self-activated ideologues of hate with their actions and words more like automated. Krishna-Hensel (2018) explains that the natives are pre-quipped with a hate-fuelled mindset

against migrants and refugees being unwelcome no matter what; they raise racist banners and chant discriminatory slogans. Such hateful practices would have been possible without Orientalism fixing first-line internal borders between the West and the East. Refugees are described as being at a loss of identity while slipping into borders in the seemingly transitional stage:

> It might seem odd that in cities teetering at the edge of the abyss young people still go to class on corporate identity and product branding [...] for one moment we are pottering about our errands as usual and the next we are dying, and our eternally impending ending does not put a stop to our transient beginnings and middles until the instant when it does (Hamid, 2017: 7).

Before trickling and flooding into the host countries, Orientalism introduces refugees to the West as mediocre products socially inconsumable, by which it is meant to suggest blatantly that the East is at loss searching for identity, which is far-fetched in the West.

To make such internal borders more detrimental to the image of migrants and refugees in the mindset of the West, Orientalism, instead of humanizing refugeeism and migration, politicizes, weaponizes and instrumentalizes the wretchedness, misery, and squalor of migrants and refugees. One flimsy and unfounded excuse why the West excludes migrants and refugees is that they are psychologically traumatized. Such a misconception has been deeply ingrained by Orientalism across the West to stave off migrants and refugees as if they were such a life-threatening and incurable social disease that one must eradicate before it spreads (Krippner and McIntyre, 2003; Elabdala, 2019). Migrants and refugees are purposefully introduced into the host countries either as traumatized or potentially traumatized, thus negatively impacting the natives when they deal with them. As a proactive step, the West seeks to keep them on the marginal and peripheral areas: "This explains why traumatized people can have sudden flashbacks when reminded of the traumatic event" (Morina and Nickerson, 2018: 189). Saeed and Nadia

along with others are introduced in *Exit West* as traumatized or potentially traumatized migrants and refugees given the unending civil war that has broken out in their home countries. Iniquitously portrayed by Orientalism to tarnish their reputation, migrants and refugees are almost always associated with wars and conflicts to intimidate the host communities, thus driving them to feel repulsion once they trickle into their countries: "Their city had yet to experience any major fighting, just some shootings and the odd car bombing" (Hamid, 2017: 7). Although spearheaded by Orientalism, the ripple effect of rejecting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers was first triggered in the neighbouring countries with the immediate vicinity of Syria:

> It faulted the government for rejecting Syrian refugees and asylum seekers at the border and for denying them entry or re-entry to Lebanon. Not surprisingly, Frontiers-Ruwad opposed the Lebanese government's position and articulated objections in the NGO's March 2015 Universal Periodic Review stakeholder submission to the U.N. Human Rights Council. […] Frontiers-Ruwad decried fundamental human rights violations of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers, most notably their right to seek asylum, and to liberty and security, occurring in Lebanon […] Frontiers Ruwad denounced the restrictive admission criteria for Syrian nationals, calling on the Lebanese government to grant displaced Syrians legal residency status on the basis of their valid UNHCR registration (Hamill, 2016: 201).

Boxed and cornered in a country at war, Saeed and Nadia along with a myriad of potential migrants, refugees and IDPs are locked by another internal border, which is location imposed by geography. Orientalism classifies the MENA region along with other destinations as vulnerable, fragile, and volatile. Again, Orientalism attributes such geographical uneasiness and precariousness to civil wars. It is with flagrant mendacity that Orientalism uses geography to establish man-made yet fake internal borders that exist only in pure illusion. This helps the West to maintain the sociocultural, socio-

political, and psychosocial segregation between the West and the East "Location, location, location, the realtors say. Geography is destiny, respond the historians (Hamid, 2017: 11). *Exit West* reveals that Saeed and Nadia are limited to their locked world although connected by the internet; they use it for trivial things and helps them get nowhere. Saeed and Nadia can have one tightly regulated hour for the internet.

