

The Depiction of Arab Women in Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*

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Abstract—The study aims to compare and contrast how diasporic Arab writers, Fadia Faqir and Diana Abu-Jaber, both present Arab women in their respective novels, *My Name Is Salma* and *Crescent*. This study was conducted using the theories of post colonialism. Hence, the researcher relies on Edward Said's views on Orientalism in analyzing both novels. The study concludes with how both Faqir and Abu Jaber represent Arab women characters in different ways in their works, *My Name Is Salma* and *Crescent*, respectively. Abu Jaber tries to negate the stereotypical images known in the West about Arab women through representing independent, confident, educated Arab women characters in *Crescent*, this depiction contrasts with Fadia Faqir's representation of Arab women in her novel *My Name Is Salma* in which she reflects the stereotypical images of the oppressed, submissive, and dependent Arab woman.

Index Terms—Arab women, feminism, Faqir, Abu Jaber

I. INTRODUCTION

The current study attempts to explore how Arab women are presented in both Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*. Though both authors are of Arab origins, they each represent Arab women quite differently. Whereas Faqir reaffirms the stereotypical images presented by the West in her novel *My Name Is Salma*, Abu Jaber, on the contrary, negates the stereotypical images and presents confident, strong Arab women characters in her novel *Crescent*. However, this is really nothing new as Arab writers in diaspora often differ in their depiction of Arab women. While some diasporic Arab writers, such as Faqir, exploit the stereotypes that highlight the misrepresentation of Arab women in the West, many other diasporic Arab writers, such as Abu Jaber, object to the stereotypical images in their works by presenting a positive image of Arab women. Though most of the studies conducted on the current literary works discuss each work separately, this study explores the depiction of Arab women in both novels together. Added to that, both novels are set in different regions, which affects how each author presents Arab women in their respective works. The depiction of Arab women by diasporic Arab writers has been a controversial topic discussed in literature and propagated through the media. Indeed, literature and the media play a great role in spreading disinformation related to Arabs, and specifically Arab women. Hansson and Henriksson (2013) state that Middle Eastern women are often presented as victims of their family systems, their male-dominated societies, and their religious restrictions. Literature and media play a crucial role in spreading the stereotypical images of Arab women without being objective. Certainly, the history between East and West is full of contradictory images about Arabs and Westerners. Arabs are condemned for being violent, uncivilized, and intolerant. This was the image of Arabs and Muslims before the 9/11 attacks which only served to negatively enhance these stereotypes about Arabs being violent, uncivilized terrorists. In its aftermath, the Western media condemned all Arabs as terrorists. In fact, CNN reported that the anti-Islamic sentiment following 9/11 spread around the world. As a result, the spread of Islamophobia in the West is at least the responsibility of distorted and imbalanced media coverage (Abdulla, 2007). Clearly, the propagation of Arab stereotypes by Western media does have a negative effect on the general public's perception of Arabs and Muslims (Ridouani, 2011).

Arab culture is defined by the West as exotic, mystified and backward, and a culture that limits women's freedom. Due to this image created by the West, Arab women are presented as obedient, oppressed and suffering in their male-dominated societies. Awad and Ludwig (2017) state that studies on how Arab women are presented in Western media have focused on examining their image in terms of economy, politics, society, education, and religion. According to the studies presented over the past couple of decades, Arab women are typically portrayed as victims of their cultures and their male partners. Arab women are often presented as passive, uncivilized, dependent, uneducated and other negative stereotypical images. El-Ouardi and Sandy (2019) show that Arab women in particular, have long been misrepresented as the Other in Western Orientalist discourse. The goal of this misrepresentation is to maintain Western superiority over the East on all cultural, political, and economic levels. The presentation of Arab women in a passive way could be

justified by the fact that Arabs belong to a different culture and religion. These ideas and the stereotypical images of Arabs were created by the West, as Lughod (2002) suggests, because Arabs belong to a different culture. Still, the West is supposed to respect Arab culture and traditions without judging them for being different.

