Online ISSN 2347-2073 **Vol. IV Issue II April 2015**

CULTURAL DUALITY IN MOHJA KAHF'S THE GIRL IN TANGARINE SCARF (2006)

Dr. Adel M. Abdelsamie
Assistant Professor,
English Department,
Faculty of Arts- Aswan University.
adel.abdelsamie@yahoo.com
&
Ms. RihamFouad Ahmed
Assistant Lecturer,
EnglishDepartment,
Faculty of Arts, Aswan University.
rfahmed@syr.edu

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine the cultural duality of an Arab–American girl in MohjaKahf's novel The Girl in Tangerine Scarf (2006). In this novel Kahf depicts the dilemma of being simultaneously an Arab and an American in contemporary American society. The heroine is torn between being raised as a conservative Arab Muslim with an Arabic name, wearing Hijab, having boyfriends, praying five times a day, on the one hand and on the other, practicing the modern American experiences in the States. KhadraShamy,manages to create her own new concept of home(s) and to develop her feminist consciousness. She manages by the end of the novel to create her own spaces, to be developed through her own feminist thought as a connecting point. In Khadra's journey searching for a feminist a solid, united identity, she is faced with many intersections with others, with concepts, and with places. Such experiences force her to make a decision about her identity, and about what attitude she should follow. Khadra, exposedto a wide range of options, succeeds in developing her self-identity. Ultimately, she can be her own free self, away from patriarchal guidance or communities' orientation.

Key words: cultural duality – dilemma – feminist narrative – self-identity – home

MohjaKahf (1967-) is an Arab-American poetess, novelist, essayist, and university professor from a Syrian origin. She was born in 1967 in Damascus, Syria and her family moved to

America in 1971 fleeing from political tensions in their homeland, because her father was a member of the banned Muslim Brotherhood. She wrote her PhD thesis in comparative literature at Rutgers University, and she is currently an associate professor at King Fahd Center, Arkansas University. She has a number of essays and chapters on Arab and Arab-American Muslim Women: Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, &Belonging (2011), edited by RababAbdulhadi,Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber;Veil: Women Writers on its History, Lore, and Politics (2008), edited by Jennifer Heath; Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak out(2005), edited by Fawzia Afzal-Khan; and Going Gglobal:The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers (2000), edited by Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj. She also has her own book on western images on Muslim woman entitledWestern Representations of the Muslim Woman: from Termagant to Odalisque (1999), and a volume of poetry: E-mails from Scheherazade (2003). Kahf is a member of the Ozark Poets and Writers Collective and she also belongs to the Radius of Arab-American Writers (RAWI). Kahf is a 2002 recipient of the Arkansas Arts Council Award for achievement in the literary arts.

The aim of this paper is to examine the cultural duality of an Arab–American girl in MohjaKahf's novel The Girl in Tangerine Scarf (2006). Kahf alsointroduces the cultural challengeswhich may face an Arab-American woman in the midst of a Judeo-Christian communityin one of her poems entitled; My Body is Not Your Battleground, in whichshe writes:

My body is not your battleground
My hair is neither sacred nor cheap,
Neither the case of your disarray
Nor the path to your liberation
My hair will not bring progress and clean water
If it flies unbraided in the breeze
It will not save us from attackers
If it is wrapped and shielded from the sun.
E-mails from Scheherazade (Kahf 58)

In these lines Kahfwrites about the sufferings of an Arab-American Muslim veiled woman, an argumentative and problematicidentity in the contemporary American society especially after the eleventh of September. Such a hyphenated identity may be regarded as a threat for the US national security.

MohjaKahf in The Girl in Tangerine Scarf(2006) depicts the dilemma of the cultural identity; of being simultaneously an Arab and an American in contemporary American society, raising numerous questions concerning the issue of cultural duality. It could be that the writer wonders whether or not a hyphenated Arab-American girl can keep parallelism between two contradictory cultures; namely the newly adopted American way of life and her homeland

culture with its Arabic heritage, customs and traditions. The heroine of Kahf'snovel is torn, for example, between being raised as a conservative Arab Muslim with an Arabic name within her title, wearing Hijab, eating halal food, having no dating or boyfriends, praying five times a day, on the one hand and on the other,practicing the rest of modern American cultural experiences in the States. Because of her sense of duality, the heroine is torn between her longing for homeland and herfitting to her new home;her sense of belonging and her search for religious and cultural bonds. Abdelrazikwonders if this girl and her like can overcome their feelings of longing to their homelands or "their belonging to the newly adopted land":

Do they take a rest from their keen search for religious and cultural ties of home(s)? Or does home-for them- mean their own new spaces where they can freely express their own selves, smoothly make integration between homelands and newly adopted land, and can easily live in their third space away from being alien or being the other American in homelands and the other Arab in America?" (Abdelrazik 2)

KhadraShamy, the protagonists of MohjaKahf's novel The Girl in Tangerine Scarf (2006),has to face up to such questions. She tries to find her own answers, to create her own new concept of home(s), to develop her Arab-American feminist consciousness, and to craft other tools of negotiating her binary opposition of life via facing her cultural duality or juxtaposition (Jarmakani 241). The protagonist is able by the end of the novel to create her own spaces, developed through herown feminist thought as a connecting point.

