



The Influence of Hybridity on Salwa's Marriage in the novel *Once in a Promised Land*

Nadhira Harly^{a*}, Gina Adisty Maharani^a

^a English Literature Department Faculty of Adab and Humanities,
Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta

* Corresponding Author. Email: nadhira.harly20@mhs.uinjkt.ac.id

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Abstract

Hybridity, or the practice of blending cultures as diasporic individuals engage with locals in the country they moved to, can have a significant impact on an individual's life, such as on their relationship with their partner. This paper discusses the ways in which hybridity shapes the marriage life of the protagonist in the 2008 novel *Once in a Promised Land* by Laila Halaby. The study used a qualitative descriptive approach and Homi Bhabha's hybridity theories to analyze the novel's portrayal of the Jordanian married couples' conflicting pursuit of the American Dream, which gets complicated as more people get involved. The protagonist, Salwa, who has a hybrid identity that combines elements of their ancestral culture with the culture of the country in which they live, faces challenges with the hybridity of both her and her partner, Jassim, that affect their marriage. These challenges stem from the clash between Salwa's hybrid belief—the traditional Jordanian value of believing that someone can not be a complete woman until she bears a child that gets assimilated into her vision of a free-willed American woman—and Jassim's own vision of the American Dream as the traditional leading figure who gets control over their family, which does not believe that having a child is a form of freedom. During this conflict, a man named Jake comes into Salwa's life and gives her a false hope of a "free and welcoming home" in him, making her cheat on Jassim despite her own Eastern values echoing inside her mind. The novel highlights how hybridity can create tension and complexity within a marriage as Salwa and Jassim navigate their cultural differences while striving to live peacefully in their "home." The research deduced that Salwa and Jassim's clash, along with the involvement of Jake in their marriage, is due to their inability to adjust to the hybridity of their identities and also their lack of communication as a result of doing so.

Kata kunci:

*Hibriditas, Kehidupan
Pernikahan,
Imigran, American
Dream, Once in a
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Abstrak

Hibriditas, atau juga bisa disebut sebagai praktik memadukan budaya ketika individu diasporik terlibat dengan penduduk setempat di negara yang mereka pindahkan, dapat memiliki dampak signifikan pada kehidupan individu, seperti misalnya pada hubungan seseorang dengan pasangan mereka. Makalah ini membahas cara-cara bagaimana hibriditas membentuk kehidupan pernikahan protagonis dalam novel yang dikeluarkan tahun 2008, *Once in a Promised Land* oleh Laila Halaby. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dan teori hibriditas Homi Bhabha untuk menganalisis penggambaran dalam novel tentang konflik pasangan suami-istri dari Yordania dalam mengejar *American Dream*. Di dalam novel tersebut, pasangan menikah asal Yordania mengejar *American Dream* mereka dengan cara yang berbenturan satu sama lain. Sang protagonis, Salwa, yang memiliki identitas hibrid dengan menggabungkan unsur-unsur budaya asal mereka dengan budaya negara tempat mereka hidup, menghadapi tantangan dengan hibriditas dalam dirinya dan juga pasangannya, Jassim, yang memengaruhi pernikahan mereka. Tantangan-tantangan ini berasal dari pertentangan antara keyakinan hibrida Salwa—kepercayaan tradisional Yordania yang meyakini bahwa seseorang tidak bisa menjadi wanita seutuhnya sampai dia melahirkan seorang anak yang berasimilasi dengan visinya tentang wanita Amerika yang berkehendak bebas—dan visi Jassim sendiri tentang *American Dream* sebagai sosok tradisional yang memegang kendali atas keluarganya dan tidak percaya bahwa memiliki anak adalah suatu bentuk kebebasan. Selama konflik ini berlangsung, seorang pria bernama Jake datang ke dalam kehidupan Salwa dan memberinya harapan palsu tentang sosok “rumah yang bebas dan menerima apa adanya” di dalam dirinya, membuatnya selingkuh dari Jassim meskipun nilai-nilai budaya timur bergema di dalam pikirannya. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa perpecahan antara Salwa dan Jassim disebabkan oleh ketidakmampuan mereka untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan hibriditas mereka dan juga kurangnya komunikasi di antara mereka berdua sebagai akibat dari ketidakmampuan tersebut.