Connectivity is critically essential for potential and existing migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs: "For people displaced by war and persecution, for migrants, information and ICTs are vital lifelines to the past, present, and future" (Maitland, 2018: 100). Connectivity is supposed to bring the West and East closer for better sociocultural and socio-political understanding, rather than being poles apart, widening the existing and any potential gaps between the several communities. According to Vernon *et al.* (2016), most IDPs and refugees trudge through poorly connected areas with 2G and 3G mobile coverage as reported by UNHCR. Still, about 20% of IDPs and refugees live across areas with no connectivity whatsoever; many IDPs and refugees complain that it is very expensive to have a 24-hour connectivity and mobile coverage; it takes up about 30% of the disposable income of IDPs and refugees (Vernon *et al.*, 2016). To alleviate their suffering, potential and existing migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs should have access to mobile coverage and internet connectivity. When we look into the issue globally, however, it is totally different: "Globally, refugees are 50% less likely than the general population to have an Internet-enabled phone, and 29% of refugee households have no phone at all" (Maitland, 2018: 100). This creates another internal border that locks refugees inside their troubled countries. Ironically enough, when empowered to have a mobile phone, people feel locked twice: once locked into its trivial things and once locked into the same circle of time, place, and people. In both cases, people such as Saeed and Nadia along with many other potential and existing migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and IDPs can make no progress. They simply remain locked inside their illusory and man-made internal borders.

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In *Exit West*, magical doors are used to conjure up and cherish high hopes for the many Syrian IDPs still trapped behind bars – the biggest closed yet open prison is one's home country when one is self-imprisoned. *Exit West* seeks to dispel and shatter the socio-political, sociocultural, and psychosocial dichotomy made by Orientalism between the West and the East. Magical doors have first travelled widely through word of mouth across trapped IDPs; when the first attempts have paid off for many IDPs, others have geared up to slip through borders. The magical doors leading to rich countries are heavily guarded while poor countries have magical doors left unguarded. The white-and-black world is staged by Orientalism that sows injustice that begets grievances, unsettlement, and uneasiness. Deep and uncountable urges push everyone to leave the shackled country into seemingly better host destination; everything at home is falling apart. Perhaps, it is the calm before the storm that will demythologize and expose the two narratives of the West deeply seated and ingrained in the European and American consciousness. The first narrative is that the West is the land of immigrants. Korpez (2020) explains the American narrative as one full of sagas retold about determination and courage, grounded on premises of liberty, individualism, and egalitarianism that brought a breath of fresh air full of hopes and ample opportunities. The second narrative is more imperial, polishing up the image of America as an empire of liberty. It tempts Americans to define liberty in favour of their well-being, safety, interest, thus making it more exclusionary and expansionist. However, for Korpez, it is all for the West to realize unlimited hegemony masterminded by Orientalism: "A wolf in sheep's clothing, this second narrative of empire-building, the "frontier zeal" to transform the world into an American "ideal" of democracy and freedom, has metastasized in the twenty-first century to a new form of global hegemony" (Korpez, 2020: 161).

The xenophobic attitudes against refugees have become officialised, politicized, and dehumanized. The inferno which the Syrian refugees have fled seems to have been reborn in the host countries. Refugees are not now crammed, overcrowded, trapped, herded, and cordoned off between national borders; rather, they are cornered in psychosocial, sociocultural, socio-political, racial, ethnic and nationalistic borders by locals negatively inculcated by the anti-refugee policies:

> Militants from Saeed and Nadia's country had crossed over to Vienna the previous week, and the city had witnessed massacres in the streets, the militants shooting unarmed people and then disappearing, an afternoon of carnage unlike anything Vienna had ever seen […] the militants had perhaps hoped to provoke a reaction against migrants from their own part of the world, […], and if that had been their hope then they had succeeded (Hamid, 2017: 60).

More aggressively, locals are weaponized against refugees and against anyone showing sympathy for them. It is the US-AND-THEM approach; either be on our side or else you side with refugees. Such humanitarian attitudes have become punishable yet extrajudicial crimes. In *Exit West*, when a good-hearted and merciful old lady attempts to show sympathy to the poor refugees, the enraged anti-refugee advocates frown upon her and she feels that she does not belong to her townspeople:

> […] for the young woman had learned of a mob that was intending to attack the migrants gathered near the zoo, […] and she planned to join a human cordon to separate the two sides, or rather to shield the migrants from the anti-migrants, and she was wearing a peace badge on her overcoat, and a rainbow pride badge, and a migrant compassion badge […] they were furious, and they were staring at her and at her badges with undisguised hostility, and the rancor of perceived betrayal, and they started to shout at her, and push her, that she felt fear, a basic, animal fear, terror, and thought that anything could happen (Hamid, 2017: 60).

