

# Constructing Life Narratives: The Multiple Versions of Maryam Jameelah's Life



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### Abstract

Focusing on the idea that life narratives are constructions inspired by the motives of their narrators and controlled by the frames of the genre, the present study engages with selected narratives of the private life of Islamic convert and religious writer Maryam Jameelah (1934-2012), who immigrated to Pakistan from the United States of America. The study considers three types of narratives: Jameelah's private correspondences, biographer Deborah Baker's interpretations of Jameelah's letters, and the devotional obituaries of her faith-fellows. Using Roy F. Baumeister and Leonard S. Newman's theory that autobiographical narrative constructions are controlled by interpretative and interpersonal motivations, I try to uncover Jameelah's implicit goals in both writing and later publishing her letters. With the help of Ira Bruce Nadel's idea that biographical representations depend on the biographer's motives, I elucidate how Baker's personal interest in Jameelah as a forerunner of modern Islamic extremism influences her presentation stratagem. Engaging with Bridget Fowler's model of positive and negative obituaries, and using Samuel K. Bonsu's idea that obituary writers pursue personal gains in highlighting positive attributes of the deceased and hiding those they deem undesirable, I analyze selected obituaries on Jameelah. This study illuminates that Jameelah's life is described differently in accordance with narrative forms and cultural values. It shows that distinct genres employ certain uniquely identifiable modes and conventions in their narrative structures.

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## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Chapter One: Jameelah’s Life in Her Private Correspondences .....	4
Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America (1945-1962): The Story of One Western Convert's Quest for the Truth (1989).....	6
Jameelah’s Artwork: A Contradictory Comfort.....	20
Conclusion to Chapter One.....	31
Chapter Two: Deborah Baker’s Interpretation of Jameelah’s Private Correspondences.....	33
Theoretical Framing .....	34
The Structure and Methodology of Baker’s Book .....	35
Baker’s Interest in Jameelah’s Life—East and West Relations and Baker’s Inquiry into Terrorism.....	36
Baker’s Identification with Jameelah .....	38
Baker’s Meeting with Jameelah in Person and Growing Distance .....	40
The Construction of Jameelah’s Story: Baker’s Editing of Jameelah’s Letters .....	43
Jameelah-Maudoodi Relationships.....	46
Baker’s Strategies of Presentation of Jameelah .....	48
Baker’s Source of Inquiry.....	50
Transformation in Jameelah.....	52
Addressees of Jameelah’s Letters.....	54
Conclusion to Chapter Two .....	55
Chapter Three: The Construction of Jameelah’s Life in Obituaries .....	57
Theoretical Framing .....	58
Obituaries on Jameelah.....	59
Obituary One: "My Sweet Heart" by Yousaf Khan.....	61
Obituary Two: “Maryam Jameelah’s Domestic Life” by Mariya Khanam .....	64
Obituary Three: “Margaret and Maryam Jameelah” by Hafiz Muhammad Idrees .....	69
Obituary Four: “Maryam Jameelah: a <i>Mumina</i> , a <i>Mujahida</i> ” by Farzana Cheema .....	73
Obituary Five: “Deceased Maryam Jameela: She Came to Pakistan in the Search of Truth and Knowledge” by Ashfaq Hussain.....	75
Obituary Six: “Aapa Maryam Jameelah — A Remarkable Legend of Services to Islam from New York to Lahore” by Hamid Ryaz Dogar.....	77
Obituary Seven: “Maryam Jameelah, 1934-2012” by Deborah Baker .....	81
Conclusion to Chapter Three .....	85
FINAL THOUGHTS .....	87

Suggestions for Future Research.....	90
Appendices .....	92
Works Cited.....	98

## Introduction

Having lived in a country of political unrest and religious sectarianism, I initially found it rather challenging to engage with a figure like Maryam Jameelah. After the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989) Jameelah's publisher Muhammad Yousaf Khan and Sons ceased publishing her writings.<sup>1</sup> Though familiar with Jameelah's name I did not get the chance to read any of her books until after her death. Interestingly, it was through obituary articles that I first discovered Jameelah's books and biographical details. The veneration of Jameelah in obituary articles was quite impressive. She was admired for her devout Islamic way of life, as well as for her publications on Islam. Farzana Cheema's<sup>2</sup> obituary "Maryam Jameelah: a *Mumina*<sup>3</sup>, a *Mujahida*<sup>4</sup>", the first one I remember, states:

Our Pakistani women hardly dare to follow Islamic conventions wholeheartedly under the influence of the movements like feminism and modernism, which a New York born woman readily volunteered to follow. Brought up in American Jewish family, Jameelah had an earnest craving to live her life under the canons of Islam in some conventional society. To follow her innate yearning to follow Islam she migrated to Pakistan and lived her whole life in Lahore. Rejecting the proposals of influential and well-off suitors, Jameelah preferred to be the second wife of Yousaf Khan just to follow the Islamic tradition of polygamy.<sup>5</sup> (23)

The above praise for Jameelah's love of Islamic ways of life increased my reverence as well as my curiosity about her life.

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<sup>1</sup> See Jameelah's bibliography in the 'works cited' list. See Chapter Two for details on decrease in Jameelah's popularity after 1990s.

<sup>2</sup> Cheema is a famous columnist in Pakistan. I shall discuss her obituary for Jameelah in Chapter Three.

<sup>3</sup> A woman who has highest degree of faith in Islam

<sup>4</sup> A person who strives for Islam. Usually this word is used for a person who does *jihad*, fighting for the cause of Islam.

<sup>5</sup> "Own translation"

Cheema's obituary led me to Jameelah's life, written by Deborah Baker, a finalist for the National Book Award for Nonfiction, *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism* (2011). I found Baker using Jameelah's archive in The New York Public Library to construct a thrilling story. She built connections between Jameelah's publications and terrorism and presented her as guilty of inciting war on America. The divergences between the obituaries and Baker's tale sparked my interest in finding out more about Jameelah. For that purpose I started searching for Jameelah's published letters. After a few months of hard work I was able to locate three published volumes of Jameelah's letters.<sup>6</sup>

I ventured to compare these correspondences with Baker's edited versions to see how Baker had reworked Jameelah's letters to make them fit in with her own agenda. Initially I planned to highlight Baker's biased narrative on Jameelah. However, Dr. Kasten advised me to focus on studying the various genres involved in discourse on Jameelah. She explained that analyses of autobiographical, biographical and hagiographical writings on Jameelah would introduce a panoramic view, or rather a number of conflicting views of her life. Prof. J. Frishman further helped me in connecting Jameelah's story to her contemporary religious influences. Thus my literary cum religious research on Jameelah's life took its start.

Maryam Jameelah (1934-2012) was born in New York into a Reform Jewish family as Margaret Marcus. She converted to Islam at the age of twenty-seven, migrated to Pakistan in 1962 and became an influential writer in the Muslim world between 1960 and 1990.<sup>7</sup> John L. Esposito and John Obert Voll write that "Maryam Jameelah has played a pioneering role as an activist Muslim intellectual which makes her truly one of the makers of contemporary Islam" (67). Jameelah's public and private lives were both eventful, and the writings surrounding them

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<sup>6</sup> These books were *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (1960-1962)(1969), *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America*, (1945-1962); *The Story of One Western Convert's Quest for the Truth* (1989), and *At Home in Pakistan* (1962-1989) (1990).

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 1.

can provide an insight into not only her own life as an individual, but also into how public personas are shaped through interpretation.

Given the many different versions of Jameelah's life, my research revolves around three narratives of Jameelah's life: her private correspondences, Baker's interpretations of her letters, and the devotional obituaries by her faith-fellows. Using Jameelah's written lives as a basis for my case study I will show that one and the same life allows for widely divergent interpretations, depending on the genre. My main two research questions are: 1) What are the overt and implicit motives for writing about Jameelah informing each text and what are the implications of the choice of genre for the resulting text? 2) What types of representation strategies are used to present a specific view of Jameelah's life? Broadly speaking, each thesis chapter discusses the differing strategies used to present Jameelah's life from different angles.

Chapter One addresses Jameelah's self-presentation strategies in her correspondences. Describing her early life in America, Jameelah explains to her parents her unease with Western conventions. While reporting the general pleasures of her life in Pakistan she conveys to them that she is in harmony with Islamic values. These narratives, directed to her Muslim readers in their published form, inform them that Western society is riddled with evils due to secular values whereas the Islamic conventions of Pakistan are far superior. I explore Jameelah's overall motives for writing and later publishing her autobiographical letters through Roy F. Baumeister's and Leonard S. Newman's theory that autobiographical narrative constructions are generally controlled by interpretative and interpersonal motivations. I explain how both of the above said motives are at work in Jameelah's letters in line with her direct and indirect addressees.

Chapter Two explores how Deborah Baker reads Jameelah's archive in The New York Public Library to construct her own tale of Jameelah. In the introduction of her book, Baker shares her motivations for reading Jameelah's archive. In the light of Baker's self-professed motives, I study her strategies of presentation of Jameelah. I use Ira Bruce Nadel's theory that

biographical representations and interpretations depend on the biographer's motives. In the case of Baker I elucidate how her personal interest in Jameelah as a forerunner of modern Islamic extremism influences her presentation stratagem.

Chapter Three explores how Jameelah is remembered by her family and friends in their obituaries. Jameelah's life is commemorated after her death with reference to her general virtues as an ideal Muslim. I study the types of virtues that are attributed to Jameelah. Samuel K. Bonsu proposes that obituary writers pursue personal gains in highlighting positive attributes of the deceased and hiding those which they deem to be undesirable. I evaluate selected obituaries on Jameelah to analyze how her bereaved ones propagate Islamic conventions, especially those that she explicitly embraced during her lifetime. In combination with Bonsu's theory, I use Bridget Fowler's framework to define the genre of Jameelah's obituaries. Engaging with Fowler's model of positive and negative obituaries I reason that some obituaries, especially that of Baker, refer to Jameelah's flaws despite her acclamations.

Apart from the above interpretations of Jameelah's life discussed in three chapters, my stance on these interpretations needs to be clarified at the start of my own work. My interpretation of Jameelah's life is guided by my double position of belonging to both the Islamic community and the academic community. Though I have tried to avoid unsubstantiated subjective positions by engaging in theoretical framing, my dual position occasionally makes it challenging to be completely unbiased. Indeed, I believe that my hybrid subjectivity allows me to contribute a unique perspective to the discussion. As an Islamic person, I am aware of the specific social nuances of this religious community, such as its practices and norms. This helps me understand the subjective positions of both Jameelah, as well as the majority of her obituary writers. On the other hand, my academic perspective allows me to analyze their constructions from a more detached and rigorous angle.

#### Chapter One: Jameelah's Life in Her Private Correspondences

Maryam Jameelah's publications made her renowned in the Muslim world and her short autobiographical details in the *Introductions* of her books created curiosity about her personal life amongst her readers. Instead of writing a full-fledged autobiography, Jameelah published her private correspondences in three volumes: *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America (1945-1962): The Story of One Western Convert's Quest for the Truth* (1989), *Correspondence between Abi-l-A'ala Al-Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah (1960-1962)* (1969), and *At Home in Pakistan (1962-89)* (1990). Beyond providing insight into her life, Jameelah's correspondences provide details of her self-presentation strategies. Generally, she presents herself as rebelling against Western values and society, and seeking a life in Islam.<sup>8</sup> This self-representation reflects her motives and intentions in writing. In this chapter, I discuss how Jameelah attempts to convey this self-image to her family and others through the correspondences with them, adapting her tactics for specific audiences. In analysing these different self-presentations of Jameelah, I focus on how Jameelah experiences her conversion to Islam and her introduction to (Pakistani) Islamic culture. Further, I highlight any internal inconsistencies within her narratives. I tie the chapter together by exploring Jameelah's self-produced artwork in the context of her written work and general self-representation.

Roy F. Baumeister and Leonard S. Newman explain the motives that usually guide people's efforts to understand their experiences by means of constructing narratives. They propose a framework for the motivations directing life narrative constructions, dividing such motivations into two broad categories: interpretative and interpersonal. Interpretive constructions are concerned with understanding personal experiences while interpersonal constructions concern themselves with communicating those experiences to the readers, hoping to influence them directly. They find four motives that guide authors' interpersonal narratives: 1) the desire to

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<sup>8</sup> The publication of Jameelah's correspondences problematizes the role of direct and indirect addresses. Jameelah targets completely different audiences in bringing her private correspondences into the public sphere. Throughout this chapter I have focussed on Jameelah's dynamic transitions between addressing her primary and secondary addressees.

obtain a reward for themselves; 2) the desire to validate identity claims; 3) the desire to pass on information; 4) and the desire to attract other people (680). Further, the researchers suggest that autobiographical narratives are constructed to seek meanings. They divide the need for meaning into four subtypes: 1) purposiveness; 2) justification by values; 3) efficacy; and 4) self-worth. They explain that “need for purpose is satisfied by interpreting present events in relation to future events, need for value and justification is satisfied by finding firm criteria for right and wrong, the need for efficacy is satisfied by exerting control to achieve positive outcomes, and the need for self-worth is satisfied by proving oneself superior to others” (681). They present the need for meaning as a central motive for exaggerating the details and impact of the narrativized events.

Following Baumeister and Newman’s framework, we can better understand Jameelah’s motives for writing and later publishing her private correspondences. We can also see how she turns her narrative towards specific directions to produce calculated effects on her audiences. Her letters, as published, are aimed at separate public addressees rather than private ones. Thus, I discuss Jameelah’s self-presentation strategies to both her direct and indirect addressees. I compare Jameelah’s letters amongst themselves, attempting to see if her self-constructions change according to context and addressees. Incorporating this comparison with an analysis of her artwork, I aim to show how Jameelah’s self-presentation strategies both stay consistent but also differ in different ways between mediums and throughout her life.

MEMOIRS OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IN AMERICA (1945-1962): THE STORY OF ONE  
WESTERN CONVERT'S QUEST FOR THE TRUTH (1989)

Maryam Jameelah published a series of letters originally ostensibly penned to her family to relay the tale of her disillusionment with Western society, her quest for truth, and the process of her religious conversion. This collection consists of 35 letters Jameelah wrote to her parents and sister while in America. Jameelah describes in them her ancestry, childhood, upbringing, education, and her fascination for Arabian (Muslim) life. Jameelah names this

collection of letters memoirs since they focus more on her surroundings than herself.<sup>9</sup> In this regard she refers in them to various social and domestic influences that formed her personality. We learn that, being born in a Reformed Jewish family, she was discriminated against by the Christian community. However, she was equally alienated from Jewish religious organizational life because of her secular upbringing. Jameelah's family had long since broken their ties with Judaism, entering the Ethical Culture Society of Westchester in 1945. There she was taught that supernaturalism or theology was irrelevant in modernity. As a result, she began to detest organized religion, adopting a humanistic philosophy to cope with life's questions (45). As such, Jameelah makes her liberal upbringing and secular education responsible for her specific outlook.

Returning to Baumeister and Newman, they propose that autobiographical construction is not limited to the narrative of one's personal experiences but involves social understanding as well, i.e., how people think about themselves and others (677). Indeed, social relations are the main concern of Jameelah's narrative. For example, she shares her sense of alienation at school with her sister. She writes to her sister that, "I was too awkward to be good in sports... when children were asked to choose teams, I was always the last one left because nobody wanted me on their side" (37). Jameelah tells her sister that she did not participate in adolescent activities such as dances, parties, films and fashions because she considered them "superficial, frivolous and silly" (38). In such correspondences, Jameelah appears to be searching for the roots of her social estrangement. She links her literary activities with her social eccentricity; she retreated to book reading due to want of friends (39). She finds the basis of her loneliness in indifference towards local social activities. Jameelah writes that her avoidance of social activities made her a recluse in the reading room of the library. Jameelah thus conveys to

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<sup>9</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson define a memoir as "a model of life narrative that situates the subject in the social environment, as either observer or participant, it directs attention more towards the lives and actions of others than to the narrator" (198). Technically the genre of letters is distinguished from memoir by its "mode of directed and dated correspondence with a specific addressee and signatory" (196).

her sister, and to her Muslim readers, a sense that she did not fit in with her Western social surroundings.

Jameelah presents herself, in her letters, to be different than her parents in their respective perceptions of Islam. Her parents tell her that “Arabs [are] low people... They had supported the Nazis during the war and were constantly rioting and massacring the Jews of Palestine. They treat their women like slaves” (40). Jameelah writes to her sister that she decided to challenge their parents’ views on Arabs and Islam. With that goal, she read literature on Islam to strengthen her arguments. However, she became radicalized.<sup>10</sup> Baumeister and Newman describe that the desire to boost self-worth is a central motive in writing autobiographical narratives. They write that “people make and tell stories to portray themselves as competent and attractive” (688). Telling of how she argued in favour of Arabs, Jameelah seeks to impress her Muslim readers.

Jameelah tells her sister that her first knowledge of Arabian culture came from *National Geographic*. Her further reading on the Arabian lifestyle, distinct from modern American lifestyles, developed her sense of affinity with Islamic culture. She used to listen to Arabian music not only to relish in its strangeness but also to use it as a source of power. For instance, she enjoyed the thrill of invoking responses from people who did not like it (25). Possibly, Jameelah turned to romanticized images of Arabian life and Islamic culture to legitimize her feelings of social exclusion. In Islam, she might have felt a sense of positive otherness and relished how that otherness invoked a strong response in others, not against her personally, but against something greater she felt they did not understand.

Baumeister and Newman propose that people construct stories to describe their affinities with certain group’s ideals that increase their self-worth within that group (688).

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<sup>10</sup> She shared her vision of an Islamic utopia with Harper, her psychiatrist. In this world, Arabic would be the official language, women would be veiled, there would be gender segregation in schools, marriages would be arranged, and traditional craftsmanship would be used instead of machines (102). Jameelah’s utopian vision was probably the product of reading of ancient Arabian stories. (See Jameelah 1989, 33)

Jameelah's narrative prepares her Muslim readers to accept her as a devout Muslim. She presents herself as distinct from Zionists in her views on the Israeli state. She appears to be generally critical of Israel, which, according to her, had deprived Palestinians of their legitimate homes. Jameelah wrote to her sister that "to deprive an entire people of their homeland and as human beings" was unjustifiable (55). Jameelah's attachment to the Palestinians separated her from many American Jews, who favored Israel. Viewing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the plight of Muslims is a strategy for attracting Muslim readers and verifying her identity claims with them.

Jameelah's reaction to Professor Rabbi Abraham Isaac Katsh's<sup>11</sup> arguments represents another instance of her bolstering her self-worth. She writes to her sister that Katsh had tried to convince students that Islam was derived from Judaism by referring to the Jewish sources of the Quran (116). He intended to establish the superiority of Judaism over Islam, but his comparisons convinced Jameelah of the truth of Islam instead. It seems as if Jameelah's overall scepticism, which she acquired at the Ethical Culture School, enabled her to see the professor's partiality. Jameelah seeks positive appraisals from her Muslim readers; she paints herself as a knowledgeable Muslim who could challenge a professor's criticism of Islam.

Baumeister and Newman discuss the desire to obtain a reward as a prominent motive in writing autobiographical stories. Describing her troubles in America, Jameelah invokes the sympathy of her Muslim readers. She presents herself as a victim caught in the trap of social norms that are contrary to her temperament. According to her writings, Jameelah's feelings of social and intellectual isolation culminate in a three-year stay in a mental hospital. She remained hospitalized between 1957 and 1959 for "schizophrenia" (120). Jameelah writes that sickness made it difficult for her to reintegrate into society and find a job (150). Reviewing her path, we see disillusionment and internal feelings of isolation manifesting themselves in distinct ways.

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<sup>11</sup> Jameelah's teacher at New York University

Her previous school experiences had heightened her feelings of physical and social isolation. At university, her feelings of intellectual isolation prevailed. Certainly, being isolated in a mental hospital follows a common pattern, implying complete physical and psychological isolation. Jameelah's hospitalization 'proves and verifies' her autobiographical record of alienation and otherness.

From the above discussion, we can infer that in her letters to her sister and parents Jameelah seems to be constantly struggling with identity construction. She attempts to understand her social position by observing the differences between herself and those around her. Meanwhile, she discovers her personality to be more similar to a romanticized construction of Muslims she created in isolation. Jameelah weaves the narrative of her early life in America to convince herself and her readers that she is unique in her individuality. She tries to show that she represents certain ideas — for example, how isolation from society causes people to search for meaning and become possibly socially estranged from a frivolous culture.

#### JAMEELAH'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH MAULANA MAUDOUDI (1960-1962)

Jameelah's correspondence with her mentor, Maulana Maudoodi, makes up the second main source of justifications for her conversion.<sup>12</sup> In this section I analyze Jameelah's self-presentation to Maudoodi and examine how she impresses him with her skill in presenting Islam to the East and West.

