

Arab Patriarchy and Human Relationships in Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*, Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*, and Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan*

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This is a socio-cultural study of three novels: *Pillars of Salt*, *Arabian Jazz*, and *West of the Jordan* by Fadia Faqir, Diana Abu-Jaber, and Laila Halaby respectively by using socio-culturalism and by using feminism theory exclusively applied on *Pillars of Salt*. It explains the cultural aspects and social traditions of the Arab societies, like how the Arab men ask girls' hand for marriage and how these traditions could be different in the three novels. It is worth mentioning that the three novels share some similarities, such as all families are Jordanian so they somehow share the same thoughts like the appropriate marriage age for girls and the age of reaching spinsterhood. The three novels are set in different spheres and different cultures but all of them talk about cultural issues like women's social position. The analysis shows how a patriarchal society is portrayed in *Pillars of Salt*, the nature of Arab relationships, like Arab family reputation, family members' relationships, the way that America affects Arab families and Individuals in both novels, *West of the Jordan* and *Arabian Jazz*, and Arab marriage age, wedding traditions, the way that brides meet grooms, and the wife's role in *West of the Jordan*, *Arabian Jazz*, and *Pillars of Salt*. The first section unveils women suffering, physical assaults, and oppression because of patriarchy and because of applying falsified Islamic rules in *Pillars of Salt* by Fadia Faqir. It discusses female stigmatization, prohibiting women from inheritance and education as examples of women's oppression. The second section tackles *West of the Jordan* and *Arabian Jazz* novels from a socio-cultural perspective talking about Arab women's reputation, about family relationships, and America's effects of both family relations and individuals, and about Arab conservatism. The third section compares the three novels dealing with marriage age, marriage traditions, some ways



of meeting whether they are traditional or modern, and the Arab traditional wife's role.

Key words: *Arab Patriarchy, Human Relationships, Socio-cultural, Arab-American novelists*

Arab Patriarchy and Human Relationships in Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt*

Throughout history, women have been suffering from patriarchy represented in different kinds of violence whether it is physical or verbal. They always have been in an inferior position in comparison with men who are authorized to have the priority in social, political, and educational sides. Arab women, for example, have been deprived of their rights and they have taken the highest global prevalence of violence,

Violence against women or gender-based violence, affect women across the Arab region.... Recent studies from the UN and the world health organization (WHO) confirm that the MENA is the region with the highest global prevalence of violence against women (Dalacoura 2019: 9; UNESCWA 2017) (Holt; 2021:3)

Arab women are tangled by their social norms from one side and their men's authority on the other side. Undoubtedly, these two authorities do not do justice to women. For example, Jordanian traditions at a specific time did not allow women to choose their husbands and whomever their fathers choose for them they have to accept without any discussion which leads to what is called Arab patriarchy. Arab patriarchy is defined as a "hierarchy of authority that is controlled and dominated by males (Krauss 1987: xii); it reflects the role of a powerful man in the Arab tribal traditions" (Holt;2021;31). That definition gives men gender advantage to have the authority to control women and to have superiority to women. That leads many Arab writers and activists to rebel against all these traditions and start writing about women suffering like Rabab Abdulhadi who wrote 'Voice of Palestinian women'. Also, Amel Amirah won the Florence Howe Award for the best essay from a feminist perspective for her essay "Between Complicity and Subversion: Body politics in Palestinian National Narrative".

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some of the critics were self-identified Arab feminists who saw the veil as a symbol of the oppression and misogyny in the middle east [that was] used to repress women. They were adamantly opposed to the event the irresponsible use of the symbols we were

promoting. Several non-Arab, non-Muslims feminists objected as well [...]10 (Abdulhadi, Alsultany, & Naber,2011,24).

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Fadia Faqir was born in 1956 in Jordan. She descends from both Bedouin Jordanian's father and a Circassian mother; it is a kind of a multicultural marriage by a Jordanian to a Circassian woman. She finished her BA in English Language and Literature at the University of Jordan and her MA at the Linceaster University studying creative writing. Then, she completed her Ph.D. in Critical and Creative writing at East Anglia University. She wrote *Nisanit, Pillars of Salt, My Name is Salma, At the Midnight Kitchen, and Willow Trees Don't Weep*.

There are many crucial aspects of patriarchal oppression: silencing women, punishing them physically, and treating them as inferior. All these kinds of violence appear in Fadia Faqir *Pillars of Salt* 1997, a story that happened in the 1920s. It is written during the time of British mandate over Jordan. The novel framed the Jordanian Bedouin society and how it was ruled by traditions on one side and by males on the other side. This novel is around two characters Um Saad and Maha in a madhouse and a storyteller. Um Saad is a migrated woman from Syria. She is described as a victim of the patriarchal society. She suffers a lot from her father and her husband. Her father prohibited her from completing her education and forced her to marry her cousin. Her husband used to beat her before sleeping and he got married to another woman, so he wanted her to be her servant. The second one, Maha, is a Jordanian Bedouin woman who represented the true example of oppressed women. Maha is a woman who is being silenced by her society and by her brother Daffash. Faqir makes her a strong character that rebels against traditions and male authority. She preferred her life to be free from her

brother's authority so she confronted him and let him stop controlling her life. The minor character, Nasra, is a weak female who is stigmatized just because she is a female although she was raped. The storyteller throughout the novel is against each woman in the story who describes them as witches. This section, *Pillars of Salt* reading reveals women's image in the Jordanian society from a feminist perspective through showing Nasra, Maha, and Um Saad's oppression practiced upon them.

Firstly, Nasra suffered from sexual oppression but despite that she was stigmatized just because she is a female; Daffash, Maha's brother, raped Nasra, this shame is stuck to Nasra instead of being stuck to the male. Daffash's father blamed Nasra, accusing her of seducing his son, "you should not have tempted him" (Faqr,1997,13). There is a popular old new statement in Jordan that says that there is nothing that could shame a man because a man is a man. This eastern thought just stigmatizes females because they think they are responsible for seducing men and they make men respond to their desires; no one forces them. This shame should be related to both females and males because both of them are aware enough of the consequences of their relation. In Nasra's case, Daffash raped her and he did not confess to that offence though she lost her virginity. As a result, in the "marriage season" she could not marry anyone because everyman looked at her as sinful.

