



Research Article

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## A Corpus-Assisted Analysis: The East/West Binary Oppositions in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*

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### Abstract

*Drawing upon the theory of postcolonialism in tandem with Edward Said's views on Orientalism, this study explores the East/West binary oppositions in Isabella Hammad's The Parisian. In this study, we treat the novel as a corpus consisting of 196,000 words and adopt a corpus linguistics (CL) approach to literature by using the corpus software Antconc. The analysis reveals a group of postcolonial binary oppositions related to three categories, namely, characteristics, geography, and characters. The contribution of the current study is twofold. First, the application of CL extends the current line of research of an under researched area by bringing together CL and literary studies. Second, it highlights the East/West binary oppositions in diaspora literature.*

**Keywords:** Binary oppositions; Corpus linguistics; Postcolonialism; Literary stylistics

### 1. Introduction

One of the theories that have focused on binary oppositions is the postcolonial theory, whereby the binary oppositions of the Orient and the Occident are taken from the stereotypes already known about them. According to Ray (2008), postcolonial theory is shaped by post-structuralism, which is inclusive of deconstruction. More specifically, deconstruction's challenges to the orderly binary oppositions gave postcolonial theory the ways and means to weaken the apparent differences between the middle and the margins and, likewise, between the colonizer and the colonized (Ray 2008). Postcolonialism is a reaction to colonialism as it criticizes, and writes against colonialism to change the all-too-familiar view that the West is always superior and the East is always inferior, and although colonization reflects the time of conquering and colonizing along with its effects on the conquered lands (Said 1991), the colonized-colonizer relationship was not existent at the time of colonization. The term colonizer is synonymous with the Westerner, specifically those from European countries; likewise, the term, colonized is usually synonymous with developing countries like those countries in Asia and Africa. Some of the assumptions created during colonization have stayed until now and have become paradigms that are "believed to be true" (Widyaningrum 2018, p. 2). These assumptions state that Westerners are civilized and superior; as a result, they have the

right to civilize the uncivilized and backwards-thinking Easterners (Al-Saidi 2014).

Postcolonialism is seen as this hypothetical battle against those living in the aftermath of colonialism, who seem to have forgotten, for whatever reason, what took place during the colonial past. It is a subject that the erudite undertake in order to look back at colonialism, question and criticize it. By revisiting colonial times, the association between the colonized and the colonizer can be seen as one of mutual enmity and want. Further, by opening up such a disturbed, and disturbing relationship, scholars may be able to better understand the equivocal period in time that came before the postcolonial period, and how we got there (Gandhi 1998).

Al-Bayyati and Alattiya (2016) add that Postcolonialism deals with different points, highly focusing on each. It includes and covers different topics, backgrounds, discourses, and experiences. It is an "area that contains a set of studies which are related to different theories, disciplines and activities" and "is related to many oppositional terms" (p. 10). Al-Bayyati and Alattiya (2016) continue by declaring that these terms are analyzed as binary oppositional forms. Widyaningrum (2018) states that postcolonialism is all about resisting European power and authority by writing against Western thought as the European feeling of superiority has created postcolonial binary oppositions. In the same vein, Al-Saidi (2014) declares that "the binary dichotomy between the civilized and the savage has perpetuated and legitimized Western power structures favoring "civilized white men"" (p. 1). Widyaningrum (2018) also discusses how colonization has led to many stereotypes, which have been then created as binary oppositions. Such stereotypes, on the one hand, have shown Westerners as the Self - superior, civilized and educated. On the other hand, they show the Easterners as the Other - inferior, uncivilized and uneducated. These stereotypes have thus been shaped as binary oppositions. That is, comparisons between West and East have created these binary oppositions.

Loomba (2007) mentions a binary opposition under the theory of postcolonialism is known as "First World/Third World, the Original, the Subaltern, the Other, the Secondary", all of which are related to Orient/Occident binary oppositions (p. 40). This is discussed in Said's (1978) introduction of his book, *Orientalism*. He discusses Kissinger's method - a method based on what linguists call binary oppositions. According to Said (1978), Kissinger splits the world into two halves: developed and developing countries. The first half (the West) "is deeply committed to the notion that the real world is external to the observer" (p. 54). Thus, Said paves the way for postcolonial theory development which includes a variety of signs, metaphors, and narratives, all of which are studied in binary oppositional terms (Ray 2008). Moreover, there are many poststructuralist approaches which influence this theory, especially that of deconstruction, which challenges the hierarchal binary oppositions.

