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The Matrimonial Relationships between Tradition and Modernity in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master Degree in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Civilization

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Abstract

The present research focuses on the analysis of Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* as a literary sample in order to analyze how the Muslim community in U.S perceives the matrimonial relationship and how this latter is pictured between the traditional conservatism and the western modernism .

In this paper we explore the polarization of tradition and modernity by comparing the visions of the young and former generation of Muslim immigrants in the U.S towards marriage .And it is by highlighting the similarities and differences that emerge from this comparison that we parallel the different perceptions of the matrimonial relationships between tradition and modernity.

In this study there are some conclusions drawn about the controversial issues that accentuate the difference between the elders and youth's perceptions of marriage and attempt to demonstrate how the identity and the upbringing of the characters affect their vision and stance towards the conjugal relationship.

Key words: tradition, modernity, Mohja Kahf, western culture, Arab-Muslim immigrants, generations, matrimonial relationships.

Dedication

To our Parents, Friends and Families.

Acknowledgments

This research project would not have been possible without the support of our supervisor; therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to thank and express our utmost gratitude to our supervisor Miss *Latifa Bessadet*; she has been a great source of knowledge and inspiration; because we constantly received a valuable guidance and absolute support from her. Her assistance and encouragement contributed tremendously in the realization of this humble work. We would like also to confess that we really appreciate her feedback and critical eye that we needed for the completion of this present dissertation.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Every human community is in evolution and the Arab-Muslim community does not make an exception, the latter took recently a more accelerated and destabilizing rhythm of development, due to the movement of immigration, and is more than ever influenced by other communities and cultures. In line with this evolution, an Arab diasporic literature emerged and extended in order to represent the real situation of these immigrants.

Along with this literary burgeoning the Arab-American literature started to emerge, but it was not until the beginning of the last couple of decades that this literature has known an upsurge in the literary production. This period has known the production of an important number of novels discussing the immigration's experiences and intricacies in contemporary America, showing how difficult it is to be an outsider with an ethnic religious belonging.

Part of the famous contemporary figures of this literature, Mohja Kahf is considered as one of the most representative and prominent feminist writers who explore through their writing a verity of cultural and religious themes aiming to form Islam as part of the collective American narrative as well as to show the various Islamic practices within the Muslim American community.

Among the numerous works of Mohja Kahf, our choice fell on her acclaimed novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. We have chosen this book especially as the corpus of our study, because throughout the coming of age of her protagonist, Kahf exposes the life of the Arab-Muslim community in America from an internal lens and reveals the conflictual identity that results from the encounter of two cultures. Besides the cultural choc, the generational conflict is another issue discussed in this novel.

Thus, given the thematic richness of the book and the numerous controversial issues that can be discussed, we have chosen to focus of our study mainly on the theme of the matrimonial relationships, because marriage is represented as the basis of the Muslim-immigrant community.

The fundamental aim of this study is to shed the light on the importance of the matrimonial relationships for the Muslim- immigrant community in the United States, and to examine the status of these unions in the interference of tradition and modernity. In addition, this work will also attempt to discover in what extent identity and culture influence the character's perceptions of the conjugal unions.

Hence our research paper will endeavor to answer the question of: How does the Muslim community perceive the matrimonial relationships and how are these unions represented in the interference of the traditional conservatism and the Western liberalism in Mohja Kahf's book *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*?

In the aim of solving the problematic of our work three potential answers have to be considered:

The traditional values govern the perception and structure of the matrimonial relationships in the Muslim-immigrant community.

The Western modernity affects considerably the way the Muslim-immigrant community perceives the matrimonial relationships.

The perceptions of the matrimonial relationships in the Muslim-immigrant community are torn between tradition and modernity.

This research paper is going to be divided into three chapters; the first chapter will provide an insight into the literary background of the novel; it includes the historical overview of the Arab-American literature and the definition of the main subject matter that characterize this literary field. In line with this literary overview, this chapter will also present the definition and exploration of the main concepts that conduct our analysis.

Within the second chapter we are going to expose two sections, the first one will introduce Mohja Kahf's novel and her writing style, as it will also discuss the potential correlation between the author and her protagonist. In the second section we are going to deal more precisely with the analysis of the recurrent types of marriage observed in the novel, and discuss the influence of both modernity and tradition on the Muslim immigrants' perception of the conjugal union.

The final chapter will be devoted to the synthesis of the controversial issues that accentuate the divergence between the elders and youth vis-à-vis the matrimonial relationships. And it will also attempt to demonstrate how the identity and the upbringing of the characters affect their visions and stances towards the standers and rules that structure the conjugal relationships.

Undertaking this research paper was not an easy task, we have been faced to many obstacles that hindered our work. These obstacles are mainly due to the lack of documentation and data dealing with the concepts we attempted to analyze; nevertheless it was that challenging part that motivated us the most to finish this humble work that we wish will be interesting.

Chapter One

The Conceptual Framework

1.1 Introduction

The analysis of the theme of the matrimonial relationships within Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* requires both an examination of the main concepts that conduct the research and a knowledge of the literary background in which the novel is situated. Hence, in this chapter we attempt to present a brief overview of the Arab American literature in which we are going to discuss how the writers of this field develop and deal with their hybrid identity and how the women writers in particular manage to find their hybrid literary voices. This hybridity engenders inevitably a feeling of discomfort and uprootedness, therefore a redefinition of space is in order, and in line with this redefinition we are going to present the notions of tradition and modernity both in their opposed and complementary context. To conclude we are going to shed the light on the representation of the matrimonial relationship for Muslims in general and for the U.S Muslim immigrants in particular.

1.2 An Insight into the Arab -American Literature

An exploration of the Arab–American literature reveals that this field of literature has been largely disregarded; even if it has been in existence in the United States for more than a century, it has only lately started to be recognized as a branch of the background of the American literature. When references to this literature began to emerge it was in the frame of the widespread prejudices against Arabs and the intense controversies that emerged in the early 21st century over immigration and Islam.

The last couple of decades have been marked by a boom of the Arab-American literature across various genres; though, prior to that time, the majority of works by Arab immigrants were neglected and put to the margin, Lisa.S Majaj explains that "This literary burgeoning reflects in part the shifting historical, social, and political contexts that have

pushed Arab-Americans to the foreground, creating both new spaces for their voices and new urgencies of expression, as well as the flourishing creativity of these writers".

The Arab-American literature reflects the evolution of the Arab American history, which has been traditionally divided into three phases in relation to the three distinct waves of Arab immigrants who came to the U.S. Naber Nadine limits chronologically the three waves as follows "the first one extending from 1885 to 1945, the second from 1945 to 1967, and the third from 1967 to the present" (qtd.in Fadda-conrey 189). From another perspective Michael Suleiman has divided these influxes of Arab Muslim immigrants into two major waves; "the first started around the1870s and lasted nearly until the beginning of World War II; while the second included immigrants who arrived following World War II and continues to the present day" (qtd.in Leonard 10)

And by the designation of Arab-Americans the 1990 U.S. census identifies Arab Americans as "Americans who can trace their ancestry to the North African countries of Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco and the Western Asian countries of Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Emirates Arabs ."

The debuts of the Arab-American literature in the United States were marked by the emergence of an organization known as "Al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya,or the new York Pen League familiarly known as Al Mahjar," (Abinader 11), meaning immigrant or diasporic writers. The writers of the Mahjar group "were nonetheless primarily expatriate writers, exiles whose vision was trained in the Middle East and its literary and political contexts" (Akash and Mattawa 68). But the strict immigration laws that arose from 1924 to the beginning of the 1960s limited the entry of new Arab immigrants and weakened the literary production of this community. (Ridinger)

The political tensions that emerged between the United States and the Arab world in the second half of the twentieth century, especially after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, gave birth to an ethnopolitical consciousness among the Arab American community, while simultaneously initiating its marginalization. (Nassar-McMillan, Ajrouch, and Hakim-Larson 25)

But after the declaration of The Civil Rights and Black Power movements new opportunities were given to the immigrant and ethnic literary voices in this U.S. paralleled by a flood of new Arab immigrants who were for the majority educated and politically engaged. From that time to the present day the history of the Arab-American literature does not stop evolving; it is in a constant growth stimulated mainly by the political events that have marked its history from the 1967 war to 9-11 and beyond. (Majaj)

Nonetheless, the most significant thing that stresses the distinction between the different generations of the Arab American communities is religion, as stated by McCarus "up to the 1950s, about 90 percent of the Arab immigrants to the US were Christians while the others were Sunni, Shia and Druze Muslims. However, by the middle of the century the composition of the group began to change and eventually some 90 percent of the Arab immigrants to the US were Muslims." (63); Arab immigrants of the first wave were for the majority Christians whereas the immigrants of the later waves were mainly Muslims.

The distinct phases of the Arabs' immigration towards the U.S mark the evolution of the Arab-American literature because these waves of immigration diverge significantly from one another in terms of cultural, political, and religious backgrounds, and it is the dissimilarity of these aspects that influenced their amendment to the host country as well as their identity and writing's development.

1.2.1 The Rise of Arab-American Feminists

The movement of migration pushed the Arab women to call into question their position and role in the western social environment; that diverges considerably from the environment of their motherlands; and it is through the rise of the feminist movement in the late 20th century in U.S that many new voices were born in the category of Arab-American feminist writers.

These feminist voices arose in response to the fact that Immigration has long been the focus of academic researches, however, "Gender as a specific category of analysis has been left out of most immigration studies, typically equating women's experiences of migration with men's." (Ladha 01).

Nonetheless, it is crucial to mention that the revolution of Arab-American women saw the light way before the American feminist movement, as Evelyn Shakir puts it, "Feminism was not a new concept in Arab-American experience. Women -who constituted one out of three of early immigrants-had been challenging traditional gender roles and engaging in feminist debate from the early period of immigration."(qtd in Majaj).

This movement resulted in the manifestation of a considerable number of feminist writers and organizations that promote the cause of the Arab women, and among these organizations we can mention the emergence of the Short-lived Feminist Arab-American Network, the Association for Middle Eastern Women's Studies, The Union of Palestinian Women's Associations in North America, and a North American chapter of the Arab Women's Union, the Arab Women's Solidarity Association. (Handal, 103).

The concerns of the Arab-American women are not just about gender oppression; these writers do not deal only with themes that tackle the different gender based challenges

the Arab-American women face in their daily lives ,but it also includes themes of identity, immigration and discrimination. These female writers have to identify themselves both as women and as members of a diasporic community; hence they find themselves struggling not only against the Arab patriarchal community but also against the Anglo racism.

The western stereotypes adopted about the Arab women add another burden to the heavy lot of these writers; these stereotypes portray the Arab women either as oppressed and submissive or as sexually provocative, Evelyn Shakir highlights this point by saying:

> According to popular belief, all Arab women can be divided into two categories. Either they are shadowy nonentities, swathed in black from head to foot, or they are belly dancers—seductive, provocative, and privy to exotic secrets of lovemaking. The two images, of course, are finally identical, adding up to a statement that all Arab women are, in one sense or another, men's instruments or slaves. (39)

For the reasons mentioned above the literary works of Arab-American women are not restricted to the themes of feminism only , but are instead characterized by a writing were the themes of identity and belonging take precedence over the themes of feminism.

In response to these stereotypes the Arab-American women reclaim their identity by writing, and it is through these writings that they aim to unsettle the strict stereotypes that misrepresent the Muslim and Arab community in general and the Arab women in particular. These feminists tend to assert themselves by their literary works within a US framework while maintaining a tight connection to their homelands.

1.2.2 The Emergence of an Arab-American Hybrid Identity.

Each literary work arises from a tension and the writings produced in the frame of the Arab diasporic literature emerge from the tension confronting two culturally different worlds. And by diaspora Braziel and Mannur refer to "groups of people who were dislocated from their native homeland through the movements of migration, immigration, or exile." (qtd.in Greene 67).

Immigration in this context is not only about changing countries, but also about shifting identities. And in order to tackle the development of the Arab-American identity it is crucial to discuss first the meaning of the term identity. As a theoretical concept the term identity is difficult to discern, but According to Philip M. Kayal: "identity formation is not a singular process with a definitive end point but an evolving social-psychological experience of self-discovery that changes with events, issues, and sociopolitical circumstances surrounding a person."(90)

Consequently, the Arab-American writers find themselves torn between two cultures; the culture of their homeland and the host country. This cultural intercourse gives birth to a hybrid identity that encloses the Arab and the American culture, nonetheless this hybridity have been experienced at different degrees by the different waves of Arab immigrant writers mentioned previously. Stuart Hall, for his part, argues that "identities are fluid,constantly re-negotiated ."(qtd.in. Phillips and Webster 118).Hence, the identity of diaporic people is not steady but evolves through time according to the circumstances.

The first Arab immigrant writers "wrote mostly in Arabic, but a few wrote both in Arabic and in English, and their objective was to confer upon literature a more effective

role in the forging of an Arab national consciousness." (Ludescher 04).the main concerns of these writers were to preserve their Arab identity and cultural heritage .

After the emergence of the literary production of what is known as El- Mahjar the second phase that marked the history of the Arab-American literature was less dynamic due to the ongoing political events at that time, Alixa Naff states that " Arab-Americans went so far in the assimilation process that some historians have described them as being in danger of assimilating themselves out of existence." (qtd.in Radwan 63).the literary figures of this period tried to distance themselves from their Arab identity even when they did not do so they managed to write about their Arabic belonging in implicit manners .

The freedom that came along with the civil rights movements allowed the Arab-Americans to embrace overtly their Arab cultural identity and engage more directly with the Arab culture and politics. In the meantime, political events, from the 1967 war to 9-11 and beyond, enforced the Arab-Americans to grapple with their identity and reconnect to their roots. Evelyn Shakir explains that "members of the third wave of Arab American writers have expressed a distinct Arab American identity in their works. Arab American literature published since the 1980s, Shakir goes on, testifies to 'a sea change' in the way Arab Americans began to perceive their identities and see themselves."(qtd.in Awad 17) .

