

Navigating Identity Crises, Alienation, and Power Dynamics: A Postcolonial Analysis of Nussaibah Younis's Fundamentally

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Abstract

This study analyzes the intersections of alienation, identity crisis, displacement, and power dynamics in Nussaibah Younis's novel Fundamentally. The narrative explores how Western academia distances individuals from their cultural roots, leaving the protagonist, Nadia, caught between her British academic training and her Iraqi heritage. Drawing on postcolonial theory, this research applies Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and ambivalence from The Location of Culture to highlight Nadia's internal struggle between two worlds. Furthermore, Edward Said's concepts of Orientalism, latent and manifest bias, and "Othering" are utilized to demonstrate how Nadia views ISIS brides as the "Other" while taking pride in her own Westernized approach. Additionally, this research employs Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concepts of the subaltern and epistemic violence from her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" to analyze the character of Sara, who represents society's marginalized lower classes. The study argues that Sara embodies the subaltern voice, successfully challenging the self-appointed saviors who seek to domesticate her. By the novel's conclusion, she refuses submission and asserts her own agency. Ultimately, this research concludes that true decolonization occurs only when individuals reclaim their authentic identity and exercise independent agency.

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Introduction

Postcolonial literature is an academic field that analyzes the psychological, cultural, and social aftermath of colonial rule. In modern times how due to global migration, modern displacement, and the clashes between Eastern and Western knowledge people face problem is the biggest challenge. When people move to another country for higher education from a Western university, they are often torn between their Eastern roots and Western knowledge. This is the core conflict of postcolonial studies. In recent times, writers analyze these themes through a raw perspective, especially focusing on the Middle Eastern and South Asian context. Nussaibah Younis's Fundamentally (2025) is a powerful representation of this modern shift. The novel introduces the protagonist, Nadia Amina a British Iraqi academic lecturer dealing with displacement, a chaotic relationship with her mother, and heartbreak. She moves to Baghdad for a UN deradicalization programme for the Islamic State brides. This journey reveals the narrative of human psychology, where her Western academic thoughts clash with the harsh realities of her war torn homeland.

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To fully explain this novel in depth, the research must look through the lens of postcolonial theories. Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, ambivalence and mimicry illustrate how a character like Nadia Amin performs her British academic identity but still remains identity-fractured and unstable. Edward Said's in his book "Orientalism" shows how power changed the person's attitude as Nadia looked at ISIS brides as an inferior, submissive and passive and present herself as superior. Moving towards Spivak's concept of subaltern, shows how Subaltern gain their voices and break the traditional cycle of submission and choose their own agency. Oppressed individuals can break the cycle of silence and Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive background to analyze the modern identity crisis and social alienation within neo-colonial structures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In present times many postcolonial critics analyze how characters face an identity crisis and alienation due to displacement. When reading Nussaibah Younis's novel *Fundamentally* (2025), recent literary reviews show distinctive motifs and characters struggle with their identity. Goyal (2025) in *The Guardian* review, she said the main character, Nadia Amina is a British academic lecturer who leaves London to handle ISIS brides and becoming the part of UN deradicalization programme in Baghdad. Her decision to move to Baghdad is inspired by her personal alienation, her chaotic relationship with her immigrant mother. She decided to prove British ability to deradicalized them. As Goyal depicts, Nadia's academic pride is clash with the harsh realistic, systemic failure of an international organization like the UN. Another review from Gian Franceschi (2025) from *The Aga Khan Library*, she points out that Nadia operates with a "savior complex," believing that her Western academic is the only Crue to rehabilitate the ISIS brides. The awakening point of her identity happens when she enters the camp and meets with the Islamic State brides. This is a training point in her personality when she feels an emotional connection with Sara, a young subaltern character from East London. Both characters suffer from the same trauma as the displacement of their immigrant families and an deep sense of alienation. Many critics argue that Nussaibah Younis uses dark humor and mockery to question the power dynamics and review the modern identity crisis within neo-colonial structures.