Secondly, Maha's oppression is present in her brother's physical violence practiced on her and in her role at home although she is a strong woman. Although Daffash is modernized and lured by the city and the English culture he has illiberal thoughts; he treats his sister harshly. He always hits and beats her, even yanks her hair. He always teases her, "he dug out quarrels from under his fingers". One day, he hit her until she spat blood and lost two of her teeth "were lying on the floor" (1997,146). Daffash practices his hegemony on his sister just because she is a female and cannot defend herself because of her weak physical body's ability in confronting any male on one side and because of social perception about a woman that she has no right to oppose any man in her family or even any man outside of her family's range on the other side. Maha works in the field, also she weaves besides her house working. When Maha got married, she was prohibited from working in the field because working outside her "well-closed room" is a "shameful" thing. Getting married to Harb is not different from getting married to any man, she should "wash his cloak, cotton shirts, and drawers. I would prepare a meal for him and see his sparkling golden tooth". The woman's role in that time was nothing except the house work or she would be ashamed and "at the end they die and are forgotten. Aunts without names, past or future." (1997,145) Maha claims that she has no existence after all her hard work.

Thirdly, Um Saad's life "is like scattered flour in a thorn field" (1997,81), this means that she is an unlucky person, all through her life she makes her life like flour scattered on a thorn field which is something impossible to be collected. From one side, she feels unlucky to have a strict father who could always frighten her and "beat her for no reason" (1997,79) in different kinds of tools like a leather belt or sharp buckles until she becomes unconscious.

Um Saad's father was controlling everything in her life even he chose her husband without asking her; he forced her to take her cousin. Her relation with her father was not a father-daughter relationship, it was a slavery relationship, "I will be your slave girl for the rest of my life" (1997,109). Um Saad had no choice to practice her freedom and her right of choosing her husband; her father gave himself the authority to reject Mohammad's proposal, the person whom she loved more than her soul; instead, with no will, he gave her to her cousin and forced her to attend her wedding without even knowing that this was her wedding party. On the other side, she was unfortunate because she was prohibited from her education in Qutab although she was wearing long black clothes with a black veil that covered her face. Her father did not want her to complete her studies after just one year claiming that she got young men who did not prefer women, in general, to go outside their homes because of honor and stigma; also because when women get more education they may rebel against their authorities and know more about their rights so they may be disobedient.

Another kind of oppression was practiced upon Um Saad was by her husband who always beat her before sleeping without committing a fault. He married a second wife although he had eight sons just because his wife's hair became grey. He brought his wife to live in Um Saad's house in her room at the time all her stuff was thrown outside her room, so she had no place to sleep in except the kitchen. On the second morning, Ubu Saad ordered her to make breakfast for them as if she was their servant. When she blamed her husband he started beating her, "he smashed one of the chairs, picked up the legs, then broke them one after the other on my sides" (1997,179), that violence crossed the limit and she was kicked out of her house to find herself in a madhouse. He let her go there by force since she had no mental illness.

To summarize, Fadia faqir in *Pillars of Salt* writes about Jordanian women's suffering, physical assault, and oppression because of patriarchal society. She clarifies the image of seeing girls worried from the cradle to the grave. Faqir gives space for each silenced female to talk freely although the end is tragic. The novel is narrated from an Arab feminist perspective. Arab feminism meant ending violence against Arab women because of traditional patriarchy, and misapplying Islamic rules. Arab women's oppression is crystallized in stigmatizing women and prohibiting them from education and inheritance. *Pillars of Salt* deals with these sensitive issues in Nasra, Maha, Um Saad, Nasra is the one who suffered from honor stigma even though she was raped by Daffash. Her tribal society condemned her claiming that she seduced him. As a consequence, Nasra could not get married because she was seen as sinful, and had committed adultery. The second one is Maha who ended in the madhouse and was considered insane because she fought to gain her rights. Her brother Daffash beat her all the time and kept her silent and always beats her. Another oppression presents in her character is her house working which is limited in her house. Um Saad faces oppression from her father and her husband. Um Saad was always her father's 'slave' who used to beat her all the time and make her do whatever he wanted to

serve his desire. He gave himself the authority to marry her off to whom he chose (her cousin). He prohibited her from completing her education considering her closed room the only appropriate place. She was also treated unjustly by her husband who hit her every night, insulted her constantly as well.

Arab relationships and behaviors in *West of the Jordan* and *Arabian Jazz*

The Jordanian-American writer Laila Halaby is a well-known poet and novelist who lives in two different cultures since her mother is American and her father is Jordanian. She finds herself attached to both worlds, studying both cultures, and live in two contrasted spheres. She has written *My Name is in his Tongue*, *Once in a Promised Land* which has been ranked as one of the top one hundred fictions in 2007, 'Track in the Sand' which is a short folklore story written for children, and *West of the Jordan*. Her works echo both the Jordanian and American worlds; she has won Pen Beyond Margins Award for her work *West of the Jordan*. Laila Halaby is known for sharing her experience in living in the USA; she makes the reader portray a clear image of how people act there and how they face many obstacles. She is interested in different themes through her writing such as Arab family relationships, Arab behaviors, cultural conflict, and identity crisis.

Her work, *West of the Jordan*, is about four cousins coming of age in America and Palestine. These cousins are struggling whether to stick to their own identity or the American one. Their lives have many complexities present in being Arab women such as sticking to Arab traditions and Arab conservativeness. In the novel, both Jordanian and Palestinian families face obstacles in protecting their reputation which is the most important thing for them. The novel deals with four cousins living in America, passing different experiences, having different personalities. The first one is called Hala who is a student living in Tucson under her mother's desire before dying, her father wants her to marry at a young age when she comes back to America, though her aunt warns her against falling into this trap. During a visit to Jordan, she fell in love with an older man, so she had to choose between the two worlds (Western and Arab worlds). She finds it difficult to live in Jordan to the extent she finds herself a stranger there; sees everything weird, so her father decides to let her freely choose whether to go back to America where she finds herself or stays in Jordan. The second one is Mawal who appreciates her family and her traditions as well. She feels that there is always something that connects her with her origin and she feels nostalgic about it. The third one is the defiant Soraya who is living in Los Angeles. Her life is controlled by her own rules; she does what makes her happy like dancing on public occasions or kidding. She has connected with her drug addicted uncle, Haydar in a physical relation though in her Arab life she could not live a normal life because she would marry no one. Like any Arab girl, she is nothing without her virginity. She decides to stay in America escaping her hard situation keeping her secret. The fourth one is Khadija, who is entangled with her sexual identity that is something contradictory to American culture, living an Arab lifestyle. She sometimes tries to live a free American sexual life but her parents do not accept. She lives in a conservative



family; her father cares about nothing except protecting her virginity as well as his reputation. He cares about her behaviors, he does not allow her to dance, or make friends with whoever she wants.