Unlike the writers who appeared in the former waves of Arab immigrants; who could not manage to harmonize between their Arab identity and the western environment; the contemporary Arab-American writers manifest in their writings parallels between their valuations of a deep rooted Arab identity and an adaptation to the American life .they succeed to balance between these two cultures by adopting a hybrid identity.

1.3 Redefining Space in the Arab Diasporic Literature

The Arab-American literature is a sub-constituent of the entity that represents the Arab diasporic literature .In its global sense the literature of diaspora "involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic compulsions." (Singh)

Space and place are essential tools with which the writers of the Arab diaspora negotiate and engage with the complexities of swinging between two countries. This symbolic space is represented by Jurij M. Lotman as "a result of a culturally specific usage of signs and perceives an analogous relationship between the narrative text as an abstract model of reality and the respective world view of a given culture." (qtd.in Hess-Lüttich 06)

Thematically, this literature depicts characters who try to cope with the dissimilarities that result from the encounter of two social and spatial spheres; both the host and the home country. Bhabha defines this type of writing as "a representation of those in-between spaces that go beyond the existing binaries and makes a bridge "between the home and the world." (Jafari and Pourjafari 06)

The writing of the Arab diasporic literature is characterized by the recurrent usage of allegories and symbols, with which the spatial sphere is frequently re-imagined and redefined. The redefinition and adaptation of space across the literary works of diaspora is referred to as the 'third space' by Homi Bhabha who considers it as "an in between hybridized space where identities, diversity, difference and boundaries of intersecting race, class, and gender, and nation are negotiated and redefined in everyday life." (qtd.in Ladha 16). This notion has also been defined by Edward W. Soja as a "tentative term that attempts to capture what is actually a constant shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings."(qtd in Flessner p28)

When so many scopes go into exploring the literature of diaspora, the latter manages to create its own distinct interspatial space in which the meaning of home, belonging, and dislocation are of a crucial importance. These concepts represent the key words that singularize the literature of diaspora in general and the Arab diasporic Literature in particular.

1.3.1 Redefining the Meaning of Home and Belonging

People of the migrant community are often unwelcomed in their host country they are for the majority victims of discrimination and marginalization, consequently they face several difficulties to adapt and belong to their new environment. And as Sarup asserts it "Roots are grown where there is a feeling of acceptance and love, not where hostility and exclusion are meted out, where walls are not built and reinforced to keep the migrant out."(qtd.in Ajulu-Okungu 08)

Thus, in response to this tensions and pressures the immigrant people have the tendency to nourish a feeling of nostalgia for their home country and tend to idealize the picture of the homeland, as Avtar Brah puts it "home is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination."(qtd in Bromley 143).

The definition of home has changed through time from a static term to a notion that can be defined in numerous ways, "Traditionally home and belonging can be defined as the place where our ancestors used to live, the place of our origin. Consequently, this definition is dedicated to the past without regard where one lives right now."(Heckmann 02)

The definition of home as an inert concept runs counter the modern definition that represents home as a concept that is not confined to a single entity but as a concept that can

only be described in a pluralistic way. "Today, the primary connotation of 'home' is of 'private' space from which the individual travels into the larger arenas of life and to which he or she returns at the end of the day." (George 11) this definition is juxtaposed to "the word's wider significance as the larger geographic space where one belongs: country, city, village, community." (ibid)

Furthermore, "Home is also the imagined location which can be more readily fixed in a mental landscape than in actual geography. The term 'home country' suggests the particular intersection of private and public and of individual and communal that is manifested in imagining a space as home."(ibid). In this context the meaning of home is being explored at three different levels: as a "private space, as a wider space beyond the confines of the private, and as a narrated home, the home of the mind." (ibid).

In the context of the literature of diaspora the meaning of home is interconnected with a sense of belonging, Syrine Hout proposes that "feeling at home is associated with freedom, a sense of belonging and personal dignity."(qtd.in Naguib 86). In the same framework Malashri and Kumar said that the meaning of home "brings with it feelings of stability, security and belonging that help in the formation of a new identity .Such identity formation becomes closely related with the politics of location and belonging." (170).

The significance of home is more acute for migrant people who had to leave their home country and seek settlement in a foreign land. Indeed Douglas Porteous suggests that "home can only be understood from the perspective of travelers, whose temporary loss of the feeling of home pushes them to try to recreate it."(qtd.in Naguib 31), Boym assents with Porteous' assertion and mentions that "home becomes an issue only if it is lost; one only feels the need to question home if it is no longer there." (387)

The notion of home has various interpretations that vary from one person to another, its significance changes as well according to the context in which it is framed; for some people it represents a shelter and a place of comfort, for others it is related to roots and origins, but in both cases home is more than just a physical building it is the representation of an identity, and this identity has a more acute meaning for the immigrant people.

1.3.2 A Sense of Displacement and Dislocation

In the literature of diaspora, an important number of writers depict in their novels, the unsettled situation of characters that are caught between two worlds and torn between two social spaces .Similarly, the confrontation of two literary spaces result in a feeling of discomfort and dislocation for the Arab immigrant writers who try to negotiate a new literary space in their writings.

Within the frame of the diasporic literature the notions of immigration and borders involve the themes of location and displacement. Because the concept of diaspora itself is considered as "A state of dislocation marked by perpetual confrontation in the diasporic psyche between the place of origin and the place of dwelling and is often viewed as a space of unsettlement, clash and overall disturbance." (Saxena 03)

The movement from the homeland to a foreign country implies a sense of dislocation and non-belonging that are characterized in the literary works as a feeling of displacement and in its essence the concept does not only designate the movement from one place to another, but is also evocative of uprootedness,

Therefore the process of displacement engenders a feeling of discomfort and disorientation due to the failure of finding a comfortable settlement and acceptance in the

host country, "A displaced person logically has some relationship with a place or places, where they no longer abide but to which they are assumed to have an intrinsic or prior connection. The meaning associated with displacement rests on a very particular view of 'place' as somewhere to belong."(Ajulu-Okungu 21)

The emergence of diaspora gave birth to a feeling of dislocation and disbelongingness that did not only separate the individuals in question from their home country and roots, but it also divided their existence into two poles. Sara Ahmed in her book *Strange Encounters* affirms that:

> indeed, if we think of home as an outer skin, then we can also consider how migration involves not only a spatial dislocation, but also a temporal dislocation:' the past' becomes associated with a home that is impossible to inhabit, and be inhabited by, in the present. The question then of being at home or leaving home is always a question of memory, of the discontinuity between past and present. (93)

For the Arab-immigrant writers, the concepts of dislocation and displacement often result in a tense and conflicted situation for the people of diaspora, because it does not only involve the interaction between the host and the home land but it also include the confrontation between the past and the present, that are most of the time pictured as the opposition between tradition and modernity. And the interaction of these two poles has been the object of many theories and debates.

1.4 The Interaction of Tradition and Modernity

It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve in details what tradition and modernity mean, nevertheless, before tackling directly the relation between these two poles, it is worth exploring briefly some definitions associated with these concepts, and it is on the light of these definitions that we are going to highlight the manifestations of this relation.

Modernity as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is "An intellectual tendency or social perspective characterized by departure from or repudiation of traditional ideas, doctrines, and cultural values in favour of contemporary or radical values and beliefs"(qtd.in Hunt 47), For Paul De Man ;the literary critic and literary theorist; "Modernity exists in the form of a desire to wipe out whatever came earlier, in the hope of reaching at least a point that could be called a true present, a point of origin that marks a new departure."(qtd.in Kujundzic 20) ,In other sources "Modernity is that which has created fundamental changes in behavior and belief about economics, politics, social organization, and intellectual discourse."(Rippin 12)

On the other hand, tradition is defined by the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* as "A belief, principle, or way of acting that people in a particular society or group have continued to follow for a long time." and is defined by *The Oxford Dictionaries* as "The transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation."

From an Islamic lens, tradition is defined by Dr.Grewal as "a process of debate over what links past, present and future in continuity that is meaningful and authoritative." (200), Muslims mostly perceive modernity in terms of Western modernity and vary in their views on its relevance and compatibility to Islam.

1.4.1 Tradition-Modernity between Opposition and Complementarity

The interaction of tradition and modernity is alternatively represented as a duality and as an antagonism .theorists and researchers diverge on their perception of the relation that links the two concepts; some perceive it as an opposition, and other see it as the correlation of two interdependent and indissoluble elements.

Ferdinand Tonnies; a German sociologist; explains in his theory of *Tradition-Modern Continuum* that "no traditional or modern society is exclusively traditional or modern. There are elements of modernity in traditional society and vice versa" (Mondal), Carlos Fuentes; a Mexican novelist; assents with the previous idea and considers that "There is no creation without tradition; the 'new' is an inflection on a preceding form; novelty is always a variation on the past."(qtd.in Timey 77) .

Alberto Arce and Norman Long observe, in their book entitled *Anthropology, Development and Modernities* that "The term 'modern' connotes a sense of belonging to the present and an awareness of the past to which people can link and at the same time distance themselves. Consequently, we can only talk of modernity in relation to tradition."(04)

Based on these critics it can be argued that modernity is never the radical change or the break from tradition, but it instead enters with the latter in a subtle cultural game where both concepts are left bound in a process of adaptation. Nevertheless, this line of argument runs counter to some entrenched hypothesis about the relationship between modernity and tradition.

Laslett peter; an English historian; reflects in his book that "modernity is replacing tradition more and more and that tradition is about resistance to change, and the

conservation of the past." (qtd in Harrington et al 634). This idea of confrontation is strengthened by Anthony Giddens who suggests that "societies which try to 'modernize' in the most obvious institutional sense - by becoming something like a capitalist democracy - but which do not throw off other traditions, such as gender inequalities, are likely to fail in their attempt to be successful modern societies ." (Gauntlett 03)

The mentioned theories refute the coexistence of tradition and modernity as complementary or equal dualities. They instead represent the relation between the two poles as a contest that places tradition and modernity in a constant confrontation, where modernity is predominating.

In line with these perspectives, tradition does not only consider the past as a treasure to be jealously kept, but also regards it as a point of reference ,thus its interaction with modernity and change represents a threat for its existence ,consequently this attachment to the past surfaces in a form of resistance and opposition, that is why "As countries grapple with modernization, people who are left behind tend to hold firmer and firmer to their view of the evil of modernity". (Holbrooke)

For these reasons, 'modernity' in this study represents all the cultural practices associated with the Western culture of the United States of America; these practices comprise gender equality, women emancipation, freedom of choice and Western secularism. Tradition, in the other hand, refers to all the cultural practices that are associated with Arabic-Muslim conservatism, such as the ethnic loyalty and the preservation of conventional customs like the traditional marriages and the institution of distinct gender roles.

1.4.2 The Generational Gap in the Muslim Immigrant Community of the United States

Every human community is in evolution and the Muslim community does not make an exception, the latter took recently a more accelerated and destabilizing rhythm of development, and is more than ever influenced by other communities particularly by the western modern society.

The rapid evolution of the Muslim community after its interaction with the western culture created a split between the young generation of Muslim immigrants; that grew up in the western environment, and the former generation; that is the first generation of immigrants. The first one aspires to change and the second one holds tight to the traditional values. And according to Dr.Magdaline Wafula's article entitled "Tradition Versus Modernity",

> When a society changes rapidly and cohorts/generations come of age under different conditions, the members of each generation are likely to develop their own perception on cultural and political establishments. When such perceptions are substantially different from the experiences of others, they may provoke generational conflict. (138)

To understand the essence of the generational conflict in the Muslim community of the USA, it is important to highlight first, the meaning of the word 'generation' in its wide context. From a biological perspective, *Tavistock's Dictionary of the Social Sciences* demonstrates that "a generation comprises all those members of a society who were born approximately at the same time, whether or not they are related by blood."(qtd.in Prasad 01)

Sociologically defined, " A generation refers to a cohort of people born within a similar span of time (15 years at the upper end) who share a comparable age and life stage and who were shaped by a particular span of time (events, trends and developments)."(McCrindle 01)

In other words the generational conflict refers to the confrontation between people separated by an important interval of age, because "Age and differences of age are among the most basic and crucial aspects of human life and determinants of human destiny" (Eisenstaedt 21).

The generational conflict is also known as the generation gap. In its broader sense, it represents the difference in opinions, values, beliefs and stances amongst generations, particularly between the young and the old one, because "In every age and every society youth have rebelled against the old. The old have damned and denounced the youth."(Prasad 183)

Based on these theoretical definitions it can be said that the generation gap is an antagonism, a competition or a disagreement between two or several generations living within the same society, because the two generations have been brought up in different circumstances and uphold different values and beliefs.

Among the generational conflicts that the Muslim immigrant community goes through, the parent-youth conflict is considered as the most noticeable one, this conflict emerges from the confrontation between the traditionally established culture of the parents and the foreign inherited culture of the youth. According to Davis' analysis:

rapid social change in USA tends to increase parent-youth conflict because within a fast-changing social order the time-interval between generations which is only a mere moment as far as the social system is concerned becomes historically significant by creating a hiatus between one generation and the next .Inevitably, under such a condition youth is reared in a milieu different from that of the parents. (qtd.in Prasad 05)

Muslim-immigrant parents have different values and perspectives comparing to their children who have adopted and adapted to the western lifestyle; their understanding and visions of life are almost contradictory, and this divergence of ideas and believes creates a kind of tension between the two generations.

Theories assert that "children of immigrants, especially adolescents in the process of constructing their identity face conflicting social contexts in which they attempt to incorporate "here" and "there" into a meaningful sense of self." (qtd.in Zubida et al 02) .Hence, the generational gap in the Muslim-immigrant community comes down to an antagonism between the tradition represented by the Muslim curators and the modernity embodied by the young Muslim-immigrant who grew up in the U.S.

