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**The Struggle of Veiled Muslim Women in America  
through Mohja Kahf's "*The Girl in the Tangerine  
Scarf*"**

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master  
Degree**

**By: Khaoula BELABES –Sabrina TARFAYA**

**Publically defended before the following jury:**

Mr.MOHAMMED SENOUSI	University OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA	Chairperson
Mr. MOHAMMED GOFFI	University OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA	Supervisor
Mr.BACHIR SAHED	University OF MOHAMED BOUDIAF - M'SILA	Examiner

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## DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "Struggles of Veiled Muslim women through Mohja Kahf's " *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* " is our own work and that all the sources we have quoted have been acknowledged

**Signature :**

**Date:**

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## Abstract

This dissertation discusses the struggle that Muslim Arab veiled women encounter in the American diaspora. Written by the Syrian American writer and poet Mohja Kahf, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is used as a corpus to analyze and understand this issue. This semi-biographical novel presents a great opportunity to address oppression, religious intolerance and double consciousness, which are constant issues that Muslim Arab women immigrants generally confront. The study is significant in the sense that it brings to view the unspoken of all injustices and bias against American Muslim Arab veiled women. In other words, the conflict had existed prior to 9/11 era. However, it was those bloody attacks which functioned as a catalyst accelerating both oppression of these women and gave rise to their commitment to struggle that subjugation. The dissertation equally analyzes the biased western view, which boils down to the way the West is blinded by its own failure to recognize its stereotyping actions on one hand, and criticizes the West beliefs of own culture to be far more superior than Non-Western cultures, on the other. Hence, to achieve its intended purpose which lays in revealing the different layers of hardships waged against Muslim women, the study calls for postcolonial approach, the choice that resorts to Edward Said's Orientalism theory.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Owing to the fact that literature is a reflection to society's ideologies, concerns and conflicts, Arab American literature is no exception to this as recent works by Arab American writers have indeed been giving voice to diasporic Arabs. Their literary productions have remarkably received an unprecedented interest by the American mainstream. Those writers used their works to reflect the problematic state of identity and community they are facing there, notably the predicament of racism and bigotry as well as their social and political exclusion.

Arab American women prose is in the midst of the literary genres that emerged to the foreground lately. It came as a tool to critically challenge the American falsified stereotypes associated with Arabs and Arab women. Arab women writers have produced many literary corpora to defy Americans bias representations that depict them as inferiors, used, silenced and oppressed. Their literary productions proved the vital role that an Arab woman can play throughout their literary accomplishments. Their writings explore themes related to religion, religious freedom, identity's hyphenation, the status of Muslim females in the American diaspora and the recurrent struggles that Muslim and Arab females constantly encounter against patriarchy, racism and bigotry.

It is in this context, that one can situate Mohja Kahf, the writer whose work is under analysis in this dissertation. Mohja Kahf is a pioneering literary figure who contributes significantly to Arab American visibility. She was born in Syria then migrated to America in which she was raised. Currently, Mohja Kahf is a comparative literature professor at the University of Arkansas. She has published several works in which she negotiates the status of diasporic Arabs and Muslims and the conflicts they constantly encounter.

The novel under analysis in this dissertation is entitled *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* Mohja's sole and only novel. It is a fictional bildungsroman about the life of Syrian American

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Khadra Shamy. It endures the semi-biographical perspective of the author, incorporating her personal journey as a Syrian Muslim woman in America. Throughout her novel, Kahf delves into sensitive and somewhat taboo issues surrounding Muslim Arabs notably Muslim women.

This study will be a significant endeavour in revealing the different levels of discrimination and bigotry that Muslim and Arab veiled women face in the American diaspora. Additionally, it will help readers to grasp the inner struggles resulting from their hybrid identities. By the same token, this study obtains significance from the fact that it will help in reshaping and correcting false views about them. This in turn will lead to a deeper and clearer understanding to their lives and the constant struggles facing them.

The present work studies the hardships facing Muslim veiled women using the novel's protagonist as a reference. It elucidates Khadra's constant conflicts with the western society, stereotypes and bigotry working against her and her subsequent attempt to search for her identity. Therefore, a deep reading of the novel using postcolonial approach brings out struggles facing Khadra Shamy as well as many other female characters. Considering this issue, this dissertation contrives to ask and answer the following question: What are the different challenges facing Muslim American veiled women and how do they impact their lives? The question stated above somewhat needs the following sub-questions: How does the author portray Muslim females integration within the America society? How is Khadra Shamy depicted in the novel? What are the different orientalist stereotypes and misconceptions that are related to hijabed women? And how does the clash of identity reflect on veiled Muslim women?

The novel has been highly studied and discussed by a wide range of researchers, who have been thrilled by the controversial themes that the novel has presented. Kahf's portrayal of Muslim women's integration within the American society has raised many debates to be discussed. Therefore, lot of literary corpora has been written about the stated topic. As the

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conducted studies analyzed the novel from different angles, notions like double consciousness, home and diaspora were the center of interest that attracted scholars, writers and intellectuals to discuss the status of Muslim women using the novel as a reference.

A journal article titled "*Notion of Home for Diasporic Arab women writers*", written by Ruzi Suliza Hashim and Nor Farid Abd El Manaf, discusses notions of home, immigration, throughout two novels entitled as *Reading Lolita in Tehran* and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. The article focuses on the way in which the author depicted the lives of Arab immigrants in a country that is not their own, and how are they struggling to adapt to their new environment.

On the other hand, an article titled "Self and Identity" in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*" written by Hanen Barket, Sura Alassad, and Amina Jardat emphasizes the complications and the contradictions that result from having a hyphenated identity<sup>1</sup>. It highlights the terms of identity and self and discusses the dilemma of neither being an Arab enough to be considered as an Arab nor being an American enough to be considered as an American. Further, the article sheds light on the case of Khadra Shamy, the fictional character, who emigrated from her homeland and settled in America. During her residency there, Khadra experienced inevitable inner clashes in her own journey to discover her own identity and self.

Another article entitled "The Symbol of the Veil in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*" written by Dr. Areen Khalifah an assistant professor in Philadelphia's university in Jordan, discusses the symbol of the veil in the novel. It starts by discussing the bias representations associated with the Islamic veil and which mainly depict it is as a tool used by Muslim Men in order to oppress women. Coupled with shedding light on the misrepresentations of the veil, the article equally shows that they are nothing more than

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<sup>1</sup>Is a term implies a dual identity(<https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-117325783.html>)

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falsified images that aim at tarnishing the Islamic religion. Further, the article demonstrates how it stands for idealism, purity and Islamic heritage.

All the works mentioned and reviewed above are carefully selected because they are slightly related to this study in certain points, and the idea that is going to be discussed in the study has been already discussed in each work of these, but limitedly and separately. This study tackles in detail all the hardships that confront diasporic veiled Arab women, starting from their inner struggle to adapt to the new foreign culture, to their external struggle against racism, discrimination, and oppression.

Since this research aims at revealing the struggles of Muslim and Arab veiled women waged by the Western society, it resorts to postcolonial approach notably Said's orientalism theory. The latter was introduced by the intellectual, researcher and scholar Edward Said which came to significantly challenge the corpus of the orientalist literature through demonstrating that what was considered to be a genuine knowledge, has been falsely fabricated in favor of the west hegemonial and political interests.

Structurally speaking, this study is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter will be mainly devoted to the historical and the theoretical foundations in order to set the base for this study. It is under "*Pre and Post 11/09 Muslim Arab Community: Socio and Postcolonial discourse*". In the light of its title, this chapter is equally going to be divided into two main sections. The first section is going to be mainly devoted to discuss and present post 09/11 community alongside the changes and the danger that came upon Muslims and Arabs in the wake of the events. The second section is going to discuss orientalism and postcolonial theory and how they are attached to each other. Further, it is going to shed light on the Edward Said as being a pioneering figure in this field.

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The second chapter under the title” *Struggle of Veiled Muslim Women :Postcolonial Implications*” will be an analytical framework. It is going to be divided into three equal sections. The first section is going to address the ordeal of cultural and political oppression and how does it reflect upon veiled Muslim women through shedding light on Khadra’s personal experiences. The second section is going to throw light on the notion of Orient vs Occident and the process of othering .Meanwhile, the third section is going to discuss the notion of double consciousness and the confusion resulting from having a hyphenated identity.

**CHAPTER ONE :**

**POST 11/09 MUSLIM ARAB**

**COMMUNITY: A SOCIO-**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

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## Introduction

Muslim Arabs are in the midst of other ethnic groups that make up the American population. Currently, they are deemed to be a significant part that was able to prove its worth in the American society. The Muslim Arab community was not recently established. In fact, its inception can be rooted back to hundreds of years, when people from all over the globe sought to settle in America.

Muslim Arabs are ethnically and racially diverse. Initially, they come from twenty -two Arab countries, covering the Middle East and North Africa. Similarly to other immigrant groups, Muslim Arabs brought their own beliefs, cultural values, ideologies and practices. In spite of this diversity, Muslim Arabs have a shared sense of values and cultural heritage that connect them with each other.

Muslim Arabs managed to form a significant community. However, they were not able to completely escape neither negative characterizations nor discrimination that accompanied them for a long time. The radicalisation underwent a noticeable shift after the events of 11/09, which provoked American hatred toward Muslims, who were perceived as bloody terrorists.

In the light of what has been mentioned earlier, the first chapter of this dissertation will be divided into two parts. The first part is going to be mainly devoted to discuss and present pre and post 9/11 Muslim Arab community in the USA. First, it provides an overall idea of the immigration, further discussing the types of immigrants, the general status of these immigrants and their settlement base. After that, it indicates to the changes, challenges and the danger that came upon Muslim Arab immigrants after the event of 11/9, and how it is considered to be a shifting point, to the worst, to Arabs and Muslims. Since 11/9 triggered Islamophobia and hate crimes. The second part is going to discuss orientalism and

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postcolonialism, Edward Said as a pioneering figure in the field and the notion of double consciousness.

### **1.1. Muslim Arabs Pilgrimage to America**

Since its creation, the United States of America has been an inciting shelter for individuals who migrated in droves searching for a better life. The migration waves embodied people from different origins and backgrounds, the thing that served in shaping the current image of the American society. Muslim Arabs are amidst the many groups that came to seek better conditions.

Where there is no accurate information about when the first Arabs arrived, historians trace their very first landings with the Spanish explorers in the fifteenth century. However, the real migration waves did not start until the nineteenth century. Generally, the process of Muslim Arabs migration to the United States of America can be broken down into 3 main stages. The first stage stretched from 1880 until 1924. It witnessed a noticeable boom in Muslim Arabs waving to America. The vast majority of them were from Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. Those immigrants fled from economic and political difficulties that they faced in their countries of origin which were under the control of the Ottoman Empire (Ozdil 5)

The second wave began after World War II and lasted until 1960. It was notably more diverse than the one that preceded it .This wave incorporated immigrants from different Arabic regions, including Iraq, Egypt, Palestine and Jordan. Those immigrants were a mixture of Muslim and Christian Arabs. The majority of them were well educated and highly skilled individuals who were thrilled by the opportunities offered by post-war America which was in need of professionals to restore its economy (Haddad 3)

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The third wave of immigration was triggered at the outset of the seventies and continued up till now. This wave is the most diverse in terms of ethnicity, religious affiliation and socioeconomic status. Mainly, it was the result of the government changing its immigration laws which ended all restrictions based on national origin through the immigration and nationality act of 1965. The act targeted purposely educated professionals for purely economic reasons ( Dareisah 5)

The waves of immigrants arriving there formed a significant community and established several institutions, the matter that shows the high position of the Muslim Arabic community that was able to establish its identity through education; politics and social participation.

