

**Crumbling under the Disciplinary Gaze: Power Relations and the Illusion of Freedom in Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams* and Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*, a Foucauldian Reading**

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**Abstract**

Discipline has been a basic constituent of life ever since the first man and woman came to earth with a legacy of resistance, an awareness of their subjectivity and the knowledge that being watched will always be a part of life. After the Towers' disaster, the need ensued to subject Muslims to the gaze of the American nation. In their novels, Laila Halaby and Shaila Abdullah depict USA after the disaster. This paper, besides translating and introducing the texts into Arabic, investigates the new forms the exercise of power takes shifting and changing relations among and between individuals and institutions. The American society abounds with judges of normalcy who tighten the standards and exclude people on new terms. Foucault's novel understandings of basic concepts give the framework for this paper. "Normative judgments", "metaphysical and political freedom" and "force relations" help interpret the personal experiences of the characters, while "biopower" highlights the difference between the policies of their governments. Parallel to the discourse of discipline that characterizes US society, goes that of fate in Jordan and Pakistan, where predestination negates personal freedom and "fate" helps refer the misfortunes that befall countries as a result of the absence of a clear, biopolitical agenda to the discourse of religion. Lack of organization appears in the overlap between discourses; the religious discourse overlaps other discourses. American citizens are subject to constraints that organize public behavior while Jordanians and Pakistanis are burdened with historical constraints that target personal life. Instead of liberating their true selves from under the debris of fallen kingdoms, they wear their subjectivities like iron masks, abiding by the traditions of countries they chose to abandon. Others expand their hearts cherishing both homelands using Foucault's "arts of the self" and detach themselves from cultural barriers to form true, instead of disciplinary subjectivities.

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الانهيار امام النظره الرافضه: علاقات القوى وتوهم الحريه فى روايتى ذات مره فى الارض الموعوده واحلام الزعفران لليلى حلبى وشيلا عبد الله: قراءه فوكويده

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### الملخص

ان النظام والقانون هو ناموس الكون منذ بدء الخليقه ولكن منذ خلق الانسان ولدت معه الرغبه فى خرق النظام ومخالفة القوانين وهو الأمر الذى يشعره بذاته وقدرته مع علمه اليقيني بأنه سيكون دوما عرضه للمراقبه التى تختلف وتتنوع اشكالها. بعد كارثة برجي التجاره العالميين بالولايات المتحده الامريكىه تولد لدى الامريكين الشعور بأن المسلمين على وجه التحديد قد اصبحوا مصدرا للخطر يهدد حياتهم وحضارتهم فأصبحوا يتفننون فى جعلهم تحت أنظارهم بصفة دائمه وهو مايتضح فى روايتى "ذات مره فى أرض الأحلام" لليلى حلبى و"أحلام الزعفران" لشيلا عبدالله اللتين تصوران التغييرات التى طالت ميزان القوى بما يؤثر على العلاقات بين الافراد والمؤسسات. لقد صار المجتمع الامريكى صارما جدا فى المعايير التى يفرضها للحكم على مدى مطابقتها افراده للمواصفات التى يفرضها للحكم على الفرد انه مواطن طبيعيا وهذه الدراسه تلجأ للمفاهيم الأساسيه فى فلسفة فوكوه مثل معايير الحكم على طبيعية الأفراد والأشياء ومفهوم الحريه السياسيه والميتافيزيقيه وعلاقات القوه وهى مفاهيم تساعد على فهم التجارب التى تمر بها شخصيات الروائتين بينما يساعد مفهوم "القوه الحيويه" على فهم سياسات الحكومات المختلفه خاصة حكومتى الولايات المتحده وباكستان فبينما تضع الاولى سياساتها على اسس علميه وتهتم بوضع خطط واضحه نجد الحياه فى باكستان تعزى كل شئ الى القدر وتصاريفه الأمر الذى يساعد على هروب المواطنين والحكومات من تحمل مسئولية عدم التخطيط او قصوره وكذلك على خلط الاوراق فى مجالات الحياه المختلفه من دين وسياسه واقتصاد الخ. وفى النهايه تقدم الدراسه تحليلا للقيود الاجتماعيه والتاريخيه التى تمثل فى بعض الاحيان قيودا تعرقل الأفراد والمجتمعات وتضع سدودا وحدودا فى طريق التقدم وحل المشكلات.

Discipline has been a basic constituent of life ever since the first man and woman came to earth with a legacy of resistance, an awareness of their subjectivity and the knowledge that being watched will always be a part of life. After the Towers' disaster, the need ensued to subject Muslims to the gaze of the American nation. In their novels, Laila Halaby and Shaila Abdullah depict USA after the disaster. This paper, besides translating and introducing the texts into Arabic, investigates the new forms the exercise of power takes shifting and changing relations among and between individuals and institutions. The American society abounds with judges of normalcy who tighten the standards and exclude people on new terms. Foucault's novel understandings of basic concepts give the framework for this paper. "Normative judgments", "metaphysical and political freedom" and "force relations" help interpret the personal experiences of the characters, while "biopower" highlights the difference between the policies of their governments. Parallel to the discourse of discipline that characterizes US society, goes that of fate in Jordan and Pakistan, where predestination negates personal freedom and "fate" helps refer the misfortunes that befall countries as a result of the absence of a clear, biopolitical agenda to the discourse of religion. Lack of organization appears in the overlap between discourses; the religious discourse overlaps other discourses. American citizens are subject to constraints that organize public behavior while Jordanians and Pakistanis are burdened with historical constraints that target personal life. Instead of liberating their true selves from under the debris of fallen kingdoms, they wear their subjectivities like iron masks, abiding by the traditions of countries they chose to abandon. Others expand their hearts cherishing both homelands using Foucault's "arts of the self" and detach themselves from cultural barriers to form true, instead of disciplinary subjectivities.

Discipline, power relations, panopticon, subjectivity  
"a human being is not a cauliflower. A cauliflower never has to confront the problem of what it means to be a cauliflower; it never has to make a choice about how it will live its life; it will never be challenged about its choice" (Sartre 345).

According to Michael Foucault, power and discipline have

always been essential constituents of man's life ever since he became aware of the disciplinary subjectivity imposed upon him by the discursive formations that characterize a certain era. The need for an authoritative gaze to detect and discipline those who violate the norms, instantly ensued in the form of numerous institutions that are established to devise programs or penal procedures and, in effect, work as "factories producing a brand of personal identity" granted to the individuals who "accept the normative values that are supposed to make them 'good' citizens" (Danaher 60). These concepts, power, discipline and subjectivity, emerge with novel definitions and understandings through different phases of history, but acquire particular significance at times when human life undergoes moments of extreme pressure like when the Twin Towers were brought down by terrorists.