ملخص

يمكن أن يكون للتهجين، أو ممارسة المزج بين الثقافات حيث يتفاعل الأفراد المغتربون مع السكان المحليين في البلد الذي انتقلوا إليه، تأثير كبير على حياة الفرد. كما هو الحال في علاقته مع شريكه. تناقش هذه الورقة البحثية الطرق التي يشكل بها التهجين الحياة الزوجية لبطل رواية "مرة واحدة في أرض الميعاد" للكاتبة ليلي حلي الصادرة عام ٢٠٠٨. وقد استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي الكيفي ونظريات هومي بهايا في التهجين لتحليل تصوير الرواية لتضارب الأزواج الأردنيين في سعيهم المتضارب لتحقيق الحلم الأمريكي، الذي يزداد تعقيدًا مع ازدياد عدد المتزوجين. تواجه بطله الرواية، سلوى ذات الهوية الهجينة التي تجمع بين عناصر من ثقافة الأجداد وثقافة البلد الذي تعيش فيه، تحديات مع هجينة كل من هي وشريكها جاسم التي تؤثر على زواجهما. تنبع هذه التحديات من التصادم بين معتقد سلوى الهجين - القيمة الأردنية التقليدية التي تؤمن بأن المرأة لا يمكن أن تكون امرأة كاملة حتى تنجب طفلًا يتم استيعابه في رؤيتها للمرأة الأمريكية ذات الإرادة الحرة - ورؤية جاسم الخاصة للحلم الأمريكي باعتباره الشخصية القيادية التقليدية التي تتحكم في أسرتهما، والتي لا تؤمن بأن إنجاب طفل هو شكل من أشكال الحرية. خلال هذا الصراع، يدخل رجل يدعى جيك إلى حياة سلوى ويمنحها أملًا زائفًا في "بيت حر ومرحب" فيه، مما يجعلها تخون جاسم رغم القيم الشرقية التي تتردد في عقلها. تسلط الرواية الضوء على كيف يمكن للتهجين أن يخلق توترًا وتعقيدًا داخل الزواج، حيث تنتقل سلوى وجاسم بين اختلافاتهما الثقافية بينما يسعيان للعيش بسلام في "وطنهما". استنتج البحث أن الصدام بين سلوى وجاسم، إلى جانب تورط جيك في زواجهما، يرجع إلى عدم قدرتهما على التكيف مع هجينة هويتهم، وكذلك عدم قدرتهما على التواصل نتيجة لذلك.

الكلمات الرئيسية:
التهجين، الحياة الزوجية،
المهاجر، الحلم الأمريكي

INTRODUCTION

The effects of living between multiple cultures seem to be difficult for many people outside of the diasporic community to comprehend. Integrating into the local culture after migrating can be difficult for those who live in the diaspora. While some of them struggle and fail, the others eventually adapt and may develop hybridity. In light of this, hybridity—or the blending of various cultural influences and identities—is a common theme in modern literature, especially in the writing of authors from underrepresented or diasporic communities. (Yulistiyanti et al., 2023) A Muslim novel titled "Once in a Promised Land" by Laila Halaby is one of the works of literature that deals with the portrayal of hybridity, which will be analyzed in this research through the lens of Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity.

One of the biggest influences on postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha, describes hybridity as the "intermediate and liminal space" that results from the collision of more than one culture (Bhabha, 1994, p. 1). According to Raminder and John (2005, p. 70–71), hybridity is the phenomenon of cultures blending as diasporic individuals interact with locals in the country they moved to, or anything that brings up the subject of cultural mixing in an exchange. Moreover, Bhabha claims that hybridity is more than just the mixture of multiple cultures; rather, it is the emergence of a new, dynamic cultural space that subverts traditional ideas of cultural authenticity (Bhabha, 1994, p. 227). Cultural practices and gestures that bring on multiple cultural influences are one way hybridity can manifest. A person who is raised in a diaspora community, for instance, might have a hybrid identity that combines aspects of their ancestry and the culture of the nation they currently reside in. Their dialect, attire, entertainment, cuisine, and other cultural practices can all be seen as manifestations of this. In order for minority or diaspora communities to insinuate their own cultural identities, hybridity can be a significant tool in the formation of cultural identity and representation. Hybridity, however, might also lead to tension and even conflict.

