Dehumanizing the Arab Other: A Case Study of Diana Abujaber's Arabian Jazz *and Fadia Faqir's* My Name is Salma

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Introduction

The growing tension between nations, countries, religions and ethnic groups has strongly marked the end of the 20thcentury, and the beginning of the 21st. In world politics, it is presumed that the Western hegemony has not come to an end with the expansion of globalization. On the contrary, as the Egyptian scholar Hassan Hanafi (2009) argues, "[g]lobalization is Western hegemony." To put this into perspective, globalization must be seen as "one of the common forms of Western hegemony, not only achieved through military action

or the economy but also, the market." In the words of Hanafi: "Globalization is not just the Westernization of the world as a concept of dissemination from the core to the periphery. Nor is it mere Americanization, as the USA is now the only existing bloc which challenges the rest of the world " (Hanafi 2009). Globalization is one of the forms of "western hegemony based on the laws of the market and military power, a concept which goes back to former imperialism" (Ibid).

The West, by which I refer to the United States and Europe, has long dominated the world. For centuries, western nations had the predominant ability to expand their power by land, sea and, later, air and technological progress. Hakim Adi adds that what might be regarded as "the domination of Europe might more properly be seen as the rise to dominance of the capitalist economic system" (The BBC History Magazine, 2016). Additionally, the technological advancements manipulated and promoted by western countries (and Japan) have made globalization one of the common forms of western hegemony.

The practice of deploying the developing countries' capitalist economy , technological advancements, cultural imperialism and therefore globalization in its broadest sense to influence developing countries, instead of using direct political and military powers is what many scholars like Jean-Pal Sartre (1964), Kwame Nkrumah (1965),

Noam Chomsky (1979) and Edward Said (1993) call 'neocolonialism', and it is via in this new type of colonialism that the ex-colonizer exercises its power upon the ex-colonized to exploit the latter but in new and different ways: culturally, economically and technologically. Neocolonialism is regarded by many thinkers and historians as the same old story of racism, white supremacy and western imperialism (Chomsky 1979, Said 1993). Joe Feagin, in his work *Racist America: roots, current realities and future reparations*, explains this desire of whites to protect the white supremacist order in the United States as follows: "systemic racism is not just about the construction of racial images, attitudes, and identities. It is even more centrally about the creation, development and maintenance of white privilege, economic wealth, and sociopolitical power over nearly four centuries" (Feagin 2000, 21).

With this in mind, one should note that over the last two decades or so, racial discrimination against Arabs as an ethnic minority group, and against Muslims as a religious minority group, in most Western host countries and in western mainstream media, has led to falsified and perverted characterizations of these human beings as bloody religious fanatics endangering world peace. Muslims and/or Arabs are therefore being dehumanized. Moreover, recent terrorist attacks in European and American cities have increased the phobia and bigotry against Muslims and Arabs. Paris, London, Brussels,

Oregon, Virginia and many other Western cities were attacked by jihadis (fighters in the name of Islam) of the so-called Alqaaida and later ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and Levantine), and this has helped spread the worst image of Muslims in the West since the last century. With Trump's unexpected victory in the 2016 US presidential elections, the rise of populism in Europe, and of far-right ideologies in many places of the world, and the ban of Islamic garments in a number of European countries, Muslims and/or Arabs are experiencing increasing discrimination and xenophobia, particularly immigrants, refugees and exiled subjects who may be referred to as nomadic subjects (Braidotti 1994); this is an idea that will be evoked in the following sections of my article.

It is no surprise that this long-standing xenophobia against Arabs, Muslims, Middle Eastern and even South Asian people, has rapidly accelerated of late, in many Western countries. In recent years, mainly after the 9/11 events, the propaganda against Islam and its people has created a false sense of association between evil, terrorism, hatred and Muslims/Arabs. In this respect, Edward Said notes in *Orientalism* (1978) that the West promotes a deep-rooted hatred for Islam. The term "Islam" as it is used today is in fact part fiction, part ideological label, part minimal designation of a religion called Islam. Today "Islam" is peculiarly traumatic news in the West. During the past few years, in the wake of recent bloody events in the Middle East, notably the Arab spring and

its aftermaths, Arabs and/or Muslims have caught European and American attention so strongly, that Islam has now become a primary focus area of the Western media: they have portrayed it, characterized it, analyzed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently made it known. "However this coverage is misleading, and a great deal in this energetic coverage is based on far from objective material. In many instances "Islam" has licensed not only patent inaccuracy, but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural, and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility" (Bhat 2015, 30).