Jameelah's self-presentation to Maudoodi seems to be grounded in her desire to impress him with her Islamic character. In her very first introduction to Maudoodi, Jameelah astonishes him with her in-depth knowledge of the troubles faced by the Muslim world. She references her articles in *The Muslim Digest* of Durban, South Africa, wherein she had refuted modernist scholars<sup>13</sup> who proposed that secularism and westernization are compatible with Islam

<sup>12</sup> Jameelah's correspondence with Maudoodi from 1960 to 1962 consists of twenty four letters detailing events in her life that brought her closer to Islam.

<sup>13</sup> These scholars include Asaf A. Fyzee (Vice-chancellor of Kashmir University), Ziya Gokalp, Ali Abd ar-Raziq and Dr. Taha Hussain.

(10-13). Jameelah's self-presentation caught Maudoodi's attention; he requested she write a brief life story describing her Islamic self-discovery.

In her short life story addressed to Maudoodi Jameelah describes her troubles in America.<sup>14</sup> Jameelah describes some formative experiences, including that with Rabbi Katsh that brought her closer to Islam. Jameelah's narrative concerning these formative influences shows that she tried to convince Maudoodi that she genuinely sought religious guidance: "I... [have] become so intensely interested in Islam as the only hope for the world that I want to become a convert. My big problem is that there are hardly any Muslims in the suburb of New York where I live and I would feel so terribly isolated" (14). In reply, Maudoodi offered her two options: to start working openly for Islam in America with the support of his co-workers or to migrate to a Muslim country (31). Regarding the latter option, he invited Jameelah to stay with him and his family in Pakistan. Maudoodi was providing an environment for Jameelah to practice Islam; he was equally interested in her writing skills and in-depth knowledge of the West and Islam.<sup>15</sup> He realized that Jameelah's writings, including her autobiography, could warn modernist Muslims against Western culture's vices.

Baumeister and Newman argue that individuals construct stories to highlight their unique traits (680). They discuss a tendency in life narratives where individuals prefer to highlight those traits that are consistent with certain values and standards and remain silent about those qualities that are morally questionable (683). Jameelah describes Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, founder of Ahmadiyya movement in Islam, as an insane person in her letter to Maudoodi. She writes that Ahmad's life and religious writings could have been useful case study of a schizophrenic person:

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<sup>14</sup> She told him that she had "almost no friends throughout the eight years of junior and senior high school" (24).

<sup>15</sup> Jameelah had shared her plans to write a book, *Islam Attacked from Without and Within: An Anthology of Anti-Islamic Propaganda*, in which she listed the names of the Western authors whose works she planned to use: Wilfred Cantwell Smith, H. G. Wells, Arnold Toynbee, William Douglas, Julian Huxley, Albert Schweitzer, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and John S. Bandeau (67).

I don't know why his relatives failed to recognize that [madness] and commit him to the asylum. If Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had been locked up in the mental hospital, he would have had no opportunity to spread his mischief [of religious ideas]. If Mirza Ghulam Ahmad were alive today, his delusions of grandeur and persecution would be quickly diagnosed by the medical world as schizophrenia-paranoid type. Every line of his writings indicates his malady... [His writings would] be of great interest to students of abnormal psychology. Psychiatrists should regard it as a valuable document on schizophrenia which provides the professionally trained with first-hand knowledge how the paranoid mind works. Viewed in this light, an objective study of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's books could help scientific research in mental diseases. (114-115)

Though ironically Jameelah had undergone a phase of life somewhat resembling the fantasy she prescribes for Ahmed, she does not let Maudoodi have slightest hint of it. Rather she shares Maudoodi's perspective on Ahmad to show her affiliations with conservative Islam that rejects Ahmed's Prophethood.

Elaborating on the idea that autobiographical authors seek rewards, Baumeister and Newman write that the rewards sought can include gaining sympathy, gaining social prestige and impressing others by highlighting personal skills (680). Jameelah's self-presentation to Maudoodi is an example of autobiographical narratives gaining social and material rewards. She had an obvious purpose in writing to Maudoodi: to convince him that she deserved to be rescued from living amongst nonbelievers. Jameelah's correspondences with Maudoodi resulted in an open offer to her to immigrate to Pakistan and stay with her mentor as a daughter. Accepting this offer Jameelah left for Pakistan on May 18, 1962. In the following section, I analyze how Jameelah details her life in Pakistan.

### At Home in Pakistan (1990)

The initial period of Jameelah's life in Pakistan after her arrival (1962-1964), is well-recorded via her personal correspondence with her parents, which was later published in *At Home in Pakistan* (1990)<sup>16</sup>. These letters describe Jameelah's excitement about Pakistan, the process of her integration into Pakistani society, her independence from her parents, and her final settlement in Pakistan by her marriage to Yousaf Khan. The work concerns Jameelah's self-raised question: "Why a modern American girl, born and raised in the metropolis of New York, should seek happiness and fulfillment at any cost in a poverty-stricken, so-called 'backward', 'Third-World' country?" (26).

Jameelah knits the story of her journey to Pakistan in her letters to her parents to describe events as clearly goal-directed. She describes herself as different from her Western shipmates, who look down upon Muslims.<sup>17</sup> Jameelah contrastingly writes that she found Muslims graceful and dignified. She describes, for example, the simplicity of the Egyptian Muslims and their carefree lives, rejoicing in their hospitality and courtesy (34-39). In this way, Jameelah presents herself as allied with the Muslims. The closer she comes to the Muslims the greater she feels distanced from her Western shipmates.<sup>18</sup> Baumeister and Newman suggest that autobiographical narratives are constructed to achieve certain purposes, either goals or fulfillments.<sup>19</sup> Showing her distinct position from the rest of the Westerners, she seeks to validate her identity claims that she belongs with Muslims.

Jameelah tries to convey to her parents that her Pakistani emigration has transformed her internally and externally: "These [Pakistani garments and the veil] shall be the clothes I shall wear from now on. I wish you could see me now. I wonder if you would recognize me as the

<sup>16</sup> Jameelah's husband, Yousaf Kahn, published these letters in 1990 in Pakistan.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, co-passenger Thelma, an Italian lady, hates Arabs because they supposedly live in filth and squalor (26) and the ship's captain says that Turks are fanatics (32).

<sup>18</sup> For instance, she fears being raped and thrown into the sea by the captain after his remarks on her dress, and she registers a complaint against him with the local Sudanese police (52).

<sup>19</sup> They explain that goals are objective circumstances whereas fulfillments are desirable subjective states (681).

same old *Peggy*” (68).<sup>20</sup> Jameelah’s donning of the veil is the first step towards her assimilation. She tries to convey to her parents and her readers that she is changed internally in her faith and externally in her dress. It is to be noted that Jameelah was not asked by Maudoodi to wear the veil. Rather it was self-imposed. Her obvious motives behind this self-restriction could be to prepare herself to adopt the role and image of a Muslim woman in conventional society or just to impress the other native Muslim women (and readers) with her devotion.

Jameelah presents to her parents that she has become well-integrated and accepted into an orthodox Islamic society. She writes that she is valued in Pakistan for a temperament that Western society scorns (6). She describes her visit to a religious school where she is honored with distinction. She says, “The only chair I found was reserved for me... I was almost something holy” (68). Paradoxically, while she tries to escape her American nationality, it is this American nationality that gives her a powerful position in Pakistan. For instance, she describes her protocol in the mental hospital of Lahore where she was given a separate room, three attendants and special food: “I soon discovered that my American citizenship made me by far the most privileged inmate in the whole hospital” (276). Although Jameelah’s distinguished position conflicts with her integration claims, she enjoys social prestige in Pakistan.<sup>21</sup>

Jameelah doubtlessly faced difficulties integrating into Pakistan but she focuses on the bounties she happens to enjoy, such as participating in tea parties and attending other socio-religious gatherings (92-112). In choosing to be silent on her problems in Pakistan Jameelah avoids confirming her parents’ notions that Muslims in so-called third-world countries live troubled lives. This tendency follows Baumeister and Newman, who propose that fulfillments and experiences are often idealized or mythologized in autobiographical narratives (682). In these cases, idealization helps to maintain Jameelah’s self-presentation to her parents and to herself.

<sup>20</sup> Jameelah’s nickname in America.

<sup>21</sup> Jameelah enjoyed this distinguished position even in her married life — Khan’s first wife was expected to perform domestic chores while Jameelah was not. These details will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Jameelah's letter to her parents after her release from the mental hospital in Lahore, however, ultimately details her problems with Maudoodi and his family.<sup>22</sup> This letter is antithetical to her former narratives from Pakistan. She confesses that she has encountered various problems since her arrival. For instance, she admits that her relationship with Maudoodi and his family had terminated within few weeks of her arrival. Maudoodi was not ready to accept Jameelah's openness and accused her of indecency.<sup>23</sup> He blamed Jameelah for domestic problems, saying that she had disgraced his family by intruding on them and spying on his children.<sup>24</sup> She discloses that Maudoodi sent her to the village of Pattoki to rid himself of her. She even holds him responsible for her nervous breakdown (273-4). It is intriguing that Jameelah discloses these problems to her parents during a life crisis. She manages to hide her general problems during her sanity to save her parents from unrest. She may have also hidden information from her parents to avoid embarrassment — they had guessed that she would be ill-fitted for Islamic society. For her Muslim audience, the personal effort Jameelah endures keeping her parents from worry may redeem her unstable behavior.

In America, one of Jameelah's chief concerns had been to marry an Islamic husband. When Maudoodi invites her to Pakistan, he promises her to find a suitable match (Jameelah 1969, 32). Shortly after arriving, Jameelah starts receiving proposals.<sup>25</sup> Soon after leaving the mental hospital, she receives a proposal from one of Maudoodi's trusted friends, Yousaf Khan. Jameelah marries him on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August, 1963, becoming his second wife.

Khan, an active member of *Jamaat e Islami*, had been appointed by Maudoodi to take care of Jameelah in the mental hospital. Khan used to provide Jameelah with sweets, drinks and other such gifts during her stay there. Jameelah writes that she has been surprised by Khan's

<sup>22</sup> Jameelah was taken to the mental hospital in Lahore in April 1963, where she remained for six months.

<sup>23</sup> Jameelah was expected to remain reserved; Maudoodi criticized her frankness (271).

<sup>24</sup> Jameelah reported once to Maudoodi about the activities of his sons, who had photos of film stars in their bedrooms (273).

<sup>25</sup> Jameelah writes to her parents that "Maudoodi tells me that since I arrived a month ago, I have received about fifty proposals for marriage" (121). However, Maudoodi advised Jameelah to learn the local ways of life before choosing to marry someone.

excessive kindness. When she was released from the hospital, he rented her a house close to his own. In the process of overseeing Jameelah's welfare and rehabilitation, Yousaf Khan comes so close to her that he proposes to her (295-96). Jameelah accepts to be the second wife of Kahn by Maudoodi's advice who reminds her that, due to her mental illness, there are few other options (297).<sup>26</sup>

Jameelah's acceptance of Khan's proposal is complex. There could have been several possible factors that prepared Jameelah to accept polygamy. In her earlier years, she had read about Arabian domestic life, which often included multiple wives. In a personal letter to Maudoodi, Jameelah criticizes the modernist Muslims for their aversion to polygamy (Jameelah 1969, 94). During her journey to Pakistan, she met some polygamist *Imams*<sup>27</sup>, their wives living peacefully together. Likewise, while staying in Pattoki, she became acquainted with her host's friend, who had two wives (242). Jameelah writes to her parents that Western society's emphasis on individualism and gender equality is incompatible with polygamy but a second marriage is no problem in Islamic society. She explains that "The modern Western concept of marriage is that the wife stands on a plane of complete equality with her husband; she is a self-assertive person in her own right, refusing to surrender one iota of her individualism" (243). However, this Western view of gender equality was hardly true in the 60s when the second feminist wave was just getting underway.<sup>28</sup> Jameelah expresses her view that polygamy leads to household productivity. Jameelah's fondness for Khan's family may also explain her acceptance of Khan's proposal. She writes of how she was welcomed into Khan's house for a tea ceremony after her arrival in Pakistan. Despite their poverty, writes Jameelah, Khan's family were extremely caring (109-11). This greatly impressed her and may have helped pave the way for her acceptance of Khan's

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<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, her families and friends produce differing counter narratives of the marriage. These will be discussed in the following chapters.

<sup>27</sup> The person who leads prayer in a mosque and conducts other religious rituals.

<sup>28</sup> Jameelah subscribes to the misogynistic view that women are unequal to men. She dismisses the Western ideas of equality and individual freedom. Jameelah, probably, approves of polygamy to maintain that she does not believe in Western ideals.

proposal. Jameelah's marriage narrative conveys that she is willing to adopt the conventional role of a Muslim woman. With regard to her interpersonal motives, Jameelah seeks to obtain reward through public approval for her commitment to Islamic tradition of polygamy.

Khan's marriage proposal came during a time of crisis. At the mental hospital she was persuaded by a Pakistani journalist, Shaheer Niazi, to renounce Maudoodi's guardianship. He told her that Maudoodi wanted to kill her. Jameelah followed the advice and planned to run away with Niazi (274). However, the American consulate responded by cancelling her permission to stay in Pakistan.<sup>29</sup> Jameelah's parents wrote to her that she would be readmitted to an American mental hospital. In response, Jameelah wrote to Maudoodi to seek his pardon. Maudoodi agreed to resume his guardianship as long as she would live separately from him (291). Viewed from this perspective, Jameelah's acceptance of Khan's proposal seems to be a desperate attempt to remain in Pakistan and continue local life rather than an achievement.<sup>30</sup>

Jameelah presents her post-married life to her parents as pleasurable. She conveys that marriage has relieved her from insecurities and provided her with a home and companions.<sup>31</sup> She writes that Khan's family is very supportive and caring; her firstborn being nursed mainly by Khan's sisters (352).<sup>32</sup> Jameelah intimates how the companionship of family life replaced loneliness. Strikingly, she describes no obvious trouble with Khan's family, except for his first wife's initial discomfort at the marriage. Here, Jameelah presents herself as the reaper of rewards from her Islamic experiences. Baumeister and Newman suggest that need for efficacy is satisfied when one has made a palpable difference in the world by exerting control to achieve positive

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<sup>29</sup> The American consulate notified Jameelah's parents of her unstable health and the discontinuation of Maudoodi's guardianship (Jameelah 1990, 290). Perhaps the consulate withdrew support for her in her confused situation and would not stand in for her.

<sup>30</sup> Yet Jameelah presents her marriage as greatly helping her integrate into Pakistan.

<sup>31</sup> Khan's combined family, including his brothers, sisters and children, provided Jameelah with companionship.

<sup>32</sup> Jameelah's first daughter, Aysha, lived only a few months.

outcomes (681). Jameelah shows her efficacy in securing her position in Pakistan in that she selected the right person for guardianship and handled her situation positively.<sup>33</sup>

Jameelah writes in her Preface to *At Home in Pakistan* that her original manuscripts have been preserved in The New York Public Library (25). It is understandable that Jameelah's parents handed over these letters to the library, probably at Jameelah's request, but it is curious how Jameelah accessed these letters for publication. Did she copy them before posting to her parents? If so, she may have been planning a publication from the very first letter. I assume Jameelah was always conscious of the potential of the letters.<sup>34</sup> This overall effort to affect her readers is an example of interpersonal construction in autobiography.

Regardless of their ultimate purpose, the letters highlight intriguing details of Pakistani Islamic culture. For instance, Jameelah reports on the Pattoki celebration of the birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. After describing many fascinating details of the festive event, she cites Maudoodi's seemingly paradoxical opinion that it is un-Islamic (148-9). Maudoodi and his followers were against *Sufi*<sup>35</sup> Islam. These asides could have been directed to her broader Muslim audience to reform their beliefs. More specifically, Jameelah's comments and citations from Maudoodi propagate *Jamaat e Islami's*<sup>36</sup> Islam, negating Sufi traditions. Jameelah voices Maudoodi's ideology, favoring his opinions.<sup>37</sup> She presents herself as a representative of conservative Islam as channeled through *Jamaat's* lenses. This aspect of Jameelah's narrative reveals that she had clear goals before in writing her life story.

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<sup>33</sup> By contrast, she reports to her parents the story of a Brazilian actress, Marlina, whose experiences with conversion and migration had been altogether negative. The actress had been "betrayed so terribly [by her Pakistani hosts] that her desire to embrace Islam had been shaken badly" (Jameelah 1990, 233). Thus, Jameelah tries to make her parents believe that she has effective control of the situation.

<sup>34</sup> Jameelah's correspondence with Maudoodi and its later publication may have assured her that her life story and correspondences with her parents could be equally persuasive for her Muslim readers, supplementing her public writings on Islam.

<sup>35</sup> Maudoodi's revivalism of Islamic ideology involved campaigning against the adoration of saints (Nasr 122).

<sup>36</sup> Maudoodi's religious party

<sup>37</sup> Another such example is Jameelah's discussion of her 'Visit to Data Sahib', a Sufi saint buried in Lahore. She enjoys the activities there but reminds her readers that Maudoodi declares visits to such shrines undesirable.

Baumeister and Newman's central claim is that "people's effort to understand their experiences often takes the form of constructing narratives" (676). There are also some passages in Jameelah's letters where she seems to be addressing herself. She tries to interpret her life choices through the rhetorical device of interior monologue, using it to interpret her own personal experience. For instance, in her second letter to her parents from Maudoodi's residence she retells the events that led to her conversion and migration (76-90). Jameelah's parents would probably have been familiar with these circumstances, but she recollects them for self-justification. This is an example of justification according to Baumeister and Newman, who propose that individuals validate their decisions through narrative schemes.

The vivid details in Jameelah's letters of Pakistani life could be an effort to celebrate her imaginative vision. For instance, she writes to her parents that a one-eyed goat will be sacrificed next year. However, Islamic tradition forbids sacrificing handicapped animals.<sup>38</sup> Jameelah's cavalier attitude towards facts in favor of her internal narrative creates an extreme interpersonal autobiography — she aims to impress the reader with her experience, rather than with verifiable reality.

Jameelah describes her migration to Pakistan as a *Hijra*<sup>39</sup> whose main objective was to find a place to practice Islam more fully than in her native land (25). Conversely, her letters show she was disappointed to see Muslim societies following a Western lifestyle (165). While staying with Maudoodi's family, for example, Jameelah realized that Maudoodi's children were somewhat westernized. Maudoodi's daughter, Asma, was studying English Literature, and his son, Hussein, was decorating his room with posters of Christian and Hindu paintings (127). However, as previously mentioned, when she mentioned the son's posters to Maudoodi, he explained that a strict attitude to children might result in revolt. Maudoodi's response made a

<sup>38</sup> These forbidden animals include: "A one-eyed animal which has obviously lost the sight of one eye, a sick animal which is obviously sick, a lame animal which obviously limps, and an old animal which has no marrow" (Tirmadhi: Hadith, 1497).

<sup>39</sup> Migration for the sake of one's faith

lasting impression on Jameelah, and her narrative construction of Maudoodi is affected by it.<sup>40</sup>

Overall, stating her dissatisfaction with the westernizing Muslim society Jameelah presents herself to her Muslim readers as a person who wants social reformation.

#### JAMEELAH'S ARTWORK: A CONTRADICTIONARY COMFORT

Since her childhood, Jameelah had been good at drawing. She wrote to her sister at the age of eleven, "Art is my favorite subject. Ever since I started school, I have been more interested in art than anything else. No sooner do I get to art-class than all the kids in the class crowd about me begging at once, 'Draw my picture! Draw my picture!' And I feel very proud because all the teachers like to put my drawings on exhibition on the bulletin board in the corridor" (1989, 23). This extract shows that art was a source of life and soul for Jameelah; her pastime as well as an identity marker. Contradicting the strictly devout image Jameelah constructs in her letters, she used to draw pictures of Palestinian Arabs. Most of her drawings are illustrations for her novel, *Ahmed Khalil*. Despite the fact that Islam prohibits the drawing of people and animals, Jameelah continued to draw throughout her life, hiding the hobby from her husband and others in the Muslim world.

In the present section I discuss some of Jameelah's drawings<sup>41</sup> to show how her drawings consolidate or invalidate her image as promoted in her letters.

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<sup>40</sup> Jameelah describes the details of her gradual loss of trust in Maudoodi after her release from the hospital (274).

<sup>41</sup> I have taken Jameelah's drawings from Deborah Baker's website: <http://www.deborahbaker.net/gallery3.htm>



“The City of Death” (December 1946, age 12)

This depiction of a graveyard-like place in drawing conveys Jameelah’s perceptions of death in her early age. This drawing reinforces Jameelah’s self-presentation in her letters that she was disturbed by news of Palestinians who had been massacred by Israeli troops (1989, 125).



