

The Nearly Hundred-Year Gap in Finding the New Arab Woman: Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*

Safad Al Safadi

Middle East University, Amman, Jordan

Nasaybah Awajan

Middle East University, Amman, Jordan

Abstract—The study aims to explore the representation of Arab women in Fadia Faqir's novel, *Pillars of Salt* and the representation of Western women in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*. The study also attempts to compare and contrast between the two writers' representations of women. To achieve the objectives of the study, the theory of feminism is applied to both novels to analyse them in terms of how women are represented. Moreover, the results of the study show that the representation of women in the writings of some Arab authors today resembles the representation of Western women written by authors in their writings over 100 years ago. The significance of the current study stems from the fact that it sheds light on literary works that are written by two different authors from different times, countries, and consequently different cultural backgrounds.

Index Terms—feminism, *Great Gatsby*, Fadia Faqir, F. Scott Fitzgerald

I. INTRODUCTION

The study aims to explore how Arab women are represented by the Arab British writer, Fadia Faqir in her novel *Pillars of Salt*, and the representation of Western women by American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald in his novel *The Great Gatsby*. Though these two novels were published one hundred years apart from one another, the study attempts to reveal how women are represented in the same way in both novels. The significance of the current study stems from the fact that it sheds light on literary works that are written by two different authors from two different times, countries, and consequently, two different cultural backgrounds. In addition, through the lens of feminism, the present study attempts to show that the representation of women by some Arab writers such as Faqir in her novel *Pillars of Salt* resembles F. Scott Fitzgerald's representation of women in *The Great Gatsby* which was published nearly a century ago. There have been many studies conducted separately on the two novels, but up to the researcher's knowledge, there have been no studies that have tackled the two novels together and how they each represent women.

Today, there is a significant gap between the status of women in the Middle East and the status of women in the West. Even though women all around the world are still fighting for their rights to improve their status, Western women stand at the forefront of that fight, while Arab women seem decades behind them. Such controversial topics between the East and West or amongst women from different cultures are clearly palpable in literary works because literature reflects reality.

Women in the Middle East have reached a stage where they have gained their basic rights but still have not been able to overcome the restrictive patriarchal traditions and norms of their culture. While it's true that there are some highly educated women within the Middle Eastern culture who have been promoted to higher positions, this certainly cannot be generalised to all women in the Middle East. Simply by being an Arab and belonging to certain tribes or communities, most Arab women are expected to behave within a predetermined structure and are never permitted to seek their desires outside of certain limits including those that their society deems acceptable and honourable and those that are forced upon them.

It is the patriarchal ideology that controls the core of norms, customs, traditions, and values and, ultimately, the females in Arab society. Furthermore, this male dominance over women in the Arab world starts within the closest unit - the family. Abudabbeh (1996) states that the "Arab family can be described as patriarchal, pyramidically hierarchal with regard to age and sex, and extended" family (p. 427). Male relatives - fathers, brothers and husbands - control the rights of women as well as their status. El Saadawi (2007) argues that the superiority of men over women is evident in Arabic society, whether in class relations or even within the family. This is all due to the infused patriarchal beliefs. She also adds that the Arab woman has lost her human essence by turning into a controlled object set to achieve fixed aims. For instance, an Arab woman must marry and bear children - and preferably boys. Furthermore, she must be obedient,

pious and submissive to please her Arab husband (and she must be young enough to even find a husband in the first place). As a result, girls are often closely watched so that they stay under the family's control.

Moreover, in male-dominated societies such as those found in the Middle East, the empowerment of men over women is seen in all aspects of the community. Men are positioned as leaders and, thus, decision-makers. This applies to making decisions for the entire family, and especially anything related to the women in their family when it comes to seeking education, choosing whom to marry and even behaving with a certain demeanour. According to the recent Congressional Research Service 2019 survey on women's rights in 15 Arab countries titled *Arab Barometer*, researchers found that "the majority of the survey respondents believed that men are better leaders and should have greater say in family decision making" (p. 1).

On the contrary, Western women today reside in liberal societies, where they are free to make their own decisions, to continue their education or not, to get married or not, to have children or not, to seek careers as they wish, and so on. Ever since the emergence of the Suffragette and the feminist movement in the 19th century, women have succeeded in rejecting traditional roles such as being the obedient housewife that were forced upon them in the past. The modern Western woman has also been liberated from the shackles of false femininity that were imposed by orthodox masculine ideals based on patriarchal tradition. For example, according to patriarchal beliefs, women need to be kind, humble, sensible, and sweet; however, men should be logical, strong, and reasonable, therefore, masculine (Tong & Botts, 2016). False traditional gender roles are obstacles that have been overcome by Western women; unfortunately, however, this has yet to happen in the Middle East where women still face these obstacles.