Diana Abu-Jaber does not have that different background of Laila Halaby's. She descends from Jordanian and American origins since her father is Jordanian and her mother is American from a German origin. Her writings are affected by Jordanian culture since her father always tells her about his country and his criticism of the American lifestyle. She has written *Crescent*, *The Language of Baklava*, *Origin*, *Silver World*, and *Arabian Jazz*. Her novel *Arabian Jazz* has gotten the 1994 Oregon Book Award. Her Novel was praised by journals and writers, like USA Today, Library Journal, Boston Globe, and many others. Throughout reading her works, readers could touch her sense of humor like in *Arabian Jazz* that seems to be serious in the first two sections but in the next sections, her humor has emerged. Her writing's common themes are culture, identity, social relations, and traditions.

Arabian Jazz is a novel written in 1993, that talks about a Jordanian immigrant family who lives in the USA. Mautassem. Ramond has left Palestine with his family when he was two year old and went to Jordan, so he has grown up as a Jordanian. He lost four of his sisters during the Palestinian war and the others have suffered in the Israeli camps where girls have starved to death, but although his sister Fatima has suffered there she has successfully escaped. Mautassem has left Jordan to live in New York with his sister Fatima and his wife Nora who is Irish American. His wife has passed away after delivering two girls Jemorah and Melvina, so their aunt Fatima has been like their mother who took the responsibility of finding their husbands and raising them virtuously. They have lived in chaos whether to consider themselves Arabs or Americans since they face a different kind of discrimination because of their color, origin, and gender. Living as an Arab in such an environment makes Jordanians insist to let their daughters marry as soon as they can because they are conservative and fear losing virginity before getting married. This fear has made Mautassem's sisters try to find men for Jemorah and her sister but to find a man for Jemorah has been more important because she has been reaching her thirty which is a critical marriage age, so there have been many ways which have been followed to find men. Both girls have been affected by the New York society, which is interested in money and sexual liberty. However, both novels, *Arabian Jazz* and *West of the Jordan* deal with both western and eastern cultures.

To come up with a full definition of culture is something complicated because each definition takes a specific aspect. The American Sociological Association defines culture from a sociological perspective as “the languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge, and collective identities and memories developed by members of all social groups that make their social environments meaningful” (Culture, Asanet). That means a collection of human experiences and behaviors in a specific society that shares the same values and knowledge which later become history. Studying culture means studying sociology and background because it tells many things about nations. Transforming culture through writing specifically

through literature tells about writers' experiences and events that happened in an era that could be political, social, economic, and educational.

Alice Templeton (1992,19) claims that although cultural criticism on literature is valuable, it brings complexities into literature because it deals with sensitive issues like race, gender, class, and social transformation. The social transformation means:

The restructuring of all aspects of life; from culture to social relations; from politics to economy; from the way we think to the way we live. Through time, societies have been transformed from small associations of individuals tied together by instincts, need, and fear, to small communities tied together by circumstances, kinship, traditions, and religious beliefs, to nations tied together by history, politics, ideology, culture, and laws (Rabei,2013,4).

The change of everything ordinary is affected by different reasons whether they are political, social, or religious but all these factors are united members innately because they are in the same sphere and share the same goal starting from small groups into larger ones. For example, Jordan during the British occupation, just like all country members, share the same goal which is expelling colonizers to gain independence. Many things are affected by these circumstances like marriage and social relations. Templeton finds that cultural criticism is studying literature in the same social context; it always takes its concept from other fields to follow social study blindly, so cultural disciplinary is "anti-disciplinary". She finds that literature conveys culture in two ways: the first one is by taking existing cultural values into new contexts just for being judged and analyzed from different aspects. The second one is taking the literary texts as a cultural practice. Also, it could be a political practice that does not mean just conveying political practices but also judging these practices through writing such as the way of talking about sexism, racism, and classism. Studying literary texts means dealing with a dynamic process that links the past with the present and the individual with the social. That means literature is a record of specific social events in specific social conditions, so sociology of literature is correlated to reanalyzing the text fairly.

Socio-cultural literature means studying the literary text from different aspects like history spheres, context, place, time, readers analyzing, and judging a text. This kind of analysis of texts reveals the text background; how people live at a specific time, how they behave, and the nature of the relationship which means studying texts with their contexts. Studying both novels *West of the Jordan* and *Arabian Jazz* from a cultural perspective tells many things about Palestinian-Jordanian families who live in America. This part explains the importance of reputation for Arabs, and what kind of family relations, the way that America affects Arabs (their families and affect them as individuals), and Arab conservatism. Arabs, especially Jordanians and Palestinians, care about their reputation; it is as important as their souls. They insist on protecting their females since their virginity as well as their behaviors, indicate that they protect family honor:

The issue of family reputation has been addressed on the surface when dealing with premarital virginity and dating issues. It was shown that family reputation and honor are central concerns to Arab parents and their responsibility of maintaining family honour our lies more heavily upon daughters than sons (Eid, 2007,146)

The family honor relies on girls more than boys because the mission of protecting the family name depends on males especially on parents; they keep an eye on their daughters' behaviors. That interest of reputation appeared in *Arabian Jazz*, in Huda and Khadija characters, while in *West of the Jordan* it emerges in Aunt Fatima.

Arab men all the time find that their reputation is the most important thing in their society that is related to their homes' females, "daughter's reputation is the most important thing in the world" (Halaby,2003, 40). In *West of the Jordan*, that interest is noticed in two situations: the first one with Huda and the second with Khadija. Huda's father sent her to study in America with her brother considering that her brother Hamdi can take care of her. One day, while she was studying with her friend at a late time, the library closed and the sky was pouring rain. She called her brother to pick her up but he could not because of the rain. As a result, she slept in her friend's home, in his sister's room. A boy from their village who was living with Hamdi told his mother that she slept in her boyfriend's house then, the news spread. Huda's father decided to let her go back, otherwise, she would not find a house to go back to. When she returned her father decided to let her marry an old man and leave the country with him to improve his image in the village. The same thing happened with Khadija who has a traditional father, "my father is a traditional father [...] that is why he is so strict and that is why I am not allowed to talk to boys" (2003,159). She was silenced by her father and by her brother Muhammad. Muhammad told his father that he saw his sister kissing a boy behind a gym. When he told his father, he hit her without proof or even without asking her if that was true. The fact was he did so because his mother took some money from him to buy a barrette for Khadija. The interest of reputation appeared in *Arabian Jazz* in Fatima's Jealousy.

