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**MARGINALIZING OF WOMEN IN PILLARS OF SALT AND
BAHIYYA'S EYES**

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Abstract

The context of marginalization is not only comprehended in the meaning of socio-culturally dropped women of the low condition which sustain marginalization due to their gender , class discrimination and being prevented from improving their own identity. It is also indicated to separatist women whose manner is considered to be errant or abnormal from the mainstream community. As a result, they feel marginalized and isolated from their community. This research discusses two selected novels Pillars of Salt (1997) written by Fadia Fakir describes the male domination in Jordanian community, and , Alifa Rifaat's Bahiyya's Eyes (1983) focuses on male domination in Egyptian culture. Thus those novelists offer an alternative side of narration that resist the control of male discourse that attacks the discrimination system of ethics and values by informing their own experiences as a girl or a wife, and by their educational background or career as the marginalized women of the Third World Communities.

Key words: Marginalization, Third world women, male domination

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تهميش المرأة في روايات اعمدة الملح و عيون بهية

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ملخص

ان سياق التهميش لا يُفهم فقط من منظور النساء المهمشات اجتماعياً وثقافياً اللاتي يعانين من التهميش بسبب جنسهن وتمييزهن الطبقي ومنعهن من تحسين هويتهم. كما أنه يُشار إلى النساء الانفصاليات اللاتي يعتبر أسلوبهن خاطئاً أو غير طبيعي من المجتمع السائد. ونتيجة لذلك ، يشعرون بالتهميش والعزلة عن مجتمعهم. يناقش هذا البحث روايتين تم اختيارهما بعنوان "أعمدة الملح" (1997) من تأليف فاديا فقير ، وهما يصفان سيطرة الذكور في المجتمع الأردني ، وتركز رواية "عيون بهية" (1983) اليف رفعت على هيمنة الذكور في الثقافة المصرية. وهكذا فإن هؤلاء الروائيين يقدمون جانباً بديلاً للسرد يقاوم سيطرة الخطاب الذكوري الذي يهاجم نظام التمييز في الأخلاق والقيم من خلال إعلامهم بتجاربه الخاصة كفتاة أو زوجة ، ومن خلال خلفيتهم التعليمية أو مهنتهم كنساء مهمشات في مجتمعات العالم الثالث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التهميش، نساء العالم الثالث، الهيمنة الذكورية.

Biographical Sketch of Fadia Fakir and Alifa Rifaa

Faqir was born in 1956 at the time of the announcement of Jordan independence from British foundation. Her father comes from a Bedouin tribe and her mother is Circassian. She grows up in a traditional family. L Moore, in *an interview with Fadia Faqi* (2011) narrates: Faqir fights in a male dominated society represented by the head of her family (her father). She portrays how cruel her father was, and how marginalized and oppressed she was (Moore, 2011, 12). In an interview with Rachel Bower (2012). Faqir emphasizes how a writer's life influences the style and content of their writing. She said "If you grow up in a war zone, 'art for art's sake' is a luxury you can't afford. But I hope my creative development demonstrates

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how revolutionary fiction may evolve as well” (Bower ,2012,7). On the other hand Alifa Rifaat is the surname of Fatma Rifaat who was born in Cairo, Egypt. Her father was an architect and she was raised in the countryside . Rifaat's primary school was in Misr al-Jadidah and then she moved to the Cultural Centre for Women for her intermediate education. She also attended the British Institute in Cairo. Salti in *Feminism and religion in Alifa Rifaat’s short stories* (1991) argues that Alifa’s father forced her to marry an engineer in her youth but they were married for a total of just eight months. Finally, Rifaat wed her uncle in 1952, a police officer whose work offered her the chance of travelling around different places in Egypt which was reflected in her fiction. Rifaat herself subjected to typical patriarchal marginalization, psychological, and physical oppressions(Salti,1991,14).

