explorations

Explorations: A Journal of Language and Literature

Between the Hammer and the Anvil: Complex Status of Women in Contemporary Arab American Women's Fiction

DOI: 10.25167/EXP13.21.9.3

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Abstract. This essay looks at the troubled representations and complex status of women in Arab American fiction produced by women authors, namely Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) and Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003). I argue that Arab fiction in the US diaspora is not only about questioning the clash between the two cultures – Arab and American – in post-9/11, but also about shedding the light on women's issues and concerns in both the diaspora and homeland. This particular ethnic fiction discusses sensitive topics in the Arab context such as traditional patriarchies, women's rights in Islam, and domestic violence. The analysis of the novels, and the arguments that stem from it, are supported by a socio-cultural constructivist approach based on perspectives of prominent critics and scholars such as Fadia Faqir, Henri Tajfel, and Carol Fadda-Conrey, to name just a few.

Key words: Mohja Kahf, Laila Halaby, patriarchy, gender, Arab American identity

1. INTRODUCTION

Arab American women's fiction witnessed an upsurge in the period following 9/11. It arguably differs from the literary creations of the 20th century due to socio-political and cultural developments and also artistic maturation. Carol Fadda-Conrey, in this context, states that "Arab-American writers starting to write and publish in the 1990s (and in the late 1980s) onward differ from their literary predecessors in notable ways, particularly in the kinds of subject matter they take up in their writings" (2014, 19). Indeed, these kinds of subject matter, Fadda-Conrey continues, "celebrate inherited Arab cultures but at the same time acknowledge their dark underbelly, which might include patriarchal norms, political divisions, and religious restrictions" (2014, 19). Samia Serageldin, an Arab American critic, also confirms the thematic transition of Arab American literature in the aftermath of 9/11. She purports that Arab American authors, or writers of Arab heritage, "when asked, are likely to say that they do not give any thought to the literature of

representation, but in the wake of September 11, they may feel more subject to inhibiting considerations. In particular, themes of sexuality and gender relations rarely escape the politics of representation" (2004, 137). The discussion about the issues of gender discourse and women's concerns in Arab American literature escalated quickly in contemporary period. This is because feminist beliefs and awareness about gender roles and gender discourse become prevalent in Arab American community of women (Read and Marshall 2003). This community includes various categories: artists, writers, activists, academics, and playwrights.

In this case, Laila Halaby's[1] *West of the Jordan* (2003) and Mohja Kahf's[2] *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) are two good examples of fiction to view how and to what extent women's status in the Arab and Arab American contexts is represented and questioned. These two novels primarily put patriarchy and gender discourse in their various forms under critical lens. The former narrates the story of a Syrian girl named Khadra Shamy who comes to the USA to settle in the city of Indianapolis. The agenda of this novel is to show the constant cultural clashes of Muslim life in America. Khadra lives her years of adolescence exploring what it means to be a Muslim woman who is confined by cultural codes and conflict of civilizations. The latter, *West of the Jordan*, tells the stories of four female cousins from Palestine and Jordan. These are Khadija, Soraya, Mawal, and Hala. The novel traces how these characters struggle to live with the strict paradigms of traditionalism and conservatism of their families. While Khadija and Soraya live in the city of Los Angeles, Hala and Mawal live between Jordan and Palestine, particularly the village of Nawara.

It is worth pointing out that the selection of these two literary texts is because of three reasons. The first reason is that the central characters in Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* are women, and this serves the purpose of this essay effectively .i.e. to examine women's status and their representations in contemporary Arab American fiction. The second reason is that the authors of these novels are women per se. This means that it is possible to argue that female authors are more concerned than their male counterparts to voice and echo women's issues and concerns in their fiction. They tend to immerse the reader in their female characters' experiences. For instance, in my interview with the Arab American novelist Laila Halaby, I ask her if she has a stance to voice and echo the problems of Arab women through her female characters. She replies: "I suppose. I think I feel that way towards any of my characters. May be I gravitate more towards female characters because I am a woman" (Berrebbah 2021, 4). The third reason is that the selected novels successfully demonstrate how Arab women's identity oscillates between their country of residence – diaspora – and their countries of origin, showcasing the complexity of their belonging.

