International Research Journal of Social sciences and Humanities, Vol.:03, Issue: 01,Jan-June,2024
PP:89-104

OPEN ACCESS
IRJSSH
ISSN (Online): 2959-1392
ISSN (Print): 2959-2887
www. irjssh.com

SHROUDED REALITIES: EXPLORING THE VEIL AS A SYMBOL OF OPPRESSION IN FADIA FAQIR'S WILLOW TREES DON'T WEEP

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores Fadia Faqir's portrayal of veil, in Willow Trees Don't Weep, as a powerful tool of oppression in the Muslim world, drawing on the theoretical insights of Dabashi's views as articulated in Brown Skin, White Masks. The study analyzes the novel's multilayered portrayal of the veil through thematic analysis, revealing its symbolic significance as a tool of patriarchal control. The study reveals how the use of the veil as a tool for maintaining gender hierarchies and exercising power and Dabashi's (2011) idea of native informer relate to Faqir's representation of veil. Through close examination of the narrative in which the veil is employed as an instrument of oppression, this study adds to a deeper comprehension of the relationships between gender and power roles in Muslim societies. The study also critically examines the possible outcome of Faqir's narrative decisions, particularly the way in which the veil is portrayed as a tool of oppression used by men. It argues that such portrayal on part of native informers accentuates Western misconceptions about the alleged oppression of women in Muslim societies. The study's conclusion shows that Fadia Faqir's portrayal of veil in Willow Trees Don't Weep supports the popular prejudices prevalent in the West regarding Muslim women, calling for a deeper understanding of Muslim women's experiences.

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Keywords. *Muslim Women, Representation, Stereotypes, Veil Dabashi's.*

Introduction

The veil is a delicate symbol that has become deeply embedded in Muslim nations' religious and cultural structure. It has long been the focus of academic research and creative investigation. In this regard, Willow Trees Don't Weep (2014) by Fadia Faqir provides an appropriate narrative that portrays the veil as a powerful symbol of tyranny, subjugation, and patriarchal oppression in the Muslim communities. Using theoretical insights of Hamid Dabashi, as presented in Brown Skin, White Masks (2011), this paper aims to dig deep into the ideology incorporated within Faqir's portrayal of the veil.

The main objective of this study is to examine Faqir's portrayal of the veil as a tool of oppression and control by patriarchy in Muslim countries. Simultaneously, this paper explores the role of native informers in the perpetuation of Western stereotypes regarding Muslim women. Through thematic analysis of Willow Trees Don't Weep, this study aims to investigate the propagation of a specific ideology through symbolic representation of the veil and its function in upholding gender norms. This study attempts to contribute to a fuller understanding of relationship between gender and power in Muslim societies by analyzing how Dabashi's (2011) concept of the "native informer" and the veil as a tool of exercising power intersect with Faqir's narrative. The following research questions, which have been carefully structured to meet the objectives of this study, serve as the basis for this study:

1. *How does Fadia Faqir portray the veil as a symbol of oppression in Willow Trees Don't Weep, and to what extent does this portrayal support prevailing Western stereotypes about Muslim women?*
2. *How does Fadia Faqir's narrative in Willow Trees Don't Weep strive to portray tyrant patriarchal subjugation through the representation of the veil?*

Through critical examination of these issues, the paper sheds light on Fadia Faqir's dual role as a Muslim woman writer who acts as a "mouthpiece" for Western stance about Muslim women while operating in both Islamic and Western contexts. Faqir's authorial voice as a native informer and its implications within broader discourses on gender, power, and representation has been expressed by her portrayal of the veil as a barrier to Muslim women's development. This paper explores the difficulties and conflicts that come with Faqir's position as a Muslim woman native informer speaking to Western audiences by examining how she manages her dual nature while negotiating with the depiction of veil.

