



## The western image of Arabs in Ahdaf Soueif's *the map of love* and Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma*



 Nasaybah Walid  
Awajan<sup>1\*</sup>  
 Malek Jamal  
Zuraikat<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Middle East University, Amman, Jordan.

Email: [nawajan@meu.edu.jo](mailto:nawajan@meu.edu.jo)

<sup>2</sup>Yarmouk University, Irbid, Amman, Jordan.

Email: [m.zuraikat@yu.edu.jo](mailto:m.zuraikat@yu.edu.jo)



(+ Corresponding author)

### ABSTRACT

#### Article History

Received: 4 September 2023

Revised: 16 October 2023

Accepted: 24 November 2023

Published: 21 December 2023

#### Keywords

Ahdaf Soueif

Arabs

Assimilation

Diaspora

East vs West

Fadia Faqir.

The current study deciphers how Ahdaf Soueif and Fadia Faqir, who are known as diasporic Arab writers, adopt the western stereotypical perspectives towards the Arabs. Instead of advocating Arabs and demystifying their identity against the western stereotypical misconceptions, Soueif (2000) and Faqir (2007) represent Arabs as backward, passive, and violent terrorists, as evident in their novels. Thus, the study explains how those Arab diasporic writers adopt the western stance against Arabs by enhancing and highlighting the image of Arabs as different from the rest of the globe at the cost of Arabs and in favor of the West. The study deploys Said's *Orientalism* to read the narratives under discussion, highlighting that such narratives misrepresent how Arabs think, behave, and feel to gain some plausibility and popularity in the West (Occident). Soueif and Faqir, we argue, sacrifice the ethics of loyalty and belonging to Arabs in favor of assimilating with the West and gaining its admiration, which resulted in creating a very inaccurate portrait of Arabs. The study reveals the potential reasons of such unethical behaviors, emphasizing that falsifying the reality of the Arab World by some Arab diasporic writers should never be the optimal way to assimilate with the West or cope with its expectations.

**Contribution/ Originality:** Considering that most readers of Arab diaspora literature admire Soueif and Faqir for their talent of writing in English, this paper provides an original account of Soueif's and Faqir's narratives emphasizing how such Arab novelists deploy their creativity to serve the Westerners rather than their own Arab ethnicity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many Arab diasporic writers have tackled the experience of Arabs living in the West compared to their experiences living in their home countries. Some of these writers include Naomi Shihab Nye, Diana Abu Jaber, Leila Aboulela, and Mohja Kahf, among others. Such writers "have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, novels, epics, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind', destiny, and so on" (Said, 1978). Some of these authors devote their writings to defending the East against the different stereotypical images promoted by the West against Eastern cultures (Khimish, 2014). Other authors like Ahdaf Soueif and Fadia Faqir present a negative image of Arabs in a way that enhances and promotes the already known Western stereotypes of Arabs, an approach that opposes the ideal function of diaspora literature that usually "seeks emancipation from all types of subjugation defined in terms of

gender, race and class" (Rai, 2005). Thus, this study emphasizes how Ahdaf Soueif in *The Map of Love* (2000) and Fadia Faqir in *My Name is Salma* (2007) adopt the Western stereotypical perspective against Arabs and misrepresent the Arabs' culture, history, and identity, as a result.

Contemplating the uniqueness of this case, the study tries to answer a set of questions related to the novelists and their narratives under discussion. First, to what extent do *The Map of Love* and *My Name is Salma* promote a negative image of the East? Second, what are the main techniques used in *The Map of Love* and *My Name is Salma* to create that image? Third, is that image accurate or inaccurate in terms of the real-life experience and the cultural standards of the East? Fourth, why do Ahdaf Soueif and Fadia Faqir promote such an image? Fifth, are there any potential reasons for both novelists to adopt or deviate from the Western viewpoint against the East?