One of the main controversial binary oppositions is Occidentalism versus Orientalism, which, according to Al-Bayyati and Alattiya (2016), were coined after Said's influence. Referencing the East and West, the two terms have been used since the 1990s whereby the West sees the East as their opponent. On the other hand, Wang (1997) states that non-Western people present the West as a reminder of the shining example of the foremost behavior of Orientalism among those, who live in the West (p. 5). Occidentalism is seen as privileged and superior to Orientalism, and this itself is considered a binary opposition (Al-Bayyati and Alattiya 2016).

Orientalism is related to the East, and how the West views the East. Morris (2010) says that Said discusses how European intellectuals such as Foucault have created the ideas of "Europe" and "The Other" as "The Self's Shadow" (p. 35). Orientalism, according to Said (1991), is "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in the European/Western experience" (p. 9). Likewise, the Orient consists of "the greatest and richest and oldest colonies" of Europe (p. 9). Moreover, Said states that the Orient is what really forms the civilization and culture of the West, and not the opposite. Actually, it is what helped to "define Europe" (or the West) (p. 9). He continues by showing how Orientalism is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"" (Said, 1991, p.10). According to Said (1978), this shows how, together, the Orient/East and Occident/West are considered a binary opposition. Said (1978) blames some intellectuals, such as poets, novelists,

scholars, and others who have accepted this binary opposition and the differences that have been created between the Orient/East and Occident/West as a result of making it a starting point for their theories, literary writings, discussions, and political views. The Orient/East and “its people, customs, ‘mind,’ destiny, and so on” have been criticized and considered inferior to the Occident/West (p. 10).

Said (1978) mainly focuses on Arabs and how they are seen in the world. Orientalism came about as “a Western style of domination and restructuring their authority over the Orient” (p. 11). He also mentions other binary oppositions which occur under the Occident/Orient binary oppositions, such as East/West, Europeans/non-Europeans, us/them, and superior/inferior (p. 15). Said also mentions that East/West binary oppositions have been widely used by many writers and authors in their literary works.

Against this backdrop, the current study aims to explore the East/West binary oppositions in Isabella Hammad’s (2019) novel, *The Parisian*. This study argues that the widespread discourses pertaining to the East-West relationship are reflected in diaspora literature in the form of binary oppositions. The contribution of the current study is twofold. First, the methodological contribution lies in bringing together CL and literary studies. Second, this study extends the current line of research of an under researched area, which is the binary opposition in diaspora literature authored by Arab writers. While we are acknowledging the limitation of this research in terms of the size of the corpus and resources, these limitations can provide directions for future research such as exploring gender binary oppositions in diaspora literature and comparing them to those found in the works of, for example, Western writers.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Postcolonialism and Binary Oppositions

From the structural viewpoint, a binary opposition is defined as “a pair of related terms or concepts that are opposite in meaning...as a fundamental organizer of human philosophy, culture, and language” (Al-Bayyati & Alattiya 2016, p. 1). Marinaro (2007) defines binary opposition as “a key concept in structuralism, a theory of sociology, anthropology and linguistics that states that all elements of human culture can only be understood in relation to one another, and how they function within a larger system or the overall environment” (p. 11). Marinaro (2007) adds that binary oppositions examine “cultural relationships” among “groups of people” in a way that each group looks at the other as different or even as a threat. In exploring binary opposition in literature, it can be defined as “a system that writers employ to discover differences between groups of individuals such as cultural, class or gender differences” (p.11).

Lentricchia and McLaughlin (1990) discuss binary oppositions in relation to deconstruction. They state that a text’s close reading is based on highlighting and analyzing the common binary oppositions in the text, such as “male/female, day/night, light/dark, good/evil, nature/society” and so on, in a way that one element of pair is privileged over the other (p. 15). On the other hand, the post-structuralists read binary oppositions as related and reliant.

Binarism is a theory that was first used by the Swiss structural linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, who declares that “signs have meaning not by a simple reference to real objects, but by their opposition to other signs” where “[e]ach sign is itself the function of a binary between the signifier, the ‘signal’ or sound image of the word, and the signified, the significance of the signal, the concept or mental image that it evokes” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2013, p. 18). Binarism has also been used in relation to imperialism to highlight a kind of dominance in binary oppositions as a consequence of “Western thought”. Such binary oppositions, which are structurally related include: “centre/margin, colonizer/colonized, metropolis/empire, and civilized/primitive” (Ashcroft et al, 2013 p. 18).