Born in 1956 in Amman, Faqir received her education in both Jordan and England. Fadia Faqir, a British-Jordanian novelist, is presently employed as a professor in England. Her work Willow Trees Don't Weep, published in 2013, is an example of how she embraces Western prejudices about Arabs and Muslims. Sarnou (2017) points out that Faqir's writings have become more well-known in the West as a result of a growing desire to understand the "Others" who are perceived as a threat to the West. Majed (2015) adds that Faqir makes an effort to incorporate contemporary issues that have an impact on diasporic literature, such terrorism and Islam, into her writing. The story is told from two different points of view. The first perspective comes from Najwa, an Arab girl who, after the death of her mother, goes in search of her father. The second point of view comes from Omar Rahman, Najwa's father, whom his friend Hani convinced to enlist in the Afghan war. There, he was brainwashed and instructed to use an explosive belt as a suicide bomber. Faqir's this work, which describes an imagined journey as a threat to the West, has influenced both foreign and Arabic-language writers. Examining the works that show how Muslims are portrayed by Faqir, Bouteraa (2019) sheds light on the Arab World's long struggle for freedom from tyrannical hands, foreign conquerors, and internal autocrats. It is more difficult for Arab women to overcome additional societal and cultural barriers in this struggle. This ideology has impacted many Arab female writers, and Faqir's work shows the wide-ranging effect of this ideology. The historical and political setting of the novel is quite instructive. Rather than the foreign troops, Faqir depicts Muslim men as terrorists because of the way they treat women.

In this study the researcher traverses the challenging conditions of an author who crosses multiple cultural and ideological worlds. Dabashi's (2011) concept of the Native Informer, particularly when it relates to Faqir, sheds light on the problem of individuals who, following their immigration to Western societies, find themselves in a state of unstable equilibrium between their new and native lands. Then they are left with no choice for their survival and wellbeing other than embracing Western ideology. Dabashi (2011) argues that these kind of writers, classified as native informers, are the facilitators for the imperialism to replace "black demon with brown one" and "a Jew with a Muslim" (Dabashi, 2011, 36). Taking about Muslim native informers Dabashi (2011) says they elevate foreign culture by showing their own culture as primitive and backward. They are "self-loathing Muslims". In this way Muslim native informers have portrayed Muslims and Islam as major threat to the elevated Western ideals.

The typical native informers, born and raised in places such as Iran, Lebanon, Somalia, and Pakistan, move to Europe and/ or the United States for

their higher education. They may come from modest or opulent backgrounds; their financial means may be either inherited, the result of advantageous marriage, or payment for services to their American employers. They rarely hold a stable job with professional accountability, remaining rather on the professional margins of the society whose interests they serve. (Dabashi, 2011, p.15)

So Faqir offers Western audiences a glimpse into the complexities and challenges the masses face within the framework of her home culture, shedding light on issues like terrorism, extremism, and the oppression of women in several countries with a majority of Muslims. This perspective is consistent with Dabashi's (2011) theory of native informers, who, in an effort to gain acceptance and success in the West, exaggerate the shortcomings or challenges of their home cultures. Simultaneously, they don't feel at home in the country they have adopted to sell their services. These native informers start looking at their people from the perspective of their imperial masters. "They can feign authority while telling their conquerors not what they need to know but what they want to hear" (Dabashi, 2011, p. 16). In return of these services rendered to them, American and European liberals call them "voices of dissent" (p. 16). When these native informers synchronize themselves with the Islamophobic conditions of their new homes, they are exposed to "simultaneously acknowledging and denying their Muslim origins" (p. 16).

Literature Review

Alhwayan & Awajan (2023) are of the view that Willow Trees Don't Weep and DeLillo's Falling Man are similar. According to Alhwayan & Awajan (2023), Faqir has portrayed a stereotypically terroristic image of Muslims in her work by taking a Western viewpoint on Islam and Muslims. DeLillo's representation of Muslims resembles with that of Faqir which testifies that Faqir is "telling her conquerors not what they need to know but what they want to hear from her" (Dabashi, 2011). Several Muslim writers, according to Alhwayan & Awajan (2023), challenged the misconceptions that Westerners perpetuated about Islam and Muslims in their works. However, "unfortunately, some Arab Muslim writers have not followed this trend; instead they have defended these stereotypes of Islam and Muslims by highlighting them in their writings mostly to simply increase the number of Western readers and, thus, gain popularity" (p. 181).

Bamia (1991) examines "Muslim women argue that Islam guaranteed women's rights of which they have been deprived because of customs and traditions that are imposed in the name of religion" (p. xxvi). Faqir's attempts in Willow Trees Don't Weep to challenge the limitations Islam places on women by demonstrating to the world that Arab Muslims have turned secular. According to

Sarnou (2017), a Muslim woman's headscarf and veil can symbolize her freedom from social standards and religious restrictions or her oppression. Sarnou (2017) goes on to say that the protagonist, Najwa, is caught between two extremes. Her father's religious extremism and her mother's complete atheism are two opposing viewpoints. As Sarnou (2017) assesses:

In her homeland, Amman, Najwa is different from many other girls of Amman because she does not wear the headscarf that represents hijab, a religious garment, in many Muslim countries. However, when she travels to Afghanistan to trace her father, Najwa meets women wearing the burqaa, a head-to-toe veil. This might be an unexpected re-consideration of this garment as a symbol of freedom because she met veiled women who are self-determined and emancipated from within (Sarnou, 2017, p. 155).