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[1] Laila Halaby was born in Beirut to a Jordanian father and an American mother. She grew up mostly in Arizona. She is currently working as a counsellor in psychosocial oncology at the Cancer Centre, University of Arizona on a Merck Foundation grant. Other publications of hers include *My Name on his Tongue* (2012) and *Once in a Promised Land* (2007).

[2] Mohja Kahf is a Syrian-American novelist, poet, and academic. She received her PhD in comparative literature from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. Her other publications are many, notably *Emails from Scheherazade* (2003) and *Hagar Poems* (2016). She is currently an active member of Syrian Nonviolent Movement.

By the same token, this essay shines a light on the bitter experiences and complex status of these female characters, either with patriarchy or inconvenient socio-cultural norms and circumstances. A specific focus will be on Khadija and Khadra. They are both important female figures in the two novels. It is worth pointing out that this essay will also draw attention to another female character whose experiences with patriarchy are worth exploring. This concerns Aunt Farah, Khadija's relative. The narratives in both novels are told by the abovementioned female protagonists – a gendered narration.

2. WOMEN'S CULTURAL BURDEN: TOXIC PATRIARCHIES AND INCONVENIENT GENDER DISCOURSE IN *WEST OF THE JORDAN*

Suad Joseph defines patriarchy in the Arab context "as the prioritising of the rights of males and elders (including elder women) and the justification of those rights within kinship values which are usually supported by religion" (1996, 14). In another definition, "patriarchy is a social system that privileges men's governance and familial control, supported by legal, economic, and political institutions" (Aboulhassan and Brumley 2018, 3). Traditional patriarchies are well demonstrated and questioned by Laila Halaby in her novel. She introduces several female characters whose experiences with patriarchy and inconvenient gender dialogue seem to harden their lives inside and outside the family. This mainly includes the female characters Aunt Farah, Hala, and Khadija. *West of the Jordan*'s main focus is on the patriarchal domestic violence that women experience either in homeland – Palestine – or in the US diaspora. This domestic violence, as Laila Halaby comments in an interview conducted with me, is an outcome and an act of "restricted and conservative families" (Berrebbah 2021, 3). Domestic violent actions, as Moha Ennaji and Fatima Sadiqi argue, "include verbal threats, coercion, economic abuse, or arbitrary deprivation of freedom in both the private and public spheres. Thus, violence against women has many forms; it can be physical, sexual, or emotional, and may be caused by a husband, a partner, a family member, or another person" (2011, 1).

Indeed, the narrator in the novel, for instance, tells us about how Aunt Farah in the village of Nawara constantly receives verbal threats and physical abuse from her husband who practices his patriarchal authority over her: "fists that pounded her with welts to cover her body, welts she ignored or covered, until it broke her father's heart and he convinced her husband to release her with divorce to freedom" (2003, 51). These words show that a woman in such situations is under full male's dominance .i.e. Aunt Farah's fate is decided by both her husband and also her father. Her endurance of such physical assault is because of her fear to divorce. In many Arab societies women are blamed for marriage problems and seen as responsible of failed relationships. As Muhammad Haj-Yahia purports, "in Arab society, divorce is viewed as a statement of failure, where the responsibility is placed mainly on the wife, who is considered 'rebellious, non-complaint, and not heeding the advice of her husband and her family'" (2002, 740). Such strict male dominance over Aunt Farah is also reflected through Hala's experiences. Hala, upon her arrival to her home country, Palestine, to attend her mother's funeral, confronts her father's willingness to keep her in home and prevent her from going back to the USA to finish her studies. She condemns his acts and vehemently responds: "if I stay here, I will kill myself. I will go to my mother and then you will have the blood of two people on

your hands" (2003, 45). This shows that strict patriarchal control of women's lives is destructive and it strips them of adequate sense of security.