KhadraShamyreflects the issues or challenges of being veiled, wearing hijab or headscarf, of following parent's interpretation of Islam, and of attempting to find her own concepts of everything and her new spaces everywhere. The novel, which can be seen as a self-identified Muslim Feminist narrative, tells the story of KhadraShamy's coming of age while being conservative Muslim Arab-American in the midst of Judeo-Christian community. In discussing cultural duality or "bicultural upbringings,"AmalTalaatAbdelrazik, one of those who treat this challenge in her book entitled Contemporary Arab American Women Writers, attempts to trace, determine, investigate, and analyze this case of cultural duality or dual identity (2). Shamy is a worthyexample of such a case because she is an Arab Muslim and an American at the same time. This kind of a self-identified Muslim narrative is a result of a wide public American quest for more knowledge about Muslims, especially, woman Muslims after the eleventh of September attacks. This eager public request concerns perhaps "the 'mystique' of the veil, the things or human beings hiding or being concealed behind 'it,' and possibly it is as much about the gaze of those who want to know what is behind the veil" (Hammer 193). Because the Muslim woman in general was an icon for War on Terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq, the political domain affected, thus, the personal relationships of Americans at that time. Consequently, Muslim woman turned from being invisible to becoming hyper visible after the eleventh of September attacks (Jarmakani 227).

Susan MuaadiDarraj is one of the significant critics who have dealt with this issue. She is an Arab-American critic, essayist, and short story writer who traces the challenges that Arab-American women face, on both the political and the personal dimensions. She underlines how Arab-American women are torn between their own Arab families and communities (personal), on the one hand and on the other hand, the American society and government (political), which definitely affects their personal affairs (Darraj 250). For example, Muslim women have always been described in the American media as silenced, covered, and oppressed. The previous image of Muslim woman who is being "victimized," turns to be a common central conception of vast diversity of Western representations (Kahf 1). This concept of Arab Muslim women turns to be a kind of western confirmation on the so-called inferiority of Arab culture, the oppression of Islam, and the backwardness of both culture and religion (Darraj 256). In contemporary American society Muslims, especially women, have had to give accounts of themselves as they are "faced with the need to provide a narrative of self to theother who demands it" (Hilal 25). Consequently, Kahf's novel The Girl in Tangerine Scarf can be seen as a reaction to this demand, or rather to answer problematic questions like: who is Muslim Arab-American girl? Is she and always will be different from other American girls? And how do her religion and bicultural identity affect the development of a feminist consciousness?

KhadraShamy faces the main challenge of creating her own space through which she can freely express her self-identified Muslim feminist narrative. She is also crafting a new other space in which she can actually reflect her experiences as an American Muslim at the same time. Kahdra's life can be seen as a chain of transformations, interactions, and intersections with others, with concepts, and with places, because she tries to play a lot of roles on different dimensions. She is, for example, a member of a conservative Arab Muslim family at home, and an American young girl at school. She tries to interact with these two human institutions in order to find a new way to express her own experience of being an Arab Muslim and to reflect a live portrayal of being American girl. She attempts to mix such complexities up, reflecting a different image of a Muslim Arab-American young girl.

Khadra's main concept of Islam is the one that prevails in her family and in her own community. She and her two brothers,Eyad and Jihad, always have been told how they are different from American around them because they must ask "if there is pig in something before eating anything from kuffar hands," pig meat and candy corn are "filthy" because they "had bugs in it", Khadra father said; that's why "God made it haram," and her mother adds:"if you ate pig, bugs would grow and grow inside your stomach and eat your guts out"(13). Similarly, white Americans usually keep dogs at home but "it's haram to have a dog, you know" (28). In her talk to Tayiba, Khadra tries to spread the Islam form of her family, emphasizing her parents' particular interpretation of Islam. She tries to establish her own new relation with certain images, concepts, people, and even things and to locate herself among

these relationships. Her Hijab or scarf, for instance, is one of her main challenges because she has to wear hijab as a Muslim, but she attempts to wear it in a different way from her mother's. Khadra chooses her own favorite color of hijab which is tangerine and she flees away from the circle of modest brown, blue and black hijab of her mother. The choice of her hijab color and all her experiences are considered as connecting points between her family and the outer community in order to find out an interpretation of her identity because she is a young Muslim girl brought up in a pure conservative Muslim family at home, but she lives in a Judeo-Christian community.