To build a strong base for this research, postcolonial theories of different theorist like Homi K. Bhabha, who introduced hybridity and mimicry in his work *The Location of Culture*, 1994. This work shows how people idealize Western culture and follow it at the any cost, while losing their own identity, yet remaining unstable. Saddique et al. (2021) examine the concept of hybrid identity in Qurratulain Hyder's *River of Fire* through Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity. Saddique et al. (2021) argue that identity is not fixed but is continually negotiated within the "third space" of cultural interaction. proves, characters with a Western background face double struggle with their original identity or their knowledge. This helps us understand Nadia's confusion with her British identity in Baghdad. Edward Said, in his work *Orientalism*, depicts that "Othering," which means considering the Eastern subject as inferior, passive or submissive while presenting the West as superior or active. Recent articles on "Othering" show that this process is now also executed by Westernized Eastern people against their own community. This serves as a perfect framework for analyzing how Nadia perceives the ISIS brides as an "other" or different from herself. Finally, Gayatri Spivak, in her essay, said that lower people from the society are suppressed by power and system. However, modern critics state that the subaltern can break this cycle. As seen through Sara's character, she refuses submission and asserts her own agency at the end of the novel.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The term postcolonialism is well defined by many writers who deal with it in different ways. To provide an authentic framework for this academic study, there are three core pillars that established postcolonial theory. This chapter analyzes the foundational concepts of Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, focusing strictly on their structural and philosophical definitions, which they mentioned in their works.

Homi K Bhabha's Theory of Hybridity and Mimicry:

Before Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon introduced the concept of mimicry. Fanon, a psychiatrist and

philosopher, mentioned this term in his 1952 book, "Black Skin, White Masks". He describes that how colonized people wants to become like their colonizers. To become like them they attempt to copy the colonizers' dressing sense and language to prove themselves as "civilized." Fanon describes this process as a psychological trauma which destroy their own identity. Homi K. Bhabha was a prominent Indian American postcolonial theorist, writer and scholar. He is a professor at Harvard University. He is known for introducing key concepts regarding the psychological and cultural impact of colonialism on people. He invented the terms of hybridity and mimicry in his book, "The Location of Culture", which was published in 1994. Homi K. Bhabha throw detail light on this term in his famous 1994 book, "The Location of Culture". In his essays, such as "Of Mimicry and Man" and "Signs Taken for Wonders,"

According to Bhabha, colonizers want the colonized to adopt their lifestyle so that ruling over them becomes easier. However, he argues that this is a dangerous act for the colonizers. When the colonized mimic , British ruler, they add elements of their own traditions, such as their religion habits, nature and so on. However, Bhabha defines mimicry as the process where the colonial power forces or encourages the colonized to copy their language, dressing, lifestyle ,education, behavior, and cultural habits of the colonizer. Bhabha famously states that, "mimicry is "almost the same, but not quite." This means that even if an individual adapts the British approach and language, they are still considered inferior by the dominant power. will still treat them as an "Other." Therefore, mimicry never makes youth exact copy but instead creates a sense of fractured identity and causes internal alienation and clashes. Recent the article "Colonial Legacies and the Third Space: A Comparative Study of Hybridity and Mimicry," written by Sana Fatima and Dr. Durre Nayan and published in the Pakistan Journal of Language and Humanities Review, notes that mimicry occurs when the South Asian upper class adopts Western knowledge as a tool of power. Thus, the imitation remains superficial, leaving the individuals torn within their hybrid identities, much like the character Sara and Nadia Amina in the novel.

