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Abstract

This thesis discusses stereotyping in twenty-first century television shows *Bodyguard* and *Elite.* Both shows contain the character of a Muslim woman and put effort in avoiding stereotypical representations. In this thesis I discuss how the shows attempt to avoid stereotypes and fail at doing so. In the beginning of *Bodyguard,* Nadia Shanaa is characterised as an oppressed woman who is forced by her husband to carry out a terrorist attack. The show plays with the main character's prejudices regarding Muslim woman and reveal that instead of being oppressed, Nadia is the mastermind behind this and several other attacks. In order to confront the audience with their stereotypical prejudices, the show slips into another stereotypical depiction of the Muslim person as a terrorist. In *Elite,* Nadia Shanaa is discriminated against because of her hijab. Although the audience is stimulated to sympathise with Nadia and the discrimination she faces, the show also slips into stereotyping. Nadia evolves into an independent woman but to become this woman she is helped by a white man, creating a white saviour narrative. Furthermore, her development into a more likeable character is paired with an abandonment of her religion, culture and, in particular, her hijab. I call the perseverance of stereotyping in these shows persistent stereotyping. Because the resistance against neo-Orientalism failed on several levels, stereotypical representations persist in these shows. Elements such as the role of the native, the journalistic pretense, the Muslim identity, and the rejection strategy contribute to persistent stereotyping in these shows.

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Introduction

In 2021, I wrote my Bachelor thesis on *Orientalism* and different adaptations of *The Arabian Nights.* As a student in Literary Studies, I continue to be drawn by how fictional media feeds on, and in turn influence society. I am now preoccupied by a new aspect of this issue: Why does it seem that representations of marginalized communities always lead to stereotypical portrayal? More particularly, why is the portrayal of Muslim women in Western cinema almost always stereotypical? Why does it seem impossible to represent Muslim women without falling into stereotypical representation?

Delving into this topic, my thesis discusses the stereotyping of veiled Muslim women. By analysing two European television shows *Bodyguard* and *Elite,* this thesis aims to prove that despite efforts to avoid them, the shows still contain (neo-)Orientalist stereotypes. Next, this thesis focuses on the question how it is possible stereotyping seems to persist. In my research I look at the two Netflix shows *Bodyguard* and *Elite,* which aired in 2018 and became popular among many people in Europe. Both shows contain a Muslim woman character with an Arabic background and reflect contemporary European society. *Bodyguard* tells the story of ex-militant and police sergeant Budd and how he becomes the bodyguard of the Home Secretary of England. London is terrorized by various attacks, including the threat posed by a suicide bomber named Nadia Ali. Although Nadia Ali is not a suspect in the investigation of the attacks, she appears to be the mastermind behind them all. In *Elite,* three working-class students are admitted to a private school in Spain. The show reflects on the relation between the new and old students. Among the new students is Nadia Shanaa, a hardworking and reserved Palestinian-Spanish girl. Both shows try not to fall into stereotyping of Muslim women, yet they fail to do so. In this thesis, I analyse how these two representations of a Muslim woman are failed attempts at avoiding neo-Orientalist stereotypes. Through narrative analysis, character analysis and semiotic analysis, I argue that by avoiding one stereotype, both shows fall into another one. With the theory of Orientalism, neo-Orientalism, cultural diversity and representation theory, this thesis argues that the shows fall into persistent stereotyping.

I will start this thesis by introducing some key terms that form the basis of my literature review and analysis.

Key terms

The next terms are explained in more detail in the literature review, yet they stand at the basis of my research. Therefore, these terms need a small introduction to clarify how I define them. This thesis focuses on (neo-) Orientalist stereotyping and culturally diverse representations. In the following section I will discuss my working definition of Orientalism, neo-Orientalism, stereotyping and representation and cultural diversity.

In 1978, Edward Said published his book *Orientalism.* Said describes this term, Orientalism, as: "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient - dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short Orientalism as a Western style of dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient."[1]

Orientalism is therefore a structure of Western thought about the Orient that was formed by European colonialism and imperialism. It created a certain knowledge, narrative, and discourse about the Middle East. The theory of Orientalism, which I will discuss in more depth in the literature review, forms the basis of the analysis of this thesis.

A particular feature of Orientalism is the stereotypes of the Orient that emerge out of the discourse. For the West, there is a certain narrative about the Orient that presents itself as the 'truth' about the Middle East. This narrative leads to certain generalisations and stereotypical representations of the Middle East. Orientalist stereotypes contain the belief that the Orient is a mystical, traditional and exotic place. The men are violent, sneaky and brutal and the women are seductive, sexual, available and subordinate. This representational discourse led to numerous writings that contained these 'characteristics' of the Orient. This thesis focuses on these Orientalist representations.

Neo-Orientalism is a contemporary form of Orientalism. Because the term is relatively new and unexplored, academics who have used and even coined the term, have not yet critically engaged with each other's work. This results in the term being used in various contexts. Nevertheless, many of these academics agree that neo-Orientalism often contains Islamophobia and centres around religion rather than race. Like the classical form, neo-Orientalism relies heavily on binary oppositions, and particularly the West/East one. Central to neo-Orientalism is also the role of the popular media on which neo-Orientalist expressions

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[1] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2019), 3.

are easily shared with millions of people. Later in this thesis, the features of neo-Orientalism will be discussed in more detail.

This thesis builds on the resistance against neo-Orientalism of the two television shows and the ways this resistance falls short. This resistance derives from globalisation and cultural diversity. Eugenia Siapera defines cultural diversity in *Cultural Diversity and Global Media: The Mediation of Difference* as "the sum of the various cultural differences in all their unruly complexity, their antagonisms, and their conviviality."[2] In this thesis I use this definition of cultural diversity to describe the different cultures and cultural practices that interact with each other in European society.

Method

The television shows at the centre of this thesis are *Bodyguard* and *Elite*. Both aired on streaming service Netflix in 2018, and both represent hijab-wearing Muslims. For the analyses of these shows I will, for a large part, use a narrative analysis.
I will closely examine the representations of the two Muslim women and their relation towards other characters, their own evolvement, and finally the way in which they fall into a neo-Orientalist stereotype. My analysis is grounded in mise en scene analyses of certain shots and scenes, as well as in Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics, which will facilitate my discussion on the symbolism of the veil.

I will use the theory of semiotics, by Roland Barthes and Ferdinand de Saussure, to discuss the symbolism of the veil. The theory of De Saussure argues that every sign signifies something. The world is given meaning to through this system of symbols. For example, a rose, which is the signified, signifies love and passion. This complete idea of the rose and its meaning is called a sign. Barthes argues that there is a 'second-order semiological system' that he calls mythology. For myths, Barthes argues, the same system applies as for the first order semiotics. There is a *form* which is the meaning that is given to the *concept*. In this second-order, the sign is called the *signification*. The relation between the first and second order of semiotics, is the way the sign becomes the form. The meaning of the rose as a sign of passion and love becomes the form which gives meaning to the concept, in myth. See image 1.[3]

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[2] Eugenia Siapera, *Cultural Diversity and Global Media: The Mediation of Difference,* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 5.
[3] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies,* trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 113.
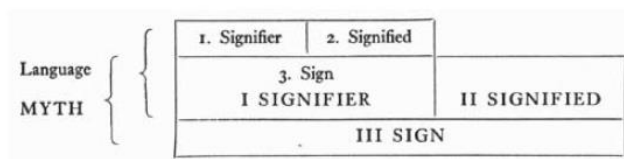
Image 1

The signification differs from the sign in that it has a greater meaning. Myths are subject to historical, cultural and ideological context. Barthes uses the example of a magazine cover with a black Frenchman saluting. The signification of this image is that it stands for the greatness of the French empire and how it does not discriminate. With the emergence of a myth, the signifier is overshadowed and loses its meaning. 'One believes that the meaning is going to die, but it is a death with reprieve; the meaning loses its value, but keeps its life, from which the form of the myth will draw its nourishment'.[4] The myth takes over the initial signifier of the sign and disregards it.

In this thesis I will use the theory of semiotics to analyse the use of the hijab in both shows. The hijab is a sign. The piece of clothing is the signified and it signifies the different reasons a woman can have to wear it. Within Orientalist discourse in European society, the hijab has turned into a concept that is now often regarded as backwards, mysterious, secretive and dangerous. Teresa Heffernan argues in *Veiled Figures: Women, Modernity, and the Spectres of Orientalism*: "It is not about why or how women do or do not wear veils or whether they should or should not veil – rather, it asks how veiling in any of its forms emerged as an over-determined sign of Islam and how the figure of the (un)veiled woman became key in the divide between Islam and the West".[5] The hijab as a religious expression still exists, yet it is overshadowed by the signification. The signification, in the case of the veil, is the meaning Orientalism and, later, neo-Orientalism have given to it. The form of a concept is highly fluid and depends on many factors such as history, geography and discourse, Barthes argues. "In actual fact, the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations. One must firmly stress this open character of the concept; it is not at all an abstract, purified essence; it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function."[6]

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[4] Barthes, *Mythologies,* 117.
[5] Teresa Heffernan, *Veiled Figures: Women, Modernity, and the Spectres of Orientalism,* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 5.
[6] Barthes, *Mythologies,* 118.

The hijab gains the Orientalist meaning because it appears in an Orientalist setting and gains a different meaning than it might have in the Orient itself. In this thesis I mostly use semiotic analysis to look at the hijab as a sign for the idea of a mysterious, sexual, and secretive Oriental woman.

The shows

The two show this thesis analyses are *Bodyguard* and *Elite.* I chose these shows for the differences but also because they both aired in 2018. This is significant because the shows present the same time and society. They both take place in contemporary Europe. There are many differences in the way these two Muslim women are portrayed; In *Elite,* Nadia Shanaa is a Palestinian-Spanish girl who is new to a private school and endures discrimination from her school and schoolmates. Her parents are Muslims who do not want her to hang out with her schoolmates and oblige her to keep wearing her hijab. She is one of the main characters of the show and a protagonist. *Elite* is a teen drama, a drama genre about and made for teenagers. *Bodyguard,* on the other hand, is a thriller show. Nadia Ali is a jihadi who pretends to be an oppressed Muslim woman in order to plan terrorist attacks. She is important for the story of the show, but she is not the protagonist. To avoid confusion between the two women named Nadia, I use the first and last name of the Nadia's when comparing them. When discussing one show, I use the first and last names at the start of a new paragraph and shift towards only the first name after mentioning her last name once.

The most important reason I chose these shows is that although they both contain a Muslim character, the shows are not entirely about these characters. *Bodyguard* discusses several terrorist attacks and organised crime in the British government. These attacks are planned by Nadia Ali. Other than her mentioning non-believers and her hijab, the show does not pay attention to the Islam. In *Elite,* the show is about teenagers from different social classes and how they interact with each other. Especially when someone commits murder, these relations are challenged. Nadia Shanaa's family is Muslim, but the Islam is not central to the larger narrative of the television show. These shows contain one or multiple Muslim characters, yet the shows don't revolve around Islam. Furthermore, both shows take place in Europe, so the setting is also mostly non-Muslim. This is useful for my analysis because, in some parts, I look at the relation between the Muslim woman and the non-Muslim characters and the sense of belonging of the Muslim characters.

This thesis aims to prove that, despite efforts, the stereotypes in *Elite* and *Bodyguard* are not completely avoided. The shows exist within a neo-Orientalist discourse and are subdued to

the phenomenon of persistent stereotyping which I define in chapter three. The role of the native Orientalist, the authority of news media and the all-consuming identity of the Muslim characters are all elements that contribute to the persistence of the neo-Orientalist discourse in which these shows exist. This thesis starts with a literature review on the existing debate on Orientalism and neo-Orientalism and how these discourses influence the representation of Muslim women in cultural texts.

Chapters

In the second chapter I will discuss the show *Bodyguard* by director Jed Mercurio and one character in particular, Nadia Ali. Nadia Ali pretends to be an oppressed Muslim woman and fools the main character, David Budd, with this act. It appears she is a terrorist, and the show frames her as the most evil person in the show. In this chapter I argue that not only does the show exchange one stereotype for another, but Nadia Ali is also compared to other villains and appears to be the worst of all. I finish the chapter with an analysis on the semiotics of her veil and how her appearance symbolizes her character.