## **1.2. General Status of Muslim Arabs in the Pre- era 11/09**

Muslim Arabs constitute a sizeable minority in the American society. Markedly, they managed to succeed in many areas of the American life. Former president Bush asserted in his speech that Muslim Arabs were able to profoundly make a valuable contribution to America *"America counts millions of Muslims amongst our citizens and Muslims make an incredibly valuable contribution to our country. "Muslims are doctors, lawyers, law professors, and members of the military, entrepreneurs, shopkeepers, moms and dads".<sup>1</sup>* As mentioned, Muslim Arabs were able to contribute valuably to America throughout their economic, professional and educational achievements.

Muslim Arabs had a range of educational backgrounds. Accordingly, the majority of them had a high educational level. Approximately eighty-four percent of those who were under the age of 25 had high school diplomas. 41% had at least their Bachelor's degree; moreover, 17% had a post-graduate degree as compared to the national average of 9%<sup>2</sup> .

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<sup>1</sup>Qtd in <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010917-11.html>

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Moreover, a high segment of them was bilingual providing an advantage for themselves in the work place. ( Hamdy 3)

Coupled with their educational achievements, they were also able to succeed professionally. Approximately 42 % of those who were 16 years and older were in professional management or similar occupations, compared to 34 % of the general U.S. population. Commonly, they worked in all fields. A high segment of them worked in sales. They held their private business including hotels, restaurants and grocery stores. Whereas, those who belong to the educated layer were more active as lawyers, doctors, and engineers. Other segment worked as employees in stores, farms and in factories.( Carlisle 134)

Similarly, Muslim Arabs succeeded in forming several religious institutions. At first, Muslims used to practice their religious rituals privately. Nevertheless, this situation has changed when the first mosques were built by 1920. In fact, mosques have played a significant role in their lives. Besides being shared places for Islamic worship, mosques were also considered as central communities for Islamic celebrations and special events. By the same token, Islamic organizations constructed a valuable component in their identity as Muslim Arabs. The Islamic organizations formed in America were multiple. Among them one can mention North American trust, the Islamic medical organization, the association of Muslim scientist and engineers in addition to plenty of other organizations that seek to serve Muslim Americans in general.( Haddad 24)

Seeking to gain a voice in the American government, Muslim Arabs formed several organizations. One organization that was formed by 1970 named National Association of Arab Americans. Its main focus revolved around foreign issues. Another organization was formed by the early twenties called Arab American anti-discrimination committee. The latter sensitizes the news media to issues of stereotyping.

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At first, those immigrants were fairly noted to be integrated and assimilated very well into the American society. However, as time progressed and as they were increasingly vilified in the American media, Muslim Arabs started to experience a sense of marginalization due to their ethnic and religious backgrounds, hence a vast majority of them choose to deny their identity aiming at bridging gaps with Americans (Carlisle135). However, the clashes between the two sides persisted till they were eventually worsened in the wake of the 11/09 events.

### **1.3. The Events of 11/09: Apocalypse of Change**

As they settled in America, Muslim Arabs found out that America was not the heavenly place they craved for. They were always meant to be considered as alienated others who belong to another place and practice another type of religion. Their status as Muslim Arabs was always determined by the social, the economic, and the political events that corresponded to each era. One decisive event that changed the lives of millions of Muslim Arabs completely and affected them drastically was the terrorist attacks of 11/09.

11 September events are considered to be a turning point in the world history. They stunned both the United States and the world. The events took place on the morning of Tuesday, September, 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. The attackers took control of four commercial aircrafts out of the airport of the East coast of America. Two planes targeted the world trade center in New York City and succeeded in blowing the main two towers. The third aircraft hit the Pentagon in Virginia, whereas the fourth one did not reach its intended target since it crashed in Pennsylvania.

Directly and in the immediate aftermath of the events fingers of suspicion were pointed at Al Qaida and its formal leader Osama Ben Laden who declared later on a recorded video his organization's responsibility for the attacks before the American presidential elections in

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2004. But, he appeared later on to deny his involvement claiming that it was a conspiracy from the government in order to tarnish Muslim's reputation:

I was not involved in the 9/11 attacks in the US nor did I have knowledge of the attacks. There exists a government within perpetrators of these attacks within its self; to the people who want to make the present century of conflict between Islam and Christianity. That secret government must be asked as to who carried out the attacks the Americans system <sup>3</sup>

The events were followed by drastic changes that affected all levels starting from America's foreign policy to the small details relating to Americans lives. On the political side, the US responded by initiating a set of political strategies illustrated in its declaration to a war against international terrorism, the commission act and the American patriot act.

The war on terror was an immediate response to the attacks. It was declared on September 20<sup>th</sup> 2001 by George Bush. The war was led by the United States and the United Kingdom with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) support, it was launched mainly against al-Qaeda and other militant organizations but soon expanded to include Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The war aimed to put an end to terrorism in America and in the world (Cakmark 3)

Likewise, The USA Patriot Act was another policy that was initiated by the US government. It was passed by Congress on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Its full title was "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism. Its purpose was to punish terrorist acts and to enhance law enhancement investigatory tools.

Still, regarding the policies followed by America in the wake of the events, the commission report was charted on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002. It was equally named Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. The report aimed at giving a full account of the circumstances surrounding the events as well as some recommendations against any possible future attacks.

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<sup>3</sup> Qtd in <http://www.globalresearch.ca/interview-with-osama-bin-laden-denies-his-involvement-in-9-11/24697>

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The government equally responded by implementing series of immigration policies as precautionary strategies to any possible threats of terrorism. The policies heightened Visa control and examination of passengers besides other procedures that attacked purposely Muslims and Arabs.

Socially speaking, the events impacted negatively Muslim Arabs relations with Americans. Tensions increased between the two sides as a result of the falsified image that Americans have drawn in their minds about Islam and Muslims. Americans believe that Islam promotes violence, led to the emergence of Islamophobia. The term refers to the irrational fear towards Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia emerged in the aftermath of the terroristic attacks that created the impression that all Muslims are terrorists. In his paper “Islamophobia: A new word for an old fear, Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid a Chairman Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony UK, defines islamophobia as follows:

Islamophobia is the fear and/ or hatred of [Islam](#), [Muslims](#) or [Islamic culture](#). Islamophobia can be characterized by the belief that all or most Muslims are religious fanatics, have violent tendencies towards non-Muslims, and reject as directly opposed to Islam such concepts as [equality](#), [tolerance](#), and [democracy](#). Islamophobia is a new form of [racism](#) whereby Muslims, an ethno-religious group, not a race, are, nevertheless, constructed as a race. A set of negative assumptions are made of the entire group to the detriment of members of that group. During the [1990](#)'s many sociologists and cultural analysts observed a shift in racist ideas from ones based on skin colour to ones based on notions of cultural superiority and [otherness](#).<sup>4</sup>

The consequences resulting from Islamophobia are widely diverse. Above it all, Islamophobia lead to a dramatic increase in anti- Muslim discrimination the thing that is manifested through verbal and physical attacks waged against Arabs and Arab like ethnicity. Simultaneously, Islamophobia has notably encouraged vandalism on mosques and Muslim cemeteries'. Furthermore, it encouraged mistrust in Muslim citizens. Therefore, they are more likely to be searched and harassed by the police offices than the rest of the population. This

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<sup>4</sup> Qtd in <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=344>

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situation was remarkably worsened due to the media's bias depiction to Muslims and Arabs that aims at distorting the image of Muslims (Semaan 25)

#### **1.4. Representation of Muslim Arabs Post 11/09**

Seems like the constant disparity of what Muslim Arabs think of themselves and what the media depicts them, mainly as extremists and terrorists. Studies have indicated that the media plays a significant role through its negative reporting and association of Islam with terrorism. The head of BBC North West, Aziz Rachid, stated in an interview that the connection between Islam and terrorism is difficult, if not impossible, to break; since Muslims are never represented or appearing in the media in any other positive or at least natural way.<sup>5</sup>

The media fuel Islamophobia. Ogan Christine, professor of Journalism and Informatics at the University of Indiana, wrote about this issue in her journal article :*The Rise of Anti-Muslim Prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States*, stating that the occurrence or the perception that media outlets tend to cover Muslims and Islam related topics in a very negative manner. She proceeds to argue that this irrational and unjustified fear and hatred toward Muslim was, and still, being shaped by the media's coverage of Islam. She continued to explain; how this fear was actually a psychological defense mechanism of what is actually misunderstanding and misrepresentation spreading across mass media. (27-43). Professor and media critic Jack Shaheen has described American films that present Arab stereotypes as follows:

“Sub-humans” and “fanatics who believe in a different god, who don't value life as much as we do, [and who are] intent on destroying us (the west) with their oil or with their terrorism”. The men seek to abduct and brutally seduce our women; they are without family and reside in a primitive place (the desert) and behave like primitive beings. The women are subservient resembling black crows—or we see them portrayed as mute, somewhat exotic harem maidens (Dareisah 5).

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/biographies/biogs/northregionaltv/aziz\\_rashid.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/biographies/biogs/northregionaltv/aziz_rashid.shtml)

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The media's reports have constantly stereotyped the image of Muslim Arabs through distorting Islam's concepts and identity. At the basic level and as it embedded, the word Islam means peace. However, Islam becomes falsely considered as an extremist, fundamental and violent religion that promotes violence. William Lane Craig, a research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology portrays Islam, defines it as follows:

Islam sees violence as a means of propagating the Muslim faith. Islam divides the world into two camps: the dar al-Islam (House of Submission) and the dar al-harb (House of War). The former are those lands which have been brought into submission to Islam; the latter are those nations which have not yet been brought into submission. This is how Islam actually views the world! <sup>6</sup>

Due to the fact that the American media has tried repeatedly to distort the image of the Islamic concepts, the word jihad has undergone many interpretations. The term refers to the holy wars that were used in the era of the prophet Mohammed peace be upon him which aimed mainly at defending Islam. However, the West reduces the term to a mere act of terrorism and represents Muslims as bloody terrorists.