Portrait of two Arab women

A central theme of Jameelah's novel, *Ahmed Khalil*, is the impact of modernization on the Arab world. This drawing explores the stark difference between two generations of Arab women. The old woman is in scarf, signifying traditional Arabian life, while the bareheaded younger one stands for modernization in the Arab world. Both of the women are sombre, perhaps at the changing perspectives of the Arab world at the cusp of transformation. This drawing hints at Jameelah's concerns for the decline of Islamic ways of life and echoes the worries that she brings up in her letters.



Self-portrait, Pakistan, March 1996

“My self-portrait, America, June 1956”, age 22

Jameelah’s self-portrait dated March 22, 1996 shows Jameelah in her early sixties. In sharp contrast to the self-portrait drawn in June 1956, Jameelah appears to be dwindled by her years. Jameelah’s self-portraits contain no expressions of the joy with which she is credited in most of her self-descriptions. The self-portraits contradict Jameelah’s self-presentation, thus calling their trustworthiness into question.



### Sketches: Madhouse

Recall that Jameelah had some of the worst times of her life in mental hospitals both in Pakistan and America. These drawings depict the miserable condition of the mental patients around her. The characters drawn are notable for their gloominess.



Arab father bathing son

Jameelah wrote to her sister that “Mother and Daddy don’t like me drawing Arabs all the time: they think the Arabs I draw are such dark and ugly people because I make them look so poor, thin and hungry-looking so everybody will feel sorry for them” (24). The present drawing embodies the above-stated objections of Jameelah’s parents; they were not wrong in their estimations of Jameelah’s drawings of Arabs. In her public writings, Jameelah advocates that women perform domestic chores rather than men. However, this drawing of a father bathing his son appears an antithesis to her self-stated conventions. Perhaps the mother being of the household is sick and cannot take care of her son, just as Jameelah herself could

not actively perform household work due to her sickness and writing. Indeed, a naked and sick girl is shown lying close to the bath tub, probably waiting to be washed as well. Further, the depiction of naked bodies might have been intolerable to Jameelah's admirers in the Arab world.



Painting: Sleeping boys

A woman looks over two males sleeping together. The caption of the painting, "Sleeping boys", hardly applies to the middle-aged men and the woman cannot be

categorized as a mother-figure taking care of her sons. Islam prohibits unwed adults sleeping together even if they are siblings.<sup>42</sup> Thus the two males sleeping together while looked upon by a female figure present a socially contentious situation, offending to the community of their faith.

As stated before, Jameelah understood that many of her pieces would not be permitted in the Muslim world. Before leaving for Pakistan, Jameelah handed over her artwork to the New York Library. She tells her parents:

“I could not take these [drawings] to Pakistan because Maulana Maudoodi had written to me that all picture-making of humans and animals is strictly forbidden in Islam and where I am going, they find no appreciation or respect... Maudoodi wanted me to destroy all my art-work but I could not bear to do that so that despite all he said why this art is prohibited in Islam, I still remained too emotionally attached to these pictures to destroy (1989, 211).

Jameelah’s decision not to destroy her drawings reflects her emotional attachment to her artwork. Ultimately the artist in Jameelah wins over the devout convert presented in her writing and she tactically manages to preserve her artwork. These drawings, though partially elaborative of Jameelah’s self-presentations given in her letters, reveal another domain of her life that remained unknown to her religious fans. Baumeister and Newman’s theory of interpersonal motives applies well to Jameelah’s artwork in this respect. She chooses to preserve her drawings for her Western readers and avoids sharing them with her religious ones who do not have ‘appreciation or respect’ for it. Here comes dual personality of Jameelah who prohibits drawings in *Western Civilization Condemned by Itself* (1979 vol II) on the authority of the Prophet Muhammad: “The most chastised of men in severity of punishment with Allah will be drawers of

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<sup>42</sup> As the Prophet Muhammad is to have said, “Teach your children to pray when they are seven years old, and smack them if they do not [pray] when they are ten years old, and separate them in their beds.” Narrated by Abu Dawood, 495

pictures” (550) but goes on supplying her drawings to the New York Library from Pakistan.<sup>43</sup> Biographer Deborah Baker says, “All drawings are captioned with quotations from the Quran, as if Maryam imagined that holy inscriptions might protect her from Allah’s anger at her transgression” (169). Baker’s detailed discussion of Jameelah’s drawings appears in Chapter Two of this thesis.

#### JAMEELAH’S STRATEGIES OF SELF-REPRESENTATION IN HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH HER PARENTS

Baumeister and Newman describe an interpersonal use of stories as the passing of information in such a way as to affect readers’ views (680). Jameelah informs her parents about various Islamic practices including obligatory prayers, ceremonies of Eid, the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, and the routines of Ramadan. She passes idealized information to her parents, hoping to attract them to her new faith. However, we cannot forget Jameelah’s differences with her parents, which have been discussed in the *Memoir* section of this chapter. Considering these religious differences, we can hardly imagine that Jameelah’s parents would have heeded her preaching.

Jameelah wrote an open letter to her parents in 1983 in which she invited them to convert to Islam. Though the open letter does not tell details of her personal life, it is useful for understanding her objectives for writing and publishing her letters. The genre of open letter, where a broader audience is addressed alongside primary addressees, allows Jameelah to multitask. She impresses her Muslim readers with her commitment to preaching Islam to others. It is not certain whether Jameelah’s parents ever received or read the open letter because Jameelah’s biographer, Baker, is silent and has not referred to it.<sup>44</sup>

Jameelah tries to convince her Muslim readers of her Islamic character to gain efficacy. While in the open letter Jameelah explicitly addresses her indirect readers, the rest of

<sup>43</sup> These drawings are labelled “additional illustrations made in Lahore”, dated 1969-1989 in the The New York Library.

<sup>44</sup> Probably this open letter was not archived or Baker did not find this open letter significant in studying Jameelah’s personal life.

her correspondences do so only implicitly.<sup>45</sup> This letter suggests Jameelah wrote most of her letters to her parents while planning to publish them. Their actual publication changed her addressees and consequently her motives. While in addressing her parents her apparent motive could have been to impress them with her imaginary achievements, a different set of motives, attuned systematically, comes in when she is addressing Muslim readers.

Jameelah attracts her Muslim readers by her ratiocination in the open letter. She concludes that Islam is the future religion for America: “The moral anarchy in the absence of any respected fixed standards of behaviour and conduct... the epidemic of venereal diseases and mental disorders... and corruption is the result of secularism, materialism and the absence of absolute, transcendental theological and moral values” (356-7). Here again Jameelah attempts to justify her religious conversion. The impression we get from her letters that she converted to Islam after much deliberation collides with the self-projection where she was naturally inclined to Islam since her childhood.

Baumeister and Newman refer to different strategies of self-worth enhancement. The most effective involves glorifying a particular group. Jameelah validates her Muslim readers’ beliefs by sharply contrasting them with Western ones: “Islam is not cold, remote and impersonal. Muslims have complete faith in a personal God who not only created but also loves and deeply cares about the fate of each of us” (361). In inviting her parents to Islam, she appears to be inviting the whole of Western civilization. This act of showing superiority of Islam to Judaism and Christianity exalts Jameelah.

Jameelah’s open letter is analytical rather than empathetic, unlike her other writing.<sup>46</sup> She weighs the costs and benefits of Islam methodically.<sup>47</sup> Jameelah open letter does not tell us of her circumstances twenty years after her emigration. She conveys to her parents and

<sup>45</sup> Structurally there is no difference between the open letter and the rest of her correspondences.

<sup>46</sup> Baker has discussed a set of Jameelah’s letters that were never intended for publication. In these letters Jameelah appears to be more frank and compassionate to her parents. These are to be discussed in Chapter 2.

<sup>47</sup> She ends her letter with an open invitation to her parents to accept her offer or decline it, similar to the actions of a preacher rather than a daughter.

nonbelievers that Islam is not primitive as is commonly thought, but holds solutions to all economic, social and political problems. She invites her parents to embrace Islam and become connected with their Pakistani family. She emphasizes they will be granted eternal prosperity, warning that refusal means eternal punishment (355-62).

Overall, Jameelah makes her conversion story devotional. She avoids giving details on her grim career prospects in America where her father used to threaten to send her to the mental hospital if she argued against him (1989, 150). Situationally, Jameelah's conversion and emigration seem to be an easy escape from American responsibilities. From the mental hospital of Lahore, she writes that if her situation in America had not been desperate, she would not have accepted Maudoodi's offer (1990, 291). Jameelah's conversion narrative, which highlights her religious virtue, does not directly mention her practical gains.

The epistolary form of Jameelah's autobiographical narrative presents diverse episodes of her life that are occasionally incoherent because she has not provided additional details of her life outside her letters.<sup>48</sup> A close comparison of different letters shows that Jameelah provides five motives for her coming to Islam that are internally self-contradictory. Firstly, her search for meaning, mentioned as a primary motive for her conversion, is juxtaposed to, and supplemented with, her search for a livelihood and settlement. Secondly, Jameelah's motives for *Hijra*<sup>49</sup> coincide with her maladjustment in America and her desire to settle. Thirdly, Jameelah paradoxically credits both her atheism<sup>50</sup> and Judaism for her coming to Islam. She says that she was attracted to Islam due to its Abrahamic affinity with Judaism, while simultaneously stating that Judaism is an inadequate religion. Fourthly, she offers intellectual reasons for her coming to Islam, asserting that she realized the truth in Islam by comparing it to Judaism, while

<sup>48</sup> These letters cover only three years of her life in Pakistan. Jameelah's publisher provides a short overview of the lives of the characters that Jameelah has described in her letters in the *Preamble*, but there is almost no information about Jameelah's personal life (11-24).

<sup>49</sup> Since *Hijra* is emigration for the sake of faith, Maudoodi's promise of marriage and settlement for Jameelah refutes Jameelah's *hijra* claims.

<sup>50</sup> Jameelah says that her atheism allowed her to study Islam objectively, rather than through the narrow canons of Judaism.

simultaneously describing the influence of her Russian convert friend, Zenita, in bringing her close to Islam. Fifthly, Jameelah presents herself in her letters to be steadfast in her views on Islam. However, in the last decades of her life, she became introverted and less enthusiastic in her revivalist tendencies,<sup>51</sup> limiting her activities to reviews of Islamic books.<sup>52</sup>

Baumeister and Newman write that “the narrative mode is well suited for reinterpreting and accommodating inconsistent information” (678). They explain that narratives are more flexible and can accommodate more inconsistencies than paradigmatic thinking.<sup>53</sup> Viewed thus, Jameelah narrative is an effort, on her part, to bring coherence to apparently incongruous events. The problem with her narrative is that she interweaves numerous stories that are not mutually congruous.<sup>54</sup>

The most interesting aspect of Jameelah’s conversion narrative is its dual appeal to her direct addressees (her family and social connections), and her indirect addresses (Muslim readers). This two-fold self-projection could not have been realized without her editing her letters, but she does not mention this editing anywhere in the *Preface* of her published correspondence and presents them as the original versions.<sup>55</sup>

#### CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER ONE

Jameelah’s private correspondences inform us that her self-representation is governed by strong motives to both react interpersonally to her readers and interpret her personal experiences. She seeks to define her ‘self’ in relation to socially accepted standards. Although the epistolary form of narrative limits the details of her life, it presents diverse episodes of her life. Her communications with different addressees reveal the presence of multiple factors and

<sup>51</sup> She did not write on the socio-political situations of the Muslim world in her last decades.

<sup>52</sup> Jameelah wrote in a letter to an Islamic researcher in 1996, saying, "Although I entered Islam in the atmosphere of political activist Islamic organization, after the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, my views on Islam changed radically. I spend a great deal of time alone in the house" (Nawab 138).

<sup>53</sup> The researchers suggest that “when confronted with a confusing and contradictory array of social information, people will try to make up plausible stories to tie it all together” (678).

<sup>54</sup> Again, this is the result of the genre of the letter. Jameelah writes different letters on various occasions. Every letter has a unique story for the concerned addressee. That is why the gaps between different versions of Jameelah’s life remain unabridged.

<sup>55</sup> Baker discusses this issue in detail and I shall come to it in Chapter Two.

conditions at work simultaneously in her conversion. Jameelah tries to justify her choice of conversion to Islam while at the same time attempting to present her life as an example of Islamic devotion. She makes efforts to both understand her own life and indirectly to warn Muslims against the imitation of the Western lifestyle, fulfilling many of Baumeister and Newman's criteria for autobiographical construction. Alongside her letters, her artwork, done against the tenants of Islam and hidden from the Muslim world, further complicate Jameelah's self-presentation. Specifically, Jameelah's correspondence suggests that she constructed her conversion narrative in accordance with the expectations or demands of her addressees, rather than it reflecting her true lived experience. Due to the inconsistencies mentioned above her efforts to bridge the gap between public and private spheres of her life by publishing her private correspondence remain unsuccessful.

## Chapter Two: Deborah Baker's Interpretation of Jameelah's Private Correspondences

Discovering Maryam Jameelah's archive in the New York Public Library, Pulitzer Prize nominee Deborah Baker realized the potential of this collection of writing from "a well-known figure in the Islamic world" (12) and wrote *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism* (2011). Baker's biography of Jameelah's life focuses on the latter's conversion under various domestic, social, religious and political influences. Baker reads the testimony provided by Jameelah herself and then tries to reconstruct the reality behind these letters based on her own findings and interpretation. Baker tries to balance self-conscious detachment and artistic attachment while presenting her subject. Chapter Two focuses first on Baker's take on Jameelah and then looks at what interests and motives are behind this interpretation. Baker approaches Jameelah's archive in the context of 9/11 and her subsequent interpretation of Jameelah's letters is conditioned by contemporary views on Muslims in America. She explores Jameelah's archive largely to link it with Islamic fundamentalism. Constructing a tale from Jameelah's private correspondences, Baker engages her readers in Jameelah's journey to Pakistan and her life-long stay there. Initially, she appears to be conveying Jameelah's self-presentations given in her private letters. However, gradually she changes track, asserting that Jameelah's self-projections in her correspondences were affectations.

Observing that Baker's story of Jameelah's life reflects different stages of identification, idealization, and increasing estrangement, I have analyzed mainly those parts of Baker's book that explain her motives for interpreting Jameelah's archive. A central point in Chapter Two concerns Baker's editing of Jameelah's letters. I have compared Baker's edited letters with Jameelah's published letters to see how Baker's reworking changes the presentation of Jameelah. I will relate my findings from Chapter One to some of Baker's findings, which will be discussed in this chapter. The results of my research presented in this chapter will highlight that biographical inquiries are linked to the motives of the biographer — biographical

representations are controlled by the biographer's personal interests. It is Baker's personal interest in Jameelah's life that initiates her biographical study, which ends in her estrangement from her subject.

#### THEORETICAL FRAMING

According to biographer and literary critic Ira Bruce Nadel, writing a biography is not simply fact collection; rather, the art of biography assigns life and form to otherwise boring facts. Biographers integrate life events into totalities through their narrativizations. Nadel's theory proposes that every biographer tells a tale, using literary techniques — linguistic expressions, figurative language, characterization, emplotment, and coherence — to represent the biographical subject. The diversity of human experiences means there may be multiple versions of the same life.<sup>56</sup> Nadel suggests that the appearance of multiple lives of the same person does not necessarily result from new discoveries about these lives, but from biographical narrativization. Each biography contains a plot structure suited to the biographer's artistic perception (103). The presentation and interpretation of individual lives govern the structure and mode of biography.

Nadel proposes that biographers employ language and emplotment as the fictionists do in narrative construction: "Fictive power directs the composition and reading of biography, explaining how biography translates facts into literary events and why biography continually interests the reader" (9). Facts do not speak for themselves. Rather the biographer imagines incongruous occurrences into created facts.<sup>57</sup>

Nadel's framework is well-suited for the analysis of Baker's presentation of Jameelah's life. Biographers, for the construction of their "created facts", have to rely mostly on textual evidence of which Jameelah's extensive correspondence constitutes an example. Baker

<sup>56</sup> For instance, there are more than 225 biographical studies of Samuel ('Doctor') Johnson, over fifty-seven of Dickens, and above seventy-one of Joyce (Nadel 102).

<sup>57</sup> Creativity involves the composition of facts and their presentation. Nadel explains that emplotment endows facts with fictive meaning by which we get a comprehensible vision of life (9).

frames her tale by interpreting Jameelah's private correspondences and adventures, comparing them with Jameelah's self-projection in her public writings.

#### THE STRUCTURE AND METHODOLOGY OF BAKER'S BOOK

Baker draws mainly on twenty-two letters<sup>58</sup> and two interviews, one with Jameelah and one with Haider Farooq, Maudoodi's son. She divides her book into three sections: "The Marble Library", "*Jahiliyya*<sup>59</sup>— The Age of Barbarism and Ignorance", and "The Concrete Library". In Section One, Baker describes Jameelah's emigration to Pakistan in 1962.<sup>60</sup> She describes her discovery of Jameelah's archive and her plan to write a biography. Baker presents a few of Jameelah's letters written from Maudoodi's residence, in which Jameelah describes her fascination for Pakistani life and the Maudoodi family's hospitality. Two chapters in this section detail Maudoodi's politico-religious life and works, connecting them to Jameelah. Part One of Section Two ends with Jameelah's letter to her parents from the Lahore mental hospital. Part Two consists primarily of a selection from Jameelah's correspondences, published in *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America (1945-1962): The Story of One Western Convert's Quest for the Truth* (1989).<sup>61</sup> In addition to the above said letters Baker includes a few letters that Jameelah addressed to her parents from the mental hospital in Lahore wherein she relates her strained relations with Maudoodi's family and her hospitalization. This section ends with Jameelah's reports of her marriage to Yousaf Khan and her final settlement in Pakistan. The last section deals with Baker's personal correspondence and interview with Jameelah. Baker points out that

<sup>58</sup> Baker has taken eight letters from *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America (1945-1962): The Story of One Western Convert's Quest for the Truth* (1989), two letters from *Correspondence between Abi-l-A'ala Al-Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah (1960-1962)* (1969), and nine letters from *At Home in Pakistan (1962-89)* (1990).

<sup>59</sup> Ignorance

<sup>60</sup> In this section, Baker adds Maudoodi's welcome letter to Jameelah in which he expresses pleasure at Jameelah's plan to emigrate. She also adds the only available letter of Jameelah's father to Maudoodi wherein he approves Jameelah's plan to live in Pakistan under Maudoodi's guardianship. She also includes Jameelah's letter to her parents in transit to Pakistan from the port of Egypt in which she describes her fascination for Arabia and Muslims. Doing so, she frames an interesting story of Jameelah's journey to Pakistan.

<sup>61</sup> As discussed in Chapter One, in these letters Jameelah describes her childhood and adolescent experiences, particularly those events causing her to detest American life and embrace Islam.

the written record of Jameelah's life in "The Marble Library"<sup>62</sup> is different from her lived life (that is, as viewed by Baker), "The Concrete Library"<sup>63</sup>. Besides connoting an encounter with more tangible evidence (Baker's 'concrete' encounter with Jameelah) this title also suggests that her live encounter with her biographical subject resulted in a less idealized view; after all, concrete is a much cheaper material than marble. At the book's end, in "A Note on Methodology", Baker clarifies that the letters included in the book have been abbreviated and edited by herself for her own purpose. She puts forward her work as "a tale" but makes it clear that she has not distorted facts about Jameelah's life: "The Convert is fundamentally a work of nonfiction" (225). She writes that "throughout these reconstituted letters, I have tried to retain Maryam's distinctive voice, one that often came more easily to me than my own... I do not make anything up" (225). Keeping in mind these claims, I detail how Baker's reworking has, actually, changed Jameelah's 'distinctive voice'.

#### BAKER'S INTEREST IN JAMEELAH'S LIFE—EAST AND WEST RELATIONS AND BAKER'S INQUIRY INTO TERRORISM

Nadel discusses how biographers' personal reasons affect their examinations and interpretations of their subjects' lives (119-122).<sup>64</sup> Baker discovered Jameelah's work in the New York Public Library by chance while reviewing the list of papers on deposit: "It was the dissonance of a lone Muslim name, among the commonplace Jewish and Christian ones, that waylaid me. From the finding aid's descriptive overview of her life and work, it was evident Maryam Jameelah was a well-known figure in the Islamic world" (12). In an interview, Baker further explains that a photograph of Jameelah in a *burkah* drew her to the archive: "Most photos of women in *burkhas* have been taken surreptitiously, but in this she is clearly posing. And I

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<sup>62</sup> This is the name of the chapter in Baker's book. "The Marble Library" refers to the archival record of Jameelah's life in The New York Public Library.

<sup>63</sup> "The Concrete Library" is the name of the corresponding chapter in Baker's book. The title refers to Jameelah's lived life, as in this section Baker meets Jameelah in person.

