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Arab American Male Identity Formation in Contemporary Literature by an Arab American Woman: Leila Halaby's West of the Jordan (2003).

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Abstract:

The present article mainly analyzes the identity formation of male characters in the novel West of the Jordan (2003) written by Leila Halaby. It examines the struggle of Arab American male protagonists to find a space for themselves within their families in the aftermath of the events of 9/11. This article makes a new inquiry in which it joins a literature written by women to the study of Arab American masculinities. To do so, it explores particularly the unsettlement of traditional manhoods placed in the metaphorical border between the Arab world and the United States, as well as the role of feminism in doing so. Leila Halaby's West of the Jordan (2003) places Arab male characters in a diasporic setting in the United States and allows for a tracing of the construction of Arab masculinity in the post-9/11 United States.

Keywords: Arab Americans, masculinity, identity construction, Leila Halaby, West of the Jordan, 9/11.

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1. INTRODUCTION

ArabMuslim men have always instigated Western interest, but their image changed dramatically after September 11, 2001. In fact, the event is viewed as a cultural trauma in the history of the United States. That dreadful day is still fresh in the minds and hearts of many Americans as well as Arab Americans. Following the attacks, Arab Muslim men notably become associated with the perpetrators and terrorists behind the tragedy. As a result, the Arab Muslim culture has been depicted as barbaric and fundamentalist. A sense of a cultural, social and religious insecurity overcomes Arab Muslim community living in the United States of America. Therefore, terror turns out to be an apparent phenomenon in modern history and Arab-related literature. Following the attacks of 9/11, Arab Muslim men have been the focus of several works by Arab American women writers. However, diasporic discourses attempt to counter-narrate the stereotypical hegemonic literature by correcting their image. The problem of having an identity crisis after the events of 9/11 and the construction of Arab Muslim men's identity in a literature written by Arab American women writers is the basic point for such a research.

The present work is an attempt to shed a light about one of the crucial Arab Muslim related issues that Arab American women writers deal with after the event of 9/11. In analyzing the work of Laila Halaby, West of Jordan (2003), the importance of this study lays in the presentation of the significant changes in 9/11 literature in reference to Arab Muslim men as main characters in a literature written by Arab American women writers. The world after 9/11 changed; and thus, literature also changed. Furthermore, the novel presents the psychic and cultural traumas that Arab Muslim men pass through in the aftermath of 9/11. The work puts a focus on the event of 9/11 and its inspiration for the 'War on Terror' as well as its influence on American society. In addition, the writer attempts to redefine Arab Muslim men's identity and to challenge the Western misrepresentation that viewed them as terrorists, pagans, foreigners, and inferior.

Several studies have been pursued to discuss Muslim related issues after 9/11 attacks. The idea of Arab men's representation in Arab American women literature is presented in a dissertation with a title, Post-9/11 Representations of Arab Men by Arab American Women Writers: Affirmation and Resistance, by Marta Bosch Vilarrubias. It deals with a collection of literary works written by Arab American women writers with an emphasis on male characters and their situation in the United States after 9/11. The writers expose new Arab men in their works, which include Laila Halaby's West of the Jordan,in a way that counter the stereotypical discourses towards them. The dissertation examines the contexts, reasons, and consequences of the depiction of Arab American masculinities. Theories on biopolitics, necropolitics, monster-terrorist, neopatriarchy, heterotopias, and third space have been a basis for such a work. Arab American feminisms also take part in this dissertation with an emphasis on their characteristics and influence to Arab American women writers.

Men in Color: Racialized Masculinities in U.S. Literature and Cinema by Joseph M. Armengol is another book that deals with the racialization of Arab men in literature as well as in cinema. It highlights the representation of ethnic masculinities both white and non-white in U.S. literature and cinema by presenting different racialized masculinities and this includes African American, Asian American, Chicano, Arab American, and even white masculinity. It aims at showing the differences and similarities between them.