Ironically enough, some EU countries instrumentalize terrorism as a pretext to refuse to give any asylum, refuge, or migration status to

refugees. This unfounded allegation dances to the tune of Trump's claim that Syrian refugees are merely ISIS operatives seeking refugee status in disguise. Although the Scandinavian countries were generous and welcoming to the influx of Syrian refugees, they switched gears to restrictive policies to reduce refugees:

> Denmark, another famously generous humanitarian state has completely changed its tone toward refugees, instead now famous for headlines announcing its prosecution of Danes that help transport refugees – calling them smugglers – cutting benefits, seizing refugees' assets, and even taking out ads in refugee-hosting states telling Syrian refugees not to come (Miller, 2017: 93).

This has increased anti-Muslim sentiments among the Danish people, making the divide of the public opinion more pronounced than before. With the antirefugee policies coming into play, many humanitarian-minded Danes have become muffled. More hostility was glaringly observed among other EU countries, such as Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, and Croatia that have blatantly adopted marked policies of anti-refugee sentiments (Miller, 2017). Newly built fences and purposively planted landmines have been reported by media as restrictive policies against refugee flows into the EU countries. With anti-Muslim, anti-Syrian and anti-refugee policies in force, Poland "refused to resettle the 7,000 Syrians it had originally agreed to resettle under the first EU responsibility-sharing plan" (Miller, 2017: 93). The many refugees "waiting to stow away on trucks headed for the Eurotunnel or ferries to the UK" is a telling evident that reveals the reluctance of France to grant asylum to refugees and migrants (Miller, 2017: 94).

In *Exit West*, refugees are almost always met with implicit or explicit unwelcome, discomfort and uneasiness. Another inhumane practice that caused a despicable shock to refugees was that instead of being protected and escorted by the police against any anti-refugee minded citizens, soldiers and policemen bulldozed refugees even out of such inhospitable camps:

> Soon there was a vanload more of them, in full riot gear, and then a car with two more who wore white shirts and black vests and were armed with what appeared to be submachine guns, and on their black vests was the word police in white letters but these two looked to Saeed and Nadia like soldiers […] When the police called over their bullhorns for everyone to exit the house (Hamid, 2017: 70).

Although the West claims to be serving as a caretaker of humanity, justice, equity, freedom, welfare, and civilization, the despicable acts displayed by the natives look very much like those in the Middle Ages:

> When they heard shouting up ahead and saw people running, and they realized that their street was under attack by a nativist mob. The mob looked to Nadia like a strange and violent tribe, intent on their destruction, some armed with iron bars or knives, and she and Saeed turned and ran, but could not escape. Nadia's eye was bruised and would soon swell shut and Saeed's lip was split and kept bleeding down his chin and onto his jacket, and in their terror they each gripped with all their might a hand of the other to avoid being separated, but they were merely knocked down, like many others, and on that evening of riots across their part of London only three lives were lost (Hamid, 2017: 73).

According to Beck's redefinition of the right of hospitability, refugees, migrants, asylum seekers and those oppressed by tyrannies shall have the right to enjoy full hospitality. This is what humanity is about; this is what global coherence is about. It is not the man-made barbed wire borders that trap refugees; rather, the psychosocial, socio-political, and socioeconomic and illusory borders that fuel hate against the other, thus generating ideologically yet emotionally charged mindset that scare off refugees and migrants:

> People in need can claim the right to hospitality. The difference resides already in the fact that, in the global space of

responsibility of global risks, nobody can be excluded from 'hospitality'. Perhaps it makes more sense to speak of all people being transformed into neighbors (Beck, 2009: 190).

Back in their home countries, such services are either cut off or supplied across the whole area with no discrimination:

> That night the electricity went out, cut off by the authorities, and Kensington and Chelsea descended into darkness. A sharp fear descended also, […]. In their own fled city, when the electricity had gone, it had gone for all. But in London there were parts as bright as ever (Hamid, 2017: 77 & 79).

