

## A Woman's Struggle for Identity and Existence: A Critical Study of Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to critically trace the Arab woman fugitive who flees from what the so-called backward world to the so-called modern and civilized world. It is a loss in a hypocrite world where in each part of it people assume humanity and coexistence. However, the real truth is that each person is a racist and ethnic against the other. The paper examines the postcolonial text that reveals the instill gap of racism and inferiority of East to the West. Gaining the Western identity by an Easterner is not an end of abusing and disdain, it is also a new door for a new name of discrimination. It investigates the writer's fragile identity for feeling guilty towards herself, her family, her society, her religion and that she deserves honor killing. However, her new identity does not give her peace and happy life. Being a woman in a western country means to be ready for selling your body to sustain yourself and your dependents.

The paper also examines the language of the text that the author uses to bring to light the changing of one's educational life. It is an analysis of the interlanguage that the writer keeps for the reader to investigate such slang words which are left untranslated. The dialogue that the writer makes during the speaker's childhood, adulthood and womanhood gives a real picture of the two worlds, West and East, religiously and socially. Fadia Fakir's, *My Name is Salma* shows the evolution of Salma's mind and awareness that tells her whatever one changes his/her appearance to change the identity cannot change his/her inner one.

*Keywords:* Post-colonialism, Racism, Muslim Arab Woman Identity, Honor Killing.

### نضال المرأة لأنبات الهوية والوجود: دراسة نقدية لرواية لله أسمي سلمى لله لفادية الفقير

#### المستخلص

تم في هذا البحث إجراء دراسة ادبية نقدية لرواية الكاتبة العربية فادية الفقير "أسمي سلمى" التي تناولت موضوع الفتاة العربية التي أضطرت للهروب من مجتمعها العربي الراضخ للعادات والتقاليد المتخلفة والمتناقضة مع الدين والانسانية الى مجتمع مدني عربي يزعم فيها احترام الانسان ويقدر التعايش بين الشعوب. لكن الحال في الواقع كان عكس الحقيقة فكل شخص عربي تجده عنصري وينظر للقدامين الى الغرب بأنهم أدنى منه مكانه ومجرد من الحقوق التي يتمتع بها الغربي. هذا البحث يقوم بدراسة نص مابعد الاستعمار الادبي وعلاقة الشعوب العربية بالغرب وأظهار الفجوة الاستعمارية التي تبرز في النظرة الغربية الدونية للمشرق وخاصة للعالم العربي. هذه الدراسة تظهر أيضا أنه وحتى أن أستطاع احد الحصول على الجنسية الغربية فليست نهاية العنصرية بل بداية لتمييز عنصري آخر ، حيث تظل مواطن من الدرجة الأدنى لاتتمتع بكامل حقوق المواطنة. كما أقوم بدراسة العادات والتقاليد العربية وعلاقتها بالدين الاسلامي وأثرتك العادات التي أجبرت سلمى للهروب من مجتمعها والاضطرار للانتقال الى عالم آخر يستغل المرأة بدعوى المساواة بين الرجل والمرأة.

كما تتناول الورقة لغة النص التي أستخدمها الكاتب لإبراز تغيير الحياة التعليمية للشخص. إنه تحليل للغة البينية التي يدفع بها الكاتب للقارئ كي يقوم بدراستها والبحث عن مثل هذه الكلمات العامة التي تُركت غير مترجمة. يعطي الحوار الذي يقوم به الكاتب خلال طفولة المتحدث ، والبلوغ ، والانوثة صورة حقيقية للعالمين ، الغربي والشرقي ، دينياً واجتماعياً. رواية "أسمي سلمى" فادية فقير تظهر مراحل تطور العقل والادراك لسلمى والذي يكشف لها انه مهما حاول الشخص أن يغير من مظهره الخارجي كي يغير هويته وأنتمائه فإنه لا يستطيع أن يغيرها من الداخل.

