



Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies

Institute of English and American Studies

English Studies Subprogramme

**The Entanglement of Patriarchy, Colonialism, and Migration as
Intersecting Oppressions: The Case of Arab Women in Fadia Faqir's
Novels**

Doctoral Dissertation

Ayham Aref Abdallah Abu Oruq

(Neptun Code: L2SPAL)

I deem this dissertation ready for submission:

Supervisor: Prof. Séllei Nóra

Debrecen, Hungary | 2024–2025

**The Entanglement of Patriarchy, Colonialism, and Migration as Intersecting
Oppressions: The Case of Arab Women in Fadia Faqir's Novels**

Following the framework of Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, University
of Debrecen, this dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
doctoral degree in English Literary and Cultural Studies Subprogramme

Written by: Ayham Aref Abdallah Abu Oruq

Supervised by: Prof. Séllei Nóra

The official board of examiners:

Dr (Chair)
Dr (Internal examiner)
Dr (External examiner)

The evaluation committee:

Dr (Chair)
Dr (Member)
Dr (Member)
Dr (Member)
Dr (Member)

Date of dissertation public defense:

Declaration

The undersigned Ayham Aref Abdallah Abu Oruq, in full awareness of my liability, I declare that the dissertation submitted is my original academic work, which was prepared with attention to the international norms of copyright, and the references included in it are clear and complete. I further declare that I am not currently subject to a procedure aimed at the revocation of a doctoral degree, and that a doctoral degree already awarded has not been revoked from me in the past 5 years. I have not submitted the present dissertation at another institute before, and it has not been rejected.

Candidate Name: Ayham Aref Abdallah Abu Oruq

University ID: L2SPAL

Date: 3 July 2025

Signature: 

Supervisor Name: Prof. Séllei Nóra

Date:

Signature:

Acknowledgement

I begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to Allah, whose limitless mercy and guidance provided me with the resilience and strength needed to complete this work. His blessings have been a constant source of inspiration throughout this journey.

I extend heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Séllei Nóra, for her unwavering support, invaluable guidance, and insightful feedback throughout the research process. Her expertise and encouragement were instrumental in shaping this work.

I am also grateful to the professors at the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Debrecen for their scholarly advice, constructive criticism, and encouragement at various stages of my doctoral studies. Their expertise has significantly enriched my understanding and contributed to the quality of this dissertation.

I would like to acknowledge the support of the administrative staff at the University of Debrecen: Erika Kiss and Monica Gönczy,

Lastly, I express my gratitude to all those who directly or indirectly contributed to this work, whether through discussions, encouragement, or practical assistance. Each of you has played a vital role in this accomplishment.

With my sincere love to everyone!

Dedication

To my kids, whom I dream of every day and night, praying to God to bless me with the gift
of fatherhood very soon,

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation.

Table of Contents

Title Page.....	I
Committee Decision.....	II
Declaration.....	III
Acknowledgment.....	IV
Dedication.....	V
Table of Contents.....	VI
Summary.....	1
Introduction: Neopatriarchy as a Context for Faqir’s Fiction	3
Chapter 1: “The Question of Palestine”: Power and Resistance in Fadia Faqir’s	
 <i>Nisanit</i>.....	21
1. Historical Background: Palestinian–Israeli Conflict.....	21
2. Negotiating Occupier Power and Native Resistance.....	31
2.1 Through Eman’s Eyes: The Cost of Occupation and Displacement.....	31
2.2 Caught in the System: David’s Dilemma and the Occupier’s Unjust Policies.....	36
2.3 Uneven Grounds: Power Disparities in the Conflict.....	46
2.4 Many Faces of Defiance.....	56
3. Conclusion.....	60
Chapter 2: Double Colonization: The Case of the Arab Women in Fadia Faqir’s <i>Pillars</i>	
 <i>of Salt</i>.....	62
1. Introduction.....	62
2. At the Nexus of Colonialism, Patriarchy, and Violence.....	69
3. Asymmetrical Representation of Arab Female Figures.....	84
4. Between Modernity and Traditionality: The Construction of Cultural Identity.....	94
5. Conclusion.....	103

Chapter 3: A Fragmented Self: Double Colonization and Liminality in Fadia Faqir's

<i>My Name is Salma</i>	105
1. Introduction.....	105
2. Double Colonization: An Arab Woman's Narrative.....	114
3. Evolving Identity: An Arab Woman in Transition.....	135
4. Conclusion.....	153

Chapter 4: Challenging Stereotypes: The Cosmopolitan Arab Woman in Fadia Faqir's

<i>Willow Trees Don't Weep</i>	155
1. Introduction.....	155
2. Rooted Stereotypes and Rootless Identity.....	162
3. Beyond Borders: The Formation of Cosmopolitan Subjectivity.....	173
4. Cosmopolitan and Counter-Cosmopolitan Subjects.....	188
5. Conclusion.....	192
Conclusion	193
Bibliography	196

Summary

This dissertation has examined the interconnected systems of patriarchy, colonialism, and migration as intersecting power structures of oppression against Arab women as delineated in Jordanian–British author Fadia Faqir’s four novels: *Nisanit* (1987), *Pillars of Salt* (1996), *My Name is Salma* (2007), and *Willow Trees Don’t Weep* (2014). The dissertation has also explored the modes of agency and resistance these women adopt in response to multiple oppressions, as well as how their experiences redefine their evolving forms of personhood and subjectivity in both colonial and postcolonial settings. Drawing upon a unique combination of theoretical materials including postcolonial feminism, postcolonial theory, and cosmopolitanism, this dissertation has argued that Faqir offers a distinctive and critically significant representation of Arab womanhood. By portraying patriarchy, colonialism, and migration as interconnected, context-dependent systems of oppression across her four novels, Faqir moves beyond simplistic depictions of Arab women. She critiques both indigenous traditional structures and Western discourses, not only by comparing diverse forms and degrees of subjugation but also by showing that genuine empowerment entails a radical reimagining of identity beyond patriarchal and colonial binaries.

The dissertation has demonstrated how, regarding colonization and migration, the Arab local patriarchy and Western modernity encounter in the life experiences of Faqir’s Arab fictional women in the form of overlapping internal and external forms of oppressions. The analysis has revealed that Faqir emphasizes the heterogeneity of Arab women’s lives, not only in relation to other gender groups but also within the Arab female community itself, thus transcending the homogenization of Arab women’s experiences and identities. The dissertation has followed a structured approach across four main chapters: examining the Palestinian–Israeli conflict in *Nisanit*, investigating the collusion between patriarchy and colonialism in *Pillars of Salt*, exploring double marginalization and liminality in *My Name*

is *Salma*, and finally analyzing stereotypical prejudices and cosmopolitan subjectivity development in *Willow Trees Don't Weep*.

Introduction: Neopatriarchy as a Context for Faqir's Fiction

Before the transfer of Western modernity – with its cultural standards – into the Arab communities, the persistent culture of the Arab Bedouins tended to be traditional, featuring a nomadic lifestyle. They used to live in tribal groups in the Arabian Desert, where the dominant social system, regulating their everyday conventional practices and shared by the overwhelming majority, was tribal. As a result of the modernization of the Arab countries in the imperialist age, the common lifestyle of the Arab Bedouins transformed from nomadic into sedentary and from tribal into dominantly urbanized. However, traces of the tribal norms still persist in the contemporary Arab culture, as they comprise a deep-seated cultural legacy passed from one generation to the next.

The central underpinning that this cultural heritage is based on is patriarchy which, in turn, displays culture-specific features distinct from Western forms of patriarchy. As practiced by Arab Bedouins, patriarchy manifests itself on hierarchical levels and within the three primary social institutions constituting its social structure: the tribe, the clan (the extended family), and the nuclear family. Within these institutions, it is a common belief – or standard –, functioning as a driving force in normalizing gender roles, that authority and control over all members including women ought to be held by a male figurehead or a leader: the Sheik of the tribe or clan on a macro level and the father of the family on a micro level. In this way, the conventional practices of individuals within this tribal system, signifying masculine values from a certain aspect of normativity, obviously create an unjust social stratification, and thereby gender-based inequalities both in the private and public spheres. This system assigns privilege and supremacy to the male while restricting the female into a subordinate and marginal position. Thus, patriarchy as a social formation in the context of the Arab Bedouin milieu, one can conclude, is an institutionalized phenomenon; furthermore, it is a product of specific social, cultural, and historical conditions.

In the aftermath of the contact with European modernity and its manifestations in imperialist era, the Arab countries, in addition to the political, geographical, cultural, and economic reconfigurations, have undergone a social change, as well. This social transformation, which supposedly leads to a transition from nomadism into urbanization, from traditionality into progression, and from religious conservatism into secular liberation, has become possible through major social, cultural, and geopolitical processes. The first and the most significant one is imperial colonization, as the foreign colonizers, Britain and France, exported their modern standards, values, assumptions, and attitudes in the imperialist epoch into the Arab colonized culture under what colonists assumed as “the civilizing mission”.

In general terms, Edward Said addresses fundamental areas of imperial and colonial influence, asserting that “the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Said, *Orientalism* 5). He also points out the imposition of imperial culture as a crucial aspect of this multi-layered domination and as a colonialist method of reinforcing the notion of Western supremacy over other subjects. In his classic *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said argues that “imperialism not only is a relationship of domination but also is committed to a specific ideology of expansion”, and elaborates that this expansion carries with it an extremely important mode of cultural practices that influences the colonized societies (186). It is in this sense that imperial enterprises transcend political, military, and economic control, embedding themselves within the cultural fabric of the colonized regions. In the case of the Arab world, the cultural enforcement by European powers was put into place to prevail and also reconstruct the identities and customs of the Arab colonized world, reconciling them with the colonizers’ modern norms. This cultural transformation was fundamental to

maintaining a hegemonic nexus that positioned the colonial West as superior and, in turn, placed the colonized indigenous cultures as inferior.

The other process, which came as a consequence of imperialism, is the phenomenon of migration, leading to cross-cultural interactions on the one hand and raising questions about the impact of demographic diversity and cultural differences on the other hand. John McLeod observes that in the post-colonial world, “the former colonizing nations have experienced the arrival of many peoples from once-colonized countries who have established new homes at the colonial centers” (206). This movement has been driven by numerous factors, ranging from the pursuit of economic opportunities and better living conditions to breaking free from political upheavals in home countries. Commenting on the accelerating movement of peoples in the postcolonial world, Bill Ashcroft et al. note that the movement of a considerable number of populations can be viewed as “a consequence of the disparity in wealth between the West and the world, extended by the economic imperatives of imperialism and rapidly opening a gap between colonizers and colonized” (217). This migration has, nevertheless, given rise to discriminatory discourses against diaspora communities, primarily due to differences in racial backgrounds. Ashcroft et al. identify two main reasons for the persistence of racial prejudice: first, because “race was central to the growing power of imperial discourse during the nineteenth century, and second, because it remains a central and unavoidable ‘fact’ of modern society that race is used as the dominant category of daily discrimination and prejudice” (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 207). In addition to race, religion has also played a vital role in marking the difference and leading to the othering of diaspora communities. As long as migrants’ religious identities do not comply with the given norms and values of the new context, they are likely to become exposed to religion-based discrimination.

In the case of the Arab migrants, the process of migration and the rise of racial and religious prejudices have affected those Arab expatriates who have relocated to Western countries seeking refuge from social, political, and economic turmoil in their home regions. Arab women, in particular, have embraced new experiences in the West, striving to adopt a more liberal lifestyle and escape the cultural constraints and patriarchal restrictions prevalent in their countries of origin. While this quest for individual liberty and social reform brings its own set of struggles in the Western patriarchal context, it also highlights the interaction between traditional values of Arab culture and Western modernity. Overall, the contact between traditional patriarchy and Western modernity has led to substantial shifts within Arab societies, with both positive and negative consequences on Arab individuals, reflecting the inevitable and ongoing reality of cultural exchange and transformation even in the post-independence Arab world.

This cultural encounter has contributed to the emergence of a unique formation within Arab society, characterized by a modernized patriarchy that still retains traces of tribal cultures. Instead of replacing traditional structures and enabling a feasible modernization process, modernity tends to blur the traditional aspects of Arab tribal culture. The outcome is a novel, hybridized, and somewhat deformed social paradigm that does not fully match notions of Western progression, nor does it preserve genuine traditionalism. This complies with what the Palestinian scholar Hisham Sharabi recognizes as the neopatriarchal Arab society. In his book, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (1988), Sharabi distinguishes between what he terms “modernized patriarchy” and “traditional patriarchy” by explaining that “the latter term refers to a universal form of traditional society, which assumes a different character in each society, while the former identifies a unique historical development, which occurred in its original form in Western Europe – the first historical break with traditionality” (3). Confirming that modernized patriarchy is “the

product of a hegemonic modern Europe” (4), Sharabi states that “neopatriarchal society was the outcome of modern Europe’s colonization of the patriarchal Arab world, of the marriage of imperialism and patriarchy” (22). He makes it explicit that modernity, a pure European production, becomes evidently ineffective and invalid when shifted over to the traditional Arab setting, grounding his argument in the fact that the dynamic features of modernity, the state of being progressive, and traditionality, the state preceding any sort of development, are completely divergent, and hence, the contact between them proves irreconcilable. More precisely, this contact is far from being linear or uniform, with the emergence of various models of resistance, adaptation, and hybridization reshaping the post-independence social milieu in the Arab world.

In this regard, it becomes obvious that the desired modernization of the Arab culture, entailing an emancipatory attitude moving away from its deep-seated social conventions, is fended off by the rigor of their rootedness and, more significantly, by the tangible adherence of the Arab traditionalists to the conservative teachings of their religion (24), and, let us add, just as importantly, to the social practices derived more or less justifiably from religion that function as codifiers of everyday behavior. As a result, neopatriarchy emerges as “neither modern nor traditional”; it is, as Sharabi puts it, “a highly unstable formation, driven by inner contradictions and conflict” (4). In this context, the traditional practices of the tribal society continue to persist but in a modernized space, or conceptualized in other words, within a neo-patriarchal and urbanized Arab society.

When it comes to the fictional representation of this hybrid, neo-patriarchal contemporary Arab world, the Jordanian–British Fadia Faqir, the author of *Nisanit* (1987), *Pillars of Salt* (1996), *My Name is Salma* (2007), and *Willow Trees Don’t Weep* (2014), traces the roots of the varied ways and reasons behind the subordination of Arab women, and accounts for the conditions of Arab disenfranchised and oppressed female characters,

their social status, as well as the transformation of their selfhood within the interacting framework of traditional patriarchy and modernity, including colonization and migration. According to the experiences of Faqir's disadvantaged female protagonists, what causes their subordination and brings them into an underprivileged social position is not only the patriarchal aspects of their traditional culture, but also their stereotypical representations in Western perception as subaltern colonial subjects in the novels where patriarchy interacts with colonization, and as marginalized migrants in the novels where patriarchy interacts with border-crossing.

Therefore, Faqir's novels can be classified into two categories depending on how contact is made between the Arab culture and modernity, in line with how this interaction is outlined above (colonization and migration/border crossing). The first one, on the one hand, includes *Nisanit* and *Pillars of Salt* because these narratives, taking place in the Arab world during the colonial era, address questions of how colonization, the first method of transferring modernity into the Arab tribal culture, functions in parallel with traditional patriarchy as double oppressive power systems over the Arab female colonial subjects. These novels examine politics of power and resistance in the context of colonial oppression, and the struggle of Arab women against indigenous forces of local patriarchy.

Her two other novels, *My Name is Salma* and *Willow Trees Don't Weep*, on the other hand, are narratives of geographical and cultural relocation, wherein Arab (neo)patriarchy interacts with migration in the life experiences of Faqir's female protagonists as twofold sources of oppression. These two narratives recount stories of subjugated Arab women who cross the borders of their Arab countries towards the West in an attempt, among other reasons, to overcome the marginalization they have experienced in their patriarchal Arab society. After being relocated, these women accordingly face double – and partly different – forms of discrimination based on their Arab ethnicity, skin color, race, religion, and

language, but these forms also belong to specific forms of gendered oppression because they are also constructed as the feminine cultural other from a Western perspective.

With this paradigm shift, one can, at the same time, observe that Faqir's literary texts fundamentally imply critiques of the subordination of Arab women, which expose multifaceted kinds of oppression: gender, class, ethnicity, and religion, or more specifically, intersecting forms of domination. These critiques highlight the cruel facets of patriarchy, colonialism, and migration, demonstrating how these systems cause women's subjugation both within their native culture and in diasporic contexts. Faqir's works, however, not only present women's subjugation and victimization: they also portray the different forms of agency adopted by Arab women as they respond to these multifarious layers of oppression, ultimately advocating for an acknowledgement of their distinct experiences and identities.

Faqir's emphasis on the diversity of Arab women's experiences aligns with the postcolonial feminist discourse that will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two, which challenges homogenous and simplistic representations of third-world women. In her famous essay "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1984), Chandra Mohanty critiques Western feminist scholarship that constructs "Third World Women" as a homogeneous "powerless" group often located as implicit victims of particular socio-economic systems (338), arguing that such "simplistic formulations" create a "monolithic notion" of sexual difference that is "both reductive and ineffectual in designing strategies to combat oppressions" and serves to "reinforce binary divisions between men and women" (344). Faqir's novels respond to this critique by demonstrating what Mohanty calls for: "the production of women as socio-economic political groups within particular local contexts" rather than limiting "the definition of the female subject to gender identity, completely bypassing social class and ethnic identities" (344). Faqir's protagonists come from diverse class positions, educational backgrounds, religious orientations, and

geographical locations, each navigating patriarchal, colonial, and migratory pressures through distinct modes of resistance and accommodation. This internal differentiation within Arab womanhood counters the homogenizing tendencies that Mohanty warns against, as such approaches risk “systematizing the experiences of different groups of women” and thereby erasing “all marginal and resistant modes of experiences” (352). By portraying the multiplicity of identity markers within Arab female communities themselves, Faqir’s work exemplifies Mohanty’s call for contextual analysis that recognizes the multiplicity of women’s lived experiences and the many ways they negotiate and resist power systems within their specific social, cultural, and political contexts.

Faqir’s novels have been discussed in scholarly articles, book chapters, and monographs, analyzed from various perspectives. As these literary texts mainly portray the experiences of Arab female protagonists in colonial and postcolonial contexts, they have received critical attention from researchers employing a range of analytical frameworks with a frequent use of feminist paradigms, postcolonial concepts, and cultural theories. Such studies explore the multiple power structures contributing to the subordination of Faqir’s fictional women, address the transformation of their cultural identities under the influence of forces of domination, and trace the modes of female empowerment, providing insights into how these marginalized Arab protagonists find agency and resist oppressive systems.

Current scholarship on Faqir’s fiction tends to foreground the different models of oppression imposed upon her Arab female characters. The theme of madness in *Pillars of Salt* appears as a significant topic through which several researchers examine these oppressive forces. Luma Balaa, using Marta Caminero-Santangelo’s feminist framework, and Shahd Alshammari, applying a transnational feminist approach, both demonstrate how colonialism and patriarchy silence Arab women and render them insane. While Balaa shows how madness is portrayed through Western Orientalist and local patriarchal stereotypes,

“associated with otherness, witchcraft, a female malady, social control, denied subjectivity, illusional power, uncontrolled sexuality, and final surrender” (1), Alshammari emphasizes how despite different social backgrounds – Maha as a peasant woman and Um Saad as a city dweller – there exists a shared experience of marginalization among them, as they face oppressive forces represented by the men in their lives and the English doctor in the mental hospital (14).

The interest in the power structures of oppression extends to studies of *My Name is Salma* in which researchers examine Arab women’s struggles related to their relocation and displacement. Dallel Sarnou approaches Salma’s narrative through a “philosophical post-humanist perception”, finding that Arab immigrants like Salma are vilified based on ethnic and religious differences and excluded through post-human representation that frames them as threats to humanity (12). Faisal Lafée Alobeytha, employing notions of ethnocentrism, scrutinizes the dual struggles faced by Arab women, who confront injustices in both their native traditions and Western societies, revealing that Arab women experience severe gender discrimination, while Western ethnocentrism further abuses and dehumanizes Arab female immigrants (1, 13). Seda Canpolat complements these analyses by investigating racist and sexist gazes in the novel, arguing that visual emphasis on sexuality can obscure the visibility of race and vice versa, illustrating how these intersecting forms of gazing redefine Salma’s identity (3). In turn, Sibyl Adam’s psychological perspective, using Freudian notions of melancholia, shows how Salma’s efforts to alleviate melancholia remain inconclusive due to the consumerist space of Exeter that normalizes whiteness, challenging the view of such feelings as merely pathological and reminding readers of structural inequalities rooted in European imperialism (20).

While the subjugation of Arab female protagonists has attracted significant attention, several studies have concentrated on the empowerment of Arab women and their resistance

to oppression. In the only study currently available on *Nisanit*, Sowmya Srinivasan explores how the Arab female protagonist Eman defies local marginalization and patriarchal oppression against the backdrop of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, expanding this interpretation to include the resistance of male characters, Shadeed and Saqi, through their political activities and guerrilla warfare (72). The theme of female empowerment continues in studies of *Pillars of Salt* in which Yasmina Djafri explores how Maha gains agency through her spinning wheel and unfinished carpet, carving out empowerment to counter tribal patriarchy and colonial rule (544). In the meantime, Nadine Sinno analyzes how the novel’s female protagonists, Maha and Hannyeh, transform prisons and mental asylums into “vehicles for social critique, sites for female solidarity, and forums for creativity and self-expression through storytelling” (68).

The construction of Arab women’s identity manifests itself as another crucial topic in existing scholarship on Faqir’s texts. Ahmad Abu Baker examines the “desire for identity erasure” in *Pillars of Salt*, arguing that the female protagonists are driven to transcend traumatic pasts and reshape their identities in response to patriarchal discourse, colonization, and separation from loved ones (39). Studies focused on cultural and geographical relocation in *My Name is Salma* employ various theoretical frameworks to understand identity transformation. Eman Mukattash uses a transnational ecocritical perspective to show how nature serves as both backdrop and identity marker, shaping Salma’s identity through interactions with different environments. Researchers Eman Jaleel, Sharifah Shaik Ismail, and Anne Christopher analyze how alienation, non-belonging, and racial discrimination push Salma to hide her cultural background and adapt to Western lifestyle through strategies like changing her name and taking off her veil (5).

Researchers applying Bhabha’s concepts offer particularly rich insights into identity construction in Faqir’s work. Isra Mirze Santesso employs Bhabha’s concept of mimicry to

demonstrate how Salma grapples with the loss of a stable identity, portraying mimicry as both a self-constituting exercise and a process that unravels the self (131). Similarly, Azhar Elias Khudhair uses Bhabha's notion of hybridity to explore how Salma navigates the complexities of identity transition and attempts to reconcile traditional upbringing with modern Western society, facing conflicts arising from cultural collisions in a "third space of enunciation" (30). Sarnou addresses the multiple liminalities in Salma's state, concluding that "Salma evidences a multiple self: she is the oppressed woman, the marginalized Arab British citizen, the foreigner, and the lover loser" (107).

Research on *Willow Trees Don't Weep* continues the exploration of identity construction in Faqir's work. Majed Hamed Aladylah traces Najwa's response to "fragmentation, rootlessness, unbelonging and disorientation" through becoming a new individual and creating new spaces and representations, finding that she establishes new identities through crossing borders and dislocations (224; 229). Ikram Ahmed Elsherif examines the tension between neo-Orientalist portrayals and expressions of human subjectivity, illustrating how Najwa embarks on journeys of self-exploration that lead her to confront her worst and best selves and eventually emerge enlightened (43). Sarnou shows how Najwa reconsiders concepts like the veil, Jihadism, and home through her journey, finding a middle path between her mother's secularism and her father's religious fundamentalism (160). In collaboration with Ouahmiche, Sarnou further examines how "home" as an object of quest is depicted to conceptualize a locus of identification for Arab women, showing how Faqir articulates memory and identity through introspection and retrospection (144). Amani Abu Joudeh and Yousef Awad interpret dress as "a meaningful aspect of the construction of identity and an evocative metaphor of sociological, political, cultural and psychological web of codes", demonstrating how dress reflects both the gazer's representation of its wearer and the wearer's changing identity (14).

Despite the considerable body of scholarship on Faqir's fiction, several critical gaps remain that this dissertation seeks to address. While previous research has explored various forms of oppression faced by Arab female characters, no study has undertaken a systematic comparison of the Arab women's experiences of subordination across all four of Faqir's novels. Moreover, although themes of resistance and empowerment have been examined, the diversity among Faqir's Arab female protagonists regarding the forms of agency and empowerment they embody remains underexplored. Consequently, there is still space for scholarship yet to illuminate how the distinct problems and responses of these Arab female characters produce asymmetrical developments in their selfhood and sense of belonging across different spatial and temporal contexts. In this light, this dissertation argues that Faqir offers a distinctive and critically significant representation of Arab womanhood. By portraying patriarchy, colonialism, and migration as interconnected and context-dependent systems of oppression across her four novels, Faqir moves beyond simplistic depictions of Arab women. She critiques both indigenous traditional structures and Western discourses, not only by comparing diverse forms and degrees of subjugation but also by showing that genuine empowerment entails a radical reimagining of identity beyond colonial and patriarchal binaries. This dissertation thus derives its significance partly from showing how Faqir's texts transcend the homogenization of Arab women's experiences and identities. It contends that Faqir emphasizes the heterogeneity of Arab women's lives, not only in relation to other gender groups but also within the Arab female community itself. In this vein, I argue that Faqir critiques reductive narratives of victimhood and emancipation, a perspective that remains insufficiently addressed in current research. In doing so, the dissertation offers new insights into Arab women's literature and the socio-political forces affecting their lives.

This dissertation, while engaged in a critical dialogue with the current scholarship above, proposes new ways of interpreting Faqir's novels by examining the complex power

structures that shape female selfhood and resistance. Rather than relying on a single theoretical approach, the dissertation adopts contextually appropriate frameworks such as double colonization, postcolonial theory, liminality, and contemporary cosmopolitanism to illuminate the idiosyncrasies of each text. While Faqir's novels can possibly be grouped based on the dominant form of contact between local patriarchy and the West – whether through colonization or migration/border crossing –, each text constructs a unique fictional world with specific narrative strategies. As such, they call for a combination of converging and diverging theories and methods of reading. This flexible, comparative approach is meant to reveal the novel contributions of this dissertation, which emerge precisely through its responsiveness to both the shared aspects of Faqir's literary works and the individuality of each text.

In Chapter One, I follow the three main narrative lines, including Eman's first-person point of view, to examine aspects of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict as portrayed in *Nisanit*. Specifically, this chapter deals with both the methods of subjugation employed by the Israeli forces and the forms of resistance undertaken by the Palestinian natives. Besides employing postcolonial critical views to approach the settler–native conflict in the narrative, my analysis also investigates historical, religious, cultural, political, economic, and gendered dynamics, thereby establishing a connection between the fictional representation and the real-world Israeli–Palestinian collision. While this chapter moves beyond the gender-centered focus that runs through the broader dissertation by including male narrative perspectives, it nonetheless remains grounded in the overarching concern with systems of colonial oppression and the various forms of resistance. These systems, whether operating overtly or covertly, continue to influence the social positions of women. Moreover, analyzing the masculine narrative lines serves to keep up the coherence of the chapter and highlights the richness of Faqir's text in integrating gender with wider socio-political factors.

It is in this sense that this chapter offers a comprehensive reading of Faqir's text, which has previously been examined primarily through the theme of resistance and the main characters' responses to oppression, as discussed in Srinivasan's article.

Chapter Two shifts to *Pillars of Salt* in which I make use of postcolonial feminist theories to investigate the intersection of patriarchy and colonialism, and how this complex system of oppression contributes to abusing the Arab colonial women, Maha and Hannyeh: a thematic concern that has not been exhaustively covered by previous researchers such as Balaa and Alshammari. I also complement the analysis of female empowerment by Djafri and Sinno by juxtaposing the varied responses of the novel's female protagonists to oppression in line with postcolonial feminist discourse that advocates for going beyond the reductive representation of women and addressing the differences and heterogeneity among gender groups worldwide. Moreover, as my discussion extends to cover issues of the broad social and geopolitical impacts of colonialism on the traditional culture of the Arab Bedouins and their lives, a distinctive aspect of my analysis is the exploration of the political link between the Balfour Declaration's effect on Palestine and the British mandate in Jordan, which I also discuss in elaborate details in Chapter One, thereby setting up connections between these otherwise diverse fictional worlds.

In Chapter Three, I integrate the concept of double colonization, a postcolonial feminist term, with various conceptualizations of liminality including Bhabha's notions of liminality, hybridity, and the third space. This theoretical combination facilitates a unique understanding of the protagonist Salma's double oppression within two distinct cultural spheres and the formation of her hybrid identity. Whereas scholars such as Sarnou, Santesso, and Khudhair have examined Salma's liminal position and double or hybrid identity as a consequence of displacement, both my approach and analysis complement these critical discussions. It bridges the gap where concepts of liminality overlook gender dimensions and

where double colonization does not regard the constitutive role of double oppression in the emergence of liminal positions and hybrid identities.

Chapter Four follows the Arab protagonist Najwa's multiple journeys, examining the stereotypical prejudices she faces in diverse cultural and religious spheres, and how she develops a dynamic identity and cosmopolitan subjectivity as a means of agency. Though my analysis of *Willow Trees Don't Weep* overlaps with aspects of Sarnou's and Aladylah's studies regarding the transformation of Najwa's identity, it draws on the concept of cosmopolitanism in its revitalized formation, which has not been previously applied to Faqir's novels in particular. This approach paves the way for a novel analysis of how the construction of a cosmopolitan subjectivity in a diasporic context can serve as a powerful expression of female empowerment. Also, Najwa's transformation is juxtaposed with that of her extremist father, whose anti-cosmopolitan and fundamentalist stance leads to his tragic downfall, showing how the acceptance of diversity and difference can function as a successful means of resisting prejudices, or, at least, as a way of survival in the midst of multiple forms of discrimination.

The central premise of this dissertation is that the oppression of Faqir's female characters stems from multiple, entangled sources that collectively shape their personhood and resistance strategies. While subordination originates in the hierarchal institutions of their patriarchal society with its array of restrictive beliefs and cultural norms, this oppression is multiplied and transformed through contact with Western modernity via colonization and border-crossing. The subordination of the Arab Bedouin women, based on gender – and in the case of Faqir's novels: class – comes out primarily in the context of the traditional Arab patriarchy, but it is complicated by including race- and religion-oriented prejudices, among others, in the context of the modernized patriarchy or neopatriarchy, and also in the context of the Western world.

Recognizing that when there are external agencies of oppression, for example, colonization, they intersect with the internal structures like patriarchy over the Arab women, Faqir holds in her article “Intrafamily Femicide in Defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan” (2001) that “Arab society in general [...] can be classified as ‘neo-patriarchal’, where power relations are not only influenced by gender, but also by class, clan and proximity to the regime. Such relations are based on the subordination of the disadvantaged and disenfranchised” (67), and on another occasion, in an interview conducted by Lindsey Moore, Faqir, in turn, adds that “[w]henver the Arab world and its natives are under pressure from external forces, its conservative structure becomes stronger” (4). In line with these perspectives, this dissertation examines how multiple forms of oppression experienced by unprivileged Arab women in Faqir’s novels arise from various intersecting spheres of influence – patriarchy, colonialism, and migration –, and how these forces redefine the female protagonists’ perception of self and place in society. Through a comparative analysis of Faqir’s four novels, this study demonstrates how these entangled forces of oppression operate differently across contexts, how Arab women employ diverse strategies of resistance and empowerment in response to these forces, and how their expressions of selfhood evolve in response to these complex interactions.

To achieve this goal, the dissertation draws upon postcolonial feminism, postcolonial theories, and cosmopolitanism as theoretical frameworks. The postcolonial feminist paradigm of double colonization is applied to analyze Faqir’s *Pillars of Salt*. This analysis centers on the intersection of colonialism and patriarchy as dual oppressive structures targeting indigenous Arab women in colonial Transjordan. This theoretical paradigm is also integrated with various conceptualizations of liminality in the analysis of *My Name is Salma*. The use of double colonization in the section devoted to analyzing this text aims to inspect the double patriarchal discourses of the East and the West that marginalize the protagonist

Salma, who is twice victimized, whether as a native Arab woman constrained by the patriarchal norms of her conservative Bedouin village or as a displaced migrant suffering from different forms of prejudices in England. It is, however, combined with theories of liminality, as the latter can provide a framework to understand Salma's state of in-betweenness, caused by her oppressive experiences between two disparate worlds. The postcolonial feminist paradigm is further used to examine the aspects of female agency as represented in the two novels in which the female protagonists espouse specific strategies in resisting and responding to oppression. In essence, the varied application of this paradigm can expose the asymmetrical experiences of Arab women, shaped by the distinct social and cultural contexts of their victimization.

Moreover, postcolonial theories addressing the nexus between colonizer and colonized are utilized to examine the Israeli–Palestinian conflict as depicted in Faqir's *Nisanit*. They are meant to explore the power dynamics and resistance strategies within this fraught geopolitical context. Meanwhile, cosmopolitan theories are applied to Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep* in which the focus shifts to the Arab female protagonist's journey towards establishing a cosmopolitan identity. This involves analyzing how her interactions with diverse cultures and religions during her travels contribute to her evolving sense of self and belonging.

Even though these theoretical frameworks are primarily employed in separate chapters, they can conceptually reinforce one another. As postcolonial feminism aims to incorporate gender into the postcolonial agenda, putting them together can open up the critical reading of the selected narratives to discussions of both the experiences of women and specificities of their socio-cultural spheres. What is more, postcolonial feminism and postcolonial theories are essentially concerned with structures of domination, resistance, and identity politics in the postcolonial world, which can be applied to Faqir's postcolonial

settings. Cosmopolitanism can, in turn, complement these perspectives in the sense that it can provide an understanding of cross-cultural interactions, and how individual migrants can adapt to prospective prejudice and discrimination, offering the potential for agency through individual disposition within diasporic contexts. Combined together, these theories bring about an inclusive theoretical and analytical approach to the circumstances lived by Faqir's Arab fictional women, underlining their overlapping yet distinct narratives of subordination, empowerment, and identity in different temporal and spatial contexts.

To this end, the major issues that the current dissertation deals with are both the (mis)treatment of Arab women within their indigenous culture and their (mis)representation in Western perception either as female colonial subjects or as female migrants as delineated in Faqir's four novels. This dissertation, which is the first monographic attempt to put Faqir's novels together, aims at revealing how (neo)patriarchy, colonialism, and immigration appear in the form of overlapping forms of oppression against Faqir's Arab female protagonists. It also examines their acts of resistance and aspects of their character transformation, exposing how these women challenge the multiple power structures governing their lives and shaping their evolving selfhood. In this way, the exploration of this topic breaks new ground and contributes not only to the understanding of Faqir's literary texts, but also links fictional representation with historical and contemporary realities regarding the conditions of Arab women.

Chapter 1: “The Question of Palestine”: Power and Resistance in Fadia Faqir’s *Nisanit*

1. Historical Background: Palestinian–Israeli Conflict

Faqir’s *Nisanit* (1987) is set in Palestine after the Six-Day War (1967), which marked the triumph of Israel that paved the way for attaining extraterritorial privileges with the tangible increase in the establishment of Jewish settlements, on the one hand. On the other hand, it brought about the defeat of the Arab coalition, which resulted in giving up huge portions of the land of Palestine and, by extension, in the coercive dispossession of their Arab indigenous inhabitants. By centering on this transformative time, the novel deals with a decisive era of the social and political upheavals that witnessed momentous turns in the contemporary history of Palestine. Thematically, the text addresses the acute tension as well as the intricate ramifications arising from, what I argue for in this chapter, a colonial encounter between a dominant power structure represented by the Israeli hegemony and an anticolonial nationalist struggle represented by the Palestinian resistance movements. The novel problematizes the idea of legitimacy over the contested land by juxtaposing the different perspectives of the two parties, each driven by its unique causes and impulses.

Given this colonial feature, a postcolonial approach can serve as an insightful theoretical framework for understanding the settler–native conflict delineated in Faqir’s text. Emerging as a response to both colonialism and imperialism, this critical approach identifies colonialism – including its various paradigms such as settler colonialism – as an unrelenting exercise of dominance. It thus provides essential conceptual and analytical tools for exploring not only the mechanisms of subjugation employed by Israeli settlers, but also the resistance strategies adopted by Palestinian natives. Moreover, postcolonial theory conceptualizes imperialism as an ideological construct that endorses geographical and territorial expansion, offering a lens through which the Zionist enterprise can be interpreted as fundamentally driven by the acquisition of land. In this context, postcolonial scholar

Robert J. C. Young makes it clear, in a way that can illustrate how the Zionist project is oriented on geographical growth, that “empires were political formations that were developed over time from particular geographical areas or through nomadic occupation” (Young, *Empire, Colony* 9–10). He elaborates that imperialism is an “overarching concept or ideology” that advocates domination over the territories of other peoples of a different race. “Colonization is the practice of actual settlement or occupation” (Young, *Empire, Colony* 53). Said makes a comparable argument by asserting that “imperialism and the culture associated with it affirm both the primacy of geography and an ideology about control of territory” (Said, *Culture* 78). Said further posits that colonialism “is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (Said, *Culture* 9). When contextualizing the Israeli–Palestinian situation within postcolonial perspectives, it becomes evident that this conflict shares a set of features with classical European colonialism by means of constructing colonial-like settlements that engender geographical expansion, even though the Zionist scheme diverges from classical colonialism insofar as it does not include the occupation of distant territories. A distinguishing characteristic lies in its *foundation* upon a religious doctrine, while a fundamental similarity is its reliance on racial divides.

Arguably, the Zionist project displays prime characteristics of classical settler colonialism in the sense that it features settler migration from the colonial West to foreign territories. This movement involves the permanent habitation of settlers – a conditional element and a tradition of settler colonialism, as articulated by Bill Ashcroft et al., who demonstrate that colonial settlers are those “Europeans who moved from their countries of origin to European colonies with the intention of remaining” (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies* 193). Quite as in the case of settler movements in classical settler colonialism are most likely encouraged by particular causes and impulses, depending on cultural, religious,

social, political, and economic aspects, the Zionist movement is similarly influenced by these factors. According to Young, “colonies, settlements, or trading posts abroad were established for a number of reasons: freedom of religion, need for land for surplus population, or desire to accumulate wealth through trade or the establishment of plantations” (52). Further, Young holds that the “large number of millions who left Europe to colonize other parts of the world did so for the same reason most people migrate today: economic need. They were themselves often victims – of persecution or poverty” (Young, *Empire, Colony* 33). In the case of the Israelis’ settlement, their migratory movement has been basically undertaken for religious emancipation, since they have, as a matter of fact, endured an extended history of religion-based persecution within Christian societies among others. Such accumulated experiences of violence consequently made the Zionist leaders in Europe feel the urgent need to have a secure place, where they could unite the disenfranchised minority Jews and save them from anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic discrimination.

This Zionist position, regarded as the foundational impetus for the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state, is observed by Israel Shahak, who points out that the only solution that the Zionist leaders in Europe found to avoid the continuing anti-Jewish mistreatments was to “remove all the Jews bodily and concentrate them on Palestine or Uganda” (70). However, this raises the question to what extent these rationales do legitimize settling in an already populated location and causing the suffering of its indigenous inhabitants by subjugating them and forcing them to an institutionalized marginal position. This dilemma – of contested legitimacy and the suffering of indigenous inhabitants – lies at the core of many narratives portraying the Israeli–Palestinian strife, as exemplified in Faqir’s *Nisanit*.

In the realm of the fictional representation of the colonial confrontation between the Israelis and the Palestinians (a contentious subject that has not only permeated modern Arabic and Hebrew literatures, but it also diffuses into worldwide cultural, social, and

political studies exploring the contemporary Middle East), Faqir's *Nisanit* is a significant case in point. Despite the novel's relatively modest critical acclaim and the limited attention within academic research, I argue that it constitutes an extraordinary novelistic representation, distinctive in narrative structure and rich in thematic content. The novel's interweaving of both first- and third-person accounts provides an inclusive perspective to the conflict; it incorporates numerous allusions to the enduring Israeli–Palestinian clashes, unfolding across a variety of historical events embodied within Faqir's narrative. These conflicts engender varying degrees of suffering among ordinary individuals with a particular focus on the most marginalized group – the Arab women. This is emphasized by the Jordanian–British Faqir, stating that the three main characters of her literary text are all “victims of history, geography and politics” (4), but it is Eman, her Arab female protagonist, who is exposed to the highest degree of victimization. Moreover, the text questions pivotal aspects surrounding the settler–indigenous confrontation, exemplifying various aspects of colonialist strategies: cultural, political, and military strategies of domination are employed by Israeli forces to assert prevalence over contested territories and maintain public security. Simultaneously, it portrays resistance methods undertaken by Palestinian fighters in reaction to their subjugation, driven by a quest for national freedom. The overlapping exploration within Faqir's fictional world provides a subtle understanding of complex dynamics inherent in the Israeli–Palestinian clash.