In his book *Orientalism*, Said (1978) clarifies all of the issues related to the East and the stereotypical images represented about the Orient/Arabs. Said's theory paved the way for post-colonial literary theory, which is manifested in the works of many post-colonial writers. Said argues that previous studies on the Orient (East) were based on political intellectualism bent on self-affirmation rather than objective studies. Therefore, he shows what the Westerners know about the East is not true, and as such, these misrepresentations are only based on the West's perspective. Said (1978) also discusses the binary oppositions created in terms of the West as superior versus the East as inferior. The idea here is that the West imposes its superiority upon the East and regards the complex cultures and histories that exist in the East as inferior. To sum up, the West, according to Said, created stereotypical images about Arabs and Arab women. According to Said (1978), the relationship between the East and the West has been dominated by the West. Therefore, according to what Said indicates in his book *Orientalism*, how the West depicts women in the East could be considered as a continuously endless attempt. However, this wrong assumption is derived from colonial history when the West imposed its authority over the East. The West acclaims its superiority and visualizes Arabs and Arab women especially in specific as weak, obedient, and oppressed, ignoring the Arabic traditions and culture. Arab society is a diverse society where a part of limits the freedom of women while others give women all the freedom in the world. However, there is no scale we can use to measure all Arabs in a negative way as some traditions that are acceptable in one area may be forbidden in another. According to the Center for Feminist Foreign Policy (2017), the stereotypical images promoted by the media not only ignore the social, economic, and cultural diversity of Arab women, but also hide the reality that the Arab world is made up of various countries, societies, cultures, languages, and, obviously, an infinite number of experiences. One example of what the West regards as a symbol of Arabic traditions and religious restrictions is the veil which they say represses the freedom of Arab women. In fact, considering it a sign of terrorism, many Western countries prohibit Arab Muslim women from wearing the veil. As a result, the West ignores the Arab Muslim woman's right to wear the veil, claiming they want to free Arab Muslim women from such oppression. The Center for Feminist Foreign Policy (2017) state that British newspapers promote stereotypes of Muslim wives and mothers as passive, subordinate victims. Moreover, the West claims they want to save the rights and freedoms of Arab women through their interventions. Ironically, Lughod (2002) notes that the "U.S. government announced the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of Eastern women" (p. 784). The West presents Arab women as victims who need help in freeing themselves from their culture and religious restrictions. This idea is presented in Fadia Faqir's novel, *My Name Is Salma* (2007) when Salma is helped to leave Jordan for the West by the Christian nun Khairiyah to protect Salma from being killed by her family. Faqir, who is a diasporic Arab writer, illustrates the stereotypical images about Arab women as passive, uneducated, dependent victims.

On the other hand, Western women are presented differently. They are depicted as confident, independent women, free from any restrictions. Indeed, as Lughod (2002) states, "the West attempts to divide the world into separate spheres; the West as superior versus the East as inferior" (Lughod, 2002, p.784). To enhance these stereotypical images, the West presents their women as educated, civilized, strong women who give speeches while Arab women are obedient, dependent, and weak women who shuffle around silently in burqas (Lughod, 2002). In other words, the West presents the Arab woman as voiceless and dependent unlike the Western women who have a strong and confident personality and are given a voice to talk and express themselves. Some diasporic Arab writers like Diana Abu Jaber ignore these stereotypical images of Arab women and they represent a confident, independent image of the Arab women. On the other hand, there are those diasporic Arab writers like Fadia Faqir who depict the awkward, dependent and weak images of Arab women. This study will discuss how Faqir promulgates the stereotypical images of Arab women in her novel *My Name Is Salma*. In contrast, Abu Jaber negates the stereotypical images of Arab women and presents them as confident, independent, and strong characters in her novel *Crescent*.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Depiction of Arabs and Arab Women by Fadia Faqir and Diana Abu Jaber in Their Literary Works*

Faqir's Depiction of Arab Women in her Novel *My Name Is Salma*.

El-Miniawi (2016), declares that Salma is presented by Faqir as struggling between two identities - the old Salma and the new Sally - in trying to create a new identity for herself. Salma is presented as a passive, weak victim and a dependent Arab woman, while her alter-ego Sally represents an independent and strong woman because she gained British nationality upon being adopted. While Salma requires assistance and suffers as a result of patriarchal Arab society, Sally finds freedom and works two jobs. In resemblance, Aziz (2018) declares that, due to her insecure personality, Salma reaches a stage where she changes her outwardly appearance, but it is notable that she is not able to change inwardly. According to Aziz (2018), Faqir embodies a character who is hostile towards the Islamic religion and Arabic traditions. Salma's skin color prevents her from fitting into Western culture due to the whiteness of Europeans in comparison to her dark skin. She looks up at them and feels that she is less than they are. In this way, Faqir depicts the conflict between the East and the West in a cultural and religious context. Nevertheless, Faqir shows the suffering of

Arab immigrants from the discriminatory view of Western society. This resulted in Salma's sense of alienation as an Arab and the removing of her headscarf to find a job in Britain. The author indicates that the *hijab* is considered a tool of oppression for Arab woman. Hence, Faqir shows the importance of education through Salma, who represents the power behind women's salvation. This study shows Faqir's portrayal of Arabic society as a backward, patriarchal society that restricts a woman's freedom in order to save her honor.

