A Non-Western Representation of the Third World Women in Nadia Hashimi’s *A House without Windows*

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Abstract  
Third-world women in western literature have often been depicted as submissive, illiterate, vulnerable, and having no identity. They are cast from the outside discourses, always entangled in the gaze of the west as being primitive. Yet the world is open to change with viable feminist female practices to enhance the accurate and exact image of third-world women. Nadia Hashimi’s *A House Without Windows* is a manifestation of deconstructing the false stereotyped image created by the West writers through skillfully presenting the real pressing contemporary issues of Afghan women in their society with diverse forms of ordeals. This paper aims to reflect upon the significant differences between stereotypical western depictions of third world women— are portrayed in mainstream western discourses as weak and in need of help— and their representation by Non-Western writers. It further explores how the female characters can cope with life hardships and pass the closures with no fear despite the difficulties of living within the nonwestern codes of patriarchy and culture. Investigating Hashmi's novel is significant because it presents an accurate depiction of third-world women together with a variety of their inspirational tales, correcting and changing the stereotyped western representation. This study elucidates the Transnational Feminist Theory as a remarkable framework for comprehending the gap between the global north and south to address the representation of third-world women. Consequently, dismantling the stereotypical images of women in the third world and the phony universalization of global sisterhood is investigated by reflecting upon the vivid pictures of strong women.  
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Introduction

Third-world women are often assessed according to several political, local, and social standards, which western feminists believe are essential in attaining a power balance between men and women. Because social context norms are disregarded, all Third World women are viewed as passive, non-resistant, and living in patriarchal environments where they are equally devastated, tenuous, and hibernate in their dullness. This anthropological totality results from the disregarding for social context norms (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). Furthermore, by elevating a single group's status as the “norm or referent,” as with the west, the distinction (binarism) between western feminists Vs. Third-world women are established (Mohanty, 2003).

Western feminist discourse characterizes third-world women as “subjects outside social relations” (Mohanty et al., 1991, p.72). The structures of law, economy, religion and family are regarded as phenomena to be assessed according to western norms. These structures are identified in terms of under-developed and developed by which women are positioned amid them. Consequently, the stereotypical image of third-world women appears in all western writings and discourses, for this the ethnocentric universality can thus be read and witnessed. Western feminists’ focus on gender is fixed as the core element of women’s oppression, transforming what is called “oppressed woman into the oppressed third world woman” (p.72). Universality is, therefore “universalizing the white condition across the board” (Hegde, 1998, p.275). Depicting the third-world women, a category is described as “Religious (not progressive) … legal minors (they are still not conscious of their rights), illiterate (ignorant), domestic (backward) and sometimes revolutionary (their country is in a state of war; they must fight!).” (Mohanty et al., 1991, p.72).

Transnational as a term has been engendered out of the particular historical periods in The United States and Canadian academia, comparable to concepts of “women of color feminisms, third world feminisms, multicultural feminisms, international feminisms, and global feminisms” (Swarr & Nagar, 2010, p.3). Likewise, the term Transnational as Grewal and Kaplan (2001) argue, “has become so ubiquitous in cultural, literary and critical studies that much of its political valence seems to have become evacuated” (p.664). Transnational Feminism as a theory was first developed in 1994 by Inderpal Grewal, and Caren Kaplan in their book Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices, which is “viewed as canonical in defining and conceptualizing transnational feminisms” (Swarr & Nagar, 2010, p. 9) and positioned Transnational Feminism as a theory among other feminists, modernity and postmodernity studies (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994).

The Term Transnational is effective when it draws attention “to uneven and dissimilar circuits of culture and capital” (Grewal et al., 2002, p.73). Such a profound understanding of the connections between racism, colonialism, patriarchies, and Feminism become increasingly visible and open to critique. Transnational Feminist knowledge is unlike the humanist concept of comparative study; they are distinct. As; the cultures, locales, and nations being compared are created by colonial episteme, it becomes imperative to examine such frameworks (Grewal et al., 2002). Putting the perspective of linkage instead of comparison empowers scholars to criticize “a
reductionist and mystified world systems model of center and periphery, a model that deploys notions such as authenticity and tradition” (p.76).

Constructing a theory of “hegemonic oppression under a unified category of gender” is incorrect as it engenders differences between women and results in the exploitation and suppression of most women (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994, pp.17-18). This is where transnational Feminism must be acknowledged to grasp the material conditions that construct the lives of women in various locations. Thus, developing an efficient opposition to the existing cultural and economic hegemonies is one way to restrict the aforementioned strategy (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). Likewise, diversity and difference are essential values here to be respected and acknowledged, not erased in building alliances (Mohanty, 2003).

