When Madness Becomes an Artistic Antechamber for Resistance

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Abstract ;(not more than 10 Lines)

This paper aims to explore the concept of madness in artistic writing. Fadia Faqir uses the trope of madness as an instrument of narrative in her novel Pillars of Salt 1996. She creates a discourse in the utterances of the storyteller that is juxtaposed to a counter discourse in the utterances of the female protagonist from confinement. Through this juxtaposition the reader could perceive the unreliability of the storyteller. Though the female protagonist, Maha, is considered as mad, it will be demonstrated, through this paper, that this madness is rather a madness of non conformity and not a mental illness. Maha's internment becomes a space for a counter discourse and her utterances a pretext to narrate proposing a reliable version of the story rather than a real state of unreason.

1. Introduction

There is no art for art's sake. Madness has been a recurrent theme used by artists in different disciplines to challenge societal norms or denounce injustice.

Madness is a very cinematic theme in Iranian Cinema. "It defies the logic of mainstream society." (Zeydabadi-Nejad, 2013, p.184). It has been used in Iranian Cinema before and after the 1979 revolution to express political views and "challenge in a unique way the dominant political discourses under the repressive regimes of pre- and post- revolution Iran." (Zeydabadi-Nejad, 2013, p.184) Madness, as a filmic theme, offers the opportunity to criticize the Iranian society though indirectly but without restriction.

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Madness has also been used in painting. Different artistic techniques, perspectives and color compositions were used by artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Fancisco de Goya or Edvard Munch to express the complexities of human mind and emotion.

Yet, madness is not limited to the visual arts, in literature and more precisely postcolonial literature, authors like Fadia Faqir utilizes madness as a central theme to express different political views in a society under dominant discourses, in the case of *Pillars of Salt (1996)*, the repressive regime is represented through the male discourse and the colonial/orientalist discourse.

Madness as a psychological disorder has always been considered as an important aspect while studying the colonised world and in this paper postcolonial literature. "It turns out that the darkness at the heart of the colonial experience may be a certain history of madness" (Clingman in Luangphinith, 2004, p. 59). This psychological disorder plays a pivotal role in the novel of the Jordanian writer Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* where madness becomes the female protagonist's space of negotiation and identity maintenance.

Fadia Faqir's representation of this mental illness joins Michel Foucault's understanding of madness. For him, it does not reside in an alternative to logic or reason but as a "methodology to review the definition of both." (Luangphinith, 2004, p. 79) The modern conception of mental illness is inspired from the Classical Age definition of madness. Michel Foucault compares the treatment of madness to that of leprosy in the middle ages. Both lepers and the mad were excluded from their society and confined in isolated houses that were designed more for separation from society than for cures. For him the Classical treatment through confinement was not practiced for therapeutic purposes because the mad people were not considered ill. (Cutting, 2012, p. 53-4)

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt* uses madness as a pretext to denounce the foreign conquest mirroring "the loss of the native integrity, [race] and gender exploitation done in the name of tradition, the alienation of the individual under such circumstances." (Luangphinith, 2004, p. 60)

Aspects of madness are depicted in many instances in the novel under different forms such as identity destruction, alienation, "unhomeliness", displacement, and also in a fractured narrative technique proposed by the author. It is a madness of non conformity rather than a mental illness.

2. **Aspects of Madness:**

It is through the female character Um Saad that the author depicts identity destruction that may engender a state of insanity. Um Saad is constantly wishing to move to another identity when she feels bad and disoriented (Faqir, 1996, p. 178). These repetitive references to identity resonate with the fact that madness and identity are often fused in colonial and post-colonial contexts.

The separation from her past results in such an acute grief that she obsessively rethinks and wonders about her identity. This recurrent questioning about identity refers to the loss of a culture due to the colonial intrusion imposing a cultural and racial hierarchy and also to the decimation of native culture in the colonial city of Amman.

Um Saad voices the Arab woman desire to move to another identity. She expresses a lassitude towards the role of daughter, mother and wife and a complete rejection of the imposed relegated role of co-wife, whereas Maha, the female protagonist, resists and negotiates her space through her narrative.