According to Camilleri and Kapsari (2020), uncontrolled hybridity can have negative and destructive consequences. One of the possible negative impacts is the distancing of more than one diasporic individual who has taken different aspects of their origin and local culture, causing them to lose ties and understanding of each other despite all of them being hybrids—people with hybridity—from the same homeland.

Such a case can be found in the novel *Once in a Promised Land*, where Salwa and her husband Jassim, both Jordanian immigrants in the United States, struggle with problems in their marriage as well as their own hybrid identities as Jordanians pursuing the "American Dream." Jassim pursues the dream of having a successful career in the United States and having the freedom of not wanting a child, pushing his wife to get the birth control pill every time, while Salwa herself seeks the freedom to have a child and live a happy family life in the United States. This causes significant conflict between the couple, making them vulnerable to being taken advantage of by people outside of their relationship, which in this case is Salwa's colleague named Jake who happens to be attracted to her.

The theme of hybridity is central to the novel, as Salwa struggles to find a sense of belonging in a world that often sees her as an outsider. She is caught between two cultures and must navigate the expectations and demands of both. The novel provides an overview on how difficult and complicated it can be to traverse between different cultural influences, while also showing how hybridity can have a negative impact on their lives.

Even though there are some benefits of hybridity, such as raising cultural awareness and

encouraging the creativity and enthusiasm that result from cultural diversity (Raminder & John, 2005, p. 81), it can also lead to a feeling of cultural displacement or alienation because people may feel torn between two different cultures and have no idea how to truly fit into one or the other. Married couples may feel less able to fully communicate their thoughts and emotions to their partner as a result of this sense of disconnection, which can affect intimacy and emotional attachment within such a marriage. Additionally, hybridity can make marriage for migrants more complicated and stressful because they may experience isolation or prejudice as a result of their cultural differences. Couples may experience further tension in their relationships as a result, and it may be more challenging for them to find acceptance and respect in their environments.

Overall, this paper aims to shed light on the thought provoking portrayal of hybridity in *Once in a Promised Land*. A better understanding of the role that hybridity plays in how couples interact, accept, and manage cultural differences can be achieved by examining Salwa and Jassim's element of hybridity and how they have applied it in their lives in a way that affects their relationship. With Salwa and Jassim's differing hybrid views on how they should live their marriage based on what they view as "American" enough for them, it is unavoidable that their marriage will crumble sooner or later, and even more so when other people whom they believed would fulfill their dream show up, mainly Jake who has his way to manipulate Salwa with his understanding of her hybridity.

METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative descriptive approach to examine data for this study, concentrating on social issues in people's daily lives. Using a case study approach, the study goes into the novel "*Once in a Promised Land*" by Laila Halaby, released in 2007, to analyze the story of Jassim and Salwa, a Jordanian couple who now live in Arizona. The study takes an exploratory approach, seeking to determine the "what" and "why" of the research issue. The data gathering process included reading the primary material and analyzing the characters using postcolonial theory, namely Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity. The findings will be presented descriptively in paragraph style, clarifying the complexities of the character's experiences in the context of postcolonial discourse and the 9/11 aftermath.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Elements of Hybridity on the Characters

Based on the research, it is clear that ambivalence as a component of hybridity dominates Laila Halaby's "*Once in a Promised Land*." Throughout the story, the characters engage in actions that represent their hybrid cultural identities. The most highlighted element is ambivalence. According to Bhaba (1994), hybrid identities often carry a sense of ambiguity or ambivalence, as individuals navigate between different cultural frameworks and experiences. Jassim and Salwa, the main characters of the story, are originally from Jordan but now live in America, exemplifying this cultural mix. Despite their commitment to the "American dream," their marriage becomes strained after years of living in the United States. Salwa, with her Eastern identity and Muslim upbringing, struggles to navigate the Western environment and questions her American identity. This internal tension exemplifies the nature of hybridity: the existence of two cultures, most commonly the colonized (East) and colonial (West).