Scott (2007) stats "The West has long encouraged the secularization of the East" (ix). One component of this secularization process, according to Scott and many other critics of the West, is the denigration of Muslim women's headscarves and veils. Things progressed to the point where Muslim women were forced to wear the headscarf, which is known as the hijab in Muslim culture. In addition, Rosida & Molatia (2016) contend that despite coming from an Islamic family, Najwa does not observe pardaa or adhere to religious rituals, in contrast to other Jordanian women. According to Davary (2009) "Veiled woman is cultural and ideological representation" of Muslim women. Rosida & Molatia (2016) state that Najwa's physical appearance and habits set her apart from other individuals in her surroundings (p. 43).

According to Rosida & Molatia (2016), Najwa, the main character in Willow Trees Don't Weep, undergoes a religious retraining. She is forbidden by her mother, a secular lady, to use a veil covering her face. Her mother forbids her from participating in other religious rites. "Najwa finds herself in a predicament where her only choice is to reject religious customs and adhere to the social mores of the communities she would eventually relocate to" (p. 47). Aladylah (2015) evaluates that Najwa wants to live a new life; the kind of life she has seen in London. A life which is away from fundamentalism, religious extremism and terrorism, a life which is peaceful. At the end, when she reaches England "She feels as if she finds herself reborn" (p. 229).

The research conducted by Apriliani (2017) on how the hijab is portrayed in Willow Trees Don't Weep is quite crucial. Mernissi (1991) is of the view "The word hijab is mentioned only seven times in the Qur'an,"(p. 96). Fadia Faqir backed this idea in Willow Trees Don't Weep adhering to the point of view of Western writers who have used the hijab as a justification to draw attention to the

marginalization of Muslim women in their portrayals. According to Apriliani (2017) in the Western countries veil is considered as a symbol of backwardness and a "veiled woman is taken as an object of gender oppression" (Apriliani, 2017, p3).

Doctoral candidates at Kharazami University in Tehran, Amjad & Albusalih (2020), have assessed Willow Trees Don't Weep from a variety of perspectives. Their analysis shows that through the representation of characters in her book, Faqir attempted to balance the two extremes, liberalism and fundamentalism. Over the course of the story, Najwa finds herself divided between her mother's secular views and her father Omer Rehman's decision to join an Islamist terrorist group in Afghanistan. In her quest to uncover the truth, she succumbs to hybridity. According to Jahamah (2021), Faqir's dual cultural ties to the West and the Arab world give her the "knowledge" and advantage needed to address pressing issues pertaining to migration, patriarchy, and Muslim Arab women. In the Third World, neo-imperialism is a reality that is justified by this kind of depiction. The United States of America launched "The War on Terror" against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, but it was not without neo-imperialist goals.

In their study on Willow Trees Don't Weep Joudeh & Awad (2019) concentrated on the characters' clothing indicators. They concluded that Faqir had a purpose when she improvised the outfit marks, especially for her female characters. She aims to remove Arab women from the complexities of their traditional surroundings and bring them into line with the West. The biggest thing standing in her way is the way she dresses – her pardaa and hajab. Sourav Paul and Shri Krishan Rai's book review of Willow Trees Don't Weep was released in the Asian Journal of Woman Studies in 2020. Paul & Rai (2020) contend that Faqir's work Willow Trees Don't Weep clarifies the situation of Muslim women in states that practice Islam. They claim that Willow Trees Don't Weep is a criticism on the "socially sanctioned abuse of womanhood in an Islamic State" (p. 132). According to their perspective, women in the Muslim world are viewed as trash because they are abused, sexually and socially exploited, and ultimately subjugated.