The novel is narrated through the perspectives of three characters: it includes Eman's first-person narrative, as well as third-person narratives showcasing the viewpoints of Shadeed, a Palestinian Fedayee combatant and guerrilla fighter imprisoned in an Israeli jail, and David, an Israeli interrogator and a Holocaust survivor of Polish origins, respectively. Thus, the text presents the counter-relationship between the Israelis as the occupier and the Palestinians as the occupied in a distinctive mode that closely exhibits their conflicting sense

of rootedness in and entitlement to the land. It also discloses how each side perceives the other, functioning as catalysts for their persistent actions of domination and resistance. The Israeli perspective, shaped by a master discourse, degrades Arab Palestinians, stereotypes their cultural traditions, and views their existence as a barrier to the realization of the Zionist vision of occupying the contested lands. Conversely, Arab Palestinians take on a rejectionist stance rooted in decolonizing aspirations, deeming the arrival of Israelis as a colonial aggression and a foreign settlement that encroaches upon their enduring desire for national liberation and self-autonomy. Faqir represents the beliefs underpinning these divergent perspectives. Thus, her literary work can be seen as a compelling depiction of the layered complexities encompassing cultural and national identity, historical narratives, and territorial acquisition central to the Israeli–Palestinian encounter.

The discord surrounding contemporary Palestine which renders it, as Said puts it, “a much debated, even contested, notion” (Said, *The Question of Palestine* 4), found its origins in the imperialist epoch when the great colonial power structures, Britain and France, not only dominated the Middle East, but also determined their destinies to great degrees. Said explicates this historical context by claiming that “despite their differences, the British and the French saw the Orient as a geographical – and cultural, political, demographical, sociological, and historical – entity over whose destiny they believed themselves to have traditional entitlement” (Said, *Orientalism* 221). As regards Palestine, after the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire that had ruled the Arab Levantine regions for several centuries, Palestine subsequently became subject to the British colonial sphere of influence from the early 1920s until the late 1940s, which brought about a substantial change to its geopolitical configuration and influenced the social conditions of its Arab natives.

Faqir makes the following remark on this crucial turn in an interview with Lindsey Moore: “the demise of the Ottoman Empire was a tragedy”, but it also “marked the beginning

of the suffering of Palestinians” (2), since it was followed by another transformative activity of colonialism. Namely, it is the British mandate which remained in place until the British authority gradually handed over parts of Palestine to the Zionist Party in fulfilment of the Balfour Declaration, regardless of the fact that it did not, at the same time, disregard the right of Arab Palestinians to constitute a territory of their own on the West Bank of the Jordan River. The following excerpt from the Declaration aligns with these facts:

[h]is Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine (quoted in Brenner 89).

The Balfour Declaration, a statement issued in the form of a political letter on 2 November 1917 by the British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour and addressed to the Zionist leader of the British Jewish Community Lord Rothschild, pledged the full support of the British government to reconstituting the land of Palestine as a national homeland for the Jewish people. Though the actual foundation of the state of Israel transpired only in 1948, the steady arrival of Jewish colonists started in the 1880s as an initial serious move towards achieving the Zionist vision of establishing a Jewish state, which continued and accelerated with the facilitation of the British authority during the mandate time.

In her studies on colonialism in the post-independent Arab world in general and Palestine in particular, Moore points out that “the Israeli–Palestinian context remains emphatically colonial”, but it is ultimately the Balfour Declaration that created a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which was British-mandated, “with half of Palestine split off to become Transjordan (later Jordan). The remaining half of Palestine also came under the control of Britain and a sharp increase in Jewish immigration was permitted” (2). Similarly,

Hisham Sharabi notes that “[t]he Jewish Zionists, late comers to the colonial arena, used indirect methods at first (e.g., purchase of land), but later on, when Israel was established, resorted to the standard colonial tactics of force and forced dispossession” (Sharabi, *Palestine Guerrillas* 62). Despite these observations, the classification of the Israeli–Palestinian relationship, whether as colonial or otherwise, remains a subject of a high degree of controversy.

The inhabitation of a populated land by immigrant settlers, irrespective of their identity, draws parallels with classical colonial practices in spite of differences such as the absence of a metropolitan center for the colonial project. Limited to specific paradigms of colonialism, supervising and backing the immigration and settlement of a group of people by a colonial power – the British mandatory government as the colonial power and Jews as the immigrant settlers in the Palestinian colony – echoes patterns in many instances of historical settler colonialism. The gradual territorial expansion by Jewish settlers and the successive dislocation of the indigenous Palestinian people complies with the expansionist aspects of colonial principles. This expansion is made possible through Israel’s implementation of a powerful political system, including a military control, which also corresponds to administrative frameworks observed in historical colonial scenarios.

Besides, the enforcement of the cultural identity of the dominant group (the immigrant Jews), in which they seek to impose their cultural values on the indigenous population, is perceived as a basic facet of colonialism. In line with these premises, Said argues that “both the British imperialist and the Zionist vision are united in playing down and even cancelling out the Arabs in Palestine as somehow secondary and negligible” (Said, *The Question of Palestine* 18). He implies that, based on their own racial and religious standards, the British and the Zionists create a discriminatory dividing line between a superior group that is relocated to occupy the center and an inferior group that is, in turn,

designated to occupy the periphery. This phenomenon of structured exclusion is not, however, circumscribed to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, as it manifests itself in diverse historical and colonial contexts in which, as Frantz Fanon clarifies, “[t]he governing race is first and foremost those who come from elsewhere, those who are unlike the original inhabitants” (Fanon, *Wretched* 40). This feature is conspicuous in the case of Palestine, where non-Arab Jews, arriving from different parts of the world as immigrant settlers, attain social, cultural, political, and economic advantages with the support of the imperialist hegemony of the British mandatory government at the expense of their Arab counterparts.

Challenging the prejudiced discourse implied in Balfour’s proclamation and criticizing how it dominantly contributes to reformulating the internal hierarchies of a colonized setting in a way that serves colonial interests, Said also argues that “Balfour’s statements in the declaration take for granted the higher right of a colonial power to dispose of a territory as it saw fit” (Said, *The Question of Palestine* 16). Aligning itself with the Zionist cause, as the declaration implies, the British hegemonic power deems it expedient to designate the Zionists as its beneficiary, positioning them as a replacement for the British authority in governing its mandated colony. In this way, the establishment of Israel as the Zionist enterprise on the Palestinian terrain is – partly if not wholly – a (re)production of Western colonization in which a colonial space is, in Said’s words, “transformed sufficiently so as no longer to appear foreign to the imperial eye” (Said, *Culture* 226), since from the colonialist viewpoint of the white man “no Oriental was ever allowed to be independent and rule himself. The premise there was that since the Orientals were ignorant of self-government, they had better be kept that way for their own good” (Said, *Orientalism* 228). Moreover, this colonial endeavor is a fulfilment of Europe’s will to maintain control over other territories through representative candidates of superior dominant power. Joseph Massad sheds light on this perspective by arguing that “French and British colonial officials

were explicitly advancing the idea of European Jewish colonization of Palestine as part of the construction of a permanent imperial order in the region” (14–15). More precisely, it is a British intervention and a colonial making that takes the form of settler colonialism in which diasporic Jews immigrated to and then settled in a geographical area in the Middle East. As obvious from the arguments above, this particular migratory activity undertaken for permanent habitation is informed by an imperialist ideology that fundamentally aims at creating the unity of Jewish communities as well as geographical expansion.

The imperialist ideological mission of Zionism, akin to a reproduced version of classical imperialism, is thoroughly discussed by Shahak in his seminal book *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years* (1994). Grounding his argument in religious underpinnings, Shahak asserts that Israel is a Jewish state with neo-imperial principles that aim at controlling far-reaching boundaries through conquering all the lands that historically belonged to the Jews from their perspective. According to this religious perspective, the historical (Biblical) borders of the land of Israel include Sinai, a part of northern Egypt, Jordan, a large chunk of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria, a portion of Iraq south of the Euphrates, Cyprus, and a huge part of Türkiye (9). This expansionist vision is symbolically represented in the Israeli flag, referenced in Faqir’s narrative when Eman accompanies her friend Sammah to Nablus, which is located in occupied Palestine. Upon seeing the Israeli flag displayed on a building, Sammah whispers, “[t]he blue stripes are the Nile and the Euphrates. They want their Biblical kingdom back” (204). The occupation of the land of Canaan (Palestine) is, however, made a primacy and a starting endeavor towards accomplishing the broad Zionist imperial interests of “imposing a hegemony on other Middle Eastern states” (11). It is in this vein that Israel’s occupation of Palestine complies with a paradigm of outright colonialism – a manifestation of what Said terms as a “new foreign colonialism” involving “a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient”

(Said, *The Question of Palestine* 8; 69), and Zionism is the imperialist idea or ideology that drives this colonial enterprise for expansive goals.

Overall, one can conclude in accordance with the above-outlined critical views that Zionism coincides with conventional imperial schemes in relying on colonialist principles to accomplish its purposes of Jewish settlement and geographical enlargement. These schemes, in general, entail a colonial encounter in which colonists claim certain reasons for their colonial activities. However, they do, at the same time, perform a set of actions of domination as colonialist strategies against colonized peoples (discriminating, segregating, expelling, dehumanizing, subjugating, and abusing) in the interest of appropriating them and imposing absolute prevalence over the colonized location. This is notably the very feature of the Israeli–Palestinian framework: Jews, who had long lived as an ethnic minority in diaspora, have made their trajectories to Palestine in the name of relocating themselves away from anti-Jewish violation within their countries of residence, but they oppress the Arab Muslim Palestinians as the racial and religious other, denying them their right to national autonomy and self-determination.

In light of the above, this chapter aims at exploring the contemporary encounter between the Israelis and the Arab Palestinians in Faqir's narrative *Nisanit*, which involves specific colonial, political, cultural, and military strategies of subjugation and methods of native resistance. Drawing upon a range of political views that classify this encounter as a neo-colonial situation of migratory settlement along with a set of postcolonial critical notions taken from Said, Fanon, Young, and others, the present chapter also investigates political, cultural, social, religious, racial, and gendered aspects that essentially fuel this encounter, rendering it an existential conflict for confirming rootedness, fulfilling destinies, and asserting one's identity over the other in Faqir's novel. Thus, the study aims to contribute not only to a deeper understanding of Faqir's major novels, but also to humanities research

focused on the Israeli–Palestinian situation, as it provides multifaceted contexts for analyzing the narrative with a stance of academic objectivity which takes into consideration the different standpoints of the two parties in conflict: the Palestinians and the Israelis.

2. Negotiating Occupier Power and Native Resistance

Narrated from various points of view, Faqir's *Nisanit* is a fictional depiction focusing on the victimization of characters who, despite their distinct identities, endure multiple experiences of loss and suffering.

2.1 Through Eman's Eyes: The Cost of Occupation and Displacement

In a sense, the text narrates the Arab woman protagonist Eman's stages of life from girlhood to womanhood, unveiling various models of social and political oppression in the context of the Arab/Palestinian–Israeli conflict. The story opens with Eman witnessing the traumatic arrest of her father, Mohammad Saqi, by Israeli soldiers for engaging in nationalist resistance and political activism. Reflecting Eman's experience of hardships and suffering, this incident exhibits an arranged raid on her family house, portraying the violations carried out by the occupying soldiers against her beloved ones. Her frequent recollection of the soldier setting eyes on her cherished doll, Lulu, and harming it in this scene, mirrors the vulnerability of the disenfranchised girl Eman amidst the unrest of conflict. She describes this incident as follows: "I was looking at Lulu, the first and last doll I ever had, and praying that they wouldn't see it. One officer caught my eyes and very slowly inserted the point edge of his rifle-blade inside its belly. Struck with pain, I started weeping silently" (10). The mention of Lulu in this scene bears an emotional echo extending in its significance beyond a mere object; it represents Eman's innocence and the inner connection she establishes with her modest possessions in childhood. The idea that Lulu is the only doll Eman ever had can justify the intimate attachment she feels towards her own belongings, making its destruction painful for Eman. What is more, as Eman identifies with Lulu emotionally and even

physically (“struck with pain”), opening up the body of the doll can be seen as the symbolic violation of Eman: the soldier’s act of piercing Lulu’s body with a weapon evokes a striking rape metaphor. This violent penetration serves as an implicit representation of sexualized aggression, one that resonates with postcolonial readings of sexual violence as a metaphor for colonial control. As Justine Leach argues, “[b]y allegorically substituting colonial violence with sexual violence, postcolonial discourse can efficiently figure concepts of violent penetration, possession, and loss of autonomy” (95). In this context, the soldier’s action not only asserts dominance over Eman’s childhood innocence but also enacts a mode of gendered and colonial abuse, sustaining the oppressive power structures between the occupier and the occupied.

Beyond the traumatic arrest of her father, the armed soldiers violate Eman’s sense of self and normal childhood, particularly when the Israeli officer deliberately inserts the front of his gun into her doll’s belly. Here, Eman’s anguished reaction of crying manifests both the intrinsic value that the doll signifies for her and the emotional and psychological abuse of her subjectivity. In the broad sense, this scene of violation can be read as emblematic of the collective violence prevalent in the Palestinian girl’s environment. It reveals the dehumanizing impacts of the oppressive force in which ordinary people and their beloved objects are not spared from inhumane brutality. At the end of the arrest scene, Eman’s question, “[t]hey killed Lulu. Didn't they?” (11), encapsulates the profound suffering experienced not only by Eman but also by Palestinian children amidst the relentless practices of the occupier domination which underscore the devastating consequences of oppressive conditions on their subjectivity and self-perception.

As a result of this raid, Eman suffers from the loss of her father, Saqi, who is represented as a leading figure in the National Freedom Party. In the novel, Saqi does not only rebel against the tyranny of the Israeli occupation but also protests against the unfair

policies of the Palestinian government which administers the Occupied Territories in the West Bank. In the area, most of the Arab Palestinian families are constantly dislocated and compelled to live in isolation with a limited self-control and a subservient role that aligns with Israel's strategic goals of conserving a physical control of internal and external frontiers, thereby keeping its Jewish community homogenous and secured from any prospective clash with enraged Arabs. It is in this respect that Faqir's narrative is critical of the interlocking system of marginalization inflicted upon Arab Palestinian citizens by both Israeli hegemony and the local Palestinian government.

The collusion between these entities contributes to the segregation of Palestinian people, confining them within a delimited space characterized by stringent circumstances that pervade their daily lives. At a certain point, the Israeli interrogator David reminds the Palestinian prisoner Shadeed: "[I]look, Shadeed, even the head of your Movement met our officials last month in Japan. Can't you see? Can't you see who pays and who gets the profit? Be sensible, my boy" (60). These words signal a politics of contact among the leaders of the two parties, suggesting that the Palestinian local government is in some way controlled by the Israeli authority for attaining specific benefits. In other words, it unravels a channel of cooperation and complicity and a level of manipulation resulting from the economic dependency on the part of the Palestinians. Hence, the ordinary Palestinian people find themselves situated as victims within overlapping structures of subjugation, wherein their local leaders fail to adequately reclaim their rights, instead serving the occupier's purposes of exerting absolute control over the whole region – and for gains for themselves.

The harsh circumstances arising from this system of conspiracy and complicity are elucidated by Eman through making a distinction between the prosperous village of Nahar located within the territories incorporated into the State of Israel in 1948 and her

impoverished village in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank. Eman articulates her observations traversing Rahmah back from visiting her uncle with her mother:

[w]e took the bus to the eastern part of Rahmah. The nearer we were to the other side of the city, the dirtier the streets and people. Even the smell of the air changed. We started with the odour of roses and ended up with the stink of overflowing sewage systems. Half-naked children were playing with their excrement. Why are they doing that? (58)

This passage provides a conspicuous contrast in terms of living conditions and structural inequalities within different areas of the region. It exposes challenges of poverty, environmental pollution, and lack of facilities caused by the systemic neglect of marginalized populations in Palestinian settings. The observation of dirty streets and filthy people is indicative of the deteriorating economic state and the absence of proper sanitation infrastructures in the Rahmah neighborhood.

The novel shows the reliance of the Palestinian people on aid with their ongoing demand for humanitarian assistance provided by international relief agencies. This dependence is foregrounded through Shadeed's introduction of himself to David, contending that he lives in "Tel Al-Asaker refugee camp" in Nablus. He "went to an UNRWA school" and "ate UNRWA food since [he] was born" (60). Pointing to these essential human needs being aided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency proves the worsening of the living circumstances faced by the Palestinians as a result of occupation and dislocation, which, in turn, makes them desperate opponents of the regime. This reliance also underlines their disempowerment, highlighting the failure of global governance in addressing the roots of their suffering. Instead of enabling Palestinian self-sufficiency, the global governance maintains power imbalances, thereby reinforcing Palestinian dependency. On another occasion, when recounting her experiences to her lover Shadeed, Eman spells out the

inevitable consequences of the hardships endured by her family and also by the people of Rahmah. She tells him that “education is a luxury” (222) in their disadvantaged village; she also tells him how her baby sister Amal died because her family was economically unable to take the newborn sick baby to any of the distant hospitals, which shows the low level of health care within the Palestinian villages.

Suffering from these hard conditions especially in the absence of her father, Eman makes the difficult decision to discontinue her education, so that she can support her mother and three young brothers by working “as an apprentice to an Armenian tailor” (88), a job arranged for her by her kind neighbor Um-Musaad. This prompts reflection on the oppression experienced by individuals in Palestinian villages and internal refugee camps due to their colonial status quo, compelling them to contend for the minimum requirements of their basic human needs. What is more, the significance of Eman’s employment, being offered by Um-Arrtin, a Palestinian woman of Armenian descent, can be interpreted as a reference to the historical existence of diverse groups of people inhabiting the land of Palestine including religious and ethnic minorities. It underscores manners of tolerance and acceptance among Arab natives and non-Arab migrants despite their cultural differences. It also underlines a mode of solidarity among subordinate women within the Palestinian community. Remarkably, this unity of women serves to oppose not only the gendered subordination inherent in the patriarchal domestic sphere, but also the paradigms of discrimination imported by the occupation enterprise, which undermine the idea of “living together” within a shared geographical space.

The solidarity, and as such, mutual empowerment, and self-empowerment of the inferior Palestinian women in the face of oppression manifest themselves in different plot elements of the novel. Solidarity features the relationship of Eman, her mother, her aunt Hanin, and Um-Mussad in which they support each other within the patriarchal domestic

sphere. This solidarity is also evident in facing the discrimination and injustice imposed on them by the occupier soldiers. For instance, when Eman, her mother, and other Palestinian women go to the Prime Ministry to ask for the release of their jailed men, Israeli armed soldiers violently restrain them, even if they present a reasonable cause for their visit. Eman narrates this episode,

Um-Musaad tried to break through the soldiers' line. One of them struck her with his fist. She kicked him. 'You whore,' he shouted and punched her on the jaw. She hit back. Mummy gasped and together with other women attacked the soldiers. They pushed me and I fell down, but Mummy pulled me up. Another woman fell to the ground, winded. The crowd stepped on her, shouting at the soldiers, 'Prostitutes of the-government' (34).

The women's individual and collective response in this physical fight exposes a spirit of women's resilience confronting the oppressive forces. In spite of the looming intimidation of violence, they steadfastly refuse to succumb and instead defy the soldiers, who represent the established structure of power, resorting to violence to keep up their leverage. The reaction of the women reveals their solidarity and mutual support, displaying the durability derived from steadfastness, unity, and collective action. Moreover, this resistance by the women reflects a broad paradigm of defiance against the hegemonic order of the soldiers. It pertains to a fundamental pattern of the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis, characterized by the dominance performed by a disciplined military apparatus, faced by native rejection and resistance among the Palestinian populace.

2.2 Caught in the System: David's Dilemma and the Occupier's Unjust Policies

The text suggests that the policies of the system, which the occupying authority implements as part of a dominating framework over the whole region, are formulated with the primary objective of ensuring the security and well-being of the Jewish community. This

strategic orientation aims at alleviating the burden on expatriate Jews within the community, who grapple with the formidable desire of transcending a tragic historical backdrop characterized by harrowing experiences of victimization in the Western context. This burden is evident in David's nightmare which, as the novel states, "started when he was four years old in Auschwitz" (80), but keeps revisiting him in the present. The nightmare depicts the trauma David has lived as a Holocaust survivor, leaving a deep and lasting impact on his psychological and mental state. The dream arouses a sense of horror, reflecting the anguish and helplessness David witnessed in his past, during the time he spent in Poland. Presented as a surreal yet realistic image with "thousands of babies shot across the sky like a jet of gas, all on fire" (80), this description seems to emulate horrifying events of the Holocaust in which innocent lives were cruelly extinguished in mass crematoriums and executions. The nightmare's recurrence since David's early life testifies to the inescapability of trauma; despite the passage of time, it refuses to remain the past, continually resurfacing in his dreams and psychological distress. Overall, because of the severity of those historical tribulations, the Israeli system, which exhibits a predilection for advancing the interests of Jewish settlers and safeguarding their comfort, necessitates a stringent approach towards other individuals, who do not identify as part of the Jewish community.

This can explain why Faqir represents David as a diasporic Jew and a traumatized Holocaust survivor, who emigrated from his country of citizenship, Poland, and settled down in Israel in quest for a distant and protected sanctuary with aspirations to a prosperous lifestyle. David serves Israel's project of the colonial settlement by engaging actively in the persecution of the Arab Palestinians, but he remains a relatively unprivileged and exploited Israeli citizen, which is depicted through his desire for a job promotion that keeps eluding him during long years of dedicated service in Israel's political body. The quotation, "[t]he

dirty job for him and the clean interrogation for them” (53), captures David’s pivotal yet underrated position in the Israeli system.

Additionally, his extraordinary expertise in interrogation, which seems to qualify him for the promotion, highlights how he is overlooked by his leaders. As is pointed out in the text,

David was quite experienced. Because of that, he could see the limits. He hit artistically to cause the least harm and the most pain. Without him in that room they would never get a tiny piece of information. Later, they would blame him if the prisoner didn’t confess. It collapsed on the head of the weakest. (65)

This passage discloses the acknowledged indispensability of David’s role within the interrogation process in prison, his being instrumental to procuring intelligence for the Israeli authorities that satisfies their requisites. Nonetheless, he is subject to liability due to the risks associated with his assigned roles as well as the consequences of any potential minor failure. It implies that the charge of accountability is often thrown on those who are least able to stand it, which uncovers patterns of exploitation and injustice within the Israeli political hierarchy itself, too.

In the course of events, David leaves behind his ambition of having a job promotion within Israel’s political system and seriously considers retirement from his duty upon his willing request once he realizes his wife’s pregnancy. It is the fulfilment of a personal and familial desire, described by David’s wife Judith as “something we’ve waited for all our lives” (200). Upon receiving this news, David resolves to resign, declaring to Judith, “I’m going to hand in my resignation today. We’ll start a new life together. A fresh one” (201), signifying his dissatisfaction with his role in the prison system and his desire for a more meaningful future. The prospect of having a child can offer David the promise of happiness

and fulfilment, providing him with the chance to rebuild his life based on familial love rather than on power and career ambition, in which he probably loses interest.

At various moments, David grapples with conflicting attitudes with regard to his duties of interrogating and torturing Palestinian prisoners. Although he perceives these actions as serving his country's interests from a patriotic angle – “no matter what, he would protect his country at any cost” (127) –, he shows empathy towards individuals like the tormented Shadeed. He recommends the guard treat Shadeed well in the final scene in which he approves Eman's letter to be given to Shadeed in the cell. This behavior is particularly significant following David's long-awaited promotion to a staff sergeant, highlighting his inclination to distance himself from being engaged with the process of suppressing the Palestinian prisoners, since getting the promotion does not mean that he becomes totally disconnected from such a morally complex activity. David also intervenes on Shadeed's behalf and notifies the guard that Shadeed needs urgent medical treatment, blaming him for not reporting Shadeed's collapse. However, he is still worried “[w]hat would they say about him giving a hand to an Arab? Not just any Arab, but a terrorist too” (126). This contradiction exposes David's inner conflict, caused by his worrying about societal judgement for offering help to an Arab, specifically one labelled as an opponent and a terrorist. Ultimately, David yearns for a peaceful family life, favoring domestic harmony over the fraught involvement in the prisoners' investigation.

Indeed, the transformation of David's individual interests and the inner conflict taking hold of his psyche can clarify how he is exploited. They can also exemplify how Israel's policies lack authentic indices of democracy; they involve hierarchal inequalities in which Israeli leaders – though enforcing a political system that endorses the superiority of the Jewish community on the whole – exploit particular segments of ordinary Jews, taking advantage of historical antisemitism and anti-Jewishness. In other words, these leaders make

these segments superior to the Arabs, but they manipulate Jewish suffering by employing those ambitious Jews persecuted in the past to project abusive dispossession and structural racism on Palestinian occupied people in exchange for a partial supremacy. David conveys a perspective of the formerly victimized Jews like him towards their existence in Palestine as relocated Israeli citizens by saying that “whatever happened they would never leave it. The Jews had suffered enough. The amount of happiness in this world was limited, fixed. To be happy, you had to wrench some away from another person” (237–38). From a postcolonial view, this sort of aggression can be interpreted in Young’s terms: “indigenous colonized people always seem prone to become the victims of the victims” (Young, *Empire, Colony* 33) in a settler–indigenous contact. This is a definitive feature of the relationship between David and Shadeed in which a victimized Jew of the Holocaust victimizes another group of people in a similar manner to preserve his newly acquired supremacy over the other colonized group.

In addition to critiquing the unjust and exploitative policies within the Israeli system through dealing with specific groups of the Jewish migrant population, the novel also brings under scrutiny the lack of democratic principles towards the treatment of Arab Palestinians. In Saqi’s, Eman’s father’s case, the Israeli prosecutor invokes the notion of democracy while calling for a heavy-handed action by declaring, “[a]lthough we are a democratic state, your honour, high treason must be crushed with an iron fist” (110). This juxtaposition highlights an obvious contradiction between the purported democracy of the state and its actual practices, as Saqi’s political activism, involving the possession of political leaflets at his house, does not rise to the level of high treason. However, the prosecutor’s accusation of high treason against Saqi seems intended to justify a harsh punishment under the guise of shielding his state.

Within this context, Faqir also employs subtitling sections of the novel to challenge Israel's claims of democratic ideals in general. The multi-used subtitle: "The Democratic State of Ishmael", the fictive equality of the Occupied Territories of the West Bank, carries a contrast between the democratic principles ostensibly upheld by the state of Israel and their practical application, particularly concerning non-Jewish Arabs. By invoking the name of the prophet Ishmael, revered as the ancestor of Arab peoples in both Jewish and Islamic religious traditions, the author points to the exclusionary facet of Israel's policies towards this demographic group. From a religious viewpoint, Shahak interprets the lack of democracy in the policies of Israel towards non-Jews by asserting that the state of Israel is not a democracy due to the application of a Jewish ideology directed against all non-Jews, who have to be officially excluded from inhabiting Jewish spaces (3). Undermining the democratic principles that the state of Israel claims to elevate, Shahak's observation makes it clear that the absence of just treatment towards non-Jewish others stems from Israel's policies, derived from particular rigorous codes of the Jewish religion.

It is in this sense that structural racism and totalitarian practices permeating the Israeli policies are charged with prejudiced binarities between the settlers and the natives (Arab/settler, Muslim/Jew, Israeli/Palestinian, superior/inferior, and master/servant). Setting them in two opposing fronts on the basis of these conflicting binarities, they also craft a heated encounter in which each group fights bluntly to outwit the other, as they both follow a principle of exclusivity. David's wish, that "all the Palestinians could disappear from Israel at a single stroke of magic, without his forcing them towards their graves" (126), indicates his personal desire not to be implicated in this process. In the broad sense, this, however, uncovers the not even hidden meaning of the Israeli alternatives towards Arab Palestinians: either evicting or killing them. This Israeli vision is also referenced through Sammah's remark to Eman, "they don't want us to stay here, so they try to make life as hard as possible

for Palestinians” (226–27), which signifies the Palestinian awareness of one of the motives behind their confrontation with the Israelis. In turn, the Palestinian resistance’s pursuit of complete freedom reflects their desire to rid themselves of settlers and achieve an exclusivist existence in Palestine. Echoing Fanon’s assertion on the dynamics of colonialism that “the zone where natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers” because “they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity” (Fanon, *Wretched* 38–39), this encounter, driven by exclusivist aspirations, manifests as a dichotomous conflict of affirmation and denial, with the Israeli occupier and the Palestinian occupied fiercely preserving asymmetrical identities and vying for solitary control over the contested geography. Making Palestine the site of this complex contest, the Israelis and the Palestinians are engaged in a complicated battle constructed on proving the real existence of their own history, the genuine sense of their belonging and, by extension, the deserved ownership of the contested land.

In the novel, the recurring motif of the title *Nisanit* is used as symbolical of the reciprocal sense of rootedness in the lands of Palestine. The title itself – taken from the name of an Israeli settlement established as a military outpost in 1980 in the Gaza strip – carries the meaning of a desert flower that cannot be easily eradicated. It appears multiple times throughout the text, notably in the name of the daughter of the Israeli family visited by David and his wife in Tel Aviv, during Shadeed and Eman’s walk in Nablus, and within David’s dream garden. It also appears when David envisions transforming the barren yard of the prison into a fertile area. In this episode, it is stated that “[t]hey would try Nisanit. It would survive the heat since it was a desert flower, and practical too, because it took so deep a hole in the ground that it couldn’t be rooted out” (239). Evoking the tenacity of this desert flower, Faqir’s multi-use of the title acquires an emblematic weight, highlighting that both parties in the conflict have deep historical roots in the land, albeit from opposed perspectives.

This metaphorical depiction alludes to the ingrained connection of both Israelis and Palestinians to the land, thereby complicating the ongoing battle between them. Beyond the historical context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict with their discrepant experiences and histories, their different agendas, and their rooted narratives, this encounter between settlers and indigenous populations, taking the formation of settler occupation, revolves around a clash over a geographical area in its essence. This pivotal dynamic is exemplified in an exchange between David and his Jewish friend Yahuda during David’s vacation visit to Tel Aviv, where he meets with an old Arab Palestinian man working on Yahuda’s plantation. Yahuda tells David that “Hajj is the previous owner of this place. He couldn’t prove his ownership, so I paid him some compensation and offered him a job. He said that he’d spent most of his life digging this soil so he might as well go on doing it” (180–181). This dialogue accentuates simmering tensions encapsulating land ownership; it mirrors an intricate history of discord over the land. Whereas Yahuda compensates Hajj for taking over the ownership of the plantation, the old man acquiesces to continue working in it, albeit no longer being its rightful owner.

This dispute underscores a particular way in which Israelis consolidate their occupation objectives by asserting ownership and marginalizing Palestinians, if not displacing them entirely, while Palestinians insist on their connection to the land even when deprived of land ownership. The elderly man’s decision elucidates the Palestinians’ rooted affinity to the land as an essential aspect of their identity, imperiled by the growing Jewish settlement construction and the dislocation of Palestinian families. Their attachment to the soil becomes a means of resistance against occupation, cultural resilience, and the assertion of their right to retrieve usurped lands. This sentiment is reflected in the words the old man sings when meeting with David:

Perhaps you forget who I am

And what my troubles are.

Pity how my hours have slipped

Through your hands;

Do not think I weep from fear,

My tears are for my country (180).

Shadeed shows a similar attitude to the land: “[h]e lay down on the ground and pressed his belly to the soil which he loved. The Zionists had stolen it” (12), which suggests his deep attachment to the land through the physical contact with the soil. Similarly, Abu-Mustafa, the old man Eman meets in Nablus, always insists on sitting on the ground because he likes “to be close to the soil” (47) of the land as much as he possibly can. In so doing, Abu Mustafa, who has witnessed the substantial transformations of the Palestinian land, as he lost his children and grandchildren in the wars of 1948 and 1967, transmits his sense of affiliation to the Palestinian young generations, emphasizing the value of the land they must have and are pushed to fearlessly defend against the aggression of settler colonization at any cost. This physical connection to the soil portrayed in Faqir’s text reveals how land becomes both a source of identity and a catalyst for resistance. The characters’ bodily interactions with the earth symbolize an unbreakable bond that transcends mere ownership. When Shadeed articulates that Palestinian fighters combat their enemy “[f]or bread, for peace, for real freedom” (92), he establishes the land as essential not just to cultural identity but to physical survival itself. This representation of land-based identity aligns with postcolonial understandings of territorial struggles. As Said observes, colonizing projects like those depicted in the novel fundamentally occur “on, about, or because of the land” (Said, *Culture* 78), which illuminates how Faqir portrays Israel’s settlement construction and the displacement of Arab populations. Similarly, Fanon’s assertion that for colonized peoples, “the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land

which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (Fanon, *Wretched* 44) provides a theoretical framework that can explain the visceral relationship between characters like Abu-Mustafa and the soil they touch, one that encompasses both material survival and spiritual wholeness.

The novel further represents policies of the Israeli system that exclude Arab Palestinians through exemplifying the restrictive practices of the occupying power leaving them in social and political constraints. Eman’s endeavor to attend university education in Nablus necessitates taking an uneasy permission from the Israeli authorities. As she laments, “it takes time to get a pass from here. The permission from the occupation authorities arrived last week” (197). Embarking on her journey to Nablus, Eman encounters a series of checkpoints, undergoing a criminal-like interrogation and an attentive check by Israeli soldiers. Through the obligatory procedures of interrogation, she also experiences a gender-constructed violation when an Israeli policewoman orders her to take off her clothes for inspection: “[c]ome on. Your underwear” (204). This reveals a form of gender abuse infringing upon Eman’s feminine privacy and agency, as her naked body is subsisted to invasive surveillance.

Eman’s description of her feeling towards the situation, “I stood naked and shivering between them. It was the first time I had taken off my clothes in front of a stranger” (204), reflects her sense of humiliation and vulnerability, as she is forced to appear undressed to strangers. Overall, this incident discloses ways how the Arab women are oppressed from a gendered aspect, but it also unveils the collective marginality of the Palestinian people in the sense that they are excluded, and their freedom of movement is restricted due to the existence of discriminatory separating borders that split them from their Israeli counterpart. Responding to the influence of Israel’s policies on the actual conditions of the Palestinians and the Israelis in the aftermath of the Six-Day War (the timeframe of Faqir’s narrative),

Said points out that Israel's high-handed strength translates into reality in that its military body manages to set up checkpoints and barriers at will, at which Palestinians have to go through endless interrogation and search, while, in contrast, Israeli settlers wander about with unrestricted freedom (Said, *The Question of Palestine* 123). This glaring disparity can expose mechanisms of power and discriminatory dimensions, shaping the lives of Palestinians and Israelis as represented in Faqir's text.

From a postcolonial standpoint, this is consonant with Young's explanation of the racial division created between natives and settlers in a variety of colonial situations which, as he describes, requires "some special physical arrangements, a different and distinctive spatial order to maintain the distance between them" (Young, *Empire, Colony* 35). Referring to a group of colonial cases in which such a prejudiced distinction between the colonizer and the colonized is established by the colonial superior power, Young mentions the Palestinian colony: "such juxtaposition of two divided zones is most visible in the Occupied Territories in the West Bank in Palestine, where the Jewish settlements are built onto the landscape with high concrete walls dividing them from overcrowded towns and villages of the Palestinians, accessed by special sealed-off highways to which local Palestinians have no access" (Young, *Empire, Colony* 35). Young's account illuminates how colonial hegemonies make use of spatial practices to construct prevalence, marginalize indigenous groups, and keep up systems of oppression, which can correspond with Faqir's presentation of the spatial procedures created by Israeli settlers in an attempt to preserve dominance over Palestinian natives.

2.3 Uneven Grounds: Power Disparities in the Conflict

The narrative delineates the loss suffered by Eman over the fall of her lover Shadeed at the hands of the Israeli forces, as well. The Palestinian rebellious fighter Shadeed promises to propose to Eman upon the successful execution of a revolutionary operation targeting a

guarded settlers' committee in Hebron. This operation underlines strategic objectives of national resistance organizations and guerrilla warfare as evidenced in the discussion held amongst Shadeed and his fellow Palestinian fighters while on their way to the operation's location. In their discussion, the fighters distinguish between prospective encounters with Israeli soldiers at checkpoints and targeting members of the Settlers' Committee in Hebron, "killing soldiers at checkpoints was not his idea of guerilla fighting. It would be less significant than killing members of the Settlers' Committee. The first would be 'an operation,' while the second would be, as Che put it, a means to achieve an end. Settlements were the hottest danger" (16). This highlights resistance movements' prioritization of targets depending on the perceived impact or effectiveness in advancing their causes. Confirming the centrality of Jewish settlements as the target of the attack mirrors the wide geopolitical backdrop of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in which the dispersal of Jewish settlements is regarded as a symbol of occupation as well as a primary obstacle to the realization of Palestinian self-determination and statehood.

Days following this operation, Shadeed is captured and placed in one of the Israeli prisons, where he gets brutally tortured at the hands of David and other Israeli officers until he succumbs to a nervous breakdown. Specifically, Shadeed is taken to be jailed in Beer Al-Sab'a prison: "the police station of the British, the prison of the Zionists and the administrative center of the Ottomans" (44–45), which can be interpreted as a critique of the concurrence of consecutive power institutions of oppression. The novel showcases the Palestinian perspective of their consecutive oppressors, saying the "British attacked us, then the Zionists. The same chase, but different faces" (218). This quotation alludes to the continuity in the struggle encountered by Palestinians, irrespective of the particular hegemonic entity that they confront. The Palestinian perspective equates the British mandate

and the Zionists, which implies that although the agent of persecution has changed over years, the underlying politics of domination and struggle remain analogous.

Faqir's critique of contemporary colonizers of Palestine also extends to the biased intervention of the British mandatory government, which facilitated the transition of its colonial legacies (governmental institutions) to Israeli settlers, enabling their dominance over Palestinian lands and people. The prison stands out as a significant example of these institutions; it is represented as an enclosure space, where the conflicting parties, the Israeli as the jailor and the Palestinian as the jailed, meet and interact with each other. In the novel, the prison functions as one of the penal policies that the Israeli power uses to isolate, punish, and dominate rejectionist Palestinians. Sharabi observes that the systematic arrests of guerrillas following the Six-Day War involve "imprisonment for long duration, interrogation, and torture. It constitutes a central mechanism of pacification and repression" (13). He further explains that "systematic arrest, then, aims not only at apprehending the guilty, but also at crushing the will to resist" (Sharabi, *Palestine Guerrillas* 14). In the novel, Shadeed, in particular, undergoes various forms of torture for resisting the occupier, with the intensity escalating, as he continues to defy the jailer's orders throughout the investigation.

Going mad because of the severity of torment, Shadeed imagines David as his absent father, "you, my father, my real father, I commanded you to come" (129). This symbolism reflects a complex nexus between sovereignty and subjugation through Shadeed's seeing the Israeli jailer as his father, which is a manifestation of paternal discipline and authority. Similarly, the remark made by the Israeli guard while tantalizing Shadeed in prison, "[t]each the bastard how to behave in the future, if he had a future" (52), indicates how the Israeli jailors hold authority to dictate and control the Palestinian prisoner's fateful trajectory. It prompts reflection on the power structures and the institutional violations encountered by

Palestinian individuals within the incarceration system, where their humanity is neglected, and their futures are precarious.

Featuring a substantial disparity, the power hierarchy within the prison system is further emphasized through the variety of subjugation methods available to the Israeli jailor over the Palestinians inside the tightly confined cells. Attempting to compel Shadeed to surrender to his decree, the Israeli officer, Shin Beit, intimidates Shadeed, “I have everything at my disposal, dogs, electricity, chemicals, as well as psychologists [...] I have many alternatives: to kill you, to make you crazy or to expel you” (114). The possible range of intimidation illustrates the extent to which the Israeli authorities are prepared to go to maintain control and dominance over Palestinian prisoners, ensuring the powerful options at the Israeli hand and the powerlessness of the Palestinian prisoners. Michel Foucault’s notions of how power operates within institutions like prisons through a variety of strategies including intimidation and the manipulation of physical and psychological punishments, can provide a theoretical lens through which to understand this fictional scenario. According to Foucault, power is not only exercised through outright coercion but also through subtle mechanisms of surveillance, normalization, and control of the body (Foucault, *Discipline* 11–12). In the case of the Israeli prison system, the utilization of intimidation tactics and the projection of authority by the Israeli officers align with Foucault’s conception of power as being exerted through disciplinary mechanisms.

