

‘ARAB MARES NEVER CRY’: ARAB WOMEN’S DECISION TO RESIST IN FADIA FAQIR’S PILLARS OF SALT

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ABSTRACT

Most feminist works about women in general and Arab women in particular are actually conducted to confine common themes such as religion, class, gender, identity formation, but the most important intersectional theme is women empowerment; women with the realms of sexuality, domestication and subjugation. Arab women have been continuously projected as weak and helpless figures with no voice or identity nor salvation especially during colonialism while they suffered double othering. This paper deals with the Anglophone Arab writer Fadia Faqir’s novel Pillars of Salt (1996) that reveals this issue evidently. Relying on Jame C. Scott’s term ‘infra-politics,’ the paper would present Maha’s fruitful resistance that detects her as a living individual more than an object of subjugation and possession. Scott’s ‘infra-politics’ which deals with ‘every day resistance’ is a form of spontaneous illegal or unintentional acts, abandonment, withdrawals, silence and inaction. It is evident Arab women sole way to express themselves and face their persistent subordination and oppression through Faqir’s main character, Maha.

Keywords: Anglophone Arab writers, colonialism, identity, infra-politics, patriarchy, resistance, women empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Bookstores in Western countries, nowadays, actually show amazing interest in literary works written by Arab writers especially after the tragic collapse of the Twin Towers on September 11th, 2001. From that time on, Arab British literature or what Geoffrey Nash (2007) calls Anglophone Arab literature has gained much attention and recognition. Therefore, the trend these days is towards Anglophone Arab literature or Commonwealth literature which has defines as the literature that is penned or read in English language by writers from countries that were colonized by the British (Young 2). Anglophone Arab literature comes as a byproduct of the cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident. It is the literature that holds the epithet of a ‘hybrid’ or ‘Anglophone’ or ‘trans-cultural’, because the culture of both – the country of origin and the adoptive country, “are housed in the same person”(Sahgal 36). It is the alter-ego of both cultures and the duality that this trans-cultural literature shows, has set it in the conciliatory position in which it aims to find a new rapprochement between the cultures of both countries.

Some Western minds received this literature barely as “a little monkey dressed in a European fashion”(qtd. in Armitage, 40). For this slice of readers the authentic writer cannot write in any language other than his original one because he would insult both himself and his culture (Carjuzza 42). Simultaneously, some Arab thinkers and critics distrusted the Anglophone Arab writers’ loyalty to their Arabic roots and even described them as traitors for writing in the language of the colonizers. For them, the Anglophone Arab literature is “a form of cultural treason, in which acts of self-deprecation take place in the colonial language”(Suleiman 17). Actually, Anglophone Arab writers never betrayed their Arabic language nor their own cultural memory for they always keep referring to their Home through the alien language. Also, one cannot ignore that these writers chose to transfer their souls in English rather than Arabic for some definite reasons such as “personal preferences, avoidance of cultural restriction and censorship, and to optimize exposure”(Nash 12). Although, Nash shows the multiple reasons that justifies Anglophone Arab writers’ choice, but the Arab audience must not deny the very limited democracy and restrictive freedom of their culture. Arab Anglophone writers could not fly in the narrow

Arabic sky, because “the art of prose is bound with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy”(Sartre 69). Hereby, they have learnt the foreign language and used it only as a medium to express the repressed image of their Home and to represent it as well as possible. So, their imprisoned Arabic soul finds its expectant freedom in the language of exile. Sarnou mentions that it is important to notice that the literary corpus of the Anglophone Arab discourse in Britain is established and flourished with the diasporic texts of the “Anglophone female writers [that] outnumber male writers”(52). The Arab British literary canon include names as; Ahdaf Souif, Leila Abulela, Fadia Faqir, Sabiha Al Khemir, Ghada Karmi and Zeina Ghandour. Whereas Jamal Mahjoub, Hisham Matar and Tonny Hanania are the only male writers who contribute in the production of this New Literature.