Still regarding the media's trial to distort the Islamic identity and concepts, the word fundamentalism has undergone many deformations. The term is identified as an attitude, effort, movement that a group, an ideology or a religion tries to promote in its fundamental beliefs. The fundamental beliefs of Islam are the five pillars, which means that Muslims are fundamentalists when they practice the basic tenets of their religion. However, the American media stripped the term from its literal meaning and linked it with terrorism and extremism. (Abukashawa 4)

As being an integral part of the Islamic identity, the Islamic veil did not escape the target of contempt of the American media's bias representations. For Muslims, hijab stands for purity, religious commitment, modesty and respect for higher being. By wearing hijab,

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/islamic-terrorism>

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women show personal devotion to God and provide whiteness to their faith. Muslim women are asked to conceal their bodies and hair from foreigners once they are mature enough. The rule of the veil is underlined in the Quran in the twenty-fourth chapter, Surah An-Nur:

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together, believers, in order that ye may succeed.(31)

The preceding Quran verses show the importance of veiling in Islam. However, this is not the way by which it is represented in America. For westerners, Hijab stands for oppression, backwardness and terrorism. Muslim veiled women are seen as being oppressed and controlled by patriarchy and Islamists. In fact, those women are recurrently victimized by the western discourse that shows that they are in need of liberation and help.

Moreover, the veil is also seen as a symbol of inferiority. For many, hijab is a handicap that guides women and restricts their liberty. More recently, and particularly in the aftermath of the events, veils became signs of terrorism that are claimed to be used by the terrorists so they can conceal their identities. Growing bears is a Sunnah in the Islamic religion. However, growing and keeping bears is difficult in America, since it became a sign of terrorism. In Hollywood, actors who played the role of terrorists share the same characteristics notably the darker skin, the long bear and the Arabic accent.

In the light of what has been outlined earlier, the aggressive campaign that the American mass media has waged against Muslim values and traditions are proved to be biased and imbalanced representations. These representations are manifested through the explicit association of Islam with fundamentalism, terrorism and intolerance leading Muslim Arabs to face an upheaval discrimination and religious intolerance.

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## 1.5. Religious Freedom Post 11/09 Events

As it has been defined in Merriam-Webster dictionary, freedom of religion is the individual's guaranteed right to practice his religion without intervention. Religious freedom has been given a priority by America's founders, since it was stated in the first amendment of the US constitution: " *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*" The First Amendment to the US constitution, 15 Dec 1791. Founders believed that religious freedom was a fundamental liberty and central principle for the success of their newly established country that was supposed to be an ideal for tolerance and pluralism.

Lately, religious intolerance in America has generally prevailed. Muslim Arabs are constantly targeted in different types of discriminatory practices that aim at limiting their religious liberty. Giving the example of veiled Muslim women who are frequently exposed to racism and religious discrimination that may sometimes extend to physical oppression. Elver Hilal, a professor at the University of California Santa Barbara, describes religious discrimination encountered by veiled women as follows:

There is nothing more visible than Muslim women's headscarves to differentiate them in a crowd. Women wearing headscarf are subject to different type of humiliation and are accused of being ignorant, dominated by their male relatives, or simply prisoners of their veil. A great deal of racism and religious discrimination exists that sometimes manifests itself in physical attacks against Muslim women in particular. There are many incidents that take place inside classrooms when students or teachers are subject to direct negative criticism at Islam and Muslims. ( Elver 169)

Along with anti-Islamic activities that seek to prevent Muslims from practicing their religious freedom, Mosques and Islamic centers have encountered a great deal of opposition. It is in this context, that one can mention the controversy of the Alhamra Islamic Center

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project in New York before the anniversary of 11/09. According to those who opposed the construction of the centre, the location was near to the site of the 9/11 attacks therefore the establishment of such centre would show disrespect to victims' families .Whereas, others saw that this incident indicates tolerance to counter Islamic extremism of that day. Elver comments on the incident as follows"*In the United States, religious freedom as strongly declared in the First Amendment is still an undeniable tool that works on the legal front. Yet, Muslims could win their case for a center near Ground Zero in a court of law, only to end up losing in the court of public opinion*"(159-160)

The increased animosity against Muslims and Islam led to the appearance of anti – sharia movement which aimed at banning the implementation of Sharia law in the United States courts. Many politicians emerged to the foreground seeking to prevent the application of the Islamic law. Newt Gingrich, a strong opponent of the Islamic law. He called for a federal law that says sharia law cannot be recognized by any court in the United States the thing that violates the principle that was stated in the first amendment about religious freedom. Another politician, introduced anti-sharia bills is David Yerushalmi. The bills were designed to pass laws that prevent courts from applying the Islamic law. David Yerushalmi once stated, in a piece of the American Spectator, published on April 27, 2006 "*Our greatest enemy today is Islam. The only Islam appearing in any formal way around the world is one that seeks a world Caliphate through murder, terror and fear* "(Elver 162-165)

Though prompted lately, this rivalry towards Muslims has existed many years before, manifesting itself through their dominance and exploitation to the Islamic world the act that they tried to justify through inventing some ideologies that theorize Arabs and Muslim as less humans. Among these ideologies one can mention 'West-and-Islam' dualism which was critically studied by Edward Said in *Orientalism*.Published in 1978, the book deeply and

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comprehensively introduces a counter-theory that challenges the westerner's bias representations to the Islamic East.

## **2. Postcolonial Theory: Orientalism**

### **2.1. The Emergence of Postcolonial Theory**

#### **2.1.1. The concept of Postcolonial**

The term postcolonial can indicate the literal meaning of the period that follows the end of colonization. However, it is also about the issues of the independent countries throughout the world before and after the end of the colonization. In their introduction to *'The Empire Writes Back': Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin emphasize the same idea by saying that the term postcolonial is used to cover “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.”(2) Further, they say it is concerned with the “world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures.” (2)

#### **2.1.2. Postcolonialism**

Depika Bahri, an associate professor in English Department at Emory University, in her article “*Introduction to Postcolonial Studies*”, stated that “*Postcolonialism is a reaction against colonialism which exercises power on natives to abuse their wealth*”. Moreover, Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms defines Postcolonialism as follows: “*It considers vexed cultural-political questions of national and ethnic identity, otherness, race, imperialism and language during and after the colonial period*” (265)

Dr.Datta G. Sawant, Professor of English at TACS College, Sengaoon, has also given a similar definition:

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Postcolonialism is a critical theory which focuses on colonial experience from the colonised society's point view, the semantic base of Post-colonialism means something that has concern only with the national culture after the departure of imperial power. But in actual practice, it has to be understood only when to refer to colonialism, myth and history, language and landscape, self and other are all very important ingredients of postcolonial studies.<sup>7</sup>

Besides, if one looks deeply for the definition of the Postcolonial theory, he will find that it is the theory which investigates and explains the legacy of Western occupation, colonization, subjugation and control of the non-western countries. It is also about the unequal power created by the European colonizers when they colonized different parts of the world such as Indian subcontinent, Northern and Central Africa, Southern East Asia during the 20th century.

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory that deals with literature produced in countries that were colonized or still, by other countries. It also deals with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries that takes colonies or their peoples as its subject matter. The theory is based on concepts of Otherness and Resistance.

The Postcolonial theory focuses on many issues such as literature developed by the new nations include; the colonized countries after gaining their independence, the European feedback to colonization, the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized or 'the West' and 'the Rest' and how the latter resisted the oppression of their colonizers, the writings from immigrant groups to western world.<sup>8</sup>

However, the main concern of it is studying the negative Western impact in the non-Western world. In particular, Post-colonial theory analyses how the West dominant identities

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<sup>7</sup>[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271633479\\_Perspectives\\_on\\_Post-colonial\\_Theory\\_Said\\_Spivak\\_and\\_Bhabha](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271633479_Perspectives_on_Post-colonial_Theory_Said_Spivak_and_Bhabha)

<sup>8</sup> <http://postcolonial.english.ucla.edu/>

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were coined and continue to be shaped by ‘Othering’ the colonized people and their cultures, refusing to give them a voice and violating their histories and traditions.

Postcolonial theory represents a complex field of study, encompassing an array of matters that include issues such as identity, gender, race, racism, and ethnicity [...] focuses on exploding knowledge systems underpinning colonialism, neocolonialism, and various forms of oppression and exploitation present today [...] challenges epistemic violence; that is, it questions the undervaluing, destruction, and appropriation of colonized people’s knowledge and ways of knowing, including the colonizer’s use of that knowledge against them to serve the colonizer’s interests. (Lunga 193)

The field of Post-colonial studies has led to the emergence of Post-colonial theory. Postcolonial studies have been in existence for many years; the middle of the 20th century. But, it has gained more prominence since 1970, notably after the publication of Said’s ‘*Orientalism*’ 1978. As a result, this book is known as the mainstay of post-colonial studies.

The book presents the theory of Orientalism which is very attached with Postcolonialism. The concept attempts to explain how the Western colonizers look upon the ‘Orient’, presenting the East as the ‘Other’, weaker, less civilized, and exotic.

## **2.2. Pioneering Postcolonial Studies: Edward Said**

There were many pioneers who were interested in the social and cultural effect of colonialism including, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi K. Bhabha and Edward Said. Their works are considered as a foundation which marked the beginning of Postcolonial theory.

For instance, Frantz Fanon case studies were around France’s former colonies while those of Edward Said were about Britain’s former colonies. As it has been mentioned before, many scholars placed the beginning of the Post-colonial studies at the publication of Said’s “*Orientalism*’ 1978. The book is regarded as the foundation stone of Post-colonial theory.

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So, it is worth mentioning that Edward Said is the prominent scholar and the father of Post-colonial studies. He was born in Jerusalem, Palestine on September 1st, 1935 and died on November 25th, 2003 in New York. Said was a professor of English and Comparative literature at Columbia University, he was also well known as an activist in Middle Eastern politics.

Edward Said's interest in Orientalism began for two reasons as he mentioned in an interview with Sut Jhally<sup>9</sup> and as written in the Media Education Foundation Transcript, Massachusetts University "Edward Said on Orientalism". The first reason was the Arab-Israeli war as he stated:

One it was an immediate thing, that is to say, the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, which had been preceded by a lot of images and discussions in the media in the popular press about how the Arabs are cowardly and they don't know how to fight and they are always going to be beaten because they are not modern. And then everybody was very surprised when the Egyptian army crossed the canal in early October of 1973 and demonstrated that like anybody else they could fight. ("Edward Said on Orientalism")

The other reason, although more psychological in nature; has much longer history in his life, that is: the split between what he thinks he is, and what the West perceive his (all Arabs for that matter) to be. This perception was, and still is prejudiced, judgemental and entirely biased. ("Edward Said on Orientalism")

The book is divided into three main parts. In the first part, Said shows the importance of Orientalism and examines the question of representation. In the second part of the book, Said analyzes Orientalist structures. Said shows how the main philological, historical, and creative writers in the nineteenth century drew upon a tradition of knowledge that allowed them to erect and control Orient. Said examines the 'Modern Orientalism' in the third part. He shows

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<sup>9</sup> Sut Jhally ; Professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts and founder and Executive Director the Media Education Foundation. <http://www.sutjhally.com/>

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how the British and French legacies of Orientalism were adopted and adjusted in the United States of America. For Said, these legacies are most apparent in the US foreign policy.