Zubair et al. (2019) show the cultural, ideological, and identity formations in the novel. Using Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and Homi K. Bhabha's theories of hybridity to analyze this novel, this study sheds light on the cultural clashes between the East and the West. Zubair et al. (2019) declare that Faqir enhances the stereotypical images represented by the West by depicting passive, subordinate Arab women characters. Arab women, according to Faqir, suffer from living in a patriarchal society that imposes restrictions on women. As a result, Salma escapes her country to save her life with the help of a nun. This shows the Arab culture's oppressive culture against women. Akkawi and Nashwan (2019) investigate the audience's perception of the subject of honor killing in the novel *My Name Is Salma*, as well as their attitudes toward the stigmatized protagonist, Salma. After watching the novel as a play on stage and knowing the circumstances of Salma, a majority of university students sympathized with Salma and agreed that she should have stayed in England and never returned to her homeland. In another published report from the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University found on the Al-Jazeera website, teenage high school students in Jordan are targeted. They agree with killing a wife, sister, or daughter, in the name of family honor. The researchers find that mature university students are more aware, experienced, and able to make their own decisions, so they condemn such behavior. On the contrary, the high school students are dependent, inexperienced, and emotionally biased toward their cultural context.

B. Abu Jaber's Depiction of Arab Women in Her Novel *Crescent*

Mehta (2009) adds that Sirine and Nadia represent independent Arab women who establish their own businesses, thereby negating the common stereotypical images of oppressed Arab women who are dependent and passive. Taking into consideration the study above, Mehta (2009) provides clues to Abu Jaber's depiction of Arab women as independent and confident, thus negating the stereotypical image presented by the West. Alamares (2013) shows Abu Jaber's attempt to enhance the depiction of Arab characters in *Crescent* in a positive way. Sirine represents a strong character, and she is a supporter of other characters in the novel. Nadia is an independent and caring character, and together, Sirine and Nadia make a place feel like home. Nurcahyo (2013) discusses how Sirine does not feel ashamed or embarrassed about her Arabic identity and uses her Arabic cuisine to show her unabashed by her Arabness. Sirine even tries to learn more about the Middle East from her uncle and Han, an Iraqi Arab professor who captivates her interest. In *Crescent*, Abu Jaber continues to depict its Arabic-American characters in *Crescent* as the opposite of the Western stereotypes of Arab women. Further, Abu Jaber portrays Um Nadia and Sirine as strong Arab women. Yousef (2010) says that, in *Crescent*, Abu Jaber portrays different characters from different cultures to reflect the harmony in this society. Sirine, the heroine, is a 39-year-old single Arab American female character who works as a chef in Nadia's café. Sirine's relationship with Han, an Iraqi professor, awakens her curiosity to learn more about her culture and origin. Sirine represents a confident Arab female character who lives in a free manner and is reconciled with her hybrid identity. The current study is different from previous studies because it provides a detailed depiction of Arab women characters in *Crescent* and *My Name Is Salma*. Previous studies focus mostly on the heroines' characterization without giving importance to minor Arab female characters. This study discusses the depiction of Arab women in the assigned novels through the lenses of post-colonialism and feminism. It also provides Arab women's representation based on Edward Said's ideas and his depiction of the East-West relationship. Hence, it shows the political reflection behind both Arab diasporic women writers' portrayals of Arab women in *My Name Is Salma* and *Crescent*.

III. ANALYSIS

A. The Depiction of Arab Women in Abu Jaber's *Crescent*

Starting with the main character in *Crescent*, Sirine, as an Iraqi American woman whose memories of her parents inspired her to become a cook. After working at many restaurants, she begins working as a chef at Nadia Café where she finally feels at home. Her small kitchen becomes her small space where she discovers who she is and where she belongs. Djohar (2019) describes Sirine as a girl, who finds herself in cooking and really believes in it as more than a job. This becomes apparent when a "restaurant reviewer for *L.A. Times* once described Sirine's cooking as brilliant; she remembers the suffused glow of satisfaction she felt, looking at that single word" (Jaber, 2003, p. 61). Sirine's food represents her Arab heritage as well as her longing for her parents. Thus, Sirine plays a significant role at Nadia Café in alleviating Han's and other Arabic students' feelings of isolation and exile. Madany (2020) states that Sirine's character and the Middle Eastern food she prepares serve as key bridges throughout the story. Moreover, cooking represents unity for Sirine; she remembers when she and her parents cooked together. She reflects on their harmony as they prepared food, as if they were developing a language of love. Through these recollections, she learns what love is and how each one completes the other. Her love for others is inspired from knowing how her parents loved one another (Jaber, 2003).