While the use of such alternatives in dealing with prisoners regarding interrogation processes is not unique to any specific culture, Shahak asserts that flogging, imprisoning, expelling, and, in threatening circumstances, killing the religious other are main features of the Jewish system to achieve the principle of social closeness and cohesion in Palestine (14). As represented in Faqir’s text, the institute of incarceration can be seen as a mode of oppression and a form of exclusion among a constellation of eliminatory practices, policies,

and regimes imposed by the Israeli governance on the indigenous people to maintain a hierarchy of power.

Apart from the hierarchy of power embodied both inside and outside the incarceration system, putting the occupier and the occupied in proximity illuminates certain politics of cultural stereotyping in Israeli–Palestinian perceptions. David refers to Shadeed in prison as “[s]tupid, lazy Arabs. Bare feet. Bare minds. They don’t grasp whatever you tell them. How many things did the Jews have to teach these grinning Arabs” (51). This statement displays how David tries to shape his relationship with Shadeed within a master–slave framework, not only by abusing him but also by demeaning his cultural identity as uncivilized, primitive, and backward. Likewise, Yahuda perceives the old Arab man as someone who “resents the change” (181), stressing his own efforts of modernizing the plantation in an attempt to justify his usurpation of this property. He further generalizes this perception to all Arabs by saying “they’re all lazy and unimaginative” (181). This narrative constructs a framework of Jewish superiority in modernization and progress, viewing Arab Palestinians as resistant to development from Yahuda’s point of view. Additionally, this perspective serves to rationalize and perpetuate entrenched inequalities between Israelis and Palestinians, sustaining the unequal positions they must occupy in society. The novel exemplifies this inequality through referring to the Palestinian people living or working in “1948 Palestine”: they work “for the Jews”, and not “with the Jews” (210), which also fits into a superior–inferior relationship grounded in the cultural perception espoused by the Jewish community.

In return, labeling the Israeli settlers as “aggressors, occupiers, colonialists, killers” (21) from the Palestinian perspective challenges the legitimacy of Jewish settlement in the region. It denies or disputes the historical narrative put forth by Jewish settlers regarding the redemption, reclaiming, and governance of land in Palestine. Considering them “aggressors”

and “killers” implies a perception of Israeli settlers as operators of conflict and violence, while deeming them as “occupiers” and “colonialists” reflects viewing them as a foreign domination. Overall, the ways the Israelis and Palestinians view each other encompass the deeply entrenched and contrasting narratives that form perceptions on both sides of the conflict, contributing to unceasing tensions and hostilities among them.

Within the context of the novel’s representation of the cultural dimensions of the conflict, the Israeli people distort the image of the Arab Muslim Palestinians by classifying their national resistance organizations as extremists whose existence and actions are a growing threat to the domestic and public security. In the report in which the Israelis announce the success of one of their intelligence operations, it is stated that “[t]he operation was carried out successfully. Two terrorists were killed and the third [Shadeed] gave himself up” (41). In the same way, the soldier, who arrests Shadeed also says while pointing his rifle to his face “he’s just an Arab, a terrorist” (44), which reveals an overgeneralized perception taken on by the Israelis to cover and legitimize their exercise of power, violence, and subjection against the revolutionary Arab Palestinians. From a postcolonial viewpoint, this can be paralleled with colonialist agendas described by Sharabi, who elucidates that terrorism sometimes serves as a rational tool of domination and a colonial invention being applied to non-European peoples in an attempt at demonizing them; whenever colonists and natives face each other, terroristic practice was the colonizers’ norm. For Sharabi, imperialism often shields itself against “self-questioning and guilt mostly by displacing the violence it practiced onto its victims” (Sharabi, *Palestine Guerrillas* 69). Though actions like Shadeed’s attack on civilians (the members of the settler committee in Hebron) are condemned as terrorism, the conflation of “Arab” with “terrorist” reflects patterns of generalization in Israeli perceptions of Arabs.

In the text, many incidents imply that the Israeli subjugation is based on a thorough knowledge of Arab Palestinians, their history, culture, traditions, religion, race, character, language, society, and possibilities, which they utilize as a dominating apparatus to confront Palestinians and weaken their resistance. One incident exemplifies this when an Israeli soldier, familiar with the language and cultural codes of the occupied, searches for the fighters hiding in Nablus. This soldier deceives an old Palestinian woman by pretending that he is an Arab man from Gaza and “a member of the Resistance Movement”. To conceal his identity in a persuasive way, he talks to the woman in a good “Arabic language plus the right social behavior”: these are for him “the keys to his success” in finding out the hiding Palestinian fighters. Since the woman does not fully trust him but still adheres to the cultural standard of hospitality, she hosts him, then she runs “to their hiding-place to warn them” (30–32), which gives them away, since the soldier follows her all along. His knowledge of Arabic language and behavior patterns allows him to manipulate the situation with the old woman effectively. He uses deception as a tactic to obtain clues and control over her. His betrayal of trust represents Israelis as willing to exploit vulnerabilities within the Palestinian community and to take advantage of its cultural value within the Palestinian community. Theoretically, this can arguably resonate with Foucault’s account of the relationship between knowledge and power. Foucault asserts that “the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information”, elaborating that “[i]t is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 51–52). Grounding the analysis of the text’s portrayal of Israeli tactics in Foucault’s theories, one can posit that the soldier’s utilization of manipulation to extract information from the Palestinian woman demonstrates how power drives the accumulation of knowledge, which, in turn, produces specific forms of power strategies.

Based on their knowledge of the Arab Palestinian culture and the individual tendencies of some of its people, the Israelis target, exploit, and recruit a particular group of Palestinian people as informers and traitors, who are more or less ready to betray their people for their own personal interests. The narrative asserts the strategic importance of information provided by Palestinian informers to Israeli authorities and how they rely on intelligence gathered from informers to preserve their dominance and suppress the Palestinian resistance movements. These informers make a significant impact because their betrayal undermines the efforts made by loyal Palestinian fighters to achieve liberation and self-determination. The expected outcome of using the strategic role of informers is evidenced in this observation: “[a]s long as there was a Palestinian informer, they would never free their country” (45). Dependence on informers and traitors is a significant strategy of the Israeli authority to overpower the Palestinian local resistance since it requires accurate clues and proofs about the confidential plans of the local resistance organizations which can only be provided by those who are close to the revolutionary groups and prepared to spy on them.

It becomes clear that Captain Abdel-Qader Lafi is the Palestinian informer, who gives clues about Mohammad Saqi’s political activism, which ultimately leads to the arrest of seventeen members involved in the local resistance including Saqi. At a certain point, Lafi appears in the court to testify to what he proclaims against Saqi and other rebellious Palestinian men in the last session of the case in which Saqi is eventually sentenced to be “hanged by the neck until he is dead [...] in the mosque yard” (111). Eman describes what happens to her father on the day of the sentence’s execution as “a show trial” (223), held in public and with the attendance of a group of Palestinian locals including Saqi’s family.

This, however, uncovers another strategy of the Israeli regime among the various forms, techniques, and apparatuses of the settler–occupier control, which is the deliberate publicization of subjugation through acts such as physical punishment and violence against

Palestinian dissenters, as well as the dazzling success of its intelligence operations. Announcing the arrest, the Israeli authority signals approval of the successful execution of the action by publicizing it in the following manner:

[t]his is Radio Ishmael broadcasting from Rahmah. Dear listeners everywhere, the courageous armed forces have aborted an attempt to overthrow our loyal Government. Seventeen members of the destructive National Freedom Party were arrested in a comb-and-sweep operation of the public areas of the capital. The loudspeaker of the armed forces headquarters has made known the names of all the members of the Party. If you are familiar with any of them, please notify the nearest Police Station. (11)

This announcement is an indication of the Israeli authority's control and surveillance of institutions in the Occupied Territories of Palestine, which provides them with a channel from which they can address the occupied Palestinians. Whether publicizing violence or intelligence, this ultimately aims at creating an atmosphere of fear, powerlessness, and disempowerment that can manipulate the collective consciousness of the Palestinian people and occupy their imagination. It is to (re)direct them to a persistent state of submission, but it also functions as a method of disintegrating the unity of the Palestinian community by accusing their resistance individuals of aberration, and thereby becoming a forsaken group rejected by some of the locals. Sharabi elucidates that Israeli policies to suppress resistance involve a strategy designed to convince "the civilian population not to cooperate with the guerrillas and of the advantages of complying with the occupation authorities. By isolating the guerrillas, intimidating the politicized elements among the Palestinians, and containing the inactive majority, the Israeli leaders hoped to take the ground from under the resistance" (Sharabi, *Palestine Guerrillas* 6). Sharabi's view highlights how the systematic branding of

resistance plays a crucial role in destabilizing Palestinian unity, maintaining dominance, and disrupting the socio-political cohesion of Palestinian society.

In the novel, Eman becomes a castaway member of her local society because of her father's resistance actions, even though she is not personally responsible for his political engagement. Eman narrates, "[m]y father tried to overthrow the government and was trying to develop Islamic socialism. That's what people told me later" (222–23). She also tells that as a schoolchild, she used to sit alone, as her schoolmates were unwilling to socialize with her because her father was a member in the local resistance movement: "people called me the prisoner's daughter and avoided me as if I had alopecia. I didn't know" (150). Eman's local ostracisation reveals her struggle to find acceptance even in her own society; it further shows an aspect of an unfair social judgment over innocent people arising from societal prejudices and also the successful deployment of division as a form of power and control. In another instance, Eman narrates that her uncle refuses to help her family by giving them the money they need to hire a lawyer for her jailed father. Eman's uncle responds to their request for help by saying that "'[h]e used to be my brother not after what he did' [...]. 'He showed me up. Humiliated me. How dare he put his head next to the ruler's? Ridiculous. [...] What he did – no, what he tried to do – affected my business. Nobody wants to make deals with the traitor's brother, of course'" (57). On one hand, this incident underscores Eman's economic dispossession as an Arab woman. Apart from earning a modest income for survival, she lacks substantial financial means and is forced to seek support from her uncle. On the other hand, her uncle's response reveals his betrayal and complicity with the dominant system, prioritizing his own economic interests over familial loyalty. His stance highlights a local conflict of interests and divergent approaches, which are the outcome of the institutionalized dismantling of the Palestinian society and its individuals created by the manipulative occupying power. While Eman's father is dedicated to fighting the occupier

regime as a means of alien aggression against his country, her uncle consents that the Israeli settlers are the legitimate rulers of the country and resisting them is an unacceptable disobedience, since he is, as his words to Eman indicate, submitted to the domination of the occupier, but he is also concerned to maintain his personal interest of promoting his business and not losing his clients.

2.4 Many Faces of Defiance

In Faqir's text, Saqi, Shadeed, and Eman are agents of resistance; they face oppression on different fronts and with vibrant steadfastness. Their exercises of defiance are motivated by different impulses, depending on their gender and also on their lived experiences. The Arab male characters, Saqi and Shadeed, struggle to overthrow the oppressive forces of the Israeli authority. They join the local resistance movements because they are actual victims of the violence of the Israeli occupation. Meanwhile, Eman navigates the challenges of patriarchal standards in her society, contending with unfair gender norms in her struggle for female liberation and autonomy.

Saqi is presented as a participant of the Six-Day War, experiencing the Arab defeat and the dispossession of the Palestinian people from their lands. This experience pushes him to leave behind his personal life, prioritizing the sacrifice for his country, as he decides to dedicate himself to resisting the Israeli subjugation until his country gets rid of the strangers. As for Shadeed, he is motivated by a sense of belonging to his homeland which comes out of a personal loss inflicted upon him by the violent actions exercised by the Israeli troops over his family members. Shadeed tells Eman that the hardest loss in his life caused by the Israelis was that "[t]hey killed my father and nine brothers and sisters. I was young then. When I grew older and was able to understand the size of the calamity, you can't imagine the pain that struck me" (219). He also says that "'Palestine runs in my blood. Even if they expel me, we'll never part because it lives here,' he hits his chest. 'It's like a fungus on my

skin” (222). As these words indicate, Shadeed participates in revolutionary operations against Israeli soldiers in retaliation for the killing of his family members, but he is also empowered to resist occupation because of his patriotic sense, which because of the harshness of his ordeal becomes much firmer.

Being brutally tortured in prison, Shadeed turns to silence in order not to make confessions about and, as such, betray the local liberation movements to which he loyally belongs. He succumbs to a nervous breakdown rather than surrender to the prisoner’s order. In the interview with Moore, Faqir clarifies that “the Palestinian prisoner resists his interrogators by maintaining silence. But because he can’t speak any version of the truth that won’t either be exploited or ignored by the Israeli authorities, he goes mad” (6). Analyzing Shadeed’s resistance in prison, Sowmya Srinivasan makes the remark that the Palestinian Fedayee withstands an unbearable and inhumane physical and mental torture by crafting an imaginative space of his own in which “he lives in his self-made world where human beings look like giants, and his only companion is a tiny ant” (68). This shows that when being incapable of resisting his enemy due to confinement, Shadeed creates self-empowering tools of withstanding, silence, and contemplation rather than obeying the oppressive order of the Israeli jailor.

Whether tortured or left in the filthy cell, Shadeed goes in his imagination to transcend his ordeals. It is narrated that he “remembered other times and places when he sat on the cold floor between his mother and father. The bubbling fountain sprayed his dry face with water. The smell of citrus flowers and the twittering of sparrows seeped through him” (115). This passage offers insights into Shadeed’s coping mechanism during his harrowing conditions in prison. He utilizes imagination as a means of psychological escape from the present agony. Enduring physical suffering and discomfort prompts him to mentally transport himself to a different time and place, when/where he was sitting between his

mother and father, suggesting a sense of comfort and security associated with parental ties. This reminiscence likely portrays a time of emotional warmth and closeness for Shadeed, in contrast with his current isolation and suffering.

Perceiving the cell of the prison as a nest, Shadeed conjures up that he is a six-legged “tiny creature” living with the ant in the desert and would like to stay hiding in the nest so as to escape the “the two-legged giants” (187), the Israeli jailors. In his self-created world of imagination, Shadeed establishes an intimate relation with the ant, missing it, offering it food, and taking care of it. At a certain point, he talks to the ant, “you are lucky because you have a lot of joints”, asking it “how is the weather outside?” (138). This reveals Shadeed’s tribulation in imprisonment, as he assumes that the ant has the free will to move, while he is deprived of his freedom in a solitary cell. The ant symbolizes freedom and unrestricted movement that Shadeed lacks in his own confinement, highlighting his feelings of entrapment. The idea that an insect – traditionally a symbol of the abject – has more agency than Shadeed reflects the depth of his helplessness. It shows how imprisonment has stripped him of autonomy, leaving even a creature as vulnerable as an ant with more control over its existence. Shadeed’s dialogue with the ant, particularly referring to her as if she were his lover, suggests that he projects his longing for affection onto the small animal. “He gave her his right hand, then picked her up with his thumb and forefinger gently, making sure not to press hard on her tiny body” (138). On another occasion, Shadeed “asked her to stay, but she insisted on going away to sit her exam. He wished that she would come back and hug him” (139). This implies a sense of emotional yearning for companionship in his isolated situation, especially in the absence of his lover, Eman. Shadeed’s wish for the ant to stay mirrors his desire for Eman to remain with him, indicating his reluctance to be away from her, further underlining the depth of his emotional attachment to Eman and his struggle to cope with her absence while he is imprisoned. Significantly, although escapism is typically an indicator of

disempowerment, it becomes a source of agency for Shadeed. By seeking respite in an imaginative world, where he feels connected to his loved ones, he gains the strength to cope with his current situation.

In the case of the Arab female character Eman, her methods of resistance are different due to her gender on the one hand and her upbringing in a family house with an absent guardian father on the other hand. As Srinivasan puts it, Eman does “devise a mode of resistance in the space provided to her” (73), as she lives in a conservative and patriarchal society in which feminine roles are restricted. However, Eman goes beyond these limitations and breaks the conventional image of the Arab Palestinian woman as a disempowered individual by crafting unique models of agency. This is portrayed through Eman’s continuing rejection of being called a “girl”, which can be seen as a gendered offense that degrades her status and autonomy, reducing her to a childlike or inferior role. In many social interactions in which Eman engages, she expresses her feeling of upset when someone – her uncle and one of the tailor’s customers – calls her up as “girl”, since she prefers her real name Eman.

The narrative represents Eman’s pursuit of educational growth as a means of self-empowerment. At a certain point, she decides to retake the school exams she missed when she was young, then complete her university education because she is willing to fulfill her dreams of becoming an independent and well-educated woman. She also fulfills her mother’s will: “I kissed her hand and said, ‘I’ll be the way you want me to be. A teacher?’” (37) This indicates the responsibility Eman feels towards her family in lieu of a father. However, she explains the efforts made by her for this uneasy move in this way: “I tried to save every month in order to pay the exam fees. Something inside pushed me toward education” (150), which can be understood as a strong inner motivation, commitment to self-fulfillment, and to resisting her multiple subordination, as well.

The narrative also shows that Eman finds agency through her work as a seamstress. As she tells, “[m]y work introduced me to the touch of silk and the odor of delightful perfumes. I used to see myself flying like birds wearing the colorful dresses I was sewing and ironing. Soaring high in blue silk, orange satin, printed georgette, crepe de chine, chiffon, taffeta, velvet. Yes, velvet” (89). Eman’s work as a seamstress allows her to transcend the rigid constraints of her circumstances, providing her with a sense of empowerment and control over her life. Through her craft, she does not only earn a livelihood, but she also gains a sense of liberation, fulfillment, purpose, and achievement.

Eman’s personal traits create the impression that she is a determined and resolute woman. Her narrative reveals that she manages to override the distressing news of Shadeed’s arrest and going mad in prison after long years of waiting, as she recovers shortly and goes to school as usual. On that day, the garbage collector Shamma’eh motivates Eman by his wise words, “if you give up they will crush you” (247). Eman’s steadfastness is shown in her response to Shamma’eh, “since the birds flew over Rahmah, which meant that we existed on the map. I grabbed the folder and walked to the school” (248–249). Eman’s decision to continue with her journey, symbolized by her action of grabbing her folder and heading to school despite challenges, reveals her determination to react with perseverance and resilience towards the accumulated hardships of her life: the loss of her father, her baby sister, and her lover Shadeed. Ultimately, it reflects the sense of faith she has towards the everlasting existence of the Palestinians in their occupied land, which is also embodied in the Arabic meaning of her name, “faith”.

3. Conclusion

This chapter has explored Faqir’s *Nisanit* by analyzing it in the context of the territorial conflict between the Jewish settlers, who established a Jewish state in the Middle East, and the Arab Palestinian natives, who reject settler occupation that restrains their right

of having an independent statehood. It has also focused on investigating the representation of different strategies of subjugation performed by the Israeli authority to overpower the Palestinian local revolutions and methods of native resistance undertaken by the Palestinian fighters to decolonize the power structure of the occupier domination. Drawing upon a constellation of political views that classify this encounter as a neo-colonial situation of migratory settlement along with a set of postcolonial critical notions taken from Said, Fanon, Young, and others, the analysis of Faqir's text has concluded that the continuing encounter between the Israeli Jews and the Arab Muslim Palestinians is not only a colonial confrontation, but it is also, because of the historical, cultural, religious and racial roots surrounding it, an existential conflict of accomplishing an exclusivist identity that requires the expulsion of the other. On the one hand, the Israeli authority makes use of a range of subjugation methods to achieve their purposes of settler colonialism such as discrimination, violence, arrests, imprisoning, social segregation, and cultural stereotyping in *Nisanit*. On the other hand, the Palestinian characters of the novel respond to Israeli domination by adopting different models of resistance depending on their individual experiences. Saqi and Shadeed participate in guerrilla wars and actions of revolution organized by the local resistance movements, making it a nationalist responsibility that they never give in to until their country gains a state of self-determination. As for Eman, she resists her double subordination by establishing an extraordinary sense of agency through responsibility, self-fulfillment, determination, education, work, empathy, and social solidarity.

Chapter 2: Double Colonization: The Case of the Arab Women in Fadia Faqir's

Pillars of Salt

1. Introduction

In response to the colonial effect on the hierarchies of the Jordanian society, Faqir's novel *Pillars of Salt* (1996) principally addresses the rule of British colonization and its damaging consequences on the geopolitical, cultural, and social structures of the nation. Set during and right after the British mandate over Transjordan (later the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan), Faqir's text deals with the transition of Jordan from colonization to independence, questioning the power structures of domination represented by colonial hegemony on the one hand, and the patriarchal system of the Bedouin society on the other hand, which collude with each other as parallel forces in imposing excessive injustice over the female colonial subjects, causing their subordination and subalternity to varying degrees.

In this way, the Bedouin woman stands in opposition to twofold superior powers, occupying an inferior position on different social and political levels. Through the stories of the two female protagonists, Maha and Hannyeh (Um Saad), who share a room in a mental hospital administered by the English, Faqir's text exhibits accumulated forms of physical, psychological, mental, sexual, and political violence that jointly work in the framework of an oppressive cycle over the indigenous women. They are practiced by both the Arab male figures, whose supremacy is reinforced by the social conventions and cultural beliefs of the Bedouin society, and the authoritative control of colonization. Therefore, the Bedouin woman appears as a victim of an interlocking system of domination or, in other words, a double-faceted structure of intersecting oppressions.

The novel employs a narrative structure centered on three distinct voices. The two Arab women protagonists exchange their stories within the madhouse's confines. In the first-person mode, Maha narrates her story of victimization in retrospect; in the meantime, she

listens to Um Saad's account within this setting. Interwoven with these narratives is the voice of Sami Al Adjnabi, a traditional male storyteller with an Orientalist point of view. Al Adjnabi, whose name means foreigner in "Arabic language", narrates his observations from the outskirts of the Bedouin village of Hamia, providing an alternative version of Maha's narrative. Describing himself as "the best storyteller in Arabia and the oldest traveler in the Levante" (1), Al Adjnabi is both a narrator and a character, embodying a foreign figure, who pretends familiarity with and knowledge of the Arab customs, history, and religion. According to the interview with Moore, Faqir clarifies that Al Adjnabi's narrative voice is intended to juxtapose the simplicity of the women's stories, offering a perspective that can exaggerate and fabricate the events through myths and illusions (7). The three-fold narrative structure of Faqir's novel allows for a nuanced exploration of the main characters' stories, their perspectives, and the intricate layers of truth and perception embedded within the text. This juxtaposition between the women's authentic testimonies and Al Adjnabi's fabricated accounts reflects how non-Western women's experiences are often overshadowed by external narratives that claim authority over their stories while distorting their lived realities.

Theoretically speaking, the subordination of non-Western women created by an overlapping structure of multiple oppressions is a dominant concern within contemporary feminist paradigms that have, in turn, brought about an array of conceptual and analytical approaches to the representations of women in different cultures. Though they often address the conditions of a particular category among the wide groups of women worldwide, a mutual feature of their discourses is, one can observe, the inclination to go beyond defining women by and attributing their experiences of subjugation to gender issues solely to incorporate other spheres of influence such as class, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, and nation. It is in this sense that these paradigms have decidedly made a considerable reconfiguration of the early basic formation of the mainstream feminist theory,

which largely foregrounded the experiences of white and middle-class women, by broadening its scope and including the diverse experiences of other groups of women like black women, third-world women, disenfranchised women, migrant women, and other groups.

Not surprisingly, when analyzing the position and representation of the Arab women in Faqir's text, the postcolonial feminist model is a case in point, as it primarily focuses on the experiences of third-world women, their socio-political positions, and their sufferings from and struggles against several forms of inequality in colonial and postcolonial contexts in which they are, as McLeod clarifies in reviewing the "double colonization" of women, "twice colonized – by colonialist realities and representations, and by patriarchal ones too" (175). McLeod adds that double colonization, a postcolonial feminist notion which was first introduced by Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford in their seminal book *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-colonial Women's Writing* (1988), refers to the ways in which third-world women "have simultaneously experienced the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy" in once-colonized locations, where they "are subject to representation in colonial discourses in ways which collude with patriarchal values" (175). Similarly, Ashcroft et al. demonstrate that the double colonization of women is a complex oppressive paradigm in which women are "subject both to general discrimination as colonial subjects and to specific discrimination as women" (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies* 118). Thus, postcolonial feminism essentially adheres to how political, cultural, and economic aspects of imperialism overlap with the local masculine control as power structures of oppression that (re)shape the lives of the non-Western women in a postcolonial world.

Hence, the social status of these women as well as the construction of their identities are (re)produced within a complex framework that, as Ina Kerner notes, has necessarily

“included the role of gender and sexuality with regard to colonialism, its legacies and re-actualizations” (10). In line with this, Anke Bartels et al. point out that postcolonial feminism is concerned with the position and representation of women and other marginalized groups in the discursive formations and power structures put into place by Western colonialism and their lingering effects. Thus, it explores the intersections of (neo)colonialism with gender, race, nation, class, and sexualities in the context of women’s lives with the ultimate aim to change oppressive power structures enacted in the name of race, nation [...] and empire. (158)

Historically, postcolonial feminism appeared in the 1980s as a reaction to the universalizing trends of Western feminism and as a critique of its lack of acknowledging difference among the wide groups of women in feminist scholarships.

It would be, as Audre Lorde reminds us, a “difference of race, sexuality, class, and age”, and, as she warns, “the absence of these considerations weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political” (110). For Lorde, the recognition and tolerance of differences in the feminist activities and critical practices is “a crucial strength” and a “force of change”, since difference is, as she confirms, “that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged” (112). Thus, postcolonial feminism challenges the validity of the feminist notion of global sisterhood, retaining a critical and opposing stance towards the idealistic tendency of Western feminism to homogenize and universalize women’s issues worldwide, which produces them as a monolithic and symmetrical subject without considering those realities of heterogeneity which can be connected, but not limited, to times, spaces, cultures, and even women’s individual experiences.

Building on this foundation of recognizing difference, Mohanty observes that “sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in a concrete, historical and political practice and analysis” (339). It is in this regard that Mohanty rejects

“the assumption of women as a coherent group with identical interests and desires”, explaining that “the discursively consensual homogeneity of women as a group is mistaken for the historically specific material reality of groups of women” (336, 338). Mohanty’s explanation makes it clear that history is a constitutive element of the differences among women, and, within this context, her argument remarkably goes against the idea of generalizations over women’s situations, which reinforces Western hegemony and ethnocentric universality. Based on this assumption, Mohanty also criticizes the Western feminist scholarships on third-world women by holding that

Western feminist writings colonize the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the third world, thereby producing and re-presenting a composite, singular “Third World Woman” – an image which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourses. (334–335)

According to these views, postcolonial feminism is a stream of thought with a transnational vision that aims at rendering visible the varied identities and experiences of all women. By transcending the boundaries of difference, it ultimately calls for a feminist system of representation that considers the heterogeneity of gender groups as an aspect of agency and as a strategy for survival in the face of multiple structures of oppression in a male-dominated world. Within the context of Arab societies, this feminist approach becomes relevant when examining how neopatriarchal structures, which blend traditional patriarchal control with modern state and social institutions, create distinct forms of oppression that vary according to women’s class, location, and social positioning. In line with this, I argue that Faqir’s novel, as a fictional representation, breaks the conventional image of Arab Bedouin women as commonly dependent and powerless individuals by depicting how the difference in their social positions produces quite different problems and responses that distinguish their

identities, illuminating fundamental characteristics of their heterogeneity both on a local and a national level. This analysis aligns with the broad argument of this dissertation in the sense that Faqir challenges the homogenizing portrayals of Arab womanhood by presenting a nuanced vision regarding varying forms of oppression and context-specific experiences.

Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* demonstrates that though its female characters are subject to manifold layers of oppression, they differ in reacting to or resisting their complex subordination. Maha, the peasant woman from the village of Hamia and the daughter of Sheikh Nimer and Maliha, is depicted as a determined, self-reliant, and free-spirited Bedouin woman. She does not take a passive role towards oppression but resists on all fronts in the same breath. She fights her tyrant brother Daffash, who plans to take over her legitimate inheritance, struggles in the face of the restrictive patriarchal society which prioritizes the male at the expense of his female counterpart, and resists the English colonizer that kills her beloved husband, Harb. Her empowerment stems from the unique personal strategies she takes on to keep herself firm whenever her downfall seems inevitable. In contrast, Hannyeh, a Syrian migrant and a city woman, seems submissive, yielding, and even fragile. She is an obedient domestic servant, who accepts the multiple oppressions, exercised first by her conservative father, then by her husband, and she shows no reaction in resisting her oppression.

The difference in their resistance arises from their differing conditions, and apart from focusing on the individual women, Faqir's text also examines the conditions of women in general within the two groups forming the Jordanian society in the novel's timeframe: a segment of the Bedouins, who live in the deserts or the villages with a tribal lifestyle (a manner of living in which the loyalty of an individual belongs to a group that is connected through a kinship system and shared traditional values and customs), and a segment of the city people, who live a more modern lifestyle in the capital city Amman. As it appears in the

novel, the relationship between the two groups is ambivalent, as each side views the other as inferior. This becomes clear in the tension that characterizes the relationship between Maha, the best representative of the indigenous traditionalists, and her brother Daffash, the best representative of the urbanized people.

As this relationship reveals, the Bedouins look at the city dwellers as hybridized people, who depart from their indigenous culture to pursue the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the colonizer. In postcolonial thinking, this urbanized group greatly complies with what Homi Bhabha recognizes in defining mimicry as a reproduced version of the colonizer that is “almost the same but not quite” (*The Location* 122). Being a method of appropriating the colonizing culture, mimicry is, as Bhabha notes, “the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers”, and, at the same time, “the success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace” (*The Location* 122–123).

In Faqir’s novel, the emergence of such copied hybridized social formation is impacted by a tangible adherence of its traditionalist and conservative counterpart to the already existing cultural standards, and hence, the outcome is a cultural conflict that substantially jeopardizes the coherence and authenticity of the cultural identity. The city people, in turn, view the indigenous Bedouins as backward people, who are not open to any social progression, and like the colonizer, they (mis)represent them as uncivilized. Out of this ambivalence, what is important to note is that the woman, whether she is a Bedouin or an urbanized one, remains the most marginalized in society. On the one hand, the social conventions of the Bedouins normalize a dominant patriarchy; on the other hand, although

the urbanized people have a modernized lifestyle, when it comes to issues of gender relations, women are also restricted to inferior positions.

In light of the above, this chapter aims to explore three issues present in Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* as core thematic subjects: the various representations of violence against women, how these women respond to their multiple oppressions, and as a third aspect, their social status within the socio-cultural conflict characterized by the encounter between modernity brought by colonization and adopted by the city dwellers and traditionality comprised of the tribal beliefs and customs of the Bedouin society and preserved by the indigenous Bedouins. Applying postcolonial feminism as a theoretical framework, I claim that the investigation of the subjects outlined above as delineated in Faqir's text can provide a meaningful interpretation of the construction of the Bedouin woman's identity in particular; furthermore, it can uncover certain pivotal features of Jordan's national identity not only in the novel's timeframe, but also in the present that still bears traces of the cultural conflict between imperialist modernity and indigenous traditionality in general.

2. At the Nexus of Colonialism, Patriarchy, and Violence

Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* is a fictional account of two Arab women's experiences of different forms of violence due to multiple patterns of oppression. The narrative opens with a tragic scene in which Maha and Um Saad share a room in a mental institution run by the English during the mandate time. In a sense, this asylum can be seen as an enclosure that enacts physical, psychological, and mental violence practiced by the colonial enterprise in complicity with patriarchal authority. The women's confinement is not merely medical but ideological: they are placed under constant surveillance and denied basic autonomy by colonial administrators and male family members alike. This setting echoes the prison system discussed in Chapter One, where the Palestinian rebel Shadeed is similarly stripped of his freedom and subjected to institutional control by Israeli jailors. In both cases, the

carceral institution is delineated as a site of domination, though the mechanisms and targets are distinctly gendered. While Shadeed retreats into silence as a means of coping with torture, Faqir suggests that for Maha and Um Saad, speech – or the struggle for it – becomes one conceivable form of self-empowerment. This seems to be a strategy in the case of women in general and female characters in particular. As Ketu Katrak points out, facing the traps of both colonial and local prejudices, female protagonists in postcolonial literature make strategic use of “their bodies via speech, silence, starvation, or illness” as “often the only available avenue” to resist what she calls their “internalized exile” in an attempt to gain autonomy over their own colonized bodies (2–3). In the case of Faqir’s protagonists, the most conspicuous mode of subjugation is the suppression of their voice by the colonizer, making them literally the subalterns who cannot speak, while, at the same time, their bodies are enclosed – and as such “silenced” – in the ward of the mental institute.

Dr. Edwards, the English doctor responsible for observing the so-called madwomen, forces them into silence during his visits. His oppressive presence is immediately felt when, upon finding them immersed in speech, he angrily declares, “you two never stop talking” and, to punish them, states he “will increase the dose” (118). This reaction is significant because even though the English-speaking doctor might not comprehend the Arabic utterances of the women, he feels the urge to restrain this verbal form of relief-seeking. This form of expression seems to go beyond ordinary human communication in its significance: it can be understood as a mode of challenging their inescapable and ongoing suppression.

In his exercise of power over the indigenous women, the English doctor embodies the colonial authority over Transjordan. He rarely appears in person but wields a dominating influence over the women through his medical staff, who not only conduct his directives in observing them but also in violating them. For instance, the porter Kukash and the nurse Salam, following the doctor’s orders, punish Um Saad by subjecting her body to electric

shocks, resulting in severe physical convulsions. This indicates that the colonial doctor, like the mandate itself, has control over the native women through authorized representatives. These representatives act on his behalf either by imposing heavy surveillance or executing various kinds of physical and psychological punishments. This strategy of enacting colonial authority through bodily control is further illustrated by Maha's description of the English doctor as a figure who assumes authority akin to a monarch: "I lower my head into the eager hands of the foreign doctor, who rules over us like a king" (240). Her narrative upon arriving at the mental hospital details another instance of mistreatment under the doctor's oppressive authority, this time directed at Um Saad: "[o]ut of nowhere, the doctor produced a pair of scissors, and gave them to Salam. Kukash handcuffed Um Saad and held her neck down with both hands. She looked like the goat Raai and Jarbwa slaughtered for my wedding. The English doctor, who came from the land of churches and clubs, started clipping her hair" (222–223). This vivid depiction underlines the disparate hierarchical power dynamics typical of colonial settings, where control is centralized and enforced through agents, who carry out cruel measures in asserting authority over native populations. The act of cutting Um Saad's hair in this scene signifies how colonial authority uses power to humiliate and dehumanize indigenous people by stripping them of their agency and power as symbolically represented by women's hair.

This episode in *Pillars of Salt* echoes yet complicates Faqir's treatment of bodily control in *Nisanit*, where Eman's body becomes similarly politicized under a different colonial-like regime. In that separate but related incident, Eman is forced by Israeli soldiers to undress, exposing her to a gendered form of institutional violence and humiliation. Although British colonialism and Israeli military occupation operate under different historical and political frameworks, both systems rely on the female body as a strategic site of control. In both cases, the female body becomes a site of domination and symbolic erasure,

demonstrating a continuity of oppressive tactics. Analyzing these power hierarchies in Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* in particular, Ahmad Abu Baker asserts that "the English doctor who stands simultaneously for both patriarchy and colonization symbolically erases and represses the female identity of Maha and Um Saad" (34). This critical perspective highlights how patriarchy and colonialism intersect as oppressive forces, largely abusing Arab women in the narrative through figures like Dr. Edwards and the systems they represent.

The doctor's relative detachment from direct interaction while exerting such substantial influence emphasizes the systemic facet of aggression within colonial constructs. Dr. Edwards' characterization can be interpreted in correspondence with the patient-doctor relationship under colonialism, which has been accounted for in many postcolonial studies. In his renowned book *A Dying Colonialism* (1965), Fanon describes the colonial doctor figure in a way that discloses his distance from the intrinsic ethical sides of his medical duty as the person, who "always appears as a link to the colonialist network, as a spokesman for the occupying power" (127). Fanon asserts that mental pathology is a direct product of colonial oppression, confirming that "colonialism in its essence was already taking on the aspect of a fertile purveyor for psychiatric hospitals" (249), with the aim "to deny the other person all attributes of humanity" (250). According to the novel, the English doctor effectively serves the occupying colonialist power and its imperial purposes in his contribution to splitting the indigenous women from their culture through exercising various modes of repressive power over them in the asylum such as institutionalizing their alleged madness, limiting their social integration, and violating their bodies and minds.

Prior to their incarceration in the madhouse, the women's experiences in their patriarchal society are fraught with violence as well. Maha's story implies that she is exposed to domestic abuse in the recurring confrontations with her tyrant brother Daffash. Describing this relationship, she narrates that Daffash

dug out quarrels from under his fingernails. Where was his dagger, his breakfast, dog. Where were his sandals? He yanked my hair. Filthy rat, ugliest woman on earth. Do what I tell you. All that would check the flow of his insults and slaps was my father's long wooden stick. Then Daffash would apologize and give me a packet of foreign chocolates. (23)

In this excerpt, Daffash is presented as a patriarch driven by a desire to humiliate his sister through domestic abuse. His treatment of Maha features verbal and physical aggression in which he belittles her with rebukes and inflicts upon her physical harm. Exhibiting his attempts to impose dominance and control over his sister, Daffash's actions are rooted in indigenous norms of compulsion. He deliberately confines Maha to crippling roles within the household that solely satisfy his personal needs and desires, reinforcing traditional gender positions in which women are expected to serve and submit to male supremacy. He resorts to violence and verbal abuse not only to intimidate his sister but also to assert his perceived masculine superiority over her.

Despite the infliction of multiple models of abuse, Daffash shows a sense of regret, apologizing to Maha and attempting to appease her with gifts like chocolates. This cycle of violence, which is reiterated several times throughout the narrative, echoes Lenore Walker's notion of the cycle of violence which identifies three distinct phases: tension-building, acute battering, and loving-contrition. During the first phase, conflicts include minor incidents of abuse. The second phase features the outburst of physical or emotional violence, exerting control over the victim. Subsequently, in the last phase, the abuser expresses remorse, apologies, and may offer promises of change, temporarily reconciling the relationship and inducing confusion in the victim (91). Walker asserts that this cycle often repeats itself, with the tensions escalating again after a period of calm (105). Maha experiences this cycle, enduring abuse followed by her brother's apologies and gifts, indicative of his efforts to

uphold control over his sister. Her resistance uncovers a pursuit of equality, defying Daffash's dominance and declaring her autonomy. However, societal norms reinforcing gender-based inequalities persist, undermining her quest for equality within the household.

Therefore, the characteristics surrounding this relation, constructed on privileging the male and marginalizing the female both in the private and public spheres, are the product of the Bedouin conventions. These conventions later help the trickster Daffash in his maneuvers of taking over Maha's share of the family orchard, the house, and her newborn son Mubarak. After Maha's husband and father pass away, Daffash plans to marry her off to the elderly Sheikh Talib, aiming to rid himself of her and advance his own goals. Maha, however, remains steadfast in her devotion to her deceased husband Harb, whom she considers her soulmate. To avoid this coerced marriage, Maha flees to the mountains due to Daffash's threat to shoot her if she refuses to comply.

Though Maha manages to escape Daffash's threat, she still suffers from the power of the Bedouin conventions. In a sense, she endures the pressure of the common traditional belief that the Bedouins prefer their widows getting married once more and continuing their lives with a male guardian as a more secure alternative for them than staying under the care of their brothers in the family house. The reason why such a convention is restrictive against women is spelt out by Raj Kumar Mishra, who argues that in many cases "the postcolonial men re-colonized the bodies and minds of their women in the name of preserving their cultural values" (132). Hence, because of her resistance, Maha is accused of tarnishing the honor code of the tribe by escaping on her own to the mountains. This becomes evident when Imam Rajab, seeing her marching to the dwelling of the tribe, calls to "stone the sinner" (231). Maha narrates the pivotal moment when she is back in the following way:

Imam Rajab shuffled towards me and said, 'May Allah damn the sinner. You are all infidels.' I looked at his long, larded beard and his bulging belly and smiled. The

women of the village did not dare leave their houses to welcome me back. They stood behind doors and windows and peeped at the woman who had spent a night on her own in the mountains. (231)

In this excerpt, Imam Rajab's statement suggests a religious condemnation directed at Maha due to her perceived transgressions that go against societal and religious norms. His physical appearance evokes an image of traditional religious authority, underpinning his role as a moral arbiter within the community.