The British Doctor like the people of the village both intend to silence the female protagonist, Maha, using madness as a pretext to confine them in a madhouse. Their insanity marginalizes them. Once there, the regular visits of the British Doctor to Maha's and Um Saad's room are threatening and reflect the "cure" and "diagnosis" that fanon considers as a "political pacification":

> Because treatments for psychologically induced impotence […] and other behavioural disturbances coincide with the suppression of national liberation, Fanon has argued that curing such deviancy effectively destroys the roots of discontent and the "criminality" that encourages the desire for political insurrection. (Fanon, in Luangphinith, 2004, p. 71)

One of the features characterising an insane reducing him to animality[1] is described in Um Saad behaviour just before confinement. This very description serves as a justification of the British doctor treatment in the Asylum.

The unreasonable behaviour of Um Saad bears the paradoxical characteristics of madness as explained by Foucault where it "flows through the entire domain of unreason, connecting its two opposed banks: that of moral choice … and that of animal rage … Madness is, gathered into a single point, the whole of unreason: the guilty day and the innocent night." (ibid in Cutting, 2012, p. 59)

To express alienation Faqir produces a fractured narrative, with no linearity, shifting back and forth in place and time in order to express alienation. "She favors 'fracturing the narrative in order to create something," as she states in her interview with Claire Chambers: "more tragic and more beautiful than the whole, and perhaps it will capture a larger chunk of the truth if it's told from different perspective. […] The source of this may be The Arabian Nights, because it contains a changing narrative: you have one story, within a story, within a story, within a story. You don't have a resolution quickly, and perhaps I took something from that."(Chambers in Bibizadeh, 2012: 3)

The storyteller's narrative describing an apocalyptic scene by the end of the novel (Faqir, 1996, p. 225) joins Foucault's religious metaphor when he explains how madness was understood in the classical age placing it at the horizon of unreason: "What the Fall is to the diverse forms of sin, madness is to the other faces of unreason."(Ibid in Cutting, 2012, p.59)

A comment was made in the article written by Suyoufie and Hammad linking the song sung by children in the novel making reference to madness "Wizz, wiz-wizz, wiz / The bee has flown away." (Faqir, 1996: 218) to Ghada Samman's short story "Thirty Years of Bees" in *The Square Moon* translated by Issa Boutella (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1998), where the female protagonist's efforts and contribution to the successful career of her husband are completely ignored and led her towards madness, the narrator observes: "A woman is like a bee. For her giving is a secretion she is never thanked for." (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 1998, p. 143)

A fractured narrative is produced by the author as a creative technique to reflect the blurred framework madness is supposed to express in this literary writing. Faqir juxtaposes two versions of the same story narrated by two characters and narrators, the unreliable narrator the storyteller, and the reliable narrator Maha, creating, thus, a discourse and a counter-discourse. Through this narrative technique, Maha's madness becomes the necessary mental disorder to recover reason.

3. Discourse and Counter-Discourse:

Faqir's narrative juxtaposition of the storyteller's and Maha's version brings under light two positions. On the one hand, it demonstrates the orientalist representation[2] writing for the west about the "other" through which the storyteller contributes to the establishment of western authority and cultural difference. On the other hand, it provides the Bedouin woman with a voice to represent "the self" through Maha's counter-discourse and thus liberates her image from the mummified orientalist representation that is present through exoticism.

The storyteller's outsider narrative counters that of Maha's insider narrative. In her narrative, we distinguish two oppressions, the patriarchal authority oppression and the colonial one. The outsider reports distortedly, through his version of the same story, approximating colonial discourse. He also reflects the local social and religious authoritative discourse.

The narrative of Maha about her story could be regarded as a tentative of reintegrating "centrifugal material of the past and of memory into the fold of recognized continuity and identity."(Fludernick, 2007, p. 264) Maha's identity construction achieved through "the telling of her story" is a means to resist the otherness represented in the narrative of the storyteller. This otherness constitutes a threat to the image of Maha. Otherness[3] is present under different forms in the utterances of the storyteller. He describes Maha as a witch. (Faqir, 1996, p. 27) After every chapter narrated by Maha about her story, the storyteller gives an exoticised version of the same story. (Faqir, 1996, pp. 30, 59, 61, 166, 168, 170)

4. Maha's Narrative Against Exoticism:

An example of exoticism juxtaposed next to Maha's narrative is noticed through many references to the jinnee in bottles reminding the reader of *The Nights*[4] and uttered by the storyteller in what follows: "I cannot control the evil jinnee when he decides to leave his bulgy bottle" (Faqir, 1996, p. 103) Yet, this orientalising and exoticising element is immediately rewritten through the utterances of Maha removing the exotic reference from its context when she describes her tears in this passage: "Bitter cold tears, eager to escape their bulgy bottle" (Faqir, p. 163)

The same scenes in both versions, that of the storyteller and Maha describing the scenes of the spying gaze of the storyteller, are ambiguously depicted by the storyteller through "mirages, light, and shadows" (Faqir, 1996, p. 4) to pinpoint the credibility and reliability of Maha's precise and detailed description and to form an Arabo-Islamic womanist narrative to that constructed by an orientalist representation.