-Social structures of the Jordanian and Egyptian Community

Two very different settings are shown in Pillars of Salt. The first is the Bedouin people, who are a reflection of the ancient customs of the Arab tribes who travelled from place to place to go hunting, enjoying the countryside, and work the crops. Each tribe has a leader, or "Sheikh," who is in charge of making decisions for his people and enforcing the law. Additionally, the "sheikh" must be present in all communal events. In the course of her engagement, Maha explains the nature of the social connection between the sheikh and the other members of the tribe, which relies on respect for each other. Also, the Sheikh has a prestigious position even among his family members. On the other hand Um Saad represents the civilian environment of Jordanian community. Maha and Um Saad explain woman's sorrow as she becomes unconsciousness, to feel more suffering. Um Saad lives in an entirely patriarchal environment. She sums up her position as a stereotypical oppressed lady by saying, “Twenty five years have passed, like a blink of an eye, just incubate and boil caraway" (Fakir,1997, 130). Her job description calls for her to conduct most of

her domestic work while she's at home. She does not do any serious matters. Throughout this statement Um Saad clarifies how she faces suffering in her male dominated community and she cannot tolerate her husband's maltreatment.

On the contrary, Man position in both communities fulfills outward jobs such as in Bedouin community, he shoots, works in the field and interests of the sheep, as well as in civilian community, he runs various jobs such as tradesman, trader, laborer. Also at his home he is the head of the family, such as Sheikh Nimer who is all the time blames Daffash (his son) for his disgraceful deeds, as well as Um Saad's father who determines to marry off her to the butcher, without asking her about her opinion of him or any member of his family about this decision. These stances clarified man has absolute freedom to do whatever he wants.

Maha argues, the civilian groups represent themselves more advanced than the Bedouin community. Um Saad spends her days cleaning the smelly shoes of her husband, Abu Saad, a butcher. , Maha explains after Abu Saad returns from his day of tending to sheep and different animals as well, she says

I used to place his feet in a bowl and wash them with soap and water. He was a butcher...his long black boots were always covered with blood and dung of sheep and goats. I used to spend hours scrubbing and cleaning to get rid of the clinging smell (Fakir, 1997,121)

Both the Bedouins in the rural areas and the civilians in the urban centres of Jordan view each other with disdain due to the country's rigid social structure. Both the Bedouin and the civilian are proud of their culture and modern comforts, but none is willing to acknowledge the other's superiority.

As well as Faqir who has the great role into expansion the importance of the Arabian women social status in her community, and their struggle in the Third World. Rifaat as Egyptian feminist has the same role in confirming the African women identity, throughout raising those women's consciousness about the importance of speaking their stories. Adebayo in *Tearing the Veil of Invisibility* (1996) states that:

Most African female writers create out of the necessity to tell their own stories in thin-veiled fictional forms; seeing themselves as representatives of African women and correctors of certain well-worn prejudices concerning African women. In short, they tell it as it is (Adebayo,1996, 39)

Florence Stratton in *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender* (2009) argues :

this penchant for deliberate promotion of patriarchal ascendancy by male writers often finds expression in their presentation of female characters as either ,mother Africa figures, symbols of a fecund and untainted tradition or prostitutes, figures of a corrupted modernity and through a set of close reading puts her figure on the pulse of masculine literary responses to colonization via the discourse of tradition (Stratton ,2009,191-192).

For whatever reason, writing about women's oppression has never intrigued or even occurred to many male authors, or their deprived rights in their works in an interview with Angelou Maya , Soyinka (1984) says:

But that is the role of women. I cannot enter into the mind and body of a woman. No, but women should write about themselves, why should they ask me to do that? (Soyinka,1984,13)