The book is about three interrelated explanations of Orientalism. The first one is an academic discipline, the second is a style of thought and the third one is a corporate institution that deals with the Orient. Orientalism is "*the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery and practice*" (Said *Orientalism* 73). As a style, Said defines as a style of thought that "*based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident".*" (2). As a corporate institution Orientalism is used to dominate and control the Orient. So that, Orientalism is linked to colonialism.

Said's book '*Orientalism*' contributed to a great deal to understand many concepts as Orientalism, Stereotyping, Otherness, and so on. The book is regarded as an influential and a controversial because as Sut Jhally; Professor of Communication at the University of Massachusetts and founder and Executive Director the Media Education Foundation said in his introduction to the interview '*Edward Said on Orientalism*' that "*Orientalism revolutionized the study of the Middle East and helped to create and shape the entire new fields of study such as Post-Colonial theory as well influencing disciplines as diverse as English, History, Anthropology, Political Science and Cultural Studies*". According to Sut Jhally:

Orientalism tries to answer the question of why, when we think of the Middle East for example, we have a preconceived notion of what kind of people live there, what they believe, how they act. Even though we may never have been there, or indeed even met anyone from there. More generally *Orientalism* asks, how do we come to understand people, strangers, who look different to us by virtue of the color of their skin? ('Edward Said on Orientalism')

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Additionally, he asserts that Professor Said's contribution to how we understand this general process of what we could call stereotyping has been immense.

The main contribution of the book was the critique of the western perception of the East or Orient which Said claims to be a creation by the western society. In his view the study of Orient *“was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”)”* (qtd. in Loomba 47)

### **2.3. Orientalism: A Premise of Interpretations**

Originally, the term Orientalism is derived from the word ‘Orient’ which is the geographical area that includes Turkey, the Middle East, Greece, Northern Africa or in other words all the countries to the east of Mediterranean sea. Orientalism derives from the word Oriental; which stands for peoples, cultures, goods from the East.

As a study, Orientalism is the critical study of the Orient and its ideology. According to Said, ‘Orientalism’ can be defined as *“a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience.”*(Said Orientalism 1) He added that by ‘Orientalism’ he meant many things, including that *“it is the western style for dominating, restructuring, and having the authority over the Orient.”* (3)

According Said, Orientalism is mainly based on what he considers *“the false image of the Orient that has been fabricated by western explorers, poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators since Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798”*. (Hamadi 40)

Thus, Orientalism produced a distorted representation of the Orient; the discourse produced is never a mere reflection of true reality, but an amalgamated abundance of

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fallacious images that came to express the Orient as inherently different and secondary to the West. The concept suggests looking at ‘Arab culture’ as exotic, uncivilized, archaic and sometimes dangerous. (Arab stereotypes) Of course, this definition comes from the western writers and western imagination's point of view. But in fact, the Orient is “*the place of Europe’s greatest, richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the ‘Other’.*” (Said Orientalism 1)

For Said, the Orient is not an imaginative area or an adjustment to Europe. Otherwise, the Orient has helped to define the West as its contrasting idea, personal experience, as Edward Said mentioned in his book *Orientalism*, the Orient here is “*an essential part of Europe material civilizations and culture.*” (2)

The central idea of Orientalism is the Western knowledge which is about East. It does not come from facts or reality, rather, from preconceived stereotypes based on the idea of all Eastern societies are similar to one another and totally dissimilar to the West i.e. Western knowledge about the East is not based on facts and proves, but it based mainly on the Western imagination. In addition, Orientalism is about the misunderstanding of Muslims as the false assumption to their culture.

As an example to the false image that ‘the Occident’ or the West society has about the ‘Orient’ or the East that the Oriental people; particularly the Arabs and Muslims, are savages who need to be educated and it is the moral duty of Westerners to do that as Jagvinder Gill stated in his thesis “Re-Oriented Britain– How British Asian Travellers and Settlers have Utilised and Reversed Orientalist Discourse1770-2010” : “*the Orient exists as an inferiorized Other, lower down the evolutionary chain, in need of the West to mould and*

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*sustain it.*”(7) In addition, the paintings and photographs which were created by Europeans always depict the Arab world as exotic and mysterious place of sand.

This idea can be also seen in the works translated from the Oriental language into the European one, or the works written by Western writers and novelists such as Joseph’s Conrad *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad has been accused of being racist when he propagated Africa’s image or the Orient in general in Western imagination rather than portraying the continent in its true form. Western writers have the belief that Europeans are civilized, educated and superior to any other race in the world.

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## Conclusion

The first chapter spotlighted the pre and post 9/11 immigration movement of Muslim Arabs to America in addition the struggles and challenges of veiled Muslim women, how the Hijab is viewed and the oppression they encountered in a nation that is supposed to guarantee religious freedoms and rights to its citizens. Moreover, it explored the notion of Orientalism and postcolonial theory. Since the concept was popularized in 1978 by the book '*Orientalism*' published by Edward Said. Said made the influential argument that scholarly writers from Europe and America represented inaccurate, misleading and stereotyped cultural representation of the East. It discussed how these perceptions hindered a true understanding of the Arab Muslim culture, because the scholars studied the culture but, because it deviated from their own they never fully understood it.

In the next chapter, "the novel *the Girl in the Tangerine scarf* "will be analysed using Edward Said's Orientalism theory. This chapter is going to throw light on the struggles of veiled Muslim Arab women, and the challenges they face as Muslim immigrants first, and as women second. Further, it is going to explore the idea of how the Hijab is seen as a sign of inferiority and backwardness. Moreover, it is going to explore the differences existing between the Orient and the Occident and how Muslim women are otherized by the American society, which views them as oppressed without any intellect of individual identity. This prejudiced perception creates a double consciousness and confusion in these women and how they identify themselves in this community, this, of course will be discussed in considerable amount in the second chapter.

**CHAPTER TWO :**  
**STRUGGLE OF VEILED MUSLIM**  
**WOMEN/POSTCOLONIAL**  
**IMPLICATIONS**

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## Introduction

The second and final chapter of this dissertation will be divided into three sections. The first section is going to address the ordeal of cultural oppression, the Muslim Arab women have to constantly deal with in western cultures oppression and subjugation. In the second section the notion of Orient Vs Occident and the process of othering will be vigorously explained using obvious aspects of the protagonist “Khadra” in facing and dealing with it all. Then, the third section is going to discuss duality i.e. double consciousness between two paradoxical environments; the East and the West and the psychological dual identity of these Muslim Arab women. After this, it is going to address the confusion between the “real Islam” and “progressive Islam”, which the novel conveys in a manner of a never ending and a never solved crisis, because they are not considered part of the western culture even if they try to blend in, and ironically by trying to blend in they lose their significant Arabic Muslim culture, which therefore causes them to be rejected by the original Muslim community.

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## 1. Struggle of Veiled Muslim women: Political and Cultural Struggle

### 1.1. Political Struggle

It is noteworthy, that political relations between America and the Middle East have been tense for a very long time, the thing that is believed to have a sizable impact on the lives of Muslims and Arabs living in America. In this light, Nathan C and Frink Abdul-Aziz argue in their article “Islam and the West: Narratives of the Conflict and Conflict Transformation ” that the main source of the rivalry existing between Americans and Muslims is due to the unsettled nature of the American relations with the Islamic world (02). Regarding this and as the novel’s prime concern revolves around dealing with the struggles of Muslim women, political struggles were vigorously tackled. Referring to the events of 11/09 which have been discussed earlier in this work, Susan Taha Alkarawi and Ida Baizura Bahar argue in their article “Negotiating Liminal Identities in *the Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*” that many events that Kahf chronicles in her novel are believed to be caused by the events since they have been proven to have a profound impact on Muslims and Arabs lives. They further argue that the struggles Muslim women face in the novel and the stereotypes they were falsely associated with, illustrate the status of Muslim veiled women in the wake of the events (102).

Still regarding political influence, Kahf throws light on the Iranian hostage crisis; that is when the Iranian revolutionaries captivated the American embassy workers and took them hostages. The event as Amra Abdu Elmajid asserts in his dissertation “ The Practice of Faith and Personal Growth in Three Novels by Muslim Women Writers in the Western Diaspora” proved to be a turning point after which Muslim Arabs were viewed as enemies (101). The impact of the event was described through the narrator’s following words:

[The hostage crisis] made America hopping mad. America was mad at Khadra personally, the Shamy family, and all the other Muslims of Indianapolis. Simmonsville residents who didn’t know the Shah of Iran from Joe Schmoe yelled “Long live the Shah!” as their Muslim

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neighbours got out of their cars and went into the blue house on New Harmony Drive. Vandalism of the Dawah Centre with soap and white spray paint was something the police couldn't seem to stop; they only came and took pictures every time it happened ( Kahf 119).

As the events gave rise to anti-Muslim sentiments, Muslim Arabs suffered a lot. Khadra the novel's protagonist found herself compelled to unfairly bear the consequences of such political event, the thing that was exemplified throughout her own experience of being bullied and harassed at school: "*Khadra counted out her days in George Rogers Clark High School where, for four hundred and forty-four days, she was a hostage to the rage the hostage crisis produced in Americans. It was a battle zone. Her job was to get through the y dodging verbal blows – and sometimes physical ones*". ( Kahf 123). As one can grasp from the preceding passage, the events impacted Khadra heavily as she compared her suffering to the sufferings of American hostages themselves.

Politics and the mass media are deemed to be two facets of one coin, since the media is a powerful tool that is used to serve political interests. Moreover, the media is considered as the most important weapon that determines how people see the rest of the world. With this regard, Kahf states that the American discourse did not report its intervention in other countries crisis neither it cared about their suffering, however when the hostage crisis occurred the media covered the event obsessively:

Where was the soul at peace?[...] There was fighting in Western Sahara. Afghans filled refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan. Patani Muslims were being persecuted in their Buddhist- dominated country. Life in Lebanon was a hell of shelling and death. None of this was an important part of the news in America. Whereas the minute details of the lives of the American men held hostage, and the tears and hopes of their mothers, fathers, grandparents in Kissamee made news every day (Kahf 122).

As shown above, American media was indifferent towards other people's suffering. It is not that it only denied any help for them, but it did not even acknowledge their harsh situations. The writer's feelings of agitation were reflected in her comment "*Only they were*

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*human, had faces, had mothers. People wore yellow ribbons for these fifty- two privileged white men who now were, if the American news was to be believed, the most wretchedly oppressed of the earth” (123).*

As the novel progressed Khadra was depicted as being totally aware of the American hypocrisy, the thing that she tried to express throughout writing counter hegemonic essays. However, her teachers at school who held racist attitudes towards her did not like her essays:

Whenever Khadra wrote an essay about how hypocritical America was to say it was democratic while it propped dictators like the Shah and supported Israel's domination of Lebanon, 'and then they wonder why people over there hate them,' she got big red D's and Mrs. Tarkington found a reason to circle every other word with red ink. As soon as she turned in a composition on a neutral topic, no politics or religion, the Tark gave her a big fat A (123).