In the third chapter I discuss the show *Elite,* directed by Carlos Montero and Darío Madrona, and focus on the character of Nadia Shanaa. Nadia Shanaa evolves in the show from a reserved, religious, and obedient girl into a social girl who stands up against her parents and removes her veil. The chapter aims to show that this evolvement is made possible by Guzmán, a white Spanish boy. His relationship with Nadia Shanaa can be described as a white saviour narrative. Although the show explicitly rejects discrimination against Muslim people, the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman persists in the relation between Nadia Shanaa and her father and Guzmán. A mise en scene analysis of a scene where Nadia Shanaa unveils shows the sexualisation of Nadia Shanaa and her hijab in *Elite.*

The final chapter of this thesis argues that the way these shows fail to avoid stereotyping of Muslim women in their attempt of resistance, is part of a neo-Orientalist discourse. In this chapter I introduce the term *persistent stereotyping* and its characteristics and argue how this phenomenon is created. I finish the chapter by arguing that there are several reasons for the persistence of stereotyping.

Literature review

Orientalism

The term Orientalism is used to describe the discourse around cultural hegemony and the assumption of a binary opposition between the West and the East. Orientalism is the stereotyping, generalising and undermining system of thought about the Orient that reveals itself in Western cultural representation. I start this literature review with discussing these characteristics building upon Said's discussion of Islamic Orientalism. The chapter then moves towards a discussion of neo-Orientalism and gender. The literature review continues with a discussion of cultural diversity in visual entertainment media. This thesis attempts to start to fill in the gap in academic literature on the representation of cultural diversity. Using two cases, I argue that the representation of Muslim women suffers from persistent stereotyping.

Orientalism is a discourse. Said argues that Orientalism is not a true representation of the Orient nor that it matters what the 'real' Orient looks like. Centuries of Western domination over the Orient has led to a certain narrative. This narrative presents itself as the truth about the Orient and its inhabitants. The 'true' Orient has no influence on the way it is represented because the continuous representation of the Orient as Oriental keeps reenforcing itself: "Thus, al of Orientalism stand forth and away from the Orient: that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear, "there" in discourse about it. And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient."[7]

Said argues that Orientalism claims a truth, a knowledge, about the Orient and this discourse is so strong, that (1) the reader and consumer of the Orientalists work learns this 'truth' but consequently that (2) the Orient inevitably becomes what the Orientalist writes about, Oriental. The West has incorporated the Orientalist discourse and has contributed to it by reusing the narrative of the Orient as the Other in the language of writing and representing the Orient. The entirety of Western thought, writings and representations of the Orient is Orientalist. Said argues that "Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there

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[7] Said, *Orientalism,* 22.

has been a considerable material investment"[8]. Orientalism materialises in European international politics regarding the Middle East.

Said uses Antonio Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony to describe the domination of one culture over others. Orientalism assumes that because European culture dominates over others, it can so easily create a discourse about cultures of the Orient. As a result, Said argues: "There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness, usually overriding the possibility that a more independent, or more skeptical, thinker might have had different views on the matter."[9] The cultural hegemony of Europe over the Orient, silences other narratives.

The assumption of a dichotomy between the West and the Orient is central to understanding Orientalism. "Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on."[10] Stuart Hall quotes Ferdinand de Saussure in his book *Representation.* He argues that "meaning depends on the difference between opposition."[11] The West identifies and gives meaning to itself by creating a contrast with the East. Furthermore, by presenting the Orient as the Other, as backwards, traditional, conservative, and static; the exact opposite of the West, Orientalism legitimises domination over the Orient. The discourse that there is a binary opposition between the West and the East was a necessity in legitimising the European colonial and imperial strategy.

Said also describes the relation between the West and the Islam. He argues that Islamic Orientalism is Orientalism in a different form and to a different degree. The othering of the Orient takes a different shape when concerning the Islamic world. "Rather, their [Islamic Orientalists] estrangement from Islam simply intensified their feelings of superiority about European culture, even as their antipathy spread to include the entire Orient, of which Islam was considered a degraded (and usually, a virulently dangerous) representative."[12] Islamic Orientalists view the Islam as backwards and resistant to change. Therefore, it is regarded as a threat to Western civilization and as something that must be kept at a distance. Said argues that Orientalism is part of a system of knowledge and truth-claims. The Orientalist is

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[8] Ibid.*,* 6.
[9] Ibid., 8.
[10] Ibid., 3.
[11] Stuart Hall, *Representation,* (Los Angeles: The Open University, 2013), 225.
[12] Said, *Orientalism,* 260.

backed and fuelled by the dominant Orientalist narrative in their writings about the Arab Orient. These writings enforce the truth-claim that fuelled the writing itself, hereby upholding the Orientalist framework.

Orientalist representation

Hall defines stereotyping by distinguishing it from typing. The practice of typing is used to make sense of things and categorise them. Our picture of a person is determined by the categories the world assigns to it. A person can be a musician, a woman and ambitious. Typing becomes stereotyping in three ways. First, when some of a person's characteristics are highlighted and simplified and this person's identity is reduced to those characteristics. A second feature is that "it symbolically *fixed* boundaries, and excludes everything which does not belong."[13] In other words, elements of a person's personality are excluded because they do not fit within the stereotype. Finally, "stereotyping tends to occur when there are gross inequalities of power."[14] This relates closely to the earlier discussed Othering and cultural hegemony. Siapera argues in *Cultural Diversity and Global Media* that by stereotyping, society gives meaning to the world. "Hence, stereotypes provide groups and persons with an important means of understanding themselves and others – in other words, they form part of people's identities."[15] Siapera does not distinguish stereotyping from typing. I agree with Hall that there is a great difference between the two and that this distinguishment is crucial to understanding stereotyping. Yet, Siapera's argument that stereotyping is a way of identity creation strongly relates to the idea of Othering and of a binary opposition between the West and the East. To define Europe, Orientalists identified themselves and Europe by contrasting it with the Orient. This contrasting happened in relation to the stereotyping of the Orient.

Hall continues to describe stereotyping as: "Stereotypes get hold of the few 'simple, vivid, memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized' characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, exaggerate and simplify them."[16] Siapera cites psychologist Gordon Allport that negative stereotyping can "cause people to become obsessed with their self-image."[17] Additionally people who are negatively stereotyped can "suffer from anxiety, expecting to face prejudices and discrimination in various aspects of their life."[18] Not only do stereotypes have these effects, stereotyping assumes a friction between the one stereotyped and the stereotype and is therefore inherently damaging.

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[13] Hall, *Representation,* 248.
[14] Ibid., 248.
[15] Siapera, *Cultural Diversity and Global Media*, 114.
[16] Hall, *Representation,* 247.
[17] Siapera, *Cultural Diversity and Global Media,* 114.
[18] Ibid., 115.

Stereotyping assumes a power relation between the one stereotyped and the stereotyper. The one who stereotypes has a power to "represent someone or something in a certain way – within a certain 'regime of representation.'"[19]

In *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,* Jack G. Shaheen discusses thousand Hollywood films produced from 1896 to 2000 that contain representations of Arabs or Arab culture. In his introduction he states: "In gathering the evidence for this book, I was driven by the need to expose an injustice: cinema's systematic, pervasive, and unapologetic degradation and dehumanization of a people."[20] Shaheen discusses how, in these movies, the Arab man is portrayed as evil, as a terrorist, as shallow, as far from civilization, as arrogant, and repressive of women. The women in the films Shaheen analyses are "humiliated, demonized, and eroticized."[21] Veiled women in Orientalist films were mostly portrayed as sexual and mute objects that triggered the fantasies of the Orientalist. In the introduction of *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film,* Ella Shohat discusses the representation of veiled Muslim women in film: "The Orient as a metaphor for sexuality is encapsulated by the recurrent figure of the veiled woman. The inaccessibility of the veiled woman, mirroring the mystery of the Orient itself, requires a process of Western unveiling for comprehension."[22] The veil is a symbol for everything the West thinks the Orient is; mysterious, backwards and secretive.

Neo-Orientalism

In "Neo-Orientalism? The relationship between the West and Islam in our globalised world" in *Third World Quarterly,* Mohammad Samiei argues that the relationship between the Islam and the West has changed: "an increasing Islamic resurgence world-wide; acts of terror in the name of Islam, particularly noticeable in 9/11 and subsequent terrorist operations in the West and the way the West responded to them; all these put both the West and Islam in quite new positions."[23] News coverage on developments such as the Arab response to the founding of the state of Israel and the Iranian revolution, led to, Samiei argues, a negative image of the Islam in Europe and North America. Around the same time, neo-conservative right-wing scholars such as Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington argued that the West must fear a clash of civilisations with the East. In "From Orientalism to neo-Orientalism:

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[19] Hall, *Representation,* 249.
[20] Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People,* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), 1.
[21] Ibid., 23.
[22] Ella Shohat, "Gender and Culture of Empire" in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film,* ed. Matthew Bernstein, and Gaylyn Studlar (Rutgers University Press, 1997), 32.
[23] Mohammad Samiei, "Neo-Orientalism? The Relationship between the West and Islam in Our Globalised World," *Third World Quaterly* 31, no. 7 (2010): 1148.

medial representations of Islam and the Muslim world" in *Textual Practice,* Muhammad Abdul Wahid argues that after 9/11 the works of these scholars become more popular and that this Islamophobic discourse lay ground for the contemporary manifestation of Orientalism: "Their essentialist views and oversimplifications, regardless of the diversity in Islamic cultures, have exacerbated the ideological re-envisioning of the question of Islam and Muslims in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the United States. In short, the hostility that existed in the Western political spheres – historically rooted in Orientalism – increased and played out in the critiques of the neoconservatives in the late twentieth century."[24]

Neo-Orientalism contains the characteristics of Orientalism that I described above. Neo-Orientalism is, like the classical form, a discourse that builds upon the power relations and the idea of a binary opposition between the West and the East. Neo-Orientalism distinguishes itself from the classical form in that it classifies the Orient as dangerous instead of "exotic, primitive, or uncivilised"[25] Ahmad Sa'di argues that neo-Orientalism is a more nuanced form and appears less on the surface: "the most noticeable change is the disappearance of the construct of race and its substitution by the inoffensive and supposedly neutral terms of 'culture', 'ethnicity' and 'religion'"[26] In "Neo-Orientalism", Behdad and Williams discuss four differences between classical and neo-Orientalism. They argue that inherent to neo-Orientalism are (1) a journalistic pretense to know the Orient, and (2) the participation of people from the Middle East in neo-Orientalist narratives. These two aspects of neo-Orientalism will be analysed more closely in the fourth chapter of this thesis. Thirdly, they argue that Orientalism mostly concerned culture and philological aspects, "neo-Orientalism is marked by an unapologetic investment in and engagement with the politics of the Middle East."[27] The will to learn more about the Orient has turned into the will to gain power over and control the Orient as a way of protecting the West from the dangers the Orient entails, like Samiei and Wahid argue. The last difference they distinguish is in the representation of veiled women. They argue: "Whereas in classical Orientalism, the veil functioned as a metonymy for the harem, portrayed as a mysterious and inaccessible space of eroticism and lusty sexuality, in neo-Orientalist discourse the veil has been refashioned once again into a symbol of Muslim women's oppression and lack of civil rights and liberties."[28]

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[24] Mohammad Abdul Wahid, "From Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism: Medial Representations of Islam and the Muslim World." *Textual Practice*, 1-10 (2023): 7.
[25] Wahid, "From Orientalism to Neo-Orientalism," 4.
[26] Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Orientalism in a Globalised World: Said in the Twenty-First Century." *Third World Quarterly* 42, no. 11 (2021): 2511.
[27] Ali Behdad, and Juliet Williams, "Neo-Orientalism." In *Globalizing American Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 285.
[28] Behdad, and Williams, "Neo-Orientalism," 285.