To answer these questions, the study uses both Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1977) and certain concepts of postcolonialism to contextualize the narratives arguing that Soueif and Faqir sacrifice their ethics of loyalty and belonging to Arabs in favor of assimilating with the West. We attempt to show that the narratives under discussion misrepresent how Arabs think, behave, and feel to gain some plausibility and popularity in the West. Pointing out the potential reasons for such unethical behaviors, the study concludes that falsifying the reality of the Arab World by some Arab diasporic writers should never be the optimal way to assimilate with the West or cope with its expectations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In addressing Arab writers of diaspora, Bayeh (2017) confirms that Arabic fiction written in English-speaking countries such as Australia, Britain, Canada, and the United States of America could resolve many problems related to the "hegemony of Arab writing" (p.18). This perspective acknowledges the cultural and political value of diasporic Arab literature in terms of spreading an accurate awareness concerning Arabs living among Westerners. Considering that there has been a demonization of Arabs since the events of 9/11, Arab writers who live in the West and write in English, French, or other European languages are viewed as central mediators between East and West as many have started defending a truer image of Arabs against Western stereotypes and misconceptions (Al-Maleh, 2009; Gana, 2008). This attitude concurs with the belief that Arab writers of diaspora try to mix "a sense of home" with the "space to which they belong" (Bhabha, 1994). They try to create a balance where "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other" (Pratt, 1992). For Soueif (2004) such a space is a "ground valued precisely for being a meeting point for many cultures and traditions" that can be called a "mezzaterra" (p.8), a space where cultures influence each other. Soueif portrays that space in her novel *The Map of Love* by presenting a hybrid family through which she "explores the complex dynamics of intercultural discourse" (Wynne, 1999). While this may seem productive, it is unique that Soueif's novel is viewed by Narosimhan and Mathews (2016) as a narrative that emphasizes mixed relationships between Westerners and Arabs to show how Westerners are not able to cope with the backward culture of Arabs and their negative views of marriage (p. 478). A similar perspective is adopted by Cariello (2009) who argues that Soueif portrays Arabs who cannot deal with Westerners viewing Arabs as backwards and blaming the Westerners for these fallacious images (p. 316).

Examining this negative attitude of diasporic Arabic literature as practiced by Faqir, Sarnou (2015) argues that Salma in *My Name is Salma* starts a new life and feels safe when she is among Westerners far away from her own homeland and away from Arabs. Sarnou describes this as "undertaking a brutal process of acculturation," which is "a process when members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group" (p. 57). Elaborating on the same issue, El-Miniawi (2016) speculates how Salma is torn by two identities and how her journey from the East to the West is considered "cross-cultural" – "between Arab Oriental and Western occidental identities" (p. 38), thus showing that she can find safety and repose only in the West. Zubair, Farida, and Mirjat (2019) also contend that Faqir "does not believe in wearing the veil" as it represents Arab women's suffering and underestimation in Arab societies (p. 127). Similarly, Aziz (2018) confirms that Faqir's novel, *My Name is Salma*, is a semi-

autobiographical narrative that reflects a few aspects of Faqir's life, such as her being forced to wear a hijab and pray five times a day. Aziz (2018) explains that Faqir mirrors "a real picture of the Arab patriarchal attitudes" and how females are depicted as "deprived of mercy and justice" (p. 2). This viewpoint emphasizes the novel's anti-Islam critique; simultaneously, it shows that Faqir's novel views Arabs as inferior to Westerners which is a very stereotypical perspective of Orientals. Overall, Faqir's *My Name is Salma* and Soueif's *The Map of Love* reflect the issues of Arab society; yet, they indirectly underscore and spread the stereotypical Western images of Arabs. They represent Arabs through the eyes of Westerners who view Arabs as backward, passive, oppressive terrorists. Koc (2014) contends that it is for this reason that Faqir and Soueif are widely read among Westerners (p. 41). The researchers concur with Koc arguing that understanding the narratives of Faqir and Soueif demands contextualizing such narratives into the greater body of diaspora literature. This is significant for readers of *My Name is Salma* and *The Map of Love* as it complicates the characters' life experience and views it as more communal than individual. Instead of reading these narratives as pieces of escape literature that are usually fictitious and incredible, the study emphasizes the interpretive value of both novels viewing them as a plausible narration of the experience of a group of diasporic writers who seem more interested in assimilating with the West than writing back against it.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Considering that this study aims to reveal how and why the narratives under discussion adopt the Western perspective and biases against Arabs, it is necessary to highlight the three main theoretical principles of the discussion: diaspora literature, postcolonialism, and Orientalism, which represent the conventional literary categories used by critics to classify the narratives under discussion. For diaspora literature, the emphasis is on "diaspora" which is "the displacement of an individual, community or groups of people from the original homeland to an alien territory". It also "connotes a cultural transition from pure roots to mixed customs in the adopted land" (Raina, 2017). Thus, diaspora literature is related to the concepts of "cultural identity", "alienation", and "hybridity" to "have a better understanding of expatriate literature of diasporic minority communities (Mohrem & Zuraikat, 2023; Raina, 2017). Such concepts associate diaspora literature with that body of literature composed by postcolonial writers whose main interest involves discussing issues of identity, root, home, dislocation, and the struggle between two identities, cultures, and behaviors (Bharathi, 2017).