2. Arabs in America

Despite having distinct language, traditions, religion, and values, Arabs, Middle Easterners, Muslims were often regarded as homogenous. Characteristics of backwardness, ignorance, uncivilized and dark-skinned are mainly associated with this group. Thus, Americans placed Arab Americans in a state of 'racial liminality'[1] or 'critical whiteness'[2]. The United States Federal Government classifies officially Arabs as white by providing a special definition to the word white as "**White**.- a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa"[3]. Based

on this definition, on the one hand, Arabs can be considered as white, but, on the other, they are in need of support against racism. Furthermore, the government prevented Arabs from organizing groups to defend themselves against prejudice and regarded them as unqualified to make minority protection programs. As a result, Arabs were classified as white; however, they were still considered as black. Nadine Nabir states that: "Arab Americans are racially white, but not quite"[4].

Arab American masculinities, in particular, suffer from Western stereotypes regarding their culture. They are not regarded as American but only as subaltern that would later constitute what is called Arabo-Islamist masculinity. "By thinking about the Arab male as someone to be dominated, the Western mind created an illusion of control over him. The construction of this specific side of Arabo-Islamist masculinity, which situates this masculinity in an inferior position to the hegemonic one, is therefore a result of a process of "internal hegemony"[5]. In order to justify their power, the colonizers attempted to ascertain their militarist masculinity against the inferior other. As a result, 'Arab-American identity has been honed and reshaped by the immigrants themselves in response to American attitudes andpolicies towards them as well as their original homeland'[6].

3. Negotiating Culture and Identity in a Multicultural Setting

In a multicultural setting, diverse cultures of the majority and minority communities commingle with one another. Each community retains its cultural distinctiveness namely language, traditions, religion, values, race…etc. The nature of American society encourages new immigrants to hold over their cultural and religious differences, and this was mainly because of American multicultural society. Caleb Rosado, who professionally specializes in multiculturalism, defines it asa system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution

within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society[7].

The sense of having a distinct culture with specific characteristics has played an important role in the formation of one's identity. Culture has been conceptualized by multiculturalists as being the result of 'an active process of creating meaning'[8]. It was viewed differently by many authors; for instance, Parekh defines culture in his book, Rethinking Multiculturalism (2000), as a 'historically created system of meaning and significance […] in terms of which a group of human beings understand, regulate and structure their individual and collective lives'[9]. Authors like Will Kymlicka claim that culture is mainly based on national and ethnic background and it equals nation since 'an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history'[10]. Culture helps determine a person's affiliations to a specific group, place, traditions, and norms also it determines his/her behaviors. Hence, he asserts further that culture 'provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres'[11].

The construction of one's cultural identity in a multicultural setting has been one of the most complex issues in the postcolonial world. Stuart Hall divides cultural identity into two aspects: communal perspective and personal perspective. The former is mainly about locating individuals in a shared culture where they negotiate their identity in accordance with the surrounding society, whereas the latter is about differentiating individuals from others around them[12].

In dealing with the postcolonial cultural identity, Hogan splits it into three regions: 'metropolis region', which is the one of the colonizer; 'indigenous region' is specific for the colonized; whereas the last one is the 'region of contact.' It is the area where the two cultures interact with one another; thus, new kinds of contact cultures will be created. The condition of being obliged to live in the region of

contact affects to a great extent the person‘s cultural identity. Hogan argues that ‘under colonialism, in the region of contact, the conflicts are so strong and pervasive that they constitute a challenge to one‘s cultural identity, and thus one‘s personal identity’[13].

In a multicultural society, one‘s identity is challenged by other identities and to which each person responds differently. These responses can be classified into stages: orthodoxy, assimilation, syncretism, and alienation. Orthodoxy means that the individual preserves his cultural traditions and integrates them in his identity. Assimilation refers to the embodiment of another culture‘s tradition into one‘s identity. Syncretism deals with the combination of the two cultures to create a new one. Alienation relates to the situation of being estranged from both cultures and this may lead to the loss of identity[14].