According to Elsherif (2021), Arab Anglophone literature underwent a transformation during the 9/11 attacks and gained access to the Modern European world. The writings of Arabian writers greatly drew attention from the West, which was interested in learning more about their civilization. Elsherif (2021) contends that authors such as Fadia Faqir aimed to advance neo-Orientalist perspectives regarding Islam and the Arab Muslim world, rather than portraying the real Arab Muslim reality. This image tends to highlight to the

West how oppressed and stifled Muslim women are in a culture ruled by men, and how they have no option. According to Ikram Elsherif's assessment, "Faqir is preoccupied with problems of gender and patriarchy" (Alsherif, 2021, p. 28).

Though there is a wealth of prior study on similar topics, none has specifically looked into Willow Trees Don't Weep in relation to how the veil is portrayed, particularly in terms of how it contributes to the perpetuation of Western preconceptions about Muslim women. Moreover, scant consideration has been given to assessing Fadia Faqir's role in the story as a native informer. This paper aims to close this gap by offering a thorough analysis of how Faqir depicts the veil and how it may contribute to the maintenance of Western stereotypes. This study intends to expand understanding of the complex processes at play inside Faqir's narrative by addressing these gaps in the literature.

A Brief Critical Trajectory of the (Muslim) Veil

Nothing is more synonymous with "the Muslim woman" than the "veil," and this is true both in communities and nations where the predominant population is Muslim as well as in mainstream Western culture. The phenomenon has a history and is not brand-new. Ahmed (1992) links the colonial era, when prominent misogynists like Lord Cromer (then-British-consul general Evelyn Baring) contended, to the European obsession with the veil. Ahmed (1992) argued "The veil and segregation were manifest signs of female oppression in Islam and were responsible for the 'backwardness' of Muslim societies" (p. 152). He further observes that the only way left for the Muslim communities "to move advance on the path of civilization" was to shake off "these intrinsic practices of Islam" (p. 43). However, Kahf (1999) contends that the argument against the veil dates back further. She tracks the image of the oppressed Muslim woman centered on the veil and seclusion back to the seventeenth century in her study of how Muslim women are portrayed in European literature from the medieval to the early modern era. Although she acknowledges that colonialism contributed to its integration, she views it more as the essential negative context which in eighteenth century helped shape the European idea of "middle-class female domesticity" (p. 7).

Mabro (1996) also connects European conceptions of gender roles with the way that the "Oriental woman" is perceived: The male, public realm of alienated labor and the feminine, private realm of selfless, nurturing, non-alienated labor were in contradiction to each other, and this served as the foundation for the bourgeois ideology that was emerging. Enforcing the concepts of monogamous marriage and women as submissive sexual creatures was essential to the entire system. The entire foundation of Western family life would have been shattered if harem residents had been portrayed as regular women who took care of their families and maintained the home, just like women did in Europe. Thus, centuries

before the European colonial era, there was already a desire to conquer the Muslim world and a connection between women and culture in Europe, using the transformation of Muslim women into its own image as a metaphor. Hoodfar (1997) quotes later writers who, in line with today's prejudices, characterize Muslim women as "either freely mobile, morally deficient because of their skimpy clothes, or dominant characters in the family (p. 254-255).

It is evident from the development of the Muslim woman from strong lady to weak victim that representations are constructs that are dependent on space, time, and culture and are inextricably linked to questions of political and economic hegemony. The Muslim lady became a damsel in distress as a result of the subjection of the Muslim world, but she still needed to be saved. The essential visual "proof" of "the inherently oppressive and unfree nature of the entire tradition of Islam and Oriental cultures," which was a significant player in this awful game, was the veil (Yeğenoğlu 1998, p. 99). Thus, while Kahf (1999) is right that a number of factors contributed to Europe's fixation with the veil in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the colonial era and Orientalism, which followed, represent a turning point in the history of how the veil was viewed and portrayed in both the East and the West. Over time, the veil grew to represent something far bigger than women's struggles: the gap that cannot be crossed between the two worlds. Veiling supported the idea of Europe's "civilizing mission" by symbolizing cultural inferiority and unveiling, modernity, progress, and emancipation, or, in other words, European culture. This is accurate when considering both French and British colonization.

In her paper on French Algeria, Clancy-Smith (1998) charts the development of the French conception of their own superiority over the "natives." At first, it was predicated on political institutions and technological superiority. It was predicated on denigration of Islam, particularly political Islam, after 1830. "The French then utilized the image of the Muslim woman and the veil to justify their occupation of Muslim countries once they had total authority over the country and had instituted civilian rule" (154).