Considering the fact that the family is the essential reference point in the traditional Muslim society, family conflicts reflect the changes in the social life caused by the competition between the Arab conservatism and the western liberalism, this conflict is paralleled to a competition between tradition and modernity. Consequently issues such as marriage, the economic and social role of women, social aspects of gender equality and relationships, are the essence of this generational conflict.

1.5 The Matrimonial Relationship

When human beings grow up they start looking for communication and companionship, they try to develop their relationships from family and neighbors to a more intimate kind of relationships with the opposite sex in order to make relationships of a deep and enduring nature; for the sake of the instinct satisfaction. But in the other hand people will experience rejection and loneliness at various times in their lives because partners will hurt one another, neglect one another, and face many obstacles in their relationships. (Akande and Dr Akande 01).hence the institution of marriage is established in the aim of regulating and preserving these relationships.

> Marriage is one of the most remarkable and most courageous of human acts, the promise of two human beings to share life together on all levels - physical, economic, spiritual --a promise made in the face of the certainty of death, the certainty of change, and the uncertainty of everything else. There is nothing else quite like this act, nothing so foolish, nothing so profound. (Mathews 01)

The marital relationship is a sacred hold between a man and a woman; it is a serious aspect that regulates the internal continuation of life's system, It is also viewed as the main constructing unit of a strong society, it is highly valued by many groups because through the marital relationship couples can get a shelter filled with peace, comfort and harmony; they can also reach a lifelong bond that is based upon mutual mental and physical gratification. (Brettle 152)

The matrimonial relationship is considered to be one of the dominant relationships because the need of a spouse and a family is a natural and instinctive need of human beings, and God sets the foundation of the marital relationship in order to allow this need

of fulfillment to be achieved in a legitimate and organized manner through the process of marriage. And its structures, forms and functions vary from one culture to another and differ from society to society, because each society has its own types of marriage based on individuals or kinship.

1.5.1 Marriage in the Islamic Religion and Society

In Islam particularly, the marital relationship is considered as an ideal bond and counted to be for the Muslim society as a half of the Islamic religion, because it is highlighted by the prophet Mohammad's saying "When a man marries, he has fulfilled half of his religion, so let him fear God regarding the other half." (qtd.in De Sondy 101) when a man and woman get married, unconsciously they will pursuit half of the Islamic rules for instance by avoiding adultery which might breaks the Islamic values. Unmarried people in the Islamic society are regarded as less than complete, and the imputations of saying unmarried are specially negative for women "the Muslim family system perceives a single woman as leading to *Fitna* or social disorder." (Macfarlane 52)

The matrimonial relationship is defined in the Quran as a supportive and protective relationship because it can guarantee the protection from sins as God said in the Quran in Surah Ar Rum: "And amongst His signs is that He created for you wives from amongst yourselves, that you may find repose in them and, He has created between you affection and mercy Indeed, herein are signs for people who reflect." (qtd.in Kotob 04). In Islam God encourages the marital relationship and organizes mutual rights and obligations between spouses.

The marital process in Islam is understood as a way to gain spiritual perfection because it allows each spouse to draw closer to God. Sexually, marriage regulates the sexual desires and allows the Muslim spouses to practice the physical relationship, because

dating and sexual contact outside the wedlock are unallowable, moreover the matrimonial relationship helps partners to make plans for their life and future in order to continue their entire life. (Van Bruinessen 129)

The traditional Islamic marital relationship starts with the proposal of a man to a woman to ask for her hand, and this is considered in Islam as a natural act of dignity for women. The second step which is acceptance, when both of the spouses and their families accept, they make an agreement upon the mahr, the groom gives money before two witnesses to the bride which is legally considered as her property gift, but not her price, as the Quran said: "You shall give the women their due dowries, equitably. If they willingly forfeit anything, then you may accept it; it is rightfully yours." (qtd.in Khalifa 46)

After giving *Mahr,* they invite the family members to the marriage to celebrate and share the joy with each other because this part of marriage play a significant role in providing the physical and moral support in order strengthen and extend the kindred of the families. (Porterfield 29)

There is a great difference between the Islamic and the traditional patterns of marriage ideas and practices, for example polygamy, the right to marry more than one woman, is a religious practice in Islam that is permissible and mentioned in the Quran, but there are other traditional practices that has no relation with Islam, for instance forced marriages or marrying only within one's group; and not to marry outside the group, these practices confuse many Muslims especially the immigrant Muslims, they are the more vulnerable to such traditional marital boundaries.

Marriage in the Muslim society has many values derived from both religious and cultural traditions that are described as central to the Islamic marriage and family life; for instance ideas about obedience, authority and home responsibility. The marital relationship is such a sacred bond for women that they become obedient only to protect their marriage,

because being divorced or left wife is something shameful to them, that is why they are all submissive and dutiful to their husbands even though they are treated as objects; just for the household and taking care of children. (Macfarlane 51) as Sharma affirms that, "Day and night, women must be kept in subordination to the males of the family: in childhood to the father, in youth to her husband, in old age to her sons [...]Even though her husband be destitute of virtue and seeks pleasure elsewhere, he must be worshiped as God." (01)

All of this bearing is not only due to the husbands but also to the belief that the husband is the sole of the wife, and the sacred duty of the woman is to be an ideal wife and mother. The attitude of men towards women in the Muslim society is take control over them, while women are emotionally attached to their husbands and children. (Roald 125)

Moreover, their weak and submissive nature and their love and affection towards husbands and children are also responsible for their degradation. While the modern women have established a cohesive status where they are and seeking for a bold and independent identity; defying male's unbearable authority; however they have got struck in a dilemma between tradition and modernity. (ibid)

1.5.2 Marriage in the Muslim Immigrant Communities in the USA

Partner choice and mating practices in the arena of migration and integration have been the main subject of the Muslim immigrant community for a long time and the important question of that subject is how matrimonial relationships are related to the integration in the host society and how the religious and traditional beliefs significantly impact the matrimonial relationships, especially on the ethnic groups, they are bounded by their native religious and traditional limits but in the other hand they are inserted with the culture of the foreign country and many other customs have crept into the marital ceremony of immigrants. (Lamanna, Riedmann and Stewart 19)

The majority of Muslim Americans are deeply devoted to their religious traditional beliefs and practices which significantly influence the marital relationships, but they are also affected by the secular modern sphere, and the Muslim immigrant generations are split between religiosity, class boundaries and subjective well-being because, they are facing the challenges of modernity and tradition at the same time. (Jackson 167)

In the Arab American literature, many writers present the marital issues as an increasing complex within the Muslim community, especially among the Muslim immigrant community. These matrimonial relationships are caught between tradition and modernity because the old and the young generations confront about the marital perceptions.

1.6 Conclusion

On the light of what has been discussed previously it can be said that Immigration is not only a matter of changing countries, but also about shifting identities and in the literature that emerges from the Arab immigration to the United States, an important number of writers depict in their literary works the unsettled situation of characters that are confusingly caught between two countries and torn between two distinct cultures.

For these characters the feeling of unsettlement does not only concern the inability of balancing between the host and the home country but it also includes the confrontation between the past and the present, which is more concretely represented in the confrontation between the young and former generation of Muslim immigrants. The Muslim community as a whole accords a huge importance to marriage, but the perception of the matrimonial relationships between the two generations is not necessarily the same, therefore a detailed analysis of this point will be discussed further, and in the aim of an efficient analysis our scope will be focused exclusively on Mohja Kahf's novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf.*

Chapter Two

The Literary Thematic Analysis

2.1 Introduction

Different cultures have different patterns of marrying and in the following chapter we are going to look at the different types of marriages among Muslims and Muslim immigrants in Mohja Kahf's novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*. Within this chapter we are going to expose two sections, the first section introduces Kahf's novel and her writing style; moreover we are going to try to find out the relationship between the author and her protagonist. In the second section of this chapter we are going to deal more precisely with the types of marriage and the importance of both, modernity and tradition in the Muslim immigrant' conjugal life, in addition to the impact of each one on the other.

2.2 An introduction to Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

The genre of Arab American novels has experienced an authentic growth in the last decades; this sudden bloom opens up a broad area of questions concerning the Arab American literature context. The struggles that Muslim women writers face in the U.S are identical to the experiences of other women of color; they share the same experiences of ethnicity and discrimination. The Arab American women writers employ varying forms of expressions, thus actively participating in the majority of the discourses surrounding Islam, Muslim women and Americanness. (Woodhull 07)

While both secular and religious Muslim feminist writers build on the notion of gender equality in Islam, they dig out the often forgotten principals of women's rights in the Muslim society both as a feminine gender and as an Arab-Muslim immigrant in America. Mohja Kahf is one of the famous writers who promote the Arab American literature (Moore 08), and her novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is the first critically successful Arab American novel that addresses Islam and its practices as its prime theme

within U.S. Khadra Shamy and her family is the core of this novel who live and achieve a great diversity with other minorities. (Salaita 32)

In this novel Kahf fuses the themes of, womanhood in Islam, victimization and self-discovery of the immigrants in America, she also tries to represent material practices of Islam and convey the texture of Muslim material culture, but in the other hand she criticizes the cultural stereotypes of Muslims and challenges to alter some of the traditional customs toward the Muslim women. (ibid)

2.2.1 Mohja Kahf's Writing Style

In the United States women of color writers have fought similar fights and used the transformative power of writing themselves through poetry and fiction by strategic narrations against the hegemonic culture that leave imprints on them and Mohja Kahf is one of these women. Kahf's integration into two distinctly different cultures of Arab and American identity, affected her deeply and as an artist it makes her create a great combination and rich linguistic diversity which occurs partly through her language because she aims to create a new language and share it with her audience the Arab Americans that can negotiate the passage between Arab and Americans, making space for both without apology. (Methews 135)

Her writing contains both American slung and Quranic verses; she uses the Arabic oral tradition and Arabic poetry. Her intention to use Arabic influences is to revive the English language. In "Copulation in English" she writes: "We are going to dip English backward/ by its Shakespearean tresses/ arcing its spine like a crescent/ we are going to rewrite English in Arabic" (qtd.in ibid) .Kahf's voice is embodied in her poetry and fiction and among her writings, *Politics and Erotics in Nizar Kabbani's Poetry: From the Sultan's Wife to the Lady Friend, "Braiding the Stories: Women's Eloquence in the Early Islamic*

Era, *sex and the Umma column at Muslim Wake Up*. Her first collection of poetry *E-mails from Scheherazad* in which Kahf tries to displace the solid stereotypes which confine the Muslim women into a questionable space. (Methews 135)

The novel genre allows her to weave into each other so many different characters and to address multiple audiences, ethnicities, religious and secular communities within Muslim cultures via her aesthetic style of writing simultaneously. "And her first novel is *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* written in a form of a bildungsroman and told by an omniscient narrator who uses flashbacks and flash-forwards."(ibid)

2.2.2 The Correlation between Mohja Kahf and her Protagonist

Though Mohja Kahf admits that the novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is not an autobiographical story, an in-depth analysis of the novel characterize the latter as an autobiographical work, in which Mohja Kahf merges together fictional perspectives to create a coming-of-age story from Khadra's perspective as a Syrian American Muslim.

Both of Kahf and Khadra came to the United States with their parents, and Indianapolis is where they landed and where they grew up, it was the appropriate place for their parents because it was the place where the conservative Islamists followers live. But for Kahf and Khadra it was the worst place; it was the town where they have spent the most horrible years of their lives, due to their ethnicity and religious belonging.

The experiences that Kahf went through in the United States are all drown through her heroine Khadra Shamy; these experiences allow them to shape their own perceptions and give them the ability to mediate between the cultures of both, their home and the host country. Indianapolis becomes the first step that makes the difference in their lives and pushes them towards shaping their presence and voice that gave them the ability to go between the cultures.

Kahf and her protagonist Khadra, struggle to find their feminist space in which they can breathe freely without the restriction of the cultural and patriarchal norms; set by the hegemonic of U.S. Third World cultures. As empowered women, they are torn between their ambitions and cultural affiliations; which they respect and wish to preserve; but at the same time they strive to shape their own new feminist identity and apparel that is independent from both the American culture and their cultural origin.

2.3 Characters between Tradition and Modernity

. The novel is the locus where the characters take place in order to guide the readers through stories that can make them catch the plots and understand the themes, and the first obstacle that face the authors while writing a novel is their struggle to link the characters with the real life and real experiences, because this authentic relation is the most substantial thing that matters to the reader.

The characters of the novel reflect complex and different cultures. And the characters of Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* compares two worlds; a world of tradition and a world of modernity that have been imprinted with both, the American and the Arab cultures, and shows the impact of each concept on the other through her very real traditional and modern characters.

Kahf explores deep complex matters that touch and arouse the consciousness of the Muslim youth; she illustrates these matters through the experiences of many characters of different ages and different backgrounds aiming to solve the unreasonable traditions that restrict the young Muslim generation.

The young Muslim generation in Kahf's novel, has increasingly turned toward Islam; the characters of this generation tend to practice and preserve their own religion, but

this does not mean that they embrace the practices and traditions of their parents, because these young Muslims are more conscious and often reject what they regard as traditional practices in favor of the purer Islam they have learnt from the various Muslim organizations.

2.3.1 The Depiction of the Traditional Characters

Tradition does not suddenly appear and disappear, but it takes shape successively with cohesion through generations, because tradition is a social habitual force coming down in history consisted of a system of culture and morality in every field and it cannot be changed easily .These cultural and religious traditions have a great impact on people and it can be stick in their minds and hearts where ever they live, for instance the Arab immigrants in U.S keep their traditional and religious beliefs as worthy and sacred values, and it is obviously presented in Kahf's novel *The Girl in The Tangerine Scarf*.

