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Images of Veiled Women in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

Sana Ayed Chebil
Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
University of Sousse, Tunisia

Abstract

Mohja Kahf is a Syrian-American writer or poet whose novels are firmly associated with an identity crisis. She is one among well-known Arab-American writers who do not only employ the figures of veiled women to merely represent their otherness in American society, but also to examine how they are perceived as physically and mentally different from those who were not. In fact, in the novel under study The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf (2006), Kahf describes the journey of sufferings and pains the protagonist encounters in America and in her homeland, an identity crisis that is deeply rooted in the cultural and social context of the novel. To reach the main objective of the study, it is important to introduce the historical account of the origin of Arab-American literature, a role assigned to the first part of this study. The first section of this paper will be devoted to the representations of veiled women as the racial other. The following part will be devoted to analyzing the suffering of the female characters of the novel through which Khadra Shamy, the protagonist of the novel, attempts to go beyond gender and racial otherness. The next section aims to look at the narrative from a feminist perspective.

Keywords: Muslim/veiled women, 'racial Otherness,' 'gender Otherness' 'mimicry'.

Introduction

Arab American literature demonstrates ideas concerning the issues of identity construction of Arab Americans. It is a useful lens to examine various concerns including issues related to race, identity, and gender. Mohja Kafi is a contemporary Arab American writer who "finds her own path to negotiate the hyphen of her own identity" (Abdelrazak2). She is one of the well-known Arab-American writers, the novelist whose literary works describe characters who are torn between Arab and American identities. This hybrid identity raises many questions that lead many writers to deal with numerous issues of interest related to the representations of Arabs, identity, race and gender. The concept of 'otherness' encompasses various spheres. One of the main characteristic traits of Kahf's novels is the opposition between the West and the East.

The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf is one of the most interesting novels written by Kahf. Her novels illustrate the representations of Arab American identity by examining the female characters and the images of Muslim women in America. Her novels deal with 'questions of otherness' and are heavily informed by the idea of the 'West' striking with the 'East,' the 'Self,' and the 'Other'. The question is mainly about how the 'other' is perceived and represented and how the 'self' locates itself in a superior place. *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is amongst his novels illustrated the crisis of the hybrid identity and its negative impacts on its owner. Representing the hybrid identity is the topic of various Arab American novels, including Kahf whose literary works draw a line between the West and the East.

She depicts the dark picture of being a Muslim woman in America. The images draw on the self/other dichotomy. The self is the West, the mainstream society, and the other is torn between the East and the West. She turns her attention to issues of gender in Islam and western stereotypes of Muslim women, both products of her personal experience as a Muslim woman living in the west. In *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, she presents images of Muslim women through western and Eastern eyes. Through these images, she critiques, resists, and dismantles the western stereotypes of Muslim women that subordinate them and see them as oppressed and silenced. Similarly, she resists the patriarchal dominance over women, the dominance that tries to keep them confined, limit their freedom, and stand in the way of their autonomy and intellectual growth.

Drawing upon the work of Kahf, *The Western Representation of Muslim women*, this paper focuses on the stereotypical image of veiled women in America. This article aims to provide readers with the literary representations of veiled women through the study of her novel. To do so, a number of key concepts need to be examined. The key concepts are Orientalism and otherness.

I-Orientalism and The Other

The main concept involved in this article is Orientalism. We first need to grasp the meaning of the term 'Other'. Drawing on Edward Said's theoretical framework, *Orientalism*, which is one of the popular concepts that mirror the dichotomous distinction