The novels under discussion cleverly address such issues, which implies that they reflect the core of postcolonial literature that functions as "an enterprise which seeks emancipation from all types of subjugation defined in terms of gender, race and class" (Rai, 2005). As stated by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2007) Post-colonialism "deals with the effects of colonization on cultures and societies" (p. 166). Thus, our paper reads Faqir's *My Name is Salma* and Soueif's *The Map of Love* emphasizing the way both novels articulate the dialogue between the East and West from a unique perspective. This demands integrating Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1977) into the argument, considering that Orientalism is a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, 1978). Interestingly, Said explains that most writers, authors, thinkers, and politicians "have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind,' destiny, and so on" (1978, p. 10). Thus, the researchers read the novels under discussion in terms of the distinctions made between the East and West by the novelists themselves. The paper emphasizes that the viewpoint adopted and promoted by Faqir and Soueif may nourish Westerners' Islamophobia and prejudice against Arabs and Muslims, thus contributing to marginalizing Arabs and oppressing them in the Western culture (Idriss & Abbas, 2011; Ismael & Ismael, 2010). To this end, the following section is divided into two parts: First, Arabs as backward, passive, and superficial, and second, Arabs as ignorant, radicals, and terrorists.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. *Arabs as Backward, Passive and Superficial*

The Arab / Orient (the East, the 'other') "is seen as being irrational, backward, despotic, inferior, depraved, aberrant and feminine sexually", while the West/ Occident is seen as "being essentially rational, developed, humane, superior, virtuous, normal and masculine" (Singh & Gautam, 2020). Emphasizing the image of Arabs as backward and passive, Soueif (2000) by Ahdaf Soueif reports the story of Sharif Pasha Al-Baroudi's marriage to the British girl, Anna. Anna accepts to marry Sharif against the will of Lord Cromer who first asks her if she knows what she is doing (Soueif, 2000). Cromer questions Anna's rationale as well as her emotional stability, thus indirectly expressing his belief that having a relationship with an Arab is unfeasible. Cromer addresses Anna saying: "Do you realize what you are doing?" He continues, "My dear, you are making a mistake ... My staff will tell you of the young women we find wandering about having contracted such marriages. They will tell you their conditions..." (Soueif, 2000). Cromer tries to explain to Anna how her future with an Arab husband will be miserable, reminding her that other British females married to Arabs regret entering such relationships and experience much suffering. He opposes their marriage realizing that the Arab-Islamic culture allows men to get married to more than one woman at the same time. Anna states that she has, indeed, heard many stories about Arabs confirming that her mind is already made up (Soueif, 2000). She says, "We are already married. If the marriage cannot be registered, we shall have to do without" (Soueif, 2000). As Lord Cromer realizes that Anna will not change her mind, he asks Sharif to sign a contract stating that he will not marry another woman, a request to which Sharif responds, "It is already in the contract" (Soueif, 2000).

As Cromer predicted, Anna regrets marrying; however, it is not because Sharif wants to marry another woman. Rather, it is because of Sharif's distrust of Anna. Realizing that Sharif is tracking her movements by asking his men to watch her wherever she goes, Anna concludes, "I cannot believe that the man I have chosen above all the others - the man for whom I have left everything I ever held dear - can I have been mistaken?" (Soueif, 2000). She then says: "Oh, how little I really know him! Could my heart have been so mistaken?" (Soueif, 2000). Elaborating on this scene which shows how hard it is to deal with Arabs or Middle Easterners, Wynne (1999) emphasizes that Soueif tries to show the difficulty and complexity of the "intercultural engagement" between the East and the West (p. 65). Similarly, El-Feky (2012) argues that Soueif reveals the "certain misunderstanding" that happens between Anna and Sharif, thus highlighting the differences between the East and West (p.185). Anna feels lonely while living with her Arab husband and in-laws. She does not feel comfortable around them and keeps wishing that she was with her Western family and friends, especially her best friend Caroline. Indeed, she says, "I would have wished to share my present joy with one of my old friends, Caroline perhaps ..." (Soueif, 2000).