<sup>64</sup> So too Leon Edel, a literary critic, who writes that a biographer is "impelled by deeply personal reasons to writing of a given life—reasons not always conducive to objectivity and truth (8). The personal reasons might be either adoration or contempt for the subject". A biographer might "select a subject upon whom he will vent his spleen" (9). Accordingly, Baker selects Jameelah's case study to investigate the roots of antagonism between the West and Islam.

thought to myself, what's the point of having your picture taken if you don't show your face?" (Gilbert 2011). Reading preliminarily on Jameelah's life Baker queried: "How did [Jameelah] come to reject America and all it stood for? Did she ever regret her decision to leave?" (18). Of the man who invited her to Pakistan, Baker wondered: "Who was he and where did he come from? What did he believe and what did he see in Margaret Marcus?" (18) However, a major agenda lay behind these minor questions for Baker: "I tended to stick with smaller questions and look[ed] for larger meanings in the answers" (18). In an interview Baker explains the type of questions she was looking to explore in her book: "Was the enmity between Islam and the West rooted in metaphysical questions or historical grievances? Was it ironic or inevitable that the age of liberal democracy was also the age of imperialism? That the American Cold War evolved into the War on Terror?" (Gilbert 2011). Baker fathoms relationships between Islam and the West by studying the marginal case of Jameelah who had feet in both.

Jameelah was, according to Baker, a pioneering critic of Western materialism: "What interested me was how she positioned herself as the voice of critique between Islam and the West" (Herschthal 2011). Baker realized that her study would illuminate the abyss of Western-Islamic relations. She states that she wanted to look into the cultural animosity between the West and Islam: "Both sides traded in caricatures and insights of varying subtlety. Both seemed to use or abuse history, particularly histories of violence and cruelty, to further their agendas" (20). To what extent Baker succeeded in subverting prejudices of the Muslims and Westerners will become evident in my discussion on Baker's presentation of Jameelah in what follows below.

An overview of reviews of Baker's book shows that *The Convert* is primarily a study of troubled relations between Islam and the West: "[Baker] proves once again how a marginal case can be an illuminating way into vast and much disputed subjects, in this instance the meeting of West and East and the role of women under orthodox Islam" (Adams 2011). Such

reviews<sup>65</sup> show that Baker's achievements in *The Convert* mostly relate to the problem of the relation of Islam and the West stained by terrorism.

Nadel says that "perspective, dimension and point of view [of the biographer] control the material" (7). Baker was, accordingly, interested in Jameelah's life in relation to her investigation on terrorism in America: "Margaret's life, too, went straight to the heart of the heated debate over the notion of divide between Islam and the West" (19). Baker explains in a book review<sup>66</sup> that she discovered Jameelah's archive six years after the fall of the Twin Towers, but with America still facing its after-effects.<sup>67</sup> She connects the puzzle of Jameelah's life to the enigma of the terrorist attacks:

But if she lived to see the attacks, what did she make of them? Did she watch the city she had once known so well fall to pieces? Had she changed her mind about the evils of the West or did she remain resolute? Could she help me make sense of 9/11 and the war on terror that followed, or would she see me as her sworn enemy? Suddenly, the obscure story of Margaret Marcus and Maryam Jameelah became the means by which I might cut the Gordian knot that bound America and Islam in enmity. (Baker 2011)

Baker's story of Jameelah's life is directly motivated by the dilemma of terrorism in America and she seeks to explore its roots in her biographical tale.

#### BAKER'S IDENTIFICATION WITH JAMEELAH

Baker states in the beginning that "Anonymity is my vocation. I inhabit the lives of subjects until I think like them [,]... telling their stories, interpreting their dreams, mimicking their voices as I type" (10). Recall Nadel that the biographer's background and relationship with the biographical subject affect the reconstruction of life (102); Baker had to negotiate her own voice and that of Jameelah in editing the letters. Baker explains that "I then asked Maryam if I

<sup>65</sup> These Reviews are listed at Baker's official website <http://www.deborahbaker.net/reviews3.htm>

<sup>66</sup> "The Subject Talks Back"

<sup>67</sup> Baker explains that American forces were still busy in Afghanistan and Iraq (Baker 2011).

could write her story as if she were writing once again to her family. Having her voice pass through my own, perhaps I might understand her better” (220). She writes that “part of the difficulty of the task I had set myself stemmed from the effort required to set aside the many beliefs I did have” (220). Here Baker conveys that she tried to inhabit Jameelah by suspending her personal beliefs. She admits that she was so emotionally involved in her story of Jameelah that she occasionally lost contact with reality. Baker describes her sense of oneness with Jameelah: “For years I had been writing this story as if it was mine alone to tell” (220). Baker’s confession shows her earnest engagement in Jameelah’s life.

Baker’s identification with Jameelah is complex. Her attachment to Jameelah fluctuates.<sup>68</sup> Most of her book deals with her mistrust of Jameelah, yet her fascination is not absent. Baker states in her interview: “At first, I was wary, put off by the righteous tone of her books, but curious about what happened next. The more I engaged with her letters and writings, however, the more intense my identification with her became.” (Gilbert 2011).

Contrary to the claims of closeness to Jameelah, however, Baker resisted Jameelah’s efforts to gain her trust during their meeting. Jameelah told Baker:

I feel quite dismayed that most Pakistanis I know, including my husband, dispute even the existence of al-Qaeda or Taliban and blame all Pakistan’s troubles on a grand conspiracy of America, Israel, and India to destroy Islam/Muslims. Incredible as it may seem to you, most people here think 9/11 was a Zionist plot to give America the pretext it needed to attack Afghanistan and Iraq and control the Muslim world. (221)

Strategically Jameelah conveys to Baker that it is not her personal conviction that America engaged in the war against terror just to occupy Muslim territories, but the common

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<sup>68</sup> Baker reports her oscillation “For nearly a year I had shifted between fascination and mistrust of this woman, a woman whose core beliefs struck deeply at my own and yet whose critique of the West was both familiar and unerring. Her letters moved and perplexed me. Her books unsettled me, stirred me into another way of looking at the complacent assumption of my world” (196).

view of Pakistani Muslims. Here Jameelah brackets herself from the rest of the Muslims in Pakistan in their views on America to show her closeness to Baker. Jameelah tells Baker that she had criticized Maudoodi and that her criticism had been published in the *Jamaati*<sup>69</sup> publication. Jameelah also explained to Baker that “their [Maudoodi’s followers] English isn’t good enough [to understand what Jameelah has written]” (198). Baker writes that Jameelah asked her not to tell this to Khan, who still believed that Jameelah was in ideological lockstep with Maudoodi—“as if we were now girlfriends in league together” (198). Here Baker senses that Jameelah was trying to win her trust. This realization makes Baker concerned but she was unable to resist it: “I thought of the amoeba ingesting a particle of food and [Jameelah] ingesting me actually” (199). Feeling emotionally confused, Baker was conscious of the risk that getting closer to Jameelah might affect her presentation. Her subsequent moments of alienation and indifference to Jameelah will be discussed in the next section.

#### BAKER’S MEETING WITH JAMEELAH IN PERSON AND GROWING DISTANCE

Nadel describes biographers’ disappointment when their idealism vanishes: “Writer’s choice, treatment and analysis of subject tend to follow a pattern of idealization, revision and rejection” (119). Baker’s fascination with Jameelah’s life changed after reviewing the latter’s criticism of the West: her meeting with Jameelah for an interview in Pakistan during December 2007 appears to be the turning point in Jameelah’s biography.<sup>70</sup> Explaining her motives for meeting Jameelah, Baker writes that by meeting Jameelah in person she hoped to clear up certain issues that had remained after the archival study. Baker describes her disappointment in Jameelah thus: “When I pointed out the inconsistencies or impracticalities of her ideas... Maryam blandly admitted she did not have all the answers” (196). Jameelah’s responses probably made Baker realize that their meeting was not going to provide substantial information.

<sup>69</sup> *Jamaat e Islami*

<sup>70</sup> Baker found that Jameelah’s lived life was different than her archival one: “In person, however, Maryam seemed less sure of herself than her books had led me to believe” (196).

Nonetheless, during the interview, Jameelah shared a dark secret — that she had been gang-raped in America at age eight: “[A group of teenaged boys] tricked me into going with them to the woods behind the Larchmont apartment complex” (194). Baker was uninterested in Jameelah’s report of sexual abuse, feeling emotionally manipulated: “Was Maryam trying to... involve my sympathies by telling me this dark secret?” (195).<sup>71</sup> Baker does not link Jameelah’s avoidance of dates with her childhood experiences of abuse. Rather, she muses: “I wondered vaguely if Peggy had taken off her clothes herself recalling the ‘foolish mistakes’ she’d written Maudoodi about” (194).<sup>72</sup> Baker shares her disinterest in Jameelah’s tragedy: “It would explain her morbid fear of dating. For many it would explain everything. But I was more surprised by my own impatience, my chilly detachment” (195). Here it is clear that Baker’s early fascination with Jameelah ends in alienation. She conveys that her in-person meeting with Jameelah convinced her of the futility of discussion because she had lost trust in Jameelah’s reports.

During her interview Baker reminds Jameelah that her own criticism of Americans has motivated the extremists of *al-Qaeda* and *Taliban*: “You [Jameelah,] created a very convincing picture of the West as an evil place” (204). Jameelah defends herself, saying that she had never preached violence and her writings on jihad relate only to philosophy; she never wrote with extremists in mind (204).<sup>73</sup> Jameelah’s weak defense against Baker’s charges suggests her guilt.<sup>74</sup> Baker’s presentation in this regard is obviously driven by her efforts to highlight Jameelah’s involvement in inciting jihad.

<sup>71</sup> Jameelah also tells Baker that “I refused requests to write anti-Semitic tracts for *Jamat e Islami*” (195). Here she appears to earn Baker’s trust.

<sup>72</sup> Jameelah told Maudoodi in her correspondences that she did not indulge in foolish mistakes of dates. Baker here recalls Jameelah’s phrase to visualize how Jameelah might have responded to the situation.

<sup>73</sup> Jameelah defends herself: “I can’t be sure. I don’t know every reader of my books. All that I can say is that it was never in my mind. It was never my intention” (204).

<sup>74</sup> I acknowledge Baker’s point on the basis of the following excerpt from Jameelah’s book *Islam versus Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the book, namely Jews and Christians): *Past and Present*: “We must crush the conspiracies of Zionism, freemasonry, Orientalism and foreign missions both with the pen and with the sword. We cannot afford peace and reconciliation with the *Ahl al Kitab* until we can humble them and gain the upper hand” (6, 1978).

Baker explicitly asks Jameelah about her views on the terrorist attacks on America. Jameelah states that the fall of the towers symbolized the fall of Western civilizations: “I don’t think anything justifies 9/11. But if the building had been empty... it might have been justified... Because it was the center of Western civilization and so was the Pentagon” (204-5). Jameelah’s perspective on the fall of the Twin Towers is presented as conclusive and that determines the structure of Baker’s book. It is the central point of Baker’s inquiry. That is why Jameelah’s acknowledgment that the terrorist attack on the twin towers was conditionally justified as the Icon of western civilization, constitutes the culminating point of Baker’s inquiry. Afterwards, she wanted nothing to do with Jameelah.

Admittedly, Jameelah tries hard to impress Baker: “I [Jameelah] refused requests to write anti-Semitic tracts for *Jamaat e Islami*” (195).<sup>75</sup> Baker’s attachment to Jameelah, the person, prior to the interview may have been fictional, arising through her letters. Confronting Jameelah in person brings back the reality that Jameelah’s writings promoted terrorism. Baker’s sense of otherness at Jameelah’s sexual secrets displays this hesitation in being associated with Jameelah.

Returning to the archive after meeting with Jameelah, Baker scrutinized Jameelah’s letters. Baker explains that after the interview, “eventually, [she] reconceived the entire book, stretching the art of biography to accommodate both the facts and fantasies Maryam and Margaret had spun in those letters” (249-50). Baker re-reads and re-interprets Jameelah’s archive and finds that: a) Jameelah composed these letters for posterity; b) she edited these letters for publication; c) she constructed these letters in Pakistan; d) details in the letters are misleading. Baker’s tale of Jameelah takes another turn after meeting her subject.

While Baker claims her view of Jameelah truly started darkening after hearing the latter’s opinions on 9/11, we can hardly dismiss Baker’s intolerance from the very start of her

<sup>75</sup> Baker once again does not link Jameelah’s childhood responses to the Holocaust with her later attitude. She remains silent with regard to Jameelah’s explanations as if she was not willing to help her readers sympathize with Jameelah.

book. She cites Vali Nasr's <sup>76</sup> opinion: "Maryam Jameelah [was] broadly responsible for cementing the global divide between Islam and the West (14).<sup>77</sup> This instance shows that Baker had been preparing her readers for the climax of Jameelah's views on terrorism as a part of her strategy of representation of Jameelah.

#### BAKER'S DISAPPOINTMENT IN JAMEELAH

After introducing Jameelah's life and work, Baker states that "my attitude towards Maryam Jameelah was, initially at least, curious but distant" (20). What made Baker inquisitive and what caused her to withdraw? Baker explains in an interview: "Up until my arrival in Pakistan I had been in thrall to Maryam's voice, her story, and her views on the irreconcilable conflicts between Islam and the West." (Gilbert 2011). Baker's final response to Jameelah, as an interviewer, was unsympathetic in view of what she saw as Jameelah's indirect involvement in terrorism.<sup>78</sup> Baker subsequently admits that her idealization of Jameelah ended with the personal contact.

Recall that Nadel suggests the biographer's desire to correct and revise results in fresh evaluations (103). Baker appears to be challenging existing notions about Jameelah: "I [Baker] wanted to construct the book so that it would subvert not only the assumptions and stereotypes Westerners often bring to thinking about Muslims but also the ones Muslims betray when they hold forth on the West" (Foster 2011). She exposes Jameelah's lofty claims, asserting that Jameelah's religious journey to Pakistan also included considerations of material gain.<sup>79</sup>

#### THE CONSTRUCTION OF JAMEELAH'S STORY: BAKER'S EDITING OF JAMEELAH'S LETTERS

Baker writes that her skills in "puzzling out a story from fragmented records, interrogating and adjusting conflicting accounts" were of little use because Jameelah had already

<sup>76</sup> Maudoodi's biographer and an Islamic revivalist.

<sup>77</sup> Baker cites the words of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Vali Nasr's father, that "Maryam Jameelah began to write at in a time when few in the Islamic world were criticizing western culture in any depth... for someone from within the West to criticize modernism, in an articulate and logical way, was revolutionary" (14).

<sup>78</sup> Baker says in her interview, "I held her responsible in some ways for 9/11 and the War on Terror and the suicide bombings going on everywhere in Pakistan" (Baxstrom 2011).

<sup>79</sup> As I discussed earlier in this chapter, Jameelah's failings in living up to her self-proclaimed models become the centre of Baker's discussion.

listed details of her life and works (27). To construct an appealing story Baker chooses to edit Jameelah's letters. She includes abbreviated versions of Jameelah's letters in her book, but presents them as unedited.<sup>80</sup> Presenting the letters, Baker draws a line between them and her explicit commentary. The boundary is deceptive because it gives the impression that Baker reacts to the original letters. Further, Baker has rearranged contents between letters. For example, to produce the letter supposedly written in transit, Baker combines four letters into one, rephrasing details. Comparing Baker's versions to Jameelah's published letters is challenging because Baker gives no dates for Jameelah's letters that are important for a reconstruction of the sequence. Thus, partial dates obscure the chronology of letters. This instance of disparities in dates and displacement in contents of these letters show that Baker does not give exact letters in order to fit them in her biographical tale.

Editing Jameelah's letters from Maudoodi's residence, Baker highlights Jameelah's difficulties. For instance, using Jameelah's letter to her parents from Lahore, she draws an absurd picture of Maudoodi's house: "[The house] is somewhat dingy and primitive...two bathrooms consist of nothing more than chamber pots and a cold water shower with unreliable pump" (21). In the originally published letter, Jameelah describes the house as "a good sized one, built sturdily of stone and cement...the toilets are chamber-pots emptied twice a day by the sweeper and at the opposite side of the room is a shower fixture which seldom works and a tap of running water" (Jameelah 1990, 95). Here we can see that Baker replaces positive phrases like "a good sized one, built sturdily" with "somewhat dingy and primitive". This variation confirms Nadel's theory that biographical narrative construction is outlined by fictional elements, where details twist toward specific viewpoints. He clarifies that "the aim of biography is not so much to convey the facts but to present an attitude, perspective or point of view regarding those facts" (208). Baker's linguistic choice in describing Maudoodi's residence strengthens her perspective

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<sup>80</sup> This impression is created by Baker's use of the standard structure of letters.

on Jameelah's life. Here, Baker exposes Jameelah's expressions of joy on her migration to her new homeland<sup>81</sup> by highlighting the pitfalls of her stay.

Baker explains in her interview why she edited Jameelah's letters:

The letters were too long and involved to include intact so, initially, I used verbatim quotes with ellipses showing where material was removed.

Inevitably, this read like I was interrupting her. When I wanted the focus to be on Maryam, readers would wonder about what I had taken out. So I removed the ellipses. Then, since letters were often written over several days, I began combining one letter written in early July with another written and sent a little later. Once the letters became part of my manuscript, they underwent further changes and eventually I stopped referring to the originals. For me that was part of both the evolution and the conceit of the book: going outside myself and my biases and set of beliefs, first to embrace hers, then to get beyond both. You risk losing the reader's trust when you step over this line but I felt it was worth it. (Gilbert 2011)

In the above extract, we learn that Baker edited Jameelah's letters to bring linearity and coherence to her narrative. However, she confesses to this drastic editing process only at the end of her book in her 'Note on Methodology' (225).

Baker's epigraph quote from Freud makes it clear that where biographical representation is fabrication, her work is no exception. She quotes, "Whoever undertakes to write a biography binds himself to lying, to concealment, to hypocrisy, to flummery and even to hiding his own lack of understanding, for biographical truth is not accessible" (1). Here Baker makes it evident that her biographical construction of Jameelah's life is more than accumulation of facts. Nadel has refers to this dilemma as follows: "forced to select, balance, evaluate and at times

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<sup>81</sup> See Chapter 1 for details on Jameelah's expressions of joy on her migration to her new homeland .

suppress aspects of his subject's life, the biographer ....must condense, eliminate and even forget in the process of writing the life (102). Accordingly, we can see that Baker has condensed Jameelah's letters to explain her motifs.

#### JAMEELAH-MAUDOODI RELATIONSHIPS

As stated above, Baker's terrorism inquiry necessitated a discussion of Maudoodi's role. Explaining the magnitude of her undertaking, Baker writes, "[To] make sense of Jameelah's story as it unfolded I also had to explore the origins of global jihad and the idea of political Islam" (Foster 2011). Baker allocates much space to Maudoodi's biography, his writings and correspondence with Jameelah. She discusses Maudoodi's involvement in Pakistan and his struggle with Sharia law.<sup>82</sup> She writes that Maudoodi's writings on the Islamic state won him fame, leading to Jameelah's decision to contact him. She establishes similarities between Maudoodi and Jameelah, suggesting they both strived for radical Islam.

Baker exposes Jameelah's troubled relationship with Maudoodi. She cites Ghulam Ahmed Pervez's<sup>83</sup> analysis of Jameelah's mental illness in Pakistan: "In Pakistan Jameelah expected to find this true Islamic society she had read of in her books... Yet as soon as she arrived here she was offered a *burqah*" (68). Pervez suggests that Maudoodi caused Jameelah's mental sickness by restricting her life.<sup>84</sup> He proposes that Maudoodi's prohibiting Jameelah's painting caused her mental sickness because it was the only outlet for her inner feelings (77). Pervez wrote that "Jameelah had suffered a crisis of faith... fear for her life as an apostate had precipitated Maryam's mental collapse" (78). Baker remains critical of Pervez's presentation of Jameelah: "There was reason to be skeptical of Ghulam Pervez's account of Maryam's state of mind" (77). She clarifies that Pervez's criticism of Maudoodi's role in Jameelah's mental

<sup>82</sup> Islamic law drawn from Quran and Hadith.

<sup>83</sup> A contemporary religious scholar of Maudoodi.