In addition to the double critique characterizing Faqir's Arabo Islamic womanism[5] in this novel we notice a "multiple critique" through many scenes and utterances in religious and family context[6].

5. Maha's Religious Counter-Discourse:

Sami al-Adjanibi or the storyteller is (mis)interpretating Islamic text in many instances. In addition to bear a post-colonial and post-oriantalist discourses this novel is a criticism to this religious misrepresentation and misinterpretation. This is highlighted in the fact that the storyteller does not even know how to pray and had to "imitate the Muslims when they bent their backs and bowed down" (Faqir, 1996: 28) considering this as "funny" (Faqir, 1996, p. 28). Through this character the writer expresses "her" Arabo-Islamic womanism, which is nothing but a "multiple criticism".

On the one hand, Faqir criticizes the (mis)understanding and (mis)representation of Islam through religious references in the storytellers narrative and make her English audience[7] feel comfortable to belong to a different religion feeling superior and "other". For example, when the storyteller utters: "one of the jinn soldiers, one of the goblins with strange powers" (Faqir, 1996, p. 1) This passage could be regarded as a "faithful English translation of such Qur'anic images [that] renders the imagery, along with Islam and the Qu'ran, ridiculous" (Abdo, 2009, p. 250). On the Other hand, this criticism is balanced when a reference is made to a figure familiar in Christianity, that of "Our master Solomon the Great" (Faqir, 1996, p. 1) read as the commander of these absurd soldiers. This use of religious references underlining absurd and inferior figures serves to confront the Western reader to a similarity denied. About this fact, Abdo states: "Likewise, it is comfortable for the Western reader to feel that the oppression the novel's female characters endure comes from their own culture and the men who control it. Less comfortable is the realization, if achieved, that this blatant misogyny comes equally from a man who is foreigner and friend of the English." (Abdo, 2009, p. 251) like the storyteller.

Like Scheherazade, Maha "transforms narrative into life." Her narrative bears the life-preserving aspect characterizing Scheherazade. "…In The Thousand and One Nights, Shahrazad preserves her life and extends the lives of other would-be women victims through narrative means." (Golley in Vinson, 2008, p. 79) Yet Maha's narrative goes beyond self-preservation. Through this very character Faqir speaks out what she considers unjust towards women within her society and outside it. The interned Maha's version of the story becomes the pretext for narrative.

6. The Pretext for Narrative:

Madness becomes necessary for Maha and Um Saad to reconstruct the self. Despite the pain, it is the madhouse that allows them to achieve a brief encounter with the self. Madness becomes a good pretext to speak. As Faqir argues in her interview: "when expression and self-actualisation is not possible, madness is the only way out." (Moore, 2011, p. 6)

In the asylum, Maha and Um Saad are alienated, "dislocated physically and psychologically." (Suyoufie and Hammad, 2009, p. 284). The fact that their stories are drawn from their past, from their memory, represents an attempt to relocate the self. However, it does not prevent them to feel displaced in the madhouse far from their families and deprived of the right to speak by the British doctor and here stands the alienating effect of colonial and imperial power, who despite the fact that the utterances of these interned women supposed to be considered as coming from insane women they are prevented from speaking as would be sane ones. Maha expressed it as she said: "My father is dead. My mother's

carpet is still unfinished. Not one single word from my lips… I lower my head into the eager hands of the foreign doctor, who rules over us like a king… I realized that I am being besieged by mirages flickering in the distance." (Faqir, 1996, p. 222)

In this novel, Faqir[8] presents madness as a pretext for Maha's narrative and thus, for her text. Madness as a pre-text of narrative conforms to Bhabha's national unwellness towards a political existence that the "unhomely" moment expresses, allowing the juxtaposition of the private with the public: "The unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalence of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence." Bhabha rephrases this concept soon enough: "each 'unhomely' house marks a deeper historical displacement"." (Bhabha in Suyoufie and Hammad, 2009, p. 285) Following this reasoning, one can deduce that Maha's and Um Saad's ordeals reflect the suffering of two marginalized and voiceless women (Maha as a simple peasant and Um Saad as an obscure immigrant's daughter) during and after the British Mandate as stated by Um Saad. (Faqir, 1996, p. 177)