## Introduction

*My goal in writing this book was to raise my voice on behalf of the millions of girls around the world who are being denied their right to go to school and realise their potential. I hope my story will inspire girls to raise their voice and embrace the power within themselves, but my mission does not end there. My mission, our mission, demands that we act decisively to educate girls and empower them to change their lives and communities.* (Malala Yousafzai ٢٠١٥)

Fadia Faqir's semi-autobiography, *My Name is Salma*, is a real picture of the Arab patriarchal attitudes. *My Name is Salma* is the third novel of Fadia Faqir which also carries another name, *A Cry of a Dove*. Salma is depicted as a dove who cries out in a world deprived of mercy and justice. In her 'You Arrive at a Truth, Not the Truth' interview by Lindsey Moore, Faqir points out how this novel has showed part of her own difficult life i.e. semi-autobiography. Salma, for example, in *My Name is Salma*, is forced to wear the veil by her father. The same thing happened to Faqir as she states,

I was forced to wear the veil by my father, a reluctant tyrant. He imposed things on us like praying five times a day, a ٧ p.m. curfew... all kinds of things that made me react against institutional religion. Some of my siblings and I felt like we were in a camp, a confined space, an army, and that our father treated us like cadets. (١)

Her reaction against religion appears in Salma's conversation to her atheist teacher, John as she attempts to persuade him that "Muslim is difficult. You don't want Muslim. Muslim is fucking complicated," (Faqir ٢٩٠). Another semiautobiographical factor Faqir mentions in her interview is her view of Western world. The English club, for instance, in Amman is a prohibited place to enter and is considered a colonial space. She says "It reconfigures itself in my writing again and again. Salma, for example, [in *My Name is Salma*] is always looking into other people's gardens in England; she's always on the outside" (Moore "You arrive..." ١). Furthermore, Faqir's son is left in Jordan as her father enforced to leave him with her ex-husband. She then gets married to an English professor. Similarly, Salma is enforced to leave her daughter in Jordan. Then she flees to England and gets married to an English professor.

As Faqir moves to England, she starts exploring the western culture. Therefore, one can observe in her works the double consciousness that has come according to the strategic negotiation she makes between Arab and western cultures. The double consciousness is also due to the living in diaspora. Her *My Name Is Salma*, for example, brings to light the Westerner's prejudice, racism and ego-ethnic attitudes against others, particularly against those who come from "Somewhere in the Middle East. Fucking A-rabic! She rode a camel all the way from Arabia to this dump in Exter. [. . .] I am not going to share the room with an Arab" (Faqir ١٥).

*My Name is Salma* is an echo of Faqir's life as she admits that there are some parts of her painful life are intermingled in her novels. However, Faqir urges her reader to read women's work as

a novel, but not as her autobiography which El Saadawi mentions, “seeks to reveal the self, what is hidden inside, just as it tries to see the other” (*A Daughter of Isis* ٣٤٥). Faqir’s semi-autobiography quests what have I done? And what am I going to counter? Through Salma, Faqir shows how a misogynous world enforces a woman to create her own world. She invites her reader to compare between woman’s life in both Arab culture and British one. Faqir says that *My Name is Salma* “holds a mirror up both to British society and the society Salma had left behind” (Chambers ٦٥). It is an appeal to hear the scream of an innocent woman in a world deprived of human sense. On one hand, it is considered as a woman’s scream against humiliated and persecuted treatment by both Eastern and Western society. It is also a metaphorical picture of the damage of mankind on the other hand.

Faqir has used some symbols to compare between the two spaces and communities—East and West. Prison, for example, is created as a turning point in Salma’s life. The British prison is depicted as a rest and preparing environment for transforming to a new community which is completely different from her natal society. It is a space as Salma says to “finding new name and history for myself. [. . .] slip slowly out of my body like a snake shedding her old skin. I might stop being Salma and become someone else, who never had a bite of the forbidden apple” (Faqir ٥٩).