between different cultures based on the opposition between 'us' and 'them; the West and the East; the Occident and the Orient: "Orientalism, in the specific sense that Said describes it, is a product of Western Hegemony over the East, a discourse created from the relationship of Western power over the Orient to Western knowledge about the Orient" (Kahf 2). He deliberately examines the threat of the 'Other,' and thus exploits the conflict between the West and the East. In *Orientalism*, Said describes the relationship between the West and the East. He referred to the relationship between Europe and the Orient based on "the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (7). This relationship stands for the threat of the 'Other,' thus demonstrating the threat of the Other, "the uncivilized," "the savage," "the undeveloped," "the weak," and "the feminized," and the superiority of the West that is seen as "the superior," the "civilized," "the strong," and "the masculine" (Saidqtd. in Schaefer 103). The Othering of the East by the West has historically taken many forms. Accordingly, the 'Other' is identified as anyone the Americans perceive as different from them and 'other' to their established norms and standards. This article uses the terms 'otherness' or 'Other' to echo Said's term 'Other' while referring to the invasion of its West by foreigners or non-citizens: "The Oriental was linked thus to elements in western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien" (207).

The Girl of the Tangerine Scarf is about the representation of 'otherness,' and is laced with anxieties about Otherness and Orientals. To keep intact a sense of home, the Other or Oriental is the Arab woman who is often defined as different and wild, someone who is excluded from civilized. As Said explains: "Orientals were rarely seen or looked at; they were seen through, analyzed not as citizens, or even people, but problems to be solved or confined" (207).To keep intact a sense of home, the Oriental is thus often defined as Other, a part of nature and wilderness excluded from civilized humanity and made into an object of actual and representational colonization. Kahf's representation of Arab-American women displays this 'otherness'. Accordingly, the novel is about American attitudes toward Muslim women that equate them to 'Otherness'. Her novels provide a useful lens with which to view and represent the Other. It shows the relationship between the self and 'Other'. Accordingly, it is important to remember that Edward Said offers a very important definition of the term 'Other,' in the sense that this definition is useful to understand and study various forms of Otherness.

II- Analysis of the Novel

In *Western Representations of Muslim women*, Kahf studies the images of Muslim women in Western literary text from the middle of the eleven century to the middle of the nineteenth century. In her study, she traces the process through which the image of Muslim women undergoes a change from a "termagant»[1] to the "odalisque"[2]. She links the changing images of Muslim women to changes in European relations with the Islamic world. She shows how the Western representation of Muslim women has changed, locating the appearance of the image of the oppressive Muslim women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries 'discourses of orientalism and colonialism. Thus, the images of Muslim women contain stereotypes. These images as submissive, speechless, and

oppressive are "already formed in western texts before the establishment of Islam in the form of "pagans, foreigners, Old Testaments figures" (Kahf 4). Accordingly, these stereotypical images are used to discredit Islam and Arab cultures. Khaf speaks to this point:

> The explicit association of Islam with the oppression of women does not reach full fruition until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When the Orient was Orintalized (to paraphrase Edward Said), when a vast and complex body of knowledge about the Islamic Other developed simultaneously with Western subjugation of that world, the image of Muslim woman most familiar in the west today emerged. (8)

The novel examines the otherness of the main character, namely Khathra, the main protagonist who comes from an Arabic country, Syria. She mainly reveals the difficulties Muslim women might face in living in a country hostile to the Arab nations. She is considered as an 'Other' because she is an American woman of Arab origin. Her otherness is the outcome of her hybrid identity, an Arab-American identity. Her otherness in the novel is built on the ground of the rigid binary between 'us' and 'them'. The rigid opposition between the self and other is clear through the conflicts of Khathra with the American society.

The representations of Khathra are conducted on various levels. Khathra bears in the name an explicit reference to nature. It is an Arabic name that means green. Her name indicates her association with the natural world of flowers that are meant to celebrate female beauty, innocence, fertility, and purity. In this respect, Kahf draws on classical sources to create his fictitious Khathra. The description of Khathra and insistence on purity of the West are meant to differentiate the English identity from its 'Other'. She is represented as a metaphor for the conventional place of women in society.