Foucault, the prominent thinker and critical theorist, refers to himself as "an experimenter" (Taylor 1). Mainly, he experimented with his own and other philosophers' understandings of basic concepts. According to Geoff Danaher, "today he is widely accepted as being one of, if not the, most influential thinkers of our time, and his ideas and theoretical terms have become part of our ways of thinking and understanding the world" (2). His epistemology generated new understandings of long established concepts and the reconceptualization of terms and knowledge that had previously been thought of as absolute and universal. More importantly, Foucault contends that these are *his* understandings, not *the* understandings and vows the contingent and historical nature of whatever has been regarded as final and universal. Foucault destabilizes the pillars of the Western philosophical traditions since "his work is not simply concerned to analyze social conditions, but is at the same time, an analysis of the basis on which we think about analyzing social conditions" (Mills 1). His contention is that the framework/approach we adopt to analyze and conceptualize a certain condition is bound to guide us onto certain findings and conclusions. Therefore, "we must of necessity analyze the perspectives we take on the subject we are analyzing" (Mills 2).

In their highly acclaimed novels, *Once in a Promised Land* and *Saffron Dreams*, Laila Halaby and Shaila Abdullah depict the changes that overtake the rhythm of life in the US after the 11<sup>th</sup> of

September. Muslims from different nationalities are held responsible for the disastrous attack and, in a sense, have to be placed under the watchful gaze of the American nation lest, in another ominous, careless moment, they carry out other attacks they could possibly be plotting.

The aim of this paper is to investigate how the two novels mirror the new forms that the exercise of power takes following the hideous disaster causing many shifts and changes in the relations among and between individuals, institutions and structures. The balance of power is significantly tipped against Muslims whose freedom is curtailed in significant ways. Foucault's novel understanding of traditional concepts gives the framework for this paper since his conceptions of power, freedom and subjectivity shed enough light to interpret the personal experiences of the characters of both novels and help detect bruises that have appeared in the overlapping network of power relations.

Foucault investigates how the means and resources available in the different fields of life constitute elements of power that could be far more effective than physical violence. He therefore refutes the traditional idea of "sovereign power, which is held or possessed and then wielded repressively by one individual over another or others", and maintains that "sovereign power became ineffective in the face of increasingly complex social, political and economic relations that developed in the latter part of the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth centuries" (Taylor 3). Power is wielded through the interplay of a set of force relations that are immanent in all interactions. He defines force relations as "whatever in one's social interactions that pushes, urges or compels one to do something" (Lynch 19). Thus "power relations are not outside but rather immanent in other kinds (economic, knowledge, sexual) of relationships" (Foucault, 1990a 93). Foucault wields the expression "micro-physics of power" (1979: 26) to prove that "power relations" begin from the bottom of the pyramid with individual behaviors and interactions that grow into "larger patterns, and eventually national norms or regulations, grow out of them" (Lynch 19). "It is in this sphere of force relations" he holds, "that we must try to analyze the mechanisms of power" (Foucault, 1990: 97).

Political freedom and easy life are winning cards in the game of power; whoever possesses them ends the game on his behalf. *Promised Land* and *Saffron Dreams* reveal how countries empower themselves and enfeeble others by dominating human and natural resources and how individuals tend to abide by the strong side that holds the lucky cards. Halaby and Abdullah trace the ebbs and flows in the intricate web of power relations between and among family members, work partners, sports buddies and countries and how these relations affect each other. Arissa criticizes marriage arrangements in Pakistan and describes them as "a game of chess" where everybody "treaded carefully" (44). Acknowledging the influence of sociohistorical constraints, she admits that it all works "within the realm of tradition" (44). She also describes how she and her husband vie for a larger share of power in the relationship at their first married days.

The number of people who leave their homeland behind for better chances of life and also to enjoy more freedom and fewer restrictions raises questions about the amount of political freedom offered to the citizens of these countries. Jassim's scientific projects guarantee him a high position in the scale of power. They promise better water services for the American population, and therefore fit in the larger scheme of the biopolitical government. He believes that the basic need for security water-wise is the key player in the mismatched game of power between the Super Power and the Middle East. "This fight is not about land or God", he declares, "it is much more primitive than that: it is about water...Whoever has control of the water wins" (Halaby 178). Economic and bureaucratic elements are two effective fingers in the hand that holds the scale of power in world and personal relations. Jassim's decision to carry the fruits of American education back to his homeland shatters over the solid rock of American possibilities and promises. "At home", he admits, "his project was ignored. Meanwhile, America was calling him daily, with her Anytime Minutes whispering stainless steel promises of a shiny lab and possibility" (62, 63). American luxury and freedom win Salwa, too, over family ties and a childhood mate and beloved. She chooses the rich and prestigious Jassim as her ticket to the US over Hassan with his meager means and dreams. "America pulled and yanked on her forever", Halaby explains,

"trying to reel her in...that Promised Land" (60). Jassim takes his dream and his wife to the more powerful country that promises a better life in return of his scientific research which contributes to their biopower projects. Arisaa and Faizan, too, prefer to relieve themselves of the struggles at home and leave Pakistan, "a society at war with itself" (106), looking for a better future for themselves and their future child, "especially if the child turns out to be a girl" (113).

With President Bush's call upon the nation to help the state fight terrorism, the authority of the government is distributed among frightened, embittered, unstable, but mostly frightened civilians. This dispersion of authority pushes Muslims to lonely corners where the suspecting gaze of the public stigmatizes them as "others" rather than "subjects". As Foucault maintains, power moves from the bottom, so, when people become aware of their forceful stance in their relationships with the different institutions, power navigates to their side. The American public forms a pact against Muslims and reaches up to the top of the pyramid of power forcing it to take aggressive action against them. Secretaries, salespeople, clients and even high school students combine to chase Muslims out of the US or at least away from positions of influence. At the beginning power is evenly balanced in the triple relation; company, Jassim and clients. Jassim provides excellent services for the clients who pay the company that offers Jassim a substantial salary. When people make it clear that they no longer trust an Arab with their water supplies, Marcus, the manager, declares that "clients ...no longer wanted Jassim" (Halaby 268). They withdraw their contracts forcing Marcus to fire him. The interference of the FBI who shows up several times to raise questions about Jassim presents another threat to the business.

Bella, a secretary with only a high school diploma keeps a notebook on Jassim to prove that he does not observe his work hours and also that perhaps he condones terrorism. Jassim was infuriated at the thought of "an FBI investigation launched by a receptionist whose main duties were answering the telephone and making photocopies" (Halaby 272). As Richard A. Lynch explains this record of performance is "an instrument of disciplinary power" that serves to make an employee "regulate or discipline her own performance and behavior" (13, 14). Sara Mills explains that

Foucault's theorizing of power "forces us to reconceptualise not only power itself but also the role that individuals play in power relations-whether they are simply subjected to oppression or whether they actively play a role in the form of their relations with others and with institutions" (35).