The 20th century saw the shift from anti-veil rhetoric to anti-veil activism. Fanon (1959) describes the campaign as unconcerned with the growth of Algeria or its women, but rather with the amazing mobilization of resources in "French-occupied Algeria to coerce women into uncovering" (p. 59). He maintains that the campaign established a "precise political doctrine," highlighting that the French were aware that Algerian culture viewed the veil as "the symbol of the status of the Algerian woman," possessing a matriarchal essence behind the outward patriarchy (Fanon 1959, p. 74). He maintains that a "precise political doctrine"

was created during the campaign. Based on the notion that women embody the essence of a society, it served as a tool for subjugation: "Being able to win a woman over to foreign ideals and liberate her from her position, while also gaining actual control over men and a useful way to destroy Algerian values" (p. 75).

Ironically, then, it was in response to the West that the veil initially emerged as a sign of primitive culture and political opposition. It came to define the woman's body—whether it was visible or hidden—as the location of opposing cultures, visually marking the limits of colonial control. Every veiled woman showed the resilience of cultural identity and the reluctance to submit to what Fanon refers to as the "rape of the colonizer," whereas every uncovered woman showed the triumph of foreign dominance (Fanon 1959, p. 76). Ahmed (1992) also links "the terms set in the first place by the colonizers" (p. 49) to the new meaning of the veil. The idea of the "veil as resistance" was not unique to Algeria. It can be found in numerous situations when wearing a veil was discouraged or prohibited. It also persists today, influencing attitudes about the veil as well as laws, as evidenced by the prohibition of wearing veils in the academic institutions of France, Tunisia, and Turkey.

Analysis of Willow Trees Don't Weep

Fadia Faqir depicts the journey of Najwa, a girl from the Middle East, as seen through the eyes of Europe. Throughout the story, Faqir pays close attention to and often exaggerates the deeply rooted patriarchal norms that exist in countries where the overwhelming population is Muslim. Women throughout Najwa's travels from Amman to Pakistan and finally Afghanistan are depicted as what Spivak (1999) would refer to as "subalterns." The story of Faqir emphasizes the marginalization and subjugation of women while misrepresenting their customs and cultural practices, which are sometimes depicted in ways that may be interpreted as ridiculing. The extreme disparity between women's lives in multiple cultural situations is a central theme in Faqir's narrative. The comparison of lives of the women living in the West and Middle East draws attention to the disparities in gender roles and possibilities across different contexts, as well as the challenges faced by Muslim veiled women living in patriarchal communities. Faqir uses this portrayal of Muslim women to reinforce the stereotypes about Muslim women that are widely held in the West. Faqir paints an image of Muslim women living in nations where they frequently face restrictions on their freedoms and run across cultural norms that make it difficult for them to pursue lives that are true to their own desires. Najwa says "Although I was free to breath, walk, work, I felt like a prisoner, condemned to my life" (p. 5).

Fadia Faqir portrays the male-dominated Amman society as being strict, cold-blooded, and harsh—particularly when it comes to the way the community

responds to the death of Raneen, Najwa's mother. Because of her secular attitude towards life and defiance of religious norms such as wearing veil and covering head, Raneen is seen with uneasiness and contempt in the society, a feeling that persisted even after her death. On account of her liberal approach towards life, the community cannot reconcile with this even after the death of Raneen. "Normally mourners gather for a meal after the funeral, but they all found excuses and vanished" (p. 5). So the portrayal of the Muslim Women as traditional and unreceptive to change highlights the lack of empathy in the culture for those who challenge established norms. Through this narrative choice, Faqir conveys the concept that Muslim communities in the Middle East are frequently hesitant to adopt more liberal perspectives particularly related to women.

Faqir highlights the backward and unwelcoming aspect of the Muslim community, reinforcing a Eurocentric perspective of Muslim women. The statement "No male guardian, no honor, no status in this neighborhood" (p. 5) showcases the deeply imprinted patriarchal customs in the Muslim communities. It suggests that having a male guardian is necessary for a woman to maintain her honor and standing in society. This portrayal aims to highlight how little choice, freedom, and independence women have in such a situation and to criticize how strictly these social norms are upheld. . Faqir attempts to prompt the readers to consider the difficulties experienced by Muslim women who strive for independence and go against these social norms:

You know how it's in Amman and particularly in this neighborhood. Chaste women don't live on their own. Tongues will wag. You'll be ostracized, habibti. And you have no relatives. As they say, "Better a man's shadow than that of a wall (p. 6).