4. Arab American Women Literature

Feminism stands to face a number of restrictions and neglects such as the issue of patriarchy, the view of religion in relation to their birth, restrictions on both physical and educational training. As a way to call for their rights and to assert their identity, women look for equal and legal protection. In doing so, feminism, as a movement to defend women‘s rights, has developed through distinctive periods. Teresa De Lauretis defined feminism as: “Feminism-a social movement of and for women-discovered the nonbeing of woman: the paradox of a being that is at once captive and absent in discourse, constantly spoken of but of itself inaudible or inexpressible, invisible yet constituted as the object and the guarantee of vision; a being whose existence and specificity are simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled…a feminist theory must start from and centrally engage that very paradox”[15].

The period following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center refueled a need for a new literature that reanimates reality. Thanks to Arab American feminism, Arab American women writers provide a basis for such literature. They attempt to deal with masculinity issues in their texts by highlighting a new and unstereotypical representation of Arab men in the aftermath of 9/11

attacks. While studying Arab American women literature, Nada Elia argues that "The silencing of Arab and Arab American men – through ostracization, intimidation, imprisonment, or deportation – has led to Arab American women becoming more vocal. Suddenly, we are in demand, as our male partners are disappeared"[16]. Rather than dealing with women issues, Arab American women writers explore the impact of 9/11 on the perception of Arab men in the United States. Arab men identity seemed to be shaped by policies and their identity which is different from the other hyphenated American identities simply because of, as stated by Hossam Aboul-Ela, the "dissident relationship to the United States foreign policy in the Middle East"[17]. In other words, Arab American identity became regarded as a heterotopia mainly because of the United States foreign policy toward the Middle East. He further argues that the physical presence of the Arab body in America creates conflict that the individual can only resolve either by "mentally dividing" or by living in "unresolved sorrow." The source of this conundrum for Said (as for the vast majority of the Arab community inside the United States) is American foreign policy toward the Middle East[18].

As a result, Arab American women writers sought to positivize the image of their counterparts, Arab men, in the minds of Americans. Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash stated that If the image of Arabs is truly being created by the American imagination, the time has come to invalidate that image and render it unrecognizable…However slow and painful the recovery, Arab American destiny will continue to come under Arab American control so long as the image of the Arab-American comes increasingly under the control of Arab American writers[19].

In other words, Arab American women writers took on the burden of representing Arab men after the attacks of 9/11. In addition, they tackled terrorism in general and 9/11 in particular into their works as a literary and cultural response to that day. Since the trauma is perceived differently, authors face the dilemma in finding a suitable language which expresses that catastrophic event. They struggle to deal with the meaning of 9/11 in a wide and varied scope of literary responses. Hence, the term 'War on Terror' and the binary of 'us

versus them' emerge within their writings. Moreover, in accordance with Ludescher, there are two factors that contributed to the rise of Arab American literature. She states that the first was the search for voices outside the traditional canon of Anglo-American male literature, a search which led to the burgeoning interest in ethnic American writers. The second factor, like so many things in the Arab American community, was political. Recent events in the Arab world combined to raise the political consciousness and solidarity of the Arab American community[20].

As a way to counter-narrate western misrepresentations, Arab Muslim men have played an important role in literature because Arab Muslim women are often regarded as harmless and victims of men's patriarchy. After 9/11, the representation of Arab men has undergone certain changes in western narratives. Arab Muslim men have never been marginalized in western discourses as in post 9/11 period. Orientalist stereotypes, such as barbaric, uncivilized, terrorists, and trouble-makers, are often mentioned in 9/11 literature whenever Arab Muslims, in general, and Arab Muslim men, in particular, are addressed.

Several novels have been written after the tragic attacks and dealt mostly with the direct or indirect effects of that event on individuals, inside and outside the United States. American hegemonic discourses have been contested and challenged by Arab Muslim women writers like Laila Halaby who has an insider view. Her works especially West of the Jordan (2003) creates a space for Arab Muslim men to redefine their identity. Laila Halaby attempts to invert the Western gaze in relation to Arab men wherein the story is narrated in the voices of four different narrators. It represents fathers in post 9/11 Arab American literature and their relationship with their daughters. The story ponders over Arab American fatherhoods which find themselves in a transnational thirdplace. Moreover, the novel presents a variety of enactments of Arab masculinity that counter the homogenous view of Arab manhood; thus, challenging the stereotypes toward Arab Muslim men who are often depicted by the West as terrorists.