Moreover, given that Aunt Farah's unfortunate experience appears in a Palestinian context, Muhammad Haj-Yahia in his "Wide Abuse in the Palestinian Authority" (2008) explains that violent patriarchies are prevalent in the Palestinian social mainstream due to the way such patriarchies have been viewed. He points out that "the tendency is to view wife abuse as a private, personal, and family problem rather than as a social and criminal problem" (63). In fact, violence perpetuated by the husband is regarded as a complementary of his masculinity and patriarchal authority. In this context, Julie Peteet opines that "while beatings reproduce masculine identity, they also reproduce men's authority and physical domination in the family" (1994, 45). The novel introduces another scene in which Aunt Farah seems to be physically abused, despite being pregnant. Aunt Farah, referring to her husband, tells us that "he would speak with God's words spattered on top of his own and people thought him virtuous, so virtuous he beat his own baby out of her and then beat her more and told her she was careless for letting a child die inside her very own body" (2003, 52-53). This quote shows that domestic violence reaches a detrimental level in that Aunt Farah's health conditions deteriorated, and as a consequence, she loses her unborn baby. This quote, interestingly, by his using of God's words, also shows that Aunt Farah's husband implements religion to justify his violent acts and confirms his right to perform patriarchy. Valentine Moghadam (2011), in this context, makes it clear that some strict Islamic societies in the Middle East support their patriarchal systems by implementing many references from religious writings, particularly the Quran, even though interpreted inconveniently from a male's perspective. Laila Halaby's portrayal of Aunt Farah's experiences with domestic violent actions, as such, reflects a symptomatic image of ill family that falls apart when gender dialogue is poorly performed, especially when gender-based violence is seen as an acceptable phenomenon in a particular traditional society, such as the Palestinian one (Haj-Yahia 2008).

By the same token, domestic violence in the Arab context appears in Khadija's family as well. This time, however, it is demonstrated within the setting of diaspora in the USA. This proves that Arab patriarchal paradigms are resilient and practiced across borders despite different cultural and political environments. Khadija informs us throughout her narration of how her father comes home drunk and willing to beat everyone in the house, including her mother, brother, and also herself: "scary is when the yelling doesn't stop and when everyone has bruises 'from the devil,' as my mother says. I know better. I know they come because the sand sends him inside that small bottle of liquor he keeps locked in his toolbox and turns his insides into fire" (2003, 174). Khadija continues to tell *West of the Jordan*'s readers of the terrible patriarchal calamities committed by her father who seems as violent as Aunt Farah's husband:

> I'll tell you what the scariest thing is: When he drinks. He doesn't do it that often and he doesn't have to drink that much before his eyes becomes bullets, his fists the curled hands of a boxer, and our living room the ring of Monday Night Wrestling ... One time I went into the yard to look for a ball I had lost in the bushes the day before, and I found my father drinking. He grabbed my arm and held his bottle in front of me. 'Drink'. he said ... he pulled me by the arm and then by the ear and dragged me into

> the kitchen were my mother was cutting vegetables. 'Oh mother of Shit', he called to her. 'Your little dog of a daughter has been drinking. Smell her mouth'. (2003, 38)

Khadija's struggle with her father's inconvenient behaviour leads to fear and emotional instability. The domestic violence in the Arab American family has been investigated well in recent decades. For instance, in there "Currying the Burden of a Culture: Bargaining with Patriarchy and the Gendered Reputation of Arab American women" (2018) Salam Abulhassan and Krista Brumley, by using data from twenty in-depth interviews with second-generation Arab American women, conclude that "Arab American women's experiences are uniquely based on patriarchy as it exists in the Arab world" (2). These critics further opine that Arab women in the USA are prone to be influenced by modern American culture which is regarded as a threat to traditional Arab values and virtues. Patriarchy hence, even though practiced in its ugliest form, is used as a mechanism to control women's bodies through rigid gendered behaviour, gendered language, and gendered relationships. As such, it is possible to argue that Khadija is not really a victim of patriarchy per se, but instead, a victim of the traditional structure that constitutes it. Khadija sustains this point when she claims: "My father is a traditional man, my mother says. That's why he is so strict" (2003, 149). Newman Wadesango et al (2017), for instance, purport that traditional ideologies do not serve women's needs in modern times, especially if such ideologies are kinked to patriarchy and male's dominance in family. These critics claim that traditional ideologies cause "devastating physical and psychological effects on women. They reinforce the inferior status of women in society and continue to violate their rights and this has serious implications on the achievement of gender equality in society" (121).