However, many studies have been conducted to highlight the common themes that vary from religion, class, gender, identity formation, nationality, hybridity, resistance in the works of these writers, but the most important intersectional theme is women empowerment. Arab female writers started to defy and attacked the homogenous stereotypical images about Arab women. One of these writers is, the British-resident Arab, Fadia Faqir. She is actively involved in Middle East Women’s Studies. Throughout her writings, Faqir voices strong Feminist themes; most of her female characters are representation of any subaltern Arab woman who is minimized and victimized by the persistent patriarchal oppression practiced upon her. In *The Second Sex* (1953), the existentialist and feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir postulates that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman...Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an Other”(273). In an interview with Moore (2011), Faqir unveils her major concern which seems to be very close to de Beauvoir’s idea. She believes that the problematic issue of ‘gender’ is not the outcome of woman’s biological condition, but it is constituted by the oppressive, segregative societies that view woman as the passive inferior other and make them believe in that(3). By keeping the process of indoctrination and re-indoctrination Arab women with the knowledge of men’s superiority, Arab patriarchal societies always try to disempower and treat women as sole vehicles to serve men. In *Pillars of Salts* (1996), Faqir manages to empower women to have rebellious identity in order to confront any higher power that tries to disempower them. Faqir’s postcolonial text *Pillars of Salt* represents Arab women as individuals who still appreciate the social and familial traditions, but at the same time reject any kind of confinement and oppression. During colonialism, Faqir formulated the idea that Arab woman has to rebel against both local and European male dominance. It exhibits how an Arab Bedouin woman can revolt and form a resistant identity out of

her subjugated position by both patriarchal relations and colonial ideologies.

The novel has received various positive reactions from critics and publishers for it encourages women to have voice, to speak the unspeakable and to form their own identity. Although, there are several perspectives on the novel because of the different approaches used to tackle it, but actually many studies like Alfadel (2010), Sinclair (2012) and El Bwitel (2015), are conducted to apply a feminist approach that unfortunately demonstrates the one and only secondary image of the obedient and submissive Muslim/Arab women in their patriarchal societies. However, all these studies including the most recent one of Alshammari, in *Literary Madness in British, Postcolonial and Bedouin Women’s Writing* (2016), have analyzed Maha’s – the main female protagonist, imprisonment in the mental institution as a result of any subaltern Arab women try to gain independence or to question her position in a male-dominated society. Thus, this research attempts to show that Maha’s experience of resistance never goes in vain because her resistance is what identifies her as a human being or a living individual. The study sheds light on how Faqir has shaken the global reader’s imagination about Arab women through Maha’s resistant acts in a micro Bedouin environment. Depending on Scott’s concept ‘infra-politics’, the study would trace Maha’s double resistance to show how the subaltern Arab women could have their own systematic strategies to resist all the kind of ordeals trying to deprive them from having a sense of self-actualization and their own identity.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Resistance, generally, denotes a direct opposition to the prevailing power structures presented in various antagonist forms, practices and behaviors that challenge and subvert these structures of power. Depending on Foucault’s premise, “where there is power, there is resistance”(Foucault 95), one could conclude that the possibility of resistance exists everywhere since there is an exercise of power. While, in the critical analysis of postcolonial studies, Jefferess defines resistance as the indigenous people’s struggle to subvert the colonizer’s power, or the failure of the colonizer’s dominance to be totally absolute. Resistance is exemplified by the anti-colonial movements and the diverse range of practices, modes and experiences of struggle against the colonial authority(4). Many critics have split most of their ink on theorizing the possible prospects of change, viz. the expected possibility of resistance to any oppressive system no matter how it is so irresistible. Thus, as Althusser, argues that power diffuses through rough and soft means, resistance could be also articulated through ‘rough/public-soft/private’ dichotomy. Hence, there is a large consensus that resistance could be expressed through the articulation of direct/visible or violent act which is mostly

equated with an involvement in the blood orgy and indirect/non-visible or non-violent act. In other words, resistance could be grasped visibly through demonstration, public declaration, protest, struggle and violent activism. Whilst, invisibly resistance could be found in “the more mundane gestures of everyday life [that] reveal significant sites of political struggle”(Amoore 7).