Rifaat in *Bahiyya's Eyes* clarifies male domination upon Egyptian women, and reflects their disfavor to the man domination, when she mentioned women's series of sufferance that reported from an old woman point of view to her daughter. Male domination is a harsh reality for women in the Third World. When Bahiyya thinks on the fact that she was born blind, she shows the deeply ingrained marginalizing behaviors of her community. "comes from the tears I shed since my mother first bore me and they ... found I was a girl" (Rifaat,1984, 57). She starts to recall her girlhood and related this with her brother treatment who was given discriminatory dealings only because he was a boy. As well as Bahiyya the condition of other girls in their village were not better, but her rejecting response according to this woman marginalization is different from other girls response that reflects through this statement "wasn't the same ,and the tears were always running down my cheeks" (Rifaat,1984, 8). Bahiyya clarifies, that the life of Third World women represents a series of tragic events. Including her disability to have enough freedom to control her destiny, to achieve her targets, or to get her rights as Third World women as Bahiyya says:

The fact is there is no joy for a girl in growing up, it's just one disaster after another till you end up an old woman who is good for nothing and who is lucky if she finds someone to feel sorry for her (Rifaat,1984, 8)

Another stance, that Rifaat uses to present the weakness of women when she offers Bahiyya, as a young girl who compulsorily circumcised because of the old

tradition that dominates her patriarchal community, Nnaemeka Obioma in *Bringing African Women into the Classroom: Rethinking Pedagogy and Epistemology* (2007) says that "Abuse of the female body is global, and should be studied and interpreted within the context of oppressive conditions under patriarchy (Obioma, 2007, 575).

woman marginalization appears upon Bahiyya's persisted especially, when her father obliged her to get marry from a man she never like him. She argues, "who was I to say I wanted this man and not that man" (Rifaat, 1984, 10). Marriage has been seen here, as another aspect of patriarchal marginalization, when her father's suppressive influence has been replaced by that of her spouse. This stance makes Bahiyya realizes that her life specified to serve the man's ambition with the complete marginalization to her role in her community, Emecheta's in *The Slave Girl* (1977) seated thoughts:

Every woman, whether slave or free belonged to some male. At birth, you were owned by your people, and when you were sold you belonged to a new master; when you grew up your new master would control you (Emecheta, 1977, 167)

Rifaat asserts that the woman's position in the Third World community associated with household chores; she settles in a closeted world where she expected to be speechless, and manageable constantly man's service. Rifaat throughout Bahiyya's speechless personage enable to create an image about woman's thinking that associates with directness and reasonable perception, that sticks in reader's mind after reading and examining women's images of marginalization in the Third World community. This image can be noticed through arranged marriage of Bahiyya, when there are no common understanding between husband and wife before marriage; the

sensations and wishes of the latest are barely take into consideration by another partner. Through her speechless protesting woman personages, Rifaat emphasizes that love, respect and familiarity should be the basis of any marital relationship, and their husbands should fulfill their wives emotional needs. Thus, through this speechless stance, Rifaat shows how the women in the Third World employed their speechless as well as their speaking as a tool of resistance against their emotional anguish which represents another aspect of their woman marginalization.

Salti, in *Feminism and Religion in Rifaat's stories* (1991), commentes: "Alifa Rifaat can be considered one of the Arab feminists who promote an understanding of women that does not depart from Islam" (Salti, 1991,108). Rifaat, with her extensive understanding of the Quran, sent a message to the patriarchal community, urging them to interpret the text attentively and in a way that would secure and promote women's status in society, bringing their standing extremely near to that of males. In this respect, Cooke in his essay *Prisons: Egyptian women writers on Islam* (1988) argues

that Muslim women speak for all Muslim women when they criticise Islamic history or perspectives, since it is the right of all women to enjoy equality and justice with men in a just society. Islamic feminism is not "an identity so much as it is an approach and determination for achieving fairness and equality for Muslim women (Cooke, 1988, 61)

Cooke invites Arabic women in the Third World to examine closely the main basics of Islam, what is "meant to have a different dual commitment: on one hand, related with deep faith and on the other hand, to seek women's rights both inside the home and outside it" (Cooke, 1988,59). Rifaat as a novelist belonging to that group of Arab feminists who do not stray from Islam, invites the Arabian women in the