For Maha and Um Saad, the act of telling their story is a process by which they elaborate an image of the self. "Narratives construct selfhood as individuality and functional role." (Fludernik, 2007, p. 260) Through their conversational exchanges in asylum they are creating identity from a story uttered. This identity belongs to the space they negotiate through their story. It is an imaginary identity existing only in the context of conversation and replacing the real one baffled or denied by the father and the husband (Um Saad's father and husband), the brother (Daffash) and the colonial intrusion (The metal eagles, the British doctor, Samir Pasha, the storyteller) It is an identity which is constituted in "interaction with others, in fluid self-presentation." Generally this self-projection of the self through one's narrative is always positive. (Fludernik, 2007, p. 260-261)

Maha narrates to create continuity between past and present and by so doing she (re)constitutes her identity. She is creating a story of her life where her image is no more manipulated by a (mis)representation, and where she refuses to be the victim of the orientalist representation, that of the storyteller.

Maha's and Um Saad's conversations in the asylum are a kind of therapy. They are producing a narrative with a story with which they can live, or survive in the madhouse. It is a story of hope with no plot and no truth. The most important thing in their story is the evaluation they give to the events, converting their "failure, depression and, anxiety into placid confidence in the future." (Fludernik, 2007, p. 262)

Yet, from the juxtaposition of the storyteller's and Maha's versions, the story can be regarded as the framing technique the author uses to mediate between the world of the reader and the interior of the fictional world. "The framing technique often serves to prevaricate on the truth conditions of the tale." (Fludernik, 2007, p. 266) Maha is providing the necessary information about the truth of her story, and the narrative of the storyteller serves to prevaricate it. In the narrative of the storyteller, Maha is the "other". Yet through the framing technique in Maha's version of 'her' story the storyteller becomes the "Other". She reconstructs the self by telling her story.

It is Maha's and Um Saad's madness that makes the articulation of their narrative possible. Madness used as a pre-text for these female characters to liberate themselves is not something new. Many stances are utilized by Faqir as hints at different forms of militancy borrowed from western feminists. For example, Madness as a pre-text for narrative is in fact a western feminist poetics that we can find in *Pillars of Salt* that we also find in Charlotte Perkin's Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*. (Suyoufie and Hammad, 2009, p. 282)

The emphasis put on the fallacy of the storyteller's religious references shows Faqir's indictment against the male misinterpretation of Islam. In her autobiographical essay, Faqir explains that among the reasons that push Scheherazade to flee her nation is the distortions of the "interpretation of the hadith and the Qu'ran" (Faqir in Suyoufie, 2008, p. 235)

Maha's narrative is a space this female character creates to protect herself from madness and to resist the orientalist misrepresentation. Both female characters, Maha and Um Saad, draw their stories from their past. The past becomes a shelter in the menacing present of the British doctor.

Maha and Um Saad focus both on their memories to supply their stories with details. Narratively speaking the flashback is used. Yet in fact it is meant to intervene in the present to alter the misrepresentation of the Bedouin woman uttered by the storyteller.

Maha and Um Saad both refuse to conform to the prevailing rules within their family in particular and society in general. This state of non-conformity challenges the societal order and the ideology they are living in. This state of non-conformity allows them to express their indictment against the native and the colonial systems in an efficient way in the guise of madness.

7. Madness of Non-Conformity:

Faqir's female protagonist embodies this unspoken narrative. Maha's utterances mirror a lucid narrator and character that was confined for another reason than madness in the madhouse. The fact that Maha, the rational narrator, is considered as insane by the British doctor without taking into consideration the cause of her forced internment, the context in which she has been judged insane "enunciates a juncture that question the scientific rationale behind an acceptable identity, the soundness of a nation, and a complete understanding of history." (Luangphinith, 2004, p. 75) This very character of Maha questions the colonizer's system of knowledge. Maha is "a larger discontent that always haunts the capitalistic, racist, and misogynistic logic of colonialism." (Luangphinith, 2004, p. 77)

Maha explains in her narrative the reason of her confinement (Faqir, 1996, p. 217) and it reflects Foucault's definition of madness in the classical age. Her "unreasoning" behaviour destabilizes the "human domain of reason"[9] established by the patriarchal and colonial systems, it is a violation to these systems. Yet Um Saad's behaviour's description before internment and after in the madhouse reflects an animality typical to the mad. (Faqir, 1996, p. 206-7) It distinguishes her from the behaviour of Maha and which makes the reader understands that Um Saad is really insane whereas Maha is not. Maha's madness is that of non-conformity and the best pretext to speak, to express a narrative relocating the "other" to recover identity.