Additionally, Pile in “Opposition, Political identities and Spaces of Resistance” exhibits the dynamic possibilities in which resistance could be practiced. He argues that man is able to create his own way of living-his own capacities and meaning, thus this has forced a recognition that resistance could be found in every single detail. The reason behind this, Pile believes, seems to be the fact that the definitions of resistance has been bound up with the individual’s ability to change things, through giving his/her own oppositional meaning to them, through finding his/her own tactics to undermine and endure “the everyday exercise of power” (Pile 14). But, the question that the study tries to highlight is that could the subaltern Arab women be really involved in any revolutionary act and if it is possible then which kind of resistance could they enact and what would be their weapons? Ryan, in *Bodies, Power and Resistance in the Middle East* (2016), argues that Arab women’s experience of resistance in Bilad Elsham is different from any other part in the world because of Arab culture and tradition. That is why it is not expected for an Arab women, due to their gender, to have a clear and direct role in the struggle against the colonizer or a public involvement in the blood orgy. Ryan proposes that the Oriental women’s enacted form of resistance is often embedded within their daily-lived experience and their desire to struggle with the daily difficulties in order to continue their life during the period of occupation(3-7).

Actually, ‘everyday resistance’ equals with what the theorist and the sterling professor of anthropology and political science, Jame C. Scott, calls the ‘infra-politics’ referring to the subaltern’s daily struggle in the face of everyday exercise of power. Scott describes the ‘infra-politics’ as “infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum...a tactical choice born of a prudent awareness of the balance of power”(Scott, 1990:183). He also argues that one has to stop thinking that resistance can be only coalesce into a direct form of opposition because ‘every day resistance’ precedes the public resistance as it also contributes in its formulation. ‘Everyday resistance’ takes the form of spontaneous illegal or unorganized acts, leaving or abandonment, withdrawals, silence and inertia or inaction. These forms are considered, according to Scott, to be the ‘the weapons of the weak’ which “their intention ... is nearly always survival and persistence”(Scott, 1986:30). To this plea, Scott’s infra-political activities could be conceptualized as a “product of the

subaltern decisions to conduct undeclared resistance in the face of the surveillance structures set up by the dominant strata”(Amoore 23).

Fanon has discussed in details how women can develop a revolutionary consciousness even if they embrace staying at home. He demonstrates that women “play a functional, capital role”(Fanon 38) in the struggle against the colonizer through their cultural resistance. The indigenous women must “resist the task of cultural destruction undertaken by the occupier... [and] oppose assimilation”(38) because they are the first to be colonized, besieged and used as means to undermine men’s resistance and to deconstruct the national culture. Fanon puts it like that:

In the colonialist program, it was the woman who was given the historic mission of shaking up the Algerian man. Converting the woman, winning her over to the foreign values, wrenching her free from her status, was at the same time achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical, effective means of deconstructing... culture. (39)

The colonizer tries to de-veil the colonized women, as well as, he would often force them to get rid of their costumes, values and tradition in order to destabilize his social system, claiming that he wants to liberate the native women from the oppressed patriarchy(Ramone 29-31). Thus, Katrak argues that Fanon encourages women to use their traditional grabs for a revolutionary purpose because the way they clothe themselves and their clung to cover their body would be seen and interpreted by Europeans as a political symbol or an icon of their anti-colonial resistance(81). At the heart of this and as a subaltern woman, Maha would manage to use creatively her invented covert forms of resistance, with which she confronts any source of domination. Here, two points in Maha’s resistant experience must be stressed: her resistance against patriarchy and colonialism, following Spivak’s declaration (1988) that the structure of colonialism produces a double colonized image of woman. Thus, this forces a recognition that her resistance must be also doubled.

DISCUSSION

1. Maha’s Patriarchal Resistance

In *Pillars of Salt* which will be shortened from now on by *PS*, Faqir illustrates the cruel and the horrific behaviors against Arab women locked in a male-privileged society as well as she wants the reader to interrogate these behaviors deeply because they are one of the main reasons behind women’s revolt. Faqir seems to agree that patriarchy is the only responsible organization that “successfully maintain[s]

and reproduce[s] the domination of one gender over the other”(Ebert 21) by “giving males control over female sexuality, fertility, and labor [emphasis is added]”(19). The act of giving men control over women is heightened within the cycle of Arab or Middle Eastern societies; the countries of the ‘Third World’, because of the “inherent characteristics [whether they are religious or cultural] in the mental and the psychic constitution of the Arab peoples”(El Saadawi i), especially during war or colonialism. Faqir, in her interview with Moore, asserts that the conservative structure of patriarchy always become stronger whenever Arab countries are besieged by external forces. In other words, whenever the Arab male is under attack, he would reflect the oppression practiced upon him by colonialism on any female figure in his family trying to disempower her(Moore 4).