Kahdra's parents are among the main traditional characters who attempt to stay isolated from the American society, they even keep their children bounded by the traditional beliefs and did not give them the chance to find their true religious and cultural identity, the only thing they aim to do is to separate them from the Western environment because they perceive the Americans as the others.

For instance, after her graduation Ebtehaj chose to stay home she "didn't work. At least, not outside the home .Inside she worked plenty." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 21) because according to the traditional beliefs "the best contribution to an Islamic revolution for a woman is to educate her children in the true Islamic values." (115).

Wajdy's mother is another conservative character who died in childbirth; she sacrificed her life to give birth to her son. The same thing for Ebtehaj's mother who has a

sweet soul and stay home for the household and children, all of these characters represent the stereotype of the devoted and domestic woman whose life is absorbed in religion and tradition, their only concern was always to be the perfect model of wife because they brought up with that conception.

Traditionally, women are always supposed to follow their husband's culture and customs and Aunt Saweem is one of them; a Syrian woman who married a Saudi man and becomes dependent to his culture and customs because "Her ensuring had been spent entirely in her husband's country, and she had assimilated to Saudi customs" (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 165).

Abdullah, a member of the Dawah center, is charged of the guidance of the new Muslim immigrants he is known for having two wives. Abdullah practice polygamy because it is allowed in Islam, his first wife is Fatima and he married the second *Tante* Mirvat in an illegal way. But he didn't balance between them as it is prescribed in their religion. Some traditional characters use religion only to fulfill their own desires and not for the sake of completing their religious duties.

In Kahf's novel most of the traditional characters hold their own beliefs and customs and practice them as it is previously discussed, but some of them can grasp the fact that there are many false traditional beliefs and misunderstood religious practices that made them feel some remorse.

For instance, Aunt Fatima; Abdullah's first wife; sacrifices her pride and herself for her children, but when her husband married the second wife, she wished she had left and divorced him before, because her encounter with the Western culture has awaken her consciousness. Modernity and the outside influences of the American environment paves

the possibility to re-interpret and change the patriarchal traditions that limit women's rights by going back to the original religious sources.

Some characters took the path of rebellion like Téta who have a different perception of life that contradicts with the other traditional characters' vision; she is a great influential character, who symbolizes the traditional homeland, nonetheless she is an open minded and emancipated woman, she even eloped and married the one she loves against her parents' will, because she does not believe in the traditional values, she realizes well what the religious rules and traditions mean.

2.3.2 The Portrayal of the Modern Characters

Migration and modernity are often regarded as correlated factors, migration has a strong effect on many fields of human life; it brings changes in the everyday life of individuals and joins different cultural, racial, and religious identities, for example the migration of the Arab immigrants to America created a new life of modernity in the Arabic culture by turning away from the traditional extremists thoughts.

The encounter of the Muslim community with western modernity drove new interactions and conflicts in the social and cultural spaces. And Kahf's novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* represents these interactions and changes through the portrayal different modern characters.

Khadra Shamy, the protagonist of the novel and the main modern character tries to reach her self-discovery and swings between retaining her cultural differences and her assimilation to the American culture. And even though Khadra grew up with strict parents and community; where the children are brought up to reject anything different from them;

she tries to find her own identity as opposed to the identity that her parents have tried to inculcate her.

Khadra as a contemporary woman, believes that the women of her community prefer to maintain the traditional norms rather than looking for change and freedom. When she gets married she rejects the inequality in the gender roles and does not want to play the role of the domestic wife restricted to the housework and childbirth; like her mother and grandmothers; she rather prefers to impose herself in her couple and defies the traditional stereotypes of the dutiful women.

Zuhura, Another major modern character is unlike the other characters, she is not afraid to disagree with her future husband or to interact with the American culture, while the whole Muslim community avoids Americans, Zuhura represents the role model of a bold and strong Muslim woman who can fight both, the discrimination of the western community and the conservatism of the Muslim community.

Hanifa is a Muslim teenager who breaks the Islamic lifestyle by committing fornication and getting pregnant out of the wedlock. By this action she ruins the pride of the traditional community and breaks the social stigma, hence, they rejected her and rebutted everything related to her.

Jihad Khadra's little brother smashes all the traditional limits and decides to marry Sariah Withcomb; a childhood friend who belongs to a Mormon family; and does not find any problem in her different religious belonging .Unlike the traditional characters Jihad believes that no one of them has to follow the other's religion or convictions.

Chrif is a character who is mainly influenced by the western modern life; he has different way of thinking and perceptions from the other characters for instance concerning

the sexual relationships; he sees it as a normal and behaviour that cannot be prohibited because it is a distinct desire in human beings.

On the other hand, Hakim, despite the fact that he is an *Imam* and occupies a high religious statue, he likes music and doing some modern things like dating with Kahdra but he fears the Muslim society and what they might say about him so he listens to music secretly.

Though they belong to the modern generation, some female and male characters, still believe in tradition because there are some strict traditions and religious beliefs that have a great power and control over the modern generations and affect their way of life as well as their ways of thinking.

In Juma's case, his only concern is to keep his cultural identity and reputation and worries more about how the Arab community perceives him Eyad also is influenced and bounded by religious beliefs, he obeys his parents by not marrying the Sudanese girl and marries the one his mother has chosen for him, a beautiful Iraqi white girl, he didn't rebel he just accepts his parents' decision.

Nilofar, another modern character but not the independent model of the modern generation, she is the girl who married a Delhi man and she becomes dependent to her husband's Indian culture. She did not retain her native culture and starts acting and wearing the way the Indians do.

All these characters have passed through various traditional, religious and modern specific issues in the marital process facing many hitches in choosing the appropriate spouse because they have to both mourn an old culture and adapt to a new one. Immigrants often marry people of different backgrounds or degrees of enculturation and most struggle with issues of family and ethnic devotion.

2.4 Endogamous and Exogamous Marriages

Mate selection is not a carless process, people tend to select their partners from the same background, and sociologists refer to marriages of the same sort as endogamy. In its broader sense endogamy is defined as a system of marriage that requires marrying only those from within one's own community. Practicing endogamy demands marriage between specific social groups, classes or ethnicities. There are some traditional and endogamous groups who practice it as a deep-rooted part of their moral values and traditional beliefs, they prefer to stay isolated from the other groups in order to protect their cohesion and for the delivery of their origin values and cultural codes in addition to the group bonding and surveying in societies with different backgrounds. (Shepard 305)

Exogamy comes as a modern step against the tradition of endogamy that can ruins the ethnic, racial and religious fanaticism because partners with different ethnic belongings indicate social interaction and strong social acceptance that led to the social integration. Generally, exogamy demands that marriage between persons be outside of groups with different ethnicities, races, or religions. (Ferraro 208) Mating between varieties of belongings mostly comes from the assimilation and integration among immigrant outflows, and the United States that is considered as the most powerful gathering of immigrants in the world.

However, the process of exogamy focuses on the mutual acceptance between the dominant and ethnic groups, it is viewed as a more convenient term for the immigrants, the focus lies on their likelihood of marrying exogenously because once they settle for a long time, firmly they will become strongly inserted in such a steward nation, thus they will be also able to handle close relationships which can lead to marriage. (ibid)

2.4.1 Endogamy and Segregation

Endogamy is prevalent in many cultures and ethnic groups such as the groups of immigrants in the United State, and the most vulnerable to the marital perturbation are the ethnic mixed couples because their marital choices in such a host country are not an easy task; the pressure the immigrant community puts on its members by imposing racial ethnic boundaries, makes them remain endogamous. And the book of Mohja Kahf proves that endogamy becomes stricter within the Muslim American community in a foreign land. (Fong 141)

In the novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf,* Kahf shows two main endogamous marriages, the first consists of the racial endogamy which was and still the biggest issue nowadays because historically the black and white marriages were discouraged, though it has declined over the late century, but it still remains the most powerful division in the matrimonial choice than any of the other types of endogamy.

The case of Khadra's brother Eyad; he wants to marry a black girl and he "worked up the nerve to enlist his parent's help in asking for the hand of the Sudanese doctor's daughter, Maha Abdul-Kadir, a regal beauty whose color was rich and dark." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 137), Eyad did not find any problem with her color but his parents did not agree at all because she was a black girl and "They pretended it was about language, not color" by saying "You have to marry a native Arabic speaker" (ibid) because the absence of the Arabic language means for them losing the religion but the black girl "was a native speaker of Arabic, with a pure accent" and "She was splendidly qualified to teach their future children the language of the Quran." (138)

But when they realized that she is a good Arabic speaker they tried to find other excuses to prevent this engagement and his mother argued that: "more importantly, she's

older than you" (139) Ebtehaj turns it to age, it is another traditional belief, they believe that "The woman should always be younger, because girls are more mature than boys and women go downhill faster in old age." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 39) though knowing that "She's only older by a few months," (ibid), they still insist on their rejection of the engagement. After a long debate his father unconsciously admits that the problem was with her color, by saying "But for heaven's sake, she's black as coal." (ibid)

Kahf shows that the traditional racial division was strong enough to influence the marital perspective of Eyad's parents despite the fact that Islam advises not to be racist and that "It's haram to be racist." (76) As it is mentioned in the Quran in the Surah of Ali Imran: "You should hold fast the rope of God, all of you and do not be devided" (qtd.in Khalifa 38)

Kahf also refers to the notion of racism by demonstrating that whites always look lowly to blacks and she confirms that the traditional Muslim generation becomes racist when it comes to the conjugal relationships trying to protect the nativity status and the origin color although they teach their children not to be racialists unlike Eyad, who is not racist, he does not care about the color of his future wife, because beauty for him is not a matter of color and what is important for him is the personality.

Ethnicity deemed as an important supplement in the marital output because the household becomes easier when the couples are from the same ethnic group and share similar cultural background and tastes. Kahf deals with other main endogamous types, as the ethnic endogamy. Zuhura who did not marry the one she loves because "Her parents wanted her to marry a Kenyan guy or something like that. Someone from the mother land." (368) the generation of Zuhura's parents and Eyad's parents are the same; they both have the traditional perception of marrying outside their respective group.

Though Eyad and Zuhura are aware that their parents are wrong in refusing the

persons they have chosen to espouse, they did not react badly; Eyad "lowered his gaze to what would please his parents, believing their approval to be next to God's. (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 139) he just accepted his parent's decision and Zuhura as well did not do what she wanted just to please her parents. Because in Islam it is a duty to obey the parents as it is mentioned in the Quran in the surah of Al Isra: *"Your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship except Him, and your parents shall be honored"* (qtd.in Khalifa 166) Kahf shows how the parent's obedience is important for the modern Muslim generation and how this affects them in their life's decisions.

Another state of ethnic endogamy is represented in Téta's marriage. Téta is a strong and rebellious woman who married the one she loves despite her parents disagreement , when retailing her marriage story to Khadra she says : "My parents were furious when he came to our house to propose" from the beginning her parents didn't accept because he was a *gypsy* and "his parents were far off in Haifa. *Filthy gypsies*!—I don't know, they call anybody who has no settled home a gypsy." (272)

Téta's husband did not belong to her ethnic group, nonetheless she did not abandon him and fought for the survival of their love, she arguments what she did by saying "doesn't the prophet say if you find a good god-loving man, accept him? […] Does the prophet say he must be from your people?" (273), thus in Islam it is recommended that once you find a suitable partner for your life accept him no matter his religious or racial belonging. Téta did not accept her parent's opposition and run away to continue her private life.

Through her talking to Khadra Téta shows that she was determined in her decision to marry the one she loves saying : "there was no telling us no. And then we eloped to Haifa—his parents lived there…more lather, lovesy." (272) Kahf tries to reveal that

endogamy is perceived as a traditional and cultural belief rather than a religious practice, and that in some cases, the traditional attitudes are more solid than the religious practices.

2.4.2 Exogamy and Interculturality

In the novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* Kahf displays various exogamous relationships which obviously include a great process of integration between the different groups of foreigners in the United States. Kahf also presents how exogamy was in the past and more precisely how it is practiced in the present with the different descent groups.

Kahf mentions in her book that exogamy existed in the past through the representation of the Bosnian community that existed hundred years before "Those Muslims in Bosnia[…] they've lived with the *Kuffar* of their land, taking them for friends and even marrying them, and still the *kuffar*, in the end turn on them and murder them." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 382) the author indicates that exogamy was in existence before the present day in Bosnia, but life in the past was not the same as nowadays, the marital relationships have changed and exogamy became a modern type of marriage because people and specifically the immigrants tend to marry from different backgrounds.

Ethnic religious exogamy is obviously shown in Trish and Omar's relationship. "Trish was an American convert with bright red hair, eyelashes so pale she seemed to have none, and freckles all over her face. Her husband, Omar, was the Dawah general director and looked like an Arab Marlboro Man." (41)

Omar married an American woman but a converted one, she "was Muslim for years before [she] met Omar." (42). He would not marry her if she did not convert to his religion, because it is traditionally important for the Muslims to espouse Muslim women, even though religiously it is known that the Muslim men are allowed to marry non-Muslim women.

Else exogamous marriage is manifested in Aunt Saweem's situation, she "Received the proposal from the handsome uncle of one of her Saudi students." religiously they have the same beliefs but culturally they are different, because Saweem is a Syrian woman and her husband a Saudi man. As a woman she is influenced to her husband's culture and customs because "Her ensuring had been spent entirely in her husband's country, and she had assimilated to Saudi customs" (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 165)

As previously mentioned in Saweem's situation, women are traditionally supposed to follow their husband's culture or religion, these presuppositions are also expressed in Nilofar's case who "got a marriage proposal from a handsome young Delhi-born doctor interning in Chicago" (154) "in her first semester" (155) when she comes to visit her home, she was "dressed in a becoming, pale pink *Shalvar-qamis*." (ibid)

Khadra's marriage is also framed in the exogamous marriages, she married a Kuwaiti man named Juma, as a modernist Khadra could not follow her husband's direction and culture, she felt terrible doing Kuwaiti stuffs like shopping and squandering, she could not manage living in Kuwait as long as she is an independent modern American Muslim; she have chosen her own way of life; in the contrary of Saweem and Nilofar, Khadra did not concede and sacrifice her own culture because she continues to have an important function in her independent lifestyle.