Similarly, Lord Cromer feels uneasy dealing with the Khedive and even leaves the ball of the Khedive before they sit down for supper. This shows that he is not able to deal with Arabs because they seem backward and uncivilized: "Lord Cromer cannot get on better with one another" (Soueif, 2000). Anna and Cromer represent the viewpoint that intercultural relationships are futile due to the exoticism of Arabs. When Amal tells Anna that Sharif Pasha will allow her to visit London but will not accompany her, Anna responds saying, "I would not wish him to come to London and be stared at - or worse" (Soueif, 2000). Anna does not want Sharif to accompany her because his dress and mannerisms are too exotic for Westerners. To reinforce this negative image of Arabs, Soueif portrays Arabs as suspicious and doubtful towards their female partners who are viewed by Arab societies as young children who should be taken care of by their male relatives (Kafagi, 2012). While there seems to be no problem in viewing women as lesser than men, such a view reflects how Arab women are regarded as weak and passive (Kafagi, 2012). What strengthens this attitude is the behavior of some Arab females who accept being treated as passive, weak, and unable to challenge the authority of neither their husbands nor male relatives (Hussain, 2004; Moghissi, 2010). Tahiyya, the wife of the building's guard and a friend of Amal, has no problem living as her husband's lesser dependent. Tahiyya believes that her role as a woman is to stay at home to cook and take care of children and that

her husband is responsible for working outside of the home to support his family without doing anything inside the home: "What can he do, ya Doctora? All day he's working" (Soueif, 2000). When Tahiyya realizes that she is pregnant, she tells Amal that she does not know how it happened or what to do about it (p. 76). She reflects on how Arab women view themselves as weak, passive, and backward (p. 25), which contributes to the Western stereotypical perception of Arabs. In short, Soueif displays how women submit themselves to the authority of males; thus they contribute nothing to their own lives or the lives of the people around them.

Moreover, Soueif is negative concerning the image of Arab men and women as well as the fruitfulness of any intercultural relationships between Arabs and Westerners (Alhalholi & Awajan, 2023). Nonetheless, such a perspective does not necessarily apply to all cases. Cohen (1982) states that in "cross-cultural marriages", the couple meets at a stage where they have a complete understanding and respect for each other once they overcome the differences between them (p. 177). This perspective contradicts Soueif's image of Arabs as people who are hard to accept and handle. Also, it contradicts the fact that there has been an increase in the number of intercultural marriages (Walker, 2005). It seems that Soueif is concerned with portraying the backward ways of male-female relationships in the ancient Arab culture which no longer exists (Joseph, 1994). Meeker (1976) states that several negative relationships between men and women are only found in the past, and if such relationships do exist these days, then they only occur in special cases and must not be generalized (p.388). Likewise, Kafagi (2012) contends that Arab women and their status have changed and are no longer dealt with by their husbands as young children (p. 3). In short, Soueif does not present the image and status of Arab women accurately; rather, she promulgates "certain misunderstanding[s]" between men and women as well as the East and West for some unknown reason (El-Feky, 2012). Much the same as Soueif does in *The Map of Love* Faqir presents Arabs as backward, passive, and full of violence in *My Name is Salma*. Faqir tackles several female issues in her novel in a way that causes several critics to accuse her of misrepresenting Arabs or to posit that she could be misunderstood when addressing Arab issues (Karmi & Yasin, 2017). Either way, the novelist is one of the most widely read diasporic Arab writers among Westerners because she presents what the West favors (Koc, 2014). However, Faqir's *My Name is Salma* is a novel about an Arab girl who runs away from her family because her brother wants to kill her for having a relationship outside of marriage with one of the men in her village. Mahmoud, Salma's brother, starts chasing his sister without hearing her side of the story or allowing her to defend herself. Salma reports: "I was to be put in a cell for my own protection. My tribe had decided to kill me, they had spilt my blood among them and all the young men were sniffing the Earth" (Faqir, 2007). She is traumatized by Mahmoud's behavior; consequently, she starts seeing him and hearing his voice almost wherever she goes and tries, in vain, to escape his threats. Nevertheless, when Salma returns to her home country from the West, her brother kills her. Faqir views Mahmoud as mean, heartless, backward, and unemotional, an image that exemplifies the way Arab males are perceived by the West. Brahim (2009) states that Arab males are known to be ignorant and uncivilized (p. 92). Moreover, Karmi and Yasin (2017) argue that Faqir tries to mirror how Arab males are presented and known in the West; therefore, she introduces them in her novel as backward and barbaric killers (p. 2). Further, Faqir shows that Arab women are marginalized from birth. When Salma's father is told that his wife gave birth to a girl, he says, "The burden of girls is from cot to coffin" (Faqir, 2007). Interestingly, Salma's parents do nothing to protect the girl from her brother. Her mother seems weak and passive, even though she is actually a strong Bedouin woman. When she learns about what Salma has done, she says, "You smeared our name with tar, your brother will shoot you between the eyes" (Faqir, 2007). Salma's mother is unable to do anything in favor of her daughter, a state of passivity that contradicts the conventional view that Bedouin women are strong enough to play a major role in the lives of their families (Abumelhim, 2013). Similarly, Salma's father seems passive and unable to help his daughter against his son. He is likely either afraid of his son, or he does not mind what his son is doing as long as it complies with the patriarchal society's expectations and traditions. Either way, his image contradicts the belief that such fathers no longer exist. Fathers nowadays are open-minded and no longer domineering and never force their sons and daughters into doing