Postcolonialism emerged as a reaction to colonialism, where the world was divided into two halves: Europe/West and Other/East. The West is related to everything positive and good, while the Other/East is related to everything negative and bad (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002). According to

Said (1991), the West has defined itself in a way to have authority over the Orient/Other. They have also defined their culture as civilized in a way to justify their role in taming the uncivilized Orient/Other. Therefore, Westerners become “the very basis” of civilizing the Orient (Barry, 2009, p. 186). Binary oppositions in relation to postcolonialism are where everything related to the Occident is the opposite of everything related to the Orient. From the perspective of imperialism, binary opposition is “a development of Western thought to see the world that establishes a relation of dominance” (Ashcroft *et al.* 2013, p. 18).

Binary oppositions in texts have been discussed by poststructuralists as the text having a center and a margin. The center is always more important than the marginal. Together they create a binary opposition. The terms that are related to the center are always privileged, such as “truth, good, muscularity, purity, whiteness” (Ashcroft *et al.* 2013, p 20), and others. On the other hand, the marginal can contain the antonyms of the previous words. Each word and its opposite create a binary opposition. According to Bertens (2001), the binary opposition consists of two opposing words or terms, but they cannot be separated from each other. Postcolonial theory could be considered a “region of ‘taboo’ – the domain of overlap between these imperial binary oppositions” and while there are certain areas that interrupt “the certainties of imperial logic” such as “ambivalence, hybridity and complexity”, areas which disrupt “the structural relations of the binary system itself” can be found (Ashcroft *et al.* 2013, p 20).

Binary oppositions have been the focus of literary studies such as Said (1991), Pope (2005), Widyaningrum (2018), and Lashari, Ansari and Abbass (2019), among others. Said (1991) states that stereotypes have been created as a result of binary oppositions and the sequences of colonization because of their group differences. These stereotypes are presented as binary oppositions. The Occident/European is considered “rational”, “virtuous”, “mature”, and “normal”. On the other hand, the Orient/Eastern is considered as “irrational”, “depraved”, “childlike”, and “different” (pp. 50-51). Additionally, Pope (2005) lists a number of binary oppositions that have been created as a result of colonialism and racism between Europeans (the “Self”), and the rest of the world (the “Other”). For example, the stereotypes related to the Europeans are “White, civilization, culture, Christian, God, cleanliness, medicine, science, reserved, familiar, (and) intellectual”. On the other hand, the “Others” are related to the following stereotypes: “Black, barbarism, nature, heathen (other religions), devils, dirt, magic, superstition, savage, exotic, and sensual” (pp 149-150). Furthermore, Ashcroft *et al.* (2013) mention some postcolonial binary oppositions, such as, “colonizer: colonized, white: black, civilized: primitive, advanced: retarded, good: evil, beautiful: ugly, human: bestial, teacher: pupil, doctor: patient” (p. 19). Concerning race binary oppositions, Widyaningrum (2018) explores postcolonial binary oppositions by studying the characterizations of white and black through the use of postcolonialism and deconstruction. The study concludes with examples of these binary oppositions, such as white/black, civilized/uncivilized, rational/irrational, and others. Another take that sheds light on lifestyle binary opposition is exemplified in Lashari *et al.*’s (2019) research on Tariq Rehman’s *The Zoo*. Lashari *et al.* seeks to unfold the binary oppositions in the two kinds of Pakistani cities, metropolitan and agriculture and their statuses by focusing on “internal structures of tension between Centre and peripheral privileges” (p. 129).

To this end, previous research on binary oppositions has shown that diaspora literature, especially contemporary Arabic literature, is an under researched area. Thus, the current study aims to address this gap in the literature.

## 2.2 *Corpus Linguistics and Literature*

A corpus is mainly a computerized group of texts used for linguistic analysis. This group of texts can be analyzed and studied with the aid of software programs in various ways (cf. Barlow 2004). In corpus linguistics, “access to the texts stored in a corpus is enabled by so called concordance programs or concordances, i.e. software packages which provide a range of functions to analyze a collection of texts” (Römer 2006, p. 83). Hunston and Francis (2000) explain that such corpus

software “selects, sorts, matches, counts, and calculates” electronically-stored texts, which in turn facilitates the researcher’s work and offers insights that might not be captured otherwise (p.15).