The representation of Western and Eastern women in literary works is subsequently opposing. In both Western and Eastern literature, Arabian women are shown as oppressed, uneducated, submissive, domestic, and weak (weak in terms of power, not physical strength). Abu Baker (2021) says Arab women are shown as fragile, frail, and abused. Further, he believes they are traumatised and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. They also have not been permitted to hold any position of authority and are erroneously seen as incapable of decision-making, thus are not allowed to do so.

On the contrary, modern-day Western women are presented differently. Whether in novels, films or even children's books, contemporary Western women characters can be seen as confident, sensible and in leadership positions. For instance, Gao (2021) views *The Great Gatsby's* female characters as powerful, daring, and brave women who stand against society's norms by rejecting typical relationships between men and women. And whether it is Daisy's affair despite her husband's knowledge or Jordan's masculine behaviour, these are all traits once attributed to only men.

One Arab diasporic writer who highlights the status of Arab women in the Middle East is Fadia Faqir, a Jordanian Bedouin-Brit. Her books often evoke feminist issues in the Arab world such as the oppression of women, and the relationships between men and women, and are quite evident in her *Pillars of Salt* (1997). The novel is set in Jordan, which was under British Mandate and is narrated by a male, Sami, and presents the voices of two repressed Arab females, Maha and Um Saad. "The 'apocalyptic vision' of the novel refers to the continuing repression of Arab women whose daily contributions to the economy and struggle to survive in a male-dominated society have largely been overlooked" (Faqir, 2017, p. 3). Faqir presents her main female character, Maha, as witty and resilient, yet she does not become the head of the family although she is more responsible than her reckless brother who takes control of everything. Thus, her role in her family, and subsequently in society, is limited because of her family's paternal beliefs.

Similar themes are seen in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald is an American novelist who comes from an aristocratic family. His love for his wife Zelda both inspired and motivated him to write many of his works (Mizener, 2019), one of which is his most notable - *The Great Gatsby*. The novel takes place in the early 1920s, otherwise known as the "Roaring Twenties", an era of great openness and change in American ideals and society which included, among other things, the "New Woman". In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald portrays three different female figures - Daisy, Jordan, and Myrtle. On the surface, these women appear to be happy and powerful, but they are ruled by males who dominate their lives due to the internalised patriarchy of society. For instance, Daisy hopes her infant daughter turns out to be a "fool - that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool" (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 16).

Although published in different times, the women in both novels, are subjected to male dominance due to the archaic values of patriarchy that are embodied in the societies and norms leaving their women with only fragments of rights and freedoms. In other words, "Arab women are oppressed in a certain way, but Western women are [too...]" (Moore, 2011, p. 8). Faqir, in her novel, *Pillars of Salt*, shows the lives of two Arab women; a Jordanian and a Syrian, who seem extremely strong and independent, yet at the same time are granted limited freedom, especially when it comes to marriage or running the family's trade. Equivalently, in *The Great Gatsby*, the female characters are presented as very powerful and determined, but they are still subjected to male-dominancy due to the patriarchal society of that time.

II. ANALYSIS

A. *The Representation of Women in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby*

The works of F. Scott Fitzgerald's are greatly appreciated by many, and perhaps none more than *The Great Gatsby*. However, his representation of women is highly negative and submissive as all the novel's female characters are suffering from the control and abuse by men because of their society's patriarchal beliefs.

First, on the surface, Daisy seems as if she lives a nice, comfortable life with her loving husband by her side; however, the opposite rings true as seen in her words: “And I hope she’ll be a fool - that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 11). Her wish for her daughter is to be nothing more than an unintelligent, silly girl who is pleasing to the eyes expresses Daisy’s character and inner thoughts. Here, it is obvious that she aims to satisfy men by looking beautiful and acting empty-headed because that is what men of her society prefer.

This also reflects her relationship with her husband, Tom, who is an example of the paternal man. Tom is not bothered by his wife’s relationship with another man because to him adultery is not a reason to lose his trophy wife. To him, acting as if he has a perfect marriage in front of others is more important than working on the marriage itself as he tries to manifest a show as a happy and handsome couple to his other rich friends with his trophy wife by his side. Though both are, indeed, beautiful, they are both also shallow in the sense that they are vain, without goals or ambitions and are interested only in wealth. Added to that, the couple never discuss the issues between them nor try to amend matters. In fact, even when Daisy has a chance at a real committed and loving relationship, she still chooses to remain in a miserable, loveless marriage rather than asking for a divorce due to the fact that she is socially structured to seem happy even if she is not.