Jordanians feel jealous; they do not like anybody look at their females like in Matussem's family. Aunt Fatima noticed a boy from neighbors looking at Jemorah, "I see always peeking, peaking at Jemorah so that they will have a stroke tonight and maybe drop dead" (Abu-Jaber,1993,92). Fatima got furious because honor is a crucial issue in Jordanians lives. Fatema also cared for her niece's reputation saying that "A woman's reputation is her soul. It's her heart and gizzard" (1993,99). With a good reputation, they can marry and they could not be stigmatized in any way. That appeared when she wanted Jomerah's father to stop the boy from doing such a thing because her uncle Fouad wanted to visit Matussem and if he noticed that he would think of them badly.

The researcher condemns Arab men's behaviors under the name of protecting honor. That leads many Arab men rashly to punish their daughters or sisters without a proof or evidence if

they hear any rumor touching their family's reputation. The situation would be different if rumors were related to men because father would talk with his sons and in some cases they would not get punished. Both Arab men and women should not care for what is being said about their families because people do not stop talking about everything. Thus, men should be more aware of their reaction especially if that is related with women's reputation.

Family relationships

Both Palestinians and Jordanians have what is called blood relations which make each family members care for the other; this makes family a priority.

The family is the center and comes before anything else as it is regarded as the most important thing a person can have. This is such an admirable trait of the Arab culture [...]. In comparison, the Western culture places a less serious emphasis on family and friends in some cases hold higher importance. (Hamed,2012,6)

While westerns suffer from the disintegration of the family, Arabs have knitted families which is a prominent feature distinguishing Arabs because family is something valuable. In Arab countries, people still stick with traditions and tribal values that have protected relations even in the extended family because the number of men in any family reinforces the family position and name in society. In both novels, family members care for each other, gather on different occasions, and value each other like Fatima who cares about her nieces.

Hala's family is an example of an ideal family relationship where everybody cares about the other like Hala's father, brother, and mother. Hala's father loved her mother; he did not leave her in the hard times like when she was diagnosed as having cancer. The brother, Jalal, loves his mother and used to "speak proudly of his mother and her country" (Halaby,2003,21) so because he loves her he insists to marry a girl from his mother's village Nawara. Also, the mother all the time cares about her sons even when she is ill, "she gave me everything she taught me the most complicated patters in embroidery [...] she cuddled me endlessly" (2003,22). Jalal is the one who encourages his sister Hala and brings her favorite books about "animals or folklore from other countries" (2003,18) he finds his happiness in his sister's smile when he brings these books. Also, in Jordan, parents care about their sons and daughters from the cradle to the grave. Hala's father is always worried about his "children". He is worried about his daughter Hala who has a cultural gap between Jordan and America; she lives hardly in Jordan "she has learned to live in another culture" (2003, 204). He is worried. She cannot live in Jordan because she finds herself in America. Thus, he agrees to let her go back to America.

Arabs stand by each other on every occasion especially if it is mourning. Halaby covered how relatives console the dead person's relatives and what people wear on that occasion in Lubna's mother mourning in Nawara, and Hala's mother's mourning in Jordan. When Lubna,

Aziz's mother, lost her husband and her two sons, people gathered in Lubna's house to console her, "we all followed in her grieving, brought her food, sat with her food, sat with her, wailed" (2003,72). At that time people brought food for three days and maybe more. Relatives always make food and send it to the mourning house and who is sitting there will eat. In the same house, some women sleep there to console females especially if their husbands are the ones who died because they think that will make them forget their grief. Women wear black Roza "without a stitch of embroidery, not a dot of red on the hem." (2003,72) that kind of Roza expresses how much they are sad, and when they stop wearing black Roza, that means they stop mourning. In most cases, in both Jordan and Palestine, the mourning stays for three days and people visit the dead person's family just like Hala's mother's Jordanian mourning, "this visiting will last three days" (2003,54). On these three days, the welcoming coffee should be served in small cups. When people drink coffee they shake the cup which means they do not want extra coffee, while if they do not shake it that means they need another one, but they could drink until three times. Although the mourning ends after three days women still wear black for forty days.

In Arabian Jazz, Jordanians value their families' members inside and outside their countries; some people who immigrate to Europe still have the responsibility of taking care of each other which is seen in Mautassem and his sisters. When his wife passed away he raised his two daughters and his sisters were taking care of his daughters. His sister Fatima cares about raising them rightly and preparing them for their marriage future.

Fatima "played at mother, dressing them in ruffles and singing endless Arabic" (1993,74) her responsibility as being like their mother struggling to raise them and "to guide them" follow the Jordanian right rules if that cost her "scooping out their eyes and pointing them with your own hands" (1993,99). She did not allow them to commit sins or faults. She tells Jemorah "how to be good, to please my mother, to be a good girl" (1993, 241) she wants her to be virtuous and values her mother even after her death. Also, she wants her to protect herself from men and of making sexual relations with any of them.

Fatima and her sisters were worried about Jemorah; when they felt that they got young enough to get married, they decided to find her a husband, "your duty, is a sacred obligation, to get that baby-girl married"(1993,19) they found it necessary to let her marry and if they could not find her a husband they could let her marry any of their sons. Fatima was worried about whom they will marry, "My American nieces (Jemorah and Melvina) who are going to send me to the mental hospital with so many worries about who are they ever going to marry" (1993, 94). Jordanians worry about their daughters even after getting married whether their husbands are good or bad which is a stereotypical image of Jordanian fathers.

America affects family

While Mautassem's family members protect their relations, America is interested in tearing family relations. It keeps them "away from the webs of family. In the new, wild western country, the family flew into particles, relatives moved, changed courses sifted around each other like the snow, [...] it was so dangerous to create a new kind of family, to be vulnerable to the elements" (1993,206) Arab Family members in America get shattered and they forget how they were attached by each other in their original countries. America has no space for relations because it is so complicated and somehow impossible to make knitted family relations.

Jemorah felt the difference in relations between America and Jordan; she "thought family must be as abundant and invisible as air" (1993,235) while in the USA "maintaining a family at all sometimes seemed like a miracle" (1993, 235) she finds herself a foreigner and the family that lives there finds it a hard mission to protect and keep relations. She feels safe living with people who "love her, who protect her who cut their right arms off and give it to her [...] in this country they offer with one hand and take away with the other" (1993, 256). Both Jemorah and her aunt are not maladjusted in America because they know that no one cares about them or loves them in contrast with Jordan where people sacrifice for the sake of their family. The idea of the life of the American family is abstracted in Fatima's saying "Americans do not understand or appreciate what family or community is, as if we need to be trained, like animals. Maybe they are right" (1993, 240). She does not see herself as valuable in that community, she just follows rules and community habits blindly in a place that treats her like an animal, thus Fatima and her brother find their existence there as a mistake. In general, Arabs are disappointed with America, they expect something and find something else.