“The desire to resist oppression is implanted in the nature of man”(qtd. in Ballou, 364), but this hidden desire would be translated into a conscious act of resistance when oppression and injustice become laws exercised in cruel and burdensome manners. In this regard, *PS* allows the reader to trace the notable and very rapid change in Maha’s character from a “coward rabbit”(PS 13) into “a tigress”(11) even if she lives within the limits of the Bedouin Jordanian environment that has its long history with woman’s oppression to the extent it becomes part of its heritage and tradition. From the very beginning of Maha’s narrative, Faqir depicts her as a simple, dutiful, obedient and intellectual girl who always tries to hold on to Eastern traditions and turath on which she has been raised upon as she knows very well the received punishment if she transgresses. This is very evident when she refuses to meet, the twin of her soul, Harb when he wanted to meet her at night. As she wonders: ““Are you Mad? For a girl to be out at night is a crime of honour. They will shoot me between the eyes”(10). One can trace how Faqir has implanted the first seed of rebellion or the desire of resistance inside Maha’s unconscious when her friend Nasra loses her virginity at Daffash’s hand, her brother, whom Maha describes as a womanizer, city-worshipper and “a shameless rapist”(12). However, Maha discovers that neither her voice nor Nasra’s voice can be heard for the people of their tribe have “an ear made out of mud, [and] another made out of paste”(13). Even her fair father, Sheikh Nimer, claims that Nasra had tempted Daffash to rape her without taken into consideration Nasra’s “tear-stained face, [and] her torn dress”(13). Hearing her father’s unfair judgment, Maha comments: “I realized how high were the mud walls imprisoning us”(13). Maha’s infra-political act comes with her spontaneous words that she utters to taunt and threaten Daffash, commenting: “Wake up, you dog, and see with your own eyes how I am going to kill you”(12).

Although, Maha could not save her best friend’s honor, but she at least never surrender to Daffah and neither

betrays her own principles nor her friend. Obviously, Faqir here wants to reveal the bitter reality in which Arab women inhabit. She wants the reader to realize that any male can simply do whatever he wants without thinking of any undesirable consequences because of his gender and because that he is always told by his society and even religion that men are superior than women. Actually, not only men are fully aware of their superiority, but also women are indoctrinated with this idea and believe in it. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Maha herself knows this common knowledge which she shares, in the following lines, during her wedding preparations through a softy reminiscence of her mother: “Her gentle touch on my plaits used to wipe out the pain of Daffash’s slaps. ‘What do you expect? He is a boy. Allah placed him a step higher. We should accept Allah’s verdict,’ she used to say”(PS 33).

Although, Maha is a subaltern tribal woman, like all Eastern women, her voice is muted in the tribe of Bani-Qasim, but she manages continuously to have her own identity and her own independence. She never surrenders to the ideas of women’s subordination and always finds her own flaws or her own infra-politics with which she faces these unjust patriarchal ideas and with which she keeps questions her own position. Despite the fact that Islam has improved women’s status in the structure of Arab region to a large extent, still there are some tribal mentalities like that of the men of Maha’s tribe who keep thinking that women are de facto subjects. Therefore, the expected place for any woman in such a Bedouin environment is in “a well closed room”(20). It is hereby, in such conservative environment, woman is doomed to be merely a womb. Women are not allowed to participate in the economic life because it is the responsibility of their ‘wali’ –any legal male guardian like father, brother, husband..., etc. (Jabiri 43). Also, according to the Bedouin ideologies and tenets, women must not work because “it was exhausting and shameful”(PS 28) and it would affect on their marriage prospects.

Thus, Maha’s resistance against such rigid patriarchal beliefs appears; first, when she decides to break with this patriarchal constraint by insisting to work with her father in their orchard from daylight to sunset. Here, Maha’s constant will and her daily struggle to work comes as her invented infra-political act through which she tries to unravel the patriarchal strategies of domination. Secondly, at her wedding night or what is referred to in Arabic as *Leilat-al-dukhla*, Maha has to find her own strategy to face and resist another patriarchal bound or tradition. Woman’s honour and virginity become part of the tradition engraved within the Bedouin society. Faqir, throughout the carefully woven events of the wedding night, tries to make a twist of these events when she presents Harb’s inability to perform due to his mother’s continuous interruption: “Come on, son...the whole tribe

would be waiting. Shame on my old age is also waiting”(PS 45). Here, Tamam, Harb’s mother, symbolizes the Bedouin turath and tradition which Maha refuses to accept and decides to fool. Such a manipulation proves how Maha is nerve to challenge the Bedouin traditions as a liberated woman who always tries to do what she believes in right regardless of the consequences of her action.