Faqir uses flashback technique to contrast and compare between the two worlds—Eastern and Western. This technique helps raise question concerning truth, history, culture, and religion. Based on a postcolonial background, Faqir’s text shows out the double oppression—patriarchal Arab society and Western discrimination—Arab woman confronts desperately. Faqir uses random style of narrative that mixes up the past with present of Salma’s life. This nonlinear narrative reveals the apocalyptic vision that Arab woman goes through in her life. She urges the reader to stand between two spaces and scrutinizes them. The reader is encouraged to study the life of Arab woman, particularly when a woman gets pregnant out of marriage. During the development of the plot of the semi-autobiography the life of Salma becomes liminalized. The plot explores the “Anglo-Arab” writer, Faqir’s sense of liminality and hybridity. Faqir makes a literary dialogue between cultures. As an Anglophone Arab writer, Faqir, has “the capacity to play a crucial role in disseminating through the wider world [her] images of hyphenated Arabs and of the Arab people as a whole” (Al Maleh x). Salma lives in struggle with her hybrid identity she tries to compromise with. Her natal Bedouin identity drags her away from her English-ness and similarly her adopted English identity takes her away from her Arab-ness. “It is as if [she] they are caught between two zones: a modern liberating zone, and a traditional subjugating zone” (Sarnou ٢). It is observe that Faqir’s *My Name Is Salma* shows out the life of a woman in two different societies. “It represents a luminal Bedouin Salma in Hima, and it also represents a marginalized Arab British Sally in Exter” (٢). Faqir finds out that a woman cannot live safely and happily in both Arab and western cultures.

In all her interviews, Faqir emphasizes that a woman has to speak for herself rather than to be represented. Thus, It is showed that Salma who is the speaker and the main character in the novel

starts telling her story from her own childhood as a Bedouin shepherdess to a sinner, fugitive and then as a second class English citizen. The novel shows

An articulation of the asylum seeker's condition that is gender-specific, emphasis falling on an Arab female's experience of being caught between two cultures: barred from returning to her Arab village on pain of almost certain death, and trapped within the circle of an alien otherness that is the lot of Muslim Arab refugees in the West. (Nash ١٢٨)

The novel also reveals the challenge, the offence and the alienation that Salma goes through "from the village and has the decision to embrace exile made for her" (١٢٨).

### **The Postcolonial Conflict**

As East exists without the help of West, the West seems incomplete because it attempts to discover the other world which is the East. This can be understood in the statement of the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges "A major event in the history of the West was the discovery of the East" (qtd in Malak ١). This means that the East is independent and does not search for anyone to explore it. The conversation between Salma and Max reveals Easterners' independency. "You know what bugs me about them. They [Arabs] come here like an army, buy houses and cars then sell their houses and cars without us hard-working English people making a sodding penny out of it. They [Arab] don't go to [English] estate agents or dealers, no, they buy off each other" (Faqr ١٧٤-٥). Interestingly, the Western discovery of the East leads to "the operative dynamics of the East-West encounter in which each pole, each party, becomes self-consciously aware of the weight and impact of the Other" (Malak ١). The relationship that has come from the West-East interaction is not always harmonious. It seems to be based on each pole's power which is considered an axiomatic tool of domination. As "power comes from everywhere," says Micheal Foucault, this means that there is not freedom has left to individuals, communities, or to nations. Since there is no balance in power recently, one observes that the Western power dominates the East which cannot represent itself. It is mentioned in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, that "Exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the power Orient" (٢١). The Arabic world is portrayed as "rich isolationist group who do not belong to Britain" (٥٤). For Westerners, "Arabs are a homogenous group who simply want to remain isolated the larger British society" (Awad ٥٤).

Thus, as a postcolonial voice, the novel reveals the Western perspective towards Easterners. Those immigrants feel 'alien' in The West. Salma, for example, shows how she has experienced a sense of alienation in the English society. She is a victim of politics, religion and geography. Differently, Salma is shut down and cannot speak out against the unjust patriarchal tradition in her unnamed country which considers her guilty "I had smeared the foreheads of my family with tar" (Faqr ٦). The woman autobiography according to Sidonie Smith is

doubly or triply the subject of other people's representations, turned again and again in stories that reflect and promote certain forms of selfhood identified with class, race, and nationality as well as sex . . . she remains marginalized in that she finds herself resident on the margins of discourse, always removed from the center of power within the culture she inhabits. . . In her doubled, perhaps tripled marginality, then, the autobiographer negotiates sometimes four sets of stories, all nonetheless written about her rather than her. (٦٤)

Salma finds herself helpless in a society where people show respect to tradition more than religion. In this sense, El Saadawi says "I had been born female in a world that wanted only males" (٥٢). Further, Salma's dark skin shows how Europeans are so sensitive to Arabs' skin. Her skin becomes like a barrier when she tries to contact with Europeans. They look at those who come from East through the colonial lenses full of prejudice and racism. Such attitudes Leila Ahmed says "the task of addressing racism for feminists of color in the West is, and to be, an ongoing and central part of the work and the thinking that we ordinarily do, no less so than the work of addressing male dominance" (٢٩٣). The double marginality that an Arab or Muslim woman confronts from her native society and western racism is showed in double force that denies woman's voice.