what they want (Barakat, 1993). As Moghissi (2010) says, patriarchal fathers have changed and started being less controlling and authoritative towards their children (p. 150). Nevertheless, Salma escapes to the West.

Ironically, Faqir reports how Salma feels safe in her new home in the West because portraying the West as a "refuge" and "safe haven" for women contradicts the fact that honor crimes do not really exist nowadays, as females are protected by laws and legislations (Dodd, 1973; Karmi & Yasin, 2017). Also, it challenges the way Salma behaves in the West: "I looked behind my back to see if I was being watched. If my brother Mahmoud sees me talking to strange men, he will tie each leg to a different horse and then get them to run in different directions. He was nowhere to be seen" (Faqir, 2007). Moreover, Salma feels inferior to Westerners around her. She thinks that she is not "presentable" with no education and no experience in life (Faqir, 2007). She does not just feel that Westerners look at her as inferior, but feels the same about herself and lacks self-confidence. As reported by her female roommate, Salma wears a veil, which causes Westerners to detest her. Responding to a query raised by Salma's roommate, a porter says that Salma is "fucking Arabic" and that she comes from someplace in the Middle East. Then the porter mocks Salma and says that she has come all the way to the UK on a camel.

Moreover, other Westerners call Salma by certain nicknames that are related to the stereotypical images associated with Arabs. Salma reports:

It was like a curse upon my head; it was my fate: my accent and the colour of my skin. I could hear it sung everywhere: in the cathedral, "WHERE DO YOU COME FROM?"; in the farmers' market, 'Do you know where the vegetable comes from?' Sometimes even the cows on the hills would line up, kick their legs in unison and sing, 'Where do you come from, you? Go home!' (Faqir, 2007).