<sup>84</sup> Pervez writes that "any psychiatrist or psychologist will agree that those who became insane are oversensitive. For a person like Jameelah, the discrepancy between her dream of an Islamic society and the reality of what she found here would be shattering" (68-9). Here Baker links Jameelah's mental sickness to her failure in finding Islamic society.

sickness is extreme: “Maudoodi had not tried to force Maryam into marriage with a groom of his choice” (77). Baker’s ambivalence corresponds with Nadel’s view that a biographer’s fresh inquiry breaks preconceived notions about a subject (104). Although Baker does not support Pervez’s claims entirely, her inquiry is keen to show how Jameelah’s self-presentations of having unproblematic contact with Maudoodi are disputed.<sup>85</sup>

Baker omits Jameelah’s correspondence with Maudoodi, claiming that she considered it reworked for publication: “I found that Maudoodi’s letters to Margaret Marcus as published were clearly edited to obscure the fact that a number of her letters to him were missing. I also caught a few details that Maryam sought to clean up” (207). Baker cites two examples of this: “Maudoodi cautioned Margaret that she could not do justice to her new book she proposed to write without proficiency in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Turkish...the Muslim name she had chosen—Jameel— was a man’s name” (207). This way, Baker demonstrates that Jameelah’s published correspondences with Maudoodi were edited for specific objectives.<sup>86</sup>

Baker introduces Maudoodi primarily through his militant ideas and involvement in Jihad. Maudoodi, according to Baker, was “the founding-father of militant, political Islam ...the first to call for a twenty-century global jihad against the West” (Baker 2011). To highlight the above said influence Baker cites example of Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani-American who parked an explosive-filled car in Times Square in 2010, was an avid reader of Maudoodi’s books (201). Baker implies that Jameelah, too, was radicalized under Maudoodi’s control. Baker describes, among other things, Maudoodi’s *Jamaat-e-Islami* as “the mother of all jihadi organizations”, referencing its involvement in Jihad against the Russian Occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s and 1990s (202). In this way, Baker’s study of Maudoodi’s life, in relation to Jameelah, widens the scope of her research on terrorism.

<sup>85</sup> Baker’s account of Jameelah’s marriage differs from the originally published letters. Baker’s edited letter states that Maudoodi disapproved of the marriage: “Given that you are as you are, I hesitate to take the responsibility of recommending you to anybody. And if after marriage you do not improve, then what?” (158).

<sup>86</sup> These objectives, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, included addresses to her Muslim readers. Jameelah skips information that might affect her social image or create a bad name for Maudoodi.

## BAKER'S STRATEGIES OF PRESENTATION OF JAMEELAH

Baker's work suggests that Islamic conversion means surrender to extremism, as is reflected in her title, *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism*. Baker links conversion with extremism and tells a tale to prove so. The biography's cover photo of a woman in *burkah* with bare legs mocks Jameelah's original, shown in the margins.<sup>87</sup> The bare legs might represent Jameelah's Western origins, while her covered upper half represents her later transformation. However, if we link Baker's cover photo with her title,<sup>88</sup> her strategy becomes clear. She suggests that Islamic conversion is another name for extremism, as made visible in Jameelah's change in dress.<sup>89</sup> This way, Baker's presentation of Jameelah ridicules Jameelah's self-proclaimed religious status as an ideal Muslim. Baker's choice or approval of the book's title and cover photo reveals her motive and audience — she writes primarily for Western readers.

Nadel writes that in biography “the emphasis is not on the facts but trends in subject's life, not the record but interpretative moments that define the psychological truth of the subject” (186). Baker emphasizes certain trends in Jameelah's life, theorizing on Jameelah's motives. She connects Jameelah's psychological problems as a child with her mental issues as an adolescent. Commenting on Jameelah's narrative of her ill-treatment in mental hospitals Baker writes that Jameelah was schizophrenic.<sup>90</sup> She attributes Jameelah's sickness to spiritual crisis — an inability to adjust to her irreligious surroundings (119-20). Baker proposes that Jameelah was a misfit in America. Thus she points out Jameelah's early age troubles that led her to seek religious healing.<sup>91</sup>

Baker's central chapter, “The Convert”, analyzes the circumstances of Jameelah's Islamic conversion, presenting it as caused by upsetting circumstances. Doing so, Baker

<sup>87</sup> See appendices for the cover photo and Jameelah's original photo. The original photo in the archive, taken in 1962, shows Jameelah completely covered except for her hands and partly her feet in sandals. The original photo represents Jameelah's religious image while Baker's cover photo mocks Jameelah's religious appearance.

<sup>88</sup> *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism*

<sup>89</sup> In the western propaganda against Islamic extremism, the veil and beard are signs of extremism.

<sup>90</sup> Baker describes Jameelah's schizophrenic behaviour — that she retreated from reality and had delusions.

<sup>91</sup> Baker attaches a letter of Jameelah's mother where she recalls Jameelah's childhood complications like her oversensitive nature, incapacity to play with the other children and phobias (108).

discredits Jameelah's devout involvement in Islamic rituals. She highlights, for instance, Jameelah's economic problems in her conversion. Jameelah's parents increasingly pressured her to find suitable work (136). However, Jameelah's published letters assert that she was a self-supporting typist before emigrating (Jameelah 1989, 159). Baker skips certain details of Jameelah's life to create her desired impression about her subject.

Baker maintains that Jameelah assured her parents of her well-being and integration in Pakistan to justify her position.<sup>92</sup> Baker highlights Jameelah's mental problems, which continued even after her conversion and emigration (218). This arouses suspicions against Jameelah's claims of settlement in Pakistan. My findings in Chapter One, also, point to Jameelah's life-long troubles in Pakistan, but Baker goes farther to find their roots.<sup>93</sup> Nadel suggests that previous biographies' limitations necessitate newer versions. Previously, Jameelah's life had been described mainly through her religious persona. Baker presents a more panoramic view of Jameelah's life. Interestingly, Baker overlooks certain details of Jameelah's letters that show her earnestness in seeking religious peace. Baker suggests that Jameelah's relationships with her parents became more problematic shortly after her conversion. She shows that Jameelah's conversion was unacceptable to her family, forcing her to leave home. According to my findings Jameelah was not staying with her parents when she converted. She had been living at Residence of the Young Women's Christian Association Washington D.C since in July 23, 1960 (Jameelah 1989, 156). Jameelah converted to Islam on May 24th 1961 at The Islamic Mission at the hands of Shaikh Daoud Ahmed Faisal who gave her the Islamic name, Maryam Jameelah (Jameelah 1989, 181). In the present instance it is evident that Baker connects events that do not fit the

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<sup>92</sup> Baker refers to Jameelah's self-presentation to her parents whom she conveyed that she was happy with her in-laws and enjoyed social prestige.

<sup>93</sup> Baker adds a letter of Jameelah's mother in which she describes Jameelah's childhood complications (108). In this way Baker connects Jameelah's childhood psychological problems with her adolescent mental issues.

timeline of Jameelah's life.<sup>94</sup> Once again, Nadel's theory that the imagination and beliefs of the biographer twist the subject's life (119) plays into Baker's presentation of Jameelah's life.<sup>95</sup>

Baker's final chapter, "Lifted Veil", reveals that Jameelah's insecurities continued until death. Baker conveys that Jameelah's search for happiness remained unconsummated: "When Margaret was a young woman, her questions were an endless source of anxiety. Her search for happiness and fulfillment had brought her to Islam. But where had the answers the Quran had provided gotten her? Not a perfect society, certainly. Not to an end of Question" (218). Baker says that Jameelah's belief, ultimately, consoled her in her lifelong predicaments: "[Jameelah's] faith granted her assurance that the evils she had witnessed... would not go unpunished" (218). Baker appears to suggest that Jameelah's solutions to her troubles — conversion and migration — were unsuccessful because she received only what her community of faith provided: "a loyal husband and family that accepted her place in it" (218). Jameelah's further search for meaning remained inaccessible.

#### BAKER'S SOURCE OF INQUIRY

Baker's position on Jameelah can best be grasped through her sources for her book. She chooses to interview Maudoodi's son, Syed Haider Farooq, the renegade.<sup>96</sup> Selecting Farooq's perspective on Jameelah, Baker searches for alternative versions of Jameelah's stories. Farooq does not accept Jameelah as a true Muslim,<sup>97</sup> telling Baker that Jameelah was ill-received, his family demanding that Maudoodi "throw her out of the house, and send her to the madhouse" (187). Farooq's view is close to Jameelah's letter to her parents where she suspected Maudoodi's intentions in sending her to Pattoki. But here Farooq gives a funny reason for Jameelah's expulsion. He recalls that Jameelah needed a razor to shave her legs but because Maudoodi could

<sup>94</sup> That is to say that Jameelah left her home first and converted to Islam later on.

<sup>95</sup> Baker has to, what Nadel calls 'suppress, distort and ignore certain details' (104) on Jameelah's life in the favour of her professed ideologies.

<sup>96</sup> A former pilot and columnist, Farooq is known as the renegade for his nonconformist views on Islam and even on his father, whom he calls a "misguided man" (205).

<sup>97</sup> Farooq explains to Baker that "She [Jameelah] could not be a true Muslim if she was insane" (187). He probably means that an insane person could not perform the obligations assigned to him.

not follow her English, she bared her leg to explain. Maudoodi felt insulted by Jameelah's indecency, sending her to Pattoki (188). Farooq's accounts of Jameelah's marriage suggest Jameelah's correspondences are unreliable. In Chapter One I have discussed Jameelah's marriage prospects where she wrote to her parents that she avoided her many suitors (1990, 121), but Farooq tells Baker that Jameelah was excessively concerned with marriage (188). According to Farooq, Jameelah had imagined Maudoodi as young, capable of coupling her. Further, he says that Jameelah went to Pattoki hoping to marry her young host, *Baijan*.<sup>98</sup> Baker is unconvinced. She writes that "the idea that Maryam had set her cap on marrying Maudoodi before arriving in Pakistan, only to pivot to settle on the prospect of marrying *Baijan* one month later, was hard to swallow" (188). Thus Baker does not take Farooq's view of Jameelah's marriage for granted. Nadel says that biographical inquiry demythologizes the life of the subject: "consistently it functions to correct, restate or reinterpret false or distorted accounts" (176). Using Farooq's tale, Baker ambivalently remains skeptical to Farooq's story but simultaneously uses it to unsettle Jameelah's religious status.

Baker strategically uses Farooq's point of view to problematize Jameelah's narrative on her marriage. She cites Farooq's report that Maudoodi was furious at the marriage between Jameelah and Yousaf Khan, and that Khan's first wife protested against the marriage to Maudoodi. Further, he tells that Maudoodi registered a kidnapping case against Khan and banned both him and Jameelah from his house (190). Farooq's reports contradict sharply with Jameelah's self-given information discussed in Chapter One— that Khan tried to unburden Maudoodi of Jameelah's responsibility.<sup>99</sup> Contrary to it Farooq hints at the material gains of Khan's marriage to Jameelah: "Khan imagined that he could make a lot of money off [Jameelah's] books" and he could send his children to the U.S. (191). Farooq's reports make Baker wonder: "Had she [Jameelah] written this [private letters] to allay her parents' fears about her welfare or to establish

<sup>98</sup> Jameelah's host in Pattoki.

<sup>99</sup> Khan told Jameelah that "Maudoodi is tired, his health is not good ...he has been extremely worried about you" (Jameelah 1990, 297).

her triumph? Was it meant as a piece of entertainment or of propaganda?” (191). Thus, the discrepancy between Jameelah’s self-stated details on her marriage and those proclaimed by Farooq allows Baker to broaden her spectrum in imagining the possible motives in Jameelah’s self-projections. The mutually contradictory accounts illustrate Nadel’s theory that “a critical biography is a contradiction in itself” (153). A biographer does not resolve riddles but merely provides insight. So too Baker, in this context, lays bare conflicts and contradictions related to Jameelah.

#### TRANSFORMATION IN JAMEELAH

Baker writes that in her later years, Jameelah limited her writing to book reviews. She argues with Jameelah in a personal letter that “Muslim youth are killing their sisters and brothers...yet you are quiet. Now you say ‘Ask the *ulema*<sup>100</sup> [their opinion on terrorism]’” (213-4). Baker conveys that Jameelah’s avoidance of giving a definite verdict on terrorism shows her transformation. Although Jameelah clarifies her position to Baker: “I... have no intention of making any change in my views on Maudoodi, Islam or the West” (215), yet Baker maintain that Jameelah’s views changed over time. Baker presents Jameelah’s silence on terrorist activities in Pakistan and America as evidence.

Baker informs us that Jameelah started writing her novel, *Ahmad Khalil: the Story of a Palestinian Refugee and his Family* (1961), at twelve, continuing intermittently throughout life. She says that Jameelah’s papers contain three versions of the novel that indicate modifications in Jameelah’s views: “The story of Ahmed Khalil was clearly Margaret’s and Maryam’s, one she would spend her whole life writing and revising” (168). Here Baker connects Jameelah’s life to her novel and suggests that the themes evolved gradually, in step with Jameelah’s own life.

Baker reports that Jameelah started drawing illustrations for *Ahmad Khalil* again in her last years and sent them to the archive in secret, fearing her husband’s disapproval: “I

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<sup>100</sup> Islamic religious scholars

wondered how [Jameelah] managed to get the paper and how she managed to send the drawings to the library without her husband's knowledge" (169). Here Baker highlights the gap between Jameelah's public persona and her personal life since Islam prohibits drawing people as Jameelah's artwork portrays. Nadel suggests that a biographer must expose inconsistencies, and Baker indeed does so. Baker proposes that Jameelah abandoned drawing at Maudoodi's command. She interprets Jameelah's taking up drawing again as evidence of their poor relationship and Jameelah's transformation. Motives aside, the secrecy surrounding Jameelah's drawings does indeed show a disconnected private and public life.

Exposing Jameelah's evasions and outright denials at the end of her book, Baker conveys that Jameelah's commitment weakened in her last years. Jameelah replied to Baker's letter and explained that "*Mujahidin*<sup>101</sup> must never be confused with 'terrorists': All the Mujahidin I have written about were genuine freedom fighters struggling on their native soil against foreign occupation and oppressive imperialism" (221). Jameelah refers to her recent article "Muslim savages", wherein she describes extremists of al-Qaeda and Taliban killing schoolchildren, kidnapping women, and prohibiting female education in northeast Pakistan: "Radical extremism is even worse than modernism" (221). Baker strategically cites Jameelah's views to show that she became a critic of extremist Muslims in her final years. She gives final shape to her biographical subject by showing Jameelah excusing her own writings.

Baker's findings suggest transformation in Jameelah's views and gaps between her private and public life. Using my findings, discussed in Chapter One, I agree with Baker that there were transformations in Jameelah's views. However, such transformations hardly apply to Jameelah's spiritual commitment. Rather, transformations in Jameelah's life and views reflect her broadened worldview, benefiting from experience.

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<sup>101</sup> Religious crusaders

## ADDRESSEES OF JAMEELAH'S LETTERS

As discussed earlier, Jameelah published her private correspondences, addressing completely new addressees/readers. Baker considers this issue thus: "I began to suspect that Peggy's correspondence had all along been directed not simply at [her parents], but past them, to posterity" (29). She presents Jameelah's correspondences as aligning with her propaganda: "Maryam had composed these letters as... a Cinderella backstory plotted to foreshadow how her embrace of Islam had rescued her from America" (208). I agree with Baker and I have discussed in Chapter One that Jameelah published letters to increase their impact. Jameelah's open letter to her parents in which she invites them to convert conveys that she wanted to address a wider audience.<sup>102</sup> Baker's inference that Jameelah's letters are unhelpful for understanding her personal life because they only project an idealized image to impress readers agrees with my conclusion in Chapter One.

Baker refuses to see Jameelah's published letters as products of truthful communication with her parents; she calls them "make-believe" (220) letters constructed with certain clear motives. Of the letter from February 1945, published in *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth in America* (1989), Baker writes, "It seems very odd that such an idea [as to live in Palestine or Egypt as a painter and missionary to the Arabs] would occur to an eleven year old" (97). Baker implies that Jameelah wrote these letters in her later years. She describes the influence of story reading on Jameelah's imagination: "It was striking, too, how Peggy seemed to treat the events and characters of the story books she was reading with as much seriousness as she did the events and people in her own life" (97). Thus, Baker proposes that Jameelah's letters are the unreliable products of her imagination.<sup>103</sup>

Baker describes Jameelah's dual response at the publication of her biography in her review *The Subject Talks Back*. Receiving the book, Jameelah commented: "I am satisfied with

<sup>102</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>103</sup> These findings of Baker are in line with my findings in chapter where I have discussed that Jameelah's reading of stories influenced her self-narrative in her letters.

your book as a fair and just detailed appraisal of my life and work” (Baker 2011). However, since Baker presents Jameelah as promoting terrorism, it is hard to see why Jameelah would acknowledge Baker’s representation as fair. It leaves the reader uncertain as to whether Jameelah had actually read Baker’s book before sending her letter. Baker informs us that soon after she received Jameelah’s approval letter, The New York Public Library had also received a letter from Jameelah, in which the latter had described Baker’s book as “filled with falsehood and unfounded allegations” (Baker 2011). Jameelah’s public disclaimer of Baker’s book, which contrasted with her private homage, make Baker wonder: “Somewhere between these two letters lay the unearthly promise of biography: a partly open door, a glimpse of another life; as if all it takes is a moment to look in and wonder” (Baker 2011). Baker suggests that Jameelah’s two letters symbolize her life — caught between extremes that are mostly mutually contradictory. In this way, any effort in establishing coherence between seemingly contradictory narrative planes might mar the whole narrative.

Analyzing Jameelah’s unpublished letters,<sup>104</sup> Baker reproached Jameelah in a personal letter. She told Jameelah that her lived life did not correspond to the life she promoted in her writings: “Why are you intent on preserving a way of life you never managed to live yourself?” (212). Picturing Jameelah’s incapacity to live life according to her self-proclaimed Islamic ideals, Baker states that her books were written for material gain: “Your books... brought in more income than Kahn’s work for the Jamaat-e-Islami. Did you write them for money?” (213). All in all, highlighting disconnection between Jameelah’s lived life and the views propagated in her writings, Baker presents Jameelah’s correspondences as merely constructions.

#### CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER TWO

Reading Baker’s findings I have realized that she had limited access to both Jameelah’s recorded and lived lives. Jameelah’s archive covers her life prior to 1963; afterwards

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<sup>104</sup> Baker believed that these letters had not been altered or rewritten because they were never published (209).

there is almost no material on her children, married life and other such personalia. Baker had merely a few sittings with Jameelah; their talks center on Jameelah's opinion on terrorist events and rarely on Jameelah's personal life. Regarding her selectiveness, Baker uses only letters that show Jameelah's contradictions and troubles. In editing Jameelah's letters, Baker has created an unduly biased account of Jameelah's transformation through her strategy of selection and barely acknowledged editing. In her personal correspondence with Jameelah, Baker addresses Jameelah's failure in living the life she prescribed, showing a gap between the public and private lives of Jameelah.

Baker's interpretation of Jameelah's correspondences is conditioned by her general motives. She reads Jameelah's life primarily to seek its connections with terrorism. Baker's political enterprise to mark Jameelah as an instigator of 9/11 directs her book's narrative. She launches an academic crackdown on the literary terrorist, Jameelah, whose books motivated Muslim youths to *jihad* against the West. Baker weaves Jameelah's life story from selected letters to draw her preferred conclusions.<sup>105</sup> As a result, her investigation into Jameelah's life remains eclectic. Baker's personal meeting and eventual dissatisfaction with her subject leaves her inquest hanging and her proposed questions unanswered. Ultimately Baker's book centers partly on her personal disillusionment with Jameelah, thereby fulfilling a core component of Nadel's theory.

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<sup>105</sup> For instance, that conversion to Islam ends in indulgence in terrorism or that a change of faith does not resolve personal issues.

### Chapter Three: The Construction of Jameelah's Life in Obituaries

Maryam Jameelah died of a sudden heart attack on October 31, 2012 in Pakistan. Her death was mourned in a series of articles in weekly magazines and daily newspapers.

Jameelah's legacy rests with not only her public writings and correspondence but also with the memories of her family and friends. The obituaries introduce different aspects of Jameelah's life, ones which had remained untouched in autobiographical and biographical studies. In this chapter, I will discuss the construction of obituaries of Jameelah, which are grounded in the social and cultural norms of Pakistan. Obituaries for Jameelah are, in some ways, biographical records. However, contrary to Baker's work and Jameelah's own writings, Jameelah's life as told by obituaries is comparatively idealized. Jameelah's traits are recollected to strengthen prevailing conceptions of her as a religious role model, including her acceptance of the traditional gender roles in Pakistan. Studying obituaries of Jameelah's life, we come across the social distinctiveness that she acquired by sacrificing her personal freedom.

Jameelah's domestic life in Pakistan is central to all obituaries. She is described as adjusted to Yousaf Khan's combined family. She is presented as the best wife, ideal mother, and most cooperative co-wife. In the previous chapters, Jameelah's family life in Pakistan after marriage has not been discussed in detail. Obituaries fill this gap, providing details on Jameelah's conjugal life and children.