Third World, to employ the principles of Islam, based on the foundations of equality and fairness between man and woman, to confirm their identity and prove their rights as a marginalized woman in a male domination community. At the same time, Rifaat's wants to confirm the Arabian women in the Third World are not idiot impersonator of Western or colonizer manners, but they are emphasizing on women's functions including their religious-limits of their communities. Johnson-Davies in Alifa Rifaat's *Distant View of a Minaret and Other Stories* (1983) points out " Rifaat's uprising is only an opposition to some incorrect understandings that have developed and gone unchallenged throughout time" (Rifaat, 1983, viii). Rifaat confirms woman ability to draw obvious difference in her mind between God's volition and men's volition. She never meant to get close from atheism, but she reviewing the traditional man's role in the Third World Arab communities. Rifaat's female characters recite the litany, use religious terminology, and recall the phrases of prayer and the name of Allah in a very overt manner, just as the calls to prayer emanating from mosques are quite apparent.

Rifaat through her Third World woman personage, presents women's main problems, wishes, desires and disadvantageous life conditions in their third world community, because of her widowhood, and marginalization by man of their family or community, N. Nkealah in *Reconciling Arabo-Islamic culture and feminist consciousness in North African women's writing* (2008), argues "The women of Rifaat passively conform to socially acceptable standards of marital and sexual conduct." (Nkealah,2008,25). Rifaat's woman marginalization norms that represented by domestic violence that married women faced from their husbands, the dictate manner that all primary decisions in household should take by men, also women's activities that depend on man approval....etc

Modernistic Aspects in *Pillars of Salt* and *Bahiyya's Eyes*

Faqir produces the technique depend on dividing or fragmenting the time of narration. This technique is discussed by Ruth Page in her paper "*Gender*" (2007) where she considers "The use of break impact of time as a replacement strategy to man-dominated narrative structures and viewed as an instrument of emancipation for women writers against male marginalization." (Page, 2007,199), Faqir exercises this technique through her women protagonists as a mean of liberating Maha and Um Saad from their patriarchal marginalization discourse. She repeats the plot structure as a narrative climaxes more than one time, this technique achieves to liberate their image, when they tell their version. Thus, when they express about their old experiences to one another which that associated with their unfortunate past, they recounted their past stances and revived those stances to life again; this technique of narration grants them opportunity for feelings rest.

In a likely manner, Rifaat also has her unique linguistic technique that improves her situation as a Third World woman, according to Salti in *Feminism and religion in Alifa Rifaat's short stories* (1991) argues that Rifaat have

a unique style and outlook on life which earned her a place in Arab Literature not only as a feminist, but also one of those new writers who are slowly moving away from the eloquent yet occasionally alienating classical Arabic, and towards a language that can be understood more easily by Arab readers. Her linguistic contribution, her courage to write about things that need to be discussed yet are often left unspoken, and her realistic and genuine style have done much to improve the situation of Arab women as a whole, and have given a boost to an already growing feminist movement in Egypt and the Arab World (Salti,1991, 112)

Rifaat uses a colloquial language, idioms, also statement instead writing in traditional English language. This language strategy enables her to insert and adds a realistic literary characteristic that contributes to show Egyptian and Arabic traditions to her stories, Jorn Seymour in *Cultural criticism in Egyptian women's writing* (2011) argues "A female perspective is elevated and supported through the alternating use of informal and conventional language in the story and conversation" (Seymour,2011, 149). Through this technique of writing Rifaat reflects women's injustice is simply back to woman marginalization system that helps to create:

A complex critical discourse that illuminates how gender ideologies combine with political oppression and a host of economic issues to constrain the lives of women, to drive them to eccentricity, or an alienated point of view (Seymour,2011, 149)