Faqir's *My Name is Salma* is a gesture to all Arab or Muslim woman who lives in such culture to keep safe of men's seduction in both Eastern and Western communities. She attempts to warn women from meeting the same fate of loss and exploitation. Faqir adopts the term Bedouin to indicate the social status of the Arab country where Salma lives. This Bedouin village reflects an image of conservative people who strictly follow the social traditions more than religion and political orders.

When a writer begins her novel by a phrase like "My Name," it means she unveils unseen world for the others. It reveals the traumatic identity of an Arab woman passes through. It symbolizes a new world a writer has experienced for some period of time. Hence, *My Name Is Salma* is also a comparison between two experiences of Salma; as an innocent woman lives in a conservative society, and a mature woman lives in a liberal Western society who offers no respect to foreigners, "Gone were the days when I was a farmer, a shepherdess, a peasant girl. I am now a seamstress, an assistant tailor in a shop in Exeter, which a few years ago, was voted the most beautiful city in Britain" (Faqir ٧).

Salma is used as a sample of an innocent woman who does surrender to man's fake love easily. For that, she is exploited and deceived many times; once by her native male, Hamdan who sexually exploits her and ruins her innocent life; second by English male, who discovers that Salma is emotionally going through the sense of alienation and loneliness. She is convinced by his feelings that he will be with her forever. Then they spend one night together and he leaves secretly early morning; and third by a Christian English nun, Mrs. Asher who lies to Salma admitting that she is from Lebanon and comes to save her. But Mrs. Asher is a Christian preacher who exploits some innocent women's social problems to convert them into Christianity. In their meeting, Mrs. Asher says "I am a

civil nun from Lebanon. I have saved many young women like you. I only travel between prisons and smuggle out women. I cannot bear the thought of an innocent soul getting killed” (Faqr ٦٤). Mrs. Asher attempts hard to convert her to Christianity assuming that Jesus loves her and will forgive her sin. She attempts to show her how her society is so backward and primary to live in. The colonial view of the East is appeared clearly in Mrs. Asher’s conversation. However, Salma rejects the Christian faith as Asher attempts to convince her. Salma finds it difficult to digest Western food as well as to accept and get convinced by Asher’s Christian faith. Salam says “my mountainous Arab stomach could not digest the fat, which floated in my tummy for days” (٩). However, she does not have more choice either to return back to her village and be killed for her sin or to adopt and start her new experience in the Western community, “Now Salina 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” (Faqr ٧).

Faqr’s *My name is Salma* is a voice of An Eastern woman who attempts to articulate the ethnic and racist gap that exists between the West and East as a result of power—economical, scientific , technological or any hegemonic power that makes one pole more prejudice over the other. In this sense, Said points out in his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, to the prejudice of the West, “they’ are not like ‘us’” (xii),revealing the fact that westerners look at Easterners as inferior people who need their help to be superior.

In the same sense, Faqr shows out the cultural and religious conflict between the ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’ in her novel *My name is Salma*. She points out to Said and Marx saying that “cultures and races are beginning to speak for themselves, rather than as people who can only be represented” (Chambers ٦٥). Faqr here makes a hint to the consequences of the ٩/١١ attack on America that brings to light a clash between cultures and races. The ٩/١١ attack leads to bring out complex thoughts and cultural voices. It is like a reaction from both (Western and Eastern) sides. This approves Said’s saying that “Europeans encounter with the Orient, and especially with Islam, strengthen [the] system of representing the Orient and [ . . . ] turned Islam into the very epitome of an outsider against which the whole of European civilization from the middle ages on was founded” (*Orientalism* ٣٥).