I was thinking of my honour. I was virgin...Harb was the one who was supposed to prove that I was a virgin. What if they were never given the sheet with the blood on it? They will think I had no honour. The shame of it will kill my father...My Family’s name will be tarnished forever...I suddenly smiled and said, ‘we can fool them’... I snatched the dagger and nicked the tip of my finger in order to bleed to much.(45)

Although the scene of the wedding night here is a straightforward, traditional and quiet familiar to most Eastern audience, but Faqir actually manages to defamiliarize this event when she places it in a different context: in Maha’s hand who tries to resist and subvert the patriarchal understanding of gender performance. Through her wit and manipulation, Maha could satisfy the crowd that “the honey in its jars was safe”(PS 46). Also, she proves that women can resist or overcome these traditional restrictions even if they use a covert or an indirect form of resistance(Alshammari 84).

Daffash seems always to be responsible of Maha’s enduring tragedies. She is an oppressed subaltern woman that finds herself obliged to enact another form of resistance by refusing the servitude at Daffash master’s mansion. In return, Maha receives severe penalties as “humiliation, anger and sheer helplessness”(PS 171). Embarrassed by Maha’s resistance and defiance, Daffash feels the need to disempower her and reverse the control through humiliation and violence, telling Maha that she is just a woman. As he reaches home the next day, he kicks and beats Maha with his father’s crooked stick and his ammunition belt. She resists his slapping through attacking his face with her fingernails, so he breaks the stick upon her back and leaves two of her teeth on the floor(Sinclair 5). Despite the severe maltreatment she faces, Maha proves again that she is strong enough to create her own infra-politics to survive and continue her life for she has to take care of her son and her land; her only sustenance. Expressing another form of resistance –silence, Maha tries to maintain her calm and save the day against all Daffash’s threads and outrage, as she mutters:

Anger had reduced me to bare bones. I must try to go on living for Mubarak’s sake...starting, waiting for the sun to rise even if scarred, even if...[I] feel like

digging...[my] heart out and burying it under the baby orange tree. (PS 172)

After that, the plot turns to narrate the famous complications of property and inheritance. Again and again Daffash appears as Maha’s determined enemy who always tries to transform and assert his own form of cultural patriarchy, and deprive her from her inheritance by forcing her to marry the old Sheikh Talib. Resistance requires courage; Maha once more proves that she is courageous enough to challenge Daffash. Maha’s resistance clearly appears through refusing both giving up her share of the land to Daffash, and rejecting Sheikh Talib as a husband. She flees to the mountains, leaving the men of her tribe with menace and rage for they take her obscured and difficult attempts to have identity and independence through her strategic daily resistance as a sign of mental illness.

2. Maha’s Colonial Resistance

As has mentioned previously, women could not participate directly in the war against the colonizer because of their gender, but they can have an active socio-political role in the struggle by enacting forms of covert or amorphous resistance. So, daily or covert resistance could be the indigenous female tradition to resist colonialism. Maha in *PS* is set up against the colonizer’s culture, ideals, traditions, values..., etc. She seems like “a sharp sword stuck in the sides of the Arab’ enemies”(PS 2). When Maha returns to her father’s house after losing Harb, she notices how the dwellings of Bani-Qasim have changed and modernized. Thus, she “wrapped the shawl more tightly around... [her] neck to protect...[herself] from the cold eastern wind” (125).

Here, Maha’s unconscious act of wrapping the shawl tightly is an indication to her covert form of resistance. When everything around her accepts the colonizer’s modernity and finds in assimilation the possible way to survive, she decides to dissent and maintain her own Bedouin traditions. Maha stands firm in front of this cold wind which blows either to westernize or destroy every Eastern tradition. Hence, Maha’s role is enhanced clearly as an active political agent because she clings to the traditional costume of the Bedouin woman: jilbab or libis shar’i which Maha describes as a long black robe and headdress. Meanwhile she mocks and laughs at English women wearing for these women are semi-naked and have no sense of shame. Maha tells a desire to heat some water and wash their colourful faces.