Furthermore, Sirine is aware of what she desires and what she lacks in her life. Her confidence and calm personality endear her to everyone, so any student may set aside time to observe her cooking and converse with her. Despite the fact that she is a human being, with all of the ups and downs that come with being human, she keeps herself busy by working. She uses her sense of loss as a result of her parent's death as a tool to fight. She was nine years old when she lost her parents, but she understands that no one and no words could ever make up for her loss. Even at her worst moments, she knows that nothing can console her or remove her anguish, so she feels that remaining silent is the best thing to do. As a result, after learning that she lost her parents, she did not act like a child; instead, she looked after herself and her uncle. Furthermore, Abu Jaber depicts Sirine's path of self-discovery until she finally reconciles with herself. Apart from the fact that Sirine betrayed Han, she became conscious of her sin as well as her sentiments. In addition, despite the fact that Sirine is half Arab and speaks a few words in Arabic, she tells Han that she would like to study Arabic. Her uncle's Arabian fictitious tales, as well as her friendship with Han, compel her to learn more about her origins and the Arabic language. Despite the fact that she appears to be American as she adjusts to Western culture, she is aware of her Arabic roots on a deeper level. Furthermore, she tries to learn everything she does not know about her homeland, Iraq, by asking her uncle and Han about it (Jaber, 2003). As a result, the Arabic language reminds Sirine of her father, and there appears to be a link between her Arabic side and her father. Throughout the story, Sirine takes an interest in learning about her Iraqi ancestors and the circumstances there. Madany (2020) says that "Sirine lives the life of an independent American woman, and yet she cannot overlook the bond she feels towards her Iraqi heritage" (p. 32). Furthermore, anybody who sees Sirine assumes she is American based on her appearance, yet she always claims to be of Arab heritage. Abu Jaber portrays marriage as an option rather than an obligation in *Crescent*. Sirine is an Arab woman who is self-sufficient and mature. She is also financially self-reliant, and makes her own decisions. She discovers that her sole interest was her profession before meeting Han. She abandons any desire to be in a relationship with a man who would rush her into marriage; she prefers to rely solely on herself and not on anyone else. In this context, Abu Jaber presents Arab women who are educated, powerful, self-assured, and employed. Abu Jaber's image exemplifies how women may wield power through their jobs and education. As a result, by portraying these Arab female characters, Abu Jaber challenges stereotypes about Arab women. Furthermore, Sirine is a strong, independent, confident Arab female heroine, and her look demonstrates that Arab women may be beautiful and white, with "...the bluish cast of skim milk, her wild blond head of hair, and her sea-green blue eyes" (Jaber, 2003, p. 20). This quotation exemplifies Abu Jaber's attempt to paint a different picture of Arab women through Sirine's depiction. Because white skin is associated with beautiful Western ladies, Abu Jaber depicts Arab women with Western traits in order to demonstrate equality. Ghouaiel (2015) has the same opinion as he says "Abu-Jaber points out that relying on skin color to identify a subject's race or ethnicity can lead to erroneous assumptions. Here, she compares Sirine's whiteness with the supposed darkness commonly associated with Arab features" (p. 249). In *Crescent*, there is no room for the stigmas attached to Arab women; there is no difference between Arab and Western women, and in fact, the more the world thinks of the difference, the more it appears that we are the same. Yousef (2010), in fact, states that Abu Jaber's novel defies any idea of stereotyping or categorizing people. Thus, even her hair could be related to her strong and confident personality.