Maha's response of smiling at Imam Rajab, despite his intense accusation, discloses her quiet defiance in the face of societal scrutiny and condemnation. Her reaction implies a denial of the shame or guilt she is being accused of, showcasing a subtle form of resistance against the arbitrary judgmental attitudes prevalent in her community. Moreover, the reaction of the other women highlights the societal stigma and ostracization that Maha encounters upon her return. Their reluctance to openly welcome her back, peering at her from behind doors and windows, reflects their submission to rigid cultural norms that dictate women's behavior and the suspicions surrounding Maha's recent actions. As discussed in the introduction, such norms are central to the structure of the Arab neopatriarchal society, where traditionalism and conservatism dominate. Sharabi identifies religious discourse as the very embodiment of neopatriarchal ideology, arguing that "the power of this type of discourse, and the language through which it is expressed, derives from an authoritative origin or text, on which it bases its claim to truth and validity. This claim serves to achieve two things simultaneously: to consolidate the hegemony of the text (source) and to block the possibility of its criticism or replacement" (96). The collective response by the women in the novel can be seen as a manifestation of the hegemony Sharabi describes. Their silent judgment reveals facets of societal ostracism and demonstrates how women struggle to meet cultural expectations within a dominant neopatriarchal context. This dynamic also questions

the hegemony of religious discourses, and how they are accepted without scrutiny, regardless of whether Maha's actions actually deviate from religious standards – let alone whether those religious standards are fully justifiable in the first place.

Exploiting this communal condemnation, Daffash seizes the opportunity to achieve what he seeks by falsely pretending that his sister has gone mad. He punches her abusively, throws her body onto the ground, and finally takes her to the mental hospital with the help of his foreign allies. Daffash's decision to commit Maha to a mental hospital is interpreted by Nadine Sinno as the result of his personal vendetta against her, not an attempt to treat any genuine mental illness. Sinno elaborates that, without the assistance of the Turkish pasha and the English medical team, Daffash would not be able to overpower his sister and usurp her legal rights (80). However, his actions are also reinforced and empowered by the traditional beliefs of his male-privileging culture. This scenario exemplifies the double colonization described by Petersen and Rutherford, as Maha is oppressed both by patriarchal violence and by colonial institutions. While the patriarch Daffash exercises patriarchal oppression against his sister, the colonial authorities legitimize that violence and reinforce his domination over his sister.

As for Hannyeh (Um Saad), the other female protagonist of the text committed to the mental institution, quite like in the case of Maha, her misery started in early childhood in Syria at the time the country was subject to the French mandate. Her story shows that the family house symbolically functions as her private imprisonment, where her conservative father controls her choices and imposes on her what she cannot bear. He treats her like an infant, who is not permitted to go in public without a male companion; this is why he forces her to quit the *Kutab* (the religious school) and stay at home with her mother. Like in any Arab conservative family, Hannyeh's father acts as the representative of power and authority, who decides everything for himself and for the other family members including

the females. This is consonant with Sharabi's assertion that in the neopatriarchal Arab society, the dominance of the patriarch remains rooted in the patriarchal values in which "the paternal will is the absolute will, mediated in both the society and the family by a forced consensus based on ritual and coercion" (7). Referring to these days and associating her suffering with the French occupation of her country, Hannyeh recollects her father's intimidating behavior as "he would keep shouting and pacing the small room until I swam in a pond of fear under the blanket. He would keep talking about killing and blood, about explosives and corpses until blood would freeze in my veins" (40). This association draws a parallel between external political unrest and internal familial strife, indicating that her father's control and aggression are not just personal but also a mirror to broad societal and political upheavals.

The transference of the national trauma into the domestic sphere accentuates how authoritarianism and oppression unfold across various levels of society. Particularly within the family structure, women like Hannyeh endure the highest weight of patriarchal authority and societal restrictions. Her narrative illuminates the continuing impact of political forces on personal lives, revealing how different power politics intersect to influence gender positions in such Arab conservative and patriarchal households. Hannyeh's story can resonate with Judith Butler's perspective that "it becomes impossible to separate out 'gender' from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (4-5), stressing how gender positions are intertwined with external socio-political circumstances. In one of the episodes, Hannyeh expresses her feeling towards the double aggression over her saying, "I did not like my father, but I really hated the French who made him restless and dirty" (41). This statement captures a complex sentiment towards the causes of oppression in her life, encapsulated by her response to the multifaceted struggles within the overlapping forces that shaped her life during childhood.

In a metaphorical way, Hannyeh describes her childhood experiences in the following way: “my life is like candyfloss: fluffy and full from the outside, empty like this damned hospital room from the inside. And they called the candyfloss ‘girls-curls.’ It was like my life” (21). Carrying profound implications about her upbringing in a patriarchal atmosphere, this description prompts reflection on the contradiction between the external appearance of Hannyeh’s life and its internal reality. In her patriarchal environment, she suffers from the burden of following societal expectations, presenting an outward image of conformity while concealing inner struggles. By likening herself to the candyfloss, which features a fragile substance from inside and with an apparently solid shape from the outside, this image evokes Hannyeh’s external innocence and joy dissolving shortly, but it also captures her true, internal emptiness, and despair, which is encapsulated in the imagery of the mental hospital: a gloomy space inhabited by desperate people. The symbolism of “girls-curls” implies that her identity and experiences as a girl are bound with gender stereotypes, suggesting that her identity and sense of self are influenced by patriarchal norms that codify how women should behave, appear, and be perceived in society. The image of emptiness in her life reflects a sense of disillusionment and discontent with the roles and expectations placed upon her as a woman in a male-dominated society.

In the context of gender stereotypes within the family structure, Hannyeh also recounts an incident of mistreatment and misrepresentation recalling, “my mother wished my neck would be broken because I, the first-born, was a girl and not the boy she had longed for” (103). This statement exposes her mother’s disappointment with Hannyeh being born female, questioning the common preference for male offspring in the Arab traditional world. In her mother’s culture, sons are perceived as heirs, who uphold the family name, lineage, and traditions, whereas daughters are regarded as less valuable in terms of preserving the family’s honor and dignity. This dichotomy emphasizes how deeply rooted patriarchal

norms, which prioritize male progeny, promote gender-based discrimination within traditional families. Moreover, the phrase “wished my neck would be broken” conveys the intense reluctance and anger Hannyeh’s mother feels. This figurative violence not only denotes emotional turbulence but also hints at potential mistreatment and abuse, whether psychological or physical. Growing up aware that she does not fulfill her mother’s desire for a son affects Hannyeh’s emotional and psychological well-being, intensifying her sense of inadequacy within the family framework.

Hannyeh’s gender-based mistreatment within the domestic sphere is further exemplified in her narrative of enduring misery akin to servitude: “[w]e used to have a reception once a month. My mother, Allah bless her soul, chose the first Monday of each month to be her guests’ day”. Describing these days as “the hardest days” for her, Hannyeh says, “I started sweeping at sunrise and finished at sunset” (102). This description provides insight into her roles in preparing for the reception day. These intensive burdens fall upon her as part of her expected duties within the household. The symbolic significance of this day features a ritualistic tradition within her family in which she is expected to manage domestic affairs and hospitality. The exhaustive responsibilities go beyond the workload itself, underlining the emotional and psychological pressure of adhering to familial rituals. Such patriarchal structure sustains gender inequalities by assigning specific roles and responsibilities based on gender.

Escaping the violence of the French colonizer in Syria, Hannyeh’s family moves to Amman, where her marginalization does not come to an end but takes a more complicated form. When she gets older, she falls in love with Muhammad, a Circassian man who works in a shop near her house, but her father rejects his proposal and, on the same night, he marries her off to an old butcher against her will. The father lies to Muhammad, claiming that Hannyeh is already given to her cousin. The reason he gives for his rejection reveals not only

how the father in such traditional conservative families decides to whom his daughter should be married, but also reflects the belief that the cousin is the first choice, and in case it does not work for some reason, the father still has the right to choose for his daughter.

This plot element shows how the patriarchal power granted by custodianship laws enables male guardians to override female choices. Sharabi's understanding of Arab neopatriarchal society supports this idea, as he claims that legal and conservative norms are primary factors behind the degraded position of women within the patriarchal structure of Arab society and the family (32). In Hannyeh's narrative, her father's choice of the old butcher as her husband is driven by financial considerations, emphasizing the importance of economic stability in conventional marital arrangements. This decision reinforces stereotypes in which monetary security often takes precedence over personal compatibility and consent. Another reason that contributes to this unwilling marriage is Hannyeh's status as an immigrant without ties to a prominent family or tribe. Reflecting her experiences of limited opportunities for marriage due to societal prejudices regarding lineage and ancestry, Hannyeh says that "[b]ecause I am an immigrant's daughter, people think that I come out of a wall. No family tree or past. So nobody would propose to immigrants" (131). This statement points out the cultural significance placed on family background in evaluating marital prospects, highlighting the discrimination encountered by individuals perceived as lacking social pedigree.

The moment when her father agrees to the marriage proposal, occurring casually, as Hannyeh narrates it, "on one Friday morning when he went to buy hummus for breakfast from the coffee shop next to Abu Saad's butchery" (130–131), reveals Faqir's critique of guardianship as a neopatriarchal oppressive system against women. It shows how Hannyeh is devalued, being reduced to a commodity, as the proposal takes place and is accepted within a context that undermines the gravity of life-altering decisions such as marriage. Indeed,

Hannyeh finds herself relocated to another patriarchal society, where the name of the family or tribe serves as a pivotal condition for a marriage's acceptance or rejection, creating the very circumstances which trap Hannyeh in her new imprisonment in the house of her husband, Abu Saad. Because she is not descended from a famous family, she must accept patriarchal oppression in her husband's house.

Embodying her marginalization within the institution of marriage by her husband, Um Saad (Hannyeh) narrates,

when Abu Saad returned from work, I used to place his feet in a bowl and wash them with soap and water. He was a butcher in the offal market [...] His long black rubber boots were always covered with blood and the dung of sheep and goats. In your life, I used to spend hours scrubbing and cleaning; I even used to add kerosene to the washing liquid to clean the cutlery and get rid of the clinging smell. A damp smell which reminded me of death and sewage. (129)

This passage portrays the humility, disrespect, and dehumanization experienced by Um Saad, shedding light on the oppressive and degrading nature of her domestic responsibilities. Her routine chore of cleaning her husband's work attire demonstrates the harshness and violence associated with his occupation. This intensive labor-like process illustrates not only her total submission but also her immersion in her husband's world. The mention of the damp smell reminiscent of death echoes a psychological burden she carries from her past while also permeating her present. It arouses a sense of unease and trauma related to violence and aggression. Significantly, this sensory detail provides insights into Um Saad's emotional and psychological state and the impact of her domestic duties on her sense of self, but it also stresses the inevitable influence of her past on her present realities.

In the context of Um Saad's routine marginalization within her roles as a wife, her depiction of the relationship with her husband shows a profound emotional disconnection.

She reflects on this by noting, “when Abu Saad slept with me, I kept my mouth shut. I had a husband, children, and grandchildren. I got used to the lack of conversation between us. We just coexisted” (168). This passage exemplifies a strained characteristic usually associated with long-term marriages within traditional families, especially when there are familial obligations that most probably prevent separation such as the existence of children. It indicates a disconnection and a lack of emotional engagement in their relationship, thereby resigning to the situation rather than making active efforts to change it.

Bell Hooks offers a critical framework for understanding this phenomenon by arguing that “unrelenting disappointment leads women and men to close off the part of themselves that was hoping to be touched and healed by male love” (17). Hooks attributes this emotional suppression to patriarchal cultures which, as she argues, “doom them to live in states of emotional numbness” (20). She further contends that patriarchy mandates that men become and remain emotionally repressed, a condition she describes as “emotional cripples” (35), which substantially affects the relationship and contributes to emotional disconnection. In Um Saad’s case, her adaptation to her marital situation originates from cultural norms, personal experiences, and gender dynamics established early in their marriage. The narrative clearly portrays Abu Saad’s treatment of his wife as driven primarily by sexual desire and objectification since the outset of their marriage relationship, resulting in a prioritization of physical contact over emotional connection. This discrepancy can lead to a lack of authentic communication and a growing emotional emptiness over time. In Um Saad’s cultural context, where societal standards promote male dominance and a sexualized view of women, these standards can consolidate circumstances in which positive communication, caring, and mutual support are secondary to sexual desires due to the male’s excessive control.

Um Saad's narrative recounts an ultimate trajectory marked by marital betrayal and ongoing mistreatment. After giving birth to eight children, her husband marries a younger woman, disregarding the years of fidelity Um Saad has devoted to him. This act does not only displace her emotionally, but it also relegates her physically to sleeping in the kitchen, while the new wife occupies Um Saad's former bedroom. This situation reflects Nawal El Saadawi's critical assertion that since the man buys the woman through marriage to serve him and fulfill his pleasures, bear his children, and manage the household, he tends to choose a younger woman to preserve the youthful appearance of her body for a longer time and ensure she performs these functions throughout his life (*Hidden* 157). El Saadawi further argues that "this explains why Arab men look upon their women as bodies which must remain forever youthful. The value of a woman deteriorates with age" (*Hidden* 158). In Um Saad's case, the shift in her status exemplifies masculinist exploitation in which her husband's favor dramatically shifts to the younger spouse. Arguably, this brings under question how polygamous marriages can reinforce male dominance and increase the suffering and marginalization of women within the family structure. Abu Baker points out that "these physical and emotional traumas have a long-lasting effect and collaborate to drive Um Saad to the verge of madness and force her to run away" (33). For Um Saad, polygamy serves as a prime cause that pushes her to escape her husband's mistreatment to ultimately find herself lost in the city of Amman without shelter.

The last memorable scene in the yard of the Big Mosque illustrates the extent of control exerted over her. Describing this tragic scene, Um Saad narrates, "my husband and two strange men found me in the Big Mosque's yard, pushed my hands into a long-sleeved jacket, then tied the sleeves behind my back [...] They woke me up, threw me in a car and brought me to this paradise" (201). This coercive act, probably justified under notions of familial honor, reveals the severe methods employed to enforce societal determinism and

endorse patriarchal control. Um Saad's subsequent confinement in a mental institution, mockingly referred to as "paradise" challenges the psychological toll of patriarchal oppression and societal pressures. Her predicament exhibits broader issues regarding women's autonomy and the stigma surrounding mental health in her society. Women who deviate from societal norms may face institutionalization among other forms of ostracism. Within Um Saad's cultural milieu, such treatment attests to rooted gender roles and expectations; the use of force and institutionalization reveals systemic gender inequalities and the limited agency women have in confronting or escaping oppressive circumstances. Her narrative, thus, serves as a stark critique of patriarchal systems and their detrimental impact on women's lives.

3. Asymmetrical Representation of Arab Female Figures

In the representation of her major female figures, Maha and Hannyeh, Faqir notably draws asymmetrical images of controlled Arab women. A core feature of their characterization is that their subjugation is informed by a doubly oppressive framework. However, when it comes to resisting this complex system of oppression, they respond differently due to their contrasting personal qualities. For instance, Maha is depicted as an unusual Arab woman, who has a private space of consciousness that provides her with an exceptional ability to respond to her subjection, and an invincible determination to gain the necessary agency which prepares her to resist all kinds of aggression fearlessly. In this regard, Katrak asserts that some female protagonists of postcolonial literature are empowered depending on their particular cases, but in general their "covert resistances are undertaken with self-consciousness and remarkable creativity". Such protagonists, Katrak elaborates, "take risks and confront domination selectively and strategically in the interest of self-preservation" (3), the very feature of Maha's situation: her resistance stems from her

inner strength and awareness, enabling her to confront her oppression with strategic and selective acts of defiance aimed at preserving her own identity and autonomy.

Contrastively, Hannyeh is depicted as a stereotypical Arab woman, who has a persistent sense of helplessness which increases her marginalization even in the domestic sphere. While Maha is given a rebellious voice that enables her to speak – and even act – against the multifaceted forms of injustice, Hannyeh is a subservient woman, who accepts her subordinate roles as if she were a willing and collaborative participant in her victimization. Unlike Maha, Hannyeh faces her tribulations by taking on limited methods of self-empowerment such as contemplation and denial. When oppressed, whether within the social institution of the family as a daughter or within the social institution of marriage as a wife, she escapes for merely temporary moments to an imaginative space, where she contemplates fairy tales in which the extraordinary heroes come to protect her, or, oblivious to her dilemmas, she finds it relieving that she can sleep for a few hours by the end of her long and exhausting day of servant-like duties. At one juncture, Um Saad seeks the help of “al-Shater Hasan” and his “Vanishing Cap” to “disappear” (222), a symbol that “expresses Um Saad’s innocent child-like nature which yearns for a different reality in which dreams can materialize like having [...] a different identity” (Abu Baker 33). Remarkably, this displays Hannyeh’s resignation to her fate, looking for solace in fleeting moments of imaginative escape.

Maha, in turn, refuses to occupy the role of a victim, crafting unique identities and innovative tactics of self-empowerment that sustain her unrelenting struggle against subjugation to great degrees. For instance, she takes advantage of the attitudes of love, support, care, and compassion she exchanges with her kind parents as a source of latent agency. As a Bedouin woman, Maha is raised in a family where her parents treat her in a way that exceeds the conventional normativity of the familial relations in the traditional

Bedouin culture. They do not only teach her precious virtues such as responsibility, independence, courage, dignity, and honor, but they also feed her a sense of insistence on maintaining them at any cost. At a certain point, Maha keeps up the family honor by refusing to meet with Harb at night near the Dead Sea before marriage, for she realizes that accepting to go with him without the permission of her parents will cause her lover to look down upon her and even doubt her chastity; as a result of this refusal, he proposes to her on the next day unhesitatingly.

This is what Maha mentions she has learnt from her mother, who told her that “those women who risked honor were mere fools” and “men were birds of prey; they chased the quarry as long as it was alive and struggling, but when they had killed it and filled their stomach, they look around for another” (18). Obviously, this guidance frames Maha’s approach towards safeguarding her state even as she harbors deep affection for Harb and envisions a future with him as her lifelong partner. In this context, the concept of honor exceeds personal dignity; it encompasses societal respectability and adherence to conventional values. Women who defy these values risk facing social dishonor and stigmatization, which highlights the cultural restrictions informed by traditional patriarchal societies, where a woman’s conduct is rigorously scrutinized and judged based on perceived morality, but also the sexual double standard: exposing the asymmetry between the limits of men’s and women’s sexuality. This incident further critiques the discriminatory politics of gender construction. Men are portrayed as driven by opportunism and desire, while, in contrast, women are perceived as vulnerable to exploitation and objectification. Maha’s response to her mother’s teachings engenders a careful approach to resistance within this patriarchal framework. By internalizing her mother’s counsel, she navigates her circumstances strategically through employing both overt acts of defiance and subtle forms

of agency. This includes cultivating inner strength and seizing opportunities for self-preservation amidst societal constraints.

Maha always remembers her mother's words of wisdom: "men believe that we are angels who descend from the seventh sky. I was a Bedouin woman, free like a swallow and as courageous as my grandmother's Sabha" (15), which motivates her to protect her reputation, even if she loves Harb and wants him as a lifelong husband. In making this rational decision not to meet Harb outside familial boundaries, Maha does not fully disregard the normative conventions of her conservative culture, albeit against her desires, justifiably believing that this action would destroy her life. This is precisely what happens to her best friend Nasra, who, in turn, meets with Daffash, from a traditional viewpoint, on an illicit sexual affair that makes the tribe members, including Maha's lustful brother, scorn her.

The ritualistic policing of female virginity reveals how women can exercise agency through performative maneuvers within patriarchal symbols to protect themselves while appearing to submit. Similarly, on her wedding night, Maha plays the game and agrees to put her falsified bridal sheet on display, even if in this case the lack of proof is not her own fault. She narrates that "[a]ll members of the tribe would wait outside the door for proof of my virginity. Young girls, young boys, half-naked children, toothless old men and horsemen were all thirsty for my blood" (49). This illustrates the intense scrutiny and judgment placed upon women in traditional patriarchal cultures, where their chastity must be proven through displaying a bridal sheet stained with blood. The community's eager anticipation outside her door symbolizes the collective examination of a woman's virtue and purity, equating them with her worth and honor. The bridal sheet, signifying virginity, becomes an apparatus through which Maha's chastity is publicly validated. This reflects the community's massive adherence to traditional values and marks the objectification of women as vessels of honor and collective dignity. Maha's response to this pressure shows a distinctive form of agency.

When her husband voices concern about the crowd at the door, saying, “I won't be able to do it if they keep knocking on the door” (49), Maha takes control over the situation by manipulating it. She uses Harb's dagger and pricks “the tip of [her] finger in order not to bleed too much” (50), thereby subverting expectations while maintaining appearances. Hence, Maha is maneuvering within a framework by both resisting it and, at the same time, taking it into account as a fateful matter.

Maha also remembers the motivational words of her father Sheikh Nimer, whose name means a tiger in Arabic, that “the daughter of the tiger of the desert must be a tigress” (13), by dint of which she is encouraged not to surrender, especially to the unmerciful patriarchal society. Maha, in turn, seeks to compensate her father, who is disappointed with his only son Daffash. She points out that what lies behind her father's misery “was just one person, one word, Daffash. He wanted a good son. A peasant capable of digging his hands into the soil and transferring that piece of land into a green orchard. Allah gave him a womanizer and a city worshiper” (22). Therefore, Maha considers that she is assigned a dutiful daughter's responsibility to gratify her aging father, who, besides being disappointed with his only son, is dejected after the death of his beloved wife.

The gendered limitations of Maha's empowerment become evident when her actions require continuous male validation, contrasting with more autonomous forms of female agency. Maha's responsibility drives her to do what her brother is supposed to do by going to visit her father regularly, looking after him – for example, bathing his body – and also working in his field. In doing the latter, she goes beyond her gender boundaries with regard to the standard female roles determined by the conventional norms of her Bedouin culture. Like Eman in *Nisanit*, who takes the responsibility to support her family members, Maha subverts the image of the submissive, dependent Arab woman by performing roles traditionally assigned to men. However, while Eman's assertion of agency emerges more

independently – rooted in her personal and political awakening under occupation – Maha's empowerment remains entangled within familial obligation and male permission. Even though Maha breaks with expectations, she does so within a patriarchal framework that still demands her husband's approval, which he grants to her. In other words, in spite of the fact that Maha transcends her gender boundaries in some way, she nevertheless remains contained and is allowed to stretch these boundaries as long as she is surrounded by good-willing and relatively open-minded male family members like her father and husband.

Moreover, Maha's love for her husband Harb empowers her to face all the hardship that pervades her life. When she gets married to the man she loves, she starts seeing life from an optimistic angle and transcends her misery caused by Daffash. However, Maha's sense of delight is incomplete, as she misses her husband, who usually joins the rebels in the mountains for days. What is worse than counting the moments of waiting for Harb's return is the harsh words addressed to her by the old women of the tribe, who criticize Maha for not carrying a baby in her belly shortly after her marriage to Harb. In their Bedouin culture, it seems that a woman is criticized to an extent that makes her probably suspect of her ability to give birth if she does not become pregnant very quickly. This becomes evident when Maha agrees to visit the elderly woman Haja Hulala, presented as the tribe's spiritual healer, with her husband's mother for a traditional treatment. During this procedure, Maha is exposed to severe body cauterization with a "blazing iron bar" (92) as a medication for her alleged bareness. The narrative underlines the painful experience of Maha among the women of the tribe, demonstrating how a woman's societal value and her fulfillment of roles as a wife and mother are heavily conditional on her ability to bear children. The massive pressure to adhere to these expectations is overwhelming, compelling women like Maha to endure severe and painful treatments in a bid to conform to rigid societal beliefs. However, Maha is still powerful and when recollecting her delightful moments with her horseman, she surpasses

the sense of alienation, the pressure of the old women's severe criticism, and the exposure to hard medication.

Maha also finds agency through spending her time on the spinning-wheel. She confirms that "the only thing I was able to do while my man was away was to weave" (113). As Maha weaves to produce a distinguished carpet, she follows in the footsteps of her mother and grandmother, continuing their traditional craft. The narrative indicates that Maha's grandmother Sabha "spun the first thread" of the carpet, whereas Maha's mother "hadn't been able to finish weaving it", asking Maha to "complete it" (15). The act of completing the carpet provides her with an innovative outlet and a means of achievement; significantly, it keeps her tethered to her cultural heritage, empowering her through the conservation and continuation of such a traditional skill that, in addition, connects her to her maternal lineage. In this regard, Yasmina Djafri argues that Maha turns to the spinning-wheel as the ultimate solution that can save her, while her man joins the rebellious men on the mountains. In taking the responsibility to finish the carpet her mother Maliha and her grandmother Sabha started before, she devises a self-inspiring power that recovers her strength and enables her to continue her struggle against the misogynistic unfair laws of Hamia (Djafri 538–539). Maha is also conscious that Harb's absence is for a crucial reason that unavoidably necessitates sacrifice and patience by the rebellious couple, who fight – though each one in a different way – for their Arab Bedouin identity against the danger of the foreign aggressor: this is what one can observe in Harb's words: "we are free Bedouins, we never accepted foreign masters" (89). Maha's weaving, like Eman's work as a seamstress in *Nisanit*, underlines how Faqir consistently presents traditional skills not merely as domestic tasks but as meaningful avenues for self-expression, resilience, and agency. While Eman channels her sewing into a profession that offers financial independence and imaginative escape, Maha's act of weaving is deeply symbolic: it anchors her to cultural memory and collective gendered resistance. In

both cases, these women transcend imposed limitations by reclaiming traditional practices as sources of empowerment.

Maha's transformation from grief to resistance demonstrates how colonial violence can paradoxically strengthen rather than diminish women's agency within traditional frameworks. Later, her story reveals that her husband is killed in one of the rebellions against the English. Maha feels devastated by this loss and mourns the death of the twin of her soul for a long time. Consequently, her hatred of the foreigners grows day after day, and a desire to fight the colonizer starts to take hold of her psyche. Meanwhile, she becomes aware of her pregnancy, which turns out to be the motive that transforms her despair into a glimpse of hope. Discussing motherhood as an aspect of empowerment in some contexts, Lorde points out that "only within a patriarchal structure is maternity the only social power open to women" (111). Maha's experience seems to both resonate with and complicate this observation, as her sense of agency arises within – and is partly constrained by – traditional gender expectations. Imagining that the twin of her soul lives in her womb and will soon come to reality, Maha starts to forget her loss. She motivates herself by contemplating that she must welcome baby Mubarak with "a bright smile and a healthy body" (126). In the Bedouin culture, it is said the one who gives birth does not die; this cultural belief fuels Maha's conviction that part of Harb, a new soldier, or a prospective protector of the tribe is coming soon. This imagined son becomes a symbolic projection of both her grief and her hope, embodying resistance through the continuation of patriarchal lineage and tribal loyalty. Maha is convinced that she can resist the colonizer by giving birth and raising a horseman, who can take revenge on those who have made him an orphan. This form of resistance through procreation, framed within cultural and gendered scripts, finds a compelling counterpoint in Eman's journey in *Nisanit*. As discussed in the analysis of this novel, Eman recovers from the loss of her loved ones in the very different context of Israeli occupation,

but rather than channeling resistance through motherhood, she affirms Palestinian existence through education, persistence, and the rearticulation of identity beyond national and familial roles. Whereas Maha's hope is invested in future male heroism, Eman's strength lies in the redefinition of her own subjectivity.

Beyond motherhood, Maha's agency is also rooted in her connection to the land. She is inspired by her sense of belonging, which she endeavors to teach to Mubarak in his early days. This is demonstrated when she places his body on the soil of the family orchard, symbolizing the land as a source of agency and a method of resistance against the foreigners. She places Mubarak among the trees, plants, and flowers which, when their crops are grown after months of watering, beautify the scene in her eyes. This act makes her feel that she cultivates something valuable that is tightly linked to her genuine Bedouin identity and to her truly beloved ones. As Maha reflects, "when sniffing the jasmine, I felt the warmth of my mother's hand through my robe, my father stroked my hair and Harb, the twin of my soul, kissed the back of my neck" (207). Therefore, Maha is eager to fight for her land and teach Mubarak the value it signifies. This dedication to the land starkly contrasts with the attitude of her brother, Daffash, of whom she worries while in the asylum. Maha fears that the land is under Daffash's mercy and that he may sell it to his English masters for a bundle of money, a betrayal that would undermine the very essence of her resistance and heritage. Like Abu Mustafa and Shadeed in *Nisanit*, who physically engage with the soil as an act of cultural resistance, Maha's bond with the land reflects a form of embodied defiance. However, unlike their more overtly nationalist and male-coded gestures, Maha's cultivation of the land is distinctly gendered. This contrast not only highlights the diversity of attachments to the land in Faqir's novels but also foregrounds how women's land-based agency operates through emotional and generational continuity, rather than through nationalist rhetoric alone. In this way, Maha's cultivation practices forge a model of selfhood

that neither capitulates foreign domination nor conforms to traditional masculine forms of resistance, instead creating space for agency ingrained in memory, nurture, and ancestral connection.

Through her narrative of defiance in the face of subjugation, Maha resists the English colonization over her country. Her resistance stems from the killing of her beloved husband, the usurpation of lands, and the imposition of foreign ways that disrupt the traditional Bedouin lifestyle. When Samer Pasha asks her to assist in preparing a traditional Bedouin dish for his English guests in his mansion, Maha initially welcomes this initiative. However, upon realizing that she cooks for those responsible for her husband's death, she reacts decisively: "I kicked the hot metal pot with my foot" (171). This act symbolizes Maha's resistance to English oppression and its detrimental impact on her country and people. It serves as an outright refusal to participate in or endorse the cultural appropriation and exploitation perpetrated by the English foreigners. Through this defiant gesture, Maha protests against the injustices of colonization, deconstructing the imposed power hierarchy and asserting her identity and solidarity with her community. Her action can be seen as a powerful reaction of rejection of the forces that seek to erase her people's culture and independence. By rejecting subservience and reclaiming agency over her actions, Maha embodies resilience in the face of colonial domination. In essence, Maha's narrative of resistance encapsulates her unwavering resoluteness to uphold her values and resist foreign domination. It reveals her rejectionist stance towards being complicit in the erasure of her cultural heritage, affirming her identity and allegiance to her people amidst the adversary exercise by the colonial rule.

Overall, Faqir's text portrays contrasting Arab female narratives within a colonial and neopatriarchal backdrop, showcasing their varied responses to oppression. While Um Saad passively succumbs to her marginalization, Maha actively resists it on multiple fronts,

quite like Eman in *Nisanit*. In the narrative's final scenes, Maha confronts her brother amid threats of honor violence endorsed collectively by the people of their tribe. She defiantly declares, "I will get married to nobody, I will not sign any deeds and will never cook for the English" (233). Maha's statement signifies her proactive resistance to different models of oppression. Her refusal to marry and sign deeds against her will challenge societal norms and patriarchal control over her choices and inheritance rights. Additionally, her steadfast refusal to cook for the English embodies her rejection of cultural assimilation and the preservation of her indigenous identity, representing a powerful stance against cultural exploitation and the erasure of her Arab heritage within a colonial context.

4. Between Modernity and Traditionality: The Construction of Cultural Identity

Contextualized in Transjordan on the cusp of the British mandate, a decisive period that marks a redefinition of the colonized nation's cultural identity and a fundamental transformation of its social structure, Faqir's narrative calls into question the effect of imperial colonization and the manifestations of Western modernity it brings on the colonized culture and its indigenous people. In a sense, the novel accentuates that the transmission of European modernity into the Bedouin milieu of Transjordan carries relatively invalid models, among which there are specificities of sexual standards that pertain to the gender politics of the Western liberal paradigm.

These standards, to which some urbanized people submit themselves without questioning their efficacy, do not offer any progression or emancipation for the Bedouin women, but rather increase their subordination, which emerges primarily through the prevailing order of their patriarchal society. According to Hazel Carby, who reflects on circumstances that are identical to postcolonial Transjordan, the "contact with white societies has not generally led to a more progressive change in African and Asian sex/gender systems" (121). In this way, while challenging the cultural restrictiveness and social

constraints that define the conditions of these women within the local sphere and that institutionalize their inferiority, the novel is also critical of the blind allegiance to the Western model, which in no way benefits the local women but reveals how modernity-based sexual standards converge with traditional patriarchy in fostering gender bias, thereby establishing a neopatriarchal mode of marginalization.

One instance that affirms how far modernity is from coming up with social merits for the native women, but partly collaborating in their mistreatment is the contradictory conceptions surrounding Daffash's multiple sexual relations with women of his tribal village. The Bedouin man, who is obsessed with the liberal behavior of his foreign friends, does not feel guilty for destroying Nasra's reputation by having an extramarital sexual relation with her, nor is he blamed by the people of the tribe for his misbehavior; that is why he is still thirsty to satisfy his sexual lust, seeking to have more illegitimate relations with other women like Salih's wife, whom he takes to a cave near their village in order to rape.

Contrastively, it is the woman who is exclusively burdened by an unconditional obedience to the social code of honor from a traditional perspective, being punished for any sexual deviation with a penalty that may extend to her death; therefore, she is as good as prohibited to assume any unconventional attitude, which clearly reveals that this mode of emancipation in conduct is misogynist and limited to the man's choice. Hence, the adoption of Western values – as represented in this context – becomes gendered, and it works with the customary laws of the Bedouin society, such as the social code of honor, to produce an intensive mode of discrimination against women.

Not only does modernity constitute devastating consequences for the most marginalized group in society, but at a broader level its manifestations invade the whole society, creating unfamiliar manners of urbanization that change the landscape of both the villages and the capital city Amman. Maha's story indicates that the lands of her village are

occupied by English cars and tanks that exhale black smoke and poison the beautiful flowers, plants, and trees of its plantations. As Um Saad, in turn, indicates, Amman is also undergoing a sudden change that features the urbanization of the city's life, as well: its streets are surrounded by glow lamps that lighten every spot in the city at night, its usual silence is replaced by the unstoppable vehicles' noise, and its people, particularly women, take off their veils and appear – how it is seen and interpreted – half-naked in public.

These aspects and practices, as the novel shows, are not popular in the traditional culture of the Bedouins, but they get to a certain extent normalized as a result of a particular group of urbanized people embracing cultural values and standards of the foreign colonizer. This can be interpreted, in McLeod's terms, as proof to the fact that "in many colonized countries British colonialism interrupted indigenous familial and community structures and imposed its own models instead" (175). These models are, however, rejected by a counter group of indigenous Bedouins, deeming them as outlandish manners that oppose the normative values and principles of their conventions.

This attitude of rejection manifests itself in Maha's reaction when she brings towels for the English women Daffash has invited to their house in Hamia, so as to cover their undressed legs. On this occasion, Maha makes the remark "city women, no shame or shyness" (38), since it surprises her that these women are painted, smoke cigarettes, and wear short skirts and have their heads uncovered. On another occasion which proves that some urbanized people follow the European liberal model, Um Saad says that the new wife of her husband is a "young, artificially blonde woman in high heels. The silk green dress clung to her body like smooth skin" (191). What is more, the narrative points out that the new bride spends the night playing cards with Abu Saad's young sons, they tell jokes, laugh in a loud voice, listen to English music, and dance until dawn.

In the novel, Um Saad's unfamiliar experience of visiting the cinema established by the English foreigners reflects the English colonial influence in Amman. The English colonists also replace traditional kutabs with schools, symbolizing a shift towards Western educational systems. Um Saad's observation of the sounds from nearby hotels and clubs further underscores the societal changes brought by colonization. She mentions hearing the clinking of alcohol glasses and the shouts of drunken men leaving clubs built by English foreigners. Um Saad narrates that "the English left our country after building clubs which no one could enter and strange-shaped toilets which no Muslim could use" (189), which highlights how colonial infrastructures clash with local cultural practices and sensitivities. Before colonization, these facilities, especially night clubs, never existed in Transjordan as the social principles, regulating the life of its people, were dominantly conservative, definitely not legitimizing the existence of such places.

Sharabi's perspective on the neopatriarchal Arab society provides a theoretical framework for understanding this cultural encounter. He argues that modernization manifests in "everyday material things" and that being modernized "signifies an external agency acting upon an internal development, thereby transforming it" (22). From a postcolonial outlook, this dependent condition is the outcome of imperialist disruption in which, as Said explains, colonialism preserves the divide between the native and the Westerner by appearing as "a cooperative venture" that sets out to "modernize, develop, instruct, and civilize". Said elaborates that the "annals of school, missions, universities, scholarly societies, hospitals" in the colonized locations are "filled with this history, which over time established so-called modernizing trends as much as it muted the harsher aspects of imperialist domination" (Said, *Culture* 223). The infrastructural transformation delineated in Faqir's text exemplifies the cultural shifts and societal impositions, echoing Said's critique of imperialist efforts as transformative yet inherently prejudiced. Said's notion underlines

how colonial powers reconfigure societies to align with Western norms, thereby marginalizing indigenous traditions while endorsing their own cultural prevalence.

Reflecting on the context of her novel and asserting that nightlife is part of the colonial legacy, Faqir says in the interview by Moore, “when I was young, I lived next to an English club – a remnant of the British Mandate – that Jordanians were not allowed to enter. [...] I remember that colonial exclusive space very clearly” (1). In the novel, locals are also denied access to night clubs, as evident in the dialogue between Daffash’s English guests about a night that they spent in one of them. In this dialogue, one of the women mentions that Daffash is exceptionally entitled to go with them because he is, as they view him, an open-minded Arab man, which discloses how the Westerners look at the Arab people with superior eyes, specifically at those who contradict the modernized man, i.e., the Arab traditionalist Bedouins.

This encounter between urbanized individuals and indigenous traditionalists is represented during the women’s initial meeting at the hospital. Before they develop a friendship, Um Saad disparagingly refers to Maha as “[a] filthy bedouin woman. Cannot you smell the sting of dung. You sleep with your sheep”. She then introduces herself, “I am an urban woman from Amman. I refuse to share the room with a grinning bedouin” (7). Um Saad’s derogatory remarks disclose the hierarchies within gender groups, displaying prejudiced representation characteristic of the urban–rural division within Jordanian society during the colonial period. Um Saad’s declaration of being a city woman conveys her sense of privilege stemming from her inhabiting an urban setting, even though, as pointed out before, she herself is subjected to multiple power structures including cultural notions, habits, and customs originating in the very same culture as that of the rural areas. Her remarks echo internalized colonial discourse in the sense that city dwellers, usually proximate to colonized centers of colonial hegemony and influence, view themselves as

more civilized and superior to their rural counterparts. This mindset is a production of colonial policies that marginalize rural communities, including Bedouins, by perceiving them as backward people. It is in this regard that the British mandate in Jordan bolsters a hierarchical division based on urbanity and conformity to Western values. In this framework, urban centers became the locus for progress and modernity, whereas rural spaces and conventional lifestyles are devalued.

Furthermore, the novel represents the foreign narrator as perpetuating a demeaning perception of Arab traditional culture. In one passage, he describes Maha in a highly exaggerated manner, referring to her as “a deer that had been roaming the deserts of Arabia since Eve, made out of our father Adam’s crooked rib, was cast out of heaven” (2). This imaginary portrayal, using Biblical references of women’s creation as secondary and inessential, but also adding an image of animality, provides the narrative with a mythical quality, typical of Orientalist perspectives that “reduce the Orient to a kind of human flatness” (Said, 150), viewing it as unchanged and primitive, and in this case also gendered. The exaggerated timeframe detaches the narrative from historical precision, indicating the narrator’s tendency to draw a mythical version of events rather than accurate representation. This approach resonates with Said’s critique of the Orientalist perspective that “views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West” (Said, *Orientalism* 108). By identifying Arab culture in such a static and exoticized manner, this narrative sustains a distorted perception that fails to acknowledge the genuine dynamics and multifaceted nature of Arab societies – let alone the lived realities of Arab women.

From an Occidentalist standpoint, the narrator’s depiction of the desert landscape complies with stereotypical notions of the Arab world, which finds its origins in Western literature’s inclination to exoticize and mystify the Arab World, portraying it as a timeless

and enigmatic terrain. Most likely, such depictions do not reflect the complexities of real-life Arab societies but instead rely on Western literary traditions that account for the perceived otherness and timeless allure of the region. According to Faqir, the narrator's approach "paints a picture of Arabs that's not true", highlighting how his Orientalist narrative goes beyond accuracy and fabricates history (7). This narrative's setting reinforces Western stereotypes of the Middle East as an exotic and barren landscape inhabited by mythical beings, perpetuating a distorted view of Arab culture and history.

In another instance, the narrator states that "Maha was born when the first female child was buried alive by the tribe of Bani-Quraish" (2-3), situating her birth in an ancient and historical context marked by gendered violence. The reference to the ancient practice of burying female infants alive in pre-Islamic Arabia mythologizes Maha's Arab origins, reflecting an Orientalist viewpoint that exoticizes Eastern cultures by underlining barbaric customs as representative and unchanging over time. By highlighting this brutal tradition, the narrator revitalizes Western stereotypes of Arab societies as essentially violent and misogynistic, neglecting the diverse realities and rich histories of these cultures. From a gendered perspective, this portrayal stereotypes Arab women as perpetual victims, a notion Butler critiques by arguing against universalist feminist views regarding the essentializing images of women in the third-world that frame gender oppression as "symptomatic of an essential, non-Western barbarism" (5). Such essentialized representations twist historical precision and maintain a distorted perception that disregards the changing nature of Arab societies.