Kahf represents non-Muslim characters from the words and imageries borrowed from the Islamic context. She heavily depends on Kuran and religious words to represent Americans and Arab-Americans. Kahf is not the author of "a particular source". Her literary works are haunted by other 'texts' and are related to various kinds of sources. Religion in Kahf's novel reflects the racist binary between 'good' Muslims and 'bad' Americans. For instance, Khathra's parents use pejorative terms when referring to Americans. America is also represented through references to the word 'impure 'kuffar' or 'kuffar land' which is defined as the noun 'Kafir', a Muslim Arabic word, which means the 'unbeliever'.

In this light, to ensure the dominance of the West over the Muslim and Arab world, the Muslim women's veil is selected as an appropriate cultural sign to signify oppression. In *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, Kahf presents the image of veiled women. The only visible aspects of these women are veils, hands, and faces. She details how these women devoutly follow God's will: they guard their modesty and keep themselves covered. Khadra is one of these characters who wear the veil because of her spiritual belief. She wears the veil because of her own choices and it signifies her affiliation with Muslim

values and integrity. She is proud of it. Kahf states that "Hijab was a crown on her head" (112). The Muslim veil represents and defines class and national identity. It is used in order to visually display their identities as they were distinguished by their clothes. Kahf refers to the importance of clothing in the preservation of Arab-American women's national identity, noting that the veil visually displays a connection to the other national identities, giving a sense of belonging. In the novel under study, Muslim women wear the veil as a daily reminder of their identity. While the veil is a sign of women's morality in the Syrian community, in America, veiled women are considered uncivilized since the veil acted as a symbol of uncivilization and disorder, as opposed to the civilized and ordered bodies of the unveiled.

In this novel, Kahf proposes that there is an association between the 'veil' the idea of otherness. She assumes that the novel has crucial links to issues of racial otherness. According to her, the veiled woman is "either 'virtuous' in subscribing to Islamic values or 'oppressed' according to colonial discourse" (Ling 344).In Indiana, she "feels as if, were she to scream" (Kahf 40). The place raises many issues that are central to the representation of America, particularly issues about race. Kahf reminds readers of another character in the novel namely Zouhoura, whose appearance in America threatens the homeland. The figure of Zouhoura brings to mind the theme of foreign invasion. She is the devilish figure whom the various Americans in the novel may represent. It is the English 'gaze' that equates the female figure with the threat of terror. Veiled women are some of the others Americans must face and remove. The police attempt to pursue this woman whose physical appearance seems to be the disruptor of the 'peaceful order' of America. Because of her body that acts as a marker of the transgression of the prestigious America and representation of what is "*not* American", she is removed by the police detective to secure the purity of the homeland.

However, in America veiling becomes a symbol of the oppression of Muslim women and a sign of Islamic cultural inferiority. The 'veil' is the sign of difference that shows the boundary between the West and the East. In this respect, as Ling (2014) assumes "The narrative of the novel exposes how the veil is fetishized and politicized in dominant Western discourses as a sign of disempowerment and oppression of Muslim women" (344). Kahf shows through her protagonist, Khadra, how Muslim women are discriminated against in America because of this "common knowledge" (Hamdan88) of Muslim women and the veil. One of the childhood experiences in America that Khadra undergoes is when she is harassed at school and mocked because she wears the veil. Kahf says that Khadra (1999)"defends her identity against the jeering kids" (Kahf 40). The three boys asked her "to take off [her] towel" (14). As she resists them, they remove it by force. Accordingly, these "narratives represent the dominant cultural gaze that constructs the gendered identity of the protagonist as a veiled woman in dichotomous terms" (Ling344).

The 'Otherness' in this novel is represented through Kahf's direct allusion to Babylon. They, Americans, also ask the questions that locate her within the category of the foreigner: "Wasn't she supposed to be an Islamic warrior woman, a Nusayba, a Sumay, an Um Slamah in exile, by the waters dark, of Babylon" (Kahf, 199, p. 40)? The passage introduces a binary of the self and 'Other'. Kahf's novel is filled with apocalyptic imagery

that is the main indicator in the representation of racial 'Otherness'. The distinction between the America woman and the Arab-American Woman articulates the differences between the apocalyptic representations of women described in the apocalypse, woman of the beast, and Jerusalem. Her 'Otherness' is described in terms of biblical tradition. The words with which the writer is concerned are derived from the myth of the apocalypse. The male gaze compares her to 'beast' which points forward to one of the 'symbols' of Revelation (dragon, beasts, harlots) (Ryken and Wilhoit 565).