Racial dichotomy exists where refugees are looked down at as the other; London becomes Light London and Dark London. It is like white and black worlds with no humanitarian tolerance, no egalitarianism, no inclusion, no socio-political integration, and no minimum mercifulness displayed towards refugees. This symbolism of 'Light London and Dark London' in Hamid's *Exit West* echoes the US-and-THEM dichotomy enforced by Orientalism on the mindset of the locals and natives or US. It is a dichotomy that separates and divides the world into two poles, one is good, and one is bad. This is the corollary of the mindset that has been fuelled for years by Orientalism; hate-driven attitudes towards the other are the reference standard for most natives in the West: "In light London, […] people dined in elegant restaurants and rode in shiny black cabs, or at least went to work in offices and shops and were free to journey about as they pleased. In dark London, rubbish accrued, uncollected" (Hamid, 2017: 79). Such racial provocation has brought about the whole gamut of brutalities, despicable atrocious, appalling massacres, and heartrending sagas still untold:

> At night, in the darkness, as drones and helicopters and surveillance balloons prowled intermittently overhead, fights would sometimes break out, and there were murders and rapes and assaults as well. Some in ark London blamed these incidents on nativist provocateurs. Others blamed other migrants (Hamid, 2017: 79).

Conclusion

Like decoys, internal borders fixed at the refugee communities by the mindset of Orientalism represent the first wedge of many others yet to come. The target readership and audiences are pre-brainwashed and pre-equipped with a tailored-made description of the refugee communities in such a fashion as to best instrumentalize the US-AND-THEM approach catered for by Orientalism. Ideational weaponization is masterminded to sow hate against immigrants and refugees while they are still in their home countries. Such ill practices of Orientalism enhance the readiness and preparedness to show more bias, racism, discrimination, exclusion, othering, hubris, xenophobia, and haughtiness against the other. The dehumanization of the refugee lives in the host countries has snowballed into a continued conflict with the natives; they have got into a vicious circle very much like their tragic lives back in their home countries. Ironically enough, refugees now seek not asylum but survival as was the case in their existence-driven suffering in their home countries.

Orientalism has desperately built external and internal borders to cordon off the other. The illusory and man-made borders fixed between the powerful and powerless, poor, and rich and Oriental and Occidental countries are all external to remap the world based on global hegemony and keep the world penned up like sheep herds to graze in heavily guarded enclosures. Internal borders are manifested in how refugees are cordoned off in inhospitable camps inside the host countries. More so, natives and refugees are segregated by psychosocial, socio-political, and emotional borders albeit neighbours. The pure human nature and unstained humanity is expressed in "Saeed went up to his foreman and thanked him for all he was doing for the migrants" (Hamid, 2017: 97). Natives unaffected by Orientalism would share refugees their food, house, free time and more; it is one race they are, which is humanity. It is such merciful practices that Orientalism is desperately fighting off to strip natives of their ethics.

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Exit West does not fictionalise the West' racist behaviours against refugees and asylum seekers in the past or present only; it predicts worse racism masterminded by the West in the future. *Exit West* published in 2017 strongly echoes down now in 2022 and even beyond. It is life-long and deeply ingrained othering that Orientalism feeds on across all ages. The claims of being champions and guards of humanity made by the West are soon laid bare, demythologized and debunked by their flagrant behaviours.

In this vein, Ivekovic (2022: 127) explains how Orientalism has caused such ironic contradiction of the European actions towards refugees: it is a white-and-black behaviours that sympathize with the blue eyes and fair hair and complexion and dehumanize and humiliate the others no matter who or what:

> […] while Hungary built a wall towards Serbia to fence off immigration. In November 2021, some 4.000 migrants or so from the Middle East (Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen mainly) suddenly accumulated at Poland's (EU's) border on the side of Belarus. […] But Poland wouldn't let them pass, brought the military to the border, started building a barbed-wire fence, tried chasing them away with water hoses while it was winter, and these people had been sleeping in the mud and bushes for several days. (Ivekovic, 2022: 127).

Such misconceptions and prejudiced actions are worst manifested in Dar London and Light London as fictionalized by *Exit West*: Dark London is for refugees, asylees and immigrants, while Light London is for the natives, Europeans, and the like. Such ill-intentioned practices are not fictionalised; they are articulations and manifestations of everyday behaviours. Given its timeliness, relevance and call for an inclusive, anti-discriminatory and humanist outlook on the refugee crisis, the article concludes that the world countries need to reconsider their refuge and migration policies and give it a breath of fresh air. Drawing on *Exit West*, the researcher also shows that the world cannot live in silos. The world is very much like a little village, and any discomfort – be it social, cultural, political, economic, military, environmental, or otherwise expressed, will impact the entire world due to the ripple effect. Based on the discussion of the analyses and descriptions, the article recommends that the world community needs to develop fair refugee policies that humanize their needs in such a manner as to bring the world countries closer to live at peace.

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