The Transnational feminist movements endeavor to enable women in various places across borders to define the diverse forms of oppression, and the social frameworks of patriarchy, and distort “white western feminists” practices, as a discursive process to articulate transnational coalitions and solidarities (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994). To grasp feminist practices in global contexts, would entail changing the analysis course from national, regional, and local culture to cross-cultural connections (Alexander & Mohanty, 1997). Transnational feminist networks bridge the dimensions through the production of assistance and sources, raising awareness of regional and local forms of suppression and integrating them into international discourses (Cited in Dempsey et al., 2011). Further, revealing white global feminism’s unwarranted universalization of gender that “has stood for a kind of western cultural imperialism” and “elided the diversity of women’s agency” is the main impetus of transnational feminism, as stated by Grewal and Kaplan (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994, p. 17).

Transnational Feminism, which is a radical framework that can address the differences and linkages between the Global North and South is often connected to authors like Mohanty (1986), Lazreg (1988), and Trinh (1991). Writings by these authors and others like them have emerged to challenge the predominance of the dogmatic idea of "Third-World Women" as victims, highlighting the necessity of showcasing their participation, activism, and agency as well as reframing the idea of Third World Women as fragile in order to seek various forms of transnational collaborations and solidarities (Swarr & Nagar, 2010). Further, more Non-western writers like Spivak, and her fellow Edward Said, have maintained in their literary writing the diverse forms of Western hegemonic agency over the third world. They invest their position and knowledge to protest against the mainstream of the west universalization. Besides, how these native representations are problematic (Kapoor, 2004). Nadia Hashimi is one of those feminist writers who present the viable ingredients of her country (heritage). Also disclosed the distortion of the west concerning third-world women along with their universalization of women’s issues.

Nadia Hashimi, the author of A House Without Windows, is an Afghan-American pediatrician and writer who lives in the Washington suburbs. Due to the environment Hashimi was raised in, and the family members were surrounding her, supported her in obtaining higher education. Her aunts worked in all areas of professional domains, in the airlines for the United Nations. Nadia grew up with the knowledge and awareness of that picture of Afghanistan in her mind, a place where women could accomplish many things (Library of Congress, 2016, 1:52). Her
Writings lean heavily on the truth. Hashimi depicted the reality and the situation of women in Afghanistan. Though she was not raised in the homeland of her parents (Afghanistan) since Hashimi was born and raised in America, she is still aware of many of the cultural expectations, values, and the notion of a reputation for a girl in her Afghan community (Better Reading, 2016, 5:22). Hashimi is a prolific writer. She owns the credit for her international bestselling novels like *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell*, *When the Moon is Low*, *A House Without Windows* (Salman et al., 2020), *One Half from the East*, *The Sky at Our Feet*, and *Sparks Like Stars* (Goodreads). In all of her novels, she is highly concerned about Afghanistan and has a lot of compassion for the Afghan women who are the nation’s constant victims (Vincily, 2020). She seems to create a distinct voice, highlighting Afghan women’s struggles that are considerably overlooked by the government and society. Similarly, she works to raise awareness about the violence committed against women in Afghanistan’s patriarchal environment (Salman et al., 2020).

Women’s challenges remain a problem in Afghanistan (Wahab & Youngerman 2007). In Afghanistan society, violence against women “is considered a widespread and undeniable reality.” The types of violence vary from economic, physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological. Nevertheless, the increasing number of assaults shows that violence against women is not only pervasive but also promoted the growing awareness of women's rights, which led to more instances and cases to be reported (Hasrat & pfefferle, 2002). Afghan women resisted and fought the power systems imposed upon them. During the period (1996-2001) under the Taliban, women established secret organizations and schools for women and girls for such institutes were not allowed. They; converted their homes into underground networks, and risked their lives to foster communal cohesiveness. Afghan; women aspire to participate in the construction of their country, which is contrary to the west’s depiction as passive, victims of violence, war, and political oppression, and accordingly, need to be liberated by the west’s intervention (Povey, 2007). Hence Afghan women must be acknowledged as change agents (Cited in Povey, 2007).