Faqr shows how the Arab society is portrayed and seen by the eyes of Westerners. It is depicted as an ‘other’ which is opposed to the European people ‘Occident’. The westerners consider the Easterners politically, socially and economically different. They also coin some terms for the Easterners one of them is called ‘Third World’. In his *Orientalism*, Edward Said points out that the West attempts to degrade the Orient during generations. They see the Orients as ‘lazy’, ‘violent’ and ‘stupid’. It is as stated by the writer Sam Selvon,

When one talks of colonial indoctrination, it is usually about oppression or subjugation, or waving little Union Jacks on Empire Day and singing ‘God Save the King’. But this gut feeling I had

as a child, that the Indian was just a piece of cane trash while the white man was to be honoured and respected” (qtd in Mcleod ١٧).

This view is pointed out by Salma when she gets badly injured by a native woman, Liz. Feeling ‘alien’ and inferior, Salma refuses to file a case against the British woman who was about to kill her, “Why create problems for me, Salma not Sal or Sally, an outlander, who must not confront the natives?” (Faqir ٢١٤). The discrimination and racism appeared many times in Faqir’s text showing how even what-so-called-educated British community is still full of hatred and racism against others, particularly those who come from East. For instance, when she and Parvin (Indian woman) were looking for jobs,

We have to look for jobs,’ said Parvin, ‘but first I must ask you about this scarf you keep wearing.’ ‘People look at me all time as if disease,’ I said. . . It will be much harder to get a job while you insist on wearing it. My friend back home, Ash, was sacked because of his turban although they said they did not meet his targets. (Faqir ١٢٣)

The scarf becomes a tool of discrimination in the Western World. Salma uncovers the fake veil of what so-called ‘civilized’ West which looks at Arab as a backward community. The Westerners see *hijab* as a symbol of a backward culture. The misname of *hijab* as a veil in the Western world is a symbol of Muslim male oppression. In her book, *Muslim Women Activists in North America*, Katherine Bullock states that “the ‘veil’ comes to be a shorthand for the alleged backwardness and inability of the entire Muslim community to adapt to “modern” ways of life” (xvi). As a result of Western view of *hijab*, Muslim woman becomes a “target” for abusing and harassment if they step into a Western space. Bullock mentions that;

Even those Muslim women who do not cover suffer from the negative stereotype of Muslim women: first their identity as a “non-scarf” wearing woman is effaced by the ubiquitous image of “the veiled woman,” and second, they are guilty by association: even if they dress like a “modern woman,” the mere fact of their being Muslim makes them suspect. (Bullock xvi)

Thus, it is observed that Salam throws away her scarf to avoid the English natives’ aggressive sights. She wants to identify herself as English woman for survival. However, her skin color still gives a sign of her non-English origin. She can be easily recognized as an “alien.” As Salma struggles to hide her identity, “Was it possible to walk out of my skin, my past, my name?” (Faqir ٤٢). Further, Salma gets obsessed by the Western question that she says

It was like a curse upon my head; it was my fate: my accent and the color of my skin. I could hear it sung everywhere: in the cathedral, ‘WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?; in the farmers’ market, ‘Do you know where this vegetable comes from?’ Sometimes even the cows on the hills would line up, kick their legs in unison and sing, ‘Where do you come from, you? Go home!’ (Faqir ١٩١)

Salma makes a comparison of the safe environment for woman between East and the West. It seems for her that the Arab world “would be a more peaceful and better place to live in if only women were to become the power wielders” (Malak ٢). In other words, the Western community is depicted as unsafe world for a woman, “No it was not easy living here in England as an ‘alien,’ which was how the immigration officer had described me” (Faqr ٣٧). Salam also adds “I was about to get beaten by a drunken skinhead” (Faqr ٤١). She also compares between the English woman and the Arab women. Through the Arabic cultural lenses, Faqr sees “only a shameless foreign woman, whose body, treasures, were on offer for nothing. Why would you give her family twenty camels if you could get her for free” (٣١٤).

Faqr also compares between the languages and cultures of both East and West. She illustrates how a person should be proud of his language and culture. She uses some inter-language terms such as (*Hala hala biik ya walla*) which means “welcome, welcome, oh boy!” (٢٧). Faqr’s heroine attempts to proof the existence of both herself and her natal language. Further, there are some words like, (*Hadi? Belhaq miziana*) are left untranslated to enforce the colonial reader to investigate the power of her own language and culture. It is a challenge between the language of both colonizer and the colonized. In this sense, Ngugi wa Thiong’o states,

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly though orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world. How people perceive themselves affects how they look at their culture, at their politics and at the social production of wealth, at their entire relationship to nature and to other human beings. Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world. (١٦)

Faqr’s *My Name is Salma* urges Arab women to get educated. She argues that education is the only way for survival in any community. Education is depicted as the only weapon a woman can have to defend herself.