Following the traumatic events of 9/11, the vocabulary of Arab American women literature changes and focuses mainly on Arab Muslim men's identity and their representation. As a central idea for such a statement, Arab American women writers changed their trend, which is based on dealing with women's issues, and started to speak for Arab men with an attempt to demystify the image of Arab men and provide realistic representation with a reference to 9/11 attacks.

5. Masculinity Studies

Theinclusion of Masculinity Studies in Gender Studies was a turning point since it focused before only on women. Hence, masculine gender became regarded as a construction rather than a norm. Based on Men's Studies, manhood came to be seen as fabrication that "had undergone historical and cultural processes of gender formation that distribute[d] power and privilege unevenly"[21]. However, manhood is no longer viewed as a universal category but rather as a construction. As a result, researchers in the field of Masculinities' Studies have investigated the relations of power between the two genders, while they deconstructed masculinity as normative which in its turn undermined patriarchy. Robyn Wiegman states thatIn unleashing masculinity from its assumed normativity and reading its function and structure as the product of a contested and contradictory field of power, a great deal of feminist work in masculinity studies has been motivated by the desire to intervene in the practices of patriarchal domination while locating the possibilities for men to challenge their constitution as men[22].

Traditionally, power hierarchy has been gendered in relation to patriarchy. The latter is constructed through socialization, connectivity, and ideologies of gender hierarchy. The difference between men and women in patriarchal societies is reinforced by institutions, such as governmental and religious powers. In those societies, men are always regarded as superior and normative; whereas, women are viewed as inferior and Othered. This traditional form of manhood was called, in accordance with Samina Aghacy, a "traditional brand of hegemonic masculinity"[23]. Moreover, some characteristics are often associated with Arab masculinity like

bravery, protection, and defense of honor. More importantly, the issue of fatherhood is particularly necessary. Peteet sees that "Manliness is also closely intertwined with virility and paternity, and with paternity's attendant sacrifices. Denying one's own needs while providing for others is such a signifier"[24]. The importance of fatherhood lies in the origin of the word 'patriarchy'. It comes from the word 'patriarch' which means 'father'. On the other hand, father, based on gender hierarchy, is the provider for his family. Being a provider is one of the central traits of manhood and the failure to achieve such responsibility will lead to frustration and violence.

However, not all men confirm to particular traits of manhood. Such hegemonic discourses became unsettled as a result of colonialism or postcoloinialism which then was reflected in the concept of neopatriarchy. Hisham Sharabi defines neopatriarchy as "the specific patriarchy developed out of the particular context of theArab world"[25]. Its main characteristic is that it lies between modernism and traditionalism, being viewed as modern while still based on tradition and patriarchy. However, the figure of the father remains central to neopatriarchy. Due to the clash between western and Arab cultures, neopatriarchy came into existence leading/opening the door to Arab masculinities to creolization. Sharabi explains such hybridization by putting a focus on the contradiction that appears as a result of the clash:From the force of Europe's impact, a profound contradiction emerged between two cultural models: the rational, secular model, patterned after Western experience, and the traditional model, firmly based in the values of Islam. It is in this tension between religious conservatism and Westernsecularism that the basic form of European political cultural domination in modern times was reflected in Arab consciousness and experience[26].

Following the Arab-Israeli war (1967), the feeling of crisis of masculinity was necessitated for reinstating masculinity discourses. On the one hand, after losing in the war, Arab men experienced a crisis of masculinity. On the other hand, when the Arab countries got their independence, women started to look for their rights in a way that threatened male domination. Fatima Mernissi claims that "Relations between sexes seem to be going through a period of

anomie, of deep confusion and absence of norms"[27]. She adds that "[t]he anomie stems from the gap between ideology and reality, for more and more women are using traditionally male spaces, going without the veil, and determining their own lives"[28]. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, gender roles became unsettled which complicated neopatriarchal masculinities. As a consequence for such rebellious action against traditional masculinity, men responded violently. In fact, this disruption of traditional forms of masculinity paved the path for new understandings of masculinity and opened doors to new gender-equal practices. Inhorn explains the idea of 'new Arab man' by claiming that Arab men: are rejecting the assumptions of their Arab forefathers, including what I call the four notorious Ps– patriarchy, patrilineality, patrilocality, and polygyny. According to the men in my studies, these four Ps are becoming a thing of the past. Instead, emergent masculinities in the Middle East are characterized by resistance to patriarchy, patrilineality, and patrilocality, which are being undermined. Polygyny is truly rare[29].