Third-world women are disregarded by their peers in the west. The discourses of western feminists deformed third-world women images and experiences as uneducated, savage, weak, having no identity, and subordinated to patriarchy authority. The aim of this study is to tackle the problem as mentioned earlier, how the western feminists perceived third-world women, and to achieve this aim, the study relies upon fulfilling the following objectives:

1. Re-represent third-world women, depicting their actual realities and experiences as strong women capable of accomplishing a lot of achievements and conquering the chains and restraints of their societies.
2. Offering the various ordeals third-world women suffer on a daily basis along with their strength to encounter those obstacles.
3. Drawing on Transnational Feminist theory as a framework to present an original analysis of Hashimi’s *A House Without Windows*.

1. How the western feminists perceived their peers in other parts of the world is the main focus to be disclosed and re-represented the actual identities of third-world women.
2. How western feminists generalized their problems and aims.
3. How western feminists disregard third-world women achievements and ordeals.
4. Literature Review

Nadia Hashimi’s *A House Without Windows* (2016) has earned considerable acclaim for its significant role in reflecting upon the actual image of Afghan women and Afghanistan culture, the compelling thematic concerns, and its exciting details of norms and traditions. Few scholars and students analyzed the novel from different aspects with different approaches, in this respect, Salman, Butt, and Mahmood (2020) have concentrated on violence against women in Afghan patriarchal society in the light of Sylvia Walby’s insight of violence as a theoretical framework. Vincily (2020) highlights the injustices, discrimination, and exploitation Afghan women experience in society and the difficulties they confront in jail. Further, the article sheds light on the burden of being a woman in a country where a woman is always perceived to be a subordinate member.

Fauzia and Rahayu, in their article (2019) *Women’s Struggle against Patriarchy: An Analysis of Radical Feminism Through Nadia Hashimi’s A House Without Windows*, embrace radical Feminism to examine the oppression of women (third world women) in Afghanistan by focusing on the female characters and describing the struggles and ordeals women encounter in a restricted patriarchal environment as well as shedding light on their exceptional resistance. Additionally, Jahan’s (2018) thesis focuses on Pashtunwali, the unwritten code of life followed by the Pashtuns of Afghanistan for generations where the Pashtun people who dwell in Afghanistan and North-West Pakistan adhere rigorously to this code.

In the light of what has been mentioned above, it is undoubtedly clear that fewer researchers have tackled this contemporary novel in respect of adopting new literary methods which were generally qualitative. Contrariwise, linguistics analysis was not shown. Studies that explored Hashimi’s *A House Without Windows* from a feminist perspective resulted in only one discussion, which is far from the Transnational feminist theory that the researcher intends to adopt to fill the gap in the literature. The approach is used to understand and reveal the unfavorable attitudes of western feminists against their peers in the third world. Grewal and Kaplan (1994) detailed the significance of Transnational feminism, and presented the continuity of the binary visions of the inequalities that kept to define the world as center/periphery. Moreover, they were “looking for ways to broaden and deepen the analysis of gender in relation to multiplicity of issues that effect women’s lives.” (p.1). Mohanty (2003), critiques the racial, sexual, and class-based presumptions of Western feminist studies as well as Eurocentric and Western developmentalist discourses. In his book, Mohanty reflects upon the relationships between feminists in both hemispheres; the unstable ones and emphasized that, “Diversity and difference are central values here—to be acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances.” (p.7). Mohanty, Russo, Torres, and Lourdes (1991) deepen readers understanding of Third World women’s difficulties and offer thought-provoking analysis of race, class, gender, and sexuality, as well as the part that imperialism plays in the creation of knowledge and of people. The book is made up of essays, most of them concentrated on the way western feminists perceived third-world women, and how their discourses produce the “image of an ‘average third world woman.’ This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually
constrained) and her being ‘third world’ (read: ignorant, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized).” Grewal, Kaplan and Wiegman (2002) evaluate the women’s field past, present, and prospects while showcasing how institutionalisation has given a new generation of academics and students access to an important, continuing intellectual endeavour. Further, look at how different knowledge divisions—racial, sexual, disciplinary, geopolitical, and economic—have an impact on education.