Similarly, Bao-feng and Xue-ying (2015) suggest that men in the novel are represented positively as they are well-achieved, intelligent, and hold high positions both at work and in society, while women are weak, fragile, and vain. The contrast between the two representations shows the gender gap between men and women. This could explain why these women are unable to leave their abusive condescending men simply because they have no other option, and they are hardwired so as just to accept their fates. Also, these women are represented as not wanting to struggle further by defying society or its norms.

The novel continues with the negative representation of its women due to the bad description of its men. For example, in Chapter 2, Tom has a conversation with Myrtle about how much she likes dogs and wants one. She asks if the dog is a male or a female, Tom replies “It’s a bitch,” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 17). Therefore, the men in the novel want to demean any female, even if that female just happens to be an animal. Then, Tom continues his scorn of women when he tells Myrtle “Here’s your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 17).

In that same chapter, the narrator, Nick Carraway uses the word “feminine” to belittle a man named Mr. McKee by describing him as a “feminine man from the flat below” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 18). Such words convey damaging stereotypes about women as they imply that they are less worthy than men - as if they come right behind men rather than beside them - which explains the use of the term “feminine” in a derogatory manner.

On the other hand, more powerful vocabulary is used to describe men. For instance, when talking about Jay Gatsby, he is projected to the audience as powerful, strong and frightening when Myrtle’s younger sister Catherine says, “I’m scared of him. I’d hate to have him get anything on me” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 20). Seda (2020) suggests that the women, and especially Myrtle and Daisy, are under the influence of men. Daisy is the rich woman from the upper class, who is contrasted by Myrtle, a poor lower-class housewife. Yet, despite their differences, they are controlled by the same man - Tom Buchanan. Moreover, with neither woman having an occupation or career, they are financially dependent on men, thereby giving men even more power and authority over them.

The insulting representation also suggests that women are shallow creatures with no hopes, dreams or ambitions. Myrtle for example is not given worth but for her physical appearance alone. She is introduced as a poor woman, whose only purpose in life is to either destroy Daisy or become her. “Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 22), she exclaims as if her vanity does not entertain the thought of Daisy and Daisy’s life.

Later in the novel, the narrator (Nick Carraway) keeps his view of women as he compares them to “moths” when he says, “girls came and went like moths” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 24) which proves that even the narrator himself is just another patriarchal man who looks down on women. Even when Nick talks about his girlfriend, Jordan Baker, he does not praise her. Instead, he says she has “avoided clever, shrewd men,” but is “dishonest,” too (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 36).

Women are also described as fools who cry out suddenly for no valid reason to indicate that they are emotional creatures whose feelings control them. For instance, in Chapter 5, Daisy starts crying the moment she sees beautiful shirts at Jay Gatsby’s mansion (Fitzgerald, 2010). Such descriptions trick readers into believing that women are empty-headed with hormonal changes that control them and their behaviours.

Moreover, the power of the novel’s narrative is evident in its men. While women cry for no reason, the man is a “son of God” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 61) which is another strong positive connotation associated with men only. In addition, the leading three women in Fitzgerald’s novel are the only ones ridiculed. This becomes especially clear when Tom uses stereotyping messages to talk about women like he does in Chapter 6: “...women get these notions in their heads” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 74). Even though Tom is a wealthy, educated man who is married to a wealthy, educated woman, he still tries to enforce negative stereotypes on women as many other men do as well.

Later in the novel, signs of physical and mental abuse against women are extremely clear in the relationship of the Wilson couple. George Wilson hits his wife, shouts at her and locks her in their house. And he is proud of it as he flaunts his abuse: “I’ve got my wife locked in up there,” he says (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 85).

As the story unravels, it reaches its worst description of women in Chapter 7 when Myrtle dies. “Michaelis (George Wilson’s friend who owns a coffee shop near George’s garage in the ash heaps) and this man reached her first, but

when they had torn open her shirtwaist, still damp with perspiration... The mouth was wide open and ripped at the corners, as though she had choked a little in giving up the tremendous vitality she had stored for so long” (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 86). This quote describes the physical condition of the body of Myrtle as highly sexualized although she is bleeding and has departed. Such a representation implies that women are judged and assessed based solely on their physical appearance even after they die as proven by both Nick, the male narrator, and Fitzgerald, the male author. Therefore, women, living and dead, have been objectified in this text to indirectly hint at a woman’s status according to patriarchal men - to serve his desires as he pleases.