Consequently, the racial discrimination of Arab immigrants has been subject to criticism in many Anglophone Arab writers' literary works and those of women writers in particular. In fact, Arab Anglophone women's writings may be categorized as minor and/or minority literature. As immigrant/diasporic writings, these narratives fall primarily into the category of minor literatures, because a minor literature does not come from a minor language; it is rather that, which a minority constructs within a major language, as it is in the case of English writings produced by Arab immigrants, or Americans and/or British citizens of Arabic descent, that share the characteristics of minority literatures. "Such literatures", for Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986), have three main characteristics: "the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation"

(Dalal Sarnou 2014, 54). To explain further, "Deleuze and Guattari's theory traces the figures of immigrants who stand between the culture of origin and that of the adoptive country. Immigrants are equipped with a first-hand knowledge of both cultures and they assume the role of mediators, interpreters and cultural translators" (ibid).

As a matter of fact, giving voice to marginalized ethnic minorities has become, as such, a priority for diasporic Arab writers, particularly those living in Europe and the United States where racism against ethnic minorities still persists. In the United States alone, an unprecedented Arabophobic and Islamophobic ill-treatment of migrant communities of diverse origins mis-recognized as Arabs —including Pakistanis, Afghanis, Indians and Amazighs (Berbers of North African countries like Morocco and Algeria who are not of Arab origin)—has been marked recently. One should note that like many other ethnic terms, "Arab" is notoriously difficult to define. According to Bernard Lewis, Arabs are not a nationality in the legal sense. Therefore, "it may be irrelevant and irrational to refer to communities of immigrants coming from the countries of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region as Arabs" (Lewis 1993, 6). Moreover, the Syrian refugee crisis has brought into question the "Arabness" of the Arab world: while thousands of Syrian refugees have fled to Europe and Canada in search of asylum, they are far from welcome in the neighboring countries

of the Arabian Peninsula, such as Saudi Arabia, Emirates, Bahrain, the Emirates or the other Gulf states (see Françoise De Bel-Air, 2015 http://gulfmigration.eu/media/pubs/exno/GLMM_EN_2015_11.pdf).

In order to expose how Arab and Muslim migrants are often dehumanized, two selected novels, written respectively, by the Arab American, Diana Abujaber, and the British Arab, Fadia Faqir, will be read with a focus on the authors' intention to voice the exclusion of Arab and Muslim immigrant groups in the West. I shall also argue that Anglophone Arab writers have assumed the responsibility of voicing the belittlement and vilification of Arabs to expose untold truths about Arabness and Muslimness and to unveil the many paradoxes of European/Western humanism.

In an effort to interrogate the fallacious, deceptive and biased representation of Arabs in a post-modern and/or neo-humanist era, and to deconstruct the use of the term "Arab" to refer to a non-homogenous ethnic minority of people coming from the Middle East, my paper offers a critical reading of fictional works produced by Anglophone Arab writers, focusing on the depiction of various female Arab characters in these texts . My intention is to examine issues of gender and race discrimination. The selected works include Diana Abujaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma* (2007). It will be highlighted through the analysis of

these novels that there is a biased misrepresentation and exclusion of immigrants who come from the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region and are racially considered not quite white, and thus, not quite human. In what follows, I am going to reflect upon the whiteness dilemma of Arab immigrants (and Arab Americans in particular), as that is one of the major concerns of Diana Abujaber's *Arabian Jazz*. In analyzing the novel, a number of polemical issues related to Arabness vs. Americanness will be investigated.

