

**AN UNQUENCHABLE SEARCH FOR HOME AND IDENTITY IN KEIJA
PARSSINEN'S *THE RUINS OF US* (2012)**

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ABSTRACT: *Home and identity are challenging words to define. Many fields such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, literature, and political science have tried to provide an understanding of these two words. This paper is an attempt to examine these two concepts in addition to applying Eugenia Scabini and Claudia Manzi's concept of 'family identity' to Keija Parssinen's The Ruins of Us (2012). Parssinen is a third-generation expatriate who was born in Saudi Arabia. Her novel is about an American woman, Rosalie, who has decided to give up her life in America and marry a Saudi man, Abdullah, and move to Saudi Arabia as an attempt to belong. They enjoy a happy life for many years, despite cultural differences, and have two children, Faisal and Mariam. Suddenly, the idea of a cozy home is shattered as Abdullah takes a second wife. The disintegration of this family influences its identity development.*

KEYWORDS: identity, family identity, identity development, home

INTRODUCTION

The Ruins of Us is Keija Parssinen's debut novel; it has received a Michener Copernicus award. Parssinen is a third-generation expatriate who was born in Saudi Arabia, and lived there for twelve years. She has had an identity problem during school which was whenever she mentioned Saudi Arabia as her origin, people looked unconvinced. Thus, three things instigate her to write *The Ruins of Us*: first, her parents' Saudi friend has taken a second wife; second, the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers engaged her to understand how men from her country of birth might have killed her; third, her father's decision to return to Saudi Arabia despite the violence towards foreigners. She says in the postscript to her novel, "In 2005, I started writing *The Ruins of Us* to assert some control over my father's story. I was tired of feeling fearful, and I wanted to better understand exactly what was going on in the country I had called home for so many years" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 6). In brief, her unquenchable desire to understand Saudi Arabia compelled her to write the novel. She shows how people try to belong by depicting the main characters', especially

Rosalie's and Faisal's, search for home and identity. She uses the third point of view by shifting perspectives from one character to another. In this paper, home and identity are dealt with in a familial context, so Eugenia Scabini and Claudia Manzi's concept of 'family identity' is employed to analyze the novel.

Home and Identity

Home and identity are interlinked concepts, which are perplexing to define. Different fields such as psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, literature, and political science have attempted to tackle these two concepts. To define home, Kimberly Dovey (1985) says, in her introduction to 'Home and Homelessness,' it is considered an emotional connection with lots of meanings between people and their surroundings. It is a safe place and shelter from the dangerous world outside. Similarly, Jane McCarthy and Rosalind Edwards (2011) mention home is "a place carrying social and emotional ideals of kinship relations, such as intimacy, rootedness, belonging, solidarity, security and privacy" (p. 111). In addition, Nikos Papastergiadis (1998) explains, "The ideal home is not just a house which offers shelter. . . . Apart from this physical protection and market value, a home is a place where personal and social meaning are grounded" (p. 2). As for Shelley Mallet's (2004) point of view, home is a practical and effective place where one can store his/her memories especially familial ones in addition to a place for family without any interference from the outside world, nobody is watching or criticizing you. Home, as Sara Ahmed (1999) explains, is not to be a fixed place but rather many places: "Home is England, where I was born and now live, home is Australia, where I grew up, and home is Pakistan, where the rest of the family lives"(p. 338). One's sense of home is clear when he/she is influential somewhere. According to Michael Jackson (2000), "We often feel at home in the world when what we do has some effect and what we say carries some weight" (p. 123) while John McLeod (2013) says to be at home is to be accepted and live among people who look like us. Moreover, Aviezer Tucker (1994) believes home to be a place where individuals are comfortable and achieve their identities. Moreover, Graham Rowles and Habib Chaudhury (2005) explain, "Home provides a sense of identity, a locus of security, and a point of centering and orientation in relation to a chaotic world beyond the threshold" (p. 3).