This chapter's main research question is: For what purpose were the obituaries for Jameelah written? Was recollection of Jameelah's life in obituaries primarily an act of commemoration of her accomplishments or do these remembrances serve some other purpose? While exploring the primary functions of obituaries I recall my central thesis topic of life narratives being constructions aiming to accomplish specific, though unavowed, objectives.

## THEORETICAL FRAMING

Samuel K. Bonsu analyses the obituaries of the Ghanaian Asante people in his article “The Presentation of Dead Selves in Everyday Life: Obituaries and Impression Management”. Using Erving Goffman’s (1959) impression management theory of how individuals try to change other people’s perceptions by regulating information in social communications,<sup>106</sup> he finds that “obituaries embody self-presentation strategies” (199). These presentation strategies for the dead include “star crafting” and following “the script”.<sup>107</sup> When “star crafting”, the bereaved use positive attributes to describe the deceased: “Carefully crafted images of those represented in obituaries afford positive associations and audience attributions of good character” (216). “The script”, on the other hand, is a sort of social contract that encourages the bereaved to hide negative information about the deceased in their presentations.<sup>108</sup> These two concepts will be detailed in the next subsection. Bonsu further proposes that “obituaries are cultural texts that appropriate social symbols to facilitate the presentation of the dead as part of the bereaved’s identity projects” (199). He explains that the bereaved use certain social codes to create favourable impressions of themselves via the presentation of their dead. Obituary writers on Jameelah adopt similar strategies when highlighting her favourable traits while also implying their own good standing. Jameelah is praised for conforming to Islamic traditions. On the other hand, her failure in obeying several cultural practices in Pakistan is carefully modulated.

Bridget Fowler, a social theorist, argues that an obituary is more than a tribute to the deceased. She discusses many subgenres of the obituary: the positive obituary, the negative obituary and the tragic obituary. She defines the positive obituary as a “traditionally positive or neutral form, close to the eulogy” (17). She states that in negative obituaries the reader’s

<sup>106</sup> Bonsu has parodied Goffman’s title *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*.

<sup>107</sup> A script is a set of rules that defines a scene and outlines expected action on stage (Goffman 1979).

<sup>108</sup> These two terms: “star crafting” and “the script” are interchangeable in their function. Both refer to the process of veneration of the deceased, either ascribing positive attributes via “star crafting” or ignoring shortcomings by means of “the script”.

positive stance towards the dead is gradually undermined while the tragic obituary recalls details of sufferings of the deceased (20). According to this scheme, most of Jameelah's obituaries belong to the category of positive obituaries, although Deborah Baker's obituary has negative elements. I shall combine Bonsu's framework and Fowler's insights to analyze seven selected obituaries on Jameelah.

Fowler describes some features of the obituary that distinguish it from other life narratives: "Yet the autobiography as such is under the expressive control of its author and is thus as profound (or simplistic) as he or she is. In contrast, one characteristic of the obituary is that these lives are selected as particularly memorable, distinguished or newsworthy" (7). In view of this difference Fowler describes the obituary as a form of collective memory that is recapitulated by a group network. She explains that "the obituaries can usefully be distinguished in terms of their different origins, between dominants' memory, popular memory, counter-memory and occupational memories" (12). I will discuss the popular memory of Jameelah's family and fans that describes her ideal traits against the counter memory of Baker that problematizes her idyllic status.

#### OBITUARIES ON JAMEELAH

The positive obituaries on Jameelah are constructed in the Islamic tradition of censorship. As the Prophet Muhammad is believed to have said, "When your companion dies, then leave him alone without speaking badly about him" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1329). These obituaries are thus closer to hagiographies. Both of these genres unite to inspire devotees by constructing a tale of religious commitment. Fowler traces the origins of the obituary to spiritual biographies and hagiographies where individuals were remembered for their virtues: "The obituary is part of the social apparatus for the selective 'justification' of certain individuals at death. It has its earliest roots in the religious framework in which people might assess the saved [saints]" (41). An analysis of Jameelah's sacred image constructed by her

religious fans in obituaries enables us to see this connection between hagiographies and obituaries hinted by Fowler.

As mentioned previously, Bonsu uses the concept of ‘star crafting’ for the presentation of the deceased in the obituaries. More precisely, he explains that “the deceased is transformed into a star who, like the Hollywood actress on the premiere night of her movie, is presented at her utmost best by her handlers” (208). He refers to a variety of cultural symbols that create stars out of the dead: social standing, family life, the success of children, residence abroad, and other such achievements. Bonsu’s idea of star crafting for the dead and Fowler’s notion of positive obituary both refer to the process of commemoration through which virtues of the deceased are highlighted.

According to Bonsu, obituaries usually omit negative information on the deceased: “One important function of obituaries is to present the deceased in a manner that overwrites all blemishes they may have had in life” (107). Jameelah’s weaknesses are mainly overlooked in obituaries to create a favorable character in line with her autobiographical information. Thus, Jameelah is presented in an idealized manner in the obituaries with an emphasis on her religious achievements. This presentation proposes that Jameelah had fixed views that stayed unaltered until death. Jameelah’s post-conversion life is presented as if in perfect harmony with the social setup in the Islamic state of Pakistan. However, some obituary writers point out Jameelah’s troubles in their asides. I have picked these asides and set them against high claims of selected obituary writers in my analysis.

Obituaries on Jameelah were published in weekly magazines and daily newspapers in Pakistan as well as posted online on Islamic websites. My selection includes texts published originally in print from *Mahnama Khawateen Magazine*, *Mahnama Khateeb*, *Haft Roza Asia*, *Jasarat Magazine*, *Roznama Dunya*, *Mahnama Chaman e Batool*. It also includes texts published digitally from *The Express Tribune*, *Young Muslim Digest* and *The Companions*. I

obtained the published obituary records mainly from the *Jamaat e Islami Library* Lahore<sup>109</sup> and translated Urdu extracts taken from these papers into English. My analyses and findings are linked to my previous chapter as well as to the discussion of how narratives vary with genre change.

The obituaries were usually written with the obvious aim to be published and circulated amongst Jameelah's fans. The obituaries selected include those by Jameelah's family members, *Jamaat e Islami* officials, professional columnists and finally by Deborah Baker. A cross-section of the selected obituaries will yield an insight into their probable functions in the context of Pakistani culture that will help in defining Jameelah's social status.

The following seven sections are my analyses of the obituaries.

#### OBITUARY ONE: "MY SWEET HEART" BY YOUSAF KHAN

Jameelah's husband appears to have been the chief mourner at Jameelah's death. Oriya Maqbool Jan, a columnist, describes Khan weeping like a child at Jameelah's death and comments "How lucky is a wife whose husband's eyes shed tears at her death" (2012), a remark motivated by the fact that it is culturally uncommon for Pakistani Muslim men to cry in public. Khan is the main source of information of Jameelah's family life. He gives details on Jameelah's children, domestic routines and literary engagements.

We come to know through Khan that Jameelah gave birth to five children.<sup>110</sup> Both of Jameelah's sons went to America to work and study and to live closer to their maternal family.<sup>111</sup> Khanam was married in Lahore and lived in Jameelah's neighbourhood while

<sup>109</sup> Most of the magazines were published by *Jamaat e Islami* or Islamic organizations affiliated with it. In this way these publications address primarily to the members of *Jamaat e Islami*, though they cater wider audience by presenting favourable image of Jameelah.

<sup>110</sup> Aysa (b. 1964), Halimah Sadia (b.1965), Khalid Farooq Khan (b.1967), Haider Farooq Khan (b.1968), and Mariya Khanam (b. 1972).

<sup>111</sup> It is to be noted that Jameelah remained in contact with her parents after immigration. Though she had ideological differences with her parents, she continued her correspondence with them. As a result her children had positive view of their maternal family.

Sadia got married in Faisalabad and occasionally visited Jameelah.<sup>112</sup> Khanam also travelled to America but ultimately returned to Pakistan. Jameelah remained in contact with her parents until her mother's death in 1985.

The most fascinating but controversial aspect of Khan's obituary for Jameelah is his account of his marriage to Jameelah. Recall that Jameelah wrote to her parents that Khan proposed to her when she was under his care. She presented Khan's concern for her as love relationship. In the obituary Khan negates any existence of mutual pre-marital love between Jameelah and himself. Instead, Khan contrives interesting pretexts: "Jameelah's love of Shafeeqa's children was one more reason for the marriage" (20). One may wonder how Jameelah was able to express her love for the first wife's children if she had been unable to take care of her own children. The socially awkward situation which was discussed in Chapter One, where Khan took care of Jameelah, would not have gone unnoticed by others, who would have been critical of their closeness.

Maudoodi might have entrusted Khan, a married person, with the care for Jameelah. In this way, Khan's marriage to Jameelah, though relieving Maudoodi of his responsibility towards Jameelah, might have equally upset Khan. By ignoring these troubles, Khan conveys in his obituary that his marriage to Jameelah was a sign of peaceful relations with Maudoodi.

Khan relates the circumstances of his marriage to Jameelah:

Maudoodi shared [with me] his concern for Jameelah's marriage. I discussed it with Shafeeqa who told me that she had already been thinking of it. She advised me to marry Jameelah. I asked Shafeeqa to convey my marriage proposal to Jameelah. Shafeeqa contacted Jameelah but the latter excused herself, saying that she had to consult Maudoodi first. (20)

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<sup>112</sup> The first born baby, Aysha, died in her infancy.

Khan's staging of his marriage to Jameelah shows that marriage in Pakistan is not simply an accomplishment of personal desire but of showing social commitment. He describes his marriage to Jameelah as an act of his loyalty to both Maudoodi and Shafeeqa. Describing Shafeeqa's acquiescence to Khan's marriage with Jameelah allows Khan to present a positive image of his first wife as well. Jameelah's consulting Maudoodi concerning Khan's proposal shows her obedience to her mentor. In Chapter One, I discussed Jameelah's letter, stating that Khan personally approached Jameelah to propose while Khan himself attributes the proposal to Shafeeqa.<sup>113</sup>

Following Bonsu, "Obituaries as social rhetoric lead audiences to internalize the intended images of those they present. They do so through the automatic interpretation of the content presented within their well-defined sociocultural structures" (213). Khan's avoidance to admit that the felt pre-marital love for Jameelah might also be the result of conservative Islam forbidding any form of courtship before marriage.<sup>114</sup>

In this respect, Khan's obituary elucidates Bonsu's point that obituaries are cultural texts that appropriate social symbols. Bonsu writes that "obituaries are used as 'platforms for enacting individual and family identities'" (215). (199). Highlighting his passive role in proposing to Jameelah, Khan emphasizes Maudoodi's role over his own. Khan's reports on Maudoodi's involvement in Jameelah's marriage reinforce the popular image of Jameelah in Pakistani society, whereby she remained loyal to Maudoodi.

Khan highlights Jameelah's virtues, like her wearing of the *burkah*, offering charity, contributing to obligatory slaughter rituals and obligatory prayers five times per day (19-20). He uses cultural symbols to praise her: "[Jameelah] wore simple dress, liked bangles and

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<sup>113</sup> See detailed discussion in Idrees' obituary.

<sup>114</sup> Generally marriage is expected to be arranged by guardians and approved by the couple in Pakistan. Though arranged marriage conventions are declining presently in Pakistan, half a century ago it was common to marry by parent's choice.

coloured her hand with henna”<sup>115</sup> (20). Bonsu writes that obituaries make “culturally embedded symbols more salient” (215). Jameelah’s practices qualify certain cultural performances as Islamic as she is considered and presented to be representative of Islam.

Khan draws an explicit moral from Jameelah’s life: “Jameelah loved Islam and she left her home and family for her faith. Following her model, we must adopt appropriate Islamic values” (19). Khan shares Jameelah’s words: “I do not need any award because I work only for the sake of Allah” (21). In this way he pays tribute to Jameelah’s supposedly selfless service. Contrasting this, however, recall Baker’s charge to Jameelah discussed in Chapter Two that Jameelah came to Pakistan to sell her books on Islam, as well as the evidence in Chapter One, where Jameelah was shown to be overjoyed to be treated as a celebrity in Pakistan.

Khan describes Jameelah to be an obedient wife. Khan writes that there was almost never a disagreement between them during their married life: “Jameelah was all loyal and ever ready to obey me” (21). Khan’s description of the submissiveness of his wife is a typical example of patriarchal society. However, recall that Jameelah had been smuggling her drawings to America without letting Khan know lest he disapprove. In that light, the true extent of her submissiveness can be questioned.

#### OBITUARY TWO: “MARYAM JAMEELAH’S DOMESTIC LIFE” BY MARIYA KHANAM

Of Jameelah’s four living children her daughter, Mariya Khanam, wrote Jameelah’s obituary. As is obvious from the title, she includes Jameelah’s domestic routines in her text. Being married in Lahore she had the opportunity to spend much time with Jameelah. She describes Jameelah’s exemplary relationship with her family members: “Jameelah never had problems with anyone in family and she had great affection for grand-children” (23). She pays tribute to her mother in Urdu verse:

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<sup>115</sup> Dye prepared from the plant *Lawsonia inermis*.

Meri aapa kia theen? Ik man mohni soorat theen

Mere liye who ik chalta phirta noor e mujasam theen

Wo wafa ka paikar theen hayaa ka zaiwar theen

Aankhon ka noor theen, dil ka saroor theen

Kia kia khoobiyen ginwaon inki ae dil e afsurda

Jo dil ko rula gai rooh ko tarrpa gai.<sup>116</sup> (23)

Khanam describes her emotional bond with Jameelah: “I loved to sit alongside my mother holding her hand and chatting on everyday issues. I can still feel her touch in my hands, and I miss her badly” (28). Khanam presents a loving mother with whom she communicated well.

Regardless of Khanam’s presentation, however, she calls Jameelah *Aapa*, which means elder sister in Urdu. She explains that her siblings addressed Jameelah by this name and called Shafeeqa their mother. She writes that “it would be unfair to praise *aapa* without referring to *Ammi*,<sup>117</sup> Shafeeqa. Shafeeqa was greater than Jameelah for her capacity of tolerance and affection for all children” (23). It is interesting to note that her own daughter, while extolling Jameelah’s virtues as a mother, denies her the title. Khanam’s description of her simultaneous bond with both mothers hints at the gap between Jameelah and her children that was filled by Shafeeqa’s motherly affection and care. This situation and Khanam’s subtle resistance to call Jameelah *Ammi* are an interesting example to question Fowler’s distinction between positive and negative obituary. Although the obituary is mostly positive, Khanam hints at Jameelah’s inconsistent behaviour and undermines the former’s self-presentation.

<sup>116</sup> What was my mother to me? She was the most beautiful woman. / Gifted with heavenly virtues she was the living divinity. / She was an embodiment of faithfulness and jewel of modesty. / She was solace to my heart and light to my eyes. / My sombre heart cannot number the virtues of my mother / Whose death has grieved my heart and shaken my soul. [My translation of Khanam’s poem in Urdu].

<sup>117</sup> mother

In the same vein, Khanam acknowledges that Jameelah never cooked in her life or performed other such household chores. Khanam does not complain of a lack of motherly care that was compensated by Shafeeqa. Rather, she proudly describes Jameelah's literary achievements. She justifies Jameelah's choices by suggesting that her hands were made only for writing on Islam (23). Jameelah's inability to adapt herself to conventional roles in Pakistan is not obviously shown as undesirable because she is presented as executing a higher goal.

Paradoxically then, Khanam writes that Jameelah was a domestically caring wife: "Jameelah was ever concerned about Khan's rest and food and instructed us to provide him the best care" (23). Though Jameelah could not manage to serve her husband herself, she made sure that nothing was lacking in the comfort of her husband. Bonsu explains that "flattering [in obituaries] may be interpreted as an unconscious framing aligned with social norms, which require the sanitization of the deceased's life story for public presentation" (206). Khanam thus presents her mother fulfilling social expectations and describes Jameelah's life as befitting the norms of Pakistan, even though it is made clear by the same text that she could not do so.

Khanam informs us that Jameelah was completely satisfied in her final years: she used to say, "Mariya! My present time is the best time of my life. All family members are so loving and caring to me" (23). Considering Jameelah's situation in her final years, Khanam's report on the 'joyful' period of Jameelah's final years appears generous. After the marriage of her daughters and the emigration of her sons to America, Jameelah was alone. Jameelah herself wrote in her letter to a researcher: "I have few Pakistani friends: mostly my friends are European and American converts to Islam like me" (Nawab 113). Jameelah's admission speaks of her inability to find companionship in Pakistani society. Apart from her claims of

assimilation in Pakistan<sup>118</sup> practically it was, probably, hard to integrate. That is why her preferences for friendship remained European and American converts.

Khanam writes that Jameelah's amicable relations with Shafeeqa extend into their after-life. Jameelah apparently urged her son, Ahmed Farooq Khan: "Ahmed! Do arrange my funeral according to Islamic commands. Bury me alongside my family members, especially near Shafeeqa. And take care of my library" (28). Contrary to Khanam's praise of the relations between Jameelah and Shafeeqa, Ashfaq Hussain<sup>119</sup> reports rivalry between the women: "Shafeeqa was angry at Khan's marriage to Jameelah. Jameelah used to tease Shafeeqa in broken Urdu phrases like 'Shafeeqa *naraz*'<sup>120</sup> and 'Shafeeqa *uktaai*'.<sup>121</sup> Shafeeqa used to say wistfully that 'My bad luck has brought co-wife [Jameelah] from New York to Pakistan' (31). However, Hussain makes the issue of rivalry light by saying that "it was but petty matter and, hence, need not bother us" (31). Whatever the nature and extent of rivalry existed between Jameelah and Shafeeqa, Khanam tries to bypass debasing details. Hussain's reports, however, make Bonsu's point evident that unattractive material about the deceased is ignored in favour of flattering information (107).

Khanam informs us that Jameelah was in regular contact with her family in America. She fulfilled her promise of always keeping her parents updated on her progress. She links Jameelah's contact with her parents to the instruction of Quran: "And We have enjoined upon man kindness to his parents" [29:8] (23). Khanam's text appears to highlight her mother's religious duty to her parents rather than describing the social relationship of a daughter to her parents. Furthermore, she informs us that Jameelah's parents visited her in Pakistan once. Jameelah's sons in America are also said to have been in regular contact with Jameelah's sister there. Khanam describes her pleasure in meeting Jameelah's parents in America: "My

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<sup>118</sup> See Chapter One

<sup>119</sup> Ashfaq Hussain is the present publisher of Jameelah's published letters. For details see obituary five.

<sup>120</sup> Shafeeqa is irritated or angry

<sup>121</sup> Shafeeqa is fed up or annoyed

grandparents were excited to see me and they introduced me to their fellows in the old house proclaiming: ‘By looking at you, we feel as if Jameelah has come to us’” (26). Khanam’s account of meeting with her grand-parents serves as a counter narrative to Jameelah’s own description of her parents. Khanam’s reports suggest that Jameelah’s parents were caring, not emotionally cold, as Jameelah had presented them in her letters.

It is to be noted that the contact of Jameelah’s children with their American maternal family is not discussed negatively as a mark of their infidelity to Islam. Rather their Islamic character is highlighted through their keeping in contact with their maternal family. This is because a positive obituary encourages the reader to have positive perspectives on the given situation.

Khanam writes that “Aapa’s life story has countless morals for the born Muslims–Jameelah never hurt someone” (22). Here Jameelah’s life has been used as an instructive medium and her selfless spirit is praised. Khanam writes, “A pious person in Jameelah’s family dreamed that the Prophet Muhammad appeared with a beautiful dress and said ‘Make Jameelah wear this dress and take care of her’” (23). This dream is probably used to present Jameelah as a saintly person. Fowler suggests that the obituary has a low profile in relying on witnesses and testimonies as compared to the other life narratives because it seeks consecration (40). It is interesting to note that Khanam does not name the pious person who happened to dream about Jameelah, thereby making the account itself suspect.

Possibly Khanam had not plenty of information on the domestic life of her mother to share with Jameelah’s fans. She ventures to share her mother’s domestic achievements in her obituary: “educated people know Jameelah only through her writings on Islam but I intend to open up her private sphere to the readers” (21). However, the content of her obituary shows that she is concerned more with the social achievements of her mother than with domestic ones.