Arabs: not quite white, then not quite human

Diana Abujaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) foregrounds the bitter journey of the Arab community's displacement and relocation to America. Abujaber, among many other fourth generation Arab American novelists, highlights the Arab American subject's daily experiences of race-based exclusion and anti-Arab bigotry. In fact, it is the precarious position which Arabs have long occupied in the ethnic and racial discourses in the US that has nourished much of the Arab American narrative. As a minority group, it has often been very difficult to reinscribe this community within a feasible ethnic frame. As for other ethnic minorities, skin color has been one of the major characteristics on the basis of which African Americans, Asian Americans and Latin Americans have been ethnically categorized in the United States. However, the cultural assimilation of Arabs in the US has always

been challenging for Arabs whose existence in America dates back to more than a century ago (Almaleh, 2009). The Arab minor community has not been fully visible only and mainly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks which dragged Arabs and Muslims into a zone of accusation and exclusion. As Nadine Naber (2008, 1) states, up until the horrific attacks of September 2001, several Arab American writers used the trope of "invisibility" to refer to the place of Arab Americans within dominant US discourses on race and ethnicity.

As a multicultural country, America was long seen as a mosaic, melting pot nation. However, it has been recognized on many occasions, that the US is ethnocentric as it often considers the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) culture, its whiteness and religion as superior to other ethnic and religious groups (see Naber, 2008). However, this may oppose the fact that there is a forced process of glocalization[1] and hybridization of the culture of the diaspora in a postmodern and postcolonial era. In this regard, Braidotti argues that "we are not all humans, or not human to the same degree, not if by 'human' one means to refer to the dominant vision of the Subject as white, male, heterosexual, urbanized, able-bodied, speaking a standard language and taking charge of the women and the children" (Braidotti 2014). According to Braidotti, many people may "belong to other, more marginalized categories or groups: non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, not urbanized,

not able-bodied, not speaking a standard language, not in charge of the women and the children"(ibid). In *Arabian Jazz*, many nomadic subjects are located in different zones of marginalization and exclusion in the American mainstream culture: Arab immigrants, hyphenated Americans, and women.

Abujaber's debut novel narrates the story of the Ramouds, an Arab American family living in upstate New York. Matussem, the head of the family, migrated to the US from Jordan, and married an Irish American woman, Nora. The couple, apparently, represents the fusion of two distinct races: Arab and European. The two are united in the land of ethnic diversity, and have two girls: Jemorah and Melvina. Nora subsequently dies during a visit to Jordan as if the European White human being cannot live and survive in this space, this region and this part of the world where the culture, the religion and Nature are different.

Arabian Jazz portrays the life of an Arab immigrant family who live in a small town in upstate New York. The novel re-questions in many parts, the relevance of the American Dream, and the United States as the land of immigrants where humanity is celebrated. In Albert Memmi's words, in the process of anti-colonial struggle, many people came to realize that the human being that western humanism spoke about was the White European human being (Memmi 2000, 227). In this respect, the

novel's title critiques the myth of the American Dream by merging two elements which refer to two main oppressed ethnic minorities of today's America: "jazz", redolent of black Americans, and "Arabian" signifying Arabs or Middle Eastern immigrants, i.e. racialized subjectivities (Braidotti 1994). The two may be considered as the most belittled groups in the US. Recent analyses of the novel's title have focused on jazz as an obsession of the main character Mutassem. One of these analyses is by Mazen Naous'. He asserts that the term "jazz" in the title of Diana Abu-Jaber's novel Arabian Jazz (1993) implies a process of improvisation and intertwining. As an essential characteristic of jazz music, improvisation manifests itself linguistically in *Arabian Jazz*, even as it intertwines with the novel's major themes.

Arabian Jazz deconstructs the truth of neo-liberal and neo-colonial America. The novel gives voice to individuals whose presence in the United States is practically rejected; it exposes the many truths of race-based exclusion which still persist in America, the so-called land of free Man. Arab Americans, native Americans, and Black Americans are dehumanized for being different from the dominant group, i.e. the White Man. Braidotti explains that the dominant subject is haunted by his structural 'others', because

> ...they are necessary to his self-representation, albeit by negation. They are the complement to that subject, who

> constructs himself as much through what he excludes, as through what he includes in his sense of himself, his agency and his entitlements. The devalued 'others' constitute therefore the specular counterparts of the subject: different from him, they are valued less than him. (Braidotti 2014).

Deploying this understanding of how otherness is created, one can argue that the issue of Arabness and Muslimness in America is, at its core, an issue of difference. On the other hand, the novel also presents characters whose presence and upbringing in the United States liberate them from the trap of paralyzing traditions. I am referring here to second generation Arab Americans. Their otherness is doubled: they represent the other to mainstream Americans and the other to native Arabs. For instance, in a provocative statement, the young American–but Arab–Jemorah emphasizes that "The homing desire […] is not the same as the desire for a homeland" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 197). This statement reflects the dilemma of being in-between two places where one is your home and the other, your diaspora. This insecure space is what creates the "inhuman" condition of diasporic individuals. To elaborate this idea, I will refer to the following quote by Edward Said. In his *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Said confesses that exile is

> ...strangely compelling to think about, but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self

> and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement" (Said 2000, 173).