This racist act was among many others that Khadra had to deal with, not because of some personal considerations rather for political ones, the idea that Amra Abdu Elmajid asserts by claiming that Americans stance towards Muslims, their acceptance and their rejection is not a matter of personal opinion rather it is much more determined by political considerations (102) the thing shaped hostile and intolerant relations between the two.

## **1.2. Cultural Struggle**

It is arguably known that the western culture has been set as an international vector, which opposes the difference-blind principle of equal dignity for all cultures the thing that prompted “clash of civilizations.”( Berrouzg 3).With regard to the clashes existing between American culture and the Muslim Arab one, it is important to note that one of the reasons of westerners rejection to the Islamic and Arabic culture is because they see veil as a sign of inferiority and backwardness, moreover, they view it as unjust and oppressive to women , the idea that Leila Ahmed asserts in her book *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* by claiming that, the main tenets of the western discourse is that Islam is innately oppressive to women and that the veil epitomized that oppression further, she argues

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that the veil is the fundamental reason behind the wrong understanding of the Islamic religion.  
(152)

With this regard, Kahf raises the issue of the cultural clashes existing between western secularism and Islamic culture, which are mainly provoked by Americans rejection to the Islamic practices notably veiling. Khadra the protagonist faced discrimination mainly because she is first Muslim second because she wears hijab. As she moved to Indiana, Khadra found her self exposed to humiliation and ignorance due to her veil. One particular disturbing incident was when Khadra was harassed by two boys at school. One of the boys attacked her and took her Malcom x book, and then asked her to take off her veil so that she can take her book back. When Khadra refused the boys teared her veil and left her bareheaded:

A ripping sound. Brent stepped back, waving a piece of scarf. Khadra lunged – tried to grab it – her scarf was torn in two, one strip in Brent’s hand, the other wound tightly around her neck. “I hate you!” she screamed. “*I hate you!*” Brent mimicked in falsetto. “It’s just *hair*, you psycho!” “What a psycho,” Curtis echoed. The two boys ran down the hall, the thump of their Adidas’d feet merging with the clatter of the pep rally... “I hate you! I hate you! I HATE you!” she screamed at their receding figure She would not cry in this hateful school. She never should have let them get to her. Hated herself for that. The scarf. It was a mess. She didn’t want anyone in this building the satisfaction of seeing her bareheaded. She shoved her dishevelled hair under (Kahf 124-5).

Brent and Cutis represent western extremists who reject the Islamic culture. Their act of nicknaming Khadra by using an expression such as “reaghead”, clearly illustrates how do they view her veil as sign of backwardness. Hansul Djohar a professor at Sayrif Hidayatullah state Islamic university argues in his article “A Cultural Translator in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*” that Burnt and Curtus’s attitude towards Khadra was not really surprising since they held falsified information about Islam (105). Still in this context, another incident took place in the Dawah center on the day of Zuhura’s engagement; a close friend of Khadra. The center was attacked by a group of anti- Muslims when women were

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praying. Once finished, they found tomatoes and eggs thrown at the entrance of the center in addition to verbal offenses sprayed on the windows such as Ragheads, Die (Kahf 82)

Kahf's depiction to the conflicts between cultures is not circumscribed to the clashes between the western and the Islamic culture. It even exceeded to explore cultural clashes between Muslims themselves, notably the ones between secular Muslims and faith practicing Muslims, this idea manifests itself throughout Khadra's relation with her secular roommate Bitsy. Bitsy whose actual name was Fatima before she changed it, immediately judged Khadra when she saw her wearing the veil: "*You're not one of those fanatics,*" Khadra replied: "*Of course I am ... I come from a long, proud line of fanatics*"(363). Khadra's answer came from her awareness that the term "Muslim" has become associated with fanaticism or fundamentalism and so she did not mind being called so since Bitsy was one of the many who will treat her this way.

Along with the discriminatory practices that were committed against Muslim veiled women, Kahf draws her reader's attention to the fact that there are cases in which those women were raped and even killed, yet completely overlooked. One example that took place in the novel is Zuhura's murder. As the narrator describes her Zuhura was a strong, clever and independent Muslim woman who was raped and killed few days following her engagement party. She was found with cuts on her hands, her Clothes and hijab were in shreds (43). The attack as everybody assumed was not for sexual reasons, but it was a political reasons. It was an act of racial and religious bigotry:

Clearly it was religious bigotry, the Muslims said... It was related to [Zuhura's] vocal espousal of Muslim causes on campus, it was political. The *Indianapolis Freeman*... said it was about race, said how could it not be, in light of the Skokie80 affair and recent area rumblings from the Klan? It called Zuhura "a young black woman" and didn't mention that she was a Muslim at all. On the other hand, the *Indianapolis Star* pretended like race wasn't there at all, calling Zuhura a "foreign woman" and "an IU international student," as if her family didn't live right there in town. The *Indianapolis News* article

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treated it like just some random crime, giving it one tiny paragraph in the back pages (95).

As Kahf tries to show, this bigotry did not stop by her death, but it even continued after it. Muslims were surprised with the ways Zuhura , the Muslim veiled girl was referred to in the media; "a young black woman," "a foreign woman" and "an international student," the thing that illustrates how Muslim women are marginalized. Zuhura's killers were not arrested. Instead the charge of the murder was brought against her fiancée Eyad in order to make a link between women's oppression, Islam and the Middle East, the notion that Abdellatif and Ottoway explore in their paper "Women in Islamist Movements: Toward an Islamist Model of Women's Activism" claiming that western discourse have generally projected a negative image of the relationship between Islam and Muslim women, where they are depicted as living in oppressive patriarchal societies (03).

To go back to the point, Khadra the novel's protagonist is an example of many other diasporic Muslim veiled females who suffer a lot in a foreign and western country. Therefore, she found herself constantly compelled to fight cultural and political circumstances imposed by the intolerant Midwest, which were mainly illustrated in people's negative stances towards her religious practices notably veiling in addition to the misframed image that the media contributed in shaping about the Middle East.

## **2. Aspects of Orientalism through “ *The Girl In The Tangerine Scarf*”**

### **2.1. Discrepancies between Civilizations; Orient Vs Occident**

Any civilization depends on the surrounding environment, beliefs and values, customs therefore, civilizations vary from each other. Samuel Huntington in his article "The Clash of Civilizations": *Foreign Affairs* claims that "*Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important religion.*"(25). He says that people who belong to different civilizations "*have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, citizen and the state, parents and children,*

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*husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.’’(25)*

As for the Oriental or the Occidental civilization; each one of them is again an integrated set of beliefs, customs and traditions that define the people who live in that part of the world. The differences between the eastern and western civilizations are numerous, because eastern and western people live in different environments also they are educated in distinctively different ways and have different beliefs.

### **2.1.1 Religion**

Despite the fact that not all the Orient are Muslims, but the West tends to focus on them when criticizing the East, they have always been and still the target group the western stereotypes. The Islamic religion differs from the existent religions in the West in terms of beliefs and rituals. As an example, most Muslims have that sense of responsibility towards spreading their religion because as they believe that by contributing in the transmission of ‘Islam’ they are serving God as well as doing their duty as real Muslims and this definitely grant them ‘Janah’; Paradise the destination which all Muslims wish to be in.

In the same context, Kahf mentions that the Shamy family went to Indiana for the sake of God, they went to Indiana to spread the ‘real Islam’ she says: “*the Shamy family had come to Indiana for God.*”(15) To emphasise that idea she adds that the Shamy family were not interested with the glitter of the world, but rather they had a mission in their life that must be accomplished “*We are not in love with the glitter of this world.*”(15)

One more point related to religion which makes Islam different from the other religions existing in the West, that Islam is both theory and practice. Muslims have to believe in the Five Pillars of Islam, follow its teachings and way of life, and practise its rituals. Kahf indicates this in her novel mentioning the dialogue between Khadra and Aunt Khadidja. Aunt

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Khadidja asked her about the definition of a real Muslim, Khadra responded by saying: “*When you do the Five Pillars, you know, and follow the Quran and the Prophet and wear hijab and follow the Islamic way of life*” (18). Regarding rituals, Kahf shows the example of the body and hands movements when praying, the Shamy family and all muslims in Dawah center and Salam mosque were focusing on this to performe an accurate prayer :

First position, qiyam. Standing, feet planted hip-distance apart for balance, focus, before you raise your arms in allahu. "Straighten your lines, close the gaps-stand shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot," the imam at Salam Mosque said before he called the first allahu. "Shaytan gets between you if you leave a gap. (23)

The prayer rituals and other rituals in the Islamic religion make it different from Christianity, Judaism and the other existent religions in the West.

### **2.1.2. The Clash between the Orient and Occident in Terms of Family**

#### **Values**

Another discrepancy that exists between the eastern and western cultures is in the term of people relationships. Unlike the West, the relationships in the eastern culture are family centric. Most of the western families are not unified, but they are divided and broken. As another example, marriage needs to pass through family approval in the eastern societies. Hence, it is not a purely individual decision. Conversely, westerners think that taking something as personal as marriage is one of the individual's priorities. Thus, the West strongly believe that the individual is more important than the family and certainly, the money is above all as kahf claims in her novel:

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-to their own parents! And, at the other end, they threw their parents into nursing homes when they got old. This, although they took slavish care of mere dogs. (42)

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Similarly, the relationship between men and women is a significant distinction that separates the East from West. There are limits between men and women in the eastern societies, and the Muslim Arab society in particular. Whereas, these limits do not prevail in the West or they are less important comparing to those which exist in the East. Kahf points out that from their childhood, Khadra, Eyad, Hakim and other Muslim children learned that there must be limitations between them. Once, Eyad was annoyed when he saw his sister Khadra on hakim's bike, he said: "*Get off Hakim's bike and get on mine. 'Cause he's a boy and Mama might see you.*" Kahf adds "*Hakim used to give her handlebar rides all the time, but she was getting older now, and her mother said she shouldn't ride with boys anymore.*"(8)

In the light of the limits between Muslim men and women, they do not shake hands or hug each other if they are friends or even relatives. The only exception is that when the man is a 'Mahram'<sup>1</sup> of the woman. In this respect, kahf mentions that when Khadra returned back to Indiana and she met Hakim, he was not anymore like he used to be with her ; he called her 'sister' and he never did this before and this thing was certainly expected because they have grown up. (36-37)

### **2.1.3. Status of Female**

It is obvious that the status of females in the Eastern society differs a lot from the one in the western society. Dissimilar to the western society, women in the East tend to choose to be real mothers, housewives and most of them are ready to sacrifice professional life and career in favour of raising their children and taking care of the family. For instance, Khadra's mother had the chance to finish her study because she had a college degree, but she voluntarily chose to stay at home and take care of her family "*I have a college degree, like Wajdy,*" Khadra's

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<sup>1</sup> The woman's mahram is anyone whom it is permanently forbidden for her to marry because of blood ties, breastfeeding or marriage ties.