## OBITUARY THREE: “MARGARET AND MARYAM JAMEELAH” BY HAFIZ MUHAMMAD IDREES

Hafiz Muhammad Idrees is deputy *ameer*<sup>122</sup> at *Jamaat e Islami* and publisher of *Weekly Asia Magazine*. Idrees’s obituary for Jameelah is the longest of all obituaries analysed in this chapter. Published in four parts, every part highlights selected virtues of Jameelah related to different phases of her life. Idrees appears to be well versed in Jameelah’s published letters as well as her other publications that make his obituary for Jameelah distinctive.<sup>123</sup>

Idrees commemorates Jameelah’s death:

Jameelah’s death is actually not the demise of an individual but the closing of a golden chapter of history. She was an embodiment of knowledge, wisdom, and insight. Like a candle, she lit the darkness surrounding her society. She was the paragon of righteousness who destroyed idols of falseness by the sword of her pen. She embraced Islam in the pattern of *Sahaba*.<sup>124</sup>

Personalities like Jameelah are not born every day. Indeed, she was the precious treasure of the Muslim world. She was the bright star that rose on the Western horizon and set in the Eastern horizon. (10)

A central point in Idrees’s obituary for Jameelah concerns his praise for her contributions to Islam. He writes, “Jameelah is a unique instance of a Jewish convert to Islam who has rendered great services to the propagation of Islam. She did not simply expose the truth of Islam but did post-mortems of anti-Islamic designs from Christians and Jews” (6). Idrees conveys that Jameelah analyzed these designs in an incisive manner. He credits Jameelah for her in depth knowledge of Western civilizations that she employed in the

<sup>122</sup> A leading office at *Jamaat e Islami*

<sup>123</sup> I cite Idrees’s obituary as a counter narrative to the rest of obituaries because he has introduced different aspects of Jameelah’s life that remained obscure or unknown to the rest of the obituarists.

<sup>124</sup> ‘*Sahaba*’ means ‘the companions of the prophet Muhammad’. Here Jameelah is equated to the companions of the Prophet Muhammad for her devotion and commitment to Islam.

defense of Islam. Idrees praises Jameelah’s support of Palestinian cause: “Being a sensitive soul Jameelah was alive to the wrongs done to Palestinians. She used to make her drawings directed against Zionist aggressions to convey to the Jews that innocent Palestinians should not be punished for the Holocaust” (9). Here Jameelah’s Jewish background and identity are discussed as a positive incentive because she addressed the other Jews who supported Zionists.<sup>125</sup> Jameelah’s message to her fellow Jews in her early years might not have been as effective as it seemed to her Muslim readers.<sup>126</sup>

Idrees writes at the beginning of his obituary that he had close friendly relations with Jameelah and Khan with reference to *Jamaat e Islami*. On the authority of his personal relations with Khan he seeks to clarify conflicting narratives on Jameelah’s marriage. Recall that Jameelah wrote to her parents that Khan proposed to her personally while in his obituary Khan says that Shafeeqa approached Jameelah with his proposal. Khan explains to Idrees that both accounts are true because Shafeeqa went to Maudoodi with Khan’s proposal and he approached Jameelah to propose to her (6). However, since Maudoodi already wanted Jameelah married to Khan, Shafeeqa’s going to Maudoodi for approval is illogical. Here Baker’s account of Shafeeqa complaining to Maudoodi about Khan’s marriage to Jameelah appears plausible. Secondly, Khan’s own obituary clearly states that it was Shafeeqa who went to Jameelah with Khan’s proposal. Despite these contradictions, Idrees states: “There exist no contradictions in the reports of Khan and Jameelah on their marriage. These varying reports convey that different people played their respective roles in Jameelah’s marriage to Khan” (6). It is interesting to see how the narratives in obituaries are adjusted to produce desirable connotations. This narrative pattern reveals absences — truth is sacrificed for the sake of the desired narrative, which is in line with both Bonsu’s and Fowler’s suggestions

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<sup>125</sup> See Chapter One for details on Jameelah’s artwork.

<sup>126</sup> See Chapter One for details on how Jameelah presents herself to her Muslim readers by criticizing Zionists.

that an obituary follows a social script that modulates the presentations of the deceased and obituary writer.

In Farzana Cheema's obituary we learn that "Though Jameelah could not fulfil the domestic requisites of cooking and cleaning, she is described as having educated her own children and those of Shafeeqa" (28). Jameelah is described as compensating for her lack of domesticity by training Khan's children. However, Idrees highlights the Islamic character of Jameelah's children by referring to their inability to speak English fluently (6). He presents the distance of Jameelah's children from their mother's language as a sign of their rootedness in Pakistani culture. Furthermore, he informs us that Jameelah's children took part in the Soviet–Afghan War (9). As this participation was required by *Jamaat e Islami*, Jameelah's children's joining the war shows their affiliation with the party. Bonsu describes the relevance of the deceased's children in obituaries: "The children's successes, inferred from their occupations, suggest[ed] that the deceased was a responsible member of society who was successful in raising equally responsible citizens" (208). In the above instance, praise for Jameelah's children as following in their mother's footsteps is tied to their remaining commitment to Islamic values, which elevates Jameelah's status as a good mother.

Describing Jameelah's interest in Islam, Idrees writes that "[Although] born in an orthodox Jewish family, Jameelah was not interested in Judaism at all" (9). Recall from Chapter One that Jameelah insisted on having an Islamic character even before she officially converted to Islam. Idrees's obituary, too, reinforces this idea and Jameelah's coming to Islam is described as a mark of her genuine search for truth. Idrees writes that "Jameelah had gone through hundreds of books on different religions in her childhood but she rejected them all in the favour of Islam because she found Islam closer to her temperament" (9). In the above instance Jameelah's innate capacity to realize the truth of Islam is described.

Idrees appreciates Jameelah's steadfastness: "Jameelah's life is a story of her determination and steadfastness. She faced endless trials before finally settling in Pakistan. Jameelah had burnt her boats and never thought of returning to America" (11). A close comparison between Idrees's claims of Jameelah's steadfastness with my findings in Chapter One clearly reveals the relevance of Fowler's discussion on the genre of obituaries.<sup>127</sup> Fowler theorizes that the genre of obituary is close to that of eulogy in that it extols the positive features of the dead (17). Idrees elucidates his point by referring to Jameelah's refusal to have connections with America. He writes that Jameelah's son asked her to apply for American social security. Jameelah tore up the application forms (10). Her refusal to accept funds from America is translated by Idrees as a sign of her commitment to her principles. However, this account of Jameelah's rejection of support from her native country makes me wonder about her motives in sending her drawings to The New York Public Library. Here once more we come to a limitation of the obituary, which has usually limited space to problematize questionable issues. Idrees writes that Jameelah's family and society at large were unable to realize her problems: "Jameelah had no mental issues but unfortunately she was declared schizophrenic" (9). Here Jameelah's parents are described as unimaginative and insensitive to her genuine problems. Jameelah's mental problems and subsequent admittance to the mental hospital in America are linked to her conflicts with her parents. Idrees's typical representation of Jameelah's troubled relations with parents was very likely designed to make obituary readers sympathize with Jameelah.

One significant point in Idrees' obituary is his report on Jameelah's use of the *burkah*. Recall Khanam's narrative on the regularity of Jameelah's headscarf use. She writes that "I have never seen my mother bare-headed at home, and outdoors she used a *burkah* till her

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<sup>127</sup> See Chapter One for my discussion on Jameelah's steadfastness.

death” (21).<sup>128</sup> Contrary to Khanam’s report Idrees writes that “Jameelah abandoned using a *burkah* in her last years and contented herself with a scarf” (11). Though this change could be explained by the fact that Pakistani women are allowed to abandon the veil in old age, one may wonder about Idrees’s choice of placing a photo of Jameelah’s photo in *burkah* on the cover page of his obituary. Bonsu describes the role of photos of the deceased and bereaved in obituaries as tools in identity negotiation (107). While it is to be noted that photos of women are usually avoided in Islamic obituaries Idrees probably employs these photos both to reinforce the sacred image of Jameelah and equally to motivate his readers to follow Jameelah’s example of *pardah*.<sup>129</sup> Idrees’s obituary appears to be ambivalent overall. Initially he reveals Jameelah’s contradictions and later provides explanations for it. Doing so, he makes room for showing his scholarly research.<sup>130</sup>

OBITUARY FOUR: “MARYAM JAMEELAH: A *MUMINA*<sup>131</sup>, A *MUJAHIDA*<sup>132</sup>,” BY FARZANA CHEEMA

Farzana Cheema is a renowned columnist of *Mahnama Khawateen Magazine*.<sup>133</sup> She informs us that she has never personally met Jameelah, except for watching her from a distance during a gathering (27). However, she manages to write detailed accounts of Jameelah’s life partly via Jameelah’s published letters and partly through interviewing Yousaf Khan.

Cheema appreciates Jameelah’s spirit for Islam that moved her to leave the luxuries of American life for an Islamic way of life in Pakistan. She describes Jameelah as a true believer

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<sup>128</sup> Dogar, also, writes that Jameelah’s use of *burkah* was part of her campaign for *pardah*. He explains that “Jameelah considered *pardah* as an essential part of Islam and denounced campaigns against it as a revolt against Islam” (32).

<sup>129</sup> Covering for the Muslim women by burkah

<sup>130</sup> Of all obituaries for Jameelah, Idrees’ obituary is longest that contains details of her all major books. He introduces diverse aspects of Jameelah’s life about which even her family obituarists remain silent. For instance, he chooses to clarify if Khan proposed Jameelah himself or it was done through mediation of Shafeeqa or Maudoodi.

<sup>131</sup> A woman who has the highest degree of faith in Islam

<sup>132</sup> A person who strives for Islam. Usually this word is used for a person who does *jihad*, fighting for the cause of Islam.

<sup>133</sup> Cheema authored three obituaries for Jameelah: “Jameelah: unanimous in words and actions, a true lover of the Prophet”, “Golden annals of Jameelah’s life in the book of existence” and “Maryam Jameelah: A Mumina, a Mujahida”. She wrote these obituaries for different magazines.

in Islam: “Born amongst soulless materialists in America, Jameelah possessed the spirit of a *mumina*. She was destined to be a great *mujahida*, Islamic preacher and author” (14).

Jameelah is presented here as a person who crusaded with her pen in both propagating and preserving Islamic values. Cheema writes that Jameelah was the true picture of the verse Quran that instructs women to stay in *pardah*.<sup>134</sup> She expresses her wonder at Jameelah’s capacity to practice Islam even better than born Muslims. She writes that “Jameelah’s life is a role model for believers, for pious people and for those who desire to have a second marriage. She spent her whole life in simplicity in a moderate Pakistani home” (Cheema 30). Cheema exhorts her readers to see Jameelah as a holy person whose practices need to be followed by other Muslims. Recall Fowler’s discussion of the origins of obituaries in spiritual biographies where readers are sermonized. Cheema accordingly strives to motivate Muslims to follow the teachings of Islam that were supposedly practiced by Jameelah.

Cheema further seeks to arouse readers’ sympathies by highlighting Jameelah’s troubles in the West. Like many others, she writes that Jameelah’s parents mistook her faith in Islam as a sign of mental sickness: “[Jameelah’s parents] took her spirit of faith for insanity and consulted psychiatrists because they were unaware of Jameelah’s spiritual needs” (29). Cheema, here, conveys that Jameelah’s ailment was spiritual rather than psychological, and that her parents were mistaken in sending her to a psychiatrist. Fowler thus presents her reader with a case of the tragic obituary: “Certain portrayals reveal contradictions or social clashes which possess tragic dimensions. Such tragedy revolves around a man or woman who has had some success in their projects, but who is brought down by a fall” (Fowler 20). Though Jameelah’s downfall is not portrayed in the pattern of tragedy, her clashes with social forces are presented here as distressing.

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<sup>134</sup> “And stay in your houses. Bedizen not yourselves with the bedizenment of the Time of ignorance. Be regular in prayer, and pay the poor due, and obey Allah and His messenger.” (30). Translation of the verse of Quran by Pickthal (33:33).

Cheema's obituary makes it evident that the obituary writers sometimes rely on second-hand information retrieved from family gossip. She also takes Jameelah's autobiographical material at face value and reports it uncritically. This shows that the opinions of Jameelah's family and friends, rather than verifiable data sources as in the case of Baker's archive-based biographical work, are the main source of information for these obituaries.

OBITUARY FIVE: "DECEASED MARYAM JAMEELA: SHE CAME TO PAKISTAN IN THE SEARCH OF TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE" BY ASHFAQ HUSSAIN

Ashfaq Hussain is the present publisher of Jameelah's published letters. He narrates the event of seeking permission from Jameelah to publish her correspondences. Jameelah states to him that she would not publish without Khan's permission.<sup>135</sup> Hussain praises Jameelah's submission to Khan: "[Jameelah] was brought up in the West where individual freedom is so much emphasized that even a husband can't touch his wife without her consent. But Jameelah was by now so in accordance with the religious values of Islam that she had completely surrendered to the will of her husband" (25). Here Jameelah's adopting of a conventional role in Islamic society is highlighted. Hussain reports that eventually, when Khan allowed Jameelah to get her letters published, "She was very pleased and started clapping like a child" (25). Though Jameelah's seeking of Khan's consent for the publication of her book presents her as an obedient wife, equally it reveals her self-willed submission. She had to sacrifice her personal freedom in living with Khan.

Hussain reports that Jameelah stayed at Maudoodi's house for more than a year (31). This report does not tally with Jameelah's self-given information, discussed in Chapter One.<sup>136</sup> It is strange that Hussain, the translator and publisher of Jameelah's letters, errs in stating the exact duration of a pivotal period in Jameelah's life. Jameelah's troubles with her

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<sup>135</sup> Khan was the initial publisher of Jameelah's works and there could be financial considerations at work in asking Khan's permission.

<sup>136</sup> Jameelah stayed at Maudoodi's residence only for a few months due to serious conflicts. See Chapter One.

hosts<sup>137</sup> are also overlooked by Hussain. This downplaying of undesirable details while highlighting positive ones further illustrates Bonsu's view that negative information is avoided in obituaries.

Hussain writes that some obituary articles credit Maudoodi directly with Jameelah's conversion. He refutes this rumour, referring to Jameelah's letter in which she writes that she was converted by Shaikh Daoud Ahmad Faisal at the Islamic Mission in Brooklyn, New York (31). Hussain's reporting on Maudoodi's role shows how obituaries are constructed to meet certain socio-religious objectives.<sup>138</sup>

Hussain highlights Jameelah's Western origin and international repute. He writes that "Jameelah's Western origin did not constitute an impediment in her coming to Islam" (31). In Chapter One, I discussed how Jameelah enjoyed a privileged social position in Pakistan owing to her Western origins. Interestingly, she receives equal praise for her foreign identity even after her death. Bonsu points out this advantageous position of the foreigner in obituaries: "Residence abroad and perceived access to Western cultural capital contributes to social attribution of life successes and hence to enhanced social status" (208). However it is to be noted that contrary to Bonsu's concept Jameelah's rejection of Western cultural capital enhances her status. Jameelah's coming to Islam, as a Western woman, is presented as a sign of the truth of Islam. In this way, Jameelah's foreign origins and later conversion to Islam set her on high pedestals of praise in obituaries.

Hussain shares his discovery of Jameelah's book *At Home in Pakistan* in the "Preamble":

I came across this book, *At Home in Pakistan* while scanning through the old books sold on the footpath in Sadar Rawalpindi. The author's name was familiar but not the title of the book. After leafing through some pages I

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<sup>137</sup> See Chapter One

<sup>138</sup> Here obviously, as stated earlier, Maudoodi's religious services are emphasized.

decided to buy the book and got it for a nominal price. The bookseller must have been happy to get some bucks for a moth eaten book which was partially sodden also. (Hussain 1990, 12)

Hussain later had the book translated and published; its publication date November 2012 was coincidentally a few days after Jameelah's death. Hussain's claim of Jameelah's popularity conflicts with his own experience that Jameelah's books were not found in the bookshops or libraries but in a stall on a street market. Hussain's "Preamble" to Jameelah's book is more about enhancing his own image through his discovery of Jameelah's unnoticed book and thus supports Bonsu's view that obituary writing is somewhat directed to the obituary writer alongside the deceased.

OBITUARY SIX: "AAPA MARYAM JAMEELAH — A REMARKABLE LEGEND OF SERVICES TO ISLAM FROM NEW YORK TO LAHORE" BY HAMID RYAZ DOGAR

Hamid Ryaz Dogar is a senior columnist in Pakistan who writes for *Jasarat Magazine*. His obituary is in truth a creation of Jameelah's fans who compliment her on the basis of information sought from Jameelah's family and friends. He regrets his inability to have met Jameelah during her life: "It had been my earnest desire to meet Jameelah — that could not be actualized due to my mundane routines" (31). Dogar seeks to recompense his wistfulness by composing an obituary for Jameelah.

Dogar relates his visit to Jameelah's funeral. He writes that Idrees, the *Jamaat e Islami* representative, told funeral-goers in his funeral address that Jameelah had converted to Islam under Maudoodi's supervision: "Jameelah converted to Islam after reading translations of Maudoodi's books on Islam. Additionally, her uncertainties were clarified via her correspondences with Maudoodi" (32). Considering the inconsistencies that have already been discussed, Dogar's account makes it clear that Jameelah's funeral event was used to praise Maudoodi at the expense of factual accuracy.

Bonsu writes that “the presentation of dead selves requires shared knowledge of cultural conventions among the bereaved and their reading audiences” (217). The funeral audience, mostly themselves followers of Maudoodi, might have been impressed by the praise of their leader. Maudoodi’s status is uplifted by pointing to his role in Jameelah’s change of faith. In this way, obituaries on Jameelah become a site of collective memory for *Jamaat-e- Islami* and hence for Idrees who recalls his favourite versions of history to praise Maudoodi.

Dogar describes Jameelah’s steadfastness in her commitment to her mentor. He writes, “It was Jameelah’s earnest desire to be buried closer to Maudoodi” (31). Dogar thereby conveys that Jameelah’s relationship with Maudoodi remained intact throughout their life.

Conversely, Taimur, a Jameelah-blogger, discloses Jameelah’s separation from Maudoodi and his party in a short introduction to Jameelah on his blog:

The logic of her discursive approach has recently led Jameelah away from revivalism and the *Jamaat-e- Islami*. Increasingly aware of revivalism’s own borrowing from the West, she has distanced herself from the revivalist exegesis and has even criticized her mentor Mawdudi for his assimilation of modern concepts into *Jamaat-e- Islami*’s ideology. Her writings in recent years embody this change in orientation and reveal the influence of traditional Islam. (2009)

Taimur’s description of Jameelah’s distancing from *Jamaat-e- Islami* and revivalism echoes Baker’s indictment in her personal letter to Jameelah, “The *Jamaat-e- Islami* no longer needs your books to sell Muslim youth on martyrdom. They have others to do that now” (Baker 214). This discrepancy concerning Jameelah’s affiliations with Maudoodi and his party reveals that Dogar, like other obituary writers, accumulated mainly favourable information.

Dogar forwards Khan's words in his obituary on Jameelah's ideal relationship with Shafeeqa. He writes that "[Jameelah and Shafeeqa] never quarrelled or had differences of opinion, enjoying mutual trust throughout their lives" (32). Here, again, Jameelah's cooperation with Khan's co-wife is cited as an example of her endurance and courtesy to impress her fans.<sup>139</sup>

Dogar writes that "According to Humaira Maudoodi Jameelah had different proposals from wealthy and influential applicants but she preferred to be the second wife of a Party worker, Yousaf Khan. She wished to be the second wife of someone to follow the *sunnah*"<sup>140</sup> (23). Dogar's praise shows that Jameelah was highly valued in the Muslim community as an instance of polygamy having been accepted by a Western female convert. She is admired here for substituting her Western convictions for Islamic ones.

Describing Jameelah's services to Islam, Dogar writes:

Jameelah devoted her whole life to Islam. For more than a half century she continued writing in favour of Islam. She rightly criticized the evils of secularism, materialism and modernism. Her books have been translated from English into Urdu, Bengali, Persian, and Turkish. The most fascinating aspect of Jameelah's Islamic mission was her practice. She did not simply advocate Islam to the other but implemented it herself and set an ideal example for others. (32)

Here Dogar's claim that Jameelah's books were translated into other languages clashes with Jameelah's report to Baker that *Jamaat e Islami* members, including Khan, did not know of her criticism of Maudoodi because they did not know English.<sup>141</sup> This remark implies that not all of Jameelah's books were translated into Urdu. Dogar is unspecific about

<sup>139</sup> Once more, recalling Hussain's report, cited in Khanam's obituary, exposes Dogar's overstatement on behalf of Khan.

<sup>140</sup> Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad

<sup>141</sup> See Chapter Two

which of Jameelah's books have been translated into which languages. Rather, he uses the phrase that "her [Jameelah's] books have been translated... [into several] languages".

Dogar's imprecise wording would have been interpreted by Jameelah's fans as a general mark of her popularity.