### **Violated Honour**

Faqr’s *My Name is Salma* a narrative that investigates the traditional taboo which is called “*Sharaf*” in the Arabic culture. “*Sharaf*” is the honour of the family which all family members have to keep safe. It is a sacred tradition none crosses it, particularly women. If someone crosses it, s/he must be killed. The word “*Sharaf*” or “honour” is usually referred to “women’s behavior,” particularly to their bodies. A woman, for example, who commits adultery or gets pregnant before the wedlock, must be killed.

In Faqr’s text, the main character’s name is Salma which means “healthy, pure and clean. [. . .] the woman with soft hands and feet” (Faqr ١٢-١٣). Faqr draws an image of a purified and innocent woman who becomes pregnant before the wedlock in the Arab society. Culturally the



woman becomes guilty and has to be purified. The cultural norm has no control to man's seduction and temptation. The man can run away and get sanctuary in other tribes. In the introduction of Liana Badr's novel, *The Eye of the Mirror*, Faqir states,

Arab women are generally treated as a minority in most Arab countries. They feel invisible, misrepresented and reduced. Perceived as second-rate natives, they are subjected to a peculiar kind of internal orientalism. Native men assume a superior position to women, misrepresent them and in most cases fail to see them. (ix)

Hence, a woman who does adultery or gets pregnant outside marriage cannot escape from her tribe. She is culturally supposed to get killed to restore the honour of the family. Male family members have to do this task themselves away from the government. "You smeared our name with tar. Your brother will shoot you between the eyes" (٣٧). There is no lawful power can stop them.

In the Arab culture, a "woman is expected to be a virgin on her wedding night and thereafter to remain sexually faithful to her husband" (Eck ٩). Legally there is no religious or state law can be applied against a woman gets pregnant before the wedlock. As the police officer states, "Salma, you are in a protective custody, which means you are here not because you have done something, but for your own protection. [. . .] By releasing you I will not be breaking the law. As far as the state is concerned you are innocent" (Faqir ٦٥). Similarly, El Saadawi says "if he saw her with another man, he could shoot her with a gun and be declared innocent by a court, for he was a forthright man who had insisted on defending his honour" (*Walking Through Fire* ٧٦). However, there is no law in the state which breaks this traditional taboo. Lila Abu-Lughod contends that "religious ideals are then confused with social ideals" (١٤٤). People inspire such misogynistic attitudes from their Bedouin tradition. Abu-Lughod says, "the source of the force and tenacity of this attitude lies not in Islamic ideology, but in the tribal social-structural model, based on the priority of relationships of consanguinity and organized in terms of patrilineal descent" (١٤٥). This can be observed in the aggressive attitude of Salma's brother, Mahmoud. As the duty of her close relative male, Mahmoud has to kill Salma for her fornication. "It's his duty. He has to hold his head high. *Ll 'aar ma yimhiyeh ila il dam*: dishonor can only be wiped off with blood" (Faqir ٣٢٧). Thus, in the Arab world a woman who loses her virginity or get pregnant out of wedlock get killed a male member of her family.

### Womanist Inspiration

As feminism is considered "a middle- to owning-class" concerning white women, another movement is created to unite all women, particularly coloured women. This movement is called "womanism" which refers to "Black women." "Womanism" is coined by Alice Walker in ١٩٨٣ as she attempts to bring women together to fight for all human rights and social justice. Kimberly King

gives a brief definition of “Womanism”. He says that “Womanism” is “integration of ethnic and feminist consciousness among women of color” (qtd in Montague ١٣).