However, Khadra feels the universality of religion(s), and she can even express herself as a Muslim, using quotes from Psalm 137. She again tries to find new connecting points between self and the other. Khadra uses a quote from the Bible to express her family departure and leaving homeland at Syria with a sense of nostalgia and fear: "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land" (Kahf 8)? Here, Khadra describes her parents' challenges and fears of being first-generation Muslim Arab immigrants trying to maintain their lifestyle and religious habits within a different community that always has been described as an alien and foreign community. Later, she uses a quote from Quran verses: "Go forth lightly and heavily and strive with your wealth and your selves in the path of God, that is best for you, if you but knew" (Quran, chapter 9). It is an Aya or a Quran quote describing Jihad "in the path of Allah." Mixing fears from new land and noble Jihad, Shamy family relocated to Indiana, to a new position at the Dawah Center which her parents call 'noble Jihad' to establish a Muslim community in the States (Kahf 14). The Shamy family uses Jihad as a convincing motivation for leaving their country and stay in a country where they will be strangers. Here she may also confirm the idea of immigration because it is widely known that "America is a nation of immigrants by establishing a parallelism between the first Pilgrims and Muslim immigrants" (Sorgun 123). Using this Biblical quotation, Kahf tries perhaps to compare and contrast these two examples of religious immigrants and to focus on an important part of American history that depends mainly on immigrants. It may be a kind of inter-relationship between Islam to which she belongs and Christianity, the religion of the community she lives in. This relationship between the two religions is similar to Khadra's story which is full of complexities and binary opposition. For example, the part of the novel that describes the life the Shamy family in Syria begins with a psalm while the other chapter describing their coming to America begins with a Quran verse. The Syrian KhadraShamy depicts this image of the universality of religions because her homeland is the best depiction of this image:

Damascus demanded that you see all religions as architectural layers of each other, gave you the tangible sense, real as the crumbling citadel steps beneath your feet that it all came together somehow in a way that made sense. All the religions spokes on the same wheel. All connected to the hub. All taking their turn in the wheeling of the great azure heavens. (297)

Hence, both Syria and America represent two icons in Khadra's life: while Syria functions as a bridge between religions, America is a transformational space where Khadra locates her sense of belonging.

Besides the idea of the universality of religions, Kahf, in her novel, presents the diversity of Islam especially in clothes and veils as an Islamic icon. A portrait of the Muslim American community as being diverse emerges clearly in The Girl in a Tangerine Scarf. A citation from HodaBarakat's novel The Tiller of Waters introduces the chapter in which Khadra attends the national Islamic conference, raising the question of origin and identity and their role in forming self-consciousness:

Before the garment industry emerged, introducing its readymade sizes—clothes that do not know a body, do not acknowledge each body's distinctiveness…we in the East…were making fabrics that were increasing in beauty…refining [our] expression of the unique relationship between the cloth and the body…Who, these days, sees in a length of cloth its origin, its place of birth, the caravans' voyages? (1)

In using this quote, Kahf has KhadraShamyattemptto portray the diversity of clothes of Muslim women attendees at the Islamic Conference. Especially, she tries to highlight the different types of Hijab or head cover. Muslim women have a various types of cover and clothes, which include escharpes, khimars, jilbabs, thobes, and depattas (Kahf 55). The various kinds of covering reflect the internal diversity of this Muslim community that contains different Arab and non-Arab countries. Each country has its own concepts of Muslim cover. For example, Muslim women hijab has different styles even in the same Arab world. Nikab of Saudi women is totally different from other Hijabs of Gulf countries and other Arab countries.