CL adds depth and breadth to our understanding of different areas in linguistics and literature. Through computer automation, CL enables, and helps to analyze patterns of a large number of words in an efficient, accurate, and quick manner (Wahid 2011). CL techniques used in literary analyses are either quantitative or qualitative or both. They can provide stylistic descriptions of literary texts so detailed that they can contribute to already completed interpretations or provide new perspectives, and insights (Wahid 2011; Adolphs 2006; Stubbs 2005). Through CL techniques, scholars have also analyzed, and explored sources of books (Holmes and Forsyth 1995; Roberts 1996; Mealand 1997), and word clusters as a stylistic device (Rommel 1994). According to Louw (1997), advanced criticism and new perspectives can be obtained by using a corpus-based analysis. For example, Viana, Fausto and Zyngier (2007) studied the style of two literary works, Machado de Assis’s *Dom Casmurro* and Dan Brown’s *O Codigo Da Vinci* by using CL. Both novels were “digitized, formatted, and transformed into two corpora” (p. 233). They used WordSmith Tools (Scott, 1999) to “identify the most frequent four-word lexical bundles” (cf. Biber, Conrad & Cortes 2004, p. 233). The bundles were then classified into structural and functional bundles according to the taxonomies of Biber et al. (2004). The findings justified Dan Brown’s *O Codigo Da Vinci* being more popular than Machado de Assis’s *Dom Casmurro*.

Additionally, CL is used to help improve literary research. For example, Biber (2020) explored the challenges of using a large text corpus such as the Austrian Academy Corpus (AAC) for digital literary studies purposes. Biber questioned the way to use “a digital text corpus of considerable size for such a specific research purpose is of interest for corpus research in general as it is of interest for digital literary text studies, which rely to a large extent on large digital text corpora” (p. 47). The analysis revealed that observing the usage of lexical entities, such as words, word forms, multi-word units, inter alia, would help researchers to choose the way to study and explore texts. Römer (2006) also showed that corpora and corpus-analytic tools can be used in literature in a way that can analyze the language of literary studies to provide “insights that intuitive approaches to the same objects of study may fail to create” (p. 81). He proved that corpus analysis could be used to improve intertextualities in English studies. Römer used WordSmith corpus software (Scott, 1999) and regards “corpus or text analysis as corpus or text transformation” to show “in what ways different types of transformation can draw attention to different aspects of a text” (p. 83). Römer accessed and analyzed the corpus following Barlow (2004) to illustrate the basic analytic (or transformational) procedures consisting of only one text: T.S. Eliot’s poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (henceforth “Prufrock”).

In light of the reviewed literature, the dynamicity and complexity of literary studies necessitate the synergy between CL and literary studies, which constitutes the methodological contribution of the current study.

### 2.3 *Isabella Hammad’s the Parisian*

Isabella Hammad’s *The Parisian* is a novel set in France and Palestine during the Great Revolt. Hammad is a British-Palestinian author, who has spent most of her life living in London. However, the novel could be considered Palestinian literature because it tackles the topics of “Palestinian and Arab nationalism, class divisions, and Orientalist scholarship” (Creswell 2019, p. 2).

The plot revolves around Midhat Kamal, the son of Haj Taher, a very wealthy merchant. Midhat leaves Egypt for Montpellier, France, to study medicine. Instead of focusing on his studies, however, Midhat falls in love with a young French lady called Jeannette, the daughter of his professor at university, Doctor Molineu. It is not long after they meet that Midhat stops focusing on his studies and starts to spend all of his time with Jeannette. Eventually, he finds out that Doctor Molineu sees him as an Oriental and a backward Muslim. At the same time, Jeannette refuses Midhat’s proposal for marriage. Both of these events cause Midhat to drop out of medical school.

Despite that it is a recent novel, *The Parisian* has received considerable attention and has been reviewed from different perspectives. For example, Chadi (2021) has explored the East-West relationship, and its complexities in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*, stating that the relationship between the two has always been a tense one. According to Chadi (2021), Hammad's novel portrays the West as imposing their superiority over the East, and ignoring their existence. Seikaly's (2021) review has focused on the character of Midhat and his attitude and excitement about moving to France to study medicine. Likewise, Creswell (2019) has discussed Midhat as a free man in Nablus. Creswell (2019) describes the character of Midhat as a Palestinian, who is put in the context of Palestine and their conflicts with Israel; however, Midhat has nothing to do with the conflict. He is described as an outsider in the novel, and he does not think about what goes on in Palestine, whether during his stay in France or even during he is in Palestine.