In *Arabian Jazz*, Maustassem's family members are like strangers who cannot feel safe and Jemorah faces a different kind of discrimination. Arab expatriates think of America as a place where they cannot feel as foreign, "This is just another place like home, a thing they will be able to hold and understand, it is not that easy" (1993, 264), "the fact that America is not as they think; Americans do not like anybody! Americans do not like Americans" (1993, 255). It is a shattered society where Arabs feel insecure there. Arabs who immigrated to America sometimes face bullying because of their origins or because of their colors and religion. When Jemorah was at her school, children were teasing her in her way from and into her home. They were harassing her and they "asked her obscene questions [...]. One day someone tore out a handful of her hair; on another, someone scratches across her raked scratches across her face and neck" (1993, 80) but all that happened because of her color "her strange name, her darker skin" (1993,80). She never felt safe on the bus because children were raised in a dangerous environment where they should hold guns; deal with gangs to protect themselves. When Jemorah was in high school, the majority of people aboard the bus were drug-addicted and dangerous who hide guns and drugs. There is another kind of hatred

against Arab Muslims who find themselves in chaos whether to consider themselves Christians or Muslims “the switch back and forth when the mood possesses them” (1993,264). Although Jemorah claimed that she was born and lived in America or even speaking like Americans this was not enough to “seem right” (1993, 255) because the language does not mean that she is equal in the American community according to her origin. In *West of the Jordan*, Halaby transfers the image of Arabs that they see America as the land of opportunities but the fact that “America is like a greedy neighbor who takes the best of you and leaves you feeling empty” (2003,106) does not appreciate individuals; it just sucks their blood without appreciation for what they offer. America is a country where individuals are hardly recognized and safe; “no one is friendly and the cities can be very dangerous” (2003,193) people have sense of insecurity because living there makes people fear being attacked any time. America is the place of bees where everybody is busy in his/her business, “Americans had no 'feeling for sin and remorse”(Cotkin, 2003, 2). The above quotation describes America as a county where people commit sins or faults with no self-assessment though they commit mistakes with regretting consequences.

America affects individuals in *West of the Jordan* and *Arabian Jazz*

Some Arabs behave like Americans when they go there, their language and their behaviors change. That change appears in the language of Shahira’s children, her husband is disrespectful, her children are busy, Melvie and Jemorah are interested in money, Fouad’s behavior is dangerous, and Jemorah and Melvie belong to no tradition. Shahira complained about her children; “my children talk like Americans” (2003, 193), their language changed into English as if they did not have Arab roots; their language was affected by the environment. The change was not restricted to language but was also related to behavior. Shahira felt that change was related to the influence of her husband on her children. Her husband changed in the way he treated others, “my husband is very difficult at times and does not respect people, not even his father. Oof, you should hear the way he talks to him, just like American. I mean no respect at all” (2003,194). In general, Arabs show respect especially to old people to say nothing about their parents. Halaby criticizes the way Americans treat their parents on one hand and the way Arabs who live in America and change their values on the other. Shahira’s children follow Americans’ steps, “they live like Americans, always busy and no time ever, and there is nothing I can do to change that” (2003,194). America is a modernized place where people have many interests in their lives; they have no time for anything.

Arabian Jazz portrays an image of people who live in America and are affected by the environment, get interested in wealth and money, have no belonging to traditions. Jemorah and Melvie become like Americans in their behaviors; they are interested in gaining money. Fouad behaves like an American, and both Melvie and Jemorah do not appreciate traditions. Melvie and Jemorah found America as the place for getting money, “I do not have time to wait for them. There is a world out there that needs saving and I have got to get it”

(1993,112). She refuses a medicine scholarship because she does not want to spend time studying claiming that she will get nothing. In her mind, America is the place where money is a necessity for living and with no money; people will be smashed under capitalism and modernism shoes. Jemorah has worked in a hospital business wing called “the land that time forgot” (1993,113), in that office who enters there ends lifeless because of heavy works, so she thought of running away from her boss, Portia’s authority, but at the time she leaves she thinks of her country, her financial situation, and earning money. Also, uncle Fouad is affected by American society since he deals with “local criminals and shady characters” (1993,171), so he found himself dangerously behave like them.

Jemorah and Melvie are affected by Americans, they have no strict traditions. Jemorah has “no tradition, no respect for elders” (1993,42) like Melvina who is a reckless girl. They do not belong to any tradition even their mother’s caftan had gone with her which means that they were raised in a modern way. They were like any “Arab children born in America hear how they were descended from saints and how neglectful young people were of the OLD Ways” (1993, 44). Arab parents in America praise their origins and portray an ideal image of their roots.

The study proves that Arab individuals’ behaviors could change though examples of families living in America complaining of behaving like Americans. The researcher believes that people’s behaviors change in America, they could change secretly or publically because of the social nature of humans that they affect and are affected by surroundings.

Family conservatism

Some Arab people who go to America are still conservative; they reject the idea of making relations with males as in the cases of Khadija’s father, Soraya, and Jemorah’s aunts. Khadija’s parents prohibited her from making relations with bad friends and they did not allow them to dance with her friends at a wedding or sleep outside her home. Her family insisted to raise her morally; her mother keeps watching her behaviors like when her mother noticed her watching a “nasty magazine” because her friend Jennifer wanted her to do so. Jennifer’s parents did not accept their daughter’s friend. She made her friend watch such magazines, “she showed me her brother’s magazines that she had brought” (2003,161). In Khadija's case, these magazines were like a beginning of letting her have a sexual relationship outside marriage, and that what her friend wanted. Because of that, Khadija was prohibited from sleeping outside her home, “you are not going to sleep anywhere outside this family until the day you are married” (2003,183). The idea of losing virginity on a wedding day is a very important thing because grooms’ relatives insist to see the proof of the bride’s virginity, otherwise they will be in a critical position; they will not accept them as brides. Also, Soraya refused to marry Riad al- Gharreb, a fancy dance man, because he used to hang out with girls. He harassed her, “he hangs his head had tried to hold on to my hand to grab any affection I will give him which is none” (2003,127), she refused him although he

proposed to her traditionally because of his bad morals. Soraya's life is not ruled by what is "halal" or "haram"; she is neutral. She does what she sees is true. Jemorah's aunt in *Arabian Jazz* also was not different from Khadija's father; she always warns her from making relationships with men, "ignore boys, they are stupid and conceited; avoid men they are stupid and dangerous; you know what they can do to you" (1993,19). Her aunts warned her of treating men or making relation, even in every visit to America they were checking her lips if she was kissed by anyone.