Nonetheless, Sirine usually draws the attention of the students; they used to stare at her when she was cooking food. Nathan even says to her, "Damn. Does everyone do this? Come right up to you and start saying unbelievably weird things?" (Jaber, 2003, p. 62). Sirine provides a sensation of peace, comfort, and ease to the person, allowing them to share their secrets. Nathan and Hanif used to confide in her about their inner sentiments because she seemed to understand everything and everyone. "I thought there was something about you," Nathan says to Sirine. "Like that. Self-possessed. You've never let it run away with you" (Jaber, 2003, p. 98). As a result, the significance of Sirine and Han's connection is that he values her as a lover, mother, sister, and companion. All of these depictions show Abu Jaber's aim to elevate Arab women to a more significant and appreciated status and quite possibly equal to males. Furthermore, because Sirine represents Han's refuge and home in exile, we can see how Arab women should be valued by their male spouses. Sirine has always wanted someone to see her inner self rather than just her physical attractiveness. In this light, Han sees her as more than just a lover, but also as a friend. Sirine is a deep character in this environment; she moves with confidence and tenacity. Even though they have just recently met, she gets a strong, inexplicable feeling that when he looks anywhere, he sees her. Sirine's personality leads Han to appeal to what is in his mind, past, and present. She is his family, the one to whom he belongs, and he confides in her. As a result, he sees her as his home (Jaber, 2003), the one with whom he wants to share everything, including his innermost secrets and feelings.

Um Nadia, the owner of Nadia's Café, is the second Arab woman character in Abu Jaber's *Crescent*. She is an independent and strong woman and with Sirine working as a cook in Nadia's café, they established a place that feels like home (Jaber, 2003). Many students visit the café to enjoy their meals and to accompany other students in sharing their sentiments and loneliness. Furthermore, Um Nadia represents the mother figure in *Crescent*; her presence resembles any mother's existence in connecting each one together and creating a home for the Arab immigrant students. To Sena (2011), "the café is a sort of re-creation of home for those immigrants caught in an alien culture" (p. 12). Furthermore, Um Nadia is a strong Arab woman who supports both Mireille and Sirine. She always advises and encourages Sirine as a mother (Jaber, 2003). She is the mother of all the immigrants and students who long for their homelands. She opens the café to make people feel at home and to serve meals from their own nations. Nadia's café is a

place where everyone feels comfortable and calm at the same time. Um Nadia's presence near the students helps them feel at home since she shares their everyday lives with them. In this way, she creates a home for everyone.

Nevertheless, after Um Nadia loses her daughter Nadia, she becomes stronger - a woman who can face life on her own. Hence, she stands in the middle of the tragedies and supports others including Sirine. Her words for Sirine and everyone reflect the wisdom of a well-experienced woman and Sirine can easily see the strength in Um Nadia's personality (Jaber, 2003). Since Sirine does not have a mother, Um Nadia is considered to be a mother for Sirine. In this context, Abu Jaber in *Crescent* not only represents strong and independent Arab women characters, but she also creates a womanhood in which all these Arab female characters support each other. Throughout the novel, Um Nadia and Merilee support Sirine as a real family. Through this perspective, Hassiba (2017) states that about Um Nadia depiction, "...The female characters presented in *Crescent* defied the stereotypes normally associated with Muslim or Arab women. Um-Nadia was unmarried, and runs her own business" (p. 64). Furthermore, Rana reflects another strong Arabic woman character; she is Muslim and wears a hijab. Though she is an Arab-American and wears a headscarf, Abu Jaber perfectly describes Rana as strong, educated, and self-sufficient. As a result, she exudes a vibrant and commanding presence. She is curious about everything and frequently asks probing questions. She has a voice and expresses herself. Moreover, she can also be thought of as an activist who gives her opinions about what is going on around her and easily attracts attention through her presence. Hassiba (2017) has the same opinion about Rana's characterization, saying Rana resembles feminists who demand their rights. As a result, she has no difficulty contradicting anyone who disagrees with her (as she did when she flung a pen at her professor, Aziz) (Jaber, 2003).