Identity is of importance now as people have more options available (Kehily, 2009). The concept of identity is complicated to define. However, a comprehensive meaning of identity is "where one (a person or a group) belongs, and what is expressed as 'self-image' or/and 'common image', what integrate them inside self or a group existence, and what differentiate them vis-à-vis 'others'" (Golubović, 2011, p. 25) while "The new conception of identity refers simultaneously to the difference and sameness of self and other, both with psychological and sociological connotations" (Meijl, 2010, p. 71). Besides, Mardi J. Horowitz (2012) defines identity as a "conscious or intuitive sense of sameness over time" (p. 3). Likewise,

Steph Lawler (2015) explains the identity of a person does not change through life and he/she has common features with other people, but at the same time there are differences which distinguish them from others. Another point of view claims identity to be dynamic not fixed (Oyserman, Elmore, & Smith, 2012), and the process of forming identity is continuous (Meijl, 2010). A person's identity as a whole consists of many intersecting features or subidentities (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). In general, identity is a link between people and their world, and how each one represents himself/herself and how others see him/her. It reflects the inside of a person in addition to his/her social status (Woodward, 2005).

In *The Ruins of Us*, the main characters are searching for home. Rosalie, the American expatriate, has married the Saudi man, Abdullah Baylani, and moved to Saudi Arabia seeking her childhood memories there: "She remembers the ache of homelessness she felt when they flew out of the desert . . . Sometimes, the cure of nostalgia is return" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 320). However, after she finds out about Abdullah's second marriage, she is totally lost and believes to have made a wrong decision. Parssinen (2012) writes, "How foolish she had been to return to the kingdom with him all those years ago. She had allowed her nostalgia for a place and time that no longer existed dictate her life's most important decision. . . . Look where chasing after memories had gotten her — stuck between worlds without a strong footing in either one" (p. 9). Nadjie Al-Ali and Khalid Koser (2004) comment, "Sometimes 'home' can be recognized in an abstract ideal, a longing for a nostalgic past or a utopian future" (p. 7). Rosalie has believed by returning to Saudi Arabia and marrying her beloved she will continue to live happily after. When Rosalie's brother tells her to come home, she believes Saudi Arabia is her home: "But I am home. I've been in this place for more than twenty-five years. My children, my friends are here" (Parssinen, 2012, p.15). She loves the desert and its people; she participates in the Baylani's rituals and parties. Julia Wardhaugh (1999) points out home "becomes a source of identity and status, and allows for a sense of connection to both people and places, to the past and to the future" (p. 96). Saudi Arabia for Rosalie is not just a setting; it is a state of being, who she is; it represents her identity. Marco Antonsich (2010) explains one's place of birth and where he/she grows up become important places throughout his/her whole life. Rosalie loves Saudi Arabia and is psychologically and emotionally connected to it. She was upset to leave, and her dream was to come back to Saudi Arabia, her home, because it is the place where she spent her childhood.

Abdullah marries Isra, a Palestinian, maybe, as an attempt to make himself feel at home. He says, "Isra held in her heart the essence of what it meant to be an Arab after 1948: suffering" (Parssinen, 2012, p.197). Though Rosalie has become a Saudi wife, Abdullah complains, "But with Rosalie, I always felt like I was lacking some sort of understanding" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 40). However, he seems to be an unfaithful and greedy man as he believes he will not be able to bear the presence of

two women growing old and needing him to take care of them. Confirming this point of view, Helen Stuhr-Rommereim (2012) says, “It is hard to find Abdullah to be a good man. He is wealthy and powerful and seems perfectly content marginalizing a woman who has actually given up freedom to be with him: the freedom to drive, to wear jeans, to be alone in a room with a man other than her husband, or her father” (para. 5). Later, he muses on what attracted him to Isra, which is “her fineness that made him think his heart capacious enough for two women. That it should fail her, fail them, one day, was too much for him to bear” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 319).