To summarize, culture means historical values and knowledge in a specific society, so to study culture, society and literature should be studied. Literature tells many things about culture because it is written in a specific context. That leads to socio-cultural literature which means studying literary texts within time, place, and people's behaviors to give information about the text background and its events. Studying *Arabian Jazz* and *West of the Jordan* from a socio-cultural perspective tells about Arab reputation, family relationships, the bad effects of America on family, the way America affects individuals, and Arab conservatism. In both novels reputation has a major part of Arabs' lives. In *West of the Jordan*, that interest was appeared in Huda and Khadija's characters. Huda's father heard that his daughter spent a night in her friend's house because of heavy rain but the news spread in his society, so he decided to let her go back and marry an old man to save his family name. Firstly, Khadija's father wanted to protect his family's reputation; he was taking care of his daughter's behaviors and habits. In *Arabian Jazz*, Aunt Fatima did not like anybody to talk about her niece, so she protected her by telling her brother about the neighbor's boy who looked at them to stop him. Secondly, family relationships mean a lot in Laila's Halaby novel, such as in Hala's family members who care about each other because her father loved her mother and her brother Jalal also showed interest in his sister as well as her father who was worried about her suffering in living in Jordan. Also, Arabs support each other on social occasions like in mourning; people visit the mourning house for three days and bring food and wear blame Roza for forty days. Abu Jaber talked about family relations in Mautassem's family. Mautassem raised his two daughters after their mother's death and their aunt Fatima was like their mother who was worried about Jemorah specifically because she was about to be thirty. Thirdly, living in Jordan protects family relations, America tears them. Mautassem's family lives in America where maintaining a family is something difficult. The members of Mautessim's family are living as strangers; different kinds of discrimination are practiced upon them such as Jemorah who faced that because of her color and origin. Halaby also converts the image of America where individuals are not appreciated and everybody is busy with his/her own business. Fourthly, America affects individuals in Shahira's family whose children talk like Americans with having no time and her husband disrespects his father. Melvie is busy collecting money and she rejected a scholarship just to save money. Jemorah cannot leave her business although it makes her tired because of money. Fouad's behaviors were like Americans and behave strangely and are affected by criminals. Also, both girls hold no traditions, hearing about their virtuous behaviors. Finally, both novels talk about Arab

conservatism in the lives of Khadija's father, Soraya, and Jemorah's aunts. Khadija's father and mother kept following their daughter's behaviors like prohibiting her from watching nasty magazines and having sexual relations before marriage. Soraya, refused a suitor, Riad al-Gharreb because he was hanging out with girls. Jemorah's family warned her against making sexual relations, even her aunts were asking her about this issue.

Marriage age, Marriage traditions, Brides-grooms' meetings, and Wives roles in *West of the Jordan, Arabian Jazz, and pillars of Salt*

Some critics claim that writers should reflect their social image by intervening in social issues. When Tawfeek Alhakeem is asked about the reason behind his writings he says, "the writer should have his perspective about life, people, and thoughts. The writer is not just a spectator; she/he is a creator for his/her society" (trans. Asad,2015), that means that writers could change, improve, criticize some issues about different aspects of society whether in political, economic, social, or educational aspects. Their constant situation by the time finds an echo in the change which is noticed in the real life. Some writers are not interested in changing but they transfer reality like talking about traditions and conventions.

According to Turizm ve Turizm Bakanlığı, the Turkish minister of tourism and culture,

tradition is knowledge, concepts, superstitions, and way of life, which can pass from one generation to another. [...] it is a society's opinions, valid for generations, on important subjects such as sacred or political issues. [...] With their conservative character, traditions influence social institutions such as the family, law, religion and politics(Conformity- Custom- Tradition-Convention,ktb)

Tradition is defined as imitating society, sharing values, opinions, and the way of life about specific cases which could be political, religious, and related to traditions. These traditions affect social and religious institutions. Because these traditions are constant, regular, and massive they become by time accepted and practiced. In most cases, these traditions become rules that obligate society's members to adhere to them.

Defining conventions besides traditions is something crucial because it could disappear over time. However, conventions mean:

to do something in a way which earlier generations also followed. [...] convention may survive or disappear over time. They play a characteristic role in arranging relations in daily life, in reducing misunderstandings between individuals and in facilitating social relations among members of a group.

(Conformity- Custom- Tradition-Convention,ktb)



This quotation means following the same behaviors of previous generations. It excludes misunderstanding between people because all people who live in the social environment let others figure that they are not blamed for their behaviors because they are not the people who set these social rules. They tell people how to behave on social occasions such as what to say, how to behave, and how to act. This chapter talks about social and cultural issues, like marriage age, wedding traditions, and Arab wives' roles.

Marriage age

Laila Halaby in *West of Jordan* on one hand, talks about the early marriage as presented in Soraya's condemnation for early marriage, in the necessity of being married after high school in Soraya and Hala's cases. On the other hand, she clarifies the reasons for early marriage for Arabs and Arab American girls. She criticizes early marriage since girls get married at the age of twelve through Soraya's story. According to ICRW "Child marriage is defined as an illegal or customary union involving a boy or girl below the age of 18" (2014), all human organizations agree to make the previous age as a standard age for marriage. Although the percent of marriage age has decreased it still exists; according to UNICEF, they are twelve million girls all around the world marry early. Soraya condemns such kind of marriage although it is restricted by traditions and by social conventions especially in tribal communities, "young men sticking their things into goats and some twelve-year-old girl being carried off on a camel to be the third wife to old sheikh" (2003,34). Soraya here protests that although girls are under-aged they marry an old man triple their age, so they have no choice except to accept because this is their parents' choice. Soraya herself suffers from the same thing; her mother wanted her to finish high school to let her marry but she ends up losing her virginity to her uncle. All the time her mother warns her against losing her virginity, "you are nothing without your virginity" (2003,199), her mother is like any Arab mother, who connects her virginity with her existence. The same thing happened with Hala; her aunt wanted her to come back from America to get married in Jordan. So, she should "have longer hair, I should wear makeup, I should not wear blue jeans" (2003, 87), which means she should follow her society's traditions to be acceptable then she could get married. She should not wear jeans because that gives a bad impression in a conservative society, otherwise she will marry no one. However, two reasons make girls marry early in America, on one hand, parents are worried about the possibility of making sexual relationships before marriage and because parents want to get rid of the unmarried female's responsibility on the other hand. Arab parents prefer letting their daughters marry early because they fear making relations with American boys, "they take that secret thing between your legs for nothing. No committer" (2003,188). The majority of American boys make sexual relations without any commitment, also in America, it is not that important for girls to lose virginity before marriage because they can marry again unlike in the Arab world. There is another reason behind letting girls marry early "Baba wanted to get rid of the problem of unmarried girls in his house" (2003,188). Arab men who live in America prefer marrying their daughters early

to get rid of the responsibility of protecting them. Khadija's father has two daughters and he is worried about finding many obstacles in raising them safely; he decides of letting them get married.