Salma is seen as strange and different in Western culture, but she is passively accepting her inferior situation in the West. She lives with a British girl named Liz who continually abuses Salma and calls her a slave (Faqir, 2007). When Salma is asked by the doctor about the bruises, she lies (Faqir, 2007) a scene that reflects how Faqir depicts Salma in a way that promotes the West as superior to the East. In another situation, Salma is scorned by a Westerner for being an Arab: "Who was it? One of them Arabs?" He continues, "You know what bugs me about them? They come here like an army, buy houses and cars then sell their houses and cars without us hard-working English people making a sodding penny out of it. They don't go to estate agents or dealers, no, they buy off each other" (p. 152). Max reveals his thoughts about Arabs highlighting that they are backward and materialistic. He does not accept Salma as a citizen and keeps reminding her of her "Arabness". A similar situation happens to Salma when she is told by the librarian that she is an "Alien" (Faqir, 2007). She also describes herself as an alien: "it was not easy living here in England as an 'alien', which was how the immigration officer had described me" (Faqir, 2007). Likewise, it is due to her dislike of Arabs that Miss Parvin refuses, at first, to share the room with Salma. These scenes show that Westerners view Arabs and Muslims as their enemies and the biggest threat against them. Moreover, people in the West have given themselves the role of civilizing the "other" – in this case, Arabs (Suleiman, 2009). Ironically, Salma does not try to resist such misconduct by Westerners. She rather pretends that she is not targeted by what people seem to think or feel against her. She understands that the woman in the bakery thinks of her as an alien, but she never defends herself (Faqir, 2007). Similarly, she wonders what to say when a young man asks her where she is from, because he may run away (Faqir, 2007). Even when an Englishman asks her to follow him, she thinks of herself as trash. She thinks if she were a western woman, she wouldn't let Arabs in her clean house, as Arabs will change everything they touch into something dark (Faqir, 2007). In short, Salma does not have any sense of self-confidence, but she feels inferior to the fascinating West (Dhabab, 2005).

#### 4.2. Arabs as Ignorant, Radicals, and Terrorists

Arabs have been always known in the West as "erotic", "primitive", "ignorant", "slave traders", and lately, the word Arab has been attached to "terrorist", "fundamentalist" and "blood-thirsty" (Ridouani, 2011). Ahdaf Soueif

portrays Arabs as terrorists in *The Map of Love* where she tells the story of a bomb that was detonated in a museum. The bomb killed many Westerners and caused some others to get kidnapped (p. 407). This scene shows that Soueif, as Morey and Amina (2011) explain, suggests that Arabs are “threatening, untrustworthy, terrorists”, and the Arab world is a place for the inhuman (p. 4). Instead of writing against this image, the novelist seems to support and enhance the images of Arabs as terrorists. She mirrors this distorted image of Arabs much like those images found in Western narratives where, according to Richardson (2013), Arabs have always been portrayed as violent terrorists (p. 1). To Westerners, the more you are a practitioner of Islam, the more dangerous you are (p. 3). As a result, in her novel, Soueif strengthens the West’s “political ideology of hate” towards Arabs and Muslims (Richardson, 2013).

Still, another stereotype that Soueif promotes in her novel is that Islam and Muslims are against women’s equality concerning the right to education. Soueif portrays Muslim leaders as misogynists who do not care about women’s rights. This can be seen when Anna says to Sharif, “The Islamists hate you for your position on education ... and there must be people who do not believe you can be married to me and yet have nothing to do with the British, who suspect you of playing a double game” (Soueif, 2000).

In Faqir’s *My Name is Salam*, the novelist portrays Arab women as humiliated by their own religion, Islam, and their families are ruined because of it. Salma is a victim of honor crimes (Atiyat, 2021). This is because, as depicted in the novel, she is not saved by her Islam. She is rather portrayed as being saved by Christians or other non-Muslims. Majed (2012) declares that Faqir tries to show how women are put in pain and misery because of Islam (p. 151). This is highlighted by the imam of Hima who gives *fatwa* on olives but is not able to give any *fatwa* on honor crimes and killing (Faqir, 2007). Majed (2012) emphasizes that by portraying a passive Imam for the village, Faqir encourages readers to think of Islam as a doctrine of violence and subjugation. Stressing this image, Faqir reports how Salma is first taken by a Lebanese nun called Khairiyya. Then she gets helped by two other Christians, Miss Asher and Minister Mahoney. Faqir is presenting helpful Christians in contrast to the passive imam of Hima to prove that Islam and Muslims are useless while Christians are very helpful.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Relying on Soueif’s *The Map of Love* and Faqir’s *My Name is Salam*, one can notice that both authors reinforce the image of Arabs created by the West without challenging any fallacies or misconceptions. Both authors agree with the West that Arabs embody the world’s backwardness, passiveness, and superficiality, and they are practitioners of ignorance, radicalism, and terrorism. Soueif reveals such a negative attitude through her main characters, the Arab Sharif and the Westerner Anna, and the way she characterizes their marriage. She also does this by portraying how naïve and passive Tahiyya is. Likewise, Faqir does this by presenting her main character, Salma, as passive and unconfident. She also shows how Salma feels inferior to Westerners.