Historically, hybridity was initially used in linguistic contexts. Later, Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher, introduced hybridity to literature. In his 1981 book, "The Dialogic Imagination", he asserts that language is inherently hybrid, meaning it acts as a mixture of different cultural voices. In his book, Bhabha mention that cultural identities are never fixed. He explains that when two cultures meet, like the Western and Eastern cultures, this is the beginning of a new cultural form, which he calls hybridity. Bhabha said that this happens in a certain situations which he calls the "Third Space" or the space of "in-betweenness." In this space, the person is reluctant and torn, as they do not fully belong to either the Eastern or Western world. This creates a sense of identity crisis, where individuals struggle to find themselves. In Chapter 1 of his book, "The Commitment to Theory," Bhabha explains the concept of the Third Space or the "in-between." He states that when two different cultures meet, there is a space between them which he calls the Third Space. This Third Space does not physically exist but is an assumed space that fills the gap by introducing new customs into it. This results in a hybrid culture, which is neither fully Eastern nor fully Western but a mixture of both. According to him, this space gives the colonized individuals courage, showing that they are not mere followers of the colonizer, but can use the culture according to their own needs. This helps maintain a hybrid identity, much like how Nadia Amin becomes hybrid at the end of the novel.

Bhabha introduces the term "Ambivalence" in Chapter 4, "Of Mimicry and Man." In this chapter, he describes ambivalence as having multiple emotions at the same time, such as revenge, sympathy, and enmity. The colonizers want the colonized to become just like them, but they later realize that if the colonized become exactly like them, the colonizers will lose their authoritative power. This creates a moment of emotional conflict, where they desire the colonized to assimilate but simultaneously fear losing their power. Similarly, the colonized are impressed by British rule, but they also hate the colonizers because they are being ruled by them.

Edward Said's Theory of Orientalism and Othering

Historically, Orientalism was used to refer to the study of Eastern knowledge and language. However, many

thinkers wrote about Orientalism as a subject of criticism or bias. For example, Anouar Abdel-Malek, in his 1963 work "Orientalism in Crisis", used this term. He argued that, according to Egyptian scholars, when Western scholars read Eastern literature, they assume the East is static and can never change. Later, A.L. Tibawi, a Palestinian historian, noted in his 1964 article "English-Speaking orientalist" that when Orientalists read Arab literature, they lack objectivity. He argued that they recall previous grudges, wars, and feelings of superiority, thereby viewing the East as an enemy. Edward Said was a famous Palestinian-American professor, critic, writer, and theorist. His work provides pillars of postcolonial theory. He introduced the Western perception towards the Eastern world in his famous work, *Orientalism*, which was published in 1978. In his work, Said defines Orientalism as a pervasive Western style of academic speech and thought designed to dominate the Orient (the Eastern world). Said uses the term "Orient" in his work to mean Eastern people, whereas the "Occident" means the Western world. Said argues that the West created false perceptions regarding the Eastern. The West depicting themselves as superior, active, civilized, and peaceful, while depicting the Eastern as inferior and passive. This discourse was used by Western powers to defend their imperial policies and their domination over Eastern nations.

Edward Said's concept is directly connected with "Othering." Othering is a psychological process used to establish a dominant identity by constructing a marginalized group as fundamentally different and inferior. The dominant group defines itself as superior; even when they are the real source of conflict, they claim the marginalized population is backward despite being civilized themselves. What the colonizers had done in colonized countries proves that by imposing the label of the "Other" on Eastern people, they attempted to justify their own institutional crimes. Edward Said also introduced the concepts of, "Latent" and "Manifest" Orientalism in his work, *Orientalism*. According to him, the colonizers view the East through specific perspectives. "Latent Orientalism" is where the colonizers follow a historical approach, viewing themselves as superior or active. In this way, they perceive the "Other" as static and unchanging specifically as inferior, passive, and unable to rule their own country. This approach is fixed in the Western mind; it does not matter how many years pass away, they still hold this mindset. This is evident as Nadia assumes the ISIS brides are objects that need British knowledge to rehabilitate them. "Manifest Orientalism" means that the Western approach changes over time through elements like media, policies, and literature. This is the external expression of Latent Orientalism. For example, when they ruled India, they claimed they wanted to "civilize" the people, whereas now, they claim they want to promote democracy in specific regions. Their statements may change over time, but the motives behind them can never be changed.