Overall, in neo-Orientalism, the Orient turned from a sexualised object of interest that needed to be discovered and studied, towards something that the West knows as dangerous and something that must be controlled. The focus in neo-Orientalism is on culture and religion rather than on race. Consequently, in neo-Orientalism the stereotyping of the Islam is more prominent in neo-Orientalism than in its classical form.

The framework of the oppressed Muslim women, the symbolics of the veil and how these lead to Western feminism is discussed by Leila Ahmed and Teresa Heffernan.

In *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate,* Leila Ahmed discusses the way feminist language was used to legitimise the colonial project of West-European countries. "The idea that Other men, men in colonized societies or societies beyond the borders of the civilized West, oppressed women was to be used, in the rhetoric of colonialism, to render morally justifiable its project of undermining or eradicating the cultures of colonized peoples."[29] Within this framework the veil some Muslim women wear became a symbol for the conservative, oppressive and violent behaviour of the Oriental men. Teresa Heffernan discusses the veil and Orientalism. She argues that the tension between the West and the East is always present in the representation of women's bodies. The veil has become a symbol for the West on how backwards the Islam and the Orient are. Leila Ahmed argues: "It [the feminist agenda for Muslim women as set by Europeans] was incorrect in its broad assumptions that Muslim women needed to abandon native ways and adopt those of the West to improve their status; obviously, Arab and Muslim women need to reject (just as Western women have been trying to do) the androcentrism and misogyny of whatever culture and tradition they find themselves in, but that is not all the same as saying they have to adopt Western culture or reject Arab culture and Islam comprehensively."[30]

The saving of Muslim women from Muslim men is part of the white saviour narrative that is often used in Orientalist cinema and television. In *The White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption,* Matthew Hughey discusses the white saviour trope in cinema. He describes a trope as a reccurring narrative or element of cinema with a symbolic meaning. About the white saviour trope he writes: "This trope is so widespread that varied intercultural and interracial relations are often guided by a logic that racializes and separates people into those who are redeemers (whites) and those who are redeemed or in need of redemption

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[29] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 151.
[30] Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 166.

(non-whites)."[31] Hughey argues that the problem of this trope is that it contributes to an image of the subordinate and dependent person of colour. "Whiteness emerges as an iron fist in a velvet glove, the knightly savior of the dysfunctional "others" who are redeemable as long as they consent to assimilation and obedience to their white benefactors of class, capital, and compassion."[32]

Many scholars have read, cited and used *Orientalism* in the past 45 years. Feminist scholars have critiqued Saids work for the little attention he has given to the aspect of gender within Orientalism. Yet some scholars, such as Ahmed and Heffernan have argued that we need to see the sexualisation of the Orient and Western feminism as inherent to Orientalism. The feminist study of Orientalism is a necessity if we want to understand the phenomenon as a whole. Four features of Orientalism show how patriarchy is inherent to Orientalism: First, the emasculation of the Oriental man. Second, the legitimisation of the colonial project by creating a discourse of saving the Oriental woman from the Oriental man. This second feature is often present in the Western-feminism discourse and results in the white saviour narrative. Third, the symbolic meaning of the veil as backwards, conservative and oppressive. Fourth, the project of unveiling the women as an idea of making the Islam more modern. Orientalism *is* a patriarchal discourse, according to Ahmed and Heffernan.

Cultural diversity

Although Orientalist stereotypes have been widely discussed, many scholars argue that European and American cinema continue to vilify Arab and Muslim people. Yet a popular trend is also to represent more marginalised communities in the cinematic world, such as LGBTQ+ people, black people, and Arab and Muslim people. In *Transnational European Television Drama: Production, Genres and Audiences* Bondebjerg, Helles and Søndergaard discuss Straubhaar's theory of cultural proximity. This theory of cultural consumption entails that audiences prefer mediated products that "speak in and from the social and cultural context with which we are directly familiar."[33] With the multicultural identities Europe contains, European television has also diversified. "Mediated cultural encounters are gradually developing into more global stories, stories concerning us and European others or about the multicultural reality of the societies we live in."[34] Eugenia Siapera argues that the media shapes culture and vice versa: "cultural diversity is (re)produced and distributed through the

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[31] Matthew W. Hughey, *The White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 2.
[32] Hughey, *The White Savior Film,* 8.
[33] Ib Bondebjerg et al., *Transnational European Television Drama: Production, Genres and Audiences* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 26.
[34] Bondebjerg et al., *Transnational European Television Drama*, 28.

media, which construct and represent it in certain ways, and which are in turn received and put to use by audiences."[35] In short, media and society influence each other.

In 2015, journalist April Reign, created the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite to address the "industry's treatment of historically marginalized groups."[36] Society calls for more racial representation within the film industry. Studies show that in Hollywood, this representation has indeed increased in the past century. Unfortunately, many critics also argue that these representations led to misrepresentations. For this thesis, the effort of the visual entertainment industry to improve racial representation and the on-screen diversity is central. The entertainment industry puts effort in a rightly representation of society's diversity. Do they succeed in doing so? In 'Representing race: the race spectrum subjectivity of diversity in film' the authors conclude: "Even though there appears to be more visible representation of minorities in today's media, the representations are still inordinately negative and stereotypical."[37]

Culturally diverse representation is a way of resistance against xenophobia, discrimination and racism, and an acceptation of cultural diversity. In this thesis I discuss how two European series show resistance against racism towards Muslim women and the forthcoming stereotypes.

Racial and ethnic representation and stereotyping, as well as specifically Muslim stereotyping, in cinema is a widely discussed topic. However, there is little research on how the industry still fails to avoid stereotypical representation. The next part of this introduction discusses Evelyn Alsultany's book on representational strategies of the filmmaking industry.

Simplified complex representations

In the first chapter of her book, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media,* Alsultany discusses how, since the 1990s, producers have incorporated representation strategies that fit the multicultural movements. She coins the term 'Simplified complex representations' and explains how the film industry applies different strategies to represent Arabs. With these strategies it appears as though the film contains positive imagery of Arabs and Muslims, yet the representation still relates to the stereotypes of these people. Alsultany argues: "These

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[35] Siapera, *Cultural Diversity and Global Media,* 7.

[36] Reggie Ugwu, "The Hashtag That Changed the Oscars: An Oral History," The New York Times, February 6, 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/02/06/movies/oscarssowhite-history.html, accessed December 20, 2023.

[37] Jesse King et al., "Representing Race: The Race Spectrum Subjectivity of Diversity in Film," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44, no. 2 (2021): 335.

representations appear to challenge or complicate former stereotypes and contribute to a multicultural or post-race illusion. Yet at the same time, most of the programs that employ simplified complex representational strategies promote logics that legitimize racist policies and practices, such as torturing Arabs and Muslims."[38]

Alsultany argues that, because the Arab and Muslim characters are still represented in relation to terrorism and violence, the Oriental image persists. She concludes by arguing that these representation-strategies may risk the denial of the severeness of institutionalised racism.

In the third chapter of her book, Alsultany discusses the representation of the Muslim woman in cinema. She argues that the stereotypical image of the oppressed Muslim woman evokes sympathy for this character "a person who formerly was not seen as deserving of human feeling."[39] She discusses how this damages the viewer's perception of the Arab: "Pity makes outrage easy; feeling sorrow for someone's distress easily morphs into anger at the circumstances that caused the distress and thus outrage at the men, the culture, and the religion."[40]

While Alsultany discusses the new representation strategies used for terrorist stereotypes, she does not discuss how producers try to challenge the Oriental discourse of the oppressed Muslim woman. While Alsultany does address the film- and television-makers' attempts to address a more complex representation of Arab and Muslim characters, her argument is based around the assumption that the producers are deliberately including some stereotypes: "Writers thus seem to be constrained and influenced by two factors: viewers have been primed to assume that Arabs/Muslims are terrorists, and therefore writers create what viewers expect and what will sell; at the same time, some viewers are particularly sensitive and fed up with stereotypes, and therefore writers must create a more diverse world of characters."[41]

Building on Alsultany, I argue that the wish of the audience might also be to see a representation of the many different people that live in society, like people with an Arab background and Muslims. It is hard to include these marginalised communities without falling into stereotypical clichés.

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[38] Evelyn Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media: Race and Representation after 9/11* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 21.
[39] Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media,* 71.
[40] Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media,* 72.
[41] Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media,* 27.

Alsultany uses political-economic theories to approach stereotyping. Siapera explains that "the media are considered to be determined by the capitalist mode of production."[42] These theories argue that culture is economised and subdued to fulfilling "its economic function as a commodity on the other hand, and as a means of deceiving or manipulating minds of the other."[43] This economic perspective assumes a passive audience and neglects the interconnectedness of media and society. Siapera discusses the term 'mediation' as Martín-Barbero and Silverstone coined it. Silverstone stresses the power of the media in shaping social, cultural, institutional, technological and individual environments. Siapera argues: "the relationship is a dialectical one, thereby paying attention to the ways in which reception, consumption, or use feed back into media institutions, technologies, and outputs."[44] Mediation is the interconnectedness between society and media. The term is created within the scholarly fields of media theories. The theory of mediation combines these media theories and looks at the different ways media influences and is influenced. For this thesis I use the principles of mediation theory.

I will look at how the writers of the two Netflix shows try to stay away from stereotypical imagery yet fail to do so because of *persistent stereotyping.* This term was created in conversation with my supervisor throughout the work on this thesis, as we were searching for a term illustrating the process of reinforcing stereotypes while consciously attempting to avoid them in a given cultural representation. In this thesis I intend to describe the way stereotypical images of the Orient, and in particular of the Islam, continue to exist, even though society, and the film and television industry try to resist these stereotypes. For this thesis I will use the theory of neo-Orientalism to discuss stereotypes in *Bodyguard* and *Elite.* Furthermore, the symbolics of the veil that I explained in this literature review will be used to do a semiotic analysis of both television shows.

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[42] Siapera, *Cultural Diversity and Global Media,* 66.
[43] Ibid., 67.
[44] Ibid., 74.

Chapter 1: Bodyguard

Introduction

On the 26th of August 2018 the BBC aired the first episode of a new thriller television show, *Bodyguard. Bodyguard* is created and written by Jed Mercurio. The show, which takes place in London, contains six one-hour long episodes surrounding Police Sergeant David Budd, a rugged police officer who stands as the ultimate yet flawed fighter for justice. In the first episode, Budd is on the train with his children. The conductor tells Budd that they suspect that there is a suicide bomber on the train. Budd searches through the train and finds Nadia Ali, a Muslim woman wearing a veil and a bomb vest on the toilet. He talks her out of letting the bomb go off and brings Nadia, himself, and the passengers on the train in safety. After the event in the train, David Budd is assigned as bodyguard to Julia Montague, the Home Secretary. After two more attacks, one on the school of Budd's children and the other on the Home Secretary, Montague is killed by a bomb. The police find out that there is a mole in the police department or security service and Budd becomes a suspect. In the last episode, Budd proves his innocence, and it appears that Nadia is the one who set up the plan of the attacks and the one who built the bombs that were used in the train, on the school, and in the attack on Montague. The movie follows the perspective of David Budd. Because of this cinematic tactic, the audience is stimulated to sympathise with Budd and to go along with his train of thought.

Bodyguard has been BBC's most successful show and has peaked with 11 million views. The show is awarded with high scores on Rotten Tomatoes and IMDb[45] and has received positive response from among others, *Time Magazine* and *The Guardian.* Despite its popularity, the show has received criticism regarding the stereotyping of Nadia. Al Jazeera quotes Shaf Choudry about television shows and films that contain terrorism and violence: "When shows like *Bodyguard* perpetuate these negative stories, especially against a backdrop of a rise in Islamophobic hate crimes across Europe and the US, these narratives can have real-life implications."[46] In the *Telegraph*, Shelina Janmohamed, also criticises the portrayal of Nadia Ali in *Bodyguard,* and claims that director Jed Mercurio has cleverly included the two mainstream stereotypes of Muslim women, the oppressed Muslim woman, and the terrorist.