One of them was wearing a tight dress with a wide, shamefully short skirt...I felt like heating some water and washing the colours of their faces. Maybe I could give them long black Qasimi robes and headdresses. The shame of it! By the Gray hairs of my father, these women were not shy of showing their

bodies to the gazing men...I started laughing at city women who had no sense of shame. (33-34)

Maha refuses any kind of assimilation with the English invaders. She prefers to be a peasant woman ploughing in the orchard than to be the English's "loyal dog" (PS 43), like her brother who chooses assimilation as an easy way to elevate his social status. She damns Daffash and his foreigner friends for invading not only the public Jordanian sphere, but also her own private one when their Land Rover damages her planted bed of radishes and henna. Hereby, Maha's damnation and harsh speaking back are acts of resistance because according to Katrak the subaltern women's resistance could be embedded within their strategic use of their bodies as reprisals or retaliation; using their mouth, for instance, as a weapon to speak back or to struggle with colonialism (58). Later on, Faqir makes the reader able to see Maha's constant resistance to the English intervention and its exploitative nature when she builds "a small fence around the henna and radish bed to stop the Pasha from running over... [her] plants"(PS 133).

Maha's political resistance could be best shown through her aims at the begetting of a courageous son to fight the English with his father and to be the protector of their dwellings. Maha yearns to join Harb, her husband, yet she knows that her gender is the biggest barrier that stops her from taking part in the war against the English invaders. Therefore, Maha's insistence on proving her fertility; that she is not barren, is not only an attempt to defeat herself in front of patriarchy in which her barrenness was equated with "an English rifle... [that] did not shoot"(70) and must be replaced for another, but it is also Maha's ingenious way to be active politically(Alshammari 87-89). She thinks that it is not enough to be simply a womb, she feels that she can do something more to Harb and the tribe, she can be politically involved and she can be part of this fight: "The village wouldn't allow me to join Harb on the battleground. Harb needed my support. How could I fight the English? I must do anything to get pregnant"(PS 83).

Scott postulates that the 'infra-politics'; the covert or the unobtrusive form of resistance, provide the 'cornerstone' or the 'building-stone' of the most visible and openly form of resistance which could not exist without it. Although Maha's infra-political acts are conceived as less visible practices of political resistance, they are significant to form "the language, structures and meanings that make the grand gestures possible"(Amoore 8). Thus, gradually Maha's silent protest would turn into public one because "she testifies to the violence of the occupier and to his inhumanity"(Fanon 66) after the horrible massacre of Harb and the other horsemen of her tribe who were "slaughtered like sheep"(PS 111). In order to categorize someone's action as a direct or public form of

resistance, one must be aware or conscious of the oppositional nature of his act because "resistance requires consciousness"(Clegg 295). Maha becomes more aware and conscious of the oppositional nature of her acts toward the colonizers because she knows that the English colonizers try to change their land and their life. So, she develops a sense of xenophobia against any Western product. For instance, Maha refuses to use "the washing powder Daffash brought from Samir Pasha's house"(PS 127), instead she uses "some grains"(127) in order to wash her father's dirty clothes.

The most climatic example of Maha's public resistance, which would lead later to her imprisonment in the mental hospital, occurs when Samir Pasha, the foreigner, asks Maha "to give his cook a hand"(PS 152). Claiming that his cook is Sudanese and his guests want to "have a taste of a true Bedouin mansaf"(153), Maha agrees upon his request as he has told her that her family have given her the permission to go to his mansion. But, what Maha does not know, is the fact that she is serving and cooking for the English invaders – the occupiers, the very men who invaded her land and slaughtered her husband. The moment she knows that she is working for the English, Maha makes her strategic decision to stop working any more. This stands by itself as a form of the infra-political activity or an act of everyday resistance because Katrak has explained how the colonized women's refusal to work could be interrupted as a strategy of resistance(62). Then, Feeling ashamed that she is cooking for the English "foreigner killers"(PS 162), Maha's rage turns into a volcanic eruption.

I kicked the hot metal pot with my foot and went to the front garden...asked the Pasha in a loud voice, 'Why didn't you tell me that I was cooking for foreigners?' 'Who is she?' asked an old army officer with a funny Arabic. 'I am Maha, the daughter of Maliha, the daughter of Sabha.'... 'You killed my husband Harb.' with mental eagles...I stepped forward, wrenched the eagle off the chest of an elderly man, threw it on the ground and stamped on it. I collected as much saliva as I could and spat on the surprised face of the English officer... [and] leave the den of foxes. (162)

3. Maha's Final Confrontation

Alshammari explains how a woman in any patriarchal system – mother, daughter or wife, can be plausibly considered mad if she tries to gain her independence, or to break down social, economic, cultural and ideological structures, whether she is actually mad or not(3). Maha's story supports this claim forcefully for she is deemed 'mad' for her courage in general and specially because of her last act (sleeping out of her home) which is considered to be a deviant

or aberrant for any male figure in Arab societies and particularly in her tribe.