The character's life in America

Salwa and Jassim, the main protagonists in "Once in a Promised Land," are shown as a complex marriage dealing with a variety of personal and cultural issues. Salwa is shown as a woman battling with her Arab-American identity, caught between her Palestinian background and her yearning for freedom and fulfillment in America. She is pressured by both her family's social and cultural standards, which frequently conflict with her own aims and desires. Jassim, on the other hand, is portrayed as an accomplished engineer who personifies the immigrant's pursuit of the American Dream. Despite his professional success, he struggles with emotions of isolation and unhappiness. He disputes the obligations that are placed on him as a provider, as well as the pressures of assimilation into American society, all while feeling detached from his cultural roots. Their marriage exemplifies the challenges of cultural identity, as they balance tradition and modernity, individualism and community, Arab background, and American upbringing. Conflicting pressures weaken their relationship, resulting in misunderstandings, conflict, and communication breakdown. In general, Salwa and Jassim are portrayed as multifaceted individuals whose experiences demonstrate the difficulties and complexities of managing cultural identity in a diverse community.

Salwa is influenced by the American lifestyle

Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* is one such story that delves into the meaning of America and the American Dream for an Arab American couple following 9/11. The American Dream coincides with the promise of equality, opportunity, success, and achievement through dedication and perseverance.

"Oh no, Mama. These pajamas are beautiful, because in them you can be a queen." (Halaby, 2008, p.47)

It wasn't just the feeling of the pajamas that she liked, it was the act of wearing pajamas such as these and what it symbolized to her: leisure. Women who wore these pajamas were rich, either in their own right or in someone else's. Women who wore this kind of pajamas did not have the wide fingers and thickened wrists that raising children and cooking and cleaning every day produced. (Halaby, 2008, p. 47)

According to the quotes above, Salwa considers silk pajamas to be a luxury item. She adheres to this style despite the fact that it is not associated with Eastern cultures. Salwa's Western mentality is regarded as a characteristic of hybridity. This demonstrates that Salwa is a Jordanian with a vision of the American Dream.

Salwa wants a child

In Eastern culture, women are required to have children. This has been indoctrinated by parents to women since they were young. This was also felt by Salwa, where her mother said that when she gets married she must have children because that is something that is normal in society.

"You need to have babies. Women are made to have children. A relationship is strengthened by having children, and a couple who does not have children is unnatural." (Halaby, 2008, p. 100)

Societal norms that force women to have children regularly lead women to feel depressed and pressured since they are continuously thrown high expectations from society. According to the quotation above, Salwa would be incomplete unless she has children in her marriage. Salwa grew up with a belief that women should have children, which caused a major conflict in her life and a significant problem in her marriage because her husband did not want a child in their married life.

It wasn't enough, though. I think having a child will fill that void. I am going to try to get pregnant, even though Jassim says he doesn't want a child. (Halaby, 2008, p. 10)

Her emptiness had been filled, and her need for a child could be rechanneled (Halaby, 2008, p.11)

Salwa, who has been married to Jassim for nine years, suffers an immense emptiness without children, prompting her to discreetly stop taking birth control pills and seek to conceive without his permission. Her concern about this deception indicates her insistence on pregnancy as a solution to her dissatisfaction. In contrast, Jassim values his freedom and regards children as a burden, causing tension in their marriage due to their opposing desires for parenthood.

The hybridity that emerges in Salwa's identity becomes a chance for Jake to forge a connection with her more deeply. Jake observes Salwa's mixed ethnic heritage and sees an opportunity to capitalize on her confusion about her identity. Jake intends to appeal to Salwa's desire to feel validated and valued for her hybrid identity by portraying himself as someone who understands and respects both Eastern and Western traditions. Jake gently validates Salwa's hybrid identity through gestures, conversations, and shared experiences, emphasizing its strength rather than a source of conflict. This develops their bond and fosters Salwa's sense of belonging in both the realm of culture.

The Impact of Hybridity on Salwa and Jassim Broken Marriage

Hybridity contributes to the broken marriage lives of Salwa and Jassim by creating conflicting views on how they should live their marriage. On the Western side—which they have always loved, Salwa herself chose to marry Jassim over her first love, Hasan, because he “promised her America.” (Halaby, 2008, p. 37) Besides their shared love for American freedom, both Salwa and Jassim have lifestyles that are influenced by American consumerism with how luxurious it is, but even the ways they embrace it clash. Besides the silky pajamas, Salwa is a fan of using giant towels as large as bedcovers “that Americans love” (p. 5), but Jassim doesn't view them as luxurious as Salwa does. Jassim views luxury as something they have to keep working for, to keep chasing over and over as envisioned by the American Dream, resulting in him viewing having a child as a hassle for their free and upclass living. The difference that didn't seem to affect their relationship much grows into a more significant problem as they navigate their lives in America.