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[45] IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes are websites that rate movies and series. The ratings on IMDb are the average of all the ratings the registered users of IMDb give a certain show or movie. It costs nothing to rate a show or movie (IMDb 2023). Rotten Tomatoes base their ratings on the reviews from film critics (Rotten Tomatoes 2024).

[46] Aina Khan, "The Bodyguard's Female Muslim Bomber Character Stirs Debate," *Al Jazeera*, September 25, 2018, http://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/9/25/the-bodyguards-female-muslim-bomber-character-stirs-debate.

"Did the story – as some are claiming – cleverly subvert the ideas of victimhood of Muslim women through Nadia's own words, pointing out that she wasn't what everyone assumed? If she – and the writer - really believe that she's not a stereotype then poor them."[47]

Anjli Mohindra, the actress who plays Nadia, reacts that it felt empowering to play Nadia in the show: "We have this idea that women who wear hijabs are oppressed and do so not at their own will and that is something that we need to think about and take stock of because that is absolutely not the case."[48]

In the show, Nadia Ali is portrayed as an innocent and oppressed Muslim woman. Later, it appears she is not a victim but a terrorist, and thus the show slips from one stereotype into another one. This chapter argues, by making a comparison of Nadia with two other characters, that Nadia is the worst villain in the show. It continues with the argument that Nadia gives David Budd a feeling of betrayal, which creates a distance between Nadia and the audience. This distance is metaphorized in Nadia's hijab and in the interrogation scene where Nadia reveals her . The chapter finishes the analysis of *Bodyguard* with the argument that although Budd immediately trusted Nadia, there was no reason to do so. He did so because the idea that Nadia was an oppressed Muslim woman confirmed the stereotype that was already there.

Oppressed woman stereotype

This paragraph argues how Nadia Ali's character is a stereotypical representation of an oppressed woman. In the next paragraphs I discuss four different elements that contribute to the characterisation of Nadia as oppressed. First, I discuss the first appearance of Nadia as scared and vulnerable. Second, I discuss the element that the police do not regard Nadia as a suspect in their investigation. The third element discussed is how Budd and the police treat Nadia with carefulness and caution so as to not to upset her. Fourth, Nadia is one of the few people that are called by her first name, indicating a sense of familiarity.

The framework of Nadia as an oppressed woman already starts at the first encounter between Budd and Nadia. When Budd finds Nadia in the toilet of the train, she almost triggers the bomb she is wearing. She appears scared and nervous, she takes short breaths,

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[47] Shelina Janmohamed, "Bodyguard's Worst Offense? Its Desperate Stereotypes About Muslim Women," *The Telegraph*, accessed March 5, 2024, www.telegraph.co.uk/women/life/bodyguards-worst-offence-desperate-stereotypes-muslim-women.

[48] Chris Harvey, "Bodyguard Star Anjli Mohindra: 'Nadia Isn't an Islamophobic Stereotype – Playing Her Was Empowering'," *The Telegraph*, accessed March 5, 2024, www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/0/bodyguard-staranjli-mohindra-nadia-isnt-islamophobic-stereotype.

seems to be shaking, whimpers and her eyebrows are middle raised. See image 2.[49] Not just Nadia's body language suggests she is scared, the fact that she is on the toilet also suggests she is vulnerable, as the toilet is a private place. This first encounter and the portrayal of Nadia as weak, scared, and vulnerable is the first element of Nadia's stereotype.

Image 2

Because of Nadia's appearance, Budd immediately trusts her even though Nadia does not give him any reason to do so. Budd shows pictures of his children, tells Nadia about his wife, and shields her body with his from gunshots, indicating this trust. Budd takes the audience along with his assumptions about Nadia's motive and her relationship with her husband. Besides Budd, the head of the police department also does not view Nadia as a suspect. She says Nadia is the "best lead to the bomb-maker."[50] This means that in about a week after the attack on the train, they have not yet questioned Nadia and that she is not a person of suspect. The police have the idea that Nadia cannot be more than a victim of oppression and consequently does not regard her as a suspect. This is the second element that adds to Nadia's portrayal of an oppressed Muslim woman.

The third element that contributes to Nadia's stereotype of an oppressed Muslim woman is the carefulness with which the police department and Budd interact with her. This starts in the first episode when Budd looks at her with concern and empathy and when he says: "You don't want to do this." See image 3.[51] This continues when Budd and his colleague interview Nadia. During the conversation, Nadia's 'appropriate adult', also a Muslim woman wearing a veil, is present, her presence emphasizes how young Nadia is. Budds colleague starts the interview by reassuring Nadia: "If any time you need to stop, please say so."[52] During the

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[49] Jed Mercurio, director, *Bodyguard*, season 1, Netflix, accessed December 20, 2023, ep. 1, 00:09:38.
[50] Mercurio, *Bodyguard*, ep. 4, 00:45:05.
[51] Ibid., ep. 1, 00:10:15.
[52] Ibid., ep. 1, 00:46:46.

interview, Nadia appears to be too scared to say anything; she is repeatedly asked to speak up for the recording, she is told that she is "doing really well"[53] and that she should take her time, she keeps fidgeting and she looks doubting at her solicitor before answering the questions. In this scene, the people around Nadia treat her with care and Nadia shows vulnerability.
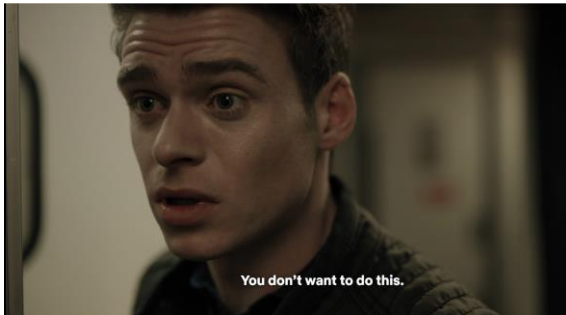

Image 3

The fourth element that contributes to the framework of Nadia Ali as an oppressed Muslim woman is the use of her first name instead of her last name. In the show, almost all the characters refer to each other with their last name or both the first and the last name. This includes police officers, criminals and Budd's colleagues. Netflix also describes all these characters with their last name in the subtitles they offer. There are three women whose first name the characters use. This is of Nadia, Vicky Budd (Budd's wife) and Chanel Dyson; a woman in her twenties who used to work for the police but got involved with organised crime after being fired. Budd calls his wife by her first name as well. Since the audience follows the perspective of Budd, Netflix's use of her first name is logical. Yet the usage of Chanel and Nadia's first name indicates that Budd feels familiar with them. By using Nadia's first name, the show familiarizes the audience and Budd with her. This creates a sense of trust and closeness with Nadia. This, in turn, contributes to the framework of Nadia as an oppressed Muslim woman who cannot be held responsible for the attacks.

The appearance of Nadia Ali on the toilet, the way Budd treats her in their first encounter, the care with which Nadia is treated and the use of her first name, create a representation of an oppressed and vulnerable woman.

The narrative that entails that Nadia Ali is saved from her husband by Budd, can be described as a white saviour narrative. Budd saves Nadia from her oppressive husband and from herself. Matthew Hughey argues that one important element of the white saviour

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[53] Ibid., ep. 1, 00:48:58.

character is the 'Crossing their color and culture line.' "A defining characteristic of the white savior film is the white interloper's intrusion on a nonwhite culture that is, or soon will be, under assault."[54] In this element, the white saviour goes to the native's land and learns more about their culture and discovers that he feels affinity for the native. In *Bodyguard,* Budd was sent as a soldier to Afghanistan. Although the show does not specifically recall that Budd grew more towards the native's culture during his time in Afghanistan, he shows Nadia that he has some affinity with it. When the two characters meet in the train, the first thing Budd says to Nadia is 'As-salamu alaykum."[55] This is a greeting used in many Arab countries and loosely translates to 'May God be with you'. By expressing himself in Arabic, Budd shows that he has been to an Arab country and it emphasises his connection with it, and with Nadia.

Terrorist stereotype

In the last episode, the police department finds out that Nadia Ali is the mastermind behind all the attacks. This next section discusses the change from the oppressed stereotype into the terrorist stereotype and how this second stereotype manifests itself in the show.

This paragraph discusses the scene in which Nadia confesses her involvement in the attacks. Already at the beginning of the scene, the atmosphere of the interrogation room is different than during the first interview with Nadia. Nadia's appropriate adult is no longer present and the nondiegetic sounds are high screeching tones supported by low bass. These sounds create a tense atmosphere. At first, Nadia denies she knows anything and is nervously biting her nails. See image 4.[56] However, when the police ask her whether she really is a victim in this process, Nadia's attitude changes completely. She suddenly stops biting her nails and when she removes her hands, she reveals a smile on her face. See image 5.[57] Nadia is clearly not showing any remorse for the deaths she has caused. She confesses that she used the information she received from Budd about his children to plan the attacks and she reveals she built all the bombs used during the attacks. She claims: "You all saw me as a poor oppressed Muslim woman. I am an engineer. I am a jihadi."[58] The stereotypical framework of an oppressed Muslim woman is replaced with the terrorist stereotype.

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[54] Hughey, *The White Savior Film,* 28.
[55] Mercurio, *Bodyguard*, ep. 1, 00:09:20.
[56] Ibid., ep. 6, 01:06:53.
[57] Ibid., ep. 6, 01:07:15.
[58] Ibid., ep. 6, 01:08:12.

Image 4

Image 5

Through a comparison between Nadia on the one side and two other villains on the other, this next part argues that Nadia is the worst villain of this show. Both comparisons also show that Nadia is deliberately portrayed as this evil mastermind, emphasizing the Muslim terrorist stereotype. The emphasis on Nadia's evilness contributes to the persistence of this stereotype.

In "Protecting Whiteness: Counter-Terrorism, and British Identity in the BBC's *Bodyguard"* Louise Pears compares Andrew Apsted with Nadia Ali. Andrew Apsted is a war veteran suffering from PTSS, who is hired to kill Montague. Pears argues that although he is also a villain in the story, there are two significant differences between both characters. First, although Apsted tries to shoot Montague, it is a targeted attack. Nadia, on the other hand, is the mastermind behind all the attacks and was aiming to kill all the passengers in a train and many schoolchildren. Nadia's actions lead to more casualties than Apsted's attack. Secondly, their reasons to perform these attacks are vastly different. Nadia's interrogation reveals that she is a Jihadi and that she planned these attacks for money and to "put a sword in the heart of the British government."[59] Apsted, however, has a much more complicated backstory including his PTSS from the war in Afghanistan and his critique of Montague's policies. "Apsted has a more reasonable and benevolent justification for his violence. He is given a greater backstory and a more just explanation for his violence. His violence needs more explanation, whereas with Nadia, "I am a jihadi", is enough to do this work."[60] Nadia is portrayed as inhumane because she targets large groups, among which a children's school. The audience cannot really understand her motive and the audience feels alienated from her because of her deception. Apsted, on the other hand, is portrayed as a victim of the system and triggers sympathy because of his past and his motivation to attack Montague.

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[59] Mercurio, *Bodyguard,* ep. 6, 01:09:30.
[60] Louise Pears, "Protecting Whiteness: Counter-Terrorism, and British Identity in the BBC's Bodyguard," Millennium (2022), 18.

The second 'bad guy' in the show is the mole within the police department, Lorraine Craddock. The show encourages the audience to feel more sympathy for Craddock than for Nadia. This contributes to the framing of Nadia as the worst villain in the show. There are two ways this difference in sympathy is created, which I will discuss in this next part. First, Craddock looks like she regrets her participation in the attacks while Nadia is proud of what she has done. During her interrogation, Craddock seems like she feels ashamed of her involvement; she stammers during her interrogation and starts to cry. See image 6.[61] When the interrogation finishes, the camera stays a little longer on Craddock, who is crying. This shot puts emphasis on the guilt Craddock feels. Nadia, on the other hand, smiles when she confesses she is responsible for the crimes. See image 5. When the police officer confronts Nadia with the fact that she could not go through with the attack on the train, Nadia responds with: "But look how I have atoned. I have helped the cause a thousand times more."[62] The only thing that would cause sympathy for Nadia, namely the fact that she could not trigger the bomb on the train, is undermined. The difference between Nadia and Craddock in their show of remorse, or lack thereof, causes more sympathy for Craddock.