Just as this researcher does, many other researchers and critics share the same views regarding *The Great Gatsby*. First, in his thesis, Hicks (1992) explores females and feminism in Fitzgerald’s works. He believes that the author of this novel projects women characters in a negative way. Hicks says, “society views Fitzgerald as a chauvinist” (p. 62) as a result of his representation of women. For example, he forces an image of a delicate feminine female through Daisy, a shy beautiful girl whose lover goes off to war, her social circle forcing her to marry a rich man from her same class. Daisy also does the same to her daughter as she raises her to be the delicate, feminine fool of a girl society expects. Also, Yaoye (2021) declares that Fitzgerald has depicted women as corrupt, crooked, untrustworthy, vain, fake, and even flamboyant, although they seem physically beautiful and attract men with their beauty.

Furthermore, the distortion of women’s images does not appear only in the novel and from its author, but it continues with its film adaptations. In his paper, Yuwen (2016) criticises a film adaptation of the famous novel saying that the film presents deformed images of women by showing Daisy Buchanan as an exploiter who follows only money by any means possible. He goes on to say that Myrtle Wilson is presented as a silly, foolish woman who is willingly used by Tom Buchanan to fulfil her goal - money. He also adds that Jordan Baker is supposed to be a representative of the 1920s “New Woman”, yet she is seen as conceited and self-centred. Zhu concludes in his journal article by claiming that *The Great Gatsby* is misogynistic and says:

No matter the movie or the novel The Great Gatsby is both for males. The three females’ characters are regarded as low morale. From the male’s aspect, Daisy is indifferent, selfish and vanity. She always pursues money and luxurious life and for these she would rather abandon her love with Gatsby and get married to Tom who she does not love. Jordan is an egoist and has independent spirit. She has lower morality for her impenitence and lies and she always ignores others’ interests. Myrtle is a ridiculous character in the movie. Although she has already been married to Wilson, she still becomes the lover of Tom. She attempts to close the upper class society of Tom’s status. She shows off her parasitic life and is killed in the end. All the three characters reflect misogyny in that era. (Yuwen, 2016, p. 98)

This reveals that *The Great Gatsby* is, in fact, an oppressive novel and serves the best interest of men by deceiving its women into indirectly obeying men. In the end, the women in it are exploited for their beauty or status to attend the needs of the men.

B. The Representation of Women in Faqir’s *Pillars of Salt*

As in the Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, women in *Pillars of Salt* are also represented negatively as a result of male dominance that is imposed on them due to patriarchal ideologies in Arab society. First, the character Maha manifests how deeply patriarchal beliefs are planted in Jordanian society and other societies alike. Maha seems to be a strong-willed and smart woman. In fact, her father describes her as “a tigress” (Faqir, 1997, p. 11). As the story unravels, the readers see how she manages to take excellent care of her family, seen in the way she cares her elderly father. Additionally, she finishes household chores like cooking and tends to the family’s business: farming, sheep breeding, and sheep-rearing. In fact, Maha even says, “I was the only one who took care of the young gloves” (Faqir, 1997, p. 20) and “We started sweeping at sunrise and finished at sunset” (Faqir, 1997, p. 94). Although this seems as a positive representation, especially at the beginning of the novel, she is later deprived of everything because of her brother, her father and the Pasha. Her brother is a controller as a result of the power given to him by both his father and society as well. The Pasha has control due to his high official rank and his close friendship with Maha’s brother. The father, of course, is the head of the family; therefore, he has the absolute power over all. When her father passes away, her brother, Daffash, becomes the head of the family immediately even although he is abusive. “He 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 insults and slaps was my father’s long wooden stick. Then, Daffash would apologize and give me a packet of foreign chocolates” (Faqir, 1997, p. 21).

Daffash was also corrupt to a point where he rapes a woman and is not held responsible for it. Maha describes the incident by saying: “My friend had lost her virginity, her honour, her life. She was nothing now. No longer a virgin, absolutely nothing” (Faqir, 1997, p. 11). Still, the vile Daffash becomes the owner of the family’s business despite his lack of morality and work experience.