In the context of Khadra's encounter with the American boys, the veil functions as the mark of inferiority and difference. This is one of many instances of victimization of veiled women in America to stress the type of oppression and discrimination Muslim women experience worldwide. In doing this, she depicts Muslim women who are oppressed only to prove that the sign of the veil is created and manipulated to be used as a tool to oppress her through the negative meanings attached to it. In other words, it is not the veil that is oppressive, but the way it is portrayed in American imagery. As such,

> The veil is seen as both a marker of Muslim culture and an explanation of its inferiority, just as, in color racism, skin color is seen as the site of racial difference and biological determination. Bodies are not only perceived as belonging to a different culture; they are also seen as culturally determined and inferior as a result. (Al-Saji, 2009, p. 65)

Accordingly, the veil in the minds of many stands for ignorance, backwardness, oppression, and therefore must be shed. These minds cannot see a woman wearing the veil without thinking of it as a sign of oppression.

Clearly, in the eyes of the West, the veil is a reminder of the "us" and "them" binary(Al-Saji, 2009, p. 65). Accordingly, "Muslim woman wearing the veil is doubly othered in the Western imagery; she is constructed at once as "women" and "Muslim". The complex difference means the veiled woman is the symbol of Islamic feminine otherness." (Al-Saji67). Muslim women are "othered" by American society through its construction of fabricated images of Muslim women's veils. Veiled women differ visibly from unveiled women and this difference becomes a mark of their contempt. In exploring the image of veiled women in America, Kahf addresses the negative stereotypes associated with veiled Arab American women in an attempt to reveal the mystery of the concept of the veil so often interpreted as a symbol of oppression. Thus, the image of the veil functions as a metaphor that signifies the ignorance of each other's cultures. Because of the discrimination Khadra suffers from in America, she decides to shed the veil. Kahf describes her new experience:

> The covered and the uncovered, each mode of being had its moments. She embraced them both. Going without hijab meant she would have to manifest the quality of modesty in her behavior, she realize one day, with a jolt. It's in how I act, how I move, what I choose, every minute... She had to do it on her own now without the jump-start that a jilbab offered. This was a rigorous challenge. Some days she just wanted her old friend hijab standing sentry by her side. (p. 312)

Through her protagonist, Kahf shows the sufferings of Muslim women in America. They cannot bear the consequences of wearing the veil in such a non-Muslim country because it causes them a lot of troubles and misunderstandings. Therefore, in order to be more accepted by Americans, they decide to shed it. This decision gives them some relief from being judged by a piece of cloth. It offers them the chance to be more American and less Muslim, not in their own eyes, but the eyes of others.

The representation of veiled women constructs an obvious distinction between Muslim identity and his Christian counterpart. To further intensify the negative image of Muslim women, the colonial past comes to haunt the present through Bitsey's words that anticipate their otherness and racial difference. In this context, Khadra says that "people look at you as if you were this alien thing…" (Kahf40). The otherness of Khathra is represented through her encounter with the Iranian-American girl, Bitsy, who perceives her as a threat because of the veil put on her head. Her body clearly articulates her alien identity: her hands and face indicate her 'Otherness'.Bitsy's words echoed the traumatic crisis caused by the terrorist/tragic bombing. This description brings to mind the historical background that associates Muslims with the threat of terror and the set of beliefs that locate them within the category of the 'Other'.