Moore (2021) explores "reflections on Palestinian book culture in what follows, beginning with an emblematic library scene from Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019)" in which "Palestinian Arab subjective crisis is spurred by exposure to European epistemology at the height of its imperial domination" (p. 16). Hammad comments on the topic of the novel saying that she tries to reflect the East-West relationship that has always existed and describes her character as being "in love with the West, at a time when Palestine was being colonized by the West" (Mathews, 2020). According to the researchers' review of previous studies that analyzed and explored Hammad's *The Parisian*, few studies are found. Therefore, the current study, which aims at analyzing the postcolonial binary oppositions with the use of CL, fills this gap in the literature.

In a nutshell, the aforementioned studies have focused on how Hammad depicts the East-West relationship either through characters or politics. While this makes Hammad's novel research-worthy, to the best of our knowledge, there is no known research tackling Binary oppositions in this novel.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopts a CL approach to literature by analyzing the East/West binary opposition in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* based on the theory of postcolonialism, and Edward Said's (1978) view on Orientalism. CL is a research method that relies on both quantitative and qualitative analyses. CL uses a large body of authentic textual data as the basis for inquiry (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen 1998). The quantitative measures of CL encompass word frequency and dispersion, looking at the words in context can be qualitatively analyzed either thematically or by using discourse analysis. These measures of analysis are elaborated on in the data analysis section.

CL is widely known as a method that seeks to quantitatively describe language use through objective and empirical evidence (Atar & Erdem 2019). This enables researchers to identify distinctive linguistic features that are unnoticed by literary critics, and allows for interpreting the significance of these features (Murphy 2015) in a way that connects linguistics to literature (Mahlberg 2013).

The recent application of CL to study literature has received much attention with the proliferation of research in "corpus stylistics" (McIntyre & Walker, 2019; Shepherd & Sardinha, 2013). Corpus stylistics involves analysing large collections of linguistic data to implement stylistic studies on literary and other genres of text (McIntyre & Walker, 2019). Much of CL research has focused on well-known English authors such as Charles Dickens (Mahlberg, 2013) and William Shakespeare (Murphy, 2015), among others. Such synergy between CL and fiction has illuminated the understanding of some otherwise unnoticed features in literary texts. For example, Murphy (2015) concluded that, in his soliloquies, Shakespeare resorted to using "certain language forms to represent expressions of doubt, resolve, introspection and strong emotion" (p. 338).

The novel selected for this study is treated as a corpus that encompassed around 196,000 words. Bearing in mind the relatively small size of such a corpus, it still can be considered representative as it covers the only work available by Hammad.



### 3.1 Why hammad's the parisian?

*The Parisian* is a novel authored by the Palestinian American Novelist Isabella Hammad. The novel was first published in 2019 and has since snared the attention of many readers (Kassab, 2019). The novel was selected for several reasons. First, it is one of the most recent diaspora literary works authored by a writer with a culturally-defined Arab background. This means there is a potential intersection between the root-rout identities embodied in the characters and their behavior, inter alia. That is, the author could have projected her heritage culture, values, and her (imagined) self as a Middle Eastern into her novel as opposed to the current Western lifestyle she lives (as she was born in the UK and currently lives in the United States). Second, the novel represents a period replete with political and cultural conflicts that influence identity since the novel describes a journey through the end of the Ottoman Empire to the rise of Palestinian nationalism in different geographical and cultural contexts, i.e., Palestine and France.