Faqir, a Muslim woman herself, portrays the veil as a representation of ignorance and rigid religious and patriarchal norms. She portrays veiled women negatively throughout the story, whether they are in Amman, Pakistan, or Afghanistan. She tries to convey to the readers that Najwa, a "good" Muslim in the eyes of the Eurocentric world, is compelled to follow these rigid religious and patriarchal rules. "I wrapped myself in chador and covered my hair" (p. 118). For some women, wearing veil is a deeply personal and spiritual choice that represents their modesty and commitment to their religion. Others might be compelled to adopt it due to social or familial conditions. Faqir appears to emphasize the latter element more in her narrative, citing situations in which women are forced to wear the veil against their will. By bringing up these instances, Faqir is criticizing the oppressive aspects of patriarchal hierarchies in Muslim societies. She seems to be suggesting that these strict norms of behavior and clothing,

symbolized by the veil, are something that women like Najwa are compelled to follow. It's crucial to remember that Muslim women wear the veil for different reasons; many do so voluntarily as a symbol of their religious devotion. By emphasizing the negative aspects, Faqir contributes to the maintenance of stereotypes regarding the choices Muslim women make regarding their religious attire.

"The women flocked in burqas in all the colors of the rainbow. They flung them off as soon as they stepped in. Happy to have them in her house, Gulnar embraced and welcomed them" (p. 137). Through this portrayal, it appears that women may follow such activities due to social pressure, rather than a genuine religious commitment. This passage also highlights a private meeting amongst women, so it's possible that their choice to remove their burqas in this context is not representative of how they conduct themselves in public. Instead of challenging more broad social standards, Faqir purposefully endorses the idea that women may only find freedom in intimate settings by focusing on this one particular instance. Throughout the narrative, Faqir has been seen scolding Muslim women for donning veils.

By highlighting aspects of the burqa that can seem abnormal or unfamiliar to a reader from the West, Faqir intends to promote the ideology on cultural differences and prevailing stereotypes about the veiling of Muslim women. "A thin, tall woman walked in, her orange burqa trailing behind her" (p. 139). Faqir's description of burqa can be interpreted as an attempt to crticize or ridicule the appearance of the burqa. Using phrases like "trailing behind her," Faqir highlights the burqa's physical characteristics in a way that may come out as ridiculous and bothersome or heavy. As a native informer, Faqir's purpose of such portrayal of veil is to support the Westerners' beliefs that the burqa is a symbol of oppression and backwardness.

An opposing perspective on Faqir's portrayal of veiled women and the veil itself can be found in the dialogue between Ashraf and Amani in Willow Trees Don't Weep. This conversation demonstrates Ashraf's character as someone who upholds traditional ideas of modesty and gender segregation, as well as the tension between different interpretations of Islamic customs and standards. One way to examine Ashraf's character is through the lens of Mamdani's (2004) concept of the "bad Muslim." Ashraf's remark to Amani regarding Najwa's appearance – specifically, that she was not wearing veil – emphasizes his devotion to the conventional and conservative notions of modesty. . He advises Amani regarding Najwa that "She should not run out like that, without a veil. Men around here are not used to seeing a women's hair" (p. 151). This perspective

aligns with a more literal interpretation of Islamic clothing codes, which dictate that women cover their faces to maintain modesty and prevent men from becoming distracted or enticed. Faqir makes another attempt to imply that Muslim women in communities where men predominate lack freedom and choice through this representation. Faqir exaggerates and distorts the perception of Muslim women, regardless of whether they are from her own nation or Pakistan or Afghanistan.

Faqir distorts the facts related to behavior of Muslim men with women to the extent that she presents women as commodities in the hands of Muslim men. Ashraf, stationed at war camp, advises Najwa "Lower your eyes! Don't let men see the color of your irises! It fans the embers in their hearts" (p. 133). Since Ashraf is a terrorist and an extremist with no connection to Islam, he can never be the representative figure for Muslim men. Nevertheless, Faqir wishes to mock the attitude of all Muslims toward women by portraying Ashraf as a representative figure. In fact, Fadia Faqir's interpretation of Ashraf's advice to Najwa is a distortion of reality and contributes to the perpetuation of stereotypes about Muslim men and their treatment of women.

I clapped with wonder. The wind ruffled the surface and its blueness was emphasized by the bare surroundings. Instead of feeling free as I looked at the vast plain, lake and rivers, my chest tightened and my face twitched: a prisoner watching through bars the world outside (p. 104).