Foucault contends that "penal reform and prison development were central to nineteenth-century thought" (Danaher 53). He wields the expressions "panopticism" and "carceral continuum" to acknowledge the colonization of the wider society by penal procedures that were devised in but extended beyond the prison. Panopticism refers to the idea of achieving discipline by subjecting people's behavior to an authoritative gaze that keenly evaluates it. These procedures monitor and regulate behavior in almost all fields of life, sports, religion, family life, etc. "Panopticism", refers to the "panopticon", designed by Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century to optimize surveillance inside prisons. It is a tower of a central position from which invisible watch people are able to observe every single prisoner any time of the day. As such, prisoners know they could be the target of the authoritative gaze at any and every moment of their sentence. The absence of the guards serves only to ascertain their permanent presence. This idea of "panopticism" is one of the major practices that flowed from behind the bars to sweep the social body. Todd May confirms that, "Techniques of surveillance and intervention have diffused throughout society... with the emergence of technologies such as surveillance cameras all over London and wiretapping in the United States" (76). Danaher agrees adding that "We can see this in the way in which authorities watch over us and monitor our behaviors... security cameras in shopping malls and night clubs"(54). After the disaster of the Towers, A panopticon effect is created to ensure that Muslims are permanently subject to the authoritative gaze. The authoritative gaze "didn't reside in a particular person; rather, it was recognized as part of the system, a way of looking that could operate as a general principle of surveillance throughout the social body" (Danaher 54). Every American became a possible watch guard usurping the authority of the police. Arabs are classified as a threat to the community; both state and individuals cooperate to save the nation according to the



dictates of the biopolitics of the government. Pursuing their everyday activities, Muslims are spotted, suspected and followed. During his daily visits to the gym Jassim hears footsteps following him to the shower room and the follower is simply an American sports buddy who later reports Jassim to the FBI arguing that "The president said that specifically, that it is our job to be on the alert for suspicious behavior, to help the police, to be the eyes and ears of the community" (173). In the middle of a visit to a mall buying everyday needs, Jassim discovers that he is being followed by a security agent. Apparently, he is considered a threat on no other basis than his features which betray him as a Middle Eastern. "If you look behind me", he tells his wife, "you will see a woman with a walkie-talkie on her shoulder... She's following me. Apparently I am a security threat" (Halaby 28). When Jassim and Salwa are harassed by the FBI, it turns out that their cellular phones, bank accounts and every move are followed. To avoid the visible surveillance cameras, Marcus and Jassim leave the office and go outside "unaware of being [still] under surveillance" (Halaby 223). The accident that takes a boy's life and drastically changes Jassim's is generated by a 17-year-old boy on a skiing board that carries the sign "terrorist hunters", which means that the rider is authorized by the American government to trace and, in Jassim's case, attack possible terrorists. Those boys work as another eye upon Middle Easterners who are all "put in a sack" (124). The American society turns into a panopticon wherein everybody resides except for Muslims, the only people who live out crumbling under the gaze.

In his *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1990) and in the 1975-76 College de France course, *Society Must Be Defended* (2003), Foucault introduces the concept of "biopower" as opposed to "sovereign power" and complementary to "disciplinary" power. Biopower, according to Foucault, is "a power which takes hold of human life" to "foster life"(1990a: 138). The concept of biopower "can be understood as technologies that were developed at the same time as, and out of, the human sciences, and which were used for analyzing, controlling, regulating and defining the human body and its behavior" (Danaher 64). Foucault sees a connection between the development of the concept of biopower and the change in political

discourse which started with the seventeenth century when the "state", not its people, came to be seen "as an end in itself" (Danaher 64). The citizens of a state "were now thought of not as ends in themselves (with rights and duties), but as resources which had to be used and taken care of, in their everyday activities, to ensure the development and viability of the state" (Danaher 64). The US government takes very good care of its citizens. When an anonymous swimmer defecates in the swimming pool, the pool was "circled with yellow tape, as though it were an accident scene" (Halaby 101), people are prevented from using it and Jassim learns that "they have to blast the pool and let it sit for four hours" (Halaby 102). Arissa's special needs child receives enormous care, "nearly every part of Raian was explored, probed, refined, fixed and adjusted" (Abdullah 170). Beside her work pager, the diabetic FBI agent has another pager that measures her blood sugar and adds insulin as needed. Psychological guidance is always suggested to ensure that people's psychological issues do not interfere with their work.

Biopower that works as an umbrella covering and watching over all aspects of life in the US figures so hazily in the two Islamic countries, whether at the level of disciplinary institutions, hospitals, schools, etc. or at the level of the state. Arissa decides to "assimilate and accept it all" within the American society because "Only this society can give [her] unborn child what [her] own can't-a chance for a better life and abundant opportunities that he could seize and avail" (Abdullah 105). Biopolitics in the US follow a strategy that each person should be guided to reach his/her full potential and therefore render maximum benefit to the state, unlike in Pakistan where such children are so neglected that they become almost nothing but a burden and a drawback in the lives of their families. Ami, Arissa's mother, is obviously an intelligent woman who is frustrated by the lack of opportunities given her in her homeland. She is a woman of wasted potential who is given no choice but to play the role of the spoiled, meek wife who should wallow in the comforts she is offered provided that she remain in the shadow of her prosperous husband. Ami uses her body to express her rejection and with her defiant, backless dresses, breaks the disapproving looks.

Nothing equals the keenness of the US on recruiting the best

human resources except for the carelessness of the Jordanian Kingdom losing scientists that could possibly solve its most complicated problems. The biopolitical role of the state is utterly absent as appears in the individual attempts of desperate citizens to secure their own needs of water as happens when Jassim's relative jeopardizes all his possessions and therefore the future of his family to hire "a diviner, a man with a sixth sense, to come with sticks and walk his land in search of water" (Halaby 53). Halaby highlights the absurdity of the investment, sending intelligent academics to get the highest scientific degrees from USA and then enticing them to stay there by the lack of real opportunities at home.

Foucault also argues that "biopower" is "necessarily racist", since racism, "broadly construed, is an indispensable precondition that grants the state the power to kill" (2003: 256). Chloe Taylor comments saying that in the name of biopower the eradication of "sub-groups of that population is perceived as a justifiable form of managing and protecting a people" (50). Foucault writes: "If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers... it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population" (1990a: 137). Chloe Taylor cites the war on Iraq as an example of how the modern biopolitical state justifies "mass killings in the name of life" (51) and both "produces and exploits racism in order to do so" (51).