Hijab and modest clothes are not the only distinguishing aspect of Arab-American Muslim woman, language is another important aspect. Rachel Norman traces such linguistic aspects in her research entitled"Searching for Home: The Role of Language in The Girl in Tangerine Scarf" in Arab American Studies Association Conference (AASA) in Dearborn, Michigan (April, 2014). For example, Khadra uses Arabic (Islamic terms) alongside the English words in her daily language. In addition to mixing Arabic with English she Americanized some Islamic terms coining thus new words like "imamed" (33) it is the past participle of imam which means guide or leader in prayers. Similarly, she uses "fatwa'd" which means asking for a religious opinion concerning certain issues (412). She uses also "hijab'd" woman that means veiled one (323). Using such terms, she attempts to find her new way to use her own language in a different context. In other words, "Arabic terms are merged with English grammatical structures" (Hilal 39). She tries to use both English and Islamic terms in Arabic in order to discover her own identity. She is a Muslim Arab-American who speaks her own language which she has left at homeland. Besides, she uses her new language in order to communicate and to make her own new space away from any sense of alienation from her

original home. It is an intermediate space of cultural and religious dialectic. Kahf italicizes these terms in her novel in order to attract the attention of the readers and to gently and slightly locate Arabic on the American textual landscape. She thus attempts to explore her own home in between her Arab Muslim inheritance of homeland and her newly adopted culture of America.

Moreover, Khadra's own experience in life enables her to accept the other because she is herself already an Other. For example, she is a friend to a non-born Muslim family, namely, Jamaleldeen family, an African American family but was not born Muslim. They joined the Nation of Islam as Billalian, later became Sunni Muslims (23). Again, Kahf is trying to present the diversity of Islam or the similar versions of Islam(s) even in the same one Muslim community. She begins with a quotation of Malcolm X's In the Crazy House Called America: "the Honorable Elijah Muhammad's teaching…is part of Islamic tradition, not an isolated, unique invention of half-baked Negro theology…Arabs have no monopoly on Islam" (23).

According to Malcolm X, 'Arabs have no monopoly,' so Khadra eventually understands that there are multiple manifestations, configurations, and interpretations of being Muslim. For example, Khadra's family and Khadija's family or JamalelDeen may be regarded as a couple of binary concepts of Islam as both have their own concepts of the real Muslim. For Khadra, JamalelDeen family represents another version of Islam that she has not known because she used to follow and believe in the Islamic concept of her parents. This concept may separate her with the rest of her family members from other Muslims who adhere to different interpretation of their Islam. The dialogue between Khadra and Khadija on the essence of a real Muslim refers to a new space of tolerant Islamic understanding which is not being judgmental on hearts and beliefs of others. More clarification is reflected in Khadra's and Khadija's following conversation:

'Was that when you finally became a real Muslim?'…Khadra asked… 'Or were you still that Elijah thing? The fake Muslims where its only for black people?.. 'What is a real Muslim, Khadra?' Aunt Khadija said finally. 'When you do the Five Pillars,' Khadra shrugged, 'you know and follow the Quran and the Prophet and wear hijab and follow the Islamic way of life and—' Aunt Khadija said gently, 'Shahada. That's all. Belief that God is One. When that enters your heart and you surrender to it, you are Muslim.' Khadra felt alarm. It wasn't that simple. Her parents said so. You have to practice Islam to be a real Muslim. (23-24)

As a result, there are different points of view concerning Islam and of being a Muslim. They may depend on different features like family, friends, and community. Khadra is unwillingly 'alarmed' when she hears of another version of Islam that does not get along with her own or her parents' Islamic experience. By the end of the novel, Khadra experiences some sort of development concerning her inherited interpretation of Islam, which is completely going to be changed.

Another example of the diversity of Islam, that deepens Khadra's self-feminist consciousness, is presenting the differences between Shia's and Sunni's prayers and Islamic beliefs. For example, Auntie Dilshad, a Shia woman from Hyderabad puts her hands down by her side after first takbier, and there is a piece of rock in front her. When Khadra asked why there is a rock in front of Auntie Dilshad, her mother says 'HUSH', steering Khadra away saying that they have to take off their shoes; Khadra concludes, "all the Sunnis knew the Shias had wrong beliefs but tried to be polite and not to talk about it. At least, not in front of them"(34). Differences may be regarded as a kind of bless and variety that may enable Khadra to accept others, to widen the narrowness of her thoughts, and to deepen her own beliefs. She is taught to respects the faith of the otherseven if it does not fit hers, because each believer is a worshipper who has his or her 'little mosque' or spiritual heartfelt Masjid inside his or her little heart. Kahfadds:

My little mosque is a decrepit
As my little heart. Its narrowness
Is the narrowness in me. Its windows
Are boarded up like the part of me that prays.
I went to the mosque
When no one was there.
No One was sweeping up.
She said: This place is just a place.
Light is everywhere. Go, live in it.
The Mosque is under your feet,
Wherever you walk each day. (Kahf 123)