Second, Craddock indirectly compares her own crimes with those committed by Nadia. Craddock tells the interrogator that she would never plant a bomb near a children's school: "I would never do anything like that to one of my team."[63] Budd then discovers that Nadia was behind this attack on the school. With her claim, Craddock suggests that attacking a school of children is a much worse degree than the things she has done. She tries to frame Budd for the things she has done, because "he'd make the perfect fall guy."[64] Hereby Craddock frames the crimes of Nadia as worse than hers, even though she betrayed Budd a great deal as well.
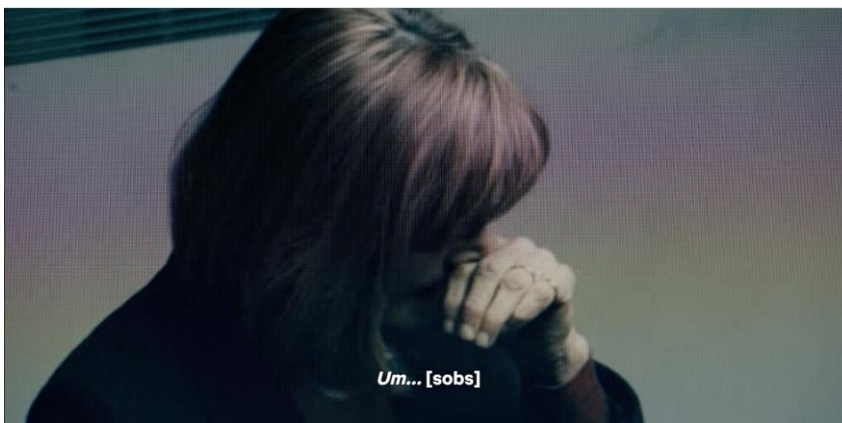

Image 6

[61] Mercurio, *Bodyguard,* ep. 6, 01:03:02.
[62] Ibid*.,* ep. 6, 01:09:54.
[63] Ibid., ep. 6, 01:04:44.
[64] Ibid., ep. 6, 01:04:36.

Alienation

Through the comparison with Apsted and Craddock, I argue that Nadia Ali is presented as the worst villain in the show and that both Budd and the audience feel alienated from her. First, Nadia has, for the European public, no good reason to commit these crimes. Second, she attacks Budd's children. Third, Budd feels more betrayed by Nadia than by Craddock. Fourth, Nadia shows no remorse for her actions. The distance that is created between Budd and the audience on one side and Nadia on the other, becomes clear in two elements: the difference between the first and the last interview with Nadia and Nadia's appearance, with in particular her veil.

Nadia Ali's attitude changes during her last interrogation where she quickly shifts from a scared oppressed woman to an evil mastermind. In the first two interviews with Nadia, Budd is in the same room as Nadia and is doing the interviewing. During the last interrogation, Budd is watching the interrogation on cameras from a different room. This shift of perspective puts a literal distance between Budd and Nadia. Not only is he not in the room anymore, but there is also a screen separating him and Nadia. This alienates Budd from the latter, evil version of Nadia.

The second way Budd's alienation from Nadia is metaphorized is in Nadia's appearance. In *Colonial fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism,* Meyda Yeğenoğlu writes about the veil and unveiling as a Western doctrine. She argues that:

> The veil attracts the eye, and forces one to think, to speculate about what is behind it. It is often represented as some kind of a mask, hiding the woman. With the help of this opaque veil, the Oriental woman is considered as not yielding herself to the Western gaze and therefore imagined as hiding something behind the veil. It is through the inscription of the veil as a mask that the Oriental woman is turned into an enigma. Such a discursive construction incites the presumption that the real nature of these women is concealed, their truth is disguised and they appear in a false, deceptive manner.[65]

Nadia hides her true identity by pretending to be oppressed by her husband. Nadia's hidden identity, symbolised by her veil, alienates her from the audience. Actor Anjli Mohindra, who

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[65] Meyda Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 44.

portrays Nadia Ali in the show, remarks in the Telegraph: "Everything up to that point is a veil – you're just removing the veil"[66] regarding Nadia. Mohindra acknowledges the symbolic significance of the veil in relation to Nadia's hijab. The veil not only adds an element of mystery, but Nadia's dark clothing also enhances this effect. Nadia's dark clothes symbolise the darkness of her character.

Confrontation with prejudices

In the last interrogation scene, when Nadia confesses her part in the attacks, she states that "To him [Budd], I was a weak woman."[67] Nadia suggests that before she could play the act that she was an oppressed woman, Budd already assigned her that role. This next paragraph argues that Budd only trusted Nadia because she fitted into the prejudices he already had of a Muslim woman. From their first encounter in the train Budd protects Nadia because he thinks Nadia's husband forces her to perform this attack. Nadia looks scared to go through with the attack, yet she does not confirm it when Budd asks her if she is forced by her husband to do so. Budd then shields Nadia's body from the gunshots from the police. Budd is willing to sacrifice his life for a woman he does not know and who is about to trigger a bomb. The only reason given by Nadia to trust her, is the fact that she looked scared when they met. I argue that Budd's trust is fuelled by his prejudices about Muslim women. Budd expected Nadia to be oppressed because he thought she was and relied upon this expectation entirely. When it appears that Nadia is not an oppressed woman but an evil mastermind, Budd is confronted with these prejudices. When Nadia says Budd saw her as a weak woman, she confronts the police with their prejudices. My analysis shows that Budd indeed followed his stereotypical prejudices. It was the confirmation of a stereotypical image that the characters already had, that fuelled the trust in Nadia. Because of this, the show makes the audience reflect on their prejudices towards Muslim women. The show addresses the oppressed stereotype and confronts the audience with their prejudices. The uneasiness that the audience is stimulated to feel regarding their prejudices, is a form of resistance against stereotyping. Nevertheless, this resistance is followed by the introduction of a different stereotype, namely a terrorist representation of Muslim people.

This chapter shows how Budd framed Nadia as an oppressed woman, which Nadia took as an opportunity to not be seen as a suspect in the crimes. Budd is surprised when Nadia reveals she is behind all the attacks and takes the audience along with his feelings of betrayal. Because Nadia gave Budd no real reason to believe her, Budd is faced with his

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[66] Harvey, "Bodyguard Star Anjli Mohindra. 'Nadia Isn't an Islamophobic Stereotype – Playing Her Was Empowering.'"
[67] Mercurio, *Bodyguard,* ep. 6, 01:07:23.

prejudices about Muslim women. The rejection of this one stereotype unfortunately creates a new stereotype, that of the terrorist Muslim. Not only is this a new stereotype, but Nadia is also framed as inhumane, and her characterization creates a feeling of alienation between her and the audience. It seems like the show cannot get out of the stereotyping of Nadia.

Chapter 2: Elite

Introduction

The second show this thesis analyses, is *Elite,* a high school teen drama from Spain. The show is directed by Carlos Montero and Darío Madrona. In 2018 the first season of the show was released on streaming platform *Netflix* and received a 7.2 on *IMDb* and a 93% score on *Rotten Tomatoes.* The show revolves around Las Encinas, a private school in Spain. After a public-school collapses, three students from this school, Nadia, Christian and Samuel, are granted a scholarship to attend Las Encinas. The show revolves around the murder of Marina, a student at the private school, and the question of who the killer is. Furthermore, the show explores the relation between these three working-class students and the wealthy students. One of the three scholarship students is Nadia Shanaa, a Palestinian-Spanish girl who wears a hijab.

Nadia's story starts at Las Encinas. On Nadia Shanaa's first day at her new school, two of her new classmates, Guzmán and Lucrecia already dislike Nadia. They plan to make Nadia fall in love with Guzmán to "cut her down to size."[68] However, Guzmán and Nadia grow to like each other, and they become friends. Throughout the show, Nadia's struggles between keeping her faith and being able to continue on the school and be with Guzmán. Furthermore, Nadia struggles with her conservative father who does not allow her to date, to remove her hijab, or to explore herself at the new school. When her conservative father finds out she does not wear her hijab at school and that her brother, Omar, has a relationship with a boy, her father wants her to quit school. He forcefully removes her from class during an exam and does not want her to attend the school dance. Still, he lets Nadia stay at Las Encinas when Guzmán promises him he will break contact with her. In the last episode, Nadia tells her father she wants to return to Las Encinas next year.

Using a close analysis focused on Nadia Shanaa's representation*,* this chapter argues that despite efforts to challenge stereotypical representation and Islamophobia, the show fails to do so. I will demonstrate this by five major topics in the series: First, I will compare the characterisation of Nadia and Lucrecia and argue how Lucrecia strengthens Nadia's character and personality. Second, I will look at the stereotypical representation of Nadia's father as the oppressive Muslim man. Third, I will analyse how Nadia's evolvement throughout the series shows that the audience is stimulated to dislike Nadia's Muslim and

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[68] Carlos Montero and Darío Madrona, *Elite*, season 1, Netflix, 2018, accessed March 28, 2024, ep. 1, 00:37:17.

Arab heritage. Fourth, this evolvement is made possible by Guzmán who is a representation of the white male saviour. Finally, I will look at the symbolism of Nadia's veil and how unveiling is sexualised in *Elite.*

Elite evokes sympathy for Nadia Shanaa and her Muslim identity by contrasting her with Lucrecia. The representation of a Muslim woman is one of the elements that contribute to the culturally diverse representations in *Elite.* The inclusion of marginalised communities is a large theme in *Elite.* The show represents homosexual characters, class differences, Muslims, HIV and polygamy. The audience praise the show for this cultural and queer representation and Netflix presents the show as a LGBTQ+-show as well. The show puts effort in a culturally diverse representation. This chapter discusses how the show fails to avoid Muslim stereotypes in this representation.

In the first section, the chapter focuses on Nadia's interaction with her fellow student, Lucrecia. Lucrecia stereotypes Nadia as oppressed, she sexualises Nadia's hijab, she supports an East-West dichotomy, and she stereotypes Muslims as terrorists. The show frames Lucrecia as a bad person, highlighting the contrast between the two girls. This creates sympathy for the Muslim girl, Nadia, and dislike towards those who discriminate against her, Lucrecia.

Sympathy for Nadia Shanaa

From the moment the three new students - among whom Nadia Shanaa - walk into the school, it is apparent that Lucrecia does not want them to be there. Lucrecia is racist and stereotypes Nadia in many ways. Additionally, Lucrecia negatively addresses Nadia's hijab and her religion. This starts in the introduction in class, when Lucrecia whispers to Guzmán: "Wasn't this a secular school?"[69] Later, the principal summons Nadia and asks her to remove her hijab. Lucrecia and Guzmán are shown whispering and watching from a distance. They are the ones that reminded the principal that headscarves are not allowed in the school. Later, Lucrecia voices her racist thoughts in a conversation with Nadia at a party. Lucrecia starts a conversation with Nadia and states: "Here's everything you hate about the West. All the sinful decadence"[70], and "With a scarf on your head you can't possibly think much, dear."[71] Lucrecia discriminates and stereotypes Nadia in this scene in two ways: First, Lucrecia stereotypes Nadia as an oppressed Muslim woman who is not allowed to think or have agency. Second, she has a stereotypical idea of Muslim people hating the West, hereby

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[69] Montero and Madrona, *Elite,* ep. 1, 00:08:10.
[70] Ibid*.,* ep. 1, 00:33:31.
[71] Ibid., ep. 1, 00: 33:40.

supporting a binary opposition between the Orient and the West. Furthermore, Lucrecia sexualizes Nadia. Lucrecia persuades Guzmán in seducing Nadia and asks him: "the idea of making a virginal Muslim girl fall for you doesn't turn you on?"[72] Lucrecia does not just stereotype Nadia as oppressed, but also as a terrorist. Lucrecia refers to Nadia as 'Taliban girl' and suggests that Nadia will let a bomb go off.