Ever since the Twin Tower, Penny, like many Americans, becomes obsessed by the news. The state enrages the people against Arabs and Muslims and exploits the anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism that follow the attacks to hoard public opinion for the invasion of Iraq that obviously secures the American needs of oil. After the claims of mass destruction weapons and links with Al-Qaeda could no longer hold, people are persuaded that the US is fighting not only to protect its people but also to save the attacked countries from the tyranny of their political leaders. "Each time the president spoke about the War on Terror", Penny "was outraged, sickened that there were people so sinister that they would want to harm innocent Americans" (Halaby 280). She is so proud of her people whom she believes are "continuing the great history of this country...saving poor people from the oppression of living in their

backward countries" (280). When her neighbor reminds her that her boyfriend is "from one of those places", she defends him saying: "he's so different from those people...he's been here for a while ... He's not some religious freak like them" (281). Apart from her friend, Penny declares, "Sometimes I don't understand why we don't just bomb those places" (281). Soon it becomes clear that lay American men and women do not even differentiate between one Muslim country and another. Marcus, a more educated American citizen, criticizes his fellow prejudiced country people declaring that "They will stand up for a war and ignore human rights in the name of peace and freedom" (Halaby 225). The attitude of Penny and her neighbor illustrates the role of the media in playing "games of truth", which Foucault defines as "a set of procedures that lead to a certain result... a set of rules by which truth is produced" (Danaher xi). He holds that nothing becomes significant "until it enters into a discourse" (Danaher 39). The media has a vital role in creating a discourse that connects Arabs with terrorism.

In his early article, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", and his seminal book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault expresses the opinion that "power operates through the [material] manipulation of bodies", not just "the ideological manipulation of minds" (Oksala 87). According to Johanna Oksala "Discipline... operates through the body [and] consists of various techniques, which aim at making the body both docile and useful" (87). Mills explains that "Capitalist production has colonized a great number of techniques from [the prison] in its construction of the work ethic, ensuring that notions such as punctuality, self-discipline and precision are *internalized* by workers as desirable qualities" (94). Sandra Bartky and Susan Bordo contend that "Disciplinary practices, for example, exacting routines of body and object co-ordination train the body in certain ways to become docile" (61). Halaby's novel stands in agreement with the idea that those in power try to manipulate people through their bodies, not just "brainwash people into believing things that are not true" (Oksala 87). Bodies are built to suit the relevant jobs; Jassim notices that the "thick body" of the female police officer is "puffed up and close to bursting out of her uniform" (Halaby 29). The foregrounding of the gym illustrates how important it is for the US government to subject citizens to the suitable kinds of discipline that

renders the body "more useful for mass production and at the same time easier to control" (Oksala 87). Jassim subjects his body to a very strict order. Before going to his work, he has to get himself in "that delightful contented state that exercise gives the body" (Halaby 5). Through his rigid exercise schedule, Jassim acquires his notably acute time-awareness and his infallible self-control that makes him capable of always saying and doing the right thing at exactly the right time provided that he takes "two swimming breaths" before he proceeds to say or do anything. He functions very much like a machine that is carefully programmed to produce all the desired responses at exactly definite times. Jassim meets almost everybody at the health club and wonders at "how people who do not swim manage" (Halaby 5). Questioned by the officer after the accident, it appears that he has strictly done everything as he should have while driving his car, respecting traffic rules even though he had the whole road for himself. Having internalized all the techniques of self-discipline, Jassim swims in the lane designated to his standard and regulates himself by a wrist watch. The day his routine is broken by an act that is deemed notorious and in discord with the dictates of biopower he is supposed to observe, Jassim's life goes astray and everything changes forever.

In Jordan and Pakistan, the idea of panopticism as a means of observing biopower is attempted, with minor success, within the discourse of religion. It is obvious that for most Muslims in the US discipline replaces religion. The internalization of the rules that tightly govern almost all the practices of the American citizen replaces the concept of "conscience" that the governments of their homelands strive to plant in their systems via the strict religious education and the insertion of the religious discourse into all other discursive formations. It is remarkable how the internalization of the codes of life in the US replaces the discourses of fate and religion for many Jordanians and Pakistanis who accommodate to the new system, since they find them synonymous in the function they perform in their lives. When Jassim adopts the American values he declares that discipline, embodied in his fixed routine replaces God in his life. Faizan, on the other hand, starts his novel by "I am their conscience... the one who puts the fear of God in their hearts... We

cannot hide from Him" (Abdullah 94). The fear that accompanies this type of surveillance, in this case, fear of God and the delayed punishment in the other world, does not seem as effective as the immediate punishment of the governmental law.

Lack of organization in Jordan and Pakistan is also obvious in the mixing of agendas and the overlap between discourses. Even political disagreements are addressed in terms of religion, very probably as a result of the public's sparse education in politics or how to express and support an opinion instead of just imposing it. The streets of Pakistan show political opinions and calls for economic reform displaying signs that sound odd in the related discourses, i.e. politics and economy. Instead of condemning their opponents for their political corruption, the protestors call them "nonbelievers" and their own illegal buildings, "The Village of God" (Abdullah 32). The instructive signs are defied and despised as a kind of protest for lack of other legal channels that guarantee mutual respect and effective communication between governments and the public. People show their protest by breaking the rules especially with the absence of effective surveillance techniques. They urinate on a sign that says "Do not Urinate" and establish buildings where they should not. As Arissa complains, "What can the public do when they can't even get basic necessities?"(18, 19)

As Danaher points out, "Another way in which penal disciplines have influenced the wider society has been in their focus on norms" (59). People who take one step away from under the umbrella of normalcy are pushed even further to the peripheries where they meet the burning gaze of rejection. Then they would rather give up whatever makes them stand out in a crowd and accept "the normative values" that are hopefully expected to make them pass as "good citizens". Foucault argues that "the knowledge and truth produced by the human sciences was, on one level, tied to power because of the way in which it was used to regulate and normalize individuals" (Danaher 26). These norms become effective via hospitals, schools, and other institutions that "divide the normal from the abnormal" (Danaher xiii). Normalcy in the US has nothing to do with personal freedom. It is mainly concerned with how to invest in the human resources so as to get maximum benefit from each person to ensure the strengthening of the state. In Pakistan, as

well as in Jordan they are devised within the limits of "sociohistorical constraints" (Taylor 7) that are wrapped within stifling cloaks of holiness and esteem to stigmatize the dissenters with religious disobedience. When Salwa and her boyfriend kiss in public nobody seems to care, but when he sends the wrong client to her cubicle he becomes the center of their colleagues' censure and criticism. Reflecting upon that public kiss Salwa observes that "At home that wouldn't happen. Tongues would have wagged from the first glance, and nothing would have gone beyond" (201). Looking at the first ultrasound of her fetus, Arissa sees "a perfectly formed baby boy", (66) while the doctors and nurses investigating the photos and calculating the measures declare that they can detect "fetal growth retardation" (66). In a condemnation of deviance from normality, Arissa states that "Even nature determined that the moment was not important enough to be recorded"(Abdullah 86).