Kahf shows another condition of ethnic religious exogamy in which the man converts to his wife's religion. Tayiba's father was a white man, a white American man who was a Muslim. He was exactly from Nebraska and his wife Aeycha was a Kenyan woman. "After a while, Tayiba's dad changed his name from Joe to Yusuf. Then he grew a beard. And sent the dog away; to his brother in Chicago. He started to fit in at the Center much better." (29)   Christian men often converted to Islam in order to marry Muslim women because in Islam women are not allowed to marry from other descent group.

The same thing for Ebtehaj's father he "married a Turkish woman [Ebtehaj] couldn't stand to see her father go in Sibelle's direction, making light of his prayers, dropping out of his first's wife pious circle, allowing wine at his table." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 275), the case of Ebtihaj's father is like Joe, both of them followed their wives 'directions.

Jihad's relationship with the Christian girl; Sariah Withcomb manifest another religious exogamous relationship, they want to get married but they are afraid that their parents prevent their marriage. Jihad said "I didn't ever think I'd marry someone outside our religion. Neither did she—she told me." (431) Jihad and Sariah did not expect to marry someone out of their religion, but they decide that they don't have to follow the other's religion and culture, each one holds on to his own beliefs and keep their original social belonging rather than assimilating into the other partner's group; like the previous couples in which one of the partners have to sacrifice things to espouse the other.

Concerning their future children Jihad says that: "They will go to see both religions up close and like, both positive. Not like, one is true and the other is false. They will never have the pure sheltered one-religion experience our parents try to give us." (432). By Jihad's new contemporary practice of marriage, he tries to challenge the traditional Islamic beliefs and shatter the traditional rules and boundaries that govern his conservative community.

Kahf displays the notion of Syncretic between two different religions; Islam and Christianity; a kind of reconciliation between the two to pave the way in the marital sphere for the new generations to conjugate each other and wreck the traditional backward thinking and beliefs of their parents.

2.5 Religious and Traditional Marriages

There is a huge difference between the traditional and religious marriages, Polygamy is a system of marriage which involves marrying more than one spouse, it had been practiced in the past all over the world for many centuries and even before the birth of Islam; like the Hebrews, Native Americans, Africans, Polynesians, Indians, Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Assyrians, Japanese, Hindus, Russians and Germanic. This process of marriage is as a converse system to monogamy and it has become a matter of vigorous cultural concern both in the West and the East. (Hendry 232)

Traditionally, arranged marriages, include the parental domination over their children, because it is the task of one's parents or relatives to find out a suitable spouse, which is the opposite of the Western concept of marriage where individuals choose their partners freely. This type of marriage is observed to be a traditional and cultural rather than a religious practice. It has been vastly practiced all over the world and still exists predominantly in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and specifically in the Muslim communities. (Ferraro 208)

Muslim marriages are for the most part arranged for young couples. It used to be practiced and continues to be nowadays the coach of choice for the Muslim generation today, especially for the immigrant families, it is considered as the main characteristic and a long-lasting system of the Islamic conjugal life. Although it is not an Islamic requirement, Muslims still insist on keeping that concept of marriage because individuals' commitment to fall in love with each other and then decide to get married is not the perfect affair for the Muslims, and according to their perception, this kind of relationships may drive their youngsters to disastrous consequences.

But young Muslims in the western countries are in a complex situation and torn

between the nature of modernity and the boundaries of their parent's faith, thus they wonder whether to follow their parents or to rebel but many of them cannot dare to disobey their parent's will, because the disobedience in Islam it is considered as a big sin that can drive to the parent's disownment and all this is illustrated in the Quran in the surah of *Al Isra* "Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor."(qtd.in Khalifa 166)

2.5.1 Polygamy and Equality between Wives

The permission of Polygamy has become the subject of various books and debates, but it has been concluded that polygamy is mostly associated with the religious doctrines, for instance In Islam Polygamy is allowed; Muslim men practice it as their right to have more than one wife because it has to be legitimate and supported (Anuar 81) religiously it has been stated in the Quran in the surah of *Al Nisa* that "[…]Marry of the women that please you, two, three or four, but if you fear that you will not able to deal justly, then only one." (qtd.in Bilaal et al 59) hence it is explained that the man is allowed to marry four wives but not more, and allowing polygamy in Islam is considered as a solution to prevent from fornication. (ibid) and Mohja Kahf's novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* reveals how polygamy is perceived within the Muslim community both by the modern and traditional generations.

But in the other Western religions and nations polygamy is prohibited and even considered as a highly inappropriate and illegal practice, because in the West it represents "a sign of oppression of women and a hidden form of slavery." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 151) So many women who had experienced polygamous marriages had suffered psychological, physical, economic and sexual abuse. But not all the polygamous marriages

are abusive because some of them practice it to minimize the adultery and some enter it unwillingly. (Zeitzen 166)

The United States is one of these nations who are extremely against the practice of polygamy, in all the 50 states; and more precisely in Utah where it represents an illegal exercise. and this prohibition is shown in Mohja Kahf's novel, even though it was allowed in the early years of the Church Jesus Christ or the Mormon Church because nowadays polygamy have been the main theme for the women activists which creates a conflict between protecting the cultural religious traditions and the understanding of women's rights. (ibid)

Mohja Kahf illustrates the banning and the approval of polygamy in her book *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and shows how the American Muslim minorities practice their polygamous relationships and how they think of it traditionally and contemporary. Kahf reveals also the prohibition of polygamy in U.S and how the Americans consider it and this is clarified when the shamys family wanted to take the American citizenship because they "were paperless in America." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 140)

"when the judge asked if they renounced polygamy, drugs, and crime. None of the shamys in that room countenanced polygamy personally, but it was still an honorable Islamic institution, not something dirty like drugs or crime. It was insulting, somehow." (142) though none of them practice polygamy, it stills a part of Islam and their pride; they see it as something pure not filthy since it is permitted in Islam, thus it is something religious and worthy not ordinary.

However, as previously mentioned, Polygamy is not freely practiced in the United States, that's why the American Muslims keep their polygamous marriages legally invisible, because practicing polygamy could engender the deportation from the United States, and this is demonstrated in the case of Uncle Abdulla "He and Tante Mirvat never

had a civil marriage, Just an Islamic one […] because he's legally married to the first one [Fatma]. The second one'd be his mistress and that's all. She has no legal protection." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 417) .An Islamic marriage means a marriage done only by an *Imam* and two witnesses without any legal contract. Kahf shows that even though polygamy is unlawful in U.S some traditional American Muslims are still practicing it because it has much to do with tradition; they still retain sway to their religious and cultural values in order to reawake their identity and attain the aspects of their cultural and spiritual passions in a foreign land.

In Islam polygamy is permitted as it is already known, but there are some Islamic rules to be respected in order to pursuit it; before thinking of marrying the second wife, the man should be ascertained if he can support both; the first and the second wife; at a time and being equal. The practice of polygamy requires taking turns in everything emotionally and financially with both as it is mentioned above in the surah of *Al Nisa*.

Thus polygamy is forbidden for the men who cannot reach the fulfillment of the conditions to be polygamous; otherwise they marry only one and take care of her and their children in order to avoid injustice, which is considered as an act that leads to the break of the religious rules.

Uncle Abdulla has two wives the first is Fatma; they married for love as she said when she was telling her story to Khadra. "We didn't have an arranged marriage, no matter what people think. We were in love. We ran to the riverbank to meet each other. We had something most people never have, something like a treasure from God." (419) all that love was gone when he married the second wealthy woman; Mirvat, Abdulla is supposed to be fair with both as Allah order in the Quran.

Financially, Abdullah "spend the same amount of money on each wife" (418) but regarding the emotional side he was not fair. Aunt Fatma refers to this inequality through

her conversation with Khadra, saying, "now? What's left of that treasure [love]? He's taken it all and given it to that one [Mirvat]" (*Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 419) Kahf accounts for explaining the hardship of practicing polygamy in the right way and how that practice impacts women's rights, because women often marry for the purpose of emotional gratification to keep the marital harmony, once it becomes destroyed, women become destroyed too. Kahf also reveals a clear effect of inequality and injustice in practicing polygamy, and that this truth is ignored by many traditional Muslims because some of them are only interested in fulfilling their desires relying on the religious and cultural justifications.

Love is considered "to be at the center of marriage" (Suzuki 70) ; it is the foundation of the matrimonial relationship and the most important thing for the woman, Fatima wishes if she could go back to the past and do it all over again and divorce Uncle Abdulla, saying "If I had it to do again? I would leave him." (419) she didn't expect things would end up like this; to the point where he stops loving her once he married Mirvat. Kahf shows the remorse of the traditional Muslim women in the acceptance and the permission of the process of polygamy.

Modernity is full of oppositions against religious and cultural values, for instance the feminists stand against polygamy because it is dissonant with the modern world; the modern women are more aware than before, they stop believing in the idea that polygamy is a favor and support for women rather than men, and that the system of polygamy works better than cheating, divorce or abandonment. Believing in this conception led so many women to accept polygamy as a way of life at least to benefit from one of these realities.

Kahf's protagonist Khadra is completely against polygamy, she sees it as an advantage for men and on the other hand as an abuse for women, this perception is demonstrated through her conversation with Seemi about sex and religion, she said "It's

never equal. Men always get breaks. Polygamy in Islam ring a bell there, huh? " (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 361). Khadra points to the fact that women are coerced to accept polygamy because it is a rule that is conditional on them according to the Islamic and traditional ruling.

However, as far as the context of polygamy is concerned, the practice stills holds a cultural worth and religious significance for the Muslim community, because it is an important religious and traditional. When Khadra saw "a tall beautiful man […] she flashed on fantasies of 'second wife' –hood—but only for the barest instant—I've just committed a feminist sin, she thought with chagrin. But if it was the only way to have him, would she consider it? Of course not—but then, why did she even go there for a second— yeee! Stop! " (372)

Khadra, for a brief moment thinks about being a second wife, because she was in a weak situation of admiration, after few seconds she realized the danger of what she have just said by labeling it a sin because she is totally against the idea of polygamy and only the act of considering it possible makes her feel guilty, because polygamy for the American Muslim women is considered as a boundary that have to be breached.

2.5.2 Arranged and Forced Marriages

Though the Islamic and cultural traditions have been influenced by the processes of modernity and somehow of westernization, the process of arranged marriages remains the Islamic norm for the Muslims, and this is clearly represented in Mohja Kahf's novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* over the marital experiences of the Muslim Americans in the United State, when "Ebtehaj and other ladies kept on the lookout for grown-up girls" (80) "who might make good matches for the bachelors they knew, friends of their husbands and such." (81).

Mohja shows how the Muslims tend to follow the traditional manners which are driven by cultural rather than Islamic regards of choosing girls whom they believe to be the appropriate spouses for their youngsters, because Islam asks for the man and woman's approval, it gives them the right to choose their partners independently out of their parent's desires, but it is also permitted as long as it is accepted by the groom and the bride.

However, as previously discussed, it would be better for the Muslims to espouse their daughters from their own folk, the case of "Zuhura [who] was getting engaged to Aunt Fatma's brother Luqman. They had first met at Uncle Abdulla's dinner. Luqman had then sent his sister fatma to inquire with Zuhura's family. A meeting had been arranged." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 73) Zuhura accepts the proposal even though she used to love somebody else; the one her parents rejected because it is difficult for a girl to reject a match accepted by her parents, knowing that the couple are free to accept or refuse the arrangement, but it is considered to be the shattering of the traditional and cultural outlook of the Muslim community and lessens their pride.

Another situation of arranged marriages is represented in the request of Eyad; he "announced his own intension to find a wife." (252). because he has chosen a girl before and his parents didn't agree so he let it for his mother's choice, she "got on the case—a joyful project, but one that required care and circumspection and good planning. She excelled at these. She had contacts in Muslim communities all over the U.S. and Canada." (252). in the arranged marriage Muslims usually consult their cognation in finding the suitable spouse, in order to know her background, origin, religion and culture because the ethnic and social background are observed as an important principle for their family's honor.

Regarding forced marriages, it is very important to differentiate between arranged marriages and forced marriages and to notice that not all arranged marriages are forced.

Both are traditional concepts, whereas arranged marriage is a cultural arrangement taken by parents without the involvement of their children but the arrangement would not be without their mutual consent; they see each other and try to get attached to each other, convincing themselves by thinking that they are the right persons for each other.

In contrast with forced marriage which is an obligation that takes place without the approval of either parties or one of them which means the luck of the mutual consent. Forced marriage is neither a cultural nor a religious practice, because in Islam as the prophet Muhammad once "A previously married woman without a husband must not be married until she is consulted and a virgin must not be married until her permission is sought." (qtd.in Dodge 124) Arranged marriage has no place in the Islamic principles, but it does take place in the Islamic traditions.

Mohja shows two related cases under a forced and arranged marriage in her novel in order to draw a clear distinction between the two aspects, the following incidents clarify the position of arranged and forced marriages, when *téta* was telling Khadra about her mother's story with her father's wife saying that "Sibelle tried to force your mother into a marriage with a man who drank and whored, just to make her misery lifelong [...] "Ebtehaj was desperate to get out of that house. Oh yes, it was all Razanne's doing" "She and Wajdy saved her." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 276)

Ebtehaj was saved by an arranged marriage because the system of arranged marriage is not violent practice as forced marriage that's why it still exist in the modern time and Mohja clarifies this conception when Khadra was discussing it with Seemi saying "Not that there's anything wrong with arranged marriage," (334) "I'm not saying I like or I don't like it," Khadra hedged. "I'm just saying that in itself is not the problem. It's not this terrible tragic movie-of-the-week thing, okay." (335)

Khadra as a modern character, is not against the idea of arranged marriage, Mohja indicates that this tradition still exists and might be present in the future, it have changed rather than disappearing from the forcible to the peaceful way because nowadays it is gaining more modern directions, but forced marriages are disappearing in view of the fact that it is in itself considered as a bad practice which ruins the women's rights.