Diana Abu-Jaber in *Arabian Jazz* specifies the appropriate Jordanian girl's marriage age and the time girls reach spinsterhood. When Jemorah turned nineteen, her aunts recognized that she reached the marriage age, "enough was enough, she had to shape up now, get serious about marriage and babies while there was time" (1993,19); they called each other to find her a husband. Although they have sons, they want to marry "wild- American girls, not boring-Arab-girls, not Boring-Arab-cousins" (1993,19). They claimed that their sons like any immigrated Arab boys do not prefer to engage Arab women such as Samir who got married to an American girl against the will of his sisters. Abu Jaber converted the Jordanian image of reaching spinsterhood and how people do their best not to reach that age which is thirty. In Jemorah's case, when she was about to reach thirty, her aunt wanted to do the impossible to let her marry because this is "marriage-emergency" when a girl should marry, otherwise she is "diagnosed as a terminal spinster" (1993, 18). This idea is proved by many writers who study Jordanian society "according to the Jordanian Department of Statistics "spinster age is thirty-five and above [...] while socially girls who reach 30 years and have not married yet, they are considered spinsters" (trans. Alfawaz & Assuood,2012,151). Traditionally, in Jordanian society girls at the age of thirty are considered spinsters and their opportunities of getting married will decrease. In Jordan the age of spinsterhood has slightly increased until reaching thirty years "in 1995, girls' age of marriage was 24-29, in 2000 it is 25-29, and in 2011 it is 26-30 years" (2012,151) because the marriage percentage is decreased in Jordan, inversely the range of marriage age is increased.

In *Pillars of Salt*, Jordanians in a Bedouin society also prefer their daughters to marry early in the marriage season. The marriage age is between fourteen and nineteen years old. Maha got married when she was nineteen as the rest of any girl in her tribe waiting for the wedding season which is summer. Girls who had got married were lucky and girls who had not would spend the year waiting for the summer"(1997, 118). Bedouin girls who get engaged in summer will be lucky while girls who stay unmarried have to wait for the next season. For example, Nasra spent more than one summer without being engaged and this made her in a critical situation.

Marriage traditions

Maha's wedding in *Pillars of Salt* is a Jordanian Bedouin conveyed in its events before, during, and after the wedding day. In the beginning, Harb (Maha's husband) visited her father alone and asked her hand then her father told her of that. While her father was telling her, directly she lowered her eyes. In her betrothal, many tents were erected for welcoming people, the men were busy roasting the coffee beans. Then, many people came to ask Maha's hand wearing black cloaks and golden hems. When men sat, Maha's father welcomed his

guests then the coffee cups were distributed. To illustrate, the first cup of coffee is usually given to the head guest to ask the girl's hand and if he drinks the coffee all the guests can drink the coffee which means that the girl's relatives have accepted their proposal. Both bride and groom authorize two men to speak in their voices who are usually older, well known, and well-spoken persons. The same thing happened in Maha's situation; Sheikh Talib represented the groom's side and Shaikh Namir presented the bride's side (Maha's father). The next traditional event is accepting the proposal by saying "your coffee is drinkable", and then the Rebaba sound is raised. On the engagement night, the bride should not weave anything; otherwise, she will have bad luck. On the wedding day, there should be big celebrations in the bride's house and many sheep are slaughtered for the Jordanian traditional meal Mansaf. On the day before the wedding day, women from Maha's tribe who prepared her box and Halima were singing sad traditional songs to explain how much she is sad because Maha would leave her house. The next step before going to the bride's house the bride should wash in "loofah and Kanan" soap then she can go to the groom's house with other females who go on foot while men ride horses, "the men were riding their horses and the women were walking on the ground [...] my feet sore and tired" (1997,42). At the wedding night or the honor night, all are waiting to see the sign of the virginity blood; if it is not witnessed there will be a massacre; the bride's relatives will think that the groom is not a real man and the groom relatives will think the bride is not a virgin. At Maha's night, there was this fear of the honor crime because the night was not as it should be, so Maha hurt her finger to fool people and see the blood to believe that everything was going alright. It is worth mentioning that the bride should give a dowry to the father, in Maha's case it was five camels; the dowry gives an idea about the man's generosity.

Laila Halaby transfers Lina and Jaffer's wedding to Glendale, California. They made somehow a traditional Palestinian Jordanian marriage starting with henna which comes a day before the wedding. On that occasion, the bride wears a "blue gown" and sits on a chair which should be on a decorated table, and paints henna on her hands. The most important part of this occasion is the bride's dance, the time where everybody looks and criticizes. When a woman is called to dance she should refuse, then she can dance to look shy. While she is dancing she should not look anywhere except at the floor to give an impression that she is quiet and polite and that is what Lina did which represents the meaning of the traditional bride, "a competent, but not excellent, dancer. Her shakes and twists are simple and her eyes are lowered" (2003,91) Also, women should not wear short or tight clothes because of "conservative culture", so when Ginna, Soraya's non- Arab friend, attended the marriage wedding she wore a long dress which reached her ankles. When the henna is finished, women make henna surrounded with vine leaves and flowers. The bride on the wedding day holds it and sticks it on a wall, and if it is stuck for a long time this is a sign that they will stay together.

Ja'far and Lina's wedding is like any Jordanian wedding when people try to show off on such occasions of marriage because that improves their image and shows their generosity, "people

still like to show off how much money they have". For example, Jalal's traditional marriage lasted for three days and the cost of the marriage would have "paved a street" or "built a mosque". In this kind of marriage, women wear fancy clothes like Rozas (a traditional dress) or modern shiny black clothes and too much gold. Then, they start dancing, singing, and ululating for the bride in a room.

In *Arabian Jazz*, Diana Abu- Jaber presents a kind of marriage in America that is arranged which is a marriage for an advantage or what it is called "marriage business"; the aim of this marriage is whether to get nationality or money. Uncle Fouad suggested a way to let Jemorah and Melvie get married which is like a modern way. He wanted them to marry his two sons (Saiid and Keir) for five thousand dollars. The idea of this marriage is that he wanted his sons to come to America to get "a little banana" and the contract should be just on paper; they are not allowed to make physical relationship. The date starts with a business dance which means that they dance without attachment; they just act until midnight. Then, the last step is the agreement from both sides; they signed on a paper that they accepted marriage under conditions as if they were married nominally and Melvie had the authority to renegotiate the marriage contract.