Based on this movement, Faqir guides her female characters who are considered as coloured in the West to fight for their identity. Salma starts her struggle to survive with learning English language. She insists to get educated. She attempts to look at her future and to adjust herself in the new culture as “The doctor said, ‘You have to cut your ties with the past, you are here now so try to get with it’” (Faqir ١٧). Salma finds books as a way for her consolation. Faqir draws a map for not only Salma to read feminist books, but for all women who want to be independent in their life. “My advice to you is to look under feminist theory” (Faqir ٢٠٧). Salma begins her journey with books. She challenges to “understand all the words, see why the human child suffers, find a cure for weeping” (٢١٠). Salma reads and compares the life of women in her Bedouin with what women have to be and what they suppose to own. Salma says,

I began reading about having a room of one’s own and enough money to be able to work. My mother had nothing of her own, her brother took her share of the farm; when her husband died Shahla was thrown out of her house so she came to live with us; and all I had was a daughter of my own, who cried and cried for me. (Faqir ٢١٠)

Faqir urges her readers to examine women’s writings as well as men’s writing. Seeing women’s writings as a sin and a shame is a backward perspective of the Arabs who read women’s writings as their shameful autobiographies. Faqir points out that women’s writings are used to be subjected to censorship of the state. They should not cross the border of the three taboos; religion, sex and politics. However, women has succeeded to break all patriarchal taboos, “challenging the assumptions of a patriarchal and often violent culture and also setting out to counter westerners’ stereotypical images of Arab women’s lives, thoughts and feelings” (x). Faqir argues that it is a double veil image implanted in the consciousness of both Westerners and Easterners. By reading women’s writings, readers can “see the colourful and resilient writings of Arab women, and hear their clear voices singing their survival” (Faqir x).

Living in exile, Salma tries to see her social status among English society. She finds out that a woman who is like her has a place or title neither in her Bedouin society nor in English society. Salma points out that “Miss in Hima was reserved for virgins, Mrs for married women or widows, but there was no title for those who had sex out of wedlock for they simply got shot” (Faqir ٢١٤). However, Salma’s restless mind starts comparing between the homeland and the Exile. She finds that “exile is a sad country. In [it] the rift between the rural image of the homeland and the western city cannot be healed. It is a severing from home, Eden, childhood; it is a sense of loss, displacement, uprootedness” (qtd in Al-Maleh ٢٧٣).

Faqir points out that a person in exile is indirectly enforced to shape a picture of differences and similarities between the two spaces he/she has experienced. It is the “double vision” that emerges due to the amalgamation of the remnant memories of the origin home and the exile. This can be called the “hybrid” identity. Faqir states;

In Exile, you quickly develop a double vision, [. . .] You begin looking forward at the country of adoption while always looking back at the country of origin. You check your position at every junction. You adjust your mirrors, your sense of belonging, and drive on exploring a new map. You keep examining and reexamining your loyalties to both the still picture in the mind and the present living landscape. You no longer take things at face value. Doubt, dissent, and questioning become part of your life. You become a hybrid forever assessing, evaluating, accommodating. (٢٧٤)

### Conclusion

Faqir shows that the Arab woman goes through many dilemmas in her life. She is isolated and oppressed in her society. Further, she is ‘alien’ in the English society. As she tries to rebuild a new identity, she finds that the colonizer’s culture and language show how inferior she is. It is the arrogance of the colonizer who justifies the ideas of being superior. The colonizer attempts to convince the colonized people to accept their lower social ranking. John Mcleod assumes that such “a process we can call ‘colonizing the mind’. It operates by persuading the people to internalize its logic and speak its language; to perpetuate the values and assumptions of the colonizers as regards the ways they perceive and represent the world” (١٨).

Faqir requests her reader to question the culture and language of both Arab and English communities. Sadly sounded tune is being sensed out of Faqir’s novel that readers are bound to appreciate her honestly pent-up feelings that she vented out in her novels, the present one, *My Name is Salma*, is an example. It is a call for all intellectuals to ponder upon the underrepresentation of the women in their communities, whether in the Arab or western worlds. It is a cry for all those concerned stakeholders to extend a hand of help and assistance, creating a space for women, carving a niche for them as equally as men. Faqir calls for reexamining Arab women’s position and the Islamic culture to include both men and women equally in all social and political spaces. Faqir follows Malala’s footsteps in encouraging women’s education’s, “Education is our right, I said. Just as it is our right to sing. Islam has given us this right and says that every girl and boy should go to school. The Quran says we should seek knowledge, study hard and learn the mysteries of our world” (Malala ٨٠). Both Malala and Faqir realize that education is the real weapon to be used to struggle for identity and rights. They believe that education will narrow the gaps between cultures. It will also bring peace to peoples. It will bring voice for voiceless women.

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