On the Eastern side—which not only stems from their origin but also from the hollow luxury of the Western one, they have differing beliefs about having a child, as has been discussed before. To the “failed woman” Salwa, America has also failed to fulfill the life she has been dreaming about living there, making her seek anything closest to her Eastern home behind her husband's back. To the “free man” Jassim, his deep-rooted desire for the American way of luxury and freedom has made him into a rather traditional, authoritative figure who binds his own wife's freedom, making an irony of his own pursuit. These differences,

along with the previous ones, have become the key source of conflict and tension in their marriage.

These conflicts have created a constant struggle for power and control within their relationship. The conflict between Salwa's longing for her Eastern sense of home and Jassim's desire for the American way of life has created a divide that seems impossible to bridge. This tension not only affects their marriage but also impacts their individual happiness and fulfillment. Once Salwa gets pregnant, she gets happy and nostalgic of the celebration a pregnant lady usually receives in Jordan, but the reality of not being able to share this news with anyone, especially her own husband, lessens the sense of fulfillment she has always sought. This inability hits her harder once she miscarries, thus she has to grieve all by herself in a loss unimaginable to any mother, and a loss of the dream of freedom she once carried with her husband. When Jassim finds out about the miscarriage, he is disappointed and copes by thinking that this is the land of freedom after all, where "your wife could be pregnant and miscarry and not tell you" (Halaby, 2008, p. 278). Jassim himself can sense his wife is getting distant as time goes on, but he is unsure of how to bridge the growing divide between them, as he is shown to fail to understand how miscarriage can affect a woman and instead compare it to his own misery of hitting a child with a car by accident (Halaby, 2008, p. 312), showing his authoritarian tendency is still going strong. The tension in their marriage continues to escalate, causing both of them to feel increasingly isolated and unhappy.

Therefore, the clashing hybrid beliefs between Salwa and Jassim, without any further reconciliation attempt, inevitably make them search for any source of external support or guidance to help them navigate their troubled relationship. Jassim is lonely without Salwa; thus, he can't help but feel drawn to an attractive American coworker named Penny—who later revealed to hold more value in loyalty in a relationship than him, further deepening the crack in their marriage despite his constant wonder of what has been wrong in their marriage. Salwa, on the other hand, has fellow Middle-Eastern friends such as Randa, but her vulnerability from her grief and longing for her home makes her prone to being manipulated by an outsider who happens to know how to exploit both her emotion and her hybrid identity. The outsider is Jake, her young American coworker, who seems to have had an eye on her since the first time they met. Salwa finds refuge and a sense of belonging to both American and Eastern soil in her relationship with Jake, while the latter finds it an opportunity to exploit Salwa's weakness. In the end, when Salwa decides to return to Jordan, Jake reveals his real feelings about diaspora like her, in which he says, "So you're running back to the pigsty?" (Halaby, 2008, p. 320) and "Bitch! God damn fucking Arab bitch! You ruined everything!" (Halaby, 2008, p. 322). With Jassim being warned by Penny and Salwa receiving physical abuse from Jake, it seems that they will return to each other and fix their marriage, but the scars left on not only their love but also their identities may prove too deep to heal.

Jake Manipulates Salwa by Exploiting Her Hybrid Identity

One of "the other persons" that happens to ruin the protagonists' marriage life even further is Jake. Jake is a young American man who is a college student and also works as a teller in the same company as the one Salwa is in. Just in time as Salwa feels even more dissatisfied with her marriage life, he appears to her as some sort of "savior", and he achieves that by taking advantage of Salwa's hybrid identity. By understanding Salwa's cultural identity, Jake knows how to emotionally manipulate her.

At first, Jake's attempts to get closer to Salwa is by being extremely polite and friendly to her in order to engage her in a conversation. By doing so, when Salwa was at her lowest, he managed to make her feel important, validated, and seen. In his compliment to her, he said, "You show a lot of integrity, and I've learned from watching you." (Halaby, 2008, p. 106) He positioned Salwa as someone worthy of admiration, respect, and acknowledgement at a time when she felt undervalued and unseen, especially as a woman coming from a patriarchal background who, at that time, felt powerless against her husband's decision and sought more of an American freedom. While doing so, he also "turned up his palms, as if in the midst of prayer." (Halaby, 2008, p. 106) which is a gesture of respect and humility that is more often found in Eastern culture than in Western culture. This is where Jake started to take advantage of Salwa's hybridity, by bringing more of her culture into conversations and making her feel like she is "home" while she was interacting with him, that even Salwa, against her own professionalism, thanked him for such an intimate compliment in public, in her working environment.