In the novel, Daffash, the best representative of the urbanized group, shares the same stereotypical attitude of the foreigners in that he despises his Bedouin family, including Maha, treating them with contempt all the time. He is fascinated by the modernized life of the city; that is why he, as Maha recounts in sorrow, sells most of the pillows and mattresses

of the family house to replace them with armchairs, and he also sells the family herd, the cow Halabeh, the dog Nashmi, the horse Mujahid, and the two camels because he wants to modernize the land by building a villa and hiring Indians to work in the field. For Maha, Daffash does not sell the traditional items of their house and the animals of their farm, but rather he sells his Bedouin identity and devalues its cultural heritage. She mourns the days and months that she, her mother, and her grandmother have spent in weaving the items of the family house which symbolize the pertinence of these trueborn Bedouin women. In highlighting such conflict between Daffash and Maha (which is meant to represent the larger cultural encounter between city people and traditionalists), Faqir's text can be interpreted as a literary critique of the devastating effect of Western colonization on the Arab culture in that its modernity does not bring a valid social progress for its native people, including women, but deforms both its social formation and cultural identity.

On a geopolitical level, the novel also critiques the British mandate's colonial agenda in the whole region including Transjordan, particularly in facilitating the displacement of Arab people from the West Bank of the Jordan River (historically referred to as Palestine) to the East Bank (Transjordan), in fulfillment of the primary goals of the Balfour Declaration. Chapter One addresses this issue but does not refer to Jordan as a host for displaced Palestinians – not only because of the geographical proximity between the two regions, but also due to the historical and social ties between their peoples. The narrative repeatedly makes references to the interconnectedness between these two regions and their peoples. For instance, Maha and Harb, shortly after their marriage, share a moment of intimacy near the Dead Sea, a location proximate to Palestine from where one can view its lands across the Jordan River. Their observation of neighboring Arab communities on the other side deconstructs any historical narratives denying their presence.

The Orientalist narrator evidences another reference when he claims that Daffash:

used to carry the compass of travelers, feed the horses of engineers and relate to them what people say about them and translate what is written on the stones from colloquial into standard Arabic. The travelers and engineers spoke standard Arabic and were able to read the Qur'an perfectly well, but nobody spoke the language of the holy book of Arabia. So Daffash used to listen to them spelling the words (he could neither read nor write), compose out of these sounds a set of phrases then deliver them in his broad bedouin accent. For example, 'Down with the Balfour Declaration' when subjected to the complicated process of Qassimi translation became 'Somebody up there must fall down.' The sounds are very similar. Ha Ha Ha. (32)

In this passage, Daffash's role as a collaborator discloses the colonial reliance on local knowledge, being manipulated to serve colonial interests. In this context, the Arab man Daffash is depicted as a treacherous individual, who is "rewarded generously by these foreign travelers" (32) for acting as an intermediary between these outsiders and the Arab indigenous community. The example of Daffash translating "Down with the Balfour Declaration" into "Somebody up there must fall down" can be seen as a critical comment on colonial policies and their consequences. The Balfour Declaration, which supported the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, led to the dispossession of Palestinians from (up there in British-mandate Palestine) to its neighboring region (fall down to British-mandate Transjordan). This colonial tactic of enlisting local collaborators finds a pointed parallel in Chapter One, where Captain Abdel-Qader Lafi's role as a Palestinian informer under Israeli occupation exposes a similar strategy of domination through internal betrayal. While Daffash operates within the framework of British mandate control in Transjordan, Lafi's cooperation enables the Israeli regime to suppress Palestinian resistance. Both figures exemplify how colonial and settler-colonial powers depend on indigenous intermediaries to fracture solidarity and enforce control.

Similarly, the narrative examines the Balfour Declaration through a sarcastic lens, portraying Balfour as a detached English lord living in Britain, far removed geographically and culturally from the lands and peoples affected by his decisions. In this regard, the Orientalist narrator, feigning familiarity with Balfour, recounts that he is:

an English lord who lived in a far away land called Britain. The English lord after hunting foxes with his pack of hounds for days on end was still bored. He felt like playing a game called 'Lands.' According to the Englishman, Lord Balfour gave the piece of land extending west of the river Jordan to a tribe without dwellings of their own. A land without people for a people without a land, he thought. (33)

The Orientalist narrator's use of irony when referencing colonialist practices can expose the glaring discrepancies within the colonial project despite being a representative of it. This can be seen as a covert recognition of the hypocrisy of colonialism in which the narrator both represents and, at the same time, critiques colonial activities. The passage ironically presents Balfour's decision-making regarding Palestine as if it were a casual game during his leisure time, challenging the colonial mindset that treats distant territories and colonized peoples as mere pieces on a geopolitical chessboard, subject to rearrangement and allocation without regard for existing communities or their rights. Central to this critique is the famous Zionist slogan, "A land without people for a people without a land", emblematic of the narrative propagated by early advocates of the Zionist enterprise during the Balfour time. This narrative falsely recognizes Palestine as unpopulated, denying the existence of Arab native inhabitants and their historical roots in the region. The passage utilizes irony to criticize the injustice of dislocating indigenous populations in the interest of constituting a national home for Jewish immigrant groups.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has investigated Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* with a special focus on three themes: the various forms of violence against the central female Arab characters, the different representations of the female protagonists due to their self-empowering methods of resisting their intricate subordination, and, thirdly, their conditions within the cultural encounter between modernity brought by colonization and adopted by a group of urbanized people and traditionality comprised of the cultural beliefs and customs of the Arab Bedouin society and preserved by another group of indigenous Bedouins. Drawing upon postcolonial feminism, the analysis of Faqir's novel has shown that the female protagonists, Maha and Hannyeh, are exposed to an intersectional structure of multiple oppressions that results from the interaction between colonization and patriarchy, and that produces accumulated forms of psychological, sexual, mental, physical, and political violence against them.

It has also shown that apart from the fact that the structure of their oppression is complex, the two victimized Arab women's responses are completely divergent: while Maha adopts unique strategies of personal empowerment that help her resist fearlessly on all fronts – even though ultimately she is also defeated in many ways –, Hannyeh adopts inefficient and passive roles that essentially increase her state of continuing disempowerment. As for the cultural encounter between modernity and traditionality, the textual analysis has argued that alongside the prejudiced intervention of the colonial power on the geopolitical level, imperial colonization, and the manifestations of modernity it transfers into Transjordan create a cultural conflict between the urbanized people and the traditionalist Bedouins. This conflict is far from being unproblematic, as it uncovers how colonial modernity – when faced with the traditionality of such an Arab Bedouin society – produces a new, deformed, and even hybridized social formation that brings only slight benefits – if any – for its indigenous people including the most marginalized group, the victimized women.

Chapter 3: A Fragmented Self: Double Colonization and Liminality in Fadia Faqir's

My Name is Salma

1. Introduction

In contemporary times, the increased streams of immigration of Arab people from their original countries into Western locations have provided Arab women with pathways to relocate to a more liberal environment. This move enables them to escape the constraints of local patriarchy prevalent in their Arab countries, where strict social and cultural norms assign to them subordinate roles within the family and society, often restricting their autonomy under a male-dominated system. However, their transition to Western societies as minority migrants brings its own set of individual struggles, placing them in another patriarchal milieu that differs culturally from their native environment. As foreign expatriates in the West, these women's quest for attaining the sought gendered impartiality is hardly fulfilled in such a Western patriarchal space, where they are at times (mis)perceived and, hence, (mis)treated as the gendered, classed, racial, religious, and linguistic other, hindering their constant efforts of integration and conformity to certain degrees. Due to wavering between two worlds, two cultures, and two languages, the experiences of the Arab diasporic women dispersed between various cultural spaces and across past and present are, therefore, influenced by a cultural encounter (between the East and the West) in which gendered, social, linguistic, religious, and political codes of the two societies interact with each other in a composite framework that necessarily reshapes their lives, restructures their social position, and redefines their cultural identities in a postcolonial context.

Remarkably, the representation of the conditions of the contemporary Arab women both within their home culture as indigenous individuals and within their host culture as diasporic subjects pervades modern anglophone Arab fiction produced by migrant women writers of Arab origins such as Hanan Al-Shaykh's *The Story of Zahra* (1980), Ahdaf

Soueif's *The Map of Love* (1999), Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005), Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008), and Laila Lalami's *The Other Americans* (2019). These literary productions call into question pivotal issues of relocation, displacement, marginalization, discrimination, racism, social inequality, hybridity, (un)belonging, assimilation, and adaptation with regard to gender construction and aspects of femininity. Displaying the prime characteristics of this emergent literary tradition, Faqir's novel *My Name is Salma* (2007) delineates the miserable experiences of a diasporic and dislocated Arab Bedouin woman. The novel's protagonist, Salma, undergoes a forced displacement and a diasporic experience when she moves from her tribal village in Levante to Exeter in an attempt to gain safety and seek refuge from what her ultimate fate could otherwise be: the victim of the social code of honor after engaging in an extramarital sexual relation with her lover and becoming pregnant out of wedlock. This threat illustrates the invasive reach of honor killings as a model of gendered violence in which women like Salma are disproportionately targeted and killed to restore what is understood as the violated family honor. It emphasizes the rooted misogynist norms that strictly dictate these women's behavior and punish their deviations in an unmerciful form extending to the point of killing.

As a relocated individual, Salma's experiences in the West are, however, fraught with discriminatory treatments, as many instances in her narrative exemplify how she is racially, culturally, and religiously othered as an alien subject, leading to a state of marginality and exclusion. In this way, the novel addresses the particular ways in which a poor, uneducated, and disenfranchised Arab Bedouin woman is subjected to multi-faceted forms of inequality in a postcolonial context. It reveals that Salma is a victim of a dual mode of oppression informed by varied prejudices ingrained in double-patriarchal discourses (Eastern and Western) which, as a consequence, cause her a persistent sense of unbelonging

and uprootedness, situating her in a liminal space on the margins of these male-centered societies.

The issue of the marginalization of third-world women, created by the complex entanglement of a dual system of oppressive power structures in the postcolonial world, is central to postcolonial feminism. As outlined in the introductory section of Chapter Two, this theoretical paradigm emerged as a critique of the essentialist, stereotypical, and reductive representations of non-Western women in early Western feminist theory. It calls for the recognition of heterogeneity among gender groups, thereby aiming to eliminate the idea of non-white otherness and render visible the diverse experiences and identities of all women, an approach that counters simplistic depictions such as those Faqir challenges in her literary works. In Chapter Two, the concept of double colonization was applied to Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* to examine her portrayal of how colonial rule and indigenous patriarchy intersect as overlapping oppressive systems comprising neopatriarchy that impacts Arab women, reflecting a critique of both these power structures in their homeland. In *My Name is Salma*, however, Faqir combines the Western and Arab modes of oppressive patriarchal domination differently, by displacing Salma from her homeland, and exposing how the Western context also functions as part of the intersecting power mechanisms othering Arab women.

However, this paradigm also encompasses the distinct, often context-dependent experiences of migrant women, especially those facing double systems of oppression in both their post-colonized countries and in former colonizing Western contexts. This chapter, therefore, extends the application of double colonization to Faqir's *My Name is Salma*. Here, Faqir explores how local (neo)patriarchal system persists and collides with Western patriarchy and colonialist discrimination in the context of exile, a clear instance of context-dependent oppression, particularly against racial and cultural minorities, thereby critiquing

these multiple subjugating forces. Despite strides towards independence, (neo)colonialist ideologies and their discriminatory effects continue to persist within postcolonial cultures, where, as Faqir often exemplifies, the establishment of equitable gender norms remains elusive. This underscores that the problems of double colonization, far from being circumscribed to the colonial epoch, represent an ongoing process. This persistence challenges homogenized narratives of post-independence liberation and continues to affect the diverse lives of women from the Global South in both their societies and in Western spaces.

Antonia Tejero confirms this assumption, arguing that “colonialism and patriarchy have been entwined historically, but an end to formal empire has not meant an end to the oppression of women in the former colonies” (253). In line with this, Young demonstrates that postcolonial feminism is certainly concerned with analyzing the conditions of being a woman in a postcolonial environment, whether in the social oppression of the postcolony (ex-colonized) or the metropolis (ex-colonizer) (115). Grounding her argument in the idea that the conditions of the migrant female subjects in diaspora are the outcome of the historical processes of colonialism, Ina Kerner notes that postcolonial feminism deals with the “representations of non-Western women” including “female diaspora subjectivities in the metropolises” (10). This perspective underscores the key role of postcolonial feminism in advocating for social justice and equality across diverse cultural landscapes.

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan and You-Me Park propose a comparable argument by demonstrating that postcolonial feminist scholars are “actively involved in contesting discriminatory immigration laws in the advanced industrial nations of the First World, and in uncovering the forms of racism and sexism that structure the oppression of women of Third World origin in these countries” (57). According to these views, one can conclude that third-world women of diaspora are foregrounded in postcolonial feminism, and it primarily

focuses on their experiences, their socio-political positions, and their sufferings from and struggles against several forms of subjugation and inequality in different postcolonial locations.

Beyond the marginalization of the third-world women, the subjugation and inequality encountered by diaspora women often place them in a liminal situation, leading to the emergence of a unique female liminal subjectivity which arises from their movement between different cultural, social, and political landscapes. In its broad meaning, liminality can be defined as the existential, social, and psychological condition of being caught in-between two developmental phases or spaces of any kind. It is a concept bound to both time and space, describing individuals and entities that exist “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 94). Derived from the Latin word *limen* meaning ‘threshold’, liminality is the transitional phase occurring in the interim/in-between stage of a rite of passage, when individuals, for instance, transition from one social or cultural status to another over a specific period of time. During this phase, individuals grapple with a state of ambiguity and uncertainty, finding themselves metaphorically poised at the threshold, navigating a sense of disoriented identity and unstable positioning.

Kim Skjoldaer-Nielsen and Joshua Edelman identify liminality as “an in-between of potent but dangerous formlessness. It denotes the social non-space in which transformation is experienced and achieved” (1). According to Roberta Piazza, liminality “indicates temporariness and in-betweenness, both in terms of space and time. It is a powerful and heuristically useful construct that allows a reflection on a range of human conditions that are susceptible to further development and transformation – a transformation that is intrinsically linked to the dynamic construction of identity” (5). Historically, the concept of liminality was first developed and introduced by the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep in his book

The Rites of Passage (1909) in which he suggests a significant classification of all existing rites of passage being framed in a tripartite sequence: pre-liminal phase (rites of separation), liminal phase (rites of transition), and post-liminal phase (rites of incorporation). However, it was when Victor Turner borrowed the concept from Van Gennep in the 1960s and expanded its use within several domains and its application to different hierarchical societies that liminality gained academic popularity as a means of understanding a variety of stances of psychological, social, cultural, anthropological, and political in-between-ness (see *The Ritual Process*). In this way, the concept of liminality can be applied to multiple categories of entities ranging from single individuals or social groups like minorities to entire societies.

Discussing the ways in which migrants can emerge as liminal subjects, Agnes Horvath et al. demonstrate that liminality pertains to transgression, boundaries, and limits, and it is tightly bound up “to threshold and boundary experience” (7). Eva Eglaja-Kristsone describes the liminal state in the case of the minority migrants as a situation in which “an individual is removed from a place of origin (homeland). Once removed, the individual enters a period of liminality definitively between leaving one’s origin and resituating oneself in a new space” (150). Because “the migratory displacement leaves the migrants with a sense of homelessness and rootlessness” (Chakraborty 150), these diasporic subjects become potentially exposed to liminal experiences. By dint of their activity of border-crossing, they make their ways into alien cultures and other spaces, where their identities get hybridized and restructured under an obligatory order made up of a set of liminalising dualities: homeland and hostland, inside and outside, past and present, inclusion and exclusion, and belonging and unbelonging. Within these dualities, they occupy a peripheral and marginal position with a sense of disorientation and liminal consciousness.

Recently, liminality has been adopted to postcolonial theory through the writings of the postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha. In his famous book *The Location of Culture* (1994),

Bhabha discusses liminality from the perspective of the relationship between the colonizing and the colonized subjects. On the one hand, Bhabha links liminality to what he terms as “the very act of going *beyond*” or the “intimations of exceeding the barrier and boundary” (6). Explaining what he means by the symbolic use of the “beyond”, Bhabha explicates that it closely pertains to the inevitable existence of those minorities migrating from former colonies to the West and to their peripheral positions within the Western modern states, wherein national discourses of homogenization would drive to discriminatory attitudes against them. For Bhabha, the ‘beyond’ is “neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past” (1–2); it is “an intervening space” (10). Stressing the significance of the border as the threshold milieu for minorities, Bhabha elaborates that “the intervention of the ‘beyond’ [...] establishes a boundary: a bridge, where ‘presencing’ begins because it captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world – the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” (13). Thus, Bhabha’s conceptualization of liminality offers a framework for approaching the often-disorienting experiences of postcolonial subjects navigating their identities in a transnational context.

On the other hand, Bhabha ties the emergence of the dislocated migrants as liminal subjects to his notions of third space and cultural hybridity. He argues that within a contact zone, which is “the precondition for the articulation of cultural difference” (56), “cultural hybridities emerge [...] in moments of historical transformation” (3). Carrying on his argument, Bhabha also holds that the “interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (5). However, Bhabha’s theorization of the third space can be critiqued for its almost optimistic quality, as he envisions it as a space where hierarchies dissolve and difference is not equated with inferiority. While this provides a valuable

theoretical lens for understanding the creation of difference and the emergence of hybridities, it risks being distanced from the lived realities experienced by many migrants and minority groups.

In practical terms, the idealized third space described by Bhabha may not fully engage with the persistent structural inequalities that continue to marginalize these groups. Alternatively, it is essential to consider how liminality, as derived from Bhabha's postcolonial framework, actually operates in modern nations. These locations often seek to espouse discourses of openness and contemporaneity, yet fail to accommodate minorities fairly. Consequently, Bhabha's third space can be seen as highlighting the tension between national narratives and the lived experiences of marginalization faced by minority and hybrid subjects. Therefore, while Bhabha's theoretical construction offers a compelling framework for understanding cultural hybridity and the interstitial spaces occupied by migrants, it should be grounded more tightly in the realities of continuing discrimination and exclusion. National contexts are not merely symbolic third spaces but are tangible environments where displaced, marginal, and exilic immigrants traverse complex and usually hostile socio-political contexts. This grounded perspective challenges the utopian ideals and emphasizes the need for appropriate strategies to address the real-world implications of cultural hybridity and liminality.

Though Bhabha presents a meaningful understanding of liminality, third space, hybridity among other issues through his critical activities within the postcolonial realm, he pays slight – if any – attention to gender dimensions; more specifically, his views are set in general terms and without making particular references to issues of either femininities or masculinities. This point of critique is undertaken by Anke Bartles et al. stating that “Homi Bhabha's notions of mimicry and hybridity [...] did not provide an analysis of women as colonizing and colonized subjects”, which means that the “gendered dimension of

colonialism is absent from [his] theories, a shortcoming that was addressed by postcolonial feminists who stressed that gender is also a form of colonial othering” (158). Considering these critiques, it is vital to expand Bhabha’s theoretical notions to incorporate gender into other intersecting spheres of discrimination, making the theoretical promise of hybridity and liminality translate into more inclusive and practical strategies for addressing social (in)justice and (in)equality. To this end, I argue that postcolonial feminism and the critical implications of Bhabha’s concept of liminality can converge in specific contexts; when combined, they can constitute a solid analytical approach to the understanding of the conditions of formerly colonized women in diaspora: while Bhabha’s liminality provides a terrain for investigating the construction of their dislocated hybrid identities and liminal consciousness as colonial or formerly colonial subjects in general, postcolonial feminism offers a means of exploring the gendered issues surrounding their intersecting oppressions which, by default, lead to situating them at the edge of society with a persistent sense of exclusion and an institutionalized liminal positionality.

In light of the above, this chapter makes use of the double colonization along with Bhabha’s postcolonial understanding of liminality and hybridity as a theoretical framework to approach Faqir’s *My Name is Salma*. It aims at exploring two concerns present in Faqir’s text as major thematic subjects: how the patriarchal discourses of the East and West collude with each other as double power structures of oppression that cause the subordination of the Arab Bedouin woman, and how these prejudiced discourses, as a consequence, lead to a substantial transformation of their selfhood featuring the emergence of both a female hybrid identity and liminal subjectivity in a diasporic context. In this vein, I claim that the investigation of the above-outlined subjects can provide a meaningful interpretation of the conditions of the contemporary Arab diasporic women. Basing much of the argument on postcolonial feminism to analyze the politics of oppression from a gendered perspective on

the one hand, and on Bhabha's liminality to analyze the politics of identity from the perspective of the diasporic migrant on the other hand, I also claim that this investigation, which has not yet been given a special attention by the studies that have been done on Faqir's novels, breaks a novel ground and contributes an original critical reading not only to the understanding of Faqir's selected text, but also to the anglophone Arab literature written by women migrants of Arab descent in general.

2. Double Colonization: An Arab Women's Narrative

Faqir's *My Name is Salma* is a portrayal of an Arab woman's struggle in the face of multi-faceted patterns of oppression. In a sense, the narrative can be understood as a critique of two oppressive socio-cultural spheres in which the Arab Bedouin woman is subordinated due to traps of Eastern and Western prejudices. According to Sarnou, Faqir's text "deconstructs home and diaspora from a different angle to demonstrate the invisibility of Arab women in Bedouin homelands, on the one hand, and the marginalization of Arab immigrants in white mainstream societies, on the other" (178). In the interview with Moore, Faqir reflects on the characteristics of the narrative's settings (the Levant and England), where her Arab female protagonist Salma occupies a marginal position, by making the comment that "[b]oth environments are oppressive, but in different ways. In each case, there are penalties for not conforming" (8). Salma's journey illustrates the difficulties of navigating identity and belonging in patriarchal environments that are inherently oppressive in distinct ways.

In general, the distinct and complex nature of these sites of oppression can be understood through Mohanty's argument that as long as gender groups are heterogeneous in terms of their own individual experiences with regard to time and space, there is, in turn, "no universal patriarchal framework", and, by extension, there is no "international male conspiracy or a monolithic, ahistorical power hierarchy" (235). In the case of Salma, her

scattered experiences of subjugation, which occur within a framework of cross-cultural and cross-social interactions between the two worlds with their different yet restrictive norms, are the outcome of patriarchal orders and misogynist codes. Whereas her subordination is mostly constructed on her gender identity within the local context, it is also constructed on her racial and religious identities alongside the gender one within the Western context.

Within the local patriarchal milieu, Salma's breach of normative values through the illicit sexual relationship with her lover subjects her to different forms of abuse and the imminent risk of death in the name of honor. At a certain point, the novel exposes Salma's self-awareness of her transgressive behavior which, as a consequence, compels her to escape to England. She acknowledges her action and its repercussions by admitting "[her] dark deeds and [her] shameful past" (7). In recalling the aftermath of her extramarital sexual intercourse, Salma further states, "[m]y face was black as if covered with soot, my hands were black and I had smeared the foreheads of my family with tar" (7). This rhetorical self-description captures Salma's sense of moral and emotional guilt, being contaminated by her socially unlawful relation. It reflects her realization of the social and cultural ramifications of bringing about an indelible mark of dishonor to the collective reputation of her tribe. According to the normative codes of Hima, the Levantine Bedouin village, where Salma's family lives, any sexual act outside marriage is an infringement on the honor code of both the family and the tribe, which, according to this code, must be cleansed by the death of the female offender. This belief resonates with Unni Wikan's assertion that honor killings are carried out "in order to restore honor, not just for a single person but for a collective" (90). It is in this vein that the novel addresses the intense consequences faced by women who disobey patriarchal norms within their traditional societies, emphasizing the harsh penalties imposed on them for damaging the shared code of honor.

While in England, Salma spells out the motivation behind her transgressive sexual activity by expressing her feeling of remorse over her past sin, “[f]orgive me, Allah, for I have sinned. The heat of passion had made me bend” (6). Suggesting a religious framework for her moral reflection, this confessional plea for divine forgiveness shows that Salma’s sexual engagement is stimulated by strong emotions or desires, which drive her to deviate from moral standards, revealing an inner conflict between personal temptation and the sense of righteousness. Arguably, this conflict challenges the unforgiving perception of the entire society towards deviant women like Salma, as it takes on an absolute judgment on them, even if they do not fully depart from the established conventional and religious norms. In this way, this depiction of Salma examines rigid societal judgments imposed on women, manifesting the disparity between instinctive personal tendencies and cultural expectations.

In a sense, the novel critiques honor crimes, problematizing the restrictive dimensions of the social code of honor through presenting Middle Eastern Arab regions as a special place for recurring honor killings. This can be observed through Salma’s first meeting with Khairyya, the Lebanese nun, who helps rescue Salma by taking her to the convent in Lebanon. Khairyya introduces herself to Salma in the protective custody by saying “I want to help you get out of the country”; “I am a civil nun from Lebanon. I have saved many young women like you. I prayed for all of you for years, but now I only travel between prisons and smuggle out women. I cannot bear the thought of an innocent soul getting killed” (46). Apart from the notion that the Lebanese nun comes to Hima on a mission of women’s solidarity to save the lives of women like Salma, this quotation demonstrates that she has managed to rescue other women in nearby places in the Levantine region, which indicates that there are numerous women who are killed, or are in danger of being killed, in the defense of family honor. It also reveals that there are many women, quite like the jailed Salma, who are domestically violated by being subjected to unjust treatment, as they are

imprisoned for an unspecified period – albeit for their own safety from one perspective – without committing a legal crime that warrants a certain punishment in the form of imprisonment.

This is what officer Salim confirms by telling Salma, “you are in protective custody, which means you are here not because you have done something, but for your own protection. If I release you and you stay in this country you will get killed in front of the prison gates” (46). His justification reveals that the local law preserves specific codes to protect women threatened by honor killings. However, it simultaneously reflects a legal-social crisis, exposing these women to a form of abuse and punitive treatment as a means of safeguarding them from another form of abuse. This protective custody, run by local authorities, echoes the colonial mental asylum in *Pillars of Salt*, where Maha and Hannyeh endure multiple forms of violence under English colonial rule. Both institutions function as oppressive spaces, where neopatriarchal power is enforced through legal and medical systems, demonstrating a continuity of gendered oppression from colonial to postcolonial contexts. The novel’s portrayal suggests, however, the paradox that no matter how much the protective custody is complicit in violence and oppression, it represents the only viable way of survival for women like Salma within the local context, which is also presented through the tragic story of another female inmate, who is shot dead by her enraged brother at the prison’s gates immediately after being released by the authorities.

Given this lethal alternative, Miss Nailah, Salma’s school teacher, who helps her escape her family, directs Salma by advising her, “[t]he best thing to do is to hand you over to the police and pray that they will keep you in protective custody forever” (37). It is in this respect that Suaad Muhammad Alqahtani clarifies in her analysis of Faqir’s novel that “the limited options available to Salma to save her life illustrate the helplessness of women within a strict patriarchal society” (80). The teacher’s advice highlights the acute gravity of this

crisis and the grim reality that even well-meaning and educated women, despite their positive intentions and solidarity, see no alternative but to subscribe to this stringent system that perpetuates women's suffering.

The critique of the prison as an oppressive space for women becomes more intense through Salma's experience of delivering her baby girl Layla in the cell, who is taken from her after birth. Salma describes this moment in this way: "[o]n the filthy floor of the prison room a bundle of flesh pushed its way out. I shouted, I cried, I begged, then delivered a swollen bundle of flesh, red like beetroot. Alcoholic women, prostitutes, and killers of husbands watched while I, the sinner, gave birth on the floor of the Islah prison" (40). The act of giving birth in such circumstances can be seen as a moment of powerlessness for Salma. The idea that she is surrounded by other deviant women in jail, witnessing her childbirth without being capable of offering assistance or support exposes the lack of female agency in oppressive environments. This situation not only illustrates the vulnerability of women within the institution of the prison but also unveils systemic deficiencies in providing humane conditions and medical care for emergency circumstances such as the delivery of babies. The imagery of Salma giving birth in such a dehumanizing environment increases the sense of exclusion and neglect experienced by female inmates. Moreover, it questions the roles of power and collusion in preserving disempowering systems of gendered oppression. The absence of any supportive intervention from fellow inmates or prison authorities during such a critical moment further intensifies women's helplessness dictated by unfair orders of the entrenched patriarchal structure.

Furthermore, Salma's comparison of female inmates to ants accentuates this theme of vulnerability and systemic harm,

[a]nts were tiny insects crawling on this earth looking for food and shelter. they were defenseless against floods, the hot sun, famines, and each other. They were exposed

to the elements. We were exposed to the elements like an open wound. They put us in prison, took away our children, killed us, and we were supposed to say God was only testing his true believers. (93)

This analogy suggests that the local prison operates as a site of oppression, where women find themselves stripped of their independence and dignity. By comparing the female inmates to defenseless ants, Salma underlines their exposure to the harshness of their societal environment without any protection or means of survival, similar to facing severe and uncontrollable natural forces. The passage also examines the abuse inflicted upon female inmates by society which prevents them from freedom by imprisoning them while rationalizing their suffering as a divine test.

The environment within the prison further exemplifies the brutality of this oppressive system. When Salma and other women sing together in prison, they are faced with hostility and verbal abuse from the guard, who shouts, “[n]o one cares about you. You are just cheap sluts, so why don’t you shut up?” The guard then adds, “[i]f I shoot one of you, your families would thank me” (86). This reaction reflects the misogyny embedded within the prison system; it also illustrates the dominant suppression of the female inmates’ voice. The guard’s words display the contempt and verbal abuse directed at these women, fostering their alleged worthlessness within society, which renders their death seem insignificant and unquestionable. Through these distressing experiences and vivid depictions, the narrative addresses broad issues of gender-based violence and pervasive systemic oppression. It exhibits how institutions designated in essence to protect and rehabilitate individual women usually become complicit in sustaining harm and abuse against them. Salma’s story, hence, serves as a powerful indictment of the social and legal structures that, instead of safeguarding women adequately, submit them to an ongoing cycle of marginalization and victimization. This systemic devaluation of women complies with the fate of Maha and Hannyeh in *Pillars*

of *Salt*, whose confinement to a mental institution by their families reflects the use of institutional spaces to discard women deemed disruptive, disobedient, or socially worthless.

Beyond the idea that women threatened by honor killings might be jailed for their own protection, the narrative makes references to several instances of honor killings in the Levantine region of Hima. Before Salma decides to return from England to her birthplace, where her brother Mahmoud eventually shoots her, the novel describes the murder of Salma's illegitimate daughter, Layla. Claiming that Layla's existence is a dishonor to the family due to her being the product of an unlawful relationship, Mahmoud drowns her in the Long Well while priding himself on his inhumane action, "like mother, like daughter" (242). Layla's victimization, nevertheless, extends beyond being thrown alive into the well by her uncle, as the tribesmen show no empathy towards the way of the innocent girl's death. In the last part of the narrative, Salma's mother tells her, "your father and his friend Jadaan fished her out and buried her remains in the cemetery against the wishes of the men of the tribe" (242). This signifies the rigid and dehumanizing facets of the honor code and the absolute adherence to patriarchal cultural traditions which prioritize family reputation over female lives, while, at the same time, some hope for individual subversive resistance to the rigid codes of the honor killing. Quite like Mahmoud, the tribesmen view Layla's very existence as a stigma of disgrace on their collective dignity, exemplifying the different paradigms of violence and repression that devastate innocent lives.

Indeed, Layla is not a victim of a sexual act; she is rather a victim of the remorseless patriarchal law: literally the embodiment of what is seen as her mother's transgressive act. Because she is a female, she must pay the cost of honor for her mother in her blood. This can correspond with Sally Engle Meery's account in which she regards honor crime as a kind of aggression against women and holds that it is "a form of gender violence rooted in the conceptions of family honor and shame" (130). As the mother's and the daughter's cases

in Faqir's text disclose it, in accordance with Meery's theoretical account, the concept behind honor killing is a discriminatory gender-based phenomenon in that what is seen by the community as a crime is only linked to women's sexuality seen as deviation, and as a result, the victims of honor killings are always women. In Bedouin society, restoring family honor often involves the expulsion of the perceived transgressor, typically a woman, from existence, even though this act cannot completely erase the wrongdoing, not even through the drastic measure of honor killing. The truth remains unavoidable and may resurface in narratives despite attempts to suppress it. The social code of honor pertains to the tribal cultural background. Traditional societies like the Bedouins still have a powerful sense of pride towards their traditions, values, and beliefs which are deeply rooted in their perspectives. The social boundaries of the family in such societies are defined by honor and any transgression by the female members is harmful to this honor. Honor killing relates the concept of honor to the purity of the unmarried daughters and sisters. In Bedouin societies, men are responsible for the maintenance of reputation and honor, which are only ruined by those women who conduct any extramarital sexual behavior.

Reflecting on this, Faqir points out in her essay "Intrafamily Femicide in Defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan" (2001) that obeying this code results in "the killings of women for deviation from sexual norms imposed by society" (69), and this interpretation implies that these deviations can be considered as a prohibited infringement on social standards from the perspective of a certain kind of normativity. Faqir, however, also elaborates that crimes motivated by honor are "rooted in the histories of the conservative societies of Arab cultures" (69). As the family is one of the most powerful institutions of these societies, honor is linked to this entity. Honor killing is a concept related to family honor. It is a reflexive action undertaken with the aim of keeping up or restoring the reputation of a particular group (at

least from their perspective), but it is also a code that reveals the asymmetrical gender construction of the societies, where honor killing is part of tribal and customary law.

Challenging the asymmetrical gender construction, the novel makes it clear that the man's sexual departure from the morally established or sanctioned standard is not deemed a violation of the shared honor code within these societies. Hamdan, Salma's partner in the illegitimate sexual act, does not face any repercussions, as he does not, from the tribe's perception, bring dishonor to his family by engaging in a sexual act outside marriage. Upon discovering Salma's pregnancy, he shifts the responsibility onto her and absolves himself of any charge. Salma narrates Hamdan's reaction, "when he finally looked up at me he was a different man, his brown eyes burning with anger rather than desire. He cleared his voice and said, 'You are responsible. You have seduced me with the yearning tunes of your pipe and swaying hips'" (151). This attitude reflects a deeply ingrained misogyny in which women are held accountable for men's desires and actions. Instead of acknowledging his own role in the situation as Salma expects, Hamdan accuses her of seduction. The change of his attitude further emphasizes Hamdan's objectification of Salma, reducing her to a source of temptation and trouble rather than a lover worthy of empathy and support.

Ironically, the novel shows that exploitative men like Hamdan in such an Arab Bedouin society refuse to marry a woman who was engaged in a sexual act, even if they themselves were participants in the illegitimate sexual practice. This is evident in Hamdan's objectification of Salma as "a slut, cheap, 'damaged goods'" (215). His derogatory view of Salma, after she loses her virginity to him outside of marriage, uncovers the double standards in gender relations in the Arab Bedouin society. While Hamdan engages in the same sexual relationship with Salma, he condemns her for the same act, revealing a hypocritical stance characteristic of patriarchal societies. By referring to Salma as "damaged goods", Hamdan degrades her to a devalued commodity rather than recognizing her as a person with dignity.

His misogynistic judgment exposes how women's personal choice and autonomy are limited and controlled, reflecting broad issues of gender inequality and the systemic oppression of women. This aspect of gender discrimination can be interpreted through the lens of the Arab feminist El Saadawi, who asserts that "honour was always linked to the behaviour of women, to a particular part in the lower half of their bodies. Honour was never linked to the behaviour of men" (*Walking* 76). Criticizing the gender bias surrounding honor killing, El Saadawi adds that shooting a woman in the defense of honor, the man is "declared innocent [...], for he was a forthright man who has insisted on defending his honour" (*Walking* 76). The representation of Hamdan's attitude in the novel exemplifies this theoretical framework proposed by El Saadawi, which addresses the gender bias that exonerates men but condemns women for the same sexual actions.

Moreover, the novel also narrates the story of Sabha, Salma's schoolmate, and how her brother shoots her in the name of honor. What is noteworthy in these killings is the widespread acceptance of this unmerciful code against women, which can be observed in the old women's whispered speech when the sound of gunshots can be heard. One of them remarks that "good riddance! We've cleansed our shame with her blood" (77). Similarly, in the final scene, as Salma is about to be killed near her daughter's grave, she overhears a group of women rationalizing the action: "dishonor can only be wiped off with blood" (243). This pervasive acceptance of such violent acts calls attention to how it is taken for granted that honor killing restores what is seen by the community as the violated honor of the family. The community, including women, unconditionally subscribes to the prejudiced conventions of these patriarchal laws, without questioning their validity. Such blind adherence to patriarchal codes echoes the collective submission to religious discourse that dictates women's behavior as explored in *Pillars of Salt*, where women's conformity to rigid neopatriarchal discourse is similarly enforced through social ostracism and moral

condemnation – as seen when Maha faces community censure for venturing alone in the mountains to escape her brother's threats.

This blind subscription further manifests itself in the reaction of Salma's mother upon the discovery of Salma's sexual relation and illegitimate pregnancy. This is how her mother reacts: "you smeared our name with tar. Your brother will shoot you between the eyes" (26). Obviously, the stance of Salma's mother is passive, as she does not attempt to help her daughter, but reminds her of the inevitable consequences of her deed. Her passive acceptance mirrors the way women in both novels internalize patriarchal values, becoming complicit in their own oppression and that of other women. On the whole, these attitudes imply that patriarchy is an inherent paradigm in these societies, where masculine and feminine roles are rigidly defined, and where women are completely subservient to the given patriarchal and misogynistic codes. This pattern demonstrates how different but interconnected patriarchal mechanisms operate across Faqir's work, whether through honor codes in *My Name is Salma* or religious discourse in *Pillars of Salt*, to regulate and control women's bodies and choices, illustrating the multiple and overlapping systems of oppression that transcend specific cultural or temporal contexts while maintaining their fundamental function of women's subjugation.

Apart from depicting honor killings as a form of violence and a manifestation of unequal gender dynamics in the Levant, the novel explores various models of Eastern patriarchal society, where women are relegated to the most inferior position. In contrast to the liberal Western world, where Salma later finds freedom in England, she recalls her mother rebuking her for not feeding the cows, cleaning the barn, and milking the goats. Salma's remark, "that was before I ran to freedom" (8), links women's freedom to breaking away from conventional domestic duties. This remark juxtaposes Salma's newfound sense of liberation in England with her past life and the expectations imposed by her mother. The

rebukes highlight the traditional gender roles and domestic responsibilities that define her upbringing; it also signifies Salma's escape from these constraints and societal norms.

Another patriarchal framework present in the novel is related to polygyny, exemplified when Salma mentions the reliance of the people of Hima on agricultural work. As she narrates, in rainy weather, they used to go on trips to the city to sell their crops: "some in Hima would have seen in it a promise of making enough money to take on a second wife" (32). This highlights a traditional gendered division, where men are primarily involved in profit making activities. Such division reinforces patriarchal structures, granting men greater economic power and control over resources. In this context, men may leverage their economic power and financial earnings to exert control over women, including through polygamous marriages. Here, women are viewed not as equal partners but as commodities or symbols of status within gender relationships. This representation of polygyny resonates with Um Saad's narrative in *Pillars of Salt*. While Bedouin men in *My Name is Salma* may take on a second wife benefiting from their profit made from agricultural work in the context of the Bedouin patriarchal culture, Abu Saad takes on a second wife and subordinates Um Saad to fulfill his lust and reinforce his masculine supremacy in the urban setting of Amman in *Pillars of Salt*. This comparative portrayal thus reveals how the same oppressive mechanism works out differently, exposing the varied manifestations of patriarchal control across different contexts.

In turn, within the patriarchal milieu of the West, because Salma is an alien immigrant with a non-conforming cultural identity, she is exposed to multiple forms of racism as the feminine cultural other in the English context. As the narrative shows, apart from the idea that England is represented as a sanctuary place that accords Salma a chance of survival and security, it is, at the same time, a discriminatory and racist society: a xenophobic environment, where cultural difference is sometimes denounced as an illegality

and otherness is suspected as a threat. In many instances in the novel, it becomes evident that ethnic minority women like Salma are underestimated by the English society; they are at times misrepresented by the force of stereotypical perception that, in turn, uncovers how English people patronize Arab groups as minority others. In this regard, Sybil Adam elucidates that “stereotyping processes place Muslims in Britain into a position of perpetual foreignness. Salma’s experience operates within a particular context of contemporary racism that depicts people of color as illegal” (12). On a particular occasion, Salma is dehumanized, undergoing criminal-like treatment when she is, upon arrival, placed in solitary confinement in the detention center of Southampton port for two months by the English authorities, for they doubt the authenticity of her personal documents based on her noncompliant physical appearance. Even though she has legal access with an English citizenship, Salma experiences discriminatory attitudes by English people because her skin color and the visible markers of her cultural identity mark her difference and show up her foreignness.