Such images are critical and need to be erased because they nourish Westerners’ Islamophobia and prejudice against Arabs and Muslims (Idriss & Abbas, 2011). It is because of such stereotypes that Arabs are “marginalized” and oppressed by Western countries (Ismael & Ismael, 2010); therefore, it is the responsibility of educated Arabs to reproduce an accurate image of Arabs’ peacefulness, productivity, and humanity. As Arab writers, Soueif and Faqir should have introduced the real image of Arabs and Islam and not supported the idea that all Arabs are terrorists. They should have emphasized that Islam “has developed a well-integrated view of women and their proper place in society” (Khimish, 2014). Thus, it is perilous to promote any literary piece composed by any Arab writer as a reliable source to understand the culture of Arabs and Muslims, as some writers do not mind sacrificing the great heritage of Arabs and Muslims in favor of certain personal interests.

**Funding:** This study received no specific financial support. The APC was funded by Middle East University in Amman, Jordan.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Transparency:** The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

**Competing Interests:** The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Authors' Contributions:** Prepared the paper's first draft including a tentative list of references, N.W.A. and M.J.Z.; setting the paper according to the journal's guidelines, N.W.A.; prepared the review of related literature, prepared the paper's final draft, and checked the accuracy of the list of references, M.J.Z. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## REFERENCES

- Abumelhim, M. H. (2013). Women and social change in Jordanian Bedouin society. *Studies in Sociology of Science*, 4(4), 27-31.
- Al-Maleh, L. (2009). *Arab voices in diaspora: Critical perspectives on anglophone Arab literature*. New York: Rodopi.
- Alhalholi, S. I., & Awajan, N. W. (2023). The depiction of Arab women in Fadia Faqir's my name is Salma and Diana Abu Jaber's crescent. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 13(4), 1057-1064.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts* (2nd ed.). Routledge: London and New York.
- Atiyat, R. (2021). My name Is Salma: The investigation of factor-based particularities affecting a violent relationship and its termination through the scope of feminist literary theory. *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, 23(2), 234-252.
- Aziz, S. (2018). A woman's struggle for identity and existence: A critical study of Fadia Faqir's my name is Salma. *AlRak Lelfalsafah Wel Lesaneyat Wel Oloom ElEjtima'iyah*, 1(31), 1-12.
- Barakat, H. (1993). *The Arab world: Society, culture, and state*. Berkeley, London, Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Bayeh, J. (2017). Anglophone Arab or diasporic? The Arab Novel in Australia, Britain, Canada, the United States of America. *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 39(39.2), 27-37.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bharathi, B. A. (2017). Literature of Diaspora, including immigration and refugees. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science*, 2(3), 1-2.
- Brahimi, S. (2009). *The other as "others": A portrait of dialogic relations in Ahdaf Soueif's Aisha*. Unpublished Master Thesis. University of Oran, Algeria.
- Cariello, M. (2009). Bodies across: Ahdaf Soueif, Fadia Faqir, Diana Abu Jaber. In Layla Al-Maleh (Ed.), *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*. In (pp. 313-338). Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Cohen, N. (1982). Same or different? A problem of identity in cross-cultural marriages. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 4(2), 177-199.
- Dhabab, M. (2005). *Representations of the Western other in early Arabic novels*. Master Thesis, The University of Leeds, Wales.
- Dodd, P. C. (1973). Family honor and the forces of change in Arab society. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4(1), 40-54.
- El-Feky, M. (2012). Discovering the self and the other: Narrative in Ahdaf Soueif's the map of love. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 141-169.
- El-Miniawi, N. (2016). The crisis of identity in my name is Salma. *Fikr Wa Ibda*, 17(3), 33-55.
- Faqir, F. (2007). *My name is Salma*. London: Transworld Publishers.
- Gana, N. (2008). In search of Andalusia: Reconfiguring Arabness in Diana Abu-Jaber's Crescent. *Comparative Literature Studies*, 45(2), 228-246.
- Hussain, P. (2004). The notion of divorce among the muslim women during medieval period and contemporary times: A feminist perspective. *World Journal of Social Science*, 1(2), 49-59.
- Idriss, M., & Abbas, T. (2011). *Honour, violence, women and islam*. New York: Routledge.
- Ismael, J., & Ismael, S. (2010). *Between Iraq and a hard place: Iraqis in Diaspora. Moghissi, H., and Ghorashi, H. Muslim Diaspora in the West: Negotiating gender, home and belonging*. England, USA: Ashgate.
- Joseph, S. (1994). *Gender and family in the Arab world*. Washington: Merip.
- Kafagi, T. (2012). The psychology of the Arab: The influence that shapes the Arab life. *Arabpsynet Journal*, 36, 1-4.