6. Analysis of the Novel

Halaby's first novel, West of the Jordan (2003), is a story that reflects the relationship between father and his daughter. There are four cousins (Mawal, Khadija, Soraya, Hala) who live either in the United States or Palestine wherein they look for their identities. They are surrounded by their fathers whose behavior is described from the point of view of their daughters. Mawal lives in Palestine, Nawara, with her family; her father seems a caring man in some of the instances where he is mentioned. Her father is not very present in the text. There is no conflict between Mawal and her parents simply because she is so attached to their traditions. She feels secured in her traditional life; however, she sometimes feels oppressed by some of the family rules imposed upon her by her parents. Despite of this fact, she never attempts to change the situation or rebel against her parents who are extremely anchored in a patriarchal idea of family. Furthermore, she wants to be a teacher in Palestine if her parents allow her to do so. In other words, Mawal is a submissive girl who accepts all what is said to her without negotiation of showing any sign of refusal. In her book, Contemporary Arab American Women

Writers: Hyphenated Identities and Border Crossings (2007), Amal Talaat Abdelrazek stated that "She hates being what she is, but instead of seeking the rights that her Islamic religion has endowed her with and proving the male patriarchy has perverted them, she suppresses her desires and remains a good girl in the eyes of the whole village"[30]. Mawal buries all her feminist desires and whishes just to satisfy her traditional parents. Halaby claimed that Mawal wants to "Accept that which is God's will. Accept that which is God's will. Accept that which… I will accept"[31].

Khadija also lives a traditional life in the United States. Her life is marked by her violent father, who is no longer able to provide for his family because of his resentment of life. He resembles the kind of transnational Arab American masculinity that requires a violent direction of upward mobility frustration. Like all of the immigrants, he came to America with a dream of being wealthy and living a luxurious life, but he ended up as the poorest character in the novel. Because of his underachievement, he attempts to impose his traditional and patriarchal power over his family. Amal Talaat Abdelrazek claimed that "He feels great disappointment with his life in America where he had hoped to realize his dreams but instead found that, with his failure in his job and his devastating feelings of loss for his homeland, his dreams have been crushed"[32]. In addition, she adds that "As a Palestinian immigrant, he has lost hope of ever returning to his homeland" (153). As a matter of fact, he is so disappointed plus being in-between state of uprootedness and nostalgia for homeland that he cannot go back to. Such situation is well described in the novel wherein Halaby mentions his disappointment and frustration.My father has many dreams that have been filled with sand. That's what he tells me: 'This country has taken my dreams that used to float like those giant balloons, and filled them with sand. Now they don't float, and you can't even see what they are anymore'[33].

The use of the image of sand signifies his sense of displacement as a result of his violent actions. However, the image sand can be related to the desert; and thus, to the Middle East. First immigrant generation tend to return back to traditionalism as way to cope with

the new society and a way to feel safe with their traditions. Hence, they attempt to maintain their patriarchal power to make sense of their sorrowful self. Khadija's father is so traditional and attached to ideas related to family honor in which he prevents his daughter from speaking with boys. There is a focus on such idea in the text wherein Halaby stated that "[Khadija's father] thinks that his daughter's reputation is the most important thing in the world"[34]. As an aspect of Arab masculinity, the man is the provider for the family and the father failed in gaining economic success. Consequently, he failed in constituting an important part of his manhood; and thus he resorts to violence to show his masculinity. Samina Aghacy claimed that "many male characters resort to domestic violence to reaffirm male prerogatives, to confirm potency and eminence, and to restore and reenact a reactionary and stable manhood"[35]. To channel his resentment and frustration, he beats his wife and daughter and he drinks; a fact that exacerbates his violence. In doing so, he is coupled with two contradictory aspects of culture in which he returns sometimes to Islamic traditionalism and in other cases he switches to un-Islamic behavior like drinking. Resorting to traditionalism implies a return to traditional upbringing, while adopting un-Islamic behavior means an influence by neopatriarchy and thirdspace masculinity that most of Arab masculinities adopt to cope with the American society. In other words, Khadija's father is caught between traditionalism and modernity. He reinforces his patriarchal power by resorting to violence and simultaneously he confirms the complexities of neopatriarchal masculinities by acting the two roles of being very violent and very caring. Khadija remarks: 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[36].