<http://www.salamislam.com/content/who-are-mahrams-islam/4>

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*mother said to Aunt Khadija. At one time, she thought she might go to medical school. "But after I graduated, I chose to stay home. For the children." She patted her belly, which globed firm and round in front of her.'”(17)*

Equally important, since most of people in the eastern society are conservative and as a part of their customs, men do not like when their wives, sisters or daughters participate in demonstrations or ride bikes; women there are not supposed to do such things. For example, riding the bike caused a problem between Khadra and her husband ‘Juma’, he was against the idea because for him, it was really a ridiculous seeing an Arab Muslim woman who wore Hijab riding a bike; Khadra would embarrass him if one of his Arab friends saw his wife on the bike so he prevented her from doing that. Kahf represents a scene of the discussion as follows: *" The next time they argued over the bike, Juma took a different approach. "You look ridiculous," he told her flatly. "It's idiotic, riding a bicycle in hijab. You look totally stupid and clumsy and clownlike."*(134)

Actually, being different does not mean that one is superior or inferior to another, but the existent differences between the East and West have separated the two worlds and led the westerners to think that they are superior than the easterners the thing that contributed in the development of the process of othering the Orient.

## **2.2. Orientilizing the Orient: Process of Othering**

The term Otherness is about “being or feeling different in appearance or character from what is familiar, expected or generally accepted.”<sup>2</sup> This definition shows that Otherness is about the process of setting differences between people by using things such as skin color, sexuality and nationality. Likewise, the practice of “Othering” is a long established paradigm of western culture. It is a system in which individuals are divided into binary categories of

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<sup>2</sup> <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/otherness>

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subject to object. The subject is a self-identified being and a validated member of society with authority over body and mind (Adams 40).

America and since its foundation tends to define who belongs to its culture and who is an Other. Muslims and Islam are an otherized group in the U.S. Muslim Arabs living there are an inferiorized Other group who is being ostracized by society. Meanwhile, they are regarded as outsiders who are dangerous to the country.<sup>3</sup>

As a matter of fact, the process of separating the Muslim Arabs or the ‘Other’ from the American dominant mainstream culture was not a current process. It has been existing before, but it has reached its acute form following the 11/09 events.

As it has been acknowledged in the previous pages, the westerners represented Muslim Arabs in terms of deficient and weak. However, they have always considered themselves as good, powerful thereby, they justified the unequal relationship between them “*The Western view of the Orient insists on the representation of the Arab Muslim in terms of a demonic barbaric alterity. It also intensifies the narcissistic view of the West positing its model as the universal norm and rendering the notion of civilization perse exclusively Western.*” (Berrezoug 24)

As for the eastern woman, the western discourse portray her in a negative image she is portrayed whether as an invisible object, because she is covered by hijab from head to feet or a playful attractive dancer whose sole concern is catching men and deceiving them. In this respect, Evelyn Shakir in her article “Mother’s Milk: Women in Arab-American Autobiography” indicates that by saying “*According to popular belief, all Arab women can be divided into two categories. Either they are shadowy nonentities, swathed in black from*

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.hatembazian.com/content/othering-islam-and-muslims-in-america/>

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*head to foot, or they are belly dancers –seductive, provocative, and privy to exotic secrets of lovemaking.’’(39)*

Khadra Shamy has been considered as ‘Other’ because of her Islamic and Arabic origins. Kahf points out that she was ostracized because of her veil, she was called by ‘reaghead’ by her white neighbours and children where she used to study.(124) She faces many challenges assimilating into a culture that she has been told she is not part of. Khadra’s experiences in school really exemplify this challenge, since in high school especially her wearing of the hijab is challenged by others. She doesn’t belong to that place; she is a stranger.<sup>4</sup>

Being from an Islamic minority in America, facing such oppressive acts, increased the sense of being different and the sense of not belonging to the American society; making persons feel that they are others inside the American society. By the same token, many Muslims living in America do not consider themselves as Americans, but Americans see them as others who have different culture and different beliefs. As an example, Khadra’s family did not consider themselves as Americans especially the mother, Ibtihaj, she said once "*We are not Americans!*" (41) and she was insisting on that, telling her children; Khadra and Iyad that Americans are Kuffar and they must not have anything in common with them. Khadra is raised by her parents to believe that she isn’t American, and she is othered by her family first who doesn’t want to assimilate with Americans. They don’t want to be Americans; they keep judging them, and evaluating their life. They want to keep their tradition, culture, and beliefs while they are in a non-Muslim society, they don’t adjust with the new society where they live.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://unlearningtonotspeak.com/?p=491>

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Actually, Muslim Arabs were not only the victims of the process of othering, but they also used to otherize the others. For instance, they have described the Americans as follows :

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; they invited people to their houses only a few at a time, and didn't even let them bring their children, and only fed them little tiny portions of food they called courses on big empty plates they called good china. Plus, Americans ate out wastefully often. (42)

Khadra's parents tended always to teach her that Americans were Kuffar who dated committed adultery and were not genius, presenting them as the 'Other' that she had to be cautious of having anything in common with them.

### **3. Khadra's Double Consciousness**

As it has been defined by Encyclopaedia dictionary, double or dual consciousness is a term used to describe the world-view of people who simultaneously hold two apparently inconsistent sets of beliefs. The concept of 'double consciousness' was first introduced by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois's book *'The Souls of Black Folk'* published in 1903.

In addition, the meaning of this concept involves 'the two-ness' which is the feeling and thoughts that one has more than one identity as a result of having two different culture or experiencing living in two different places. Therefore, this feeling causes difficulty in developing a sense of self. W.E.B Du Bois defines double consciousness as "*this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of another.*" (Du Bois, 3) He also forged the concept to describe "*an individual whose identity is divided into several facets*". This divided identity creates a conflict because one cannot precisely identify to which culture or society he really belongs.

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Du Bois in his book used to talk about the African Americans who have their own culture as well as a new culture since they are living in America. These two cultures are going on together and can't be separated because they shape the identity of African Americans. Double consciousness is not limited to African Americans, Muslims and other minorities living in America have similar double consciousness “*Over one hundred years later, double consciousness is no longer limited to the lives of African Americans. Various ethnic Americans experience this split in consciousness while attempting to merge their specific cultural heritages with the values of dominant white society.*” (Gingras 83) For example, Muslims identify themselves as ‘Americans’, while many citizens define them as an ‘Outsider’ identity.

### **3.1. Khadra’s Confusion between Two Paradoxical Environments: Identity Fragmentation**

It is important to note that when Muslim Arabs, particularly Muslim Arab women move to western countries they find themselves confused between two totally different environments. The different traditions, culture, religion, lifestyle that people see when they change their environments where they used to live may cause a confusion and difficulty to them. For instance, Khadra, the protagonist of the novel *The Girl in The Tangerine Scarf* encountered a similar confusion because she experienced living in two paradoxical environments Syria; part of the East, and the United States of America; the West.

Khadra Shamy, American Muslim woman of Syrian origin who was struggling to build a strong unique personality to herself after she grew up among a diverse group of Muslims in a Christian and often hostile town in Indiana. Khadra emigrated from Syria in her early years with her family in the early 70s and settled in Indiana, United States. Kadra’s family was a devout, tightly knit Muslim family consisting of the father Wajdy, the mother Ibtehaj, Eyad;

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Khadra's older brother and a younger brother Jihad. The family was a part of "Dawah Center", a community which its mission was to spread the "correct" Islam.

From the first moments when she arrived to the US, Khadra realized that there were many differences between the place she came from and the new place. These differences appeared in all sides of person's life, different thoughts, behaviours and even religious practices. For example, kahf points out that unlike Syria, in America Pig meat was everywhere and since Khadra's arrival to the country when she was a child, her parents told her that she had to be cautious when eating something given by others, because according to the Islamic religion, Pig meat is 'haram' and when someone eats it he will commit a big sin "*Pig meat was filthy. It had bugs in it, Khadra's father said. That's why God made it haram, her mother said. If you ate pig, bugs would grow and grow inside your stomach and eat your guts out. Always ask if there is pig in something before you eat anything from kuffar hands.*"(12)

In Syria, Kahf says that "*The adhan floating down from up in the air. Streets busy with people who spoke Arabic in the same rhythms as his mother and father, ey wallah, people whose faces bore his parents' features*" (14). While in America, particularly Indiana where Khadra spent her childhood, not all people spoke the same language because many of them were from other countries.

Another major difference between the two environments that the American society rejects the Islamic veil or hijab. Khadra was still remembering when she was annoyed at school and mocked because of the hijab. One of the children at school takes from Khadra her Malcolm X book and then tells her if she takes off "her "towel," he would return it to her. She does not and, though she tries to resist, the children hold her down until they rip her scarf. An antagonist of her comments, "Look, rag head's got hair under that piece a shit". Khadra shouts at them "I hate you" and one of them shouts back at her telling her "It's just hair, you psycho" (124).

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The West see the veil as a sign of bigotry, being archaic, not civilized and of course being a terrorist especially after the 11/09 events. In this context Amel Abdelrazek in her article “Shehrazad’s Legacy: Arab American Women Writers and the Resisting, Healing and Connecting Power of their Storytelling” says: “*I will never forget the New York Times photo essay on December 31, 2001, depicting a veiled woman captioned “The Face of Islam”, appearing in juxtaposition to photographs of the crumbling Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, linking the oppression of Arab Muslim women to terrorist violence.*”(140)

Muslim women inside the American society experience a type of identity split. This identity split results from trying to assimilate into mainstream American culture. When persons accept themselves definitely, they are able to take control of their own lives and are free to be themselves but, if they are enable to do that then the opposite will happen. This issue has been explored in the novel, Khadra Shamy was uncertain to which culture she really belonged further, she was not able to accept that she was both an Arab and American at the same time. As a result, she found a difficulty to know herself and she experienced an identity fragmentation. Mais Yusuf Alqutami in her thesis “Feminist Resistance in Contemporary American Women Writers of Color: Unsettling Images of the Veil and the House in Western Culture” mentions that issue: “*this combination of being Muslim and American simultaneously is incomprehensible to many. The public’s perception of its contradictoriness is one of the major problems Muslim American women struggle with sometimes on daily basis.*”(119)

To put it another way, Khadra’s big problem was how to be an American and a Muslim Arab simultaneously, because on one hand Khadra was informed that she was not an American, her parents were insisting on that to make her aware of keeping her beliefs, traditions and culture. On the other hand, the American society rejected her and considered her as an enemy because of her Islamic and Arabic background as it has been mentioned

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earlier. When Khadra was young, her mother Ibtihaj said once telling her and her brother Eyad that they were not Americans and they would never be so that, they should stop behaving like them. She said “*do you think we are American? 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?*” (Kahf 41)

Besides, Khadra’s parents didn’t give her a space to discover who she was. With her brother, she learnt that she must not have any kind of relationship with Americans. Wajdy and Ebtehaj, who had always defined the Americans as the ‘Other’, the Other for them are Kuffar so; they prevented their children from having anything in common with them. But she was living there and she couldn’t be away from dealing with Americans. Additionally, Khadra has been taught that everything must be classified to two categories; Halal category or Haram category and this suggested Khadra’s confusion to find her religious identity.