Furthermore, Rana is a member of a group that discusses current Middle Eastern affairs. She invites Sirine to her group meeting and addresses political concerns including American actions in Arab countries and their implications (Jaber, 2003). The reader can see that she is fearless in discussing these political topics, and her fiery mind permits her to discuss crucial political issues that are not associated with female interests. Thus, it is here that Abu Jaber wishes to blur the lines between what is typically connected with males and what is found in *Crescent* in relation to an Arab woman. As a result, Rana is not just a strong and rebellious figure, but she is also an activist who speaks about political issue without fear, as Yousef (2010) points out. As a result, Rana portrays a powerful Arab female figure that inspires others to take note of her presence. Rana also frees herself from her unsuccessful marriage and runs away from her spouse. She is brave for attempting to prevent her life and personality from being shattered by her husband, who regarded her as property and imprisoned her in their home. Furthermore, through Rana, Abu Jaber challenges the popular perception of veiled Arab and Muslim women. Ghouaiel (2015) discusses Abu Jaber's attempt in *Crescent* to deconstruct the previous perception about Arab and Arab Americans through representing Rana as "the active veiled Saudi American student who, in a 'Women in Islam' meeting" discusses political issues which defies the common perception about Arab veiled women. In this context, Abu Jaber shows Rana as a powerful and well-educated Arab woman. On the other hand, she is not compelled to wear the *hijab*; rather, she wears her headscarf as a symbol of her faith and heritage (Jaber, 2003). As a result, she opposes Western stereotypes of Arab women, particularly those who are veiled. Therefore, Abu Jaber, according to Yousef (2010), defies the stereotypes associate with Arab women in her novel *Crescent*. Mireille is Um Nadia's daughter. Despite being 42, she still hasn't married, but does so at the end of the story.

B. The Depiction of Arab Women in Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma*

The following discussion offers Faqir's depictions of Arab women that, from a postcolonial standpoint, promulgate the clichéd pictures presented by the West. It could be said, from a feminist perspective, that Faqir may unintentionally represent Arab women in this way to highlight their suffering. Onyango (2016) states that Faqir is concerned with raising awareness of the situation of women in Muslim societies through Salma, who represents all Muslim women, in order to liberate them from oppressive males. The section starts with Salma, then moves on to Salma's mother, grandma Shahla, Hima ladies, Madam Lamaa, and finally Noura. In Faqir's novel, Arab women are portrayed as obedient, abused, docile, mute, reliant, and even threatened with death by the males in their lives. Through this novel, Faqir depicts the East as a grave for Arab women and women are forced to obey men in their society. When Salma becomes pregnant out of wedlock, her clan divides her blood among themselves, and her brother Mahmoud threatens to shoot her. Moreover, her mother says "If your father or brother find out they will kill you" (Faqir, 2007, p. 42). Furthermore, many scholars argue that, through the character of Salma, Faqir expresses her hatred for Arabic customs and Islamic roles. Majed (2012), for example, claims that the image of Islam depicted in Faqir's literary works is affected by her own experience with her father which she discusses in two of her essays. As a result, Faqir mirrors her own experience through Salma when her father compels her to wear the veil and forces her to pray five times a day - both of which Faqir believes to be a kind as oppression. Faqir's harsh portrayal of oppressed Arab women increases the conventional pictures represented by the West. According to Majed (2012), "Such writers represent the Western imagined Arab and Muslim culture rather than the culture itself" (p. 44). Thus, he continues to claim that diasporic Arab writers, such as Faqir, embrace the conventional images of Arab women portrayed by the West in depicting downtrodden, weak, and suppressed Arab women.

Many experts say that Faqir is a feminist who demands and highlights the suffering of Arab women though their male-dominated society's oppression of them; therefore, Islamic duties such as guarding their chastity and the wearing the headscarf are forced on them. The reader notices Faqir's unfavorable portrayal of Arab women - a contentious issue

in the current study. In this way, Faqir portrays a negative image of Arab women for Western readers who are unfamiliar with the Islamic world or the Arabic culture, away from literature and the Western media, which distort the facts and manipulates the Arab women's depiction as solely perceived via the Western assumptions and preconceptions. This story begins with the protagonist, Salma, living in Hima. She then moves on to the UK where she becomes the British "Sally" after a British nun adopts her. She is a naive shepherdess, a Bedouin girl, uneducated and reliant. When she becomes pregnant out of wedlock, her community plans to divide her blood and kill her. This depiction shows her weak nature - incapable of defending herself against the oppression she endures in Hima at the hands of the patriarchal society in which she resided. Faqir, in this view, portrays repressed Arab female characters who are subjugated by their culture and male family members. Furthermore, Salma is subordinate to her society; she is forced to clean the horse, milk the goats, and feed the cows as her mother always requested her to do, and her hands are rough from working all the time. Furthermore, Faqir depicts Salma as meek, naive, and weak, since Salma allows Hamdan to exploit her sexually because she believes he loves her. As a result, she is useless to him, and she accepts being referred to in lower terms by him (Faqir, 2002). As a result, her tribe planned to murder her, and her brother and father agreed. As a result, Salma accepts responsibility for her pregnancy and is threatened with death in order to restore the family's honor. Hamdan also threatens Salma with death if she dares divulge his identity and abandons her (Aziz, 2018). As a result, Salma lacks a voice to defend herself against the tyranny she encountered from her community. She also lacks the courage to prevent herself from becoming a victim of Hamdan's exploitation.