Trying to access the resources of the public library in Exeter, Salma mentions that although she is eligible for a subscription as a British citizen, she has “waited for the librarian, who was rummaging through the drawers, to find an excuse to deny [her] membership”. Coming up with an excuse, the librarian then says, “you are an alien, we have no national insurance number for you; you cannot get in” (71). This incident showcases prospective obstacles that immigrants like Salma may encounter due to their non-corresponding cultural identity. Despite her legal status as a British citizen, Salma’s perceived alienness operates as a justification for exclusion from the native perspective, mirroring the tangible disconnection between the legal citizenship of minority groups and social acceptance. The incident also reflects a societal issue in which institutional policies and individual prejudices intersect to project racism onto foreign subjects. Whether intentional or unintentional, the librarian’s disapproval of Salma’s right to subscribe to a

public facility is part of a larger pattern of attitude that continually destabilizes Salma's efforts to integrate and establish a sense of belonging. This not only restricts her access to resources and opportunities but also maintains her marginalized status, questioning how her identity as a British citizen is secondary to her identity as a non-white foreigner.

Similarly, the sick Salma visits an English doctor, who is suspicious of her identity, as she introduces herself using her newly adopted English name (Sally), but she has dark skin with a veil covering her head. The doctor's wonder, "your name is Miss Sally Asher? How preposterous!" (82), indicates a strong reaction of surprise or disbelief, finding it unreasonable to reconcile Salma's physical appearance with her mismatched name. Arising from preconceived perceptions or stereotypes about individuals' names and appearances, this interaction reflects the doctor's lack of cultural sensitivity or understanding. By questioning the legitimacy of Salma's name, he implicitly dismisses her cultural identity and background, which can cause Salma's alienation and amplifies her feeling of otherness and marginalization as an immigrant individual in England.

The English doctor realizes Salma's rights for medical care as a British citizen, but he asks her in a remarkably chauvinistic way not to waste his time and consume the government money. Stemming from Salma's non-whiteness, these unjust treatments resonate with Hazel Carby's view, claiming that it is ultimately race that functions as the prime reason that renders the position and experience of women of color "not only marginal but also invisible" (11) – or, perhaps one could say, far too visible, marking them out as Others. Reflecting on migrants in diaspora, McLeod demonstrates that the dominant discourses of race, ethnicity, and gender may function to exclude them from being recognized as part of the nation's people (212). In summary, these incidents display how racial prejudices diffuse into ordinary interactions among natives and migrants, revealing the insidious influence of structural racism and xenophobia on people of color including

gender groups. Following Carby's and McLeod's conceptions, Salma's marginalization in the West can be attributed to the racial and gendered bias inflicted upon migrant women of color, rendering them invisible – or markedly visible – within a variety of societal frameworks.

In the novel, it becomes clear that Salma is aware of the reasons behind her state of social exclusion in the Western space. In a mode of hesitation and surrender after a lot of trying and failing to assimilate and to establish a genuine sense of belonging, Salma comes to terms with her position that “an outlander [...] must not confront the natives” (143); this is because the attitudes of the native English people overtly and covertly keep reminding Salma of her foreignness in every social activity in which she engages with them. Salma expresses her distress about this continual attitude when she says, “every morning I was reminded of my alienness” (26). The repetitive inquiry about her origins, “how many times had I been asked this question since I came to Britain?” (48), becomes a symbol of her ongoing marginalization which she also encapsulates by describing it as “a curse upon my head; it was my fate: my accent and the color of my skin” (141). These statements highlight the routine nature of her exclusion, with the constant reminders of her foreignness further destabilizing her sense of self and impeding her acceptance in the newly adopted English space.

Furthermore, Salma asserts that the attitude of her English boss, Max, changes depending on his mood. Observing that a Japanese company buys one of the competitive shops nearby, Salma narrates that Max says to her, “‘take your filthy foreign hands – no offense – off my shop and go back home, eaters of monkey brains.’ Max had read somewhere that monkeys’ brains were a delicacy in the Far East, so he decided that all Asians were snake-, monkey- and donkeyeaters” (87). Max's comment is fraught with xenophobia and racism. By mentioning Salma's foreignness and generalizing offensive remarks about Asian

people, Max shows a discriminatory mindset and stereotype-based prejudices about cultural others through his ostracizing and dehumanizing language. His assumption that a Japanese company owning a nearby shop somehow relates to Asian dietary habits is unfounded and reflects a lack of understanding about or neglect of business politics and cultural diversity in his country. Max's derogatory remarks are abusive and alienating for Salma, who is of Arab origins. While she is not directly targeted by Max's racism, his prejudiced attitude can contribute to undermining her sense of belonging and increasing her feeling of isolation and marginalization as an Arab minority in England.

The narrative indicates that Salma makes palpable attempts at restructuring her sense of identity in order to adapt to English culture and also to transcend her segregation. She endeavors as much as possible to perform manners of Britishness and feminine behavioral conduct of whiteness in the mainstream white society of Exeter so as to stand as a conformist individual and a fully accepted English citizen. Nevertheless, Salma is systematically disempowered, repeatedly encountering social subordination. At a certain point, Max expresses one of the crucial reasons and the historical roots behind the degradation of cultural others by English people, "we used to be lords and masters. Just look at us now Look at us". He adds that "the sun never set on the British Empire" (118). This is what Salma's Pakistani friend Parvin brings to Salma's attention in reflecting on the recurring superior attitudes towards Salma, "what is left of the Empire are those little islands of nostalgia" (10). This reveals a sense of longing for the past dominance of the British empire and the colonists' imposition of white supremacy, but it also shows that although the age of the empire has technically ended, the historical legacy of colonialism and its remnants continue to influence contemporary attitudes towards non-white others.

In the novel, the way Salma's English landlord, Liz, treats her exemplifies a colonial attitude that maintains a whole set of binary divisions such as us and them, white and non-

white, superior and inferior, and master and servant. Having grown up in colonized India, Liz often hallucinates about her past as a colonial master surrounded by Indian servants, nostalgically stating, “I wish I had never set foot in India. Everyone looked up to me and served me. Servants carried me to school, you dressed me, Hita cooked for us, Mr. Crooked Hands took care of the garden, Riza guarded the gate” (149–150). This quotation implies the hierarchical and exploitative nature of colonial rule when indigenous populations were made inferior to British colonists out of a dominating framework. Liz’s wish that she had never gone to the colonized India, however, conveys a deep ambivalence that could arise from a subliminal recognition of the moral contradictions of colonialism. Being part of the colonial system, she benefits from exploiting the colonized people, but she also remains complicit in its inhumane oppression.

The contrast between Liz’s romanticized view of the colonial past and Salma’s perspective as an immigrant from a former colony like India underlines the cultural and socioeconomic disparities between the two characters. Salma, representing the colonized population, views Liz’s nostalgia with skepticism or resentment, confronting the exploitation and oppression that colonialism retained. In return, Liz’s wistful longing for colonial dominance inadvertently unveils the injustices and inequalities rooted in colonial enterprises. As Adam explains, “Liz transposes a historical colonial relationship, that of master and servant, onto this contemporary exchange between white British-born and asylum seeker” (10). This dynamic further showcases the gendered dimension of power in which women from disenfranchised backgrounds are relegated to subordinate positions. Liz’s assumption that she can demean Salma comes out from entrenched gender norms that devalue women’s voices and agency.

Salma recognizes Liz’s superior treatment, noting that Liz “would speak to [her] as if [she] were her servant in India” (48). Salma also describes Liz’s behavior as “her older

self returning” (201), reflecting a colonial mindset that imposes hierarchies based on race, ethnicity, and gender. In one scene, Salma helps the drunk Liz but gets wounded, as Liz carries a riding whip and hits the bottles. Salma narrates, “while on the landing waiting for the taxi I heard Liz’s laughter, then she said, as if talking to one of her Indian maids, ‘Slaves must never breathe English air’” (157). This statement reveals ingrained racial prejudice and a sense of colonialist superiority. By labeling her Indian servants as “slaves”, Liz belittles them (even below the legal status of natives in India or in the imperial colonies in general), perpetuating harmful stereotypes and preserving colonial attitudes of domination and subjugation.

Liz’s remark reflects the enduring legacy of colonialism and imperialism in which racial superiority and exploitation were commonplace. The notion that certain individuals are undeserving of “English air” echoes the historical dividing discrimination experienced by colonized peoples under British hegemony: the British are entitled to go to, and to take control of, the colonies, but the colonized are not even allowed to take a step in Britain. In this regard, Adam demonstrates that “the character of Liz and her relationship to Salma as an immigrant is significant for how it reminds the reader of the connections between British colonial history and present-day xenophobic attitudes. Liz frequently recalls her life growing up in colonial India at the same time as verbally abusing Salma based on her refugee status” (14). Ultimately, the relationship between Liz and Salma shows how colonial histories continue to influence social and racial interactions within postcolonial locations.

At the hospital, Salma lies about her wound caused by Liz’s whip, claiming that she mistakenly wounded herself with a knife while cutting carrots. She justifies this to avoid causing troubles for the old woman Liz and, more significantly, to protect herself from potential discrimination or mistreatment. By downplaying the situation, Salma inclines to divert negative attention to herself and to safeguard her well-being, choosing to avoid direct

confrontations with the natives. It is in this sense that Faqir's narrative is, thus, critical of the colonialist authority and its discriminatory traces that Arab immigrant women suffer from as displaced subjects in contemporary society. Even though the colonialist sovereignty is not visible immediately, its discriminatory identifications are implicitly manifest in the superior attitudes of the English people, who still insist on the glory of their strength in the imperial time when they used to be the dominant subject.

Salma's experiences of discriminatory treatments can be interpreted – using Bhabha's concepts – as a colonialist discourse that plays an active role, from a colonialist perspective, in revitalizing the Western hegemony over otherness through the reproduction of cultural differentiation in a postcolonial context (163). In this vein, Bhabha notes that otherness in the colonial discourse is “an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity” (96). Linking discrimination to his notion of cultural hybridity, Bhabha further elaborates that discrimination within the discourse of cultural colonialism is produced “through the strategy of disavowal, the *reference* of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something *different* – a mutation, a hybrid” (159).

In this way, Bhabha considers hybridity as the result of a colonialist discourse that reinforces the sovereignty of the formerly Western colonizers, stating that “[h]ybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority)” (159). In line with this, Adam explains that Salma is relocated within a cultural framework (Exeter) in which the attitudes of the English people towards immigrants are linked to the history of

empire as one of the aspects of Britishness. Adam elaborates that “Britain’s amnesiac inability to properly mourn the loss of power that came with the end of the empire actively contributes to contemporary distrust of immigrants” (3–4), the very complexity that entraps Salma in Exeter.

Moreover, the novel depicts a distinct paradigm of the discrimination inflicted upon Arab women immigrants like Salma. At the initial meeting between Salma and Parvin before becoming good friends, the Pakistani immigrant Parvin refuses to share the room with the Arab Salma at the hostel in Exeter. In an exchange between Parvin and the hostel’s porter, the porter responds to the English immigrant woman’s question about “where does [Salma] come from?” as “[s]omewhere in the Middle East. Fucking Arabic! She rode a camel all the way from Arabia” (5). Parvin, in return, replies while spitting “I am not going to share the room with an Arab” (5). While the porter’s words reflect the perception that Arab immigrants are backward people, who still celebrate a primitive lifestyle in the deserts of Arabia, Parvin’s reply implies how she looks down upon Salma as a less human being. On this stereotypical perception, Sarnou makes the remark that Arabs as an ethnic group in a Western country are often “vilified and denigrated, based on a Eurocentric perception of the ‘oriental’ Arab world” (184). More significantly, the incident, however, highlights the layers of prejudice existing even among marginalized groups. Parvin, herself an immigrant and most probably having endured discrimination, displays racist attitudes towards the Arab woman Salma by refusing to share a room with her. Suggesting that she has internalized some of the Eurocentric prejudices about Arabs, Parvin’s comments of contempt indicate how colonial and racist constructs can impact individuals from various ethnic backgrounds, driving them to espouse and perpetuate these abusive stereotypes against each other in a multicultural space like England.

Additionally, the novel delineates that Salma faces gender-based exploitation in England. Although her boss at the bar, Allan, treats her well, he sometimes steals glances at her body, making Salma uncomfortable and reminding her that “he is a man”, while she wishes “him to be just a friend without desires and stolen glances” (148). Allan further exploits her by asking her to dress attractively to benefit his business. This situation reflects that Allan offers Salma an evening job without considering her ethnicity or color, focusing instead on her gender identity, as women are often preferred for such roles in the Western context. In reading how Salma is perceived based on her gendered identity in Exeter, Seda Canpolat clarifies that “Salma dramatizes the various ways in which the white racist gaze assails the non-white woman’s self-image, targeting her dark-skinned body as the most immediate site of difference” (26). Moreover, Salma’s body is exploited by the Englishman Jim, whom she invites for tea and subsequently has a sexual affair with. Despite treating her gently at first, Jim ignores her when they meet again, dismissing her with, “I am really busy these days. See you around” (93). These experiences emphasize the issue of gender-based exploitation, demonstrating how Salma’s value is reduced to her physical attractiveness as a woman, rather than her individual dignity.

Overall, one can conclude that Faqir’s novel challenges multiple forms of prejudices to which her Arab female protagonist is exposed within the two worlds (the East and the West), where she is – in McLeod’s words – “twice colonized – by colonialist realities and representations, and by patriarchal ones too” (75). Within these contexts, the victimized Salma is caught in a web of different oppressive forces that interact in her life experiences as overlapping modes of subjugation. In her local sphere, her subjugation is rooted in the established gender inequalities of the patriarchal Arab world. The social code of honor serves as a significant example, illustrating the multiple forms of abuse faced by those Arab women who defy the given norms encapsulating the concept of honor. In the Western sphere,

Salma's marginalization, in turn, arises from native attitudes of racism and xenophobia which are based on her non-conforming cultural, religious, class, racial, and gender identities. Ultimately, these modes of subjugation attest to the multifaceted nature of her oppression across different socio-cultural landscapes.

3. Evolving Identity: An Arab Woman in Transition

Faqir's novel delineates the complex process of identity negotiation and adaptation experienced by the Arab Bedouin female protagonist, Salma. In essence, the narrative traces her forced dislocation from her place of origin, charting her substantial transformation, as she embarks on several peregrinations from the Levantine Bedouin village of Hima to Lebanon, Cyprus, and ultimately the predominantly white society of Exeter in England. Salma's diasporic expatriation and the scattered experiences she endures within different locations situate her as a liminal subject, caught between the oppressive forces of her threatening past and the discriminatory realities of her present. This double marginalization – originating in both the Eastern cultural context she leaves and the Western cultural context she moves to – culminates in her pursuit of identity formation and her strife for integration and belonging within a postcolonial framework.

In the novel, Salma's multiple metamorphoses and liminal positionality are symbolized through various instances of her narrative. This thematic concern is particularly embodied in the repeated use of the subtitle "Where the River Meets the Sea". This expression appears both as Salma's response to the immigration officer's question about her address in England and in Sister Asher's description of Southampton. It conveys a rich array of connotations, ranging from change and transformation to boundless possibilities. The imagery of the river merging with the sea serves as a metaphor for openness, adventure, and discovery, reflecting the new opportunities that Salma's relocation to England would offer, as well as her transitions from particular stages to other ones. Her movement from the

familiarity of her Bedouin village to the unknown expanse of Western society mirrors the confluence of the river and the sea, embodying her exploration of selfhood and the potential emergence of new aspects of her subjectivity. Crucially, the expression highlights the liminality of her existence, as she oscillates between two worlds, two cultures, and two identities, showcasing her disoriented state and complex journey of transformation. This interpretation is consonant with McLeod's assertion that the migrant's state of in-betweenness can lead to "immense possibilities and creativity, even though it evokes the pain of loss and of not being firmly rooted in a secure place" (215). Salma's geographical and cultural relocation encapsulates this discrepancy, revealing both the richness of her voyage and the risks of restructuring her multiple identities. By putting Salma's personal journey within McLeod's framework, one can figure out the dual nature of her experience, marked by the fertile potential of her hybrid state and the task of retaining a consistent sense of self.

As the events unfold, it becomes conspicuous that England is depicted as an asylum, where Salma seeks refuge escaping forcibly the reach of the tribal code of honor. In this context, the Arab locality functions as a gender-based liminalizing space, wherein Salma's only chance of survival is confinement. England itself is also depicted as a liminalizing space, where Salma is marginalized due to her race, skin color, religion, class, language, and gender. To overcome the double jeopardy of both returning to her homeland and confronting the dominant racism of English society, Salma forms new identities – cultural, religious, gendered, and linguistic. This self-reconstruction, which entails the suppression of the performative manners of her original identity and the development of distinct ones that allow her to blend into the new environment, is described by Salma narrating that "Salma resisted, but Sally must adapt. I kept looking up 'adapt' in the Oxford English Dictionary: Adapt: fit, adjust, change" (7). Here, the use of the third-person mode to distinguish her different

identities is emblematic of her disoriented state and the fragmentation of her selfhood. It manifests the inner conflict between the Arab Salma and the British Sally, marking her struggle to balance cultural preservation with integration. It exhibits the protagonist's double identity and the tension between her Arab heritage and her efforts to adapt to English societal norms.

This internal struggle discloses the challenge of maintaining her Arab cultural identity while bearing the burden of adjusting to Western expectations. Her search for the definition of "adapt" in the dictionary signals her willingness to explore and recognize the process of adaptation, which requires a state of flexibility and resilience towards change in the interest of coping with the new yet different circumstances. Moreover, Salma's inner conflict is shown in the unrelenting comparisons she continually makes in every aspect between home culture and host culture. Throughout the narrative, Salma distinguishes between various aspects like landscapes, foods, drinks, gender relations, freedom, and education, highlighting how she is torn between two societies with an undefined position and liminal existence. This duality shows how her original identity influences her conformity to the English identity, while simultaneously, her new identity distances her from belonging to her Arab origins.

Comparing landscapes while in Exeter, Salma narrates in retrospect in the opening scene, "the dewy greenness of the hills, the whiteness of the sheep, the grayness of the skies carried me to my distant past, to a small mud village tucked away between the deserted hills, to Hima, to silver-green olive groves gleaming in the morning light" (6). Juxtaposing the imagery of the English landscape with Salma's memories of her homeland, this passage evokes a sense of uprooting and nostalgia. It captures Salma's yearning for the lost homeland and her turbulence to reconcile her past with her present condition in England. Describing the pastoral beauty and serenity of the English landscape while feeling at home or comforted

by this scenery, Salma is transported back to her distant past and in her small village in Hima. Even though she attempts to get over the past, Salma remains in some way chained to her original culture, which prevents her from establishing a new personhood and full integration in the new socio-cultural landscape.

In one of her ventures in exploring English culture, Salma attempts to accommodate with the local food, drawing a contrast with her own culinary experiences. She describes her first encounter with British traditional cuisine, stating, “a few years ago, I had tasted my first fish and chips, but my mountainous Arab stomach could not digest the fat, which floated in my tummy for days” (7). This passage clarifies Salma’s hardships in following British cultural manners through its traditional dishes. The description of her stomach as unaccustomed to the fattiness of the dish highlights the physical discomfort and digestive difficulties she faces in acclimating to new dietary practices. Remarkably, this instance tackles one of the barriers regarding social integration by immigrants like Salma. It reveals how ordinary habits and preferences can influence their experiences in the new environment, where everyday activities like eating can even work out as a site of difference and a hindrance to adaptation.

Salma compares human relationships by examining her sexual affairs with an Arab man and an Englishman, each within their cultural contexts. Comparing her relationships with Jim in Exeter and Hamdan in Hima, she notes, “Jim was a gentleman; he had his condoms ready [...] No yanking of hair, crying or rending of garments” (57). She also reflects on the perception of these relationships from the viewpoints of their respective communities, stating, “without the approval of the elders, without papers, without a marriage contract I went ahead and slept with a stranger” (77). Stressing the differing values and consequences of her sexual affairs in the two patriarchal societies, Salma recounts her feelings the morning after dating with Jim, “all [she] wanted to do was to jump up and wash [her] body with soap

and water including your insides, do [her] ablutions then pray for forgiveness” (57). This contrast implies how extramarital sexuality is treated differently in each context: while Salma may fall victim to honor killing to restore the violated shame in the Eastern culture, she purges her sexual wrongdoing through seeking divine forgiveness as a personal choice in the Western culture.

In her relationship with Hamdan, he objectifies Salma and treats her in an aggressive way to uphold his masculine power. He exploits her body by making her pregnant, then leaving her in a heavy predicament without sharing any responsibility in the face of blameful society. This emphasizes the severe consequences she faces within this cultural context, where the burden of shame and responsibility falls solely on her. In contrast, while Jim’s behavior can be seen as exploitative, too, as he abandons her after their date and never returns, Salma’s response to their encounter is significantly different. Although her immediate desire to cleanse herself and seek forgiveness reflects her internalized guilt and the pressure to conform to cultural and religious norms, what makes a significant difference is that she does not have to face consequences from her community like honor killing: it is only she who has to come to terms with her sexuality.

These relationships illustrate Salma’s suffering from cultural and personal limits, emphasizing the intersection between consent, accountability, and societal expectations. Hamdan’s treatment results in tangible consequences, increasing her vulnerability within her cultural context, where a woman’s honor is closely tied to her sexual behavior. Conversely, her encounter with Jim, while momentarily distressing, prompts her to reflect on her autonomy and the necessity of self-purification, underscoring her quest for redemption and self-worth amidst patriarchal constraints. Salma’s contrasting experiences with Jim and Hamdan also accentuate her discovery of identity and selfhood within two distinct cultural frameworks. With Hamdan, the relationship leaves a lasting physical and social impact,

reinforcing her subordinate position within her native patriarchal society. With Jim, the relationship challenges her perception of self and morality, pushing her towards a more introspective journey of self-forgiveness and empowerment. These encounters collectively highlight the theme of Salma's search for identity and agency within the conflicting demands of two differing cultures.

In her journey of self-exploration, Salma faces numerous challenges but manages to carve out unique forms of agency that empower her to transcend them, albeit to a limited degree. Salma's determination towards conformity is expressed in the following words: "Salma the dark black iris of Hima must try to turn into a Sally, an English rose, white, confident, with an elegant English accent, and a pony" (8). This excerpt reveals aspects of transformation that Salma needs to undergo, so that she can move away from the identity of the Arab Bedouin woman into the identity of the English lady Sally, involving not only adopting a new name but also performing feminine traits stereotypically associated with English cultural ideals such as whiteness, beauty, confidence, and the sophistication of English accent.

Reflecting her willingness to confront the dilemma of achieving freedom, Salma describes the first time she comes to her landlady Liz: "it was my first attempt to get out of the hostel into the outside world" (8). Symbolizing a sense of freedom and an escape from limitations, Salma manages the words "the sun is shining" instead of saying "good morning" (8) to Liz at the door. Putting the words out of proper context, as the weather is rainy, this embodies Salma's initial steps towards the quest for independence, integration into the outside world, liberation, and self-expression. Her decision to leave the hostel represents her desire to break free from the confines of her previous environment and explore the wider world around her. The idea that Salma makes this comment during the rainy weather further emphasizes her need to find moments of brightness and positivity, suggesting a spirit of

resilience and optimism, as well as a sense of determination to assert herself and reinvent her identity in the new English surroundings.

Salma's determination and optimism is also evidenced through her sudden decision to leave Southampton and move to Exeter, which is justified in the novel as: Exeter is "the best southern city for jobs" (155). The narrative indicates that Minister Mahoney is pleased to host and support Salma in Southampton, as he treats her with a paternal-like sense. However, she deliberately resolves to relocate to Exeter to start a new expedition of self-fulfillment. Despite her positive purposes, Salma finds it difficult to attain the employment necessary for her survival in the new location. Inspecting local papers for vacancies, Salma comes across an opportunity for a salesgirl requiring to be "presentable with good command of English" (12). Salma's reaction reveals her self-skepticism and lack of requirements, "I was neither presentable nor able to speak English well. Nothing that would suit a woman like me with no looks, no education, no experience and no letters of recommendation" (12). This scenario sketches barriers that minority female groups may face in obtaining employment, usually intensified by obstacles such as physical appearance and language deficiency.

Following Parvin's advice, "it will be much harder to get a job while you insist on wearing it" (90), Salma takes the first step towards altering her appearance and reshaping her gendered identity by making the hard decision: removing her veil. The difficulty of this decision is initially underlined through Salma's exchange with Miss Asher. When asked, "[d]o you have to wear this veil? God has made you perfect and he loves every part of you, including your hair", Salma responds, "[m]y hair is aura. I must hide it. Just like my private parts" (139). This interaction reveals the intrinsic cultural and religious value the veil signifies for Salma, equating it to hiding the private parts of her body in public. Stating that, "I cannot take off veil, Sister. My country, my language, my daughter. No piece of cloth.

Feel naked, me” (140), draws attention to how fundamental the veil is to her identity, associating it with her sense of attachment to her cultural heritage and its normative values.

The removal of the veil symbolizes not just an alteration in appearance but a painful and substantial transformation in her sense of personhood. Upon taking off her veil for the first time, Salma makes the remark, “I rubbed my forehead and walked out. It felt as if my head was covered with raw sores, and I had taken off the bandages. I felt as dirty as a whore, with no name or family, a sinner who would never see paradise and drink from its rivers of milk and honey” (94). This comparison illustrates her powerlessness and distress in the sense that the veil serves as a form of protection in her native culture. It safeguards women from uncomfortable attention or scrutiny from men by working out as a barrier that helps maintain boundaries and preserves a sense of privacy for women in public spaces without feeling exposed to objectifying aspects of the male gaze and potential harassment.

In this context, the significance of the veil goes beyond a mere piece of cloth; it represents Salma’s original identity and the values of her social background. By taking it off, she is exposed to a sense of detachment from her cultural roots, which also contributes to her feelings of emptiness and disorientation. Young contends that the veil is sometimes a “situational choice” for women, symbolizing “a cultural and religious identity” (*Postcolonialism* 80). He notes that many Arab and Muslim women in Western countries choose to remove it, as the Western stereotypical perception often associates the veil with “the subordination and oppression of women” (Young, *Postcolonialism* 89). This can interpret the complicated confusion endured by Salma: while she is willing to avoid this stereotype-constructed subordination, she is subject to losing her attachment to her cultural and religious origins through removing the veil. Salma’s comparison of herself to a whore for removing her veil suggests a deep-seated sense of shame linked to the notion of unveiling in her religious context. Her fear of being seen as a sinner further emphasizes the weight of

these cultural and religious beliefs. Removing the veil leads to a loss of connection to her religious convictions and the sense of spiritual fulfillment it provides.

The novel indicates that the process of unveiling, however, is not enough for Salma to gain empowerment towards making her way into the mainstream white culture, as she finds it unavoidable to keep up the way she dresses, as well. Getting ready to go outside, Salma narrates while looking at her reflection in the mirror:

I chose the tightest and shortest skirt in the wardrobe and squeezed myself into it, slipped my legs into sheer transparent black tights then wore my shiny black high-heeled shoes. I fixed my wired bra and pulled the straps up to give my breasts a younger, fuller shape. The black crochet beaded blouse was tight enough to enhance the breasts without showing the aging stomach. (41)

Salma's decision to alter her appearance reflects her desire for self-expression; it also serves as a form of self-empowerment and reclaiming control over her own body and identity, which she lacks in her home culture. Stemming from her willingness to assimilate into her new atmosphere and adapt to the societal norms of beauty and fashion popular in England, this brings under question the burdens Arab Muslim immigrant women encounter to fit into Western dominant cultural standards so as to attain admission into society.

In her attempts to further align with English cultural standards of feminine beauty and distance herself from her Arab identity, Salma arranges an appointment with a plastic surgeon, asking for reducing her nipples, which she describes as "dark and out" (117). Her concern about the darkness and prominence of her nipples can be attributed to cultural differences in gendered beauty standards between her Arab background and the English culture. The surgeon, however, observes that Salma's nipples are normal, recommending immediate psychiatric therapy for Salma. This implies that Salma's decision to undergo surgery for a normal part of her body can be interpreted as arising from potential

psychological issues, symptomatic of profound psychological distress that comes out from both her desire to cut ties with her memories which still remind her of the shameful past in Hima and the societal influences confronting her adaptation efforts in England.

Salma's transformative actions – removing her veil and adopting Westernized clothing – reveal her liminal state, as she transitions from one phase of identity to another. Initially, her veil and the traditional attire signify adherence to cultural and religious values, reflecting her sense of belonging to her home culture. The act of removing the veil represents a departure from this established identity, charged with emotional significance, since it embodies her questioning of societal demands and pursuit of personal autonomy. This transitional phase is characterized by ambiguity in which Salma finds herself neither fully aligned with her past identity nor totally comfortable in her new one. As she navigates societal judgments and internal conflicts, she experiences uncertainty and a sense of disconnection. Her new dress code may not yet resonate with her evolving sense of self, highlighting the tension between conventional expectations and individual expression. Ultimately, as Salma continues to redefine her identity, she could attain a new sense of self that incorporates aspects of her past while embracing emerging beliefs. This reintegration into society echoes her transformation and the difficulties of identity reconstruction.

This transformation also discloses a deep identity crisis rooted in the marginalizing misogyny prevalent both in the Eastern and Western contexts, where women's behavior and appearances are determined by patriarchal orders, leading to feelings of uncertainty and inadequacy. At a certain point, Salma narrates after adjusting her appearance especially when working in the bar, "I realized from the way Allan was following me with his eyes that I had stopped being an incomprehensible foreigner and had become a woman, a body neither white nor olive-skinned nor black. My color had faded away and was replaced by curves, flesh and promises" (131). Salma's observation captures a pivotal moment, featuring a

transformation in her experience, particularly in how the perception of others towards her has completely changed.

By altering her appearance and perhaps fitting more closely into Western cultural standards of feminine beauty, Salma notices a shift in how she is seen by Allan, suggesting a change from being viewed based on her race and skin color to simply being viewed based on her gender as a woman. This shift indicates that Salma's appearance exceeds racial and skin color categorizations and becomes more related to her physical attraction. In this way, her identity is reduced to her physical attributes and allure, emphasizing the objectification of her body. In the broad sense, this transformation represents the composite intersection of race, color, gender, and beauty standards in defining an Arab immigrant female identity. Salma's experience attests to how societal perceptions and biases can shape interactions and relationships, specifically for individuals from marginalized or expatriate backgrounds within a diasporic context.

One more problem hindering Salma's efforts of assimilation in England is illiteracy, resulting in her deficiency of English language. In many instances, Salma finds it difficult to communicate properly with English people, which also serves as a crucial marker of her difference, and thereby subjecting her to social rejection. In response, Salma, however, creates a new linguistic identity that alleviates the burden of language deficiency. The narrative reveals that alongside the constant consultation of the English dictionary to look up the meaning of difficult words, Salma's repeated visits to the library during her free time help her overcome this state of exclusion, allowing her to improve her literacy and gradually integrate into society on the linguistic level.

Her determination to improve her language and knowledge is exposed when she narrates, "today I would insist on having a lunch break so I could read a bit" (98). She also describes her experience of learning language expressions from listening to English music

using Parvin's tape, "I wrote down the lyrics, looked up some words in the dictionary, played the cassette again, then memorized the songs" (99). In practical terms, Salma brings into use what she learns from Miss Asher, Minister Mahoney, Gwen, Parvin, and Dr Robson, her university tutor, in different contexts. In one of the ordinary interactions, for example, she responds to Allan, her boss in the bar, when asked whether she is a university student or not by borrowing her university tutor's words: "'Yes. First year English Literature, part time, though,' I said the same way Dr Robson would have said it to me in his untidy office" (148). This interaction exemplifies Salma's use of mimicry as a tactic of survival not only by repeating her tutor's words but also by adopting his manner of speech in a bid to acquire acceptance in a space, where she is marginalized due to her lack of its dominant cultural codes. Salma's use of what the novel terms as "immigrant A-Z" (18) is also indicative of her commitment to conformity by referring to this guide to obtain practical and helpful advice or instructions for navigating life in the new country. The narrative indicates that Salma refuses the Englishman David's invitation to a private dinner based on what she learns from this guide regarding cautions and restraints that migrants should follow in dealing with natives in the foreign landscape.

Salma's decision to try and gain a university degree as well as her choice to enroll in an English literature course serve as a powerful indication of her openness to overriding her illiteracy and lack of knowledge. She explains to Parvin this choice in that she wants to know the English language well. She says "stories good. Teach you language and how to act like English Miss" (135). What is more, Salma finds agency in her interests of exploring feminist theory; that is why she asks Gwen to buy her George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876). This choice of novel is analytically significant, as it suggests Salma's curiosity to become familiar with Eliot as a female author, who challenges societal norms by writing under a male pseudonym. It implies Salma's motivation to acquire empowerment and understanding

through reading sophisticated literary texts. Eliot's book deals with themes of identity, social issues, and the position of women in society, mirroring Salma's own quest for self-discovery and intellectual growth.

Furthermore, during one of her lunch breaks, Salma visits the library to "look for books or articles on Shakespeare's sister" (153), which also signals Salma's passion to explore the feminist theory. This concept, which was proposed by Virginia Woolf in her essay "A Room of One's Own" (1929), depicts an imaginary sister of William Shakespeare, who possesses a distinctive talent but was unable to fulfill her potential due to societal constraints on women. Salma describes the essay she writes on Shakespeare's sister for her literature course at the university, "the conclusion was about my own experience as an alien in their land. They, and I, think I don't live here, but I do, just like all the women who were ignored in these tales" (164). Salma's search and the focus of her essay can be interpreted as a strong desire to identify and challenge traditional gender roles and barriers to women's creative expression. It also embodies Salma's personal experiences, contending to follow her passion and achieve visibility in a hypocritical male-dominated world.

Another crucial challenge that Salma suffers from is her persistent sense of alienation and loneliness in England. Over this dilemma, Salma makes the remark while being on her own in Exeter, "I sat in the cafe without family, past or children like a tree without roots" (81), reflecting on her sense of separation and isolation due to the loss of familial bonds. It is also an expression of her estrangement, rootlessness, and instability which exacerbate her powerlessness and lack of protection. This sentiment also manifests when Salma, while observing an English family having lunch together with a sense of familial tie in the cafe, notes, "to the homeless this sense of security was unattainable" (81). This observation prompts reflection on the security felt by the English family with their established roots, support networks, and cultural familiarity, being contrasted with Salma's sense of

uprootedness and vulnerability. By likening herself to the homeless, Salma stresses her emotional and cultural dislocation, underscoring her inability to attain the same sense of security and comfort enjoyed by the English family.

Salma's feelings of alienation and loneliness as a displaced subject in England can correspond with the unhomely condition described by Bhabha, who asserts that "the unhomely" individuals are those who cannot be easily accommodated in the private and public spheres of the familiar division of social life (Bhabha, "The World" 141). In Bhabha's terms, Salma occupies an unhomely space, where her past and identity are not recognized, leaving her feeling out of place. Comparing herself to the homeless signifies her emotional and cultural displacement, exemplifying her unhomely situation in which what is familiar becomes strange, and the sense of connection remains continually elusive. To surpass this predicament, Salma crafts agency through her relationships with those who support her journey of self-exploration in the West. The English characters, who assist her, serve as substitutes for her missing family members: Minister Mahoney assumes a paternal role, Gwen becomes a motherly figure, Parvin acts as a sister, and Allan serves as a brother. Additionally, Salma marries a kind Englishman, who replaces her lover Hamdan. Nonetheless, she does not find an alternative to Layla, even though she gives birth to her baby son, Imran.

When Salma starts thinking about returning home to see Layla and leaving Imran behind, she justifies this looming decision with the comparison, "[s]ons are treated better. They can fend for themselves. Daughters are helpless" (132). From a patriarchal aspect, Salma's comparison tackles societal patterns that prioritize sons over daughters, reinforcing traditional gender positions. Within Salma's social context, sons are perceived as capable and autonomous, while daughters are viewed as defenseless and in need of protection. This division illustrates the entrenched gender inequalities that affect Salma's thoughts and

decisions. Her willingness to abandon her son while longing to reunite with her daughter accentuates her disorientation arising from the rigid imperatives to adhere to these patriarchal norms. A comparable internalization of gender bias is evident in *Pillars of Salt* through Hannyeh's experience with her mother's disappointment over the birth of a daughter. Both instances highlight how patriarchal preferences within the family structure reproduce inherited hierarchies, shaping women's sense of identity and belonging from an early age. Despite their differing circumstances, both characters are positioned within oppressive systems that value them differently based on entrenched cultural ideals of gender.

Eventually, Salma successfully forges new identities and tailors a new persona, allowing her to face the problems of coexisting within the English space. In one of her letters addressed back home to Layla, Salma writes, "[n]ow I live in Great Britain. I have a job, a car, a husband and a large house. I am rich, so rich I could pay for your university education" (67). Despite these achievements, Salma remains haunted by her memories in Hima, especially the memory of her daughter, who was taken from her at birth. This is confirmed by Alaa Alghamdi explaining that Salma is haunted by the fact that she was not allowed to raise her daughter, and she struggles to survive in England with the disjointed memory of giving birth to Layla (12). In line with this, Sarnou also argues that "despite the fact that Salma could metamorphose into an educated, successful Sally who got married to her professor, Salma's Bedouin roots dragged her back to Hima to look for her daughter" (104), suggesting that her material and social success in England cannot heal her emotional and psychological turbulence, and that her external accomplishments cannot compensate for her internal conflicts.

Reflecting on her inability to forget Layla despite attempts to force herself, Salma admits, "I had been trying to let go of her since she was born. I kept trying and failing then trying better to fail better" (120). This persistent sorrow reveals the deep emotional scars

that her past has left on her, making her incapable of suppressing her maternal emotions towards her lost daughter. Salma confides in Parvin, “I dream of Layla almost every night. Something must have happened to her. Mother’s heart knows” (231). After a horrible nightmare in which she “heard distant but amplified wheezing as if it were coming from the bottom of a well” (231), Salma finally resolves to return to her homeland, ignoring Parvin’s repeated warnings. She feels a strong maternal pull, saying, “I have to go. Look for her. She is calling me. She needs my help” (21), which shows the ineradicable effect of past experiences on her sense of selfhood and the inescapable truth of her maternal misery.

It also raises the question of how fixed the concept of ‘home’ is for Salma and to what extent she can forbear the despair of overcoming the ties that bind her to its culture. Although she successfully reinvents herself, she remains caught between two worlds, grappling with dual identities. This state of instability serves as a metaphor for Salma’s diasporic experience in which the past continually crosses with the present, making it difficult for her to fully integrate into the new culture. Salma’s journey highlights the complexities of identity, belonging, and the unavoidable influence of one’s roots. In spite of her efforts to create a new life, the unresolved trauma of her past keeps her tied to a sense of incompleteness, revealing how vitally constitutive individual histories are to the quest for selfhood and construction of identity. This is resonant with Stuart Hall’s and Paul Du Gay’s assertion that “because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies” (4). Through Salma’s experience, one can observe how identity is not a fixed essence, but a dynamic and ongoing process shaped by historical, cultural, and discursive frameworks, aligning with the theoretical perspective proposed by Hall and Du Gay regarding the constructed nature of identities.

Hence, Salma's newly acquired manners of integration in Exeter clash with the inherent manners of her original identity, leaving her in a state of unresolved tribulation. Her acknowledgment that "this country was right in resisting me; it was right in refusing to embrace me because something in me was resisting it and would never belong to it" (125) uncovers her sense of difference and otherness in the country granting her an asylum. This self-realization highlights the internal factors contributing to her rejection. Even though she makes tremendous efforts to assimilate and realize acceptance, Salma is aware that aspects of her identity obstruct her complete adaptation. In this vein, Canpolat explains that "the discursive limitations of Salma's racial performance stem from the discrepancy between acting white and looking non-white" (8). In other words, Salma's transition to a Western lady is incomplete as if she wore a white mask that does not conceal inherent differences. By the same token, Esra Mirze Santesso argues that Salma's "project, in essence, is a performance-experiment based on mimicry" (107), which means that she adopts artificial Western qualities to construct a new identity, thereby making her conformity to the mainstream white society of Exeter conspicuously limited.

Basing her argument on the notion that mimicry can function as "a quick route to identity formation", Santesso elucidates that "Salma instantaneously creates a new identity by embracing superficial Westernization – even though such adjustments directly challenge her religious beliefs and traditional upbringing" (108). Theoretically, this can be interpreted following Bhabha's conception of hybridity, mimicry, and third space. As reviewed by Santesso, Bhabha postulates that "within the contact zone, the indigenous populace, as they become aware of their difference from the colonizer, adopts cultural and ideological norms imported from the dominant culture; gradually, this conscious adoption becomes an unconscious imitation of the culture presented to them as superior" (Santesso 108). Bhabha also describes "the colonial setting as the locus of cultural difference and therefore tension

– tension that may be eased by mimicry, which reduces the visibility of difference via the repetition of recognizable cultural patterns” (Santesso 110). In Salma’s situation, her attempts to diminish the visibility of her differences through mimicry do not lead to full integration and assimilation, and the artificial Western qualities she adopts only secure partial conformity to the Western space.