Recently, Amula or Ololade, in their article "Orientalism Revisited" published in 2026, presented a critique of Western discourse on non-Western development through postcolonial, subaltern, and Marxist frameworks. They marginalized the concepts of Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak to analyze how today's Western development institutions, such as NGOs and the IMF, depict non-Western nations as under-developed. They argue these institutions use the same tools that were used during the colonial era, in which Eastern people are portrayed as inferior, submissive, or passive.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's Theory of the Subaltern:

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is an Indian theorist, philosopher, and professor. She is also the co-founder of postcolonial studies and known for her contribution in feminism and subaltern theory. In her essay, "Can the Subaltern speak" She introduced the concept of, Subaltern which was published in 1988. In her essay, she uses the term "subaltern," which was firstly introduced by Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci to describe the lowest layers and voices of society. He Antonio Gramsci introduced this in his work, "Prison Notebooks", which he wrote while imprisoned between 1929 and 1935. He used this term to describe those groups in a society who possess no socio-economic power or reputation, and who are easily suppressed by the elite class. Spivak states that the subaltern is a population completely marginalized and cut off from social or economic power, including the poor, uneducated individuals, and female laborers. Spivak argues that the dominant, elite patriarchal systems completely silence these individuals. This book heavily relies on the question of whether the subaltern can speak for themselves or if they are always represented by others, which

also the essence of her book. Spivak concludes that whenever the subaltern attempts to raise their voices, their speech is neglected by the elite or replaced by dominant political agendas. This shows that the subalterns are trapped into a systemic cycle of silence. Furthermore, modern critics argue that contemporary subaltern subjects are now breaking this cycle by reclaiming their own agency and challenging neo-colonial structures.

Spivak introduced the concepts of "Epistemic Violence", "Othering, and Marginalization". "Epistemic violence" means that the colonizers ruled through knowledge. For example, when the British came to India, they imposed their own education system in schools because they believed Eastern knowledge was backward. This resulted in the colonized losing their own identity, which is what Spivak calls epistemic violence. This is evident as Nadia becomes trapped by British knowledge and disconnected from her own cultural roots. Spivak also adopted the concept of the "Other" and explained it in a detailed manner. She argued that the colonizers perceive themselves as the center of the world while placing the colonized at the margin. Whenever the West writes about the "Other," they always depict them as inferior. She further noted that this process severely damages the lower classes and women, who face double oppression by both colonial society and patriarchal men. They destroy their original identity and transform them into the "Other."

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:

The critical exploration of Postcolonial literature is a center of residual psychological, linguistic and socio-political trails left behind by colonizer. Nussaibah younis's novel *Fundamentally* investigates, the institutional and intimate realities of its protagonist, Dr. Nadia Amin, as she enters post-war Baghdad under the auspices of a United Nations deradicalization project (Younis, 2025, p. 12). By viewing the text through the tripartite theoretical framework established by Homi K. Bhabha (1994), Edward Said (1978), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988), the narrative exposes the deep identity crises and colonial legacy inherent within modern international humanitarian interventions. Instead operating as an equal platform for management, the United Nations produces systemic hierarchies, mimics historical imperial logic, and enacts epistemic violence upon its subjects. This chapter provides a rigorous literary analysis of how Younis's characters navigate hybridity, resistance, orientalist mapping, and subaltern marginalization within a contemporary neocolonial paradigm.

The Bhabhabian Framework: Mimicry, Hybridity, and the Ambivalent "Third Space"

1. Mimicry and Fractured Identity

Homi K. Bhabha's (1994) encounter of Colonial power heavily relies on the concept of mimicry, the structural enforcement or strategic imitation of the colonizer's lifestyle, language, and cultural codes, which ultimately produces a subjective state that is "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). In *Fundamentally*, this clearly exists within the personality of protagonist, Nadia Amin. Her character is a professional persona of Western mimicry; she adopts a Westernized identity to fit into British academia as a lecturer at University College London (UCL) but she is still alienated, considered an "Other" by them, and disconnected from her Iraqi heritage.