## 4. Data Analysis

The Antconc corpus tool (Anthony, 2022) was used for the analysis and different CL techniques were used in the analysis. A frequency analysis was conducted as the first step to get to know the most frequent lexical words the author used. This was useful as an unbiased starting point for the study (Haider, 2018) and to narrow the focus of the analysis by choosing from the salient words for further analysis (Nofal, Forthcoming). Having examined the frequency list, we selected the words whose cultural equivalents/opposites in the novel are found in the list, such as Palestine/France, Nablus/Montpellier, and Imam/Priest. Furthermore, concordance analysis was used to investigate the words in question in their contexts. The concordance lines were thoroughly examined for patterns. The researcher followed a corpus-driven approach in which the frequency and saliency in the data determine what to do next in the analysis rather than looking for or testing a predetermined hypothesis (Baker, Gabrielatos & McEnery, 2013). Three themes emerged in the analysis pertaining to characteristics, geography, and characters. Then Illustrative examples (i.e. quotes) from the concordance lines were presented along with the relevant discussion, as demonstrated in the following section.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The results of the study reveal a group of postcolonial binary oppositions, which are divided into three categories, postcolonial binary oppositions related to characteristics, geography, and characters along with their frequencies in the novel, shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3 respectively. All the selected postcolonial binary oppositions go under the main East/West binary opposition. Most of these binary oppositions are already known and used in postcolonial writings, but others are chosen and added in resemblance to the others. This is because Isabella Hammad sets her novel in two places, France and Palestine. In France, Hammad's main character, Midhat, is presented and portrayed as an Oriental who is put on the spot to be studied, and analyzed as an alien by the people around him. Creswell (2019) says that Midhat discovers that his "friend", Doctor Molineu, has been studying him in relation to the Doctor's "theories of Muslim backwardness" (p. 3). When Midhat goes back to Palestine, he behaves like a Parisian, totally differing and detaching himself from his surroundings, family and relatives. For this reason, the binary oppositions being analyzed revolve around Hammad's main character, Midhat.

### 5.1 Characteristics

Table (1) shows the postcolonial binary oppositions related to human characteristics which, in the current case, are the characteristics of both the Westerners, and the Easterners. As shown in Table

(1), there are different characteristics of the West, and the East that create binary oppositions, such as civilized/uncivilized, Empire/Orient, educated/uneducated, and others.

**Table 1:** Postcolonial Binary Oppositions related to Characteristics

Western Stereotypes		Eastern Stereotypes	
Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
Civilised	2	Uncivilised	2
Colonial/Empire/ Educated	4/22/8	Orient/Occupied/Aliens/ Uneducated/Failure	2/19/11/2/9
Western/European/ Parisian	14/23/13	Arab/Arabs/Nabulsi/Syrian/ Egyptian	68/51/15/14
French/English/Jewish	148/32/43	Arabic	23
French/Zionist/Jews/ British/Germans	148/15/56/127/10	Palestinian/Parisian	12/23
Non-Muslims	74	Muslims	10
Human	17	Inhuman	1

The Arabs or Easterners have always been seen as uncivilized, uneducated, failures, aliens and as a whole “Orientals”. All these characteristics are given to Midhat while he is in France, whether in Paris or Montpellier. He is portrayed as something different, and strange in France. This is due to the “cultural supremacy” that was created by the West. The Westerners have taken the responsibility and role of civilizing the East and its people. This is why they intended to impose their culture and totally ignore the fact that the colonized already have their own culture. Many stereotypes have emerged from this assumption of the West as superior to the East, and the West’s idealism has been adopted and believed by the world as a result. The East has been accused of such stereotypes without being able to defend themselves from such stereotypical imagery. This is why the Orient, whether the East or its people, has always been used in experiments (Chadi, 2021, p. 37). According to Said (1978), the “Orient was almost a European invention” (p. 9). Many researchers have mentioned and discussed the negative stereotyping of Arabs as “violent, irrational, destructive, aggressive, victimized, uncivilized, “radical Muslims, strongly supportive of terrorism, inferior, culturally backward, sexually depraved, congenitally violent”, bloodthirsty savages, brutal, patriarchal, tribal, the wealthy sheikh, the slothful indolent, the villain and the 3Bs: billionaire, bomber, belly dancer including bedouin, depraved, childlike, different from Europeans and Westerners, terrorist, radical, and extremist” (Najm 2019, pp. 94-95). The following quotes show how Molineu tries to study Midhat as an object:

*“You have been studying me.”*

*“No, that is not at all...”*

*“Do you think I am not, you think I am uncivilized?”*

*“I should have asked your permission, of course, I see that very clearly now---”*

*“Do you think I am uncivilized?” (Hammad 2019, p. 159).*

As seen above, Hammad shows and highlights the fact that Midhat is different, and this appears in the use of the stereotypes of the Arab/East and, in contrast, mentions the stereotypes of the Westerners. Moreover, Hammad presents Midhat as uncivilized in his random behavior, and in his irresponsibility towards education and study, all of which lead to his failure. Unlike the Europeans around him who are successful, Midhat is presented as a failure. It is obvious how Hammad creates such a contrast between Midhat, who is an Eastern Arab, and the Western French. This contrast has created these binary oppositions.