As for the children, Faisal is trying to make himself home, but Rosalie and Abdullah neglect him. He wants to belong somewhere, so he is easily manipulated by radical Sheikh Ibrahim who is a leader of a Koranic group. Faisal believes joining this Koranic group will satisfy that need to belong. In the meantime, Mariam believes Saudi Arabia is her home: “I’m not going to leave. I’ll go to college, but then I’ll come back. I don’t want to *be* American” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 174). She has her own idea of home; she wants to improve the conditions of women in Saudi Arabia. Cynthia Tindongan (2011) explains people who have multiple identities need to negotiate their identities which causes stress reflecting their confusing and conflicting status about who they are and where they come from. Faisal and Mariam are looking for ways to understand and fulfill their identity.

Family and Identity

The relationship between members of a family is vital in all human societies according to Eugenia Scabini and Claudia Manzi (2011). They point out, “The relational context of family is uniquely important in the study of family identity processes” (p. 565). The relationship between members of a family develops over time without the notice of its members. They directly or indirectly agree upon certain things such as values and religious practices in addition to the role of each one of them. Scabini and Manzi (2011) define the concept of family, “as an organization of primary relationships that connects and binds together different genders and different generations to give rise to a new generation. The connection between generations includes both parent-child relationships” (p. 568). Being a member of a family has certain obligations that influence his/ her development. He/she can refuse to perform a certain role within the family; however, he/she is still a family member. For example, children do not choose their parents. They refuse to belong to their families and can decide to no longer contact them. This is clear in Faisal’s case; he is angry with Rosalie because of her American nationality. He barely speaks with her: “Faisal seemed to glide through the house with an air of haughty superiority about him. . . . she [Rosalie] felt the weight of his disdain” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 25). He believes America is responsible for all the evils in Saudi Arabia, and this is due to the influence of his sheikh.

The Baylani family members are influenced by external and internal factors which hinder the development of their identity. Scabini and Manzi (2011) state, “The family is a highly complex social organism that mirrors and actively interacts with its social and cultural context” (p. 566). They use the term ‘family identity,’ to refer “to the family’s true nature, to the family’s potentialities, the realization of which represents the best fulfillment it is capable of” (p. 568-569). They explain family identity in relation to three different levels:

1. at the group level, that is, the specific identity of the family as a group;
2. At the couple subsystem level, in fact, each family subsystem, and especially the couple, has its own identity and, thus, its sets of potentials to be pursued;
3. At the individual subsystem level, that is, the component of individual identity that comes from being part of a specific family group. (p. 569)

Family Identity as a Group

When referring to family identity, Scabini and Manzi (2011) mention there are ‘symbolic qualities’ of the family bond which if followed or applied, the bond becomes strong which influences the well-being of the family, and may cause positive or negative individual results. If the relationship among the family is cozy and reassuring, members of the family will be healthy and enjoy social and psychological stability (Scabini and Manzi, as cited in Feaster & Szapocznik, 2002; Passmore, Fogarty, Bourke, & Baker-Evans, 2005). Though Rosalie was living in a different culture than hers, she was happy to enjoy a stable life with Abdullah, her beloved husband: “At the end of the day he had belonged to her, their marriage a place they could retreat to, a bond that had set her apart from the unknown others” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 8). In contrast, if the relationship is unstable and family members are not in touch, they will be subjected to anxiety, pain, and depression that makes them unhealthy (Scabini and Manzi, as cited in Dishion, Capaldi, & Yoerger, 1999; Stouthamer-Loeber, Wei, Homish, & Loeber, 2002). This is exactly what happens to all the members of Baylani after the discovery of Abdullah’s second wife. Parssinen (2012) writes, “Madness had lately afflicted his [Abdullah’s] family. Rosalie was a corpse one minute and a banshee the next. Faisal was an enigma, with his furtive movements, his shadowy friends, his bizarre declamations. . . .Even Mariam was in trouble” (p. 89). Rosalie is angry and confused; she does not know what she should do. As a result, she does not take care of Faisal and Mariam. The relationship among the Baylani family members is unhealthy; they are all suffering from stress, pain, and depression.