Her internal clashes are a crystal clear proof of her continuous struggle with alienation and an identity crisis in the West, which is further driven by a scarred relationship with her immigrant mother. When she travels in Baghdad, she feels a powerful encounter of her Iraqi heritage, that immediately shows her cultural alienation and displacement. Younis records Nadia's explicit internal friction "It felt strange being around Muslims again, after my godless life in London, and I wondered if they could smell the apostasy on me" (Younis, 2025, p. 74). This mimicry operates not only on an individual psychological level but also on a systemic institutional level within the humanitarian sector, where administrative elites employ Western knowledge as a structural instrument of authority, resulting in superficial performances of power (Fatima & Nayan, 2025, p. 50). In the novel, the United Nations agency the UN Deradicalization Organization, or UNDO embodies this flawed institutional imitation (Younis, 2025, p. 81). Pierre, an elite French staffer, explicitly highlights this performance of institutional benevolence "Ah, this is a better question, why are we here? The UN overlords decide they look impotent in the matter of ISIS brides, so they create a shiny new agency. But

why? The Iraqis don't want it. The home countries don't want it. They just need to be seen to act" (Younis, 2025, p. 115).

2. Ambivalence and the "Savior Complex"

Pierre's critique highlights the deep structural ambivalence underlying the intervention. Bhabha (1994) defines ambivalence as a site of profound political conflict, wherein the dominant power desires the assimilation of the subject but simultaneously fears losing its authoritative control "Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite... which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). UNDO does not seek a transformative restoration of local autonomy; rather, it aims to project an illusion of global administrative control. The institution operates as an ideological mirror designed to soothe Western anxieties rather than address the structural realities of the local population. The real conflict of Nadia's hybrid identity happens when she moves from London to Baghdad for this UN deradicalization programme. Nadia starts her journey in Iraq with a "savior complex," blindly believing that her Western teaching and secular theories can easily help her rehabilitate the ISIS brides. However, her proud mimicry is completely damaged, when she faces the effects of war own her mother homeland. She feels alienated by her own heritage; the local Iraqi society considers her too Westernized, while the Westernized structures treat her as an outsider despite her ethnic background.

3. The Hybrid "Third Space"

This intersectional crisis culminates within Bhabha's (1994) conceptualization of the Third Space or "in-betweenness" a spatial and psychological threshold where cultural identities intersect, contest, and renegotiate fixed boundaries. Bhabha notes that: "It is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 2). Nadia lives in this "Third Space" neither fully British nor fully Iraqi, but caught in-between. Her journey to Baghdad forces her to accept the painful reality of her hybrid self, which causes immense internal destruction. Simultaneously, the refugee camp in Ninewah functions as a stark physical manifestation of this Third Space. Within the camp, characters like Sara the British-born teenager who traveled to the region at a young age exist in a state of suspended identity (Younis, 2025, p. 132). When Nadia interviews Sara inside her tent, the physical space underscores this cultural fragmentation. Nadia notes the eclectic mix of her belongings "...a comic book, a few sticks of gum, colored yarn plaited into bracelets, and a sock with doll's eyes and bunny ears sewn onto it" (Younis, 2025, p. 135). Sara's simultaneous reliance on Western popular media and online religious discourses highlights the fluid, fractured nature of her hybrid identity. She cannot return cleanly to her Western upbringing, yet she faces systemic rejection by the state (Younis, 2025, p. 140). Rather than existing as a static radicalized subject, Sara embodies the fluid, fractured subjectivity that Bhabha (1994) predicts emerges within the contested terrain of the postcolonial margins.

Said's Orientalism: "Othering" and the Mechanics of Manifest Governance

1. Othering and the Colonial Gaze

Edward Said's (1978) foundational formulation of Orientalism posits that the West constructs the "Orient" as a static, passive, and inherently inferior "Other" to validate, sustain, and moralize its own imperialistic policies. Younis (2025) directly exposes how this discourse of Othering continues to operate within contemporary counterterrorism frameworks. The architectural layout of the Green Zone in Baghdad functions as a spatial manifestation of this ideological division, separating the rational, secure Western administrators from the chaotic populace they claim to reform. Nadia describes this extreme segregation upon her arrival "We entered the Green Zone, a fortified district where international organizations and government agencies hid from the population they claimed to serve. My new home" (Younis, 2025, p. 62). The data analysis demonstrates that Said's concepts of Orientalism and "Othering" are deeply reflective of the power dynamics within the novel. Although Nadia Amin belongs to an Iraqi bloodline, her British parenting has changed her

Eastern traditional mindset which forces her to see her own tradition through a Western lens.