Muslims in the United States become subject to what Foucault calls "dividing practices", a "process of distinguishing people on the basis of their perceived normality" (Danaher 60). After the disaster of the Towers the sphere of normality shrinks even tighter to include criteria that were not part of the normalcy standards before. Names, features and attires that indicate Arabs or Muslims check citizens out of the normal zone. The problem is that sometimes the standards become quite subjective. When an American citizen, Jake, goes to buy drugs, he states that he "would have been more comfortable with a normal-looking person, someone like himself" (Halaby 74). Connecting her name with Arabic origins, a bank client decides against being served by Salwa, "I think I'd feel more comfortable working with someone I can understand better" (Halaby 114). Faced with the unjustified accusations of the FBI and his boss, Jassim defends himself saying, "I am a *normal* person who happens to be an Arab" (Halaby 232). Accordingly, Arissa's hijab, too, becomes an abnormality that she gets rid of in order not to shed more negative light on her son's disabilities. She chooses to offer her son "one less chance of being singled out... an opportunity to mingle and fit in better...there would be plenty of times when he would be regarded differently, and the least I could offer him was one less deviation from the norm" (Abdullah 105).

What happens to Arissa illustrates the concept of "descending individualism" which indicates that "we become more individuated the further down the scale we are" (Danaher 58). Before the disastrous September, when Faizan and Arissa try to melt in the American society by kissing in public, they are not disturbed by the disdainful gazes of other Muslims since they do not register them out of the mainstream. After the disaster, the media hunts Arissa in an attempt to prove that all Muslims are alike since they follow the same religion. She feels naked in her hijab which individualizes her in a society where almost all individuals have become "judges of normality" (Danaher 60). Having no strings to pull or release She is lost in the intricate web of power relations. She throws away her hijab hoping to partake in "the pleasure of popular culture in contemporary western societies [which] is associated with the desire to become part of an undifferentiated mass" (Danaher 59). Arissa is temporarily relieved when for some time she is removed from under the public gaze by a banner she was offered by mistake in a demonstration protesting or calling for something that she is not aware of. For the short span of the walk, Arissa wallows in the luxury of being invisible, "defined as part of a large group" (Danaher 59), floating invisibly with the undifferentiated mob. Invisibility in the large group temporarily empowers Arissa giving her a string to pull regardless of the fact that she does not know in which direction.

Foucault gives ample thought to the concept of freedom and differentiates between political freedom which concerns "the liberties one does or does not have as a member of a particular society" (May 73) and metaphysical freedom which is a much more complicated concept concerned with the choices a human being makes in his/her inner world where no sovereign reigns but him/herself. There, a person's thoughts may roam the universe of his mind totally unabashed till they finally reach or never reach decisions about the issues that make a person who he/she really is. As Todd May explains metaphysical freedom is a term that "challenges the doctrine of determinism", i.e. "the view that human beings are in control of none of their actions or thoughts" (72). Foucault does not deny metaphysical freedom, yet, in agreement with structuralism, he denies the idea of a free subject. Robert Hughes argues that according to Foucault, "human beings can never



be in control of their history or destiny" (71). "Part of our socialization", agrees Danaher, "influences us to make ourselves the subject of our own gaze, and so we are constantly monitoring our bodies, actions and feelings" (54). Human beings are always subject to constraints, but these constraints are historical, not metaphysical. They come in the form of a legacy of beliefs and traditions that are revered and cherished for no other reason than having been believed in and practiced for a long time. Foucault also highlights the colossal shift from "restraint" to "constraint" which results in more conformity and less possibility of resistance since "*constraint*" provides a subtler, albeit tighter grip upon societies. He contends that while restraint is practiced in prisons where "docile bodies" obedient to authority are created, constraint is practiced on a wider level upon entire nations by borrowing such prison techniques as surveillance and intervention. Surveillance and intervention, however, acquire new meanings when they are transferred from prison to the outside world. In place of concrete walls and iron bars, higher walls and more impenetrable bars have been erected to mold people's minds and psychological constitutions within the even tighter frames of historical constraints and normative judgments. What is even more serious is that the historical constraints on people's behavior "do not operate by stopping people from doing something that they might otherwise be tempted to do" (May 76). They are worked so systematically as to "create people to be certain kinds of ways, and by doing so make them into docile bodies" (May 76). Awareness of these constraints which come in the form of a historical legacy and the unjustifiable claims they have upon their adherents is essential for the stimulation of resistance. While discussing the hijab issue and how it has become a life threat for Muslims in the US, Arissa's mother-in-law describes the stages in which a certain tradition is embedded in the psychological frames of people. "I started wearing my scarf when I was ten", she tells Arissa, "When my sister and I complained that it would not stay put...my father shouted, 'Drill it down with a nail'. After a while, they did feel like nails burrowed into our skulls" (Abdullah 108). Ma acknowledges the fact that traditions are time bound. She concludes her speech saying that "Times have changed...the tradition also was to live back

home"(108).

The two novels copy the colossal shift from restraint to constraint which illustrates how through various institutions and disciplines societies practice the manipulation of bodies as a bypass for the ideological manipulation of minds. "Sociohistorical constraints" are so deeply embedded within the societies that are less welcoming of political freedom. While restraint creates docile bodies, constraint produces docile minds that conform to the dictates of the prescribed norms as their own freely elected patterns of behavior thereby eliminating all possibilities of resistance.

Freedom is also essential for the achievement of subjectivity, "one of the most defining characteristics of modern life" (McGushin 127). "Subjectivity" is a term that "replaces the commonsense notion that our identity is the product of our conscious, self-governing self and, instead, presents individual identity as the product of discourses, ideologies and institutional practices" (Danaher xiv, xv). "Maybe the target nowadays", Foucault writes, "is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are" (1982, 216). Foucault is particularly concerned with the task of finding the true self as opposed to the disciplinary self, conferred upon individuals by the sociohistorical constraints of a certain society. He defines this task as the "care for the self" and subjectivity as "what we make of ourselves when we do devote ourselves to taking care of ourselves" (McGushin 128). Although Taylor maintains that "We take up and occupy the subject positions that our sociohistorical context makes available to us", she agrees with Foucault that "we can unmake ourselves, or make ourselves differently" if "we use the norms and values of our society in new ways, work on creating totally new forms of subjectivity, or even dispense with the subject as a mode of existence" (Taylor 7). This experimentation with who a person is, embracing or rejecting norms and values, enhances the practices of freedom.