Swarr and Nagar (2010) examine the philosophy and use of Transnational feminist scholarly and activist methods. In their book, they continue to grapple with issues of power and representation while staying steadfastly devoted to radical criticisms and objectives of postcolonial and Transnational feminisms. Grewal and Kaplan (2001) manifest how Transnational sexualities insists on acknowledging the numerous processes involved in globalization—such as political economies of state, capitalism, diasporic movements, and the disjunctive flow of meanings produced across these sites—that contribute to the formation of specific genders and sexualities. Alexander and Mohanty (1997) explore sexual and gender politics, economic and cultural marginalisation, as well as anti-racist and anti-colonial acts in both the ‘West’ and the ‘Third-World’ from a feminist perspective. Dempsey, Parker, and Krone (2011) investigate the contentious impression of feminist transnationalism by examining the ways in which transnational feminist networks deal with socio-spatial disparities in their individual practises and as a larger social movement.

These studies criticised the predominance of the stereotype of ‘Third-World women’ as helpless victims and highlighted the need to emphasise Third-World women's activity and agency as well as to reframe the narrative. Since Transnational feminism is not used before in Hashimi’s work, this study assures the uniqueness of the current discussion that aims to represent the real image of the strong women of third-world throughout Hashimi’s novel by using the support of the aforementioned works. The study is original in that it will deepen the idea of women’s resistance with their various ordeals against the mainstream universalization of first-world women in a transnational feminist lens. Therefore, the current study provides a new understanding of Hashimi’s novel. The significance of the study is that it contributes to the enrichment of third-world women’s literature.

Methodology

This study falls within the broad category of thematic analysis in literature as it focuses on the ideology of third-world women, portraying their real struggles, varied experiences, and actual image. Transnational feminist theory was used as the study's framework since it perfectly matches the themes of Nadia Hashimi’s novel. The main objective of this approach is to challenge widespread stereotypes that contrast white, classist, and western feminists against their counterparts in the developing world. It also refutes the idea that people from different places have the same subjectivities and experiences. Transnational feminism resists unrealistic ideals of global sisterhood while simultaneously working to provide the groundwork for more beneficial and equitable relationships between women across borders and cultural settings. Hashimi’s A House Without Windows is appropriate to be utilized as data to be analyzed in the light of transnational feminism. In addition, the discussion concentrates on the stories told by the female characters in
Hashimi’s novel to demonstrate their influential roles, varied experiences, and ordeals. This was done to create a new image of these women as a response to the passive characterization of their western sisters.

Analysis

*A House Without Windows* (2016) is full of female characters fighting against cultural norms (Jahan, 2018). Through Hashimi’s concentration on female prisoners in her novel, she brings these problems to light. The author has admitted that though it is a fictional work, it is a genuine representation of Afghanistan’s procedural and penal laws. Her story opens the windows to the world to see how the legal system oppresses Afghan women without even a fair trial (Jahan, 2018). *A House Without Windows* is the third novel for Hashimi, she ornamented it with exciting bits and stories from her culture (Library of Congress, 2016, 16:42). The struggle for independence, autonomy, and how we fit in and connect to the world around us is a prominent theme (PolitySA, 2016, 4:59). *A House Without Windows* is about a female character named Zeba. The latter stands for all women in Afghanistan; she is a simple, ordinary woman who lives in Afghanistan. One day, a commotion happened in their tiny house. Neighbors rushed to fill their courtyard upon her scream, they found her husband murdered with a hatchet in the back of his head, and Zeba resides beside him with stains of blood on her hands. Zeba was shocked that she did not say much in her defense when the accusing fingers were directed toward her. She was then arrested by the police and drawn to prison, where she met a variety of women; those in her cell and others were imprisoned for crimes of immorality and other different accusations (Better Reading, 2016, 00:27).