Reading through this statement, I argue that exiled and/or diasporic subjects live a de-humanizing journey while oscillating between two memories, two homes, two histories, and therefore two selves. Being 'transplanted' in a new place and space where they are rejected makes them feel less human than other WASPs. This state of bewilderment has been further aggravated by the new American president Donald Trump's policy of exclusion[2].

In fact, it is this journey of displacement that de-humanizes the status of Arab immigrants in the US. It is, I argue, a nomadic journey. In this regard , Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of nomadism should be evoked to decipher the Ramouds' experience of a nomadic lifestyle that scattered the family across the world, and this is very similar to the current situation of thousands of Syrian refugees who left their homeland to roam around the world. "The nomad has a territory", explain Deleuze and Guattari :

> [H]e follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.). But

> the question is what in nomad life is a principle and what is only a consequence. To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. (Deleuze and Guatarri 1987, 380)

In *Arabian Jazz* , the Ramoud family lives in Jordan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Moreover, the novel projects the particular zone where the Ramouds live as a peculiar space where: "No one ever escapes this place […] You want to think twice about moving here. It's like that show – The Twilight Zone?" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 90) Although Jemorah and Melvina are American born, they do not feel part of the White American mainstream, due to their father's nationality, their appearance, and life experiences. They eventually conclude that they are "everything and nothing" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 330). From this perspective, it becomes clear that being recognized as both an Arab and an American seems to be extremely difficult.

Another crucial point, to be discussed subsequently, is the distinction that is made when referring to Arabs in America. We read in the novel: "Americans had the mon-

ey, but Arabs, ah! They had the food, the culture, the etiquette, the ways of being and seeing and understanding how life was meant to be lived" (Abu-Jaber 1993, 360). Allegedly, Arabs are seen as a different race, and thus, different human beings. In the novel, one can figure out that the difference is not only ethnicity-based, but culture-based as well. However, the untold truth about Arabs, as Rosina Hassoun (2011) explains, is that they are a macro-ethnic population with a common language, history, and cultural similarities. Arabs are a multiracial group with a variety of physical traits and a range of skin colors from light to dark. Therefore, it would be inappropriate and unfair to uncritically refer to all people coming from the MENA region as Arabs .

I contend that Abujaber's *Arabian Jazz* portrays Arabs in America as nomadic subjects who are deemed to be belittled and dehumanized by the White mainstream culture based on a racial, religious and cultural discrimination. This contributes to a sense of dislocation and displacement even among second, third and fourth generations of Arab Americans. Consequently, a permanent feeling of marginalization hinders this community from fully assimilating into mainstream American culture. The next section will deal with another representation of the Arab diaspora through a study of *My Name is Salma*, a novel written by the British Jordanian female writer, Fadia Faqir. The point of divergence between Abujaber's work and Faqir's is that the latter novel rep-

resents another community of Arab immigrants who are also struggling to make a home for themselves in their adoptive country; Faqir's text, in other words, focuses on the British Arab minority group.

De-humanizing the Other: *My Name is Salma*

Fadia Faqir's *My Name is Salma* (2007) is set between the Middle East and Britain. It investigates the issue of immigrating to a Western country, i.e. Britain, not only as a new theme when it comes to the choice of the central character Salma, who is an unskilled Bedouin woman, but also in terms of raising questions about the future of Arabs who live in Britain. Salma is cut off from her country of origin and arrives in Britain for permanent stay; as such, the novel portrays conflicts of forced dislocation, integration, assimilation, racism and the settlement experience.