Additionally, Maha’s suffering does not end at this point, but continues until her marriage. She marries a man whom she loves – a forbidden love unknown to her family for which they may both get killed as expected by family and society. Still, she is scorned for not instantly bearing a child after “Just five months without pregnancy and the people of Hamia started adding, ‘May Allah give you a son,’ after every greeting” (Faqir, 1997, p. 67). Still, she succeeds in having a child, but then her husband dies. This is another turning point in her life as the villagers hold her in disdain for being a widow and a single mother, her brother included. Not surprisingly, Daffash continues his physical abuse of

Maha for days, even trying to wed her off to the Pasha. When his plan fails, he then sends her to a mental hospital because she is seen as a “disobedient girl” (Faqir, 1997, p. 165). Yousef (2016) agrees that the novel shows oppressed women in a patriarchal Arab community and links it to colonialism - a notion supported by the novel as well - suggesting that both patriarchal communities and patriarchal colonialism cooperate to subjugate women.

Although Maha stands against her brother, the tyrant, and runs away to escape her forced marriage to the Pasha, she is still seen as a foul woman by everyone for daring to say no to the man of the family who “has priority” (Faqir, 1997, p. 201). Thus, as a result of her rebellious acts, she must be silenced along with everyone who helped her escape. Maha and the women who aided her are attacked verbally and physically while everyone watches. “Beat them up” (Faqir, 1997, p. 217).

The humiliation of the women in public under society’s consent is because they are considered half-citizens with “No brain and no faith” (Faqir, 1997, p. 217). Thus, despite being strong-willed, Maha remains oppressed by the men in her society beginning from her brother to the foreign Pasha and even by both the men in the village and the men working at the hospital. She tries her best to escape from the abuse she faces but fails ultimately because of the authorities granted to men as a result of patriarchal values in Middle Eastern societies.

During her stay at the hospital, she meets another woman who has also been abused and violated - Um Saad, or Haniyyah, Um Saad's premarital name. Haniyyah is an urban woman who lives in Amman, the capital of Jordan. She also suffers because of patriarchal authority -first at the hands of her father and later at the hands of her husband. Haniyyah fell in love with a non-Arab man and once her family found this out after her beloved proposes to her, her family refused as he was a Circassian. As a result, she was beaten and forced to marry to an old man. “Without uttering a word,” she says “without opening my mouth, I ate about a hundred lashes. My father’s belt reduced me to a heap of flayed meat” (Faqir, 1997, p. 100). She is then married off in the most horrid of ways. Her family tells her to get dressed to go to a party with them, she rejoices because she has been permitted to leave the house, but little did she know that she is going to her own wedding to a man named Abu Saad, a man she does not know and is many years older than her (Faqir, 1997). Her father physically abuses her to force her to marry as a way to resist her begging and refusal.

Later, her husband treats her in a similar manner - if not worse (Faqir, 1997, p. 109). “I will never forget one thing. At night, that man, my husband, who afterwards I discovered was called Abu Saad, chased me and ripped my dress apart. Then he asked me in a weak, thin voice that made the bulk of his body look like a mistake, ‘Have you had your period?’” This shows that Haniyyah is too young to get married and has faced great physical, verbal, and sexual abuse because she is the weaker part – a mere woman.

El Bwitel (2015) says that *Pillars of Salt* expresses the unjust treatment and the awful problems facing women in patriarchal societies. Much like the female characters in the novel, many women live in misery under male dominance where men are prioritized while women are treated as inferiors. Thus, men look down upon women just as in the cases of Haniyyah and Maha. Men treat them badly, use them, and abuse them because they have the power to do so and can do as they please.

Yet, unlike Maha, Haniyyah’s marriage is not a happy one; she is treated as a slave who is ordered to do things, clean, cook, bathe, and speak. She says she “used to place his feet in a bowl and wash them with soap and water... I used to spend hours scrubbing and cleaning ... a damp stink which reminded me of death and sewage” (Faqir, 1997, p. 121). She continues to describe her marriage: “We never ever talked, Abu Saad and I. He gave me orders and I listened” (Faqir, 1997, p. 151). Yet, after all Um Saad gives to Abu Saad, one may think he will reward her; on the contrary, he goes and finds a new younger wife because Um Saad is looking old. Just as her father does, her husband introduces her to his second bride suddenly without any notice: “Yusra, my new wife” (Faqir, 1997, p. 178). She is then devastated, especially when she sees this other woman in her house with her husband and children, taking her room, and throwing her belongings in a pile on the floor. So, like a maid, she starts sleeping on the kitchen floor – an act which bothers no one, not even her children. Still, she keeps cooking and cleaning just as she used to until she breaks down and runs away. Later, she is sent to an insane asylum, but even there, the women are treated badly. For example, they shave Haniyyah’s head to try shock treatments on her even though they did not attempt to treat her or listen to her story indicating the abuse continues along with no one listening to her voice.