2.6. Conclusion

The strength of modernity and the boundaries of tradition toward marital choices in Mohja Kahf's novel were examined in this chapter through four types of marriage which were identified as religious and traditional processes. Conclusively, from the content analysis of this chapter, we discovered that Kahf's novel is an autobiographical work and that there is a correlation between both Mohja Kahf and her protagonist Khadra Shamy.

We also ended up with the conclusion that the matrimonial relationships swings between tradition and modernity and that the Muslim immigrant generations are confused between tradition and modernity; they wonder whether to act independently or to accept their parents' religious and traditional rules. But the matrimonial relationships are neither straight forward nor easy to understand and manage, in addition to that; there are many religious traditional and cultural obstacles that affect these relationships.

Chapter Three

Taboos at the Intersection of Tradition and Modernity

3.1 Introduction

Disregarding the different types of marriage acknowledged In Mohja Kahf's book, marriage in its religious frame is considered as the cornerstone of the Muslim community, its sacred position is approved by all the Muslim believers regardless of their age and gender, nevertheless their perception of some practices coating the matrimonial relationships clash and differ. In this chapter we endeavor to shed the light on the controversial issues that accentuate the divergence between the modern and traditional generations' perception of the matrimonial relationship and the rules that govern this union, we also attempt to demonstrate how the identity and the upbringing of the characters affect their visions and stances towards the standers and rules that shape the conjugal relationship.

3.2 Taboos as the Point of Contrast

The characters of the Arab-Muslim community in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* accord a huge importance to the matrimonial relationship and conjugal life; they consider the marital life as the fundamental foundation of the community and the basis of the family; hence, it systematically imposes the preservation and respect of these marital relationships and condemns all what might affect or compromise them.

Nonetheless, the contact of the Islamic conservatism with the western liberalism created a confusing image of the matrimonial relationships among the members of the Muslim community, especially among the young generation; who grew up in a western environment and cohabited with the American culture.

The Arab-Muslim community in Kahf's book as any other society or community in the world has conventional values and principles of acceptable behavior that the members

of the society are obliged to follow. And considering the fact that the matrimonial relationships and the family are considered as the cornerstone of the Muslim community, it is then the role of this latter to direct and guide the behavior and thoughts of its members by conventional expectations and rules concerning the conjugal relationships.

The list of behavioral guidelines and codes that govern every society are usually referred to as taboos. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* the term taboo is defined as "The prohibition of an action based on the belief that such behaviour is either too sacred and consecrated or too dangerous and accursed for ordinary individual to undertake". Furthermore, "Taboos are sometimes referred to as doing the "unthinkable". Even thinking about violating a taboo is problematic."(Fershtman et al 01)

3.2.1 Taboos between Religion and Culture

The taboos that govern Khadra's community are not all related to the Islamic religion, some are part of the deep-rooted tradition of her community's Arabic background and cultural belonging .Thus, the characterizations of the taboos that reign in Mohja Kahf's book are either accredited to religious or cultural motifs.

The Islamic religion has its own set of taboos that dictate what the believers should not do or consider doing in their lives. Religious taboos in general are referred to as a practice that is prohibited or sacred based on religious values or ethics, but in his article entitled *Islamic Religious Taboos*, James Stuart refers to the Islamic taboos specifically as the obligation to "avoid forbidden ("haram") acts in order to maintain a good relation with God."

In the frame of the matrimonial relationships, issues such as; adultery, fornication and illicit relationships in general are considered religious taboos; because, the act of

violating the conjugal relationship itself is represented as a taboo, since marriage is considered in Islam as a sacred union.

While the Islamic taboos are negatively perceived by some of Kahf's non-Muslim characters; who find these prohibitions senseless and useless, the Muslim characters perceive these taboos as the only truth to be respected. Mary Douglas asserts that "To an outside observer, a taboo or religious prohibition might seem irrational; to the believer it simply seems right". (72)

This misunderstanding and bad perception of taboos are not restricted to the non-Muslim characters; a number of Muslim characters in the novel contradict about the veracity and reliability of some taboos, because they consider that these taboos are not conform to Islam but are instead culturally based taboos.

In fact, every culture has its proper taboos, and these taboos are not necessarily based on religious norms. This kind of taboos is mainly related to the upbringing and the cultural environment of the individual. And when cultures interact, coexist and diverge these taboos are called into question.

3.2.2 The Sustainability of Taboos in a Hybrid Culture

Taboos differ from one culture to another; each culture has a set of taboos that fit its social norms and values; hence, a practice may be taboo in one culture and not in another. Thus; the Arab-Muslim community's taboos like sexuality, abortion and having children out of the wedlock are not really considered as a large social stigma in the U.S.

This divergence creates a contrast between the Muslim and American culture, as well as between the theoretical Islamic teaching the Muslim characters had received and

the taboos they are submitted to in their lives. This confrontation of ideologies and cultures engenders confusion and puzzlement for the characters who have to live within the interaction of two different cultures with different taboos.

Taboos are important features of any cultural identity; "Adopting an identity implies accepting the taboos and the social norms associated with this identity." (Fershtman, Uri, and Moshe 06).and living as a minority within a mainstream imposes the confrontation or coexistence of two identities. The characters have then to first choose which identity they want to adopt, the American or the Muslim culture, and then decide whether they are going to follow the taboos prescribed by the chosen identity or not .

The modernity that comes in line with the American culture gives birth to new attitudes and behaviours that affect the religious and cultural taboos of the Muslim community. These new attitudes and stances challenge the power of these prohibitions and call them into question. "Taboos change over time; some become stronger while others disappear. Part of this process is clearly a result of social and demographic changes." (ibid)

Through time this influence leads to the alternation of the taboos; some vanish while others take root. This process is even more accelerated for the Muslim immigrant community in reason of its abrupt contact with the American culture. Under the influence of the western evolution and modernity some of this community's taboos and other prohibitions collapse and crumble because they are considered as banal and random things for the Americans; hence, matters such as dating and sexuality start to lose their alien aspect for Khadra and her peers.

But not all the taboos succumb to the weight of the American modernity, some in the contrary raise and strengthen as a form of resistance to the western influence and as an attachment to the tradition. Therefore, more pressure is placed upon the members of

Khadra's community to maintain the traditional values and respect the imposed taboos, in the sake of the preservation of their culture and identity.

The strength of taboos is determined by the number of individuals who advocate and endorse them, but these taboos can also weaken or disappear if people deviate from them. And in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* the taboos are negotiated between the elders who preserve the taboos and the youth who try to break free.

The pressure between the assimilation forces of the western sphere and the need to hold on to one's cultural traditions and religion present a kind of confusion for the Muslim immigrants in Kahf's book. These characters are torn between three categories of taboos among which they try to manage and negotiate their identity.

3.3 Taboos at the Center of the Generational Conflict

As the Arab-Muslim community in Kahf's book tends to grow the gap between the elders and the youth tends to widen, because contrary to their parents who had an already acquired Arab identity when they reached the host country, the majority of the young Muslim characters are still in the lookout of a personal identity. As a result, the characters of the young generation find themselves trapped between the freedoms that the American society affords and the deep-rooted traditions and taboos of their parents' and grandparents' generations.

The young generation's perceptions and stances towards the taboos surrounding the conjugal relationships and gender interaction are not as strict and rigid as those of their parents. The young characters grew up mainly in the U.S and cohabited with Americans who slam the taboos of the Muslim immigrant community and consider things like dating and sexuality as legitimate parts of the everyday life. Nonetheless, this attitude is

contradicted by the inculcated values and education the young characters received from their parents.

The young generation in Mohja Kahf's book tries to forge its own identity; its members endeavor to set the norms and values that define their hybrid identity by balancing between two opposite social structures and cultures. The young Muslim generation manages to adapt the traditional values and taboos of their parents' generation to the modernity and freedom that are offered by the American society. This adaptation gives birth to a culture that is neither traditionally embedded nor completely modern.

Raised in different environments and upholders of different identities the modern and traditional generations have different perception of the matrimonial relationships and conjugal life, but what accentuates this disparity lies in the fact that their visions of marriage parallels their stances towards the taboos that surrounds the marital relationship.

3.3.1 Challenging the Fixed Gender Roles in Marriage

Marriage involves the union of a man and a woman to form a family. This union requires the contribution and collaboration of the two partners; each partner has distinct duties and tasks to fulfill; in order to ensure the complementarity and the balance of the couple. The distribution of roles in the couple is known as the gender roles, these roles are the representation of the responsibilities that the society draws for each gender and the violation of these norms is considered as a problematic issue for the conservative communities especially for the Arab-Muslim community that considers the changes in the gender roles as a taboo.

Kahf shows in her book *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* that Islam has a faire stance concerning the gender roles; it does not promote the presumed image of the

oppressive man and the enclosed woman because "religion allows more flexibility than that."(192); it instead, portrays the husband and his wife as equal partners both within and outside the domestic sphere, "the prophet never asked his wives to do anything in the house for him." (241)   besides "the prophet used to help his wife with the housework, and *sitna* aicha led a battle once" (192).

Nonetheless, in Kahf's book the characters of the elder generation have a rigid vision of the gender roles; they consider that "Men should be men and women should be women" (ibid). The strict attitude of the traditional characters towards the gender roles is mainly governed by custom and tradition. Rose as one of the main figures that promote the traditional repartition of the gender roles says that, "that's the way it's supposed to be. Tradition hon .it works .you do not mess with what works."(ibid)

This vision of the gender roles is even more accentuated when it comes to the matrimonial relationships, the elder characters advocate the gender roles' stereotype in which the husband is the main source of income and the wife is the homemaker. Characters like Ebtehaj "didn't work. At least , not outside the home .Inside she worked plenty, scrubbing things clean, getting spots out , refolding aluminum foil , deboning chicken to make it last several meals"(*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 21) ,her mother-in-law is portrayed as a domestic woman as well, she was "devoted to her children and home" (286).

The indicated characteristics fitted these female characters for the traditional stereotype of the housewife; devoted to housework and children's education, since it is believed that "the best contribution to an Islamic revolution for a woman is to educate her children in the true Islamic values." (155)

However, this vision of the gender roles differs from one generation to another; the young women in Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* have the same career opportunities as their male partners, thus characters like Khadra and Zuhura try to affirm themselves in their marital relations and attempt to obtain equivalent roles as their spouses.

Kahf's protagonist as a model of the modern woman rejects the inequality in the gender roles, and does not want to play the role of the domestic wife restricted to the housework and labor she rather prefers to impose herself in her couple and defies the stereotypes of the traditional obedient women.

Khadra stands up against her husband and quarrel with him about whom is supposed to cook, because she considers that cooking is not a task restricted to women ,in their quarrel she says : "I don't know .why're you asking me ? like I'm the one who's supposed to know? [...]I'm not a women – I don't know How to cook! Juma shouted .well; it didn't come with my boobs! Khadra shouted back."(*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 241). By these statements Khadra does not only reject the domestic tasks that were for a long time imposed to every married woman but she also alludes to the fact that the gender roles are not biological.

On the other hand, the male characters of the modern generation do not waive the position and profits that the traditional gender roles afford to men, hence, they constantly try to coerce their defiant wives into the standard feminine roles.

Zuhura is depicted as a strong and bold woman who "would stand head and shoulder above not only her peers, but her elder and younger cohorts."(56); nevertheless, she has to set aside her boldness and audacity when dealing with her future husband, since "she was beginning to see that her argumentation talents, while they suited her career

ambitions, were not the skills needed for becoming Luqman's wife" (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 74).

Juma, for his part, tries to exercise more authority on his wife, imposing more rules and limits on her; he first protest about Khadra's subscription to a class of Islamic studies with a German professor, then he uses religion to prevent her from riding her bicycle, telling her "As your husband I forbid you" (230).Furthermore, Juma tries to convince his wife that the housework is a woman's duty not a man's one, ironically saying "Let's see: who's the wife in this picture." (241)

Though they belong to the modern generation some male characters still fervently believe in the traditional gender roles, these characters are considerably influenced by tradition. As in Juma's case "It wasn't god's rulings; it was just his own sensibilities, the way he'd been raised in Kuwait." (229)

Marriage for the young generation involves people with similar incomes and interests in comparison to the traditional individuals who have clearly defined and distinctly different domestic and wage earning roles, this contrast means that the modern married couples have different expectations of their roles and responsibilities within the marital life comparing to their elders. And it is also this disparity in the gender roles that stresses the difference between the modern and traditional married couples and widens the gap between the two generations' perception of marriage.

Apart from the distinctive roles that are attributed to each gender. Separation between men and women is another issue that highlights the difference between the two sexes. And Mohja Kahf enlightens in her novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* that the interaction between girls and boys past a certain age is inacceptable and considered a taboo.

However the author makes it clear that this separation is not due to a religious conviction, because Islam had not prevented the two sexes' interaction "the prophet had taught women with no curtain between them, and that the first mosques in Islam had no physical barrier between men and women."(*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 197).

As in the case of the gender roles it is the tradition that governs peoples' thinking apropos the sexes' interference, and the characters of the traditional generation see in this interaction a violation to the norms of the Muslim community.

Saweem; Ebtehaj milk sister; for example "was telling Ebtehaj, in scandalized tones, that her husband's sister, sheikha, held mixed-gender dinner parties."(170) and when she received Ebtehaj and her family into her house "the men went left, into the public parlor, and the women went right" (165).Ebtehaj for her part is not as strict as her milk sister.