Faqir's novel examines issues related to women's invisibility in Arab countries and Arabs' invisibility in the diaspora. Nayera Alminiawi claims that *My Name is Salma* is a novel of a search for and an assertion of identity. She observes that the story is one of a physical and psychological journey from innocence to experience, from life to death, from an Arabic set up and language-world to an English environment, language and culture. (Alminawi 2015, 61)

More importantly, the novel portrays the traumatic process of dehumanization that Salma, the protagonist, goes through, during a long journey of displacement and forced migration from Hima to Exeter. Faqir's text relates the story of Salma, a young woman from a traditional Bedouin society in the Middle East, who is impregnated before marriage. For this, she is sentenced to death by her society and family whose honor is tarnished. Salma thereafter embarks upon a long journey of displacement, dislocation and exile. She is put in prison for her own protection for several years; here she gives birth to a baby girl, Layla, whom she is not allowed to raise or see, until years later, when the girl is murdered by her brother, Mahmoud. Following her term in prison, Salma is compelled again, to relocate to another place, a new home, but this time for permanent stay—in a completely different country—England.

It is in her new homeland, Exeter, that Salma goes through the process of forming a new identity, with a new name—'Sally Asher'—even as she continues to be haunted by her past experiences in Hima. Having experienced a brutal process of acculturation, Salma's identity is fluid and unstable to the point of fragmentation, as she does not appear to have survived the move to England with an intact psyche. Relevant to this context, is Braidotti's (2011) conceptualization of the nomadic subject, as "a utopian figuration that is not about displacement but about a discursive freedom from dominant

narratives"(Maher 2009, 89). The nomadic subject is thus "a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity" (Braidotti 1994, 22). In this regard, I contend that Salma becomes a nomadic subject, following her exile in England. The fluidity of her identity, to draw from Braidotti's theory, "expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity" (Braidotti 1994, 22). Her disrupted, disorganized memory is represented through a markedly fractured narration, oscillating between Salma's past and Sally's present. It is a spiral, rather than a linear, narrative. In the opening paragraph, the narrative begins in Hima (Faqir 2007, 7) while the following paragraphs are about life in Exeter. Salma's depiction of her life, the reader notices, oscillates between her past in Hima and her present in Exeter.

Salma eventually starts putting together the pieces of her new life. She first finds a shelter, then a job; she starts doing an MA in English literature, and finds at last, a husband with whom she begins a new life with a new identity. However, being a dark-skinned Arab in the land of whiteness proves a major obstacle to her process of integration. What undermines Salma/Sally's Britishness is her less/non-whiteness: "A few years ago, I had tasted my first fish and chips, but my mountainous Arab stomach could not digest the fat […]Salma resisted, but Sally must adapt"(Faqir 2007, 9). The lines quot-

ed above, from the first chapter of the novel, sum up a long process of dislocation, acculturation and assimilation that the Bedouin Arab woman goes through. In the following passages, I will suggest how Salma as an Arab is invisiblized and dehumanized both in her native home and in the diaspora.

The displacement journey of many Arabs and Muslims to Western countries represents an experience is usually interwoven with Islamophobia, Arabophobia, racism and rejection; all of which lead to a constant feeling of marginalization , inferiority and alienation from the host country and its mainstream culture. Despite their will to assimilate and integrate into the host culture, immigrants, Arabs and Muslims particularly, become unfortunate victims of cultural humiliation, religious disdain, and social disintegration. In this connection, I claim that Faqir's *My Name is Salma* depicts a constant state of invisibility that both Arab immigrants in the West, and Arab women back home, confront. The novel portrays the difficulties and hardships faced by people living in the diaspora, and at the same time, voices the agonies of women living in conservative Bedouin communities. It deconstructs home and diaspora from a different angle to demonstrate the invisibility of Arab women in Bedouin homelands, on the one hand, and the marginalization of Arab immigrants in White mainstream societies, on the other .

In the opening pages of the first chapter, "Where the River Meets the Sea," the reader encounters images and scenes portraying Salma/Sally's awareness of being an alien both in Hima, her native village, and England, her foreign home – an awareness mingled with a bitter feeling of pain and chagrin: "If I did not know me I would have said that I was Salma, but my back was bent and my head was held low. I wrapped my trembling body with the warm towel and sniffed the air" (Faqir 2007, 6). Salma appears alien even to herself, and this confession made by the protagonist a long time after her stay in Exeter, is simply an inescapable result of being seen as strange and invisible, wherever she goes and whenever, she appears: by Elizabeth (the owner of the hostel where Salma lives in Exeter), by Mahmoud (her brother, who is an omnipresent threat to her life), by Parvin (her Pakistani friend who would later help Salma adapt to a diasporic English life), by her tribe back in Hima (where she is condemned to death and banished from her family's memory), and by many other members of her 'new' country, England (where people see in her the exotic image of castaway Arabs/Muslims).

