Teshera

In her article Veiled Intentions: Don't Judge a Muslim Girl by Her Covering, Maysan Haydar explains that her covering was a choice not a requirement. She describes the cultural ideas behind the privacy of the coverings and the irony in the stereotypes that have been created toward Muslim women. She writes "It's only now, after comparing my turbulent teen experiences with those of other women, that I can fully appreciate how much of a saving grace this small piece of cloth was" (180). Haydar's article brought to life for me another perspective of the American woman's need to self-objectify in our relationships with male acquaintances, the process in which we represent ourselves, and the way we value our own sexuality.

     Haydar's description of her interactions with the opposite sex shed a light on my own. When I reflect on my relationships with male acquaintances, I did not realize the frequency in which I have stepped lightly on invisible eggshells when I consider giving a compliment or making a kind gesture. I have found that far too often kindness has been misconstrued for affection, then leading in a direction of an awkward and inappropriate situation. She writes "the weirdness that normally clouds boy-girl interactions was lifted, because most guys automatically assumed I wasn't available for dating. Of course, girls deserve to be respected no matter what they wear" (181). Her experience showed that she was able to have a natural friendship with the opposite sex because they had respect for her based off of her personality, not because they were attracted to her appearance. When a casual friendship began to migrate into attraction she knew what made her attractive was her "ability to relate to everyone in a very natural way, without all the confusing sexual pressure" (181).

     When Maysan Haydar experienced the stereotype that Muslim women are not free to be themselves because of their coverings, she found the irony in this young woman's notion. She writes "to my eyes, her idea of freedom involved a complicated hairstyle, loads of makeup and jeans she probably had to sew herself into" (180). I have been the woman that sees the Muslim women and pities their coverings; I can also relate to Haydar's concept of our idea of freedom. We have the freedom to show ourselves in public, but our society does not allow us to feel free to do so unless we are made up: with make up, dressed in the latest trend, and are physically fit. They are truly more free to be themselves with their coverings, than we are to walk about as our natural selves.

     Haydar experienced a variety of women who flaunted their bodies in New York City. She began to understand that they believe Muslim women "didn't value themselves as sexual beings" (181) because they wore such conservative clothing and coverings. Maysan Haydar describes the extent that American women go to make themselves attractive for the people they interact with outside of their intimate relationship. Like many religions, Muslims are taught that their bodies are of such great value that it is "only meant to be shared in an intimate relationship: husband and wife, mother and baby . . . " (182). While American women in my generation feel that they are of more value when they are dressed in an outfit that bests accentuates their bodies with their hair and make up perfected, "the most severe-looking coverings use to be limited to the richest women in Arab society; being swathed in so much cloth was regarded as a sign of status" (182). The notion that the beauty of our bodies is so valuable and sacred that it should only be shared with our husbands would be an incredible concept for every woman to adopt. Infidelity statistics and divorce rates would be bound to drop.

      After reading Haydar's article, I have found a greater respect for the Muslim women wearing coverings. I delight in the way she was raised and her experience as a Muslim woman that wears a covering while living in New York City. To think that wearing a piece of cloth over a woman's face is enough to help her build quality relationships with the opposite sex, represent herself with dignity, and protect her sexuality; it would to break the negativity our society has set among women. "At the heart of my veiling is personal freedom" (184) writes Haydar, truly inspiring.

Works Cited

Haydar, Maysan. "Veiled Intentions: Don't Judge a Muslim Girl by Her Covering." Viewpoints.Ed. W. Royce Adams, 7th ed. Boston, Wadsworth, 2010. (179-186)