Although the show contains these Orientalist claims, Lucrecia does not trigger sympathy with this. To the contrary, the show already frames Lucrecia as the bad guy in the show, and these claims amplify the characterisation of Lucrecia as a bad person. Aside from being mean to Nadia, Lucrecia is also mean to other people. She blackmails her teacher into giving her the highest grade in class instead of Nadia, she seduces Guzmán in having sex with her even though he does not want to, and she makes a fool out of the other scholarship students. These acts put her in contrast with Nadia, who is depicted as a nice and relatable person in the show. Furthermore, Lucrecia is a flat character in the show; she has no development in the show and, contrarily to her fellow students, her home-situation and parents are almost never shown or mentioned. To summarise, Lucrecia is not the main character in the show, and she is the antagonist to the protagonist, Nadia. The show stimulates the audience to have affinity for Nadia and consequently to condemn the stereotypical and racist acts of Lucrecia.

Not only the difference between Lucrecia and Nadia triggers sympathy for Nadia. At the beginning of the show, Nadia shows to struggle with removing her hijab for school. Because this struggle is clearly depicted, the audience shares her emotions. The principal tells Nadia that she is not allowed to wear accessories and Nadia responds with: "My Hijab is no accessory. Besides, everybody has things around here. Expensive bags, gold watches. […] They mean "I have more money, more style. I'm better than you." […] If you understood you wouldn't ask me to give up my culture or religion."[73] Nadia feels misunderstood and discriminated against and the series clearly show this. Because this scene is from her point of view, the show stimulates the audience to see Nadia's forced removal as injustice. Later, Nadia's brother Omar asks her how her first day was. She smiles slightly and says it was very good. After Omar leaves, she turns to look at herself wearing the hijab in the reflection of the window. See image 7.[74] The next day, Nadia removes her hijab in the bathroom while looking in the mirror, with the same expression. See image 8.[75] With this sequence, the

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[72] Ibid., ep.1, 00:37:09.
[73] Ibid., ep. 1, 00:11:03.
[74] Ibid., ep. 1, 00:16:07.
[75] Ibid., ep.1, 00:18:04.

audience is taken along with the struggle Nadia experiences while removing her hijab. The way Nadia looks at her own reflection symbolises her search for who she is and who she wants to be. The camera point of view gives the audience a look inside Nadia's head. Both shots are filmed from behind Nadia while she looks at her reflection. These shots create a feeling of intimacy between the audience and Nadia, which contributes to the overall sympathy that is created.

Image 7

Image 8

Oppressive father stereotype

Although Nadia Shanaa's character is not a stereotypical representation of a 'bad Muslim', her father's characterisation contains this stereotype. Nadia's father, Yusef Shanaa, is portrayed as a traditional and oppressive father who has not integrated in Spanish society. He disapproves of his children's relationships, he uses force against his children, and he discriminates against homosexuals. In this next paragraph I will elaborate on these claims and argue how this leads to the audience disliking Yusef. Furthermore, this paragraph argues that through the relationship between Nadia and her father, Nadia's characterisation contains a stereotypical representation.

First, Yusef does not like Nadia's new school, her new friend and Omar's sexual orientation but the audience is stimulated to do contrarily. The show explicitly follows Nadia and Omar's and their new relationships. The series shows how Nadia and Omar get attached to new people which stimulates the audience to like these new relationships. Their father does not like this and wants to force them to break contact. Second, Yusef uses force against both his children. He pushes against Omar's throat when he discovers Omar is a drug dealer and he forcefully drags Nadia out of the classroom when he wants her to leave the school. The violent manners he uses against his children portray Yusef as a violent and unlikeable character. Finally, Yusef discriminates against his son when he discovers Omar is homosexual. Because Nadia and Omar are two of the main characters of the show, the audience is taken along with their point of view. Like the relationship between Lucrecia and Nadia, Yusef is portrayed as unsympathetic because he is put in contrast with the protagonist. The audience is stimulated to like Omar and Nadia and the relationships they create. Because their father opposes them and their relationship, and occasionally uses force against them, the audience is discouraged to like Yusef. This representation of Yusef and the relation with his children is a stereotypical representation of the Muslim father that oppresses his children. Consequently, Nadia is stereotyped as a submissive Muslim girl that is silenced by her father. Like Evelyn Alsultany argues, the pity the audience feels for Nadia and Omar easily translates into hatred towards the man causing this pain, Yusef.

Stereotypical development

Nadia Shanaa has an excessive background story. The show takes the audience to Nadia's home, her parents and her brother and she experiences multiple new things; she falls in love, she meets new people, and she goes to parties. Furthermore, Nadia develops in the show. From a reserved girl who does not have many friends and is controlled by her father, she changes into someone who goes to parties, becomes friends with Marina and Guzmán and stands up against her father. This development is made possible by the people she meets at Las Encinas, and particularly Guzmán. In the next section I will analyse Nadia's evolvement and argue how Guzmán is the white saviour in this process.

At the beginning of the show Nadia is a reserved person. She does not show interest in the other students and only talks to people when she is being talked to. For example, when Nadia finishes the social media profile of Guzmán for a school assignment, the teacher says the page contains too little information. Nadia responds with: "How much more does one need to introduce oneself on social media?"[76] This shows that Nadia is a private person who

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[76] Ibid., ep. 2, 00:23:21.

likes to keep things to herself. Guzmán also notices her reserved attitude, as he calls her boring because she does not want to take pictures of him in his swimsuit. Throughout the show, Nadia opens up more. She befriends Guzmán and his sister Marina and she goes to a party. At the end of season one, Nadia has changed from a reserved person only focused on schoolwork, to a person with social interests.

Another way that Nadia changes throughout the show is in her emphasis on the differences between her and the people at her school. When she, Samuel and Christian enter the school on their first day, Christian claims: "Shit. They're looking at us like we're Martians." Nadia responds with "You get used to it"[77], clearly referring to her hijab and the way people often stare at her. Christian emphasizes the distance that the other students feel towards these new scholarship students. Not only does Nadia confirm this distance, but she also isolates herself from Samuel and Christian by stating 'you get used to it'. Nadia alienates herself not only from her friends, but also from the rest of the world. Nadia in particular, amplifies the difference between her and Guzmán: "This only makes me see how different we are. You tried to win a bet at my expense. Then, you tell me about your father snorting coke in the cellars. And now, your sister with HIV. And you say that our culture is archaic."[78] Nadia highlights the differences between 'her world' and 'Guzmán's world', which stands in the way of their friendship. Throughout the show, Nadia's binary thinking moderates and she discovers 'her world' and 'Guzmán's world' are not so different. She gives her new friends advice on the things she felt distanced from before, like Marina's HIV and Guzmán's father who is in jail. Nadia shifts from emphasising the binary opposition between her and 'the rest' to overcome these differences.

Alongside Nadia's social change and her increased sense of belonging, Nadia's attitude towards her father also changes. At first, Nadia is very concerned about her parents' opinion, and she obeys her oppressive father. She wants to please him, so she starts to hide things from him. Eventually, Nadia stands up against her parents. She stops them from arranging a marriage between her brother and a girl he does not know, and, despite earlier condemnation, she supports Omars relationship with another man. Furthermore, Nadia stands up against her father when he wants her to leave Las Encinas. She states: "If I go back, it will be with no conditions. If I go back, it will be to be a student like the rest. I don't know if anything will happen with Guzmán, or with someone else. Or if nothing happens at

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[77] Ibid., ep. 1, 00:04:04.
[78] Ibid., ep. 5, 00:22:12.

all. But if I go back, it will be unconditionally."[79] Her changed attitude towards her parents is a third aspect of Nadia's personal development.

Throughout the first season Nadia develops on three levels, she becomes more social, her sense of belonging increases and she becomes more independent. This next paragraph argues that the show stimulates the audience to encourage these developments. The largest theme of the show is the interaction between the students at Las Encinas. Nadia's newly grown social interest is something that contributes to this theme. Therefore, the audience is stimulated to like Nadia's social change. Likewise, the audience is stimulated to encourage Nadia's sense of belonging because it contributes to the larger narrative. Nadia releases her binary thinking which brings her closer to the other characters. Finally, Nadia's confrontation with her oppressive father is also something that the audience is stimulated to support. Nadia develops into something society wants her to be. She integrates in her school and rejects her parents' traditional ways to evolve into a more likeable character.

This evolvement is mostly triggered by her relationship with Guzmán. Guzmán challenges Nadia to explore new social relations with him and the other students at Las Encinas. He even encourages her to go to parties. Furthermore, Guzmán stresses that he and she are not as different as she thinks they are. It is clear she listens to him because she accompanies him in his visit to his father in jail and she gives Marina advice on HIV. The way Guzmán helps Nadia in her evolvement is most visible in his attitude towards Nadia's relationship with her father. When Yusef forcefully drags Nadia out of the classroom, Guzmán quickly jumps up to help her. Moreover, Nadia's father blames Guzmán for Nadia's alteration and wants them to break apart. Guzmán engages in every aspect of Nadia's change. Their relationship helps Nadia change into someone the audience wants her to be. Guzmán's role in Nadia's development can be described as a white saviour trope. Although at first, Guzmán discriminates against Nadia, he discovers that she is not that different from him. He leaves his girlfriend Lucrecia to be friends with Nadia and helps her discover who she is and who she wants to be. The white saviour narrative is clearly present when Guzmán literally tries to save Nadia from the forceful grasp of her oppressive father. This scene symbolises my argument that *Elite* contains a white saviour narrative.

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[79] Ibid., ep. 8, 00:40:53.

Sexualisation of the hijab

In the following paragraphs I will argue how Nadia Shanaa's hijab, and Nadia's unveiling is sexualised through a close analysis of the swimming pool scene.[80] At the party Guzmán takes her to, Nadia is drugged and suggests going swimming at Guzmán's place. When they enter the house, Nadia still wears her hijab. In the pool, Nadia's hijab comes loose. See image 9.[81] Nadia then looks seductively at Guzmán. Romantic music is playing off-screen. She dives under water and her hijab falls off her head. During this shot, the music plays louder and reaches the climatic chorus of the song. Nadia invites Guzmán into the pool. See image 10. [82]

Image 9

Image 10

The scene ends with a shot of Nadia's hijab lying at the bottom of the pool. This last shot underlines the meaning of the removal of the hijab. The swimming pool scene is the only scene in the first season in which Guzmán seems to long for Nadia. In other scenes Guzmán clearly shows affection for Nadia, yet only here does he seem to desire her and does she seem to seduce him. The removal of Nadia's hijab is portrayed as a seductive and sexual deed. Like Lucrecia predicted, Guzmán is attracted to the idea of unveiling Nadia.

Orientalist discourse often contains the sexualising of a veiled woman. As Yegenoglu argues: "The veiled existence is the very truth of Oriental women; they seem to exist always in this deceptive manner. This metaphysical speculation or mediation, this desire to reveal and unveil is at the same time the scene of seduction."[83] Not only is the unveiling of Nadia sexualised, but it also goes hand in hand with Nadia's growth. The paragraphs above established that Guzmán influenced Nadia's evolvement. The show suggests that to grow into an open and liberated person, Nadia must remove her hijab. Guzmán helps her to do so.

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[80] Ibid., s. 1, e. 3.
[81] Ibid., ep. 3, 00:34:43.
[82] Ibid., ep. 3, 00:34:56.
[83] Yegenoglu, *Colonial Fantasies*, 45.

The three ways Nadia develops; her social attitude, her increased sense of belonging and her independence lead to two stereotypes. In the paragraph above I argued that the first stereotype the show falls into is the white saviour narrative. The second one stereotype is that in order to become her new empowered self, Nadia must leave her Arab heritage and Muslim identity behind. This stereotype enforces the neo-Orientalist idea that Arabness and Muslimness cannot go hand in hand with modernism and freedom of women. Nadia's reserved attitude at the beginning of the show is vanishes when she unveils, her increased sense of belonging is paired with going to parties where she gets drugged and visiting someone in jail, and she must go against her traditional parents in order to become independent. All these changes require Nadia's distancing from her culture and religion.