The symbolic qualities, as Scabini et al. (2007) explain, refer to the combination of main features that describe family bonds “such as intimacy, emotions, support, commitment, and control, but can all be seen to fall into the categories of affective and ethical factors”(p. 9). They add the family bond depends on these two factors,

the affective and ethical factors. The affective factor is represented by trust and hope while the ethical one is represented by loyalty and justice. If something goes wrong with one of these dimensions, the family members suffer from a high degree of distress. Moreover, the quality of family relationships depends upon the existence of both these dimensions together that connect in 'principle of caring,' which mean "caring for the other person and for the relationship" (Scabini & Manzi, 2011, p. 569).

The family bond is shaken and weakened due to the lack of intimacy and emotions between Rosalie and Abdullah. Before Abdullah's second marriage, Rosalie had thought Abdullah was committed to her because she "had given up everything—family, religion, homeland—to marry him" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 34). Surprisingly, Abdullah does not regret his action; he even justifies it saying to Rosalie, "I've done nothing outside of my rights. . . . When you chose to marry me and move here, you told me that you were ready to accept my culture. You said you loved my culture. Well, this is my culture" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 36). Rosalie believes trust is no longer present, "My husband was an honest man. A loving man" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 36). He is not loyal; Parssinen (2012) writes, "How could he have even begun to explain to Rosalie that, even though she'd become exactly what his country demanded her to become, it wasn't what *he* wanted her to become, and now he no longer loved her as he once had" (p. 99-100). Moreover, when Faisal holds Rosalie a hostage, Abdullah thinks of her death and feels "a small bit of relief" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 275).

The relationship between Rosalie and Faisal is brittle; Rosalie says, "I feel my own son is a stranger. He is hard. There is so much anger in him" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 116). In contrast, her relationship with Mariam is a strong one. Parssinen (2012) writes, "They'd always been close, Rose and Mariam, so close that he'd [Abdullah] felt a little jealous; it made him more aware that he lacked that closeness with his son" (p.100). Faisal's relationship with Abdullah is fragile because he is always busy at work, and rarely spends time with him. Thus, Faisal is an easy prey for Sheikh Ibrahim. As for Abdullah's relationship with Mariam, it is a peaceful one. When he is depressed, he depends on her: "He hoped her optimism and energy would spread to him, make him truly believe that everything would be OK" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 97). Unfortunately, there is something wrong with the affective and ethical factors. Therefore, the Baylani family suffers from a high degree of distress.

The family bond depends on trust and hope, and strengthens if it takes justice, loyalty, and obligation into consideration. In fact, a family achieves its identity when it takes care of the two dimensions which means following and applying the symbolic qualities (Scabini & Manzi, 2011). Although there is no trust among the Baylani family, there is hope that things will get better. Rosalie is not yet ready for a divorce because she still loves Abdullah. She wants to hold onto her family: "It's my choice, and I choose my family. I have nothing without them" (Parssinen, 2012, p.

227). Moreover, she has hope, “When he [Abdullah] comes to the States to see me, it’ll be easier to pretend that it’s just the two of us. It’ll be easier to be two human beings” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 227). Unfortunately, the Baylani family does not fulfill its identity as a group because of the absence of the ethical factors.

Family Subsystem Identity: The Couple Identity

The couple is, as Scabini and Manzi (2011) write, a subsystem. Thus, when two people get married, their characteristics change after becoming a couple as if they are one person. They now have a different identity than when they were single. Each partner in this relationship internalizes this new connection between his/her self and the other. In addition, the couple identity, as a part of individual identity, is influenced by significant events, and as a result there is a change in the couple’s characteristics at different stages of life such as marriage, childbirth, etc. Abdullah’s decision to take a second wife has a disastrous effect upon his and Rosalie’s identity as a couple. Parssinen (2012) writes, “Her [Rosalie] voiced was filled with cruelty and contempt, which surprised her. She had never spoken to her husband in that tone before, but then again, she had not known that she was to become the senior wife, mother of his children” (p.11). Scabini and Manzi (2011) explain another impact of being in a couple relationship “is that the individual tends to include the other’s attributes and the relationship in their mental representation of self” (p. 570). This is what Rosalie does; she feels she is a Saudi Arabian citizen, not an American, to the extent “she dreamed in Arabic” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 16). In brief, she becomes a Baylani family member and all for the sake of Abdullah. Parssinen (2012) writes, “She’d surprised herself by how well she fit into his life in the kingdom. So well that it became *their* life” (p.16).