Hence, this barrier between boys and girls reveals the gender division that controls the gender relationships and settle the unequal gender roles. Nevertheless it is also shown that the western context weakens the rigidity and firmness of the gender separation and promotes the gender roles equality.

3.3.2 Dating and Fornication as a Critical Juncture of Marriage

Islam has always stressed the importance of the marital relationships; it has established marriage as the only way for the two sexes to form a family and have legitimate children**.** Consequently, marriage is the only mean for a man and a woman in the Muslim community to tie a relationship and satisfy their sexual desires.

In order to conserve these matrimonial relationships "Every religion in the world has rules about sex." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 283), and Islam forbids all forms of

illicit relations between the two genders and disallows all kind of private intercourse between them. "Say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty." (228) and it "tells men to control their bodies too," (361); that is why it is shown in the book that "Past a certain age, girls in their community didn't hang out with boys."(136)

For the conservative Muslim community there is no concept of dating as it is practiced in the West; there are no romantic or sexual relationships before committing to each other .Thus, all pre marital or extramarital relationships are negatively perceived. But As with most traditional beliefs, these ideas are held more strongly by the elder generation than by the younger one.

Believes in America are different, and so are the ways to meet the partner. The young generation who lives in the interaction of these two contradictory perspectives of relationships finds itself torn between two ideologies. And characters like Jihad and Khadra are no more content with the arranged marriage; the way their parents got married does not work for them.

These young characters grew up in a western environment where dating and relationships are part of the everyday life "Americans dated and fornicated and committed adultery."(68). Thus comparing to their parents they are more open to the idea of love before marriage; Jihad; the Shamy's youngest child fell in love at a young age but confessed his secret love story only to his sister; because he considers that she is the only one who can understand his situation. Effectively Khadra receives the news positively "what a blessing .*Alhamdulilah* [she says, and admits that] she never would've had the courage at his age" (431). Nonetheless, Jihad cannot be that open about his love story with his parents who are more restraint about the idea.

Beginning a love relationship in the past was much more challenging than it is for the modern generation, characters like Aunt Fatma and Téta had to go through hard times to preserve their love from the harshness of the traditional society. Aunt Fatma and her lover had to meet stealthily; they had to "run to the riverbank to meet each other" (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 419) so that nobody can see them. and Téta "eloped to Haifa" (272) with her beloved man so that they can get married, but there elopement was not that easy, in that context she says "[We were] hiding our love too .people were hard on us" (273) and quotes a passage from Nizar kabani's poems that says "people of my city hate love and hate lovers" (ibid) .Her family tamed by the traditional customs rebutted her she "was dead to them." (ibid)

The modern woman in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is no more the stereotyped oppressed Muslim woman but is instead a fascinating woman who loves to be attractive and desired and "Khadra was a woman." (341) after her divorce, she ventured in the world of dating for the first time and her first relationship was with Chrîf; a man who pushed her limits a bit too far that "it all came screeching to an end" (352)

Khadra was "still on the lookout for love" (375) after her failed tentative with Chrîf, but she did not despair to keep looking for her match and it is her reconnection with her old friend hakim that rekindled the flame of love in Khadra's heart; nonetheless, it surprises her to tight a love relationship with a highly religious man, she was amazed and wondered "Is she being asked on a date? .A date with the imam?" (410) this was the last thing she was expected.

But for the conservative elders like Khadra's parents and the other uncles who grew up in a conservative community and had traditional upbringings, dating was correlated to sin and adultery, that is why they have radical opinions about the gender illicit

relationships, "The fact that joy dated at all was enough to put her, in their view, on the slippery slope to promiscuity." (214)

These elder characters consider that it is their duty to preserve their children from the American influential beliefs about dating, Wajdy who has always dismissed the Americans for their education, angrily wonders "How could any decent father hand his daughter over to a boy and tell them, go on ,go out into the night, hold hands, touch each other? Some profound perversion on the soul made American men accept this pimpery –." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 86).Uncle Omar shares the same thought as Wajdy, and one day he even went after his son "Ramsey with a strap after catching him with Insaf Haqiqat when they were teens" (55).

In Islam dating tends to fornication and as "Every religion in the world has rules about sex" (361) the Islamic religion requires sex to be within the frame of the marital relationship, and sex outside marriage is considered as a sin. And since virginity is the concrete proof that the girl did not have sex with anyone else before committing to her husband, she has to preserve her it until the day of her marriage.

It is for these precise reasons that the mothers in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* teach their daughters to be really careful about their virginity and stick in their minds that "We're all supposed to be careful with what's between our legs." (361). Apart from the sexual relationships the unmarried girls have to avoid all what might touch their virginity, hence "Virgins mustn't use tampons they're for married women."(109).

Mohja Kahf also emphasizes the rigidity of the Muslim community concerning the issue of virginity when zuhura was missing and suspected of adultery "Even if she is found alive now, she is ruined." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 92), and referred to "the murder possible honor killing." (97), in which her husband was suspected .On the other hand the

young girls are constantly reminded that they should not be influenced by their American counterpart, because "American girls don't care if they're open down there!"(109).

Hanifa transgressed the Islamic rules and committed fornication; her act resulted in the birth of an illegitimate child. "Most of the community had closed ranks on Hanifa for having a baby out of wedlock." (397). The Muslim community rejected her and rebutted everything related to her "Never speak her name again [Ebtehaj said when Khadra asked] how strange it was about Hanifa" (130).

The characters of the new generation are more educated about sex they do not consider it only as a conjugal duty but also want to enjoy practicing it, Khadra as one of these characters confirms that she wants "Good sex. Great sex [...] a prude doesn't like sex. I like sex."(360). these characters are also more indulgent vis-à-vis the people having sex outside marriage; Khadra as an example does not judge her friend for her sexual life though she knows "Seemi and Veejay's relationship included sex" (361).

Khadra thinks that "people are human and have different weaknesses, and having a weakness for ego maybe just as much a problem as having for sex." (362) .But even if she says she is not a prude and she likes sex, she does not believe in sex outside marriage and would not think of it herself.

The characters of the young generation do not share their parents' perception of the gender interactions and dating, nevertheless they are still distant from the idea of having sex outside marriage. These convergence and divergence allude to the fact that even though the young characters venture to transgress some traditional rules they still respect the religious prohibitions.

3.4 Breaking the Taboos

Living under the influence of a society that promotes individualism rather than social conformity, compelled the Muslim generation in Kahf's book to transgress some taboos in order to break free from the confinement of the traditional culture. But the rebellion against the social norms and taboos often engender the risks of severe punishment and complete rejection by the family as well as the community ,so inevitably,

> Anyone who has violated a taboo becomes taboo himself, because he possesses the dangerous quality of tempting others to follow his example: why should he be allowed to do what is forbidden to others? Thus he is truly contagious in that every example encourages imitation, and for that reason he himself must be shunned. (Freud 38)

Indeed the character's decisions to break some taboos signal the beginning of a change and rupture with certain traditions, but it does not mean that they rebut entirely the values of their culture. It is, in fact a moment of uncertainty and even loneliness, because modernity as practiced by the young Muslim generation has created more tensions and contradictions between them and their elders than it supplied with answers.

The hybrid identity of the young characters gave birth to a new perception of the matrimonial relationships; this new vision engendered the transgression of some taboos that do not fit with their aspirations and expectations of marriage. Consequently challenging taboos like abortion and *khulu'* represents the liberation from the traditional cults of the elder generation.

3.4.1 Contraception and Abortion Break the Social Stigma

The community of *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is strongly pro-family and regards children as a gift from God; even so it has set marriage as the only frame inside which procreation and sexual relations can take place. In general the Islamic religion encourages marriage and considers raising children as one of its main purposes.

Even if religion accords a big importance to procreation , it regards the act of temporary prevention as legitimate, and   Kahf points out the ambiguity and controversies that arouse around the subject by explicating   in the novel that "birth control is allowed in *shariah*, but not indefinitely" (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 226). Though the practice of contraception is valid in Islam, the act is still regarded as a violation by some characters.

The traditional generation systematically relates marriage to procreation. They suppose that every newly married couple should expect a baby in the few months that follow their legal union. "In the months after the wedding, not a week went by when someone didn't ask Khadra if she was pregnant."(ibid), and the constant questions that the elders used to ask the newly married couples, like"Any little ones on the way?" (57), or "Why don't you have a baby in your hands and three more behind you" (55). Are the proofs that the old generation does not consider the use of prevention as an option for the married couples especially not for the newly married ones.

Old people like aunt Fatma have negative preconceptions and ideas about the use of contraceptives for women. Because, in addition to the Islamic lens through which she sees it as haram and that "god doesn't like you trying to prevent life." (226), she tells Khadra: "It can be harmful, I tell you .My aunt took the pills and do you know what?—aunt Fatma lowered her voice, her eyes widening—they made her sterile...The West sends the pills to Egypt and other Muslim lands to make us all sterile." (ibid)

In opposition to this generation that urges childbirth, the young generation prefers to defer pregnancy and enjoy a childfree marital life for a while. Hence, the use of contraceptives is crucial for the young married characters. Mohja Kahf underlines the significance of prevention for these characters in many situations in which she stresses their convictions and their fears.

These paradoxical feelings are exemplified in Khadra's panic the day of her weeding when she forgot her birth control pills , "she sent Tayiba to hook's drugs before they closed to pick up a refill of her birth control pills, which she'd been taking since her last period" (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 216). Her husband; Juma; belongs to the same generation; nonetheless, he does not share the same resolution of postponing children, "you're really adamant about that, aren't you?" (ibid) .Khadra is not the only character who opts for prevention in marriage "Danny, and his wife, Tayiba had started out with the resolve to postpone children too." (227)

Though their openness to the idea of contraception, the young characters in the book still hold some preconceptions vis-a-vis the sexual prevention. Juma heard that "real men don't use condoms [because] spermicide can make you impotent" (ibid). Khadra as well, faced lot of doubts and apprehensions about contraception after her abortion, and all what haunted her mind were the consequences of her act, "Do you think god will punish me by not letting me have babies later when I want them?" (250).

In addition to the personal doubts that the young married characters have about prevention, the traditional Muslim community adds another burden to their heavy lot by exercising an additional pressure on them for having babies, which is the case of the "the aunties who used to pry into whether or not she [Khadra]was pregnant during her brief marriage." (57). The elders' expectations and presumptions accentuate the newly married

couples' frustration by rushing them into procreation; Khadra for example feels "it's like they're all here in bed with us [she and Juma], going like "Have babies! do it ,do it." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 227).

The fear and hesitation that the young characters of *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* endure after opting for prevention, allude to the fact that though they are stepping outside the radical beliefs and adapting the practice of contraception to their modern needs and values, they still hold some of the traditional ideas inculcated by their parents and grandparents.

Among the practices of contraception represented in the book of *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, Mohja Kahf depicts abortion as the most conflictual and controversial form of contraception that the characters differ on.

In Islam abortion is *halal* if it conforms to the religious norms, because "Islamic law allows abortion up to four months [...] all the schools of thought allow it .the only thing they differ on is how long it's allowed .four weeks to four months .that's the range" (225). But every person sees abortion from a different lens; these visions differ in function of the significance that the individual holds for pregnancy.

The generation of Khadra's parents and grandparents accord a huge importance to pregnancy and children, Ebtehaj for example gave up on all her dreams and ambitions in the sake of having children and bringing them up ,in this context she says, " after I graduated, I chose to stay home .For the children. She patted her belly, which globed firm and round in front of her." (21).Wajdy's mother on the other hand went to the extent of making her life in peril just to give birth to her baby ; she died while having her son Wajdy; though, "they told her it was risky"(245) ,this woman "sacrificed everything for a child, sacrificed her own self ." (ibid).

Mohja Kahf's elder characters like Ebtehaj and her mother in-law are, according to the tradition, women who dedicate their lives to procreation; they put pregnancy and children at the top of their priorities in life. Thus having an abortion is unthinkable for these characters.

In contrast to these devoted mothers who renounced to their dreams and gave birth to children at the expense of their lives, Khadra has different views and plans for her life and having a baby does not figure among them, because having a child "would lock her into a life, a very specific kind of life with Juma that she was no longer certain she wanted." (247), "She has given 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." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 248).

Khadra; as a figure of modernity; does not want to have the same fate as the traditional women. "Well, I don't want to die in childbirth .I am not your mother [...] I don't want to be your mother" (245). Khadra is not only different from the traditional woman; her grandmother in this case; but is also determined to push away all what might lock her into the kind of life elder women in her community lived.

Having an abortion for Kahf's protagonist does not only mean rejecting pregnancy but it also means rejecting the Dawah Center and its entire community ,rejecting their stereotypes and rules and most of all rejecting the kind of life they have drawn for her. Her rebellion is described as "the snarl of a fanged thing gnawing in a trap." (248)

Mohja Kahf also shows that the characters who rebel against the traditional religious and cultural values often risk severe punishment and a complete rejection by the family as well as the community. Khadra as a character who rebelled against the conventional principals of her Muslim community found herself rebutted, "Her parents

would not speak to her [...] and they did not come to Khadra, no one was there everyone was talking about her." (251)

3.4.2 Divorce and *Khulu'* toward a Path for Liberation

The conjugal life is not always a succession of happy and peaceful moments, sometimes this alliance is confronted to possible marigolds and misunderstandings and Mohja Kahf expresses this reality in her book *The Girls in the Tangerine Scarf* by saying that, "there are days when things are rosy, and then there may be days when you wake up and feel the future closing in on you, the horizon shrinking "(209). In these cases when the happy days give way to the harsh reality of life the matrimonial relationships are put to the test.

And when the tension between the couple persists, repeats and increases; in the long run; it creates an aversion between the spouses in such a way that separation becomes the only resolution. And divorce is considered as the most extreme and serious solution that some of Mohja Kahf's characters opted for.