Dogar's claim of Jameelah's worldwide popularity conflicts with Jan's reports on Jameelah's acceptance in Pakistan. Jan complains of the Pakistani Government's unresponsiveness towards Jameelah's services to Islam: "It is strange that the Government of Pakistan has not acknowledged Jameelah's services. Our libraries and bookshops [in Pakistan] are loaded with anti-Islam books by Western authors but unfortunately Jameelah's books on Western materialism are not available. Jameelah has never been awarded a medal or trophy for her writings" (2012). It is likely that Jameelah's affiliations to the religio-political party of Maudoodi made her less popular with the government because she wrote mostly for the preservation and propagation of conservative Islam, which opposes all forms of modernity from the West. Esposito & Voll argue, "If her defence of tradition won her many admirers, her critique and rejection of Islamic and secular reformers alike diminished her impact" (67). Jameelah's writings might not have been suited to Pakistani national policy and thus were not given prominence.

Dogar writes that Jameelah willingly abandoned her artwork as soon as Maudoodi had told her that sketches were forbidden in Islam (32). Recall that I have cited evidence that Jameelah started drawing again in her later years and continued to send illustrations back to New York. It is intriguing that Jameelah earned public prestige for abandoning her favorite pastime for the sake of Islam, while privately she continued sending her drawings to America. The adulation in the obituaries might thus be the result of ignorance about the facts.

I wonder if any of Jameelah's obituary writers read Baker's disclosures on Jameelah's artwork. Were they ignorant or simply hiding negative information on Jameelah?

OBITUARY SEVEN: "MARYAM JAMEELAH, 1934-2012" BY DEBORAH BAKER

Fowler writes that "an author who has already done an important full-length biography of a given person may serve in turn as a good obituarist" (112). What is lacking in the obituaries already discussed is detached analysis of Jameelah's life in relation to her major works. Baker's obituary serves this analytical function. However, even Baker's obituary is not completely objective because she has her own agenda in writing on Jameelah. What makes it especially unique is its secular nature. Bonsu discusses personal goals involved in presenting the dead: "Obituaries are not simply constructed in the honour of the deceased; rather the bereaved employ these performances to follow their own goals" (215). Baker's political objectives give a new dimension to Jameelah's life by introducing its less glamorous aspects.

Part of Baker's obituary seems positive on the surface: "[Jameelah] needed to get to the absolute heart of things and it was this restless desire that drew me to her, though our differences were numerous and profound" (Baker 2012). Ignoring her personal objection, Baker describes Jameelah's pursuit of clarity and certainty as the starting point of her interest in Jameelah. At the same time however, Baker's obituary draws on Jameelah's troubles in Pakistan: "The freedoms that her family in the West took for granted were not for her. She was subject to powerful rages that left her reeling and filled with regrets" (Baker 2012). Thus, describing Jameelah's remorse and guilt, Baker ultimately presents a low image of her. Contrary to the sunny side of Jameelah's life displayed in Khan's obituary, Baker discusses Jameelah's compulsions, which made her depend on Khan: "Like a politically fragile country that persists in acquiescing to one strongman after another, Margaret Marcus seemed to live in fear of what she was capable of if she was left to herself" (Baker 2012). Here Baker

suggests that Jameelah lived a life of compromises out of fear of knowing or displaying her true self with all her emotions.

Recall Fowler's definition of the negative obituary, where such obituaries describe the deceased in terms of "dishonouring any cause for which they pretended to stand. They are invariably portrayed in the obituaries as devoid of any altruistic or admirable qualities" (165). Baker's obituary has some features of the negative obituary as outlined by Fowler, but it is not wholly lacking commendation.

Contrary to the other obituaries that use only Jameelah's photos in *burkah* Baker chooses to present both veiled and unveiled photos of Jameelah.<sup>142</sup> The unveiled photos present glimpses of Jameelah's life that remained covered under religious shades while those in *burkah* show Jameelah's efforts at hiding herself from the public.

Baker's obituary does not clearly follow Bonsu's model, though she follows her own motives in writing Jameelah's obituary, drawing on Jameelah's failures rather than on her successes. As such, Baker's obituary more clearly follows Fowler's concept of the negative obituary that uses critical discourse and "sows seeds of doubt" (18-19) against conventionally held public images of Jameelah.

Deborah Baker describes Jameelah's fear of death in her obituary. She writes that "I was glad to hear that the end came quickly. As a child she had an overpowering fear of death. Her parents, secular Jews, could not assuage her fears" (2012). Here Baker is not pleased with Jameelah's death itself, but with the process that ultimately set Jameelah free from the pains of her sickness.<sup>143</sup> Baker explains that Jameelah found consolation by contacting Maudoodi, who assured her that "the afterlife was not some old-fashioned religious superstition, but a certainty" (2012). Baker's findings challenge Jameelah's autobiographical

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<sup>142</sup> See the Appendices

<sup>143</sup> Baker informs us in the start of obituary that Jameelah had been in coma after her first heart stroke.

information where she presents herself as pursuing meaning in life (Jameelah 1989,95), an objective higher than overcoming fear of death.

Baker highlights Jameelah's readiness to face her death. She writes that Jameelah sought religious solutions for her fear of death:

[Jameelah] constantly reminded herself that she might die at any moment and would have to answer for the life she had lived. To achieve something enduring with the gifts God had provided her was her dream. Only then could she be sure that she had not squandered her life, dishonored her limited time on earth by meaningless pursuits or sinful behavior. She planned to give a good account of herself. I think she will. (2012)

Baker's analysis of Jameelah's resolve to confront the phenomena of death is not negative. She conveys that Jameelah's metaphysical resources to make sense of life and death sustained her existence. Here Fowler's theory of the negative obituary is not completely applicable; Baker rightly points out Jameelah's engaging as well as her disengaging peculiarities.

Baker's obituary reinforces her biographical presentation of Jameelah. The obvious difference between the two presentations of Jameelah by Baker discussed here concerns the change in genre. Biographical presentation has more space for what Fowler calls testimonies and witnesses than the obituary. Baker refers back to her biographical work to convey her point of view. Here we can see that Baker's position as biographer dominates her position as obituary writer and her obituary appears to be an appendix to her biographical work on Jameelah. Baker's obituary on Jameelah is the only clear specimen of a secular and critical obituary analyzed by me through Fowler's framework (44). This obituary serves as a counter narrative to the religious ones. Just as Baker's biographical work on Jameelah, her obituary calls in question the popular image of Jameelah constructed in other positive obituaries.

Overall, Baker is ambivalent in a sense she admires Jameelah and her persistence, if not her choice of conservative Islam.<sup>144</sup>

#### GAPS IN THE PRESENTATION OF JAMEELAH'S LIFE IN THE OBITUARIES

The above comparative analyses show that each obituary on Jameelah has a unique perspective and structure. Looking into the genre through Fowler and Bonsu's framework I come to the following two general considerations. Firstly, Jameelah is remembered positively in most of the obituaries by her family and fans. Obituaries on Jameelah are distinct in espousing the opinions of their writers rather than providing verifiable data. Secondly, Fowler's categorization of obituaries as being either positive, negative or tragic has proved a helpful instrument. Though no single obituary strictly belongs to one specific category outlined by Fowler, the categories are useful in that they enabled me to discover certain patterns of idealization and praise in obituaries.

Indeed, in the obituaries, many events of Jameelah's life are recollected exactly as described in her letters. In this regard, they support her self-image as presented in her own writings. However, differences between the genres also create differences; Jameelah's autobiographical letters recollect her personal memory in relation to socio-cultural occurrences, while obituaries are set up by the collective memory of group networks, Jameelah's family and friends. The letters were addressed ostensibly to their recipients; thus, they suggested a bond of trust between Jameelah and her parents. Obituaries, however, are explicitly written for a broader audience.<sup>145</sup>

The obituary writers are hardly unanimous in their accounts of Jameelah's life. An obvious point of agreement amongst the obituary writers could have been the number of Jameelah's books. However, we come across varying numbers even here. Khan writes in the "Postscript" of Jameelah's published letters in *At Home in Pakistan* (1990): "My wife is the

<sup>144</sup> Strategically Baker attracts both Muslim and Western readers via her ambivalence.

<sup>145</sup> Interestingly the boundary between these genres blurs when we consider that Jameelah's letters were equally addressed to indirect addressees, her Muslim readers.

author of eleven full-length books and more than twenty pamphlets and I am very happy to be the publisher and distributor of all her books” (367). Hussain writes that Jameelah is the author of thirty-eight books (32). Jan reports that Jameelah authored thirty books. Idrees mentions thirty-four books and pamphlets by Jameelah in his obituary article (10). This variation in the number of books shows that the obituary writers were not equally familiar with Jameelah’s writings and the number of her books was often conflated with that of her pamphlets.

### CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER THREE

The obituary writers mainly focus on Jameelah’s positive traits, with the exception of Baker. Jameelah is praised mainly for her Islamic character, since numerous Islamic virtues are attributed to her. Idealization of Jameelah, as distinct from paying tribute to Jameelah, allows the obituary writers to propagate selected ethical and religious codes as well as to enhance their own characters. My analysis of the selected obituaries makes it evident that most of the virtues ascribed to Jameelah are conspicuous by their absence.<sup>146</sup> Sometimes positive attributions are the result of ignorance of the facts and occasionally they are in line with the tradition of the genre which Bonsu calls hiding negative information. Using different strategies, most of the obituary writers project politico-religious ideologies — venerating Maudoodi for his services to Islam, promoting Maudoodi’s version of Islam, publicizing the agendas of *Jamaat e Islami*, and preaching canons of conservative Islam supposedly practiced by Jameelah. However, underneath the polished surface we get occasional glimpses of Jameelah’s life that are apparently incongruous with her popular image in Pakistan. However, the constructions in the obituaries have been shown to exhort Muslim readers and to assert the superiority of Islamic values over those of Westerners. This is in line with the framework of Bonsu, which is echoed in Fowler’s account of the positive obituary; the

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<sup>146</sup> Most of the virtues ascribed to Jameelah in the obituaries are fabricated and they [these virtues] are not supported by other sources.

obituaries have been mostly used as a space to honour the deceased and bereaved, as well as to follow social scripts and conventions.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The present study has shown that different constructions of Jameelah's life are conditioned by the motives of their writers, and controlled by the frames of the genres in which they are formulated. Life narrators adopt various strategies of presentation suited to their objectives. As each chapter has dealt with different forms of presentation of Jameelah's life in their respective genres, we have seen that, individually, all versions have exclusive modes of construction. More generally, these varying presentations help us to see how Jameelah's life narratives convey a certain view of their subject by weaving a story out of available data on her life. My findings demonstrate that constructions of Jameelah's life are fluid — thus they are dependent on various cultural aspects and personal agendas.

Chapter One has shown that Jameelah's autobiographical letters were constructed as rationalizations of her overall choices in life. Though initially addressed to her parents to communicate her perceptions of the world, her letters take on a new function in educating the Muslim readers against the evils of modernity after publication.<sup>147</sup> In this way, the switches between direct and indirect address in her letters makes it evident that Jameelah's self-presentations are guided by the multiple interpretative and interpersonal motives outlined by Baumeister.

Chapter Two made it evident that archival data may be employed to deduce specific meanings for the propagation of envisioned agendas as theorized in Nadel's work. Baker reads Jameelah's correspondences to show that Jameelah calculatedly presents a negative view of the West to gain applause from her Muslim readers. She edits Jameelah's letters, contrarily, to build a narrative opposing Jameelah's intentions. Thus, she uses the same letters to frame quite a different tale of Jameelah. Baker backs up her assertions by providing disparate reports from

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<sup>147</sup> This information is exploited later on in the other subsequent constructions of Jameelah's life. Jameelah, too, relies on this data later in her future writings, like in the introductions of her books and interviews. Thus, the recording of her real as well as imaginary experiences serves as ready-made material for upcoming self-projections.

Ghulam Ahmed and Haider Farooq. She presents Jameelah's confessions, recorded in her personal interviews in Lahore, to deconstruct Jameelah's make-believe world of letters. Baker ventures to highlight the gaps between Jameelah's private and public lives. Doing so, she conveys to her readers that both Jameelah's public writings as well as her private letters were constructions on respective levels.

My analyses in Chapter Three demonstrated that obituaries usually present an idealized view of Jameelah where negative information is often consciously suppressed. Bonsu's theory that the presentation of the deceased in obituaries is channeled by the motives of the griever illuminates the procedures of remembering Jameelah at her death. Jameelah's family and fans pay tribute to Jameelah for her religious achievements. Jameelah's veneration also allows the obituary writers to enhance their own social identities. Jameelah's death is used as a platform to propagate Islamic ideologies. At the same time, Jameelah's dislike for the West is recalled in the obituaries to inculcate aversion for Western values in Muslim youth.

It is to be noted that Jameelah's letters serve as a starting point in all narratives discussed in this study. Obituaries attest to information stored in Jameelah's letters and use it as evidence. Almost all obituary writers directly or indirectly refer to Jameelah's letters as if they are a reliable source of information. However, interestingly, the obituary writers themselves use only select parts of letters, ones that either show Jameelah's liking for Islam or her dislike for the West. On the other hand, information on Jameelah's troubles in Pakistan after her conversion to Islam, including her mental issues, is overlooked. Baker, too, is selective in choosing information on Jameelah from her letters, prioritizing information that shows conflicts in the latter's self-proclaimed data.

Baker's biographical narrative differs from Jameelah's autobiographical one in terms of evidence and testimony.<sup>148</sup> Baker integrates multiple forms of evidence from the archive with her personal interview with Jameelah.<sup>149</sup> On the other hand, Jameelah presents her personal views and memories as evidence in her letters.<sup>150</sup>

As Jameelah's obituaries include post-mortem analyses of her life, they are comparatively broader in scope than her autobiographical and biographical narratives. Interestingly, Jameelah's autobiographical narrative as put forth in the letters discloses nothing of her early life prior to the age of eleven. To complete her story in the memoir she inserts a supposed letter of her mother which recalls Jameelah's childhood.<sup>151</sup> Baker too cites this letter by Jameelah's mother to bring linearity to her story. Both Jameelah and Baker conclude with a description of Jameelah's last years in Lahore. Obituaries provide additional information, giving insight into not only Jameelah as a subject, but also her surrounding social atmosphere.

Practically, analyzing multiple modes of engagement with Jameelah's life shows that differing narratives capture dissimilar strands of Jameelah's life, exploring it from different perspectives by means of varying parameters. This multi-source analysis highlights the complexity of Jameelah's life and its representations.

Overall, all three genres discussed in my thesis tend to simplify certain complex issues of Jameelah's life. Following their respective generic traditions the life writers in each case concentrate on those details or achievements of Jameelah's life that support their alleged motives. They construct Jameelah's life as a totality and thus overlook internal inconsistencies.

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<sup>148</sup> Bruner explains that the reflexive nature of autobiographical narrative, where the narrator and central figure are same, makes it troubled: "the reflexivity of self-narrative poses problems of a deep and serious order — problems beyond those of verification, beyond the issue of indeterminacy, beyond rationalization" (Bruner 693).

<sup>149</sup> See Baker's sources in Chapter Two

<sup>150</sup> Smith and Watson write that "memory is a subjective form of evidence, not externally verifiable; rather it is asserted on the subject's authority" (6)

<sup>151</sup> It is interesting to note that Jameelah does not share any letter of her parents with her readers that she received through correspondence except a letter of her father to Maudoodi in which he permitted Jameelah to immigrate to Pakistan. Jameelah's mother's letter reports the missing part of Jameelah's life, her childhood. I have used word 'supposed letter' to convey my suspicion that it is more a short story on Jameelah's childhood than a letter of for correspondence.

In this respect, Derrida has rightly defined the self as a living being that transgresses the generic labels of autobiography, biography and fiction, and each text belongs to several genres simultaneously (Green 50). Jameelah's life writings elucidate that these genres are not to be taken as fixed entities as they do not provide access to the 'essential' Jameelah. Rather, they are codependent, either reinforcing or challenging one another within any given narrative.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Baker's study on Jameelah signals that relations between Jameelah and Maudoodi were troubled. She brings forward points that suggest that Jameelah became critical of Maudoodi's writings in her later years. The scope of this thesis did not allow me to go into detail regarding their relations, an enterprise that would require a full-length study, particularly in relation to the following two questions: 1) What was the nature of Maudoodi's influence on Jameelah, both in ideology and in terms of everyday life? Was it limited to the adoption of Islamic values or did it extend to Jameelah's writings? 2) What made Jameelah shy away from *Jamaat e Islami* and revivalism? In the obituaries we find recurrent references to Maudoodi's influence on Jameelah, but no concrete leads. A better understanding of Jameelah's relationship with Maudoodi and his organization would give us both a deeper understanding of Jameelah's later life, as well as a possible model for how religious attitudes can evolve over a person's life. This proposed future study would require the use of Jameelah's library, as proposed by Khanam in her obituary. Ultimately, my interest in Jameelah's life started because she was a mysterious and controversial figure. My study confirms this and shows that her life and legacy deserve more research. Jameelah's life and writings concern the Muslims and the Westerners simultaneously because she addresses to the both. Her Western origin and education makes her stand distinct amongst the Muslim writers whereas her radical writings concern the West in terms of promoting extremism. Further academic study would not only improve our understanding of Jameelah's life,

but also clarify how life writings, encoded in respective genres, led to fresh interpretations of her life and will do so in the future for both her legacy and those of others.

Appendices

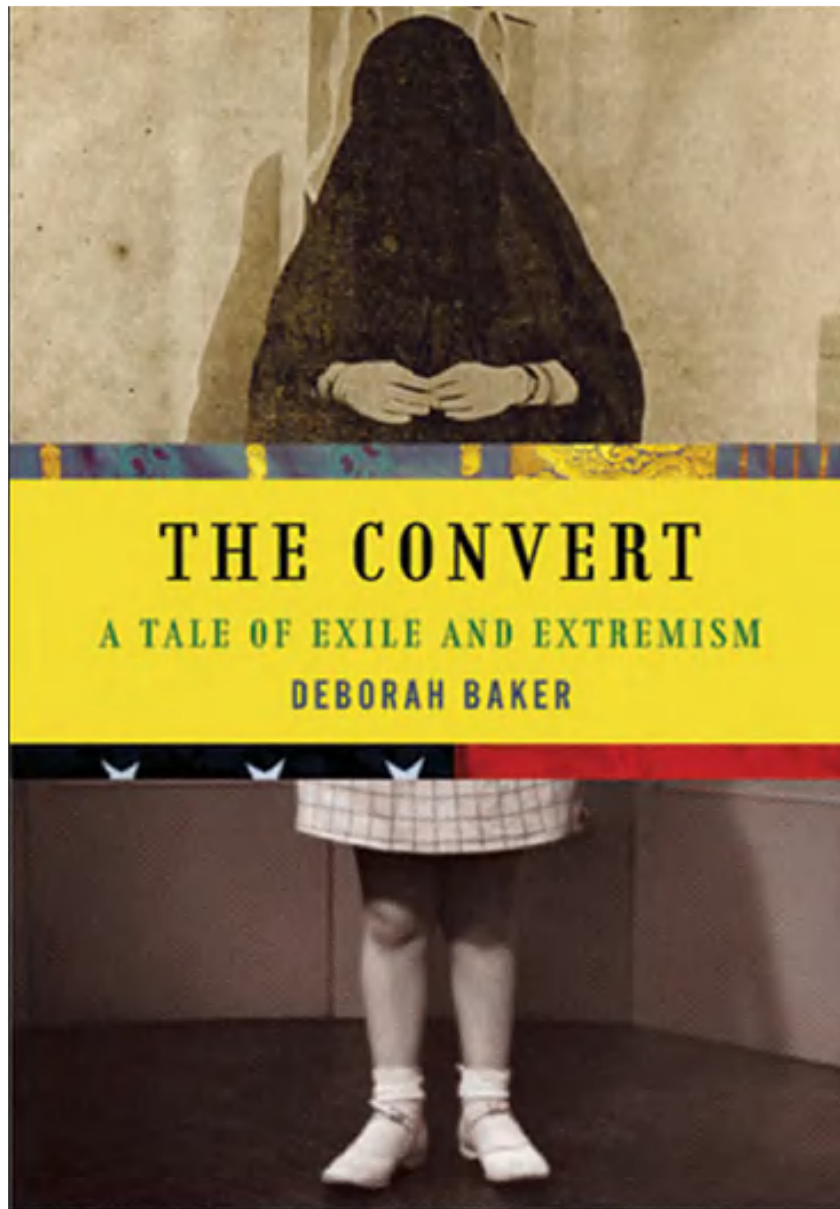


Figure 2: Cover image of Baker's *The Convert: A Tale of Exile and Extremism* (2011).



Figure 3: The original photo in the archive, taken in 1962, shows Jameelah completely covered except for her hands and feet.



Figure 4: Cover image of Hafiz M. Idrees's obituary on Jameelah.



Maryam Jameelah in a Burqa - 1966

Figure 5: Cover image of Baker's obituary on Jameelah.



Figure 6: Jameelah's photo as used in Baker's obituary on Jameelah.



Figure 7: Jameelah's photo used in Baker's obituary [Jameelah on left alongside her sister, Betty (1942)].

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