Miss Naila, and Salma's mother assist her in escaping and save her life by keeping her in protective care after she becomes pregnant. Then Salma gives birth to a baby girl, Layla, who is taken away from her. As a result, a Christian nun assists her in fleeing Jordan. According to this viewpoint, Faqir victimizes Arab women because they require assistance to save them from honor crimes committed by their family members (Faqir, 2007). In fact, while honor crimes exist in the Arab world, they are not a widespread occurrence in Arabic society. Faqir exaggerates the subject of violence against Arab women by depicting it through Salma and other women in Hima. As a result, Faqir demonstrates that honor crimes are unending and ongoing in Hima by mentioning a girl who is immediately killed by her brother after the authorities released her. Faqir demonstrates through Salma that Arab women are oppressed from birth; when Salma's father learns that he had a girl, he exclaims, "'The burden of girls is from cot to coffin', said my father" (Faqir, 2007, p. 123). In this light, Al-Majarha (2016) states that "A Bedouin girl is generally brought up to be voiceless, submissive, and obedient. Consequently, she becomes unable to think for herself and make her decisions independently. Others should think and decide for her and she has to follow their orders" (p. 30). Al-Majarha (2016) also adds that "This issue that Faqir presents in her novel will be discussed through a feminist perspective in order to investigate how women are oppressed by their cultural and patriarchal society in the name of honour" (p. 49).

Thus, Faqir exemplifies the importance of women in Arab society, as they are valued less than men. Besides that, having a female in an Arab family is considered bad luck, exemplifying the oppressed image of Arab women. As a result, Faqir paints Arab women as victims who are oppressed by their patriarchal society and religious restraints. According to Onyango (2016), Faqir portrays Arab female characters as victims of patriarchal dominance. From this vantage point, this portrayal recalls Western clichés of downtrodden and stifled Arab women who are victims of their society. Continuing on, after she acquires British nationality, Salma gains confidence and strength (Faqir, 2007). Salma has become self-sufficient in England, working two jobs as a seamstress and a nightclub waitress to make ends meet. Furthermore, when Salma changes her name to Sally, she constantly reminds herself of the difference between the obedient Salma and the confident Sally; however, this change in nationality did not change Salma's inner feelings of confidence. She continues to blame herself and believes that she does not deserve to live. Many quotations demonstrate Salma's lack of confidence since Faqir portrays her as weak and insecure. Salma's inert personality stops her from moving on with her new life, despite the fact that she is liberated. Despite the fact that she begins to rely on herself and enrolls in university, she is still unable to feel at ease, and she continues to blame herself for the past. Furthermore, Salma accepts to shed her veil when her friend Parvin advises her to do so in order to seek a job because the veil is a marker for her Islamic identity and it is difficult to find a work while wearing it. As a result, Salma adopts the Western culture in the way she dresses and lives her life in attempt to fit in with the new surroundings, neglecting her customs and origins. Salma, from this vantage point, is divided between two identities: the submissive Salma and the free, autonomous Sally. As a result, the reader will quickly perceive that Salma is weak and insecure.

Many Western readers may have incorrect notions about Arab women as a result of Salma's constant denigration of herself as inferior, alien, and different. As a result, the use of the words "alien" and "other" repeatedly demonstrates how odd Arab civilization and culture appear to the West. As Aziz (2018) states that "Faqir 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 or "Occidentals" (Aziz, 2018). Through this lens, Faqir equates negative depictions of Arab women with the clichéd images portrayed by the West. While Salma constantly belittles herself by referring to herself as an "alien" and "other," an awkward Arab Muslim lady, Sally Asher, who has British identity, is a British rose. In contrast to her hometown, Salma only finds freedom and safety when she becomes Sally. Ironically, after boosting her confidence by repeating her British identity, Salma drops the pen and forms on the librarian's shoes as a sign of the of the Arab Salma's inferiority. Furthermore, Salma's appearance symbolizes how she differs from the attractive Western ladies; Faqir identifies the color black with the Arab Salma and white with the gorgeous Western woman. As it is associated with death and