How brides meet grooms

West of the Jordan introduces an extraordinary image of Jalal's way of meeting his woman and the way that men meet women in Europe and ask their hands. The way that Jalal should follow to get married is to tell their parents to find the appropriate girl for their son then he can see her be engaged unlike the modern way which makes both the man and woman know each other before getting married then they can get engaged. Jalal is Jordanian and his dead mother is from Palestine who followed somehow the same thing but the difference is that he did not tell his father of that, "I am going to marry a girl from mam's village. Auntie Sahar has already found someone" (2003,204). His father complained about how he decided to get married without letting him know but the justification was the "times are changing" (2003,204). Traditions could change over time, so what is not acceptable in the future it is ordinary now.

Arab women protect their virginity until marriage. Khadija has the same thought, "I had never thought about sex with a boy before I get married" (2003,183). On the day of the wedding, they lose their virginity. Before asking her hand and when she agrees, the groom makes an unfamiliar proposal which the bride never forgets. In contrast, in Jordan, Adaaja (2020) claims that the traditional idea of meeting women should be on the river where women fill their water pots. Then, whoever a woman admires will ask her to allow him to drink from her pot. In *Pillars of Salt* Maha loved her husband before getting married. She was meeting him while she was milking their cow, "Harb was standing right behind me. [...] without raising my head I said, 'what are you doing here?'" (1997,9). Although she was meeting him while she was milking a cow she could not meet him at night because that could

lead to a crime of honor; her brother Daffash absolutely would kill her as soon as he saw her. Maha was prohibited from seeing Harb even when he came to ask her hand, so she secretly was looking at him.

In *Arabian Jazz*, there are two ways of knowing girls. The first one is the traditional ancient way when girls never see men until the wedding day and the second one meeting or taking boyfriends before getting married. Mautassem remembered when his sisters got married to men they “had never seen before in their lives” (1993,186). His sister Lutfea got married without seeing the suitor. He came to ask her hand but he had congenital malformation but despite that, she was not allowed to choose freely; she was tearing all her dresses to pieces” (1993, 186). At that time, she had no choice but to accept reality and deal with it. By contrast, Mautassem cared about his daughters’ future and whoever they were going to marry, “he would never throw them into unwanted marriage” (1993,152). He had a liberal mind and could not force his daughters to marry someone they did not like. His two daughters lived American freedom; Jemorah and Melvie had boyfriends. Jemorah had a boyfriend called Ricky, he was visiting her family. One day, secretly, Jemorah met him in her house yard at night. He “laid his head in Jem’s lap” (1993, 129), she started touching him without caring for who was going to see them. They sat together singing and laughing even he kissed her hand. Also, Melvina made a sexual relationship with Larry Fasco and she kept it secret.

Wives’ roles

The three novels mention the wife’s role in Jemorah and Nasir’s engagement, in Jalal's wedding, and Hala's marriage. Firstly, Abu-Jaber mentioned the familiar role for Arab women when they get married like washing their husband's feet or doing their housework. That happened when Nasir got engaged to Jemorah; she was singing of women's roles in their houses but her sister Melvina refused such things claiming that her sister was not “on the material slave block” (1993, 254). Jemorah imagined herself returning with Nasir to Jordan doing the ordinary wife’s role. Secondly, Halaby mentions the traditional role in Jalal’s wedding for wives converting the stereotypical image of the bride. In her marriage, she should be a traditional bride who is "ready to follow orders, ready to serve” (2003, 93), that was the role of the bride to be obedient besides doing her housework and serving her family males. She should not talk or complain, just follow orders blindly. Thirdly, Faquir points out that Maha’s role like any tribal Jordanian wife has nothing to do except housework, “I would sleep next to Harb every night of my life, yes, I would wash his cloak, cotton shirt, and drawers. I would prepare a meal for him and see his sparkling golden teeth every day” (1997,23). Maha should clean her house, wash his clothes, and cook for him; in that way, she satisfies her husband.

This part explains Arab marriage traditions which include Early marriage, Marriage traditions, How grooms meet their brides, and Wives’ rules. Early marriage was very common among Arabs and American Arabs. Girls used to get married at an age as low as 12

and her husband will be three times her age. This type of marriage was being criticised by Laila Halaby in *West of Jordan*. Although early marriage has reduced these days but it still exists. Soraya herself has suffered and ended up losing her virginity to her uncle and Hala has suffered a similar fate. Arab families in America get worried that their girl could end up in a sexual relationship and they consider girls a big responsibility on them which is why they end up enforcing them to get married early. Diana in *Arabian Jazz* has been to a similar situation where when she turned 19 her parents have decided that it is her time to get married. Her parents were worried since they saw Samir marry an American girl against his parents' will. In the Jordanian society when a girl reaches 30 they consider her a spinster which leads to more pressure on getting married early. As per the Pillar of Salt Bedouins average marriage age is from thirteen to nineteen.

Marriage traditions in Jordan last for three to seven days before the wedding starts. It starts with Henna where on that occasion men start their traditional dance and women start singing sad songs and prepare the bride's belongings such as cloths and perfume. After the Henna day comes Alsharah day where people start preparing and decorating their tents and the relatives of the groom go to the bride's house on a Camel. The events of Maha's Wedding in *Pillars of Salt* which are the Jordanian Bedouins it started with the groom visiting her father and asking for her hand. They welcomed the groom and his family and a cup of coffee was given to the head of the groom's family. The elder from the groom's family asked for the hand of Maha to their son and the elder of the bride's family accepted the proposal then they drink the coffee. At the wedding day a big celebration occurs and a lot of sheep get slaughtered to serve Mansaf. After that everyone waits for the sign of virginity blood which has to be witnessed otherwise a massacre will occur. Ja'far and Lina's wedding is a bit different where the women wear expensive clothes and jewellery, dancing and singing in the bride's room. Diana's marriage was in America and a different type of arranged marriage. Her marriage was like business deals where the purpose of her marriage was money and nationality. Where she was married but was not allowed making any physical contact and there was no marriage contract established.

In *West of Jordan* Jalal has introduced a new way on how the brides meet the grooms. Unlike the traditional way where the father finds a suitable match for him Jalal's way is finding the bride without informing his father and after he finds the bride he tells his father I'm going to get married that my aunt found. Khadija has experienced a similar situation where her husband came to her in the middle of a small crowd and asked her to marry him while holding flowers. However, in the *Arabian Jazz* there are two ways where the groom meets the bride. The first way is the traditional way where the family goes and asks for the bride's hand. Lutfea has experienced this way where she got married without seeing the groom till the wedding day. The other way which is common in Arabs living in America is that the girl gets a boyfriend. Jemorah has experienced this where she had a boyfriend called Reeky where she had a sexual relationship with him without getting married.



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