Foucault argues that subjectivity is "an active becoming, rather than a fixed being" (McGushin 135). Therefore, "the quest to discover or find oneself-in the form of an essence or substance-is futile" (McGushin 135). He therefore presents the technique, "care of the self" (2005a 12) which helps achieve a "relational, dynamic and restless, potentially unruly and unpredictable" form of subjectivity as

opposed to "hermeneutic" or "confessional" subjectivity" (McGushin 135). "Hermeneutic" or "confessional" subjectivity assumes that the self is a fixed essence lurking inside the human being and therefore "self-expression" (confession) and self-interpretation (hermeneutics) is all that is needed to form subjectivity. Foucault is attacked by many writers for his abject rejection of the idea of "a self-governing subject" (Danaher 31). Hughes argues that Foucault's ideas suggest that "we are not in control of our own history and never can be" (71). But Foucault does not completely deny personal freedom and free will in relation to the achievement of subjectivity. To achieve this paradoxical task of extricating a person's true self from amongst the layers of social and historical constraints, however, he suggests three concepts, "thought", "criticism" and "problematization". These concepts refer to mental activities practicing which "we can both reflect on our own position as social subjects, and attempt to negotiate, and negotiate with, the social order" (Danaher 44). "Thought" according to Foucault is "freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem" (1997: xxxv). Criticism, is "a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying" (1997: xxxv). It is the critical work that an individual does upon him/herself when he/she views it as "an object of self-reflexive thought" (1997: xxxv). Combined, "Thought and criticism ... enable us to problematize- and, potentially, transform-our subjectivity" (Danaher 45).

Faced with the tragic loss of her husband, Arissa's status as a married woman who has "a sheltered existence" is shattered and she has to redefine herself. She is faced with an urgent need to form her subjectivity, i.e. know who she is, where she stands and where she would rather be. Vitalized by the need to understand her past and her present in terms of each other, Arissa takes care of herself the Foucauldian way by performing the processes of thought, criticism and problematization. She detaches herself from herself and her personal experience and insightfully reflects upon both; "My own voice seemed foreign to me", she observes (155). She realizes that she has to achieve balance in her life, mostly between the different

sociocultural milieus she belongs to regarding both as experimental and taking neither for granted. Unlike Halaby's Salwa, Arissa does not feel obliged to honor one culture by condemning the other or regard her loyalty to one land as a betrayal of the other. She does not regard herself as a solid entity that came from her home country in one piece with the words "Made in Pakistan" written upon the cover. On the contrary she sees herself and her life experience as one of the canvas paintings she starts without deciding how the final picture will be. With each stroke of the brush new colors add new meanings to the painting; similarly, with each decision she takes, Arissa's life experience is enhanced and her subjectivity expands to host a new Arissa that embraces the old and the new selves, leaving a space for the future selves that will come into being as a result of the new decisions and choices she will take and make. According to Foucault, "arts-including but not limited to reading, thinking, writing...allow [a person] to get free of himself" (McGushin 140). Arissa reflects thoughtfully upon her life while drawing pictures with the "subtle details that makes something yours and unique" (133). She relates herself to the paintings in terms of how they liberate the inner self struggling to emerge and begging to differ with the present one. She also takes upon herself the completion of a writing project that her late husband started, but decides to rewrite from a different point of view. In her attempt to understand the characters she is supposed to give life to, Arissa makes sense of herself, her life and her experience. She realizes that being what she is, is not a matter of her free choice, but, in agreement with Foucault, a matter of the discourses and sociopolitical constraints she was forced to experience life through. She speaks about Pakistan as "the country that shaped us" (174). When she starts having driving classes and realizes that she will always have her limitations, she concludes, "I was the product of a country where I always expected to be driven to places" (153). Like harnesses these constraints were fixed to her eyes to direct her vision so that she saw what she saw and believed what she believed. She criticizes the themes she has hitherto welcomed as the givens of her life and as such problematizes and dramatically transforms herself. Arissa forsakes the submissive believer in determinism which she recognizes as a product of her Pakistani background and awakens the "planner" in her.

Arisa carries her responsibility as a free person who should have a say in defining what is right and what is wrong for herself and replace the life that was outlined for her by the blueprint of her own devising. She outgrows the Calvinistic predestination of her Pakistani society and the belief that "God has determined everything that is going to happen, and that human life is merely a playing out of God's script" (May 72). Belief in predestination is obvious in the many predictions that pervade the novel. People devise tricks to sneak upon fate and get a glimpse of what is going to happen since everything has already been written in God's book. All the foreseer needs to do is peek ahead to sneak on fate. Even though Arissa meets Faizan, the love of her life accidentally in the United States, what finally brings them together is an arranged marriage carried out by a matchmaker. Abdullah hints that in Pakistan, "arranged marriages ... gave [parents] perfect control over their children's destinies" (23). Arissa and Faizan are given truthful predictions about their future. "You came to the world with losses, you wretched woman", a fortuneteller predicts for Arissa, uninvited (36). Faizan comes to the world with a definite brief of his story. Even his religion is marked by a birthmark that takes the shape of a crescent, the symbol of his religion, on his chin. He, too, has a detailed account of how his life would end. "Fire dancer! There's misfortune in your fate", a formidable foreseer volunteers. "Giant flames will be his blanket one day... he will dance with fire one day, but he will not win" (46). When the prophecy comes exactly true, her mother-in-law assuages Arissa's guilt stating that "there is a time reserved for each one of us. When it comes, we have no say, no power to stop it... Prayers... fall on deaf ears, and the one who is to be snatched away will be plucked from this earth" (109). Still Arissa blames herself for not listening to Faizan when he urgently demanded that they return to Pakistan because the new Arissa values her role as a planner. Arissa realizes that life as she has hitherto accepted hers, as a predetermined scenario that she is acting out, makes her like the rider of "a toy horse, galloping on bound legs, destination firmly defined, thrilled with providence... in naiveté" (Abdullah 2). She decides that as she takes time for grief, she must also have "a quiet time for reflection" (2). "Some choices are never yours", she admits, "your life's events

choose them for you" (106). Still she acknowledges her political and metaphysical freedom when she participates in a demonstration and stands up her grounds against the media's attempt to confer upon her a certain status, "Muslim harmed by Muslim" and (123). She exercises her free will to change what she is given, into what she would rather have when she decides to keep her abnormal baby and takes the long journey to help him become as "normal" as possible. Alongside her perseverance to normalize her child who faces physical challenges, goes her personal struggle to shape her new subjectivity regarding the normative standards of both USA and Pakistan on an equal stance rejecting and accepting what suits her personal goals. "I also learned the lesson of life from a little voice in my ear" states Arissa, "there's no real sense in stepping out of the cave of your past if you get trapped in yet again by your existing baggage" (Abdullah 172).

Arisa detaches herself from the disciplinary contexts of both Pakistan and USA to define her true self that "has not been molded or made to conform, that has not been disciplined" (McGushin 134). Taking or losing the hijab is seen as a matter of historical and traditional constraint; she is abandoning a tradition, not a religion. The only justification that Faizan offers Arissa for wearing the hijab is that "For generations, women in his household had worn the veil. It's just something that was done, no questions asked, no explanations needed" (58). Setting off the journey of self-discovery, Arissa decides that the first step to take is to get off that wooden horse and acknowledge her power as an effective agent who can bring about a change in the world as well as in her own life.