Khadra's experience as a Muslim Arab-American girl is completely different from that of her parents because she has the chance to be oriented to other versions of Islam. This chance helps to develop her religious understanding and feminist consciousness. For example, she accepts the idea of other Islamic interpretations or forms, and locates herself among them. Another example of Islamic diversity is the Thoreau family; an American family that consists of the father, Joe, and Kenyan mother, Ayesha, their daughter Tayiba, and Aysha's daughter from a previous marriage, Zuhura. Khadra's father, Wajdy looks at Joe as a mainstream American who is culturally different from Arabs (28-29). In the same way, non-Muslim Americans look at Muslim American as aliens. Who are the Americans? Why they are different from Muslims? These are the two questions Khadra tries to understand and to answer. She knows the answer from her father for the first time when she wanders out into a forest with Eyad, Hanifa, and Hakim. Her father gives her a long speech on how they are different as Arabs:

Who were the Americans? The Americans were the white people who surrounded them, a crashing sea of unbelief in which the Dawah Center bobbed, a brave boat. (There were black

people who were Americans, but that was different.) You had your nice Americans and your nasty Americans. And then there was the majority of Americans; the best that could be said about them was that they were ignorant…Generally speaking, Americans cussed, smoke, and drank, and the Shamys had it on good authority that a fair number of them used drugs. Americans dated and fornicated and committed adultery. They had broken families and lots of divorces. Americans were not generous or hospitable like Uncle Abdulla and Aunt Fatma…Americans believed the individual was more important than the family, and money was more important than anything. Khadra's dad said Americans threw out their sons and daughters when they turned eighteen unless they could pay rent…All in all, Americans led shallow, wasteful, materialistic lives, Islam could solve many of their social ills, if they but knew. (67-68)

After returning home, they know a similar answer from the character of the mother, Ebtihaj, in a form of questions:"Do you think we are Americans? Do you think we have no limits? Do you think we leave our children wandering in the streets? Is that what you think we are? Is it?"; "We are not Americans!"She sobbed, her face twisted in grief. "We are not Americans!" (67-68).Ebtihajforgets that the other American identity is a real part of her children's upbringing. However, it could be that Wajdy realizes this fact when he decides that the family is going to apply for American citizenship because they can no longer return to Syria. This American citizenship marks not only a turning point or shift in Khadra's religious and cultural consciousness, but it also shows a shift in Wajdy's Islamic experience as well. For example, after being an American citizen, he can give Friday Khutba. He says:

In many ways, my brothers, America is more Islamic than the countries of the Muslim world…' It was Wajdy's turn to give the Khutba at the Dawah Center's small juma service… 'Brothers do not for a minute think we will stop protesting against the immoral and unfair policies of America outside, in the Muslim world. May my tongue be cut off if I forget Jerusalem. But let's face it: here inside America, there are many good qualities…America, he concluded, 'is like Islam without Muslims. And our sick and corrupt Muslim home countries—they are Muslims without Islam'. (143-4)

Even Wajdy tries to find a new space for himself as a Muslim Arab as well as an American citizen. In the very beginning, he refused to be a part of this American identity. Later, he finds for himself a place where he can mix or combine both identities together. This new space is his Friday Khutbas in Dawah center. Moreover, Khadra's mother, Ebtihaj, defends a women who held a "mixed gender" dinner party, when she states, "I don't see what is wrong with that, if the women wear hijab," but Khadrais astonished and cannot believe her ears when her mother defends Americans later that day (170). It is Ebtihaj's shift and compromise to find her own new space of being Arab Muslim in the midst of an American community. All these shifts and development of Wajdy's and Ebtihaj's view are heavily connected to Khadra's transformation to find her own new self, her concepts, and her space in life. Her

parents' new spaces paved the way to change Khadra's concepts and to support her urgent transformation of carving and crafting her own new ways or spaces for the expression of her own developing Arab American feminism.

More than that, Khadra has to testify her sense of belongingto her Muslim Arab and American identity during her two trips; first to Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage and second to her homeland Syria after her divorce. She perceives Saudi Arabia as "someplace where we really belong. It's the land of the Prophet. The land of all Muslims"(173).It is true that she adores Kaba, Adhan, talbiya, tawaf and Hijr Ismail, yet after being in the line of American passport holders and facing different situations,she questioned her born-Muslimidentity; she feels that not all she finds in the land of all Muslims are purely good and related to Islam. By the time she returns, Khadra begins to think of America as home, where she can, perhaps, belong.