Zeba embodies the essence of an Afghan woman who had suffered much for the sake of her family and endured her drunken husband who became a monster and abusive over time. Well, nothing is ordinary for Zeba when her husband is found murdered with a hatchet “in the back of his neck” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 22); while she was waiting for her children to come back from school on that day before the incident. Doing the everyday chores, as usual, Zeba heard a sound in her courtyard, a horrible sound that when she went to see, the deadly incident happened within seconds. As the murder took place, she could not defend herself, and in this horrible situation, Zeba was thinking of her children “go back into the house… your sisters, your sisters” (p. 11). This speech shows that Zeba is strong. However, she is unaware of her surroundings due to the impact of the scene of her husband’s murder, yet she can direct her children and protect them from enduring the agony of seeing their father killed in their house, and at the same time, she does not want them to see her (their mother) in this horrible state; weeping and about to be arrested by the police. Zeba reflects the idea of the family as a basic social unit, which the West lacks. El Saadawi believes that the cultural differences (traditions, codes, laws) between third-world countries and Western cultures make it difficult for women from across all cultures, specifically western feminists, to adopt the same feminism and react in the same manner to oppressive causes. “We, in Third World countries are facing life and death issues. We cannot speak about equality for women.” (As Cited in Zairi, 2003, p.77). Women’s status in Afghanistan is intricate; they could be simply accused of a crime they did not commit.
Gulnaz, Zeba’s mother, was not an ordinary woman; she was a sorceress who was not driven by what others wanted her to do. She takes charge of her own decisions, even in the matter of children. Gulnaz decided not to get pregnant due to the chaos the country was going through, the economic and security situation. It was an ill time to bear more children into this world. This thinking engendered a sense of responsibility towards her children. She is wise enough to think before taking a step in this anarchy “Imagine a home led by three different patriarchs in one year, she thought to herself. No, this kind of home could not survive, nor could a country. We will have no more children” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 27). The western feminists passive depiction of third-world women is neither accurate nor true, their aim is, “removing agency from Third World women, often seeing them as passive victims of barbaric and primitive practices… that women are passive, apolitical and conservative,” (Cited in Afshar, 1996, pp. 10-11). Hashimi challenges these prevailing ill-ideas in her novel.

Zeba was growing up as an individual human being. She hated the way people were looking at her as an extension or a copy of Gulnaz, who the latter was full of tricks and black magic, “I am nothing like my mother” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 112). The emphasis in her words places the diversion of her thoughts and personality away from the life her mother chose. Zeba will not be looked at as a witch like Gulnaz. Grewal and Kaplan (1994) state that “in supporting the agendas of modernity, feminists misrecognize and fail to resist Western hegemonies.” (p. 2). Hashimi’s feminist practices resist and question the modernity of the girl that she must be docile and obedient.

Zeba was arrested and drawn right away to Chil Mahtab prison. Charges are no longer accounted for the criminals, but innocent people. Getting to know the cellmates, Nafisa, a woman in her mid-thirties, was reported to her family by a relative who falsely accused her of having an inappropriate relationship with a stranger, a blacksmith widower. “Nafisa had been convicted of attempted Zina, or sex outside of marriage. She’d been sentenced to three years” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 41). Despite her sentence and her family’s repudiation, she stood firm in defending herself; she was not afraid, saying that she did nothing wrong to be sentenced. With an unwavering voice:

I’m not a child. I should be able to eat in the park when I want. And anyway, we weren’t doing anything wrong. We were just eating. My mother had made some bulanee [a kind of pies in Afghanistan] and I wanted to share it with him (p. 42).

Nafisa is not a fragile woman who trembles in front of the judge for having mercy. On the contrary, her “defiant manner had won her no mercy from the judge” (p. 41), which should not be a plea as there is no case at all, but since she is in Afghanistan, she has to defend herself. Using the pronoun I in the forenamed speech shows her individuality, a woman who has the right to be accessible without imposing control over her; the domination of her patriarch makes her steps plod. Hashimi points throughout Nafisa’s words to the sense of feminism of a third-world woman, to her sturdiness and intensity as a woman who can manage her issues and need no help from her western peers or the false speeches they give on behalf of her. Bulkin (1984), the American writer, points
out that Arab Women are depicted as “They have no true understanding of feminism. They are pawns of Arab men” (p. 168). Hashimi defies the stereotypical views of third-world women.

Latifa is another cellmate where Zeba resides now in prison. She is an example of a brave woman who does not allow anyone, even her family, to abuse her. Latifa was tortured by her father and brothers, but she could not bear this anguish more, so she decided to put an end to the domestic violence she was facing; “She’d been beaten and cursed at until the day she’d decided she could take no more” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 42). She has “a seven-year sentence for running away from home, kidnapping, and attempted prostitution” (p. 43). They thought she had the intention of prostituting her sister as she took her when she eloped. Latifa's rebellious nature led her to reject legal representation and insist on representing herself in front of the court. She asserts that, “It was all my doing, she’d said, tapping her hand over her breastbone and nodding affirmatively. I decided to flee that miserable home. I wanted to save myself and my sister” (pp. 42-43). Being a strong and stubborn woman, Latifa did not allow anyone, including her family, to oppress and persecute her. She is not the submissive woman who confirms the false patriarch’s authority. Latifa tried to bear the responsibility of her plan as an independent individual with the right to decide and live freely. She attempted to figure out justice on her own and ran away from the house since laws would not be by her side if she went to the police office to submit a charge against her family. Latifa was wild and rebellious enough to call for and set her rightful freedom by fleeing to rescue herself. Moreover, she feels respected and worthy, and others must behave according to this. Hashimi shakes the west look of third-world women through the character of Latifa, for western feminists consider third-world women as suppressed, liable to the patriarchal system, and having no agency to determine who they want to be, as shown by this quote in the magazine Time on the twenty-four of December 2001, by Katherine Ryan;