Other Postcolonial Binary Oppositions related to characteristics are those of nationalities such as Western/Arab, Parisian/Egyptian, and Parisian/Nabulsi. The people, who are labeled as superior are the Westerners, including the Europeans. According to Said (1978), Westerners – including the



Europeans- identify themselves as “us” against everyone who is non-European or non-Westerner and consider themselves to be superior to non-Europeans or non-Westerners. The West/Europe has always been known as superior to the East/Arabs/Orient.

Wu (2002) also comments on the word “Muslim” when moving to the postcolonial binary opposition Muslim/non-Muslim. Wu states that the way the Westerners, specifically the Europeans and their media, perceive the East and specifically Muslims as terrorists. This has “increased xenophobic sentiments towards these communities, namely, Islamophobia and Sinophobia” (p. 88). Lewis (2002) states that the West has improved their relationships with the Indians and the Chinese, but the case is not the same with the Muslims and Arabs.

From the previous examples, it can be noticed that the natural and factual characteristics of the Westerners and the Easterners are taken as stereotypical binary oppositions to differentiate between these two sides and to assure the superiority of the Westerners over the non-Westerners. Some binary oppositions have been created from stereotypes that are also created from biological, and geographical differences (Zarkada-Fraser 2001; Goodman, Moses and Jones 2020). This can be linked to the postcolonial binary oppositions, which are described as geographical as presented in Table 2.

### 5.2 Geography

Table (2) shows the postcolonial binary oppositions that are related to geography such as West/ East, Europe/East, France/Palestine, Montpellier/Nablus, and others. Midhat moves from the East to Europe and finds himself dealt with and treated strangely. He is not accepted the same as the European characters around him. As mentioned earlier in the study, the East/Orient and its representation are considered inventions of the Europeans. The Orient is the reason for Europe’s existence, and the Orient is created and only exists in Europe’s mentality. The Orient has defined Europe (or the West) and “is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the other” (Said 1978, p. 9).

**Table 2.** Geographical Postcolonial Binary Oppositions

Western Stereotypes		Eastern Stereotypes	
Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
West/ Europe	22	East	13
France/Paris/Montpellier	67/83/45	Palestine/Nablus/Jerusalem/ Egypt/ Beirut	87/291/107/19/15

The culture of Europe gains its “strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate an even underground self” (Said 1978, p. 11). Chadi (2021) declares that the “West was objectifying the East through fantasizing it” (p. 31). Chadi adds that Hammad presents some of the views the West has about the East and “presents how Westerners picture Arabs and stands against those claims through depicting the life of pure Arab-Muslim people” (p. 31). It could be noticed how the Westerners have divided the world between Westerners and non-Westerners. This has been presented as binary oppositions by Hammad in her novel, *The Parisian*. This could also be seen in her way of dividing the novel into two contexts - The East, including Egypt and Palestine and other mentioned countries, and the West which includes France where many characters from different parts of the West are grouped together.

### 5.3 Characters

Table (3) shows the postcolonial binary oppositions as characters. Some characters in the novel present the West, and others present the East. This is why they are considered to be postcolonial binary oppositions such as Midhat/Jamil, Jeanette/Fatima, Molineu/Arabs (Midhat), Sheikh/Imam,

and others. The first binary oppositions to start with are Midhat/Jamil.

**Table 3.** Postcolonial Binary Oppositions as Characters

Western Stereotypes		Eastern Stereotypes	
Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
Jeanette	249	Fatima	348
Midhat	1272	Jamil/Hani	327/266
Molineu/Antoine	121/170	Arabs	86
Priest	54	Sheikh/Imam	25/3

At the age of 19, Midhat is sent by his father Kamal to France to study medicine. As an Arab Palestinian, Midhat represents the West/Paris throughout the novel. Although he is considered different to the Westerners/Europeans/French in Paris, he also has nothing to do with what is happening in Palestine/Nablus. Hammad sets her novel in the time of the “outbreak of the Arab revolt of 1936”, a time also known as the “Great Revolt” (Creswell 2019, p. 3). Midhat does not show any response to the revolt although the reader is introduced to a group of Arabs and their conversations. These conversations show how Midhat feels as an outsider and does not care about what happens in Palestine and especially Nablus. This can be seen in the following quotations:

“Bassem says, ‘You know? They have killed us. They are killing us. Like the Armenians.’ ‘Who have they killed?’ said Midhat. ‘You didn’t read the paper today?’ said Yusef Mansour...‘Midhat, you have to start reading the paper’” (Hammad 2019, pp. 160-161).