Equally important, the novel posits an interesting interpretation of Khadija's father's parental behaviour that is, in any way, intersected with repressive patriarchy: "sometimes my father loves my mother –and the rest of us– so much that he becomes a kissing and hugging machine. Sometimes, though, he is an angry machine that sees suspicious moves in every breath. But most of the time he is sad, his thoughts somewhere I cannot visit" (2003, 37). It is possible to understand through Khadija's narration that her father's treatment of her family oscillates between violence and affection which leads to a particular assumption that he suffers psychological turbulence. In this context, it is worth pointing out that Khadija's father mental state has been distorted due to several diasporic mediations: loss of home, lack of assimilation, financial failure, nostalgia, alienation, etc. Not only this, Khadija's father also struggles financially. He fails to aid his family properly because of his low-wage job – a mechanic. Steven Salaita, in his review of *West of the Jordan*, comments on Khadija's father as the poorest male immigrant in the novel (2011, 83). As a result, his fatherhood is performed problematically. Daniel Monterescu (2006) comments on the patriarchal and masculine identity of Arab men by describing it as situational. He opines that it entails contradiction and juxtaposition .i.e. such identity is ambivalent because it brings together traditionalism and liberalism. The loss of balance between these two paradigms, as Monterescu argues, causes the Arab father to act irresponsibly towards his family and it consequently hurts his self-actualization. His complex belonging – Arab and American – makes traditional and liberal ideologies negatively converged. Khadija and her family, therefore, are a victim of his unstable psychological state that determines much of his patriarchy. Laila Halaby, in this sense, showcases her criticism of such forms of patriarchy – a violent one. She uses her fiction

to echo women's concerns and also to bring social issues of women into broader horizons. The advantage that *West of the Jordan* holds is that it narrates women's experiences in both socio-cultural realms: Arab and American.

3. BETWEEN HERE AND THERE: WHEN THE IDEAL HOME IS ONLY A MYTH IN *THE GIRL IN THE TANGERINE SCARF*

Like Laila Halaby in her *West of the Jordan*, Mohja Kahf also introduces us to the bitter experiences of patriarchy that Khadra, the female protagonist in the novel, goes through. The novel importantly shows how Khadra negotiates her rights and feminist identity in the Islamic setting, Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. She goes to this place with her family to fulfil their duty towards Islam – that is pilgrimage. Mecca, for Khadra, is a place to connect with her origins and also to practice self-actualization. In Fadda-Conrey's opinion, the willingness and desire of diasporic Arab identities to reconnect with religious, national, and geographic roots are "informed by the urge to gain a deeper self-knowledge and some reprieve from the ambiguities of belonging that plague Arab-Americans in the diaspora" (2014, 66). However, the expectations of Khadra are quickly disappointed as she clashes with the patriarchal structure of the Muslim society in Mecca and its norms that do not serve her ambition to actualize her sense of belonging, and in fact, differ enormously from her Muslim community in the USA, particularly the city of Indianapolis. This is evident when the narrator exposes in narratives the malign treatment that Khadra receives from Muslim males in Mecca, which is supposedly known as the mother of all Muslims.

Khadra, for instance, experiences inconvenient gender dialogue with other Muslim men after she decides to pray at a nearby mosque. They prevent her and claim that she has no right as a woman to do this. The Mattawa men [Islamic policemen] intervene and take her back to her house. Khadra then defends her right to pray at the mosque by referring to other prominent women in Islamic history: "Women have always gone to the mosque. It's part of Islam … What about Aisha? … What about the Prophet saying 'you must never prevent the female servants of God from attending the houses of God?" (2006, 168).

The treatment of Khadra in this way makes her realize that the patriarchal system in Mecca is justified by Islamic reasoning, either in domestic or public sphere, given that she has always been reminded that women in strict Islamic society cannot go out without permission or travel abroad alone (2006, 153-167). Surprisingly, Khadra understands that her rights as a Muslim woman in USA are better negotiated and well claimed than in Mecca. She can, for instance, pray at Indianapolis Mosque without restrictions or male mentoring. This understanding is confirmed by her father's statement: "you are used to America, *benti* … In most of Muslim world, it has not been the custom for hundreds of years" (2006, 168). This situation infuriates Khadra. It makes her "very angry – angry that they would treat her that way, and angry that she let them get inside her feelings – and she wanted to come out swinging" (2006, 169). It should be noted, moreover, that the examples that Khadra refers to in her arguments about her rights to pray in mosque invoke Islamic feminist thought. Khadra's feminist approach can be regarded as a "legitimate example or aspiration that comes from a representation of archetypal models derived from early Islamic history and built around the figures of the *ummahat al-*

mu'minin: literally mothers of all believers" (Yamani 1996, 264). As such, the legitimate model is Aisha, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad. This shows that Khadra not only attempts to culturally and socially situate herself in Mecca, but also struggles to maintain her feminist stance – troubled intersection.