But in the Middle East, there is little chance for women to shape their destinies. They have had to put up with terror their entire lives in their very homes and societies. Perhaps the war on terrorism will have beneficial results for a long-forgotten, oppressed people: not the men of Islam, but their wives, mothers, and sisters (Cited in Zairi, 2003, p. 35).

Throughout this quote, the author emphasizes how western feminists disregard third-world women, and perceive them as subjects, not human beings, who must incur the horror of wars as they are used to suppression for living in a patriarchal domain. Hashimi deconstructs the passive portrayal of Latifa’s character as a stubborn woman who refuses to be dominated by anyone.

It is significant to highlight those women who have been charged with honor crimes and committed ‘Zina’ (adultery)—either fleeing their homes, or engaging in illicit relationships—, must take a virginity test after being dragged to jail to confirm that they are still virgins. Because marriage is the only legal union between a man and a woman and anything outside this frame will result in a severe sentence. Zeba is confused when she hears the guard telling Nafisa to be prepared for the test. Latifa turned to Nafisa and explained to her what would happen in doing the test as she had experienced it:
You’ll have to take your underpants off and lift your skirt. The doctor’s going to use a flashlight to look at every hole in your body to see if a man’s been near it. Oh, yes, your backside is part of the exam. But the front is the main story. He’ll poke around looking to make sure your woman part still has its modesty veil. (Hashimi, 2016, pp. 68-69)

Latifa describes the humiliating virginity test performed on their bodies to see whether they were innocent and still upheld their families’ dignity with rage and sarcasm since she had seen it done before. Latifa was not telling a joke in the previous sentences; it was her own experience and the rest of those women in Chil Mahtab jail where their honor was detected in that tiny room where doctors were checking specific areas in their bodies. Latifa is exposing the baseless, meager laws constructed to impede their rights as human beings, what a woman may feel when her body is no longer her own, violated by strangers to reach a result of her innocence, which most of them confirmed to be not guilty, like Nafisa and Latifa. Those women in prison are armed with patience to pass this operation. Hashimi presents those women in Chil Mahtab to say that women in the feminist framework who do not accept unjust treatment can react differently and exist in different environments. They must not only be in positions, give speeches, and demand women or gender equality. Hashimi depicts the utopian vision of the westerners who regard themselves and their culture as the norm (notably the American culture) via those strong women of third-world, and various forms of struggles, “The history of that cultural practice in Europe and the United States carries within it as a major constitutive element, the unequal relationship of force between the outside Western ethnographer-observer and a primitive, or at least different but certainly weaker and less developed, non-Western society.” (Said, 1989, p. 217). The distinction is clear here; the west, non-west, superior, inferior.

Tamina, Kamal’s sister, where Zeba’s kids after the murder stayed with her, did not say much about her brother’s murder, that even her husband’s outrage about the death of her brother was more than her. Tamina had such a heroic heart when she was only half Fareed’s size; her cousin, she stood firmly facing him with outstretched hands to protect her dead brother’s son Basir, as Fareed intended to hit him. Tamina shows boundless courage, “You will not touch him!” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 154); her tone contains an imperative urge to leave him, “I’m not going to let a drunk torture my nephew” (p. 155). She feels the surge of vigor to prevent her cousin from abusing her verbally for he was cursing her, as well as to stop his assault to her nephew, who was a child. With such genuine rife images the novel depicted as Tamina, Hashimi poses a severe challenge to the “First World women and Western-trained women” and their “contributing to the continued ‘degradation’ of Third World women.” For western feminists whom attempt to represent third-world women without real understanding of their hardships and daily life misères which utterly differ from that of the western women. as Gayatri C. Spivak has stated (Cited in Lazreg, 2019, p. 10) by mirroring the ordinary sturdy woman, able to defeat the restraints.