Another issue to be found in the novel is how discriminating race-based othering is produced by minorities themeselves. Elsewhere in the story, we read:

> Using his master keys, the porter opened the door and let in a short, thin, dark young woman … when

> she looked at me she could only see the slit of my eyes and a white veil so she turned to him. 'Where does she come from?' 'Somewhere in the Middle East. Fucking A-rabic! She rode a camel all the way from Arabia to this dump in Exeter,' he said and laughed. 'I am not going to share a room with an Arab,' she spat […] I looked at her straight hair and long fringe and turned in my bed. The smell of hurt and broken promises filled the brightly lit room. (Faqir 2007, 15)

In this extract, there is a representation of an Arab woman facing strong antipathy from people around her because she comes from the Middle East. The reader also notices a scornful attitude shown by someone of her own gender. Here, Parvin displays her Arabophobia, like many other white people and non-Arabic immigrants in Britain. However, even Parvin belongs to the Orient based on Edward Said's conceptualization of the Orient (1978). According to Said, the West has created a dichotomy between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the Orient. The Middle East and Asia are viewed with prejudice and racism. The West has created a culture, history, and future promise for the East. On this framework, rests not only the study of the Orient, but also the political imperialism of Europe in the East. Said discusses the dialectical relationship between the Occident and the Orient as a manifestation of "us versus them".

Thus, because of the British colonial experience in India, Pakistan and Indochina, the British Pakistani

Parvin, I argue, belongs to the same imaginative geography, perceived as the exotic Orient, as does Salma, the British Bedouin Arab woman. Such a Eurocentric view of people like Salma and Parvin is at the very center of a reductive Western master-narrative of the peripheral, non-White other. Parvin's words claim so too: "You know, Salma, we are like shingles. Invisible, snake-like. It slides around your body and suddenly erupts on your skin and then sting sting,' Parvin said and laughed" (Faqir 2007, 25). Parvin was, in this extract, referring to homeless immigrants or 'those who were either without a family or were trying to blot out their history' (Ibid), i.e. the dehumanized nomadic subjects coming from the undermined Orient which is, in Said's words, "an integral part of European material civilization and culture." (Said 1978, 22)

The Eurocentric master-discourse is noticeable as well, in Elizabeth's conversations with Salma/Sally. The scenes involving Salma and Elizabeth, alias Liz, the owner of the semi-detached house that Salma hires, project Liz's Eurocentric view of the Arab other, who is regarded as a "less white", non-native British subject, and legitimately dehumanized on that basis. In the beginning of the novel, Salma introduces Liz as her master; she says: "Liz, Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth I, Her Highness, my landlady was still asleep" (Faqir 2007, 10). This description encloses an orientalist view of Elizabeth who, to someone like Salma, represents European whiteness,

European people and the ex-colonizer. In another scene, Salma and Liz are watching television together:

> 'Was that the shadow Chancellor?' I asked Liz. 'No, the Prime Minister. The Chancellor does not spit,' she answered and looked at the television screen, not wanting to be interrupted. 'Who are these puppets?' I asked. 'Foreigners! Aliens like you,' she said and smiled. 'Like me?' I asked. 'Yes, illegal immigrants,' she said. 'I no illegal,' I said losing my English. 'Yes, you are. You must be,' she said. 'Would you like a cuppa?' I asked, imitating my friend Gwen and trying to change the subject. (Faqir 2007, 23-4)

This conversation is layered with multiple suggestions and nuances. First, we interpret Liz's answers as a legitimized belittlement and vilification of the Arab Other, who is perceived as less human. In addition, the passage reflects Salma's sense of inferiority. Salma feels unfairly undermined despite her British citizenship; yet she tries hard to imitate other British natives. As Bhabha explains, mimicry is the act of repeating rather than re-presenting, and in that very act of repetition, originality is lost, and centrality de-centred (Bhabha 1994, 85-92). Thus, by imitating Gwen's English, Salma loses her "original" Bedouin self, but remains "less British" at the same time, because her very gesture of imitating Gwen entails an awareness that she is not fully British. Hence, Salma is stuck in the perennial limbo of trying to become Sally.