The couple’s new identity is formed, as Scabini and Manzi (2011) stress, by the meeting of two people and the meeting of their family histories. Furthermore, to have a true identity, the couple must have a distinctive character different than their families of origin. To achieve distinctiveness, “it must have a certain autonomy in exercising its function and a certain amount of decisional power” (p. 571) which are different from one culture to another. Rosalie and Abdullah’s relationship has been refused by Abdullah’s Saudi family: “Abdullah had defied his entire family, battled them tirelessly for months to gain their approval for his marriage to Rosalie, the Amreekiyah” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 41). Also, Rosalie’s parents have refused their marriage unless Abdullah converts to Christianity: “But just know that we will try to convince Ab-Dallah to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior” (Parssinen, 2012, p.105). However, they have got married and returned to Saudi Arabia, and they stood against Abdullah’s family until they accepted her. As a couple, Abdullah and Rosalie have been autonomous and took their own decision. So, in the end, Abdullah’s family has accepted Rosalie into the family especially after one of Abdullah’s sisters made sure she was not after their money: “Nadia had

definitely tested Rosalie's patience with her little mind games at the beginning, but once she was convinced that Rosalie wasn't just some gold digger after the family coin, they'd become close" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 61).

The relationship between the couple and their families of origin becomes more important when the couple become parents. The couple achieve their identity after the partners become, as if, one person, and incorporate the history of their family origin by developing the positive and negative aspects (Scabini & Manzi, 2011). Abdullah's father has begun to accept Abdullah's marriage after the birth of his children: "babies mitigate anger; he had seen it himself when Faisal and Mariam had been born, the new softness in his father's face—but he found he couldn't get the words right" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 93). Similarly, Rosalie's parents have only resumed their connection "when she gave birth to their first grandchild" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 105). Rosalie and Abdullah have achieved their identity as a couple in the beginning of their marriage, but then love fades, and Abdullah marries for the second time.

Individual Identity within the Family

Individual identity within the family, as Scabini and Manzi (2011) point, "refers to aspects of self related to (1) belonging to a specific family and (2) the specific identity role played within different family subsystems, e.g., couple relationship, sibling relationship, and parent-child relationship" (p. 571). They state family is a small group where members have a shared interest or identity. The individual identity of a person means he/she is a part of the family even if he/she decides not to be involved. They add since individuals have role identities in family subsystems, family identity consists of many complicated relationships which depend on each other. For example, an individual may have several identities. He/she could be a partner, a parent, a son/daughter.

In fact, filial relation is the most important relation a person will experience because everyone is either a son or a daughter even if he/she does not become a partner or a parent. Filial relation is clearly portrayed in the novel. Faisal is a teenager who is searching for his identity and a place to call home. He is not closely connected to his family, and has problems with his parents, Abdullah and Rosalie. Faisal is angry with his father, and their relationship deteriorates as Faisal plays the role of a preacher: "Ya Allah, how much longer did he have to wait for his father to find his way back to the path" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 64)? Moreover, he criticizes his father's behavior, and lectures him about the punishment of drinking saying, "I believe there's eighty lashes for public intoxication" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 71). These words infuriate Abdullah: "If you do not shut your mouth immediately, I'll lash you myself I do know how the Prophet, peace be upon Him, feels about insubordinate children" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 71).