Mohja Kahf, throughout Khadra's above-mentioned experiences, sheds light on the complex patriarchal system in Arab society, as exemplified by Mecca. This system positions women in a place in which they are "subjected to the authority of men on the basis of conservative Islamic traditions" (Fernea 1998, 332). In this context, Amy Alexander and Christian Welzel (2011) suggest that the relationship between patriarchy and Muslim identity can hold both structural and cultural interpretations, and such a relationship triggers major debates in Arab-Muslim communities and Western ones. As a result of this, and given her hyphenated identity, Khadra confronts what Riham Bahi terms two-front battle: "against Islamic traditionalism [patriarchy and gender inequality] and Western imperialism" (2011, 5).

Khadra, consequently, realizes that "she should appreciate the freedom she enjoys in America where she is free to practice her religion without persecution" (Alakarawi and Bahar 2013, 104). Her stance shines some light on Rasheed El-Enany claim that "the West to Arabs, with an emphasis on women, is no longer an oppressor but a saviour, a place of refuge from repression at home, a space of freedom with the promise of prosperity" (2006, 186).

In addition, Khadra's unpleasant experiences in Mecca do not stop at this level; she confronts alienating treatment from her Arab friends. These are Ghalya, Afaaf, and Ghazi. This is because she is regarded as an American rather than an Arab. When Khadra ask them to stay away from her Ghalya aggressively responds: "Listen to her go off in American!" (2006, 178). Khadra also struggles to avoid Ghazi's sexual harassment. He attempts to rape her in a car. As the narrator tells us, he "started pulling her veil down the back of her head and pushing his hand up against her breast and his mouth was grazing her now exposed neck … and then he was pushing himself on top of her" (2006, 177). The driver himself did not do anything, "he just lowered his eyes and tucked his head down and sat very still" (2006, 177). The journey that Khadra embarks on in Mecca changes all her ideas about home, self-identity and belonging. In this context, and as a commentary on what happens to Khadra, Sandhya Rao Mehta states that "it requires a physical journey to the roots, a pilgrimage to Mecca where the family hopes to discover the purest form of Islam that she [Khadra] gets her rudest shock" (2014, 127). Consequently, Khadra suffers from a damaged self-image shaped by the perceptions and treatment she receives from her Arab counterparts. The incident eventually causes Khadra to ponder the true meaning of home and reconsider her sense of belonging. Kahf writes: "And even though she was in a Muslim country at this moment, and not just any Muslim country but *the* Muslim country, where Islam started, she had never felt so far from home" (2006, 177).

By the same token, the incidents of the Mosque and sexual harassment are a backdrop that leads her to re-negotiate her sense of belonging in Mecca. Being observed as American, Khadra feels as though she is out-grouped and excluded from the wider Arab society in a same way she does in the wider American society in the USA. In relation to Social Identity Theory, Turner and Oaks explain that self-concept depends on the extent to which an individual belongs to a particular group or community. These critics opines that self-concept is determined by how each side perceives the other. Self-concept

generates "personal self-categorization as one level of social self-concept; this type of categorization is based on differentiation between oneself as a unique individual and other [relevant] in-group members" (1986, 241). In this sense, the self-concept of Khadra is determined by how she consciously categorizes herself in the society of Mecca on the basis of differences in terms of values and belonging .i.e. while her Islamic values are questioned in Mecca by the Mattawa men, her belonging is perceived by her Arab counterparts to be American. Henri Tajfel, in this context, argues that "divisions of people into social categories which matter to the individual are usually associated with positive or negative evaluations of these categories … which in turn, can be considered as a system of orientation that helps to create and define the individual's place in society" (1978, 62-63).