Throughout her text, Faqir wants to explain that the colonized woman's fate is not only determined by the disempowerment of the native and the colonial man, but also by the religious inaccuracies. She also clarifies how religion is overtaken the Arab culture in general and the Jordanian Bedouin culture in particular. Faqir's text exposes how religion is intercalated in a warped way to reinforce any oppressive form that favors males over females and causes to treat them as Higher Beings (Sinclair 6-9). Although Allah says in his Holy Book, "And as for those who commit prostitution from among your women, ask (against them) four witnesses from among you" (Al Nisa 15), but imam Rajab considers Maha as a sinner who has committed adultery without any witness, and has to be stoned as Maha narrates: "I heard the imam crying, 'stone the sinner.' children started picking up small pebbles and throwing them at me... 'Here she is, look at her, she is mad. The bee of her brain has thrown away'" (PS 216). The last pages of the novel reflect carefully Faqir's revolutionary spirit with which she tries to encourage Arab women to form their own experience and to unfolded various conditions of oppression-decipherable they experience, how they act, publically because "When injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty" (qtd. in Frederick, 2017, p.59).

Wherefore, when all the male figures in the novel have conspired to weaken Maha and deprive her from forming her own identity, Maha finds in resistance the possible way to strive for her liberated identity. Maha stands firm like an Arab mare in front of this trilogy of oppression refusing any kind of disempowerment and echoing Faqir's hidden message that women are no less than men in reality as Maha narrates:

'First of all,'... Daffash barked... 'I don't talk to women. No brain and no faith.' The imam nodded his head approvingly... 'Second what is the use of talking to a crazy women?'... 'Third lower your head or I will shoot you between your eyes.'... 'First, I [Maha] don't talk to a rapist.'... 'Second, I don't talk to disobedient sons. Third, I don't talk to servants of the English.'... 'I will get married to nobody, I will not sign any deeds, and will never cook for the English... The echo of the word 'English' travelled far, bouncing of the wall of the houses...until it broke upon their tops in a horrible echo.(PS 217)

Maha's final resistance is represented in her boldness and aggressiveness; it is regarded as a kind of empowerment which any man of the tribe refuses. Hereby, imam Rajab give Daffash the permission to beat her on public reminding him that "Allah said in his wise book, 'Beat them up'" (217). Daffash does not miss the chance and does exactly what the

imam has told him leaving her in a mental institution and her son motherless.

CONCLUSION

Through highlighting Maha's resistant character in Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*, the research breaks the stereotypical image of women and shed lights on self-motivated images of Arab women. Faqir in her text lets a new image about Arab women to be born throughout her protagonist's character. Faqir manages to secure the Arab women's image from the passivity with which it was associated. She encourages women to have a voice and to form their own identity through daily constant resistance to all kinds of power or systems that try to exploit, disempower, dehumanize and dominate them. Not all Arab women are weak, passive, stupid and without identity. Arab women are as courageous, active, intelligent and attractive as Maha, the purebred Arab mare who learns that "Arab mares never cry" (PS 126) or give up. The Bedouin peasant Maha has formed her own identity through enacting her own infra-politics. Faqir hints to the point that Maha's resistance is constructed affectively by the Jordanian Bedouin environment or context with its incursions of power. Although Maha is a subaltern Bedouin woman, she operates varieties of every day resistance as her weapon to confront domination because subjugation and assimilation is in every aspect in her life; resistance becomes her salvation. Maha has consisted her own resistant self as a result of the invasive power, practiced upon her either by patriarchy or colonialism, that always to dehumanize and control her. Albeit, Maha's actual experience of resistance leads to her imprisonment in an insane asylum, but she at least could form her own distinctive identity which she was so proud of as she used to narrate: "I, Maha, daughter of Maliha, daughter of Sabha...the Indian fig - 'strong,' the people of Hamia used to say, 'bitter like colocynth'" (5).

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