From the previous quote, Midhat is presented as irresponsible, and careless, which also foreshadows how he behaves when he goes back to Palestine. Instead of him concentrating on his studies, he spends his days in Montpellier thinking of, and following a French woman called Jeannette until years pass without him finishing his studies. After spending his time with her, she refuses his proposal because of him being different.

So, Midhat is totally in love with France, and does not think of what happens in Palestine. Things are pretty much the same when he returns to Nablus where he is nicknamed “The Parisian” because of the way he behaves and dresses. This annoys the people around him, especially his cousin Jamil. Potgieter (2020) declares that Midhat has acquired a Western style of clothes, and he does not show seriousness, care and responsibility towards the conflicts happening in Nablus and the suffering that the people of the city are going through (p. 2).

Jamil is totally different from Midhat. The difference could be seen in the scene of the policeman checking on Midhat at Nabi Musa. They both go there, but then get separated because of the big number of people. A fight starts there, and Midhat decides to go back leaving Jamil behind. From a taxi, Midhat sees Jamil “dropped into a pool of bodies” (Hammad, 2019, p. 298) but insists on running away as if has not seen Jamil at all. Later it is discovered that Midhat left his cousin in a pool of blood (Hammad, 2019, p. 299).

Jamil criticizes Midhat for being stuck in his own world as “The Parisian” in his “coloured ties” telling him, “You should just look outside yourself a bit. The country is going to shit. We have starving fellahin... Do you even listen to what people talk about?” (Hammad 2019, p. 355). From Jamil’s words, it can be noticed how Midhat lives in his own fancy world, and feels no sense of responsibility towards his family, and country. Creswell (2019) points out that Hammad has presented her protagonist as a “kind of amiable fop”. He is presented by her as the main character, but he has nothing to do with the whole plot (Creswell, 2019, p. 7). Jamil is different, he becomes a fighter and defender of his land, while, Midhat retreats into “domesticity and self-absorption” (Creswell 2019, pp. 6-7).

Moving to the other postcolonial binary opposition related to characters is Jeanette/Fatima, whom Midhat falls in love with, one in France and the other in Palestine. They both see him as different. Jeanette sees Midhat as different from her and the other Westerners, so she refuses his

marriage proposal. Fatima, on the other hand, sees Midhat as different, as a Parisian in Nablus. The difference between the two is that Midhat's being different is the reason behind Fatima accepting to marry him, unlike Jeanette who refuses his proposal because he is different. It is worth mentioning that although Midhat marries Fatima and has children with her, he keeps dreaming about his beloved French girl.

Midhat looks up to the Westerners. That is why he is related to the West in the binary opposition category. This also appears when he goes back to Palestine. This mirrors El-Enany's (2006) views when he states that since the nineteenth century, some Arabs started looking up to the Westerners, specifically the Europeans, because of their developments and enlightenment. To them, the West is considered Paradise (El-Enany, 2006, p. 33). Midhat resembles these people more than he resembles other Arab characters in the novel.

## 6. Conclusion

This study adopts a corpus-assisted approach to literary studies to explore the East/West binary oppositions in Isabella Hammad's (2019) novel *The Parisian*. Drawing upon the theory of postcolonialism and Edward Said's (1978) views on Orientalism, the analysis reveals three categories of postcolonial binary oppositions pertinent to characteristics, geography, and characters. Examples of postcolonial binary oppositions related to human characteristics are civilized/uncivilized, Empire/Orient, educated/uneducated, inter alia. The postcolonial binary oppositions related to geography include West/East, Europe/East, France/Palestine, Montpellier/Nablus. Finally, examples of the postcolonial binary oppositions that are related to the characters are Midhat/Jamil, Jeanette/Fatima, Molineu/Arabs (Midhat), Sheikh/Imam, and others. This study suggests that the spread of discourses around the East-West relationship triggers binary oppositions not only by Western writers, but also by Eastern writers like Hammad. In addition to that, CL proved to be an effective of great value to literary studies. Since manual analysis is a time-consuming task, CL techniques saves time and provides accurate results.

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