Khadra learnt from the Dawah center as well as her parents to not be a racist, because for Muslims being racist is haram. This made her thought that all Muslims around her were not racist. However, when her brother wanted to marry from a Muslim educated and beautiful girl ‘Maha’ from Sudan, they strongly refused because of her skin color. Wajdy; the father said: “*But for heaven’s sake, she’s black as coal!*” (85) Her parents’ hypocrisy caused her a confusion and made her of course unconvinced by what she learnt about her religion and the way of practicing it in her family and her society. Again, Mais Yusuf Alqutami in her thesis states that “*her narrow understanding of the Muslim practices leads to her loss of self because she has the wrong belief that Islam does not cherish the self but cherishes the common good.*”(139)

Khadra’s misunderstanding of some Islamic practices and the misconception she had that Islam gave more importance to the common good more than the self, caused her a fragmented identity.

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### 3.2. Personal Identity Vs Cultural Identity

*The Girl in The Tangerine Scarf* narrates Khadra's own journey of identity's discovery. Regarding this, it is important to differentiate between two interrelated terms which are personal identity and cultural identity. The term personal identity can be defined as the person's sense of self that develops and evolves throughout the stages of his life<sup>6</sup>, whereas cultural identity refers to the person's identification or belonging to a group, based on various cultural considerations including race, religion and gender<sup>7</sup>. One can extract the relation existing between the two notions throughout Dr. Azly Rahman speech to Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim Students in 2007, "*We are a republic onto itself. We are a kingdom we govern ourselves. In each and every one of us lies an inner world bigger than the world outside – a world if known, if and only if we know ourselves – is a world in which freedom reigns and one in which the self refuses to be caged and shackled by structures of oppression built by others.*"<sup>8</sup>. In other words, the person's personal identity is the person's true self which rejects to be buried by any outer influences.

In view of the preceding lines, Khadra and at outset of the novel appeared to be fluctuated between her personal identity and her cultural one. As Kahf tried to show, Khadra's belonging to an ultra-conservative community who solely believed in one and only definition to Islam and rejected other differences, hampered her from being her true self. However, as the novel progressed, one can notice Khadra experiencing set of circumstances bringing her closer and closer to her buried identity as opposed to the one that was imposed on her.

Growing up, Khadra was not given a fair chance to discover life on her own terms, the thing that prolonged her process of self-discovery. Her parents forbade her from having

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<sup>6</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-personal>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.oxfordreference.com/>

<sup>8</sup> *qtd in* <https://blog.limkitsiang.com/2008/01/11/students-question-authority/>

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relations with Americans, because according to them Americans are “Kuffar”. Ebtihaj and Wajdy insisted on distancing their children from the American culture’s influence. The idea that manifests itself through Ibtihaj’s following words:

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?” Then she burst into sobs. She marched Khadra up the stairs and pushed her into the bathtub. (“Don’t go anywhere!” she yelled at Eyad. “You’re next!”). With the water running hot and hard she scrubbed and scrubbed her daughter with an enormous loofah from Syria. “We are not Americans!” she sobbed, her face twisted in grief. “We are not Americans!” (66-67)

Khadra’s parents constantly insisted on presenting their Islamic culture as pure and untainted as opposed to the American one. In this context, Ismet Bujubaj argues in his article “Parents and Daughters in Two Novels by Arab Americans: Khalas Let Her Go” that Khadra’s parents act of romanticizing their Islamic culture was a tendency to preserve their children from outer pressure and influences (193).

Always concerning Khadra’s process of identity’s discovery, Huda Ahmad Ulayyan and Yousef Awad, state in their article “The Quest for Self-Discovery: A Study of the Journey Motif in Kahf’s *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and Aboulela’s *The Translator*” that it was only after several journeys that Khadra undergone, when she started to sense her real self (33) As a married woman Khadra went through the most dramatic crisis in her life. Her marriage was conventional. The couple did not seem to be interested in each other; their marriage was merely based on some cultural considerations. Juma considered taking her in marriage because she had the qualities he admired in a woman: Arab Muslim strict girl and most importantly “*she had not lost her Arab identity despite being raised entirely in America*”( 201). However, their marriage proved dysfunctional, when Juma started to impose more and more limits on her. She realized that “*can’t go on in the marriage without killing off the ‘me’ that I am*” (242). Therefore, Khadra’s marriage was one step forward toward building her identity, the idea that Abbasali Bolran and Alireza Anusliravani assert in their article “Resistance and Uncanny Moments of In-Betweenness in Mohja Kahf’s *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* by claiming that Khadra’s self-fashioning began with her rebellion against her husband’s patriarchy (15).

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Her marriage incompatibility was followed by her abortion experience. For Khadra everything collapsed the day she discovered she was pregnant .Yet, her family did not support her decision . Khadra felt that her family did not even want her to have rights over her body, Khadra began to question the roles assigned to her, her identity that she did not even know and that was unfairly forced upon her:

No, enough, no. Her back was up against the wall, the bathroom small, mewing her in. She beat the floor with the Ajax canister over and over with the force of her will, no no no, no no no no, scattering the powder seven times. Where was it, this will of hers, this misshapen self? She needed to know it. (...) 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 not a word but a spasm, the snarl of a fanged thing gnawing at a trap: no. No, no, no, no, no, *no*. ( 248)

After the crisis she went through, Khadra understood that she needed to go to her homeland Syria in order to find answers to all of her questions (266). Syria was the place that gave her the opportunity to know her true self (Ulyyan 34). It was there where Khadra met her grandmother Teta, who told her stories about her family members that completely affected her, especially the one of her mother's rape. Khadra knew that her mother was difficult and rebellious girl who eventually changed due to the the struggles she faced during her life . Therefore, she realised that unlike her mother who fought for her identity, hers was forcedly imposed upon her. Teta encouraged her to let go of the past and to start a new page *But, Khadra, don't think that you need to find out all your mother's secrets and understand her story to go on with your own. Her pain is hers to heal.*" (27).

As the novel progressed Khadra was able to earn a job as photographer, Khadra met a poet who profoundly served in shaping her identity. He taught her how to see her religion as she wanted, not through other's lenses .He tried to get her to see herself. (301) However, he turned out to be manifestation for all of her thoughts. Hence, Khadra started to quest herself: *"and then this whole other life opened up in her mind. It sent her whirling in mad agony. This*

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*incidental skin, this name she wore like a badge-glance down, check it-what was it again? Had it changed? Was it always changing? Who was she? What was she, what cells of matter, sewn up into this Khadra shape, this instar? Imagine!”(p.306).*Hence, Khadra started to accept things in a different way. She started to identify with herself see life with new lenses. For instance, She started to believe that her prayers are now the real thing (307). By the end of the novel Khadra was depicted as she“*knows she is where she belongs, doing what she must do, with intent, with abandon”* (441).

### **3.3. Khadra and Islam: From Traditional Islam to Progressive Islam**

Owing to the fact that, Khadra’s main struggle throughout the novel was to understand her Islamic faith, the journey she undergone thoroughly changed profoundly the way she viewed Islam. Khadra as depicted in the first pages was a devout and strict Muslim girl who believed that real Islam is about following the rules by letter (18),changed later to hold a more progressive view about it . With regard to this notion, Ahmed Malak argues in his book *Muslim narratives and the discourse of English* that real Islam is not just about following rules. Rather, it is more about emotional engagement:

living Islam is not merely a spiritual practice or theological adherence, but also an intellectual and emotional engagement ... Islam, however one conceives it, commands affection even from its own dissenters: Islam's values of justice and generosity, of courage and creativity, endow it with endearing and enduring loyalty. This loyalty is one of Islam's hallmarks that many outsiders miss, misunderstand or misinterpret. ( 152–153)

In this light, it is important to mention that Khadra’s extremist views about Islam were given to her by her ultra-conservative family. Her parents were the founders of the Duwah community, a religious organization that aimed at spreading Islam in the U.S.A. Khadra’s parents were not only attached to Islam, more they did not even want to have relations with non-Muslims, the thing that was clearly shown through their attitudes towards Americans; they neither wanted to assimilate with them nor to have the American citizenship(141).

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Furthermore, they kept on judging and evaluating their lives, they even rejected their traditions, their culture and their beliefs. Khadra's religious influence by her parents can be related to what Scholar Katherine Frank suggested about Islamic practices in her paper "Anthropological Theory" pointing that a person's consciousness can be a result of impersonal interactions with others which may contribute to one's attraction or disengagement to religious practices (295)

Influenced by her parents extremism. Khadra as a child was portrayed as being a conservative Sunni girl, who looked down to those who did not share her extreme views. As the narrator described her, Khadra used to eat dates, read traditional literature and wear black clothes. Concerning her clothing type, Carine Pereira argues in her article "Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* Seen through Hijab Perspective" that the clothes she wore indicate her strong devotion and attachment to what is so called religious commitment (10). Her first hijab was very shocking even to her own parents:

[Her parents] exchanged looks but didn't say anything. What could they say? They were the ones who had introduced Khadra to the works of Islamist revolutionary Sayid Qutub, after all, and his multivolume *tafsir* of the Quran sat on their rickety bookshelf in the living room. She seemed only to be taking his rhetoric a step or two further along the path of its own logic (150)

Like any other Sunni American, Khadra was afraid that she would be affected by Americans way of life, repeatedly she used to remind her cousin's friend that she is not really American, rather she is an Arab (174). Her biggest fear was to become a typical assimilated woman (185). However, things started to shift when Khadra started to seek more rights. Khadra's desire to shift from her traditional role to more progressive one was prompted when she was about to participate in a tajwid competition . However, Khadra was not allowed to do so because women were not allowed to participate (199). A similar experience was when Khadra went to a Mosque in Syria in order to pray , however she end up brought home by the police, the act that brought her parents shame because as her father told her women are not

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supposed to pray there (167). Khadra's rejection to the traditional rule that any Muslim woman is supposed to play was simultaneously exemplified through her marriage experience. She constantly refused her husband's demands in letting go of her western way of life so they end up having a divorce (224)

Coupled with Khadra's experience with sexism, Khadra's abortion was another catalyst for change. Khadra found out that she was pregnant while she was considering a divorce, the thing that created an urgent need for abortion. However, her parents opposed her decision. Her discussion with her parents is outlined as follows:

"You're going to have children sooner or later," Ebtehaj launched at her. "In two or three years, or now, what's the difference?"  
"Your life is not in danger," her father said, beginning this line of argument for the fourth time that evening...  
Khadra's father said, "My mother died having me. They told her it was risky, but she went ahead and had me."...  
"Well, I don't want to die in childbirth," Khadra said sarcastically...  
"I'm not suggesting you do so," he said quietly. "I'm saying, my mother sacrificed everything for a child. Sacrificed her own self."  
"Well, I am *not* your mother," Khadra shot back. "I don't want to be your mother."...  
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 into 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 (244-246).