Najwa's comment that she felt like a prisoner forced to stare out through bars paints a vivid picture of her sense of restriction, captivity, and confinement in her new surroundings. By painting Afghanistan in this way, Faqir highlights the tight cultural constraints and patriarchal norms that women in Afghan communities must contend with. This image aligns with Dabashi's (2011) perspective that native informers exploit the minor deficiencies of their countries and exaggerate these shortcomings to secure personal benefits in the West. In an attempt to fit her narrative into a Western viewpoint, Faqir further mocks at the Muslim women who wear veils or observe pardaa. She uses the Muslim women who wear veils as a target for taunts in order to appease the Western audience. She portrays them in a way that makes them seem out of place in the contemporary, civilized society. As an illustration, Najwa notes:

A group of veiled women flocked into the cafe, arm in arm, chatting and laughing. This was supposed to be a secular country! My mother wouldn't have approved. 'The army of Allah has invaded Great Britain!' I was about to leave, but decided to stay and eavesdrop (p. 185).

Drawing attention to the differences between Muslim women's traditional

religious practices and a modern, secular society, Faqir portrays veiled women as "Allah's army" entering a Western country such as England. This portrayal can be read as sketch comedy, satire, or social commentary, and it prompts readers to consider how backwards Muslim women are and how they fail to live up to the standards of the developed world. Faqir employs irony to attack the rigid cultural norms that force Muslim women to cover their faces as well as the likely unease that some Westerners might feel when confronted by openly religious individuals. Faqir presents the appearance of veiled women in this way in order to question readers' assumptions and biases about religious garb and its acceptability in a secular society. The narrative choices made by Faqir reflect the biases and beliefs of some Western viewers who find it difficult to understand or accept cultural norms that differ from their own.

As Faqir's spokesperson, Najwa tries to portray herself as a "good Muslim" who defies Islamic law, wearing of veil and engages in a romantic and physical relationship with Andy. . "He slipped his hand through my shirt, cupped my breast and tweaked my nipple. Tremors of pleasure and pain rushed down to the center of my pelvic cavity, there, where all the nerves met" (p. 207). Faqir seeks to demonstrate that Muslim women are enslaved to their houses and are therefore eager to develop sexual relationships with males through this portrayal of Najwa. It's critical to recognize that Faqir appeals to Western assumptions and stereotypes about Muslim women by presenting his case from a Eurocentric standpoint. By portraying Najwa's thoughts about veil and actions as rebellious and transgressive, Faqir contributes to the stereotype that Muslim women are inherently repressed and subservient and must overcome their cultural and religious constraints in order to achieve independence.

Conclusion

To sum up, this research has offered a thorough examination of Fadia Faqir's book Willow Trees Don't Weep, with particular attention to how the veil has been portrayed as a symbol of oppression and how it perpetuates negative Western perceptions about Muslim women. This research has clarified the intricacies regarding portrayal of the veil and the consequences for the roles of women within Muslim societies through a blend of thematic analysis and interaction with Hamid Dabashi's concept of native informers. It is clear from the thematic analysis of Faqir's negative portrayal of the veil that the author purposefully creates a narrative that emphasizes the oppressive nature of social norms and patriarchal constraints that are common in societies with a majority of Muslims, particularly in the Middle East, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The narrative repeatedly highlights the veil as a representation of these repressive structures, emphasizing the many challenges and barriers that women encounter, frequently

attributing them to religious or cultural laws. Faqir emphasizes the veil's function as a patriarchal tool by depicting it, which reinforces the narrative that highlights how difficult and restricting these civilizations place on women.

Through her portrayal of veil, Faqir seems to appeal to the Western audience while criticizing her own cultural background. In doing so, Faqir intentionally contributes to the perpetuation of Eurocentric stereotypes by portraying Muslim women as repressed, constrained, psychologically disturbed, and unreceptive to Western ideas. Intentionally, Faqir helps to perpetuate false narratives about Muslim women's experiences by portraying them through a Western viewpoint. This representation not only distorts the realities of Muslim women's life, but it also serves to uphold the Western narrative that elevates its ideals. Therefore, Faqir's portrayal of Muslim women in regard to the veil ultimately serves to support and perpetuate harmful stereotypes and misrepresentations despite addressing key gender and power dynamics.

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