Kahf thereby focuses on images of the Muslim world as an unfamiliar setting, a horrific place that is dangerously close to threats of crime and terror, contrary to the homely Western environment. He locates Khadra's identity within the context of crime and so doing he alienates her from the civilized Western society. According to her, she belongs to a race that once harmed the safety of the world. The veil according to Bitsy is associated with fantasies of a terrorist threat. The phrase represents Muslims as a source of threat, those who belong to the terrorists, the horrific side of 'them'. Bitsy gives a dark image of veiled women and Muslims that is filled with racial otherness. Bitsy represents Islam and Muslims as the cause of the death of his parents who are murdered because of a terrorist event. This account delivers the message that "Islamaphobia is in fact rooted in a homogenized image of the Muslim community, which would invariably revitalize a politicized, monolithic stereotype of veiled Muslim women" (Ling344).

Similarly, the novel narrates the stories of Muslim women who suffer from an identity crisis and tragedy. It explores the otherness of minor characters, including Reem and Aunt Razanne whose 'veil' and 'jilbab' associate them with 'otherness' and differentiate her from the Syrian. It is mainly about the suffering of veiled women. The novel also indicates the 'otherness' of veiled women within the Syrian community itself. In fact, they are

oppressed inside and outside their homelands in various forms.In Syria, the veil causes the exile of Khadra's aunt and many women who are perceived as a threat to national security. Veiled women in this novel, including Aunt Razanne and her daughter, Reem, experience alienation as "the paratroopers tore [their] veils" (Kahf280). The two women are therefore victims of oppression as they are ordered to "strip off their hijab and jilbab, or get a gun on their head" (Kahf281). The otherness of veiled women is represented through their encounter with the 'paratroopers'. Kahf shows how veiled women have to endure injustice and political oppression when they are at home. The image of veiled women in America as a threat to mainstream society is not disassociated from the image constructed by the Syrian community itself. The veil is perceived as a sign of inferiority and backwardness. Sibelle describes hijab as unfashionable. She says: "Most fashionable people stopped wearing hijeb" (Kahf200).In this respect, Kahf represents Khathra whose 'otherness' cannot be understood in isolation, apart from racial and gender otherness.

The concept of 'Otherness' encompassed various spaces in the novel, namely 'gender Otherness'.The novel also examines gender issues. The novel attempts to link Arab-American identity to racial otherness. The mode offers the opportunity to express the painful experience of marginalization and isolation within and outside the homeland. Khathra's journey to Mecca with the aim of pilgrimage brings with it both exile and alienation. It brings with it the threat of a hybrid identity that disrupts the purity of the homeland.

Khathra tells the story of her journey from America to Arab Saudi, anticipating additional forms of 'otherness'. Travelling to Arab Saudi, the journey of Khathra demonstrates a range of hellish encounters with the police. Kahf tells the story of her journey to Saudi Arabia she has an Islamic pilgrimage to make: a visit to Mecca. In order to achieve his expectations, she attempts to blend in with Muslim society, yet she is disappointed by its negative gaze. She goes to the mosque where women are forbidden to enter. When the police claim that she is not allowed to approach, she feels alienated from this "Muslim country where Islam started" (Kahf200). According to her, Mecca is the place of psychological unrest, the place that haunts the mind. She feels alienated as she knows that women are segregated from men and they are not allowed to participate in 'salat Fajr' or 'daily worship'. Her appearance breaks down the stability of Arab Saudi and demonstrates the clash between the rigid Islamic traditions.

Kahf represents how the 'male gaze' mirrors the otherness of veiled women in Arab countries. Drawing on the feminist approach, women in public places, as critics point out, are considered as victims of the 'male gaze'. The concept is mainly used by feminist critics. The concept is also informed by the theory of Laura Mulvey who refers to the idea that women are not the owners of the look. She explains that "[i]n their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (62). The concept of the 'male gaze' is inseparable from another concept. Through Khadra, Kahf takes the reader on another tour of suffering in Saudi Arabia where the female protagonist of the novel suffers from 'pursuing' male gazes. Since the novel is also narrated from a female perspective, this section briefly demonstrates the hellish experience of Arab-

American women in Arab countries. The theme of women as 'objects' of male spectacle, then, is significant in the novel. The public space haunts the heroine and subjects her to the possibility of the 'male gaze'. In this case, Mecca is a space that is represented through the encounter between the male gaze and the female figure. The passage depicts an instance whereby the gaze makes her 'mesmerized'.