negative sentiments, the repetition of black ankles, black skin, and black Salma may refer to the gloomy and subservient Arab women. As a result, black denotes a terrible, bleak future and the oppression of Arab women, whereas white represents freedom, optimism, peace, and beautiful Western women. On the one hand, Salma is portrayed as inferior, insecure, and weak. She always expresses self-insecurity and always does what is told to her without thinking. On the other hand, she gains confidence and strength when she transforms into Sally the British rose. Furthermore, Salma constantly refers to Liz as a queen, and when Liz hits Salma, she does not say anything because Liz is a superior native British while she is an inferior refugee. Furthermore, Liz's language when speaking to Salma carries racist and discriminatory terms. Salma and Liz's relationship is divided into superior and inferior, as in colonizer and colonized, as Liz comments to Salma as they are watching television. As a result, in letters to her companion Noura, she expresses how Arabs vary from foreigners, saying, "The Westerners read so much, not like us. They are also nice and humble, not like us" (Faqir, 2007, p. 49). As a result, this quotation reflects the binary opposition in which the West regards differences between themselves as superior, and any nation that does not belong to them as inferior. This idea is in accordance with Majed (2012) who claims that *My Name Is Salma* is full of stereotypical images of Islam and Arabs. Furthermore, because of Salma's lack of confidence and sense of inferiority, she always lies about her Arabic ancestry. She conceals her genuine Arab identity; alternatively, she lies about her origin. Salma's lack of confidence and sense of inferiority as an Arab and Muslim is reflected in this. As a result, by exposing these prejudices in her novel, Faqir may unwittingly be propagating the stereotypical views of Arab women presented by the West by emphasizing Salma's sense of inferiority and concealing her Arabic heritage.

Salma removes her veil and begins dressing like a western woman, wearing short skirts and revealing clothing. Salma is aware of what she is doing; she always demonstrates that this appearance is not acceptable in her family, but she does it in order to obtain a job and feel accepted in England rather than being seen as an alien. From this vantage point, Salma is unable to preserve her Arab ancestry or feel at ease with her genuine identity. This exposes her weak personality in trying to change for the sake of others, and the reader can sense her lack of confidence as a result of her masking who she really is. Salma, on the other hand, was unable to adjust to her new culture until she resolved to break free from the old Arab Salma. According to Majed (2012), "In fact, this opposition seems to prove, in Faqir's perspective, the superiority of modern western civilization over the Muslim traditional one" (p. 170). Salma's mother is helpless and voiceless; she symbolizes a passive, subordinate figure, unable to protect or defend her daughter. Salma's mother, as much as she despises Mahmoud, is powerless to protect her daughter from her brother. As a result, near the end of the story, Mahmoud murders Salma despite his mother's pleas not to. Salma's mother is subdued and passive, and her relationship with her son reflects this. As a result, despite the fact that she is his mother, he treats her with contempt. As a result, she does not contact Salma when she is in protective custody, and she does not protect Salma from being murdered. She justifies this by saying, "I cannot visit you because your father haj Ibrahim and your brother forbade me to come" she explains (Faqir, 2007, p. 53). Shahla, Salma's grandmother, is another woman character in Hima who dies of sadness when her husband takes on a second wife. Furthermore, Salma states that neither her mother nor her grandmother, Shahla, own anything. As Faqir points out, women in Hima do not own anything, indicating male dominance over Arab women. From this vantage point, Salma's mother and grandmother are reliant, weak, and obedient, despite the fact that they are not permitted to own anything. As a result, Faqir depicts Arab women as mute, submissive, and repressed. Otherwise, their society will abandon them, threaten them with death, or replace them with other women.

IV. CONCLUSION

Given the above debate, the reader can see how each diasporic Arab writer portrays Arab women differently. Abu Jaber attempts to paint a favorable picture of Arab women in her novel *Crescent* by portraying Arab women who are powerful, independent, and self-assured. Sirine, Um Nadia, Rana, and Mireille are attractively represented in a new way to counteract the stereotyped pictures portrayed by the West. As a result, Abu Jaber, as a diasporic Arab writer, challenges Western views of Arab women while portraying a favorable image of them. In contrast, Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma* portrays Arab women in a negative light by depicting servile, dependent, and obedient Arab female characters. Furthermore, Faqir may unwittingly represent Arab women in this fashion in order to highlight their suffering, but in doing so, she reinforces conventional ideas of Arab women in the West. As a result, Faqir, as a diasporic Arab writer, symbolizes what Western readers think they know about Arab women.

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