Khadra, as a result of this frustration and aggression, considers Mecca and its society as a place of non-belonging in which she craves to go back home – to the USA. On the plane home, referring to Mecca, Khadra says: "I' m glad we're through with that place" (2006, 179). She feels relieved to see "the lights of Indianapolis spread out on the dark earth beneath the jet. The sweet relief of her own clean bed awaited her there – and only there, of all the earth" (2006, 179). The stigmatizing experiences of Khadra in Mecca are instrumental in affirming the foreignness and otherness she senses in Arab society as a place of *ghurba*[3]. Moreover, Mohja Kahf, through her introducing of Khadra's attempts to culturally and socially locate herself in Arab society, suggests that female diasporic figures are always in the process of being perplexed in their search for a proper sense of belonging, struggling to conveniently oscillate between the complexity of hybridity and the problems of displacement. She manifests the way in which cultural, religious, and social constructions defy Muslim women's freedom of choice, equality, and justice in the Arab world as exemplified in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Kahf's depiction of her female protagonist's experiences in Mecca is symptomatic of some other Muslim women who live in the diaspora but vigorously seek to reconnect with their motherlands. She poses a strategic reconfiguration of the binary logics perpetuated in the relationship between the homelands of origin as a place in which the meaning of self-discovery and sense of belonging reaches its utmost complexity and the host country, in this case the USA, as a realm for social and cultural refuge. In other words, as Fedda-Conrey contends, "the ways in which original Arab homelands, and their concomitant cultural and political by-products, are imagined, replicated, portrayed, and lived by Arab Americans invite new engagements with US citizenship and belonging" (2014, 3).

Khadra's unfortunate experiences, moreover, continue in her host country, the USA. This makes her peculiar sensation of home broader and actually more complex. For example, her wearing of the veil and Islamic outlook add more visibility to her existence in the American dominant social mainstream. She becomes a target of verbal assault and sexist threats. Her white American school colleagues Curtis Stephenson and Brent Lott have often regarded her as an alien and foreigner due to her outfit and culture. They approach her aggressively to rip her veil off and ridicule her. They say: "look, raghead has got hair under that piece a shit" (2006, 124). It is possible to explain such aggressive attitude due to the cultural stereotypes of Muslim women in the American context.

[3] This is a transliteration of an Arabic word that means, in its broad context, foreignness or estrangement in a land away from home.

Charles Stangor for instance purports that "when stereotypes or prejudice produce negative behaviours toward others, the behaviour is called discrimination" (2000, 11). Khadra's experience also invokes what Myra Macdonald terms the "colonial obsession of unveiling" (2006: 9). This is related basically to a particular agenda which is "characterised by a desire to master, control, and reshape the body of the subjects by making them visible" (Yegenoglu 1998, 12). In this sense, Khadra realizes that abandoning Mecca and going back to the USA is not a genuine shelter. Her main issue is her hyphenated identity which positions her as an American in Arab society and an Arab other in the wider American social stream – a constant dilemma. She concludes that her identity crisis gets more complicated because of her gender which becomes a burden in most situations she encounters.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Both Laila Halaby and Mohja Kahf unveil some of the gender issues as well as socio-cultural inconsonances that Arab women experiences either in the diaspora or the supposed homelands. Their female characters live in a particular peculiar situations that feature insularity and anxiety. These characters, namely Khadija and Khadra, because of the rigid social patriarchies they confront, "find themselves in a state of liminality, an existence in different spaces without feeling completely whole in either—an in-between state of being" (Salaita 2011, 85). Whereas Khadija's sense of identity address and revisit the patriarchal gender roles that are embedded in Arab immigrants' perspectives such as her father's, Khadra encounters inconvenient gender discourse which leads to a conflict between her sense of individuality and the social structure of her kin community, as demonstrated in Mecca. They both have interconnected, similar, but destructive confrontation with patriarchy in the Arab context. By reading *West of the Jordan* and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* we can understand that both female authors tend to question Arab women's complex status as much it is in reality. In other words, Laila Halaby and Mohja Kahf use fiction to reflect women's real serious concerns with regards to patriarchy, social injustice, domestic violence, civil rights, and proper gender discourse. This can be regarded as an implicit feminist critique. As such, both authors, I argue, can be identified as an example of the Arab American feminists "who have long shouldered a double burden: not only do they work against sexism and patriarchy in their communities, but they also have to contend with the harmful stereotypes propagated about them and their Arab culture in the mass media" (Amireh 2011, 44).[4]

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[4] For more reading about this particular double burden please consult *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging* (2011).

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