Within the context of Salma’s partial adaptation, the narrative addresses her state of in-betweenness as the outcome of her recurring assimilation efforts. In a state of confusion, Salma wonders, “what was better: to live with half a lung, kidney, liver, heart or to go back to the old country and risk being killed?” (133). This contemplation illustrates her liminal existence, marked by uncertainty, instability, and the difficult choice between a fragmented life as a refugee in diaspora and the potential finality of returning to an unsafe homeland. This proves her suspended position between two worlds, alluding to her incomplete sense of selfhood. According to Sarnou, “Salma started a long journey of dislocation, escaping from one place to another, and from one country to another crossing borders but always standing at the threshold of these new spaces” (103), indicating how her double identity positions her in a liminal place at the edge of two distinct cultures. This dual marginalization leaves her sense of self and identity unsettled. In this regard, Bhabha’s concept of the “third space” can interpret Salma’s experience, as he explains that migrants in diaspora find themselves “in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha, *The Location* 2). In Salma’s case, these dualities invade her life experiences and operate as metaphorical boundaries that prevent her from securing a defined position, revealing how the intersection of cultural differences engenders her fragmented identity.

On another occasion, Salma expresses her liminal position with a fragmented identity after the transformation she has undergone by stating, “I became neither Salma, nor Sal nor

Sally, neither Arab nor English” (141). She also describes herself as “a tree neither of the East nor of the West” (203). According to these self-descriptions, Salma’s struggle encapsulates the consequences of navigating a hybrid identity. While her efforts to assimilate have led to a partial adoption of her host country’s culture, the resistance she encounters indicates that her original identity remains influential. This tension creates a hybrid state in which elements of both cultures coexist within her without fully integrating, resulting in an ongoing uncertainty of where she precisely stands in the world. Consequently, the outcome is a fragmented identity in which Salma’s sense of self is divided and unstable, reflecting the emotional toll of traversing two cultures without fully attaining rootedness in and belonging to either.

Salma’s fragmented identity is significantly represented through Faqir’s narrative technique, characterized by non-linear shifts between Hima and Exeter, the past and the present, and the Bedouin identity of Salma and the English identity of Sally. Narrated retrospectively in the first-person mode by the protagonist Salma, the events of the story are presented randomly in episodic flashbacks and a fragmentary style. By following this subtle technique of novelistic representation, Faqir draws a cultural distinction between the East and the West, where Salma is situated on the periphery of these societies. The narrative’s temporal shifts suggest the continuity between Salma’s past experiences and her present circumstances, illustrating how her individual history affects her current thoughts, emotions, and behavior. This ongoing conflict shapes Salma’s evolving sense of self and place in the world, contributing to the construction of her hyphenated personhood.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has investigated Faqir’s *My Name is Salma*, focusing on how the patriarchal discourses of the East and West converge as double power structures of oppression that cause the subordination of the Arab female protagonist Salma, and how these

prejudiced discourses, as a consequence, lead to a transformation of her selfhood, featuring the emergence of both a female hybrid identity and liminal subjectivity in a diasporic context. By applying the notion of “double colonization” derived from the postcolonial feminist paradigm alongside a constellation of conceptualizations of liminality including Bhabha’s postcolonial liminality, the analysis of Faqir’s text has shown that Salma is subject to a unique mode of double oppression within two different worlds. Her victimization unfolds through the entanglement of gender biases in her local milieu, where she faces honor-based violence for engaging in an illegitimate sexual relationship and becoming pregnant outside of marriage. Salma’s marginalization, however, extends into the Western context, where she suffers from discriminatory mistreatment based on her racial, ethnic, class, gender, religious, and linguistic identities. Moreover, the analysis has concluded that Salma’s efforts to depart from her original culture and integrate into the mainstream society in Exeter lead to a substantial identity shift, placing her in a liminal position, marked with a state of disorientation. Ultimately, this transformation becomes pivotal in understanding Salma’s geographical and cultural relocation and identity negotiation, as she traverses two worlds, two cultures, two languages, and two identities.

Chapter 4: Challenging Stereotypes: The Cosmopolitan Arab Woman in Fadia

Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep*

1. Introduction

Within the literary tradition of the modern anglophone Arab fiction by migrant women writers with its tendencies to represent the conditions of Arab women either inside their indigenous culture as marginalized individuals or outside as subaltern migrants who relocate themselves for some reason to an alien culture, Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep* (2014) stands out as a significant instance. Alongside *My Name is Salma*, which was discussed in the previous chapter dealing with the protagonist Salma's double oppression and liminal position, *Willow Trees Don't Weep* displays prime characteristics of this literary tradition by addressing issues of geographical and cultural relocation, displacement, marginalization, discrimination, belonging, and adaptation with regard to gender construction and aspects of femininity. The narrative tells the story of an Arab female protagonist, who undergoes a diasporic experience in which she faces marginalization while also struggling to forge a sense of identity and belonging through a long journey of exploration.

Despite several similarities on the thematic level, the two novels diverge in how they delineate the transformation of their protagonists' cultural identities. In *My Name is Salma*, the female protagonist Salma's journey of adaptation to Western culture remains incomplete. Stuck in the strong tie to her Bedouin culture, she eventually returns to her home village, where she faces her tragic downfall. Though Salma acquires agency in the face of her marginalization in the Western context, her inability to surpass her liminal position between two cultures leaves her fragmented: her double consciousness undermines any stable sense of belonging. In contrast, *Willow Trees Don't Weep* can be seen as a narrative of individual flourishing, openness, and self-realization. Its Arab protagonist Najwa, by undergoing

displacement, develops a diasporic consciousness and a cosmopolitan belonging, enabling her to transcend marginalization. These attributes also empower her to react strategically to the multiple forms of social, cultural, religious, and political discrimination, which originates from a stereotypical misrepresentation and mistreatment based on her different identities.

To understand how this resistance operates, it is essential to examine the mechanisms through which Najwa is marginalized. In *Willow Trees Don't Weep*, Faqir's protagonist encounters the destructive effects of stereotyping across multiple cultural contexts, revealing how stereotyping can be seen as forming fixed, oversimplified ideas, or expectations about a group of people without really understanding them. The novel demonstrates how such stereotyping involves making unfair judgments about their traits, abilities, or behavioral patterns based on limited or inaccurate information. These stereotypes are not only based on mere preconceived assumptions but can further function as a source for the construction of prejudice and discrimination. This process of categorization, while seemingly natural, carries profound implications for individual identity. As Rebecca Cook and Simone Cusack argue, "[s]tereotyping is part of human nature. It is the way we categorize individuals, often unconsciously, into particular groups or types, in part to simplify the world around us. It is the process of ascribing to an individual general attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of his or her apparent membership in a particular group" (1). In Najwa's case, her experiences across different geographical and cultural spaces exemplify how the components of identity, on the basis of which individuals are categorized into stereotypically monolithic groups, can include – but are not limited to – gender, class, sex, race, religion, and nationality. The implications of this categorization process extend beyond the individual level and have significant social consequences. In a social context, the adherence to stereotypes plays an integral role in making a group of people with shared characteristics (such as their language, religion, customs, traditions, and values) appear homogeneous and

their identities coherent and rooted. However, through Najwa's narrative, Faqir exposes how such stereotypical homogenization undermines the coexistence of differences and, as a consequence, cultural – let alone individual – diversity, thereby preventing or resisting openness towards cultural otherness.

Cultural stereotyping and the lack of openness to cultural diversity are particularly problematic in the contemporary globalized world, where unprecedented movements of people challenge established boundaries. People carry identity structures that existing frameworks cannot adequately accommodate. Not surprisingly, cosmopolitan enterprise focuses on negotiating existing fixed cultural identities and reconsidering their conjunctural validity. Cosmopolitanism creates a medium for viewing and re-negotiating the uniformity and rootedness of cultural identities to produce dynamic alternatives that work with cultural difference. Cosmopolitanism calls for a framework of consciousness, where people of various gendered, ethnic, political, religious, and cultural backgrounds accept each other under the ethical responsibilities of mutual concern, tolerance, and respect while sustaining a stance of openness to cultural heterogeneity, rather than the inclination of preserving homogenization and sameness. Although these principles may seem idealistic and difficult to fully implement, they play a vital role in dismantling discriminatory discourses and prejudices, thereby fostering a more inclusive and ethically responsible global community.

These principal notions are reciprocally central to twofold strands of cosmopolitanism: Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and contemporary cosmopolitanism. In reading the foundational creeds of cosmopolitanism within the context of European Enlightenment, Walter Dignolo points out how Immanuel Kant's cosmopolitan ideas invite us for the readiness of hospitality and the endurance of peace and social equality at a wide universal scale (733). In line with this, Kwame Anthony Appiah, a prominent advocate of the cosmopolitan enterprise, reminds us that we are "citizens of the world" and that we ought

to keep up “obligations to others, obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by ties of kith or kind or even the moral formal ties of a shared citizenship” (XV). However, such idealistic understandings, especially those characterizing universal Enlightenment like that of Kant, aside from their tendency to focus on elitism as well as their “racial underpinnings and Eurocentric bias” (Mignolo, 732–733), lack specification in the sense that they do not identify what precisely constitutes the cosmopolitan community and who the cosmopolitan subjects really are.

These issues have drawn the attention of several contemporary cosmopolitan intellectuals to rethink what the enlightened, and universalist contributions have not brought into focus. In inclusive terms, Daniel Hiebert posits that cosmopolitanism is concerned to “describe individuals who are well travelled and have learned to be comfortable in many cultural settings” (212). Grounding their argument in the idea that “rootlessness, movement, homelessness and nomadism have become the motifs of the analyst of cosmopolitanism” (16), Gavin Kendall et al. suggest three types of cosmopolitanism in the contemporary world: global business elites, refugees, and expatriates (13). Concentrating exclusively on the non-elites, Sheldon Pollock et al. go with the view that “refugees, people of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of the cosmopolitan community” (582). This argument, foregrounding the non-elite subjects, is also confirmed by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, who argue that cosmopolitanism can “exist among a wide variety of non-elites, especially migrants and refugees” (8). By the same token, Ulf Hannerz argues that migrants may be most readily associated with cosmopolitanism, since they possess the free will to make their ways into other cultures through their movements across nations (243). According to these views, cosmopolitanism is, thus, bound to diasporic and migratory experiences and it is ultimately the travel and mobility of people across a variety of locations of the globe that establish the contemporary cosmopolitan subjects. This framework proves

particularly relevant to understanding Najwa's transformation throughout her geographic and cultural relocations in the novel.

The marginalized and disenfranchised immigrants, however, preserve a pivotal space in the cosmopolitan sphere, simply because they, quite like other groups of cosmopolitanism, have more or less the willingness to take risks by dint of encountering cultural otherness, and also because they are subject to a substantial transformation of their selves and identities that occurs as an outcome of their inevitable interactions with different cultures. In this regard, Pnina Werbner, in reviewing multiple types of the cosmopolitan community, refers to Bhabha's notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism which, as she confirms, involves non-elite, particularly non-western forms of travel in a postcolonial world, where the openness to ethnic, religious, cultural, and national otherness becomes indispensable (14). This category, as defined by Bhabha, pertains to those who "occupy marginal or minority positions within cultures and societies" (Bhabha, "Vernacular" 139). Najwa's position as a disenfranchised Arab woman clearly aligns with this vernacular cosmopolitan identity, occupying marginal positions across the various societies she encounters.

Drawing upon Bhabha's notions of third space and cultural hybridity, Vinay Dharwadker associates the vernacular cosmopolitans with the marginalized migrants' state of ambivalent in-betweenness, arguing that it is the condition of liminality that ultimately situates these migrants in a third space of hybridity in which they appropriate ways of life formulated out of the two spaces, and hence, their own hybrid identities (127). Within an emerging zone, they create micro-worlds of their own that combine aspects of their home culture with those of their newly adopted one. Nevertheless, not all hybrid subjects may possess a cosmopolitan outlook, thereby emerging as truly cosmopolitan individuals; the ability to navigate this hybridity is conditional on these individuals' capacity for carving out

agency, their strategic ability to cope with influential socio-cultural factors, and also their potential for maintaining dynamic identities.

Vertovec and Cohen support this point, demonstrating that cosmopolitanism “assumes complex, overlapping, changing and often highly individualistic choices of identity and belonging” (18). This distinction is evident in the contrasting experiences of the Arab migrant protagonists in Faqir’s *My Name is Salma* and *Willow Trees Don’t Weep*. As explored in the previous chapter, Salma, torn between her Arab heritage and English reality, experiences liminality as a source of suffering. Although she attempts to reconcile her double identities for survival, she ultimately fails to establish a coherent sense of belonging. Her inability to balance the differences between her home and host cultures prevents her from evolving into a truly cosmopolitan individual.

In contrast, *Willow Trees Don’t Weep* presents a different trajectory through Najwa, who successfully navigates her hybrid identity. Unlike Salma, Najwa transcends marginalization by adopting a neutral stance between the two cultures, allowing her to cultivate a cosmopolitan outlook. This contrast echoes Chan Kwok-Bun’s perspective on cosmopolitanism and hybridity, which he describes as involving both “the dark side of cosmopolitan encounters” (206), where individuals are subject to alienation, and the “many fascinating, exciting possibilities” (194), where hybridity opens up new opportunities. Kwok-Bun argues that whereas strangeness can drive to exclusion, it can also arouse curiosity, adventure, and transformation (207). Cosmopolitanism, hence, does not disregard one’s local affinity; it is rather ingrained in one’s cultural background and works out as a basis for negotiating identity in a transnational context. While cosmopolitanism as a disposition of openness and cultural adaptability can manifest in various contexts, the vernacular cosmopolitanism demonstrated by diasporic migrants offers a distinct pathway to cosmopolitan consciousness. For marginalized and underprivileged groups, geographical

and cultural relocation becomes a catalyst that transforms lived experiences of displacement into cosmopolitan belonging. These diasporic migrants are integral to redefining cosmopolitanism through their navigation of hybridity, cultural difference, and the challenges of establishing identity across multiple cultural spaces. The extent to which they achieve cosmopolitan belonging, however, depends on their ability to strategically negotiate these complexities and forge agency within their host societies.

It comes as no surprise that the representation of the marginalized, unprivileged, and diasporic migrants as cosmopolitan subjects permeates contemporary literary texts, particularly some of those committed to address matters of border-crossing, cultural identity, displacement, (un)belonging, adaptation, and hybridity. Faqir's novel *Willow Trees Don't Weep* accounts for the transformation of the personal identity that a disenfranchised Arab woman undergoes due to her experiences of multiple relocations. The novel's protagonist Najwa embarks on an intricate journey from her birthplace Jordan to Pakistan, then Afghanistan all the way to England to follow her missing father's footsteps. Through this journey, Najwa constructs a fluid cosmopolitan subjectivity that serves as a unique strategy to redefine her consciousness/personhood and provides her with agency against the multiple partial stereotypes inherent in the conventional norms of the different patriarchal societies in which she moves. Before going to England, where she faces multiple forms of discrimination based on her racial and religious identity as the feminine cultural other in such a Western patriarchal context, Najwa is exposed to gender-oriented discrimination that arises as a result of the patriarchal order of the Jordanian traditional society. Nevertheless, Najwa manages to forge a dynamic identity in reaction to these discourses and excels at reinventing herself so as to overcome prospective discriminatory mistreatments either within her original culture or within the newly adopted one.

Considering the above, this chapter explores the processes that have an impact on Najwa's formation of identity with regard to her multiple displacements as delineated in Faqir's novel *Willow Trees Don't Weep*. It aims at revealing how prejudices rooted in stereotypes against the novel's female protagonist drive her to emerge as a rootless subject with a persistent sense of unbelonging. It also aims to accentuate in what ways she, in response, constructs a fluid cosmopolitan identity among several counter-cosmopolitan institutions as a unique method of acquiring self-empowerment. Drawing upon various conceptual theorizations of cosmopolitanism as a notion that pertains to specific marginal groups in diaspora, I claim that the investigation of the above-outlined subjects breaks a novel ground and contributes to the understanding of Faqir's novel as a transnational literary text that does not only challenge the ways and reasons behind the subordination of the disenfranchised Arab migrant woman in the contemporary times, but also as regards the construction of a cosmopolitan female subjectivity as a method of personal empowerment.

2. Rooted Stereotypes and Rootless Identity

The female protagonist, Najwa, a young Jordanian woman in Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep* sets out on a challenging and mysterious mission that entails several travels across various locations when she crosses the borders of her Arab country to look for her father Omar Rahman to be clued-up about why her father suddenly left and what happened to him during his long years of absence. At her age of three, Najwa's father abandons his family and travels with his close friend Hani to Afghanistan, so that they can join a global movement of Islamic Jihad. For this reason, Najwa's mother Raneen espouses a reluctant stance towards Islam, showing repulsion and a strong rejection of anything that is related to the religion that she associates with her husband's betrayal. As a reaction, she takes a variety of steps towards converting to secularism such as removing her Islamic veil and burning all the religious books in the house.

Remarkably, Omar's sudden desertion can be seen as the outset of the family's struggle and suffering. His prioritization of religious ideology over familial responsibilities creates a void and arouses a range of consequential reactions from his wife, Raneen. This act uncovers the powerful pull of religious fundamentalism and its crucial role in disrupting and breaking up the family structure. It also questions the consequences encountered by Arab women particularly when they lack a male guardian within a traditional patriarchal structure. Conversely, Raneen's resentment of Islamic ideology transcends a mere personal inclination; it is a definitive stance against the repercussions of religious fundamentalism that have caused her and her daughter immense distress. Therefore, she does not only distance herself from her husband's religion, but she also imposes secularism on her daughter Najwa by forcing her to unveil her head and also forbidding her from participating in religious events at school.

This is exemplified when Raneen bursts into anger at Najwa's face upon observing that her daughter wears a piece of jewelry, given to her by a schoolmate, which contains an Islamic symbol, saying "no religious words, deeds, texts, symbols, jewellery or dress in this house" (9). Raneen's extreme reaction to religious markers illuminates the intensity of her trauma and her concern that any Islamic symbol might reintroduce the oppressive forces she seeks to undermine. The symbol becomes threatening not for its inherent meaning, but for what it signifies from her perspective: a potential gateway back to the fundamentalist influence that once constrained her life. Her blanket prohibition of all religious expression discloses how her rejection of religious oppression has transformed into an equally totalizing secular ideology that denies Najwa the right to explore her own spiritual identity. Consequently, the process of secularizing Najwa by her mother further extends to shape Najwa's future. As soon as the young Najwa is preparing to attend college, Raneen insists that her daughter studies French language because France "is the most secular country on

earth” (9), but as this subject is not on offer, she decides that Najwa must “train as a tourist guide and work in one of the hotels by the Dead Sea, the most cosmopolitan and secular of environments” (10), which can be understood as practical measures to integrate Najwa into a secular environment, far removed from religious fundamentalist influences.

Set against the backdrop of Najwa’s transition from childhood to adolescence, the narrative examines aspects of the collision between religious extremism and liberal secularism. Influencing Najwa’s decisions, beliefs, and stances, this conflict is depicted through the contrasting tendencies and actions among her family members. This conflict can be interpreted through Sharabi’s notion of neopatriarchy. Discussing the outcomes arising from the interaction between Arab traditional patriarchy and Western modernity in the context of Arab society, Sharabi observes that it leads to a clash between religious fundamentalism and liberal secularism, which becomes an emerging characteristic impacting the Arab socio-cultural sphere. He argues that modernized Arab society, in its core concerns, represents a cultural and social encounter between “the two fundamental standpoints of secularism and Islam”. The former comes from the West with its cultural standards as “its implicit or explicit model”, while the latter arises from the established religion as “its source of legitimacy and inspiration”. Sharabi further contends that neither standpoint succeeds in “developing a genuinely independent critical and analytical discourse” in which “the problems of identity, history and the West” do not “find effective resolution” (10). Hence, Najwa’s narrative, confused amidst the opposition between her parents’ ideologies, exemplifies the societal discrepancy Sharabi describes. The intersection in Najwa’s personal life reflects the larger cultural and social forces at play, marked by the cultural tension between notions of Western modernity and entrenched norms of Arab traditional and conservative culture in contemporary Arab neopatriarchal society.

As the events of the narrative unfold, it becomes evident that Najwa's upbringing as a secular girl under the guidance of her mother, in the absence of her father, is fraught with difficulties. In a sense, it establishes her as a castaway stranger with a sense of difference and a state of unbelonging among her neighbors, as she lives in a religious and conservative milieu, where she does not adhere to its customs, standards, and values. Besides transgressing the sanctioned dress code designated to women in such a conservative and traditional culture by appearing in public unveiled and dressed in a liberal style, she does not, unlike others, practice Islamic rituals either, which renders her the cultural and religious other in the perception of the surrounding people. This paradoxical positioning underscores the intricate relationship between physical belonging and socio-cultural acceptance. In their analysis of Najwa's conditions within the local sphere, Ghania Ouahmiche and Sarnou make the remark that "[b]eing different from other conservative girls of Amman excludes Najwa from a space she inhabits physically but cannot adhere to its rulings emotionally" (148). This observation captures the essence of Najwa's unsettled existence: she is geographically settled but culturally uprooted, present in body but absent in spirit from the community that surrounds her. This spatial paradox becomes a defining feature of her identity construction and foreshadows her later experiences of displacement in diverse cultural landscapes. Najwa's sense of difference, which causes her a state of social exclusion, is expressed by her narrating: "I knew I was different. I was not allowed to cover my head, wear a long school uniform or trousers, recite the Qur'an, participate in the Ramadan procession or wear prayer clothes and go to the mosque in the evening with the other children, who carried lanterns" (9). This passage highlights Najwa's consciousness of her divergence from cultural and religious norms, leading to a state of non-conformity and isolation. Her exclusion from taking part in communal religious activities further alienates her from her peers and community, causing both her physical and emotional estrangement. Being like an outsider,

this portrayal of Najwa's narrative illustrates how rigid social, cultural, and religious values can marginalize individuals who do not fully adhere to them.

The narrative also exemplifies that Najwa is viewed and even treated as a person with less dignity and honor, for she is brought up in a family house that is only inhabited by three women: Najwa, her mother, and her grandmother. This is evidenced when Najwa claims that "[n]o male guardian, no honour, no status in this neighbourhood" (5). This realization of societal judgments reveals how prejudicial mechanisms function in practice, categorizing Najwa and her family based on their household structure with rigid assumptions about their moral character imposed upon them regardless of their individual circumstances. Though these realities are not Najwa's own faults, and definitely not the outcome of her deliberate personal choices, she is subject to prejudiced misrepresentation and mistreatment that notably emerge from dual sources of bias: a religious framework that perceives women who lack religiosity as deviant, coupled with a gender-based framework that identifies women who live without male guardians as shameless. These overlapping stereotypes function as sources for exclusion, creating a double bind that frames Najwa's view of herself as perpetually other. As a consequence, the community's assumptions become internalized constraints that impact her identity formation. This forces her to navigate between fulfilling social expectations and reclaiming her individual agency – a tension that drives her towards developing alternative forms of belonging and subjectivity.

Furthermore, Faqir's novel makes it explicit that Najwa has fewer – if any – social interactions, since no guests habitually visit her house and she has no relatives or friends with whom she can socialize, which intensifies her feeling of isolation and, by extension, her dilemma of not having affinity either for her society or for its people, who always look down upon her. For instance, the next-door neighbors prohibit their son to propose to Najwa because she grows up in a family without men, and therefore, she does not, as they believe,

know how to show obedience and respect to their son, which reveals how it is taken for granted by society that the female roles are secondary and restricted to obeying males' wills in the private sphere. What is more, this attitude assumes that as long as a woman grows up in a house without men, she is not accustomed to the standardized occupations expected of women and shall be, by default, unable to perform her alleged domestic duties, pivoted on an unconditional conformity towards her prospective husband, who, in turn, acts as her legitimate guardian substituting her previous one; that is, her father.

Indeed, Najwa lives in a patriarchal society the driving forces of which are essentialist stereotypes that define masculinities and femininities and allocate to genders their specific and rigidly defined roles both in the domestic and the public spheres. Whereas men are assigned superiority that stems from their conventional responsibilities as guardians, who provide women with social protection and financial support, women are confined to an institutionalized dependency that does not only relate to their inferior status in their male-centered culture, but it also stretches to their position in the legal system that holds official jurisdiction over the whole society. This institutionalized control becomes evident when Najwa goes to the Jordanian Passport and Identity Service in Amman on her own, unaccompanied by her male custodian (the husband for married women and the father for unmarried ones from a legal perspective), who is supposed to sign over an official permission in his capacity as Najwa's legal custodian, and the employee – at least from a legal aspect – justifiably refuses to issue a travel passport for her.

Faqir's portrayal of this bureaucratic barrier demonstrates how patriarchal systems manifest differently across contexts. Unlike the more personal and familial form of guardianship in *Pillars of Salt*, where Hannyeh's father exercises his authority by arranging her marriage for financial gain (see Chapter 2), Najwa's experience reveals how patriarchal control is entrenched in state institutions. This contrast underscores Faqir's broader critique

of how guardianship persists in different forms, adapting to both traditional and bureaucratic contexts. Returning to the central analysis of Najwa's predicament, critics have recognized the broader implications of such systematic oppression. In their analysis of Faqir's text, Paul Sourav and Shri Krishan Rai state that the narrative "is a blistering broadside on the socially sanctioned abuse of womanhood in an Islamic state. It is an account of how women are hunted, choked, chopped up, and thrown away" (132). This view encapsulates the novel's critical commentary on institutionalized gender discrimination that Najwa encounters, questioning the collective oppressive power structures that govern her society.

Najwa also falls victim to manifold forms of abuse in Jordan due to the absence of her male protector. The novel exhibits that her quotidian experiences are fraught with multiple forms of sexual harassment. In Bukharan market, she is abused by a male seller, who whispers to her a "secret conversation", saying "can I tempt you with a cup of coffee?" (21–22), while another man intentionally touches her bum. However, Najwa keeps silent and shows no reaction, as she is intimidated because if she resists or shouts, people will "find out about the violation" (22), and she will be accused of shamefulness. Ironically, it is believed in such societies that, even if women are not participants of the misconduct but its victims, the concealment of sexual harassment against them is all the better for their benefit and for the preservation of their reputation because it has to be taken into consideration, as the novel also refers to it, that "tongues will wag" (6) with interminable verbal criticism and the accusation of women's shamefulness means that their alleged act of guiltiness gets more publicized.

Worse than that, even though Najwa wears her grandmother's yashmak, abaya, and veil in a bid to avoid similar situations of sexual harassment in the public market, a car stops by her, and its rider directs his words to the walking Najwa: "Psst! Psst! Come here!" (26). The man assumes that Najwa wears Islamic dress to hide her real identity, and "she is rather

a prostitute in disguise” (26). In fact, all the implications reflected by these different situations of sexual abuse against Najwa lead to the interpretation that exploitive and opportunist men of such an unmerciful patriarchal society do not miss and seize every possible chance to harass unescorted women in public places: those with veils or without, and whether they are secular or pious. A similar dynamic is explored in *Pillars of Salt*, where Sheikh Talib attempts to exploit Maha’s vulnerability as a widow, and in *My Name is Salma*, where Salma is both abandoned and punished for her romantic involvement with Hamdan, who abuses her affection without accountability. These narratives parallel Najwa’s, revealing a broader pattern across Faqir’s fiction in which women, regardless of their behavior or appearance, are exposed to male exploitation within deeply patriarchal systems. Obviously, they disclose a larger social crisis that, in its significance, goes beyond the experiences of a secular girl with no custodianship: it can be understood as a stereotyping-based misrepresentation and misconception of women that pervade such patriarchal cultures in which the most marginalized group, the women find themselves stripped of any actual protecting apparatuses in the midst of their struggles against the hegemonic tyranny of particular misogynist traditions.

In response to her marginalization and isolation within the local patriarchal sphere, Najwa takes on unique methods of self-empowerment. Her capacity for devising agency is evident in her neutral position in the opening scene of the story. She mentions that her mother requests before she dies “[n]o Islamic funeral” (3), something that Najwa’s grandmother Zainab does not implement, as she follows religious rituals during the funeral including washing Raneen’s body, doing Islamic ablutions, reciting Quran, wrapping the corpse in loofah, and performing the funeral prayer in the mosque. Within the contrast between the mother’s dismissal of religious beliefs and the grandmother’s adherence to religious values, Najwa’s position is balanced, as she does not disregard either of them. She remains as an

observant, who tries to become acquainted with the complexity of the situation without necessarily intervening or taking a side. Though this situation reflects her internal struggle as to which path to choose, her middle ground allows her to become connected to both despite their inherent opposition. According to Sarnou, Najwa navigates the ideological tensions in her life by appropriating an in-between position and “a way that perceives the truth from a neutral and ideology-free position” (160). More precisely, Najwa maintains traits of the secular character desired by her mother, but she does not fully reject Islamic rituals that her grandmother believes in; that is why she accompanies her grandmother to the cemetery on the day of her mother’s funeral even though women are not allowed to go there as this is, from the perspective of her conservative community, considered a man’s space.

Similarly, in assisting her grandmother on her visit to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, Najwa acknowledges the significance of religious spirituality, while, at the same time, she behaves and appears as a secular person, who seems to have less sense of religiousness, which shows how much openness and flexibility pave the way for her to develop a fluid identity and a cosmopolitan positionality. Her wish before her grandmother takes the bus to Mecca, “May Allah accept your pilgrimage and grant you a place in his paradise” (61), also shows Najwa’s acceptance of religious teachings even if she does not herself embrace them. This suggests that Najwa does not confine herself to a rigid identity as her flexibility enables her to develop a more comprehensive and adaptable approach between the contrasting aspects of her life without being either strictly secular or fully religious.

Therefore, Najwa is emancipated from inside and she is not completely fettered by the confines of these ideologies, as she can resist and overcome these confines through the dynamic characteristics of her identity. From a cosmopolitan viewpoint, this open attitude of neutrality can be interpreted in correspondence with Hannerz’ ideas on the cosmopolites’

competence, surrender and mastery. This scholar asserts that the cosmopolitans are those who have a sense of mastery in espousing the different culture but do not necessarily become fully committed to it. When necessary, they always know how and where to find the secure exit, which means that they have the eagerness to override the state of being fully restricted to their standards (240). This is exactly how Najwa manages her complex cultural balance: even if at this point she cannot be claimed as the fully cosmopolitan subject, this trait exhibits the foundational skills that will facilitate her later development of cosmopolitan subjectivity when she encounters diverse cultural contexts through displacement. She has a sense of mastery in taking on what satisfies her demands from the diverse cultures, admitting certain aspects to herself and leaving behind the others, without regarding the validity or invalidity of the relinquished ones. In contrast, Salma in *My Name is Salma* lacks this sense of cultural mastery, remaining tethered to a liminal position between home culture and host culture, unable to reconcile the tensions of her fragmented identity – a dissonance that ultimately prevents her from attaining a stable cultural balance. Moreover, Najwa's cultural balance can be understood through Appiah's framework on the cosmopolitan attitudes towards religious rituals and beliefs like the Islamic pilgrimage. Appiah calls for acknowledging the meaning of these acts even if one does not believe in them. His argument is grounded in the idea that there is no harm in allowing their believers to perform them, as their reasoning differs from that of non-believers. To state that Muslims should undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca as a means of fulfilling an Islamic decree, he argues, is not to agree with their beliefs but to recognize and respect the rationale behind their actions from an external perspective (9–10). Najwa's appreciation of Islamic rituals resonates with this cosmopolitan attitude, reconciling personal autonomy with an acknowledgement of cultural and religious multiplicity.

Before the death of her mother, Najwa also exercises agency in the face of the restrictions placed upon women by the patriarchal order by taking responsibility to support her family while her father is away. At one point, she decides “to give up college to find a job” (14) as a receptionist in one of the hotels in Amman. Similarly, Eman in *Nisanit* assumes familial responsibility by working to support her mother and brothers amid the disruptions of the Palestine-Israeli conflict; Najwa’s decision to give up college to find a job represents a parallel act of agency within the constraints of local patriarchal society. Both women respond to the absence of male guardianship by transforming economic necessity into a form of resistance, using employment as a means to sustain their families while asserting their capability beyond traditional gender roles. This choice not only provides Najwa with an outlet for personal purpose, achievement, and autonomy, but also reveals her determination to progress in her career while maintaining her neutrality. In her role, Najwa confronts cultural expectations regarding modesty and female behavior, particularly her grandmother’s caution to avoid “looking men in the eyes” (14). In her traditional culture, direct eye contact with men can be perceived as inappropriate, potentially leading to undesired attention or misinterpretation. Therefore, Najwa initially implements a polite letter to greet guests, often foreign men, as a way to perform her duties efficiently without direct interaction. However, when this approach proves ineffective, Najwa adapts by revising the letter. She states, “I had to take out please and thank you. Then, just before printing it, I added shukran: thank you in Arabic, to spite him” (14). This decision demonstrates her flexibility, resourcefulness, and pragmatism in dealing with the challenges of her job. By modifying her approach, Najwa not only meets the practical demands of her role but also continues to protect herself by upholding personal boundaries.

In spite of these micro-successes of hers, Najwa still struggles, and her experiences within the local sphere uncover crucial aspects contributing to her marginalization. Due to

the absence of her male guardian, Najwa faces different forms of gendered exploitation and sexual harassment from men without having the means to protect herself and safeguard her well-being. She is also forced into a state of exclusion and a feeling of estrangement because of her non-conforming identities. These experiences expose the biased societal judgments and stereotypical gender-based discrimination that foster Najwa's sense of rootlessness and lack of belonging within a patriarchal environment, and her experiences also reveal that the established norms operate as driving forces for women's degradation and inferiority. However, Najwa's resistance to this marginalization, though constrained within the local context, manifests through her ability to craft flexible and neutral identities. This ability to adapt to the rigid expectations of her environment showcases the foundational traits of a cosmopolitan individual. These traits lay the ground for her later journeys, through which her engagement with diverse cultures will not only refine but also consolidate her cosmopolitan subjectivity.

3. Beyond Borders: The Formation of Cosmopolitan Subjectivity

Faqir's novel presents distinctive possibilities for the development of a dynamic identity in a diasporic context by employing the trope of the journey as a narrative strategy to foreground the processes involved in the reinvention of Najwa's cultural identity. As depicted in the story, Najwa's identity changes and is constantly reshaped, as she encounters different social situations in which she engages with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, who challenge or affirm her sense of self. Therefore, the formation of her identity is the product of her scattered experiences in a variety of locations and an outcome of her condition both as a marginalized individual within her indigenous culture and as a displaced nomadic migrant. In this respect, her journey can be interpreted as a process of self-exploration and self-identification. It is also a course of socialization in which her experiences with distinct cultures bring about an alternate experience that redefines her

identity and reformulates her life in a different mode. In an online interview with Fadi Zaghmout, Faqir reveals that she wants Najwa “to go on a journey that is so difficult and is going to change her into someone who is possibly aware of what is happening in the world” (01:28–01:40). Najwa is forced to confront this difficulty, since she has enough motives to push her ahead on an endeavor of discovery through undertaking an unavoidable action of border-crossing. In this vein, Ouahmiche and Sarnou state that Najwa “started a long journey of crossing borders to discover her father's past which would make her reach the coherent sense of the self” (146). She has to face a predicament made up of an internal confusion and a personal crisis that stem from her lack of knowledge about her father's true identity and whereabouts, the absence of concrete information about his past actions and motivations, her urgent need to come to terms with her real existence in life, and her quest to reestablish her sense of belonging and conformity, which would remain unresolved and unidentified unless she reaches a genuine sense of self-awareness.

Through her migratory activity, Najwa creates a private space of consciousness that provides her with a latent agency which enables her to transcend all the obstacles pervading her life and to carry on her challenging mission not only of pursuing her father, who seems in some way a mere reminiscence of childhood for her, but also of searching for her disoriented self and unsettled roots. In many instances in the novel, Najwa shows an extraordinary ability in crafting a non-static but changeable identity as a personal strategy and a self-cautionary tool that empowers her to avoid falling into foreseeable tribulations. For instance, because she is aware that, in a time of witnessing huge movements of Arab Muslim jihadists towards Pakistan and Afghanistan, having a visa to these countries is difficult especially for young Muslim people, Najwa puts tourism as the main reason behind her visit to Pakistan in an attempt not to raise suspicion about her identity. At the embassy interview, she insists that she studies tourism and is eager to discover the fascinating peaks

of a Pakistani mountain. Ironically, the man at the embassy asks her not to “tell [him] [she is] going to climb it!” Najwa, in turn, answers: “I have to climb it” (53), mirroring her own mission which is as arduously adventurous as climbing such high mountains.

Going through the airport check, Najwa downplays the situation when the police officer asks about the purpose of her visit to Pakistan. She claims she is on a tourism trip and expresses an interest in traditional music, believing that “someone who loved to sing, dance [...] was no threat to anyone” (68). Similarly, when questioned again by a policeman upon arriving in the country, she maintains her claim, demonstrating her purported fascination with “ethnic Pakistani music” (74). These interactions reveal how Najwa strategically uses cultural stereotypes to her advantage. By crafting an identity as a harmless tourist and pretending to be familiar with local customs, she positions herself within a framework of dissimulation in which she manages to deflect attention from her true intentions. This tactic allows her to distance herself from potential suspicion, ensuring she is not scrutinized or detained. Najwa’s approach highlights her awareness of how cultural knowledge can effectively serve in tailoring a credible persona that can mitigate authorities’ suspicions. This corresponds with Hannerz’s view of cosmopolitanism as “a perspective, a state of mind, or – to take a more processual view – a mode of managing meaning”. Hannerz further explains that cosmopolitanism entails “relationships to a plurality of cultures” and requires “an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other”. He also describes this cosmopolitan competence as “a built-up skill in manoeuvring more or less expertly with a particular system of meanings and meaningful forms” (238–239). By managing the meaning of the inspection system at the airport through her cultural awareness and flexibility, Najwa embodies these cosmopolitan traits, successfully relying on them to influence perceptions and accomplish her goals – not only of protecting herself, but also of continuing her mission without disruption. Her tactical performance of harmlessness demonstrates how her agency

manifests through calculated cultural navigation rather than direct confrontation. Unlike Salma, whose difference is involuntarily marked and policed by the English system based on her appearance and background, and who is consequently placed in detention in Southampton upon arrival to England, Najwa performs a controlled version of difference that tactically disarms suspicion. Faqir thus draws a sharp contrast between imposed visibility and calculated invisibility, reflecting the divergent strategies her Arab female protagonist employ in navigating systems of surveillance and cultural expectations.

Najwa's encounter with Islamic scripture at "al-Zahrani mosque" (77) in Pakistan represents a pivotal moment, where her pragmatic approach to religion transforms into genuine spiritual awakening, fundamentally altering her understanding of suffering and healing. During this visit, she performs ablution and reads verses from the holy Quran about how ease and relief often follow every difficulty through divine mercy. Initially, she engages in these religious practices for pragmatic purposes with the desire to get along with the unfamiliar atmosphere of the mosque and establish a connection with its people. However, as she ponders on these verses, their profound implications start to take hold of her. This moment becomes particularly significant when Najwa remembers her sick mother, thinking that if she "had read this verse from the Qur'an, she would have realised that each trial carried the seeds of healing within it" (79). This incident captures a moment of transformation in Najwa's internal journey in which her engagement with religious beliefs leads to a meaningful spiritual and philosophical introspection. Resonating with her experiences, the content of the verses, reflecting divine mercy and eventual relief, allows Najwa to reassess her understanding of the struggles in her own life. This shift shows Najwa's growing awareness, underscoring her continuing pursuit of meaning and solace. It turns out to operate as a catalyst for Najwa to identify the dichotomy of suffering and healing within every move,

aligning with her efforts to reconcile her past and present realities with a sense of purpose and realization.