For Khadra, Saudi Arabia is marked by the sense of homelessness and threat of the 'unknown', a space where a sense of belonging and identity cannot be maintained. Kahf shows through Khadra how Muslim women are discriminated against in Saudi Arabia. The novel illustrates how this Muslim country engages with a patriarchal discourse that categorizes women as either 'bad' or 'good'. The novel has two main categories of women that can be classified as either Mary or Eve. In this context, women are classified according to the Virgin/Whore binary. She is seen as a 'shame,' a woman whose chastity is disrupted by being visible in public spaces at night. The word is used to represent anxieties about class and sexuality. According to the male figures, she is the woman who represents sex and freedom. Khadra's 'uncovered hair" stands for difference, thus demonstrating the threat to the purity of the homeland. Her body introduces various challenges to social norms. It is used as a sign of her gender transgression. Her physical appearance and behavior represent a transgressive woman who challenges social norms. Her 'journey' to Mecca is identified by restlessness and ambiguity.

Viewed through the lens of gender and race, her physical appearance and behavior disturb her gender and national identity. Her 'uncovered face' introduces various challenges to social norms. Khadra's body and appearance become markers of proximity with prostitution. The police perceive her as "a kind of a bad woman, out in the street at the dark hour, alone, face uncovered" (Kahf40). The traits of 'otherness' are frequently projected into Khathra through her "face uncovered" (Kahf, 2006, 166). Khadra embodies the negative images of the independent woman. She possesses signs of 'otherness' that function to subvert conventional gender norms. Kahf shows through this public figure how women are discriminated against in Saudi Arabia.

The novel shows the representations of veiled women in terms of gender too. There is an important point in this passage that sheds particular light on the veiled woman who is the victim of patriarchal society: The stereotypical images of Muslim women as submissive and dependent housewives still exist in the minds of most Arab men. Muslim women cannot carry out other professions than that of being housewives. Women are expected to act according to the roles assigned by Arab society. They are considered submissive, voiceless, and dependent on men. The patriarchal conception of Muslim women is centered on domestic values, innocence, and submission to the male power of father and husband. These are the mental pictures that most Arab men have of Muslim women.

The feeling of homelessness is not just continued through Khadra's interaction with the public world but also with the domestic interior. Kahf provides us with the image of an empowered Muslim woman whose freedom is somewhat restricted by her traditional husband and his patriarchal outlook in life. She feels alienated from her husband who dominates her. This is illustrated when she is prohibited by her husband to ride a bicycle

because he thinks it is un-Islamic behavior. Indeed, she is determined to play an active role in the Muslim community but her husband expects her to follow the norm and gives upon her activities for him. He does not appreciate her independence or free thinking and believes as a wife she should be willing to make all these compromises to accommodate her husband and to fit the profile of the perfect obedient wife that her husband expects of her. Once he asks her "What's for dinner? " (Kahf, 240) to which she responds "I don't know. Why are you asking me? Like I'm the one who's supposed to know?" (Kahf240), his immediate response is "Let's see: Who's the wife in this picture" (241)? This upsets her because she never views herself as a housewife whose life is confined to the limited space of the home and the roles allowed by the husband. Kahf portrays the image of the traditional patriarchal figure that assumes authority over his wife, believing it is a position rightly his, due to his privilege of maleness. Through Kahf's representation of Khadra's character, she challenges that image of a subservient and silenced wife who caters to the needs of her oppressive husband at the expense of her own needs. Thus, Kahf wants to convey that for "Muslim Arab American women, the *hijab* is the least of their worries. They not only have to resist negative Western stereotypes but also have to fight Arab males who see religion through patriarchal eyes"(Abdelrazak 100).