Elite uses Lucrecia's stereotyping of Nadia as a Muslim terrorist to reject this stereotype. Through a contrast with Lucrecia's negative character, Nadia is built as the sympathetic protagonist. Although Nadia is a round character who experiences growth, her Muslim father is a stereotypical oppressive Muslim father who triggers little sympathy. Furthermore, Nadia's development into an independent person, is mostly set in motion through her relationship with Guzmán, leading to a white saviour narrative. Just as in *Bodyguard,* the hijab becomes a symbol of something that is hidden and in the case of Nadia in *Elite,* additionally something that should be revealed and sexualized. The next chapter of this thesis argues that persistent stereotyping is the reason these two television shows slip from one stereotype into another and discusses how this is possible.

Chapter 3: Persistent stereotyping

In the first two chapters of this thesis, I analysed two television shows, *Bodyguard* and *Elite*. In this chapter, I am doing a comparison of the two shows' rejection of existing stereotypes and their use of the veil as a way of hiding one's true identity. Second, I analyse the way both shows slide into another stereotype whilst rejecting another. I continue to argue how this form of stereotyping can be described as persistent stereotyping. The chapter will continue with a review of the term neo-Orientalism and precede with an analysis on how neo-Orientalism relates to persistent stereotyping in *Bodyguard* and *Elite.*

Comparison *Bodyguard* and *Elite*

Media coverage of *Bodyguard* and *Elite*, including reviews and interviews, point to an awareness of the stereotyping and discrimination of Muslim people in European society by the creators and actors, and an open wish to tackle those. In an interview with the cast of *Elite,* Omar Ayuso who plays Omar Shanaa states: "For Montero, striking the right balance between drama and character development has been key to avoid falling into the pitfall of stereotypes and recycled storylines for the TV show, which he says is among the first in Spain to delve into such once-taboo topics in a front-facing and provocative way."[84] In *Bodyguard*, Nadia Ali uses the existing stereotype of an oppressed Muslim woman in her advantage. Because of her lie, she is not a suspect in the investigation of multiple bombing attacks. In *Elite* as well, Nadia Shanaa and Lucrecia's interaction shows how Muslim women suffer from discrimination and racism. Not only on-screen do the shows reject stereotypes. The actors who play the Muslim women, also applaud the shows' recognition and rejection of certain stereotypes, as argued in the chapter on *Bodyguard*.

Both *Elite* and *Bodyguard* show resistance against stereotyping in two different ways. In *Bodyguard* is Budd, and with him also the audience, confronted with his prejudices towards Muslim women. The show hereby resists the idea that a Muslim woman with a hijab is automatically weak and oppressed by her husband. *Elite* tries to represent the cultural diversity of Spain. However, both shows fail to completely avoid stereotyping and slip into an Orientalist representation of these Muslim women. In *Bodyguard*, Nadia Ali deceives Budd and the audience when it appears that she is a terrorist and a jihadi. Furthermore, not only is Nadia Ali portrayed as a 'bad Muslim', but she is also framed as a worse person than two other villains in the show, Craddock and Apsted. The process of stereotyping Nadia Shanaa

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[84] Brande Victorian, "Omar Ayuso Talks Return to 'Elite' and the Moral Responsibility He Feels Playing a Gay Muslim Character," *Hollywood Reporter*, accessed May 10, 2024.

in *Elite* happens similarly. Nadia Shanaa is oppressed by her father. Throughout the first season of the show, she leaves the traditional, religious, and veiled version of herself behind in order to become an empowered character. Moreover, a white Spanish boy, Guzmán, helps her to become this more likeable character. In the relation between Nadia Shanaa and Guzmán, the show plays with a white saviour narrative. The two shows leave one Orientalist stereotype behind, in exchange for another.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the hijab of both women emphasizes the stereotypical representation. The hijab of Nadia Ali in *Bodyguard* metaphorizes her hiding the truth from David Budd and the police. Whereas in *Elite,* Guzmán sexualizes Nadia Shanaa's unveiling and on top of that, Nadia Shanaa's unveiling goes hand in hand with her personal development. In both shows, the hijab symbolizes the religion of both women in a negative way. In other words, the veils of these women go hand in hand with their stereotypes. In both shows, the veil has become a (neo-)Orientalist symbol.

The stereotypes of an oppressed Muslim woman and of the terrorist Muslim, are inherent features of neo-Orientalist texts (Wahid; Behdad and Williams). The representation of veiled women is often linked to these discourses. In "Neo-Orientalism", Ali Behdad and Juliet Williams write, "In neo-Orientalist discourses, the veil is always constructed in terms of a binary between freedom and oppression, secularism and religion, modernity and tradition, and democracy and tyranny."[85] For Nadia Shanaa in *Elite,* removing her veil resulted in freedom, secularism, and modernity. Nadia Ali in *Bodyguard* keeps her veil on but is stereotyped as a tyrant.

The producers of the two shows I analysed are aware of stereotypes of Muslim women, as they address it in interviews and in the show, yet they fail to completely avoid these. Why do they fail to do so? As earlier introduced in this thesis, Evelyn Alsultany discusses different strategies that producers, according to her, use to represent marginalised groups. To explain why producers keep misrepresenting these Muslim women, Alsultany argues, "Writers thus seem to be constrained and influenced by two factors: viewers have been primed to assume that Arabs/Muslims are terrorists, and therefore writers create what viewers expect and what will sell; at the same time, some viewers are particularly sensitive and fed up with stereotypes, and therefore writers must create a more diverse world of characters."[86]

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[85] Behdad, and Williams, "Neo-Orientalism," 294.
[86] Alsultany, *Arabs and Muslims in the Media,* 27.

Alsultany concludes that because these production offices are commercial companies, it is their conscious decision to keep including stereotypes. Alsultany uses political-economic theories when she discusses culturally diverse representation. I argue we need to use the theory of mediation to look at stereotyping in these shows. The producers want to make a better representation, but fail to do so because of the neo-Orientalist discourse they operate in. In what follows, I offer three points of contention that I find myself having with Alsultany's theory: the actors argue that they are not portraying stereotypes, the characters show that the producers are aware of certain stereotypes, and it is a problem within society and not within the industry alone.

First, the actors of both Nadia's say in interviews that they feel it is empowering to play their character and that they relate to them. These actors do not believe that they are portraying a stereotypical character, they argue that they are telling a story that is not only close to the truth, but also that they are telling the story of a powerful woman. Second, the two Muslim characters address the common stereotypes of oppression and terrorism in the show as well. They are pointing at existing stereotypes and play with these common representations. This shows that the producers are completely aware of certain stereotypes and choose to defy them, yet fail at doing so. Third, Alsultany holds the producers of these texts responsible for these representations yet, I argue that this is a problem of society and not of commercial intentions of the filmmaking industry. We should look at a broader scale and study how the neo-Orientalist discourse in European society influences the representation of these Muslim women. After an introduction of the term persistent stereotyping, I will continue with an analysis of neo-Orientalism and connect this to the persistent stereotypes in *Bodyguard* and *Elite*. Through this analysis, the next part argues how the problem of persistent stereotyping relates to the neo-Orientalist discourse.

Persistent stereotyping

As argued in the previous paragraph, the misrepresentation of these two Muslim women is part of the neo-Orientalist discourse of the twenty-first century. The stereotypes of oppression and terrorism seem to persist in *Bodyguard* and *Elite*. This form of stereotyping, where the producers are stuck within neo-Orientalist representations, is something I characterise as persistent stereotyping. This is a phenomenon where stereotyping, despite efforts to avoid it, seems to persist. This term is not applicable to a certain kind of stereotype, such as terrorist stereotype, but it is inherent to the phenomenon of contemporary stereotyping.

Persistent stereotyping only occurs when there is an awareness of stereotyping and the harm it afflicts. Consequently, the phenomenon is linked to the effort of cultural texts to oppose the stereotype. This can occur in the form of a culturally diverse representation but also of a confrontation of one's prejudices.

In the literature review of this thesis I discussed cultural hegemony and Said's argument that the Orientalist discourse faces no real resistance: "[the Orientalist] was in, or thought about, the Orient because he *could be there,* or could think about it, with very little resistance on the Orient's part."[87] Due to globalisation, resistance against the (neo-) Orientalist discourse can now come from all over the world. In the digital age, stories and narratives travel much faster and traveling to the Orient becomes easier. The world figuratively becomes smaller, and ideas travel faster. Muslim people who are stereotyped can watch the movies and shows that contain these stereotypes. Furthermore, because of migration and multiculturalism, the Orientals live among the people who do the stereotyping. This leads to culturally diverse representation and also to critique when these representations are stereotypical. As a consequence, the internet is full of blogs and YouTube video's where Muslim people criticise the stereotyping of Muslim people in European and American television and film. Resistance against neo-Orientalism is easily formed because more people encounter and hear of the Muslim stereotypes. Globalisation and the digital age facilitate this resistance by ensuring that more people are exposed to and can address these harmful stereotypes. In *Bodyguard,* the resistance against neo-Orientalism is present in Budd's confrontation with his stereotypical prejudices towards Nadia Ali. In *Elite,* this resistance is the culturally diverse representation.

Failed resistance against neo-Orientalism, forms the link between persistent stereotyping and neo-Orientalism. Both shows analysed in this thesis try to reject stereotyping. In *Bodyguard,* the show makes the protagonist and the audience face their prejudices towards Muslim women. *Elite* contains culturally diverse representations of LGBTQ+ people, Muslim people and shows class differences. However, the shows fail to use these two strategies of resisting neo-Orientalist stereotypes caused by persistent stereotyping. Persistent stereotyping emerges when resistance against neo-Orientalism fails.

Persistent stereotyping is possible because it relies on a power relation between the representer and the represented. Just like in Orientalism, where cultural hegemony creates a

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[87] Said, *Orientalism,* 7.

power relation between the Orient and the West, the hegemony between the represener and the represented shows the power the entertainment industry has over the stereotyped.

Essential to understanding persistent stereotyping is that it persists because there are enough recollections, personal stories and memoires that confirm the stereotypical stories do happen. The fictional stories of oppressed Muslim women, like Nadia Shanaa's story in *Elite,* are stories that do happen to Muslim women. Likewise, there is a great threat in Europe from Islamist terrorists who act in the name of God. Extremists pose a real threat in Europe so the representation of the Islamist terrorist is something that *could be* a true recollection. The problem is that there are endless true narratives of Muslim people, yet it is the stereotypical ones that keep returning. These stereotypes are fuelled by a belief that it is a truthful representation, and it is ignored that such stereotypes are generalising an entire community.

This chapter continues with four factors that contribute to persistent stereotyping. The first two factors are aspects of neo-Orientalism that also apply to persistent stereotyping: the native's recollections within neo-Orientalist discourse and the journalistic pretense of truth. Third, I discuss how in *Bodyguard* and *Elite,* the two Muslim women's identity revolves around her religion and how this leads to stereotyping. Finally, I argue that the strategy of rejecting one stereotype, as is done in the two shows, can easily lead to a new form of stereotyping.

Recollections of the native

Behdad and Williams argue that neo-Orientalism distinguishes itself from the classical form through the contribution of non-Western subjects to the discourse. According to Behdad and Williams, the neo-Orientalist memoires written by the native become "virtually impervious to critique."[88] The native who has experienced something that falls within existing stereotypes and writes or talks about it, unintentionally confirms the narrative of this stereotype. "Neo-Orientalist memoirists capitalize on both the moral authority and the special immunity they enjoy as presumptive survivors of patriarchal and religious oppression."[89] The native speaks from experience and with authority about their recollections which leads to a confirmation of the Western stereotypical prejudices about "the Muslim world".

Earlier in this thesis I used the interviews with Mina El Hammani (Nadia Shanaa in *Elite)* and Anjli Mohindra (Nadia Ali in *Bodyguard)* to illustrate their view on the character they play.

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[88] Behdad, and Williams, "Neo-Orientalism," 295.
[89] Ibid., 295.