Sometime later, after apologizing for saying it at their workplace, Jake immediately brought up the topic of diaspora by saying, "I don't think it would be easy to be an Arab these days. I mean, with what's going on and investigations and all that." (Halaby, 2008, p. 127) Jake took advantage of the current 9/11 situation, which has made Middle Easterners like Salwa feel more discriminated against, by making her feel sympathized, as if someone finally understood her struggle as a diasporic person. To make her lower her guard even further toward this American man, he began speaking in Salwa's native language, Arabic, which she rarely hears outside of her time with her husband in the United States, especially at such a time when speaking it can only alert the local people. But he spoke it not so fluently, not just because he had just learned it, but to make Salwa teach him and interact more with him in order to gain her trust. When Salwa asked him why he was learning Arabic, instead of telling her his true intention, he said, "Everyone is talking Arab this and Arab that, and I thought I'd try to see it from the inside." (Halaby, 2008, p. 127) Jake's choice of words showed Salwa that he was genuinely interested in her culture and customs, which made her feel valued and accepted as an Arab.

Jake took it further on one occasion by asking her about her culture beyond just language. He asked her about Ramadan and how different it is to celebrate it with her husband—big emphasis on this—in the United States and with her family in her homeland, Jordan. It appears that his intention in asking was to make her feel more distant from her husband and for him to be more like a family member to Salwa, right at the time she felt homesick because of both her problems with her husband and the discrimination she experienced. He asked her about Eid present, to which Salwa responded that her dear friend used to bring her a pot of flowers back home. And with that information in mind, at Eid, he brought her exactly that—a glimpse of home she had missed dearly, but this time, it was given by an American man. His "generous" gesture not only brought joy to Salwa, but also convinced her of his thoughtfulness in making her feel like she belonged in her new home, despite all of the challenges she had recently experienced.

Done with convincing Salwa, Jake slowly started to drop his act of being a kind and polite man who cares about the culture of the marginalized, revealed his true nature as a man who is only interested in Salwa's body, marked by him saying, "Your mouth is full. Very sensual." which he quickly diverted by asking Salwa, "How did your Eid celebration go?" (Halaby, 2008, p. 161) This sudden and unexpected shift from an almost disrespectful comment to a seemingly polite question spoke volumes about the kind of man Jake truly was; one who sought to manipulate and dominate his counterpart while covering up his

true intentions with shallow compliments and friendliness.

Despite how clear it was to Salwa, and how wrong she felt to give up the morals of her Eastern culture to satisfy her Western one, the feeling of “home” he had instilled in her binds her to him. She thought of her problem with Jake as “an American problem, an American situation” (Halaby, 2008, p. 175); something her Eastern values would never understand, and she forced herself to think in English so her Eastern thoughts could not do anything to her. In the moment, Jake successfully “split” Salwa’s hybridity and made her strongly favor the culture that benefits them the most. Salwa found herself at a crossroads between her Eastern values and Western culture, and yet, she succumbed herself deeper to the point of no return, all because of Jake’s cunning nature and the homesick feeling he had provided her with.

In the end, it took Jake’s manipulation and harassment for Salwa to finally realize that there is no “American Dream” she was persuaded to let go of her principles and embrace the values of the Western world, along with ruining her marriage in the process.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the hybridity has quite a lot of impact towards both Salwa and Jassim, including their marriage as well. From the research conducted, it was found that Salwa and Jassim's Pakistani-American identity had a negative impact on their marriage after the 9/11 World Trade Center building bombing tragedy in America. The hybridity element that is shown in this novel is ambivalence, it can be seen from Salwa that shows a combination of Eastern and Western perspectives. She believes that having children strengthens relationships (Eastern), yet she believes her rights are violated by not being able to have children with Jassim. However, this contradicts her interpretation of the American dream. Jassim's fixation with the American dream reinforces Salwa's hybridity by encouraging her to embrace it, yet his attitude disappoints her, leading her to seek consolation in Eastern culture. Jake exploits this hybridity to connect with Salwa, making her feel like a valued diaspora woman free of both cultures' constraints.

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