Clearly, the abuse of women by men continues whether from the family or even at a hospital because patriarchal men have the absolute power to treat women as inferiors. The patriarchal thinking is deeply embedded in Arab society where abuse seems ordinary, just like it is presented in the novel. Men have all the authority and women are granted fractions of the rights to remain under men’s supervision. If a woman tries to rebel, she is then shunned by men and their society for daring to say no to those in power, whether they be fathers, brothers, or husbands.

Patriarchy in the Middle East resembles patriarchy that existed in the ancient times of Greece where women were treated as second class citizens with limited rights under the rule of men. “It can be clearly established that women in ancient Greece had an inferior position to men” (Auezove, 2020). When a woman does something, a man disapproves of, she is hysterical, crazy and ought to be sent away to gain her sanity back - just as Maha and Haniyyah. Therefore, the ancient concept of patriarchy is seen in contemporary literary works because it still exists in contemporary societies. The ideology sets certain roles for men and women that are socially constructed from the ancient times of Greece and are still ongoing today.

Moreover, all of the previously mentioned evidence is supported by many researchers, including Conwell (2011) and Abu Orouq (2021). Conwell (2011) believes that Maha is an oppressed character in spite of her tremendous efforts to fight against oppressors like her brother Daffash, for example. Conwell concludes her thesis by saying, “Daffash wishes to marry her off again for political reasons” (p. 49). This shows the depth of embedded patriarchal beliefs in Jordan and the Middle East – beliefs their women are fighting against even today.

Likewise, Abu Orouq (2021) shares a similar vision as he explores the violence against Maha and Haniyyah in his article. He says that the protagonists of the novel undergo extreme subjugation as a result of patriarchy and patriarchal traditions. He thinks that “Faqir’s text exhibits accumulated forms of physical, psychological, sexual and political violence that jointly work in the framework of an oppressive cycle over the indigenous women” (p. 76). He says that Faqir focuses on women of the Middle East, whose voices are less heard than the others as they go under extreme circumstances of oppression and subjugation (Abu Orouq, 2021).

Awajan et al. (2018) also describes the Arab family as the main unit in society, whether in the past or now. She continues by adding that the husband-wife relationship, the parent-child relationship, and the brother-sister relationship are key elements in Arab families, just as in the case of Maha and Haniyyah. This explains the power vested to families and how strong they can be, especially if used erroneously when they are extremely oppressive.

Abu Sharkh (2023) states that some women in Jordan seem oppressed based on her own analysis. There are striking similarities between the Bedouin Maha, the urban Haniyyah and the modern-day conditions of many women in Jordan as suggested by Abu Sharkh’s observations and study results. All of the women mentioned have similar duties such as working at home, having children, and obeying the men in their lives. Abu Sharkh adds that all of the women have taken the role of superwomen where they have to have children, they have to work because their men only want jobs at offices in the capital and they have to do household chores.

III. CONCLUSION

Both the Jordanian-British novelist Faqir and the American writer Fitzgerald show their male and female characters from a patriarchal point of view. The women in Faqir’s novel, published in 1997, are oppressed, abused and are under the control of the men in their lives - their brothers, husbands, and fathers - who have the absolute power and authority bestowed to them by patriarchal ideologies in patriarchal Arab societies.

Similarly, Fitzgerald’s novel shows women as submissive, subjugated and exploited by their men, especially their husbands. Just as in Faqir’s novel, Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, portrays the unlimited powers men have because they are given great privileges due to the dominated patriarchy in the Western culture. Also, the comparison between the two books exemplifies a great similarity between Middle Eastern women in contemporary times and Western women during the early 1920s, whether in literary works or in real life, which indicates that the gap between the two groups of women is approximate to a century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Middle East University in Amman, Jordan, for their financial support granted to cover the publication fees of this research article.

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Safad Al Safadi is an MA Holder from Middle East University, Amman, Jordan.

Nasyabah W. Awajan is an assistant professor at the English Language and Literature Department at Middle East University. She earned her PhD from The University of Jordan in English Literature. She has taught as a part time lecturer in The Arab Open University and The University of Jordan. She has also worked as a teacher educator for English Language students and the Academic Reading and Writing Lead at Queen Rania Teacher Academy.