Kahf deconstructs the stereotypical images of Muslim women and constructs positive and empowered images of them. Initially, we are presented with the image of an educated and ambitious woman who wanted to go to medical school. She states "I used to dream I would be a doctor on the day, and open a free clinic for poor people," (Kahf25-26). Another image of an independent woman is Khadra's grandmother who is a telephone operator and among the "very first wave of working women" (Kahf271). She does not conform to a society that viewed "a telephone girl's job was a bad thing, a thing for floozies" (Kahf271). She resists such nonsense and those confining roles assigned to women. She asserts "We wanted to be the New Women" (Kahf271). The term 'New Woman' "in literary textual configuration depicted the changing image of a woman from the established and accepted role-model to a more radical figure" (Ling345).The collapse of the domestic ideology and the major rules associated with the patriarchal order brought about an atmosphere of anxiety regarding the emergence of women who refuse to play their roles as Victorian wives and mothers.

She says proudly that she is among the "Women who cherish themselves, women who are cherished"(272). Indeed, the image of Muslim women as vulnerable, passive, and in need of liberation is challenged through the representation of Hanifa who is a professional driver and a participant in a car race. She is a wife, a mother, and the first Muslim woman to be a professional driver. Accordingly, Kahf provides her readers with various images of Muslim women playing different roles in society. Through these women, she praises them for their active contributions to the community. She creates new alternative readings of the lives of Muslim and Arab American women in defiance of the sterile and prejudiced images of Muslim women as backward and uncivilized. Thus, as Ahmed states the "misconception that Muslim women are helpless prisoners in the homes needs to be corrected"(qtd in Hamdan77).

Abdelrazek assumes that hybrid identity owners, particularly, Arab-American women, "live in an in-between space where they oscillate between the Arab and American culture" (Abdelrazek 11). Khadra's new identity is influenced by stereotypes. The veil is equated in the minds of most Americans with oppression and subjugation of women. She also resists the stereotypical images of Muslim women that still exist in the East: the image of women as submissive and confined to the limited space of the home. In resistance to these images, Kahf presents images of independent women who play different roles in their communities. In her narrative of Muslim women in America, she moves away from projecting Islam as a religion that is patriarchal and oppressive. She attempts to demonstrate the bright image of Islam, other than what is commonly portrayed or thought by many in other parts of the world. She tries to show that Islam is not far from modernity and modern living. Accordingly, as an Arab- American feminist, Kahf "revolves against two oppressed systems: Arab patriarchy that wants to silence woman and restrict her freedom using false religious excuses and American misconception and negative stereotyping of Muslim woman" (Abdelrazek 102). While she longs to embrace her Arab heritage, she "cannot identify with the patriarchal aspects of the culture. However, she cannot fully belong to American culture, which often excludes them because of ethnic difference" (Abdelrazek 102).

Khathra's story can be analyzed in record with Bhabha's theory of mimicry. The term can be first analyzed in terms of the 'Other''s attempt to include himself or herself within the homeland that continually rejects and sees him/her as an 'outsider' (200). Bhabha's concept of 'mimicry' can be applied to explain her situation in which Khadra attempts to build the bridges between Arab and American identities, the gap that attempts to fill in. To do so, as an 'Other,' she decides to 'mimic Americans. Rather than accepting her racial otherness, she plans to subvert the hierarchical structure by creating her new identity.

Conclusion

The Girl of the Tangerine Scarf targeted anxieties regarding race. Kahf examines the crisis of Arab-American identity. Khadra, the main character in the novel, has a hybrid identity. She faces conflicts as she is still carrying a Syrian identity and at the same time looking for her American identity. In this novel, Khadra seems to be woven between being Syrian and American. The novel attempts to reproduce a chain of binary opposition such as the self and the Other, the American and semi-American. This article, in short, argues that in Arab-American literature, veiled women are represented as dangerous, uncivilized, unwomanly, and in need of control in order to protect mainstream society.

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