By making the storyteller's narrative wrong and contradicted by Maha, Faqir tackles a very important point about the reliability of the storyteller. In fact, this is a plot decision to pinpoint the pressure and psychological oppression the interned female protagonist could experience through such a representation. It could be viewed as a direct discourse denouncing the orientalist male made opinion about Arab women.

The ending of Faqir's novel suggests that though Maha succeeds to tell her story and liberate her image from the orientalist representation of the storyteller; she cannot be free as long as the poor and alienated Um Saad remains in subjugation[10].

The ending of *Pillars of Salt*[11] by the storyteller's narrative refers to the despair of the Arab woman. After the long narrative of indictment of Maha, Maha and Um Saad are silenced by the British doctor and the orientalist storyteller has the last word. The same idea of unchanging conditions for women is reflected through the unfinished carpet of Maha's grand-mother.

The fact that Maha's utterances are used as the principle source of information, being the narrator that the reader believes, challenges the idea stating that the most powerful individual, being the British doctor and the men of the village (Daffash and the others), decide about the insanity of Maha. A situation where, as Michel Foucault observes, "defining the insane is undertaken by individuals, who in "an act of sovereign reason, confine their neighbours, and communicate and recognize each other through the merciless language of non-madness"."(Foucault, 1988: ix in Luangphinith, 2004, p. 61)

8. Conclusion:

The winding up of the novel voices a postcolonial feminist argument that despite the different means used to liberate themselves and negotiate their space and despite the post-independence period as time of fiction in *Pillars of Salt*, colonised women are "held hostage" to the needs of social conformity where they are tenaciously subjected to patriarchal control in the familial sphere.

Madness of non conformity is supported by the narrative technique of flashback. The narrative technique uses flashback as a reference to the female characters' memory. In this case memory operates at the service of identity maintenance, because loss of identity can be equivalent to insanity. The female characters are telling their stories and remembering their past though it hurts them, to maintain their identity. They use their memories to save them from madness. This narrative technique reinforces the idea that Maha's madness in the novel is a madness of non conformity and not a mental disorder.

Maha's madness is a way to say that women can achieve the sane reaction of speaking and telling their stories only through insanity. It this case insanity becomes a pretext to speak.It is within this mood that Pillars of Salt was written and where Maha becomes Faqir's Scheherazade to voice her resentment, especially of the west media: "Bagdad became 'Arabia', an extension of the desert so romantically and faithfully portrayed by Lawrence of Arabia and his predecessors" (Faqir, 1998, p. 57) English language, Faqir's first love became a site of disillusionment, and the host country a "mental hospital".

Notes

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[1] About the animality of Classical madness Foucault put: "The animal in man no longer has any value as the sign of a Beyond; it has become his madness, without relation to anything but itself: his madness in the state of nature. The animality that rages in madness dispossesses man of what is specifically human in him; not in order to deliver him over to other powers, but simply to establish him at the zero degree of his own nature. For classicism, madness in its ultimate form is man in immediate relation to his animality."(Foucault in Cutting, 2012, p. 58). "Foucault has shown that during the eighteenth-century Europe became the locus where the stripping of the insane of their humanity and thus legitimising their treatment as animals occurred." (Foucault in Zeydabadi-Nejad, 2013, p. 185)

[2] The problem exposed by Said's paradigm of orientalism is mainly the production in and for the West. The problem is that orientalism draws its power from the ability to construct "the very object it speaks about and from its power to produce a regime of truth about the other and thereby establish the identity and the power of the subject that speaks about it." (Abu Lughod, 2001, p. 105)

[3] Through the counter-discourse of Maha is manifesting subjectivity and constructing her identity. Yet one cannot speak about identity without the distinction of many elements representing othering or alterity. The "other" can be represented under different facets, human or non human. For example, in the novel of Faqir, Maha's others are human: the native man (her father, brother, the storyteller who is half Arab), the colonizer (her brother, the storyteller who is considered as a foreigner, the British doctor, Samir Pasha), Maha's other is also non human like the asylum, the new house of her husband where she feels "unhomeliness". For Um Saad, the human other is: native man (her father and husband), the colonizer (the British doctor), and the non human other is represented by the asylum.