Similarly, Faisal's relationship with Rosalie is not stable. He is annoyed with her because she is an American, and believes she is responsible for his confusing status. He does not accept his hyphenated identity because his foreign colleagues refuse his Muslim identity and always make fun of him. He has had a bad experience in a boarding school in Switzerland; an Italian student beats him after the 9/11 attacks. Therefore, he insists on staying in Saudi Arabia, his home: "What's wrong with my home? . . . And why should I try to know about people who don't care about me? Who might even hate me?" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 77). However, when he returns to Saudi Arabia, he tries to fit in: "He embraced that identity with an appropriate zealotry that surprised even him. He worked hard to forget his other, American, half, for it seemed, in this new world order, that there was no room for line-straddling or commingling" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 76-77). Unfortunately, he is still teased by his Saudi friends who make fun of his American half; he does not lead a peaceful life. His friend, Majid, mocks him, "You have been an obedient schoolboy, just like your country and your mother asked you to be" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 84). Even Sheikh Ibrahim annoys him saying, "We are slaves to American interests. We send our young men there, and they return with American whores for brides" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 182). Thus, Faisal feels ashamed of his mother, Rosalie.

A filial identity is fulfilled when an individual accepts and approves the family heritage. Therefore, he/she acquires a distinguished position in the family. But when the child does not develop his/her own concept of the family's values and heritage, there may be two negative results. First, the intergenerational transmission may not continue when the child, without experience, rejects the family heritage. Second, the child may internalize his/her parental standards into his/her self-system without any development (Scabini & Manzi, 2011). Faisal does not achieve his filial identity due to the weak bond between him and his parents in addition to rejecting Rosalie's American values and heritage, and not developing Abdullah's Saudi values. Parssinen (2012) writes:

Soon he would move out of his house and away from his family. He was eager for that day. It seemed, more and more, that he no longer knew these people who called themselves his parents. He glanced at the crumpled black-and-white photo of his grandfather, Abdul Latif, which Faisal kept as reminder of where he'd come from. (p. 63)

As an attempt to belong, since he believes his parents had not "looked at him and taken the time to *see* him for who he was" (Parssinen, 2012, p.71), he joins a Koranic study group that he considers "his family now" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 82). Golubović (2011) explains in the formation of a person, he/ she should have a group identity in order to belong somewhere, whether it is a family, a society, a state, or a generation. A person identifies with a group in order to understand where he/she belongs. During this stage, he/she follows the group and shares its values. Belonging to a group

eliminates isolation and provides security. Thus, Faisal is attracted to the Koranic group because he is ignored by his parents; they are not paying attention to his needs as an adolescent. This Koranic group satisfies Faisal's needs, so he is keen to have a positive image in the group's eyes. He is confused; he does not have a strong footing in either America or Saudi Arabia. He feels comfortable in the presence of the Koranic group, as Sara Savage and Jose Liht (2008) comment a person's confusion about the world are quietened by a group's beliefs, which are more important than a person's beliefs.

Sheikh Ibrahim, the leader of the Koranic group, uses religion as a means to criticize al-Saud's domestic policy that is welcoming Americans into the Arabian Peninsula while encouraging jihad in Afghanistan and Iraq. Savage and Liht (2008) state radicalizers use religion as a means to achieve political goals. They connect members of a group by stressing their call for good moral values in the in-group while the out-group is evil wanting to destroy them. Therefore, members of the in-group are fueled against the out-group. Consequently, Faisal is angry at America and is happy to be part of "a mini-rebellion. It made him feel purposeful, part of something grand" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 175). N. Leibovich et al. (2018) stress the need to belong even to a minimum degree is necessary because it strengthens interpersonal relationships and enhances a person's well-being. Majid and Faisal kidnap Rosalie and Dan Coleman, Abdullah and Rosalie's American friend and employee, as a means of pressure to free the sheikh: "FAISAL WAS NOT sure how he came to be where he was at that moment, hurtling down a dark highway with two hostages, one of whom was his mother" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 236). Faisal and Majid sacrifice their lives as Savage and Liht (2018) state, "The social identity of individuals becomes salient over personal identity, perceptions concerning the status of the in-group vis-à-vis other group becomes important" (p. 84). Faisal does not think of the consequences; he wants to achieve glory among his Koranic group and to be respected by them. Parssinen (2012) writes, "He wanted to be that kind of man who stood up for what he believed in" (p. 238). Things get out of hand, and Faisal and Majid have a fight as Majid wants to bury Rosalie alive; therefore, Faisal kills Majid. Before Faisal is accused of murdering Majid and kidnapping his mother and an American citizen, one of al-Saud princes orders Abdullah to send Faisal abroad for some time until he grows up, understands and accepts his country's policies. Therefore, Faisal feels "his home stripped away like the thinnest raiment" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 314), and as he is walking in George H. W. Bush International Airport in Houston, Texas, he thinks of how he is going to live there: "This was not his country. Even the sign at the customs line reminded him: ALL OTHER COUNTRIES" (Parssinen, 2012, p. 317). He does not fulfill his filial identity because he does not accept his mother's heritage, but he accepts his father's though he is unable to develop his own concept of Saudi heritage and values.