When the protagonist arrives at the deradicalization camp in Baghdad she perceives ISS brides as other, without showing any sympathy towards them, who are the victim of geopolitics displacement. She presents Western thoughts as civilized and superior. Her approach is beautifully captured in the novel when she reflects on her academic authority and thinks "I came here armed with theories from London, believing I could fix them, as if they were broken clocks and I held the only key to time" (Younis, 2025, p. 112). This quote clearly shows that she is the product of Orientalism, harboring the biased perception that native women cannot reform themselves without Western intervention and teaching. Furthermore, this analysis describes the psychological process of "Othering" between Nadia and Sara. When Nadia first meets Sara, instead of understanding her complex situation and socio-political displacement, she reduces her to a stereotype: "To me, they were not women with names or histories; they were just the 'Other' a dangerous puzzle that my Western education was supposed to solve" (Younis, 2025). This demonstrates her pride in being a Westernized lecturer. Edward Said's framework successfully explains that "Othering" in the neo-colonial world is no longer just a weapon operated by Western colonizers, but it is also practiced by Westernized Eastern elites. These elites impose their Western intellectual superiority over marginalized natives to justify and defend their own institutional positions and agency.

2. Latent and Manifest Orientalism

This ideological division is further demonstrated by Said's (1978), as he tells the distinction between Latent and Manifest Orientalism. Latent Orientalism represents western views towards the Eastern, where East viewed as incapable, static and self-governance while Manifest Orientalism embodies the historical expressions, policies, and media representations of this underlying view. Said explains "The distinction I am making between latent and manifest Orientalism is this: latent Orientalism is an almost unconscious (and certainly untouchable) positivity, while manifest Orientalism is the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literature, history, sociology, and so forth" (Said, 1978, p. 206). This division appears vividly during Nadia's meeting with Hannah, a counterterrorism official at the British Embassy (Younis, 2025, p. 175). Hannah demands that the deradicalization program strictly adhere to Western bureaucratic categories, stating: "Oh yes. HMG's new inclusion strategy commits to centering the marginalized and giving voice to the voiceless. We urge you to create a program inclusive of all genders and none, of all faiths and none, and of all sexualities and none" (Younis, 2025, p. 176). When Nadia points out that such idealized frameworks fail to account for the severe, life-threatening environment of the camp where non-conformity results in immediate execution, Hannah dismisses her "I'm afraid your approach does not meet the strictures of our inclusion policy" (Younis, 2025, p. 178).

Spivakian Subalternity: Epistemic Violence and the Trajectory of Silence

1. The Subaltern Subject and Double Oppression

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's (1988) critical framework expands on the concept of the subaltern subjects so radically marginalized and cut off from socio-economic power lines that they are systematically denied any recognizable form of agency within dominant patriarchal and political structures. In Fundamentally, the women confined within the Ninewah refugee camp occupy this ultimate subaltern position. Silenced by both local radical patriarchal structures and the bureaucratic machinery of the United Nations, these women are routinely spoken for, analyzed, and categorized, yet rarely heard (Younis, 2025, p. 190).

Specifically, Sara represents the absolute subaltern subject; she is an uneducated, working-class Muslim immigrant girl from East London who was manipulated and sent into the ISIS camp in Baghdad. Spivak argues that the subaltern are completely silenced by a double oppression executed by both Eastern patriarchal systems and Western agencies. Initially, Sara has no voice or recognized identity; her struggles are completely suppressed, and her identity is constantly re-written by others. This state of absolute helplessness is perfectly captured when she expresses her frustration about being treated as an object "Everyone wants to

speak for me. The men who brought me here, the politicians in London, and now you with your expensive education. But nobody asks me what I lost" (Younis, 2025, p. 189). These lines perfectly align with Spivak's fundamental question, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", showing that subaltern voices are systematically suppressed by elite agendas and institutional structures.