- Karmi, S., & Yasin, A. (2017). *Literary marketability in Fadia Faqir's my name is Salma*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Humanities. Jordan. 20-12 March 2018.
- Khimish, H. A. (2014). The impact of religion on Arab women. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5(3), 132-142.
- Koc, N. (2014). *Representation of British muslim identities in Leila Aboulela's Minaret and Nadeem Aslam's maps of lost lovers*. Unpublished Master Thesis, Middle East Technical University, Turkey.
- Majed, H. (2012). *Islam and muslim identities in four contemporary British novels*. Unpublished Master Thesis, University of Sunderland, England.
- Meeker, M. E. (1976). Meaning and society in the near East: Examples from the black sea Turks and the levantine Arabs. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 7(2), 243-270.
- Moghissi, H. (2010). *Changing spousal relations in diaspora: Muslims in Canada*. In Moghissi, Haideh and Halleh Ghorashi. *Muslim Diaspora in the West: Negotiating Gender, Home and Belonging*. England, USA: Ashgate.
- Mohrem, B., & Zuraikat, M. J. (2023). Baba's death: Nour's nostalgic voice in Zyen Joukhadar's The map of salt and stars. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 13(5), 1204-1208.
- Morey, P., & Amina, Y. (2011). *Framing muslims: Stereotyping and representation after 9/11*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Narosimhan, R., & Mathews, S. (2016). Gender, nation and identity in Ahdaf Soueif's Sandpiper. *Indian Journal of Research*, 3(3), 478- 479.
- Pratt, M. (1992). *Imperial eyes*. London: Routledge.
- Rai, G. (2005). Postcolonialism: Its meaning and significance. *The SPIEL Journal of English Studies*, 1(2), 1-22.
- Raina, J. A. (2017). Theorizing diaspora literature: A review of key concepts. *Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science & English Language*, 4(23), 6469-6474.
- Richardson, R. (2013). *Islam and the West: Histories and stories over the centuries*. Retrieved from <http://www.insted.co.uk/islam-and-west.pdf>
- Ridouani, D. (2011). The representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western media. *RUTA*, 3, 1-15.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism* (25th ed.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Sarnou, D. (2015). Salma in "my name is Salma": The invisible Alien Arab woman. *El- Tarwassol*, 21(1), 225-234.
- Singh, O., & Gautam, S. (2020). Representation, marxism and edward said's orientalism. *International Journal of Recent Scientific Research*, 11(3), 37895-37897.
- Soueif, A. (2000). *The map of love*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Soueif, A. (2004). *Mezzaterra: Fragments from the common ground*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Suleiman, Y. (2009). *Contextualizing islam in Britain: Part1*. Cambridge: Centre of Islamic Studies.
- Walker, E. (2005). *Interracial couples: The impact of race and gender on one's experience of discrimination based on the race of the partner*. Unpublished Master Thesis. University of Maryland, UK.
- Wynne, G. (1999). Navigating the Mezzaterra: Home, Harem and the hybrid family in Ahdaf Soueif's the map of love. *Critical Survey*, 18(2), 56-66.
- Zubair, H. B., Farida, P., & Mirjat, A. J. (2019). Exploring the representation of feminist reinventions, cultural alienation and Western ideological pressures on muslim women in Fadia Faqir's my name is Salma. *The Women-Annual Research Journal of Gender Studies*, 11(11), 116-137.

*Views and opinions expressed in this article are the views and opinions of the author(s), International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability etc. caused in relation to/arising out of the use of the content.*