In Saudi Arabia, Afaf, the daughter of a family friend, first introduces Khadra to the young men, as "My American cousin," the thing which evokes Khadra's Arab Muslim identity and she quickly responses: "No. I'm not really American. I'm an Arab, like you" (174). Here, Khadra is definitively neglecting her American identity and emphasizing her Arab one. However, her experience changes her mind about her ideal and utopic image of Saudi Arabia, which reflects her own singular interpretation of Islam. Khadra concludes that she "had never felt so far from home" (177). Her visit to Saudi Arabia was a real feeling of alienation and being far from her newly adopted home, America. Khadra recognizes that there is one home for her: America. Rather, her concept of home is complicated, overlapped and mixed because it is a part of her juxtaposition.

In her trip of searching to Syria, she tries to search for her cultural roots in order to complete the image of self and the image of the other, or to locate a new bridge between them. She travels to Syria after unsuccessful marriage to a Kuwaiti graduate student Juma al-Tashkenti. Like her trip to the Saudi Arabia, her trip to Syria contributes as well to her concept of belonging and to the development of her own feminist consciousness. In Saudi Arabia, she discovered her religious identity, but while being in her homeland she attempts to explore others around her in order to truly locate her cultural Arab Muslim identity. She begins to recognize the interactions and intersections of her relationships with others and how they affect the way she views herself. Khadra discovers an old story about her mother, Ebtehaj, who was raped on a school trip to France. Knowing this information about her mother makes her feel pity for her and justifies her mother's fears. This trip evokes her Syrian historical identity especially when she meets the Syrian Rabbi who completely alters Khadra's sense of national belonging and Arab identity. Syria is the place where Khadra can escape to old familial and national narratives of history. For example, she feels the sense of indebtedness and rootedness to her roots and pride of being part of that large history. She is called back to Damascus:

He spoke with the deepest Damascene accent Khadra had ever heard… 'Yes, of course, he speaks like a Damascene, darling—he is a Damascene,' Teta said, as they emerged, and Khadra felt ashamed from not getting it….Why should she be like the Marion County librarian who once gushed. 'Oh, you can speak the English language! And your accent is so American!' But this was different, wasn't it? It's just that—all the time, she'd thought of them as Them, these people over There, not all the same of course, she knew that, but still not part of Us. Never. And when she grew out of that primitive notion of 'There's-us-and-then-there's-them,' she grew by accepting, albeit reluctantly, the claims of some of her professors that certain things crosscut religion…It sent her whirling in mad agony. This incidental skin, this name she wore like a badge…Had it changed? Was it always changing? Who was she?...They all came to her, all the people she had once held at bay…Now the barrier was removed, and they all rushed into her heart, and it hurt…Droves of people, strangers and neighbors. We are your kin, we are part of you. (305-6)

She loved the country of her origin, and found that something in the soil therethat may answer a basic need in her, and corresponds to the deep (297). All her experiences and interactions affect the development of her feminist consciousness by the end of the story and the progress of her transformation as well.

Ultimately, Khadrarecognizes the fact that there is no need to cross the ocean searching for home(s), if she has already a home in America. The main reasons of Khadra's divorce represent a way of interaction with others and reflect different interpretation of Islam. One reason of her divorce, for example, is her insistence on riding a bike on public, and refusing to travel with her husband to Kuwait. Her disobedience to her husband is also another reason. 'Ta'a' or obedience is "a conditional sentence, not a command" in Quran because it is almost prefixed with 'if' hence it is not a direct order and it is a conditional case. (Wadud 76-77). Then, the wife has the right to say 'no' if she does not agree or if she feels uncomfortable and annoyed from certain orders or demands. Another reason for her divorce is her sole decision to have an abortion because of her fears from pregnancy. After all these uncompromising differences, divorce is the lawful Islamic option for this stubborn spouse. As a Muslim woman, Khadra is completely aware of the problematic and argumentative consequences of her decision. So, as a student of Islamic Studies, who is interested in Sufism, she supports her decision with the writings of Imam Ghazali, an Islamic scholar, in order to end pregnancy and to present this Hoja or Islamic proof that her "life is in danger" to her parents who refuse to address this opinion (244). In this situation, Khadra has to contradict the Islamic concept of her parents. She is again in a situation of binary opposition; yet this time it is not between Arab Muslim Identity and American one, it is between two different interpretations of Islam. Khadra argues:

It turned out that nothing she'd read described the real Muslim gut reaction to the question of abortion…Khadra's father said, "My mother died having me….A woman who dies in

childbirth is considered a martyr—goes straight to heaven.'… 'Well, I am not your mother,' Khadra shot back. 'I don't want to be your mother.' 'I didn't raise you to speak to me in that tone,' he snapped, as he rarely did. Yeah, you did, Khadra thought sullenly. You raised me to go out and learn, but deep down you still want me to be just like your mother. So where did you think all these contradictions would lead me if not to this frustration, this tone of voice? But I am not going to kill myself to fit into the life you have all mapped out for me. (245-6)

Frequently, Khadra recognizes that her parents want to prevent her from being her own self because they have imposed their own ideas and Islamic concept on her. Away from religious perspective and whether abortion is accepted or not, halal or haram, her abortion may be regarded as the first situation of resistance against the concepts, interpretations, and viewpoints of the other who no longer represent her reality or identity.