Aneesaa, Yousif’s colleague in the office and “the head of the legal aid group” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 124), is a daring woman in her early forties who had lived abroad (Australia) for the war’s worst years. After the Taliban’s fall, Aneesaa returned to her country, and endeavored to use her foreign law degree for sound only. “Yusuf-Jan,” (Yousif is Zeba’s attorney), Aneasaa started, telling Yusuf about Afghanistan justice system “the justice system, if you can even call it that, is as twisted
as a mullah’s turban. There are ways to work with what we have, but it takes creativity and patience” (p. 124). She is a stout woman, fearless of confessing the truth and reality of what Afghan people were living. Throughout the real-sad audacious words in this speech, Hashimi strikes the readers with woman’s role in politics. She is aware of the mess and the policies to denote that woman’s place is not only in the house taking care of her family and the homely chores, likewise, but able to participate in setting the rules and laws, helping and supporting others besides her family’s duties, the perfect example of a sturdy woman. Thus, Hashimi manages to decenter and break the passive image of the third-world women in this country by presenting this positive image of Aneesa, who fights to change the rusted laws in her country. Likewise, mocking the current justice system using the method simile to convey the idea that the justice system is like the twisted turban of the Mulla, which means it is intricate and complicated as things intertwined with each other to show how the situation is absurd. For this, Third World women find in

Transnational feminism is an answer to their misgivings about their place in academic feminism; the economic and cultural homogenizing power of ‘globalization’; and their capacity to bring about change in the lives of women locally or transform the terms of the academic feminist discourse. (Lazreg, 2019, p. 11)

The reason for Kamal’s murder is that he was trying to rape a young girl the age of his daughters Shabnam and Kareema. There are many ways to end one’s life, and this is what Kamal did to Zeba, his children, and that little girl, Laylee. For this, Zeba sacrificed herself to protect that girl since “It was all about honor. Honor was a boulder that men placed on the shoulders of their daughters, their sisters, and their wives” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 197). The honor of that little girl was lost in Zeba’s courtyard. She took her space to banish the fallacy of killing her husband while she did not. She told her mother what had happened that day. When Zeba saw the little girl Laylee hidden beneath Kamal, who attempted to violate her, she managed to knock him over but slipped by Kareema’s plastic doll to fall to the ground. Within these minutes, Kamal leaped into Zeba, trying to suffocate her, and that was when Laylee struck the fatal hit to the back of his head to rescue the woman who wanted to save her. Narayan (1997) said, “Third-World feminists are rooted in and responsive to the problems women face within their national context; and to argue that they are not simplminded emulations of Western feminist political-concerns.” (p.4). Here Hashimi wants to convey that third-world women cannot be judged from the position of English women since the latter will not understand them, as their cultures, conditions, and lives are different.

Zeba spent nineteen days in the shrine to test her mindset as people believe in shrines more than hospitals, “She’s back! Ladies, ladies, Malika Zeba has come back to us” (Hashimi, 2016, p.280). The result is that there was nothing wrong with Zeba; she was not insane. The time she spent at the shrine helped her to get back to her balance again. Zeba assisted many women in prison, solved as much as possible from the problems that kept them up at night and prayed for them even in the shrine. Now Zeba is their queen, and they are celebrating her arrival in the prison again. Those women in jail were waiting for her eagerly, praying for her to return safe and sound from the shrine. They missed her company and words whenever they visited her in the cell. She was listening to them and solving as much as possible of their issues, if there was nothing to do for them; she prayed for their comfort, which created a physical and psychological sense of unity.
Reflecting upon their solidarity, those women cast a feeling of frustration by being together. Ultimately, this shakes the “Universal Sisterhood as a cross-culturally singular, homogeneous group with the same interests, perspectives and goals, and similar experiences” (Barrett, 1992, p.78). Moreover, Hashimi points to their resistance, and revolution shattering the epistemological realm. Thus, “In the context of feminist research and practice, feminist activists crossed national borders to produce transnational forms of women’s organizing, and feminist researchers produced a rich scholarship on gender, globalization, and transnationalism.” (Fernandes, 2013, p. 102).