2. Epistemic Violence and the Reclamation of Agency

This systematic silencing is reinforced by epistemic violence, which Spivak (1988) defines as the destruction of local ways of knowing through the violent enforcement of foreign educational and administrative frameworks. Spivak frames the core of this violence as the total displacement of the subaltern's subjectivity: "The clearest available example of epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity" (Spivak, 1988, p. 280). Nadia recognizes her own complicity in this dynamic during her initial focus group sessions, where she observes how Western institutions use clinical research practices to turn human suffering into bureaucratic data (Younis, 2025, p. 195). When she attempts to implement her research-driven rehabilitation strategy, Sara immediately exposes the underlying predatory nature of the encounter: "Yeah, thought so... You're here to interrogate us and get us arrested and hanged. Admit it!" (Younis, 2025, p. 201). Sara's sharp resistance exposes the epistemic violence inherent within the humanitarian mission. Nadia treats the camp residents as research data to validate her academic theories, transforming lived trauma into policy metrics. This systemic extraction is further demonstrated during the chaotic distribution of humanitarian supplies, where the basic survival needs of the women clash with the rigid, detached expectations of the aid workers (Younis, 2025, p. 220). When supplies are finally delivered, the scene devolves into a desperate scramble for necessities. "Seconds later, a stampede of women swept through the tent and they filled their arms with goods, tearing them from each other's hands. The commotion almost lifted the plastic roof into the sky... I turned around to cough, and when I looked back, every cardboard box was empty, and the women were gone" (Younis, 2025, p. 222).

While administrative specialists like Sherri complain about the lack of "orderly queues" and geometric tent placements, they completely ignore the structural violence that produces this desperation (Younis, 2025, p. 225). Sara's character, leading to the breaking of her silent voice. She successfully breaks the cycle of being silenced by oppression. Instead of relying on Nadia and her Westernized savior complex, she reclaims her own agency. She completely refuses to be a passive and submissive subject. Her intense self-recognition and resistance are highlighted at the climax of the novel when she boldly states. The humanitarian framework categorizes the women either as dangerous security risks or passive recipients of aid, stripping them of genuine political agency. Whenever these subaltern subjects attempt to speak outside the parameters established by the institution, their voices are dismissed as uncooperative, backward, or radical. However, as the story moves forward, we see profound changes in "I am not your project to be fixed, Nadia. I am a human being, and I will write my own ending, even if it is written in the dark" (Younis, 2025, p. 234).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research project provides a comprehensive postcolonial analysis of Nussaibah Younis's novel *Fundamentally* (2025), focusing intensely on the themes of "dentity crisis", "alienation" and evolving power dynamics. Through the character of Nadia Amina, the study successfully applies HomiK.Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and mimicry. It demonstrates that Western academic training and secular lifestyles can often alienate postcolonial subject from their traditional heritage, leaving them trapped in a fractured Third Space of cultural in-betweenness where they fully belong to neither the East nor the West. Furthermore, by utilizing Edward Said's framework of "Orientalism", the analysis reveals that "Othering" is active as a weapon that Western discourses traditionally operate to maintain their prestige and render the East inferior, but is now also executed by Westernized Eastern elites to protect their own institutional authority and savior complex. However, the most significant finding of this study comes from the application of Gayatri Spivak's "subaltern" theory onto the character of Sara. While the traditional view often constructs subaltern characters

as permanently silenced and helpless, this contemporary novel proves that postcolonial structures are dynamic. By the end of the novel, the character completely rejects this passive approach by successfully adopting her own independent "agency" ultimately, this research concludes that true decolonization in the modern world does not come from adopting Western ideologies, but occurs when marginalized individuals recognize their independent identity and stick to their own "agency" to write their own endings.

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