Although Faisal and Mariam live in the same house, they respond differently to the disintegration of their family. Sewite Kebede (2010) comments, “The sense of belonging is a subjective response which can be based on several things, including an individual’s personal experience and response to social surroundings, or personal relationships” (p. 22). Mariam understands what Rosalie is going through after the discovery of a second wife, and she does not argue with Abdullah about his decision: “It’s just that . . . Baba is never wrong” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 164). She is independent, and advocates freedom for Saudi women. Thus, her school complains about her misbehavior starting from “removing her veil in the playground, skipping class to read smuggled books in the library, passing out EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN NOW bumper stickers to her classmates” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 89). In addition, she disagrees with Faisal and criticizes him: “it’s people like you and your stupid friends and the religious police that make me ashamed” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 174). Moreover, she is clever: she is the one who helps her father and the detective find Rosalie and Faisal by using her blog to gather information about their whereabouts. Though she is younger than Faisal, she seems to be wiser, which is probably, due to their different experiences. Fortunately, Mariam is on the right track to achieve her filial identity as she accepts Rosalie’s and Abdullah’s heritage and decides to develop Saudi values.

CONCLUSION

Parssinen responds to her inner voice to understand Saudi Arabia by writing *The Ruins of Us*. She presents the issues of love, marriage, betrayal, politics, home and identity by depicting the crisis, Abdullah’s taking of a second wife, which causes the collapse of the Baylani family. Thus, this paper focuses on the personal aspects of identity in a familial context. A stable and warm relationship is necessary for the well-being of family members. The Baylani family fails to achieve its identity development in relation to three different levels: family as a group, couple, and individual identity. The family as a group is exposed to stress, pain, depression, and anger as Abdullah takes a second wife, so the idea of a cozy home is shattered. Concerning their couple identity, Abdullah and Rosalie cannot fix their relationship. Abdullah does not divorce his second wife especially that she is pregnant. Furthermore, he is not comfortable with his present status but is unable to change it. Therefore, Rosalie does not forgive him; she is angry as he takes away her feeling of safety, but she chooses not to ask for divorce. Her reaction is not a typical American which she herself recognizes saying, “Mariam would never allow herself to be someone’s first or second wife. She would have been on a plane to Houston the moment she learned about Israa” (Parssinen, 2012, p. 166). Rosalie believes Faisal’s problem may reunite them and force them to strengthen the family bond. Nevertheless, deep down, she knows she will leave Saudi Arabia one day. She is lost and believes she does not belong in America which could be emphasized by Zenju Manuel’s (2018) opinion which is losing one’s home in the beginning of his/ her life

is accompanied by a feeling of not belonging in any place. As for filial identity, Faisal and Mariam's responses to the disintegration of their family vary as they have gone through different situations. Faisal surrenders to being sent to America, and to be later accompanied by Mariam after she finishes her school. In brief, familial conflicts are not resolved. There is no resolution or a happy end for the Baylani family, just the ruins of their souls.

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