Eventually and against all expectations Khadra had an abortion. Areen Khalifah argues in his article "The Symbol of The Veil *in the Girl in The Tangerine Scarf* " that her reaction towards her parents demands came from her complete rejection to the Islamic gender rule she was supposed to play as a Muslim woman which lays in being a good woman and a good wife who sacrifices her own life for the sake of her own family ( 158) .

Still concerning Khadra's transformation, her biggest step towards becoming a progressive Muslim is her redefinition to the veil. When she was a teenager, Khadra wore headscarf because it was what others expected her to do and more importantly it was what

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marked her belonging to the Islamic community. However, Khadra renewed her perspective towards wearing hijab when she went to Syria. It was there when she met her grandmother Teta who told her stories about her family that contributed in her process of transformation. In spite of the fact that, her veil fell accidentally, Khadra did not mind, she even enjoyed being unveiled:

A yellow butterfly flittered by. The scarf was slipping off. She shrugged. The chiffon fell across her shoulders. She closed her eyes and let the sunshine through the thin skin of her eyelids, warm her body to the very core of her. She opened her eyes, and she knew deep in the place of *yaqin* [a Quranic word which means certainty] that this was all right, a blessing on her shoulders. *Alhamdulillah, Alhamdulillah.* (309)

Khadra did not mind being unveiled, the attitude that Amra Abdulmajid explains in his thesis "The Practice of Faith and Personal Growth in three novels by three Muslim Writers " that it came from her total belief that God would not impose on her something she was not ready to bear. Taking off the veil marked a new beginning toward finding her real identity. Nevertheless, when Khadra was on the plane for a trip to go back to America , she decided to wear her hijab again, but this time it was totally different:

On the plane, she pulled the tangerine silk out of her handbag. Pulled and pulled. And drew the head-covering out longer and longer in her hands like an endless handkerchief from a magician's pocket. Before landing in Chicago, she draped the *depatta* so it hung from the crown of her head. Not tightly, the way *Ebtehaj* wore it. Loosely, so it moved and slipped about her face and touched her cheek, like the hand of a lover. She wanted them to know at Customs, at the re-entry checkpoint, she wanted them to know at O'Hare, that she was coming in under one of the many signs of the heritage. And she wanted her heart to remember, in the dappled ruffle and rustle of veiling and unveiling, how precious is the heritage! A treasure fire cannot eat.( 329)

Her decision to wear hijab all over again but with a different way marked her new definition for her identity as a Muslim woman. Her scarf's bright colour contradicted with the dark colours she used to wear previously. Bahar and Alkarawi comment on that in their article "Negotiating Liminal Identities in *the Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* " that the way her hijab

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was portrayed disprove stereotypes that portray Muslim women as dressed only in black, covered and oppressed(102).

Khadra's final step towards becoming more progressive Muslim was her new understanding of God's role in her life. At first, Khadra appeared to be a strict Muslim woman who followed all rituals practiced by her family. She believed that this was the only way to be a real Muslim. However, after her divorce from Juma, Khadra's perception to the rules has changed drastically (264.). There she found fault with the strict enforcement of the rules. Khadra realised that life is less about rituals and more about love. She could no longer see God as someone who would punish her because of she forgot to do a prayer or failed to make ablutions.

In short analysing Khadra's character reveals the complexity of the lives of Veiled Muslim women living in a western diaspora. The contradictions existing between the American secular environment and Islamic religion culture cause them a difficulty to coexist with the challenges there. However, Khadra appeared eventually to find inner peace when she recognized that religion is more about love and faith rather than rituals and dogma.

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## Conclusion

Through the second chapter, the struggles of veiled Muslim Arab women have been discussed. Generally, veiled Muslim Arab women experience the ordeal of cultural and political oppression due to their religious background and origins. Khadra Shamy faced a similar oppression because the fact that she was a Muslim woman who wore hijab. The Islamic veil has been always and still stereotyped in the American society. Americans tend to consider veiled Muslim Arab women as backward, archaic and bigoted. Consequently, they encounter many oppressive and discriminatory practices. Moreover, being different does not mean that one is superior or inferior to another, but the existent discrepancies between the East and West separate the two worlds and make the westerners think that they are superior than the easterners. These discrepancies are in terms of religion, family values and status of female. Thus, the sense of being superior for the West contribute in the development of the process of othering the Orient. Further, the process of othering the Orient is about considering them as 'the Rest' to the West. The notion of Double Consciousness is also explained referring to the protagonist of the novel. The fact that Khadra experienced living in two paradoxical environments caused a dilemma of identity to her. Additionally, the notion of personal identity against cultural identity is explored, referring again to Khadra and how she could get rid of her cultural identity to reach her personal one.

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## General Conclusion

Muslim Arab community in America is noted for its diversity. Nowadays Muslims and Arabs constitute a sizeable minority that is dispersed throughout the United States. However, Muslims and Arabs were not able to escape negative stereotyping that was notably accelerated in the wake of 11/09, the events that are constantly depicted as having changed America forever. The horrifying attacks did not only affect Americans but also Muslims and Arabs in the US, the Middle East and around the world. However, the most affected part were Muslims and Arabs who became at once visible to be accused for the attacks. Hence, a blanket of stereotypes was waged against them depicting them as terrorists and trouble makers. This campaign was strongly accelerated through the media's efforts to tarnish Muslims and Arabs reputation which reworked the orientalist Arab stereotypes, trying to view terrorism as a part of the Arab race.

The present work has been approached from postcolonial perspective and notably Said's orientalism theory. The latter was firstly presented throughout his seminal work *Orientalism*. *Orientalism* as Said suggested came to challenge the corpus of the orientalist literature and show that what is considered to be a genuine branch of knowledge has been in many ways fabricated in favour of Western political dominance. He gave a special attention to three interrelated notions ; 'Orient', 'Islam' and 'the West' trying to show how these terms were manipulated for creating a hostile discourse, which is responsible for the current climate characterizing the relationships between the two poles.

"*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*" throws light on the tumultuous lives of American Muslim women and the hardships they constantly encounter. Khadra Shamy is a Muslim and an Arab girl who transplanted to the American Midwest with her family. Nevertheless, as she settled there she gradually came to see the ugly face of racism, not only from fellow Americans but also from other Muslims. She found herself unfairly exposed to intolerance

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and humiliation. Through the lines of the novel, one can grasp how Kahf contextualizes political and cultural issues in order to demonstrate that Muslims acceptance and rejection is more based on political and cultural considerations rather than on personal views. In this way, Kahf shows how rivalry between the intolerant Midwest and the Islamic East, which dominated world politics for a long time reflected negatively upon them.

By the same token, Kahf shows how cultural discrepancies existing between American secularism and Islamic conservatism can cause Muslim women enormous problems. Western secularists view the Islamic veil as an oppressive tool used by patriarchy in order to limit their liberty. Moreover, Islam is perceived and represented as a misogynistic religion by western discourse. Therefore, Muslim females became a constant subject to discrimination waged by the intolerant West. Because of her Islamic religion and hijab, Khadra was bullied, insulted and even physically attacked, the thing that clearly illustrates American intolerance with Muslim veiled women.

With regard to the discrepancies existing between the two poles, Kahf highlighted many. As being a pillar in the individual's life, religion was given much importance in the novel. Despite the fact that Americans were depicted as religious people, yet they did not give much importance to rituals as Muslim characters. Muslims were depicted as being ultra-conservatives insisting on following rules by letter as opposed to Americans. Further, Muslims were depicted as having the sense of responsibility towards spreading their religion; emphasizing here Khadra's parents who aimed at spreading Islam all over Indianapolis.

Another highlighted distinction was that one of relationships. The western families have been depicted as divided, and broken. Moreover, they seemed to strongly believe of the individual's importance over the family. Unlike Muslims, who were depicted as giving the family the priority. Moreover, relationships between males and females were simultaneously depicted as being different. Unlike the unlimited relationships of westerners, relationships

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between Muslim men and women are limited and governed by rules. Furthermore, the differences existing between women's rule were equally highlighted. Women in the East tend to choose to be real mothers, housewives who sacrifice professional life and career in favour of raising their children as opposed to the American women who are depicted as secular and independent who favour to live their lives regardless of what others think of them.

Americans tend to refer to those who belong to other cultures as others. Therefore, Muslims and Islam are otherized by the American society. Khadra is another in many respects. First, she is originated from an Arab country therefore she is culturally considered as backward. Second, she is a Muslim woman who chooses to veil; therefore she is regarded as debased woman who submitted to patriarchy.

The contradictions existing between the two environments created a confusion to Khadra. From one side, she was a part of a close-knit Muslim family who tried to uphold cultural and religious rules. Yet, she lived in a secular community who rejected her cultural and religious backgrounds. Hence, she was uncertain of which culture she belonged to, the thing that caused her an identity's fragmentation.

Another struggle Khadra faced, was with religion. Khadra as depicted in the first pages was portrayed as devout and strict Muslim girl who believed in following the rules by letter, the thing that was given to her by her ultra-conservative family who classified everything between Hala and Haram. However, throughout the journey she embarked and the experiences she faced, Khadra's views about Islam changed to be more flexible. She eventually came to the realization that religion is based more on love rather it is on doctrine and dogma.

The initial focus of the work was how the author portrayed the harsh experiences of veiled American Muslim females, and to what extent those experiences play a role in shaping and affecting their lives. There was a strong possibility that every character "Khadra" dealt with

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throughout the novel is a real representation of what real American Muslim women encounter. It is indeed poignant and thought provoking how the struggle of these women can be. It is important that the work was presented since it helped to understand, then hopefully be understood.

This study will pave the way for those who are interested in Muslim Arabs literary studies, especially the underlined novel, to make more detailed studies by analysing different issues about the hardships facing Muslim hijabed women in America.

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## ملخص

تناقش هذه الدراسة الصراعات التي تواجهها النساء العربيات المسلمات في امريكا. وقد استعملت الكاتبة والشاعرة الأمريكية السورية مهجة كهف "الفتاة ذات الوشاح النارجي" كقاعدة لتحليل وفهم هذه القضية. هذه الرواية شبه السيرة الذاتية تعالج القمع والحرية الدينية والوعي المزدوج والقضايا التي تواجه النساء العربيات المسلمات المهاجرات عموما. تمت مناقشة الصراع الذي أثاره المجتمع الغربي منذ 11 أيلول / سبتمبر بصورة شاملة. وفي هذه الدراسة ، تم تحليل وجهة النظر الغربية المتحيزة وتم ابراز كيفية ان الغرب فشل في الاعتراف بنمطيته من جهة، ومن ناحية أخرى ان الغرب يعتقد ان ثقافته الخاصة متفوقة بكثير على غيرها من الثقافات غيرالغربية . الهدف المقصود من هذه الدراسة هو الكشف عن المصاعب التي تواجهها النساء المسلمات، وقد تم اتباع نظرية الاستشراق للباحث الفلسطيني ادوارد وديع سعيد لتحقيق هذا الهدف. كما تهدف الدراسة الى ابراز المعاناة غير المعلنة و المظالم الممارسة ضد المرأة المسلمة المحجبة في المجتمع الامريكي.