Hence, the story turns from being a kind of record or document of an Arab Muslim family in diaspora, to be a feminist account of resistance and development. For example, it tells the story of Khadra's transformation from just a recipient of the other's thought to a thinker and a decision maker herself. She tries to discuss and even to rebel against certain patriarchal and religious taboos. In other words, Khadra has managed to enter prohibited areas, to break silence and speak loud as a Muslim girl, to create her own ways of thinking and to create her own spaces of life. Thus, her resistance is a transformational stage between silence and development. Her transformation and development may be seen as an access to her new identity and a medium between all her binary oppositions. She states:

Where was it, this will of hers, this misshapen self? She needed to know it. Hello, self. Can we meet at last? It was not vainglorious to have a self. It was not the same as selfish individualism, no. You have to have a self to even start a journey to God. To cultivate your nafs whom God invites to enter the Garden at the end of Surat al-Fajr. She had not taken even a baby step in that direction. Her self was a meager thing, scuttling behind a toilet, what she hadn't given over of it to Mama, to Juma. Too much, she has given away too much. She will not give the last inches of her body, will not let them fill her up with a life she does not want. Feral, it was a word, but a spasm, the snarl of a fanged thing gnawing at a trap: no. No, no, no, no, no, no. (248)

Finding herself, is Khadra's big achievement in perceiving or reprieving herself and her relations to God and to others who may distort and disturb her relation to God by imposing their own concepts. Finally, she concludes that there is more than one standard version of Islam.

Ultimately, Khadra's narrative of self and other becomes more convincing because it relies basically on her own concepts and viewpoints. After returning from Syria, Khadra moves to Philadelphia, where she addresses some Islamic historical events like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the 1991 Gulf War, and traces the significance of these conflicts and events for the Muslim American community through her interactions with other Muslim and non-

Muslim characters. Philadelphia is the place where Khadra develops her concept of the universality of religions, and the intersectionof religions through her relationship with BlumaFroehlig, a Jewish American student studying at the same photography school as Khadra. Here she goes beyond the idea of Islamic diversity and surpasses the concept of being Arab Muslim in a western Judeo-Christiancommunity. Thus, through her encounter with Bluma, she tries to see beyond the frame of accepting what is already exists. Both Khadra and Bluma have the same experience of conservative religious upbringing. Khadra comments, "So it was a relief not to have to explain every little thing about that to a friend who was an American. Cool to find an American who was not even a Muslim but got it" (316). They even have the same dietary system. Their relation can be religiously accepted, but politically it cannot be normal. Both of them lost members of family during Palestinian-Israeli war, and each of them is unable to put the full blame on the other. Consequently, they are likely to find a new space for their political connection; they have not got to know each other as an Arab Muslim and an Israeli Jew, but as human beings who can share their own experiences of life:

‘You know, you really need to go out and get other Arab friends besides me, girl.’ ‘Yeah, honey, and you need to get other Jewish friends besides me.’ ‘Yeah, I can’t be your only Arab.’ ‘Me neither, your only Jew.’ ‘Yeah.Puts too much pressure on us.’‘Yeah.Sugar?’‘Yeah. Two lumps.’ ‘Yeah.” There was a clink of spoons. They stirred and stirred and sipped. (322)

Thus, both Khadra and Bluma are managed to lead their relationship to a positive way that is a way from hatred and charging each other.

In Philadelphia, Khadra also meets Muslims who have different conceptions of Islam that is totally diverse from her own Islamic interpretation. For example, Seemi Dost, a Pakistani immigrant who works as a therapist for autistic children is a new challenge in Khadra’s development of identity. They have different viewpoints on Salman Rushdie’s novel The Satanic Verses. Khadra refuses his portrayal of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Seemi screams at her " 'That’s bogus!'Seemi snapped. 'And it doesn’t even make sense. You can’t have it both ways. You either come out and support him, or you’re one of them. There’s no room here for any other position!' " (333) Khadra declares clearly that she does not have the right to judge Rushdie’s life but that she feels uncomfortable with his novel. Here, Khadra’s declaration reflects her own viewpoint that is not imposed by others, and it does not depend on the other's ideas. This situation reflects her religious maturity and cultural development.