Rifaat's women protagonists reflect the condition of The Third world within range of stances that have great influence on their social position in their families and their communities. Rifaat's linguistic technique of writing that associates with the clear use of Arabian's daily language of compliment and gratitude to Allah, this manner reflects the religious nature of the Arabian woman and her pride of her religion, which strengthen her position in society. For example, the novel opens with the statement "we praise him and thank him for his favor for whatever he decides" (Rifaat,1997,5), also Bahiyya always uses religious manifestations such as: "Allah's will", "Allah's hands", "Allah have mercy on her", "Allah forgive me", and "Allah bless you". These manifestations not real litany as much as they are traditional manners of utterance, which reflect religious tendencies rooted in Arabian women's personality. Rifaat's women protagonists in the midst of their oppression holding on the strong religious convictions that inherited from their Arabian roots.

Thus Rifaat's through autobiographical writing of her women protagonists that symbolize to their voice, she can find a mean of survival to those women and enable them to confirm their identity. There are literate characters among them and there are also illiterate ones. These characters represent a range of socioeconomic statuses. Then the women in the third world should destroy the restrictions of patriarchal community by breaking their silence and regains her important place in her male dominated community. The idea speech or expression of has the same significance of writing, because it associates with the raising of awareness and forming a distinct resistance technique through literary system. Wherefore, Rifaat creates two stories one inside the others to give Bahiyya a sound that enable Bahiyya to tell her old experiance to her daughter; this technique of narrating enables Bahiyya to send reflected awareness message for new generations on a personal level as well as on a public level. Hélèn Cixous encourages women to respond to patriarchal culture via writing.

Don't allow anybody or anything prevent you from writing—not other people, not stupid capitalist devices, not even yourself. Women need to express themselves via writing because they have common experiences that need to be acknowledged. (Cixous ,313)

According to Cixous Bahiyya distressed by her terrible experiments, she tells her young daughter her personal narrative as a manifestation of her illness, as Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) calls “Habitual reiteration”, Bahiyya has suffered psychologically and experienced physical assault from various patriarchal border controls, such as circumcision and compelled wedding (Freud, 1920,144), so she decides to handle her privacy by telling what happened in this way in order to safeguard the next generation of women from the real recurred marginalisation of the preceding generations, which she represents with her young daughter.

This point of view reflects Bahiyya's strong personality, that enables her to destroy and resist misshapen values of her community, unlike other women attitudes who could not try to resist their marginalization that imposed on them by their patriarchal community. Then the readers can discover Bahiyya's moment of realization when she decides to produce a revolutionary discourse that aims to change the third world women's reality.

Juliet Mitchell in "*Psychoanalysis and Feminism*" (1974) believes that "It is possible for women to maintain their sense of femininity while participating in egocentric discourse". (Mitchell, 1974, 149) Women must speak out about their subordination in order to counter men's patriarchal rhetoric, and the feminist call to alter the distorted patriarchal system is a crucial part of this. In her book, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center* (1984) Bell hooks says that:

Individuals who fight for the eradication of sexism without supporting struggles to end racism or classism undermine their own efforts. Individuals who fight for the eradication of racism or classism while supporting sexist oppression are helping to maintain the cultural basis of all forms of group oppression (Hook, 1984,39)

Bahiyya fights against being subservient in her patriarchal community; as she matures, her vision aligns with the growing wisdom she's acquired about her reality, and she decides in a flash of insight to challenge the patriarchal dominance system as a whole by speaking from the perspective of her inner daughter and reawakening the feminine consciousness dormant there. In telling her tale to her daughter, she hoped to spark a conversation that generation of women would help break down patriarchal norms and create new ones. Bahiyya realizes that she has lost her own existence due to the patriarchal constraints of her community.

Conclusion

This research discusses the woman marginalization in Egyptian and Jordanian culture that practiced upon the Third World women. This research shows the two novelists Fadia Fakir and Alifa Rifaat fighting against the male domination in Jordanian and Egyptian communities, because their communities have suffered from male domination that marginalized them and represented women as a second class citizen, despite variations between the two nations.

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