According to Foucault, a problem of subjectivity ensues if a person concludes his self-seeking activities assuming that he/she has found, once and for all, who he/she is. Then "we start to accept a static, fixed idea of who and what we are, and then we are inclined to neglect the development of the active relationship, which is the real life and heart of subjectivity" (McGushin 129). A human self should be subjected to an ever going process of coping and regeneration by continuously reacting and adapting to social and political changes and also by having a flexible ideological stance that defines who a person is. Believing, however, that a person has decided, once and for all, where he/she stands creates a problem of subjectivity since it

results in a tight selfhood that stands rigid, therefore fracture prone in the face of the inevitable ebbs and flows of life.

Unlike Arissa, Jassim and Salwa attempt to achieve what Foucault calls "hermeneutic" or "confessional" subjectivity, i.e. subjectivity that is "formed through the activities of self-interpretation and self-expression" (McGushin 134). Jassim wears his identity like an iron mask immune to shifts or transformations. He views himself and his wife within fixed frames as obvious in the names they give each other; "Father of Water Preservation" and "Miss Pajamas". When he loses his job, therefore, his life goes astray. Significantly, they are both seen the same way by people. When his wife is carried to the hospital beaten and mutilated by her lover, Jassim still insists that she is "incapable of any sort of illicit behavior" (328) and when asked about his friend, Marcus insists that Jassim is "incapable of being ... moved toward evildoing" (237).

Salwa has built her subjectivity upon the fixed idea that she is an Arab who belongs to "lands holier than this" (Halaby 210) and therefore should abide by its laws. Asked about the nationality of his wife, Jassim states that she is a Jordanian in spite of the fact that she is American born. Being with her lover, all she can think of is "the impossibility of what she was doing, allowing an American boy to envelop her married self" (175). Salwa craves a child to fill a hole in her life, but never summons enough courage to face her husband with her feelings. When she decides to stop the pills she pretends to herself that someone else is throwing them down the drain negating her own will. Salwa is always trying to explain herself even to herself and goes to confess her affair to her Jordanian friend, Randa. Foucault explains that "the confession" plays a part even "in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life" (McGushin 134). Accordingly, "one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell" (McGushin 134). However, Foucault maintains that hermeneutics and confession help the person attain what he calls "disciplinary subjectivity" since, in doing so, a person still fails to "discern and express the inner truth" (McGushin 134). He/she evaluates him/herself within the disciplinary context of a certain code of ethics laid out for the citizens of a certain society. Salwa willingly exposes herself to the relentless gaze of her countrywoman

knowing how she will be judged and the latter directs her to go immerse herself in the context of her home country culture to get re-disciplined accordingly.

Randa massages Salwa with "Fingers stuffed with centuries of wisdom, knots of history and meaning, somehow accidentally transported to this desert world" (102). "Wisdom" and "history" acquire different meanings when people move from one land to another. If a person has blindly fixated his/her subjectivity around them, they accompany him to foreign lands in the form of cultural barriers that complicate life and result in split subjectivity. Unlike Arissa, Salwa and Jassim never stop to reflect upon or problematize the givens of both cultures. According to Foucault what they should have done is detach themselves from both cultures, examine them from a distance to finally have a personal stance from them regardless of historical backgrounds which, to Foucault, are actually historical constraints. Moving away from "the notion that there is just one right way of seeing and being" (Danaher 158), the performer of these mental activities might end up denouncing , embracing or modifying elements of both cultures turning them from barriers into his/her own choices. After their discussion about the hijab, Arissa decides to take hers off, because it shouted "Look at me; I follow the same religion as the one who harmed you" (106), while her mother-in-law holds even tighter to hers. Later both are quite satisfied with the choices they have made, not just received and accepted.

Focusing her attention on a certain self and spending energy trying to define and express that self, Salwa "neglect[s] [her] subjective becoming, which is taken over by processes of disciplinary training and normalization" (McGushin 135). Salwa is torn between two contradictory discourses that have opposed views particularly regarding sexual behavior and family values. Instead of freeing herself from the shackles of both to embrace the true self that will emerge, ironically Salwa blindly aligns with the codes of the culture of the homeland she deserted. Halaby describes her as "empty" and her dreams as "used up", because they are not actually her dreams, but those of someone else. She ends up practicing in reality what she condemns in principle. Salwa focuses on the self that is revealed through confession and interpretation, but fails to notice that "these very activities themselves are what define us and



make us into the kind of person we are" (McGushin 134). Confession and interpretation guide Salwa only to reveal the divided self that is imposed upon her as a result of living in two disciplinary systems and she collapses as a result of failure to find her true self that is never given a chance to show up. She is as she describes herself, "trained in containment but yearning to break free" (Halaby 190). Salwa ends up utterly negating her subjectivity by pretending to be unconscious a long time after she actually regains her consciousness. She willingly shuts herself down unable to function and defend who she is and her life comes to a standstill. She stands in disgraceful opposition to Abdullah's Ami, "a winged creature" (20), who sees sociohistorical constraints for what they are and upholds to her metaphysical freedom freeing the jenny from the bottle and allowing her to assert herself against the tyranny of stereotypical female models. "I can't be a prisoner here, now or ever" (131), she declares to her husband. Her true self rejects constraints and the social roles allotted to Pakistani women: "I hate being your wife, a mother" (131). Therefore, Ami too flees to USA wishing for more freedom and to escape the power of the gaze which individuates her singling her out and trying to fit her into certain norms that threaten to stifle her subjectivity.

In response to the confessional, hermeneutic form of subjectivity that ensues as a result of succumbing to a disciplinary form of life, Foucault cites the "arts/technologies of the self" and "arts of living" in the works of ancient philosophers particularly Marcus Aurelius and Seneca. "The examination of conscience," is a kind of "accounting or administrative activity" that should be undertaken both at the beginning and at the end of the day. A person should begin his day with "an anticipatory examination of conscience", which is "a form of preparation and memory" that helps "remember...goals and...principles...be prepared for the events of the day so [as]...not to forget what [he/she is] trying to achieve" (McGushin 138). This examination is concerned with a person's future plans, "not at all going back over what you could have done in the night or the day before" (McGushin 137) like Salwa who always wishes for a rewind button to retrieve the important stations of her life and behave differently. In a related vein, Foucault also

advocates "a belated self-examination" that guides a person to "take...some time at the end of the day to recollect and record what he has done that day" (McGushin 138). That evening examination is "a test of the reactivation of the fundamental rules of action, of the ends we should have in mind, and of the means we should employ to achieve these ends and the immediate objectives we may set ourselves" (McGushin 138).

Arissa forms a relationship to herself using "an anticipatory examination of conscience". Although she occasionally goes back to examine what she could have done or how she could have acted differently, she mainly concerns herself with what she could do to manage the future and describes herself as a planner. Arissa always has definite goals and principles in mind although these goals and principles are flexible, a sign that they are self-imposed and not dictated by society. According to McGushin, these "techniques of self-examination are ways of taking care of oneself in the sense that they assist one in the activity of becoming the self that one wants or needs to be" (138). They launch a person within a certain form of self/subjectivity that is solid and definitive, albeit prone to further development as a result of accumulated experiences and surrounding changes.