Another challenge to her religious and emotional identity is ChrifBenzid who is a Tunisian student at her school of photography who always describes himself as a "secular Muslim" (337). The First Gulf War in 1991 gathers them as Arabs and they begin to watch the reactions of their American colleagues on this event. So, she falls in love with him. As a 'secular Muslim' he is different from those who are religious Muslims or 'religious nuts.' He

gets to put himself in comparison with them in order to show how he is liberal and how they are conservatives:

A family of Muslims, the classically observant sort with the beards and hijabs, was praying under a tall cottonwood tree. 'Why do these people have to make a spectacle of themselves all the time? Chrif said. 'These people? Which people?' she said… 'Muslims.' 'Uh, you're a Muslim yourself.' 'Not like that, man. I'm a secular Muslim. These religious Muslims, they always have to embarrass themselves, on some level. All I know is, they give us a bad name. Like, let's make sure the entire world knows we're religious nuts. Look at them, praying in the middle of the park with their rear-ends in the air. (337)

On the other hand, Khadra tries to persuade him that being a Muslim is not a shame or 'straitjacket;'however, she knows that it wasn't that simple or easy thing (344).

Khadra uses her photographs to find out answers to all her problematic questions because she always believes in the clarity of lenses of the camera to see beyond the frame. Khadra finds that the camera provides her with a different lens to view self and others. In some situations, the camera allows her to enter into spaces which others regard as a privacy area. Camera lenses enter this space of uncertainty and dimness. There is no authentic, standard, model, certain, or even true answers to any question, especially the question of the identity. In other words, there are limits to absolute recognition, interpretation, and configuration.

Actually, Mohjakahf, foreshadowing the development of the events of her novel, informs her readers from the very beginning of her book that they will read a novel with a different interpretations of Islam, thus, indicating that her 'creative life' and its new spaces are her profound worship and sound cult,"my creative life is my deepest prayer" (1). Then she immediately emphasizes the previous idea of creativity when she states "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (8). This Biblical quote reflects her and her family's mixed feelings of worries, fears, and creativity of being immigrants in a foreign land that predominantly has a religion that is different from their own. In Khadra's journey searching for a feminist solid, united and sound identity, she is faced with many intersections with others, with concepts, and with places. All these experiences force her to make a decision about who she is, and about what attitude she should follow. Throughout her journey, Khadra is exposed to a wide range of options, interpretations, configurations, interactions, concepts, and styles of lives of both Muslim and non- Muslim that help informing herself and developing her self-identity. At the end of the novel, she can finally be her own free self, away from patriarchal guidance, unexplained religious taboos and communities' orientation.

Works Cited

Abdelrazek, AmalTalaat, Contemporary Arab American WomenWriters: Hyphenated Identities and Border Crossings. New York: Cambria Press, 2007.

Darraj, Suzan Muaadi. "Personal and political: The Dynamics of Arab American Feminism." Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender Violence and Belonging. Eds.Rabab, Abdulhadi, NadineNaber, and Evelyn Alsultany, Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010.

Hilal, Reem M. "Tracing a Narrative of Muslim Self after 9/11." Unpublished Diss. (Ph.D.). UMI Number: 3588922. University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2013.

Hammer, Juliane.American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2012.

Jarmakani, Amira. "Arab American Feminisms: Mobilizing the Politics of Invisibility." Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender Violence and Belonging.Eds.Rabab, Abdulhadi, Nadine Naber, and Evelyn Alsultany.Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010.

Kahf, Mohja. E-mails from Scheherazade.Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2003.

———. The Girl in Tangerine Scarf.New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006.[All of the quotations in this paper from this novel are taken from this edition.]

———. "Little Mosque Poems."Shattering the Stereotypes: Muslim Women Speak Out. Ed. FawziaAfzal-Khan. Massachusetts: Olive Branch Press, 2005.

———. Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1999.

Rachel, Norman. 2014. "Searching for Home: The Role of Language in The Girl in Tangerine Scarf." Arab American Studies Association.Beyond the Label: Arab American Faces, Places,And Traces. Dearborn, Michigan: Arab American National Museum, April 4-6, 2014.

Sorgun, Sabiha. "Like—Hair Sneaking from Beneath the Scarf: Contemporary Immigrant Muslim Women Novelists Speak of Gender, Immigration, and Islam." Unpublished Diss. (Ph.D.). UMI Number: 3473288. Northern Illinois University, 2011.

Wadud, Amina. Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Scared Text from a Woman's Perspective. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.