[4] "Both Persian and Arabic in origin, The Nights was translated into French, which edition influenced later seminal Arabic translation […] And like [*Pillars of Salt*], it too is a "cultural amphibian", an organic, growing, metamorphic, "impure", "inauthentic", travelling entity, one of "cross cultural history and identity which impels it beyond the confines of any single representation of its identity and which makes it relevant as the only piece of literature which inhabits the nexus of Eastern history and Western being" (Abdo, 2009, p. 249)

[5] In Arabo-Islamic womanist writing, Faqir presents a multi-layered criticism where two important aspects of oppression are tackled and resisted by female characters. On one hand, we find the indictment against the androcentric and the colonial systems represented by the traditional patriarchy in the Arab and Muslim context and by colonialism. On the other, the western hegemony represented under the orientalist vision of the Arab Muslim woman is condemned. Though criticized, tradition is preserved and the traditional man regretted. It is used by the Arab Muslim woman (character and writer) to resist different types of domination. (Hammouche, 2020, p. 17)

[6] Amin Malak Observes about Arab and Muslim women's writing that: "The works of almost all Arab and Muslim women writers in English reveal an unequivocal sense of affiliation with their Islamic culture, while at the same time condemning and combating the abusive excesses of patriarchy when it appropriates and exploits the religious argument to preserve its own spiritual and material hegemony" (Malak in Suyoufie and Hammad, 2009, p. 282).

[7] The use of English by Faqir could be regarded as a way to enfranchise her text and avoid censorship. Like the scene describing the storyteller's voyeurism through the secret gaze of a sexual intercourse between Maha and Harb (see in the novel). As Amin Malak observes: "using hybridized English allows "the conscious [womanist] narrative voice to infiltrate taboo terrain, both sexual and political, that might be inaccessible when handled in Arabic. Removed emotionally and culturally from the local scene, the English language accords a liberating medium to the author to broach and delve into issues such as feminine sexuality, politics of power and gender […]. English here accords a liberating lexical storehouse and semantic sanctuary." (Malak in Suyoufie and Hammad, 2009, p. 309)

[8] Faqir is considered by Suyoufie as a feminist whose ideology is close to the Western Feminism at its early phase focusing on women's rights to speak. Yet in such a criticism the orientalist mummifying image of the Arab woman is ignored. It is against this representation that Faqir is claiming freedom for her silenced women.

[9] For Foucault, in the nineteenth century, the mad were confined after being homogeneously mixed with other sorts of deviants like prostitutes, free-thinkers, vagabonds, etc. who deviates from the ideal reason of that time. For Foucault "the mad, being idle, were a threat to the stability of a bourgeois

society in which labor was the central value. Further, Foucault held that, within the category of unreason, the mad were distinctive for their animality, which put them in radical opposition to the human domain of reason […] confinement was an economic policy meant to deal with problems of poverty, particular begging and unemployment." (Cutting, 2012, p. 53-4)

[10] Through our analoguous Um Saad and Dunyâzâd as sisters to Maha and Scheherazad we can add Hajila as a sister to Isma in Assia Djebar's *Ombre Sultane (1987)* translated as *A sister to Scheherazade*. Despite her modern way of life and western education, Isma could not achieve freedom as well as Hajila remains uneducated and victim of traditional patriarchy where she experiences the life of a beaten wife.

[11] About the semi-closure of the novel by the storyteller the feminist reading of Suyoufie joins Malti-Douglas's reading about the ending of *The Nights*. According to the storyteller's version, Maha marries her coloniser (crusader) as an act of welcoming the "Other". Like Scheherazade, in Malti-Dougla view, "Maha capitulates to the attractions of the body: "Corporeality is the final word, as Shahrazâd relinquishes her role of narrator for that of the perfect woman: mother and lover."(Malti-Douglas in Suyoufie, 2008, p. 237) Further to this, Souyoufie adds that this ending is also a reference to Faqir's use of English. Like Maha who succeeds to seduce the Foreign King, Faqir succeeds to adapt English to her culture and seduce the English reader. (Malti-Douglas in Suyoufie, 2008, p. 237)

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