Not being able to return back home is often regarded as a justification of his violent behavior. The experience of trauma is directed through destructiveness. Khadija explained such point, "My ache comes from losing my home,' my father tells us a lot"[37]. Even though his violence is justified by the trauma of exile, but his

behavior is not accepted by his family members plus other relatives like Esmeralda who "cursed Khadija's father in Arabic and said he was an old shoe with a hole in his head as well as one in his ass"[38]. At the end of the novel, in one of the moment of his anger, his daughter called the police to arrest him. He seems a different man when the police came to take him: "My father's fire just goes away like it started raining inside him and he lets them pick him off [my brother] Hamouda, who I pick up from the ground as soon as the police pick up my father"[39]. This ending conducts a feminist stance towards sexism and the daughter as an agent of change against neo (patriarchal) masculine behavior.

Soraya is the opposite of Khadija. She lives in Los Angeles and she independent and out spoken girl. She is also well aware of her sexuality. In accordance with Amal Talaat Abdelrazek, "She refuses her parents' traditional way of life and favors the American sense of freedom she feels and enjoys outside her home"[40]. Her father is a disempowered man who never takes care of his family and he gets his strength from his economic success. Halaby writes:My mother is the strong one in our house and people would probably make fun of my father if it weren't for all the money he has. Money is his favorite thing, like somewhere along the way he decided he could only focus on one thing and he thought better money than family, less headaches. So men respect him because of his success[41].

Soraya's father has adopted tradional American ideals of upward mobility over traditional Arab ideals of patriarchy. He forgets about the traditional view concerning Arab fatherhood and he gives importance to the image of breadwinner with the aim of fulfilling the American dream of economic success. The ability to be a good provider for the family is one of the esential elements for the construction of patriarchal Arab identity. However, he neglects many responsibilities and he is only a provider in which he seems ineffectual and neglecting father. His patriarchal masculinity is mainly based on having commodities rather than being committed to his family. Soraya stresses that her father's masculinity is successful because of econmic achievements and she adds that her father never practises his traditions. Moreover, she admits that her mother is the

strongest memeber in the family. Finally, Soraya does not like her father's dettachment from his traditions simply because that resuls in ineffectual fatherhood.

Finally, Hala is a student in Tucson who grew up in Jordan and immigrated to the United States when she was a teenager. She attempts to make sense to her identity in the period of returning back to Jodan to attend her mother's funeral. She meets again her father who prevents her from returning back to the United States and advises her to finish her studies in Jordan. As a single man, he thinks that taking desicions on behalf of his daughter, after the deathe of her mother, as one of responsabilities. Halaby explains, "While [Hala's mother] was alive, [her] father respected her wishes, but not even two days into my mourning her death, he made it clear thathe was going to be the one to make the decisions about [her] life from then on"[42]. To secure his family honor, he resorts to traditional Arab practice and tells Hala to stay in Jordan and finish her; and thus, she has to "put [her] roots [t]here as a woman"[43]. Hala says that: "I was to replace my mother with a husband. I was to stay in Jordan forever. Marry … Have children. Be someone else's burden"[44]. In other words, she accepts her traditional feminine role; however, she is against such idea in which she thinks suicide as the only solution for such constraint. Hence, she tells her father, "My mother's wish was that I study in America. If I stay here I will kill myself"[45]. As a reaction to this rebellious behevior, Hala states, "He stared at me. No yelling. No cursing. No invitations to kill myself this very minute at his feet– somethingIsurelywouldneverhavebeenabletodoevenwithmygriefatits strongest. Just staring. He turned and walked away. We did not speak again"[46].