As Hashmi’s goal is to correct the misrepresentation of her countrywomen in this novel, she deliberately employs a woman to defend Zeba. Sultana was interested in covering Zeba’s case. She contacted Yousif to get some information, but he was surprised, expecting the reporter to be a man, not a woman. Detecting the astonishment throughout their conversation, thinking she studied abroad, “I graduated from Kabul University… We do have an educational system here, you know. You don’t have to go to the United States to learn something” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 294). Hashimi wanted to emphasize that women in Afghanistan occupy different jobs and positions. They follow their passion just like Sultana. She became a journalist because she liked to know the truth. With her family’s support, she achieved her goal and is now the only female journalist willing to make a report about a prisoner in Chil Mahtab. Furthermore, the author hinted at the westerner’s look at the easterners, how the latter was left on the outside debates alienated when the “Westerners see themselves alone as the ones that sort, differentiate,” (Grewal & Grewal, 1994, p. 7). Those westerners think that third-world women will always need their support and assistance, and they cannot study in their countries for they have nothing, and if they do study abroad, they will only imitate their western sisters. Minces described third-world women as, “those few Arab women who had the privilege of studying in Western universities and coming in touch with “civilization” which allowed them — once back home — to copy Western feminists” (Cited in Zairi, 2003, pp. 24-25), Minces’ claim indicates that third-world women have no civilization, and if they get the credit to study abroad, they will only imitate their peers for they have nothing special. Yet, Hashimi shatters this claim by the character of Sultana.

Zeba’s family, her lawyer, Yousif, and the rest of her surroundings; the journalist, relatives, her cellmates, and neighbors did everything to defend her and prove her innocence. The women in Chil Mahtab prison, whose stories ranged from tragic to absurd, showed magnificent solidarity to Zeba, sitting in a semicircle around her a few hours before her sentence, attempting to comfort her. With their words of support and compassion, they made the last few hours unforgettable, “No matter what happens, your name will be painted on the walls of this jail, in our blood if that’s what it comes down to, for as long as each of us stays here” (Hashimi, 2016, p. 330), taking into account the Testimonies and the true story of Zeba, who was trying to “prevent her home from becoming a den of sin” (p.333). The judge acquitted Zeba of the crime of murdering her husband, making her sentence the time she spent in Chil Mahtab and a fine of one thousand Afghanis. After Zeba’s release, her children are delivered to her by Tamina. Zeba spent months at her house and “used the time to recover” (p.339). Well, it is the best Scenario ever as women need a break, and it is simply the usual thing they do to pass the problematic phase by isolating themselves from the external world. She took her time at the house with her children, who she had
not seen for months, to breathe and recover, take care of them and get back to life. She started to live again, setting peace of mind norms.

Hashimi elaborated on Laylee’s struggle, who was raped by Kamal and suffered much at a young age, “kill me” (p.342) when she pleaded with her parents, especially her mother, to put an end to her suffering after the incident. What the author tried to convey is that Afghanistan society does not only construct in one direction as depicted by the west; not everything is based on honor for some families. In the case of Laylee’s family, they did everything possible to bring her back to life. Being realistic, Hashimi shed light on many aspects to demonstrate the various experiences lived by women and girls in different forms of families. This is what she successfully wanted to accomplish, women and girls are not oppressed, subjugated, and violated; contrarily, they may have supportive families, and when they do not, they forge their zone, fight, and achieve the brightest victory ever. This idea is simply assured by the words the novel ended with “I am more than fine” (p. 342); Zeba confirmed that every woman could start a new beginning with refreshing breezes forward without locking back. Hashimi proves that “Feminist scholars have increasingly sought to develop transnational perspectives to break from national narratives and decenter U.S.-oriented approaches.” (Fernandes, 2013, p.2). Furthermore, she grounded the affairs of women and girls in Afghanistan by constructing a terrain of coalition and solidarity.

Conclusion

Third-world women have long been stereotyped by western feminists’ discourses in their pervasive depiction. The study aimed and succeeded in revealing the false generalization and sisterhood of those feminists in the west, since they embraced superiority in their attitudes towards their peers. Deconstructing the passive image of third-world women, which is constructed by the Western feminists, and representing them again as equal members to their counterparts, is what Hashimi has done accurately throughout her novel. Nadia Hashimi’s A House Without Windows centers on the female heroines struggling with vigor in a country based on unjust norms and laws where women’s rights stand in nothing but a vacuum. Throughout the distinct author’s voice, Hashimi successfully depicts how those women have been brave enough to fight for their rights and freedom to change the worn system in the light of Transnational Feminist theory. The novel manages to shed light on the diverse forms of oppression women encounter in their lives and show how those women are connected and assist each other in coping with the persecution of the patriarchal society. Thereupon avoiding the fallacy that third-world women have to endure from their western counterparts.

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