Only two months into her widowhood, Arissa devises a "plan of action" with a list of assignments she believes necessary to adapt to "the new twist" in her life (Abdullah 80). Along the road, she omits and adds to her list in an indication that the new Arissa that will emerge will not be a final version of the present one, but an energetic living being that will always be prone for change and regeneration. "The planner in me", she observes, "made a mental note-it was time for a change" (111). Carrying out her first decision, losing the hijab, she takes a walk which she describes as "therapeutic" (116) since it gives her the chance to revise, evaluate and reconsider what she did earlier in the day: "It gave me a chance to order my thoughts, to assign them slots in my mind or to jerk them loose" (116). For Arissa, this examination of conscience works as a memory exercise. She adds and omits from her list to register what happened during the day and also be alert to the rules she should always have in mind while pursuing her goals. Her most important goal, finishing Faizan's writing project, remains the longest in her list

since it requires Arissa to articulate her thoughts and her new vision of life. Change and adapt are her passwords for survival and coping. She finds her new subjectivity in this ever going process of coping and adapting. "The truth is I am a planner", she surmises, "I hav[e] to start afresh, plan anew, plot out probable challenges along the way"(80).

Among the major arts of the self that Foucault borrows from ancient philosophy is the "contemplation of nature and of external reality", a practice that he maintains has "a powerful, transformative effect on one's relationship to oneself and the way one lives" (McGushin 139). Placing human experience within the larger contexts of nature and external realities raises an individual above the limitations and mundaneness of the personal enabling him/her to keep his/her own choices and attitudes in perspective. Contemplating the magnificent universe and how it hosts diverse worlds enlightens a human being as to the way he/she relates to his/her personal world. The importance of this art of the self is that it widens the scope of subjectivity to encompass the cosmos in addition to the inner life of the individual. Practicing this type of subjectivity, a citizen challenges presuppositions that act as blinders forcing people to pursue their self-discovery activities within the social and historical constraints. Soaring above the frivolous albeit all-consuming trivialities of everyday life, a person sees himself/herself and his/her life for what they really are; a ring in an endless chain. The history and future of individuals and even nations are brief, insignificant moments in the history of the world. This endows a person with unlimited freedom of choice and the courage to effect a change in their sphere of life which now appears "hardly a speck of dust swallowed up in the endless expanses of space, completely insignificant in relation to the power and beauty of the heavenly bodies" (McGushin 139). The only occasion when Jassim takes notice of natural scenery is when he is taking Penny to the Botanical Gardens. From behind his iron mask subjectivity he sees nature only for what it is with the eyes of a hydrologist, examining how the different plants secure their needs of water. The scenery inspires neither self-examination nor a reflection on his personal life and therefore does not enhance Jassim's subjectivity.

Contemplating the behavior of trees in autumn helps Arissa make up her mind regarding the achievement of her new subjectivity. She notices that some trees are reluctant to shed their leaves and reflects on an old saying that "it will be a bad winter if trees decide to hold on to their leaves" (Abdullah 1). In unison with nature, Arissa decides "to carry out the first task on [her] list" and sheds her old self "when fall was about to lose its hue" (1). Arissa realizes that right and wrong have different definitions in different societies with different historical backgrounds. In her relationship with Zaki, it is Arissa who decides when and how to begin and end the relationship instead of shedding all responsibility on fate. In another occasion she notices that "the sunlight beamed with a magical quality, wanting to envelop us in its shiny embrace. Instead, we looked for shade and put on our shades" (107). This experience inspires her to bridge the cultural barrier between her first and second homelands by publishing interviews she makes with exemplary Asians who are good representatives of their culture and religion in the US. Reading the weather forecast, Arissa learns that "A sharp change in the jet stream will channel numerous storm systems into the Atlantic", and she reflects that, "One was raging within me as I walked" (2). She tells herself, "You can do anything you set your mind to" (Abdullah 105). A new Arissa is born: "In the glass pane of a Starbucks, I stared at the new me-bold, unabashed, sans the veil that I had retired within" (115). Arissa liberates herself from a tradition that did not fit her new life, not from a religion. "After all", explains Foucault, "what would be the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself" (1990b:8).

To conclude, every society has an intricate web of power relations that determines the dynamics of the social gaze within the relevant discourses. The present reading of the novels at hand ascertains facts and reveals major differences in perspective and attitude between the societies represented in both novels. Parallel to the discourse of discipline and organization that characterizes life in the US goes the discourse of fate and predestination in Jordan and Pakistan. Despite the great value Islam confers upon science and scientists, the word fate helps citizens and states refer the

misfortunes that befall them as a result of the absence of a clear, biopolitical plan to the discourse of religion. Arts, like poetry and painting, help advertise the popular discourse of predestination which negates personal freedom and shifts individual and state responsibility to an abstract entity, i.e., fate, a blurred combination of slackness and lack of planning.

The concept of discipline as surveillance and intervention, so pervasive in the American society, is so ridiculously absent in Jordan and Pakistan where people establish a whole village on a prohibited area. In the US people have so internalized the rules that they respect them watched or not; watched, however, is the rule. Discipline is easy to internalize when citizens are confident in the biopolitical agenda of their governments that regard them as the main investment and offer them equal chances. According to the two novels, the governments of Jordan and Pakistan lack a clear vision of how to invest in the natural and human resources, therefore, people have doubts as to their efficiency in planning and providing what is best for the public. Shaila and Halaby agree that believing in the system is a prerequisite for internalizing its dictates.

Notably, discipline and constraint in USA achieve the vital function of establishing order and organizing public life, while in Jordan and Pakistan they are mostly concerned with laying boundaries on personal life, how people are dressed, the appropriate age for marriage, and how far they approximate the social roles allotted to them through a system they mostly regard as unfair and do not fully comprehend. The defiance of the laws reflects a deep-rooted mistrust in governments and a disgraceful lack of political freedom.

In the US, an internal gaze is activated through institutions that work according to a clear, carefully laid agenda that reflects the dominant discourses determining good citizenship. It imposes constraints that are mainly concerned with regulating a person's public behavior within the set rules. Sending a bank client to the wrong cubicle in the US, incurs the censure and rejection that an extramarital relationship would in Jordan or Pakistan. In Jordan and Pakistan the word "constraint" is used almost synonymously with the word "conscience" which also activates the internal gaze but in this

case with the intention of watching over a person's personal life. Most of these societies attempt to create self-discipline by activating a sense of inner surveillance, which is usually connected to religion and the fear of God Who is supposed to watch over everybody and monitor the balance of justice. The delayed punishment in the hereafter, however, does not pose a real threat as compared to the immediate principle of rewarding and punishment applied in the US. Finally, as Foucault maintains, nobody is excluded from the network of power; it remains for every individual, institution and country to decipher their situation in the force relations to improve their positions in the scale of power and form their subjectivities accordingly.

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