Shortly after Hala's confrontation with her father, she leaves Jordan and goes to the United States. However, she returns back to Jordan because of her grandmother's funeral, but her father recognizes that if he intervenes in his daughter's decisions, she will leave forever and never returns back. She states, "my father must know by now that he will lose me forever if he pushes too hard"[47]. Hala's father has been transformed by his daughter in which he does not reject his daughter's idea to visit people by herself. She says,

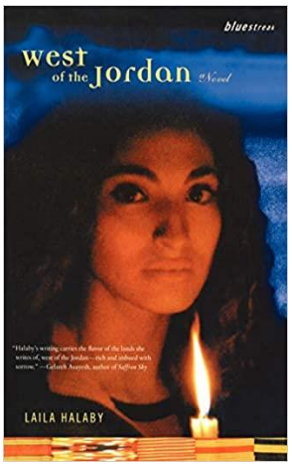
"My father does not seem surprised, doesn't try to dissuade me, and even offers to drive me there"[48]. He even tells her by the end of the novel to delay her marriage after finishing her studies in the United States. Hala's father has changed from the being a traditional fathers whose main concern is his family's honor to a new father who is proud of his daughter and respects her ambitions. Although his masculinity is neopatriarchal, Hala's father spends almost his life in Palestine; and thus his masculinity is not a transnational one. Because of his contact with his transnational daughter, his masculinity has changed from traditional to modern. This story emphasizes the power of feminism of changing men's traditional and patriarchal behavior. At the end of the novel, Hala decides to return back to her origins since she has been in contact with her homeland; and therefore, she wears her Jordanian dress, roza, when she is going back to the United Stated. Ironically, her father tells her, "You are flying to America! Miss Modern Lady Who Had Almost No Interest In Dresses Until Today, why can't you wear your beloved jeans like you do all the time?"[49].

7. CONCLUSION

Following the 9/11 attacks, Arab American women writers publish a new type of literature, which is innovative and timely, about the misrepresentation of Arab men in the West, generally, and in America, particularly. Arab American women literature is an attempt to resist the stereotyping of Arab men as emasculated and threatening. Moreover, this literature aims at showing that women are not victims to men as it was viewed by the west and it is through Arab American feminism that issues about gender and racial equality have been forwarded. Laila Halaby, West of the Jordan, is an example that tackles issues related to Arab masculinity in America through the narration of four women characters. Moreover, the story examines the main father figures and establishes some patterns about the representation of fatherhood in the United States. In Laila Halaby's West of the Jordan there is a varied account of fathers, from strict and abusive, through careless, to a father that starts being traditional but learns to open his mind. The appearance of Arab Muslim men as fathers in this novel makes clear the situational

position of Arab fatherhood and masculinity: Arab fathers move between traditionalism and liberalism. Some tilt more towards one (i.e., traditionalism, in the case of Khadija's father) or the other (i.e., liberalism in the case of Soraya's), and others change their mind throughout their life (as is the case of Hala's father) making clear that evolution is possible.

(Appendix 1)



Source: (https://www.amazon.com/West-Jordan-Bluestreak-Laila-Halaby/dp/0807083593)

This is a brilliant and revelatory first novel by a woman who is both an Arab and an American, who speaks with both voices and understands both worlds. Through the narratives of four cousins at the brink of maturity, Laila Halaby immerses her readers in the lives, friendships, and loves of girls struggling with national, ethnic, and sexual identities. Mawal is the stable one, living steeped in the security of Palestinian traditions in the West Bank. Hala is torn between two worlds-in love in Jordan, drawn back to the world she has come to love in Arizona. Khadija is terrified by the sexual freedom of her American friends, but scarred, both literally and figuratively, by her father's abusive behavior. Soraya is lost in trying to forge an acceptable life in a foreign yet familiar land, in love with

her own uncle, and unable to navigate the fast culture of California youth. Interweaving their stories, allowing us to see each cousin from multiple points of view, Halaby creates a compelling and entirely original story, a window into the rich and complicated Arab world.

Margins:

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