Both actors relate their experiences to the experience of their characters. El Hammani says in an interview ""It was important to show the way Muslims live, their lives and the dynamics of what a Muslim family is.""[90] She continues to tell how she grew up and how she experienced some things similar to Nadia Shanaa's story. Although there is a difference between the claims in these interviews and the memoires Behdad and Williams discuss, the experience of these actors can have the same influence on neo-Orientalism. By speaking of their experience and relating these to the experience of Nadia, El Hammani and Mohindra confirm that Muslim terrorists and the oppression of Muslim women do in fact exist. This confirmation shows that there is truth in the representation of the two Muslim women in these shows. The problem is not the experiences of these women but is the exclusivity of the narrative and the authority it holds. The recollections unintentionally silence the voices that regard these recollections as stereotypical and harmful. The only narrative the Western audience hears, is one that contains stereotypes. On top of that, it is told by the people who the stereotype is about. The authority of the native's experience unintentionally strengthens the stereotypical representation.

Behdad and Williams call this element of neo-Orientalism the role of the native Orientalist. I would argue that although the recollections of the native do contribute to the neo-Orientalist discourse and to persistent stereotyping, they should not be called 'native Orientalists'. The danger of naming these people Orientalists lies in that it can silence the voice of the native. Although real-life stories can contribute to neo-Orientalism, they should not be silenced. The oppression of Muslim women is something that still happens and should not be ignored because it is an Orientalist stereotype. The women who write or tell these stories should not be called native Orientalists. They just want to tell the world what happened to them. Precisely this friction, between the recollection and the stereotype it confirms, is a reason stereotyping persists.

Journalistic pretense

In *Covering Islam* (2003)*,* Edward Said outlines the selectiveness with which the media covers the Islam: "it is extremely rare to see informative articles on Islamic culture in the *New York Review of Books,* say, or in *Harper's.* Only when there is a bomb in Saudi Arabia or the threat of violence against the United States in Iran has 'Islam' seemed worthy of general

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[90] Olivia Adams, "Why It's Important to Watch Netflix's New Teen Drama," *Grazia*, October 11, 2018, accessed June 7, 2024, https://web.archive.org/web/20200730232011/https://www.graziame.com/culture/film-music/why-its-important-to-watch-netflixs-new-teen-drama.

comment."[91] Because the media only covers the Islam in context of terrorist attacks or the oppression of Muslim women, a generalised image is created. Behdad and Williams argue: "unlike the "will to knowledge" of classical Orientalism, a journalistic pretense of direct access to truth and the real dominates the current form, as neo-Orientalists deploy superficial empirical observations about Muslim societies and cultures to make great generalizations about them."[92] The journalistic authority with which the Islam and Muslim world is covered leads to a singular, generalised narrative. Especially because this narrative contains truth, as selective and generalising as it is, it is easily awarded with authority. Like the recollections of the native, the news coverage of 'the Islam' gains authority because of its truthfulness. The awarded authority the narrative gets, makes this the dominant narrative which becomes extremely hard to oppose. "Individual observation here allows the neo-Orientalist to postulate his subjective claims as self-evident and to extract the truth about a society."[93] Thus, not only the authority of the native impacts the stereotypes, but the media's authority also is a key factor as well.

Persistent stereotyping is caused by, among other things, the generalising narratives of the media and the native, both aspects of neo-Orientalist discourse. As in the media, in *Elite* and *Bodyguard* the 'Muslim World' is narrowed down to the concept of the oppressed Muslim woman and the Muslim terrorist. Furthermore, the image about the Islam that is created by the media is adapted by these shows*.* Because of the truth claims of the native and the media, these stereotypes are enforced.

Muslim identity

The factors discussed above are external causes for persistent stereotyping. A last internal factor I will discuss is the Muslim identity of the two Nadia's in the shows, and how this identity sustains itself and stereotyping. Both Muslim women in *Bodyguard* and *Elite,* have a personality and identity that is based solely on the fact that they are Muslim. The flat character of Nadia Ali in *Bodyguard* and even the round character of Nadia Shanaa in *Elite* focus on them being a Muslim. In the first chapter of this thesis, I discussed how Nadia Ali in *Bodyguard* does not experience growth in the show. The entirety of Nadia Ali's character is her Muslimness. The oppressed stereotype at the start of the show and especially the latter stereotype in which she reveals to be a Jihadi, all relate to her religion. Nadia Ali's only purpose in the show is to be an evil Islamist.

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[91] Edward Said, et al., *Covering Islam*, 1st ed. (Jendela, 2002), 14.
[92] Behdad, and Williams, "Neo-Orientalism," 285.
[93] Behdad, and Williams, "Neo-Orientalism," 292.

Even the characterisation of the more in-depth character Nadia Shanaa solely concerns her religion. Firstly, Nadia Shanaa often refers to her Muslim identity and how this puts her at a disadvantage because people discriminate against her. Secondly, her relationship with Guzmán is compromised because she is a Muslim, and he is not. Finally, the difficulties in her relationship with her conservative and backwards Muslim parents and her desire to stay at her new school. Thus, every aspect of Nadia Shanaa's personality and actions revolves around the fact that she is Muslim. When everything that relates to Nadia Shanaa also relates to her Muslimness, the stereotyping of this Muslim woman easily persists.

Besides the narrative that always relates back to the Muslim identity of the two Nadia's, the hijab emphasizes their Muslimness as well. In her interview with the Telegraph, Anjli Mohindra comments on Nadia Ali's veil: "I didn't feel the hijab was completely necessary. I think the same message could have been made [without it]."[94] This reinforces my argument: The hijab is crucial not for character building but to symbolise religion as the main characteristic of these women's identity.

The rejection strategy

In this chapter I discussed how neo-Orientalism relates to persistent stereotyping. In *Bodyguard* and *Elite,* the phenomenon of persistent stereotyping occurs. There are three factors that contribute to this persistent nature of the stereotypes. First, the journalistic authority. Second, the native authority. Third, the all-consuming Muslim identity of both women. In the following paragraphs, I argue that the strategy of consciously rejecting stereotypes in both shows also contributes to their persistence.

Both shows make a clear effort to reject stereotypes. Hereby, the shows point out what these women are not. Nadia Ali in *Bodyguard* is *not* an oppressed Muslim woman. Instead, she is revealed to be an evil mastermind, contradicting initial assumptions about her. Similarly, in *Elite*, the show emphasises the discrimination of Nadia Shanaa as a terrorist and as silenced by her religion. The antagonist, Lucrecia, is the one who discriminates against Nadia Shanaa, making it clear to the audience that Nadia Shanaa is not what Lucrecia assumes her to be. This focus on what these women are not, raises the question of what they are. In both shows, the answer comes in the form of a new stereotype. Further research is needed to understand how explicitly addressing stereotypes relates to their persistence. However, I argue that the strategy itself entraps the shows within the framework of stereotyping.

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[94] Chris Harvey, "Bodyguard Star Anjli Mohindra: 'Nadia Isn't an Islamophobic Stereotype – Playing Her Was Empowering'."

The plot of *Bodyguard* revolves entirely around Nadia Ali's framing as an oppressed Muslim woman. By rejecting one stereotype, the show falls into another. Nadia Ali is not a weak, oppressed Muslim woman, so she is strong and independent. In order to reject the initial frame of Nadia Ali as an oppressed woman and turn her into a strong and independent woman, the show made her the bad guy. In order to address the prejudice of Budd about Nadia Ali that entailed passivity and subordination, the show turned her into a terrorist. There are elements that strengthened the stereotype, such as the contrast with Craddock or the confession that she is jihadi. These elements were unnecessary to show Nadia Ali's independence. Yet, I argue that in order to reject one stereotype or identity, there has to be an alternative identity. This alternative identity is, in the case of *Bodyguard,* a new stereotype.

In *Elite,* Lucrecia discriminates against Nadia Shanaa. She makes remarks about terrorism, about Nadia Shanaa's hijab and she sexualises Nadia Shanaa. The series continues by showing that these remarks about Nadia Shanaa and Muslims are not true. Nadia Shanaa empowers, and the series attempts to show that Nadia Shanaa is not who Lucrecia thought she was. However, for Nadia Shanaa to become this empowered version, she must distance herself from her religion and adopt a more 'Western' identity.

By highlighting what these women are not, the shows also emphasize what they are, which is stereotypical. This construction ensures that the show stays within the framework of stereotyping. Clearly opposing stereotypes can easily lead to persistent stereotyping.

In this chapter I discussed how *Bodyguard* and *Elite* show resistance against neo-Orientalist stereotypes. They use two different strategies to do so; in *Bodyguard* the protagonist is faced with his stereotypical prejudices and in *Elite* this resistance lies in a culturally diverse representation and the condemnation of a discriminating character. However, both shows fail to succeed with this resistance, and they are subdued to the phenomenon of persistent stereotyping. This phenomenon is inherent to the failed rejection of stereotypes, it operates within neo-Orientalist discourse and is enforced by society's call for a 'truth'. In this chapter I offered four factors that contribute to persistent stereotyping; the recollections of the native, the journalistic pretense, the Muslim identity and the rejection strategy.

Conclusion

This thesis shows that *Bodyguard* and *Elite* attempt to refrain from using stereotypical representations. Producers and actors from both shows say in interviews that they like the show's rejection of stereotypes. Both shows do indeed address certain stereotypes. Whereas *Bodyguard* confronts the audience with their prejudices towards Muslim women and the assumption of oppression and *Elite* addresses discrimination against Muslim people. However, because of this rejection, both shows automatically slip into a new stereotype. In Bodyguard's revelation that Nadia Ali is not really oppressed but an evil mastermind, a new stereotype is introduced. In order to reject one stereotype, another one comes to the surface. In *Elite* as well, a stereotypical representation of Nadia Shanaa cannot be avoided Despite the show's efforts to portray her as a multi-dimensional character, her father Yusef is depicted as the stereotypical oppressive father. Furthermore, Nadia Shanaa's evolvement into an independent woman suggests that empowerment and liberation are achieved through the rejection of cultural and religious identity.

According to these findings, this thesis introduces the term persistent stereotyping. This phenomenon describes the persistence of stereotyping despite efforts to avoid it. Persistent stereotyping is a result of failed resistance against neo-Orientalism. This persistence is inherent to neo-Orientalism, yet it also reinforces it. Persistent stereotyping is caused by two elements of neo-Orientalist discourse. First, the authority with which the native's recollections are presented. These recollections consist of stereotypical narratives and hereby fuel the stereotypical image that the Orientalist already has of the Islam. The second element, the journalistic pretense, has a similar influence. The journalistic claim of knowing and reporting about *the* Orient, creates a narrative that is hard to oppose and fuels the stereotypes people already have. Within the shows this thesis analyses, there are two more elements that cause persistent stereotyping. First, the characterisation of the Nadia's revolves around their religion. When the entire identity of a character relies on the fact that they are Muslims, it is easy to fall into stereotyping. Second, the strategy both shows use to obviously reject a certain stereotype can cause the show to slip into another stereotype. The shows emphasise what these women are not and draw attention to what these women are.

In *Orientalism*, Said asks the question; will Orientalism end? Behdad and Williams argue that Orientalism never ends but is exposed to the changes of society, hence the exploration of the term neo-Orientalism. Said writes: "there is no avoiding the fact that even if we disregard the Orientalist distinctions between "them" and "us", a powerful series of political and ultimately

ideological realities inform scholarship today."[95] Said argues that Orientalist discourse consists of various parts that cannot all be stripped away. Furthermore, he warns us about the persistence of ideologies and discourses such as Orientalism, since they are easily made and spread. The form of stereotyping that we see in *Elite* and *Bodyguard* are part of the reason, and paradoxically also a result, of this persistence of Orientalism. Nevertheless, Said argues that there is a way of overcoming Orientalist discourses: "Rather than the manufactured clash of civilisations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow."[96] The good intentions with which the Muslim women in *Bodyguard* and *Elite* are portrayed, are a sign that we are indeed starting the conversation between different cultures. However, the persistence of the neo-Orientalist stereotypes is a matter that we need to be aware of. To overcome this, the persistently stereotyping narrative of Muslim women, needs to change and be more complex than it is now.

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[95] Said, *Orientalism,* 326-327.
[96] Ibid., xx.

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