In the Islamic religion of Kahf's characters, divorce is permitted if it is justified by valid and just reasons. Nonetheless, it is considered as loathsome. All the characters in the book are conscious that divorce must not be taken lightly or brandished in the slightest disagreement. For instance, Eyad, advances this idea to his sister when she reveals her intention of divorce, by telling her that "Divorce is supposed to be a last resource" (243).

Even though the generation of Khadra is aware of the seriousness of the act it is prone to higher rates of divorce comparing to the generation of her parents. Because Khadra's parents' generation is highly conservative and sees in divorce a violation of the sacred union of marriage.

In addition to the religious motifs, the conservatism of the traditional generation is mainly due to the fact that formerly, when a couple divorced, there had to be a good reason for it and the divorcees were put to the margin of the society and lived with the weight of shame and guilt. But the new generation is not afraid of stepping out of the marital life and tends to trivialize divorce; hence the causes of divorce are for most pointless and senseless.

The American environment in which Khadra and her peers have been brought up has a significant influence on their perception of the conjugal relationships and divorce, because it is thought that the United States of America is among the countries that have the higher rate of divorce. A phenomenon that is mainly due to the western lifestyle that belittles the importance of the matrimonial relationships and emboldened individualism. And Khadra's father who is tightly attached to the traditional Islamic values and principals despises this way of life and considers that Americans "had broken families and lots of divorce [because they] believed the individual was more important than the family." (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 68)

Another factor that highlights the discrepancy between the two generations is the presence of children for the couple, because the probability of breaks is more important for the couples without children .For instance, hakim and his wife Mahasen had "no kids" (51) and ended up divorced, and the case of the protagonist and her husband, because she believes that having children "would lock her into a life, a very specific kind of life with Juma, that she was no longer certain she wanted. (247).

In parallel, the traditional generation; represented by aunt Fatma in this case; gives a huge importance to the presence of children for the couple and considers that their presence is a sufficient reason to keep the couple together even if the conjugal relation is unsupportable. In this context aunt Fatma says to Khadra, "I stayed for the children [...] I

sacrificed my pride, myself for the children" (419). Hence the children's absence or presence plays an important role in the life of couples; whether they belong to the modern or traditional generation; and determine their continuity.

Divorce in Islam focuses generally on the male rejection of the female partner, the feminine divorce *Khulu '* being much less known on the other hand is considered as more taboo. Thus, this type of divorce is little practiced in the Muslim communities although it is admitted by most of the Muslim legal schools.

The Modern women in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* are described as women with confidence and self independence, women who have their own dreams and goals, women who have other expectations of marriage and most of all as women who do not fear to stand alone or to divorce.

Khadra as the major character of this category of women "offered Juma a khulu, or wife initiated divorce [...] Juma's pride was deeply offended by khulu. She repudiates him" (*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 251) .For Mahasen's husband too "it was she who left him" (58). Men are still shocked by *Khulu'* and feel really offended by these procedures, because they have always considered divorce as a power that is only of their resort, and the fact that their wives rebut them strikes their manliness.

If Khadra's mother and grandmother shows an extreme endurance in their couples, the generation of the protagonist seems more boastful and resolute .they are not ready to give up their dreams and ambitions in the sake of their marriages .Khadra says to her brother : " I feel like I can't go in this marriage without killing off the 'me' that I am" (242) , "I don't think I can stay with Juma without changing who I am ,who I essentially deep-down am" (243) and if leaving her husband is the only way to achieve her goals, then, "If it means divorce ,so be it." (248)

Access to education is another point that stresses the differences between the women of the two generations and their audacity to initiate a divorce. The traditional women believe all what is it dictated by the custom, and when the power was in the hands of the conservative majority, divorce was prohibited, compromised and perceived as a procedure opposing God's law.

Whereas young women like Khadra and Mahasen who had the chance to get a modern education of the classical Islam, were "well versed on *khulu'*."(*The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* 251), and become more aware of their rights and duties in the religious frame because, "Popular Islam mostly buried *khulu'*, and Muslim women the world over did not know they had the right. Modern Islamists such as the Dawah folk, however, revived many concepts from the classical Islam and this was one of them" (ibid), the modern and educated women want to live and undo the numerous social bans.

Another significant cause that boosted the young Muslim women's emancipation and self-confidence to go through divorce is their economic independence. In the past, it was a man task to earn money and afford the expenses of the family, whereas the woman's duty was restricted to the housework and children's education. Hence, women like Ebtehaj and the aunties had no income and had to rely on their husbands' money. Due to these situations, it was too difficult for most women to separate from their husbands. Nonetheless, this situation changed considerably for the majority of the young Muslim women like Khadra who had degrees and were predisposed to the professional life.

In addition to that the characters of the young generation had the instructions and guidance of their elders who do not want their progenitor to endure the same life and encourage them to be more independent. Téta for example, offered Khadra *Osmanli liras* on her weeding day and told her "this is called security, my dear, and we never show it to

our husband. A woman must keep something for herself, in case of circumstances" (209) she also told her "Trust him all you want, but have your own resources." (ibid) .for the modern generation the fact that the woman ask for divorce is legitimate ; even though, the Muslim community still sees divorce from a pejorative lens.

3.5 Conclusion

With regard to what has been discussed above it can be assumed that the two generations' perceptions of the matrimonial relationship go hand in hand with their stances towards the taboos established about it, these perceptions differ significantly due to the fact that the two generations did not have the same upbringing and do not share the same cultural inheritance. Therefore the contradictions above the perception of marriage is not expressed in the religious context but is instead observed at the cultural level. As a result the characters of the young generation tend to break the traditional taboos in order to express their distinct cultural identity and proper perception of marriage and in these rebellious attempts Kahf places her female characters at the foreground of the characters who challenge the traditional perceptions and break the social stigma.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

The present research has undertaken the study of Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* as a corpus in order to analyze how the immigrant Muslim community perceives the matrimonial relationship and how this latter is affected by the confrontation of the traditional conservatism and the western modernism .

In this dissertation we explored the interaction between tradition and modernity by comparing the portrayal of the young and former generation of Muslim immigrants in the U.S .and it is by relating the similarities and contrasts that emerge from these portrayals that we paralleled the differences and similarities between tradition and modernity.

On the light of what has been exposed in this research paper it can be said that marriage in its entity is considered as the cornerstone of the Muslim community, its importance is undeniable and unquestionable by the Muslim believers regardless of their age and gender, nonetheless the characters' perception of some practices encasing the matrimonial relationships differs and contrasts between the upholders of tradition and the seekers of modernity

This divergence is not expressed at the religious level but is instead articulated in the cultural frame, because the two generations uphold two different identities and cultures, due to their different environmental upbringing, but what accentuates this disparity even more is the fact that their vision of marriage parallels their stance toward the taboos that surrounds the marital relationship.

As the study goes on; it has been observed that Mohja Kahf stresses the disparity between the two generations' perceptions of marriage by putting her female characters at

the forefront of the modern generation and refer to their emancipation as the critical juncture in the perception of the matrimonial relationships.

Through this research paper we ended up with the conclusion that even if the decision of some modern characters to break the matrimonial taboos signals a change and the beginning of a rupture with certain traditions, it does not mean that they rebut entirely their Islamic values and culture.The modern Muslim generation is able to adapt the traditional matrimonial values and institutions to the progress of the western culture.and marriage is consequently torn between the traditional bounds and the modern ideologies.

Our study was motivated by the fact that little attention has been paid to the theme of matrimonial relationships and even less consideration was given to the perception of its evolution in time .hence, we expect our study to make a small contribution to the overall picture of what effect the interaction of tradition and modernity might have on people of Diaspora and to what extent does this interference influence their identity and perceptions of the matrimonial relationships, we further hope that our work paves the way to future research on the topic.

But even if we attempted in our research study to answer some questioning and enlighten some ambiguities about the topic in question, there are still elements of analysis to be resumed. Indeed, a relative approach with one or several novels of the same author or a comparison with another Arab-American author's novel could bring a new meaning to the novel and open the field to multiple interpretations of the theme.

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Appendices

Appendix one

The Author's Biography

Mohja Kahf, an Arab American poet and author,she is "one of the most important emerging voices in theMuslim world", born in Damascus, the largest city of Syria and the oldest inhabited cities in the world in 1967,when she was three years old almost four, Kahf came to the United States in 1971 with her parents, they have been involved in Syrian opposition politics. Her father could pursue a graduate degree and her could mother finish a BS in pharmacy. (Koon 02)

They landed in Salt Lake City, Utah, which was probably the best place for her parents in the West because it was the place where the Conservative Islamists followers settle, regarding the clear social and cultural changes that immigrants face in America, they try to go between the traditional and modern Muslims with a right sight of both, to the Islamic religious beliefs and the modern society. (Koon 02)

Around the age of twelve, Kahf started writing poems in a journal; she graduated from high school when she was fifteen years old and after receiving her PhD in comparative literature from Rutgers University, Kahf is currently a professor of comparative literature, Arabic literature, post-colonialism, and literary theory, in addition to that she is a faculty member of the King Fahd Center for the Middle East and Islamic

Studies at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, the county seat of Washington where she currently lives happily with her husband Najib Ghadbian and her three children. (Lampert 277)

From Salk Lake Kahf's family moved to Plainville Indianapolis where she grown up and where she have spent the worst years of her life, because of her ethnicity, she have experienced a great oppression which gave her presence of mind, and a strength to believe that she has her own voice that could make a difference in her life, and these experiences that she has gone through, didn't push her down but drive her up, she notes:

"I remember the actual moment and day when I knew how to not take it any-more," she said, "and to whirl around and say something back, and to have that shock of, oh, what I say can actually be effective in some way. That voice is still in me." (Koon 02) Kahf's experiences that she has experienced in the United States allow her to shape her own perceptions and give her the ability to mediate between the cultures of both, her home Syria and the host country America because she was deeply affected by two different cultures that makes her creates such a combination of two cultures by representing a rich linguistic diversity of her storytelling in her writings.

Mohja Kahf's writings include the first book which was an academic study of Muslim and Arab woman, *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (1999*), Politics and Erotics in Nizar Kabbani's Poetry: From the Sultan's Wife to the Lady Friend* (2000), *Braiding the Stories: Women's Eloquence in the Early Islamic Era*, *in Windows of Faith: Muslim Women's Scholarship and Activism* (2000), She has also a *sex and the Umma* column at Muslim Wake Up!, her columns speak to men and offer for them new directions of gender roles. (Lampert 277)

Her poetry has been published in literary journals for over ten years and her first collection of poetry *E-mails from Scheherazad*, (2003) in which Kahf presents the stereotypes of the Muslim woman in the United States, in addition to her first novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* published in 2006 which was chosen as book of the year for the One Book for June 2007, a story about a Muslim girl's coming of age in Indiana, who depicts the hardship of immigrants. (Lampert 278)

Mohja Kahf, as an immigrant and intellectual activist paves the way of the Arabness and Americaness for the Muslim immigrants through her work for the challenge and redefinition, which challenges both Arab communities, and the American perceptions against the Muslim women's subjectivities. In addition to that Kahf's work aims to change the constructions of otherness of the third world female in the United States, which is mainly represented by the Muslim Arab American woman in Kahf. (Koegeler 40)

Kahf's writings explore themes of ethnic, cultural, and religious borders and focuses more on the definition of traditional structures of power relations across gender and gender relations. Kahf addresses to touch some deep nerves through her writings, both in the Islamic and the western world as Lisa Suhair Majaj commented in *ArteNews* that Kahf's work "draws on American colloquialisms and Quranic suras; it is informed not only by American free verse … but also by a lush energy that draws on the heart of the Arabic oral tradition and Arabic poetry." (Koegeler 40)

Appendix two

The Synopsis of the Book *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

The story of *The girl in the tangerine scarf* is set in the American Heartland; where Khadra Shamy, a young Syrian-born girl, lives with her family in Indianapolis. Her devout parents follow the principals of the conservative Muslims trying to preserve their Islamic lifestyle and idealize Islam in America. They constantly try to isolate Khadra and her brothers from the Americans so that they would not be influenced by the western culture. Khadra is raised in a tied cosmopolitan community of Muslim aunties and uncles.
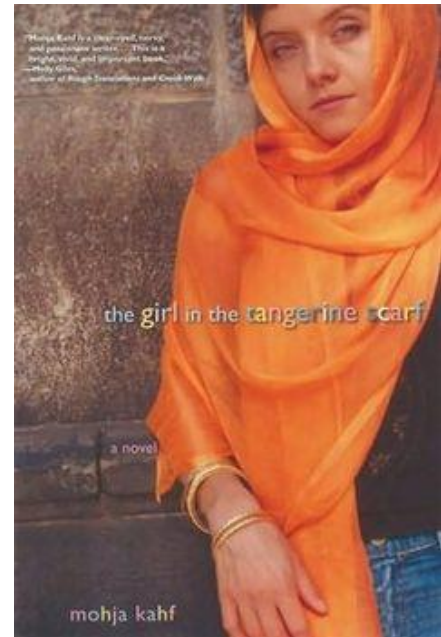
However, the community is singularized the by fanatical tensions between Sunnis and Shias. As the novel progresses, Khadra collects her simplistic understanding of each of these identities and gains a more complex one with special perceptions. During her stay in Syria after her divorce from Juma, she learns more multiculturalism on the same trip and becomes more permissive through her interactions with Syrian Jews and her admission of their claims to an authentic Syrian identity.

After returning to the United States, Khadra similarly starts to bring to light a new multicultural American identity, pleasing in the ethnic and religious diversity of Philadelphia, where she has moved in order to escape Indianapolis and its conservatism and oppression to find out the real interpretation of the Islamic rules and culture in addition to that to pursue a degree in photography and her conception of Islam expands to incorporate a wide range of practices.