In another scene, the reader is shocked by Salma's reaction when Elizabeth injures her arm. Drunk, Liz injured Salma's forearm, while she was trying to take a whip out of Liz's hand. Liz was hitting bottles with the whip, imagining she was talking to some Indian upahs and wallahs (maids): "Slaves must never breathe English air," Liz says, while Salma is waiting for a taxi to take her to the hospital (Faqir 2007, 185). Unexpectedly, Salma lies to the doctor and tells him that she cut her hand while chopping salad. Salma's reaction could be read from different perspectives. It could be seen as an act of empathy with Liz's miserable circumstances after the latter is stripped of her prestigious status. However, it may also be viewed as an act of Salma's self-imposed subordination, owing to what she perceives as her inferior status-quo and "given" subalternity in a White Western world. Significant in this regard, are Gramsci (1947) and Spivak's (1988) conceptualizations of subalternity as subordination. In fact, Spivak borrowed the term 'subaltern' from Gramsci, to refer to the unrepresented group of people in the society. For Spivak, the term 'subaltern' encompasses the exact picture of the lower class and discriminated people. Edward Said, in the same vein, argues in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), that the representation of the subaltern is meant to fulfill the ideological function of keeping the "subordinate subordinate, [and] the inferior inferior" (Said 1993, 80).

My Name is Salma, like many other novels by Anglophone Arab writers, unveils bitter truths about being an

Arab in a foreign country where this misrepresented and misrecognized ethnic group is vilified and denigrated, based on a Eurocentric perception of the 'oriental' Arab world, which, I contend, is different from the West, but not necessarily inferior. In conclusion, I will emphasize how the dehumanization of the Arab community has worsened relationships between Arabs, Muslims and the West.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to bring to light how Arabs are vilified and dehumanized, based on an alleged ethnic and religious inferiority, which, to extrapolate a conceptual term from Foucault (1966), is an outcome of an unjust process of "exteriorization". Arab and/or Muslim immigrants, in most Western countries are excluded, and therefore exteriorized, from the white Eurocentric homogeneity, due to their skin color, religion(s) and cultural background(s). According to Foucault, "the historical description of things said is shot through with the opposition of interior and exterior; and wholly directed by a desire to move from the exterior—which may be no more than contingency or mere material necessity, a visible body or uncertain translation—towards the essential nucleus of interiority" (Foucault 1966, 120-121). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that as much as the West itself, the "Orient" is an idea that "has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West" (Said 1978, 5). Arabs and/or Muslims are ex-

cluded based on a falsified representation propagated by the mainstream media in most Western countries where so-called "oriental" subjects, including Arabs, Muslims and Asians, are considered a threat to humanity. The ongoing denigration of Arabs, who include both Muslims and non-Muslims, has aggravated the plight of Arab immigrants in Europe and the United States. Trump's travel ban, his immigration policy and European far-right anti-immigrant policies have made it increasingly difficult for immigrants, refugees and exiles to integrate into the mainstream culture. Thus, many Anglophone Arab writers, particularly American Arabs and British Arabs, tend to raise questions about being hyphenated and nomadic subjects who are stuck between two opposing spaces: home and diaspora, being Arabs and being American/British. These writers also evoke the dilemma of the integration of Arab immigrants into mainstream Western cultures when the latter exclude them from their cultural and social life. Faqir and Abujaber, among others, have successfully voiced the agonies of excluded and displaced Arabs in the diaspora. The selected novels offer a glimpse of how Arabs, refugees and ethnic/religious minorities are looked upon by many Western/Euro-centrists. From this perspective, and with the unprecedented escalation of refugee crises in Europe and across the globe, greater attention and consideration should be given to the consequences, aftermaths and estimated solutions for a successful integration of these new comers, not only by governments and states, but also and more importantly, by the peoples of the host countries.

Notes

[1.] The term 'glocalization' expresses the ways in which globalization dynamics are always reinterpreted locally, leading to an interpenetration of the local and global scales that creates context-dependent outcomes. Some authors go so far as to contend that glocalisation is the way in which globalisation really operates (Robertson, 1992).

[2.] I am referring here to the travel ban executive order signed by Trump on 6th March 2017 to ban immigration from six Muslim-majority countries: Iran, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Syria and Libya.

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