Najwa's strategic manipulation of cultural identity markers and intimate family details reveals her sophisticated understanding of how authenticity is performed and weaponized in contexts of political suspicion, transforming her from a naive seeker into a calculating navigator of ideological landscapes. On her first meeting with the religious man Abu Baker in the mosque, he suspects her identity as a spy. Najwa, however, manages to convince him of her true identity and her expedition of finding her father by providing specific, minimal details about him, "he has a crescent-shaped scar at the end of his eyebrow" (93). The paradoxical significance of these minimal details lies in their very specificity and ordinariness. The physical marker of a scar suggests the kind of knowledge only available through close personal connection, creating credibility because it avoids grandiose claims or suspicious elaboration. In contexts of displacement and trauma, where mistrust is prevalent, such restrained disclosure may serve as effective truth-telling through understatement rather than overstatement. Najwa further supports her narrative by mentioning to Abu Baker, "my mother was called Raneen, and my grandmother is Zainab" (93). When he presses her again about her grandmother's name, Najwa emphasizes her "Palestinian grandmother" (93). This reference to her Palestinian roots demonstrates Najwa's strategic use of cultural and historical knowledge to build trust and reliability, as Palestinian identity holds particular symbolic capital in this context through its association with anti-colonial struggle, which is a shared framework of oppression that resonates with Abu Baker's own ideological stance. Her awareness of a certain geopolitical perspective that links the struggles of the Afghan and Palestinian people enables her to connect with Abu Baker on a successful level, making her narrative more persuasive to him, whose worldview is framed by solidarity with liberation movements and resistance to Western intervention. This adaptability is crucial in her quest

to find her father, showcasing her growing ability to draw on the knowledge she has to accomplish her purposes. Ultimately, Najwa gains Abu Baker's trust, making another move in advancing her mission, as he eventually begins to share important clues about her father and how they first met in one of the training camps. Abu Baker further facilitates Najwa's trip to Afghanistan, assisting her to continue her journey of exploration.

While on the way to Afghanistan, Najwa experiences a pivotal moment of awareness when the car she is traveling in is thoroughly checked by soldiers at a checkpoint, who are searching for weapons. Later, she notices a piece of weapon hidden under the seat by the driver, likely picked up from one of the stores after the checkpoint. Najwa's remark, "you gaze at the same spot for years and fail to see the whole picture" (121), marks a turning point in her views, highlighting her growing awareness of the ambiguities of surface-level perceptions and the likely deceptive realities of the world around her. It signifies her realization in the sense that what she had already accepted may involve concealed implications and hidden truths. The symbolism of discovering the weapon after such attentive checks creates a powerful metaphor that contrasts surface security with deeper insecurities represented by the hidden weapon, symbolizing the concealed truths and suppressed realities that official narratives fail to acknowledge. Significantly, this symbolism echoes Najwa's journey of exploration, both internal and external, which is not only about her physical relocation but also about the expansion of her knowledge and her evolving understanding of the world she inhabits.

As she begins to notice that her previous perception of her surroundings and the people she encounters might be superficial, she starts to discern the underlying realities that she once ignored. This transformation can be interpreted in Appiah's and Hannerz's terms. While Appiah suggests that cosmopolitan knowledge is "imperfect, provisional, [and] subject to revision in the face of new evidence" (144), Hannerz identifies cosmopolitanism

as “an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity” (239). Najwa’s search for hidden realities during her journey embodies this cosmopolitan stance, though it emerges not from pure ethical openness or intellectual curiosity, but rather as a survival strategy necessitated by her vulnerable position as a displaced woman navigating potentially dangerous territories. It reflects a process of engaging with unfamiliar experiences, reassessing previous assumptions and reconsidering her perception of the world. Her transformation embodies the fallibilist aspect of cosmopolitanism, as her beliefs are not fixed but remain open to change as she continuously encounters new insights. This pragmatic necessity transforms into ethical openness, as Najwa discovers that survival requires true engagement with difference rather than superficial tolerance, making her cosmopolitan development both strategic and transformative. This change in attitude demonstrates Najwa’s flexible receptiveness to new knowledge – a characteristic of a cosmopolitan outlook that aligns with the theories of Appiah and Hannerz.

Najwa’s confrontation with her father’s secret family in Afghanistan forces her to confront the fluidity of her own identity, demonstrating her remarkable capacity to transform resentment into acceptance when faced with challenging family dynamics. In Afghanistan, Najwa’s time at one of Al Qaeda camps leads her to new revelations particularly through her encounter with Gulnar. At first, she appears outraged to know that the Afghani woman is her father’s second wife and that she has a half-sister named Amani. After her first reaction of anger due to the unexpected shock in her personal life, Najwa’s attitude changes from resentment to a tolerant and accepting stance, acknowledging Gulnar’s and Amani’s hospitality and kindness. This shift becomes evident when Najwa decides to “give [Amani] a hug” on the next day and “make a dress for her naked doll” (154). This gesture embodies Najwa’s ability to reshape her feelings and adjust her attitudes. It showcases her capacity for

a dynamic sense of identity that allows her to transcend the emotional gap created by her initial anger and accept the newfound realities of her family.

In the narrative, however, there is a major disruption to this newly emerging relationship between these three women: a destructive drone attack on the camp, causing Amani's death before Najwa can fully reconnect with and express her care for her half-sister. Najwa's ultimate reaction: "just like that, I left the land of the wronged, of victims and hard-done-bys, and entered the country of the guilty" (161) signifies a turning point in her understanding of the world and her place within it. Witnessing harsh events of violence and their moral dimensions, Najwa views herself and those around her as victims, who endure the indiscriminate and dehumanizing nature of the attack beyond their control. The notion that the attack takes Amani's life before Najwa can reconcile the relationship with her underlines the grim reality that innocent people are not excluded from violent acts with their arbitrariness and cruelty blurring the lines between victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, Najwa's reaction reflects that her previous perception of what is good and evil, and what is right and wrong, was simplistic, and the senselessness of the attack makes her reconsider the complexities of the world around her. It is a world replete with varying forms of violence where everyone, including herself, is likely to be subjected to loss while being burdened by some responsibility in the face of threatening circumstances.

After these harsh situations, Najwa decides to move to England to continue following in her father's footsteps. This shows that Najwa is determined not to let any cause slow down the progression of her journey or limit the attainment of her personal goals; that is why she maneuvers within a framework of awareness in which she is prepared, when necessary, to adapt her presentation of identity to avoid being misperceived. This framework operates through ethical pragmatism, where she adopts acceptable identities not to assimilate permanently but to navigate systems of exclusion that would otherwise block her access to

mobility and opportunity. On one occasion, for instance, she uses a forged student visa and a fabricated university letter of acceptance to gain access to England. She does this because she realizes that traveling from Afghanistan to the West would be problematic at a time of intense geopolitical tensions following the Soviet invasion and the subsequent rise of religious fundamentalist groups, leading to widespread travel restrictions on individuals from this region. By presenting herself as a student, she circumvents both bureaucratic barriers and potential prejudicial assumptions, enabling her to pursue her search for her father.

Not only does Najwa maneuver by pretension in order not raise suspicion about her identity, but also in order to assimilate and be accepted as a fully conformist expatriate, she also changes her appearance and behaves in special manners that comply as much as possible with the given normative standards of the different cultures. In this regard, Amani Abu Joudeh and Yousef Awad demonstrate that Faqir identifies dress “as a meaningful aspect of the construction of identity and an evocative metaphor of sociological, political, cultural and psychological web of codes” (13), and as they argue, “Najwa’s choice of what to wear during her peregrinations [...] is ruled by self-perception and cultural positioning” (9). Remarkably, Faqir’s novel represents the significance of the personal appearance and individual dress code as constitutive elements in the recognition of cultural identity, serving as pivotal aspects that disclose how migrants are perceived and thus treated when they intend to integrate in certain social situations outside the borders of their home countries.

In the case of Najwa, these aspects intensify her sense of awareness and assist her not to be situated at the risk of stereotypical segregation. As Abu Joudeh and Awad also observe, Najwa “is aware of the indicative role that dress plays in diverse countries including Jordan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Britain; thus, she pays a close attention to the specificity of each region where in each place she emerges differently” (7). This geographic adaptability

mirrors her psychological flexibility, one that refuses the coherence of a single self in favor of multiple, contextually appropriate performances that serve both survival and self-determination. In the Pakistani and Afghani conservative communities, Najwa follows the Islamic dress code by wearing a veil with a long chador; she also pretends to be a devout Muslim in conduct, one who does not look strange men in the eyes and refrains from shaking hands with them. Indeed, with her maneuvers and manners fitting into the Muslim code of conduct, Najwa manages to achieve her purposes in these countries: in addition to overcoming stereotypical misrepresentation, she gets useful clues about her father's whereabouts.

Moreover, Najwa continues to alter her appearance on grounds of convenience and reinvents her sense of self and identity on her journey to England. On her way while still on the plane, she turns back to her secular identity and habitually liberal look by taking off her veil and shirt and "exposing [her] arms and cleavage" (169). She is attentive to hide any sign that would label her as a Muslim woman. For this reason, she also keeps in mind to abstain from using any Islamic words such as "Inshallah!" and "Allah Willing" (173) in her verbal communication with the English people. While this transformation demonstrates her adaptability, it also reveals the vulnerability inherent in having to suppress core aspects of her identity to move through new cultural spaces safely. This constant reinvention of her identity aligns with David Held's understanding of cultural cosmopolitanism. Held, in alignment with Scheffler, emphasizes that cultural cosmopolitanism involves the "fluidity of individual identity" and the "remarkable capacity to forge new identities using materials from diverse cultural sources, and to flourish while so doing" (58). For Held, this approach also entails the ability to stand outside any singular cultural location and mediate between multiple traditions, navigating their core aspects with ease (58). In Najwa's case, her journey embodies cultural cosmopolitanism, as she continuously alters her identity depending on the

different cultural contexts. By seamlessly navigating multiple identities, she embraces the cosmopolitan ideal of engaging in diverse cultures, mediating their norms through reshaping her evolving sense of self in pursuit of personal growth and fulfillment. This sharply contrasts with Salma's experience, where the struggle to maintain her Arab identity under Western scrutiny leads to psychological distress. Unlike Najwa, Salma cannot easily adapt; her reluctance to remove the veil even to find work and her later desire for plastic surgery expose a painful crisis of identity. Faqir, through these divergent portrayals, highlights the heterogeneity of Arab women's responses to cultural marginalization and the uneven burdens of visibility and conformity.

Najwa's action of changing her appearance in England is, in some context, unailing and safe; what is more, it is women with Islamic dresses who are occasionally violated in this location. While sitting in a café in London, Najwa watches a discriminatory incident, in which a young Englishman abuses a group of veiled women. He shouts at them: "O! Scarecrows! Camel heads! Go home!" (185). Although Najwa is only an observer of this incident, she notices that the violated women are unperturbed, indicating that they are most probably used to such religion- and race-based abuses. Witnessing this scene reinforces Najwa's decision to conceal any signs of a Muslim identity, as she recognizes the precarious position of visible Muslim women in this society and the potential threats to her own sense of belonging. This incident highlights the pervasiveness of racism and Islamophobia in daily life, leading to the normalization of these discriminatory acts. On a broader scale, it reflects a societal pattern in which xenophobia persists, contributing to the marginalization of Muslim women, particularly those who wear the Islamic veil.

Najwa's own experiences in English society further illustrate this marginalization. Her relationship with Andy, the Englishman she meets on the plane, serves as a significant instance. As a first impression, Andy appears helpful and kind to Najwa and he hosts her at

his house. However, after they engage in a sexual relationship, he abruptly loses interest in her. Even though Najwa is attentive to avoid “emotional attachment” (173) to strange men, she feels attracted to Andy, which ultimately leads to her giving up her virginity to him. This moment becomes especially crucial when Andy begins making excuses to get rid of her, “my mother is going to France soon. You need to find alternative accommodation” (209). This pattern of behavior exemplifies how the intersection of race, gender, and precarious migration status subordinates minority women in the English context. Andy’s treatment of Najwa demonstrates how her multiple marginalization – as a woman, as an Arab, and as an immigrant – renders her vulnerable to exploitation. This relationship exemplifies the intersection of race and gender in subordinating minority women in the English context. Andy’s change of attitude is indicative of Najwa’s struggle for acceptance in Western society, where she is excluded from integration and is viewed as an outsider. His superficial kindness shows a pattern of objectification in which Najwa is reduced to an object of desire rather than perceived as a person with dignity.

Najwa describes her feeling towards Andy’s betrayal in this way: “Andy cut me out of his life like a deft butcher, trimming off the fat” (215). This metaphor conveys not only the swiftness and precision of his actions but also the painful detachment with which he discards her as if disposing of waste. In this sense, it reflects a dehumanizing attitude in which Andy degrades Najwa to something devoid of value, akin to trimmed fat. It also implies the lack of hesitation in his exploitation and the sense of rejection Najwa feels, as she realizes how he discards her without any regard for the emotional intimacy they once shared after he fulfils his desires with her. Whether as an observer of abuse or a victim of it, these incidents profoundly impact Najwa’s perspective, reinforcing her awareness of the precarious position of Arab Muslim women in English society. This personal experience illuminates broader patterns of systemic inequality that marginalize immigrant women

within Western societies. They represent politics of exclusion and othering that migrant women like her would face. Najwa comes to grasp how gender, racial, and religious identities can make women objects for abuse in a predominantly white society that is sometimes unwelcoming and intolerant of cultural differences – in addition to defining women as sexual objects of desire.

In contrast to her experiences with Andy, Najwa also engages with other English individuals who treat her with compassion and helpfulness, valuing her efforts to reunite with her father. For example, she meets Edward, a man who endured personal turmoil, including a troubled family background with an addicted mother and an absent father, as well as an unfair prison sentence for allegedly attempting to kill his girlfriend. Afterward, Edward undergoes a substantial transformation by converting to Islam, a decision impelled by his exposure to the Quran through Omar's recitations in prison. Omar's role here serves as a cultural and spiritual mediator, bridging Islamic teachings with Edward's Western context and highlighting how cross-cultural exchange can facilitate personal transformation. His conversion does not lead to extremism but rather a quest for meaning, structure, and freedom in his life. As Edward explains to Najwa, the holy book provides him with the framework his past life lacked, stating, "[n]o one told me what to do or this is right or this wrong. The self needs a framework" (224). Edward's search for structure mirrors Najwa's own quest for stability and belonging, as she traverses different cultural contexts, suggesting that the need for meaningful guidance transcends cultural boundaries. More practically, Edward plays a crucial role in supporting Najwa, arranging her visit to her father in prison and facilitating her accommodation with Elizabeth, a kind English woman in Durham.

Elizabeth also treats Najwa with kindness and vitally assists her in her quest, even going so far as to write to the authorities to help schedule Najwa's prison visits. The discrepancy between Najwa's interactions with Andy and those with Edward and Elizabeth

emphasizes the diversity of human relationships within English social landscapes. While Andy represents the segment of society that rejects others and marginalizes them, Edward and Elizabeth are depicted as compassionate individuals, who recognize Najwa's humanity regardless of her different cultural background. They represent a social group capable of showing tolerance and acceptance towards otherness, thereby challenging xenophobia and exclusion of minorities in their country. This genuine support marks a significant shift in Najwa's experience with Englishness, disclosing that her earlier encounters with exploitation and discrimination do not necessarily encompass the entirety of English society but rather coexist with possibilities for authentic connection and mutual respect.

This diversity of human relationships corresponds with Stuart Hall's understanding of cosmopolitanism in which he notes that societies are increasingly becoming multiple in nature due to the constant movement of people. Hall argues that societies are "composed of communities with different origins, coming from different places, obliged to make a life together within the confines still of a fixed territory boundary or space, while acknowledging that they are making a common life, not living a form of apartheid or separatism" (25). In the novel, Edward's and Elizabeth's treatment of Najwa exemplifies Hall's cosmopolitan values of coexistence, respect, and acceptance. Unlike Andy, who approaches Najwa with xenophobia and exclusionary attitudes, they engage with her in a manner that upholds the ideals of an inclusive and interconnected society, where individuals ought to, in Appiah's words, "develop habits of coexistence" and "of living together" (xix) with respect despite their different origins. Yet while Najwa embraces this diversity with strategic openness and fluid self-presentation, Salma's experience reveals a contrasting trajectory: worn down by persistent exclusion and racialized suspicion, she surrenders to her outsider status on many occasions. As previously analyzed, her resigned acceptance of marginalization demonstrates how sustained discrimination can lead to internalized submission and fear of confronting

natives. Hence, their differing responses to xenophobia reflect the heterogeneity of Arab women's encounters with, and positions within, Western multicultural spaces.

Ultimately, Najwa meets her father, but this encounter proves unsatisfactory to her, as his justification for abandoning her appears unconvincing. He attributes his extremist actions to a predetermined fate decided by God, whereas Najwa argues that individual destinies are guided by free choices. This fundamental disagreement reveals the emergence of Najwa's own ethical worldview, one that privileges personal responsibility and agency over fatalistic resignation. Right after this disappointing meeting, Najwa starts thinking about returning to her grandmother while taking a reflective walk by the river in Durham – a space that symbolizes her transition towards a new understanding of herself and her place in the world. During this moment, she says, “[h]ere and now, I – the skin, gristle, bone and blood of me – seemed real” (261). This emphasis on her physical materiality signifies a crucial moment of self-recognition, where Najwa reclaims ownership of her body after experiences of objectification and displacement, asserting her concrete existence as the foundation of her identity. By focusing on her physical presence, Najwa emphasizes her embodiment and the concrete reality of her existence, contrasting with the emotional and psychological suffering that previously caused her to feel rootless and isolated. This visceral connection to her own body displays a form of healing, as she moves from being acted upon by others to reclaiming her own self-possession and autonomy. This realization marks an evolving acceptance of her identity, transcending her condition as a deserted daughter, as she starts to view herself as a complete human being with a coherent sense of self. This reflection also encapsulates Najwa's empowerment in which she asserts her own existence, reclaims her agency, and acknowledges her adequacy and value.

Overall, the different situations that Najwa witnesses through her long journey of exploration bring her close to a conscious understanding that feeds her a sense of her own

perspectives, beliefs, feelings, and desires. With a flexible identity, she adopts a pragmatic and chameleon-like approach and attitude to her own sense of identity, adjusting her self-expression and cultural engagement depending on the ideological implications of the specific cultural contexts. She turns out to be a person who is open to having her identity redefined and her roots resettled in various locations. She becomes a person willing to adapt to diverse cultures and embrace diversity without denying the coexistence and validity of otherness. This readiness to reshape herself in response to different environments suggests both adaptability and a strategic performance of identity, an ability to navigate complexity without fully relinquishing self-awareness. Hence, she evolves into a cosmopolitan individual who is inwardly ready to embrace a balanced attitude amongst differences, signaling not only openness to but also meaningful engagement with cultural plurality.

4. Cosmopolitan and Counter-Cosmopolitan Subjects

Faqir employs a distinctive narrative style that intertwines Najwa's retrospective first-person account with her father's narrative, presented as a fictional diary in alternating sections. Through this nuanced juxtaposition, the novel explores the tension between cosmopolitanism and anti-cosmopolitanism. The story takes readers through four countries, offering a close presentation of how the characters' interactions with various cultural, political, and religious ideologies reshape their sense of identity. It provides critical insights into how their lives are reshaped and how their cultural identities are reconstructed under the influence of radicalism, secularism, terrorism, and extremism. The narrative lines intersect at the point when Najwa eventually meets her father in Frankland prison in Durham, England. This convergence underscores the disparity in their worldviews, a direct result of the distinct ideological and experiential paths they have followed. Whereas Najwa comes to terms with the knowledge that sets her free with a stance of openness towards cultural diversity, her father is imprisoned for his terrorist deeds and blames himself for his strictness

The narrative accentuates that Najwa's fluidity of identity, growing self-awareness, and agency provide a framework for the emergence of cosmopolitan subjectivity amid multiple counter-cosmopolitan individuals and entities. Unlike her father, who turns from a non-strict Muslim but secular student of nursing in Jordan to a religious fundamentalist, who serves as a medic in one of Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, Najwa appropriates a cosmopolitan consciousness that makes her identity different from and arguably opposed to the idea of exclusive belonging or allegiance to a particular culture or ideology. In contrast to Najwa, her father's misunderstanding of many realities and his blind allegiance to religious extremism render his identity rigorous. Analyzing Omar's transformation of identity, Majed Aladylah argues that Omar "lacks understanding of this implosion" (228), elaborating that "[he] is emotionally and intellectually confused; his world is shattered between reality and illusion" (228). In his diary, it is revealed that Omar and Hani, who used to go to bars and drink alcohol, and therefore, initially appear as religiously impious individuals, are misguided by the illusory thought that they can fight the injustice of society by joining the political movements of local resistance. Before they become members of the global movement of Al Qaeda Islamist organization in the mountains of Afghanistan, their misguidance starts in Jordan when the two friends attend a confidential study circle that regularly assembles next to the Grand Mosque in Amman.

This meeting is arranged by an Islamist political brotherhood established in Jordanian-controlled Jerusalem in 1953, likely referencing Hizb ut-Tahrir (party of liberation), which is a pan-Islamist and fundamentalist political organization that aims at reuniting the Muslim community (Umma) and implementing Sharia law, thereby rejecting the liberal and secular paradigms exported from the West in the imperialist age. As Omar and Hani once discuss, this organization "works at all levels of society to restore the Islamic

way of life under the umbrella of the Caliphate” (44), with the call for global Jihad as one of its core principles to achieve its wide-ranging purposes.

Sharabi contends that the evolution of “fundamentalist Islam into a militant political movement” in the contemporary Arab setting is intrinsically linked to “its dialectical relation to imperialism and modernization”. He further argues that “[t]he Islamic trend, in its reformist as well as conservative and militant forms, viewed history and the West in ideological terms and could see the past only as the embodiment or repository of the truth of Islam and its golden age, and the West as the negation of both”. Sharabi considers that this encounter between fundamentalism and secularism produces “forms of consciousness, within neopatriarchal society, which reflect varying responses to the problem of distorted modernization” (71–72). Faqir’s novel reflects these dynamics, blending references to reality with fictional representation to critique the social conditions in Jordan and other Arab countries during a period marked by the disintegration of national identity due to the rise of radical organizations. The characters Omar and Hani exemplify Sharabi’s assertion, as their conversion from non-strict Muslims to radical Islamists illustrates the influence of fundamentalist ideologies in their society.

In the novel, Islamist fundamentalist groups establish themselves in the UK with their actions influencing both natives and migrants. Najwa reads in a newspaper that “Lisa French, 32, was on the top deck of the number 30 London bus blown up in Tavistock Square by suicide terrorist Hasib Hussain, killing 13 people and himself. Lisa had a phobia. ‘Until now, buses have looked like coffins on wheels to me – because that was the image I was left with’” (187). As a reaction to this news, Najwa narrates, “I looked up *phobia* in my pocket dictionary: *A fear, aversion or hatred*” (187). This moment suggests that the news provokes Najwa to speculate on the nature of fear, on the aversion resulting from horrifying events, and on how they occasionally pervade her lived experiences. Lisa’s story, in which she is

exposed to terroristic violence leading to internal anxiety, prompts Najwa to associate her internal fear with her struggles to search for meaning amid the violence and discrimination shaping her existence. Najwa's attempt to look for the meaning of "phobia" underlines the impact of external events on her internal world, embodying her dilemma to find a sense of her personhood in a life characterized by both personal and collective fears.

By the same token, the narrative includes a reference to the three terrorist bombs in the underground train in London in the same year. The novel portrays Omar as a member of the radical network responsible for these attacks and a participant of these terrorist events. His occupation is "to teach the bombers how to make simple and quick explosives" (32), something that he learned in Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. The novel highlights how these horrible actions cause the outburst of discrimination and Islamophobia against Arab and Muslim immigrants, who are at times misperceived by stereotypical implications as terrorists within the English community. In this way, Islamist fundamentalist groups fend off Najwa's cosmopolitanism and impact her efforts to assimilate in the English culture in particular, but they also lead to a stereotypical discrimination against Arab and Muslim migrants in diaspora in general. In this vein, one can refer to Appiah's juxtaposition of the cosmopolitan and anti-cosmopolitan in which he asserts that despite their "transnational networks and global moral aspirations", religious fundamentalist movements like Al Qaeda are counter-cosmopolitan, for they "appear to espouse singular truth and demonize the other" (quoted in Werbner, 11). Appiah further critiques how such radical movements distort traditional religious values, weaponizing Jihad as a political tool under the guise of religious doctrine (140). Within the novel, both Najwa's father and Al Qaeda embody this rejection of pluralism, insisting on their ideological exclusivity as the sole legitimate truth. Their recourse to violence does not only reinforce fear and insecurity, but it also intensifies

xenophobic anxieties, influencing both native citizens and migrants alike, even undermining, among others, Najwa's sense of self and position in society.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep*, focusing on how the Arab protagonist Najwa's difference leads to her estrangement within her local patriarchal community, and how her dynamic identity and cosmopolitan subjectivity serve as latent agency in the diasporic context. Utilizing cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework, the textual analysis has revealed that Najwa faces stereotypical prejudices due to her secular identity in Jordan, where she does not conform to the cultural and religious practices of her conservative community. Her diasporic journey enables the establishment of a flexible identity and cosmopolitan positionality, empowering her to develop a unique sense of belonging across different cultures. By addressing the encounter between religious fundamentalism and liberal secularism through juxtaposing Najwa's narrative with that of her extremist father, the analysis has demonstrated how their opposing worldviews shape their contrasting destinies. While her father's anti-cosmopolitan convictions lead to his downfall, Najwa emerges as an empowered cosmopolitan, whose trajectory embodies a resilient and inclusive alternative to fundamentalism. Najwa's evolution towards acceptance and tolerance of social, cultural, and religious diversity contrasts with her father's imprisonment for terrorist activities, a direct consequence of his rigid, anti-cosmopolitan ideology.

Conclusion

This dissertation has undertaken the first comprehensive monographic analysis of Fadia Faqir's four novels, examining the interconnected systems of patriarchy, colonialism, and migration as overlapping power structures of oppression faced by Faqir's Arab female protagonists across diverse temporal and spatial contexts. Through this examination, it has explored the modes of agency and resistance these women adopt in response to multiple oppressions, as well as how their experiences redefine their evolving forms of personhood and subjectivity in both colonial and postcolonial settings.

Central to this analysis is Sharabi's concept of neopatriarchy, which provides a crucial theoretical lens for understanding the interconnections between patriarchy, colonialism, and migration within Arab contexts, thereby contextualizing Faqir's narratives across different times and locations. Neopatriarchy, as a hybrid formation emerging from the interaction between indigenous patriarchal traditions and the forces of colonialism and migration, enables a nuanced understanding of how Arab women navigate overlapping systems of oppression that move beyond reductive East–West binaries.

This dissertation has employed a contextually responsive framework, applying theories of postcolonial feminism – including double colonization –, postcolonialism, liminality, and cosmopolitanism. While these theoretical approaches have been applied individually to each novel, a cross-referential comparative methodology has been maintained across the analysis within the separate chapters. This methodological approach has revealed not only the shared terrain of subjugation but also the distinctiveness of each woman's experience and strategy of resistance, demonstrating how Faqir transcends simplistic victim–heroine dichotomies and challenges homogenizing representations of Arab womanhood by foregrounding their complexity and diversity.

The textual analysis has demonstrated that the female protagonists suffer from varied forms and degrees of oppression. In *Nisanit*, the Palestinian woman Eman endures the trauma of settler-colonial occupation and local patriarchal ostracism, particularly following the 1967 Six-Day War. *Pillars of Salt* reveals how Maha and Hannyeh fall victim to different models of violence arising from the collusion between colonial hegemony and local patriarchy during the onset of the British mandate in Transjordan. This intersecting framework embodies the concept of double colonization, manifested both in the mental institution and within their unforgiving society.

In *My Name is Salma*, the protagonist Salma experiences a distinct form of double colonization that operates through two interacting yet different patriarchal systems. Initially, she faces subjugation under her native Bedouin patriarchy, which subjects her to honor-based persecution and restrictive cultural codes. Subsequently, she encounters marginalization within Western patriarchal structures that both racialize and exclude her based on her ethnic and cultural identity. This dual oppression creates a complex oppressive framework, where Salma becomes caught between conflicting identity constructs, resulting in a liminal positionality characterized by profound disorientation and uncertainty. In *Willow Trees Don't Weep*, Najwa's transnational journey through Jordan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and England illuminates her encounters with multiple layers of cultural prejudice, religious intolerance, and patriarchal silencing. She faces ostracism both for her secular identity and for defying local gender norms in Jordan, while confronting discrimination, exclusion, racism, and exploitation in England.

Moreover, the analysis of Faqir's novels has highlighted how Faqir's characters exhibit varied modes of agency that reshape their personhood and subjectivities. Characters such as Maha and Eman reclaim their agency through responsibility, determination, resilience, education, cultural traditions, and female solidarity. Their acts of resistance and

self-empowerment enable them to negotiate personal autonomy within oppressive contexts. Conversely, Hannyeh, who internalizes societal judgment and succumbs to her dilemma, exemplifies the toll of such overlapping systems of oppression. Similarly, Salma's empowerment emerges through education, work, and adaptive identity performance in the West. However, her transformation and modes of agency remain limited, as she is unable to overcome the dilemma of double identity and liminal positionality. Najwa, in contrast, achieves a more assertive transformation: her dynamic identity and cosmopolitan subjectivity allow her to confront multiple layers of exclusion and to emerge with a redefined sense of self, unbound by rigid binaries.

The findings of this dissertation have established that Faqir employs literary fiction to contest essentialist narratives by offering sophisticated portrayals of Arab women's lived experiences. Her protagonists emerge as neither passive victims nor idealized heroines, but as multidimensional figures, whose agency develops in direct response to their unique socio-historical contexts. Furthermore, this dissertation has demonstrated that through Faqir's critique of both indigenous patriarchal norms and Western imperial discourses, genuine empowerment in her fiction lies in the radical reimagining of Arab womanhood beyond colonial and patriarchal binaries. Through nuanced portrayals of diverse protagonists, Faqir resists the homogenization of Arab female experience while challenging reductive narratives of both victimhood and emancipation.

In conclusion, these findings have contributed new insights to the field of Arab women's literature and to broader scholarly debates surrounding gender, identity, and power in postcolonial and diasporic contexts. This dissertation has underscored the literary and political significance of Faqir's work as a vital intervention in ongoing academic discourses on representation and resistance, thereby establishing a foundation for future scholarship in this critical area of postcolonial feminist literary studies.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Faqir, Fadia. *My Name is Salma*. London, Black Swan, 2008.

———. *Nisanit*. London, Penguin Books, 1987.

———. *Pillars of Salt*. London, Quartet Books, 1996.

———. *Willow Trees Don't Weep*. London, Heron Books, 2014.

Secondary Sources

Abu Baker, Ahmad M. S. "Identity Erasure in Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*, *My Name is Salma* & Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*." *Journal of Arts & Humanities*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2021, pp. 31–41.

Abu Joudeh, Amani, and Yousef Awad. "Dress as a Marker of Identity Construction in Arab Women's Literature from the Diaspora." *Acta Scientiarum. Language and Culture*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2019, pp. 1–14.

Adam, Sibyl. "Melancholic Migrations and Affective Objects in Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma*." *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writings*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1–23.

Aladylah, Majed H. "Crossing Borders: Narrating Identity and Self in *Willow Trees Don't Weep* by Fadia Faqir." *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 3, 2015, pp. 224–229.

Alghamdi, Alaa. *Transformations of the Liminal Self: Configurations of Home and Identity for Muslim Characters in British Postcolonial Fiction*. Bloomington, iuniverse, 2011.

Alobeytha, Faisal Lafee. "Ethnocentrism and Arab Women in Fadia Faqir's *The Cry of the Dove*." *International Journal of Arabic–English Studies (IJAES)*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2023, pp. 1–16.

- Alqahtani, Suaad Muhammad. "Western Feminism or Return to Authentic Islam? Jordanian Women in Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* and *My Name is Salma*." *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2017, pp. 77–91.
- Alshammari, Shahd. *Literary Madness in British, Postcolonial, and Bedouin Women's Writing*. Cambridge, Cambridge Scholarly Publishing, 2016.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York and London, W. W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. 2nd ed. London and New York, Routledge, 1989.
- . *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London and New York, Routledge, 2013.
- Balaa, Luma. "The Madness of Women as an Illusional Power in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 25, no. 7, 2023, pp. 1–20.
- Bartels, Anke, et al., editors. *Postcolonial Literatures in English: An Introduction*. Stuttgart, J.B. Metzler, 2019.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "The World and the Home." *Social Text*, no. 31/32, 1992, pp. 141–53.
- . *The Location of Culture*. London and New York, Routledge, 1994.
- . "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan." *Voices of the Crossing: The Impact of Britain on Writers from Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa*, edited by Ferdinand Dennis and Naseem Khan, London, Serpent's Tail, 2000, pp. 133–142.
- Brenner, Michael. *In Search of Israel: The History of an Idea*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London, Routledge, 1990.

Carby, Hazel V. "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood."

The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in 70s Britain, edited by Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, London and New York, Routledge, 1982, pp. 110–28.

Canpolat, Seda. "Scopic Dilemmas: Gazing the Muslim Woman in Fadia Faqir's *My Name*

is Salma and Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*." *Contemporary Women's Writing*, vol. 10. no. 2, 2015, pp. 216–235.

Chakraborty, Arup Ratan. "Liminality in Post-colonial Theory: A Journey from Arnold Van

Gennep to Homi K. Bhabha." *Anudhyan: An International Journal of Social Sciences*, 2016.

Cook, Rebecca J, and Simone Cusack. *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal*

Perspectives. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Dharwadker, Vinay. "Diaspora and Cosmopolitanism." *The Ashgate Research Companion*

to Cosmopolitanism, edited by Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka, Farnham and Burlington, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011, pp. 125–145.

Djafri, Yasmina. "Spinning in Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*: An Instrument of Female

Empowerment." *Creating Myths as Narratives of Empowerment and Disempowerment*, edited by Sihem Arfaoui et al., California, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016, pp. 532–547.

Eglaja-Kristone, Eva. "Exile and Liminality: Experience between Cultures and Identities."

Interlitteraria, vol. 20, no. 1, 2015, pp. 146–155.

El Saadawi, Nawal. *Walking through Fire: The Later Years of Nawal El Saadawi*. Translated

by Sherif Hetata. London and New York, Zed Books Ltd, 2002.

———. *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*. London, Zed Press, 2007.

- Elsherif, Ikram Ahmed. "Overshadowed by Neo-Orientalism: The Odyssey in Fadia Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep*." *Journal of English and Comparative Studies*, vol. 3, 2021, pp. 29–46.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York, Grove Press, 1963.
- . *A Dying Colonialism*. New York, Grove Press, 1965.
- Faqir, Fadia. "Intrafamily Femicide in Defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2001, pp. 65–82.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon. Translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper. New York, Pantheon Books, 1980.
- . *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York, Vintage Books, 1995.
- Jaleel, Eman Mahir, et al. "The Arabian Women's Adaptation of Western Values in Fadia Faqir's *The Cry of the Dove*." *Research Journal of Language, Literature and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 8, 2016, pp. 1–6.
- Hall, Stuart. "Political Belonging in a World of Multiple Identities." *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 25–31.
- Hannerz, Ulf. "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 7, 1990, pp. 237–251.
- Held, David. "Culture and Political Community: National, Global, and Cosmopolitan." *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 48–60.

- Hiebert, Daniel. "Cosmopolitanism at the Local Level: The Development of Transnational Neighbourhood." *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 209–226.
- Hooks, Bell. *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*. New York, Atria Books, 2004.
- Horvath, Agnes, et al., editors. *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality*. New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2015.
- Katrak, Ketu H. *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London, Rutgers University Press, 2006.
- Khudhair, Azhar Elias. "Cultural Hybridity and Identity Negotiation in Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma*." *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, vol. 12, no. 5, 2024, pp. 30–37.
- Kendall, Gavin, et al., editors. *The Sociology of Cosmopolitanism: Globalization, Identity, Culture and Government*. London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Kerner, Ina. "Relations of Difference: Power and Inequality in Intersectional and Postcolonial Feminist Theories." *Current Sociology*, vol. 65, no. 6, 2016, pp. 1–21.
- Kwok-Bun, Chan. "Both Sides, now: Culture, Contact, Hybridization, and Cosmopolitanism." *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 191–208.
- Leach, Justine. "The Seduction of Rape as Allegory in Postcolonial Literature." In *Querying Consent: Beyond Permission and Refusal*, edited by Jordana Greenblatt and Keja Valens, 83–99. New Brunswick, Camden, and Newark, NJ, and London, Rutgers University Press, 2018.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. (Reprint Edition). Audre Lorde (Ed.). Berkeley, Crossing Press, 2007, pp. 110–114.

- Massad, Joseph A. *The Making of National Identity in Jordan*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2001.
- McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Meery, Sally Engle. *Gendered Violence: A Cultural Perspective*. Oxford, Black Well, 2005.
- Mignolo, Walter D. "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism." *Public Culture*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2000, pp. 721–748.
- Mishra, Raj Kumar. "Postcolonial Feminism: Looking into within-beyond-to Difference." *International Journal of English and Literature*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2013, pp. 129–134.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Boundary 2*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1984, pp. 333–358.
- Moore, Lindsey. "You Arrive at a Truth, not the Truth: An Interview with Fadia Faqir." *Postcolonial Text*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2011, pp. 1–13.
- . *Arab, Muslim, Woman: Voice and Vision in Postcolonial Literature and Film*. London, Routledge, 2008.
- Mukattash, Eman K. "Transnationalizing Ecocritical Studies in Arab Diasporic Fiction: A Case Study of Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma*." *American, British and Canadian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2022, pp. 179–200.
- Ouahmiche, Ghania and Dallel Sarnou. "Voices of Errancy, Spaces of Silence and Traces of Writing in the Narratives of Fadia Faqir, Leila Aboulela and Assia Djebar." *International Journal of Arabic–English Studies*, vol. 16, 2016, pp. 143–163.
- Piazza, Robert. *Discourses of Identity in Liminal Places and Spaces*. New York and London, Routledge, 2019.
- Pollock, Sheldon, et al., editors. *Cosmopolitanism*. Durham and North Carolina, Duke University Press Books, 2017.

- Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder and You-Me Park. "Postcolonial Feminism/Postcolonialism and Feminism." *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*. Edited by Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York, Vintage Books, 1979.
- . *The Question of Palestine*. New York, Vintage Books, 1979.
- . *Culture and Imperialism*. New York, Vintage Books, 1994.
- Santesso, Isra Mirze. *Disorientation: Muslim Identity in Contemporary Anglophone Literature*. Hampshire and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Sarnou, Dalel. "Deterritorialized Anglophone Arab Women: Liminal Selves between Home and Diaspora (A Case Study of Faqir's *My Name is Salma*)."
Revista Canaria De Estudios Ingleses, vol. 74, no. 1, 2017, pp. 99–107.
- . "Rethinking the Veil, Jihad and Home on Fadia Faqir's *Willow Trees Don't Weep* (2014)."
Open Cultural Studies, vol. 1, 2017, pp. 155–160.
- . "Voicing Liminal Subjects in Anglophone Arab Narratives: A Case Study of Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma*."
Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses, vol. 74, 2017, pp. 99–108.
- . "Dehumanizing the Arab Other: "A Case Study of Diana Abujaber's *Arabian Jazz* and Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma*."
Postcolonial Interventions, vol. III, no. 2, 2018, pp. 160–191.
- Sharabi, Hisham. *Palestine Guerrillas: Their Credibility and Effectiveness*. Georgetown, Georgetown University Press, 1970.
- . *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Shahak, Israel. *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*. London, Pluto Press, 1994.

- Sinno, Nadine. "From Confinement to Creativity: Women's Reconfiguration of the Prison and Mental Asylum in Salwa Bakr's *The Golden Chariot* and Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*." *Journal of Arabic Literature*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2001, pp. 69–94.
- Skjoldaer-Nielsen, Kim and Joshua Edelman. "Liminality." *Ecumenica*, vol.7, no. 1–2, 2014, pp. 1–6.
- Sourav, Paul and Shri Krishan Rai. "*Willow Trees Don't Weep*." *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2020, pp. 132–136.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988). *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*. Rosalind C. Morris (Ed.). New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, pp. 21–64.
- Srinivasan, Sowmya. "Fadia Faqir Writes Back: *Nisanit* as a Resistance Novel." *IUP Journal of English Studies*, vol.12, no. 3, 2017, pp. 62–76.
- Stuart, Hall and Paul Du Gay. *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London, Sage Publications, 1996.
- Tejero, Antonia Navarro. *Postcolonial Feminism: Teaching How to Avoid Prejudices about Muslim Women in an ESL Classroom*. Cordoba, Relaciones Interculturales en la Diversidad, 2013.
- Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. New York, Cornell University Press, 1969.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003.
- . *Empire, Colony, Postcolony*. Chichester, Willy Blackwell, 2015.
- Vertovec, Steven, and Robin Cohen. "Introduction." *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice*, edited by Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, Oxford UP, 2002, pp. 1–24.

- Walker, Lenore E. A., editor. *The Battered Woman Syndrome: With Research Associates*, 3rd ed. New York, Springer Publishing Company, 2009.
- Werbner, Pnina. "Introduction: Towards a New Cosmopolitan Anthropology." *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism*, edited by Pnina Werbner, Oxford and New York, Berg, 2008, pp. 1–32.
- Wikan, Unni. *In Honor of Fadime: Murder and Shame*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Zaghmout, Fadi. "Fadia Faqir Introduces *Willow Trees Don't Weep*." *YouTube*, 26 Feb. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tK4K1V8SreA. Accessed 5 May 2021.